

Asia in Transition 4

Victor T. King
Zawawi Ibrahim
Noor Hasharina Hassan *Editors*

Borneo Studies in History, Society and Culture

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Asia in Transition

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This volume has had a rather long chequered history. As is often the case a project emerges from chance meetings and happy coincidental circumstances. After delivering an overview paper on the theme of ‘Culture and Identity: Some Borneo Comparisons’ at the Biennial International Conference of the Borneo Research Council, held at Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) during 25–27 June 2012, Victor King happened to be speaking with Poline Bala about the progress and development of anthropological studies in Borneo. It was really at her suggestion that we then began to think about providing a more comprehensive overview of Borneo Studies, and it was from this initiative that the current volume emerged. The co-editors, Zawawi Ibrahim and Noor Hasharina Hassan, enthusiastically embraced this project.

When Victor King was actively engaged in teaching and research at the Institute of Asian Studies, UBD from August 2012, and working closely with Zawawi Ibrahim, the opportunity presented itself and the decision was taken to organise, host and fund a workshop on Borneo Studies. This duly took place during 30 November–1 December 2012 at UBD when we brought several leading local scholars together in order that we could consider where we might take this proposal.

What was clear, however, was the following:

1. We had to try to widen the agenda beyond anthropology (though this remains a vitally important focus) to examine the contribution of the social sciences more generally to our understanding of Borneo societies and cultures and their transformations since the Second World War (which should also include the multidisciplinary fields of development studies, environmental studies, social policy studies, cultural studies and gender studies).
2. We should try to address a range of conceptual issues as well as more substantive problem areas in that, though Borneo Studies has quite understandably been preoccupied with ‘real world’ issues of modernisation and development and with the application of social science knowledge to practical and everyday problems and processes, there have been some significant contributions to concepts and theory as well.

3. We should attempt to locate Borneo Studies within the wider studies of Malaysia and Indonesia and within the context of Southeast Asian Studies; widening the frame of reference also applies to the only fully national territory in Borneo, Brunei Darussalam.
4. We should endeavour to locate Borneo Studies within disciplinary contexts and examine the contribution of the study of Borneo societies, cultures and transformations to the development of the social science disciplines more generally.
5. And, in contemplating the 'state of the art' in Borneo Studies we should be prepared to look to the future, and try to determine where we go from here. What are the urgent matters which we need to address that have not received the attention they deserve? What subjects have we been concerned with already but which need further elaboration and research? What is the scope for disciplinary and multidisciplinary collaboration? What is the scope for collaboration between some of the participants in this workshop?

We then invited the participants of the workshop to prepare their papers for publication and we contacted several other active researchers on Borneo to add to the range of issues and topics on what we wanted to cover and present. We do not claim that this is a comprehensive treatment of research on Borneo undertaken since the late 1940s when what we might term modern social science, based on primary field research, emerged in Borneo. Sadly we are still underrepresented in Kalimantan, and, as has always been the case, the field continues to be dominated by social science in Sarawak. We have managed, however, to secure some contributions from our Indonesian colleagues and to ensure that some of the major developments in the largest part of the island have been covered. As the workshop was organised in Brunei we have also been able to include recent research contributions from colleagues at the university there, and we have been fortunate in securing contributions from scholars in Sabah. Nevertheless, we recognise that this is only a modest beginning in the attempt to capture some of the major scholarly post-war developments in Borneo Studies, and much more needs to be done and continuing glaring gaps need to be filled.

The rather extended delay between the initial planning for this volume and its publication requires some explanation. After Victor King's temporary departure from Brunei in December 2012, though with a brief 10-week revisit in mid-2013, the project stalled due to the pressure of other research and publication commitments. It was re-energised in 2014 when Zawawi Ibrahim, as the local coordinator at UBD, and Victor King, with the assistance of Noor Hasharina Hassan, contacted those contributors who had committed to the publication and then approached other potential contributors to at least begin to fill some of the gaps in coverage. Much of 2014 and 2015 have been preoccupied with bringing together and editing the volume.

The project might not have materialised had it not been for the support of colleagues in Universiti Brunei Darussalam's Institute of Asian Studies. We wish to acknowledge the financial support provided by the institute to enable the initial workshop to take place, and the copy-editing and indexing to be undertaken, a

substantial task given the size of the volume. Had it not been for the enthusiasm and encouragement of the then Director of the Institute, Prof. Tong Chee Kiong, for arguing for the importance of developing a Borneo Studies agenda within the university and securing funding for it, this project would not have been completed successfully. We owe him an enormous debt of gratitude. Sincere thanks are also due to Dr Yabit Alas at UBD for developing the network of Borneo institutions and for providing a framework for the inclusion of our contributors from Kalimantan. Our heartfelt thanks also go to Gareth Richards of Impress Creative and Editorial, Penang, who, in many respects has been our fourth co-editor. His professionalism, good humour, patience and sheer determination to see the project to a conclusion, and his meticulous copy-editing, ably assisted by Julia Tan and Siti Aishah Kamarudin, have ensured that what started as an interesting concept has turned into a publication which we hope will set an agenda for Borneo Studies in the next decade.

Brunei Darussalam
March 2016

Victor T. King
Zawawi Ibrahim
Noor Hasharina Hassan

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AMA-JK	Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Jalai dan Kendawangan (Jalai Kendawangan Alliance of Indigenous Peoples)
AMA-Kalbar	Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Kalimantan Barat (West Kalimantan Alliance of Indigenous Peoples)
AMAN	Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (Indigenous Peoples' Alliance of the Archipelago)
AMBD	Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (Monetary Authority of Brunei Darussalam)
ANPRI	Aliansi untuk Perdamaian dan Rekonsiliasi (Alliance for Peace and Reconciliation)
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BATAMAD	Barisan Pertahanan Masyarakat Adat Dayak (Dayak Customary Defence Guard)
BEM	Borneo Evangelical Mission
Berjaya	Parti Bersatu Rakyat Jelata (Sabah People's United Front)
Bernamea	Pertubuhan Berita Nasional Malaysia
BHEP	Bakun Hydroelectric Project
BKCUK	Badan Koordinasi Credit Union Kalimantan (Kalimantan Credit Union Coordinating Board)
BKSNT	Balai Kajian Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional (Centre for Studies of History and Tradition)
BMT	Baitul Maal wa Tamwil
BRC	Borneo Research Council
CDD	Curriculum Development Department
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
CoERI	Centre of Excellence for Rural Informatics
CSSRC	Colonial Social Science Research Council
CUSO	Canadian University Service Overseas
DAD	Dewan Adat Dayak (Dayak Traditional Council)
DBP	Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka
EVR	Ethnolinguistic vitality rating

FID	Financial Institutions Division
FPI	Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defenders Front)
GAD	Gender and development
GMTPS	Gerakan Mandau Telawang Pancasila (Pancasila Dagger and Shield Movement)
GPD	Gerakan Pemuda Dayak (Dayak Youth Movement)
GPPK	Gerakan Pemberdayaan Pancur Kasih (Pancur Kasih Empowerment Movement)
IAIN	Pontianak Institut Agama Islam Negeri (Pontianak State Institute of Islamic Studies)
IAS	Institute of Asian Studies
ICT	Information and communication technology
ICTM	International Council for Traditional Music
IDRD	Institute of Dayakology Research and Development
IDS	Institute for Development Studies, Sabah
INDEP	Institute for Indigenous Economic Progress
INGI	International NGO Forum on Indonesia
ISAI	Institut Studi Arus Informasi (Institute for the Studies on Free Flow of Information)
Jatam	Jaringan Advokasi Tambang (Mining Advocacy Network)
JKKK	Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung (village development and security committee)
JMM	Jasa Menenun Mandiri
JTB	Jabatan Telekom Brunei
Kalteng	Kalimantan Tengah (Central Kalimantan)
KCA	Kadazan Cultural Association
KDCA	Kadazan Dusun Cultural Association
KKN	<i>korupsi, kulusi dan nepotisme</i> (corruption, collusion and nepotism)
KLF	Kadazandusun Language Foundation
KPA	Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria (Consortium of Agrarian Reform)
LBBPJ	Lembaga Bina Benua Puti Jaji
LBBT	Lembaga Bela Banua Talino (Institute for Community Legal Resources Empowerment)
LCDA	Land Consolidation Development Authority
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
LP2M	Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian pada Masyarakat (Centre for Research and Community Service)
LP3S	Lembaga Pelatihan dan Penunjang Pembangunan Sosial (Institute for Training and Supporting Social Development)
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
MABM	Majelis Adat Budaya Melayu (Malay Custom and Cultural Council)
MABT	Majelis Adat Budaya Tionghoa (Chinese Custom and Cultural Council)
MAD	Majelis Adat Dayak (Dayak Traditional Council)

MADN	Majelis Adat Dayak Nasional (National Dayak Traditional Council)
MIKA	Percetakan Mitra Kasih (Mitra Kasih Printing House)
MiSEM	Mitra Sekolah Masyarakat (Public Schools Partners)
MTs	Madrasah Tsanawiyah (Islamic junior high school)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OT1	Oral Tradition 1 project
PAR	Participatory action research
PASEA	Performing Arts of Southeast Asia
PBS	Parti Bersatu Sabah
PCN	Personal credit line
PDI-P	Partai Demokrasi Perjuangan (Indonesian Democratic Struggle Party)
PEK	Program Pengembangan Ekonomi Kerakyatan (People's Economic Development Programme)
PRCF	People, Resources and Conservation Foundation
PTUN	Pengadilan Tata Usaha Negara (State Administrative Court)
RRI	Radio Republik Indonesia (Republic of Indonesia Radio)
RTB	Radio Television Brunei
SDN	<i>sekolah dasar negeri</i> (state elementary school)
SEASREP	Southeast Asian Studies Regional Exchange Program
SEDIA	Sabah Economic Development and Investment Authority
SMP	<i>sekolah menengah pertama</i> (junior secondary school)
SMTE	Small-medium tourism enterprises
TAP	Tabung Amanah Pekerja (Employees' Trust Fund)
<i>Tidayu</i>	Tionghoa, Dayak and Melayu
UBD	Universiti Brunei Darussalam
UMS	Universiti Malaysia Sabah
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNIMAS	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
UNTAN	Universitas Tanjungpura
USNO	United Sabah National Organisation
VoIP	Voice over internet protocol
WALHI	Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (Indonesian Forum for the Environment)
WID	Women in development
WWF	World Wildlife Fund for Nature
YKSPK	Yayasan Karya Sosial Pancur Kasih (Pancur Kasih Social Work Foundation)

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Recent publications include ‘The Bidayuh of Sarawak: gender, spirituality and swiddens’ (with Patricia Nayoi, 2015) ‘Songs from Long Peluan’ (2014) and ‘Northwestern Borneo’ (2012), as well as articles in the *Sarawak Museum Journal* and *Borneo Research Bulletin* on basketry and material culture. She co-edited *Sarawak cultural legacy* (with Lucas Chin, 1991). She is a member of the Borneo Research Council.

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News in West Borneo (2008), *A little book for wisdom: between Pontianak and Oxford* (2010) and 'Indigenous community identity within Muslim societies in Indonesia: a study of Katab Kebahan Dayak in West Borneo' (2011).

Bernard Sellato has been working in and on Borneo since 1973, first as a geologist and later as an anthropologist. He is now a senior researcher with Centre Asie du Sud-Est, Paris, France (Centre national de la recherche scientifique and École des hautes études en sciences sociales). He is a former director of the Institut de recherche sur le Sud-Est Asiatique, Université de Provence, Marseille, and for 10 years was the editor of the bilingual journal *Moussons: social science research on Southeast Asia*. He is the author or editor of a dozen books, including *Hornbill and dragon: arts and culture of Borneo* (1989/1992), *Nomads of the Borneo rainforest* (1994), *Innermost Borneo: studies in Dayak cultures* (2002), *Beyond the green myth: Borneo's hunter-gatherers in the twenty-first century* (with Peter G. Sercombe, 2007) and *Plaited arts from the Borneo rainforest* (2012).

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Chapter 1

Introductory Remarks

Victor T. King, Zawawi Ibrahim and Noor Hasharina Hassan

Keywords Chapter summaries · Borneo · Anthropology · Applied studies · Globalisation future

As we have already indicated, this volume emerged from discussions and deliberations held at the Universiti Brunei Darussalam's Institute of Asian Studies in 2012, and particularly from a workshop organised towards the end of that year. The focus was to take stock of the development of social science research in Borneo during the post-war period, to assess what had been achieved and to access some recent research by early career researchers.

We then invited the participants of the workshop to prepare their papers for publication, most responded and some did not, and we have since contacted several other active researchers on Borneo to add to the range of issues and topics on what we wanted to cover and present. This is not a comprehensive treatment of social science research on Borneo since the late 1940s when modern social science, based on primary field research, emerged in Borneo. We are still underrepresented in Kalimantan, and, as has always been the case, the field continues to be dominated by social science research in Sarawak. The early advantages that Sarawak enjoyed through the work of the Colonial Social Science Research Council and the Sarawak Museum under Tom Harrisson gave the state an enormous head start which it has

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continued to build on with the establishment of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) there in 1992 (see Poline Bala, Chap. 13) and other research institutions.

We have managed, however, to secure some contributions on Kalimantan (see Chaps. 9, 12, 15 and 20) and to ensure that some of the major developments in the largest part of the island have been covered. (Some of the general chapters on Borneo also cover literature and research on Kalimantan, see Chaps. 4, 5, 6 and 8.) As the workshop was organised in Brunei we have also been able to include some recent research contributions from colleagues at the university there (see Chaps. 14, 22, 23 and 24), and we have been fortunate in securing chapters from scholars in Sabah (see Chaps. 10 and 21). Nevertheless we recognise that this is only a modest beginning in the attempt to capture some of the major scholarly post-war developments in Borneo Studies, and much more remains to be done.

We decided to divide the volume into three sections to reflect the scope of the reviews. The first section comprises Borneo-wide perspectives and issues. Victor King provides some introductory reflections on the development of anthropological research in the early post-war years in Chap. 2. It serves as something of an extension to these introductory remarks. These pioneer fieldworkers set out the research trajectories for others to follow, and some of the major issues which were to dominate research agendas during the next two decades were guided by particular preoccupations in British social anthropology: social structure and organisation; the defining features of cognatic kinship including kindred relations and networks and affinal relations; cognatic descent categories and groupings; the main characteristics of the household or small family, the longhouse, longhouse clusters, village and community; residential and marriage patterns; jural personalities, corporate groupings, rights in land and other property and the operation of customary laws; social ranking, status, leadership institutions (secular and religious), and succession to office; local economic organisation, agriculture and commercial production; ethnic identities and river-based groupings.

What was also a noticeable characteristic of this early work was that it was pursued by anthropologists who happened to be recruited to undertake research in Sarawak and Sabah, as the early sites of modern field research, or decided that Borneo provided the opportunities to explore various issues which were exercising anthropology at the time. They were not Borneo specialists per se, but some had already completed projects on other parts of the world and then subsequently continued to carry out research beyond Borneo: other field sites comprised Fiji, Samoa, northern Thailand, Yunnan–Burma, mainland China, East Africa and eastern Indonesia. In this regard, they usually became interested in themes, issues and concepts which were rather different from those in which they had been engaged in Borneo (among others, upland–lowland relationships, unilineal descent, alliance and cross-cousin marriage, pluralism, gender relations and the ethical/moral order, religious change and conversion).

The main field research was undertaken in Sarawak and to some extent Sabah; very little was done in the vast territories and the complex mixes of populations and cultures to the south in Kalimantan. Kalimantan remained a relatively unknown

area to modern social scientific inquiry until the 1960s. We should also note that the scholarly terrain was set out and delimited by a handful of (male) anthropologists who undertook detailed ethnographic fieldwork, working in a colonial environment with its own demands and interests, and working on a delimited field site within one or more defined communities within one ethnic group, even though there might well be continued debate about what constituted that ethnic group, and how it related to other neighbouring groups, culturally, linguistically and historically. What is also noteworthy in this early work and even that undertaken up to the 1980s and 1990s was that much of it was confined to a particular part, state or province of Borneo. If a researcher worked in Sarawak or Brunei, he or she rarely moved to other parts of Borneo to undertake further research. There was little in the way of comparative studies, and almost no studies which adopted a Borneo-wide perspective.

The great divide, however, was that between the former British territories of northern Borneo and the former Dutch territories to the south. In the north the historical and archival materials were in English and there was early on in the post-war period a research infrastructure, at first established through the state museums (though the Brunei and Sabah Museums came much later than the Sarawak Museum with its internationally recognised journal) and then the universities. In the south invariably researchers had to at least read Dutch, and also for some purposes German, to gain some appreciation of the historical development, the geographies and economies of the societies and cultures there, and of the effects of colonial policies on local communities. For a considerable period of time into the post-war period the physical and research infrastructures were also relatively rudimentary, and sometimes permission to undertake research there was difficult to obtain. The comparative advantages of the northern areas of Borneo were therefore clear for foreign researchers, but these advantages have decreased over time, and now many more local researchers in Kalimantan are producing valuable research, sometimes in collaboration with overseas scholars.

What was to follow after the small number of early studies (mainly in Sarawak) was a burgeoning of research on Borneo from the late 1960s, an increase in the number of women researchers and a truly substantial expansion of work by locally-based social scientists working in local universities and research institutions; a widening of the range of perspectives, concepts and issues (an increasing focus on reflexivity and postmodern concerns; a shift to agency, fluidity and flexibility and away from earlier social structuralist and corporatist concerns; a focus on political ecology and environmental change; an all-consuming interest in identity construction, maintenance and transformation, to do with minorities, majorities, nation-states, borders and boundaries, political party development, the media and globalisation), an increase in research in hitherto unexplored fields (in Kalimantan, Brunei, Sabah) as well as a movement into more applied, developmental and policy-related issues, and engineered agricultural transitions (resettlement, land development, sustainability); and some reliance on collaborative and team research.

Victor King takes the story on from Chap. 2 and in Chap. 5 develops these themes from the later 1960s and 1970s up to the present. Chapter 5 is arranged

chronologically, and thematically, as well as in terms of individual legacies and intellectual histories, and on debates and controversies (which include discussion of the factors which might explain variations in land tenure systems and property rights; ethnic nomenclature, classification and identity; the characterisation, definition and explanation for the nomadic way of life; explanations for symbolic forms; the nature of cognation and the analysis of social forms [kindreds, households, longhouses, communities]; and the relationships between equality and hierarchy). His final general Chap. 8 then focuses on a set of themes which have commanded increasing attention in Borneo Studies and that is identities or ethnicities and their constructions and transformations. Major work of international importance has been undertaken on these themes from Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's work to that of Jérôme Rousseau, Bernard Sellato and Zawawi Ibrahim. The work is grouped under seven categories: (1) the nation-state, majorities and minorities; (2) religious conversion and identities; (3) the media, identities and nation-building; (4) borderlands, margins, migrations and identities; (5) interethnic relations and violence; (6) arenas for identity construction in tourism and museums; and finally (7) emerging middle classes, lifestyles and identities in urban settings.

Zawawi Ibrahim's Chap. 3 comprises a critical overview of current scholarship on the issues of representation, identity and multiculturalism in Sarawak. It examines works in anthropology and other disciplines, from both local and foreign scholars (Western, Japanese and Korean), whose contributions have been foregrounded on concrete, recent empirical research. Here a senior Malaysian scholar invites critiques of earlier colonial knowledge on Sarawak society and examines subsequent contributions of new knowledge by both Western and locally-based researchers on its changing communities. By predominantly drawing his theoretical nuances from cultural studies, these alternative writings attempt to pluralise, decentre and contest dominant discourses on Sarawak society by articulating fluidity, agency, alternative representations and reconstruction of identities from the margins of society and the nation-state. Going beyond postmodernist anthropology, and inspired by Linda Tuhiwai Smith's landmark *Decolonizing methodologies* (1999), Zawawi's own research draws critical attention to indigenous people's storytelling as a way that anthropologists should epistemologically mediate their research with 'the Other' (also see Chap. 14). His chapter provides an appropriate counterbalance to both King's theoretical and empirical focus on largely earlier-derived Western literature and anthropological research in Borneo. Some of this work returns us to the important themes of the construction and transformation of local identities.

Other general contributions to the review of Borneo Studies comprise Bernard Sellato's consideration of material culture studies in Chap. 4, which, as his bibliography suggests comprises a very substantial field of scholarly endeavour. Sellato returns to the importance of the relationship between the material world and ethnocultural identities. He also notes the changing conceptualisations of material culture when he says

The concept of material culture today covers a much broader scope, concerned as it is with the forms, uses, and meanings of objects, images and environments in everyday life. Material culture is the product of the interaction of people and their material world, and one means by which culture is stored and transmitted. An artefact, therefore, can no longer be reduced to the status of a 'thing'. It is, in an important way, a social, rather than individual creation and, therefore, material culture as a whole reflects the conceptual context of a society.

In two interesting case studies (the Pinyawa'a Bidayuh red basket [*juah bireh*] and the *raong* hat, which he extends to the basket-and-hat pair of the Lun Bawang; and the Kenyah-Kayan baby carrier) he demonstrates the malleability of material culture. From their earlier religious, ritual and symbolic contexts, they are translated into new symbols of ethnic identity ('icons of tradition'), in the Bidayuh case, incorporated into Catholic church-based rituals, and with constructed ethnic costumes worn in public dancing competitions, and, in the case of the Kenyah baby carrier originally serving as an expression and embodiment of social relations and as a protective device, it becomes a 'trademark artefact' removed from its socio-cultural context and sold in tourist and souvenir shops. Sellato also notes the more recent phenomenon of the appropriation from one ethnic group of items of material culture by another group to transform its ethnic-specific role into a generic symbol of Dayak culture.

From the solidity of material culture we move into the realm of media-generated images and meanings—into the world of mass communications, the electronic, the visual, oral and sensory—in Fausto Barlocco's overview of research in Chap. 7 on the media in Borneo during the past 30 years, with reference to his own work on the Kadazan of Sabah, Victor Caldarola's research on the Banjarese in South Kalimantan, and that of John Postill on the Iban of Sarawak, among others, as well as the stream of publications, including Poline Bala's doctoral research on the eBario project among the Kelabit of Sarawak. Barlocco refers to John Lent's earlier surveys of research on the media and the fact that high-quality work undertaken by well-trained researchers using appropriate methodologies and with an understanding of the contexts and sensitivities of mass communication in a plural, multicultural society was 'seriously limited' up to the late 1970s. The situation had improved immeasurably when Lent undertook a second major survey of the field in the 1990s (popular culture in music, films, cartoons, the press, advertising, educational broadcasting, videocassettes, and in television, radio, telematics and computerisation).

What the detailed ethnographic studies draw our attention to are the ways in which the media are deployed by governments to promote a national agenda and a national culture in both the Indonesian and Malaysian cases. Caldarola reveals these 'assimilationist policies' in the case of the minority Banjarese reception of media messages from Jakarta. Postill, in the Iban case, has argued for the success of the Malaysian media (television, clock and calendar time and state propaganda) as they became increasingly national in direction from the formation of Malaysia in 1963 and the incorporation of Sarawak and Sabah into a federal system, in 'Malaysianising' the Iban. On the other hand Barlocco, in examining in detail the

national government's messages of modernisation, economic and educational development and national unity, proposes that Kadazan perceptions and feelings of marginalisation and of being second-class citizens as against the Malay political elite, leads them to 'reject many aspects of the propaganda'. Instead they locate themselves within the oppositional categories of ethnic Kadazan, Christian or local Sabahan.

Barlocco also reviews a set of other studies which rather than conceptualising the media as vehicles of culture sees the media in an instrumental way as a mechanism used by government to institute developmental changes, for example in rural information and communication technology (ICT) projects, and of influencing people to behave in certain ways. He focuses on the very important community ICT and internet programme and the setting up of a telecentre, started by Universiti Malaysia Sarawak in 1999 as a means to promote development and socioeconomic wellbeing in the context of the formation of a knowledge society and as part of a participatory action research approach. Barlocco evaluates the research of Matthew Amster, Poline Bala, Peter Songan and others in demonstrating the successes but also the limitations of the project, and the overriding role of the government as the primary agent of change, a role which is seldom challenged.

Finally in the Borneo-wide reviews, Lars Kaskija explores in Chap. 6 what is now a voluminous and complex literature on hunter-gatherers in Borneo, a category of diverse, small-scale populations which lived by utilising the resources of the tropical forests and waterways in hunting, gathering and fishing. Nevertheless, a seemingly straightforward category in Borneo ethnography and history has generated all kinds of conceptual complexities, debates and disagreements among researchers. Kaskija has undertaken a formidable task in bringing this literature together and making sense of it. He demonstrates their 'cultural diversity, variation and elusiveness'; he examines their credentials, authenticity and 'genuineness' as hunter-gatherers and the physical-anthropological and phenotypical evidence; he explores in detail the controversy generated from Carl Hoffman's revisionist thesis that the Punan hunter-gatherers are not thus by origin but are agriculturalists who have moved out of farming to specialise in the collection of commercially valuable forest products which they then channel into trading networks. Kaskija argues, however, that it is unhelpful to categorise hunter-gatherers in terms of too simplistic dichotomies and ideal or homogeneous types (between foragers and farmers and pre-Austronesian foragers and Austronesian farmers, for example), or to assume that they have devolved from farming populations. Indeed, Kaskija draws attention to the fact that the process of change has usually operated in the other direction in Borneo from nomadic lifestyles to more settled modes of existence, and trade and commercial gathering have not been central elements or the *raison d'être* of hunting-gathering economies.

The second section of the book focuses on particular political units in Borneo: Sarawak, Sabah, Brunei and Kalimantan. These comprise overviews of research or research plans, specific institutions which have been involved in research or areas of research that have commanded significant attention. Christina Kreps in Chap. 9 looks back at her earlier research on Museum Balanga, the Provincial Museum of

Central Kalimantan, in the early 1990s and then her later involvement in the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project and the setting up of Museum Kapuas Raya in Sintang, West Kalimantan from the early 2000s up to 2008. This chapter serves to remind us of the important work undertaken by regional and local museums in Borneo. Kreps argues that these case studies provide instructive material on what she refers to as ‘engaged museum anthropology’, which is now increasingly directed to ‘more publicly orientated’ activities and to provide a service to those communities with which they work and interact. Moreover, she demonstrates how different cultures perceive museums and their purposes and collections differently, contrasting Western concerns about the preservation, conservation, storage and handling of collections, and about the ways in which one arrives at a description, understanding and interpretation of particular artefacts with the approaches adopted in Palangkaraya. She warns against imposing a Western scientifically-based museology on other curatorial traditions and practices and instead proposes a move from a ‘colonial’ to a more cross-culturally sensitive, critical, reflexive and ‘collaborative’ museology, and one based on local priorities, interests and agendas. Her case studies of heritage and museum work in Sintang show how an international cooperative programme, utilising ‘multi-pronged’ strategies, and drawing on support and interest from a range of public, private and non-governmental bodies at the local and international level can have positive results.

Reinforcing the importance of identity formation and development, Kumpiady Widen in Chap. 12 traces the emergence of Dayak identities in Central Kalimantan, coordinated in the provincial capital, Palangkaraya. He points to several key moments: the Tumbang Anoi peace meeting of 1894, which for the first time brought representatives from widely scattered Dayak communities together, and encouraged a realisation of common interests and a shared community; the Gerakan Mandau Talawang Pancasila, which was a major movement of Dayak solidarity in the 1950s resulting in the Madara Agreement in March 1956 to secure the establishment of the Dayak province of Central Kalimantan; the appointment of the first Dayak Governor of Central Kalimantan, Tjilik Riwut (1958–1967), and the most recent appointment of Agustin Teras Narang (2005–2015); the Dayak–Madurese peacemaking following the interethnic conflicts of 2001; the strengthening of Dayak customary law institutions from 2008 and the formation of the National Dayak Traditional Council, the Dayak Customary Defence Guard and the Dayak Youth Movement.

Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan in Chap. 10 provides a valuable overview of research and writings on the culture and ethnography of Sabah/British North Borneo going back to earliest times, but particularly drawing attention to important accounts from the mid-nineteenth century into the first half of the twentieth century, including the work of Owen Rutter, Ivor Evans and George Cathcart Woolley. She also draws attention to a sometimes forgotten body of literature—the studies undertaken by missionaries (the Borneo Evangelical Mission and the Roman Catholic St Joseph’s Missionary Society of Mill Hill, London, for example). As King has done in Chaps. 2 and 5, Pugh-Kitingan also refers to George Appell’s and his wife’s important work among the Rungus Dusun, Clifford Sather’s research among the Bajau Laut,

and Robert Harrison's among the Ranau Dusun, and the contention between Appell and others and the anthropologist Thomas Rhys Williams and his reports on his field study of the Dusun at Tambunan.

One major setback in the development of research on Sabah, which was not experienced in Sarawak, was the decision by Tun Mustapha Harun, the chief minister from 1967 to 1975, to impose restrictions on Christian missionary work in Sabah and on foreign researchers undertaking social science research in the state. Nevertheless, Pugh-Kitingan points to a momentum being maintained in the 1960s and 1970s with some ethnomusicology studies carried out by Ben Neufield and Edward Frame, and linguistic studies by Don Prentice. From 1978, under the Berjaya state government, Sabah opened up to research again, in linguistics, anthropology, and in material culture through the Sabah Museum, and then from 1985 in development studies through the Institute of Development Studies. Pugh-Kitingan also surveys her own extensive work in ethnomusicology among the Kadazan Dusun and 32 other local groups. She concludes by providing a summary of the enormously improved infrastructure for research on Sabah with the establishment of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) in 1994.

A similar exercise in surveying the field of studies has been undertaken by Gary M. Jones for Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) in Chap. 14, the first university to be founded in the former northern British territories in October 1985. He points to the important place that not only Brunei Studies plays in the profile of the university, but through the work of the Institute of Asian Studies the increasing focus on Borneo Studies in a multidisciplinary framework. UBD, UMS and UNIMAS have all hosted biennial conferences of the Borneo Research Council (as have Universitas Tanjungpura, Pontianak and Palangkaraya in Kalimantan). Unfortunately we do not have any surveys or work undertaken in Kalimantan universities, but Zaenuddin Hudi Prasojo in Chap. 20 outlines some of the locally-based research that has been pursued in West Kalimantan (see below) and John Bamba in Chap. 15 gives us a summary of some of the research and published work produced by Institut Dayakologi in Pontianak.

Poline Bala in Chap. 13 provides us with an overview of the important work that has been done at UNIMAS since its foundation in 1992, a substantial body of research in applied and development-orientated work. A very specific focus has been on gender studies, and Hew Cheng Sim in Chap. 11 explores this area of research in Sarawak. She emphasises the fact that in a part of Borneo which was experiencing rapid transformations and urbanisation then an interest in gender relations naturally drew her to examine these in urban settings, to women's experiences of rural-urban migration, to local women in the sex industry in Kuching, but also to changing gender relations in an Iban resettlement project. Interestingly Hew draws attention to the blind spots in early Borneo anthropology in that the dimension of women's roles, activities and perceptions had been 'buried' in male-dominated anthropology's concerns with kinship, marriage and family structures (and we might add with the corporatist, structuralist concerns of this early post-war anthropology). She draws attention pertinently to Monica Freeman's role as the unpaid (domestic) research assistant of her husband, Derek; and to the

androcentric biases and the absence of gendered perspectives in the edited volume *Female and male in Borneo*. She then provides a well-argued conspectus on the development of feminist social science.

In addition, Hew draws attention to work undertaken across a range of disciplines which focus on women and gender relations (in the sociological and economic analysis of the organisation of money in marriage [Wee]; in women and health development [Wong]; in women informal traders in the urban sector from a development studies perspective [Junaenah Sulehan]; in psychological research on single mothers [Nor Ba'yah Abdul Kadir and Kamsiah Ali]; on the underrepresentation of women in formal politics [Mowe]). Finally, Hew bemoans the fact that studies on gender relations in Sarawak (but we can extend this to the whole of Borneo) are few and far between. For future research, she argues for historical specificity, social/political/economic contextualisation, a focus on women's lived experiences rather than on homogenising and essentialising them as a sociological/anthropological/cultural/economic/political category; for feminist ethnographers to mediate and interpret women's experiences not merely reproduce and privilege them and to adopt a 'reflexive voice... above the din of the politics of representations and accountability', and 'to walk the tightrope of feminist research in good faith'.

For the final section of our volume to reflect a range of recent research on Borneo we decided to group miscellaneous case studies together. Nevertheless, we believe that these give expression to some of the major issues and themes which have exercised researchers on Borneo during the past two decades: there are case studies on rural development and resettlement in Sarawak (Welyne Jeffrey Jehom, Chap. 16 and Dimbab Ngidang, Chap. 18); tourism in Sabah (Rosalie Corpuz, Chap. 21); identities in relation to origins and the association with place in the Kelabit highlands of Sarawak (Valerie Mashman, Chap. 19); identities as part of a context of fluidity, movement and connection (Jayl Langub and Noboru Ishikawa, Chap. 17); identities in opposition to others in relation to the Chinese, Malay and Dayak of West Kalimantan (Zaenuddin Hudi Prasajo, Chap. 20); with regard to the viability of the Tutong language and its instruction at Universiti Brunei Darussalam (Noor Azam Haji-Othman, Chap. 22); and religious conversion of the Brunei Dusun to Islam (Asiyah az-Zahra Kumpoh, Chap. 24); and finally lifestyles and consumption, in this case again in Brunei (Noor Hasharina Hassan, Chap. 23).

The chapters by Welyne Jeffrey Jehom and Dimbab Ngidang strike depressingly familiar notes in the experience of development in Borneo. Jehom argues that the rationale for government-generated resettlement of rural populations is one of bringing progress, development and jobs to rural people in the context of resettlement and incorporation of small-scale, partly subsistence cultivators into large-scale, centrally managed plantations growing such cash crops as oil palm. Yet the reverse is the case in her findings on the Kenyah-Badeng who have been displaced from their home following the construction of the Bakun hydroelectric dam and reservoir. The government template for modernisation displaces people from their established livelihoods, separates them emotionally and psychologically from their homeland, fails to adequately compensate them for their loss of land and

resources, disrupts their social support systems, and transforms them into insecure, low-paid plantation wage labourers. These continue to be top-down decision-making processes with little regard for the view of local communities affected by these state-engineered projects. Jehom concludes that the major objectives of the resettlement programme have not been achieved and she illustrates the problems which have arisen in disputes between the Kenyah-Badeng and the oil palm plantation company, and in the failure of the project to commercialise food production.

In the case of the Iban communities of Pantu subdistrict in Sri Aman, Dimbab Ngidang argues that the agrarian transition and the movement of people from the countryside to the town and off-farm employment has resulted in those who left their rights in land and other property in the custodianship of those who remain behind, and in the custodianship of the longhouse chiefs (*tuai rumah*) in effect to have forfeited their property. They usually do not know where farm boundaries are located and they have no formal records of their rights in customary land. The land can then be sold on for profit to plantation companies in the context of state-promoted commercial joint venture estate development. This situation has resulted in conflicts and disputes over land rights, and the disenfranchisement of a significant number of those who have migrated from their homelands. But it operates under a customary law system which is no longer appropriate to a dynamic situation of capitalistic development, mobility and modernisation.

Tourism is another arena in which local communities are drawn into a national and international level development process. However, in the case of wildlife attractions and ecotourism in Sabah there is a generally positive outlook, at least in Rosalie Corpuz's three case studies. She examines the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre, the Kinabatangan floodplain and the Turtle Islands Marine Park from the perspective of international visitor experiences. There is a lively verbatim recording of visitor impressions, especially visual impressions, in relation to their prior expectations gleaned from their access to pre-Borneo images in television programmes and documentaries, word-of-mouth from family and friends, guide books, the internet, travel and adventure literature, magazines, nature and wildlife photography books, destination advertising, travel brochures and general news coverage. Overall there was a positive visitor experience, but the level of development in Sabah and the large expanses of commercial plantations were not part of their expectations.

The chapters which relate in one way or another to identities are diverse. Valerie Mashman's chapter can be read as an exercise in interpreting ethno-historical accounts of origins, and migrations on the basis of oral histories about Kelabit–Ngurek relations, claims to a homeland based on the remains of an ancient stone culture among the Kelabit, and the contribution of archaeological investigations to these claims. These oral narratives are invariably arenas for dispute and the Kelabit–Ngurek relationship requires further investigation, but the chapter demonstrates how claims to aboriginal status can be supported by various devices, including the authority of archaeologists and anthropologists. This is an increasingly familiar story and replicated in case studies in Indonesia.

Earlier post-war research on Borneo emphasised the importance of landscape and geography as a means of delimiting ethnic groups or in somewhat outdated terminology ‘tribes’. Derek Freeman’s work on the Iban demonstrated the importance of the interactions and identities formed and generated by residence in a common river basin. These river-based groupings, given that water transport was of vital importance in Borneo, provided a means for anthropologists to draw boundaries around units of interaction, communication and identity. However, Jayl Langub and Noboru Ishikawa’s recent research suggests that we need to rethink this mode of delineation. They examine a complex of ethnic groups (Penan, Berawan, Sebop, Lirong, Punan Bah, Kayan, Kejaman, Kenyah, Seping, Lahanan, Malay and Tatau), and the connecting migratory routes and migrations of people across a wide spatial area of Sarawak. In other words, though communities may not be on the same river system but are distant from one other across watersheds, they are nevertheless closely connected and share identities because of these transriverine movements and relations or as Langub and Ishikawa term them ‘watershed networks’. Excitingly, we may then arrive at a ‘new mental map of Borneo’.

Perhaps nowhere has the strength and some of the unfortunate consequences of ethnic identity and separation been so evident as in West and Central Kalimantan. Kumpiady Widen in Chap. 12 has explored this in Central Kalimantan and the emergence of a Dayak identity from the late nineteenth century. Zaenuddin Hudi Prasajo traces this in the western Indonesian Borneo province. There has been a noticeable institutionalisation and deterritorialisation of identities in Kalimantan (with the formation of assemblies, centres, institutes and agencies devoted to one major ethnic group to the exclusion of others) which was encouraged during Suharto’s New Order, but then given full rein during the post-Suharto period of decentralisation when different groups were vying for political advantage and taking a more hardened attitude towards their neighbouring ethnic groups. Prasajo argues for the importance of religion in identity formation in West Kalimantan (Islam and the Malay, Christianity and the Dayak, and Buddhism and the Chinese).

In Brunei the identities of the minority populations is under some pressure. But it is heartening to read Noor Azam Haji-Othman’s chapter on the positive attitude taken towards the teaching of minority languages at Universiti Brunei Darussalam. He describes in some detail the Language Centre’s preparations for and delivery of the Tutong language (spoken by some 12,000 people) at the undergraduate level; the decision was also taken to teach Iban and Dusun. However, the substantial demand from the undergraduates to follow courses in Tutong was persuasive. The challenges in teaching a non-standardised and non-codified language, and finding appropriately qualified teachers were significant. UBD managed to overcome these, but, as Azam advises, there are still doubts about the viability of such a programme. The introduction of such a course does not aim to reverse ‘language shift’, but it is an encouraging development in supporting minority identities and instilling a pride among those speakers of minority languages that they are given attention at university level.

From the protection and encouragement of minority languages and addressing ‘language shift’ we move to a much more problematical issue of ‘religious shift’. Whether it involves conversion to Islam, Christianity or Kaharingan, this has

significant implications for ethnic identities. Asiyah az-Zahra Kumpoh investigates the process and experience of conversion to Islam among the Brunei Dusun. From her fieldwork findings she sees this as a generally smooth and socially, psychologically and emotionally painless process, but as she notes, the ‘constant exposure to Islam through the education system, mass media and society at large has created a greater familiarity with Islam compared to [young Dusuns’] ancestral religion’. The same issues, as in the religious domain, apply in Azam’s consideration of minority languages—they are non-codified, they have no written records, they are not standardised, and above all they do not command national and international authorisation. Nevertheless, because of the ubiquity of Islam in Brunei the conversion process, as revealed in Lewis Rambo’s stages approach (with modifications) does not engender personal or social difficulties.

Finally, we come to a neglected field of study, and one which needs much more attention in the interpretation and understanding of the trajectories of modernisation in Borneo. King in his Chap. 8 draws our attention to the neglected field of urban social class formation and the fact that the importance of understanding changing lifestyles and consumption patterns has not commanded a great deal of attention in Borneo Studies up to now. Perhaps Brunei is a somewhat extreme version, as an oil- and gas-rich state and fourth in the world in terms of GDP per capita (according to the International Monetary Fund), but Noor Hasharina Hassan’s detailed dissection of consumption patterns, and the changes in credit arrangements to address what is largely a middle-class status phenomenon is instructive for other urbanising and more wealthy parts of Borneo. The aspirations she describes in relation to Bruneians would not be out of place among the ‘new rich’ in Kuching, Sibul, Bintulu, Miri, Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan, Samarinda, Balikpapan, Banjarmasin, Palangkaraya and Pontianak. And there will be other urban centres in Borneo where lifestyles and consumption should command greater attention. Moreover, she observes, and this would apply to other social groups in Borneo outside Brunei, that ‘Bruneians often express their modernity through their consumption patterns and the country is often seen as a highly status-driven society’. What she also draws attention to is consumption driven by credit; again an issue which merits attention elsewhere in Borneo, and the consumption patterns of the young, educated, upwardly mobile population, in addition to the need to address traditional obligations and responsibilities as well as to finance a new, modernised, globalised lifestyle.

So we move from the traditional preoccupations of the early post-war colonial anthropologists; to a second generation which continued the legacy with modifications; to a third which became more localised, applied and policy-directed in such areas as rural development and land development; to a fourth which embraced postmodernism and reflexivity, and globalisation in our increasing attention to the power of the media and electronic communications and to concerns with agency, fluidity and deconstructing structures; to a fifth, barely started, which looks at urban Borneo, the middle classes, consumption and lifestyles. The future looks to be exciting, and we hope that this volume does not simply critically evaluate the past and assess the present but also gives some guidance and research agendas in Borneo in the future.

Part I
Borneo-Wide Perspectives

Chapter 2

Some Preliminary Thoughts on Early Anthropology in Borneo

Victor T. King

Abstract The chapter argues that the early post-war study of Borneo, primarily undertaken by anthropologists, and predominantly in what was then the British Crown Colony of Sarawak should not be viewed in narrow, parochial terms. Unfortunately, apart from Sarawak, there was little that was done in modern social science during the first two decades of the post-war era in other parts of Borneo. What was accomplished with regard to the understanding of local social organisation and economies in Sarawak established an agenda for the next generation of researchers. These studies gave Borneo an academic legacy, a profile beyond the island; some publications, findings and the research training of postgraduate students were clearly more significant than others, and this chapter traces that variegated legacy. But importantly those early social scientists then moved on to expand their empirical and theoretical field of vision and link Borneo with major issues which were being debated outside Borneo Studies. Indeed, most of them had already undertaken research and training in other parts of the world prior to their research in Borneo. In that sense this formative research on Borneo was something of a staging post for the further development of our thinking about social and economic transformation in a rapidly changing world. The studies of Edmund Leach, Derek Freeman, William Geddes, Stephen Morris, T'ien Ju-K'ang, Rodney Needham, Tom Harrisson and George Appell, among others, are considered in a preliminary way to set the scene for some of the later chapters.

Keywords Anthropology · Borneo studies · Research methodology

2.1 An Early Encounter with the Anthropology of Borneo

In contextualising the objectives which provided the organisational framework for the workshop on Borneo Studies at Universiti Brunei Darussalam from which this edited book has emerged it is perhaps useful to include some personal reflections

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from someone who has been involved in research on Borneo for a considerable period of time. Some of these reflections were also presented in an introductory address at the workshop. My preliminary thoughts are devoted primarily to anthropology because this was the dominant disciplinary approach in the social sciences in those early post-war years. But I end this chapter with some consideration of more general overviews and compilations on Borneo in preparation for the subsequent contributions to this volume.

If I look back to the late 1960s and the early 1970s, when I first engaged with Borneo as a young researcher, what was the scholarly landscape like? In the course of about three years of reading around the ethnography, anthropology, history and geography of Borneo at that time, I think I managed to cover much of what had been published. If we compare what was available then to what we have now, then the development of the field of studies has been quite staggering. There are still major gaps in our knowledge, as we would expect. But for a newcomer to the field there is now a truly substantial and wide-ranging literature to cover.

What was it like then? There was not much that inspired me in the pre-war period. There were, of course, the ethnographic compilations of Charles Hose and William McDougall, *The pagan tribes of Borneo* (1912) and of Henry Ling Roth's *The natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo* (1896), and Owen Rutter's *The pagans of North Borneo* (1929). But for me there were two stimulating publications: Robert Hertz's *Death and the right hand* (translated by Rodney and Claudia Needham and published in 1960), which comprised two essays: the first, 'A contribution to the collective representation of death' (1907), which stimulated Peter Metcalf's admirable work on Berawan funeral rites *A Borneo journey into death: Berawan eschatology from its rituals* (1981, 1982) and with Richard Huntington, *Celebrations of death: the anthropology of mortuary ritual* (1991); and the second on 'The pre-eminence of the right hand: a study in religious polarity' (1909), which gave rise to a body of work in the late 1970s and 1980s on symbolism and structural analysis in Borneo, in which I was involved, especially in an exchange with Peter Metcalf and his 'Birds and deities in Borneo' (1976) (King 1977, 1980 and see King 1985). It had also influenced Erik Jensen in the 1970s, which was hardly surprising given that his supervisor was Rodney Needham, and Needham had then edited *Right and left: essays on dual symbolic classification*, celebrating the work of Robert Hertz and the *Année sociologique* (1973). These exercises brought the anthropology of Borneo into a loose alliance with structural anthropology, the study of symbolism and the influential school of French anthropology which had been founded by Émile Durkheim. The other important work, for me at least, was Hans Schärer's *Ngaju religion: the conception of God among a south Borneo people* (1963), again translated by Rodney Needham from Schärer's 1946 publication *Die Gottesidee der Ngadju Dajak in Süd-Borneo* (1946, Brill). This connected Borneo anthropology to the important stream of work that emerged from Leiden structuralism and the studies of Indonesian cultures undertaken by J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong, W.H. Rassers and their students.

When I entered this field of studies I was faced with the overwhelming importance of studies of Sarawak and the internationally recognised status of the Sarawak Museum because and in spite of Tom Harrisson. I say in spite of because of the

tensions and conflicts between Harrisson and various of the overseas visiting anthropologists (including Edmund Leach, Derek Freeman and Rodney Needham; and see Heimann 1998; Sheppard 1977; Winzeler 2008; and obituaries of Harrisson by, among others, Sandin 1976; McCredie 1976; O'Connor 1976). The museum was founded in 1888 and the *Sarawak Museum Journal* first printed in 1911. Second, there were the major anthropological studies sponsored by the Colonial Social Science Research Council (CSSRC) in Sarawak in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

These pioneer developments gave Sarawak a considerable advantage over other parts of Borneo in the formulation, organisation, coordination and execution of research. Borneo Studies in the 1950s, 1960s and even into the 1970s was Sarawak-focused and -dominated. Harrisson had left Sarawak by the mid-1960s, and spent time supporting the development of the Brunei Museum along with its first director, Pg Dato Paduka Hj Sharifuddin, and contributing to the work and research of the Sabah Museum (McCredie 1976; Harrisson and Harrisson 1971). When I arrived in Kuching for the first time in 1972 Benedict Sandin was the curator and government ethnologist in the Sarawak Museum as the protégé and successor of Harrisson, and, among other activities, Stephen Morris, Clifford Sather and Hatta Solhee were working from the museum and were engaged in the Miri-Bintulu regional planning study; Michael Heppell, a student of Derek Freeman, had also arrived to do research on the Ulu Ai Iban (1975). The museum was the magnet which brought researchers together. Peter Eaton also appeared in order to undertake his doctoral research on education and school-leavers (1974). Carol Rubenstein was based in the museum involved in her oral literature project (1973), and Stephanie Morgan had returned from field research in West Kalimantan.

There had not been a great deal of research undertaken in the 1950s. Borneo Studies was dominated by the work that had emerged from Edmund Leach's report on Sarawak on behalf of the CSSRC (1948, 1950, and see 1954). Leach had been commissioned by the CSSRC to undertake social science surveys of Sarawak and North Borneo (see also Tambiah 1998). This gave rise to the studies of Freeman (1916–2001), William Robert (Bill) Geddes (1916–1989), Harold Stephen Morris (1913–1993) and T'ien Ju-K'ang (1916–) presided over by Raymond Firth (1901–2002), as the then secretary of the Council. Nevertheless, Leach (1910–1989) provided an important structure and reference point for a considerable amount of field research which was undertaken in those early post-war years and through to the 1950s (Strickland 1989). Subsequently, Stephen Morris provided an informal, insightful and amusing insider's view of the CSSRC-sponsored socio-economic studies which were undertaken by what local administrators referred to as the 'socio-comics' (1977).

2.2 The Commonwealth Connection

Interestingly, the New Zealand connection was dominant in these early CSSRC studies. (Freeman was a New Zealander, with an Australian father and a New Zealand mother; and though born in England and spending his childhood in

Rhodesia, Morris's mother was also a New Zealander; Geddes and Firth also hailed from New Zealand.) Although Leach briefly visited North Borneo in November 1947 for one week and produced a report, the momentum achieved in Sarawak was not replicated in North Borneo other than the study undertaken by Monica Glyn-Jones of the Penampang Dusun and the report which she produced in 1953. Given the brevity of his stay, his *Report on a visit to Kemabong, Labuan and Interior Residency, British North Borneo, 1–8th November, 1947* (1947) could never have matched his *Report on the possibilities of a social economic survey of Sarawak* (1948) published as *Social science research in Sarawak* (1950).

In North Borneo there was no obvious research institution to promote field studies, and, though its roots go back some way, a museum was not formally established there until 1965, when it was housed modestly in a shophouse in Gaya Street. In Kalimantan the situation was yet again altogether different; the turmoil occasioned by the Indonesian revolution and the continuing economic and political instability under Sukarno in the late 1950s and 1960s never provided the environment within which sustained social science research could be undertaken or scholarly institutions established and developed. The Indonesians were valiantly attempting to build an educational infrastructure in a situation of economic decline and the Dutch had long departed.

Finally, it was not until the late 1960s when research began to be encouraged by the Brunei government in the remaining British dependency in northern Borneo, still under British protection. The Brunei Museum was established in 1965 and it is then that we witness the first stirrings of anthropological-sociological research there. We should note here the important pioneering role that museums, especially in the northern Borneo territories, played in the promotion of advanced research, but their position in this regard has increasingly been marginalised since the 1980s with the establishment of universities and their importance in funding, organising and sponsoring field research in the social sciences. Nevertheless, there are fields within which museums continue to play an important role, particularly in archaeological and biological research, and in such obvious fields as material culture and local technologies.

For me the highlights of the 1950s and the early 1960s were undoubtedly Freeman's publications on Iban agriculture and social organisation (1955a, b), and specifically on the concept of the kindred with special reference to his Iban ethnography, and on the Iban domestic family (*bilek* family) and its developmental cycle. At that time the Sarawak Museum, through Tom Harrisson and his staff, was increasingly involved in archaeological excavations at the Niah Caves and Santubong, and aside from that Harrisson published his rather idiosyncratic *World within: a Borneo story* on the upland Kelabit (1959) and was undertaking research on the Malays of southwest Sarawak as well as keeping up a prodigious published output in his own *Sarawak Museum Journal* and other regional journals (1970). Rodney Needham was also pursuing his research on the Penan of Sarawak in 1951–52 (1953) and publishing papers on them in the 1950s and early 1960s, though neither Harrisson nor Needham were part of these earlier specially commissioned CSSRC studies. (Leach had indicated in his report that these other groups were

worthy of study and Harrison did receive funding support from the CSSRC for his study of the coastal Malays.)

However, it is worth noting that, although he had never worked in Borneo, a scholar who influenced and directed work in the former British territories was Raymond Firth. He held court at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) from 1944 to 1968 as the professorial successor to Bronislaw Malinowski, and during a formative period in British social anthropology. In my view, Firth was not only a central figure in sponsoring and supervising work on Borneo but also a vital figure in developing a programme of anthropological research on the wider Southeast Asia [following his own field research on Malay fishermen undertaken in the late 1930s (1946), and his wife Rosemary's research on Malay domestic affairs (1943)].

We have to keep in mind that most of the British-based anthropological work on Southeast Asia, and specifically on Borneo, in the first decade after 1945 was undertaken through or had a connection with Firth at the LSE, and his close associates, Maurice Freedman and Edmund Leach (before Leach went to Cambridge); the major exception was Rodney Needham at Oxford (see Leach 1984). And Freeman, though he wrote his doctoral thesis at Cambridge under the supervision of Meyer Fortes, had been trained at the LSE prior to leaving for Sarawak; even Fortes, who spent most of his senior career at Cambridge from 1950 and between 1946 and 1950 at Oxford, had been a research student at the LSE in the 1930s, had studied there under Charles Gabriel Seligman, and had trained with Malinowski and Firth (see Abrahams 1983; Herskovits 1941; Murdock 1943, 1960a, b; Macdonald 2002; and see Kuper 1996).

More recently in the postmodern, post-colonial, post-orientalist environment within which there has been an important re-evaluation of the work of early anthropology, the conduct of research in such places as Sarawak, the issues which were given importance (and those questions which were ignored or given little attention), the images of 'native' populations which were constructed and the ways in which research findings were interpreted have come under increasing scrutiny and criticism. Pamela Lindell's critique of Geddes's Bidayuh research (2008) and Robert Winzeler's examination of Tom Harrison's contribution to Borneo ethnology, ethnography and archaeology, and his relationships with visiting anthropologists (2008), are cases in point (and see Zawawi, Chap. 3).

2.3 Social Structure, Kinship and Descent

The period of the 1950s and 1960s, when E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Meyer Fortes, Raymond Firth and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown dominated British anthropology, was characterised by an increasingly sharp division between British social structural and American cultural anthropology (and see King and Wilder 2006). Freeman's work on the Iban demonstrated the unmistakable influence of the British preoccupation with social structure and the functions which social groups performed (and within

that kinship and marriage and the mechanisms and processes which provided social order and continuity), which was also reflected in Freeman's dialogue with British descent theorists who had worked primarily in Africa.

When I entered Borneo Studies in the early 1970s, one of the major preoccupations was kinship, descent and marriage as central elements within the study of social structure (and within that studies of the domestic family or household, or small family, the kindred, ambilineal, bilateral or cognatic descent, the structure of the longhouse or village, affinal relations, residential arrangements before and after marriage, and relationship terminologies).

Although Borneo societies were not constituted on the basis of unilineal descent groups, Freeman and others analysed the properties of kindreds and ego-focused kinship networks which functioned in some respects like clans and lineages in that they had the capacity to mobilise, organise and coordinate large numbers of people (1961). Even among the Bidayuh, Geddes managed to uncover the elements of 'community' which gave coherence and order beyond the household or small family (1954); and Morris examined and presented the main principles of local grouping, kinship, residence and descent and hereditary rank which served to organise and lend coherence and order to the coastal Melanau (see King 1978a, 1978b: 1–36; Morris 1953, 1978; and see Appell 1976a).

Subsequently, George Appell was to reveal in detail some of the inadequacies of Radcliffe-Brownian social structuralism, the failure to address indigenous concepts, the slow adaptation of the concept of the 'jural' which is at base founded on indigenous concepts, and the reasons why this approach fails to provide us with the analytical tools to understand and elucidate the forms and processes of cognatic societies like those in Borneo (see, for example, Appell 1973, 1988; also see 1969; and see the discussion of Appell's work below).

2.4 Anthropology in and out of Borneo

What was striking for me about this early post-war period was that the anthropologists who carried out research in Borneo overall did not continue to be pre-occupied with it as a site of fieldwork, nor had some of them commenced their early research career there. Probably this circumstance in part reflects the comparative perspectives of anthropology and the desire and need to draw out similarities and differences across cultures and communities. What this early period of research also demonstrates is that the four anthropologists sponsored by the CSSRC, though they met from time to time, did not work together as a team; they produced their monographs without much reference to their counterparts. Interestingly, the only significant collaborative project that I have come across is that between Freeman and Geddes, but it was directed to research on Oceania and not to Borneo (Freeman and Geddes 1959). It is also clear from Monica Freeman's diaries that relations between the researchers, and particularly between Freeman and Morris and Freeman and Geddes, were not close and collegial (Appell-Warren 2009).

These early researchers were first and foremost anthropologists and not regional specialists. T'ien produced his *The Chinese of Sarawak: a study of social structure* (1953; and see T'ien and Ward 1956), but he then carved out a career for himself in mainland China working and publishing on Chinese culture, society, history, and social and cultural change, primarily as professor of history and head of sociology at Fudan University in Shanghai (see, for example, 1986, 1993, 1997). Moreover, his PhD thesis, which was submitted in London before his departure for Sarawak, was on mainland Southeast Asia: 'Religious cults and social structure of the Shan states of the Yunnan-Burma frontier' (1948; and see 1986).

Geddes too had received his PhD in London in 1948, in his case on 'An analysis of cultural change in Fiji'. After his Land Dayak study he went on to become heavily involved in research and the application and administration of research based in the Tribal Research Centre in Chiang Mai in the hills of northern Thailand from 1959 through to the early 1960s, subsequently producing his volume *Migrants of the mountains: the cultural ecology of the Blue Miao (Hmong Njua) of Thailand* (1976). During this period of his research he also published on peasant life in communist China, based on a visit to China in the mid-1950s (1963). His inaugural lecture at the University of Sydney in 1959 also demonstrates his increasing distance from his research in Sarawak, though his interest in Land Dayak religion (1957) must have informed some of his thinking on the anthropology of religion (1959).

Like T'ien, Geddes never really built up a programme of studies in Borneo anthropology. In comparative terms Geddes and T'ien published very little from their Sarawak research other than the reports commissioned by the CSSRC. Geddes produced his report on the Land Dayaks in 1954 and, aside from a few papers, also wrote what most interested readers will remember him for, *Nine Dayak nights* (1957) and the way in which he entered Land Dayak culture through the story of a folk hero, Kichapi, told by a village shaman over the course of nine nights of festivities. His ethnographic films, too, have made an impact: two on the Hmong (Miao) of northern Thailand (*The opium people* and *Miao year*) and three on the Land Dayaks, *The Land Dayaks of Borneo*, *The soul of the rice* and *Brides of the gods*, which he made following his return to Sarawak and the village of Mentu Tapuh (Appell 2002). Overall Lindell was particularly critical of Geddes's failure to address in any sustained way various processes of social change, particularly in relation to conversion to Christianity, and the absence in Geddes's monograph of the interpretation of 'community' and social organisation in the context of social and cultural transformations (2008: 50–54; and see Golson 1989, 2007).

Morris is an interesting case in this respect too. He studied forestry at Edinburgh University in the early 1930s and then took up a career in law. It was not until 1945–47 that he moved into anthropology and studied for the postgraduate diploma in social anthropology at the LSE, which then took him to Sarawak. After writing his Melanau report which subsequently appeared in 1953, he spent three years in Kampala and undertook a study of the East African Indians. It was this subject and not the Melanau which was to preoccupy him for the next 20 years. He was 40 years of age before being awarded his PhD, not on the Melanau but on

'Immigrant Indian communities in East Africa' submitted to the University of London in 1963. His book on *The Indians of Uganda* appeared in 1968, and at this time he became interested in the concept of the plural society (1967a). In the late 1950s and into the 1960s he was publishing on East African Indians, though he continued a sporadic engagement with the Melanau (see, for example, 1967b, 1980, 1981) and unlike Geddes, Freeman and T'ien he was then to return to Sarawak on a fairly regular basis and ultimately to produce two important locally published monographs on the Melanau (see Clayre 1993).

In any event, Stephen Morris's monograph *The Oya Melanau* was published with the Sarawak branch of the Malaysian Historical Society in 1991, two years before his death. Another of his legacies was the work which he encouraged on the Melanau language by Iain F.C.S. Clayre and Beatrice Clayre. Iain Clayre received his PhD on the Melanau language in 1972, at Morris's old university, Edinburgh (and see Beatrice Clayre 1997; Chou 1999). And it was the close relationship which Stephen Morris forged with Beatrice Clayre that enabled her to see to press Morris's posthumously published *The Oya Melanau: traditional ritual and belief with a catalogue of Belum carvings* (1997, *Sarawak Museum Journal*, 52 [73]).

The most prolific researcher during this formative period of research on Borneo, however, was undoubtedly Derek Freeman. He too had undertaken research outside Borneo prior to his Iban studies. He had been a language teacher in Samoa in 1940–43, and he wrote a postgraduate thesis in anthropology on Samoan social structure which was presented to the University of London in 1948; this was around about the same time that Freeman, along with Geddes, Morris and T'ien were undertaking their postgraduate training under Firth at the LSE. From 1949 through to the early 1960s Freeman was engaged primarily with his Iban materials, but then for the next three decades he returned to his Samoan research and became engaged in a sustained critical analysis of Margaret Mead's work on adolescence and social organisation in Samoa.

Freeman completed his doctoral thesis at Cambridge under Meyer Fortes in 1953, 'Family and kin among the Iban of Sarawak'. His classic reports on Iban shifting cultivation and social organisation were published in 1955 (1955a, b), and then a series of papers on Iban social organisation from 1957 until 1961, including his chapters on the developmental cycle of the Iban *bilek* family (1957) and his general chapter on Iban kinship and marriage (1960) which culminated in his superb Curl Essay Prize paper 'On the concept of the kindred' (1961).

2.5 Derek Freeman's Legacy and Wider Debates

One of the major legacies from this period was left by Freeman (see Appell and Madan 1988a, b). He revisited Borneo in March 1961 where he was said to have suffered a nervous breakdown as a consequence of the acrimonious and intense rivalry and argument with Tom Harrisson arising specifically from Harrisson's alleged mistreatment of Freeman's research student Brian de Martinoir (who at that

time was undertaking a study of the Kajang in the Belaga area). Freeman became convinced that Harrisson was psychopathic and suffering from extreme paranoia. It is said, and Freeman also confirmed this, that the whole experience was part of his personal and academic transformation ('a cognitive abreaction', something akin to a religious conversion) and it marked his change of perspective in anthropology from a British-influenced social structuralism to an approach which was directed to discovering the universal psychological and biological foundations of human behaviour. He embraced an 'interactionist' anthropological or sociobiological model drawing on neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, psychoanalysis and a range of studies of the brain's functions. Perhaps to mark this redirection and rebirth he changed his publication name from J.D. Freeman to Derek Freeman (this is something John Barnes remarks upon in his autobiography *Humping my drum*, 2008; and see Appell and Madan 1988b; Caton 2005, 2006; Fox 2002; Hempenstall 2012; Heppell 2002; Tuzin 2002).

I remember when I had written a critical piece on Freeman's work on the kindred in the 1970s, drawing on the doctoral research of John E. Smart (1971), Freeman said that he would respond to this, and sent me a detailed questionnaire relevant to the issues which I had raised (King 1976; and see Appell 1976d). But to my knowledge he never drafted a rejoinder. Instead he sent me theoretical papers on sociobiology which argued strongly for a radically different approach to anthropology (1966, 1973). He informed me in a letter that he had moved on from concerns with kinship and social organisation, and was no longer so much engaged in his Iban material.

From the late 1960s Freeman became intensely preoccupied with Margaret Mead's work on Samoa and how his new interests and approach to anthropology could decisively demonstrate the fallacy of Mead's approach which focused on the role of culture in the explanation of adolescence, and sexual and other behaviour. He returned to field research in Samoa in 1966–67 and in 1983 his *Margaret Mead and Samoa: the making and unmaking of an anthropological myth* appeared to enormous controversy, particularly in the American anthropological establishment (and see Freeman 1996). Freeman later also published *The fateful hoaxing of Margaret Mead* (1999), again to much controversy, in which he argued that Mead's ethnographic and conceptual errors in her study of Samoan culture were due to her having been 'hoaxed' by two of her female Samoan informants.

The shift to concerns with sociobiology and evolutionary psychology can also be illustrated, I think, in Robert J. Barrett's later penetrating work on Iban psychology and culture (for his publications and data see Chur-Hansen 2008; Chur-Hansen and Appell 2012; and see Barrett and Lucas 1993). Yet the Freeman–Mead controversy rumbles on after Freeman's death with the more recent questioning of Freeman's 'trashing' of Mead and his argument that she had been the victim of a 'hoax' (see, for example, Shankman 2009, 2013).

There were two subsequent and important scholarly interventions, among others, in which Freeman did return to things Bornean. First, his engagement with Rodney Needham's paper 'Blood, thunder and mockery of animals' (1964), which Freeman addressed in his subsequent paper 'Thunder, blood and the nicknaming of God's creatures' (1968). This latter paper gives expression to Freeman's conversion to

biological anthropology, while Needham tended to keep to his particular tradition of Anglo-French-Dutch structuralism and his interests in social organisation [an important and influential comparative and structuralist paper which emerged from Needham's Penan work was 'Age, category and descent' (1966)]. Nevertheless, both Needham and Freeman were moving towards explanations of symbolism and cultural behaviour and interpretation based on the assumption of the unity of humankind.

Needham continued to pursue the fundamental and universal principles of logic which structured 'collective representations' and he embraced the notion that certain symbols like fire and stone were 'archetypal' or 'natural' symbols; while Freeman had moved further down the road of psychoanalytical explanation, the importance of the unconscious processes of the mind and the principle that we share a universal biological heritage and character. His commitment to explanations in psychological and biological terms and to the complex interrelationships between culture and nature can also be seen in other publications on the Iban (see, for example, his analysis in 'shaman and incubus' 1967; and his interpretation of 'severed heads that germinate', 1979).

Second, there was the rather acrimonious criticism of Jérôme Rousseau's paper on 'Iban inequality' (1980); Freeman's *Some reflections on the nature of Iban society* (1981) addressed Rousseau's argument in robust terms. Contrary to the position taken by Freeman and others that the Iban are 'egalitarian' and their society and culture characterised by a high degree of individualism, Rousseau proposed instead that the Iban possess an 'unequal social structure', though Rousseau recognised that they also hold to an 'egalitarian ideology' (1980: 61). Freeman, in his response, reaffirmed his earlier pronouncements on Iban equality, democracy, individualism and autonomy, but the interrelationships between equality and hierarchy are much more complex than we have hitherto allowed.

Therefore, following a flurry of publications on the Iban, and with the occasional return to his Iban field materials after the mid-1960s, Freeman then moved into other theoretical and ethnographic fields. He usually only revisited Borneo when he wanted to demonstrate the importance of an interactionist paradigm in relation to the interpretation or reinterpretation of the Iban ethnography, and to engage with other anthropologists who had restimulated his interest or had challenged some of his fundamental understandings of Iban society and culture.

But what the early anthropology of Borneo served to do, connected as it was to the wider world of anthropology through the work of Freeman and Needham in particular, and to some extent Leach, was to situate Borneo Studies within wider debates in anthropology. This is most obvious in Freeman's arguments against what he viewed as the flawed position of 'cultural determinism' within anthropology and what he saw as its misguided and radical separation of culture from nature. Moreover, and with reference to Needham's contribution to Borneo Studies and the wider field of anthropology we should note that Needham had read Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* (1949), and much else in French sociology, and was very well acquainted with Dutch or more particularly Leiden structuralism before he embarked on his fieldwork among the Penan.

Perhaps this structuralist perspective compromised, if this is the right word, his desire to pursue and develop his study of Penan social organisation. After Sarawak, Needham then went on to undertake research in Mamboru, Sumba, eastern Indonesia (where he was confronted with the kinds of kinships and marriage systems that he was then to spend a large part of his career analysing). And beyond that he undertook a wide range of total structural analyses (embracing both symbolic and social structures) in mainland and island Southeast Asia, as well as supervising a large number of research students who worked mainly in Indonesia and Malaysia and within the Needham-generated, Oxford-based structuralist tradition (see Forth 2010).

It is intriguing and instructive with regard to the social organisation of nomadic peoples that Needham, though he published much in article form on the Penan, never completed a monograph on them after submitting his DPhil thesis in Oxford on ‘The social organisation of the Penan: a Southeast Asia people’ (1953). When I asked him, in our correspondence about Borneo anthropology, how we, as anthropologists, might understand the Penan in organisational terms, he responded that we should present them ethnographically ‘in terms of a range of cultural particulars’. As Endicott has indicated, and as I discerned in my meetings with Needham, he was rather dissatisfied with his Penan materials (though he had a large amount of data) in providing him with the tools to construct a coherent and ordered social and cultural account, or, perhaps to put it another way, Penan social organisation did not lend itself to the kinds of structural analyses to which he committed much of his professional life; infuriatingly, for him they lacked social structure (Endicott 2007: 16–17). And in describing his doctoral thesis he indicated that it was ‘purely descriptive ethnography’, apart from the last chapter which compared the Penan with other hunting-gathering groups (Sather 2007). I was privileged when he showed me extracts of his handwritten manuscript on the Penan on which he was working in the 1980s during one of my visits to All Souls College; he was intending it to be the monograph which he had never managed to commit to publication. Unfortunately it is now lost to us.

Within the space of 10 years from his Penan doctoral thesis Needham had published his masterpiece of structural analysis of alliance systems in his *Structure and sentiment: a test case in social anthropology* (1962), essentially a sustained criticism of and the presentation of a radically different perspective from the work of George C. Homans and David M. Schneider in their *Marriage, authority and final causes* (1955). This was a statement of the fundamental differences between Anglo-French-Dutch structuralism and American cultural anthropology (and see Endicott 2007).

This connection to wider debates in the work of Freeman and Needham did not really happen to any extent through the work of Geddes, Morris and T’ien. They moved into other fields but this did not seem, in my view at least, to provide major contributions to anthropological theory. It did, however, present us with some important and substantial ethnographical material. Nor did they provide a training ground for research students in Borneo Studies; they invariably supervised students who were pursuing research in other parts of the world. This also applies to Needham and Leach. In the case of Needham, he supervised an astonishing range of

doctoral work on Southeast Asia, though very little on Borneo, perhaps because, in part, the structural project in anthropology was not realisable in cognatic societies. Erik Jensen was an exception in that he provided one of the first major studies of aspects of Iban religion (1974; and see *Iban belief and behaviour: a study of the Sarawak Iban, their religion and padi cult*, 1968), though Freeman was to have a number of criticisms of it (1975: 275–88).

Leach also supervised a considerable number of research students, though again under Leach's supervision only Jérôme Rousseau undertook field research in Borneo (1974), and Leach had adopted an important advisory and mentoring role in Derek Freeman's work. It is worth noting here that Rousseau was another anthropologist who moved beyond Borneo from his Cambridge thesis 'The social organisation of the Baluy Kayan' (1974) to undertake more general theoretical work in the area of social inequality and stratification (for example, *Rethinking social evolution: the perspective from middle range societies* [2006, and also 2001]). Apart from his major monograph on *Kayan religion* (1998) Rousseau's most significant contribution to the understanding of Borneo societies and their interrelationships (in a wide-ranging perspective on identity) must be *Central Borneo: ethnic identity and social life in a stratified society* (1990). This major excursion into the study of identity was prefigured in his important 1975 paper when he explored, among other things, the 'folk' classification of the Kayan in identifying and naming their neighbours (1975).

However, in making an assessment of this early period in Bornean anthropology, it was Freeman above all who left a very substantial legacy. A landmark event to my mind was the publication in the LSE Monographs series in 1970 of *Report on the Iban*. Prior to this, Freeman's *Iban agriculture* (1955a) and his *Report on the Iban of Sarawak* (1955b) had been out of print for some time and difficult to obtain. He had also had a hand in supervising George Appell's thesis on the Rungus Dusun, 'The nature of social groupings among the Rungus Dusun of Sabah, Malaysia' (1965) (which for me serves as a hallmark of the kind of work that was being done in Borneo in the 1950s, 1960s and into the 1970s). Appell undertook field research on British North Borneo/Sabah as a research scholar at the Australian National University from 1959 until 1964. He received his PhD in 1966. Freeman was his supervisor but then, according to Appell, Freeman moved away from the kind of anthropology that Appell was doing (which was much more in the British tradition focusing on social structure, corporate groups and jural rules); John Barnes took over as supervisor.

Moreover, recent communication with George Appell in April–May 2013 has helped me develop my understanding of what he was attempting to achieve in his fieldwork among the Rungus (personal communication, 'Response to King', 7 May 2013). Above all he wanted to discover the social entities or units that the Rungus themselves identified in order to reflect the social world, including the jural domain of the people under study. He was especially concerned with the concepts of 'corporation' and 'corporate group', and argued that the major diagnostic feature of a corporate group presented by British social anthropologists—that these units existed in perpetuity—was a misleading characterisation, and that corporate groups should instead be defined by their capacity to 'enter into jural relations' (Appell

1983, 1984, 1990a). What he also draws attention to is that when he was working on these issues in the late 1950s and into the 1960s, unbeknown to him at that time, a group of Yale anthropologists including Ward H. Goodenough and William C. Sturtevant were working on the same set of problems (that is, the identification of local or indigenous concepts), though they were primarily concerned with the ‘cognitive world’ rather than that of social organisation. Furthermore, his focus on corporate groups, their definition and capacities became of crucial significance in another major area of work on which he was to focus, that of land tenure.

Among Appell’s important legacies, apart from a truly substantial corpus of published work on Borneo, was the founding of the *Borneo Research Bulletin* (Appell 1990b, c), the organisation of the biennial international conferences, the BRC’s publications series, the advocacy on behalf of Borneo, and the enormous range of networking that he has undertaken, in addition to the work of his daughters, Amity Appell Doolittle (see, for example, her sociohistorical study of property rights and power struggles in Sabah, 1999, 2005) and Laura P. Appell-Warren (see her thesis on the social construction of personhood among the Rungus, 1988, and her editing of Monica Freeman’s diaries, 2009), and his wife Laura W.R. Appell (see, for example, 1991; and with G.N. Appell 1993, and G.N. Appell and Laura W.R. Appell 1993, 2003) have been indispensable in Borneo Studies. Appell too connected Borneo anthropology to broader issues in anthropology (property rights, jural personalities, development and ethics in particular). I have already referred to his two important edited books on *The societies of Borneo* (1976a) and *Studies in Borneo societies* (1976b).

Like others before him Appell also engaged in wider debates within anthropology, particularly in what he referred to as ‘cognitive structuralism’ (1973), on the impacts of social change and modernisation on indigenous peoples (numerous papers), on the concept of ‘corporation’, corporate social groupings and cognatic descent, and on the ethics of anthropological enquiry [in, for example, papers in *Current Anthropology* (1971a), *Human Organization* (1971b) and *Anthropological Quarterly* (1976c), and his book *Dilemmas and ethical conflicts in anthropological enquiry: a case book* (1978)]. There is also his important co-edited book with Triloki N. Madan, in celebration of the work of his one-time doctoral supervisor and mentor, Derek Freeman: *Choice and morality in anthropological perspective: essays in honor of Derek Freeman* (1988). In that volume Appell, in part at least, returns to his long-established concerns with the relationships between jural relations, social isolates and social structure, but there he also investigates the ways in which choice, individual action and opportunity can be included within his paradigm of social isolates and social groupings, and specifically jural isolates, jural aggregates and jural collectivities (1988). Here too Appell contributed to more general debates in anthropology.

Freeman’s legacy in Iban studies was also continued through his research students who went on to produce important published work on the Iban: Michael Heppell (*Iban social control: the infant and the adult*, 1975), James Masing (*The coming of the gods: an Iban invocatory chant [timang gawai amat]*, 1977, 1981), and Motomitsu Uchibori (*The leaving of the transient world: a study of Iban*

eschatology and mortuary practices, 1978). Heppell, in particular, went on to undertake research in other parts of Borneo and to publish on a range of issues in Borneo anthropology. For a time Freeman also supervised Brian de Martinoir, a Belgian anthropologist (with no discernible result) and Roger D. Peranio, an American, who studied the Limbang Bisaya (but who returned to the United States from Australia without completing his thesis at that time, and eventually submitted it at Columbia University in 1977). I should also mention my own PhD student, Traude Gavin, who worked on Iban textiles in her *Iban ritual textiles* (2003/2004), and who received advice not only from Rodney Needham but especially from Derek Freeman, who kindly agreed to allow her access to his field notes, and to Monica's, his wife's drawings. Penelope Graham and her work on Iban shamanism also benefited from Freeman's direction and support (1987).

2.6 Concluding Observations

The roughly two decades after the Second World War comprised a formative period in the development of the anthropology, and primarily a British-influenced social anthropology of Borneo (though focused on the British Crown Colony of Sarawak). These pioneer fieldworkers defined the major issues and formulated the concepts which were to preoccupy researchers during the next two decades and they set down the foundations for those of us who followed. But preoccupied as they were with Sarawak and to some extent Sabah they had little guidance to provide on the vast territories and the complex mixes of populations and cultures to the south in Kalimantan. We should also note that the scholarly terrain was set out and delimited by a handful of (male) anthropologists who undertook detailed ethnographic fieldwork. What was to follow was a burgeoning of research on Borneo, an increase in the number of female researchers and locally based social scientists, a widening of the range of perspectives, concepts and issues, as well as a movement into more applied, developmental issues, and some reliance on collaborative research. I shall take up the story again in Chap. 5 and commence and develop these themes from the later 1960s and 1970s.

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Chapter 3

Towards a Critical Alternative Scholarship on the Discourse of Representation, Identity and Multiculturalism in Sarawak

Zawawi Ibrahim

Abstract This chapter represents a critical overview of current scholarship on the issues of representation, identity and multiculturalism in Sarawak. It examines works by anthropologists and scholars from other disciplines (political science, law and social work), established and young, local and from outside, whose contributions have been foregrounded on concrete empirical research. Inspired primarily by theoretical nuances from cultural studies, these alternative writings attempt to pluralise and decentre discourses on Sarawak society and culture. They seek to problematise and contest the dominant contemporary discourse by articulating fluidity, agency, alternative representations and reconstruction of identities from the margins of society and the nation-state. At the core of the discourse, these studies interrogate and problematise multiculturalism in the context of Sarawak from the concrete historical experience of specific ethnic communities. Since multiculturalism also touches on other relevant epistemological questions, issues of representation, identity formation, including ethnicity, logically become indispensable components and subtexts, requiring their own respective and autonomous space for deliberation.

Keywords Sarawak · Representation · Identity · Multiculturalism · Knowledge production · Critical scholarship

3.1 Introduction

The academic study of Sarawak society is undergoing a radical and significant change. For too long, our understanding of communities and their creative imaginings has been framed by notions of fixity. Mainstream perspectives have tended to

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homogenise complex realities and merely reproduce hegemonic texts and ideas. The result has been less than enlightening. It is not an exaggeration to say that analysis of Sarawak society had reached an impasse. By contrast, a new wave of scholarship has begun to take a more critical and self-reflexive approach, seeking to problematise and contest the dominant discourse of the day, the taken-for-granted knowledge(s) and even the ‘grand narratives’. This new wave—comprising both established scholars and a rising generation of writers—is exploring and articulating fluidity, agency, alternative representations and reconstruction of identities from the margins of society and the nation-state. The wider context of this critical approach is the willingness to revisit the notion of ‘multiculturalism’ at the level of the concrete, moving away from the political rhetoric and essentialising predisposition so often associated with the term. Thus an important thrust of the new scholarship is to problematise multiculturalism in the context of Sarawak’s experience. But ‘multiculturalism’ also touches on critical epistemological questions; hence the issue of ‘representation’ automatically becomes a relevant subtext. Likewise, the theme of identity formation, including ethnicity, is another indispensable component of multiculturalism, which requires its own space for deliberation.

It is obvious that in order to realise the core objectives of a new critical social science of Sarawak it is necessary to balance the demands of rigorous theoretical engagement as well as the findings of empirical research. This chapter provides an insight into how this task has been approached through a review of some of the best new critical scholarship that has emerged in recent years. By bringing together these two levels of engagement—the theoretical and the empirical—on the different ethnic communities in Sarawak through the works of anthropologists and scholars from other disciplines (political science, law and social work) the discussion here reflects on both the globality and locality of knowledge production on Sarawak society and culture.

3.2 Anthropological Representations

Sarawak was the object of study for some of the most celebrated anthropologists working within the British structural functionalist tradition in the middle decades of the twentieth century. They left a large body of work that reflects both the particular theoretical predispositions of structural functionalism as well as a good deal of ethnographic data gleaned from extended periods of fieldwork, the classic *modus operandi* of this intellectual tradition. One of the important questions raised in the critical, postmodernist ‘textual turn’ in anthropology is the question of anthropological representation of ‘the Other’. In the process, classical anthropological texts have been put under critical review and interrogated. Forms of orientalist representations of the Other, the legacy of colonial anthropology and other forms of colonial knowledge, postmodernist ethnographic narratives and representations—all these have become critical themes of the new discourse. One of the key elements

of the new wave of critical scholarship, then, has been to deal explicitly with themes of colonial representations of Sarawak's indigenous subjects through a dissection of major anthropological works. In this regard, the spotlight has been turned in particular on the oeuvre of Tom Harrisson and William Geddes; on gender representation in Sarawak ethnographies; and, on the discourse on indigenous representation of development.

3.2.1 *Tom Harrisson: A Reluctant Colonial Anthropologist?*

In the context of Sarawakian anthropology, there is none other than Tom Harrisson who is regarded as the most flamboyant among all of the colonial anthropologists ever to have set foot in Sarawak. In the conclusion of a major study of Harrisson, Robert Winzeler (2008: 42) passes the following verdict: 'It seems safe to say that there will not be another Tom Harrisson in Sarawak'. Winzeler's biographical foray, in which his archival reading of Harrisson's correspondence with several social anthropologists is blended creatively with his reading of Judith Heimann's *The most offending soul alive: Tom Harrisson and his remarkable life* (1998), provides a refreshing and innovative take on a colonial anthropologist by a fellow Western anthropologist, albeit from the postcolonial era. Winzeler's study is an important exemplar in tracing the beginnings of anthropology in Sarawak, positioning eminent names of the early fieldwork-oriented twentieth-century British social anthropology, such as Raymond Firth and Edmund Leach in the colonial anthropological discourse, working under the aegis of the Colonial Social Science Research Council. Others such as Derek Freeman, William Geddes, Stephen Morris and Rodney Needham were also part of this early colonial configuration.

Winzeler (2008: 25ff.) subtly unravels the heterogeneous nature of this circle of colonial anthropologists and the intrigues and contestation from within the group, with Harrisson primarily being the point of reference. Contrary to conventional thinking, Winzeler deconstructs the assumption that colonial anthropology is a homogenous category; to this end, his revelations of some of the episodic ruptures between Harrisson and Freeman are especially telling. His portrayal of Harrisson is critical but balanced and fair. He problematises the representation of Harrisson as 'a colonial man' and successfully illuminates the different facets of the man—the person, the ethnographer and ethnologist, the archaeologist, also curator of the Sarawak Museum, and finally the anthropologist. Apart from shedding light on Harrisson's personalised attachment and commitment to one particular social group, the Kelabit community in the Bario, we also sense the dilemma that Harrisson is somewhat of a reluctant writer–anthropologist, even if he leaves behind a legacy of his writings on the Kelabit and the Malays. While his publication on the Malays (*The Malays of south-west Sarawak before Malaysia*, 1970), amounting to a nearly 700-page monograph, was considered rather unexpected at the time, Winzeler (2008: 37) makes the astute observation that his 'modest' contribution on the Kelabit is a case of Harrisson knowing 'too much rather than too little'.

Nevertheless, whatever there is of his legacy, Harrisson's writings on these two communities have laid down a knowledge base from which the new generation of younger indigenous scholars are able to extend his works into contemporary Kelabit and Malay society of Sarawak.

3.2.2 *William Geddes and 'Remote' Bidayuh?*

A similar anthropological interrogation has recently been offered by Pamela Lindell's (2008) study of the very much underwritten community of Land Dayaks or Bidayuh through the ethnographic writings of the anthropologist William Geddes. Geddes was working under Leach's project on Bidayuh villages, sponsored by the Colonial Social Science Research Council. Lindell praises Geddes as 'a great humanist', a trait that apparently shone through his cinematographic works on the Bidayuh as well as on other communities outside Sarawak. She focuses her critique on Geddes's representation of the Bidayuh through his two well-known anthropological works, *The Land Dayaks of Sarawak* (1954) and *Nine Dayak nights* (1973). According to Lindell (2008: 48), in choosing to conduct his research among the Bidayuh of the Upper Sadong area of Serian, Geddes opted for 'remoteness' and the 'native exoticism' that came with it, ignoring Leach's (1950) earlier recommendation for him to choose 'a community undergoing social stress as a result of outside influences'. Geddes's choice was perhaps drawn by the pursuit of the 'authentic', based on the Euro-American presumption that the so-called communities in 'isolation' are 'more valid' or 'credible' than those experiencing externally generated social changes. Indeed, as Lindell (2008: 50–54) argues, the representation of the Bidayuh in history has been rooted in dominant negative colonial stereotypes, contributed by the prejudices of the Brooke-era administrators, travellers and scholars beholden to the 'shy and withdrawn' imaging of the Bidayuh whom they felt lacked the fascination of the 'gregarious and ferocious warriors' of the Iban. The colonial image of the Bidayuh's loss of 'authenticity' has also to do with their long exposure to contact with outsiders, either by their coastal location or their proximity to mines or townships such as Bau or the capital city Kuching.

In the case of Geddes's choice of his fieldwork in the 'remote' Mentu Tapuh of the Upper Sadong, Lindell points out exactly where Geddes went off the mark in his representation of the Land Dayaks (Bidayuh). She takes issue with Geddes's contention that 'Land Dayak society is fundamentally individualistic and lacking in community cohesion'. The author is especially critical of Geddes's inability to explain these issues in relation to the impact of Brooke's colonialism on these so-called 'remote' and 'traditional' communities. First, there was the outlawing of headhunting since the beginning of the Brooke regime, which meant that 'the community had probably changed a great deal in the hundred years of colonial rule that had gone by before Geddes arrived', including the decline in the use of the head house for ceremonies. Second, there is the glaring omission in Geddes's explanation of the exposure and/or conversion to Christianity that had impacted on

Mentu Tepuh and the role that Christianity played in the daily lives of the villagers. Hence, Geddes's failure to explain the lack of community ties ('extreme individualism') of the Bidayuh as a product of the 'conflicts between Christians and non-Christians' affecting 'Bidayuh villages since the beginnings of missionary activity', or the sociocultural stress caused by conversion, rather than something that arose out of the innate deficiencies of Bidayuh traditional social structure as such. Lindell's commentary alerts us to the fact that the glory sought by traditional anthropologists to bask in the rite of passage of fieldwork in the favour of remote and traditional communities is no substitute for analytical rigour in anthropological modes of explanation. In retrospect, it is clear that Geddes was still caught in the theoretical trappings of his time, i.e. the old structural functionalist anthropological representation of the 'primitive' as viable 'authentic' and 'credible' traditional communities, ignoring the realities that these societies had long been subjected to the colonial cultural, administrative and political order of the day.

3.2.3 *Reflecting on Gender Representations*

The new wave of critical anthropology has not only focused on the particular perspectives of individual writers but has also cast a critical gaze on the various thematic lacunae in the anthropological text. In this regard, Fiona Harris (2008) offers an illuminating and reflexive look at the representation of gender in Sarawak ethnographic studies. She finds that except for an edited volume published in the early 1990s by the Borneo Research Council that deals with gender (Sutlive 1991) 'little attention is paid to gender issues in Sarawak ethnographies', and even in that publication 'many of the contributors failed to engage with the anthropology of gender to any extent'. Following Jane Atkinson's (1990, 1992) lead as it relates to other parts of Southeast Asia, Harris agrees that her reading of the Sarawak literature also shows that it is in the area of religious practice and ritual activity, the primary domain of power and prestige-making, that gender relations and 'difference' are best articulated. She cites ethnographic texts on male-dominated prestige-making processes, through Iban headhunting and the institution of *bejalai*. The notion of 'travel', it seems, whether it is in the traditional mode in quest of shamanic practice or, as in the 'modern' context, 'to seek fame and fortune through travel and migrant labour', always gives both knowledge and prestige to men to the exclusion of women. This is a form of enclosure which is supported by 'culturally constructed notions of morality' which stigmatise women (Harris 2008: 60–61).

Considering the dearth of ethnography on gender in Sarawak, Harris (2008: 62) feels that the question of gender representation should best be discussed in the light of social change, to show how 'gender relations ... react and adapt to wider social processes'. From here, she moves on to her own empirical data, based in Kampung Gayu, a Bidayuh community in the Padawan area of Sarawak. She explores a society undergoing rapid change, articulated through education, literacy, new religious rituals, accessibility to urban townships, increasing dealings with government

agencies and officialdom, declining traditional padi-related activities, an expanding cash economy manifested by new trading and marketing opportunities, the emergence of salaried occupations and consumerism. It is a situation in which ‘the movement of people and commodities between town and *kampung* flowed back and forth, bringing new ideas and more continuous contact with other ways of life’. By engaging herself with the question of change, she is able to capture what Geddes was not able to do, and explore how ‘the complexity of gender relations is revealed in the way that this is crosscut and infiltrated by “town” and discourses of local models of “modernity”’. In this way gender analysis moves away from ‘monolithic representations’ and embraces ‘several representations of gender’ and ‘multiple perspectives’ linked to variables such as class, age and other indicators.

Harris (2008: 64–68) also highlights early writings and colonial views on indigenous women and the male-biased nature of colonial policy on missionary education and conversion. But the realisation that control over women was crucial to the male converts’ communities led to the opening of mission schools for girls in order to provide Christian wives for the boys. Having observed that women are clearly becoming the mainstay of the congregation of the ‘new religion’ in present-day Gayu, part of her discussion explores gender representation in the ritual practices in both the domain of the ‘traditional religion’ (related to the role of both male and female *dukun* in the padi harvest rituals) and the Catholic rituals of the village congregation. While noting the relevance of ‘complementarity’ rather than ‘asymmetry’ as being the usual markers of gender relations in Southeast Asia, she notes both domains reveal the presence of ‘gender inequality’ and ‘difference’ with women ‘being the hardest workers in ritual terms’. In the modern congregation, while the males dominate the role of the prayer leaders, hence are more prestigious, Harris is tempted to render a more ‘agency’ proactive interpretation to the role of women as ‘audiences’ of ritual performance, as well as by being the ‘primary agents in maintaining catholic families’ through their participation in the congregation with their children, i.e. as representatives of the household. She notes that, in the context of Gayu village, Catholicism is being caught in the flow of change and urban influence, with education and ‘modern’ occupation fast becoming the new markers for success and status, regardless of gender. As a result, certain ambiguities are emerging (such as the presence of ‘a single female prayer leader’), paving the way for a new strategy for women to negotiate ‘modernity’ or a new vision of identity.

3.2.4 Indigenous Storytelling and Representation of Alternative Development Narratives

Against the dominant state-capital narrations of development, couched in the language of ‘modernisation’, my own work attempts to present a postmodernist-cum-storytelling ethnography with a particular focus on Penan deterritorialisation (Zawawi 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2008, 2015). The fundamental premise here

is that indigenous narratives are equally capable of generating their own legitimate forms of knowledge and discourse on development (Zawawi and Noorshah 2012a). By working on the Penan ethnographic base that has been paved by scholars such as Jayl Langub (1996) and Peter Brosius (1986, 1997a, b, 1999), I foreground my analysis of Penan deterritorialisation based on fieldwork observation in the Ulu Baram area of Sarawak, via a representation of an overview of the impact of the state-sponsored modernisation process (read: ‘developmentalism’) on the Penan traditional landscape and *communitas* (Zawawi 2008). The historical perspective of this deterritorialisation evolved together with the division of Borneo between three different nation-states, with Sarawak being part of a colonial governance system from the Brooke raj to Crown colony status, and ultimately as a state of the independent Malaysian nation-state (Zawawi 2015). Penan deterritorialisation intensified under the impact of the both the Sarawak and Malaysian developmental states, especially with the large-scale logging of the rainforest, which was traditionally the home of the nomadic Penan. In the final phase of this process, the Penan, who were initially given a special protected subject status by the colonial rulers, began to be viewed as an object of development, being officially perceived as ‘an ungrounded people who wander aimlessly through the forest in search of food, living a hand-to-hand mouth existence, a people without history and a sense of place’ (Brosius 2000: 22). My argument on the process of Penan being deterritorialised from ‘locality’ and ‘sustainability’ is empowered by the storytelling of Penghulu James, who offers ‘a representation of an indigenous notion of place, space and territory’ in defence of Penan claims to ‘stewardship’ over the land despite their traditional status as non-cultivators, to contest the current bureaucratic rational-legal and official discourse which governs the present Penan landscape (Zawawi 2008: 86–87). I am optimistic for the role of a decolonising anthropology in mediating knowledge from the margins, to narrate not only the realities of deterritorialisation but also, and more importantly, the reterritorialising imaginings of indigenous society. In this context, I perceive Penan storytelling as ‘agency’ (Zawawi 2013: 311n2), as an attempt to subvert colonialising modes of epistemology and their ‘regimes of truth’ (after Foucault). This constitutes a crucial alternative indigenous project of research to contest orientalism and its representation of colonised and indigenous people (Smith 1999; Zawawi and Noorshah 2012b).

3.3 Problematising Multiculturalism

In my overview, I have noted how the more fluid character of Sarawak’s multiculturalism often stands in stark contrast to the more ‘compartmentalised’ character of peninsular Malaysia’s pluralism (Zawawi 2008), an observation that has also been acknowledged in Ien Ang’s review of Asian multiculturalism (Ang 2010: 9). It is also interesting to note that compared to what happens at the national level, public pronouncements at the Sarawak state level of official discourse seldom propagate the idea of a ‘dominant culture’ or ‘dominant ethnic’. Nor does the reference to ‘national

culture' or 'national culture policy' (which in the national context has a Malay dominant ethnic connotation) often figure in its authority-defined political narratives. Instead, Sarawak seems to bask in its pluralism and intercultural fluidity. At the official level, the presence of multicultural symposiums, regularly sponsored by the state government for instance, is a fair testimony of this. It may start off with a major one in which all the different ethnic communities participate. This would then be followed by a series of seminars, each representing a different indigenous 'ethnic'/ 'tribal' community of subgroups, e.g. the Iban Bidayuh, Orang Ulu, Melanau, Melayu, and so on. Special workshop series on traditional music and instruments or dance forms of the various ethnic/indigenous communities are also sponsored and held on a continuous basis, with a view towards preserving Sarawak's multicultural heritage. Such forums also provide regular outlets for intellectual discourses on relevant aspects of Sarawak indigenous cultures.

But such a seemingly harmonious portrayal of Sarawakian multiculturalism has to be historically grounded since Sarawak is part and parcel of a wider Malaysian nation-state, in which there is another layer of power at the centre. The incorporation of Sarawak into the modern nation-state, and hence the making of the nation itself, has emerged out of a struggle—a contestation between periphery and centre, between community and state or nation. Analysing these sites of struggle, bringing to bear a cultural studies perspective on the relationship between power and the production of meanings surrounding these sites of struggle, is a task that is equally imperative in any attempt at problematising and explaining multiculturalism in contemporary Sarawak.

3.3.1 Everyday Multiculturalism and Selling Multiculturalism in Sarawak

A number of writers have attempted to examine the fluidity of multiculturalism in Sarawak at the level of the community as well as its threshold points. In one interesting example, Welyne Jeffrey Jehom (2008) explores the advantages and disadvantages of colonial policies in relation to fostering or inhibiting Sarawakian multicultural practices of the past and their implications for present-day pluralism. She describes, in particular, the implications arising from headhunting and tribal warfare, trading contacts between the Chinese and the indigenous people, and intermarriages across ethnic groups. In this regard, she is especially critical of the impact of some of the Brooke policies. She then proceeds to analyse her own field-work sample based on contemporary Sarawak and confirms that there is still continuing tolerance of intermarriages, and that tolerance has also been extended into other domains of public space and cultural practices, even religion. However, she also notes possible areas of pluralist contestations especially in the field of business and notably the Bumiputera versus non-Bumiputera (Chinese) dichotomy. Nonetheless, her general conclusion is that a sense of pragmatism and goodwill seems to prevail.

Nowhere has there been a more socially engineered promotion and representation of Sarawak multiculturalism and its ‘multiethnicities’ than in the business and public space of tourism. Hence the Sarawak Cultural Village, which was officially launched by the state government in 1990, is an interesting showpiece selling Sarawak to tourists as well as representing Sarawakian multiculturalism, both in terms of its architectural derivatives as well as its regular multicultural stage performances and events. The Korean scholar, Kim Yongjin (2008), takes up the challenge to engage with the critics that ‘the representation in the Sarawak Cultural Village has failed to fulfil its mission of reflecting “real lives” of ethnic groups’. Based on his research, he reviews the discourse of Sarawak Cultural Village’s representation by way of three thematic aspects: the question of ‘authenticity’, the relationship between culture and tourism and multiculturalism as national culture.

He argues that ‘dubious authenticity and ambiguity of multiculturalism do not engender feelings of disgrace to actual performers’, that ‘ethnic categorisations and cultural representations are situated in a “presumed dimension” which ‘provides enough buffering space for discrepancy between form and content’ (Kim 2008: 116). On the third theme, Kim detects a discrepancy. There exists the possibility of the Malay/Islam-centred perspective of national culture being decentred and rendered by a different mode of localised representation and meanings. Here the dominant ethnic nuances and the discourse of national culture could be reappropriated and reinterpreted by non-Malay indigenous Sarawakians to gel with the specificities of Sarawak realities—that in the context of Sarawakian Malaysian multiculturalism, it is the non-Malay and non-Muslim Bumiputera majority who are at the centre of Sarawak culture. But again, since the cultural dimension is ‘presumed’, ‘[i]ndividual agents neither internalise them as exact reflections of reality nor negate them as simple fabrications’. Hence different positions and perspectives (including the official discourse) can ‘coexist without any overt contradiction’ and allow the Sarawak Cultural Village form of multiculturalism ‘to continue to persist in the face of logical tensions and conflicting interpretations’ (ibid.).

3.3.2 Multiculturalism Perspectives from the Chinese ‘Centre’ and the Indigenous ‘Periphery’

The plural society conception first advanced in J.S. Furnivall’s (1948) work on Burma and Java suggested that different ethnic groups only meet in the market place. But this flawed conception begs the question of what happens beyond the market place in the postcolonial era of the modern nation-state. In this context, the positioning of the ‘Chinese question’ in the evolving multiculturalism of Sarawak society has to be problematised in the same way as the discourse of the ‘indigenous’. From a historical perspective, it involves engaging with a number of issues: contesting identities and nationalisms; modulating an initial homeland, immigrant and/or business-based trajectory to the imperatives of new-found citizenry or civil

society claims; and, the nuances of indigenous pluralism of the host society throughout both its colonial and postcolonial phases.

In light of these questions, Voon Jan Cham (2008) has conducted path-breaking research that offers a Chinese perspective on Sarawakian multiculturalism. Voon foregrounds the Chinese discourse on multiculturalism through both the Brooke and the post-Brooke eras. He throws interesting light onto the dynamic synergies by which the Chinese have attempted to engage with issues of colonialism, Sinocentricity, religions, socio-economy and education under the Brooke regimes. In the post-Brooke period, right up to the post-Malaysia formation, he traces the political evolution of Chinese thinking and ideological positions, and the competing ideologies of 'multiracial nationalism' and 'communal politics' in the evolving multicultural politics of Sarawak society. In the process, he pays tribute to the works of Wu An, a Sarawak Chinese nationalist poet and the spirit of SA'ATi or '*sate hati*' (literally 'one heart'), symbolising unity in the context of Sarawak multiculturalism. Voon also opens up an analysis of the ethnic Taiwanese scholar, Wu Ju Hui, the author of *Hua Chiau analysis*, who has discoursed on the question of the overseas Chinese in their struggle in mediating their identities between the homeland and 'the local integrative or assimilative nationalism'.

By contrast, Poline Bala (2008), another younger indigenous scholar, explores what the conception of 'nation' and its notion of 'national culture' or 'national integration' (with its constructed model of 'multiculturalism') means to the indigenous minorities inhabiting the margins of the Malaysian nation-state, in this particular case, the Kelabit of the Bario highlands of Sarawak. Taking a lead from Janet Hoskins (1987), she utilises the Kelabit experience as a way to explore 'heterogeneity in experiences, meanings and historicities within Malaysia's nation-building process'. She initially locates the Kelabit sense of place in the context of a pre-nation-state localised multiculturalism, undefined by any official political boundaries. However, the aftermath of their active participation in the Indonesia–Malaysian confrontation marks the turning point in the Kelabit perception of a fixed political and cultural unit affirming modern state rule 'to crystallise a new set of ethnic and national identities in the Kelabit highlands' (Bala 2008: 143).

Overnight, the Kelabit became statistically defined as 'the Other indigenous category', a part of the Bumiputera minority, competing for political status and economic resources as other Sarawakian indigenous groups and dominated by a national discourse at the centre of power which gives prominence to Malayness and Islamness. Bala then goes on to foreground the fact that in contrast to the dominance of official Islam at the level of the national, 'Christianity offers the Kelabit a distinctly non-Muslim and (non) Malay ethnic/religious identity'. As a result, 'Christian practice and belief cannot be empirically separated from notions of contemporary Kelabit ethnicity' (ibid.: 146). With the new religion also comes the acquisition of modern knowledge and skills through formal education. Bala argues that the latter, being a part of the Malaysian nation-state's development apparatus, has been reappropriated by the Kelabit to strengthen their identity by 'manipulating' this medium to attain social mobility, 'power, class and cultural status' for themselves in order to be at par or excel in the new modernity framed by the

Malaysian nation-building project. This process is taking place in a context where the Kelabit people have been relegated to the status of a political, economic and ethnic minority. Bala suggests that it is the same reason that explains the recent Kelabit success in embracing the eBario ICT-based project for community development in the Kelabit highlands (ibid.: 149).

Ramy Bulan—a Kelabit like Poline Bala and a scholar of law who has been researching on customary law and issues of legal pluralism related to Malaysian indigenous communities—brings to bear a very crucial dimension of multiculturalism, the place of customary law or *adat* as a viable and sustainable mechanism in settling conflicts of the present-day Kelabit community living in the Bario highlands. In her research Bulan (2008) outlines the finer details of customary law as an aspect of restorative justice, the constitution in the native courts and its procedures, the different forms of mediation in resolving Kelabit conflicts and disputes, and finally the enforcement of *adat* through the ritual, restitutionary and compensatory payments. She concludes by emphasising the fluidity and adaptability of customary law to the changing realities of modern society and how for the Kelabit longhouse communities in the highlands *adat* is still the ‘foundation for community solidarity, survival and continuity’. But she also asks a pertinent question on the current dilemma of Kelabit modernity: ‘As many Kelabit families settle in urban areas because of job commitments and their children grow up with a different kind of legal system, how relevant would the customary law system be to them? To what extent would Gerunsin Lembat’s (1993) notion of *adat* as ‘source of identity’ apply to them?’ (Bulan 2008: 170). Indeed, Bulan’s question equally underscores the predicament of other indigenous communities in having to balance *adat* with other sources of identity that emanate from Sarawak’s current modernity and state of multiculturalism.

3.3.3 *On Developing a ‘Multiculturalism’ Research Methodology*

For practitioners in social science who are not only involved in the knowledge production of multiculturalism but also have to engage with multiculturalism as an applied form of knowledge and social practice (such as in social work), it is equally imperative to develop an effective methodology which will enable them to transverse and mediate the multicultural border crossings of the different cultures and ethnicities with whom they have to negotiate on an everyday basis. It is with reference to the above contextualisation and objectives that Ling How Kee’s (2008) research agenda reflects on her recent research experience of fieldworking in Sarawak to illuminate issues of multiculturalism in social work practice and subsequent knowledge development in the discourse.

Between the two extremities of the ‘outsider perspective’ (starting with Western social work theory and practice to be indigenised to non-Western settings) and the ‘authentication position’ (which is grounded in local worldviews and cultures), Ling opts for a third position, ‘the international, multicultural position [which]

draws attention to the “monocultural” view of both the indigenisation and *authenticisation* positions as well as highlights the changing and dynamic nature of culture’. It is a position which adopts the notion of a ‘fluid boundary of the self ... neither that of an insider nor that of an outsider’. She propagates a multicultural practice which takes place ‘in the borderland of a “third” culture ... created by the interaction between the cultures of the social worker and the clients ... which is neither completely that of the informants’ nor the researcher’s culture, but a third culture’. For Ling, when social work moves across the border, it is imperative that ‘the process does not lead to the displacement, marginalisation or domination of the worldviews of local people’. But at the same time, multicultural practice is also ‘a negotiation of similarities and differences, of dialogic exchange in establishing relationship, rather than a mere application of culturally sensitive techniques’. Hence it must allow for the emergence of ‘a borderland in which the culture of the worker and the culture of the clients are in transaction. It is through this borderland that mutual engagement and mutual learning take place’ (ibid.: 186–87).

3.4 Identity and Ethnicity

The other key element in the discourse on Sarawak multiculturalism focuses explicitly on the issue of identity (ethnicity) as reflected by the concrete experience of ethnic communities undergoing social change. Of course the theoretical literature on identity and ethnicity abounds, is diverse and ‘rich for the taking’. Identity is, after all, always evolving and ‘always in the process of formation’ (Hall 2000). But at any particular point in time, it must be historically positioned and contextualised in order to pinpoint the specific socioeconomic and political forces responsible for the particular way in which identity is expressed. Again the relationship between identity and ethnicity is one that has to be problematised and explained rather than assumed. Moreover, there are many levels which locate its articulation, arising either from basic community interactions and dynamics of change on the ground, or as an outcome of the impact of the new modernity, to something that has to be explained in terms of different modes or wider units of contestation.

3.4.1 *Iban ‘Mediated’ Nationalism in ‘Centre-Periphery’ Contestation*

One prominent scholar who has been grappling with these questions over the past two decades is John Postill. His work moves away from a constructivist to a culturalist and historical approach to ethnicity in underpinning the mediated production of Iban ethnicity and nationalism which emerged during the first phase of media production (1954–1976) in Sarawak (Postill 2008; see also Postill 1998).

He predicated his analysis on the premise that a main site of struggle between centre and periphery is language and ‘that the Iban and other Dayaks, who lack the “political shell” of the state are losing out to the politically stronger peninsular Malays and their Sarawak allies’. Postill (2008: 198ff.) explores in detail the setting up and the subsequent development of two forms of media by the colonial government, Iban Radio in 1954 and the Borneo Literature Bureau in 1958. Both forms of media emphasised ‘the importance of the Iban language’ and ‘preserved ... the uniqueness of a reinvented cultural heritage’ (ibid.: 214). He sees this first phase of media production as ‘one of new opportunities for a generation of young Iban men who had acquired literacy skills at the mission schools and were eager to build a “literate sophisticated high culture” (after Gellner 1983) combining cultural materials from their colonial masters and longhouse elders’. The Borneo Literature Bureau became an important source of textualising Iban folklore and its disappearing oral tradition which offered ‘unparalleled insights into Iban philosophy and epistemology’ (see Sutlive 1988). Postill highlights especially the works of Benedict Sandin and Andria Ejau, through the print media of the Bureau, as representing ‘two poles of the modernist–traditionalist continuum running through the entire field of Iban media production’: these were products of ‘modern Sarawak’ which ‘bolstered ... the generic divide’ that ‘has indigenious, pre-state roots’ and gave a sense of revitalised identity to Iban ethnicity and ‘nationalism’ in the emerging postcolonial society (Postill 2008: 206ff.). With Sarawak independence through Malaysia in 1963, there also came a new national language policy which was eventually implemented through the setting up of a new national education system and other attendant agencies. One such institution is Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP), Malaysia’s language planning and development agency, which took over the Borneo Literature Bureau in 1977. While Iban Radio, which ‘posed less of a threat to the fledgling Malaysian nation state ... was allowed to live’, Iban print media which foregrounds ‘a minority’s ethnohistory and drama ... lost out to the new national language imported from Malaya’. Citing Gellner again, Postill reflects that ‘the Iban teachers lacked an Iban state, for a literate culture ... cannot normally survive without its own political shell, the state’ (ibid.: 216–217).

3.4.2 Urban Dayak Predicaments of Modernity and Identity

By contrast, Clare Boulanger’s (2008) research ‘fast forwards’ the Dayaks beyond the nationalism of the past into the dilemma of the new modernity, symbolised by urban living which sets them apart from their rural and traditional past. Her project is simple: ‘to understand how ethnic identity might be changing as more and more Dayaks—the indigenious, non-Muslim peoples of Sarawak—were working and residing in urban environments that were far different from the hinterland spaces in which many Dayaks grew up, and from which ethnic definitions largely continued to be drawn’ (ibid.: 230). Boulanger offers a postmodernist reading of the fragmented and differentiated narratives coming out of her fieldwork notes and

ethnographic research undertaken with urban Dayaks (Bidayuh, Iban, Orang Ulu groups and Melanau) in Kuching, the capital city of Sarawak. The author argues that the urban Dayaks are not only able to compartmentalise the past—which was identified with being ‘left behind’, ‘backward belief’, ‘indigenous religious practices’, ‘frozen’ custom, ‘waste(ing) time’, a ‘not true’ culture, and being ‘entangled’ in ancestors’ things—but they ‘also conform to the modernist view that time proceeds only from the present into the future’. She sees urban residents ‘desperately’ seeking ‘to distinguish themselves from their rural fellows whose futures seemed blighted by the inability to move forward in time’. As the ‘wall thickens’ between past and present, continuity with the past ‘was only acceptable as long as it could be shown that the seeds of the modern were evident in Dayak history’. Indeed, should such a heritage ‘continue to be seen as a liability’, urban Dayaks may be tempted to firm up an ‘ethnic barrier’ between themselves and their fellow Dayaks by reconstructing other forms of identity. Rather than ‘disowning the past’, the latter choice seems ‘healthier’ as it will render less ‘psychic damage’ to the Dayak urban mind. While the Christian concept of ‘forgiveness’ provides a way out through ‘repentance’, the Dayak’s ‘malevolent past’ associated with ‘such monstrous sins as headhunting will continue to well up from the past and despoil the present and future’. While wishful thinking may articulate a desire for some to remain pagan into the future (‘because if everybody is Christian ... then we will lose our custom. And when custom is lost, then our identity will be lost’), Boulanger gently reminds us that ‘[t]ruly modern people cannot have their past and future too’ (ibid.: 237).

3.4.3 On Being Penan: Penan Belangan Ethnicity in the Asap Resettlement

A rather different take on the issue of changing ethnic identities is offered by Kelvin Egay (2008) whose empirically grounded work explores the status of Penan Belangan contesting notions of identity as they became relocated in the Sungai Asap resettlement scheme after September 1999 with other displaced indigenous groups including the Kayan. Some time from 1910 to 1915 the Penan Belangan had moved from a former nomadic way of life from the Batu Laga highlands in the Bunut territory to migrate to the Balui region, where they began to interact with the Kayan and partially began to adopt their culture of rice wine brewing, swidden agriculture and growing tobacco. In the late 1950s or early 1960s they finally moved to settle permanently in Long Belangan until they were finally relocated in the Sungai Asap resettlement to make way for the proposed Bakun hydroelectric project.

The Kayan–Penan Belangan relationship was traditionally grounded in a patron-client nexus, in which the Penan occupied a standing in the highly stratified dominant Kayan society by serving as prized hunters for the Kayan aristocrats. Although the relationship was both politically and economically significant to both communities, and although almost all Penan communities in the Belaga area are now

leading a sedentary agricultural life, the Kayan perception of the Penan has not changed. They are still treated as ‘social inferiors’, stigmatised by the Kayan externally imposed ethnic taxonomy on all nomadic groups as ‘Punan’, a terminology which is also adopted by Penan to delineate themselves from the non-Penans, albeit as subordinates in social hierarchy of the indigenous social status structure.

Here the concept of ‘being Penan’ for the Penan Belangan simultaneously revolves around the dichotomy: ‘not real Penan’ and ‘retaining Penan identity’. In theoretically grappling with these empirical ambiguities of Penan identity, Egay finds that Fredrik Barth’s (1969) famous notion of ethnicity can no longer accommodate the complexities of being Penan as the structural bases (Barth’s ‘organisational vessel’ concept) of the boundary have already become undermined and weakened as a consequence of social change, as Belangan Penan moved from nomadic hunter-gathering to a cultivator, sedentary economic base. Following the lead by Anthony Cohen (1985), Egay explores Penan ethnic identity and its sustainability in the realm of symbolic meaning rather than structural boundary. He opts for Shamsul A.B.’s (1998) approach on identity built upon the authority-defined and everyday-defined social reality discourse. Hence Kayan imposition of ‘being Penan’ (through the label ‘Punan’) on the Penan Belangan is centred on an authority-defined axis, being situated along the historical sedentary–nomadic Kayan–Penan relationship of the past. This has been challenged by Penan’s own authority-defined version of being Penan as sedentary agriculturalists which is vehemently denied by the Kayan. The contestation remains unresolved at this level, in which two authority-defined versions of Penan identity coexist. However, at the level of the everyday-defined reality, ‘being real Penan’ has also assumed a life of its own, providing a set of independent meanings and sustainability to Penan’s own version of identity regardless of and independent of the Kayan authority-defined one (Egay 2008: 252–253).

3.4.4 *Contesting Sarawak Malayness*

It is perhaps surprising that the study of the Malay communities of Sarawak has been a rather underresearched subject. Noburu Ishikawa is a scholar who is seeking to rectify this state of affairs (Ishikawa 2000, 2008a, b). In his most recent intervention, he traces the colonial production of ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ in relation to Malay ethnicity, the outcome of which is the rise to cultural prominence of the *perabangan* Malay (Ishikawa 2008b). Their status was backed by the Brooke colonial regime; they could apparently claim ancestry to aristocratic lineage and were clustered around Kuching. In contrast, there has also emerged an othered category of Malays, the non-*perabangan*: these comprise the majority of Malay coastal and riverine dwellers whose main subsistence activity is fishing as well as a not so well-known category of ‘land-oriented Malay peasants’, whose engagement with inland swidden agriculture ‘has generated categorical confusion as to their ethnic affiliation vis-à-vis fellow Dayak cultivators’. According to Ishikawa, ‘in the

ethnic discourse moulded over one and a half centuries of Sarawak history, rural Malay agriculturalists have been doubly peripheralised in relation to the urban Malays as well as to fisherfolk in the Sarawak River delta' (ibid.: 259). He calls for a deconstruction of the dominant ethnic discourse of urban Malays as a point of reference in studies of Sarawak Malay ethnicity.

Faisal Hazis (2008) takes up the challenge raised by Ishikawa by following where Tom Harrisson had left off, to further research on the coastal Malay community in southwestern Sarawak. The study which was initiated under the programme of Nusantara Studies at the Institute of East Asian Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, focuses on 14 Malay villages involving about 800 respondents. Faisal provides a glimpse of contemporary Malay life in southwestern Sarawak and concludes that despite the 'impressive' indicators of 'economic growth' of the state, 'the coastal Malays in southwestern Sarawak have not been fully integrated into the mainstream economic development, hence hindering real change from taking place'. In engaging the question of Malayness Faisal revisits several competing discourses on Malayness at the level of the 'authority-defined' (after Shamsul 1998): the colonial knowledge base propagated by colonial historians and writers during the Brooke period; the local Malay perspective expressed through the early and later writings of Abang Yusuf Puteh (especially contesting the normative understanding of '*masuk Melayu*' via conversion to Islam); Harrisson's writings on the Malays; and finally the textual definition of Malayness as adopted by the Federal Constitution which became applicable to Sarawak Malays after the formation of Malaysia. Faisal argues that these ideas of Malayness are by no means homogenous. Nor does the official stipulation of Malayness imply compliance at the level of the everyday-defined. He then examines the various nuances of Malayness at the level of the everyday-defined, firstly by contesting Islam as the marker of Malayness, especially in the examples pertaining to the Melanau and Chinese Muslims in the research sample. He highlights the power shifts between the Melanau and the Malay Muslims as being responsible for the separate assertion of their respective Muslim-cum-ethnic identities, in spite of their similar religion. In the case of the Malay-Chinese Muslim relations, while conversion, intermarriage and adoption are common channels of 'entering Malayness', it is normally the offspring who will be regarded as Malay (Faisal 2008: 280–285).

Loyalty to *perintah* (or *kerajaan*, literally government) is also traditionally regarded as a marker of Malayness. It was an idea of Malayness constructed by colonialism which has also been appropriated by the ruling party of the postcolonial Sarawak government. But the idea of loyalty also preceded colonial rule, with the Malay *datus*, the Malay aristocrats (*perabangan*) acting as the Sultan of Brunei's representatives, becoming the early source of loyalty for the Malays. However, in the current period of contemporary politics, Faisal questions loyalty to *perintah* as being based on 'blind loyalty'. Instead he points to 'the Malay struggle to survive in the political culture of contemporary Malaysian polity [that] has somewhat shaped and nurtured these subordinate values of "loyalty" to *perintah*'. But economic dissatisfaction over the 'slow pace of development', 'the fear that their land would

be taken over by the government’—all these, according to Faisal, would also assure that ‘(d)espite the prevalence of this docile culture, some Malays including those in southwestern Sarawak are contesting this colonial idea of Malayness’ (ibid.: 291).

3.5 Conclusion

As we have shown, while the new wave of critical scholarship demarcates themes of representation and identity from the discourse of multiculturalism proper, in reality multiculturalism is a terrain of ongoing synergy which involves constant cross-referencing on questions of representation and identity. Theoretically, the new critical perspective rejects not only orientalist and colonial modes of representation but also statist and developmentalist forms of grand narratives. It problematises the type of multiculturalism founded on the old assimilationist and liberal pluralism paradigm, based on the maxim: *e pluribus unum*, ‘out of many, one’. Instead, it moves towards a multiculturalism based on ‘a multiplicity of legitimate cultural cores or centers’, founded on a ‘brave new world’ social imaginings and ethos: ‘in one, many’ (Kottak and Kozaitis 1999: 49). In this context, it pushes for a reconceptualisation of the existing power relations between cultural communities, hence challenging the hierarchy that privileges some communities to be at the centre while others are relegated to the periphery.

As the new scholarship engages with knowledge based on research, it foregrounds representations and identities in their respective concrete historical formation and trajectories of nation-state-making processes which have given rise to the current state of Malaysian multiculturalism. But at the same time, it recognises that multiculturalism stands for ‘a wide range of social articulations, ideals and practices’ and ‘describes a variety of political strategies and processes’ (of governance and management of diversity) ‘which are everywhere incomplete’ (Hall 2000: 210). In its ideal vision of praxis, many of the critical scholars propose a notion of ‘radical multiculturalism’ which is ‘polycentric’ whose *raison d’être* is ‘about dispersing power, about empowering the disempowered, about transforming subordinating institutions and discourses.... It thinks and imagines from the margins, seeing minoritarian communities not as “interest groups” to be “added on” to a preexisting nucleus but rather as active, generative participants at the very core of a shared, conflictual history’ (Shohat and Stam 1994: 48).

One of the objectives of the new wave of critical scholarship is to set in motion a critical discourse on Malaysian multiculturalism. Hence at one level, issues of Malaysian multiculturalism have to be problematised in the context of a broader landscape of governance, involving questions of the nation or the national, and a critical overview of its agenda of modernity (developmentalism), culture and identity. Emerging critical perspectives are concerned with pluralising and decentring discourses on Sarawak society and culture—an intellectual perspective that articulates fluidity, agency, alternative representations and reconstruction of identities from the margins of society and the nation-state. Yet it is also analytically

useful to note that while multiculturalism is a celebration of a multiplicity of cultural cores and centres, for communities the site of struggle over identity (read: over power and meaning) is equally multicentric. This in a sense represents a ‘calling’ to bring into the discourse the perspective of ‘cultural studies’, a moot point, which was raised and concurred to by Sharmani Gabriel (2010) in her review of my analysis of Sarawak multiculturalism. As nearly all the contributors to the new wave of scholarship have demonstrated, the critical task involves not only a cultural contestation against grand narratives (such as development, modernisation and modernity) but also entities—ranging from community, state to nation. In the case of the latter two categories, the engagement may involve both state and national forms of hegemony, of which the Malaysian nation is only one locus of power. Indeed, it is always useful to remind analysts that the Sarawak state power discourse also has its own space and trajectory that is both ‘autonomous’ and ‘dependent’ (Leigh 1998; Aeria 2006). All this only adds to the complexity of the subject matter at hand and merely affirms the fact that in our attempt to understand Malaysian multiculturalism, and in particular the Sarawak variant of multiculturalism, work has only just begun.

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Chapter 4

Material Culture Studies and Ethnocultural Identity

Bernard Sellato

Abstract This chapter briefly exposes the changing focuses of material culture studies through the twentieth century. It then assesses the available corpus of studies in Borneo's material culture, proposing a rough periodisation of the types of publications and describing in broad categories the material productions examined in these publications. Finally, using some examples, it endeavours to shed light on the linkages between material culture, on the one hand, and social relations and ethnocultural identity, on the other.

Keywords Borneo · Material culture · Ethnocultural identity · Social relations · Trade

4.1 Material Culture and Material Culture Studies

Material culture, a phrase that appeared in the social sciences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, remained centred on the artefact per se up to the latter part of the twentieth century, and material culture studies were then primarily descriptive. Artefacts were (or had been) collected by explorers, colonial civil administrators or military personnel, geologists or missionaries, and stored in museums. Important studies were produced by museum curators, scholars working with museum collections and knowledgeable compilers, though often with only scant information available on the artefacts' precise geographic and ethnic origins, vernacular names, functions, or their meaning and cultural relevance among the people who produced them. While such collections and studies remain precious assets, they provide little insight into those peoples' social lives.

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The concept of material culture today covers a much broader scope, concerned as it is with the forms, uses and meanings of objects, images and environments in everyday life. Material culture is the product of the interaction of people and their material world, and one means by which culture is stored and transmitted. An artefact, therefore, can no longer be reduced to the status of a ‘thing’. It is, in an important way, a social rather than individual creation and, therefore, material culture as a whole reflects the conceptual context of a society. Artefacts intervene in the construction of society and of social identities (see *Journal of Material Culture*). Moreover, as fully fledged constitutive elements of social life they also have a social life of their own (Appadurai 1986), through the process of their creation and their use (Lemonnier 1992), hence the need to view objects as agents (Gell 1998). Material culture, therefore, must be examined with the purpose of procuring an understanding of the society that created it.

Material culture studies—now an interdisciplinary field including anthropology, sociology, archaeology, art history and museum studies—are concerned with the social, cultural, economic and symbolic context of artefacts, and thus with the linkage between these and social relations in general, and investigate the ways in which material objects participate in socialising people into culture. In short, the craftsman ‘weaves the world’ in everything s/he does, and by doing so s/he ‘makes culture’ (see Ingold 2000).

Actually, such studies do encompass other fields, such as environmental studies (landscapes, fauna and flora), agronomy (land tenure systems, cultigens), technology (e.g. architecture, weaponry), cognition science (indigenous knowledge, transmission), health sciences (ethnomedicine, traditional pharmacopoeia), and religion and rituals (e.g. shamanism, headhunting). Despite their name, they are also found to cover such ‘immaterial’ aspects of culture as oral history, oral literature, dance and music performance, as per the broader concept of ‘cultural heritage’ (as defined by UNESCO’s 1972 World Heritage Convention; see also the concept of ‘cultural property’ as a basic tenet of people’s identity, as recalled in a 1976 UNESCO recommendation; on the ambiguity in the definition of the so-called ‘immaterial heritage’ see Bromberger 2014). Today, material culture studies are also, for a substantial part, focusing on contemporary ‘cultural change’ in the context of globalisation, as well as on the subject of ‘development’ (on Borneo see, for example, Cleary and Eaton 1992; on material culture change see Regis 1996).

In the course of time, scholars have used a variety of approaches to look at material culture—functionalism, structuralism, symbolism, gender studies, consumerism, etc. (see a review in Davy Ball 2009). In the closing decades of the twentieth century the focus in anthropology shifted towards technological processes and again, more recently, away from the object itself and towards social and cognitive processes.

Due to constraints I shall not try to assess the available corpus of studies in Borneo’s material culture in terms of theoretical approaches or disciplinary fields. Instead, I shall attempt, first, to establish a rough periodisation of the types of publications and describe in broad categories the local material productions examined in these publications; and, second, using examples, to shed light on the

linkages between material culture, on the one hand, and social relations and ethnocultural identity, on the other.

4.2 Material Culture Studies in the Literature on Borneo

A number of early accounts of Borneo—for example, Marryat (1848), Schwaner (1853–54), Veth (1854–56), St John (1862), Perelaer (1870), Bock (1882), Whitehead (1893) or Beccari (1904)—do contain information on material culture, though they generally are framed in a narrative format.

Around the turn of the twentieth century Beccari (1904: 365, cited in Leibrick 1989) was already urging for ‘the comprehensive and detailed documentation of the minutiae of Sarawak’s indigenous material culture heritage’. Indeed, at that time substantial pieces of work began to appear. These were rather general, synthetic accounts by explorers (e.g. Nieuwenhuis 1904–7) or colonial administrators (e.g. Enthoven 1903; Hose and McDougall 1912), museum inventories and catalogues (e.g. van der Chijs 1885 in Batavia, Shelford 1904–5 at the Sarawak Museum, Juynboll 1910 in Leiden), or compilations produced back in the West (e.g. Hein 1890; Roth 1896), most of which remain invaluable sources to this day. In the same period, more focused, albeit sometimes notably shorter, studies were published, in which scholars investigated the uses and meanings of things: Dayak pictorial and technical arts (Hein 1889), bamboo ornaments (Loebèr 1903), costume (Tromp 1890), tattoo patterns (Den Hamer 1885; Hose and Shelford 1906), swords (Tromp 1888; Shelford 1901), offering structures and funerary monuments (Grabowsky 1888, 1889), musical instruments (Grabowsky 1905) and decorative motifs (Haddon 1905).

The period between the two world wars saw a relatively limited output of important ‘ethnographic’ books—Elshout (1926) and Tillema (1938) on Apo Kayan, Evans (1922) and Rutter (1929) on Sabah, Lumholtz (1920) on the southern and central regions (some of which were reprinted in the 1980s and 1990s)—and a noteworthy development of generally shorter pieces covering, with a narrower focus, a broader scope of material productions. Apart from Bornean arts (Nieuwenhuis 1925–26), tattoos (Tillema 1930), decorated bamboo (Loebèr 1918–19), funerary monuments (Ten Cate 1922; Bertling 1927–28; Tillema 1931–32) and decorative motifs (Vroklage 1939), new attention was brought to masks (Rassers 1928–29; Tillema 1937; Schärer 1940–41), textiles (Haddon and Start 1936), ornamented shields (Münsterberger 1939), basketry (Woolley 1929; Tillema 1939), woodcarving (Banks 1941), bronze works (Huysen 1929; Tillmann 1939) and megalithic monuments (Banks 1937). Most such pieces appeared in scholarly journals, both Dutch and British, as well as in the *Sarawak Museum Journal* (from 1911 onwards), though some were released in wider audience journals or magazines in the Netherlands, thus contributing to the general public’s interest in Borneo cultures.

In-depth professional anthropological work started in Sarawak in the early 1950s with social-economic surveys commissioned by the British colonial service (Leach 1950; Needham 1953; Morris 1953; Geddes 1954; Freeman 1955). In these studies, material culture does not feature prominently, as their authors, social anthropologists, seem to almost never have considered it per se, or described and studied it in an ethnographic way, but instead viewed it only as the physical provision for, or medium of, otherwise important social or economic activity.

This trend persisted during the second half of the century in British and American scholarly studies (e.g. PhD dissertations), with scholars often devoting only minor side papers to material culture topics. By the century's closing decade, the Borneo Research Council's (BRC) publications (Monograph Series, Proceedings Series, etc.), with few exceptions, had focused on gender, religion, shamanism, headhunting, land tenure, social control, health, language, development and the environment, and only a relatively small percentage of the articles published in the *Borneo Research Bulletin* were devoted to material culture. However, the BRC is now scheduling several books on material culture for publication.

During that period, a limited number of works dealt, in a more or less general way, with Borneo's material culture and art (Gill 1968; Brenan 1975; Avé 1982; Heppell 1988, 1994, 2005a; Mashman 1989; Kurui and Kaboy 1989; Sellato 1989, 1992; Tillotson 1994), handicrafts (Alman 1963, 1968; Zainie 1969; Morrison 1972, 1982; Munan 1989a, b; Piper 1992), decorative motifs, design, style and art history (von Heine-Geldern 1966; McBain 1981a; Anggat 1988). Few of these, however, are full-length books or academic productions.

To this day, PhD dissertations in the social sciences focusing, at least partly, on material culture have usually only appeared fairly recently and are still uncommon (e.g. Dunkel 1975; Béguet 1993; Tillotson 1994; Gavin 1995; Thambiah 1995; Lindell 2000; Oley 2001; Westmacott 2002; Davy Ball 2009)—if we set aside a few studies concerned with imported ceramics (B. Harrisson 1984; Césard 2009).

While large exhibitions of Indonesian arts held in the Netherlands and the United States (e.g. see Chicago 1948; van Brakel et al. 1987; Taylor and Aragon 1991; Capistrano-Baker 1994; van Brakel et al. 1996) sometimes included a sizable section on Borneo, exhibitions specifically devoted to Borneo have been few and, likewise, their catalogues (e.g. Anonymous 1973; Avé and King 1986; *Expedition* 1988). In the last few years, however, Borneo has received more sustained attention: Maiullari and Arnel (2008), Maiullari (2011), Isler and von Wyss-Giacosa (2011), Dietrich and Pavaloi (2013), and the 2013 joint Dutch-Bruneian exhibition in Bandar Seri Begawan should also be mentioned (see KIT 2013). Scholars in Western museums produced studies based on these museums' collections: e.g. Sørensen (1972, 1973) in Oslo, Hamilton (1996) in Washington (see also Boruchoff 1986), Remešová (2004) in Prague, Martin (2010) in Dresden. Several Borneo exhibitions in art galleries were complemented with catalogues (e.g. Goldman 1975; Heppell and Maxwell 1990; Heppell 1992; Johnson 2009).

In East Malaysia, the Sarawak Museum produced an important book (Chin 1980), as well as a number of thin booklets on various subjects, and the Sabah Museum later followed suit (e.g. Sabah 1991, 1992, 2007, n.d.). Likewise, the

Brunei Museum has put out some publications on material culture (e.g. Harrison 1973; *Warisan* 1996; Bantong 2001). Through their periodic journals, these three institutions have also contributed powerfully to expanding our knowledge of northern Borneo's cultures in general.

Other publications were released in Kuching by the Borneo Literature Bureau (e.g. Alman 1968; Zainie 1969) and the Sarawak Literary Society (e.g. Chong 1987; Bléhaut 1997) and, in Kuala Lumpur, by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (e.g. Anggat 1988) and the Museum Association of Malaysia (e.g. Mohd. Kassim 1983). In Sarawak, private publishers, the Tun Jugah Foundation and Society Atelier Sarawak, released several important titles that should be mentioned: Linggi (2001) and Sultive and Sutlive (2001), for the former, and Jabu (1991), Chin and Mashman (1991) and Ong (n.d.) for the latter.

In Indonesia nationwide programmes (*proyek*) implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture in the 1980s and 1990s—variously named *Proyek Media Kebudayaan*, *Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Kebudayaan Daerah*, *Proyek Inventarisasi dan Pembinaan Nilai-nilai Budaya* or *Proyek Pembinaan Permuseuman*—underwrote the publication of series on the collections held by provincial museums (e.g. *Album seni budaya, Sekelumit* 1989–90; Syarifuddin and M. Saperi 1990–91; Magai 1991; Rasmin et al. 1992–93), traditional architecture (Soenarpo et al. 1986), and many more on various material culture topics (e.g. Anonymous 1982; Surya et al. 1985–86; Husna et al. 1990–91; Taihuttu 1995–96). Kalimantan's state museums also occasionally published thematic volumes on their collections (e.g. Sjarifuddin 1983–84; Bonoh 1984–85; Achmad 1986; Mulyati and Zularfi 1994; see also Kartiwa 1997). Unfortunately, these publications are poorly disseminated and quite difficult to procure, and keeping up to date with recent releases proves a real challenge.

Finally, a few photographic books (e.g. Morrison 1962; Wong 1979; Hong 1987; Tiong 2001) have documented traditional life, thus providing much visual information on material culture.

Altogether, in the latter part of the twentieth century and up to this day a wealth of information has been produced. A review of these publications by broad thematic categories is presented below.

By far the most popular research and publication topic in material culture studies in the last three decades has been textiles, and especially Iban textiles. Initiated by Haddon and Start's (1936) book, work on Iban (and Kalimantan 'Ibanic') woven fabrics picked up again around 1980 (Fisher 1979; Maxwell 1980; Vogelsanger 1980), then went into full swing 10 years later (Drake 1991; Jabu 1991; Mashman 1992; Gavin 1995, 1996, 2003; Linggi 2001; Heppell 2005b, 2014; Amann 2013), albeit not always exempt of some debate regarding the ambiguous relationship of motif, name and meaning. Apart from the Iban-Ibanic set, we should mention some work on Sabah's traditional weaving and dyeing (Sabah 1991), Brunei textiles (*Warisan* 1996) and East Kalimantan's unusual *ulap doyo* textiles (Oley 2001, 2007).

The longhouse has also been a popular focus of study, although only some of the works discuss architecture and/or the longhouse as a physical structure (e.g. Lee

1962; Miles 1964; Schneeberger 1979; Kelbling 1983; Kampffmeyer 1991; Ong 1991; Winzeler 1996, 1998, 2004; Lindell 2000). Other works mainly examined the longhouse as a social institution, a ritual structure or a symbolic element of identity (Dove 1982; Guerreiro 1984, 2003; Sather 1993; Alexander 1993; Sellato 1998, 2015a; Metcalf 2010), in an ‘anthropology of architecture’ approach, as Waterson’s (1990) book title stresses—or as a target for the ethnic tourism industry (Kruse 2003; also King 1994; Zeppel 1994).

Woodcarving, especially in hardwood, holds a special status in material culture, due to primitive art dealers’ and collectors’ sustained interest in Borneo’s sculpture, starting with Vredembregt’s booklet (1981). Large carved pieces were regarded as art, and museums and art galleries published book-sized catalogues on the subject (e.g. Sumnik-Dekovich 1985; Heppell and Maxwell 1990; Maiullari and Arnel 2008; Johnson 2009), while some isolated articles appeared in journals (Chong 1987; Mashman 1994; Kjellgren 1999; Sellato 2001; but see also Chin and Mashman 1991). Shorter studies focused on carved funerary monuments (e.g. Bataille 1974; Metcalf 1976; Rampai 1983; Schiller 1984; Guerreiro 2011). Related to the statuary, due to the primitive art market’s interest, are masks, which were also the subject of several publications: Gill (1966, 1967), Revel-Macdonald (1978, 1981), Mohd. Kassim (1983), Heppell (1992, 2015) and Bantong 2001.

With pottery and basketry, we leave the world of ‘primitive art’ for that of ‘folk crafts’. Both crafts have seen a trickle of mostly minor publications spanning half a century. For pottery: Freeman (1957), Alman (1960), Anonymous (1985), Chin and Mashman (1991), Sellato (1997), Teuteberg (1998), and Arifin and Sellato (1999). For basketry: Klausen (1957), Dunsmore (1983), Bléhaut (1997), Sellato (1997, 2012d), Lenjau (1999), Maiullari (2011) and Puri (2013).

Other, slightly less ‘popular’ categories must be mentioned: metalware (including swords) and metalworking (e.g. Morrison 1948; Harrison 1973; Lim and Shariffuddin 1976; Christie and King 1988; Chin and Mashman 1991; Heppell 2011; Hollestelle forthcoming); megalithic monuments (e.g. Harrison 1958; Whittier and Whittier 1974; Baier 1992; Arifin and Sellato 2003); tattoos (Dunkel 1975; Thomas 1968; McBain 1981b); decorated human skulls (Avé 1996; Winzeler 1999); wooden ‘calendars’ (Avé 1970; Hopes 1997); baby carriers (Whittier and Whittier 1988; Sellato 2012b); bark cloth (Kooijman 1963; Sellato 2006); to which we may add traditional ‘sports’ (e.g. Anonymous 1982; Dunsmore 1983; Chin 1984), penis pins (Harrison 1964; Brown et al. 1988), bamboo tubes (Klokke 1993), longboat building (Nicolaisen and Damgaard-Sørensen 1991), hunting weapons and traps (Sloan 1975; Puri 2006), and even, once in a while, local traditional cuisine (Jamuh and Harrison 1966–69; Dirung and Dirung 1993).

We could also include here works on music and dance (e.g. Seeler 1969; Maceda 1978; Matusky 1986, 1990, 1991; Gorlinsky 1988; Pugh-Kitingan 1988), as well as on crucial, though exogenous, elements of the Bornean material culture: glass beads (Dunsmore 1978; Munan-Oettli 1987; Munan 2005) and ceramic jars (Adhyatman and Abu Ridho 1977; B. Harrison 1986; Rangkuti and Faizaliskandiar 1988; Wibisono 1990; Sabah 2007; Césard 2009).

Finally, I shall leave aside very recent works focusing on contemporary cultural change and dealing with topics outside of my sphere of expertise, although some should probably be listed in this chapter, such as Liana Chua's studies.

4.3 Material Culture and Ethnocultural Identity

In a recent paper, Victor T. King (2012) examined 'the interrelated concepts of culture and identity, and more especially identities in motion'. Artefacts, of course, often display visual evidence of ethnocultural affiliation.

As already noted, locally crafted objects, present everywhere in traditional societies to fulfil all sorts of practical, daily life functions, also pervade the social, economic, political and religious spheres. They are involved in sharing and exchange networks, feature prominently as symbols of social status and prestige, and perform primary roles in ritual activities, and thus they are constitutive elements of social life, and strongly contribute to building and upholding ethnocultural identity.

The discussion below, intentionally focusing on 'traditional' artefacts of local commercial, social or ritual significance—rather than on recently appropriated 'modern' objects—attempts to investigate, among the communities that produce them, their evolution into new icons of identity—or 'icons of tradition', as Taylor (1994) puts it—in a wide open and fast-changing world.

4.3.1 *The Bidayuh Red Basket*

A good example of this evolution is presented by Mashman and Nayoi (2012) with the so-called 'red basket' of the Pinyawa'a subgroup of Bidayuh in western Sarawak. Traditionally, this red basket (*juah bireh*) was used for sowing and harvesting, as well as in rituals of the paddy cult (*adat gawai*), particularly at harvest time, as a container for offerings to the rice spirits; it also features in traditional marriage exchanges (ibid.:89). However, '[i]n its most profound context', the authors write, the red basket is used for supernatural purposes during the healing ceremonies, with each household owning one; here called 'soul basket', it is a container for the soul of a sick person (ibid.:80, 91).

In the 1960s a Catholic mission and school were set up at a nearby bazaar, and most of the community have since converted (ibid.:81). The red basket is now put to mundane use—for carrying personal belongings around—but '[i]t is most publicly conspicuous at the weekly church service, when it serves for the collection' (ibid.:89). Interestingly, it is now used by both Catholics and practitioners of the paddy cult in shared rituals and celebrations: Catholic families partake in the paddy cult rituals, using their own red baskets and saying Catholic prayers, and non-Catholics also attend a thanksgiving ceremony held at the church, during which

young women in ethnic costumes, carrying red baskets, ‘dance around the altar to the beat of the gongs in a manner reminiscent of the priestesses who dance to entertain the spirits of the rice’ (ibid.:91).

Later, in the 1970s, a strong movement within the Bidayuh community aimed at popularising ritual dances for public performances, and encouraged younger Catholic women to practise them (ibid.:92). The women’s new ethnic costume, partly deriving from the priestess’s dress, includes the red basket, along with the typical *raong* hat, which was worn to protect a baby’s soul. This costume is worn for dancing contests, ceremonial occasions and special masses in church.

Both the hat and basket, now as an inseparable pair, have thus become key components in the Pinyawa’a community’s ethnocultural identity (ibid.:80–81, 92). If ‘the red basket provides a sense of cultural continuity as the belief systems change’ from the traditional *adat gawai* to Christianity, as Mashman and Nayoi rightly noted (ibid.:89; see also Mashman 2000), the iconic value of the hat-and-basket pair, and of this Bidayuh ethnic costume as a whole, has now spread out to the social and political sphere beyond the community, and to Sarawak’s cultural stage.

In a similar process, among the Lun Dayeh (or Lundaye) of North Kalimantan (the new Indonesian province of Kalimantan Utara) and the Lun Bawang and Kelabit of Sarawak (with some degree of variation between these groups), the ritual *raung basung* (or *rong*) hat and *tayen* (or *ra’ing*) basket were originally used for sowing and harvesting, and appeared in rice cycle rituals, as well as in traditional marriage exchanges. Nowadays, the hat-and-basket pair is mostly manufactured and sold for use in Christian wedding ceremonies, which still rally broad kinship networks, even in town (Mashman 2012: 180–181; see Davy Ball 2009: 365; Sellato 2012a).

Among the eastern Sarawak Lun Bawang, Mashman (2012: 181) concludes, these hats and baskets are now worn as part of the ethnic costume at weddings and formal occasions as a mark of identity. Likewise, Kalimantan Lun Dayeh women, dressed in a standard ethnic costume, perform group dances at events such as the annual Birau festival at the district’s capital and in the course of National Day celebrations, in which the *raung* and *tayen* are recognisable ethnic identity icons (Sellato fieldnotes).

4.3.2 *The Kenyah Baby Carrier*

Among Kenyah, Kayan and related groups, which display distinctive, named and operative social strata (including nobility, commoners and slaves), both in Sarawak and Kalimantan, social ascription and status used to be visually discernible through the exclusive use of certain types of objects and decorative patterns (see, e.g. Rousseau 1990: 186–187; also Whittier 1973; King 1985). The baby carrier, a trademark artefact of these groups, offers a clear example of this, as both the motifs decorating it and small objects attached to it are not only protective devices against

spiritual danger (for the child carried in it) but also indicators of social status (for the family owning and using it).

‘Functionally analogous to the ... cloth slings used to carry infants by many people around the world’ (Whittier and Whittier 1988), the baby carrier is a simple structure built of a half-moon wooden board and raised rattan plaitwork, and is equipped with shoulder straps. Its decoration is what makes it spiritually and socially significant: a large beadwork panel, animal fangs, bronze bells, shells, etc. Baby carriers, particularly their decorative elements, are part of family heirlooms. They are used, associated with a broad, decorated sun hat, in name-giving ceremonies, as well as, among some groups, in weddings and other rituals (see Whittier and Whittier 1988; Sellato 2012b; Lenjau et al. 2012: 217).

Noble families have a strict monopoly on the creation and use of certain decorative motifs and objects to be displayed on a baby carrier (and other items), e.g. anthropomorphic motifs or tiger and leopard fangs (for recent sources, see Armstrong 1992: 203; Lenjau 1999: 174; Lenjau et al. 2012: 219–20, 223; Sellato 1997: 230, 2012b: 272). Among the Kenyah of the uppermost Bahau River, only women of the noble stratum may create the anthropomorphic *kalung kelunan* or *kalung éla* motifs, as only the souls of noble people are strong enough to be exposed to the power of the motif. Yet, the spiritual risk incurred calls for a ritual payment or a blood sacrifice to the spirit of the motif, and such a motif may only be used for children of the noble category (Sellato 1997: 230).

Supernatural sanctions are believed to befall any non-noble person who would be so bold as to make or use an object carrying such a powerful spirit. In the 1990s Lenjau (1999: 171–72) wrote that the Kenyah still carefully heeded this taboo (see also Armstrong 1992: 203). Baby carriers, along with the broad sun hats (*sa’ung seling*) also carrying anthropomorphic motifs and restricted to nobility (see Sellato 2012c), are usually displayed on house walls. Altogether, as the Whittiers (1988) conclude: ‘The ... baby carrier [is] a work of art, a device for protecting a child’s health, a display and confirmation of social rank, and a mechanism for creating and strengthening social relations’.

Sun hats have long been, and still are, often requested by and given away to visiting officials (Sellato 1997: 230), and this also holds, albeit less often nowadays, for baby carriers. Indeed, such officials were naturally viewed as foreign ‘nobility’, so the taboo question was never raised. Moreover, since the hat or baby carrier would be owned or used away from the village, this would have no negative spiritual impact on the source community.

In recent years, however, baby carriers have been manufactured by urban Kenyah communities, in Samarinda and elsewhere, and even in certain Kenyah resettlement villages closer to urban centres. These Kenyah craftspeople, whether or not they belong to the nobility, but no longer worrying about spiritual risk, create attractive decorative beadwork panels displaying anthropomorphic motifs. Such baby carriers are now marketed, with no reference to their ritual or social meaning, to airport souvenir shops or ‘antique’ shops in town. Some Kenyah families in Samarinda, as early as the 1990s, were running a baby carrier cottage industry and flying their goods to Kuching, where they fetched much higher prices. I was told

that part was sold to souvenir shops there, and part to well-to-do Sarawak Kenyah, who needed them for rituals or heirlooms.

This, of course, reflects the dissolution of traditional social organisation and the emerging dominance of individualistic values, especially in urban contexts. Yet, this process strongly contributes to promoting the baby carrier as an iconic craft of the Kenyah on the provincial and even the national scenes.

One traditionally typical Kenyah craft, the cloth patchwork sun hat, has spread widely to other ethnic groups and other regions of Borneo, to the extent that it is now viewed as a symbol of a generic ‘Dayak’ culture and a standard souvenir from Borneo—and no longer a specifically Kenyah icon.

In the upper Bahau region, a development project has set out recently (2013) to assist local Kenyah craftswomen in producing and marketing the *sa’ung seling* ritual sun hat in order to generate some revenue for these isolated villages. These women, highly concerned with the possible spiritual risk that might ensue, referred the project staff to the subdistrict’s customary chief (*kepala adat*), who granted special permission for commoner women to manufacture *sa’ung seling* with anthropomorphic figures (Iris Hardy, personal communication). The *sa’ung seling* is now manufactured and marketed as a specific product of the Kenyah groups of the uppermost Bahau area, and in the process is becoming these groups’ ethnic identity icon in broader regional official settings.

4.4 Material Culture, Identity Icons and Trade

For the record, I should stress here the ritual significance, Borneo-wide, of the pair of artefacts comprising a ‘container’ (a basket or, here, a baby carrier) and a hat (as the container’s cover; see several examples, among various groups, in Sellato 2012d). In the Kenyah case, the sun hat and baby carrier pair forms a ‘total’ protective device, as well as a sort of ritual enclosure, which in other ethnic contexts outside Borneo would often consist of a ritual textile. It should not be unexpected, somehow, that these artefacts, rather than others of lesser ritual value (e.g. the blowpipe), have been turned into icons of identity. The fact that they carry ethnically distinctive decoration is also quite relevant here.

The Bidayuh’s red basket and *raong* hat and the Lun Dayeh’s basket-and-hat pair, whose ritual roles in farming or other traditional ceremonies have notably faded away, now feature in Christian ceremonies and, quite prominently, in public displays of ethnic identity, illustrating a general historical shift from a traditional religion to Christianity, another, related shift from the religious to a non-religious or mundane sphere, as well as yet another, from internal (intra-community) to external (inter-community) use.

The Kenyah baby carrier (and associated hat) offers an example of broadened practices transgressing the traditional social order. This clearly hints at the

progressive crumbling of social stratification and of the nobility's power over its commoners, even in the most old-fashioned, isolated communities. At the same time, it signals the emergence of new, often urban or peri-urban ethnic communities now estranged from erstwhile ritual prohibitions, and displaying individualistic economic behaviours. It also emphasises the repositioning and marketing of these artefacts by their makers as trade goods of a high economic importance—and these goods also happen to carry ethnic identity value.

Therefore, the role of trade in the promotion of such icons of ethnic identity, if not in their original construction, should not be underestimated. The Lun Dayeh hats and baskets are made mainly for intra-community circulation and sale, although they are also marketed to souvenir shops, which probably also applies to the Bidayuh hat and basket. The Kenyah baby carrier, although it is to some extent circulated among Kenyah groups scattered in various parts of Borneo, appears to mainly target the tourist trade. And the *sa'ung seling* case illustrates an interesting, ongoing speedy swing from social status marker to trade good to identity icon—the acceleration of the process being a sign of the times.

As the discovery and confirmation of these objects' trade value outside the communities that use/d them—especially in the tourist trade networks—trigger an intensification of their production, they certainly also contribute to boosting their value as ethnic identity icons within these communities (for a discussion of the impact of trade on material culture change, see Sellato 2015b). The tourist trade, in turn, promotes these icons among other regional ethnic groups, as well as to the national scene and beyond.

With regards to trade, the role of external agents—running or supporting local economic development projects, e.g. non-governmental organisations or foundations, state agencies—in the creation and promotion of iconic artefacts is also of relevance and should be taken into account, as is the case for Penan communities' rattan baskets in Sarawak or for the *sa'ung seling* of the Kenyah in East Kalimantan. Indeed, the advent of iconic objects may not always be a spontaneous endogenous process.

Finally, the question of cultural property should be raised regarding iconic material culture items. The commercial takeover of one group's specific traditional artefacts by another group has become a familiar occurrence, even in Borneo (e.g. the 'tree of life' rattan mat of the Ngaju made by Banjarese, or fake Bahau statues sold by Bugis in Samarinda). And 'iconic takeover'—one group's specific traditional artefact being selected by another group as its own iconic object—is not unheard of (e.g. Sellato 2015b). More generally, the patenting of particular items of material culture, as well as of decorative motifs, is now a pending problem in Borneo, as elsewhere. A recent controversy around the *bidai* mat of the Seluas people of West Kalimantan being claimed by (and patented in) Malaysia as an iconic product of Sarawak (Okezone 2013) is telling enough, as are earlier and ongoing 'cultural' debates between Indonesia and Malaysia about 'ownership' of batik and the shadow puppet theatre (Jakarta Post 2012).

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Chapter 5

Borneo and Beyond: Reflections on Borneo Studies, Anthropology and the Social Sciences

Victor T. King

Abstract This overview of research on Borneo, which moves on from Chap. 2, draws attention to Borneo-wide studies, reference materials, bibliographies and a range of sources of information. It arranges the survey chronologically, thematically and in terms of debates and controversies. With regard to themes, it is argued that George Appell's categorisation of concepts, themes and materials on the Iban could, with modification, provide the basis for a Borneo-wide arrangement of research. The survey proceeds from a consideration of early materials on Kalimantan, ethnic and ethnographic infilling with some conceptual development in the 1960s and 1970s, which saw the development of field research in Brunei, extension of research in Sabah, a considerable increase of research in Kalimantan, and the consolidation of research on the Iban of Sarawak. The 1980s witnessed a significant focus on development issues, policy and practice, primarily carried out by local researchers. The 1990s and beyond saw an increasing interest in issues of culture and identity across a range of thematic concerns (see Chap. 8). The discussion of debates and controversies, aside from those discussed in Chap. 2 arising from Freeman's work, comprise land tenure and rights in property; the Hoffman-derived Punan devolution issue; the intense debates about the traditional categorisation of Borneo societies as either egalitarian or hierarchical; the movement from a structuralist/corporatist interest in defined social units to one that emphasised fluidity, individual agency, networks and gender; and the definition and characterisation of the identity and social organisation of the Maloh of West Kalimantan.

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5.1 The Context

In many respects this is a very personal review of the anthropological and related social science literature on Borneo which has been produced in the post-war period. I have already presented a preliminary excursion into the early anthropological work undertaken on Borneo, heavily Sarawak-dominated, in Chap. 2 which laid the foundations for the generation of researchers who followed in the later 1960s and into the 1970s and 1980s. In this chapter I intend to take the story forward from then, when there was a major upsurge in research across the social sciences in Borneo.

It is impossible to cover even a reasonably comprehensive segment of what is an extremely large amount of material. Therefore, I have had to be selective, though I trust in attempting to evaluate some of the major achievements of anthropological and other social science research on Borneo, I have addressed those contributions which have been recognised and acknowledged as of some scholarly significance.

This has been an interesting and constructive exercise for me in that I have not been actively engaged in field research in Borneo since the 1990s, though I have attempted to keep in touch with the development of this field of studies, primarily by continuing to read in the literature, reviewing books, supervising research students, assessing papers for publication and examining research theses. However, from mid-2012 I have taken up where I left off and, on my return to research on Borneo after a relatively long absence, I thought it worthwhile to take stock of past and current achievements in preparation for considering how we might formulate and carry forward a research agenda for the future. What struck me forcefully in examining and in some cases re-examining both published work and doctoral materials produced during the past two decades is the preoccupation with issues of identity and cultural politics. Of course, there is much else in this recent literature on Borneo, but it seems to me that the theme of identity and more specifically ethnicity and ethnic relations is one of increasing and significant interest in the literature, and one which has resonance in other parts of Southeast Asia as well.

In order to give this theme the attention it deserves I have devoted separate publications to the relationships between culture and identity (see, for example, King 2012a) and in this volume as Chap. 8. These two chapters (5 and 8) are therefore interrelated, but I do make reference to some of the literature on identity in this more general chapter. By way of introduction we have to pose the question: Why is it that we have witnessed this upsurge in concern and interest in Borneo Studies in issues of identity construction and transformation, and the ways in which identities are formed, sustained and changed in social and cultural encounters and in the context of processes of globalisation (see, for example King 2012b; Zawawi 2012)?

Cultural politics has been an important phenomenon across Southeast Asia in recent years (see, for example, Kahn 1995, 1998, 2005), but I think in the Borneo context that this is in no small part due to the dramatic events in Indonesian Kalimantan from late 1996 to 2001 when serious and bloody conflicts ensued between the native Dayaks, Madurese and Malays in the provinces of West and Central Kalimantan. In some respects they form part of a wider series of ethnic conflicts in other parts of the Indonesian archipelago following the collapse of Suharto's New Order in 1998, the institution of policies of decentralisation and the politicisation of ethnic identities. Nevertheless, some of the conflicts predated these events and evidence of Dayak–Madurese tensions and anti-Chinese actions go back to at least the 1950s (Tanasaldy 2012). Therefore, these interethnic encounters involved not only various Dayak groups but also Malays, immigrant Madurese and Chinese in what were primarily openly conflictual relations.

Even from 1945 there was a politicisation of ethnicity in the continuing struggle between the Indonesian nationalists and the Dutch colonialists, and before the introduction of Sukarno's Guided Democracy in 1959 and the implementation of the highly centralised and authoritarian policies of the New Order from 1966, the Dayaks of Kalimantan had already begun to organise themselves politically and to build a pan-Dayak identity (König 2012, and see Kumpiady Widen's chapter in this volume). This occurred well before the non-Muslim indigenous populations of Sarawak and British North Borneo (Sabah) began to develop and express a Dayak and other sub-Dayak identities in the run-up to independence within Malaysia in 1963 (see for example, Leigh 1971, 1974; Zawawi 2008a, b). Dayak identities were also formed in relation to, or we might say in opposition to, the development of politically conscious movements among immigrant communities, particularly the Chinese across the former territories of British and Dutch Borneo, and in what came to be the Federation of Malaysia, and among the Indian populations as well. After 1963 the Malaysian Borneo territories were drawn into the model or template of ethnic difference which had been progressively rationalised in peninsular Malaysia. The sultanate of Brunei too has addressed the issue of ethnicity, language and culture which it has embedded in racial or ethnic categories and distinctions in its 1959 Constitution (see, for example, King 1994a).

Leaving aside these considerations my focus in this chapter is on topical issues which are at the forefront of concerns about social and cultural transformations in post-war Borneo; some of these concerns also have important policy dimensions. I have also attempted to capture chronologically significant moments and debates, primarily in the field of anthropology.

5.2 Overviews and General Books

There have been several reviews and overviews of disciplines and subjects within the field of Borneo Studies, a significant number of which have tended to give prominence to work in Sarawak. Moreover, the *Borneo Research Bulletin* has begun to commission

a series of overviews in particular disciplines and subject areas. I also undertook a review of development studies in Sarawak many years ago (King 1986) at a time when I was moving more and more in the direction of applied studies, and, although the purpose of a subsequent paper for the Malaysian journal *Akademika* in 2009 was not to present an updated overview, I did make reference to a range of studies in the broad fields of development, change and modernisation (and see King Chap. 25). But these focused on Sarawak and did not provide material on the other parts of Borneo. George Appell had already provided a more general overview of social science research in Sarawak in 1977 (and with Leigh Wright 1978), and Peter Kedit addressed the issue of the then current anthropological research in Sarawak in 1975.

Of course, subsequently there have been a number of edited books and a few jointly authored and single-authored books covering the whole island as well. The Borneo Research Council's proceedings series are usually Borneo-wide, as are some of the monograph series (and see Appell 1990a, b). These embrace a number of themes, but are broadly within the areas of social change, rural development, environmental change; language and oral traditions; gender, material culture and religion and ritual. The edited publications comprise: Vinson Sutlive, *Female and male in Borneo: contributions and challenges to gender studies* (1991) and *Change and development in Borneo* (1993); Robert L. Winzeler, *The seen and unseen: shamanism, mediumship and possession in Borneo* (1993) and *Indigenous architecture in Borneo* (1998); James T. Collins, *Language and oral tradition in Borneo* (1990); Peter Martin, *Shifting patterns of language use in Borneo* (1995) and with Peter Sercombe, *Languages in Borneo: diachronic and synchronic perspectives* (2009); Victor T. King, *Tourism in Borneo* (1995) and *Rural development and social science research* (1999a); William Wilder, *Journeys of the soul: anthropological studies of death, burial, and reburial practices in Borneo* (2003); and Peter Eaton, *Environment and conservation in Borneo* (1999).

Then there are the books published outside the work of the Borneo Research Council. These include: Jan Avé and Victor T. King, *Borneo: the people of the weeping forest: tradition and change in Borneo* (1986a), and the Dutch edition also published in 1986b); and Victor T. King, *Essays on Borneo societies* (1978b) and *The peoples of Borneo* (1993); Mark Cleary and Peter Eaton, *Borneo: change and development* (1992); Fadzilah Majid Cooke, *State, communities and forests in contemporary Borneo* (2006); Cristina Eghenter, Bernard Sellato and G. Simon Devung, *Social science research and conservation management in the interior of Borneo* (2003); Robert L. Winzeler, *Indigenous peoples and the state: politics, land, and ethnicity in the Malayan Peninsula and Borneo* (1997); Reed L. Wadley, *Histories of the Borneo environment: economic, political and social dimensions of change and continuity* (2005); Peter G. Sercombe and Bernard Sellato, *Beyond the green myth: Borneo's hunters-gatherers in the twenty-first century* (2007); Christine Padoch and Nancy Lee Peluso, *Borneo in transition: people, forests, conservation, and development* (1996); Amarjit Kaur, *Economic change in East Malaysia: Sabah and Sarawak since 1850* (1998); Bernard Sellato, *Nomades et sédentarisation à Bornéo: histoire économique et sociale* (1989 and 1986), published in English as *Nomads of the Borneo rainforest: the economics, politics, and*

ideology of settling down (1994), and his *Innermost Borneo: studies in Dayak cultures* (2002); Harold Brookfield, Lesley Potter and Yvonne Byron, *In place of the forest: environmental and socio-economic transformation in Borneo and the eastern Malay Peninsula* (1995); and Gerard A. Persoon and Manon Osseweijer, *Reflections on the heart of Borneo* (2008).

These are valuable reference materials and they have informed our current work on Borneo. However, they certainly do not exhaust the range of Borneo-wide collections available, and other relevant publications are referred to in other chapters in this volume.

Other general reference materials are located in the *Borneo Research Bulletin* [and see the valuable index of the *Bulletin*, volumes 1–42 (2012) compiled by the Borneo Research Council], the *Sarawak Museum Journal*, the *Brunei Museum Journal*, the *Sabah Society Journal*, the publications of the Sabah Museum, and Institut Dayakologi in Pontianak, particularly the Institute's *Kalimantan Review* (see also John Bamba, Chap. 15 on the voluminous literature on Kalimantan published in Indonesian), as well as the journals and publications of the universities and other research institutions in Borneo such as the *Sarawak Development Journal*, and including the proceedings of the Borneo-Kalimantan Inter-University Conferences which were held at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, and in Pontianak and Banjarmasin. In addition, the local interest in Borneo seems to be on the increase with the recent launch at Universiti Malaya of the *Borneo Research Journal*.

There is also a number of bibliographies which require our attention, among others those by Jérôme Rousseau on Central Borneo (1988, and see 1970), Jan Avé, Victor T. King and Joke de Wit on West Kalimantan (1983), the checklist of Iban materials in the Iban encyclopedia (King et al. 2001), A.A. Cense and E.M. Uhlenbeck on Borneo languages (1958), Hans J.B. Combrink, Craig Soderberg, Michael E. Boutin and Alanna Y. Boutin (compilers) *Indigenous groups of Sabah: an annotated bibliography of linguistic and anthropological sources* (2 volumes, 2008; earlier editions, 1984, 1986, 2006), and Mohd. Yussop's bibliography of bibliographies (2001).

5.3 The Iban and Appell's Categorisation

With regard to compilations we should also emphasise the importance of the monumental four-volume *Encyclopedia of Iban Studies* edited by Vinson and Joanne Sutlive (2001); within that there is the important overview paper by George N. Appell (which reviews research up until about a decade and a half ago) on Iban Studies (2001: 741–785). The categories he devises, though specific to the Iban in relation to more general Borneo ethnography, do provide the beginnings of a more general categorisation of research. I should also draw attention to Appell's bold statement about Iban Studies because it provides us with an orientation to the general field of Borneo Studies and it does provide a focus for debate. In other words, to what extent and in what ways has the study of the Iban and culturally and

historically related populations in West Kalimantan provided an agenda for anthropological and other related social science research (see below)?

Again with reference to my Chap. 2 in this volume, Appell's proposals have in part been stimulated by the work of Derek Freeman. I think it can be argued that of all anthropological monographs on Borneo communities it has been Freeman's very widely quoted *Report on the Iban* (1970, and see 1953, 1955b) and *Iban agriculture* (1955a) which have been the most influential and which have provided a baseline and set a standard for the study of cognatic societies and for our understanding of shifting or swidden agricultural economies in the humid tropics. It is also true that of all Borneo peoples it is the Iban, both in Sarawak and in West Kalimantan, who have been the most extensively studied across a wide range of subjects and themes. After all only the Iban have a four-volume encyclopaedia devoted to them and several dictionaries of their language. Students of other Borneo societies most certainly view with enormous envy the considerable level of scholarly work and publications on the Iban. In support of their importance Appell also says:

This uniqueness of [Iban] culture and optimistic vitality have brought researchers from around the world to study Ibanic society and culture, not only to make an ethnographic record for posterity but also to learn what contributions a study of their society and culture would make to social theory.... Furthermore, because of this extensive study, Iban society now provides the model, the background phenomena, on which all other ethnographic inquiries of Borneo societies can proceed. Iban research has informed the discussion of many theoretical issues in anthropological inquiry, particularly those dealing with the structure of cognatic societies, i.e., societies without any form of descent group. Thus, Iban culture forms the fundamental grounds against which other cultures are compared in order to elicit cultural information and to test hypotheses in social theory (2001: 741).

With specific reference to the study of social organisation and kinship I had also noted some time ago that Freeman's publications on the Iban had 'provided the base-line for comparison and most Bornean scholars have assessed at least some of their findings in relation to Freeman's observations on such features of Iban society as the *bilek-family* (or household), the kindred and the longhouse' (King 1978a: 6). Furthermore, George P. Murdock's edited book on *Social structure in Southeast Asia* (1960a) served to consolidate the importance and influence of Freeman's Iban material by including a chapter by Freeman (1960) in his volume as a case study of a cognatic social system which would serve to provide templates for 'the types and organizational variations of cognatic societies' (Murdock 1960b: 7).

In exploring his particular proposition in relation to the importance of the Iban for anthropological contemplation and theorising, Appell also devises a very useful categorisation of the major themes in research on the Iban. Some of these can most certainly provide the basis for a wider categorisation of the literature on Borneo Studies whilst others are rather more specific to the Iban.

Appell's categories for his discussion of the Iban literature comprise: (1) social organisation and the nature of cognatic societies; (2) the cultural ecology of swidden agriculture; (3) the analysis of land tenure; (4) the nature of egalitarian society; (5) ethnogenesis; (6) gender studies; (7) warfare, headhunting and the expansion of the Ibans; (8) religion, ritual and symbolism; (9) oral literature;

(10) regional variation in Ibanic cultures; and (11) problems of social change. These categories not only reflect the emphases in the literature on the Iban, which of course also reflect some of the major characteristics of Iban society, culture and history, but they also reflect some of Appell's own theoretical concerns, particularly in his own work on social organisation, land tenure and social change. Of course, there has also been a significant amount of research which has emerged since the publication of his paper which would require the elaboration of his categories. But if we wish to use this categorisation for a more general exploration of the literature on Borneo then obviously we would need to widen some of the categories and also rearrange them. Nevertheless, the strength of Appell's paper is that he provides a detailed summary and evaluation of the literature in the categories which he formulates. Let us consider these in more detail.

1. Social organisation and the nature of cognatic societies is certainly a theme which has played a major part in research on Borneo, and the Iban have been a paradigmatic case in this respect, as I have already said. I would suggest that this theme should include such other organisational principles as residence and territory, age, class, status and power (I would bring the issues raised by Iban egalitarianism, and the debates on equality and inequality, into the general category of social organisation), and likewise gender (Appell's category of gender studies seems more appropriate in a general consideration of social organisation).
2. The emphasis on the cultural ecology of swidden agriculture could be broadened to include a wide range of studies on rural development, agricultural modernisation and resettlement among the Iban and other populations in Borneo, and I would bring land tenure into this category in addition to broader environmental issues and environmental history (see, for example, Wadley 2005).
3. The concept of ethnogenesis, which refers to the emergence of identities and the ways in which groupings and categories of people come to a consciousness of their difference from others in what has come to be called 'ethnic' terms and the ways in which this consciousness is expressed, sustained and transformed, perhaps requires a greater stress on interethnic relations and boundary-crossing, and, as with the work of such researchers as John Postill, an increasing emphasis on the whole field of the media, nation-building and identities (1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2008; and Barlocco 2008, 2009, 2010). I would bring Appell's category of regional variation in Ibanic cultures into this category of ethnogenesis, interethnic relations and identity.
4. Warfare, headhunting and the expansion of the Iban is a very important theme in Iban history, but processes of migration, expansion and interethnic conflicts have a more general importance in Borneo, and certainly these considerations along with ethnohistory can embrace other literature as well.
5. Religion, ritual and symbolism can also serve as a general category along with processes of religious conversion.
6. Although Appell indicates oral literature within his major categories we might want to expand this into the fields of language and linguistics to provide again a more general delimitation of a field of studies.

7. Problems of social change (perhaps we should extend this to cultural, economic and political change) also embrace rural–urban migration and urbanisation, and this area of study both within the Iban literature and more widely should include such matters as urban identities and the emergence of an urban middle class [we should note that in the concern with migration, perhaps for the Iban at least more attention might be given to the changing institution of *bejalai* to carry on Peter Kedit’s work (1993, and see 1980)]. There is also the interesting phenomenon of the Iban diaspora (and this applies to other Borneo communities as well) now residing and working outside Borneo (in peninsular Malaysia and Singapore especially). Studies of tourism are gaining ground in Borneo, but they can also be included within the general field of social, cultural and economic change.
8. There are other areas which are not really covered directly in Appell’s categorisation, one of which is that of material culture and museum studies.
9. There is also the category of film, photography, dance and performance.

Therefore, with appropriate modifications in Appell’s scheme there seems to me to be several of these which can be applied across Borneo. However, I think a thematic categorisation should be brought together with a chronological treatment of the field of studies whilst also drawing attention to significant debates and controversies and to the work of prominent scholars who have made major contributions to our understanding of social and cultural organisation and change.

There is more to say about Appell’s contribution at this juncture (and see Chap. 2). Given his long involvement in Borneo Studies and the *Borneo Research Bulletin*, and his coordination of gatherings of Borneo scholars, particularly at the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association, George Appell has also produced important Borneo-wide edited volumes. I have already referred to his general study of cognation (1976a) along with another edited book which covers a range of issues including religion and symbolism (1976b). He has also undertaken other surveys of social science work on Borneo, for example his edited volume with Leigh Wright on social science research in Sarawak (1978, and see Appell 1969a, 1977), and Sabah (for example, 1968) and his direction of our attention to urgent anthropological research which is required for Borneo (for example, 1969b, 1970).

5.4 Early Materials on Kalimantan

With reference to Chap. 2 I take up here the review of research and publications on Borneo from when I entered this field of studies in the late 1960s to early 1970s. I have already set the scene in a consideration of the pioneering work of the late 1940s, 1950s and into the 1960s. Looking back on my preparation for field research in Kalimantan, there was precious little modern field research to access, in contrast

to what was then available on Sarawak and to some extent Sabah. Having learned to read Dutch I covered about everything that was relevant in missionary journals and archives and in the work of A.W. Nieuwenhuis (1900, 1904–1907, 1994; and see van Goor 1995 and Sellato 1993), J.J.K. Enthoven (1903) (enormously important for my historical work), P.J. Veth (1854–1856), Donatus Dunselman (see, for example, 1955, 1959), M.C. Schadee (see, for example, 1903–1904–1905–1906–1907), G.A.F. Molengraaff (1900), as well as Karl Helbig’s work in German (1955) (see, for references King 1985; and for a commentary on Dutch sources Avé, King and de Wit 1983).

But in English there had only been a handful of studies. Those scholars whom I contacted were unfailingly helpful: Herb and Pat Whittier whom I met in Hull in 1971 on their return from Kalimantan and who had undertaken work on the Kenyah in the Apo Kayan [see Herb Whittier’s thesis (1973) on symbols of social differentiation which had a great influence on some of my subsequent work on the symbolism of social stratification, and Pat Whittier’s (1981), on systems of appellation]; Alf and Judith Hudson (1978) who had worked on the Ma’anyan in southeastern Borneo (his doorstep of a thesis at Cornell (1967) on their social structure and culture was an excellent model of its time on how to handle cognatic social systems). The Hudsons’ work, and then through the linguistic work which Alf Hudson did (see, for example, 1977), also had a major ethnographic influence on me (and see 1967). I called on them to contribute to *Essays on Borneo societies* (1978) along with George Appell (Rungus) (1978b), Jay Crain (Lun Dayeh) (1978), Stephen Morris (Melanau) (1978), Jérôme Rousseau (Kayan) (1978), Cliff Sather (Bajau Laut) (1978), William Schneider (Selako) (1978) and Herb Whittier (Kenyah) (1978).

Though perhaps less useful there was also the mission-based work of William Conley on *The Kalimantan Kenyah: a study of tribal conversion in terms of dynamic cultural themes* (1976). In correspondence with Needham (who directed me to Hans Schärer’s work, 1963), with Tom Harrisson (rather terse exchanges), and in my meetings with Anthony Richards and Edmund Leach in Cambridge I accessed much of what I could on Indonesian Borneo and other relevant literature on the northern Borneo territories. Though I did not contact him directly, I had also read all the published work in article form of Douglas Miles on the Ngaju of Central Kalimantan. Subsequently he published his *Cutlass and crescent moon: a case study of social and political change in outer Indonesia* (1976) which was an early study of interethnic relations between Banjarese Malays and Ngaju Dayaks, based on field research undertaken in 1961–63 (and see Alexander 2008 and Miles 1994). The most valuable pre-fieldwork meeting was with Jan B. Avé in Leiden and through him my introduction to the world of Dutch ethnology and history, museum collections on Kalimantan, photographic materials and the Leiden school of structural anthropology (see King 2012c), and his recommendation that I read, among many others, Waldemar Stöhr’s *Das Totenritual der Dajak* (1959). A rather curious though also important book which he recommended was Tjilik Riwt’s *Kalimantan memanggil* (1958).

5.5 Expansion in the 1960s and 1970s: Ethnic and Ethnographic Infilling, with Some Conceptual Development

There was a veritable explosion of doctoral studies on Borneo in the 1960s and into the 1970s which I kept track of and read avidly, though these were primarily presenting ethnographic data on social organisation and, on occasion, such cultural matters as religion, and various dimensions of change and development. These latter themes or what we might term social and economic transformations (whether spontaneous or government and institutionally driven) were to become much more important from the late 1970s and into the 1980s and 1990s. In other words, while this early body of work might well be structured in terms of a particular research theme or interest or in relation to a particular concept or conceptual framework, their main purpose was to present an ethnographic record on a population, which usually had not been the subject of previous detailed, first-hand field study. The tendency for foreign researchers (myself included) was to go where others had not been and studied before; many of us were into anthropological imperialism in those days, laying claim to peoples and places which others had so far not managed to claim before our arrival. Perhaps we might refer to this as a period of ethnic and ethnographic infilling, and in some cases ethnographic elaboration.

Apart from the studies of the Iban which continued to proliferate, the rest of Borneo seemed to be a landscape of opportunity for anthropologists. What, I think, characterises this period is the undertaking of research primarily by overseas researchers, primarily American, still primarily male, still primarily in Sarawak, and primarily pursuing projects of their own choosing for their doctoral studies. There was also a scatter of researchers from other English-speaking countries: Britain, Australia, Canada. During this early period there was little evidence of local scholars undertaking research [with the exception of such Iban experts as Benedict Sandin (for example, 1967) and Peter Kedit (1980)], and this, along with changing government priorities in Borneo resulted in a very marked shift from the mid-1970s in what was to be studied and how it was to be done.

But this early period of activity saw other parts of Borneo (other than Sarawak) gradually coming into the purview of modern social science. I have already referred to the early anthropological studies in Kalimantan by the Hudsons, the Whittiers, Douglas Miles and William Conley, and by me as the lone British researcher (though in terms of its size and ethnic diversity Kalimantan was only sparsely covered, see also Martin Baier, 'Das Adatbusrecht der Ngaju-Dajak', 1977). Brunei also began to be the subject of serious and sustained research with the studies of Donald E. Brown, best known for his *Brunei: the structure and history of a Bornean Malay sultanate* (1970), based on his Cornell doctoral thesis 'Socio-political history of Brunei: a Bornean Malay sultanate' (1969), and a wide range of papers on social organisation and sociohistorical analysis (see King 1994a, 1996, 2001).

Brown, like some other senior anthropologists, particularly Freeman and Needham, was also to make a contribution to wider anthropological debates.

He moved beyond Borneo in his later work, most prominently in his *Principles of social structure: South East Asia* (1976). In that book he explored the concept of ‘corporation’ and its utility in the structural analysis of social forms and processes, and then illustrated the operation of a range of principles of organisation: sex/gender, age, ethnicity, locality, descent, ritual and belief, common property interests, occupation, rank and voluntary association; and demonstrated the inter-relationship between different principles of organisation in the Brunei case.

In addition, a theme which Brown had developed in relation to his Brunei materials was that of the relationship between social stratification and historiography in his *Hierarchy, history, and human nature: the social origins of historical consciousness* (1988). He later turned this interest into a wide-ranging comparative study which examined, in the context of social hierarchy, the question of why some societies suppress history or at least do not take a particular interest in it, and why some celebrate and emphasise it. Finally, in his *Human universals* (1991), and the subsequent papers which developed from it (for example, 2004), Brown comes close to Derek Freeman’s concerns in his exploration of the fields of human biology, genetics, ethology, neurology and psychology. (We have already noted Freeman’s conversion from a British-based social structure-focused perspective and one which was critical of the ‘culturalist’ position of such American anthropologists as Franz Boas and Margaret Mead.) Rather than cultural relativism and the emphasis on human differences, Brown, moving from a concern with ‘corporations’ and social structure, searches for similarities in human behaviour, personality and culture rooted in human nature and the human mind, in interaction with the natural and cultural environment within which they are embedded.

There is another interesting connection between some of Brown’s and indeed Freeman’s work with that of Rodney Needham in the latter’s increasing interest in with what he himself referred to in Lévi-Straussian terms as the ‘fundamental structures of the human mind’ and ‘radical factors’ of thought and action. For Needham, in his later work, there was no such thing as ‘beliefs’ or ‘inner states’; these are the product of the working of the human brain, independent of language and culture. Needham therefore searched for the ‘cognitive universals’ or ‘primary factors’ generated by the human mind. These comprise such elements as colours, sacred numbers, symbolic polarities and their associations, right and left, percussion and transition, the sacred and the secular, and certain archetypal figures. For Needham kinship systems too can be reduced to a small number of organisational forms and marriage rules; and relationships between categories, groups and symbols can also be reduced to a limited number of possibilities (opposition, exchange, alternation, reversal, inversion, transition and complementarity). He published a series of tightly written and succinct volumes on these general cultural principles which he had been adumbrating since the 1970s (1978a, b, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1985, 1987, and see Forth 2010).

Two other contributions to the early development of Brunei anthropology came from Allen Maxwell and Linda Amy Kimball; there was Maxwell’s ethnographic thesis on the Kadayan in which he also explores issues of ethnic identity, ‘Urang Darat: an ethnographic study of the Kadayan of the Labu Valley, Brunei’ (Yale,

1980) and Linda Amy Kimball's 'The enculturation of aggression in a Brunei Malay village' (Ohio, 1975). Maxwell also undertook work on the Brunei Malay language and literature and on linguistic, historical and ethnographic matters in Sarawak; but he did not stray far from Borneo. Apart from her *Borneo medicine: the traditional healing art of indigenous Brunei Malay medicine* (1979) and *Alam Brunei: the world of traditional Brunei Malay culture* (1991), Linda Kimball also wrote with Colin Tweddell *Introduction to the peoples and cultures of Asia* (1985) and with Shawna Craig and Dale K. McGinnis *Anthropological world: an introduction to cultural anthropology* (1986).

A large amount of work was undertaken in Sarawak in the late 1950s, 1960s and into the 1970s, with a significant proportion of it on the Iban. Those studies which covered other groups included James Deegan on change among the Lun Bawang (1973), Roy Bruton on sociocultural transmission through schooling among the Bidayuh (1981), Roger Peranio on Bisayan social change (1977), Peter Metcalf on Berawan concepts and rituals of death (1976, 1981, 1982), Jérôme Rousseau on Kayan social organisation (1974), Iain Clayre on a grammatical description of the Melanau language (1972), B.G. Grijpstra on issues of Bidayuh rural development (1976), William Martin Schneider on Selako social organisation (1974), Richard Fidler (2010/1973) on a Chinese urban community in an upriver bazaar, and Zainal Kling on the social, economic and cultural organisation and values of the Saribas Malays (1973).

The substantial amount of work on the Iban included studies by Robert F. Austin on Iban migration (1977), Don David Cobb on Iban shifting cultivation (1988), Rob Cramb on Iban land tenure (1987), Michael Heppell on social control and socialisation (1975), James Jemut Masing's analysis of an Iban invocatory chant (1981), Motomitsu Uchibori on Iban eschatology and mortuary practices (1978, 1997), Margit Ilona Kományi on the involvement in decision-making of Iban women (1973), Christine Padoch on migration and its alternatives in long-settled Iban areas (1978), Richard L. Schwenk on the reasons underlying family innovativeness among the rural Iban (1975), James M. Seymour on rural schools and development (1972), Robert Pringle on the Iban under the Brooke raj (1967, 1970), Vinson Sutlive on the movement of Iban from the longhouse to the town (1972) and Clayton Hsin Chu on Iban shamanism (1978).

There was also more general work on rural settlement (Gale Dixon 1972), the social history of urban development in Kuching (Craig Lockard 1974, 1987), the development of political organisations (Michael Leigh 1971) and post-independence bureaucratic change and ethnicity in both Sarawak and Sabah (William Wu Shou-Chiang 1972).

Although not as significant in its quantity there was also important research undertaken in Sabah particularly following Appell's studies and publications in the 1960s; among others, David H. Fortier's study of cultural change among Chinese communities in rural areas (1964), Robert Harrison's study of socioeconomic variation among different Ranau Dusun agricultural communities (1971), Clifford A. Sather's study of Bajau Laut kinship and domestic relations (1971, 1978), Jay Bouton Crain's work on marriage and social exchange among the Lun Dayeh (1970), Elizabeth Koepping's study of Kadazan social relations (1981) and

Han Sin Fong's work on occupational patterns and social interaction among the Chinese (1971). A later edited volume by Sherwood G. Lingenfelter on *Social organization of Sabah societies* (1990) continues this earlier focus on social forms including kinship, and covering a range of other communities as well; and Jean Morrison addressed issues of gender among the Bajau (1993). Most recently scholars at Universiti Malaysia Sabah have carried on this tradition of field research (see, for example, Pugh-Kitingan 2004, 2012).

5.6 Studies in the 1980s: The Turn towards Development and Practice

In Kalimantan there was also a resurgence of studies: they include Michael Dove on the subsistence strategies of the Kantu' (1981), Richard Allen Drake on Mualang 'material provisioning' (1982), Francis McKeown on the Merakai Iban with special reference to dispute settlement (1983), Joseph Aaron Weinstock on religion and identity among the Luangan (1983), Bernard Sellato on the sedentarisation of hunting-gathering communities (1989), Carl Lewis Hoffman's controversial thesis on the Punan (1983, 1986), Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's study of politics and culture among the Meratus Dayaks (1984, 1993) and Olivier Sevin on a socio-geographical study of the Ngaju of the Seruyan and Kahayan (1983).

There was also a developing tendency in ethnic terms to begin to build upon work that had already been done, including the emphasis on Iban-related peoples in West Kalimantan which continued the focus on the Iban initiated by Freeman in neighbouring Sarawak; the development of work on the Barito-speaking populations initiated by Hudson; and comparative research on hunting-gathering or previously nomadic groups which had been pioneered by Needham in Sarawak. Research also continued on the Ngaju, a large and important population which had been the subject of interest in the work of Schärer and Miles, among others.

In Sarawak, too, we began to see the development of important work on the upriver Kajang groups related historically and culturally to the coastal Melanau and Morris's studies: Simon Strickland on the Kejaman and Sekapan (1986, 1995); Ida Nicolaisen on the Punan Bah (1976, 1977–1978, 1983, 1986, 1995), though she had also worked among other peoples as well which provided, among other publications, *The pastoral Tuareg* (with Johannes Nicolaisen 1997), and *Elusive hunters: the Haddad of Kanem and the Bahr el Ghazal* (2010); and Jennifer Alexander on the Lahanan (1987, 1989, 1990, 1992, 2006/1993), and with Paul Alexander (1995).

But from the late 1970s and onwards we can detect a significant shift in thematic interest and focus, prompted in no small part by the closer control which the three governments responsible for Borneo exercised over research undertaken by foreign researchers in particular. It was marked, among other developments, by Peter Kedit's announcement the *Sarawak Museum Journal* (1975) that henceforth research in Sarawak should be much more practically oriented and should address

the problems of sociocultural change in the state. This in turn coincided with the rapid increase in commercial logging in Sarawak, Sabah and Kalimantan and the obvious environmental, economic and social costs of the exploitation of the rainforests and the impacts on local communities. Reflecting on this period of research it is my view that we witnessed a significant shift in research themes, and I was certainly part of this movement towards applied studies and policy issues.

Of course, research of a more practical, applied nature was undertaken before then in the 1960s and 1970s (as we can see in some of the references above) and it was one of the principles underlying the much earlier Colonial Social Science Research Council-sponsored studies. But its prominence in government and academic agendas became especially pronounced in the last quarter of the twentieth century, and this is where the work of local researchers came to the fore as well. This was for obvious reasons. Local scholars were grappling with the serious issues of economic development and growth and their consequences, and government funding was very much directed to these concerns. However, I should state very strongly here that this stream of work is by no means devoid of theoretical content.

I have already made the case for the importance of the relationships between theory and practice in my *Anthropology and development in South-East Asia* (King 1999b). Only a brief catalogue of work can be provided here. In Sarawak there is a wide range of materials available [much has emerged from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) and government institutions, and see Poline Bala, Chap. 13], and quite a lot of the research appears in the form of doctoral theses (primarily written at overseas institutions). It includes work by Abang Azhari Hadari (1991), Abdul Majid Mat Salleh and Mohd Yusof Kasim (1990), Abdul Rashid Abdullah (1993), Warren Aris (1998), Poline Bala (2008), Madeline Berma (1996), Henry Chan (2007), Chin See Chung (1984), Dimbab Ngidang (1993), Hatta Solhee (1984), Hew Cheng Sim (2003, 2007, and see Chap. 11), Evelyne Hong (1977, 1985, 1987), Morni B. Kambrie (1990), Jayl Langub (1983), Jayum Jawan (1991), Jegak Uli (1996), Francis Jana Lian (1987), Salfarina Abdul Gapor (2001), Peter Songan (1992), and many others.

Overseas researchers also undertook work relevant to various practical development concerns, including Hanne Christensen (1997), Robert Cramb (1987, 2007), Arabella E. Duffield (1999), Robert Gerrits (1994), Monica Janowski (1991) and Jill Windle (1997). A similar account can also be given for Sabah where there has also been a very prominent emphasis on applied work through Universiti Malaysia Sabah [and such researchers as Fadzilah Majid Cooke (1999, 2006) and Paul Porodong (2010) among many others] and the Institute of Development Studies. There is also the work of foreign researchers such as Alison L. Hoare (2002), and the impetus given to development-oriented concerns early on through the advocacy of George Appell (1985a, and see Amity A. Doolittle 1999, 2005) among others. In Sabah, too, there has been a particular emphasis on issues to do with tourism and development; see for example, Goh Hong Ching (2007), Timothy Maurice Pianzin (1993), Ong Puay Liu (2000, 2008) and Zainab Khalifah (1997); on land settlement and rural development (Anna Hewgill 1999); and on issues to do with health and illness (Ismail Simon Charles 2004).

I have said elsewhere that this more practically oriented work demonstrates ‘the crucial need to address the human dimensions of development, the complexity of development interventions and the need to listen to the voices of ordinary people who are the targets of centrally planned policies’ (King 2009: 28, and see Zawawi 2001). Earlier on George Appell had made a similar case, and was especially concerned about the undermining of indigenous rights to land in Borneo and the emergence of landlessness (see, for example, 1985a, and Appell’s chapters on the Rungus and Bulusu’ in that volume). In Kalimantan, and especially in the eastern province, much of the research has focused on such issues as rainforest clearance, changing systems of shifting cultivation, sustainable agricultural systems, responses to such hazards as fire, off-farm work and rural–urban linkages, poverty, resettlement and transmigration, health issues and rural development, and ethnobotanical knowledge and use of medicinal plants. Among others there is the work of Syamsuni Arman (1987), Lucia Carol Cargill (1996), Carol Pierce Colfer (2008, and see Colfer, Peluso and Chin 1997), Stacy Marie Crevello (2003), Rokhmin Dahuri (1991), Michael Dove (1981), Cristina Eghenter (1995, and Eghenter, Sellato and Devung 2003), Stephanie Theresa Fried (1995), Mary Beth Fulcher (1983), Lisa Gollin (2001), Julia C. Hall (1993), Michaela Haug (2007, 2010), Aleksius Jemadu (1996), Han Knapen (2001), Indah D. Kusuma (2005), Danna Jo Leaman (1996), Cynthia Mackie (1986), Judith Hannah Mayer (1996), Frank Momberg (1993), Muhammad Yunus Rasyid (1982), Nancy Lee Peluso (1983), Nick N. Salafsky (1993), Donna Mayo Vargas (1985), Andrew P. Vayda (1981, 1983 and his senior role in the Man and Biosphere programme in particular), Reed L. Wadley (1997a), Danny Wilistra (2000) and William Bruce Wood (1985).

5.7 Culture and Identities

The applied, practical, policy concerns in Borneo research have continued within what we commonly refer to as development studies. But during the past 20 years there have been other developments which have emerged from and addressed issues which have come onto the wider social science agenda, and indeed which have a resonance in Borneo itself. Most of them can be captured within the frame of cultural studies, and have been taken up in my working paper *Culture and identity* which provides a much more extensive consideration of the relevant literature (2012a, and see Chap. 8). It is in the cultural realm (in the construction and contestation of identities and the relations between identity formation, nation-building and globalisation), and the discourses which are generated in the interfaces between people and the nation-state on which we need to focus. I will only summarise the contributions here which come under seven headings: (1) the nation-state, majorities and minorities; (2) religious conversion and identities; (3) the media, identities and nation-building; (4) borderlands, margins, migrations and identities; (5) interethnic relations and violence; (6) arenas for identity construction in tourism and museums; and finally (7) emerging middle classes,

lifestyles and identities in urban settings. These dimensions are considered in much more detail in the separate Chap. 8 in this volume, and only a brief summary is provided here.

5.7.1 *The Nation-State, Majorities and Minorities*

The first category covers the literature which moves from a focus on a local or defined population to one which sees a particular community or group within the nation-state and in engagement with political elites and associated dominant groups through which they have to negotiate their identity and resources. This category is best illustrated in Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's study of the Meratus Dayaks (1984, 1993), Kumpiady Widen's studies of Ma'anyan Dayaks (2001, 2002, and see his Chap. 12 in this volume; see also Zaenuddin Hudi Prasajo, Chap. 20, Kusni 1994, 2001), Kustanto's study of the Sungkung (2002), Hui Yew-Foong's (2011) and Mary Somers Heidhues's (2003) work on the Chinese in West Kalimantan, Laura Steckman's recent thesis on Dayak identity in relation to state action (2011), and Robert Winzeler's edited collection on the relationship between the state and minorities (1997), though there are many other studies which could be cited (see also King 2012a).

5.7.2 *Religious Conversion and Identities*

The literature on religious conversion and on transformations in religious ideas and practices has increased substantially in recent years and it points to a social and cultural process which has assumed much greater prominence in the context of nation-building in Borneo. To provide a context for these changes we are fortunate in having major studies of 'traditional' religions, which address issues of ritual performance, the language of ritual (in prayer, song, chant, myth, invocation), cosmology, symbolism, and the transitions involved in birth, initiation, marriage and death, the architectural and material expressions of religion, the ways in which health and illness are conceptualised and dealt with (in shamanism and spirit mediumship), and the interrelationships between religion and the mundane, everyday activities of securing a livelihood, particularly in the traditional pursuits of agriculture, and hunting and gathering. These studies include Ann L. Appleton's *Acts of integration, expressions of faith: madness, death and ritual in Melanau ontology* (2006); Jay Bernstein's study of Taman shamanism *Spirits captured in stone: shamanism and traditional medicine among the Taman of Borneo* (1997, and see 1991); Pascal Couderc and Kenneth Sillander's *Ancestors in Borneo societies: death, transformation, and social immortality* (2012); Julian Davison's *Image and metaphor: an analysis of Iban collective representations* (1987); Henry Gana Ngadi's *Iban rites of passage and some related ritual acts* (1988); Penelope Graham's *Iban shamanism:*

an analysis of the ethnographic literature (1987); Eva Maria Kershaw's *A study of Brunei Dusun religion: ethnic priesthood on a frontier of Islam* [2000, see also the work by Brunei Dusun researchers Bantong Antaran, *The Brunei Dusun* (1993) and Binchin Pudarno's recent study *Singing Siram Ditaan* (2014)]; Lake' Baling's *The old Kayan religion and the Bungan religious reform* (2002); James Jemut Masing's *The coming of the gods* (1981, and see the extended published version 1997); Peter Metcalf's *A Borneo journey into death* (1981, 1982) and *Where are you, spirits: style and theme in Berawan prayer* (1989); Stephen Morris's posthumous study of Melanau religion in *The Oya Melanau* (1997); Jérôme Rousseau's *Kayan religion: ritual life and religious reform in central Borneo* (1998); Benedict Sandin's *Iban adat and augury* (1980); Clifford Sather's *Seeds of play, words of power: an ethnographic study of Iban shamanic chants* (2001); Hans Schärer's important work on *Ngaju religion* (1963, 1946); Vinson Sutlive and Patricia Matusky's *Tears of sorrow, words of hope: an ethnographic study of Iban death chants* (2012); Motomitsu Uchibori's *The leaving of the transient world* (1978). It should be noted here that Metcalf, like some of the other anthropologists to whom I have referred in the context of the process of carrying debates beyond Borneo, has also produced work in the more general anthropological field [for example, his introductory text *Anthropology: the basics* (2005) and his reflective piece on doing fieldwork and its problems, *They lie, we lie: getting on with anthropology* (2002)].

Following Conley's early study of Kenyah religious conversion (1973), we have enjoyed a spate of studies, mainly examining processes of conversion and its social and cultural consequences, as well as the continuities and discontinuities which result from changes in religious belief and practice. Among others, there are studies by Asiyah az-Zahra Ahmad Kumpoh (2011), David G. Bonney (1995), Donald R. Bryant (1985), Liana Chua (2007a, b, 2009, 2012), Jennifer Connolly (2003), Michael Coomans (1980), J.A. Fowler (1976), Fridolin Ukur (1971), Annette Suzanne Harris (1995), Fiona Harris (2002), Arnold Leon Humble (1982), Sian Eira Jay (1991), Pamela Lindell (2000, 2008), Anne Schiller (1987, 1997, 2005), Tan Sooi Ling (2008), Larry Kenneth Thomson (2000), Mariko Urano (2002), Karen Westmacott (2002), and Zhu Feng (2004). Of course, particular religious configurations, specific beliefs and practices, and the connections established between myth, cosmology and ethnic origins are important ingredients in the construction and maintenance of identities. The major focus in research on Borneo has been on conversion to Christianity rather than to Islam, and the impetus for this has come from American missionary activity, though with a more modest interest from Britain and Germany. These issues are taken up in more detail in Chap. 8.

5.7.3 The Media, Identities and Nation-Building

The third category of research on identities in Borneo has taken the media route to nation-building and has posed the important question: How are communities and ethnic groups in Borneo responding and reacting to media-generated nation-building

in Malaysia and Indonesia? This is an emerging area of research pioneered by John Postill (2000, 2006), Fausto Barlocco (2008) and Poline Bala (2008), among others, and it explores dimensions of identity formation and the different ways in which minority populations respond to the opportunities and constraints presented within a nation-state structure.

5.7.4 Borderlands, Margins, Migrations and Identities

Research within the fourth category has focused primarily on Indonesian border populations and the responses of these marginal communities in territorial terms to the pressures of what is perceived to be a remote central government (which is dominated by culturally and ethnically different populations with different priorities); the work of Michael Eilenberg (2012) and with Reed L. Wadley (2009) is important here. Research on the Sarawak side of the border has also focused on spatially marginal populations, cross-border relations and the ambiguous and shifting relations with the nation-state (see Ishikawa 1998, 2010; Amster 1998; Bala 2002); this work also presents us with a range of case studies which complement and overlap with those on media-generated nation-building and the responses of minorities to the actions and ideologies of dominant political elites.

5.7.5 Interethnic Relations and Violence

As I have already indicated in my introductory remarks, this category of research has emerged in the necessary engagement with the violent interethnic conflicts in West and Central Kalimantan in the 1990s and the relationship between the construction, transformation and expression of ethnicity, the politicisation of identity, the underlying reasons for ethnic conflict, and its cultural patterning and local interpretation, in the work of an increasing number of anthropologists, historians and political scientists, among them Colombijn (2001), Colombijn and Lindblad (2002), Davidson (2002, 2008), Dove (2006), Harwell (2000), Hawkins (2000), Heidhues (2001), König (2012), Peluso (2003, 2006, 2008), Peluso and Harwell (2001), Sukandar (2007) and van Klinken (2004).

5.7.6 Arenas for Identity Construction in Tourism and Museums

I like to think that I encouraged an interest in tourism research in Borneo with the panel which I organised at the BRC conference in Sabah in 1992 (see King 1995).

This was a time when tourism began to be promoted very vigorously in Borneo. But, of course, there was already some work being undertaken on tourism by, among others, Heather Zeppel (1994). Encouragingly this interest has continued in, for example, studies by researchers in Sabah (already referred to above, Goh, Pianzin, Ong, Zainab), and Sarawak, including William Kruse's *Selling wild Borneo* (2003).

Prior to the establishment of universities in Borneo the museums were the major supporters and managers of research, the obvious example being the Sarawak Museum and subsequently the Brunei Museum. Yet their major influence has been in categorising ethnic groups and presenting particular interpretations of culture and identity by attaching items of material culture to them. What is more their role in relation to the general public and to tourist visitors has become increasingly important as state governments have seen museums as a significant government institution in tourism promotion. It is clear from the work of Dianne Tillotson (1994) and Christina Kreps (1994, and see her Chap. 9, and Bernard Sellato on material culture in Chap. 4) that museums are important agents for constructing and presenting culture, and as departments responsible to government they usually present a nation-state view of what ethnic groups are important and how they are defined (and see Gill 1968; Sellato 1992, 2012).

5.7.7 Emerging Middle Classes, Lifestyles and Identities in Urban Settings

Globalisation is one of our current preoccupations and we might have anticipated that research on Borneo would have reflected this concern. Unfortunately it has not. There is very little research available on urban societies in Borneo which documents what local people experience in relation to the most immediate manifestations of global processes and late modernity, through encounters with the state and bureaucracy, nation-building symbols and actions, the media, technology and consumerism, international tourists, and representatives of other ethnic groups. There is nevertheless an emerging, though still rather modest interest in identity construction in urban areas and the lifestyles of an expanding middle class (see, for example, Boulanger 1999, 2000, 2002, 2008, 2009).

5.8 Some Controversies

An additional way in which we can usefully survey some of the field of Borneo Studies is by examining particular debates and controversies. It is interesting in surveying the field of studies that several of the debates turn on the problem of identities and the identification, labelling and depiction of ethnic groups and categories and the ways in which these groups have interacted with and encountered

each other through time. Other issues tend to concern themselves with problems of ethnographic accuracy and those to do with social organisation, including the relationships between social groups and rights in property and access to material resources.

In the pages of the *Borneo Research Bulletin* one could point immediately to George Appell's excursion into ethnographic errors in *Borneo Studies* (1991, 1992), and Roger Kershaw's emulation of this exercise with reference to 'errors and imbalances' in 'foreign analysis' of ethnic minorities in late twentieth-century Brunei (2010). A specific example of these kinds of ethnographic debates can be found in the exchanges between George Appell, Peter R. Goethals, Robert Harrison and Clifford Sather, on the one hand, and Thomas Rhys Williams (1969), on the other, in relation to the latter's work on the Sabah Dusun (see Appell 1965, 1966, 1967; Appell et al. 1966; Sather 1967).

Another rather long-running debate was directed to systems of land tenure and property-holding groups in Borneo with reference to 'ecological determinism' which started with a brief and exploratory paper in the *Borneo Research Bulletin* by George Appell on the possible relationships between such environmental variables as rainfall and soil and the kinds of rights and access which farmers establish in land (1971a). Appell's interesting proposition emerged from his ongoing concerns with land tenure, property systems and jural relations (see, for example, Appell 1971b, and see 1974, 1997a, b).

His paper sparked a whole series of interventions, ethnographic additions, rejoinders and disagreements among several anthropologists who published their views primarily in the *Borneo Research Bulletin*; there was also a wider literature relevant to these concerns: Gale Dixon (1974), Victor King (1975), Joseph Weinstock (1979a, b, 1981), Michael Dove (1980, 1982), and a later follow up on Kayan land tenure with Jérôme Rousseau (1987) and George Appell (1986, and see Appell 1997a), and on Iban land tenure (Cramb 1989; Wadley 1997b). Debates turned on the reliability of the data, the specific cases used and the importance of using indigenous terms and categories and not externally imposed and generated ones, the complexity of the combination of factors at play—social, cultural, economic, environmental, historical, political—and the lines of causality involved, keeping in mind the possibility of multiple or plural causality (see, for example, Dove 1982: 31–33). Appell's subsequent research among the Bulusu' of north-eastern Kalimantan added a further dimension to his understanding of these issues and he recognised the importance of addressing historical circumstances (1983, 1985a, b), and the ecological significance of sacred groves (1997b).

Returning to some of the debates and controversies on ethnic identities, these have revealed sharp differences of view over the nomenclature of ethnic groups which in turn is related to how these groups are constituted and differentiated in the interpretations presented by anthropologists and other social scientists. Tom Harrison's and Rodney Needham's exchange over 'Punan' and 'Penan' comes to mind immediately (Harrison 1949a, b, 1959, 1975; Needham 1953, 1954a, b, 1955, 1972; Jayl Langub 1975). Needham was arguing against the dangers of viewing hunter-gatherers as linguistically and culturally homogeneous, and there

has been a subsequent intense debate about hunting-gathering as a definable mode of livelihood, about the origins of hunter-gatherers, whether or not they are best understood in terms of ecological autonomy and independence or as engaged in a relatively regular way with agriculturalists, about the appropriateness of the distinctions between an agricultural and a hunting-gathering way of life, and about processes of sedentarisation and devolution (see Lars Kaskija 2002, 2012, and his Chap. 6 in this volume).

Much of this debate was instigated by Carl Hoffman's provocative thesis entitled *Punan* (1983, and see 1984) and the book published from it *The Punan: hunters and gatherers of Borneo* (1986, and see Hildebrand 1982) based on his argument that hunter-gatherers are devolved agriculturalists, specialising in the collection of valuable products from the rainforest which are channelled into Asian networks of trade through persisting relations between forest nomads and neighbouring agriculturalists. This in turn led to deliberations on the constitution of the Punan as a category of populations in Borneo which could in some way be differentiated from others, or a category which was more appropriately characterised as diverse in sociocultural, ethnic and ecological terms.

Hoffman's thesis led to a series of counter-arguments about, among others, (1) the viability of hunting-gathering without the need to engage in trade in forest products; (2) that rather than devolution from settled agriculture the most common processes at work in Borneo have been in the reverse direction from hunting-gathering to settled agriculture; and (3) that it is misleading to characterise livelihoods in terms of a too simple distinction between agriculture and nomadism; instead there is a continuum of activity from farming to horticulture to hunting-gathering, and various populations move between various of these activities or practise them simultaneously. These detailed studies of nomadism have come from Bernard Sellato on a range of forest nomad groupings in Kalimantan (1986, 1988, 1989, 1994, 2002), J. Peter Brosius on the Penan Gang (1988, 1991, 1992), Nicolas Césard on the Punan Tubu' (2007, 2009), Shanthi Thambiah on the Bhuket of Sarawak and West Kalimantan (1995), Rajindra Kumar Puri on the Penan Benalui (1997, 2006), Katherine Holmsen on the Punan Kelai at Long Suluy (2006), Henry Chan on Punan Vuhang (2007) and Lars Kaskija on the Punan Malinau and other groups in East Kalimantan (2002, 2012), among others. The enormous literature on hunter-gatherers and logging and that which relates to Bruno Manser (2004) and other opposition activities certainly merits examination, probably starting with Tim Bending's work on 'contentious narratives' (2006, and see King for a review of Bending and Puri 2006).

As for other discussions and debates, I have already referred to some of these in Chap. 2, in relation to Derek Freeman's work (see 1953, 1957, 1960, 1961, 1970), particularly with regard to the concept of the kindred and familial units (see, for example, King 1976, 1991, 1994b, 2013; Appell 1976c; Smart 1971); on ritual and symbolic interpretation (Barrett and Lucas 1993; Jensen 1968, 1974; King 1977, 1980; Needham 1964; Freeman 1967, 1968, 1975, 1979); and between Freeman (1981) and Rousseau (1980) on Iban social inequality. Following on from this debate, the issues surrounding so-called 'egalitarian' and 'ranked' or 'stratified'

societies and the concepts of 'equality' and 'inequality' in Borneo have been explored in considerable detail by a range of researchers. The most significant issues and arguments have been brought together in an insightful and meticulous paper by Clifford Sather 'All threads are white' (1996). Our understanding of the complexities of the relations between equality, autonomy, hierarchy, control and dependence have also been advanced and debated by, among others, Jennifer Alexander (1990, 1992, 2006) with reference to the Lahanan, and Rita Armstrong (1991, 1992, see also 1998) with a focus on the Kenyah-Badeng. Christine Helliwell further develops our understanding of these relationships between equality and their more subtle conceptualisations arising from her field research among the Gerai of West Kalimantan (1990, 1994, 1995, 2001, 2006). I noted these developments briefly in a reprint of my *Essays on Borneo societies* (King 1994b: vii–x) and argued that the relations between cognation, equality and hierarchy also required much greater attention and analysis (King 1991).

Rather than the simplistic distinction between egalitarianism and hierarchy and equality and inequality these later contributions to the debates argue for the need to examine the relationships between ideology and practice (an egalitarian ideology can coexist and interrelate with unequal relations and outcomes in practice); the 'equality of potential' can exist in a dialectical relationship with the 'attainment of achieved inequality' in the operation of ideas about individuality, autonomy and merit (Sather 1996: 73–78); inequality in the domain of politics can be found in relation to relative equality in matters of material life and gender and there are often differences between relationships in the domestic or internal and the public or external spheres of life; ethnic groups characterised or categorised as either 'egalitarian' or 'stratified' are commonly not homogeneously organised social entities and the boundaries between ethnic groups are frequently fuzzy and ill-defined; and we should acknowledge that social forms are dynamic and are subject to change by human agency over time. In other words, in any given social unit the principles of equality and inequality are in dynamic tension one with the other.

The earlier preoccupations with the delineation, definition and description of bounded social groups such as households, longhouses and villages, and the debates about the nature of kindreds and their utility in helping us to capture the main forms and processes of social life in Borneo societies (see, for example, the debate between King 1976 and Appell 1976c) (and the same can be said for debates about whether or not a particular society or ethnic group is egalitarian or hierarchical) have given way to much more fine-grained analyses and discussions of individuals, groupings and communities (which are usually not clearly demarcated). The work of Christine Helliwell on the Gerai of West Kalimantan demonstrates the problems of defining longhouses and communities in terms of clearly defined, independent households ('*Never stand alone*': a study of Borneo sociality, 2001, and see 2006), and Rita Armstrong's work has addressed the problematical distinction between egalitarian and stratified societies with reference to the Kenyah-Badeng (see *People of the same heart: the social world of the Kenyah Badeng*, 1991, and 1992). The concepts of sociality, domesticity, domestic conflict, personhood, rice/ritualised hearths, 'house societies', and authority and social action are also explored to demonstrate the

complexity of social relations, which in the earlier literature on Bornean societies tended to be seen in terms of corporate and bounded units of one kind or another or 'jural personalities' (see, for example, Véronique Béguet on Iban 1993; Monica Janowski on Kelabit 1991; Antonio Guerreiro on Modang 1984; Kenneth Sillander on Bentian 2004; Fudiat Suryadikara on Banjarese 1988).

Studies of social units such as the household have also given way not only to studies of individuals and networks and the permeability of boundaries but to studies of gender in relation to such processes as socioeconomic change and culture (see, for example, Hew Cheng Sim on Bidayuh 2003, and see 2007 and Chap. 11 in this volume; Morrison on Bajau 1993; Mashman 1991; and Gavin 1996, 2003/2004 on Iban; and for more wide-ranging coverage Sutlive 1991). But, as Harris says in relation to research on Sarawak (which applies to the other parts of Borneo as well): 'Little research has been published that includes a discussion of gender issues, and Sarawak women have little or no voice in the ethnographies' (2008: 57, and see Graham 1996).

Perhaps to conclude this brief review of debates and controversies, I should make reference to one in which I have been involved in relation to the Maloh of the Upper Kapuas and my monograph on the ethnography and sociohistory of social inequality (1985). It brings together a number of issues which I have just raised, particularly in relation to debates and differences of view about identities and the identification of ethnic units in Borneo, interethnic relations, the nature of cognatic society and the problematical conceptualisation, analysis and sociocultural expressions of equality and inequality. Although it is difficult to reflect on one's own work in relation to studies of other societies in Borneo, it might be suggested that my study of the 'Maloh' has produced considerable controversy in which both foreign and local scholars have been involved (aside from myself there have been local researchers from the Embaloh and Taman communities themselves, from Java working in French, from the Netherlands, Japan, and the United States); or, if not directly involved in the debates they have at least contributed to the ethnography of the debate.

It is gratifying that so many researchers, including local social scientists have undertaken studies of this complex of communities in West Kalimantan which I originally labelled 'Maloh', following Iban convention and the commonly used nomenclature in the Sarawak literature (see, for example, Harrison 1965, 1966). Debates have been conducted on ethnic identity and the appropriateness or otherwise of certain ethnic referents as well as on the forms of social structure and actions, relations and behaviour which flow from particular principles of organisation. I have tried to capture the sense of these debates, and to resolve some of the differences of opinion in two papers, one in the *Borneo Research Bulletin* entitled 'Who are the Maloh? Cultural diversity and cultural change in interior Indonesian Borneo' (2002) and 'A question of identity: names, societies and ethnic groups in interior Kalimantan and Brunei Darussalam' in *Sojourn* (2001), the latter paper bringing together issues raised from the Maloh literature, and also from discussions in which Donald Brown (1998) and Allen Maxwell (1996) became involved stemming from my arguments in 'What is Brunei society? Reflections on a

conceptual and ethnographic issue' (1994a, 1996; and see Kershaw 2010). The major issues of ethnic labelling were also brought together by Reed L. Wadley in 'Reconsidering an ethnic label in Borneo: the Maloh of West Kalimantan, Indonesia' (2000).

Literature relevant to the Maloh debates includes work by Y.C. Thambun Anyang (1996, 1998, and see Sellato 1998), Mudiyono Diposiswoyo (1985), Henry Arts (1991), Jay Bernstein (1991, 1997), Jacobus E. Frans (1992, and Irene A. Muslim and Jacobus E. Frans 1994), Anna Samagat Juliana (1992) and Katsumi Okuno (1997). These debates raise the interesting question of how and why certain ethnic labels gain currency and are adopted by the people in question (the term 'Iban' is a case in point) and others remain the subject of dispute and are not accepted by those so named, and the role of the anthropologist and local scholars in this process. Another element in the debates is the issue of social inequality, how it is expressed in the society in question, by whom, and how the anthropologist interprets it. My view is clear on this: that systems of social organisation are flexible and subject to change; they cannot be easily and firmly categorised; individuals and groups deploy concepts of equality and inequality in a language of contestation and competition; and the communities and ethnic groups we study are interrelated and interact with their neighbours, and given increased physical and social mobility are embedded in wider, globalising systems; this in turn suggests that we cannot understand how societies and cultures are constructed and are changed within the confines of any one unit however defined (whether Bidayuh, Iban, Gerai, Maloh, Modang, Kenyah or Kayan).

In formulating my views about centres and margins/peripheries, and in my excursions into the examination of the complex interrelationships between ethnic groups, communities, and political units, I have of course been much influenced by the work of Leach (1950, 1954), but also by, among others, Christopher Healey on 'tribes' and 'states' in Borneo (1985, though I do not agree with everything he has to say about interethnic relations), and on a wider scale Bennet Bronson's perspectives on upstream and downstream interactions (1977).

5.9 Final Thoughts

5.9.1 *My Top Twenty*

In undertaking such a stock-taking exercise and by way of conclusion I thought it useful to try to list what we might consider to be the top 20 contributions to Borneo Studies in the field of the social sciences, broadly defined. This is a very personal list and one which I found most difficult to compile. Perhaps I should have included journal papers and book chapters. Instead I have only selected books. I do not rank them in order of priority, but my guess is that several of the books here would appear on most researchers' lists. It is important to think about the major

contributions to our knowledge of the societies and cultures of Borneo, and also to think about how those key contributions have influenced and changed our understanding.

My twenty most significant books on Borneo are:

- Derek Freeman. 1970. *Report on the Iban*.
- Robert Pringle. 1970. *Rajahs and rebels: the Ibans of Sarawak under Brooke rule 1841–1941*.
- Robert Hertz. 1960. *Death and the right hand*.
- Hans Schärer. 1963. *Ngaju religion: the conception of God among a South Borneo people*.
- Alfred B. Hudson. 1967. *Padju Epat: the ethnography and social structure of a Ma'anjan Dayak group in southeastern Borneo*.
- W.R. Geddes. 1957. *Nine Dayak nights*.
- Jérôme Rousseau. 1990. *Central Borneo: ethnic identity and social life in a stratified society*.
- Benedict Sandin. 1967. *The Sea Dayaks of Borneo before white Rajah rule*.
- Bernard Sellato. 1994. *Nomads of the Borneo rainforest: the economics, politics, and ideology of settling down, and as Nomades et sédentarisation à Bornéo: histoire économique et sociale* (1989).
- Tjilik Riwut. 1958. *Kalimantan memanggil*.
- Donald E. Brown. 1970. *Brunei: the structure and history of a Bornean Malay sultanate*.
- J.J.K. Enthoven. 1903. *Bijdragen tot de geographie van Borneo's westerafdeeling*.
- Han Knapen. 2001. *Forests of fortune? The environmental history of Southeast Borneo, 1600–1880*.
- John Postill. 2006. *Media and nation building: how the Iban became Malaysian*.
- George N. Appell, ed. 1976a. *The societies of Borneo: explorations in the theory of cognatic social structure*.
- Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing. 1993. *In the realm of the diamond queen: marginality in an out-of-the-way place*.
- Peter Metcalf. 2010. *The life of the longhouse: an archaeology of ethnicity*.
- Waldemar Stöhr. 1959. *Das Totenritual der Dajak*.
- Traude Gavin. 2003/2004. *Iban ritual textiles*.
- H.F. Tillema. 1938, and 1989. *Apo-Kajan, een filmreis naar en door Centraal Borneo*.

In presenting an overview of the field we should reflect on and recapture what has already been discussed and reconsider the ways in which we are best able to arrange and evaluate the literature. We have used an overlapping set of organisational principles based on chronology, themes, individual legacies and contributions, and debates and controversies.

5.9.2 *An Overall Perspective*

Chronological: we have moved from earlier studies and those which set the baselines for future work; through to ethnographic expansion and infilling; the shift to applied work and policy-related concerns; the increasing concern with agency and fluidity and away from earlier social structural and corporatist analyses of Borneo social organisation; the all-consuming interest in identity construction, maintenance and transformation (including issues, among others, to do with minorities, nation-states, borders and boundaries, the media; and local agency and response to wider forces of change and globalisation).

Thematic: we have considered the main areas of social and cultural life which have engaged researchers in Borneo: cognation and kindreds; equality and inequality; the symbolism of death, shamanism and religion; rural development and change; ecology, the destruction of the rainforests, swidden agriculture and hunting-gathering; culture and identity, and so on.

Debates and controversies: here we have considered what issues have encouraged researchers in this field to engage in debates and scholarly exchanges; these include discussions of the factors which might explain variations in land tenure systems and property rights; ethnic nomenclature, classification and identity; the characterisation, definition and explanation for the nomadic way of life; explanations for symbolic forms; the nature of cognation and the analysis of social forms (kindreds, households, longhouses, communities); and the relationships between equality and hierarchy.

There is much more I could have referred to and discussed in this introductory overview. It is, in many respects, a starting point in the consideration of research on Borneo as a field of studies which has both relied upon and contributed to the more general field of anthropology and the wider social sciences. It is the first major attempt, I think, to take stock and to reflect on what has been achieved in scholarship in the post-war period and it has said something about what has been achieved during the period of independence and the era of nation-building and development.

What is clear, however, is that there has been a noticeable increase in the amount of work undertaken by institutions and scholars based in Borneo, and this trend will undoubtedly continue. It was to be expected that, in the early stages of research in Borneo Studies, foreign scholars would be dominant. But this situation has been changing certainly since the 1980s. Moreover, we are now witnessing a very welcome development—there is now much more collaboration between foreign and locally-based researchers, and the workshop which was organised at Universiti Brunei Darussalam provides an excellent example of this scholarly collaboration in evaluating what has been achieved and where we might go from here.

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Chapter 6

Devolved, Diverse, Distinct? Hunter-Gatherer Research in Borneo

Lars Kaskija

Abstract In this chapter, past and present research on Borneo hunter-gatherers is reviewed briefly, followed by a general discussion of the category referred to as the hunter-gatherers of Borneo, their presumed origin/s, their distinctiveness, or their inclusion in wider sociopolitical contexts. It is suggested that our descriptions, besides emphasising techno-economic factors, often emanate from rather simple dichotomies, where people and subsistence strategies are sorted into more or less ideal and homogenous types. Today, however, no simple picture of Borneo hunter-gatherers, past or present, can be put forward. Not only is our knowledge of hunter-gatherers in Borneo limited, it covers a very thin layer of time. Even though the huge data gap that exists between historic and prehistoric hunter-gatherers will never be bridged, present and future research in social or natural sciences (e.g. anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, palynology, paleobiology and genetics) will almost certainly generate an increasingly complex and ambiguous picture of Borneo hunter-gatherers, transcending any single grand theory and thereby reshaping and enriching our perception of the past, as well as the present.

Keywords Borneo · Hunter-gatherers · Social science · Social transformation · Subsistence system · Punan

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6.1 Introduction

Hunter-gatherers are, as the name implies, a category that is defined by the way in which they primarily subsist.¹ By utilising wild, natural resources through fishing, hunting and gathering, they also represent the most ancient way in which humans have made a living. Therefore, people designated as hunter-gatherers are often judged by not only the way in which they subsist but also by our visions of their distant past. This prehistoric dimension lurks constantly in the background when contemporary hunter-gatherers are discussed, sometimes leading even researchers to make simple, underlying assumptions about the authenticity of these groups.

Hunter-gatherer studies, however, leave very little room for simplistic assumptions. As a category, hunter-gatherers represent a truly elusive and ‘unruly class of human society, with ambiguous boundaries’ (Ames 2004: 364), and research conducted in recent decades has painted an increasingly complex picture of hunter-gatherers in different times and in different parts of the world. Although there are similarities in the ways in which they have gained a livelihood, groups of hunter-gatherers, both past and present, show a considerable degree of cultural diversity, variation and elusiveness (Ames 2004; Biesbrouck et al. 1999; Kent 1996; Kelly 1995; Lourandos 1997; Woodburn 2000). In addition, this variation is accompanied by a truly wide variety of basic assumptions, theories and opinions characterising the scientific study of hunter-gatherers. Actually, everything about them seems to ‘evoke vigorous differences of opinion’, says James Woodburn (2000: 78). Their elusiveness makes ‘facts... hard to obtain, and even when obtained, become matters of dispute’ (ibid.). Hunter-gatherer studies often seem to reveal more about ourselves, and the age in which we live, than about the people we claim to portray. In the words of Warren Shapiro (1998: 489), hunter-gatherer studies are ‘profoundly embedded in ideology’.

This chapter focuses particular attention on hunter-gatherer research in Borneo, an area with roughly 25,000 (former/contemporary) hunter-gatherers, who represent a linguistically, socially and culturally diverse and heterogeneous category of indigenes. To what degree they represent a clearly distinct category of people has been questioned. Some would even argue that they are merely an imaginary category and a ‘fanciful image’ (Hoffman 1983a: 1).

It has also been questioned whether it has ever been possible to survive solely by hunting and gathering in tropical rainforests. Data from twentieth-century rainforest hunter-gatherers worldwide indicate that most of them rely heavily on agricultural produce, either cultivated by themselves or obtained from neighbouring agricultural communities (i.e. Bailey et al. 1989; Headland 1987). If this is generally the case then Borneo is an interesting exception. Perhaps the most convincing evidence that

¹The concept of hunter-gatherers is used in this chapter as a heuristic device. Although there are several alternative terms, with a similar meaning, frequently used in the Borneo literature, e.g. ‘nomads’, ‘foragers’ or even ‘forest dwellers’, the concept of hunter-gatherers is probably the most well known and widely used.

humans can actually subsist in tropical rainforests by no other means than hunting and gathering is to be found in the ethnographic record from Borneo (cf. Brosius 1991). It is therefore even the more surprising that precisely these Borneo hunter-gatherers are those who are sometimes accused of being one of the least genuine among Southeast Asian groups of hunter-gatherers, not primarily because of doubts concerning their way of making a living but because their physical appearance casts doubts on their (pre-)historic record.

Hunter-gatherer research in Southeast Asia often attributes particular significance to the distinction between two phenotypes: hunter-gatherers displaying ‘Negrito’ physical features, on the one hand, and those who display ‘Mongoloid’ features, on the other (cf. Sercombe and Sellato 2007: 2–3). As the ‘Negritos’ often have dark skin, tight curly hair and short stature, they appear as clearly distinct from surrounding populations, while the ‘Mongoloid’ groups often are, more or less, physically inseparable from their Asian/Malay neighbours. This has often been regarded as a reliable indication of their origin. It has been argued that people with ‘Mongoloid’ features started to populate the Southeast Asian archipelago only during the last 5000 years, possibly bringing with them a Neolithic culture; it is therefore assumed that hunter-gatherers sharing these physical features are more recent arrivals, while the physically distinct ‘Negrito’ groups would be possible descendants of the prehistoric (‘Australoid’) foragers, who had physical features resembling those of the Negritos, and who were living in Borneo and elsewhere already some 40,000 years ago.

The ‘Negrito’ category is represented by hunter-gatherers living in peninsular Malaysia (e.g. Semang, Batek, population 2500), the Philippines (e.g. Agta, population 30,000) and the Andaman Islands, whereas the ‘Mongoloid’ category are found in Borneo (e.g. Punan, Penan, population 25,000), Sumatra (Kubu, Orang Rimba, population 5,000),² Sulawesi (Toala) and on the Southeast Asian mainland (e.g. Mlabri, Saoch, Tuc-cui).³ The ‘Mongoloid’ category also includes the sea nomads (e.g. Sama Dilaut, Bajau, Moken), some of whom fit the category of maritime foragers.

Thus, the hunter-gatherers of Borneo are not phenotypically distinct from their agricultural neighbours, which is also the reason why Borneo hunter-gatherers, such as Punan and Penan, are sometimes classified as ‘devolved agriculturalists’ (Blust 1989) or as ‘secondary’ hunter-gatherers (Hoffman 1983a: 195), and therefore as less ‘genuine’ and ‘pristine’ than the Negrito groups (Bellwood 2007: 131, 134). The phenotypical characteristics are thus seen as a product of isolation, in the case of the present-day Negritos, and as a product of devolution from an agricultural past, in the case of the hunter-gatherers of Borneo and Sumatra.

²If we include the agricultural ‘Orang Batin Kubu’, or ‘Kubu jinak’ (tame Kubu), the overall population figures for Kubu would reach close to 20,000 people (Sager 2008: 11).

³The Soach (i.e. former hunter-gatherers of Cambodia), are an intermediate category between Negrito and non-Negrito, according to David Bulbeck (2013: 96). For more information and additional references, see Peter Sercombe and Bernard Sellato (2007) and Robert L. Winzeler (2011).

In general, descriptions of hunter-gatherers often seem to emanate from surprisingly simple dichotomies, where people are sorted into more or less ideal and homogeneous types. Today, however, we see a situation of current research in which no simple picture of Borneo hunter-gatherers may be put forward. In the present chapter, it is proposed that contemporary and future research (in anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, palynology, paleobiology and genetics) will generate an increasingly complex and ambiguous picture of Borneo hunter-gatherers, transcending any single grand theory and thereby reshaping and enriching our perception of the past, as well as the present.

6.2 Hunter-Gatherer Research in Borneo

From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards an ever-increasing number of publications appeared in which Western adventurers, travellers, explorers, scientists, missionaries or colonial officers portrayed the forests and peoples of Borneo (cf. King 1993: 7–17). However, even though Borneo nomads were already mentioned in literary sources 200 years ago (Hildebrand 1982: 11),⁴ surprisingly little was written about them before the last quarter of the twentieth century. Although Borneo hunter-gatherers are noted in many of the earlier publications about the peoples of Borneo (e.g. Furness 1979 [1902]; Haddon 1901), these accounts are scanty in detail and often based on second-hand information. A few accounts, published before the 1950s, are based on first-hand experiences with groups of hunter-gatherers, either living in Kalimantan (Bock 1881; Elshout 1926; Lumholtz 1920; Nieuwenhuis 1904–1907; Pauwels 1935; Sitsen 1932; Stolk 1907; Tillema 1939) or in Sarawak (Harrisson 1949; Hose and McDougall 1993 [1912]; Urquhart 1951).⁵

When discussing the development of anthropological research in Borneo, it is next to impossible not to mention the importance of Edmund Leach. In 1947, several years before the publication of *Political systems of highland Burma* (Leach 1954), Leach conducted a 6-month social survey in Sarawak, where, in a new and innovative way, he described the ethnic mosaic of interior Borneo (Leach 1950). He also presented recommendations for further research on major ethnic groups, several of them would, in just a few years' time, result in excellent and now classic monographs (e.g. Freeman 1955; Geddes 1954; Morris 1953). With reference to Borneo hunter-gatherers, Leach (1950: 38) made the following recommendation.

⁴According to Harmut Hildebrand, the earliest known sources describing Borneo hunter-gatherers appeared in 1790 and in 1814. The latter source is the first one mentioning the name 'Punan' (although misspelt as 'Puman').

⁵For a more complete review of the literature on Borneo nomads, see Hildebrand (1982) and the introductory chapter to Sercombe and Sellato (2007).

A further group that clearly invites study is the nomadic Punan. Practically nothing is known of the way of life of these people and to the anthropologist they are particularly interesting because they are one of the few nomadic groups in Southeast Asia which are not of negrito race. Technically, the problem of such a study presents great difficulties and I cannot suggest how these should be overcome.

Despite the anticipated difficulties, Rodney Needham managed to carry out 12 months' fieldwork among the Penan in Sarawak in 1951–1952, the first long-term ethnographic field study to be conducted among any group of Borneo hunter-gatherers. Although this pioneering study soon resulted in a doctoral thesis (Needham 1953), it was never published or otherwise made available.⁶ Instead, Needham chose to present his major findings in a series of articles dealing with, for example, ethnic classification (1954a, 1955), cosmological ideas (1954d, 1964), social organisation and the significance of death names among the Western Penan (1954b, 1954c, 1959, 1965, 1966). A number of important early papers on Borneo nomads were also published by Tom Harrisson (1949, 1959), W.H. Hühne (1959), I.A.N. Urquhart (1951, 1957, 1959)—all three government employees in Sarawak—and by Guy Arnold (1956, 1957, 1958, 1959), the leader of a multidisciplinary Oxford expedition who spent approximately 6 months in the remote Usun Apau area in Sarawak in 1955.

It would take until the early 1970s before anyone would undertake an equally intensive field study as that accomplished by Needham. This field research was conducted by Johannes Nicolaisen, a Danish anthropologist who spent 12 months among the Western Penan in Sarawak in 1973–1975. Like Needham's study, the outcome of this research appeared in a series of journal articles (1974/1975, 1976a, b), but never as a monograph.⁷ In the 1970s Harrisson (1975)⁸ and Needham (1971, 1972) made their final contributions, at the same time as a new generation of anthropologists began publishing reports and articles dealing specifically with different groups of Penan in Sarawak (Kaboy 1974; Kedit 1978, 1982; Langub 1974, 1975). It is interesting to note that almost all publications up to the 1970s dealt with groups of Penan in Sarawak, mostly Western Penan. Important exceptions are a few publications that deal specifically with the Beketan (Sandin 1967/1968) and the Punan Busang (Ellis 1972; Sloan 1972) in Sarawak, or groups of hunter-gatherers living in Indonesian Borneo (King 1974, 1975a, b, 1979; Simandjuntak 1967; Sinau 1970; Whittier 1974). Of interest are also the works of Clifford Sather (1971, 1978), who conducted fieldwork among sea nomads (Bajau Laut) in northern Borneo in the mid-1960s and on several occasions thereafter (also cf. Sopher 1977 [1965]).

The first major work on Borneo hunter-gatherers to be made widely available was published in the early 1980s (Hildebrand 1982). Like Stefan Seitz (1981, 1988, 2007),

⁶As mentioned in an obituary in the *Guardian* on 16 January 2007, Needham (1921–1980) 'placed an embargo on both his Oxford BLitt thesis and his DPhil thesis'. For a short summary of his thesis, see Needham (1972).

⁷Johannes Nicolaisen (1921–1980) may have had the intention of writing a monograph on the Penan, but this was made impossible by his untimely death in 1980.

⁸Tom Harrisson died in an accident in 1976, at the age of 65.

Harmut Hildebrand never conducted any field research in Borneo, but his contribution nonetheless represents a very useful compilation and discussion of all written sources on Borneo hunter-gatherers available up to 1980. The early 1980s was also a time of growing ‘revisionism’ in hunter-gatherer studies in general (e.g. Schrire 1984). In the context of Borneo, the idea of the ‘pure’ hunter-gatherer was especially challenged by Carl L. Hoffman (1981, 1982, 1983a, b, 1984, 1986), who instead argued that Punan and Penan are not hunter-gatherers by origin, but agriculturalists who have left farming in order to become specialised in the collection of forest products for trade. Although Hoffman visited several groups of Punan in East Kalimantan, he normally stayed for only a few days in each settlement. This may be one reason why his ethnographic material has been accused of containing many flaws (Brosius 1988; Kaskija 1988; Sellato 1988). Hoffman nonetheless pushes his arguments in a straightforward, categorical and often provocative manner, which has given him a rather large international circle of readers. I will return to his arguments later in this chapter.

The first popular books about Borneo hunter-gatherers appeared in the late 1980s and early 1990s (e.g. Chen 1990; Davis 1992; Davis and Henley 1991; Davis et al. 1995; Lau 1987; Manser 1992, 1996; Rain and Rain 1992). This was also a time when documentaries for television and/or cinema were produced, such as *Blowpipes and bulldozers* (Kendell and Tait 1988) and *Tong Tana: a journey into the heart of Borneo* (Röed et al. 1990). This media attention, which was substantial towards the end of the 1980s, focused mainly on the urgent issue of deforestation in Sarawak and its consequences for the (Eastern) Penan. The ethnographic accounts of the Penan that were presented by environmental activists and in popular books, articles and films were often ‘obscurantist and romantic’ (Brosius 1999: 280), possibly for the sake of a good cause. Although this critique of romantic essentialism also applies to Bruno Manser (1992, 1996), he nonetheless resided with the Eastern Penan in Sarawak for almost 7 consecutive years (1984–1990), sharing their everyday life on equal terms. For that reason we should probably count him, next to Jayl Langub, Peter Brosius and Bernard Sellato, as one of the most dedicated fieldworkers with a deep interest in Borneo hunter-gatherers.

The 1980s was also the time when Brosius (1986, 1989a, b, 1990) and Sellato (1980, 1984, 1986, 1989) began publishing their findings. While Brosius spent 3 years (1984–1987) among the Penan Geng, a group of Western Penan, and an additional 7 months among Eastern Penan (1992–1993), Sellato criss-crossed the Müller Mountains and neighbouring areas in Kalimantan for 8 years between 1973 and 1990, first as a field geologist and later, from 1979, as an anthropologist. During this time he collected a substantial body of ethnographic and ethnohistoric data on the peoples surrounding the Müller Mountains, an area that connects several of the major river basins in Borneo (i.e. Kapuas, Mahakam, Kayan and Rejang). As Sellato has focused his attention on an area that is a kind of social crossroads in central Borneo, his ethnography has become particularly rich in ethnohistoric detail, situating a number of nomadic groups in a larger social and political context of migrations, warfare, socioeconomic transformations and processes of ethnogenesis, thereby painting a highly dynamic and complex picture of the social life of Borneo hunter-gatherers in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Brosius, on the other hand, with his

deep familiarity with the Western Penan, and especially the Penan Geng, has produced an ethnography that is exceptionally rich in depth and detail, especially when it comes to environmental knowledge, social organisation and, not least, *The axiological presence of death: Penan Geng death-names*, which is the title of his doctoral thesis (Brosius 1992). During the 1990s and well into the present, Brosius has been particularly interested in environmental issues and the political ecology of Sarawak (1993, 1995, 1997, 1999a, b, c, 2006, 2007), while Sellato (e.g. Sellato 1993a, b, 1994a, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2005, 2007) and Langub (e.g. Langub 1989, 1993, 1996a, b, 2001, 2004, 2008) have continued—now for roughly 40 years—their research on Borneo hunter-gatherers. Besides publishing a large number of reports, articles and books, too many to be mentioned here, both have also played an important role in their support of new generations of researchers with an interest in Borneo hunter-gatherers.

During the last two decades a significant number of new researchers have conducted extensive fieldwork among groups of hunter-gatherers in Borneo. In Sarawak, Shanthi Thambiah (1995, 1997, 2007) has directed her full attention to the Bhuket; Henry Chan (2007a, b) has conducted extensive field research among the Punan Vuhang (Busang), and Yumi Kato (2008, 2011, 2013) among the Sihan, a group of former hunter-gatherers in the Belaga area in Sarawak. Of interest is also Tim Bending (2006), who published a book on ‘contentious narratives in upriver Sarawak’, dealing particularly with the Penan. In Brunei Darussalam, Peter Sercombe (1996, 2007, 2013) and Robert Voeks (1999, 2007) have engaged in anthropological research on the Eastern Penan. In Indonesian Borneo, Rajindira Puri (1997b, 1998, 2001) has conducted anthropological and ethnobiological research in various parts of Kalimantan throughout the 1990s. In his major fieldwork his attention is exclusively directed to the hunting knowledge of the Penan Benalui, a group of Western Penan living in the Bahau area (Puri 1997a, 2005). In the neighbouring Malinau–Tubu’ river basin, Nicolas Césard (2007, 2009, 2013), A. Klintuni Boedhihartono (2004, 2008) and I (Kaskija 1995, 1998, 2002, 2007, 2011, 2012, 2013) have carried out field research among Punan groups living in different parts of this area. Important contributions have also been made by local Punan, for example K.A. Klimut (Klimut and Puri 2007) and Dollop Mamung (1998); the latter has also co-authored a number of important reports dealing with Punan (e.g. Sitorus et al. 2004). In addition, a substantial number of reports, at least partly dealing with Borneo hunter-gatherers, have been published during the last two decades by non-governmental organisations and research institutes, such as World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) (e.g. Sitorus et al. 2004; Eghenter et al. 2003; Levang et al. 2007; Persoon and Osseweijer 2008; Sellato 2001).

In general, Punan groups in Indonesian Borneo living in the interior parts of East Kalimantan (including what is now part of the newly established province of North Kalimantan) have received more attention from social scientists than groups living in either West Kalimantan or in the coastal areas of East Kalimantan. Besides Victor T. King (1974, 1975a, 1979), Sellato (e.g. Sellato 1994a) and Mering Ngo (1986, 2007), few scholars have done research among hunter-gatherers in West Kalimantan. With reference to groups residing closer to the east coast of Borneo, Hoffman (1983a) gives special attention to those Punan who occupy the coastal zone between the deltas of the

Kayan and the Berau Rivers. In the 1980s George Appell (1983) and Laura Appell (1985) provided information on the Punan Bulusu' of the Sekatak area, and Antonio Guerreiro (1985) added to our knowledge on the Punan Kelai. The first major work, however, based on long-term anthropological fieldwork among hunter-gatherers in the Berau area, was written by Katherine Holmsen (2006) and deals with Punan groups of the upper reaches of the Kelai River (i.e. Punan Kelai and Punan Suluy). Of interest is also the ongoing research by Guerreiro (2004) among east coast hunter-gatherers (Punan Kelai, Basap, Lebbu, Suku Darat), and the linguistic research that Antonia Soriente is conducting among a broad collection of Borneo hunter-gatherers (2013, forthcoming).

6.3 Subsistence Systems and Continua

Contemporary groups of hunter-gatherers in Borneo gain their livelihood primarily from a combination of basically forest-orientated activities, such as hunting and gathering, collection of and trade in non-timber forest products, small-scale horticulture, rice cultivation, and by acting as porters, guides or assistants to anyone in need of their services, as well as by the occasional selling of wild meat, fruit and handicrafts, such as skilfully plaited rattan mats and baskets. In addition, individuals may engage in wage labour, for shorter or longer periods of time, or devote time to gold digging or the cultivation of cash crops. The subsistence economy of these modern hunter-gatherers can thus be characterised as truly versatile, showing much local variation in time and space, and in response to changing circumstances.

Although tropical rainforest environments are truly diverse, the hunter-gatherers of Borneo generally tend towards a surprisingly small range of key food resources. The most highly valued prey is the bearded pig (*Sus barbatus*). This has been the primary prey species in Borneo in all times, from prehistory to the present (Barker 2005: 97). This wild pig species is a migratory animal and its movements are closely linked to the mast fruiting of dipterocarp trees. At certain times of the year the wild boar may therefore be completely absent locally for several weeks, while being surprisingly abundant at other times. Although certain groups of Borneo hunter-gatherers, such as the Eastern Penan, hunt a 'greater variety of prey species' (Brosius 1991: fn. 24), to most groups the wild boar is an animal of such great social, emotional, symbolic and nutritional value that other prey animals are of limited interest as long as wild pigs are to be found (cf. Brosius 1986: 178; Pfeffer and Caldecott 1986; Puri 2005; Seitz 1981: 285; Sellato 1994a: 122–128).

The most important source of carbohydrate food in Borneo has historically been the pith of several species of wild sago palms, belonging to the genera *Caryota*, *Corypha* and *Arenga*, and especially *Eugeissona utilis* (Borneo hill sago), which is the most important food source (see Sellato 1994a; Brosius 1991; Puri 1997b; Langub 1988). The *Eugeissona* palms have, for at least 40,000 years, been of crucial importance for the livelihood of people living in interior Borneo (Barton and Denham 2011: 19). The increased cultivation of alternative food sources, especially

cassava and rice, has resulted in the gradual decline in the importance of the *Eugeissona* palm over the course of the last century, but it is nonetheless important to remember that this sago palm, as well the bearded pig, represent resources that ultimately made it possible for hunter-gatherers and others to survive, for shorter or longer periods of time, solely on hunting and gathering in the forests of Borneo. Tropical rainforests are generally ‘game-rich and plant-food poor’ (Griffin 1984: 115–118), and this general lack of starch-producing species in tropical forests has led the proponents of the ‘green desert’ theory to argue that hunter-gatherers may never have been able to survive in rainforests without reliance on cultivated foods (i.e. Bailey et al. 1989; Headland 1987). Borneo here seems to be an exception, and the reason is particularly linked to the presence of wild sago palms. Graeme Barker (2005: 98) has pointed out that archaeological research in Sarawak indicates that prehistoric foragers were able to ‘extract high-energy carbohydrates’ and to ‘exploit tropical rainforests effectively’, and Brosius (1991: 145) has demonstrated that the Penan of Sarawak have subsisted successfully in tropical forests ‘without recourse to agricultural supplements’. If the Penan are accepted as a valid exception to the green desert argument, it depends mainly on whether or not they are considered to be cases of sufficiently ‘pure’ hunter-gatherers. Although Penan do not plant or cultivate sago trees, they still ‘actively manage the *Eugeissona* palm, and their exploitation of this resource has a further impact on the demography of this resource’ (ibid: 146). If their stewardship of palm groves thereby is regarded as a form of incipient cultivation, they may be considered to have transgressed the imaginary and symbolically significant boundary between foraging and farming.

This particular dichotomy between foragers and farmers is often emphasised and given special significance. The real situation, however, is indistinct and ambiguous. Smith (2001) has convincingly argued that it is almost impossible to consistently describe the large territory between hunting-gathering and agriculture in even the simplest conceptual or developmental terms. Roy Ellen (1988), in his study of the Nuaulu of central Seram, Indonesia, provides an illustration of the futility of trying to draw sharp and unambiguous boundaries between hunting-gathering and farming. The forager–farmer dichotomy may assume the existence of ideal types but, in reality, where do we find ‘pure’ hunter-gatherers and ‘pure’ farmers? Even among some of the most successful swidden rice agriculturalists in Borneo—such as the Kantu’, the Iban or the Bidayuh (Land Dayak)—the number of households that fail to harvest sufficient rice for 1 year’s needs often comprise as much as 60–70 % of a community (Dove 1993: 146). Among these and other groups of prominent agriculturalists, such as Kenyah, the wild resources of rivers and forests have often been more, or at least equally, important food sources as agricultural products (Chin 1985; de Beer and McDermott 1989: 54).

In addition, the efficient forms of hill rice (and wet rice) agriculture that characterise late twentieth-century ethnic groups in central Borneo, such as Kayan, Kenyah and Kelabit, may have evolved in the last 300–400 years. Sellato has suggested that the spread of rice cultivation throughout the interior of Borneo coincided with the expansion of large dominant groups, such as Kayan in central Borneo, Iban in western Borneo and Ngaju in south-central Borneo (Sellato 1993a).

Brian Hayden (2011) has suggested that rice, until quite recently, has mainly been a kind of luxury food, used primarily at feasts and in order to gain prestige. In terms of subsistence, however, sago has a higher economic return rate than hill rice,⁹ and it is less risky and therefore more reliable than swidden rice (Barton 2009). Before the eighteenth century the local economies of central Borneo utilised a wide range of economic possibilities, where sago processing (*Metroxylon* in coastal areas, and *Eugeissona* and *Arenga* further inland) and tuber cultivation probably played a much more significant role than rice (cf. Barton 2012; Barton and Denham 2011; Harrison 1949: 142, 1959: 66; Eghenter and Sellato 2003: 23).

Even as late as the twentieth century, rice was of limited importance to many central Borneo groups, such as the Kajang (Ida Nicolaisen 1983, 1986) in Sarawak. Several groups, such as the Kenyah Leppo' Ke, still rely heavily today on taro for their diet, which they mix with rice (Sellato 1995). Cassava was probably introduced in central Borneo in the eighteenth century, and it immediately became very popular and spread quickly throughout the island. In the 1930s cassava was the most important crop among several groups such as the Tingalan and Bulusu' in the Malinau area (Schneeberger 1979: 21–22; Lundqvist 1949: 24). Rice was, as a source of food, of no or very little importance at that time, which is 'a possible indication of a rather recent adoption of *ladang* rice cultivation' (Schneeberger 1979: 22). The Tingalan, Tidung, Bulusu' and other Murutic groups probably subsisted on sago flour from *Metroxylon* palms in the past, but with the introduction of cassava they started to replace sago with flour extracted from cassava (Sellato 2012). Other examples of horticultural societies with little focus on rice cultivation includes 'the Siang and Ot Danum of the upper Barito River who are still derogatorily called "tuber eaters" by the Kayanised peoples of the upper Mahakam' (Sellato 2002: 125). We may also mention the Melanau—closely related to the Kajang—who inhabit the swampy plains of coastal Sarawak, where they have, for as long as we know, primarily been producers of sago (*Metroxylon* sp.) for subsistence as well as for export (Morris 1953).

Groups in Borneo designated as agriculturalists, or horticulturalists, have never been 'purely' agricultural, but have sustained themselves through a combination of subsistence systems, including fishing and hunting-gathering of wild resources. The presumed 'purity' of prehistoric groups of hunter-gatherers is also quite debatable. According to Barker (2008), 'people have been shaping and changing rainforest from more or less when they first encountered it, in this case 50,000 years ago'. We know that groups of Borneo hunter-gatherers, at least at certain points in time, have subsisted solely on the wild resources of the forest, but we also know that hunter-gatherers in Borneo have managed and manipulated particularly valuable resources of the forest for several thousand years, perhaps since the late Pleistocene period (ibid.). With reference to groups of Negrito foragers in the Philippines, Fox

⁹According to Huw Barton (2009), the economic return rates from sago palms (3600 kcal/h) are significantly higher than those from swidden rice fields (400–1500 kcal/h). In reference to the Kelabit, Barton states that 'the point of growing rice is ... to show exceptional ability. If they wanted only to survive, they could make sago or grow root crops' (ibid.).

(1952: 250, cited in Nicolaisen 1974/1975: 423) argues that certain crops, like taro, yam and banana, were probably already cultivated several thousand years ago; these crops can, just as cassava, easily be adjusted to a nomadic lifestyle. With the introduction of sweet potato and corn, the cultivation of these plants spread rapidly also among the Negritos of the Philippines, just as the cultivation of cassava was quickly adopted by all people in Borneo. In a well-reasoned discussion of foragers and farmers in the Philippines, Griffin (1984: 115) suggests that

a wide range of foraging economic strategies may have come and gone as specific conditions of population, group contact, and resource availability fluctuated. More precisely, nonhorticultural foragers may not have existed in the past several thousand years. Farming societies emphasising cultivation over hunting may or may not have any great antiquity.

This conclusion may also have validity in Borneo. Based on what has been said in this section, it is probably useful to view swidden rice agriculture, horticulture and hunting-gathering as forming mixed subsistence systems, i.e. what Sather (1995: 257) has referred to as ‘a continuum of stable combinations of rice agriculture, domesticated sago and tuber cultivation, orchard crops, forest foraging, hunting and marine collection’. Sellato (1994b, cf. 1993a: 116, 176–177) has devoted a full article to the subject of continua of livelihood systems in interior Borneo, and Barker and Janowski (2011) have conceptualised the same phenomenon as an ‘entanglement’ of foraging and farming. With increased knowledge about local subsistence practices, past and present, the overall picture has become increasingly complex, and concepts such as ‘continuum’ or ‘entanglement’ of foraging and farming evidently appear much more accurate than simple dichotomies.

6.4 Central Borneo as a Social System

If subsistence systems are characterised by great complexity and entanglement, with fuzzy and fluid boundaries, this is even more the case when we try to comprehend the social, cultural and ethnic mosaic of Borneo. There have been numerous attempts at subdividing the peoples of central Borneo into neat categories on the basis of language, origin, culture or ethnicity, but none of them has proved successful. Leach (1950) made the first attempt in Borneo at studying all (stratified) groups within a single river basin, the Balui, as one sociopolitical system. What he referred to as the ‘Kenyah-Kayan-Kajang complex’ was ‘in earlier classifications... subdivided into anything up to a hundred tribes and sub-tribes’ (Leach 1950: 55). The notion of ethnic groups as bounded, separate, stable and basically timeless was seriously challenged by Leach (1950, 1954), as well as by Fredrik Barth (1969), who shifted focus from the cultural content of ethnic groups to the very processes by which ethnic boundaries within regional systems are maintained, altered or erased.

With reference to Borneo, Tim Babcock (1974: 198) proposed a ‘Leachian analysis of interethnic relations in certain areas in particular historical periods’, and

Victor King (1982: 41) considered it important to include all groups within a larger area of Borneo and to analyse them as a ‘single socio-political system’ (cf. King 1985: 125). Unlike Leach, who excluded groups of hunter-gatherers from his ‘Kenyah-Kayan-Kajang complex’, King included the forest nomads, as well as the coastal Muslim communities, into his single regional system, as these ‘various populations have been interrelated and interconnected for a very long period of time’ (King 1993: 38). Several studies depicting river basins in Borneo as integrated social systems have, in particular, emphasised the importance of trade networks as the most important vehicle for bringing together a diverse population living along a major river and consisting of Malay polities at the downriver end and scattered groups of forest nomads at the headwaters (cf. Black 1985; Lindblad 1988; Magenda 1991; Sellato 2005).

The most elaborate and detailed study along these lines in Borneo appeared in 1990, when Jérôme Rousseau (1990) analysed the whole of central Borneo as a single social system, or society. In his analysis ‘each river basin forms a network which brings together not only stratified agriculturalists, but also nomads, other Dayak, and Malays’ (ibid: 301). Among studies with a wider regional focus, the historically most detailed studies dealing with hunter-gatherers are those of Sellato (1986, 1989, 1994a), where a diverse collection of nomadic groups in central Borneo is situated within a larger and highly dynamic sociopolitical context. Of interest is also Sather’s (1995) discussion of the long history of complex trading networks in the Indo-Malaysian archipelago and the ethnogenesis of sea nomads, such as Sama Dilaut (Sather 1984), as well as rainforest nomads, such as Punan. Sather is thereby placing a very broad range of Borneo foragers in a wider historical and political framework. More recent and mainly politically orientated approaches include Tania Murray Li’s (2004 [1999]) exploration of marginality in rural Indonesia as a ‘relational concept’, and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing’s (1993) study of ‘marginality in an out-of-the-way place’, where the people of the Meratus Mountains of South Kalimantan are situated within a wider regional and national context.¹⁰

The idea that the population of central Borneo shares a common sociopolitical universe comes, in some respects, close to arguments proposed by the (historical) revisionists in hunter-gatherer studies. Instead of seeing hunter-gatherers as isolated, separate and timeless, they are analysed as part of a larger regional whole that includes all people within a wider area. Especially from the early 1980s numerous anthropologists worldwide began emphasising the long history of interaction between hunter-gatherers and their pastoral or agricultural neighbours (e.g. Bahuchet and Guillaume 1982), thereby questioning the notion of the isolated and timeless ‘tribe’ (cf. Wolf 1982). By demonstrating that hunter-gatherers have not been living in isolation, not even a thousand years ago, it seemed obvious that they

¹⁰The Bukit of the Meratus range of South Kalimantan are not considered as belonging to the category of hunter-gatherers, although the question of their origins is enigmatic and ‘indeed an intriguing one’ (Sillander 2004: 40). In their marginality, however, they have very much in common with groups of hunter-gatherers in Borneo.

also had a long history of change. Why would hunter-gatherers, as opposed to all other human societies, be ‘permitted antiquity while denied history’? (Wilmsen 1989: 10) From a revisionist standpoint it is a complete mistake to conceive of contemporary hunter-gatherers as relics from the past who have preserved, more or less intact, a traditional and archaic way of living. The use of ethnic labels and clear-cut subsistence dichotomies as static designations ‘convey a false sense of continuity’, as pointed out by James Scott (2013), ‘vastly understating the fluidity of ... ethnic boundaries’ and local subsistence systems.

Hunter-gatherer revisionism in the context of Borneo is mainly represented by Hoffman, who questioned the idea that Borneo hunter-gatherers are ‘distinct, outside, and apart from the general pattern of Borneo’s traditional life’ (Hoffman 1983a: 101). Groups, such as the Punan, do not only have a long history of interaction with their agricultural neighbours, according to Hoffman, they are actually related to and share the same origin as these neighbours. To Hoffman, the ethnogenesis of groups of hunter-gatherers in Borneo is an outcome not of ‘devolution’ or some other form of ‘cultural retrogression’ but of an ‘economic specialisation’ (Hoffman 1984: 145), whereby sedentary agriculturalists, at some unspecified point in time, became nomadic, professional collectors of commercially valuable forest products (Hoffman 1983a: 197). Borneo hunter-gatherers are thus not an aboriginal, autochthonous population, as they all ‘derive... from sedentary agricultural peoples’ (ibid.: 195).

6.5 Origins of Borneo Hunter-Gatherers

Unlike historical revisionists in general, Hoffman’s attempt at historical reconstruction is rudimentary. Besides the historic–linguistic data presented by Robert Blust (1976), Hoffman’s conclusions are almost entirely based on the occurrence of phenotypical, linguistic, cultural and technological similarities between contemporary hunter-gatherers and their sedentary neighbours. To Hoffman, these similarities strongly suggest a common origin.

In his thesis and subsequent articles, Hoffman isolates several factors that, according to him, support his hypothesis regarding the origin of the Punan. He argues, for example that each group of Punan ‘has tended to confine itself to a tract of primary forest adjacent and contiguous to an area occupied by a specific sedentary agricultural people’ (Hoffman 1983a: 47, cf. 104). While having close relations with their sedentary neighbours, Punan in general ‘cannot recall having had much of any contact with other Punan at all’ (ibid.: 112). Even a slight familiarity with the ethnographic record of Borneo will uncover a far more complex reality. Brosius has pointed out that ‘whereas groups such as Agta and Semang live and forage in close proximity to agricultural settlements, Penan inhabit areas in the deep interior, usually one to four days’ walk from the nearest agricultural settlements’ (Brosius 1991: 136, cf. Rousseau 1984: 88). Johannes Nicolaisen states that ‘very close contact and some marriages are contracted even between members of

[Penan] groups living very far from each other' (1976b: 41). But even where the distance between Punan and agricultural Dayaks is quite short, this does not necessarily mean that there are regular contacts (Needham 1965: 71).

Another important indication of origin is, in Hoffman's view, the linguistic and cultural heterogeneity of Borneo hunter-gatherers. The Punan do not comprise a 'single, uniform people' (Hoffman 1983a: 40). They 'do not share a single, common language' (ibid.: 37) and their languages are not distinct from those spoken by groups of sedentary agriculturalists (ibid.: 40). According to Hoffman, the cultural diversity of Borneo hunter-gatherers is just as obvious, as are the cultural similarities between different groups of hunter-gatherers and their sedentary neighbours. Even if this argument would be true in every single case, it would still prove very little. Even different groups of African Bushmen speak different languages, and they display differences in kinship organisation, religious beliefs, settlement patterns and hunting strategies (Kent 1992: 48–49). The same applies to the Negritos of the Philippines (Headland and Reid 1989) and the Pygmies of Africa (Biesbrouck et al. 1999). This is a common feature among hunter-gatherers worldwide. An alternative, and I would say more likely explanation, is that they readily adopt cultural features, language or almost anything from neighbouring peoples, and therefore often share many similarities with their immediate neighbours. Among some groups of hunter-gatherers 'cultural loss has gone so far as to have led to the loss of the original language' (Brunton 1990: 675). It is therefore not surprising that not even 'primary' hunter-gatherers can be described as a 'single, uniform people'.

There are, however, groups of Punan or Penan who speak languages that are identical to those spoken by their immediate sedentary neighbours and where the reason may be a common origin. One example is the Punan Kelai and Punan Segah, who speak the same language as their agricultural neighbours, the Ga'ai/Segai. Mika Okushima (2008), just like Hoffman, considers these groups to be former agriculturalists who have become 'secondary' hunter-gatherers through a process of 'Punanisation'. Sellato has suggested that Punan Kelai and other groups of hunter-gatherers in the Berau area may partly consist of the descendants of slaves imported from outside Borneo (2007: 72; Sercombe and Sellato 2007:12).¹¹ A second example are the (Eastern and Western) Penan of Sarawak,¹² who speak a language that is more or less identical to that of certain groups of sedentary Kenyah (Needham 2007: 51, 1972; Brosius 1988: 84). In this case, however, the linguistic similarities have been interpreted not as an indication of Penan being former Kenyah agriculturalists, as suggested by Hoffman, but rather as an indication of Kenyah being former hunter-gatherers, as suggested by Whittier (1973: 23):

¹¹See also Rousseau (1990: 242), who mentions the enslavement of groups of hunter-gatherers in Borneo.

¹²Eastern and Western Penan speak different dialects of the same language. Brosius (1988: 84) has described these two dialects as 'significantly different' but 'mutually intelligible'.

I am suggesting that the Kenyah were hunting and gathering (similar to the Punan) in their early history in the Iwan [River] and that they learned swidden rice agriculture, most likely from the Kayan. This kind of process is still going on today, as we noted in the case of the Punan Oho' who now prefer to be called Kenyah. (cf. also Ida Nicolaisen 1976a: 76; Sellato 1988; Brosius 1988: 84, 1992: 53–54; Sather 1995: 253)

This interpretation appears to be the most likely, as during the last 300 years—a time period from which we have at least some data—there has been an ongoing and general process whereby nomads have become increasingly sedentary (Sellato 1994a; Brosius 1988: 87). Thus, whereas linguistic similarities between groups of hunter-gatherers and their sedentary neighbours may give some support to Hoffman in the case of the Punan Kelai/Segah, the opposite seems to be true for the Penan of Sarawak. Besides these two large clusters of Punan/Penan, there is a broad range of Borneo hunter-gatherers for whom the linguistic situation is particularly intriguing. Based on his own linguistic data, Sellato (1993a) points out a number of lexical items that are shared by this broad range of Borneo hunter-gatherers but 'not found in the languages of the main settled ethnic groups' (Sellato 2002: 120). What is significant is that some of these hunter-gatherer groups are 'spatially very remote from one another' (*ibid.*). This includes groups of hunter-gatherers in the north-eastern part of central Borneo (e.g. Punan Malinau, Punan Tubu', Punan Mentarang, Punan Bulusu', Punan Batu, Basap and Punan Bahau), as well as groups further south and west (e.g. Punan Lisum, Punan Busang, Punan Kereho, Bukat, Bektetan and Sihan), including mixed hunter-gatherer/non-hunter-gatherer groups (e.g. Aoheng, Kajang and Seputan), and groups of non-hunter-gatherers (i.e. Melanau and Bidayuh/Land Dayak). Sellato suggests that the lexical items he mentions 'belong to an ancient lexical substratum' that is 'a part of an old Punan linguistic entity' (*ibid.*: 121).¹³ This has been further discussed by Alexander Adelaar (1995), who identifies lexical and phonological similarities between the Aslian (i.e. Mon–Khmer) languages of the Orang Asli of peninsular Malaysia and the language of the Bidayuh of western Borneo. I will return to this circumstance in the next section.

As Hoffman sees Borneo hunter-gatherers as a product of 'economic specialisation', it is no surprise that he suggests that trade in forest produce is 'what these "Punan" of Borneo are all about' (Hoffman 1983a: 164); 'Punan do not trade in order to remain nomads; they have instead remained nomads in order to trade' (*ibid.*: 171). According to a number of Borneo specialists, all groups of Punan have been, more or less, involved in trade, but this trade has never been 'what these "Punan" of Borneo are all about'. Sellato refers in detail to a number of specific historical cases from central Borneo that give very little support to Hoffman's basic hypothesis (Sellato 1988, 1993a, 1994a). Although the importance of trade is very much at the core of Hoffman's argument, the opportunities for trade in central

¹³The only languages spoken by groups of Borneo hunter-gatherers that do not contain the lexical items identified by Sellato are, as far as we know, those of the Eastern/Western Penan and the Punan Kelai/Segah. They are thus not part of this 'old Punan linguistic entity'.

Borneo ‘are usually too limited to make it the centre of nomadic economy’ (Rousseau 1984: 90). According to Hoffman, the settlement patterns of the Punan are dictated by their involvement in trade. However, it is often pointed out that movements and settlement patterns have a much more complicated background, and cultural and ecological factors—especially the availability of key forest resources—play, or at least have played, an important role (Brosius 1988: 98–100; Hühne 1959: 201; Kedit 1978: 18–24; Needham 1972; Johannes Nicolaisen 1976b).

Although Hoffman’s thesis on the Punan has been frequently cited in international scientific publications dealing with hunter-gatherers, among Borneo specialists the criticism has been scathing (e.g. Brosius 1988, 1991; Sellato 1988). According to Brosius (1988), Hoffman not only ‘seriously misrepresents the ethnographic record’ (ibid.: 82), he uses available literature in a remarkably selective manner and even makes a ‘purposeful attempt to obscure the shortcomings of his data’ (ibid.: 103). In addition, the question of hunter-gatherer origins, which lies at the very core of Hoffman’s thesis, is ‘a non-problem, in that it is unresolvable, except by resorting to the most tenuous sort of conjectural history’ (Brosius 1988: 87, cf. King 1993: 41). Researchers in archaeology and historical linguistics, however, have a different opinion. Peter Bellwood (2007 [1985]) and Blust (1996) are rather confident that basic conclusions can be drawn regarding the origin of Borneo hunter-gatherers, and both of them seem to conceive of Hoffman’s assumptions as broadly accurate and credible.

6.6 Borneo Hunter-Gatherers and Austronesian History

From the archaeological record, especially from the Niah Caves in Sarawak, we know that humans were already present in Borneo 40,000–50,000 years ago (Zuraina 1982: 31; Bellwood 1992: 8; Barker 2005, 2008). We also know that these early hunter-gatherers were not of the Mongoloid phenotype, as the present population, but of Australoid or Australo-Melanesian (Bellwood 1992: 9, 2007 [1985]: 71), which means that they shared certain physical features with the Negritos of the Philippines and the Malay peninsula (cf. Bellwood 2007 [1985]: 71–72).¹⁴ The question is: What happened to these early inhabitants of the island of Borneo?

According to the out-of-Taiwan hypothesis—which is the currently most accepted hypothesis—the Austronesian languages originated in Taiwan and began spreading southwards into the Philippines around 4000 BP (Reid 2013), or perhaps 5000 BP (Blust 1996; Bellwood 2007 [1985]), reaching Borneo more than 3000 years ago

¹⁴For more detail on the complex issue of the Negritos, see the special issue of *Human Ecology* (2013) 85(1/3), edited by Phillip Endicott. http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/human_biology/toc/hub.85.1-3.html.

(cf. Benjamin 2013; Bellwood 2009; King 1993: 77). Both the Punan of Borneo and the Negritos of the Philippines speak Austronesian languages today, just as their agricultural neighbours do. As the Negritos inhabited the Philippine islands long before the first Austronesian speakers arrived, it is assumed that they once spoke other languages. The fact that all of them speak Austronesian languages today therefore indicates that they have had close relations with neighbouring Austronesian-speaking communities for a long time. Therefore, these Negritos ‘must be seen as an adaptive product of prolonged contact’ (Sather 1995: 230).

Based on linguistic evidence, Blust argues that the Austronesian speakers were agriculturalists at the time of their arrival. They already cultivated rice 6000 years ago, while still in Taiwan, and they had domesticated pigs, water buffaloes, dogs, perhaps chickens, made pottery and ‘were familiar with some metals’ (Blust 1996: 31). Bellwood (1992: 11) states that the Austronesians were cultivators who ‘expanded rapidly around the coasts and up the rivers with little resistance from the existing but sparse foraging populations’. This theory thus implies that the Austronesian-speaking arrivals completely displaced or absorbed previous populations in Borneo, which would then explain the absence of Negritos.

6.6.1 Attempts at Reframing the Early History

By combining genetic, linguistic and archaeological data, Mark Donohue and Tim Denham (2010) challenge this picture of Austronesian speakers who in large numbers came to dominate insular Southeast Asia, replacing not only local languages but also local cultures and subsistence strategies with a Neolithic cultural package. It is certainly true that insular Southeast Asia ‘has witnessed massive language replacement’ (ibid.: 232), but there is ‘no genetic evidence for a large-scale population replacement, displacement, or absorption’ (ibid., cf. Bulbeck 2013). According to Sather (1995: 240), the successful spread of Austronesian languages is not an indication of ‘a mass movement of people’ but is probably ‘linked to trade itself’; the Austronesian languages were simply ‘the dominant languages of trade’ (Sather 1995: 240, cf. Reid 2007). This is also a reason for being cautious when referring to ‘the Austronesians’ as an ethnic entity; we should regard this term as referring not to people but strictly to languages.

A factor of probably great importance is the rise of the sea levels that occurred as a consequence of deglaciation in the northern hemisphere. Approximately 20,000 years ago, the sea levels were at their lowest and 120 metres below the present levels in Southeast Asia. At this time, the islands of Borneo, Java and Sumatra were connected by land and formed a large extension of the Southeast Asian mainland. This landmass has been called ‘Sundaland’. As a consequence, between 20,000 BP and 7000 BP ‘around half of the land area of the continent of Sundaland was lost to the sea ... with a concomitant doubling of the length of coastline as the resulting archipelago was formed’ (Soares et al. 2008: 1209; cf. Voris 2000). This fact ‘triggered major displacement of human groups living on the

Sunda coastline and had an important role in shaping subsequent life in the region, in particular its maritime orientation and the development of sailing technology' (Soares et al. 2008: 1215).

This has led Stephen Oppenheimer (1998, 2006) to argue against the out-of-Taiwan hypothesis proposed by Bellwood and others, suggesting instead that 'island Southeast Asia was more likely to have been the Holocene homeland of maritime expansion in the southwest Pacific than the target' (Oppenheimer 2006: 715).¹⁵ Seen in this perspective, it seems plausible 'that island Southeast Asia was a zone of considerable maritime interaction before the appearance of Austronesian languages' (Donohue and Denham 2010: 223), which casts doubts on the idea that the early pre-Austronesian populations mainly consisted of scattered bands of simple, undifferentiated and 'sparse foraging populations' (Bellwood 1992: 11). The existence of early networks for trade and barter between various parts of insular Southeast Asia indicates the presence of rather diversified economies regionally. There are even, according to Barker (2008), indications of early rice cultivation in certain lowland areas in Borneo by 8000 BP, that is, several thousand years before the first Austronesian speakers are supposed to have arrived. It thus seems that the early pre-Austronesian populations were less homogenous and their subsistence practices far more diverse and sophisticated than previously assumed. Barker (2008) confesses that '[t]he archaeology of Island Southeast Asia ... is opening a Pandora's box.... It was all so much simpler when all we had to worry about were the Austronesians!'

It can also be questioned whether the early Austronesian speakers were fully fledged (rice) agriculturalists (cf. Sather 1995; Sellato 1993). It has been suggested that they probably practised 'a comparatively broad spectrum of economic activities', including foraging, horticulture and trade (Sather 1995: 236). In addition, although rice cultivation may have been practised to some extent locally, where environmental conditions were particularly suitable, it was probably not an option in the rainforest environment without the necessary technological equipment. Important metals, like bronze and iron, did not appear in Borneo before 2000 BP (Sellato 2002: 124; King 1993: 6–7). Sellato therefore speculates that the early Austronesian speakers 'probably remained coast-bound, practicing a mixed economy of forest foraging (particularly wild sago) in low plains, coastal foraging and fishing, and perhaps some horticulture (cultivated sago and tubers). Others penetrated farther inland to make a living strictly on forest foraging' (Sellato 1993). Jan Avé and King (1986: 14–15) paint a similar picture, suggesting that the early Austronesian speakers probably did not rely on rice agriculture, but mainly utilised 'the large expanses of sago palms (*Metroxylon* sp.) in coastal areas.... Over time, other cultivated crops entered the inventory of these coastal dwellers: the tuber called taro, and also rice'. With the expansion further inland, the utilisation of the

¹⁵The ideas presented by Stephen Oppenheimer are partly inspired by Wilhelm Solheim's (1996, 2006) Nusantao maritime trading and communication network, a hypothesis that he developed 40 years ago, although modified and developed continuously since then.

coastal *Metroxylon* sago was replaced by other palm trees with edible pith, in particular *Eugeissona* (ibid.). For sea traders in tropical Southeast Asia sago from *Metroxylon* (presumably in the form of dry cooked pellets) may actually have been the staple food from the very start of circum-island navigation (cf. Sellato 2001; Warren 1981). In general, as pointed out by Ellen (2011), the utilisation of sago palms has been of central importance to local economies in much of insular Southeast Asia since ancient times.

Recent research thus questions the existence of a clear dichotomy (other than linguistic) between pre-Austronesian foragers and incoming Austronesian farmers (Barker 2008). The subsistence economies of the pre-Austronesian populations and the incoming Austronesian speakers may have been of equal complexity and sophistication. It has been pointed out that headhunting and feuding were widespread among the early Austronesian speakers, who were ‘a murderous bunch’ (Reid 2013: 348), but this did not prevent people from interacting. According to Donohue and Denham (2010: 232), the genetic evidence is ‘more suggestive of prolonged interaction and mixing among populations’. The resulting linguistic and phenotypical mixtures and continua may never be sorted out, but ongoing and future research will almost certainly add many new pieces of data to this puzzle of entanglements.

Of particular interest in the context of Borneo hunter-gatherers are the lexical and phonological similarities between Aslian (i.e. Mon–Khmer) languages of the Orang Asli of peninsular Malaysia and the West Borneo languages of the Bidayuh and a broad collection of groups of hunter-gatherers mentioned earlier. For example, the word for ‘to die’, *kəbis*, is closely related to northern and central Aslian languages in peninsular Malaysia, for example *kəbəs*, *kobis*, *kabih* (Sellato 1993, Adelaar 1995). This word also has cognates (i.e. *kefoh*, *kavo*, *mekefoh*) in languages spoken by several groups of hunter-gatherers in Borneo. This opens new and intriguing alleys of research, which may eventually help to better comprehend the complex histories of migration and interaction of people and languages in Southeast Asia.

Geoffrey Benjamin (1986: 5) has suggested, in reference to the early history of peninsular Malaysia, that the distinction between foragers and farmers may have been much less pronounced in the past: ‘The differentiation of the two came about only much later, through a process of “mutual socio-cultural dissimulation”’ (ibid.: 15). Although our data from Borneo are extremely meagre on this point, it is nonetheless possible that the seventeenth-century expansion of large, socially stratified groups, such as Kayan, led to a process of increased differentiation between foragers and farmers, while the expansion of more egalitarian groups, such as Iban, led to a process (in the opposite direction) to increase assimilation of hunter-gatherers. This may also provide an important clue to the distribution of Borneo hunter-gatherers in the twentieth century, which corresponds roughly with the distribution of major stratified groups, such as Kayan, Kenyah and Ga’ai. The Iban societies competed with hunter-gatherers for non-timber forest products, then eventually absorbed them. The stratified societies, however, did not integrate hunter-gatherers, as it was in the interest of leading aristocrats to have groups of

hunter-gatherers remaining as nomads and collectors of commercially valuable forest products (cf. Sellato 1994a: 203, 212–220; Sercombe and Sellato 2007: 31; Brosius 1993a: 53).

The crucial question is how to connect pieces of archaeological or linguistic data with the recorded ethnohistory of contemporary groups. There is a huge chronological gap separating the historic narrative of the last century from the fragments of information we have on Borneo's early human history. To Brosius (1988: 87), as we have seen, this is something unresolvable. Even Sellato, who has consistently aimed at historical depth in his hunter-gatherer studies, has repeatedly pointed out the serious lack of historical information, especially for the precolonial times (Sellato 1994a: 116, 2002: 117). This historical dimension is intrinsically problematical in hunter-gatherer studies in particular. The genealogical and historical memory of hunter-gatherers is often rather shallow, seldom reaching beyond the names of single great-grandparents. There are exceptions, of course, but even among the Western Penan, well known for their extensive genealogies, 'very few individuals ... possess this knowledge' (Brosius 1992: 74, cf. Kaskija 2002: 52). Therefore, it is very difficult to reconstruct the history of hunter-gatherers 'more than a century or two' (Sellato 1994a: 125). Archival sources may bring additional data, besides providing a broader political context, but our ethnohistoric accounts, however thick, remain shallow in time depth. Beyond the reach of living memory and written documents, other disciplines, with a far more extensive time depth, take over: archaeology, historical linguistics and a wide range of biosciences, including genomics. This provides us with important pieces of new information from a very distant past, but it also brings seemingly insurmountable methodological problems (cf. Lye 2013: 418).

6.7 Distinct, or Not? What Is Special about the Punan?

According to Shapiro (1998: 489), hunter-gatherer studies often emphasise 'techno-economic factors in human life at the expense of "ideology"'. This is often the case and rainforest hunter-gatherers are usually described with particular reference to their subsistence practices, and also frequently to the environmental knowledge upon which these practices are built. In Borneo, however, up until recently, all indigenous ethnic communities utilised, to varying degrees, the rich resources of the rainforest through hunting and gathering, using more or less the same tools and techniques. In this respect there is very little that makes the Punan/Penan unique and distinct, apart from the fact that most of them used to spend more time on hunting and gathering than the average member of primarily agricultural groups.

Although research has confirmed the depth of the environmental knowledge of Borneo's nomadic groups, there is no indication that they have a significantly greater knowledge of their rainforest environment than non-hunter-gatherer Dayaks in general. If 'environmental knowledge' is used in a narrow sense, referring mainly

to the number of wild plant and animal species that are recognised and classified by local informants, then this kind of knowledge is of a similar scope and magnitude among the various indigenous groups in Borneo (cf. Voeks and Sercombe 2000; Voeks 1999, 2004, 2007; Puri 1997a, b, 1998; Koizumi and Momose 2007). Although minor differences have been noted, this is still not a reason to place groups of Punan/Penan in a separate and more intimate relationship with the non-domesticated environment. Punan are not essentially closer to nature than farmers (cf. Sellato 2005).

Despite these similarities in subsistence techniques and environmental knowledge, characteristic of all indigenous groups along the forager–farmer continuum, and despite the cultural, linguistic and phenotypical similarities discussed earlier, many scholars still commonly view and depict groups of Borneo hunter-gatherers as distinct and clearly identifiable cultural units. The ethnographic literature contains many examples illustrating various elements of this ‘sociocultural’ distinctiveness. Barker (2008), for example, remarks that ‘the cosmologies and world views of the Kelabit [rice farmers] and [their] Penan [neighbours] are strikingly different’. Langub and Janowski (2011) have noted that similar things are given different meaning among the Penan than among farming groups, such as Kelabit. This has been exemplified in great detail by Brosius (1992: 25–26, 1006), who points out that the Penan’s expressions of death and their complex system of death names, although common (usually in simpler form) among all groups of people in central Borneo, are nonetheless ‘elaborated in a completely different direction’ and given a radically different meaning among the Penan than among neighbouring agricultural groups. Brosius (*ibid.*: 161) also points out that Penan organise their understanding of the surrounding landscape in a way that is ‘more densely textured’ and more ‘dimensional’ than is the case among their sedentary Dayak neighbours.

Moreover, Sellato (2002: 107) talks about ‘a core of social values and behaviour patterns’ among groups of Punan ‘that plays an important role in perpetuating their way of life through historic vicissitudes and cultural interactions’. Sellato (1994a: 210) refers to these values as an ‘ideological core’, consisting of characteristics such as ‘openness, mobility, autonomy, flexibility, opportunism, [and] an inclination to individualism’ (*ibid.*: 211). Thambiah (1995: 1, 102–115) suggests that the Bhuket of Sarawak—even though they now are skilled rice farmers and cash crop cultivators, many also being chainsaw operators, lorry drivers, clerks or teachers—are still to be regarded as hunter-gatherers, mainly because of ‘the persistence of their flexible attitude to life’ and their capacity for change.

The distinctiveness of groups of Borneo hunter-gatherers is, according to Sellato (1994a: 211), expressed ‘most clearly, in the economic sphere’, for example in their sharing practices and their preference for activities that give an immediate return. These features are seen as parts of a cultural ‘toolkit’ that allows formerly nomadic people to make their way, sometimes more efficiently than farmers, through a fast-changing world (Sellato 2007: 86–87); at other times the same features are described as obstacles and a troublesome handicap. In a recent article, Koizumi et al. (2012) ask, in reference to Penan Benalui, whether the culture of these hunter-gatherers should be regarded as ‘a major hindrance to a settled agricultural

life'. One problem among these Penan is an 'absence of savings because of excessive spending and extensive sharing' (ibid.: 1). An interesting parallel is Ida Nicolaisen's (1986: 105–106) portrait of the Kajang¹⁶ as having an economy that is in a 'permanent state of bankruptcy', mainly because of their sharing practices and their tendency to spend and consume, and to 'venture into activities which pay off instantaneously'.

A recurrent theme is also that of an oscillation between avoidance and contact (Kaskija 2012; Lye 2013: 436), between 'a mixed economy ... in the frontier and a foraging economy away from it' (Gardner 1993: 129), between autonomy and an 'ideology of patronage' (Bending 2006), between self-reliance and an attitude of dependence and 'assistedness' (Sellato 2007: 88).

An equally recurrent theme is that of variation. Each hunter-gatherer group is unique in many respects, mainly due to unique historical experiences. While some groups lived far away from their nearest agricultural neighbours (Nicolaisen 1976b: 35–40; Rousseau 1984: 88; Needham 1971: 178), some of them with limited interaction with outsiders (Sellato 1988: 116), others have had very close external contacts, to the point of partial assimilation (e.g. Punan Tubu'), or even complete subordination, as among certain groups on the east coast (Kaskija 2011). While some groups are still nomadic, such as a few Eastern Penan, others may never have been nomadic at all (e.g. Punan Batu). Some groups, early in time, became excellent blacksmiths and even learned iron smelting, while other groups never practised metallurgy at all (Sellato 2015; Needham 1953). Some groups have been extremely peaceful and subservient, while others have, as small bands, defended themselves and even waged guerrilla warfare against powerful aggressors (Sellato 1994a: 138; Thambiah 2007: 94–97). An interesting example is Brosius's (2007) description of the differential response of Eastern and Western Penan to the logging industry, which he explains with reference to the diverging colonial histories of the Baram (Eastern Penan) and Balui (Western Penan) areas in Sarawak. However, why the Western Penan, as compared to the Eastern Penan, have significantly larger and more stable communities, why their intercommunity relations are characterised by competitiveness, or why their leaders are more outspoken and prominent, we do not know. The historical processes through which these distinctive features were generated have remained inaccessible and therefore unexplored.

Not least because of distinctive features, such as those mentioned above, it is often assumed, at least implicitly, that the cultures of Borneo hunter-gatherers have developed over a long period of time and very differently from those of the major swidden cultivators. While earlier this was generally regarded as an outcome of isolation and a fidelity to age-old traditions, it is today rather seen in the context of the

¹⁶The Kajang may have no historical tradition of ever having been nomadic (Brosius 1992: 56), but they are referred to as a 'composite ethnic group' by Sellato (1994a: 212), and an example of the historically common amalgamation of groups of hunter-gatherers and (non-stratified) horticulturalists: 'The sharing of geographical space, of ancient ties, and probably of the same lingua franca, and the threat of common enemies contribute to the formation of an ethnic "melting pot" in which nomads and horticulturalists blend' (ibid.).

interaction of a broad range of people within a wider regional or nation context, and in the diverse and complex historical processes through which these relations have been formed and transformed (cf. Kaskija 2013). It is quite possible that most groups of Borneo hunter-gatherers are, just as African hunter-gatherers, ‘descendants of groups that have a long history of hunting and gathering’ (Woodburn 1988: 61), but this says nothing about the length of this history.

It can be expected that additional research will emphasise an increasingly complex and ambiguous picture of human populations in Borneo history and prehistory. Simple dichotomies, such as Australoid versus Austronesians, foragers versus farmers, traditional versus modern, seem unable to accommodate various kinds of new data, which paint a rather confusing and fluid picture of great social and economic diversity and entanglement.

Our understanding of Borneo hunter-gatherers often seems to be intimately connected to our perceptions of their past and their presumed origin. They are, in a way, defined by the past, or rather by our images of the past. It is in this context that the ongoing reframing of the (pre-)Austronesian history becomes important. By drawing a map—not only one that talks about Austronesian immigrant farmers as the forefathers of the whole indigenous population of Borneo, but instead one of great complexity and entanglements—we open up a whole range of new possibilities. Even though our images of historic and pre-Neolithic hunter-gatherers have been dissociated, and the gap between 5000 BP and 300 BP is a no man’s land that will never be bridged—except by ‘resorting to the most tenuous sort of conjectural history’ (Brosius 1988: 87)—we now know that not even pre-Neolithic hunter-gatherers were ‘pure’. The image that is now appearing is one of the mixed livelihood systems (foraging–fishing–food production) persisting through time and genetic and linguistic replacement—of which Borneo hunter-gatherers were and still are one component.

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Chapter 7

Issues and Trends in Media and Communications in Borneo over the Past 30 Years

Fausto Barlocco

Abstract The chapter is a review of the most important English-language research carried out in the field of media and mass communications in Borneo. This research can be classified as media infrastructure, historical, audience studies, content analyses and development communication studies, and was done by scholars from disciplines as diverse as business, marketing, media studies, social anthropology, education and development studies. The main distinction that can be made is that between article-long studies dealing with a single issue in a single medium, and being mostly interested in practical applications, and theses or book-length studies with a more holistic and critical approach. The works belonging to the first group, consisting mostly of media studies, business or marketing, tend to show a pragmatic outlook geared towards development—an idea that is often problematised by the anthropological works belonging to the second group. The latter, by contrast, tends to focus on issues of power relations, representation, nation-building and identity. The study of information and communications technologies (ICT) and their introduction within the life of the people of Borneo—especially the case study of the rural ICT project of eBario—has been, with different approaches, undertaken by authors from both groups. Overall, it can be argued that the status of media studies in the area has improved with the increased attention paid to the subject and in the diversity of studies produced, some of which offer very promising critical insights and theoretical sophistication.

Keywords Borneo · Anthropology · Media · Mass communications · Information and communications technologies · eBario

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7.1 Introduction

This chapter intends to provide a review, highlighting the most interesting trends and findings, of the most important research carried out in the field of media and mass communications in Borneo, and whose results have been published in English. In doing so, the chapter will build on three previous works published by John Lent in 1978a, b and 1994 with the explicit intent of surveying mass communications research in Malaysia. The aim of the chapter is not to provide an exhaustive review of everything published in the field—a task that could prove almost impossible considering the proliferation of research and publications in the field of media and related fields since the 1970s—but rather to highlight the main subfields in which most research efforts have been concentrated, and to critically assess the main contributions given, highlighting the most important and interesting issues and theoretical contributions emerging from them. Moreover, in contrast to what was undertaken by Lent (1978a, b, 1994), and in line with the contributions of the rest of the book, this chapter concentrates on a geographic area, Borneo, rather than on a country, Malaysia. While the field comprises territories belonging to three countries (Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei), the majority of the studies reviewed refer to the Malaysian portion of the island, with which the majority of English-language articles and books deal. While concentrating solely on publications in English—therefore mostly being limited to Sabah and Sarawak—without doubt constitutes a limitation, the scholarship surveyed here consists of publications that, in my view, can be considered the most relevant to the international debates in the field of media studies and media anthropology. The approach with which this set of literature is discussed, different to the one used by Lent who tried to provide a complete overview in all fields, will be anthropological and critical.

7.2 Media Studies in Borneo

The most appropriate starting point for a survey of the studies conducted on the media in Borneo is constituted by Lent's survey of research published in Malaysia (1978a, b, 1982a, b, 1994). In his first survey, Lent (1978a) argues that academic research in the field of media and communications had started in Malaysia only at the beginning of the 1970s, and that at the time it consisted mainly of students' papers and theses—mostly of good quality—submitted to local universities. In 1978 he came up with a list of 177 works, mostly dealing with media infrastructure and, to a lesser extent, providing audience and content analysis. Media research in Malaysia, he contends, was seriously limited by a lack of trained researchers and the poor application of methodology, on the one hand, and by a lack of appreciation of the discipline in government and academic environments and the sensitivities of a multiethnic reality, on the other.

In 1994 Lent reported that research topics had broadened since his last review, including 'professionalism, biographies of media pioneers, images of Malaysia in the foreign press, images within Malaysian media, development communication, youth and media', and 'traditional communications' (1994: 78), but especially expanding to cover aspects of popular culture such as music, comics, cartoons and films, as well as the new field of telematics and computerisation. The most important categories used by Lent in his survey of publications up to 1994 are media infrastructure studies, audience studies, content analyses and development communication studies, to which he added historical and critical studies. Talking about media infrastructure, which in 1994 he found still to be the most studied aspect, Lent mentions general surveys as well as studies dealing with a single medium, namely films, cartoons, advertising, educational broadcasting, music and videocassettes. He then notes various studies in the newly developed field of telematics, criticising the majority of them, and especially those of Morris H. Crawford (1984) and Cees Hamelink (1983), for their limited research and lack of critical approach.

A good and extensive example of a study dealing with media infrastructure is one by Wallace Koh (1998), who provides an overview of public and private media in Brunei Darussalam and of the policies and regulations affecting them. The country showed a high level of radio ownership (310,105 for a population of 305,100 in 1996) and television ownership (190,300), with a limited but increasing penetration of the internet (8000 subscribers in 1998). The broadcast service in the country was mainly in the hands of the public sector, with five radio stations and one television channel run by Radio Television Brunei (RTB), but also private providers based abroad, as in the case of radio programmes being rebroadcast from London and international television channels accessible through a satellite dish or decoder. Radio broadcasts, not only in Malay and English but also Chinese and Nepali, started in 1957, and included news and current affairs as well as children's programmes, and moral and Islamic content. Television broadcasting started in 1975 and was in Malay and English, consisting of 35 % locally produced and 65 % imported programmes. A survey cited by Koh (1998) found that 95 % of the population was watching RTB. The government also had control of the telecommunications sector, managing the only mobile and land telephone and internet provider, Jabatan Telekom Brunei (JTB), as well as a considerable amount of the press, through the publications of the Information Department. The main private company operating in the sector, Brunei Press, produces the *Borneo Bulletin*, a newspaper with a circulation beyond the limits of the country. In an unpublished thesis, Siti Nur Khairunnisa (2010) analyses the attempts by RTB to counter the loss of audiences caused by competition with a satellite television station broadcasting from Malaysia through the creation of new channels with programming similar to externally produced content, and through the development of the promotional strategy, the Brunei media carnival. The study concludes that the strategy has failed and, with a pragmatic approach similar to that of much contemporary literature (see below), proposes alternative solutions to increase RTB's audience popularity.

Among the infrastructure studies that should be included are those that look at a single medium from a historical point of view, especially newspapers and magazines.

Of interest here is R.W.H. Reece's article (1981) on Sarawak's first Malay newspaper, *Fajar Sarawak*, later also the subject of two articles in Malay by P.L. Thomas and Reece (1984) and Hamidah Karim (1981). Another interesting study was done by Sharifah Mariam Ghazali (1985), who looked at forms of communication between civil servants and politicians in Sabah and their quality. Concerning audience studies in Malaysia, Lent (1994) argues that research had developed from Newell Grenfell's (1979) important but dated study, with research looking not only at ratings and commercial aspects but also at the credibility of the mass media, the effects of the media on specific groups such as teenagers, the connection with interethnic interactions and the effects of the diffusion of foreign television programmes. Audience analyses also examine news about, and the projected image of, Malaysia in foreign media as well as news about other countries in Malaysia. Other research deals with the coverage of elections in the country. Studies of development communications had been relatively few according to Lent (1994), considering aspects such as communications for family planning (Shahan N. Noor cited in Lent 1994), for education (Asmah Haji Omar 1985), rice irrigation (Ramli Mohamed 1984) and use by agricultural development agencies (Keeney 1986).

Among these latter studies can be placed Hamdan Adnan's (1990) analysis of the state of rural media—newspapers, radio and television providing information about events taking place in rural areas and aiming at their inhabitants. The survey, which looked at the whole of Malaysia at the end of the 1980s, found the rural media, and especially the press, to be limited and therefore unable to play the desired key role in fostering 'nation-building and rural development' (1990: 71). Hamdan attributes the situation to the fact that the Malaysian media, because they originated from the interests of the colonial administration and later developed to serve those of specific ethnic communities, were mainly urban-centred and orientated. The study, by contrast, concludes that to be less the case in Sabah and Sarawak where, possibly due to geographical isolation, the rural media were more developed. In both states he stresses the presence of local radio stations run by the government that favoured topics of rural interest, such as agriculture, as well as a television channel producing programmes with a local focus.¹ The local press was particularly developed in the two states, with 12 newspapers in Sarawak and nine in Sabah, not only publishing in Chinese or English but also including bilingual or trilingual editions featuring local languages alongside English and Malay. Generally, according to Hamdan, these newspapers tended to favour local themes, including those of interest to the rural populations, as well as to align with specific political parties or groups depending on their ownership. Due to their focus, but also to a lack of manpower and modern technologies, these media often employed local people to provide news and other information. But in doing so they also encouraged the participation of the audiences by inviting people to voice their problems on the radio or, in the case of newspapers,

¹Television production and broadcast in Malaysian Borneo began in 1970 with the setting up of Sabah TV, reaching Sarawak in 1975 as TV Malaysia Rangkaian Ketiga, operating until 1984. For a discussion see Barlocco (2014).

using stringers. Also, the media often relied on the help of the Department of Information and on news collected by Pertubuhan Berita Nasional Malaysia (Bernama), the Malaysian national news agency. Hamdan concludes that, despite the fact that the news still tended to be mostly urban-orientated, radio, television and newspapers were used to a satisfactory degree by rural people in Sarawak and Sabah, as evidenced by a case study in 1982 that showed that in the latter instance farmers had obtained information about the national unit trust scheme mainly through the media, and especially through television.

A final category used by Lent (1994) in his survey of media and communications research in Malaysia is that of critical studies, a term he employs to refer to 'works that pinpoint, define and study a society's serious issues', among which, in Malaysia, he identifies 'consumerism and advertising, roles and images of women, freedom of expression, media ownership, media imperialism, and impact of new information technology' (1994: 84). It is immediately clear that these themes fit into the already considered categories of infrastructure, history, audience and content analyses, and that the category is used by Lent to refer to the most topical and burning issues in the Malaysian context, on the one hand, while denoting studies done with a critical approach, on the other. The former aspect is obviously time dependent, as topical and current themes vary with historical events as well as with the development of theoretical debates and sophistication, and therefore are not suitable for being the basis of a durable category. The critical approach, by contrast, is vital when looking at any aspect of media and communications, as well as any other social scientific aspect, and should constitute the indispensable perspective within which studies are undertaken rather than one of the categories within which these are classified. This view is only implicitly present in Lent's (1994) survey, in his comments about the problems with the development of a critical perspective and in his negative evaluation of the way in which works by Malaysian media scholars were excessively influenced by American gurus, whose approaches and ideas were often applied in an uncritical way.

The same criticism made by Lent was later picked up by John Postill (2006), who blames the constraints imposed by the government and the excessive following of some American gurus for the serious limitations contained in media studies on Malaysia, and specifically on Sarawak, published at least until the late 1990s. According to Postill, a work exemplifying these shortcomings and influenced by mainstream and dated American works is Jeniri Amir and Awang Rosli's (1996) *Isu-isu media di Sarawak*.

7.3 Media as an Assimilation Tool

A study that can be considered to fulfil all requirements for being critical is Victor J. Caldarola's doctoral research (1990) about the consumption of visual media in South Kalimantan, Indonesia in the late 1980s, published in an article (1992) and later as a monograph (1994). Caldarola's study belongs to the category

of audience and media reception studies, and consists of a case study of a Banjarese village in South Kalimantan. He concludes that cultural experience, rather than media experience in itself, strongly influenced the reception of mass media. More specifically, he finds that reception practices and interpretative patterns of media audiences reflected prevailing cultural perspectives and values, and that they varied according to gender, age, occupation, educational achievement, household economy and religious orientations. On the other hand, he argues that it is likely that long-term experience with mass media would have over time ‘influenced reception patterns, as the media become integrated into the domain of cultural experiences’ (1990: 348).

Moreover, while the reception patterns of the Banjarese audiences invoked local traditions, including customs (*adat*) and Islamic practices, in fact they strongly encouraged the influence of Indonesian national culture, which constituted the dominant perspective of the mass media. Among the villagers there were also differences between groups, with the most receptive to national culture influences being young people and Muslim reformists. As a result, media influences, together with formal education and political domination by civilian and military authorities from Jakarta, constituted primary elements of the assimilation to Indonesian-ness of members of cultural minorities like the Banjarese. On the other hand, orthodox Islam, which had an essential role in media experience among the Banjarese, ‘presents the greatest threat to Indonesia’s national culture agenda, and perhaps the best organised resistance to Jakarta’s “assimilationist policies”’, according to Caldarola (1990: 380). This was made possible, he argues, by the fact that ‘while reception patterns confirm the cultural identities of media audiences, they also function as mediators of those identities, and thus establish the basis for potentially sweeping changes’ (ibid.: 373). The conclusion reached by Caldarola (1990, 1994) is that the media favoured the formation of a national culture.

Assimilationist policies were at the focus of two book-length studies carried out in Sarawak and Sabah in the two subsequent decades: that of Postill in the mid-1990s and by me in the mid-2000s. While Postill (2006) mainly concentrated on the successful use of the ‘four foundational media’ of television, writing (literacy), clock-and-calendar time and state propaganda to create a national culture in Malaysia, I concentrated on the relationship between the national culture spread primarily through the media and the identification with different collective categories among the people of Sabah officially known as Kadazandusun (Barlocco 2014).²

²The term Kadazandusun or Kadazan-Dusun is officially used in Sabah to refer to a set of peoples who had no idea of having a common ethnic identity and whose members started to increasingly define themselves as either Kadazan or Dusun from the late 1950s. The terms Kadazandusun and Kadazan-Dusun came into usage under the auspices of the Kadazan Dusun Cultural Association and became popular in the late 1980s to forge a political and cultural unity between those who preferred the term Kadazan and those who opposed it, and has become the term used in the census. In order to stress the political and modern origin of the term and to avoid taking sides, I propose the usage of an alternative term, Dusunic peoples, based on the belonging to the Dusunic language

Postill's monograph *Media and nation building: how the Iban became Malaysian* (2006) deals with all the media research fields identified by Lent (1994), namely infrastructure studies, audience studies, content analyses and development communication studies, through an approach that identifies itself as belonging to media anthropology. Postill defines his approach, combining ethnographic and historical research, as 'ethnological', by which he means 'tracking the fates of the Iban and other Malaysian peoples (*ethnos*) across time and space' and therefore setting itself apart from 'social anthropological studies centred on the embedded sociality of contemporary groups' (ibid.: 3). Postill's research consists of a case study, looking at the Iban of Sarawak and the way in which, since the formation of Malaysia in 1963, they had become 'Malaysianised' through the government's efforts, and primarily through the use of the media. The monograph begins with a reconstruction and analysis of the intertwined development of an indigenous and national cultural and media production. Indigenous cultural and media production, exemplified by the works of the Iban ethnohistorian Benedict Sandin, developed through popular radio broadcasts in indigenous languages, starting in the late colonial period, and through a period of relatively intense literary production thanks to the formation of the Borneo Literature Bureau in 1958. With the formation of Malaysia and the end of the threats posed by the Indonesian confrontation (*konfrontasi*) and communist guerrillas, these indigenous media became part of the national media, controlled by Kuala Lumpur, whose main aim was, according to Postill, that of 'building a nation within the ... allocated territories' (2006: 1). As a consequence, production in Iban and other indigenous languages of Sarawak (and Sabah) was strongly limited, with the termination of the publications by the Borneo Literature Bureau and the indigenous broadcasts being relegated to a secondary role as a result of the increasing predominance of television with its imported or Malay programmes. Postill's book then turns to media reception, looking at the way in which state propaganda, defined as 'sustainable propaganda' for the way it constitutes a sustainable form of development, has become an integral part of Iban individual lifeworlds. Rural Iban, Postill concludes, lacked an independent ideological space from which to critically assess the official reports. Apart from television and state propaganda, other essential media considered by Postill included clock-and-calendar time. This created a new, homogenous and shared form of time-reckoning, inscribing every action in even the remotest village within a synchronicity with the rest of the world and especially with Malaysia, as exemplified through the transformation brought by television broadcast times or the case study of the annual Dayak harvest festival. On the other hand, Postill shows also a pocket of parochial practice that had not (yet) succumbed to the imperative of nationalisation and globalisation, constituted by the importance of the materiality of objects such as television sets and their usage as burial objects.

(Footnote 2 continued)

family [for a more in-depth discussion see Barlocco (2014)]. In the rest of the chapter I will use the term in inverted commas to refer to its official usage or that by other authors.

Postill's conclusions are that states have become, and likely will remain for some time, the key units of the world, at least at the political and cultural level, especially thanks to the control of a set of mass media by governments. The thorough Malaysianisation of the Iban and the formation of a Malaysian 'thick culture area', according to Postill (2006), bear witness to this power of the media.

In my book-length study of the everyday creation, re-creation and application of various collective forms of identification among the Kadazan of Sabah's Penampang district, I look at the media mainly as carriers of discourses about a set of themes relevant to the process of identification (Barlocco 2014). Among these, the most important are nation-building and progress, and they are advanced very effectively by government-led propaganda, which proposes an apparently coherent discourse bringing together ideas of modernisation, economic and educational development, and national unity. On the other hand, like Amity A. Doolittle (2005), I found many examples of the rejection of government propaganda, which I attribute to a sense of being treated and perceived as second-class citizens and therefore of a lack participation in the Malaysian imagined community common among non-Muslim natives of Sabah.

I concentrate on two key aspects of the media: the way in which the symbolic materials they provide is used in the creation of narratives of self-identity (Thompson 1995); and the way in which they stimulate discourses of identity that often take an essentialist form. My analysis looks at the commentaries given by Kadazan villagers on newspaper articles, popular television programmes and soap operas, concentrating on the types of reading they give and on how they situate themselves as belonging to different identities in response to them. I conclude that Kadazan villagers, while usually not challenging the legitimacy of the nation which is the prime initiator of development, and situating themselves within a Malaysian frame of reference, reject many aspects of the propaganda. They see these aspects as connected with the primacy of the ruling elites—especially the Malays—and of their values, which are mainly connected with Islam and with some form of 'internal colonialism' of the Bornean states. When these views and values are expressed, either explicitly or implicitly as in the case of Malay television dramas, the Kadazan villagers react by rejecting the whole product, or even genre, and by situating themselves within an oppositional category—ethnic as Kadazan, religious as Christian or local as Sabahans. The three categories, as shown by letters sent to newspapers as well as in a wide range of face-to-face discussions, tend to be connected with a discourse of national belonging when the Kadazan and other Sabahans talk about the immigrants coming in large numbers to the state (Barlocco 2014). In this case individuals demand rights due to them as Malaysian citizens against non-citizens, while lamenting the government's support given to the latter, allowing them to become naturalised as Malays and, as such, to alter the ethnic and political balance in favour of the federal government and its local allies. On the other hand, Kadazan villagers also circulate and support a localist discourse based on village and ethnic belonging, on egalitarian values of sharing and commensality (including clearly non-Muslim alcohol drinking and pork eating), and on putting primacy on strong ties of kinship and friendship in opposition to the urban,

multiethnic environment, oblivious to the fact that they derive their livelihood from it (Barlocco 2010, 2014).

Another aspect I studied (Barlocco 2013, 2014) is how the nation is constructed through consumerism, taking the form of both everyday practices of consumption and commercial advertisement, as suggested by Robert Foster (2002). I apply Foster's idea that advertisements qualify commodities as embodiments and/or possessions of the nation—and their consumption as a form of appropriation of its qualities by the individual to the ethnic group—by looking at newspaper advertisements connected with the most important native celebration of Sabah, the harvest festival, *Pesta Kaamatan*. While the advertisements communicate to the members of the 'Kadazan-Dusun ethnic group' as a specific community of consumers, and in so doing contribute to 'materialising' the group, it could be argued that they constitute only a subgroup of the Malaysian one, albeit with some specific characteristics. I attribute this fact to the unique form taken by the Malaysian nation, which presents itself as a pluralistic arrangement in which the main communities retain their cultural distinctiveness (Barlocco 2013). Therefore, I conclude that consumption and advertisements can be agents in 'materialising' and objectifying not only the nation but also, in a country like Malaysia, the ethnic groups that constitute its plural arrangement.

While the studies by Postill (2006) and, to some extent, my own (Barlocco 2013, 2014) concentrate mainly on the media as vehicles of culture, the majority of the studies done in the 2000s and early 2010s look at them in an instrumental way. The media were either tools for change through government-sponsored rural ICT projects (Bala et al. 2000, 2002; Harris et al. 2001; Songan et al. 2004; Yeo et al. 2011; Cheuk et al. 2012) and through private initiatives (Karanasios and Burgess 2006), as conveyors of messages influencing people's behaviour (Totu et al. 2013), or tools for political campaigning (Asiyah Kassim et al. 2012). These studies come from disciplines as diverse as business, marketing, media studies, social anthropology, education and development studies, and are diverse in their depth and quality.

7.4 Bario

Most of the works mentioned above (Bala et al. 2000, 2002; Harris et al. 2001; Songan et al. 2004; Karanasios and Burgess 2006; Yeo et al. 2011; Cheuk et al. 2012) deal with what can be considered the most important case study in the field of media—more specifically new or electronic media—in Borneo, especially in the 2000s and early 2010s. This is the eBario, a community ICT project started by Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) in 1999 in the remote Sarawakian village of Bario. The project has attracted a relatively high amount of attention from both institutional and academic circles. Members of the latter are mostly Malaysian scholars from a variety of disciplines, including media studies as well as development studies, technology, economics, business and marketing. Many of these academics, such as Roger Harris, Peter Songan, Elaine Khoo Guat Lien and

Tingang Trang, belonged to the UNIMAS team tasked with the responsibility to plan the development and the implementation of the project as well as to evaluate its results. Among these researchers was also Poline Bala, who dedicated her doctoral thesis (Bala 2008) to the subject. To these should be added the more critical anthropological study by Matthew Amster (2008), who looks at the media as aspects of the micropolitics of daily life among the Kelabit. The rationale behind the eBario project, shared by both institutional and academic agents, was that of creating an opportunity for ‘bridging the digital divide’ as a way to more generally provide development and increase standards of living for populations from remote and/or less-developed areas. This idea belongs to the wider domain of community informatics, which is the ‘application of ICTs to enable community processes and the achievement of community objectives including overcoming “digital divides” both within and among communities’ (Gurstein 2000, cited in Songan et al. 2004: 266; see also Bala et al. 2002). The aim of community informatics projects like eBario, according to Songan et al. (2004: 266), would be ‘to improve the socio-economic well-being of the community’.

The aims of the project were in line with the former Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad’s Vision 2020 idea of creating a knowledge society, with plans to provide rural communities with communication facilities. These, as noted by Harris et al. (2001), are particularly scarce in Malaysian Borneo as opposed to the peninsula, creating a communication gap between the two parts of the country. The need for special arrangements and incentives to bridge these gaps is particularly strong, as the low population density of areas like most of Malaysian Borneo determines a low revenue for private communications operators, while the social payoff is highest in areas that are the most isolated.

Isolation is particularly marked in the case of the people of Bario and the surrounding communities, who belong mainly to the Kelabit ethnic group, as they are located in a highland area that is remote from any other settlement and is reachable only by overland journeys taking weeks of trekking across forested mountains or by air travel with a Twin Otter (Yeo et al. 2011). The communities of Bario and the Kelabit highlands, therefore, were chosen as the target for the project because of their status as one of the most geographically isolated in the whole of Borneo.

The planners chose to base the community informatics project with the establishment of a telecentre, possibly located at the local secondary school. As described by Harris et al. (2001: 6–7), ‘telecentres come with a variety of names ... and no single definition serves to satisfy all of them. However, a common characteristic is a physical space that provides public access to ICTs for educational, personal, social and economic development’. Cheuk et al. (2012: 682–683) argue that telecentres were

set up for the general use of the community—for accessing the internet, and the use of e-applications and other ICT-related services. The role of the telecentres have been identified as, *inter alia*, a provider of applications for citizen services and government interactions, a virtual site for the community to meet and interact, a provider of trade,

commercial and government-related information, a general information centre, a communication portal and facilities centre and a platform for knowledge sharing.

Harris et al. (2001) provided a baseline study of communication practices among the Kelabit of the Bario area and of challenges and opportunities that the introduction of ICT could bring to them. The survey aimed at discovering, through a participatory action-orientated approach, the possible positive effects that the introduction of various forms of ICT—in particular the internet—might have for the local population, and the way in which ICT could offer solutions to some of their needs. The authors saw themselves as trying to avoid technological determinism and offered a social and economic study of computing and communication technologies, rather than a technology impact assessment. The research found the most important form of communication used by the Kelabit of Bario to be face-to-face, including sending memos or letters and sharing gossip, both within the community and with the rest of the world, and in the latter case messages were often sent through people visiting Miri or other places outside of the area. Locally, communal meetings, especially religious ones, and group work were also important occasions to share information. Radio, owned by 79 % of households, and television, owned by 30 %, were also important sources of information but were seen as inadequate by the local people as they only offered one-way communication. The study also found that while five computers were present in the local secondary school their use was limited and no local people had any knowledge of the internet. On the other hand, the researchers found a great deal of interest in ICT and the internet among the teachers, who were very keen on learning more about them and felt that their students should have access to these technologies, including know-how on their use.

Following the initial baseline study, the eBario project was started in 1999, implementing a participatory action research (PAR) approach that focused on the community's needs and tried to involve its members to fit the provision and to generate engagement. In 2001 16 computers with internet access were installed in the primary school. Teachers were trained, followed by the children. The training-of-the-trainer method was used to train the whole community.

In 2006 the operation was given to the community, who had to make it economically viable by charging a small fee for the services and organising events and initiatives (Yeo et al. 2011). By 2011 the telecentre was used mostly for the communication by residents with people outside the area—mainly relatives. Also of great importance was its use by lodge owners and other providers of tourism services to communicate with their customers (*ibid.*).

Five years after the project was initiated Songan et al. (2004) assessed the extent to which it had changed the lives of the Kelabit of Bario by providing opportunities for increased knowledge, communication and economic development. While they stressed the importance and effectiveness of synergies between the public and private sectors, the study mostly concentrated on government actions and goals, and seemed to consider them as paramount. The approach was exemplified by the consideration offered by the authors that very little previous knowledge of ICT and

very little awareness of its potential to transform society had been found among the villagers of Bario despite a large amount of government propaganda on the subject.

A later study by Stan Karanasios and Stephen Burgess (2006) concentrated on the use of the internet for tourism businesses, in particular by small-medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs), using Bario as a case study. The authors qualified the usage as a 'small generic presence', as they found that most SMTEs used the internet but to a limited extent—merely as a communication tool with potential customers or to manage bookings, mostly through e-mails. Online payments and direct bookings were rare. 'Overall the Internet is used as an open information exchange, using low maintenance and low cost activities—that in most cases yielded significant benefits' (ibid.: 16). On the other hand, there was generally a high level of awareness of how to use the internet and of its strategic value. According to the study, SMTEs saw internet usage as the norm. In Bario, even if the internet was not available at a business premises, access to it from a shared point, the telecentre, resulted in increased bookings.

A deeper and more critical evaluation of the eBario project and its impact is provided by Bala, a Kelabit anthropologist, in her unpublished doctoral dissertation (2008). She looks at the way Bario residents have used opportunities offered by development coming from the outside, and specifically from the project, as a resource in their search for success, affluence and respect. She argues that this phenomenon derives from the Kelabit's ability and willingness to harness the advantages of the modern world, and especially of education and government-led development (see also Boulanger 2002). This ability and willingness are encouraged and supported by native notions such as that of progress (*iyuk*), movement and specifically status mobility, and the positive quality of 'good' (*doo*), including not only hospitality, generosity and strength but also perseverance and self-discipline. According to Bala (2008), part of this response has been the development of a new 'economic elite' involved in the tourism business in Bario and the highlands, as already described by Karanasios and Burgess (2006). These economic developments, together with the impact of Christianity, education and new forms of wealth, have, according to Bala, changed the social dynamics among the Kelabit and, in particular, the relationship between inherited and achieved status.

Matthew Amster (2008), a scholar who has dedicated much of his work to the Kelabit, considers some of the impacts of the wiring of Bario in an article discussing the various layers of social space in the community. He concentrates not only on how the media created an unusual connection between the remote location of Bario and regional centres such as Miri but also on national and international processes and forms of power, taking the form of practices and discourses concerning development, modernity and connectedness. While considering new forms of communication deriving from the upgrading of the airstrip and the introduction of the internet to Bario as linking the place to regional and global forces in an unprecedented way, Amster also exposes the limitations of internet technology. Based on observations undertaken in 2003, he argues that only a limited set of people, mainly schoolteachers, civil servants and tourists, as well as others with previous experience of computers, used the internet for communication, while the

majority still preferred to communicate by word of mouth or by sending letters through people who flew between Bario and other locations, especially Miri.

To support his point, Amster describes a case in which, after a helicopter crash involving a church leader happened at some distance from Bario, the news reached the town through people flying in from Miri, who reported the news and brought a newspaper article that was posted on the airport wall, rather than through the internet or one of the public telephones available. The preference for long-established practices of information exchange over the use of the internet was also confirmed by the fact that people living in Miri who were connected with relatives in Bario via e-mail still preferred to print important messages and send them with people—even strangers such as foreign tourists—flying to Bario. Amster therefore concludes that, despite the introduction of new technologies such as the telephone and the internet, the form of communication used by people mainly remained the same as in the past, without major changes. According to Amster, the main impact of the project was that it had attracted significant attention to Bario and the Kelabit, constituting an experiment that had great resonance among government officials, the media and scholars, both nationally and internationally.

A paper by Yeo et al. (2011) discusses the observed positive effects and limitations of the initiative tested in Bario, and the plans to scale up the project to four rural communities: Long Lamai and Ba'kelalan in Sarawak, and Buayan and Larapan in Sabah. In order to reach the goal, the Centre of Excellence for Rural Informatics (CoERI) was set up in 2007. The authors identify four stages of replication—planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation based on the eBario model—albeit flexible enough to adapt to local context and needs. The evaluation centred on the issues of how much the telecentre was used and the extent to which it had improved the life of local people. In terms of the assessment of eBario, Yeo et al. find that, after a decade, equipment had become obsolete, user numbers had declined and needs had changed. In order to remedy these issues, a new business model was sought by UNIMAS researchers, involving mainly the use of voice over internet protocol (VoIP) for people to communicate cheaply with distant relatives, internet access for the 12 villages around Bario and telehealth.

Cheuk et al. (2012) carried out a quantitative study with a non-random sample of businesspeople looking at community attitudes towards the Bario telecentre. They find the telecentre supporting a set of functions, namely education, e-government services, e-health, telemedicine and personal communication, with the latter being the most prominent. According to their findings, a large majority of Bario's inhabitants, apart from those over 60 years, used the telecentre mainly for sending and receiving (primarily business-related) e-mails and browsing websites. They lamented the cost and the slow/problematic connection, especially during rainy days when solar power was unusable. Attitudes were generally positive, as it was felt that telecentres could improve business, and people usually perceived the service as useful. However, the usage rate was not very high due to the availability of alternative forms of access to the internet—such as mobile phones—and technical problems at the telecentre. At this point, they argued, 'the digital divide has

been largely bridged and the role of the telecentre has to change in line with that fact' (ibid.: 686).

7.5 Media and the Government

What all the studies of eBario reveal, with the exception of Amster (2008) and to some extent Bala (2008, see below), is a common developmentalist framework, considering ICTs as essential tools able to increase access to knowledge and therefore to generate economic, social and cultural development. While the studies undertaken follow and encourage the approach of the project designers and implementers, which consisted of finding out the needs of local communities and proposing solutions to the issues faced by them, none challenge the idea of the government as the primary agent of change and thus being responsible for it. These studies acknowledge the primacy of government in nation-building and development, and the way in which these are connected with propaganda, but, unlike Doolittle (2005), Postill (2006) and Barlocco (2014), they do not problematise that relationship. In disclosing these characteristics, the case of eBario and all the studies dedicated to it offer what seems to be a representative example of the analyses of media and communications in Borneo by local and international scholars, and of the approaches and preoccupations shown by them.

In her dissertation, Bala (2008) takes a position that can be contrasted with that of the authors mentioned above, as well as of many others writing on development in other areas, and offers a positive evaluation of development concerning the Kelabit. This, in her view, derives not only from the fact that state-sanctioned formal education and, at least sometimes, development can bring material advantages, as Postill (2006) argues, but also from what she presents as a congruence between the values of the government's ideological views and goals and those of the Kelabit. Bala's analysis, however, seems to overemphasise the advantages the Kelabit obtain from development and their active part in reaping these advantages without paying enough attention to their being part—even through development politics and propaganda—of a larger system over which they are much less in control than Bala would allow.

Two studies published in the past 3 years show how, despite the passing of time, many media studies published in Malaysia still remain tied to old approaches and show themselves unable to fully engage with present empirical developments or theoretical advances. The first of the two studies, carried out by Asiyah Kassim et al. (2012), proposes to investigate the influence of social media on voting behaviour among young people in Sarawak during the tenth state election. The study, which is based on structured interviews with people mostly aged between 19 and 23—considered as the political actors most likely to bring social change—also incorporates a content analysis of six 'social media platforms'. However, as far as it is possible to ascertain, as the article does not adequately describe its procedure and

results, the analysis does not deal with actual social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, but concentrates on political blogs and websites, completely missing the specificities and importance of the former.

The most relevant results of the research are that a large majority of participants (90 %) thought that social media could have an influence on electoral choices, both in the positive sense of providing information and in the negative when information affects the image of a candidate. Moreover, the majority (70 %) reported that they were influenced by social media in their voting, and about a quarter of respondents considered social media as the most significant platform for campaigning. This fact was due to the perceived two-way nature of communication, allowing citizens to interact with candidates and to ask them questions, a fact also confirmed by the liking expressed for door-to-door campaigning. The content analysis shows a general dissatisfaction with the then state government and chief minister because of abuses of power, bad governance and lack of transparency. Other issues felt to be very relevant were the violation of native rights and the position of the Chinese in state politics.

The second study by Andreas Totu et al. (2013) concentrates on Sabah and looks at the correlation between television watching and the 'Kadazan-Dusun' people's (not better identified) way of life and values. It finds them to be more inclined toward spirituality than materialistic values and, contrary to previous studies on other populations, identifies no correlation between exposure to television advertisements and the presence of a materialistic outlook. This paper, despite years of debate refining the theoretical tools used in the study of media, still seems connected to old ideas of media effects, quite similar to the discredited and infamous 'hypodermic needle' model.

7.6 Conclusion

The studies considered in this chapter can be divided by time, location and type. In regard to time, studies done in the 1980s include Thomas and Reece (1984), Sharifah Mariam (1985), Hamdan (1990) and Caldarola (1990); in the 1990s Postill (2006), Bala et al. (2000); in the 2000s Karanasios and Burgess (2006), Songan et al. (2004), Bala (2008), Amster (2008), Barlocco (2013, 2014); in the 2010s Yeo et al. (2011), Cheuk et al. (2012), Asiyah Kassim et al. (2012) and Totu et al. (2013).

In terms of location, the only study done on Kalimantan is that by Caldarola (1990), while Brunei was studied by Koh (1998) and by Siti Nur Khairunnisa (2010). In Malaysia the studies by Sharifah Mariam (1985), Barlocco (2013, 2014) and Totu et al. (2013) are about Sabah, while the majority are on Sarawak (Thomas and Reece 1984; Harris et al. 2001; Postill 2006; Karanasios and Burgess 2006; Songan et al. 2004; Bala 2008; Amster 2008; Yeo et al. 2011; Asiyah Kassim et al. 2012; Cheuk et al. 2012). Among the latter the importance of studies on the eBario project must be noted, not only for their number but also for the mix of academic and non-academic interest it attracted. In terms of types we can distinguish infrastructure

studies (Thomas and Reece 1984; Hamdan 1990), reception studies (Caldarola 1990; Totu et al. 2013), media and development/business studies (Harris et al. 2001; Bala et al. 2000, 2002; Cheuk et al. 2012; Asiyah Kassim et al. 2012; Karanasios and Burgess 2006; Songan et al. 2004; and Yeo et al. 2011). Other studies include more than one category.

This brief survey, which has no pretence of completeness and has limited itself to English-language publications, shows how media research in Borneo situated itself within the most traditional categories of studies, already established by the end of the 1970s, namely media infrastructure, audience, development communication and historical studies, as well as content analyses (see Lent 1994). Scholars belonging to various disciplines, including business, marketing, media studies, social anthropology, education and development studies, have explored these fields of research. These scholars have applied various theoretical and epistemological approaches, mainly pragmatic ones, looking at practical consequences and potentialities of the media as technologies, sometimes falling into views similar to those of the ‘hypodermic needle’ model, postulating direct and universal effects of the media.

The studies that present themselves as more interesting and able to go beyond these limitations share some common characteristics. First, they tend to be book-length contributions (Caldarola 1994; Doolittle 2005; Postill 2006; Barlocco 2014), mostly based on doctoral theses, or articles in more general journals, not belonging to very specialised technical ones (Hamdan 1990; Amster 2008; Barlocco 2013). Another aspect shared by the most significant works consists of the fact that they mix various fields of study, looking not only at reception but also media infrastructure and production in the present (Postill 2006; Amster 2008; Barlocco 2014) in a diachronic, historical perspective. These studies also tend to put together more disciplines; while they were carried out by anthropologists, they are inclined to integrate—at least to some extent—aspects of media studies and content analysis, history, technology and material culture, going beyond narrow approaches limiting themselves to one aspect. On the other hand, these studies, because of their holistic and less technical approach, are probably less useful to those interested in more specific and direct practical applications. It seems that it is by following the best elements of these studies—and especially their critical approach—that the field of media studies in Borneo can provide the advances anticipated in the first review by Lent in 1978a, b.

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Chapter 8

Identities in Borneo: Constructions and Transformations

Victor T. King

Abstract This chapter focuses on a rapidly expanding field of research in the social sciences in Borneo. There has been a noticeable focus on the multidisciplinary study of identities and ethnicities in Borneo in the last two decades, even though the identification of units for analysis and the labelling of ethnic groups or categories have enjoyed a long history in Borneo Studies. An important stimulus for the more recent increase in scholarly interest was the major conference held in Sarawak in 1988 which explored issues of ethnicity and then the publication by the Sarawak Museum of four volumes of papers in 1989, organised primarily in terms of the major ethnic groups identified in the state (Chin and Kedit in *Sarawak Museum Journal* 40:xi–xii, 1989). Other key moments in this developing interest included publications by Jérôme Rousseau (*Central Borneo: ethnic identity and social life in a stratified society*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990), Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (*In the realm of the diamond queen: marginality in an out-of-the-way place*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1993) and Bernard Sellato (*Nomades et sédentarisation à Bornéo: histoire économique et sociale*. Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris, 1989). A more recent manifestation of this expanding interest is the edited book by Zawawi Ibrahim (*Representation, identity and multiculturalism in Sarawak*. Persatuan Sains Sosial Malaysia and Kuching: Dayak Cultural Foundation, Kajang, 2008b) and the volume by Peter Metcalf (*The life of the longhouse: an archaeology of ethnicity*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010). This chapter, which attempts an overview and analysis of the field, arranges the contributions (by no means exhaustively) into seven categories: (1) the nation-state, majorities and minorities; (2) religious conversion and identities; (3) the media, identities and nation-building;

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(4) borderlands, margins, migrations and identities; (5) interethnic relations and violence; (6) arenas for identity construction in tourism and museums; and finally (7) emerging middle classes, lifestyles and identities in urban settings.

Keywords Borneo Studies • Social science • Identity • Ethnicity • Nation-state

8.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on a rapidly expanding field of research in the social sciences in Borneo. There has been a noticeable focus on the multidisciplinary study of identities and ethnicities in Borneo in the last two decades, even though the identification of units for analysis and the labelling of ethnic groups or categories have enjoyed a long history in Borneo Studies. An important stimulus for the more recent increase in scholarly interest was the major conference held in Sarawak in 1988 which explored issues of ethnicity and then the publication by the Sarawak Museum of four volumes of papers in 1989, organised primarily in terms of the major ethnic groups identified in the state (Chin and Kedit 1989). Other key moments in this developing interest included the publication of Jérôme Rousseau's (1990) *Central Borneo: ethnic identity and social life in a stratified society*, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's (1993) *In the realm of the diamond queen: marginality in an out-of-the-way place* and Bernard Sellato's (1989) *Nomades et sédentarisation à Bornéo: histoire économique et sociale*, translated as *Nomads of the Borneo rainforest* (1994). More recent manifestations of this expanding interest are the edited book by Zawawi Ibrahim (2008b), *Representation, identity and multiculturalism in Sarawak* and Peter Metcalf's (2010) *The life of the longhouse: an archaeology of ethnicity*. This chapter, which attempts an overview and analysis of the field, arranges the contributions (by no means exhaustively) into seven categories: (1) the nation-state, majorities and minorities; (2) religious conversion and identities; (3) the media, identities and nation-building; (4) borderlands, margins, migrations and identities; (5) interethnic relations and violence; (6) arenas for identity construction in tourism and museums; and finally (7) emerging middle classes, lifestyles and identities in urban settings.

8.2 Wider Contexts

In Southeast Asia interest in what was traditionally referred to as 'ethnicity' has a long history. Going back to the early post-war period anthropologists were already examining the ways in which identities (using such alternative terms as 'tribal', 'indigenous', 'native', 'minority', 'culturunit' or 'culture-bearing unit' and so on) are constructed, and, at the same time, are not carried unchanging from the past and anchored reassuringly in some distant ancestral time and space. Rather, it was argued, they are products of social interaction and cultural construction. Indeed, as a

‘resource’ they can be ‘switched’, ‘manipulated’, ‘deployed’ and ‘used’, and many anthropological studies have focused on the strategic ways in which particular communities adopt, change and discard identities, and the role-playing and behaviour associated with them, according to circumstances, needs and interests (Nagata 1975, 1979; Dentan 1975). Individuals can also carry multiple identities and deploy these as different situations and interactions demand (Dentan 1976: 78; King and Wilder 2003: 196–200; Nagata 1979). This is especially so in situations where minority populations have to come to terms with more powerful majorities (Dentan 1975). Having said this, I do not subscribe slavishly to an interactionist perspective on identity and I would also argue that there is some merit in the view that there are elements in identity formation for certain communities that are, in some sense, primordial, or at least are more persistent and long established.

We could well make a case for Southeast Asia as the major site in global terms for the development of theories and concepts of cultural identity. A most significant and early contribution to these debates was Edmund Leach’s (1954) *Political systems of highland Burma: a study of Kachin social structure* which emerged from his doctoral thesis submitted to the London School of Economics where he argued that identity had to be examined as a historical process (Leach 1947). He demonstrated this with regard to interactions between the village-based pagan Kachin and their Buddhist Shan neighbours and the fact that the social forms and identities of the upland-dwelling tribal Kachin were forged and transformed in relation to the valley-dwelling Shan who were organised into hierarchical states. Kachin sociopolitical organisation and identities were therefore unstable and subject to change and were indeed used strategically in relation to the Shan. This gave rise to a whole stream of work on the relations between upland and lowland populations in Southeast Asia and the ways in which identities were constructed and transformed (see King and Wilder 1982, 2003). It has also served to generate notions of centres and margins, focal points and peripheries, and the concept of the formation of identities in the context of interaction and encounter across borders and boundaries. We should also note at this juncture that Leach’s (1950) important and ambitious overview *Social science research in Sarawak*, commissioned by the Colonial Social Science Research Council, took elements from his highland Burma study, and very much influenced my approach and that of some other anthropologists to the study of social structure, identities and interethnic encounters in a Borneo context (see, for example, King 1978, 1979, 1982, 1985).

Another more general and important contribution to this debate, though not specific to Southeast Asia, was the edited book by Fredrik Barth (1969) *Ethnic groups and boundaries: the social organization of culture difference* in which Barth argued for the importance of focusing not on the ‘cultural stuff’ which expresses and is used to define ethnic identity (which in any case is never homogeneous) but rather the ‘cultural boundaries’ between units defined as separate and different and the process of crossing boundaries. Nevertheless, I think work in Southeast Asia, which predated Barth, had already demonstrated the importance of boundary crossing, though it had not been conceptualised specifically in the terms in which Barth presented it to us.

8.3 My Own Involvement

I first became involved in these deliberations in the 1970s when I was grappling with the problem of how to define and label an ethnic group in the upper Kapuas region which I came to refer to as 'Maloh' and to weigh the competing claims of this Iban-derived 'exonym' with a range of locally derived 'endonyms' (which included Embaloh, Taman, Kalis). The conclusion I reached was that ethnic boundaries were never neatly drawn: people cross boundaries, express their identities according to context, scale and level, and embrace new identities while sometimes retaining a previous identity. Moreover, cultural exchange and contact has given rise to hybridisation and syncretism. Identities, while presented as 'fixed', 'stereotypical' and 'enduring', are instead rather more fluid, relational and contingent (see King 1979, 1982, 1985, 1989, 2001, 2002; King and Wilder 1982; Hitchcock and King 1997a, b). Our earlier concerns with ethnicity have been translated into or perhaps have been embraced more recently by the more general concept of 'identity' or 'cultural identity' which has been increasingly viewed in the context of what has come to be called 'cultural politics', an arena in which identity is constructed, debated and contested, particularly in relation to minorities and the nation-state (see, for example, Kahn 1992, 1995, 1998, 1999).

With regard to the Borneo literature on identity I still remain convinced that we need to reconceptualise the concept of 'centres' and 'margins' in relation to changing identities and that, in Leachian mode, we can conceive of Borneo societies as gaining form and identity in their interrelationships with focal points of state-based power and influence, whether indigenous or foreign (King 2001). This in turn requires a shift to the study of interactions in urban centres (Boulanger 2009), changing social class and ethnic configurations, the emergence of a politically aware, modern, educated elite, and the effects of urban-generated media and lifestyles on rural populations.

8.4 Culture and Identity

I have already argued elsewhere that the concept of identity (or cultural identity) is closely related to that of ethnicity (King 2012) and that, in some contexts, they are used interchangeably in that they both refer to the realm of values, behaviour and cultural meaning. Nevertheless, I think we should see ethnicity as a special kind of identity attached to particular groups, categories or communities which command larger-scale forms of allegiance and loyalty. In its specifically ethnic dimension identity is what distinguishes or differentiates a particular category or group of individuals from others. Ethnicity is frequently expressed as unifying and differentiating people at varying levels of contrast, and with the process of separating or distinguishing some from others by using certain cultural criteria (Hitchcock and King 1997a, b).

Therefore, the concept of identity is bound up with processes of cultural construction and transformation and the various forms and levels of identity can never

be taken to be complete and firmly established. They are always in the process of 'becoming' and are invariably located in a world of competing, conflicting and interacting identities made more intense by the impacts of globalisation and media technology, nation-building, and transnational movements and encounters (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Anderson 1991). Identities are also forged and transformed in situations where power and the ability to exercise one's will and discretion are differentially allocated in hierarchical social formations (Wertheim 1964, 1967, 1974, 1993). In this regard, Chris Jenks (1993: 99) says: 'There are no societies in which the quality of life is not differentiated by complexes of class, status and power, and as societies become more complex this differentiation becomes more marked, but also more subtly encoded in networks of symbolic cultural representations' (and see Clammer 2002: 32). These issues of hierarchy, inequality and contention are in turn closely connected to Michel Foucault's (1977, 1980) concept of 'discourse' and the role of knowledge, ideas, images and cultural categories in exercising control, regulation and domination over others.

It is sometimes difficult to anticipate what elements will be given significance in establishing similarity and difference, but the processes of identifying and differentiating 'us' from 'them' are deeply social and cultural (Kahn 1992: 159). Obviously those who study ethnicity and identity have to examine the criteria which can be used to unite and differentiate people and choose which make sense and are most appropriate and useful in their analyses. These may or may not correspond with the criteria which the people under study themselves use, the so-called 'subjective' dimension of identity (Nagata 1974, 1975, 1979) or in Liana Chua's (2007a) terms 'native exegesis'. But an outside observer, in attempting to construct wider ranging classifications for comparative purposes, might well choose to emphasise certain criteria, say language, rather than local principles of identity. The establishment of identities can also entail a range of active interactions (cultural exchange, social intercourse including possibly intermarriage, trade and commerce, political alliance, and even peaceful assimilation) across the boundaries between different or separate groupings or they may involve processes of exclusion, avoidance, non-recognition or hostility, the latter sometimes resulting in political subjugation, economic exploitation, forced acculturation or in extreme cases violence and genocide. In the case of the construction of national identities we can see how politically dominant groups, or in more abstract terms 'the state', attempt to promote, disseminate and sometimes impose on others their notions of identity and what that identity from a national perspective comprises.

8.5 Bornean Identities: Reorientations

It is in the cultural realm (in the construction and contestation of identities, see Appadurai 1986, 1990, 1991, 1996 and the relations between identity formation, nation-building and globalisation), and the discourses which are generated in the interfaces between people and the nation-state on which we need to focus. There are

three points in relation to these issues in Borneo and the ways in which researchers have positioned themselves in regional studies.

First, up to the 1990s Borneo specialists tended to conform to the boundaries that had been set by the colonial powers; we worked either in the former British dependencies or in former Dutch Borneo. We usually did not cross borders, even those between the former British domains of Sarawak, Sabah and Brunei Darussalam. This territorial confinement presented major problems in understanding cultural identities and historical interconnections which cut across artificially created imperial borders. There was not a great deal of research that took a boldly comparative perspective across the whole island or major parts of it up to about 1990, though the work of Jérôme Rousseau (1990, and see 1975) and Bernard Sellato (1989, 1994) is pioneering in this field, and consolidated in the later work of Robert Winzeler (1997a), among several others. I tried to do the same broad sweep in the co-authored book with Jan Avé, *People of the weeping forests: tradition and change in Borneo* (1986) and in the general book on *The peoples of Borneo* (1993). What has happened in the last two decades is a rapidly increasing amount of work on Kalimantan (which was certainly not the case in the 1970s and the 1980s). This has helped us in our understanding of both historical connections between populations across Borneo but also about the formation and transformation of identities which cut across artificial divides.

Second, once the complexities of Borneo history, cultures and identities are acknowledged we can then locate the island within the nation-states which incorporate it (and although Brunei Darussalam appears to be an exception here, it does not make much sense to study it without examining its relations with neighbouring areas of Malaysian Sarawak and Sabah, and historically with the southern Philippines). In my view the study of Borneo identities, unless it is content to lapse into a kind of parochialism, needs to address the connections between Kalimantan and the wider Republic of Indonesia and the policies of the central government in relation to its outer island dependencies; and in the Malaysian Borneo territories to examine the consequences for identities in Sarawak and Sabah of the policies and practices of those who control and administer the state in Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya and organise patronage systems within Kuching and Kota Kinabalu. In the case of Brunei, it has to be considered in relation to those neighbouring territories and peoples to which the sultanate was historically connected and with which it maintains social, cultural and economic relations. Indeed, it has been one of my main contentions that to understand the forms, composition and processes of what I refer to as 'Brunei society' then one must examine cross-border relations and comparative cases which demonstrate important similarities between political, economic and cultural 'centres' like Brunei (or more specifically Bandar Seri Begawan) and the populations which surround them (King 1994, 1996, 2001).

Third, apart from the work of political scientists and economists which has occasionally connected Borneo to the two nation-states with which the major parts of the island are connected, there has been an interesting turn more recently in studies of identities. There are at least seven strands to this (though a rather more intense review of the literature might find others and will certainly demonstrate that there is overlap

between some of these strands or categories of research and publication). The first category comprises the movement from a preoccupation with a circumscribed population to a perspective which sees this population in relation to the nation-state and associated dominant groups through which it has to negotiate its identity and resources. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's (1984, 1993) work on the Meratus Dayaks is an early example of this approach (and see also Winzeler 1997a, b; Sillander 2004).

A second strand has focused on religious identities and religious conversion, primarily to Islam or some form of Christianity (see, for example, Chalmers 2006; Asiyah 2011; Connolly 2003), or to emerging indigenous religions such as Kaharingan in Central Kalimantan (Schiller 1987, 1997). The literature on religious conversion and on transformations in religious ideas and practices is becoming increasingly substantial and, of course, particular religious configurations, specific beliefs and practices, and the connections established between myth, cosmology and ethnic origins are important ingredients in the construction and maintenance of identities. A significant segment of this literature has emerged from Christian missionary activity going as far back as William Conley's (1976) partly proselytising work on Kenyah conversion in Kalimantan. Much later we have had the detailed studies of Bidayuh conversion by Annette Harris (2002) and Chua (2007a, 2012), among others.

The third strand of research has taken the media route to nation-building and asked the question: How are populations in Borneo responding to media-generated nation-building in Malaysia and Indonesia? Research in the field of media anthropology by John Postill (1998, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2008), Fausto Barlocco (2008, 2009, 2010, 2014) and Poline Bala (2000, 2001, 2002, 2007, 2008), among others, has explored these dimensions of identity formation and the different ways in which different minorities are responding to the opportunities and constraints presented by their inclusion in a nation-state structure.

A fourth area of research has examined Indonesian border populations and the responses of these territorially marginal communities to the pressures of a perceived remote central government (which is seen as dominated by culturally and ethnically different populations with different cultural and ethnic priorities). The work of Michael Eilenberg and Reed Wadley (2009) is important here. Research on the Sarawak side of the border has also focused on territorially marginal populations and their ambiguous and shifting relations with the nation-state (see Ishikawa 2010; Bala 2002; Reid 1997). This work also presents us with a range of case studies which complement those on media-generated nation-building and minority responses.

A fifth strand has emerged in response to the violent interethnic conflicts in West and Central Kalimantan in the 1990s and the relationship between the construction, transformation and expression of ethnicity, the politicisation of identity, the reasons for conflict, and its cultural patterning and local interpretation, in the work of many social scientists, particularly anthropologists, historians and political scientists, including Jacques Bertrand (2004: 45–71), Jamie Davidson (2008), Michael Dove (2006), Emily Harwell (2000), Mary Hawkins (2000), Mary Heidhues (2001), Nancy Lee Peluso and Emily Harwell (2001), and Anika König (2012). I think it is important to note that this dramatically violent expression of identity and interethnic

relations has also served to increase academic and popular interest in the whole area of ethnicity and culture in Borneo.

The next category comprises arenas for constructing and expressing identities in what might be termed leisure pursuits and entertainments. These comprise such activities as tourism (the Sarawak Cultural Village demonstrates how identities are constructed and represented) and exhibitions and presentations within and sponsored by regional museums. Examples of this work are provided by William Kruse (2003) and Heather Zeppel (1994) on tourism, selling ‘wild Borneo’ and authenticity, and Christina Kreps (1994) and Dianne Tillotson (1994) on cultural construction in museums. The literature on material culture in Borneo is considerable, and it also has an important contribution to make to the delimitation and expression of identities. Material artefacts have become increasingly ‘malleable’ and hybridised as a means to express identities (see, for example, Gavin 2004; Sellato 2012; and Sellato’s Chap. 4 in this volume).

Finally, there is an emerging, though still rather nominal, interest in identity construction in urban areas and the lifestyles of an expanding middle class (see, for example, Boulanger 1999, 2000, 2002, 2009). In an urban context interethnic encounters become more immediate and frequent, and identities are subject to new demands imposed by the juxtaposition of people of different ethnicities and to the more rapid transformations engendered by urban life.

All seven strands have, in one way or another, tackled issues of identity and change, and it is to these seven different categories which I now turn.

8.6 Identities and Ethnicities: Some Cases

What has been achieved in the last couple of decades in this field? Are there significant moments in the study of identities in Borneo? If we turn to any anthropological study of Borneo, whether it focuses on ethnicity or not, there is very likely to be some discussion of the problem of identity and ethnic labelling. We have the well-known four-volume collection as a special issue of the *Sarawak Museum Journal* (Chin and Kedit 1989) arising from a 1988 conference in Kuching and a series of ethnic-based seminars around the country to demonstrate the importance of ethnic identities in Sarawak and how they might be managed and transformed. The Cultural Heritage Symposia programme gained a momentum and has resulted in five events (1988, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2009) which brought together representatives from the officially sanctioned ethnic categories in Sarawak (Chua 2012: 48). The inaugural event was a monumental enterprise and one which, in my view, emphasised the importance of ethnicity and identity in both academic research and in government policy. But very few of the deliberations at that gathering gave explicit attention to the ways in which social transformations are thought about, discussed and debated within and between the different constituent ethnic groups of Sarawak and in relation to representations generated at higher levels of the nation-state and beyond. This is hardly surprising in that the cultural heritage seminars to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Sarawak’s

independence within Malaysia were designed to encourage ‘the various communities ... to examine their respective cultures to determine what to discard in the interest of “development” and “unity” and what to preserve and incorporate into a national (Malaysian) culture’ (Winzler 1997c: 201; Chin and Kedit 1989). Here we have an apt illustration of what inspires my current deliberations, in that culture and identity are constructed and subject to the demands and interests of the nation-state; they are politicised. Indeed the Sarawak government delineated those ‘ethnic divisions’ which would debate their future roles in the state: Bidayuh, Iban, Melanau, Orang Ulu, Malay, Chinese and Indian (Jehom 2008).

There also seems to have been little attention paid to the political dimensions of these concerns in the four-volume proceedings arising from the sixth biennial conference of the Borneo Research Council in Kuching in 2000, although there was considerable attention paid to issues of ethnicity and culture (Leigh 2000). However, the appearance since the 1990s of several studies which examine the responses of local populations to the policies and practices of state representatives enable us to draw out similarities and differences in those responses and discourses. These emerging interests were consolidated and brought together in the Borneo Research Council’s eleventh international conference in Brunei on the themes of ‘Identities, Cultures, Environments’. Some of the key variables in explaining differences in responses and discourses appear to be: (1) the time frame and changes in government and its policies; (2) location of the communities under study (whether close to urban centres or more distant, whether near an international border or not, whether some members of an identified group live and work in an urban area or not); (3) the character and history of interethnic relationships; (4) local economic structures and resource use; (5) demography and population profiles; and (6) relative physical mobility of both men and women.

I should add that this significant level of attention to ethnic identity and categorisation, particularly in Sarawak, has been carried forward and consolidated through the ambitious project of Michael Leigh (2002), which has ‘mapped’, indeed captured the peoples of Sarawak in a substantial ethnic atlas.

8.6.1 The Nation-State, Majorities and Minorities

One of the first major studies of the effects of national policies and the actions and attitudes of a lowland majority on a minority community and the local responses to these pressures was undertaken not in Sarawak (where one might have anticipated an earlier interest) but in South Kalimantan. Interest in local identities in the context of a nation-state was marked above all by the appearance of Tsing’s study *In the realm of the diamond queen*, which examined the ‘cultural and political construction of marginality’ (1993: 5, though this was based on an earlier doctoral thesis, 1984). I should add here that, although I combine the concept of nation with that of state, I recognise that they are conceptually distinct and in certain cases may not cohere (Thongchai 1994). Tsing’s study demonstrates how the Meratus Dayaks

(an exonym for those diverse indigenous populations which live in the Meratus uplands, and perhaps this lack of differentiation is a problem in her argument) of South Kalimantan are marginalised not only by the policies and practices of the state but also by their neighbours, the lowland Banjar Malays, and how the Meratus people challenge, negotiate, reinterpret and explain their lowly status. I should add that subsequently Mary Hawkins (2000: 24–36) has examined the Banjar side of the story and demonstrated that their dominance as a Muslim community has not only generated marginality among minority groups but has also encouraged members of upland communities to assimilate to the ethnic category ‘Banjar’, a familiar story in majority–minority relations across Borneo and indeed Southeast Asia.

We are familiar with Tsing’s perspectives from other studies of outer islanders in Indonesia, and, of course, in the work of James Scott on ‘weapons of the weak’ (1985) and ‘the art of not being governed’ (2009). But, to my knowledge, this is the first detailed and sustained attempt in a Borneo context to analyse the interrelationships between the discourses and practices associated with civilisation, modernity, progress, order and power, on the one hand, and the primitive, traditional, backward, nomadic, disordered, untamed and displaced, on the other. We should, however, make reference to Douglas Miles’s (1976) pioneering study of Banjarese–Dayak relations in South Kalimantan and the politicisation of Muslim and non-Muslim identities from the early part of the twentieth century which began to chart the issues generated by local–state interactions in ethnic terms.

During the past couple of decades there have been several other studies of different Borneo populations examining how both colonial and post-colonial actions have served to divide populations off from each other and create separate, marginal populations, and how these in turn talk about and represent state power (Steckman 2011). In the case of the Meratus Dayaks under Suharto’s New Order this representation of the state was expressed and identified in terms of violence, terrorism, government ‘head-hunting’, ceremonial building projects in the name of development and the political preoccupation with establishing ‘order’ (ibid.: 76ff.). I would also link the detailed work of Kenneth Sillander (2004: 48ff.) on the Bentian Dayaks of East Kalimantan with that of Tsing (as Sillander does himself), in that he examines some of the consequences of being on the margins or on ‘several peripheries’. However, he does state from the outset that, although originally he had planned ‘to make a study of ethnicity’, he then found that he was unable to gather sufficient data on this topic mainly because ‘of the relative insignificance of ethnic identity and ethnicity as criteria for social action among the Bentian’ (ibid.: 3, and Sillander 1995). Even so Sillander does provide us with the kind of information and analysis which suggests to me that we can situate the Bentian within the literature on ‘centres’ and ‘margins’ and on the processes of constructing marginal identities in interaction with powerful centres. In this connection, Sillander (1995) explains how the Bentian as a recognisable unit of identification was constructed, but interestingly he argues that ethnicity is not a significant factor among the Bentian and the Luangan.

We have also seen, in the case of the Punan/Penan of Sarawak, a case to which Tsing refers, how the media and other external observers including politicians,

government agents and non-governmental organisation (NGO) activists (and even anthropologists) choose to represent and ‘construct’ these ‘out-of-the way’ peoples in the context of commercial logging and the undermining of a nomadic way of life (see, for example, Bending 2006; and for a review King 2006; Brosius 1997; Thambiah 1995 on the Bhuket/Ukit). A major recent study which focuses on the ‘images’ and identities of the Punan Malinau in East Kalimantan is that by Lars Kaskija (2012). Building on the work of Sellato (1994), Thambiah (1995) and others, Kaskija develops notions of Punan identity in their engagement with more powerful neighbours on the bases of a foraging ethos, openness, sociality, flexibility and opportunism, immediate return and sharing, variability and diversity, and ‘code-switching’. Kaskija’s findings and his characterisation of the Punan as ‘stuck at the bottom’ and as adopting strategies to engage with dominant others reminds me very much of Tsing’s observations on the Meratus. But in the case of the Punan Malinau there is interaction with and response to several dominant others and not just to one as in Meratus–Banjar relations.

Another very important development in the context of Tsing’s theme is Winzeler’s (1997a) edited book which examines the encounters between the post-colonial state and minority groups and the range of local responses to external pressures, which ‘have often involved a mixture of dependency and acceptance, on the one hand, and of hostility and resistance, on the other’ (Winzeler 1997b: 2; and see Zawawi 2000). Winzeler’s book is something of a bold departure in Borneo Studies in that it embraces the Malaysian peninsula, and Malaysian and Indonesian Borneo. What he also draws our attention to is the increasingly interventionist policies of the post-colonial state in comparison with the colonial experience in that

[t]he national policies and projects carried out by postcolonial governments in regard to the indigenous peoples involve efforts at social and cultural transformation... [They] generally seek to promote a common national culture, religion, and language and to eradicate what are regarded as backward or savage beliefs, customs, lifestyles, and modes of adaptation. (Winzeler 1997b: 1–2)

Winzeler identifies the indigenous responses to these interventions in predictable fashion: ‘dependency and acceptance’, ‘hostility and resistance’, ‘peaceful protest’, ‘accepted forums’, ‘passive noncooperation’, ‘sabotage’ and ‘open rebellion’; again, all very James Scott (*ibid.*: 2–3). The consequences for identity are clear. In situations of pressure, tension and conflict minorities have a different attitude to their ‘cultural patterns and traditions’ in that what was previously ‘implicit’ have become ‘objectified or externalized’ (*ibid.*: 3). Winzeler explores some of these issues in relation to the Bidayuh, and in noting their much more intense relations with those in power because of their proximity to Kuching—the Brunei Malays, the Brooke raj, the British colonial regime and the representatives of the post-colonial Malaysian federal authorities in Kuala Lumpur and their agents in Kuching—Winzeler (1997c: 216) remarks that the Bidayuh are ‘involved in the creative cultural process of maintaining, restoring, discovering, and, in some instances, creating traditions’. They have done so, among other agencies, through the Dayak Bidayuh National Association which has been concerned both to modernise the Bidayuh and to retain the core elements of Bidayuh identity and tradition which

include the men's house (ibid.: 222–223). It is above all about identity, but as Winzeler notes it is part of an overall process of 'cultural objectification' in Malaysia following the need for the government to formulate a national cultural policy in order to promote national unity and identity (ibid.: 225–226). In order to survive, cultures (and in this regard identities) have to be formalised and promoted, and this is especially pressing for those populations under threat, particularly the Bidayuh, and their need to overcome the construction of the Bidayuh in the colonial and early anthropological literature as passive victims of modernisation and the aggression of others (ibid.: 227).

8.6.2 *Religious Conversion and Identities*

Religious conversion is another significant consideration in the maintenance and transformation of identities. As we have seen in Chap. 5 we are fortunate in having major studies of 'traditional' religions; all of these important and detailed studies announce and demonstrate in different ways the expression, maintenance and transformation of cultural identities.

To return to the issue of religious transformation, and following Conley's (1976) early study of Kenyah religious conversion we now have several more recent studies, mainly examining processes of conversion and its social and cultural consequences: of Annette Harris (1995) on Sabah in her *The impact of Christianity on power relationships and social exchanges: a case study of change among the Tagal Murut of Sabah, Malaysia*; in Kalimantan Anne Schiller's (1987, 1997) work on the Ngaju and Kaharingan in *The dynamics of death: ritual identity, and religious change among the Kalimantan Ngaju and Small sacrifices: religious change and cultural identity among the Ngaju of Indonesia*, Sian Eira Jay (1991) on *Shamans, priests and the cosmology of the Ngaju Dayak of Central Kalimantan*, Fridolin Ukur's (1971) *Tantang-djawab suku Dajak (1835–1945)*, and Joseph Aaron Weinstock's (1983) *Kaharingan and the Luangan Dayaks: religion and identity in central-east Borneo*; in West Kalimantan there are the studies by David G. Bonney (1995) on *Development of training services for KGBI seminary students who come from rural areas and who minister in the city of Pontianak*, Arnold Leon Humble (1982) on *Conservative Baptists in Kalimantan Barat*, Donald R. Bryant (1985) on *Functional substitutes for the animistic sacrifices associated with the cultivation of rice in West Kalimantan, Indonesia*, Larry Kenneth Thomson (2000) on *The effect of the Dayak worldview, customs, traditions, and customary law (adat-istiadat) on the interpretation of the Gospel in West Kalimantan, Indonesian Borneo*; in East Kalimantan, along with Conley's study there are Michael C.C. Coomans' (1980) *Evangelisatie en kultuurveranderingen: onderzoek naar de verhouding tussen de evangelisatie en den socio-kulturele veranderingen in de adat van de Dajaks van Oost-Kalimantan (bisdom Samarinda), Indonesië*, Jennifer Connolly's (2003) *Becoming Christian and Dayak: a study of Christian conversion among Dayaks in East Kalimantan, Indonesia*, and Mariko Urano's (2002) *Appropriation of cultural*

symbols and peasant resistance; in Sarawak, on Bidayuh conversion there are Fiona Harris's (2002) *Growing gods: Bidayuh processes of religious change in Sarawak, Malaysia*, Liana Chua's (2007a) *Objects of culture: constituting Bidayuh-ness in Sarawak, East Malaysia* and *The Christianity of culture: conversion, ethnic citizenship and the matter of religion in Malaysian Borneo* (Chua 2012; and see 2007b, 2009); and then Tan Sooi Ling's (2008) *Transformative worship among the Selako in Sarawak, Malaysia* and Pamela Lindell's (2000) *The longhouse and the legacy of history: religion, architecture and change among the Bisingai of Sarawak (Malaysia)*; for the Iban there is J.A. Fowler's (1976) *Communicating the Gospel among the Iban*, Karen Westmacott's (2002) study of change among the Kayan of the Baram region, *Christ is the head of the house: material culture and new modes of consumption for the Kayan in the 1990s*, and Zhu Feng's (2004) study *Chinese Christianity and culture accommodation of Chinese overseas*; and finally in Brunei, among others there is Asiyah az-Zahra Ahmad Kumpoh's (2011) *Conversion to Islam: the case of the Dusun Ethnic Group in Brunei Darussalam* (and see Chap. 24 in this volume).

Clearly conversion to a particular religion is also implicated in political processes and nation-building. Conversion in the Borneo territories is invariably to one of the world religions, particularly Islam (see, for example, Chalmers 2006, 2007, 2009; Asiyah 2011) and various forms of Christianity (Chua 2012), or in parts of central and southeastern Kalimantan to the Dayak religion referred to as Kaharingan which is recognised by the Indonesian government as an official religion and categorised as a version of Hinduism (Schiller 1997). The indigenous religion of the Ngaju has been codified and its ritual standardised in the process of gaining acceptance as an official religion. It is also deployed by the Ngaju and others as a central element in their identity and their claims to modernity in the Indonesian nation-state. Schiller's study provides a template for many of the prominent and pressing issues to be considered in conversion processes: embracing modernisation but without converting to the majority religion, and embracing modernity by converting to an officially recognised religion. But the whole process of conversion and deciding what to convert to is deeply political.

Two studies of the Bidayuh in Sarawak have also, among other things, explored the relationship between conversion and identity (Chua 2009, 2012; Harris 2002), and Winzeler (2008), who has examined processes of identity change among the Bidayuh, has also considered conversion among minority populations more generally in Southeast Asia, and the economic, material, magical and spiritual, and the ethnic and identity reasons for it (and see Winzeler 2004 for material expressions of religion and its transformations). Clearly culture has been subject to increasing essentialisation or objectification in Sarawak in the context of the political imperative to promote multiculturalism. Yet, as Chua argues, we should not be so seduced by the political dimensions of conversion (though I would argue that this is a vitally important element of what we are witnessing in Borneo and throughout Southeast Asia), but instead we must approach the issue of 'cultural consciousness' from the perspective of those we study who 'not only act in the world but also contemplate, speculate about, and debate various notions about which

anthropologists are also concerned—such as “culture”, “religion”, “(dis)continuity” and “Christianity” (Chua 2012: 29). What is clear is that conversion to Christianity has enabled Bidayuhs to continue to connect with their past and to claim through Christianity a Bidayuh identity. Chua’s work, in particular, also draws our attention to the issue of whether or not conversion requires and results in ‘rupture’ with the past in the realisation of a new set of ritual practices, and, perhaps for some, a new spirituality, or whether there is the possibility of a continuing connection with the old religion. With some notable exceptions she proposes that there is continuity and that *gawai adat* is still connected and, for some, meaningful to the religious lives of the Bidayuh. Chua (ibid.: 104) says with great conviction that religious conversion ‘did not only generate discourses of change and difference, but also gave rise to a strong, and in many ways, more pervasive, sense of connection with the past: of continuity and contiguity between *adat gawai* and Christianity’.

8.6.3 *The Media, Identities and Nation-Building*

A third major area of developing interest is in the media, which in turn focuses on ‘agency from below’, and whether in national terms it is a positive or a negative response. Benedict Anderson’s (1991) excursion into the mechanisms of nation-creation—print media, census, map and museum—in the period of early modernity has to be augmented by attention to the effects of diverse forms of electronic and print media in the era of late modernity. One of the few researchers to address this subject in a Borneo context is John Postill (1998, 2006). In his study of the relationships between the media and nation-building in Malaysia, he examines the ways in which the Sarawak Iban have responded to and been affected by state-led and media-directed Malaysianisation processes. What for me is intriguing about Postill’s body of work, which he locates within the subfield of ‘media anthropology’, is that he interweaves the consideration of the roles and consequences of conventional media forms—in newspapers and other published material, television and radio—with an examination of the changing attitudes to and implications of devices like wristwatches, clocks, calendars and television sets in the conceptualisation and arrangement of time, place, identity and tradition (Postill 2001, 2002).

Following John Comaroff (1996), Postill, though critical of some of Comaroff’s propositions, addresses the phenomenon of global communications and the ways in which global cultural flows generate reactions and mediations on the part of the representatives of the state and responses on the part of constituent ethnic groups (like the Iban) in the arena of cultural politics and identity construction and change within the nation-state (Postill 2001: 147, and see 1998, 2008). Postill carefully and subtly examines historically different media forms (literature [including school texts and indigenous language publications], radio, television) during the post-war period in Sarawak and tries to determine to what extent and in what ways the Sarawak state and Malaysian national governments have been able to manage and control media productions (through mass education and a national language policy as well as the

control of certain information sources) in order to build a national culture, and how their actions have impacted on the development and transformation of Iban identity (Postill 2001: 148).

In particular, the dissemination of cultural information, bearing in mind the distinction between oral and written forms of information and between oral and literate traditions, has generated tensions among minority groups to both modernise and retain their identities based selectively on elements of past traditions. In this process identity is both constructed and transformed and reinvented, but the vital issue is whether or not minority languages are permitted in written and other forms through, for example, school instruction and newspapers. In the era of interpersonal communication, particularly the internet and e-mail, these devices which enable criticism and resistance become even more important when other major outlets of information are government controlled. Postill's (2002: 118) main conclusion is that there is a need 'to understand ethnicity not as an isolated category of analysis but as part of a broader context of social, economic, and political relations'. His significant contribution is to investigate the diverse modes in which information, ideology and forms of knowledge are conveyed and how these in turn are incorporated, changed and responded to by individuals and communities in constructing and transforming their identities. He also asserts that through media-disseminated nation-building 'Malaysia has become an unquestioned reality amongst the Iban of Sarawak' as has their participation in 'mass public culture' (Postill 2006: 192–193). Even more positively, though this might be contentious if we wish to encompass all Iban in Sarawak, he asserts that 'state-led media efforts have been amply rewarded for the Iban of Sarawak have become thoroughly "Malaysianised"' (ibid.: 3). This, of course, depends on what we understand by the concept of Malaysia and its relationship to development and modernity and what the Iban understand by it. (For example, is it primarily in cultural terms, or economic terms or political-territorial terms?)

Media-generated nation-building in Malaysia seems to have produced a different result among the Kadazandusun in the neighbouring Malaysian Borneo state of Sabah, which demonstrates that, according to context, state propaganda can have both positive and negative effects. Fausto Barlocco (2008, 2009, 2010, 2014) examines the encounters between members of a local community of Kadazandusun in the village of Kitauu in the Penampang region of Sabah and the Muslim-Malay-dominated federal authorities in Kuala Lumpur and their surrogates in Kota Kinabalu (and see his Chap. 7 in this volume). Certain observations are extended to the wider Kadazandusun population. The specific focus is on the ways in which Kadazandusun identities have been constructed and transformed and the situational manipulations of identities in the context of the post-independence Malaysian nation-building project. In this regard, and as with Postill's study, a major area of interest is the use of the media by the representatives of the state in presenting its images and visions of the nation and the 'national culture' and the problems and issues which this presents for a marginalised Kadazandusun minority. The analysis of the practices and discourses surrounding identity formation and change and resistance to state-generated priorities leads Barlocco to address some of the general and Southeast Asian-specific literature

on ethnicity, identity, modernity, 'the invention of tradition', 'imagined communities', and the media and consumption.

Barlocco focuses on the sense of belonging of the Kadazandusun and on two major kinds of collective identification: the nation and the ethnic group. In contrast to the Iban of Postill's study, Kadazandusun villagers (and we must acknowledge that this, as with Postill's Iban study, probably does not apply to all Kadazandusun) usually reject the state's promotion of a national identity and are unwilling to identify with the Malaysian nation. They more often identify themselves as members of their ethnic group or village which, in Kadazandusun eyes, enables greater participation than at the national level. Yet the Malaysian nation-building project is profoundly ambiguous: it seeks to promote a national culture and identity whilst at the same time differentiating its citizens into separate ethnic categories and treating them differently. In this situation (though it conforms to what we know about the situational operation of identities in other cases) the Kadazandusun villagers identify themselves as Malaysian, Kadazan, Sabahan and members of their village according to context. Nevertheless, according to Barlocco they feel themselves to be a marginalised population and their sense of belonging is rooted at the local rather than the national level. Barlocco argues that the official state discourse and practice of ethnic and religious differentiation have been deeply internalised by the Kadazan and is a primary reason for their opposition to the state, because of their experience of being treated as marginal and second-class citizens (and see Reid 1997). What is more, he suggests interestingly that in demonstrating this opposition to state-directed identity politics the Kadazandusun 'uphold an implicitly anti-essentialist and performative view of culture more akin to that of anthropologists than that of nation-builders' (Barlocco 2014: 16).

A similar experience is recorded for the Bidayuh of Sarawak. Chua musters considerable evidence that the Bidayuh, while embracing modernity and wishing to benefit from it, are, in an important sense, ambivalent about it. She, like Postill in the Iban case and indeed Barlocco in the Kadazandusun case, confirms that the Bidayuh are 'part of the wider Malaysian nation'. But, in contrast to Postill's conclusions and in support of Barlocco's, she proposes that this process of constructing a nation in Muslim-Malay terms 'has certainly generated a widespread sense of alienation from its institutions and the powers-that-be' and for the Bidayuh have led to their realisation that modernisation and development have become 'inescapably ethnicised' (Chua 2012: 42–43).

In another rather different study of nation-building and of the process of drawing minority populations into the national fold, Poline Bala has examined the processes and consequences of the introduction of the eBario development programme (information and communication technologies, comprising telephones, computers, very small aperture terminals and the internet) in the Kelabit highlands from the year 2000. Bala was herself engaged in the implementation and monitoring of the programme and she explores various issues to do with local responses to state-generated development, and the opportunities, tensions and constraints surrounding what we have come to refer to as 'action anthropology'. Bala's recurring theme is that in contrast to the critical positions taken by a number of prominent and

distinguished social scientists on the dimensions of power, control, hegemony, exploitation, marginalisation and dependency in development discourse and action (notably in the work of Arturo Escobar 1995), in the Kelabit case there is a more optimistic story to tell. She argues that, during several decades of exposure to the outside world both during the late colonial period and the period of independence within Malaysia, the Kelabit have engaged in a positive quest for development and progress and a desire to embrace modernity. Development is seen in local cultural terms as a resource, a product to be consumed and used. They embraced Christianity, formal education and opportunities in the world beyond their homeland in the remote uplands.

In a later paper Bala (2008: 139–150) is a little more equivocal in examining some of the problems and issues which will face the Kelabit as a Christian minority in Malaysia. Yet overall Kelabit are depicted as makers of their own futures: problem-solvers and decision-makers, who observe, learn, evaluate and make choices, though, of course, within certain parameters. The Kelabit search for status, success, affluence and respect, the means of acquiring these qualities and the meanings attached to them have changed with the increasing engagement of the Kelabit with the outside world. Nevertheless, there does appear to be areas of change in which the Kelabit are rather more powerless: the threats posed by commercial logging and by the pressures on land and native land rights, and in broader political terms the exercise of power by a Malay-dominated federation, and, in Sarawak, a Melanau-Malay-dominated state which categorises marginal minorities as ‘other indigenous’ or ‘*orang ulu*’, and ensures that the main benefits of economic development do not go to them. We know that there are successful, prominent and outward-looking Kelabit, but we have to ask what power and influence do they wield. Nevertheless, as with Postill’s Iban study, the Kelabit, through their access to media and in this case their use of modern electronic technology, appear to be embracing modernity and the national agenda. But we have to emphasise that there are others in Malaysian Borneo who are not so engaged and that the commitment to the Malaysian nation-building project is decidedly equivocal.

8.6.4 Borderlands, Margins, Migrations and Identities

We all acknowledge that territorial borders, as artificial political constructs determining sovereignty, citizenship and the reach of state laws and jurisdiction, are not necessarily impermeable or even necessarily formidable barriers to movement. This is especially so in the case of the border between Indonesian Kalimantan and Malaysian Borneo (Fariastuti 2002; Tirtosudarmo 2002). Nevertheless, borders define states and, depending on the capacities of central governments to monitor, police and secure their borders, then they can and do make a difference. Noboru Ishikawa’s study of the borderland Malay community of Telok Melano in the Lundu district of Sarawak explores how nation-states are made and sustained and how those who live at or near borders ‘deal with the most concrete manifestation of

the nation-state—its territorial boundary’ (1998, 2010: 4–5). It demonstrates, in extended historical perspective, how the occupation, deployment and symbolism of space and human movement across it are interrelated with the formation, maintenance and transformation of different interrelated levels of identity—national, ethnic and community/village. What is especially important about the study is the way in which the focus moves from understanding the activities of the nation-state (and the problematical connection between ‘nation’ and ‘state’) not simply in terms of incorporating people and space, forging an identity which transcends the local, and instilling a sense of belonging but also for those at the borders how these larger activities also produce social dislocation, ethnic displacement, marginalisation, heterogeneity and unevenness. It shows too how transnational movements both serve to strengthen and undermine the national project.

Eilenberg’s work (2012) and his jointly written papers with Wadley (Eilenberg and Wadley 2009; Wadley and Eilenberg 2006) must be read in conjunction with Ishikawa’s study. Operating at a different section of the border and on the Indonesian side, focusing on the Iban of the Emperan (or the former Dutch-named ‘Batang-Loepar-landen’), their work serves both to confirm some of Ishikawa’s findings and perspectives and to take this field of research into different directions. Eilenberg demonstrates, as does Ishikawa, the porosity of the border between Sarawak and West Kalimantan. However, he identifies an increasingly strengthened position of what he terms the ‘border elite’ in West Kalimantan, particularly since the post-Suharto government’s policy of decentralisation and the decision to grant more autonomy to the regions, as well as the political, cultural and psychological distance which these Indonesian border populations, in this case the Ibans, feel towards not only Jakarta but also the provincial capital of Pontianak. Experiencing this sense of marginalisation, their orientation is across the border to Sarawak and their Iban kin, friends and ethnic cousins where they frequently go to visit and work, and where some also settle permanently. In other words, rather than seeing themselves as citizens of an Indonesian nation-state, the Indonesian Iban feel closer, as do the Kadazandusun in Sabah, to those who share a particular ethnic identity (even though this too has been constructed by political centres). But the interesting dimension to this issue in West Kalimantan is that the core of Iban ethnic identity is found across a national border and not as in the Kadazandusun case in easy reach of the state capital. Eilenberg (2012: 23) says, ‘For many, their connections over the border are often stronger than those with their own nation’. This leaves open, however, the question of what the orientation of the Kalimantan Iban was and is to the Sarawak state and the Kuala Lumpur federal government.

Although in a rather different context looking across the border from Sarawak to Kalimantan, Bala (2002) also emphasises the importance of the social, cultural and historical connectedness between the Kelabit and the Lun Berian, their close relatives (*lun ruyung*) on the other side of the border (see Amster 2006: 218). However, in this sector of the border it would appear that this political and territorial demarcation has made a real difference in that, despite cross-border relationships, these have been distanced over time and that the perceptions of the border and the people who live on the other side have changed so that there is an emerging

differentiation of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. This was especially strengthened during Sukarno’s ‘confrontation’ with Malaysia in the early 1960s when borders hardened and made a difference. This set of findings is also supported by Matthew Amster’s (2006: 222) work on the Kelabit when he proposes that they have ‘a positive understanding of the relationship to the nation and state’. In Eilenberg’s, Bala’s and Amster’s studies there is also a sense of the economic and status differentiation between those who live on either side of the border; Malaysians are more wealthy and in Sarawak have greater freedom of cultural expression. Indonesians cross the border to find work where they can, usually in menial jobs. Nevertheless, the cross-border perspectives and interactions which are active and ongoing do make a difference to the efforts of political elites at the centre to build a nation and national consciousness. They also encourage us to reconceptualise the nature of the state and nation, and to engage with the nation-state as both an idea and as everyday practices (Eilenberg 2012: 50).

This important and emerging literature on the issues posed for nation-states and by its populations at the margins, engendered by the inevitable existence of borderlands, draws attention, among other things, to the importance of the relationship between territory and identity and the process of demarcating, colonising and monitoring space. As with Barth’s earlier and attempts at focusing on ethnic boundaries in a more general sense (1969), more recent work on Borneo has examined the effects of territorial borders. It is at the margins that the arrangement and delimitation of space, society and culture take on a particular resonance.

8.6.5 *Interethnic Relations and Violence*

There is an interesting and increasing body of work on Borneo which examines the construction and demarcation of identities through state action, the politicisation of identities and the association of identities with particular territories, and the competition for resources. Nancy Lee Peluso (2008) examines some of these dimensions of ethnicity in her analysis of the Dayak–Madurese conflicts in West Kalimantan in 1996/97 (and see Peluso 2003, 2006; and Davidson 2008), which also builds on the work of Emily Harwell (2000, and see Peluso and Harwell 2001). It is clear that there was a relationship between violence and identity but Peluso (2008: 56) also suggests that

[b]ecause ethnicity or “race” was the basis by which territory, authority, and land rights were allocated under Dutch colonial legal pluralism, territory and ethnicity had become conjoined in new and unprecedented ways, most importantly in the ways individuals were allowed access to land or governed.

Ethnic differences were the product of colonial and post-colonial policies and actions, and cultural identities were the subject of more recent government attention to ‘revitalise and reconfigure “culture”’ (ibid.) which in turn served to give form and substance to a wider Dayak identity (ibid.: 64). The explanation for violent

conflict in terms of competition for resources between native Dayaks, on the one hand, and Chinese, Madurese, and private and public sector logging and plantation companies, on the other, has assumed some importance in the literature (Heidhues 2001; Dove 2006; Bertrand 2004).

Jamie Davidson's work focuses on the politicisation of Dayak identity in rural Kalimantan promoted by such NGOs as the Institut Dayakologi and Pancur Kasih with such publications as the *Kalimantan Review* (2002, and 2008), arguing that the Institut Dayakologi along with other NGOs have identified with Dayak frustrations about marginalisation under the New Order and the perceived advantages enjoyed by other ethnic groups, including the Madurese. The government-generated stereotypes of Dayaks as isolated, backward and left behind people also contributed to the solidification of identities and the increasing consciousness of a Dayak identity, a distinctive *adat* and an aboriginal sovereignty as against more recent mainly Muslim immigrants from other parts of the archipelago (Schiller 2007; van Klinken 2004, 2007; Bertrand 2004). We should also note the involvement of a Dayak, Christian mission-educated intelligentsia in these Dayak movements which argued for Dayak empowerment (Heidhues 2001: 141), as well as the early role of the New Order government in encouraging the development of a Dayak identity in support of their anti-Chinese, anti-communist campaigns in West Kalimantan. In other words, a pan-Dayak identity has been constructed over a long period of time, though it has been increasingly embraced and reinforced by the Dayaks themselves. This consciousness of an identity separate from others has also resulted in several doctoral theses written by local scholars on the theme of identity and social change in Indonesian Kalimantan (see Alquadrie 1990; Kustanto 2002; Widen 2001; and see Widen's Chap. 12 in this volume).

Rather than political or economic factors in the explanation, or at least the understanding of interethnic conflicts, a recent doctoral thesis examines the cultural dimensions of Dayak–Madurese violence in West Kalimantan (König 2012; and see Schiller and Garang 2002). König therefore concentrates more on the cultural expression or the character of violence. Why did it take the form it did among the Kanayatn Dayaks and how do they explain and perceive their actions? What is the cultural logic underlying these acts of violence? Her approach is rather more subtly argued than culturalist approaches that have invoked such explanations as a Dayak 'culture of violence' which relates to a return to the raiding and headhunting traditions of the past (de Jonge and Nooteboom 2006; Loveband and Young 2006).

8.6.6 Arenas for Identity Construction in Tourism and Museums

The island of Borneo is fortunate in having a number of important and well-managed museums. These too are the locus of identity construction. Prior to the foundation of universities in Borneo the museums were the major sponsors and

coordinators of research, the best example being the Sarawak Museum. But they have always been influential in presenting particular interpretations of culture and identity by demarcating ethnic groups and categories and attaching items of material culture to them (see Sellato, Chap. 4 in this volume). Perhaps we might argue that their role in relation to the general public and to tourist visitors has become more important as state governments have seen museums as a significant element in tourism promotion. It is clear from the work of Dianne Tillotson (1994) and Christina Kreps (1994, and see her Chap. 9 in this volume) that museums are important agents for constructing and presenting culture, and as departments responsible to government they usually present a nation-state view of what ethnic groups are important, how they are defined and how they relate to national culture. Indeed, Tillotson posed the question in her thesis on material culture and museum collections: Who invented the Dayaks? We should also note the important work that has been undertaken on material culture and its relationship to identity (see, for example, Gavin 2004; Sellato 2012, among many others).

In tourism, too, cultures and identities are constructed and staged particularly in ethnic or longhouse tourism. William Kruse (2003) has demonstrated the ways in which Iban culture, for example, is presented to tourists in ‘selling wild Borneo’, and Heather Zeppel (1994) has also examined issues of authenticity and the staging of the most obvious manifestations of Iban culture (or what is presented as Iban culture in tourism promotion). I like to think that I kick-started an interest in tourism research in Borneo with the panel which I organised at the BRC conference in Sabah in 1992 (see King 1995), but, of course, there was already some important work being undertaken on tourism by, among others, Zeppel.

8.6.7 Emerging Middle Classes, Lifestyles and Identities in Urban Settings

This vital concern with identity construction and transformation is especially important at a time when there has been the growth of a multiethnic, disparate young middle class in Borneo and the wider Malaysia and Indonesia—educated, urban-based, consumerist—and notable evidence of the development of a civil society. Junaenah Sulehan and Madeline Berma (1999: 68–71) have made reference to these young professionals and consumerism in Sarawak, for example, without specifically analysing the phenomenon. In this connection I am thinking of the valuable work of such researchers as Joel Kahn and Francis Loh Kok Wah (1992), and see Kahn (1995, 1998), Abdul Rahman Embong (1996, 2001a, b, c, d, 2002, 2006a, b), King (2008a, b), and King et al. (2008) in peninsular Malaysia and Loh Kok Wah (1992) in relation to the Kadazan of Sabah which might serve as an appropriate model for Sarawak. Maznah Mohamad and Wong Soak Koon (2001a, b) have also contributed to this agenda, and Zawawi Ibrahim and his contributors, in his edited book on Sarawak multiculturalism, also acknowledge the importance of this field of research in cultural politics and the

politics of identity (2008a, b, and see Zawawi 1999). They have managed to push this agenda forward, but much more needs to be done in the Sarawak (and Sabah) context on the study of identities in changing class situations in Malaysian Borneo. Even more needs to be done in Kalimantan.

One might also anticipate that concerns about globalisation would surface most directly in studies of urbanisation in Borneo where local people experience some of the most immediate manifestations and impacts of global processes and late modernity, through encounters with the state and bureaucracy, nation-building symbols and actions, the media, technology and consumerism, international tourists and representatives of other ethnic groups. However, attention to the urban context in Borneo has not been substantial. Among the most important studies have been Craig Lockard's (1987) social and economic history of Kuching, Vinson Sutlive's (1972, 1977) anthropological work on Rejang Iban migration to Sibuluan, and Hew Cheng Sim's (2001, 2003, 2007a, b) focus on female migration and women's circumstances in urban settings. However, even these studies were done without any explicit attention to identity formation. One researcher who does attempt, to my mind, to situate her work in the arena of identities and culture is Clare Boulanger (1999, 2000, 2002, 2008, 2009), which I have summarised earlier, with her interest in changing Dayak urban identities and the implications of modernity and 'being modern' for the identification with and conceptualisation of Dayak traditions and religion, distinctions between the present (the future) and the past, between the urban and the rural, and between urban and rural representatives of different Dayak ethnic categories and groups. She also identifies three dimensions of modernity among urban Dayaks: Christianity, education and entrepreneurship (Boulanger 1999). Here we return to the theme of identity through religion, but also the importance of being modern (*moden*) (see, for example, Chua 2012: 40–44). The disjunctions between traditional and modern (with specific reference to the discourse of developmentalism) and the issue of boundary maintenance are also explored by Kirsten Edey (2007) in the context of urban Sarawak.

8.7 Conclusions

The relationship between culture and identity and the potential which a focus on the concept of 'identities in motion' has in the development of research on Borneo, and particularly comparative research is significant, I would argue. The conceptualisation of at least some of the relations in a Borneo context in terms of 'centres' and 'margins', or alternatively 'cores' and 'peripheries', may also be of some analytical value. In a similar vein, Ishikawa (2010: 92, 135–137) has said, in relation to his study of a Malay borderland community in Sarawak, and using Thongchai's (1994) concept of the 'geo-body': 'The emergence of a centre–periphery relationship in the making of the geo-body of the territorial state has been a crucial factor for the uneven expansion of national life'. We can examine these relations in spatial terms (or rather in terms of the occupation, consolidation, construction and symbolism of

space) or in terms of cultural hierarchies or layers (nations, ethnic categories and groups, local communities and so on), and their relationships to power and wealth, keeping in mind that these layers in relation to centres and margins are also relative (Horstmann and Wadley 2006). In other words, margins have different orders of magnitude from relatively remote minority groups to larger urban populations so that for certain purposes residents of Kuching can be seen as marginal or peripheral to those of Kuala Lumpur or Putrajaya. In admittedly rather crude terms I also posed the question some time ago of why the state of Sarawak has been ‘peripheral’ to the powerful centres of peninsular Malaysia (King 1990: 110–129).

In this connection we have an expanding literature on marginal or peripheral populations and identity construction and transformation among minorities in Borneo. But in certain respects, and as I and my co-editor Michael Parnwell argued a couple of decades ago in a book on ‘margins’ and ‘minorities’ in Malaysia, ‘there is often an ethnic, and specifically a cultural dimension to the feature of marginality ... [so that] ... uneven development also comes to be expressed in cultural terms’ (King and Parwell 1990: 2–3). In a very similar vein, Joel Kahn (1999), in his analysis of the relations between uplands and lowlands, core and periphery, the powerful and the marginal, and the rich and the poor in Indonesia draws attention to the state-generated process of ‘culturalising’ relationships in Suharto’s Indonesia, which might otherwise be thought of in terms of unequal access to resources or unequal access to power and wealth. In this connection, too, König (2012) has adopted a culturalised perspective on interethnic violence.

Perhaps the comparative study of cultural identities across Borneo and deploying one or more of the dimensions of identity which I have attempted to delineate in this chapter (taking in the range of cases and circumstances to be found in different locations and political units) might prove rewarding in not only continuing to embrace the wider perspective which the field of Borneo Studies should provide for the study of the whole island, but also to bring the wider nation-states within which the major areas of Borneo are situated into our frames of analysis.

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Part II
State-Specific Perspectives

Chapter 9

The Real and the Ideal: Towards Culturally Appropriate and Collaborative Heritage Practice in Kalimantan

Christina Kreps

Abstract This chapter critically examines changing approaches to museum development and heritage work in Kalimantan. The first part consists of an excerpt from my book *Liberating culture: cross-cultural perspectives on museums, curation, and heritage preservation* (2003). The book is based on ethnographic research conducted on the Provincial Museum of Central Kalimantan, Museum Balanga from January 1991 to August 1992. The second part, with the first serving as background, describes my work with the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project and the Museum Kapuas Raya, both based in Sintang, West Kalimantan in 2002, 2003 and 2008. These last two projects highlight the pivotal role international cooperation and collaboration play in these museum and heritage initiatives. Taken together, the case studies illustrate how museum ethnography, or the application of ethnographic research methods to the study of museums and museological processes and practices, can provide valuable insights into local conditions and the realities of what is happening on the ground. I show how museum ethnography is not only the basis for critical analysis but also for change in the direction of more culturally appropriate, collaborative, and participatory approaches. I conclude, however, that these approaches remain largely an ideal, or aspiration, without sufficient knowledge of local contexts and time to get to know a community and its specific needs and interests.

Keywords Kalimantan · Museum ethnography · Heritage · Museum Balanga · Dayak Ikat Weaving Project · Museum Kapuas Raya

9.1 Introduction

This chapter critically examines changing approaches to museum development and heritage work in Kalimantan. I present examples of my research and work on several projects, from the early 1990s to 2008, as a means of highlighting the

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importance of ethnographic research, and specifically museum ethnography, in the planning and execution of museum and heritage projects involving international cooperation and collaboration. My aim is to show how museum ethnography, or the application of ethnographic research methods to the study of museums and museological processes and practices, can provide valuable insights into local conditions and the realities of what is happening on the ground. I show how museum ethnography is not only the basis for critical analysis but also for change in the direction of more culturally appropriate, collaborative, and participatory methodologies. The chapter, on the whole, is a case study in ‘engaged museum anthropology’, in keeping with current movements in anthropology to be more publically orientated and in service to the communities with whom we work (see Ames 1992; Bouquet 2012; Duggan 2011; Lamphere 2003; Low and Merry 2010).

The chapter has two parts. The first part consists of an excerpt taken from my book *Liberating culture: cross-cultural perspectives on museums, curation, and heritage preservation* (2003). The book is based on ethnographic research conducted on the Provincial Museum of Central Kalimantan, Museum Balanga from January 1991 to August 1992 (Kreps 1994). In this passage, I give examples of how local curatorial traditions, perceptions of objects, and ways of treating them were being mixed with Western museological practices. Throughout the book, I argue that long before Europeans introduced the museum idea into Borneo, and elsewhere, many non-Western cultures had their own methods of taking care of and preserving things that they valued. In other words, they possessed their own indigenous museologies. I further argue that by imposing the Western museum model onto local communities we run the risk of undermining or displacing these traditions, which are cultural expressions in themselves worthy of study and support as part of people’s living culture.

Even though some indigenous and non-Western scholars and museum professionals had been making similar assertions since the 1980s (see, for example, Mead 1983; Konaré 1983), up until the 1990s little anthropological research had been done on non-Western models of museums and curatorial practices. In *Liberating culture*, I assert that this lack of attention was largely due to the certitude that the museum and museological behaviour were uniquely Western and modern phenomena. It could also be attributed to a belief in the superiority of Western, scientifically based museology and approaches to cultural heritage preservation. This ideology and discourse, I maintain, have blinded us from seeing the diversity of museological forms and behaviours and approaches to the transmission of culture that exist throughout the world.

Much has changed in the museum world and in the scholarship on museums since the 1990s, and, of course, in Indonesia as well. Scholarly interest in non-Western museums has continued to grow, and there is now a substantial body of the literature to draw on for comparative studies (see, for example, Bhatti 2012; Clavir 2002; Clifford 1991; McCarthy 2011; Peers and Brown 2003; Silverman

2015; Stanley 1998, 2007). The postcolonial critique of museums that emerged in the 1980s on the part of the scholarly community, as well as those whose cultural heritages have been collected and represented in museums, has not only led to a rethinking of the museum idea but has also dramatically transformed practice. Over the past few decades, as ‘source’, ‘originating’ and ‘descendant’ communities have demanded greater say in how museums curate and interpret their cultural patrimony, museums have attempted to become more inclusive of multiple perspectives and show greater respect for the diversity of ways that people know, experience and value objects in their collections. In short, what has been occurring is a shift in both ideology and practice from ‘colonial’ to a more ‘cooperative’ and ‘collaborative’ museology (Clifford 1997: 120), albeit to different degrees and under different guises in varying contexts. Cooperative and collaborative museology is, at least ideally, about the equitable sharing of power and authority grounded in the principles of participatory democracy, social justice and cultural and human rights (Phillips 2003). Indeed, collaboration and participation have become keywords in contemporary museological discourse, representing both a philosophical stance and a particular approach to practice that is critically informed and engaged with communities. These developments, on the whole, have inspired more culturally appropriate, critical and reflexive museology (Peers and Brown 2003; Shelton 2001; Silverman 2015).

In the second part of the chapter, with the first serving as background, I discuss my work with the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project and the Museum Kapuas Raya, both based in Sintang, West Kalimantan in 2002, 2003 and 2008. These projects reflect many of the changes described above, for example the shift from a colonial to more cooperative and collaborative museology. They also illustrate the pivotal role international cooperation and collaboration can play in heritage work, and the benefits to be gained from multipronged strategies that pull together resources and support from multiple public and private organisations, governmental and non-governmental institutions, and localised and supranational agencies (see Daly and Winter 2012).

9.2 Museum Balanga as a Site of Cultural Hybridisation¹

The Provincial Museum of Central Kalimantan, Museum Balanga, is located in the provincial capital of Palangkaraya. The town, with a population of approximately 100,000, is a ‘frontier’ community carved out of the once thick forests of Central Kalimantan. It is the commercial and government centre of the province, situated

¹This section draws on Christina Kreps (2003). *Liberating culture: cross-cultural perspectives on museums, curation, and heritage preservation*. London: Routledge, pp. x–xiii, 26–34. Reproduced by permission of Routledge.

some 80 miles (or 130 km) from the Java Sea. The primary means of accessing Palangkaraya is by boat or airplane since few roads exist in the province that are navigable year round. In the eyes of some, Palangkaraya's remote location makes it an unlikely place to find a museum. As one Australian visitor wrote in Museum Balanga's comment book: 'I hardly expected to find a museum in Palangkaraya or in all of Borneo, for that matter'. This visitor's comment reflected not only the prevalent image of Borneo as a wild and 'uncivilised' land, but also popular attitudes regarding the context in which one expects to find a museum.

Museum Balanga was first established as a regional museum (*museum daerah*) in 1973 by community members, who were concerned about the preservation of Central Kalimantan's cultural heritage. As stated in one of the museum's publications:

For a long time the people of Central Kalimantan longed for a museum which would give a picture of the various aspects of life of the people of Central Kalimantan and its natural environment. This desire led to the establishment of a museum in Palangka Raya. (Mihing 1989/90: 3)

However, according to a former director of Museum Balanga, the idea to create a museum in Palangkaraya originally came from an Australian dignitary who visited the town back in the early 1970s.

In 1990, Museum Balanga was officially designated a provincial museum (*museum negeri*), which placed it under the purview of the Directorate of Museums (Direktorat Permuseuman) and the central government. In an interview with the director of Museum Balanga in 1991, I was told that before the museum was incorporated into the national museum system it was not a 'real' museum. By this, he meant that previously the museum was not being managed in line with the state bureaucracy and according to professional museum standards as dictated by the Directorate of Museums.

Museum Balanga functions to collect, preserve, document, study, display and disseminate information on the cultural and natural history of the province. The museum is primarily devoted to the collection and representation of Dayak culture, although the province is ethnically diverse and home to immigrants from other Indonesian islands. The name 'Dayak' is a generic term that refers to the non-Malay, non-Chinese indigenous inhabitants of Indonesian Borneo. A number of different Dayak groups exist in Central Kalimantan who possess their own names, languages and cultural traditions. Despite this diversity, even among the Dayaks, Museum Balanga mostly concentrates on Ngaju-Dayak culture. This is partly due to the fact that the Ngaju are the most numerous Dayak group in the province. In 1994, it was estimated that there were between 500,000–800,000 Ngaju speakers in a province with a total population of some 1.5 million (Schiller 1997: 14). The Ngaju are also the most politically and economically powerful Dayak group in Central Kalimantan.

Historically, Dayaks have lived in villages along the banks of Kalimantan's many rivers. Their livelihood has rested on the cultivation of rice in addition to

hunting, fishing and gathering forest products for trade such as rattan, resins, rubber and sandalwood. Most Dayaks today are also engaged in some form of wage labour, working in timber camps, mining operations or as civil servants.

In keeping with the Directorate of Museums' assertion that Indonesians are 'not yet museum-minded', Museum Balanga appeared to be a foreign idea in the eyes of the local community. Outside of visiting government officials and dignitaries, school groups and occasional tourists, few people visited the museum on a regular basis. Many local people surveyed did not know the museum existed despite its formidable presence on the edge of town. (Museum Balanga consists of nine buildings enclosed in a 3-ha complex. The word 'museum' is also inscribed in large letters on the facade of its main building.) For some, it was just a place to 'keep old things', while for others it was just another cluster of government buildings whose real purposes and functions were unknown.

The museum idea was also alien to many of the individuals who worked in Museum Balanga. Museum workers were civil servants who, for the most part, had had no formal museological training before coming to work at the museum. The majority of Museum Balanga workers were also Dayaks, who retained, to varying degrees, ties to their traditional culture. They received their training on the job and under the guidance of the Directorate of Museums. Consequently, the directorate was charged with instilling a sense of museum-mindedness not just in the public but also in the people working in provincial museums.

Bearing on the museum staff's lack of museum-mindedness, I was interested in how museological tasks were performed in Museum Balanga in comparison to work in European and American museums. Museum Balanga resembles Western-style museums in its functions and forms of cultural representation. However, the ways in which museum work was actually carried out often reflected local values, beliefs and perceptions on the uses and treatment of objects, which, at times, appeared to conflict with those of professional, Western museum culture.

Western museum culture operates with a particular set of standards, practices and value systems regarding the collection, care, interpretation and representation of objects. Within this museum culture objects are made museum pieces or 'special' by meeting criteria established by anthropologists, art historians, scientists, curators and collectors. Standard criteria for evaluating an object's value may be its 'bio-data', or where and when it was made; its formal aesthetic properties; its rarity, uniqueness or authenticity; its monetary value as determined by an art or antique market; and its scientific value as evidence of natural or cultural phenomena (Clifford 1988; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991).

Most of the objects in Museum Balanga's collection are classified as 'ethnographic', representing various aspects of Dayak culture. According to the Directorate of Museum's classification system, an ethnographic object is anything made by local people and still in use. For the most part, objects are displayed using an exhibition style similar to Western ethnographic museums whereby objects are grouped thematically and shown in a reconstructed cultural context. For example, one exhibition leads visitors through the stages of life by showing objects used in rituals related to birth, courting, marriage and death. (This 'life-cycle' exhibit is a

standard feature of nearly all provincial museums in Indonesia and was originally designed and installed by directorate staff from Jakarta.) A life-size diorama features a house on the river complete with canoes, hunting and fishing gear such as traps, weirs, blowpipes, spears and nets. Other displays include implements used in traditional gold mining and agriculture as well as tools and materials used in the production of basketry and bark cloth. Also on display are ritual paraphernalia and objects associated with Kaharingan ceremonies. Kaharingan is the traditional, animist religion of the Ngaju and other Dayaks of Central Kalimantan. What actually constitutes Dayak culture is a matter of debate, but for many Kaharingan is the basis of Ngaju-Dayak culture and provides the inspiration for much of its unique cultural expressions (Schiller 1997).

Many of the objects on display in the museum are examples of things still being used in everyday life, and found in people's homes, in the market or in villages. Not surprisingly, then, objects such as baskets, fishing and hunting gear, and tools were seen as ordinary by the staff and local people. This quotidian perception of objects was reflected in the way staff members handled objects and managed the collection, which, from the perspective of a professional curator, might be considered careless or improper. The perceived ordinariness of the objects was also the reason why many local people did not visit the museum. They saw no point in visiting a place to view objects they had in their homes and used on an almost daily basis.

Conventionally, in Western museums, once an object enters the museum it takes on a new life and usually does not leave the museum except for purposes deemed acceptable by the curators. Museum workers are obliged to safeguard objects so their museum value is preserved. Rarely are objects used for the same purposes they were originally made. However, in Museum Balanga objects were often borrowed by local people for use in ceremonies, performances, and for community events such as festivals, official ceremonies and festivities related to the observance of national holidays.

As a case in point, one day I arrived at the museum in time to see the staff preparing a float for a parade commemorating Indonesian Independence Day, 17 August 1945. Staff members were busily carting objects out of the museum to create a display on the back of a truck. The display was designed to represent a traditional Dayak funerary ceremony known as a *tiwah*. Large brass gongs had been arranged on the bed of the truck along with five-foot-tall wooden figures known as *sapundu*. An antique ceremonial cloth was being nailed onto the side of the truck while two other workers were giving the only masks in the museum's collection a new coat of paint.

Observing these actions, I was confronted with the dilemma of whether or not to intervene in the staff's activities. As a person trained in 'proper' and 'professional' museum practices, I felt compelled to inform the workers about the potentially damaging effects of their actions on the objects. When I expressed my concerns to one staff member, who was wrestling a large wooden carving onto the truck, he turned to me with a perplexed look and said: 'Oh, it doesn't matter. There are lots of them in the villages'. Obviously, this approach to the objects challenged my own sense of museum-mindedness and the idea that the carvings, masks and other

objects were 'special' by virtue of the fact they were in the museum. It also underscored the differences between my views of and relationship to the objects and those of the staff. To this man, as well as for many other members of the museum staff, they were objects still embedded in Dayak living culture. But to me, they were 'ethnographic specimens', whose value rested on their status as examples of Dayak 'material culture'. Thus, the staff members did not perceive the objects in the detached and abstract manner that I did.

In Western ethnographic museums, objects are made 'ethnographic' by the act of detaching them from their original cultural context and their recontextualisation into Western scientific frames of reference. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has observed: 'Ethnographic artifacts are objects of ethnography.... Objects become ethnographic by virtue of being defined, segmented, detached, and carried away by ethnographers. Such objects are ethnographic ... by virtue of the manner in which they have been detached' (1991: 387).

As previously noted, most of the objects in Museum Balanga's collection were classified as ethnographic, and the museum's approach to exhibiting objects was modelled after Western-style ethnographic museums. Nevertheless, at the time of my research, none of the museum workers was trained in anthropology or ethnographic methods. They were using a classification system for objects and exhibition styles formulated by the Directorate of Museums. Consequently, the practice of conceptually detaching objects from their larger sociocultural contexts and perceiving them in an abstract manner was incongruous to the way in which many of the staff members viewed the objects. This incongruity became clear to me while observing the preparation of an exhibit on traditional carving of Central Kalimantan.

The title of the exhibition was *The art of traditional carving of Central Kalimantan*, and was held at Museum Balanga from 29 February to 3 March 1992. The exhibition displayed a total of 27 pieces, which were arranged to highlight the objects' aesthetic or formal qualities as well as their functions. The objects included weapons, musical instruments and carvings originally used in Kaharingan ceremonies and rituals.

A few days before the exhibit was to open, staff members responsible for making object labels and interpretative texts told me they were having trouble preparing the texts. I thought their trouble stemmed from difficulties in finding information about the objects. In an effort to help them, I drew their attention to several publications on Dayak woodcarving. However, the staff were reluctant to use these materials because they said the objects illustrated in the books were not the same as those in the museum's collection. Initially, I thought this response reflected the staff's lack of training in formal research and museum methods. But later I learned their reluctance had more to do with the nature of the objects and who had the right to interpret them.

The exhibition included various types of *hampatung* and *karuhei*, which are carved wooden figures created by ritual specialists or *basir* for use in religious rituals or ceremonies. Each object is considered a unique creation, endowed with

meanings and powers known only to the *basir* who created it. Knowledge about an object and how to use it is sacred, nonpublic, and only acquired through lengthy apprenticeship (Schiller 1986; Sellato 1989; Taylor and Aragon 1991). It is also highly personal and based on individual interpretations of Kaharingan. In describing the work of one ritual specialist, Basir Muka, Schiller writes: 'Like other ritual specialists Muka possesses a highly personalistic understanding of his religion based upon his own experience, and the conclusions he has formed about the relationship between man and the supernatural. Basir Muka has produced a permanent record of his religious beliefs in a sculpture that is both sacred artifact and an attempt to preserve Kahayan mythology' (1986: 232). Therefore, 'without the detailed information from the individual who created them, it is impossible to interpret completely the ritual objects ... or to understand the use of Dayak magical paraphernalia' (Taylor and Aragon 1991: 49).

Because objects were made for specific purposes and endowed with singular meanings, museum workers were cautious about usurping the *basir*'s authority and writing generalised statements on exhibit labels about the objects. This attitude stands in contrast to how ethnographic objects are viewed and used in Western museum culture where a single artefact is made to represent an abstract totality, such as Dayak wood carving, art or culture. As James Clifford has pointed out, museum collections and displays 'create the illusion of adequate representation of the world by first cutting objects out of specific contexts and making them "stand for" abstract wholes' (Clifford 1988: 220). Museums deny objects their singularity as 'exhibition classifications ... shift the grounds of singularity from the objects to a category within a particular taxonomy' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991: 392).

Furthermore, the modern museum is typically considered a public entity. Museum collections are theoretically owned by or held in the public trust and accessible to the public. Information about collections is, in principle, available for public consumption. 'Museums are ... apparatuses for public rather than private consumption.... The public museum was established as a means of sharing what had been private and exposing what had been concealed' (Hooper-Greenhill 1989: 68). However, particular kinds of objects, such as *karuhei*, and knowledge about them have not been considered public domain in Dayak culture. In fact, knowledge and rights to the ownership and interpretation of some objects, because of their sacred nature, have been the sole preserve of *basir* or other select members of the society.

Out of respect for traditional customs and beliefs associated with certain objects and rights related to the authority of ritual specialists, Museum Balanga workers looked to *basir* for guidance on how to interpret and present objects used in Kaharingan rituals. They also called upon *basir* to assist them in the production of exhibits related to Kaharingan. For instance, on one occasion the museum hired three *basir* to help renovate an exhibit on the *tiwah* ceremony. The *basir* were engaged to advise the staff on how to make the exhibit more authentic or closer to the image of a real *tiwah*. But the *basir* did more than merely advise. They selected objects for display, constructed models of ceremonial structures and arranged them in their appropriate positions. All the work was carried out in accordance with Kaharingan prescriptions. After the renovation was completed, the *basir* performed

a cleansing ritual to cast out any lingering bad spirits and to summon good spirits to bestow their blessings on the museum, staff and visitors.

Collaboration with *basir* is one example of how Museum Balanga was a site of cultural hybridisation, where local approaches to the interpretation and representation of cultural materials were being mixed with those of a wider, international museum culture. However, to some administrators, these collaborative efforts were unprofessional, too closely tied to religion, and not in keeping with the idea of a museum as a modern, secular institution based on scientific principles and professionalism. As a result, such practices were being discouraged in Museum Balanga.

9.3 Dayak Ikat Weaving Project

I was first introduced to the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project in July 2002 when I visited the Kobus Cultural Centre, the home base of the project. I went there as a consultant to the Ford Foundation in Jakarta, which had been funding the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project for several years. My brief was to evaluate its progress and make recommendations for its further development. I was also asked to discuss the project's long-term goal of establishing a museum in Sintang. This goal was noted in its proposal to the Ford Foundation as part of Phase II of the project. I returned to Sintang in July 2003 with two graduate students enrolled in the University of Denver's Department of Anthropology Museum and Heritage Studies Program, which I directed. The purpose of our visit was to engage in a collaborative training exercise with Kobus staff as part of the newly created University of Denver/Indonesia Exchange Program in Museum Training supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation.

The objectives of the Exchange Program were to provide on-site training to local museums in Indonesia and give participants the opportunity to share knowledge and experience in the spirit of international cooperation and cross-cultural exchange. The first component of the programme involved training workshops held at the Kobus Centre in Sintang in addition to the Museum Pusaka Nias in Genungsitoli on the island of Nias (see Kreps 2008). The second component entailed bringing one participant from each site to the University of Denver to study museum anthropology during the 2004/2005 academic year. A guiding principle of the programme was that approaches to museum development and training should be made to fit local cultural settings.

The Exchange Program grew out of a concern for what I saw as largely ineffective approaches to museum development and training, and the need for the creation of alternative strategies. When I first began conducting research on museums in Kalimantan in the early 1990s, museum development in Indonesia could still be characterised as 'colonial' in the sense that museums continued to be modelled after Western-style museums, and were set up and managed in a 'top-down' fashion with little involvement of community members apart from those

who worked in the museums. Museum development in Indonesia as a whole had been under the purview of government officials, elites and international experts. As noted in the above passage from *Liberating culture*, the Directorate of Museums had been responsible for overseeing the development of museums, both public and private since 1975. It operated within the Department of Education and Culture until it was dissolved in 1999 and became part of the newly formed Directorate General for History and Archaeology in the Department of Culture and Tourism in 2001. The directorate provided technical assistance to museums through training programmes for museum staff often organised in cooperation with museum professionals from Europe, the United States, Australia and Japan. It also produced instructional handbooks on how to perform museum tasks based on internationally recognised professional museum standards established by bodies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) International Council of Museums.

Despite these programmatic efforts and the many resources that have gone into museum development over the decades, I observed, for the most part, that museum workers, especially those working in museums outside metropolitan areas, remained poorly trained and collections poorly cared for and managed. This situation could be attributed to the top-down, expert/outsider-driven approaches to museum development and training described above. It could also be seen as a consequence of the direct transfer of museum models, technologies and practices developed in cultural and socioeconomic contexts dramatically different from those in which most Indonesian museums existed.

For instance, over the years, I observed training programmes run by national and international museum experts in various aspects of collections care and management, such as registration, documentation and conservation. Although these workshops were intended to provide museum workers with the training that would help them better care for and preserve collections, this training generally did not match the trainees' level of preparation or the resources available at their museums. Furthermore, Indonesian museums, like many museums elsewhere, tended to be inadequately funded and operated with limited resources. Regular access to professional quality materials and equipment was also a problem, especially for museums in remote areas. This approach to training not only paid little attention to how standard, professional museum practices fit particular museum settings, it also did not allow much room for exploring how local people may have had their own curatorial traditions.

In this light, I envisioned the Exchange Program not only as an opportunity to engage in international cooperation and cultural exchange but also as an experiment in 'appropriate museology'. As both theory and method, appropriate museology is based on the premise that approaches to museum development, professional training and heritage work should be adapted to local cultural contexts and socioeconomic conditions. It is ideally a bottom-up, community-based approach that combines local knowledge and resources with those of professional practices to better meet the needs and interests of a particular museum and its community. Appropriate museology and heritage practice also suggest that indigenous

museological traditions should be explored and integrated into museum and heritage where suitable (see Kreps 2008).

Another essential element of appropriate museology is that individual projects should be site-specific, conceptualised ‘on the ground’ in consultation and collaboration with stakeholders, rather than being formulated beforehand, ‘packaged’ and ‘delivered’. Consequently, when the students and I arrived at the Kobus Centre our first task was to meet with individuals working with the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project and discuss their needs and how we might assist them. Based on my visit the year before, I was familiar with the project and its goals.

The Dayak Ikat Weaving Project was initiated in 1999 by the People, Resources and Conservation Foundation (PRCF), a community development non-governmental organisation, in collaboration with the Kobus Centre (Centre for Cultural Communication and Art). The project aims to enhance the artistic and managerial skills of weavers; contribute to women’s empowerment through greater financial security and independence; and foster appreciation of weaving through research and education (PRCF Report 2002). The project’s overarching goal is to revive and strengthen the *ikat* weaving tradition as a hallmark of Dayak cultural heritage.

In 2002, the project’s main focus was the further development of its weaving cooperative *Jasa Menenun Mandiri* (JMM), which translates as ‘weavers go independent’. The cooperative administrative office and gallery were based at the Kobus Centre, which also served as a collection and distribution point for the weavers’ products that included *ikat* cloths, bags, picture frames, place mats, jackets, scarves, as well as other local crafts like basketry. The Kobus Centre was also the residence of Father Jacques Maessen, a Dutch Catholic priest who has been working in the region since 1969. He was also a founder of and senior adviser to the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project.

Maessen had been interested in the *ikat* weavings for many years, and had amassed some 500 old and contemporary pieces by 2003, along with other objects of Dayak traditional and contemporary art (see Kreps 2012). In our meeting Maessen described how weavers and other artists would come to the Kobus Centre, which in many respects resembled and functioned as a museum, to study his collection. And although he possessed extensive knowledge of his collection and about textiles in general, this knowledge, in his words, resided primarily ‘in his head’. He had never had time to ‘write it all down’ or create an inventory. Thus, we collectively decided to create a numbering and inventory system for his textile collection, which he hoped to someday donate to a museum or other facility where it would be more accessible to the public. We instructed staff members of the cooperative and Novia Sagita, a Dayak woman from Pontianak who was a researcher for the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project, in how to number, tag and enter data on inventory worksheets. These data consisted of an inventory number, dimensions, materials, provenance, name of weaver and date of collection if known. The worksheet also included a space for descriptions of motifs and other relevant information. Novia Sagita provided additional information on the symbolic meanings of motifs based on her prior research on *ikats*. The students also helped

rehouse the textiles in a 'climate controlled' room to better protect them from the damaging effects of light, dust, humidity and pests. This activity gave us the opportunity to train staff in how to implement basic 'preventative conservation' measures.

While our collaborative work at the Kobus Centre was just one small intervention, the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project as a whole can be seen as a successful alternative to colonial-style approaches because it embodies many of the principles and methods of appropriate museology and heritage practice as well as participatory community development. First and foremost, it is a community-based initiative that includes the full participation of community members, particularly weavers, and supports weaving as an integral part of daily life and living cultural heritage (see Kreps 2012).

When the cooperative was established in 2000 it had fewer than 50 members. Today it has 1414 members from 44 villages in the Sintang district (personal communication with Novia Sagita, 10 September 2014). The cooperative, which now operates independently from the Kobus Centre, buys and sells the weavers' products and provides them with loans to purchase materials like thread and chemical dyes or for other needs. Through their participation in the cooperative, weavers have the opportunity to earn much-needed cash and acquire skills in financial and business management. Thus, it exists to generate income for the weavers and their communities as well as support the *ikat* weaving tradition. The cooperative also sponsors training workshops on the use of natural dyeing techniques and traditional designs, motifs and colours.

Because background information on each textile increases its marketability and is especially important to collectors, the cooperative includes with each piece a certificate of authenticity, bearing the name of the weaver and her village, and whether chemical or natural dyes were used. It also produces pamphlets that interpret the meaning of each cloth's motifs.

Research and documentation has been an important dimension of the project from its inception for marketing purposes, and because knowledge related to the tradition is rapidly disappearing with the passing of older weavers. For this reason, Novia Sagita began conducting field studies around Sintang and the Upper Kapuas districts of West Kalimantan in 2002. Her research primarily involved documenting, through photographs, notes and video recordings, the intangible aspects of Dayak *ikat* weaving, such as the meaning of textile designs and motifs. She also recorded local customs, beliefs and rituals associated with weaving and dyeing along with oral histories of individual weavers. Sagita was also interested in investigating indigenous curatorial practices connected to weaving. Although scholars have been studying and publishing on Iban textiles for decades, local practices related to their care and preservation have not been documented to any degree.

Many of the customs, beliefs and ritual practices linked to Dayak textiles can be seen as curatorial traditions if curation is viewed in terms of how people use, give meaning to and interpret, classify, take care of and preserve things of value to them according to prescribed cultural protocol. The term curator is derived from the Latin

word *curare*—to take care of. Returning to this original definition of curator as custodian, guardian or keeper we can see how individuals or certain classes of people such as priests, shamans, ritual specialists and, in this case, weavers are curators. As caretakers of a family, group or society’s cultural knowledge, practices and creations they are responsible for transmitting culture from one generation to the next or, in other words, for cultural heritage preservation.

In museological parlance, a curator must possess specialised knowledge on the technical and formal properties of an art or craft, have knowledge of particular styles and traditions, and understand and appreciate particular aesthetic systems. Dayak weavers certainly meet these criteria and can be seen not only as curators but also connoisseurs of *ikat* textiles, being able to judge the quality and ritual efficacy of a piece based on local aesthetic canons and cultural protocol (see Kreps 2012).

Although the functions of *ikat* weaving have changed over time, such as for clothing and ceremonial use, Sagita found that many weavers still adhere to many of the traditional beliefs related to weaving. For example, many older weavers continue to make offerings to the spirits and observe taboos throughout the weaving and dyeing process. Sagita suggests these beliefs and customs along with stories concerning *ikat* weaving have worked to preserve the art form through the generations. Among these methods of preservation is what she identifies as an ‘indigenous copyright’ system described in the following passage.

When I visited the weavers in different villages, I sometimes showed them my photo collection of *ikats*. This was one method I used for gathering information on motifs. The weavers were very intrigued by these photos and asked a lot of questions about which Dayaks made which *ikats*, and how the textile were [sic] collected. It was interesting to listen to their discussions about the photographs and the comparisons they made between their motifs and those on the textiles in the photographs. A middle-aged weaver said that it was unusual for them to see photographs of *ikat*. She was also a little worried about how the photographs made it easy for other people to copy motifs. For them, when they want to copy someone else’s designs (even those of relatives) they have to make payments in the traditional way. I believe this indicated how weavers are concerned about respecting and protecting traditional rights to cultural property. Traditional rules and customs regarding the use of motifs is a kind of indigenous copyright. (Sagita 2009: 125)

Sagita documented other examples of indigenous curatorial practices, for instance, how weavers fold cloths to protect their motifs as well as how they store them in baskets made from *daun senggang* (a particular kind of leaf) that acts as an insecticide. Some women also store heirloom textiles in ceramic jars to guard them from excessive humidity, light, dust and rodents (Sagita 2009: 124–125). She also recorded the custom of giving long names or titles to cloths based on their ‘biography’, a practice well documented in the literature on Iban textiles (see Gavin 2003). Weavers, in addition to naming cloths, may also classify textiles based on type of design and motif, use, an individual weaver or ethnic groups’ style, or on the basis of a cloth’s supernatural qualities.

The Dayak Ikat Weaving Project, Sagita contends, has been successful overall because its organisers have involved the weavers in all phases of planning and developing the project over the years. They have also respected local, indigenous

knowledge as well as social organisation related to gender and work roles. Thus, while the project was largely initiated by ‘outsiders’, community participation has been its cornerstone. The cooperative also has been very active in creating opportunities for weavers to share their knowledge, skills and experiences with one another and with weavers from other areas of Indonesia (Sagita 2009: 126–127). Its ongoing success has largely rested on how it has been tailored to fit into the lives of weavers and the local sociocultural context. The project has not just been devoted to marketing and preserving a traditional art form but has also been dedicated to preserving a way of life and living culture (see Kreps 2012).

While many aspects of the weaving tradition have undergone change, it continues to be a socially significant activity and an integral part of daily life, something women do in their spare time when they are not tending the rice fields, collecting firewood, preparing meals, or caring for children and livestock. Weaving brings women together and gives them an opportunity to share the events of the day, tell stories and relax. It is in the comfort of their homes, or longhouse, where most young weavers learn how to weave from their grandmothers, mothers or from other weavers. And even though most women now weave to earn an income and textiles have chiefly become commodities, weavers control the means of production through their participation in the cooperative.

Moreover, the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project has been successful because it has been able to garner support from a number of national and international governmental and non-governmental organisations, foundations, donors and collectors. It has furthermore formed alliances with other weaving cooperatives in Indonesia and abroad as a means of promoting and sustaining traditional weaving.

The University of Denver Exchange Program contributed to the project beyond the workshop held at the Kobus Centre in 2003. In 2004 the University of Denver Museum of Anthropology presented the exhibit *Woven dreams: women and weaving in Indonesian Borneo*, in collaboration with the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project. Maessen loaned several pieces from his collection for display, including a backstrap loom with an *ikat* warp, an antique spinning wheel and cotton gin, several older and contemporary *ikat* textiles, and some examples of beadwork. The cooperative also sent textiles that were sold during the exhibit’s opening reception, allowing us to return approximately US\$1500 back to the cooperative.

The Exchange Program provided further support to the project by facilitating Novia Sagita’s study at the University of Denver during the 2004/2005 academic year.² During her stay, she sat in on anthropology classes and gained hands-on training in the Museum of Anthropology. She also had the opportunity to visit other museums and build her professional network. This experience would prove highly valuable as Sagita went on to be a key figure in the planning and creation of the Museum Kapuas Raya. As part of my work for the Ford Foundation and the Exchange Program I also played a role in the museum’s genesis.

²Novia Sagita’s study at the University of Denver was funded by a fellowship from the Asian Cultural Council based in New York.

9.4 Museum Kapuas Raya

As noted earlier, when I first visited the Kobus Centre in 2002 Maessen and a representative of the PRCF told me that one of the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project's long-term goals was to establish a museum in Sintang. We discussed how they might go about starting to plan a museum and I suggested that they begin by conducting a community survey to ascertain whether or not there was interest in the community in creating a museum. A survey would allow people to make suggestions on what form the museum should take as well as its purposes and functions. In this way, community members could be involved from its inception and participate in its planning and development. I emphasised how such an effort could help engender a 'sense of ownership' and community investment in the museum because museums, and other types of development projects, have proven to be unsustainable in the long run without community 'buy in' and participation (see Kreps 2002, 2003, 2008).³

I offered to provide examples of community surveys to guide them in the creation of their own survey that would be suited to their needs and local conditions. I also gave them a copy of my chapter 'Program pembangunan Museum Rakyat Kayan Mentarang: kebudayaan, pelestarian dan partisipasi masyarakat' (The Kayan Mentarang People's Museum development program: culture, conservation and community participation) in the book *Kebudayaan dan pelestarian alam: penelitian interdisipliner di pedalaman Kalimantan* (Culture and conservation: interdisciplinary research in interior Kalimantan) (Eghenter and Sellato 1999). The chapter outlines a methodology for establishing community museums based on my work with the World Wildlife Fund in East Kalimantan in 1996 and 1997. In our discussions, I stressed the importance of having a clear vision of the museum's purposes, functions and its 'target audience' or, rather, whom is it intended to serve. I also suggested various ways a museum could support and promote weaving through the collection and preservation of textiles and through research, documentation, exhibitions, education and public programming.

During this first meeting, I learned that the *bupati* (regent or district head) at that time was also interested in establishing a museum or cultural centre in Sintang. He preferred the idea of a cultural centre over a museum since the former tends to focus primarily on living culture. As a Dayak, the *bupati* was very interested in the preservation and promotion of Dayak history, art and culture. However, he also believed a museum or cultural centre should represent and serve all the people of the district. The *bupati* was a professionally trained archivist and former head of provincial archives in Pontianak. The *bupati* and the local Committee on Museums, History and Antiquities were instrumental in having an archives centre set up in the town of Sintang that housed historical documents and photographs dating from the

³The tendency to speak of 'community' and 'communities' in monolithic terms and as homogeneous units has now been subjected to a thorough critique in the museum studies and anthropological literature. See, for example, Karp, Kreamer, and Lavine (1992), Crooke (2006), Watson (2007).

Dutch colonial period. While in Sintang I attended the formal opening of the archives along with representatives of the Weaving Project. The governor of West Kalimantan attended the opening, showing support for the *bupati* and committee's efforts. This facility was intended to be temporary since the *bupati* and the committee was in the process of planning the construction of a new building to house the archives.

One private museum already existed in Sintang, the Dara Juanti Museum, located on the site of the former palace of Sultan Nata Muhammed Shamsuddin who died there in 1738 (Sellato 2011). The palace (now the museum) was built in 1937 and contains heirlooms, state regalia, ceramics and artefacts dating back to the Hindu era in Borneo. I visited the museum and was impressed by its building and collections, although both were in dire need of conservation. A descendant of the sultan, who described himself as an *ahli warisan* (heritage specialist/caretaker) of the museum and its collection, gave our party a tour. Although the Dara Juanti Museum is a significant historical landmark and is important to the Malay-Muslim community in Sintang, I was told that it did not really function as a community-wide museum and represent the ethnic diversity of Sintang.

Maessen and representatives of the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project equally believed that a new museum in Sintang should represent all the different ethnic groups of the region, that is Dayak, Malay and Chinese. They hoped that such a museum could foster cross-cultural understanding and more harmonious relations among the different groups. This was particularly important given recent communal violence and ongoing tensions in the region and in other provinces of Kalimantan (see Schiller and Garang 2002; van Klinken 2007; Schulte Nordholt and van Klinken 2007; Tanasaldy 2007, King in this volume). I told them about the International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience, formed in 1999, which is a global network of historic houses, museums and memorials dedicated to educating publics about the contemporary implications of past tragedies, and, in many cases, how to work towards reconciliation and building community (see www.sitesofconscience.org). I also suggested that they consider the ecomuseum model, a concept that first emerged in France and has now spread to communities throughout the world. Ecomuseums are dedicated to helping build and reinforce a people's sense of identity by focusing on their relationships to their natural and cultural environment. Ecomuseums are inherently community-based museums in which community members participate in all aspects of their operations (see Davis 2011).

When I returned to Sintang in 2003 with the students, I was impressed to see how much progress had been made on the development of the new archives facility and cultural centre in just one year. A three-storey building for the archives was under construction and a cultural centre/gallery was near completion. The latter was a remarkable structure built in the shape of the covered trading boats known as *bandung* that have traversed the rivers of Kalimantan for centuries. Both the archives building and the Bandung Gallery were, and still are, located a few kilometres from the town.

Over the year, the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project had also continued pursuing its goal of creating a museum in Sintang or at least finding a place where the Kobus

Centre's collection could be housed and put on display for the public. They saw these new facilities as potentially suitable sites and furthermore believed there would be a number of advantages to partnering with local government agencies and officials, like the *bupati*.

After touring both sites, I concluded that the archives building would be the most suitable location, at least in its adherence to professional museum standards. As a professional archivist, the *bupati* was aware of the kinds of conservation measures that needed to be in place for the preservation of valuable collections, such as climate control and security, and had incorporated these into the building's design. The building was also much larger than the Bandung Gallery with three wings that were planned to accommodate a library, computer labs, classrooms, storage and display areas. Although the Bandung Gallery was very striking in appearance, it was a wooden structure and did not have any means of climate control, security or space for the storage and display of collections. According to the *bupati*, he wanted the gallery to be a place where artists and craftspeople from throughout the region could demonstrate, display and sell their work, especially to tourists.

After sharing my observations with Maessen and the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project staff, I was asked to write a report to the *bupati* recommending that space be set aside in the new archives building for a museum. Maessen thought that such a recommendation would carry more weight coming from a 'museum expert'. In the report I stated why I thought the archives building would be an ideal home for the Kobus collection, and how it could become an important centre for research and preservation as well as education. One month after I left Sintang I was pleased to hear from Maessen that the *bupati* had accepted the proposal and was willing to make space in the building for the Kobus collection and a museum.

I returned to Sintang in August 2008 in time to see final preparations being made for the official opening of the new Museum Kapuas Raya set for 8 October. The Kobus Centre and the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project's staff members had finally achieved their goal. They believed this was made possible by their ability to garner support from and collaborate with multiple partners, i.e. local government, international foundations and institutions, and private donors. This multipronged strategy was a relatively new approach to museum development and heritage work in Kalimantan that stood in contrast to earlier centralised, top-down approaches that were primarily controlled by national government agencies.

The Museum Kapuas Raya ultimately became a reality as a result of a collaborative partnership between the Kobus Centre, Sintang local government (under the leadership of the *bupati*) and the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, which has a history of working on international collaborative projects in heritage preservation and applied museology in Indonesia and elsewhere.⁴ In 2003 Maessen visited the

⁴It should be noted here that I was well acquainted with the history and work of the Tropenmuseum because I had conducted research at the museum from January to August 1987 for my master's thesis 'Decolonizing museums: the Dutch example' (1988). I had maintained ongoing relationships with several members of the Tropenmuseum staff since that time, and suggested that Father Maessen contact the museum for possible support and guidance.

Tropenmuseum to explore the possibility of collaborating on the development of a museum in Sintang. Subsequently, the museum decided to send a member of its curatorial staff to Sintang to assess the feasibility of such a project, and to develop initial concepts for a project proposal. In 2004 Maessen, the *bupati* and a group of community members from Sintang visited the Netherlands for 10 days. During this trip, they visited several Dutch heritage institutions where historical manuscripts, artefacts, maps and photographs from Sintang were kept. The *bupati* hoped that some day the people of Sintang would have more ready access to this material that was of such importance to their history and cultural identity. As a result of these meetings, the government of Sintang and the Tropenmuseum signed a partnership agreement and memorandum of understanding (van Hout 2015).

Itie van Hout, a member of the Tropenmuseum curatorial staff and project team, details the process behind planning the museum in ‘Museum Kapuas Raya: the in-between museum’ (2015). She writes that in conceptualising the museum, the project leaders drew on a number of models that have become popular in the international museum world. In keeping with Maessen’s and the *bupati*’s original vision to create a museum that would focus on the history of the region and its living cultures, they determined that ‘community museum’ models, such as the ecomuseum idea explained above, would be the most appropriate. And although the museum’s main purpose was to serve local communities and function as an educational heritage institution, it was also hoped that the museum would contribute to the development of tourism in the area (van Hout 2015).

The project leaders were especially concerned with how to equally represent the three main ethnic groups of Sintang, i.e. Dayak, Malay and Chinese, following Maessen’s desire for a museum that would foster cross-cultural understanding and intercultural dialogue. For this reason, they believed that it was imperative for the museum to not be identified with any one ethnic group. It was also important that all stakeholders contributed to and participated in every aspect of the museum’s development (van Hout 2015: 177–179). This aspiration, however, proved to be more challenging than expected due to long-standing power relations and dynamics among the project’s various participants.⁵

The Dayaks, Malays and Chinese have lived together in Sintang for more than two centuries, albeit with each group residing in its own area along the banks of the Kapuas and Melawi rivers. The Dayaks originally lived in villages along the rivers, as they still do, but over time many have migrated to Sintang and its surroundings. And although many Dayaks and Chinese converted to Christianity in the nineteenth century, Sintang’s communities are still defined by their own distinctive ethnic, religious and linguistic traditions (van Hout 2015: 176). A history of strong social and political inequalities among the various ethnic groups of Kalimantan is well documented. Dayaks, in particular, have been historically discriminated against

⁵Throughout her chapter, van Hout critically reflects on her role in the project as a representative of former Dutch colonisers, and how colonial/postcolonial power relationships might have influenced the dynamics in the project.

under the power of various rulers (King 1993; Peluso and Harwell 2001; Schiller 1997; Tanasaldy 2007). The Chinese, too, have suffered discrimination and oppression, and were not allowed to openly use their language or practise their traditions until after the collapse of Suharto's New Order regime in 1998 (van Hout 2015; Schulte Nordholt and van Klinken 2007).

As mentioned earlier, throughout the 1990s West Kalimantan was marred by several violent protests and outbreaks of communal violence that took place throughout the province. According to Gerry van Klinken, this violence was associated with a resurgence of ethnic identity movements and activism in the post-Suharto, decentralisation and *reformasi* (reformation) period (van Klinken 2007).

Van Hout recounts how it was against this backdrop of complex ethnic and political relations that the museum was conceived as an avenue for fostering greater social cohesion and sense of community. The project leaders hoped the museum would be a place where each group's heritage could be presented, and where cultural similarities and differences could be explored. Consequently, the project's success depended on building relationships across ethnic as well as colonial and postcolonial divides (van Hout 2015: 181–186).

Between 2003 and 2010 representatives from Sintang visited the Netherlands 10 times, and staff members from the Tropenmuseum visited Sintang 23 times. Project activities took place prior to and during these visits, and van Hout underscores how e-mail contact made the project possible. The project lasted a little more than four years, and during this time the *bupati*'s office was regularly updated by the project manager who was Indonesian and had a good understanding of local politics and administrative systems. Local government officials facilitated identifying community representatives and recruiting staff for the museum.

As a means of getting community members involved in the project and building relationships, one of the *bupati*'s first activities was to organise a seminar in which he introduced the project leaders' ideas for a future heritage institution in Sintang to the community. According to van Hout, over time and after the planning team had met with various groups in a variety of settings and meeting formats, community 'cultural experts' were elected to represent each group in the development process (van Hout 2015: 181–183).

Crucial to the project was the idea that community members would decide on exhibition content based on their own cultural knowledge and wishes. Participants were asked to identify subjects for the exhibition that would cut across the different cultures. They decided on the subjects of birth, marriage, death and other rites of passage to be incorporated into the exhibition *The cycle of life*. The Malay group chose the Malay wedding to showcase; the Chinese community wanted to highlight activities that take place at temples during Chinese New Year celebrations; and the Dayaks settled on the *gawai* harvest festival. In each case, the team worked with community members in developing content and obtaining objects and materials for the exhibition (van Hout 2015: 182).

In step with current 'reflexive museology', van Hout critically reflects on the process of planning and setting up the museum and possible reasons for why the

project team did not achieve many of its goals, particularly those concerning community participation and the stimulation of cross-cultural dialogue and interaction. She recounts how during various stages of the process the different groups played different participatory roles and showed varying degrees of commitment to the project. In fact, she asserts, their degrees of commitment remained unequal throughout the whole process, and the team had to work hard to build solid, ongoing relationships. For instance, she relates that only the Malay and Dayak groups attended the first seminar and it was only after the *bupati* intervened that the Chinese became involved. Moreover, even though community representatives were members of the project team, a feeling of separateness persisted between the community and the project leaders. Van Hout suggests that this fluctuating commitment and indeed scepticism on the part of the different groups was likely due to the fact that the project did not emerge from the community itself, but rather was initiated by the *bupati* and the Kobus Centre.

Van Hout further relates how the different groups did not really interact and communicate with one another to the degree they had hoped for until the final stage of installing the exhibition. Even then, while representatives from each ethnic group helped with the installation of their own sections of *The cycle of life*, other community members only ‘looked on’ during the activity. Perhaps more discussion among the Chinese, Dayak and Malay would have been achieved, she surmises, if the project leaders had encouraged greater group interaction at earlier stages of the project. Van Hout states that the main inadequacy of the project’s design was that it did not provide sufficient opportunities for dialogue among the various ethnic groups (van Hout 2015: 183)

Despite these shortcomings, van Hout believes the museum project has been a success in that the museum has become a ‘space of encounter’ among the different groups around their shared cultural heritage and is a source of community pride. In addition to its exhibitions on Sintang’s cultures and histories, the museum also provides a meeting place where cultural and environmental issues can be discussed. In this way, van Hout contends, the museum is playing a role in community development and sustainability.

Furthermore, the Museum Kapuas Raya project can be seen as a success because it now serves as an alternative to the standard model of Indonesian provincial museums (van Hout 2015: 184–185). In contrast to provincial museums that are intended to represent the history and cultures of an entire province within the larger context of the nation (see Kreps 2003), Museum Kapuas Raya focuses on the specific history and traditions of particular communities within a region of a province. What is more, exhibitions in the museum are based on community members’ own interpretations and views of their cultures. And even though the idea for the museum did not come directly from community members, it was initiated and carried out by local government officials in collaboration with private and international partners rather than being orchestrated by representatives of the national government in Jakarta.

Particularly noteworthy is how the museum has drawn the attention of other local, regional and inter-island governments interested in developing similar

heritage institutions. Van Hout describes how towards the end of the exhibition installation process government workers from different provinces visited the museum ‘to see what was going on’, and subsequently asked for assistance in setting up their own museums. In asking for advice they turned to the Museum Kapuas Raya staff not to the Tropenmuseum. This outcome is especially important because it means the project was effective in building local capacity for future domestic collaborations without dependency on external partners.

The long-term success and survival of the museum remains to be seen, but for now van Hout suggests

the government, museum staff and community of Sintang are creating their own museological form and practice. They are striving to shape a museum that suits the local political, economic, and cultural conditions while accepting that these are dynamic processes. The museum management has recognised that it is only by engaging with the issues of local relevance that the museum can build relationships with the community and in this way flourish as an institution of civil society (van Hout 2015: 184).

Certainly even though the project leaders did not achieve all their stated goals, the Museum Kapuas Raya project can be seen as a milestone in the history of museum development in Kalimantan, as an alternative to the wholly state-sponsored provincial museum (*museum negeri*) and in its aspiration to enact more collaborative, participatory and culturally appropriate museology.

9.5 Conclusion

As Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge suggested back in 1992, ‘museums are part of a transnational order of cultural forms that has emerged in the last two centuries and now unites much of the world’ (1992: 35). But they also pointed out that ‘every society appears to bring to these forms its own specific history and traditions, its own cultural stamp, its own quirks and idiosyncrasies’ (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988: 5). Indeed, as I have discovered in my own research on museums in Indonesia and elsewhere in the world, museums are always ultimately products of their own particular historical, cultural and national environments (see Krepis 2003: ix–xiii). They embody and reflect changes taking place in the societies in which they exist and in some cases help bring about change.

Museum Kapuas Raya has made a good start in being an agent of positive social change in Sintang. The degree to which the museum will be able to continue playing this role depends on its capacity to build and sustain community participation and support. The museum’s overall survival also rests on the extent to which community members find value and meaning in the institution, and whether or not it meets their needs and interests. For further guidance along this path, the museum staff might look to their sister heritage project, i.e. the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project, which has a proven track record of participation and relevance to its members.

In this chapter, I have tried to demonstrate the importance of understanding local context when attempting to put international heritage initiatives into practice. I have

suggested that ethnographic research and ‘engaged museum anthropology’ are a means of gaining insights, knowledge and understanding of ‘specific history and traditions’, ‘cultural stamps’, ‘quirks and idiosyncrasies’ and real conditions ‘on the ground’.

Preliminary ethnographic research and engaged practice can also help determine beforehand what kind of heritage institution or organisation is appropriate and desired by a community. I agree with Ames that

[w]hat needs to be suspended is the assumption that the idea of the museum necessarily contains within it all the solutions to a community’s interest in its heritage, and the notion of that valuable heritage which experts judge to be suitable for institutionalisation. The museological initiative is only one alternative, and could in fact unintentionally limit local initiative and thus be counterproductive (2006: 179)

Despite its obvious benefits, the nature of most international museum and heritage projects does not allow for long-term and in-depth ethnographic research. It remains largely an ‘ideal’ beyond the scope and means of most projects. On this point, van Hout acknowledges that although she conducted research on the structure of Sintang society, the different cultural groups that live in the region and their relationships to one another prior to her first visit, this research was insufficient for understanding the nuances and complexities of interethnic relations and processes of identity formation in Sintang. She concedes that greater knowledge of group dynamics and community tensions may have ‘smoothed the process for the museum planning as well as helped to establish trust within the community about the project’ (van Hout 2015: 180).

This shortcoming is not unique to the Museum Kapuas Raya project. In fact, the Tropenmuseum staff can be commended for the number of visits they made to and the amount of time they spent in Sintang. And in my own case, even though I had previously conducted long-term fieldwork in Central and East Kalimantan on museums and cultural preservation projects, the time I actually spent over the course of my three visits to Sintang amounted to only about three weeks.

In conclusion, having sufficient time to engage with and really get to know a community remains one of our greatest challenges as we work toward developing more culturally appropriate, collaborative and participatory approaches to museum and heritage work. While much progress is being made, much work remains to be done in closing the gap between the ‘real’ and the ‘ideal’.

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Chapter 10

An Overview of Cultural Research in Sabah

Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan

Abstract Set against a background sketch of its peoples and cultures, this chapter traces the history of cultural research in Sabah, the East Malaysian state situated in northern Borneo. It takes the reader from accounts by European explorers and missionaries, and records of officers of the British North Borneo Chartered Company in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to post-Second World War research and the eventual development of the Sabah Society, the Department of Sabah Museum, the Borneo Research Council and the Institut Linguistik SIL–Cawangan Malaysia (now SIL Malaysia). It then briefly introduces some of the social and cultural research done since the establishment of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) in 1994, especially under its former School of Social Sciences (that combined with the School of Arts to form the Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Heritage in 2014), some of its research units and the Kadazandusun Chair. The discussion highlights some of the main researchers and their work over the years, especially in the fields of anthropology, linguistics, archaeology and ethnomusicology.

Keywords Sabah · Cultural research · Anthropology · Linguistics · Archaeology · Ethnomusicology

10.1 Introducing the Peoples of Sabah

This chapter briefly sketches an overview of the history and development of cultural or ethnographic studies among the peoples of northern Borneo, from early recorded observations to current anthropological, linguistic, archaeological and ethnomusicological research. Due to space constraints, it will discuss major developments in cultural research, while sociological or socioeconomic studies are only mentioned in passing.

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Fig. 10.1 Kadazan Dusun *bobolian* or priestesses chanting *rinait* during a *moginakan* celebration in Kampung Sunsuron, Tambunan (Photograph: Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan 1987)

Sabah's cultural mosaic includes around 50 main Austronesian isoglots, as well as others such as the Chinese and a tiny Indian population, some of whom have been present since 1883 during the early days of the British North Borneo Chartered Company administration. Around 32 of the Austronesian isoglots are indigenous to Sabah and consist mainly of speakers of languages of the Dusunic, Murutic and Paitanic language families. The Dusunic family consists of 13 languages of which the Kadazan Dusun is historically the most numerous, and constitutes both the largest indigenous society and the largest overall ethnic group in the state (Fig. 10.1). Dusunic peoples are traditionally located in the interior, northwest and west coast areas. The Murutic family contains around 12 languages located across southern Sabah (Fig. 10.2), while the Paitanic family is composed of five main groups who are distributed along the eastern rivers such as the Kinabatangan, the Sugut and the Paitan (Fig. 10.3). There are also various linguistic isolates such as the Ida'an/Begak of Lahad Datu who are historically related to the Paitanic family, the Tidung along the east coast who are said to be related to the Murutic family, and the Bonggi of Bangi and Balambangan island in the north (King and King 1997 [1984]).

Most of these communities practise swidden rice cultivation in hilly areas, although many of the Dusunic groups, including the Kadazan Dusun of the inland upland Tambunan plain, parts of Ranau District and the western coastal plains, the Lotud of Tuaran and the Timugon Murut of Tenom also cultivate wet rice. Like many Borneo communities, these peoples are egalitarian societies with bilateral kinship systems, who practise gender balance. Women were usually the traditional

Fig. 10.2 Paluan Murut women (Photograph: Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan 2010)



ritual specialists and spirit mediums in the community. Nowadays many of these indigenous peoples are Christians, while some have accepted Islam. Although many traditional ritual practices have declined, traditional worldviews remain largely intact.

Linguistic and archaeological evidence suggests that the ancestors of these people have inhabited northern Borneo for 6000–10,000 years (Harrison and Harrison 1970; Bellwood 1984a: 85–87), while genetic studies indicate that Austronesians have been living there for over 20,000 years (Oppenheimer et al. 2000).

Apart from these peoples, Sabah also has other Austronesian communities. Various members of the Sama-Bajau family live in the coastal areas, and there are



Fig. 10.3 A Makiang woman from the Upper Kinabatangan area playing a *gabang* (Photograph: Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan 1989)

distinct differences in language and culture between the west coast Bajau and those of the east coast. Although most inhabit the shorelines, the Bajau peoples are traditional harvesters of sea and one small community, the Bajau Laut or Sama Dilaut of the east coast, were once true sea nomads. The Iranun of the Danao family are another major maritime people, who once controlled most of the rivers along the northwest coast and parts of the east coast. Today they live in many coastal areas, especially in the Kota Belud and Kudat Districts and in the Kampung Tungku area of Lahad Datu (Boutin et al. 2006).

Other Austronesian communities in Sabah include the Brunei and Kedayan (Kadayan) largely in the southwest, the Suluk (Taosug) in some parts of the east coast, and the Lundayeh who have migrated into the Sipitang area and parts of Tenom during the twentieth century. Some Suluk are descended from those who came to the east coast of northern Borneo during the time of the Brunei sultanate, while many are recent arrivals from southern Philippines. In addition to these, an

Iban community has come to settle in Merotai near Tawau over the past 50 years. During the early decades of the twentieth century many Javanese were brought into North Borneo as estate workers, and in the late 1950s Cocos Islanders migrated to Tawau. Since the 1970s huge numbers of immigrants (many illegal) from southern Philippines and Indonesia have come into Sabah.

The following discussion identifies early accounts of northern Borneo cultures, and then details post-Second World War and recent studies. It then examines emerging trends in current research.

10.2 Early Studies of the Peoples of Sabah

Possibly the earliest written accounts about the inhabitants of northern Borneo were by Odoric of Pordenone, who visited the area around 1322 and introduced Christianity to some of the inhabitants (George 1981: 468). Then from the account of Antonio Pigafetta, who travelled with the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan, it appears that the two remaining ships of Magellan's fleet that was attacked in the Philippines visited Brunei and possibly Simpang Mengayau in 1521, the northernmost tip of Borneo on the Kudat peninsula (Pigafetta 1906; Sabah Museum 1992: 5, 7). Finally, Thomas Forrest who worked for the British East India Company met Iranun people at Tempasuk and Bonggi on Balambangan island during his exploring mission in the direction of New Guinea in the late eighteenth century (Forrest 1969 [1779]).

Some of the most detailed early descriptions of indigenous life and culture in North Borneo are found in the writings of nineteenth-century British explorers, such as Spenser St John's *Life in the forests of the Far East* (1974 [1858]), Frank Hatton's *North Borneo, explorations and adventures on the equator* (1885) and John Whitehead's *Exploration of Mount Kina Balu, North Borneo* (1893). Henry Ling Roth's two-volume ethnography *The natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo* (1968 [1886]) draws on accounts of previous explorers, government officers and missionaries, as well as museum artefacts and lithographs, to give detailed illustrated descriptions of the material culture and life of many of the peoples of northern Borneo. Although these accounts were often coloured by the cultural perceptions of their European writers, they provide valuable historical information about life in Sabah during the nineteenth century.

During the late nineteenth century the German ethnologist and photographer Albert Grubauer came to North Borneo. His collection of artefacts and photographs can be found in the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, St Petersburg, Russia (Kasatkina 2010, 2012). Other sources of ethnographic information from this period can be found in the diaries and writings of government officers, such as those of William Pretyman, the first resident of Tempasuk (Harrison 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959), William B. Pryer, the former district officer of Sandakan (Pryer 1970; Ada Pryer 1894), Owen Rutter, Ivor H.N. Evans and George Cathcart Woolley.

Rutter, who was trained in anthropology, worked as government officer in North Borneo during the early years of the twentieth century. His books, *British North Borneo* (1922) and *The pagans of North Borneo* (1929), are ethnographic classics of the time. Although his spelling of indigenous terms is often inaccurate and some details may be incorrect, his photographs and descriptions of local cultures, especially those of the west coast, are important reference sources.

Evans also wrote descriptions of local culture, both as articles for the *British North Borneo Herald* and in his books *Among primitive peoples in Borneo* (1922), *Studies in religion, folklore and customs in British North Borneo and the Malay Peninsula* (1923) and *The religion of the Tempasuk Dusuns of North Borneo* (1953).

The diaries, photographs and monographs of the government officer Woolley provide some of the most ethnographically accurate and unbiased descriptions of indigenous culture at the beginning of the twentieth century (Wong and Moo-Tan 2015). His monographs, published by the North Borneo Government Printers, range from topics such as native law and customs, to social structure, language and music. They are culture specific to the particular peoples among whom he lived and worked, including the Kadazan Dusun of Tambunan, the Timugon Murut (whom he misspells as Timogun) and others (see a selection in the References). Much of Woolley's work was conducted from 1901 until the 1930s, but after his internment by the Japanese during the Second World War he stayed on in North Borneo (Woolley 1971). In 1946 he bequeathed his magnificent collection of indigenous artefacts, black-and-white photographs, glass negatives and diaries to become the basis for a proposed North Borneo Society (now the Sabah Society). In 1963 the Sabah Society proposed establishing a state museum. Woolley's artefacts, photographs and negatives formed the basic collection of the modern Sabah Museum, which was established in 1965, while the Sabah State Library keeps his diaries.

Accounts and studies made by Christian missionaries also provide important information about indigenous communities during the early twentieth century. The Roman Catholic missionaries of St Joseph's Missionary Society of Mill Hill, London (known as the Mill Hill Fathers), many of whom were Dutch, were among the earliest to document the Kadazan Dusun language. Father J. Prenger, who was stationed at Kampung Inobong in Penampang from 1894 until his death in 1899, undertook an expedition over the Crocker Range onto the Tambunan plain, and compiled one of the first Kadazan Dusun dictionaries that formed the basis of later dictionaries (Prenger 1894; Rooney 1981: 144; Silver Jubilee Committee 2002). In 1924 Father Aloysius Goossens, one of the first four Mill Hill Fathers who arrived in Borneo in 1881 and came to Papar in 1893, compiled a dictionary based on the Kadazan dialect of Kampung Limbahau, Papar under the name Gossens (Gossens 1924).¹ During their imprisonment by the Japanese during the Second World War, Father A. Antonissen and Father H. Verhoeven, together with Samuel Majalang and

¹It is thought that he preferred to write as 'Gossens' because Goossens sounds like the son of a goose (Wong and Moo-Tan 2015: 330).

Bernard Mojikon of the Kadazan community, secretly compiled the *Kadazan Dictionary and Grammar*. This manuscript was hidden during the war and later published in 1958 by the Government Printer in Canberra, Australia (Rooney 1981: 145; Antonissen 1958). This formed the basis of later work on the language and the *Kadazan Dusun Malay–English dictionary* produced by the Kadazan Dusun Cultural Association (Lasimbang and Miller 1995).

10.3 Later Research

Ethnographic and linguistic studies by missionaries and others were also important during the years after the Second World War. The British linguist and archaeologist Beatrice Clayre, who then worked with the Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM, the founding mission of the indigenous Sidang Injil Borneo church or SIB), conducted several linguistic studies on Kadazan Dusun (Clayre 1966, 1967, 1970a, b). She has since carried out much linguistic research in Sarawak, and is considered an expert on the Sa'ban language of Sarawak and Kalimantan. The anthropologist Shirley Lees and her husband John Lees, a medical doctor, also worked with the BEM. She published linguistic and ethnographic descriptions about the Tagal (Tahol) Murut and the Lundayeh, among whom they worked, and other communities in Sarawak and Sabah such as the Dusun (see Lees 1964a, b, 1966).

The medical researcher Ivan Polunin, who was employed by the post-war British colonial administration to investigate so-called 'Murut depopulation', spent several periods among the various Murut communities of Keningau, Malaing, Dalit and Tenom from 1953 to 1956, and in 1959. Later he also conducted a survey on goitre in 1970. During 1956 and 1959 he carried out the first documented open-reel sound recordings of Murut music, using a high-quality Nagra tape recorder. These recordings later formed the basis of two LP records: *Murut music of North Borneo* under the New York Ethnic Folkways label and the other under *Music of Borneo* with HMV in Singapore.² During 1954 and 1955 Polunin was accompanied in the field by the American anthropologist John Landgraf who studied the social organisation and material culture of various Murutic groups, and produced detailed maps of southern Sabah (Landgraf 1956). Landgraf's maps were later used as a basis for further mapping in Sabah and are said to be some of the most accurate produced.

Before this, most studies had been basically descriptive in nature. During the 1950s and early 1960s, however, ethnographic research in Sabah developed new depth in terms of methodology and theory. Monica Glyn-Jones was among the first of the post-war scholars to do research among in a Dusunic community, in this case the coastal Kadazan of Penampang (Glyn-Jones 1953).

²Personal communication with Ivan Polunin (1991).



Fig. 10.4 Rungus *bobolizan* or priestesses (Photograph: Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan 2010)

George Appell, an American anthropologist, together with his wife Laura, conducted extensive research among the Rungus people of Matungong from 1959 to 1962 (Fig. 10.4). Since then they have done research in other parts of Borneo, but have made many trips back to Sabah. The volume of their published research is prodigious and has not only contributed to Borneo anthropology but also to the development of anthropology as a discipline in the twentieth century (see, for example, Appell 1976, 1978, 1986, 1992; Appell and Appell 2003). George Appell is founder and president of the Borneo Research Council and one of the founders of the American Anthropological Association. In addition to research on bilateral kinship, social structure, worldview, traditional property and land tenure systems, and other foci in Borneo, the Appells have spent hundreds of hours recording the ritual chants of the Rungus *bobolizan* (female ritual specialists), and continue today to transcribe and translate this unique form of oral literature in their Sabah Oral Literature Project.

Clifford Sather conducted anthropological field research among the Bajau Laut in Semporna, Sabah, during the 1960s and later among the Iban of Sarawak (Sather 1976, 1997, 2000, 2004). Like the Appells, Sather's research has made a major contribution to knowledge about Borneo societies (Fig. 10.5). Robert Harrison, another anthropologist, did research among the Kadazan Dusun of Ranau District (Harrison 1976). Thomas Rhys Williams was another American anthropologist who did some fieldwork among the Kadazan Dusun of Tambunan around the same period as the Appells and Sather (Williams 1961a, b, 1962, 1965, 1969). Unlike the careful and scholarly research of the Appells and Sather, however, Williams's writings contain so many gross factual and orthographic errors that one is led to doubt the validity of his research (Appell 1967; Appell et al. 1966; Sather 1966; Pugh-Kitingan 2004: 12–13, 72).



Fig. 10.5 A *lahat* or village of the now semi-nomadic Sama Dilaut near Mabul Island, off Semporna, Sabah (Photograph: Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan 1999)

Heated academic debates between eminent researchers on Borneo, including Appell, Sather and others, and Williams led to the establishment of the Borneo Research Council by Appell as an incorporated body in 1967. The council holds various symposia and biennial international conferences, and produces many publications including the annual *Borneo Research Bulletin*, a monograph series and a *Selected Papers* series. The bilingual international Borneo Research Council conferences, which since 1990 have been held at various universities and institutions on the island of Borneo, are focused on all social, medical and biological research in Borneo. They have drawn scholars from throughout Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and around the world.

During the 1950s and 1960s, archaeological research was carried out in Sabah by Tom and Barbara Harrison. This often included joint research with the Sabah Museum which has a section devoted to archaeology.

Apart from major anthropological and archaeological research already identified, simple ethnographic studies continued to be conducted by local officers during the 1950s and 1960s. John Alman, principal of the Kent Teachers Training College in Tuaran (now Institut Pendidikan Guru Kent or IPG Kent), wrote several short papers, some of which have been published in the *Sabah Society Journal* and the *Sarawak Museum Journal*, and produced two books with his wife Elizabeth on Sabah handicrafts (Alman 1961; Alman and Alman 1963a, b). Although not always linguistically or anthropologically accurate, the Almans' work is reasonably well known locally.

10.4 Intervening Years

Following the formation of Malaysia in 1963, local state political developments had unfortunate consequences for research in Sabah. During the later years of the USNO (United Sabah National Organisation) state government when Mustapha Harun was chief minister, most Christian missionaries were expelled and many foreign anthropologists were denied entry into Sabah. This led to a gap in serious anthropological research for some time.

Nevertheless during the 1970s a few preliminary ethnomusicological studies were carried out in Sabah. Ben Neufield, a Canadian volunteer serving with Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO), recorded traditional music in Tambunan, Keningau, Tenom, Pensiangan and Penampang from 1970 to 1973. Although his Sabah research has not been published, his high-quality carefully documented recordings are an important source of traditional indigenous music in Sabah. Edward Frame, an American Fulbright scholar, also conducted preliminary ethnomusicological fieldwork in Sabah and published a few papers (Frame 1974, 1975, 1976, 1982). Unfortunately, his work contains some factual and linguistic errors because he had little understanding of indigenous cultures in Sabah, and tried to record a large amount of material from several areas over just a few months.

The linguist D.J. Prentice, who later worked at the Australian National University and was a contemporary of Neufield, conducted language research among the Timugon Murut during the 1960s (Prentice 1969a, b, c, 1970, 1972). His wife Susan also conducted preliminary ethnographic and ethnomusicological observations among some of the Murut (Susan Prentice 1988).

During the early years of the Parti Berjaya state government (Parti Bersatu Rakyat Jelata, Sabah People's United Front) from 1976, Sabah began to open up gradually to international researchers. In 1978 the Malaysian branch of Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) known as Institut Linguistik SIL–Cawangan Malaysia signed a memorandum of understanding with the Sabah state government and began detailed surveys and in-depth language studies among nearly all the indigenous communities in Sabah. Institut Linguistik SIL–Cawangan Malaysia (now SIL Malaysia) has produced many publications such as *Languages of Sabah: a survey report* (King and King 1997 [1984]), annotated bibliographies (Boutin 1985; Boutin and Boutin 1984, Combrink et al. 2006a, b) and *Social organization of Sabah societies* (Lingenfelter 1991 [1990]), in addition to series of dictionaries, vocabularies, trilingual phrase books, folk tales, bilingual *Learn to speak* guides, and other works. Many of these have been published with the Sabah Museum as a language series.

Over the years SIL has not only worked with the Sabah state government but has also assisted local cultural associations as facilitators in linguistic projects. In 1982 it began collaboration with the large Kadazan Cultural Association (KCA, now Kadazan Dusun Cultural Association or KDCA) headed by Joseph Pairin Kitingan

to facilitate research and publications in Kadazan Dusun. This led to the publication of many language materials and the dictionary of 1995. Among other cultural associations, it has been involved with the Badan Bahasa dan Kebudayaan Iranun, an Iranun cultural association headed by Pandikar Amin Hj. Mulia, in developing language materials in Iranun.

In addition to linguistic research, several researchers who worked with SIL have conducted anthropological studies. For example, the Finnish anthropologist Kielo Brewis, who with her husband Richard lived in Tenom for around 15 years, published several anthropological works on the Timugon Murut and a cultural dictionary of Timugon Murut (see Brewis 1990, 1992, 1993; Brewis and Brewis 2004).

Since its formation in 1965 the Sabah Museum has been one of the major research bodies dealing with the natural, botanical, archaeological and sociocultural heritage of Sabah. One of the key local Sabahan researchers connected with the museum is the British-trained Patricia Regis, an anthropologist and museologist who was the curator of ethnography during the early 1980s, and later director of the department from 1988 to 1994. She planned the extensive Traditional Houses Project (later called Kampung Warisan, and since 2013 named Living Heritage Village) in the grounds of the museum, which features unique architectural styles from various communities in Sabah (Fig. 10.6). Constructed by experts from the communities themselves, each house periodically functions as a living museum

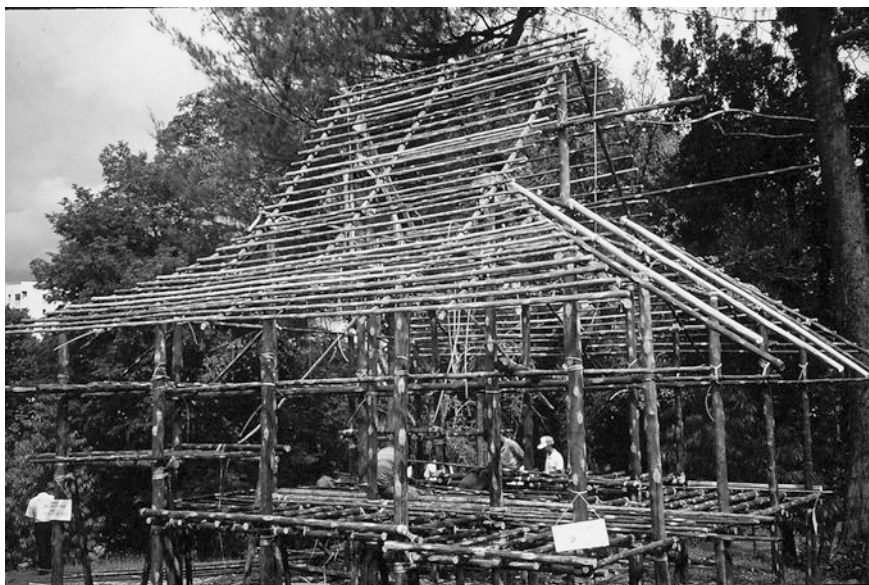


Fig. 10.6 Constructing the Bonggi house (from Bangi Island) in the grounds of the Sabah Museum complex under the Traditional Houses Project (now Living Heritage Village) of Sabah Museum (Photograph: Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan 1989)

during certain festivals when members of the respective societies reside there as in their home villages. Regis has carried out extensive ethnographic research among the Lotud Dusun, the Tahol Murut, the Iranun, various Bajau groups and others. In addition to detailed studies of material culture, including excellent work on textiles, she has done intensive research into the worldviews, ritual systems, ritual texts and institutions of female ritual specialists among the Lotud and several other communities (Regis and John Baptist 1982, 1992, 1993, 1994, 2002; Regis et al. 2003).

The botanist Joseph Pounis Guntavid from Tambunan, who served as curator of natural history at the Sabah Museum for many years and more recently as a director until 2011, developed the museum's large comprehensive herbarium. He also helped to set up the museum's ethnobotanical gardens of traditional medicinal plants and local cultivars.

In addition to its language series mentioned earlier, the Sabah Museum has produced many other key academic publications on the heritage of Sabah, including the *Sabah Museum Journal* (formerly *Sabah Museum Annals*, and during the 1980s *Sabah Museum and Archives Journal*), and the *Sabah Museum Monograph* series. Its latest book is the first volume of G.C. Woolley's diaries, a fully annotated and illustrated hardcover publication (Wong and Moo-Tan 2015).

Over the years, many local and foreign scholars have worked with the Sabah Museum. For example, the Swedish musicologist Inge Skog was attached briefly as a visiting scholar to the Department of Sabah Museum, and made some preliminary studies of Lotud gongs and gong music in Tuaran during 1982 and 1985 (Skog n. d.). The archaeologist Peter Bellwood also did collaborative research with the Sabah Museum from the late 1970s into the 1980s (Bellwood 1984b, 1988, 1989). The legal anthropologist Masaru Miyamoto of Chuo University has been an affiliate of the museum since 1988, when he was still working with the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka, and continued his research on native law in Sabah up to 2014 (Miyamoto and Regis 2002; Miyamoto and John Baptist 2008). Tomiyuki Uesegi, at one time affiliated with Tokyo University, did some ethnographic and linguistic research among the Tahol (Tagal) Murut during the 1990s. He then studied social and political transformation, as part of a team headed by Shinji Yamashita, who did collaborative research on development in Sabah with the Institute for Development Studies, Sabah (IDS).

Meanwhile, some West Malaysian scholars began serious anthropological studies among Sabahan communities. An example is Yap Beng Liang of Universiti Malaya, who has conducted research among the Bajau Kubang of Omdal island (Yap 1993). Over the past 20 years other scholars, such as the archaeologist Stephen Chia of Universiti Sains Malaysia, have undertaken extensive research in Sabah in collaboration with the Sabah Museum.

Following the election of the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) government in 1985, Sabah saw increased local and international cultural research, as well as serious socioeconomic studies. The IDS is a semi-government body established by the state government in 1985 as a think tank to carry out serious socioeconomic and environmental research and policy studies in Sabah. It regularly holds seminars and

conferences and has produced many publications on economic and political development. Since 2008 the work of IDS has been expanded by the formation of its sister organisation Sabah Economic Development and Investment Authority (SEDIA) which organises projects and programmes to drive the Sabah development corridor.

Another government organisation involved in some social research, especially during the 1980s and 1990s, is the Sabah Foundation (Yayasan Sabah). This includes the Centre for Borneo Studies and the major Fuad Stephens Borneo Research Library. The Centre for Borneo Studies has published some books, including some of the excellent work by the late Peter Phelan, a Roman Catholic Brother from Ireland, who devoted his life to teaching in the interior of Sabah and conducted anthropological research for many years (Phelan 1997).

With regard to ethnomusicological research during this period, as an Australian ethnomusicologist who first visited Sabah in 1977/78 as the young wife of a Kadazan Dusun agricultural scientist from Tambunan and settled permanently in 1982, I have conducted ethnomusicological research among the Kadazan Dusun and more than 32 other local groups, including the Lotud, the east and west coast Bajau communities, the Iranun and others (a selection of works is listed in the References). From 1986 I held the post of director of music and later cultural research officer in the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Sabah, and was also a research affiliate of the Sabah Museum. I also interviewed the late Keith Botterill and did research on the Second World War death marches for the Oral History Committee of the Sabah State Archives. From 1997 to 2000 I headed the Cultural Research Section of the Sabah Cultural Board (a newly formed body under the ministry), and from 1998 to 2000 was the Sabah consultant to the Southeast Asian Studies Regional Exchange Program (SEASREP) project, Kulintang Music and Malay Dance Traditions of North Borneo and the Philippines. This project was headed by Mohd Anis Md Nor, a professor in ethnomusicology and ethnochoreology at the Cultural Centre, Universiti Malaya, and Felicidad Prudente of the University of the Philippines (Fig. 10.7). The Sabah research team also included Hanafi Hussin of Universiti Malaya, who has since conducted research on the rituals of the Kadazan of Penampang and the Bajau of Semporna, Sunetra Fernando then also of Universiti Malaya, Judeth John Baptist and other Sabah Museum personnel, staff of the Sabah Cultural Board and also from the federal government's Sabah branch Pejabat Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negeri Sabah, now named Jabatan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negara, Sabah (Fernando 2002; Pugh-Kitingan and John Baptist 2005). In 2000 I joined Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) as a lecturer in ethnography and ethnomusicology under the Anthropology and Sociology Section of the School of Social Sciences, and in 2003 was appointed to the newly established Kadazandusun Chair of UMS.

In addition to major government organisations such as the Sabah Museum, the Sabah State Archives, IDS, and major non-governmental research organisations like



Fig. 10.7 An Iranun woman playing *kulintang* at Kg Merabau, Kota Belud (Photograph: Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan 1998)

the Borneo Research Council, SIL International and local cultural associations, a few small local private bodies have sprung up in recent times, often funded by politicians. The Institute for Indigenous Economic Progress (INDEP) is a small body engaged in socioeconomic and development studies. The Kadazandusun Language Foundation (KLF) is a small organisation that carries out linguistic studies on various aspects of the coastal Kadazan dialect of Kadazan Dusun and publishes books and other materials on Kadazan Dusun and Timugon Murut.

10.5 Recent Developments

Since the establishment of UMS following approval by Parliament on 24 November 1994 research on the peoples of Sabah and their cultures and environment has mushroomed. Today the university consists of 10 faculties, three research institutes, two research centres, 17 research units and two academic chairs (the Kadazandusun Chair and the Kelvin Tan Aik Pen Forestry Chair). It currently has a student

population of up to 18,000 (both undergraduate and graduate), with over a thousand academic staff. Borneo research ranges from biodiversity studies to intangible cultural heritage, from rural medicine to archaeology. There is much collaborative research both between departments within UMS and with outside bodies including other universities, museums and non-governmental organisations.

The Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Heritage (formed in 2014 from the former School of Social Sciences and School of Arts) currently teaches various undergraduate courses and supervises candidates for MA and PhD degrees by research in nine programmes: anthropology and sociology, geography, history, international relations, communications, industrial relations, music, visual arts and creative arts. There are four research units linked to the faculty: the Research Unit of Ethnography and Development, Remote Sensing and GIS Unit, the Borneo Archaeology Research Unit and the recently formed Borneo Heritage Research Unit. The Kadazandusun Chair, an academic research chair under the UMS vice-chancellor, is placed with this faculty. Most of the current staff of the anthropology and sociology programme are sociologists, while Paul Porodong from the Rungus community of Matunggong is an environmental anthropologist, Hashim Awang is a medical anthropologist and I am an ethnomusicologist.

Research that has been carried out by the faculty includes studies of *kampung air* (water villages) as well as the documentation of marine resources and coastal community-based projects in support of the Coral Triangle Initiative in coastal areas, borderland studies, ethnic relations, traditional knowledge and climate change, malaria studies and changing patterns of indigenous land use. The Research Unit of Ethnography and Development has undertaken extensive migration studies, and is currently involved in poverty studies and rural development research. Research by the Remote Sensing and GIS Unit includes coastal surveys and mapping of mangroves and human settlements. The Archaeology Research Unit is engaged in both marine archaeology and studies of carvings on natural monoliths in the remote interior of southern Sabah, while the Borneo Heritage Research Unit undertakes folklore research.

The Kadazandusun Chair was initiated with a grant from the Sabah state government in 2000. Originally envisaged as a chair of Sabah indigenous studies, it was planned to carry out ethnographic research among the Kadazan Dusun and other indigenous isoglots in Sabah. Since being first appointed to the chair in 2003, I have headed many ethnographic and ethnomusicological research projects, some of which were conducted with researchers from UMS as well as other organisations such as the Sabah Museum and Universiti Malaya. Two of the projects, Music and Ritual Processes of the Mamahui Pogun of the Lotud Dusun of Tuaran, and the Ethnographic and Cultural Mapping of Sabah. Part 1: Tambunan District, won gold medals in the Research and Innovation Competition (PEREKA) 2011 (Figs. 10.8 and 10.9).



Fig. 10.8 The late Odun Rinduman, *tantagas lawid* (high priestess) of the Lotud Dusun, chanting *rinait* (long ritual poetry) during the *Mamahui Pogun* (Cleansing the Universe) ritual series in 2003 (Photograph: Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan 2003)



Fig. 10.9 Interviewing village headmen at Kampung Karanaan, Tambunan, in the Ethnographic and Cultural Mapping project (Photograph: Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan 2008)

10.6 Current Research Trends

Broad trends emerging in international and local anthropological research on Sabah today cover the fields of environmental anthropology, border studies, poverty studies, legal anthropology and others, as already noted. Foci of research in environmental anthropology, for example, include studies on indigenous environmental knowledge, traditional medicine, indigenous communities and environmental resources, changes in indigenous socioeconomic practices, and issues of indigenous land and water rights. The latter are also related to studies in legal anthropology (see, for example, Doolittle 2005).

Studies in traditional environmental knowledge are also related to the fields of material culture and intangible cultural heritage. The latter includes research on oral literature, indigenous cosmologies and ritual systems, music and dance. Trends in current ethnomusicological and ethnochoreological research include Sabah's place in Southeast Asian maritime cultures (Hanafi Hussin and Santamaria 2012), change and hybridity, and merging parameters of music and dance. Much of this research is collaborative between the Research Unit of Sabah Museum, the UMS Kadazandusun Chair, researchers at Universiti Malaya and other universities in Southeast Asia through the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) Study Group on the Performing Arts of Southeast Asia or PASEA (see Mohd Anis et al. 2011, 2013, 2015).

Research on Sabah's languages and linguistics has continued and is set to advance further with official collaboration between SIL International and UMS since 2011. Applied linguistics is emerging as an important field with the development of heritage language literacy and courses in Kadazan Dusun and (soon)

Timugon Murut in schools. It has also seen the emergence of locally run kindergartens using indigenous languages throughout Sabah (Smith 2003, 2008).

In all these areas, there is much interdisciplinary research. Examples from UMS include research on traditional medicine and food science carried out by members of the Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Heritage and Faculty of Food Science and Nutrition, studies on malaria conducted by the Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Heritage and the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, ethnographic and cultural mapping undertaken by the Kadazandusun Chair and the GIS Laboratory, research in marine archaeology and the history of gong making in Sabah. There are also many collaborations among Malaysian and overseas universities in research on Sabah. UMS itself also has linkages with the Borneo Research Council, SIL International and the Sabah Museum.

There is also an increasing realisation of the need for the digitisation of knowledge for future generations, especially in Sabah. While printed records can be scanned and there is one photographic shop in Kota Kinabalu that digitises photographic slides, there is a lack of facilities for the digitisation of analogue sound recordings. The Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Heritage at UMS, however, is developing *ilmuSabah.com*, a database of publications and research materials for future reference. Meanwhile, the Sabah State Library, together with other libraries in Borneo, is also setting up the *k@Borneo* portal and database of published books and other materials.

10.7 Conclusions

From the foregoing, it can be seen that studies and research on indigenous communities and cultures in Sabah go back over several centuries. Perhaps the books by Henry Ling Roth were among the first to attempt a serious unbiased anthropological approach. G.C. Woolley and other government officers produced further accurate attempts at ethnographic documentation.

It was not until deeper research by George Appell, Clifford Sather and others associated with the Borneo Research Council during the late 1950s and 1960s that anthropology in Sabah reached a major academic standard. Linguistic research has also had a major academic impact, especially that carried out by SIL International. Although a less populated field, ethnomusicological research through the works of Ivan Polunin, Ben Neufeld and me has contributed to the development of this field in Sabah. Throughout this period, the Sabah Museum has been the main holder of cultural heritage collections, with the State Archives as depository of historical documents. The establishment of UMS, with local and international collaborations, has further expanded research on the cultural heritage of Sabah. The digitisation of fragile research materials for the future, however, presents ongoing challenges.

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Chapter 11

Whither Gender Studies in Sarawak?

Hew Cheng Sim

Abstract This chapter reviews gender research in the field of sociology and anthropology in Sarawak. The discussion is contextualised in the wider debates of women and gender studies and explores the development of anthropology of women to a feminist anthropology and a feminist ethnography. The chapter argues three salient points. First, research that disaggregates women and men and discusses their differential experience of a social phenomenon is not necessarily a gender study because, for the purposes of this chapter, gender studies is defined as research with an explicit feminist agenda. Second, anthropologists studying indigenous societies in Sarawak often point out that gender is unmarked and therefore gender relations are of little interest. I argue instead that gender is deeply implicated in processes of social transformation and the black box of gender relations requires unpacking in the context of rapidly changing Sarawak. Third, the future of gender studies in Sarawak in the field of anthropology and sociology is challenging, as there is no critical mass of researchers and academics in this specific field for capacity building among students and young scholars.

Keywords Sarawak · Anthropology · Sociology · Gender studies · Feminism

11.1 Introduction

When I was first approached to write a chapter on gender studies in Borneo I was hesitant for several reasons. In a landscape populated by anthropologists I am a misfit. A sociologist by training, I did not share their anthropological preoccupations with descent groups, kinship systems, religious rites and rituals, and the like. For most anthropologists trained in the classical traditions a field site is chosen to investigate a particular intellectual interest. In my case, the field determined my research interest.

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My geographical location in Sarawak, a rapidly changing part of Borneo, meant that my focus had to be necessarily on social transformation, and what is more pertinent than the process of urbanisation when half the population there had become urbanised in the space of three decades? Thus, like the women that I studied, my research interests also migrated from the rural to the urban. I wanted to know how processes of social transformation impacted on women and gender relations and, in turn, how these processes were gendered in nature.

Although my research questions were more sociological in nature, the research site in Sarawak and the method I used was more akin to anthropology. That said, I do not wish to overstate the disciplinary boundary between anthropology and sociology because historically there have always been border crossings and hybridisation between them. The prodigious publications by anthropologists in Borneo were immensely useful in providing ethnographic baseline material for understanding the changes that were taking place. Hence, I was to benefit greatly from the contributions of illustrious anthropologists and researchers who went before me.

My second reservation pertained to Borneo Studies. I have never worked beyond the territorial confines of Sarawak, and to make any scholarly reviews on work in other parts of Borneo would be disingenuous. I read neither Bahasa Indonesia nor Dutch, so an entire corpus of work is unknown to me. Thus, I have decided to limit my discussion to the subject of women and gender studies in Sarawak and its connection to wider debates in the field.

11.2 From an Anthropology of Women to a Feminist Anthropology

Women have always been embedded in anthropological discussions of marriage, family and kinship structures. In fact they were so embedded that they became buried in the morass of data on culture and social organisation in the longhouse or village. Thus, the feminist critique was not so much that women were absent in anthropology but rather it was targeted at the way women were represented and discussed by male anthropologists in particular.

During the 1970s, when feminists rigorously critiqued every branch of academic pursuit, it became self-evident that women were not properly studied in anthropology because of androcentric bias. For instance, male anthropologists had greater access to male respondents who were also perceived to be more knowledgeable informants. When women appeared at all, it was to the credit of the unpaid labour of the anthropologist's wife who accompanied her husband to the field. When these were published at all, they were mainly treated as non-anthropological in nature because of their lack of anthropological training. Monica Freeman's field diaries,

sketches, photographs and letters are a case in point. Although they were not specifically on Iban women, her lively notes and descriptions only became available more than half a century after her husband's authoritative work on the Ibans (Freeman 1955) and this was also due to the effort of another woman, the Bornean anthropologist Laura P. Appell-Warren (2009). The problem of how the writings of women anthropologists or untrained wives have been ignored or trivialised has been well documented and discussed (Bell et al. 1993; Behar and Gordon 1995; Abu-Lughod 1991).

Anthropologists (mainly female anthropologists) set out to redress this imbalance by putting the study of women centre stage, their position and status explored. This effort of putting women back into the picture was labelled anthropology of women, but it soon became clear that this method of 'add women and stir' was merely remedial and inadequate. The collection of essays in *Female and male in Borneo: contributions and challenges to Gender Studies* (Sutlive 1991b) is an example of such an attempt. Fiona Harris (2008) pointed to the androcentric bias in Julian Davison and Vinson Sutlive's chapter (1991) on the male practice of headhunting in the collection. She wrote: 'some authors suggested that women were somehow held responsible for this practice, egging on young men to demonstrate their worthiness as suitors. This suggests that while prestige clearly was associated with the taker of heads, moral responsibility for this act rested with women' (Harris 2008: 61). As to whether *Female and male in Borneo* rose to the challenge and contributed to gender studies depends on the definition of gender studies.

Although gender studies is often loosely used to refer to a whole gamut of work ranging from women's studies to studies on sexuality and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) studies, the word 'gender' refers to the socially constituted power relations between women and men. Hence, gender studies is not about women per se but about the study of how the power relationships between women and men are socially constructed and therefore open to change (Kabeer 1994: 54). Feminist anthropologists would further argue that the problem of androcentric bias was not only at the level of empirical research but also at a theoretical and analytical level. As Penelope Graham (1996) rightly argued, a gendered perspective was glaringly absent in the *Female and male in Borneo* collection. In addition, feminists pointed out that the linguistic categories and conceptual frameworks in anthropology reflected the male worldview and were simply unable to allow women's perspectives to emerge.

However, this raised the issue of objectivity in anthropology. Henrietta Moore (1988: 5) wrote concerning the anthropology of women:

Fears were expressed that what had once been 'male bias' would be replaced by a corresponding 'female bias'. If the model of the world was inadequate when seen through the eyes of men, why should it be any less so when seen through the eyes of women? The issue of whether women anthropologists are more qualified than their male colleagues to study other women remains a contentious point. The privileging of the female ethnographer not only casts doubt on the ability of women to study men, but ultimately casts doubt on the whole project and purpose of anthropology: the comparative study of human societies.

I will return to the contentious point of objectivity in feminist epistemology later. For now, I would like to proceed to a discussion of feminist anthropology.

Feminist anthropology emerged as a result of the social and political ferment in the 1960s which led to the resurgence of Marxist theorising in the early 1970s. Andre Gunder Frank's 'development of underdevelopment' thesis (1967) was a major influence on Marxist feminists who argued that colonisation led to a worsening of women's position in colonised societies. The increasing reach of capitalism and state structures on non-capitalist and non-state societies resulted in the worsening of women's position as stratification and privatisation of resources emerged. Thus, it can be said that anthropology provided much fuel to the subfield of 'women in development' (WID) and 'gender and development' (GAD) in development studies.

Feminist anthropology is therefore defined as embracing those subjects with an explicitly feminist agenda. By feminist agenda here I do not mean grand political projects of emancipation. Such lofty aspirations were often not the aim of scholarly endeavours; instead, it referred to the thrust of the initial research question. When studying a social phenomenon/transformational process, did we begin the study with the explicit aim, however modest, of understanding women's lives and experiences? Did we ask how that social phenomenon/transformational process was gendered and engendering? How did it change the power dynamics between women and men? My own work on changing gender relations in Batang Ai and women's experiences of rural–urban migration and urbanisation (Hew and Kedit 1987; Hew 2003, 2007) had a feminist starting point. Another example is Margit Ilona Kományi's thesis (1973) on Iban women in decision-making.

Although many recognised that women and men had to be disaggregated in research analysis, it was still not feminist anthropology. For instance, when studying the Iban custom of *bejalai* Peter Kedit (1993) discussed its differential impact on women and men. Jill Windle (1997) did the same thing for roads in rural upland areas. Ryoji Soda (2007) similarly had a section on female migration and subsistence activities in his book on Iban migration. Jennifer and Paul Alexander (2003) reported on gender and ethnic identity amongst the Lahanans in Sarawak. Harris (2002), in her study of Bidayuh and Christianisation, included an analysis of women as ritual and prayer leaders when they converted to Christianity. That said, the lines could become very blurred. In examining the colonial legacy of psychiatric care in Sarawak, Sara Ashencaen Crabtree (2012) looked at stigma and social exclusion through the lenses of ethnicity and gender. Another example is Sutlive's (1988, 1991a) work in which he documented the rural–urban migration of the Iban to Sibiu. Although his initial research question was not on women or gender relations per se, his description of the women migrants' motivations and experiences as sex workers were feminist in nature. His work led me to conduct a similar study of local women in the sex industry in Kuching a few years later (Hew 1990).

Outside of anthropology, there have been numerous studies focusing on women and gender relations which emanated from fields such as economics, political science, psychology and health. For instance, the recent study by Lynn Wee (2015) on the taboo topic of the organisation of money in a marriage and its implications

for gender relations in the household came from the disciplines of economics and sociology. From health, Wong Mee Lian (1991) studied Berawan women in health development. From development studies, Junaenah Sulehan (2001) investigated indigenous women's participation in the urban sector as informal traders. In the field of psychology, Nor Ba'yah Abdul Kadir and Kamsiah Ali (2012) studied single mothers in Sarawak. In political science, Phyllis Mowe (2003) looked at the under-representation of Sarawak women in politics. These are just a few examples. From 1990 to 2006 there were only 26 undergraduate theses on women from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak and other universities in the peninsula (Zainab 2006). One problem with examining these was that academic studies in many Malaysian universities were no longer along conventional disciplinary lines. Instead, we have theses from resource science, cognitive science, consumer behaviour and the like. However, what I dare say is that if we are to limit ourselves to feminist anthropology in particular, the numbers are very small indeed.

Returning to the wider debates within anthropology itself, two landmark publications in the United States, *Women, culture and society* (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974) and *Towards an anthropology of women* (Reiter 1975), marked the feminist assault not only on the androcentric bias in anthropology but also in trying to understand gender relations. As was fashionable at that time, the essays in *Women, culture and society* argued that women were universally subordinated as a result of their child-bearing and child-rearing role. Women's domestic sphere was devalued in comparison to men's powerful political public sphere, and sexual asymmetry was a result of social structure, culture and socialisation. On the other side of the Atlantic, the Subordination of Women group (Young et al. 1981) based at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex University argued that although there were variations across the globe, commonalities in the subordination of women pointed to the rules and practices of family and kinship relations in organising rights, responsibilities and resources resulting in asymmetrical gender relations. However, as familial relations were socially and historically constructed there was scope for both women and men to negotiate and manoeuvre.

By the late 1980s this early theorising of the universal subordination of women lost its appeal as it became obvious that the positions of women vis-à-vis men and other women were multiple, complex and contradictory. Women and men do not always stand in opposition to each other, and gender relations had to be understood in the context of a web of complex interrelationships. Structural Marxism was criticised as being too economic and deterministic, with not enough attention given to human agency and the power dynamics in society. Culture and belief systems were reduced to ideology and did not permit the idea of a contestation over meaning.

The critics argued that the dichotomous frameworks of nature/nurture, domestic/public and reproduction/production were Western categories rooted in the Enlightenment and bore no relation to realities in non-Western societies. For instance, in rural Sarawak there was no clear separation between women's productive and reproductive work. Childcare took place at the farm where babies were swaddled on women's backs while the processing of crops like the drying of

harvested pepper berries took place at home. Class and ethnicity also made the thesis of separate spheres highly problematic. What constituted a private and domestic domain for one group of women was public to another. Domestic servants were a case in point. The ambiguity and contradictions of class and ethnicity were epitomised by one of my Bidayuh respondents who worked as a maid for a white middle-class woman married to an Iban. Cecilia (not her real name) was an employee in the latter's household, a market gardener as she sold vegetables that she grew, an informal trader as she sold sarongs at the factory gates on pay day and a direct saleswoman for Avon in her village. In addition, Cecilia sold cooked food with two of her friends on weekends, engaged fellow villagers to plant pepper and was therefore also an employer. To cap it all, she was a moneylender earning modest interest on short-term loans that she gave to people in her village (Hew 2003).

As theory and conceptual frameworks shaped data collection and interpretation, inadequacies in anthropological theories were reflected in analysis. Hence, feminist anthropologists began to critique the binary concepts used in anthropology and set out to rework and redefine anthropology itself.

11.3 Feminist Ethnography

Harris argued that one of the reasons for the paucity of publications on gender issues and the absence of women's voices in ethnographies was that there was no discernible inequality in gender relations in Sarawak. Shanthi Thambiah (1997) would agree with her when she wrote of the egalitarian gender relations among the Bhuket of central Borneo. Harris (2008: 59) continued:

In many ways, it seemed that gender was simply unremarkable and there was no real discourse to pick up on to guide the research. I found myself probing for gender difference and looking for inequality where it was simply inappropriate to do so. Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, it is clear that rather than asymmetry, complementarity seems to be of most relevance to an analysis of gender relations ... and in Sarawak, it seems that gender is often unmarked. This is probably one of the main reasons that gender has not been made the main subject of any substantial publications to date.

Although this may be argued in the precolonial and colonial periods (and even this can be disputed), the same cannot be said of the half-century since then. Gender is deeply implicated in processes of social transformation. The black box of gender relations in the context of rapid socioeconomic changes requires unpacking and examination. Let us leave this for a moment to discuss the debates on feminist ethnography.

Feminist ethnography today is a reworking of the old but with a postmodern turn (to take the phrase of Frances E. Mascia-Lees et al. 1989). Postmodernism emerged from a critique of the concept of modernity and argued that there was no objective reality and therefore rejected grand theories with universal claims to knowledge. Jane L. Parpart and Marianne H. Marchand (1995: 2) described postmodernism in this way:

The grand theories of the past, whether liberal or Marxist, have been dismissed as products of an age when Europeans and North Americans mistakenly believed in their own invincibility. The metanarratives of such thought are no longer seen as 'truth', but simply as privileged discourses that deny and silence competing dissident voices. The struggle for universalist knowledge has been abandoned. A search has begun for previously silenced voices, for the specificity and power of language(s) and their relation to knowledge, context and locality.

In addition, Jacques Derrida (in *ibid.*) argued that the first term in the binary opposites in Western thought was privileged over the second. Examples of these include the binary categories of man/woman, rational/emotional, mind/body, culture/nature, modern/traditional, scientific/non-scientific and neutral/partial. He further suggested that texts have to be deconstructed to reveal how binary thinking shaped our understanding and how language (discourse) was constructed to highlight difference, which in turn led to hegemony. In other words, all texts were persuasive fictions to be deconstructed in order to reveal their hegemonic agenda.

The postmodernist rejection of binary categories and hegemonic discourses which essentialised and universalised reality was compelling, but as argued by Nancy Hartsock, if all knowledge is situated, postmodernism is a situated knowledge of a particular kind—that is, 'Euro-American, masculine and racially as well as economically privileged' (Hartsock 1990: 23). Thus, feminists asked if there could be a marriage between feminism and postmodernism given the earlier unhappy marriage between feminism and Marxism. Some feminists who were sympathetic to postmodernism argued for a strategic engagement rather than an alliance. As Parpart and Marchand (1995: 10), citing Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson, pointed out the following:

'Postmodernists offer sophisticated and persuasive criticisms of foundationalism and essentialism, but their conceptions of social criticism tend to be anaemic. Feminists offer robust conceptions of social criticism, but they tend at times to lapse into foundationalism and essentialism.' They call for a critical engagement between the two, one that combines 'a postmodernist incredulity toward metanarratives with the social-critical power of feminism.'

In anthropology, the ethnography-as-text school was concerned with anthropology's historic role in colonial ventures and analysed the strategies ethnographers used to claim privileged knowledge in describing the lives of the colonised to a Western audience. Thus, for the poststructuralists in anthropology, material reality was hard to know as it was culturally constructed and mediated by representations of the ethnographer. Theory is now discourse theory and power is reduced to the politics of representation. This self-reflexive trend in anthropology led many feminist scholars to reanalyse gender relations in colonial discourses. However, it was the publication of *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) that provoked a furore among feminist anthropologists. Apart from Mary Louise Pratt, no other female anthropologist was represented in the collection. Clifford (1986: 20–21) justified this by asserting that feminists did not write creative ethnographies. Feminism clearly had contributed to anthropological theory. But feminist ethnography had focused either on setting the record

straight about women or on revising anthropological categories (for example, the nature/culture opposition). It had not produced either unconventional forms of writing or a developed reflection on ethnographic textuality as such.

The reaction by American feminist anthropologists to Clifford was unequivocal. Judith Stacey (1988) and Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) came out with papers of exactly the same title: 'Can there be a feminist ethnography?' A few years later, two edited volumes with the same title came out in the same year: *Women writing culture* edited by Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon (1995) and another by Gary A. Olson and Elizabeth Hirsh (1995) were also published. Abu-Lughod (1990) argued that the notion of a feminist ethnography stabbed at the very heart of anthropology as it provoked questions about objectivity in the anthropological enterprise. If objectivity were seen as the ideal of 'good science', and therefore important for anthropological research and writing, then to argue for a feminist ethnography would be to argue for a biased and partial account. According to her, the notion of objectivity had been subverted by interpretative anthropology. She put it thus: 'If, as anthropologists, we know what we know through emotionally complicated and communicatively ambiguous social encounters in the field, then certainly objectivity is out of the question and anthropology is not to be likened to science' (ibid.: 10). Linked to our earlier discussion of androcentric bias, we return to the thorny issue of objectivity in feminist epistemology.

The binary opposites of objectivity/subjectivity, unbiased/biased, reason/emotion, detachment/involvement, universal/partial and professional/unprofessional were terms associated with masculine/feminine. The observation was made that the notion of objectivity was one connected to masculinity (ibid.). Others more radical, like Catherine MacKinnon, would go as far as to argue that men created the whole notion of objectivity as it corresponded to their dominant view of the world in which they objectified women (ibid: 14).

Feminist reactions to this debate have been mixed. Some rejected the notion of objectivity and privileged the devalued terms of binary opposites. Others argued that turning these gendered dualisms on their head merely maintained such oppositional thinking. Instead, Sandra Harding, a philosopher of science, wanted to redefine objectivity. For her, objectivity did not mean neutrality but started from a specific social location because, as she argued, all knowledge was socially situated. As a proponent of feminist standpoint theory, she believed that standpoint epistemology would produce a 'stronger objectivity' if we stepped outside the dominant conceptual framework and studied a phenomenon from the vantage point of people who have been marginalised and excluded from knowledge production, such as women and ethnic minorities. This deconstructive strategy would produce more useful knowledge. Her use of the word 'objectivity' in standpoint theory was deliberate.

So, I'm simply using the rhetoric of objectivity because it's an incredibly powerful language. It's a calculated attempt to make it progressive because my point is that notions such as objectivity are deeply embedded in the institutions of the West that we're proudest of – the legal tradition for example.... Objectivity is central to public policy; it's central to Western democracy.... I think that we should conduct our intellectual and political

struggles on the terrains where those struggles are taking place. And for anybody who works close to the natural sciences or the law or public policy, relativism and subjectivity are not the terrain where those struggles are taking place – that’s not a language that’s going to help people understand how to do better than we’ve been doing. (Harding in Hirsh and Olson 1995: 32)

Donna Haraway (1988) similarly argued for situated knowledges against disembodied knowledges. Hartsock (1990) elaborated on this concept to suggest that the views from below were embodied and collective knowledges, which had to engage with issues of power and therefore had potential for empowerment. For Abu-Lughod (1990), feminist ethnography was grounded on the experience where the researcher and the researched shared commonalities and also differences. This outsider/insider positioning of the ethnographer has also been explored by Renato Rosaldo (1989: 217) when he talked of doing research in the borderlands. He explained the following:

Ethnographers look less for homogenous communities than for the border zones within and between them. Such cultural border zones are always in motion, not frozen for inspection.... Rapidly increasing global interdependence has made it more and more clear that neither ‘we’ nor ‘they’ are as neatly bounded and homogenous as once seemed to be the case. All of us inhabit an interdependent late-twentieth-century world marked by borrowing and lending across porous national and cultural boundaries that are saturated with inequality, power and domination.

Stacey (1988) did not share Abu-Lughod’s enthusiasm and argued that the ethnographic process was unavoidably exploitative in nature as the informants’ lives were put into the ethnographic mill. After all, the research product was ultimately the product of the researcher and the suggestion of an alliance between feminist researchers with the women they study was a delusion. She therefore agreed with Marilyn Strathern’s (1987) description of the ‘awkward relationship’ between feminism and anthropology. In spite of this, Dianne Bell, Pat Caplan and Wazir Jahan Karim (1993: 4) believed that the gendered nature of fieldwork had long been debated by women in anthropology:

There is a long and honourable tradition of ethnographic writing in which the voice of the ethnographer pondering her situation, the impact of her presence on the people with whom she is working, and the problematic nature of being both observer and participant is audible. In short, there is a reflexive tradition in which the voices of women were critical.

11.4 Conclusion

Returning, then, to the question: Whither gender studies in Sarawak? Studies on gender relations in Sarawak in the field of anthropology and sociology are few and far between. The cultivation of local scholarship in this field has been challenging. Students arriving in universities have never been exposed to gender studies in their secondary school education. At the Faculty of Social Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak there is no gender studies programme and students in their first year have

approximately only eight hours of class time devoted exclusively to gender. An earlier audit found that only 19 % of undergraduate courses have gender issues embedded in their course content (Hew 2009). However, this improved to 45 % in an audit for this chapter. In 2013 postgraduate students constituted a mere 2.1 % of the student population in the Faculty of Social Sciences and one or two were working specifically on women and gender relations. Although there is a gender studies research cluster, its members are shifting and many do not have a background in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology. Conversely, not many who are members of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology are interested in gender issues. Therefore, the challenge is capacity building in order to gather a critical mass of academics interested and knowledgeable in gender studies. This will help in mainstreaming gender into all courses offered by the faculty and will eventually lead to more research on gender relations. The picture is not any better in any of the other institutions of higher learning in Sarawak.

In spite of this, I would like to conclude with a few salient points. First, studies on gender relations will have to be historically specific and located within the social, political and economic context of Sarawak as the categories of class, ethnicity and gender are not immutable but socially and historically contingent and shifting. Second, it is important that women's situated experiences be given precedence over any generalisations or metanarratives that homogenise and essentialise them. Highly theoretical constructs reify their lives and maintain a social distance between the researcher and researched. Third, as feminist ethnographers, we are not suggesting that by privileging women's own words we are ventriloquists. On the contrary, we are conscious that we are giving a partial representation of the women's own representation of their lives. We mediate the experiences of others and their interpretation of reality. Fourth, the reflexive voice of the feminist researcher has to be heard above the din over the politics of representations and accountability. Last but not least, we have to walk the tightrope of feminist research in good faith if we are not to be defeated by the anxieties and paralysis engendered by critiques and debates in our own chosen fields.

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Chapter 12

The Rise of Dayak Identities in Central Kalimantan

Kumpiady Widen

Abstract The famous Tumbang Anoi peace meeting held in Kalimantan in 1894 has become a milestone of Dayak civilisation. The meeting can be considered as marking the beginning of a resurgence of Dayak identity, underpinned by *adat* or customary law. However, since that time the historical journey of the Dayak has been coloured by a number of bitter experiences. Some of the most important include the struggle of the Dayak social solidarity movement, Gerakan Mandau Talawang Pancasila, in the 1950s to establish the province of Central Kalimantan; the marginalisation under Suharto's New Order regime in the 1970s–1990s; and the violent ethnic conflicts between the Dayak and Madurese that culminated in bloody clashes in 2001. These historical experiences have helped the Dayak construct a strong collective identity, a 'resistance identity'. They have provided important lessons for the Dayak to evaluate themselves, to build self-confidence and to strengthen ethnic solidarity. The culmination of the political process of Dayak identity formation occurred during the administration of Agustin Teras Narang as the governor of Central Kalimantan (2005–2015). His development programmes have aimed at increasing prosperity, dignity and ethnic solidarity among the Dayak, and, to this end, it can be argued that Narang has succeeded.

Keywords Central Kalimantan • Dayak • Identity • Ethnicity • Conflict

12.1 Introduction

Central Kalimantan (Kalimantan Tengah) was established as the seventeenth province of Indonesia on 17 July 1957, with its capital city at Palangkaraya. By the time of its 57th anniversary in 2014 all sectors had developed rapidly. The province has 13 regencies and one municipality, 136 subdistricts and 1569 villages with a total population of over 2.3 million. Historically, the establishment of the province

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of Central Kalimantan was due to the struggle of the Dayak during the 1950s who demanded that Central Kalimantan be separated from South Kalimantan as soon as possible. This demand was responded to positively by the central government in Jakarta. This history has been kept firmly and clearly in the collective memories of all Dayak of Central Kalimantan. They are proud because the establishment of Central Kalimantan was due to strong and collective efforts exerted by the Dayak themselves, and not as a gift from the central government. The solidarity movement demanding the establishment of Central Kalimantan was called Gerakan Mandau Talawang Pancasila (GMTPS, Pancasila Dagger and Shield Movement). In the course of Dayak history there have been a number of historical events that have served to construct and strengthen Dayak identity. This chapter examines the significance of these events before looking at current developments that seek to strengthen the Dayak assertion of identity, interests and institutions.

12.2 The Centrality of Custom and Land

A historic peace meeting was named after the location where it was held, at Tumbang Anoi on the upper Kahayan River in 1894. It lasted for 3 months (22 May–22 July) and was attended by more than 300 Dayak chiefs from all over Kalimantan. Usop (1994) notes that of the hundreds of customary decisions made at Tumbang Anoi, eight were categorised as of great importance:

- 1 The abolition of hostilities between the Dayak and the Dutch.
- 2 The abolition of inter-Dayak warfare.
- 3 The abolition of revenge-taking between families.
- 4 The abolition of headhunting.
- 5 The abolition of slavery.
- 6 The implementation of customary law (*adat*).
- 7 The acknowledgement by the Dutch of the implementation of customary law and their assumption of responsibility for keeping the peace and maintaining security over the whole of Kalimantan/Borneo.
- 8 The requirement that all Dayak maintain permanent residence.

The Tumbang Anoi peace meeting was a historical milestone for Dayak civilisation in that it introduced an order based on customary law. It also eliminated headhunting, warfare and slavery. The Dayak lived in extended family groups in longhouses or traditional houses (*betang*) where they could develop and practise their customs and culture. A Dayak traditional house not only symbolised protection but also *belombah adat* (to live together based on customary law), embodying unity, tolerance and solidarity. This lifestyle also served to express their identity.

In order to commemorate the centenary of the Tumbang Anoi peace meeting, a seminar was held in Palangkaraya in 1994, attended by Dayak delegates from all four Kalimantan provinces. At the conclusion of the seminar, all the delegates underlined that the unity, dignity, identity and culture of the Dayak are the most

important values that should be maintained and protected. All Dayak ethnic groups from the whole of Kalimantan have to be united in order to maintain and protect their lands, *adat* and culture. This is very important because while the land ‘belongs’ to the Dayak it is under increasing pressure due to the development of oil palm estates, gold and coal mining, and logging, with an increased incidence of forest fires.

In an earlier study, I stated that land is the *blood* and *breath* of the Dayak because fertile land provides their food and livelihoods and for the next generation (Widen 2001). The term *petak ayungku* (my land) expresses a very important value. It means that all the surrounding lands as far as the sound of a gong or as far as a cock crows must belong to the Dayak. This way of claiming landownership has been inherited from the ancestors. Therefore, it is not surprising that there have been a number of conflicts over land use and land rights issues. For example, riots and protests have occurred at Aurora Gold’s PT Indo Muro Kencana mine in Murung Raya; and some oil palm estates in West Kotawaringin, East Kotawaringin and East Barito regencies have been the sites of conflicts over land rights. Most of the local people who are farmers living around the estates and mines are becoming poorer because their land area is decreasing while the soil quality is deteriorating.

There are at least three causes of the local riots (see Widen 2001). First, there is the issue of land compensation. The initial phase of opening up the land for estates and mining used small sections of land belonging to the local community. The company management paid 50 % of the land compensation due, but the remainder was to be paid later. In reality, the companies have processed compensation very slowly and sometimes tried to disregard their obligations with a number of excuses. Second, there is the problem of worker recruitment. The company management policy states that the ratio of workers is 75 % local to 25 % migrant workers. In reality, a number of company managements have broken this rule. The primary reason for doing so is the claim that there is a lack of local skills so that in some cases the number of migrant workers exceeds that of local workers. Third, community social responsibility (CSR) programmes (formerly the community development programme) have been based on a government regulation stipulating that every company/estate has to provide services and support to a number of villages surrounding the company or estate’s landholdings. In reality, only a small number of villages with very insignificant CSR programmes have been brought into the scheme. Even now each of these problems is still to be found in and around a number of estates and mines in Central Kalimantan.

12.3 Gerakan Mandau Telawang Pancasila

As already noted, Gerakan Mandau Talawang Pancasila (GMTPS) comprised a major solidarity movement among the Dayak of Central Kalimantan that demanded the establishment of a new province. Kalimantan had been divided into three provinces in 1953, based on Emergency Law no. 03/1953 issued by the Ministry of

Internal Affairs. This created the provinces of West Kalimantan, East Kalimantan and South Kalimantan. South Kalimantan initially included Barito, Kapuas, Kahayan and Kotawaringin, which were later incorporated politically and administratively into Central Kalimantan province. In practice, the Dayak protested that the government of South Kalimantan was unfair, unjust and intolerant and discriminated against them. On this basis they demanded the creation of a separate Dayak homeland, distinct from South Kalimantan. Their claims were eventually heard positively by the provincial and central governments, resulting in a peace meeting between the government and GMTPS members at the small village of Madara, South Barito on 1 March 1956, which resulted in the Perjanjian Madara or Madara Agreement. Three important decisions were agreed at the meeting: (a) Central Kalimantan province would be separated from South Kalimantan; (b) all revolts and conflicts would cease; (c) GMTPS members would be released from any criminal charges and would be recruited to become civil government officers.

As a follow-up, the Dayak of Barito, Kapuas, Kahayan and Kotawaringin held a Dayak congress on 2–5 December 1956. Two important decisions were taken: Central Kalimantan must be separated from South Kalimantan as soon as possible; and Dayak people were ready and prepared to support the unity and solidarity of all Indonesian people. Therefore, Central Kalimantan was officially divided from South Kalimantan, based on Regulation no. 10/1957, and Central Kalimantan was formally declared as a province of Indonesia (Riwut 2007: 64–66).

On 17 July 1957 President Sukarno laid a commemorative cornerstone on the banks of the Kahayan River to symbolise the establishment of Central Kalimantan with Palangkaraya as its capital. Tjilik (Cilik) Riwut, a native Dayak, had been appointed by the central government as the first governor (1958–1967). Because of the lack of human resources needed to build a new province, Riwut invited government employees from Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi. However, few government employees came to Central Kalimantan. Some were afraid of the Dayak and their reputation, in the popular imagination, as fierce and warlike headhunters. Another reason was because Central Kalimantan was still remote and forested. This is one of the major reasons why the process of development in the new province was quite slow. The second governor was Reinout Sylvanus (1967–1978) and the third governor Willy Ananias Gara (1978–1983). The first, second and third governors were all Dayak, while the next three governors were non-Dayak. The seventh and the eighth governors were also from the Dayak community. The eighth governor was Agustin Teras Narang, who served two terms (2005–2010 and 2010–2015).

12.4 Ethnic Conflict Between the Dayak and Madurese

Dayak identity has also been forged in conflicts with other peoples. Historically, the Madurese came to Central Kalimantan in the 1960s. They came as transmigrants and temporary workers, and while never the most important migrant group in terms of numbers they became the most visible in this new wave of migration. This

visibility increased Dayak resentment (Bertrand 2004: 55). Between the 1960s and 2000 there were more than 20 cases of conflicts between the Dayak and the Madurese, notably in a wave of tensions in 1996–1997. These were triggered by bloody quarrels, robbery, deception, sexual harassment and even murder initiated by the Madurese. However, the two parties have solved all the conflicts peacefully. Several cases were followed up by written agreements in order to remind the Madurese not to repeat these acts in the future. Unfortunately, the problems have not been brought to an end because the Madurese have never consistently kept to the agreements.

The peak of the conflict came in February and March 2001, with attacks and counter-attacks between the Dayak and Madurese. The aftermath resulted in the exodus of all Madurese from Central Kalimantan. A number of meetings had been initiated and sponsored by the government in an effort to reach reconciliation between the Dayak and Madurese. Finally, the government, the Dayak and the Madurese agreed to three alternative solutions. First, the Madurese could opt for permanent residence in Madura and receive government support to resettle. Second, the Madurese could choose new permanent residence in Java, Sumatra or Sulawesi. Third, the Madurese, on the basis of strict selection, could choose to return to Sampit and Palangkaraya. Strict selection meant that those permitted to return to Central Kalimantan comprised government officers, police, soldiers, parliamentary members, social workers, those who had permanent and gainful employment (businessmen) and those who had intermarried with the Dayak.

Since the bloody conflicts of 2001 the Dayak became fully aware of their rights and responsibilities as Dayak to maintain and defend their land, culture and identities. They realised that they had to work hard, not be lazy or spectators, in order to live well and prosperously. Before this, the Dayak had become spectators of rapid development wherever they lived. Consequently, they were forced to take refuge in the interior where some of them lived permanently as poor farmers (Widen 2011). The conflicts in 2001 opened their eyes in order to see the reality around them and that they had to struggle to maintain and defend their dignity and identity.

The lesson is not only worthwhile for the Dayak to build their self-confidence and solidarity, and strengthen their identity, but also for the Madurese in order for them to re-evaluate their position and behaviour in their new home. The Madurese, especially those who have returned and are still living in Central Kalimantan, have already changed their behaviour and character in order to live peacefully in a multicultural society. As I often meet them at the traditional market in Palangkaraya, the Madurese invariably show their politeness and friendship to everyone who interacts and communicates with them.

12.5 Agustin Teras Narang's Governorship

Having waited more than 22 years, Agustin Teras Narang, who belongs to a prominent Dayak family, was installed as the eighth governor of Central Kalimantan in 2005, standing for the Indonesian Democratic Struggle Party (Partai Demokrasi Perjuangan, PDI-P). The Dayak of the province had very high expectations of him to develop, build and defend their culture, dignity and identity. For his hard work during 5 years of his leadership, he was elected for a second term as governor. During his 10 years in office Narang has promoted several development programmes of which 50 % have been designated for the Dayak in general. His grand 10-year development programme is stated in his vision and mission. His vision is to overcome the isolation of Central Kalimantan in order to build prosperity and dignity for all. To carry out this vision, Narang designated 12 sectors of development: infrastructure; economy, education, health and family planning; law, security and human rights; politics; social, culture and religion; youth and sports; tourism; natural resources and environment; people empowerment; telecommunications and communications. The most important priority was to end the isolation of Central Kalimantan. There are many villages, subdistricts and even regencies that are still marginalised and without land transportation, although river transportation is available. Therefore, during his two periods in office Narang reached his target to construct land transportation to all villages, subdistricts and regencies to accomplish the demand for access to education, health, economy, culture, politics and social integration.

In order to strengthen Dayak customary law, Narang issued Provincial Regulation no. 16/2008 on customary law institutions in 2008. To date, there are now more than 80 customary law institutions in Central Kalimantan. Based on provincial regulations, each *kecamatan* (subdistrict) should have a customary law institution presided over by the *damang* as the expert in *adat* or customary law. He has special roles in building, developing, maintaining and controlling the implementation of customary law in the community. In addition, the *damang* also serves as a judge of customary law at the level of the subdistrict. In this position the *damang* manages both criminal and civil cases. The second Provincial Regulation no. 13/2009 covered customary land and customary rights in land. This regulation is very important for the Dayak in that it will help overcome conflict over land between the Dayak and investors, including estates and mining companies. As a Dayak himself, Narang has articulated his programmes in Dayak terms. *Sarjana pembangun desa* (*sarjana* as village builder) is one of the national development programmes which has been translated into Dayak as *Sarjana mamangun tuntang mahaga lewu* (PM2L) and has been used in widely in Central Kalimantan. Every village has at least two *sarjana* (university/college graduates) working as motivators and supervisors of village development programmes. Narang uses the term *Kalteng* (short for Kalimantan Tengah, Central Kalimantan) in a number of ways: in the education development sector, *Kalteng harati* (Kalteng intelligence); in the health development sector, *Kalteng barigas* (Kalteng healthy); in the sector for

electricity development, *Kalteng tarang* (Kalteng bright); and in the sector for agricultural development, *Kalteng besuh* (Kalteng satisfy).

In 2010 Narang was made president of Majelis Adat Dayak Nasional (MADN, National Dayak Traditional Council). All Dayak in Kalimantan are members of this council. At the provincial level down to the village level the governor formed Dewan Adat Dayak (DAD, Dayak Traditional Councils) in order to strengthen the existence of the national-level council. Further, in order to empower the younger generation, Narang also formed Barisan Pertahanan Masyarakat Adat Dayak (BATAMAD, Dayak Customary Defence Guard). Similar to BATAMAD, Yansen A. Binti also formed the Gerakan Pemuda Dayak (GPD, Dayak Youth Movement).

A number of events have demonstrated Dayak resolve to assert their distinctive identity. In 2012 there was a very important solidarity rally of the Dayak of Palangkaraya. Hundreds of Dayak with swords and spears and wearing traditional dress gathered at Palangkaraya Tjilik Riwut airport. They strongly objected to the arrival of Habib M. Rizieq, the head of Front Pembela Islam (FPI, Islamic Defenders Front), and other senior FPI leaders. As a result, the head of FPI was afraid to disembark from his airplane and returned to Jakarta as soon as possible. Rizieq had planned to declare the establishment of the FPI in Palangkaraya.

Another instance of the lobbying activities of the Dayak solidarity movement also occurred in Palangkaraya in December 2013 as a result of to the declaration of the formation of Perhimpunan Dayak Melayu (PDM, Association of Dayak Malays) by H.M. Riban Satia as the head of the association. This association is politically divisive according to the members of the Dayak solidarity movement. Riban Satia, now the mayor of Palangkaraya, wanted to divide the Dayak into two parts: Christian Dayak and Muslim Dayak. This was part of his strategy to enhance his opportunity to secure his candidacy for the governorship of Central Kalimantan in 2015. Therefore, a number of Dayak solidarity groups objected strongly to Perhimpunan Dayak Melayu and proposed that it should be dispersed because it would trigger internal conflict among the Dayak themselves. For them, the term Dayak is an expression of collective ethnic identity for all Dayak that overrides sub-categorisations such as Christian, Muslim or Kaharingan.

The following year was also very important for the Dayak, especially those of Central Kalimantan. On 1–4 October 2014 many Dayak celebrated and visited Tumbang Anoi village, Gunung Mas regency, in order to commemorate the peace meeting of 1894. There was a series of special events. On 1 October 2014 there was the formal ceremony for the opening of a *betang* on Jalan RTA Milono in Palangkaraya. This newly constructed longhouse served as the centre for the MADN and DAD secretariats as well as a venue for arts events and live cultural performances. On 2 October 2014 there was a one-day seminar on Dayak culture and identity held at the *betang* attended by more than 200 Dayak. The centrepiece of the agenda was on 3–4 October 2014. More than 1500 Dayak went to Tumbang Anoi and spent a night there, including watching an interesting cultural performance and having dinner together. On 4 October 2014 there was a special ceremony at the *betang* in Tumbang Anoi led by Narang. At the ceremony, the

organising committee distributed a number of books to all participants: *History of Central Kalimantan*, *Dayak customary law*, *History of the Tumbang Anoi peace meeting 1894* and *Central Kalimantan governor's regulation on the management of customary land in Central Kalimantan*. As with the conclusion of the original Tumbang Anoi peace meeting, the commemoration organising committee made two very important commitments: first, the governor and president of the MADN was declared *bapak kebangkitan masyarakat Dayak* (prominent figure for the resurgence of the Dayak community); second, it was agreed that the commemoration of the Tumbang Anoi peace meeting should become an annual event in Central Kalimantan.

12.6 The Construction and Future of Dayak Identity

From a sociological perspective, my discussion regarding the rise of Dayak identity, solidarity and unity conforms with what Manuel Castells (1997) refers to as 'resistance identity'. This identity is primarily concerned with communal identification in relation to the efforts and struggles of the Dayak of Central Kalimantan to maintain and defend their culture, dignity and identity since 1894. This resistance identity is also accelerating due to a number of challenges, injustices and political conditions. For instance, when there is a general election of candidates for the positions of governors, regents and mayors in Central Kalimantan, there are two important issues that always accompany this process, namely ethnic and religious identity. Recently, the Dayak of Central Kalimantan have made very strong efforts in order to ensure that they become 'leaders in their own country'. As has been shown in the case of Agustin Teras Narang, he has worked very hard for the progress and prosperity of the Dayak of Central Kalimantan. Narang's term in office as governor ended in December 2015. Therefore, a number of Dayak solidarity movements began their search for a new candidate, as part of a collective commitment to ensure the maintenance and support of their identity and unity. After some delays in the electoral process, Sugianto Sabran was inaugurated as the new governor in 2016.

A number of researchers in the past, such as Mikhail Coomans (1987), Stepanus Djuweng (1995) and Rilus Kinseng (1993), were pessimistic about the condition and future prospects for Dayak culture and identity. They predicted that in 15 years a distinctive culture and identity would have disappeared. All Dayak villages, they argued, are open to global influences. Communication technologies and the modern information media have also spread global news and ideas to remote villages. They have provided access to outside influences that act to transform the traditional Dayak lifestyle. For instance, exogamous marriage, modern education and religious conversion have all served to undermine the traditional culture and identity of the Dayak. Marriage outside the Dayak community has loosened or even blurred family relationships. Education has separated family members in villages and towns and has shaped the Dayak to become 'modern' people. Religion (both Christianity and Islam) has resulted in the abandonment of much of the traditional religious beliefs.

National development policies have transformed the everyday lives and livelihoods of the indigenous people and impoverished them generally by excessive commercial exploitation of their natural resources. Are all of these symptoms indicative of the extinction of Dayak culture and identity?

In contrast to these rather pessimistic views, I draw upon Thomas Hylland Eriksen's (1993: 68) more optimistic perspective:

Conspicuous forms of *boundary maintenance become important* when the boundaries are under pressure. Ethnic identity, which embodies a perceived continuity with the past, may in this way function in a psychologically reassuring way for the individual in times of upheaval; they seem to tell people that although 'all that is solid melts into air', there is an unchanging, stable core of ethnic belongingness which assures the individual of a continuity with the past, which can be an important source of self respect and personal authenticity in the modern world, which is often perceived as a world of flux and make-believe. If one can claim to 'have a culture', it proves that one is faithful to one's ancestors and to the past.

This perspective is again strengthened by John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith (1996: v) who note: 'Clearly, ethnicity, far from fading away, has now become a central issue in the social and political life of every continent. The "end of history", it seems, turns out to have ushered in the era of ethnicity. The key issue here is that ethnic identities are developing the power to adapt and to accommodate to changing world forces. Globalisation certainly means the end of traditional societies but not the group who make them up'.

The Dayak, wherever they live, individually and collectively continue to maintain and strengthen their ethnic identity by means of language, ethnic association, education, customary law, the Tumbang Anoi peace meeting, the GMTPS, ethnic conflict and contention, as well as the newer institutional forms that advance the cause of Dayak identity and interests.

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Chapter 13

An Overview of Anthropological and Sociological Research at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Poline Bala

Abstract In order to make sense of contemporary and ongoing anthropological and sociological research activities at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) it is important to highlight different levels of factors that have shaped and influenced the sort of research agendas and activities carried out by members of the faculty (and also the Institute of East Asian Studies and now known as Institute of Borneo Studies) over the past 20 years. The discussion also reveals the social and political milieu within which research has been carried out and, at the same time, throws light on ways in which the first university in Sarawak has addressed the concerns of society.

Keywords Universiti Malaysia Sarawak · Anthropology · Sociology · Research · Knowledge production

13.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of trends, themes and orientations in anthropological and sociological research in the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Institute of East Asian Studies at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). Its aim is to document and thematically analyse anthropological and sociological research in the faculty and contextualise the situation within which this research has evolved at UNIMAS and how it is applied today. In order to make sense of ongoing anthropological and sociological research activities at UNIMAS it is important to examine how current events and contemporary issues, including adjustments in curricula, have shaped research agendas and influenced research activities carried out by staff over the past 20 years. Conversely, the discussion also reveals the social and political milieu within which research has been carried out and, at the same

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time, throws light on ways in which the first university in Sarawak has addressed the concerns of society.

It is important to explore the context of the construction and generation of new knowledge. For one thing, this raises questions of the extent to which the faculty at UNIMAS has been ‘at the frontiers of knowledge and blaz[ing] new trails into the future in various domains not simply for the sake of knowledge generation, but very importantly, knowledge that can improve the lot of humanity’ (Abdul Rahman 2010: 10). I suggest an exploration of this claim is crucial. Again echoing Abdul Rahman Embong:

[A]t a time when policy emphasis everywhere has been on science and technology to be the panacea and driver of the nation’s growth and competitiveness, a fresh look at the contribution of social sciences and humanities in the generation (and regeneration) of knowledge as well as in providing policy inputs for the making and re-making of society through social reform is indeed timely and necessary. (Ibid.)

Bearing this in mind, the chapter begins with a brief history of the social sciences at UNIMAS, highlighting the university’s vision and mission. It then discusses how these have reshaped the way social sciences are taught in the faculty and have set the tone for research interests and their methodologies. The second part throws light on the research issues, shifts and practices in recent years. It concludes with a summary of contributions of research towards knowledge (re)generation and identifies new fields of knowledge and knowledge’s contribution towards understanding social change in Borneo in general and Sarawak in particular.

13.2 A Brief History of Social Sciences at UNIMAS

UNIMAS was the first public university to be established in Malaysian Borneo. It was set up in 1992, a little less than 30 years after the formation of Malaysia. The Faculty of Social Sciences was one of the two pioneering faculties that offered undergraduate courses. Guiding the faculty’s development was UNIMAS’s vision to become an exemplary university of internationally acknowledged stature and a scholarly institution of choice for both students and academics through the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research and scholarship. Meanwhile, its mission is to generate, disseminate and apply knowledge strategically and innovatively to enhance the quality of the nation’s culture and the prosperity of its people.

Concurrent with UNIMAS’s mission, all learning and teaching programmes at the faculty have been designed in response to the development of new emerging technologies in society and the increasing demand for an industrial workforce. One direct implication of this in the early years was a deliberate steering away from the conventional department-based academic disciplines towards a programme-based arrangement. For instance, at the Faculty of Social Sciences academic programmes such as international studies, industrial relations and labour studies, social work studies, communication studies, planning and development management studies,

and politics and government studies were introduced instead of the usual department-based fields of geography, history, anthropology, sociology, political science and so on. The emphasis is on interdisciplinary learning and teaching.

Inevitably, this phenomenon has a bearing on research agendas and activities carried out by members of the faculty. Moreover, many of the academic staff and researchers were recruited from diverse universities in Malaysia (for instance, from Universiti Putra [Pertanian] Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Sains Malaysia). Within the milieu of the new university, all had to find new research paths guided by societal concerns and scholarly interests as well as theoretical and ideological orientations. At the Faculty of Social Sciences, this has been made clear in the formation of the following research clusters: urbanisation, community development, gender studies, political studies, communication studies, social policy, poverty, ethnicity and identity, belief systems and indigenous knowledge.

These clusters are interdisciplinary in nature and are reflective of the social, political and economic issues/situations pertinent to the wider Sarawak society of that time; hence, they are socially relevant research areas. The overarching theme, nevertheless, is social transformation in Borneo. In other words, being situated on the island of Borneo has also impacted on research themes and issues explored by members of the faculty. For over 300 years, European rulers and regional sultanates have colonised the island, transformed its political and economic structures into what we recognise today. But beyond these political histories also lay the diverse cultural formations and practices, the complex and dynamic group identities, and the evolution of local economic systems. In fact, these features have made Borneo an anthropological lodestone to many international and local scholars since the late nineteenth century.

An important aspect in this connection was the emergence of the Sarawak Museum, which was established in 1886 not only as the repository of knowledge and point of contact for international, regional and local researchers but more importantly in setting the orientation of social science for subsequent research in Sarawak. This was especially so when in 1911 the museum produced its own journal, the *Sarawak Museum Journal*. Many years later the museum still has immense consequences for both social and natural science knowledge in academic institutions such as UNIMAS. Besides exploring new areas of research, to a certain degree members of the faculty attempt to maintain concerns established by pioneering social scientists, a clear example is the theme 'capturing' vanishing traditions and cultures of Sarawak people.

This trend is very clear from the work carried out at the Institute of East Asian Studies,¹ which was established in 1997. Even though its charter indicates that the institute's role is to facilitate a range of interdisciplinary programmes and activities to advance the understanding of Borneo/Kalimantan from a regional perspective, in

¹It is important to note here the interchange ability of academics between the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Institute of East Asian Studies especially in the early years of the institute.

the first 6 years after its establishment the institute published specialised bibliographies, 13 working papers and 12 scholarly monographs. Some of these publications were written in five languages, in addition to English. These include the following:²

Bibliographies

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²All references here and later in the chapter are ordered according to date of publication.

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13.3 Social Science and Humanities in Malaysia

Another important element to consider in mapping trends of social science research at UNIMAS is the development of the social sciences and humanities in the context of Malaysia. Rahman Embong (2010) provides a compelling historical analysis of the development of social science and humanities in Malaysia, and the transition from 'colonial knowledge' to contemporary efforts of making social science relevant to the issues and concerns of the larger Malaysian society. An important research area that has emerged out of this concern has been gender studies. A good example is provided by the work of Hew Cheng Sim. They include the following:

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- Hew Cheng Sim. 1991. Agrarian change and gender relations: a brief summary. *Borneo Research Bulletin* 23:99–102.
- Hew Cheng Sim. 1995. Agrarian change, stratification and the gender division of labour. In *Dimensions of tradition and development in Malaysia*, eds. Rokiah Talib, and Tan Chee Beng, 285–304. Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications.
- Hew Cheng Sim. 1995. Gender and cultural conceptions: the case of the Ibans in Sarawak. In *Gender, culture and religion: equal before God, unequal before man*, eds. Cecilia Ng, and Noraini Othman, 68–81. Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sains Sosial Malaysia.
- Hew Cheng Sim, and Sharifah Mariam Al-Idris. 1998. Gender aspects of labour allocation and decision-making in agricultural production: a case study of the Kelabits in Bario Highlands, Sarawak. In *Bario: the Kelabit Highlands of Sarawak*, eds. Ghazally Ismail, and Laily bin Din, 307–330. Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications.
- Hew Cheng Sim. 1999. Bidayuh women and rural-urban migration. *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 33(1):89–124.

- Hew Cheng Sim. 2001. Bidayuh housewives in a changing world: Sarawak, Malaysia. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 57(2):151–166.
- Hew Cheng Sim. 2001. Of marriage, money and men: Bidayuh working mothers and their households in Kuching. *Asian Journal of Social Science* 29(2): 285–304.
- Hew Cheng Sim. 2001. Singles, sex and salaries: the experiences of single Bidayuh women migrants in Kuching. *Asian Studies Review* 25(3):361–376.

There is also

- Nor Ba'yah Abdul Kadir and Kamsiah Ali. 2002. Indicators of well-being amongst single mothers in Sarawak. *Jurnal Kerja Sosial Malaysia* 1:75–92.
2002. Pembentukan indeks wanita Melayu: Kajian Penerokaan. *Persidangan Antarabangsa Pengajian Melayu ke-2*, Beijing, 1.

13.4 Knowledge Production and the Development Agenda

Another important element to note, which has relevance to UNIMAS, is the relationship between fundamental or basic research and applied research, and the significance of applied research under government auspices. As already noted, UNIMAS's mission is to generate, disseminate and apply knowledge strategically and innovatively to enhance the quality of the nation's culture and prosperity of its people. This infers the use of applied research to national wealth creation, or to make knowledge generated at the university relevant to the country's development. As a result, there has been an emphasis on action knowledge through community-engaged research and development by means of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary as well as participatory action research and bottom-up approaches. This entailed involvement in communities deploying research for community social development. 'Community service' was considered an important aspect in the yearly appraisal of academic staff.

A good example of this is the eBario project, which was initiated as a multi-disciplinary research project (see also Barlocco, Chap. 7 in this volume). This kind of project allows experimentation and exploration of the importance of interdisciplinary research, publication and education. Projects like eBario and its offshoots have placed UNIMAS in a good position to undertake these kinds of research and to develop instructional programmes that address multidimensional issues and require the combination of knowledge from more than one field. Publications that highlight this trend include the following:

- Harris, Roger, Poline Bala, Peter Songan, Elaine Khoo Guat Lien, and Tingang Trang. 2001. Challenges and opportunities in introducing information and communication technologies to the Kelabit community of North Central Borneo. *New Media and Society* 3(3):270–295.

- Bala, Poline, Roger W. Harris, and Peter Songan. 2003. E Bario project: in search of a methodology to provide access to information communication technologies for rural communities in Malaysia. In *Information communication technologies: concepts, methodologies, tools, and applications*, ed. Craig Van Slyke, 826–839. Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.
- Bala, Poline. 2009. Social shaping of technologies for community development: redeployment of information communication technologies among the Kelabit in Bario of the Kelabit Highlands. In *Information communication technologies for human services education and delivery: concepts and cases*, eds. Jennifer Martin, and Linette Hawkins, 201–214. Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.
- Bala, Poline. 2011. Re-thinking methodology through the e-Bario project: from participatory methods to a relational approach to information communication technologies for rural development. In *ICTs for global development and sustainability: practice and applications*, eds. Jacques Steyn, Jean-Paul van Belle, and Eduardo Villanueva Mansilla, 1–18. Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.
- Bala, Poline. 2014. Redeploying technologies: ICT for greater agency and capacity for political engagement in the Kelabit Highlands. In *Subversion, conversion, development: cross-cultural knowledge exchange and the politics of design*, eds. James Leach, and Lee Wilson, 104–128. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

13.5 Shift from 2003 Onwards

At the beginning of 2003 a shift began to take shape in the Faculty of Social Sciences at UNIMAS. This was in response to two evaluation reports submitted to the faculty. The first report was submitted in 2001 by the external advisers to the faculty—Clive Kessler of the University of New South Wales, Australia and Norani Othman of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Abdul Rahman Embong and Rashila Ramli, who are senior members of the Malaysian Social Science Association, made the second evaluation in 2004 (see also Abdul Halim 2009: 28).

There were two noteworthy amendments as a result of these reports. The first was the formation of academic departments in response to the ‘missing links’ prevalent in the faculty. Of particular importance was the absence of the disciplines of anthropology and sociology in a social science faculty. As a consequence, the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Department of Politics and International Studies, Department of Development Studies and Department of Communication Studies were established. However, this did not mean the elimination of programmes. Rather these were placed into the new departments: international studies, and politics and government studies under the Department of Politics and International Studies; social work studies, and anthropology and sociology under the Department of Anthropology and Sociology; industrial relations and labour studies, and planning and development management studies under

the Department of Development Studies; and communication programmes and media studies under the Department of Communication Studies.

The second aspect has been an increased concern over social science and theoretical frameworks at the faculty. Guided by the universals of sociology and anthropology, while mindful of its specific location, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology aspires to become one of the leading centres for sociological and anthropological studies in the region, with a focus on social transformation in Borneo. Considerable efforts have been made to define and promote the disciplines through the teaching and learning of several undergraduate programmes, postgraduate work, research and publication, and also through community engagement.

With this there is an attempt to consolidate research activities as members of the department were returning from their study leave—having obtained postgraduate degrees from local and foreign universities. As of February 2015, the department comprises 15 members who have diverse expertise. There are considerable specialisations in subject matter and approach. In fact, some of the research projects in which members of the department have been involved have won national, regional and international awards. There are those who are engaged in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary applied social science research. As experts in action knowledge they engage in community-relevant research and development, applying participatory action research, especially in the fields of disability studies as well as science and technology studies.

At the same time, there has been the emergence of critical scholarship and research from a range of theoretical and methodological approaches, a situation Abdul Halim Ali refers to as ‘a more theoretically informed direction’ (2009: 28). There have been attempts by some members of the department to employ a range of theoretical perspectives, sociological analysis and research methods in addressing an increasing number of social situations, social processes and cultural patterns in diverse Borneo societies, past and present. These theoretical perspectives and research methods foster a more informed outlook and critical thinking to bear on contemporary social issues such as inequality and marginalisation, social and cultural transformation, globalisation, ecology and environmental issues, development and sustainability. This is in addition to such other topics such as gender, ethnicity, identity and belief systems, as well as indigenous knowledge. In response to these innovations research clusters have been extended to include disability studies, society and technology studies, and heritage studies, and Borneo ethnography as a niche area. New research interests have emerged: medical anthropology and sociology, disability, indigenous knowledge, education and environmental management. As a consequence, the following have been identified as focus areas for research.

13.5.1 Borneo Ethnography

Ethnography has been an important domain in the social anthropology of Borneo societies. During its infancy, ethnographic research in Borneo focused on the study

of kinship, ritual and religion, customs and law, ethnicity and identities, and economic exchanges between different groups of peoples. Recently it has turned its attention, among others, to issues in gender relations, ecology and environmental movements, the evolution of grassroots politics, the emergence of information sciences and technologies, and societies' adaptation to the global economy. In line with this trend, members of the faculty continue not only to grasp the essence of traditional ethnographic research but, more importantly, to improve these approaches by conducting rigorous fieldwork and to evaluate the anthropological concepts and theories used as cultural texts in Borneo. The latter follows the work of George E. Marcus and Michael M.J. Fischer (1999) who have aptly coined the term 'cultural critique', referring to the need for us to constantly gauge and challenge our anthropological knowledge, especially in the fast changing world of the twenty-first century. As such, research in Borneo ethnography must also adapt to these transformations that require alternative forms of inquiry and writing.

Having said that, the aims of Borneo ethnography research at the faculty are as follows:

- Develop and expand the scope of ethnographic research among lecturers/researchers and postgraduate students. This includes the expansion of interdisciplinary research within the faculty and researchers from other disciplines to participate in ethnographic research.
- Establish an ethnographic repository at the faculty accessible to lecturers/researchers, undergraduate and postgraduate students. This includes a collection of hard copy and digitalised colonial documents, gazettes, journal articles, letters, monographs, maps, etc. on Borneo societies.
- Organise academic dialogue sessions at the faculty pertaining to the development of anthropology in Borneo. This includes organising regular seminar and colloquium sessions specifically to discuss the current and critical issues in ethnographic research and anthropological theories in Borneo. Such dialogue sessions are aimed to challenge the existing analytical concepts with new ethnographic data.
- Organise workshops specifically aimed at providing practical exercises in ethnographic research. This includes a workshop on using ethnographic research tools and analysis such as fieldwork preparation, participant observation, interviewing methods, software for data analysis, language course and so on. The aim of the workshop is also to introduce ethnographers on the concept of 'field sites' and 'fieldwork', sharing fieldwork experiences, and to provide possible solutions to fieldwork dilemmas and issues.
- Create a network of collaboration with universities, research institutions and non-governmental organisations in Sabah, Brunei and Kalimantan. This includes establishing formal and/or informal collaboration with relevant institutions, encouraging the sharing of knowledge among scholars and students in Borneo. Other forms of collaboration may include the exchange programmes among students/researchers in different institutions, organising seminars and conferences focusing on Borneo ethnography within the region, and so on.

Publications that reflect these concerns include the following:

- Liau, Juna. 2007. Anthropological study of *ketene'*: the Kenyah verbal art. Working Paper No.15, Faculty of Social Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.
- Liau, Juna. 2007. Sistem penamaan dalam masyarakat Kenyah. Dewan Budaya.
- Liau, Juna. 2007. Etika alam sekitar: persoalan dan cabaran. Paper at the 5th International Malaysia Social Science Conference, Kuala Lumpur.
- Liau, Juna. 2007. The role of tertiary education in the Kenyah community. Paper at Kenyah Uma Bakah Conference, Sungai Asap, Belaga.
- Liau, Juna. 2008. The usage of medicinal plants among the Kenyah.
- Liau, Juna. 2008. Rural women roles and perspectives on food and medicine. Paper at the 9th International Borneo Research Council Conference, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Kota Kinabalu.
- Liau, Juna. 2008. Transition of rural community in Belaga Sarawak: health beliefs and practices. Paper at the 6th International Malaysian Social Science Conference, Kuching, Sarawak.
- Saat, Gusni, 2010. *Sama-Bajau dalam kanca urbanisasi: pengalaman di Teluk Bone, Sulawesi Selatan*. Kota Samarahan: Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.
- Chai, Elena. 2010. Pàn kung mà – the matchmaker of Tabidu: managing ambiguous identity. In 『人=間の人類学:内的な関心の発展と誤読』, 中野麻衣子と深田淳太郎(共編), 211–225. はる書房.
- Chai, Elena. 2011. 危險的新娘:一個客家社區的個案研究, 陳琮淵譯 in傳承與創新一砂拉越華人社會論述, 陳琮淵吳詒賜合編 [Discourses on Sarawak Chinese community inheritance and development]. 115–138. 砂拉越華族文化協會 [Sibu: Sarawak Chinese Cultural Association].
- Dayang Hajrayati. 2011. Tanah sebagai penghidupan kaum Seping, satu kajian di Ulu Belaga, Sarawak. *Jurnal SUWA* 9(2).
- Samat, Tracy Peter. 2012. The aging voice: implication of ethnic tourism development on the indigenous culture. Paper for International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities (ICOSH).
- Chai, Elena. 2013. 「舊」娘? 「新」娘? 馬來西亞砂拉越州客家社群的婚姻儀式及女性. 台湾国立中央大学. [Brides are still brides as they were? Marriage rituals and women in a Hakka community in Sarawak, Malaysia]. Taipei: National Central University of Taiwan.
- Chai, Elena. 2013. 講題:同神異祭:兩個砂拉越華人聚落之儀式比較 [One deity, many ways: a comparison of communal rituals in two Chinese settlements in Sarawak]. 東南亞客家及其周邊, 張維安編, 國立清華大學人文社會研究中心. [Multiculturalism in monsoon Asia], ed. Chang We-An, 145–175. Taipei: National Tsing Hua University.
- Chai, Elena. 2013. 身為客家新娘:比達友婦女在馬來西亞砂拉越一個客家村的案例[Being Hakka brides: a case study of Bidayuh women in a Hakka village, Sarawak, Malaysia]. In 客居他鄉—東南亞客家族群的生活與文化. 林開忠編, 客家委員會客家文化發展中心, ed. Lim Kai-Thiong, 226–240, Taipei: Hakka Council, Hakka Development Center.

- Chai, Elena. 2013. Ancestor power: marriage rituals of a Hakka community in Sarawak, Malaysia. *Journal of Malaysian Chinese Studies* 2(1):35–48.
- Chai, Elena. 2013. 砂拉越大伯公遊神與一個華人社群的社会結構 [Tua Pek Kong procession and the social structure of a bazaar community in Sarawak]. In 第一屆馬來西亞華人研究双年会论文集, 林志强, 庄华兴, 潘永强, 张炳祺, 许德发, 詹缘端合編, 145–178. 华社研究中心 [Kuala Lumpur: Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies].
- Samani, Mus Chairil, Jamilah Maliki, Tracy Peter Samat, and Nurul Huda Marwan. 2014. Persuading the public: a content analysis of four Bidayuh homestay websites. Paper at Regional Conference for Local Knowledge (RCLK) Kuching, Sarawak, 12–13 October.
- Samat, Tracy Peter, Nurul Huda Marwan, Mus Chairil Samani, and Jamilah Maliki. 2014. Preserving Bidayuh arts through ethnic tourism. Paper at Regional Conference for Local Knowledge (RCLK) Kuching, Sarawak, 12–13 October.
- Liau, Juna. 2014. Kenyah: catatan etnografi. Dewan Budaya.
- Liau, Juna. 2014. Mantera dalam konteks masyarakat Kenyah. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Chai, Elena. 2014. Our temple, our past: memories of the past and social identity of a Hakka community in Sarawak. *Malaysian Journal of Chinese Studies* 3(1): 21–34.
- Chai, Elena. 2014. 砂拉越大伯公廟平面圖匯集 [Compilation of Sarawak Tua Pek Kong temples layouts]. Sib: En An Teng Association.
- Chai, Elena. 2015. Young wives in a Chinese Hakka village. In *For better or for worse: marriage and family in Sarawak*, ed. Hew Cheng Sim, 99–114. London: Whiting and Birch.
- Dayang Hajrayati. 2015. Kesan pembangunan tanah terhadap strategi kehidupan masyarakat Seping di Ulu Belaga, Sarawak. In *Researching society and social relations in Sarawak*, eds. Kamsiah Ali, and Sh. Sophia Wan Ahmad. UNIMAS Press.

13.5.2 Gender Studies

The gender research cluster consists of about 10 faculty members who are researching or are interested in researching gender issues. Some are working on gender in development while others are investigating the changing structure of the family, not only of Borneo societies but also of peninsular Malaysia. Examples of these concerns include:

- Hew Cheng Sim. 2003. *Women workers, migration and family in Sarawak*. London: Routledge Curzon.
- Hew Cheng Sim. 2003. The impact of urbanization on family structure: the experience of Sarawak, Malaysia. *Sojourn* 18(1):89–109.

- Hew Cheng Sim, ed. 2007. *Village mothers, city daughters: women and urbanization in Sarawak*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Hew Cheng Sim, Song Saw Imm, and Rasidah Mahdi. 2007. Gender equity in the Sarawak state civil service. *Sarawak Museum Journal* 64(85):1–34
- Hew Cheng Sim. 2009. Key issues affecting women in Sarawak. *Sarawak Gazette* 126(1547):52–56.
- Hew Cheng Sim. 2010. Praying together, staying together: Islamisation and inter-ethnic marriages in Sarawak, Malaysia. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 36(2):199–215.
- Kaur, Parveen. 2010. *Gender ideologies, resources and marital power*. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag.
- Hew Cheng Sim. 2011. Coping with change: rural transformation and women in contemporary Sarawak, Malaysia. *Critical Asian Studies* 43(4):595–616.
- Hew Cheng Sim, and Rokiah Talib. 2011. *Tra Zehnder: Iban woman patriot of Sarawak*. Kota Samarahan: UNIMAS Press.
- Kaur, Parveen. 2011. Norms, resources and marital power: a study of Sikh households in Malaysia. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 37(2):263–278.
- Kaur, Parveen. 2012. The relationship between gender ideology and division of labour in Sikh households. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 38(1):105–120.
- Kaur, Parveen, and Arif Jawaid. 2012. Inequality in decision-making and marital power among the Sikhs. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 38(2):149–160.
- Nor Ba'yah Abdul Kadir, and Kamsiah Ali. 2012. Women's voices in relation to fate, cultural practices and life satisfaction: a case study of Sarawakian single mothers in Samarahan, Sarawak. *e-Bangi: Jurnal Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan* 7(1):107–118.
- Kaur, Parveen. 2013. Women's resources and power dynamics in Sikh families in Malaysia. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 39(1–2):77–92.
- Kaur, Parveen. 2013. *Multidimensional perspectives of development*. Kota Samarahan: Institute of East Asian Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.
- Kaur, Parveen, and Arif Jawaid Moghal. 2014. Lotus in the pond. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family*, 40(1):65–81.
- Kaur, Parveen, and Arif Jawaid. 2014. Perceptions on gender equality among the Sikhs in Malaysia. *International Review of Modern Sociology* 40(2):163–174.
- Hew Cheng Sim, ed. 2015. *For better or for worse: marriage and family in Sarawak*. London: Whiting and Birch.

13.5.3 Disability Studies

This is a field of study that examines disability as a social, political, cultural and political phenomenon. Grounded in the social model of disability, it is seen as a

form of institutional discrimination and social exclusion rather than as an individual deficit or defect that can be treated solely through medical intervention or rehabilitation by experts and other services. Disability studies is therefore informed by scholarship from different disciplines, including sociology, social work, social policy, anthropology, political science, communication and media studies, gender studies, economics, history, architecture, literature, comparative religions, philosophy, law and the arts. The department has been instrumental in the Centre of Excellence for Disability Studies (CoEDS) established in UNIMAS in May 2011. Together, the department and CoEDS continue to initiate and conduct research and development guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as well as promoting a strong developmental focus for disabilities studies. In fact, prior to this the department had organised several research and development activities related to disability. These include the following:

Seminar: Self-advocacy for people with learning disabilities (2007).

International collaborative research project: Towards a culturally-sensitive disability studies: interconnection of disability studies in and across Malaysia and the UK (2008–2010).

International conference: Perspectives on inclusive development: embracing diversity and creating disability-sensitive communities (2010).

Liau, Juna. 2013. Caring in the context of Sarawak: rethinking carers' health and well-being. Paper at Konferensi Antar Universiti Se Borneo-Kalimantan ke-7 (KABOKA 7), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.

Liau, Juna. 2013. It's not the end of the world: living with disability following road traffic accidents. PhD thesis, Monash University.

Ling How Kee, Jennifer Martin, and Rosaleen Ow. 2014. *Cross-cultural social work: local and global*. Sydney: Palgrave Macmillan.

Other publications in the social work programme reflect increasing interest in societal concerns, especially with regards to juvenile issues and others such as ageing and caring issues. A good example can be drawn from the work of Kamsiah Ali, Ling How Kee and others:

Faizah Mas'ud, Kamsiah Ali, and Gill Raja, 2003. Direction for social work education. In *Pengurusan perkhidmatan kerja sosial di Malaysia*, ed. Zakariah Jamaluddin. Sintok: Penerbit Universiti Utara Malaysia.

Kamsiah Ali, and Nor Ba'yah Abdul Kadir. 2005. Pesalah juvana: keperluan dan realiti [Work with young offenders: needs and realities]. *IRPA and Fundamental Research Paper Series*, vols 1–3. Research and Innovation Management Centre, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.

Kamsiah Ali. 2006. *The young generation and their struggle for a place in society*. Kota Samarahan: Faculty of Social Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.

Kamsiah Ali. 2006. The social construction of youth problem. In Proceedings of the Borneo Research Conference.

Kamsiah Ali. 2006. The social construction of youth problem: between care and control. In Proceedings of the 5th Malaysian Studies Conference.

- Ling How Kee. 2007. Elderly women's experiences of urbanization. In *Village mothers, city daughters: women and urbanization in Sarawak*, ed. Hew Cheng Sim, 88–103. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Kamsiah Ali. 2008. Voices of the young members of the Rakan Muda programmes: a study in Kuching, Sarawak. *Sarawak Museum Journal*, 85:133–164.
- Ling How Kee. 2009. Urbanization and the ageing community in Sarawak, Malaysia. In *Older persons in Southeast Asia: an emerging asset*, eds. Evi Arifin, and Aris Ananta, 335–358. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Kamsiah Ali. 2013. Framing juvenile delinquents as the pathological individual. In *Issues in development in Malaysia and Nigeria: multi-dimensional approaches*, eds. Gusni Saat, Sanib Said, and Sharifah S. Ahmad, 125–144. Kota Samarahan: Institute of East Asian Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.
- Chan Kim Geok, Khatijah Lim Abdullah, and Ling How Kee. 2013. Quality of life among Malaysian mothers with a child with Down syndrome. *International Journal of Nursing Practice* 19(4):381–389.
- Ling How Kee. 2014. Exploring the experiences of older men and women in caregiving and care-receiving in Sarawak, Malaysia. In *Gender and ageing: Southeast Asian perspectives*, ed. Theresa W. Devasahayam, 174–197. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Chan, K. G., K. L. Abdullah, and H. K. Ling. 2014. Care demands of mothers caring for a child with Down's syndrome: Malaysian (Sarawak) mothers' perspectives. *International Journal of Nursing Practice*, doi:10.1111/ijn.12275.
- Kamsiah Ali, and Nor Ba'yah Abdul Kadir. 2015. Keperluan hidup pesalah kanak-kanak di pusat pemulihan. In *Researching society and social relations in Sarawak*, eds. Kamsiah Ali, and Sharifah S. Ahmad. Kota Samarahan: UNIMAS Press.

It is very important to highlight a particular contribution by the social work programme in the context of constructing and generating new knowledge. This is especially so with regard to new paradigms in cross-cultural social work and evidence-based social work research and practice. This, I suggest, has made an immense contribution towards generating knowledge, in the words of Rahman Embong (2010: 10), 'that can improve the lot of humanity'. This is made clear mainly through the work of Ling How Kee:

- Ling How Kee. 2002. Social work in Malaysia: a vision of direction. In *Social work around the world II*, eds. Ngoh Tiong Tan, and Imelda Dodds, 83–97, Berne: International Federation of Social Workers Press.
- Ling How Kee. 2003. Drawing lessons from local designated helpers to develop culturally appropriate social work practice. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Social Work* 13(2):26–45.
- Ling How Kee. 2003. Multiculturalism: implications for social work in Malaysia. *Jurnal: Kebajikan Masyarakat* 25(1):1–9.

- Ling, How Kee. 2004. The search from within: research issues in relation to developing culturally appropriate social work practice. *International Social Work* 47(3):336–345.
- Ling How Kee. 2007. *Indigenising social work: research and practice in Sarawak*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.
- Ling How Kee. 2008. The development of culturally appropriate social work practice in Sarawak, Malaysia. In *Indigenous social work practice and education around the world: towards culturally relevant education and practice*, eds. Mel Grey, John Coates, and Michael Yellow Bird, 97–106. Williston, VT: Ashgate.
- Ling How Kee. 2008. Border crossings: towards developing multiculturalism in social research and practice. In *Representation, identity and multiculturalism in Sarawak*, ed. Zawawi Ibrahim, 175–191. Bangi: Malaysian Social Science Association and Kuching: Dayak Cultural Foundation.
- Ling How Kee. 2014. *Pribumisasi pekerjaan sosial: penelitian dan praktek di Sarawak*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Samudra Biru.
- Ling How Kee, Jennifer Martin, and Rosaleen Ow. 2014. *Cross-cultural social work: local and global*. South Yarra, Vic: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Ling How Kee. 2014. Social work across cultures: contexts and contestations. In *Cross-cultural social work: local and global*, eds. Ling How Kee, Jennifer Martin, and Rosaleen Ow, 8–29. South Yarra, Vic: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ling How Kee, and Christine Fejo-King. 2014. Developing culturally based methods of research. In *Cross-cultural social work: local and global*, eds. Ling How Kee, Jennifer Martin, and Rosaleen Ow, 101–116. South Yarra, Vic: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ling How Kee. 2015. Doing inclusive research: our clients, our collaborators. In *New paradigms in evidence-based social work research and practice*, ed. Azlinda Azman. Putrajaya: Institut Sosial Malaysia, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development.
- Faizah Haji Mas'ud, Nur Afifah V. Abdullah, Kamsiah Ali, and Ling How Kee. 2015. Promoting social inclusion of disabled children through participation in a theatre production: an exploratory research. In *New paradigms in evidence-based social work research and practice*, ed. Azlinda Azman. Putrajaya: Institut Sosial Malaysia, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development.

13.5.4 Society and Technology Studies

Building on the sociological study of technology (in some instances also known as social studies of technology or technology studies), this group looks at how society and technology affect one another and the world. This includes technology and social transformation, technology and human identity, technology and development policies (information and communications technology [ICT] to support local development). Of particular interest is critical understanding of the relationship between ICT and society—specifically indigenous communities and ICT, that is the

character and significance of ICT in different social (values and cultural orientations) and technical settings and the implications of ICT for individuals, organisations and society, as well as processes shaping the use and impacts of ICT in societies. Of equal importance is an understanding of the implications of ICT for social and economic development.

13.5.5 Heritage Studies

This is an academic field interested in the issues, theories and practices of preservation, management and presentation of heritage. Interdisciplinary in nature, heritage studies brings together scholars from diverse academic and professional backgrounds including anthropology, archaeology, conservation, museum studies and fine arts. Mindful of the various definitions which have been put forward to explain what heritage is,³ we understand cultural heritage to include monuments, buildings and sites with archaeological, historical, anthropological and ethnographical values, and also natural heritage including natural areas or features and geological or geophysical formations which carry outstanding aesthetic and scientific values. Heritage is also not just confined to sites for they can also be in the form of objects, both tangible (for example manuscripts, coins, artwork and archaeological and ethnographical artefacts) and intangible (for example traditional customs, theatre, dance, folklore, traditional games, languages and martial arts).

Objects of heritage are important to us not only because they provide narratives of and links to the past but they are also often used to define who we are. It is in this context that critical scholarship on heritage itself—its contested nature—has been taken on board by members of the department. This is in line with studies by Eric Hobsbawm (1983) and Homi Bhabha (1994) who argue for a perspective of a past that was recent, interrupted and disjointed, in other words, a type of invention that involves ‘a process of formalisation and ritualisation’ (Hobsbawm 1983: 4). To illustrate, the recognition of a site or a monument or a cultural performance as ‘heritage’ has to go through a certain process and validation before it is considered by a panel of experts as ‘heritage’. The appendage ‘heritage’ to certain objects carries with it prestige, a sense of urgency and importance that these items require protection, care and attention worthy of an object of national stature. To this, a series of questions arise: What makes certain object ‘heritage’ at the expense of others? What criteria are used to name an object as heritage? What function does

³For example, according to Yahaya Ahmad (2006), ‘Australia refers to its heritage as “place, cultural significance and fabric”, Canada refers to “material culture, geographic environments and human environments”, New Zealand to “place”, and China to “immovable physical remains”, to name a few’. However, as simply defined by UNESCO, ‘heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations’. According to UNESCO’s definition, heritage can be divided into cultural and natural heritage.

'heritage' serve for the society, culture and knowledge that it is claimed to represent? Closely related to the former are the following works:

- Gani, Nicholas, Velat Bujeng, and Stephen Chia. 2009. Archaeological survey and excavation at Gua Tupak, Bau, Sarawak. *Sarawak Museum Journal* 66(87): 185–198.
- Gani, Nicholas. 2010. Ekskavasi di Gua Tupak, Bau, Sarawak: satu laporan awal. In *Archaeological heritage of Malaysia*, vol. 3, eds. Stephen Chia, and Hamid Mohd Isa, 228–242. Penang: Pusat Penyelidikan Arkeologi Global, Universiti Sains Malaysia.
- Gani, Nicholas. 2010. Sisa cengkerang dari Gua Tupak, Bau, Sarawak. *Jurnal Arkeologi Malaysia* 23:30–40.
- Gani, Nicholas. 2012. Salt production in Long Midang, Krayan, East Kalimantan. *Borneo Research Bulletin* 43:216–224.
- Gani, Nicholas, Stephen Chia, and Velat Bujeng. 2013. Faunal remains from Gua Tupak, Bau, Sarawak. *Sarawak Museum Journal* 71(92):185–227.
- Gani, Nicholas, and Mohd Shazani Masri. 2013. Religious conversion among the Temiar of Kelantan and the Semai of Pahang. In *Issues in development in Malaysia and Nigeria: multi-dimensional perspectives*, eds. Gusni Saat, Sanib Said, and Sharifah S. Ahmad. Kota Samarahan: Institute of East Asian Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak and Yayasan Sarawak.
- Gani, Nicholas, and Stephen Chia. 2013. A description and classification of earthenware sherds excavated from Gua Tupak, Bau, Sarawak. *Sarawak Museum Journal* 70(91):161–182.

Meanwhile the second aspect can be gauged from the following:

- Sharifah S. Ahmad. 2015. Will to order? Colonial reason in the 19th century Sarawak. In *Researching society and social relations in Sarawak*, eds. Kamsiah Ali, and Sh. Sophia Wan Ahmad. UNIMAS Press.

13.5.6 Critical Scholarship on Construction of Narrative and Knowledge about Sarawak

As mentioned previously, there has been the emergence of critical scholarship and research from a range of theoretical and methodological approaches. That is, some members of the department have employed a range of theoretical perspectives, sociological analysis and research methods in addressing an increasing number of social situations, social processes and cultural patterns in diverse Borneo societies, but more particularly Sarawak's past and present communities. These perspectives and methods continue to foster a more informed outlook and critical thinking to bear on contemporary social issues, such as inequality and marginalisation, social and cultural transformation, globalisation, ecology and environmental issues, development and sustainability as well as gender, ethnicity, identity and belief

systems, as well as indigenous knowledge. This growing trend can be gauged from the following works:

- Veluso, Sandra, Tiet Ho, Gabriel Chong, and Kelvin Egay. 2000. Mak Nyah community in Kuching: life under the make-up. In *Borneo 2000: Proceedings of the Sixth Borneo Research Council Research Conference: ethnicity, culture and society*, ed. Michael Leigh, 511–532. Kota Samarahan: Institute of East Asian Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.
- Long, Brian, Jonas Henriques, Heidi Skov Anderson, Quentin Gausset, and Kelvin Egay. 2003. Land tenure in relation to the Crocker Range National Park, Sabah. *ASEAN Review of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation* January–March: 1–11.
- Egay, Kelvin, Robert Malong, and Dimbab Ngidang. 2006. Negotiating ethnic boundaries and resource use Patterns in Loagan Bunut National Park. In *Scientific journey through Borneo: Loagan Bunut: a scientific expedition on the physical, chemical, biological and sociological aspects*, eds. Andrew Alek Tuen, Alex Sayok, A.N. Toh, and Gabriel T. Noweg. Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and Kota Samarahan: Institute of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.
- Egay, Kelvin. 2008. The significance of ethnic identity among the Penan Belangan community in the Sungai Asap resettlement scheme, Belaga, Sarawak. In *Representation, identity and multiculturalism in Sarawak*, ed. Zawawi Ibrahim, 239–255. Kuching: Dayak Cultural Foundation and Kajang: Malaysian Social Science Association.
- Egay, Kelvin. 2009. Re-situating the Sa'ban ethnography: a reflection on the notion of representation. *Akademika* 77:133–148.
- Awang Azman Awang Pawi. 2009. Native text resistances in early Malay post-colonialism. Paper at 18th New Zealand Asian Studies Society International Conference, Victoria University of Wellington.
- Egay, Kelvin. 2010. Matter of access, not rights: indigenous peoples, external institutions and their squabbles in mid-Tinjar River, Sarawak. *Manusia dan Masyarakat* 19:1–15.
- Awang Azman Awang Pawi. 2010. Sarawak Malay material culture: between collective memory and primordial. Paper at European Association for South-East Asian Studies Conference, with School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, Sweden.
- Awang Azman Awang Pawi. 2010. Mitos peribumi malas ditulis semula: konteks Melayu Sarawak [The myth of the lazy native: Sarawak Malay context]. Paper at International Seminar on Trade and Finance in the Malay World. Historical and Cultural Perspectives, Goethe-University Frankfurt, Germany.
- Awang Azman Awang Pawi. 2010. Sarawak Malay material culture and their Weltanschauung: some preliminary research themes and findings. Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand.

- Awang Azman Awang Pawi. 2011. The antecedent of Nusantara material culture [Permulaan budaya benda Nusantara]. Paper at 26th ASEASUK Conference, Cambridge, 9–11 September.
- Egay, Kelvin. 2012. Salt economy in the Krayan Highlands, East Kalimantan. *Borneo Research Bulletin* 43:205–215.
- Ling How Kee, and Wong Swee Kiong. 2012. High cost of living and social safety nets for low income groups in urban Sarawak, Malaysia. In *Poverty and global recession in Southeast Asia*, eds. Aris Ananta, and Richard Barichello, 397–417. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Wong Swee Kiong, and Ling How Kee. 2013. Making a living in the face of environmental change: a case in an indigenous community in Sarawak, Malaysia. In *The environments of the poor in Southeast Asia, East Asia and the Pacific*, eds. Aris Ananta, Armin Bauer, and Myo Thant, 232–242. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Mertz, Ole, Kelvin Egay, Thilde Bech Bruun, and Tina Svan Colding. 2013. The last swiddens of Sarawak, Malaysia. *Human Ecology* 41(1):109–118.
- Gusni Saat, Sanib Said, and Sharifah S. Ahmad, eds. 2013. *Issues in development in Malaysia and Nigeria: multi-dimensional approaches*. Kota Samarahan: Institute of East Asian Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.
- Sharifah S. Ahmad, and S.Z.A. Ishak. 2013. A question of difference. In *Issues in development in Malaysia and Nigeria: multi-dimensional approaches*, eds. Gusni Saat, Sanib Said, and Sharifah S. Ahmad. Kota Samarahan: Institute of East Asian Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.
- Bala, Poline. 2014. Being Christians in Muslim-majority Malaysia: the Kelabit and Lun Bawang experiences in Sarawak. In *Religious diversity in Muslim-majority states in Southeast Asia: areas of toleration and conflict*, eds. Bernhard Plattdasch, and Johan Saravanamuttu, 379–399. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Kamsiah Ali, and Sharifah S. Ahmad, eds. 2015. *Researching society and social relations in Sarawak*. Kota Samarahan: UNIMAS Press.

13.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shed light on the following elements: factors and stages in the development of anthropological and sociological research at the Faculty of Social Sciences, UNIMAS specifically by members of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, as well as contemporary trends or orientations in research. Building on ethnographic data provided by the early chronicles, some researchers write about contemporary Sarawak cultures and society to rediscover ongoing social transformations among various societies not only in Malaysian Borneo but also peninsular Malaysia.

At the same time, and in line with UNIMAS's vision and mission, the commitment is to the principle that knowledge production must serve society. This is very clear in

two areas: social work and society and technology (specifically information communication technologies for development)—multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches have prospered as a distinct methodology and approach at the department. The study of various problems (societal concerns) has led to discovering, refining and perfecting existing methods of sociological investigation.

This is important for institutions like UNIMAS that are creators and transmitters of knowledge. As it is universities nowadays are required to advance knowledge beyond the confines of traditional knowledge areas known as ‘disciplines’. Given the complexity and multidisciplinary nature of research in today’s environment, one important lesson learnt from projects like eBario has been that is very difficult for a single researcher to have a significant impact on a field because the increased complexity of current societal, global and scientific problems frequently requires contributions from multiple fields to achieve understanding and solutions. As a result, we now see knowledge advancing not only within the core of the various disciplines but increasingly at the interface of disciplines and through new combinations of disciplines.

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- Hobsbawm, Eric. 1983. Introduction: inventing traditions. In *The invention of tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm, and Terence Ranger, 1–14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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Chapter 14

Borneo Research in the Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam

Gary M. Jones

Abstract This chapter provides a brief outline of Borneo-related research that has been conducted at Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) and in particular at the Institute of Asian Studies (IAS) within the university. It includes an analysis of earlier Borneo research conducted through UBD and a description of the current relevant research clusters and topics. The chapter explains the role of the institute in Borneo, in particular its participation in the Borneo Research Council and the creation of a Borneo Studies Network that links the IAS with other research institutes across Borneo. Much of the research that has been conducted thus far in the institute is reflected in the IAS Working Paper series, and a description of the content of Borneo-themed papers is included. The IAS is also working on a book series, as this collection attests, and that is also explained, as is the weekly seminar series that has become an integral part of the institute's life.

Keywords Borneo · Universiti Brunei Darussalam · Institute of Asian Studies · Research · International partnerships

14.1 Introduction

Research into Borneo-related issues has always been conducted at Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) since its establishment in 1985. The university was well represented at the inaugural Borneo Research Council conference held in Kuching in 1990 and has been represented at the council's international biennial conferences ever since. UBD has twice hosted these conferences, in 1996 and 2012, and over the years its staff members have contributed greatly to the council's monographs, occasional papers and conference proceedings. However, while individuals were working incidentally on Borneo, it was not until the island became the subject for a

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research cluster in the new Institute of Asian Studies (IAS) at UBD that the research became dedicated with institutional support.

Early UBD work on Borneo resulted in publications that usually reflected the work of individual departments or colleagues within the university: Mark Cleary and Peter Eaton (1992) and Peter W. Martin (1994) are obvious examples. There was little collaboration or multidisciplinary research. The creation of a cluster has drawn people from various backgrounds together, and while a need to understand how other disciplines impact on our own has always been assumed, the cluster makes this a reality. For example, geographers and historians working with linguists gain insights into migration studies that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Research into climate change has drawn geographers, environmentalists and sociologists together to work on one of a number of subjects that lends itself to a multidisciplinary approach, and this pattern is reflected across the cluster. While Borneo may be a large island, it is not so large that what impacts on one country will not impact on the rest. The result has been to draw interest, if not actual participation, from other universities based in the neighbouring countries. In the process, momentum has been achieved which has resulted in attracting researchers from across all of Borneo.

14.2 Institute of Asian Studies

The IAS was established in January 2012. The institute's inaugural research areas were Borneo Studies (which became the Borneo research cluster), South China Sea studies, popular culture in Asia, economic and financial integration in Asia and human/capital movements in Asia. Of these, Borneo Studies and the cluster created have been the most active, as the work described below suggests. The primary role of staff within the institute is research and to support graduate studies, although all contribute to some teaching, mostly in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, at undergraduate level.

Early discussion within the institute questioned whether pan-Borneo academic ventures could be successful given that the island is home to different political units, each with its own political system and academic constraints. Any research can be politically sensitive, and while a topic might not raise any objections in one country it may in another, especially if the researchers are making comparisons. Academics usually appreciate constraints in their own home territories but any cross-border research can result in sensitive boundaries being broached and issues being raised. However, it is incumbent on any research institute to raise issues and seek answers, no matter how uncomfortable this might be for other government bodies. Thus the institute went ahead and reached out to other universities across Borneo with the intention of creating much closer academic collaboration than had been the case in the past, even with the efforts of the Borneo Research Council which had enjoyed some success in bringing researchers from across Borneo and beyond to its biennial conferences. To date, the collaboration has aided university staff by creating a wider audience for their work and in giving graduate students the opportunity to work

beyond their national borders. The actual research and publications have thus far benefited the participating academics and institutions.

Another early question, and one that persists, was mobility within Borneo. While it is possible to drive around the whole island, the size of Borneo and the condition of many roads make this impracticable. For the most part air travel is the only realistic choice, but this can be expensive and will usually only take the traveller to a major city, which could still involve a long drive to the research institute. It is often easier and cheaper, especially when travelling to and from Malaysia or Indonesia, to actually fly via Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur or Singapore rather than find a route across Borneo itself. Of course, in the age of the internet and social media it is not always necessary to work face-to-face, but occasional meetings are vital in order to establish rapport and to explore issues and ideas in depth that may not surface in any other forum.

Despite the two obvious limitations described above, an Asian institute based in Brunei also has advantages. The country is well located strategically, enjoys political stability and has good relations with its neighbours. There are few tensions and the other Borneo states collaborate with Brunei in many ventures, not just academic. The country also has good infrastructure, communications and, most important, a university that is ambitious and supportive of new research. The Borneo Studies cluster thus has the sort of institutional support that is necessary for it to be successful. Academics are attracted to work at the institute by the competitive salaries, assurance that their research will be supported and the safe and modern working environment that the university affords. As a result, the IAS has attracted well-qualified and committed staff and has also quickly been able to establish international partnerships.

14.3 International Partnerships

Through linkages with other key centres of Asian studies, the IAS aims to provide a multidisciplinary and dynamic research environment for scholars engaging in research on Asian issues. To this end, the institute is a founding member of the Consortium for Southeast Asian Studies in Asia (SEASIA) and the Borneo Studies Network.

14.3.1 Consortium for Southeast Asian Studies in Asia

The SEASIA consortium aims to encourage region-based scholarship on Southeast Asia by linking key hubs of research, teaching and training from all over the region through multilateral forums and workshops and held its first biennial conference in Kyoto in December 2015. Among the papers presented was one on Brunei literature and a workshop followed the theme of monarchy, particularly the Brunei monarchy.

Apart from the IAS, the consortium charter was signed by nine other leading hubs for Asian and Southeast Asian studies in the region, including the Center for Asia-Pacific Area Studies, Academia Sinica; the Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University; the Indonesian Institute of Sciences; the Korean Association of Southeast Asian Studies; the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore; the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nanyang Technological University; the Taiwan Association of Southeast Asian Studies; the Asian Center, University of the Philippines; and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University (acting as the secretariat).

14.3.2 Borneo Studies Network

The Borneo Studies Network was founded in 2012. As a Borneo-based partnership of research centres and institutions of higher education, the Borneo Studies Network promotes coordination and collaboration between members, with the larger aim of fostering the competitiveness and research excellence both of and in Borneo. Research and activities are not limited by subject: any topic related to Borneo is entertained and this has led to a wide range of subjects being included for research and graduate studies.

Borneo Studies Network membership is currently composed of institutions from Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia: multi-faculties from UBD (including IAS as the secretariat), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Universitas Mulawarman (Samarinda-Indonesia), Universitas Lambung Mangkurat (Banjarmasin-Indonesia), Universitas Balikpapan (Indonesia), and Universitas Tanjungpura, Institut Dayakologi, Sekolah Tinggi Pastoral Keuskupan Agung and Mata Enggang Institut (all from Pontianak-Indonesia).

The Borneo Studies Network has already held a governing council meeting (2013) and graduate studies workshop (2014). Both events were held in Brunei and all the institutions were represented. The challenge will be in keeping the momentum going. The will is there, the collaboration is very useful, especially when addressing common issues, but logistical and financial constraints need also to be addressed.

14.4 Research and Publications

Although many participants in the Borneo Studies Network are focused on agricultural research, particularly that involving sustainable timber, fish and mineral exploitation, almost all the research that has been published thus far through the IAS is in the social sciences, reflecting the academic background of staff.

14.4.1 Working Paper Series

In addition to publications such as this volume, working papers have been a feature of IAS research and a reflection of work undertaken there. The IAS Working Paper series has now reached 21 volumes (June 2016) and all are available online. Those that are immediately pertinent to Borneo are described below. Inevitably most of the papers have Bruneian themes, but as the Borneo Studies Network develops its programme a much wider range of pan-Borneo papers will emerge.

King, Victor T. 2012. *Culture and identity: some Borneo comparisons*. Working Paper No. 1, Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

In this paper King reflects on the many years that he has researched the region and how his perspectives and understanding have changed since he was a young man with the often preconceived notions of that time. Although he is hesitant to use the terms ‘postmodernism’ or ‘poststructuralism’ these are essentially the categories under which this paper falls. The insights he has gained, and many that others have shared with him, bring up to date almost 40 years of research. The paper reflects with hindsight issues that continue to evolve as Borneo has moved from a mainly agrarian economy to a mixed one in which mining, plantations and oil and gas have to a great extent replaced farming, logging and fishing as the main sources of income. The paper explores case studies and ideas, with the cases grouped under four headings: (1) the nation-state, majorities and minorities; (2) the media, identities and nation-building; (3) borderlands, margins and minorities; and (4) emerging middle classes, lifestyles and identities. In his conclusion, King suggests ‘taking in the range of cases and circumstances to be found in different locations and political units, might prove rewarding in not only continuing to bring the wider perspective which the field of Borneo Studies should provide for the study of the whole island but also to bring the wider nation-states within which the major areas of Borneo are situated into our frames of analysis’ (King 2012: 51).

King, Victor T. 2013. *Borneo and beyond: reflections on Borneo Studies, anthropology and the social sciences*. Working Paper No. 3, Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

In his second contribution to the working paper series, King again concentrates on Borneo.¹ In this paper he attempts to ‘take stock and to reflect on what has been achieved in scholarship on Borneo in the post-war period’ (King 2013: 3). This period also marked the end of colonialism and thus issues of nation-building and development are central throughout the paper. Among other contributions, the paper lists major publications about Borneo, especially those that influenced the writer himself. Looking at these publications is a stark reminder of how few have been written by local academics about their own surroundings. Of course, in later publications, and as Borneo-based universities established themselves, local

¹An updated and revised version of this working paper is Chap. 5 of the present volume.

academics have begun to become more prominent, especially, as King notes in his conclusion, since the 1980s. Nevertheless, it is clear that the story of Borneo, at least that written in English and disseminated to the wider world, has been written mainly by outsiders looking in, albeit often with very extensive experience and understanding of the island. Given its scope and subject matter, this paper provides an excellent introduction to the study of Borneo and should be on any Borneo researcher's reading list. Perhaps most interesting is King's own 'top twenty' contributions to Borneo Studies. Here he has compiled a list of what he considers to be the 20 most significant books on Borneo, beginning, in chronological order, with J.J.K. Enthoven's 1903 publication to Peter Metcalf's from 2010.

Evers, Hans-Dieter, Anthony Banyouko Ndah, and Liyana Yahya. 2013. *Epistemic landscape atlas of Brunei Darussalam*. Working Paper No. 6, Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

Although not looking at Borneo as a whole, this paper is still a contribution to Borneo Studies. It is the result of a project that the authors undertook with the title 'Knowledge hubs in Brunei Darussalam'. In the research, and as described in the paper, knowledge hubs refer to institutions that produce or hold knowledge, thus academic institutions, government offices, consultant bodies, banks and oil/gas institutions are included. Inevitably the majority of the hubs are in or around the capital, Bandar Seri Begawan, apart from those representing oil and gas institutions in Seria and Kuala Belait, where the oil and gas are collected from both the onshore and offshore fields and where most of the oil companies are based. Just outside the capital, the neighbouring campuses of UBD and Universiti Teknologi Brunei create the largest research hub.

Purwaningrum, Farah, Hans-Dieter Evers, Syamimi Ariff Lim, and Anthony Banyouko Ndah. 2014. *The governance of knowledge: perspectives from Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia*. Working Paper No. 9, Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

This is another paper that looks at Brunei (and West Malaysia) rather than Borneo, but which nevertheless reflects research about a part of Borneo. This paper is a preliminary analysis of knowledge clusters in the Brunei-Muara District of Brunei Darussalam. It builds on earlier research that was conducted in Malaysia's multi-media and northern corridors. It also examines how learning perspectives vary in the knowledge clusters of Penang, Kuala Lumpur, peninsular Malaysia and the Brunei-Muara District. As far as Brunei is concerned, it is noted that physical proximity does not necessarily equate with an increase of knowledge exchange among organisations. The paper also makes a telling point about the failure of UBD to capitalise on ties with higher education institutes in Southeast Asia; rather it has developed stronger ties with Australia, Britain, European Union countries, India and China. The authors suggest this is probably due to historical and alumni

linkages. Of course, the development of Brunei studies in the IAS and especially the creation of the Borneo Studies Network should go some way to redress the balance.

Hussainmiya, B.A., and Asbol Haji Mail. 2014. *'No Federation please—we are Bruneians': scuttling the northern Borneo closer association proposals*. Working Paper No. 11, Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

This is a Brunei-themed paper that had, and arguably still has, implications for all of Borneo. It focuses on a fascinating period for relationships between Brunei and its close neighbour, Malaysia, and the reasons for Brunei remaining outside the Malaysia Federation. It portrays a story of misunderstanding and misinterpretation between the various parties involved; whether this was by design or accident is another matter. What does emerge is the will of Brunei's Sultan Haji Omar, despite pressure from the British and Malaysians, to stay out of the Federation of Malaysia. In order to explain the decisions of the day the authors delve into the history of northern Borneo and explain how previous events decided the final decision-making in August 1963. Also of interest to present-day developments was the suggestion that the northern Borneo states—Sarawak, Brunei and Sabah—might create their own political entity. The two authors suggest that such a proposal was only finally laid to rest with the formation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967 that brought Malaysia together with Brunei as equals under one umbrella.

Mufidah Abdul Hakim. 2014. *Pengangun as ritual specialist in Brunei Darussalam*. Working Paper No. 12, Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

This paper provides an ethnographic account of the spiritual function of *pengangun* (a wedding attendant) based on research in the Brunei-Muara District of Brunei. *Pengangun* are assumed to have spiritual knowledge that they can use to bless and protect the bride and groom from black magic. Given modernisation and a better understanding of Islam, the role and position of *pengangun* in society has changed. This paper, based on the author's research as an undergraduate student at UBD, examines the changes as they have unfolded over the last 50 years.

Nurul Umillah Binti Abdul Razak, Adira Rehafizzan Binti Anuar, Dk Siti Nurul Islam Binti Pg Mohd Sahar, and Nurul Hidayah Binti Matsuni. 2015. *Domestic maids in Brunei: a case study*. Working Paper No. 14, Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

This paper examines the lives, hardships, difficulties and dreams of five eastern Javanese women working as domestic maids in Brunei. In particular, it analyses how their position as domestic maids abroad has changed the dynamics of gender and power relations in their traditionally patriarchal households in Java.

Zawawi Ibrahim. 2015. *From island to nation-state formations and developmentalism: Penan story-telling as narratives of 'territorialising space' and reclaiming*

stewardship. Working Paper No. 15, Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

As Zawawi (2015: 1) explains in his abstract, ‘this paper is an attempt to position Penan storytelling in the context of the evolution of Borneo from an island to that of a nation-state, defined ultimately by the grand narratives of Malaysian developmentalism’. The paper argues the case for indigenous counter-narratives as legitimate forms of knowledge and discourse on development, building on the Penan ethnographic base begun by scholars such as Jayl Langub and Peter Brosius. The fieldwork for this paper was done in the Ulu Baram area of Sarawak. Discussion centres on an indigenous notion of place, space and territory. Zawawi (ibid.: 1) argues that this paper ‘may also be seen as a defence of Penan claims to “stewardship” over the land despite their traditional status as non-cultivators, to contest the current bureaucratic “rational legal” and official discourse which governs the present Penan landscape’. He concludes by suggesting ‘decolonising anthropology which listens to the voices of its “subjects” while its storytelling texts and “peoplespeak” ethnography mediate knowledge from the margin, narrating not only a deterritorialized landscape but perhaps, and more importantly, also the “reterritorializing” imaginings of indigenous society’ (ibid.: 29).

14.4.2 Seminar Series

As well as the current book series and working papers, the IAS hosts weekly seminars, open to all, which have proven to be enormously successful. In fact, the challenge has been in finding enough slots for staff who wish to present. Presenters have come from both Brunei and abroad, and the themes have been far reaching including most academic subjects as well as those rooted in current affairs and politics.

14.5 The Future

Given Brunei’s location, that UBD has a commitment to research and that Borneo is an active cluster within the IAS then it can only be assumed that more will be achieved in both the short and long term. In addition to a greater diversity of themes and topics, a major challenge will be involving colleagues from other parts of the island and in continuing to establish working partnerships. As the institute grows and becomes better established and more widely known then it should evolve into a leading centre for Borneo research.

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Chapter 15

Institut Dayakologi: The Challenges of an Information and Advocacy Centre of Dayak Culture in Kalimantan

John Bamba

Abstract Over the past quarter of a century Institut Dayakologi has played a leading role in the revitalisation of Dayak identity and interests in Kalimantan. It has done so in collaboration with a large number of non-governmental organisations and community groups with the aim of advancing the position of Dayak people in particular and the rights of indigenous peoples more generally. Tracing the origins of new thinking about the challenges facing the Dayak community to meetings of students and activists in the late 1980s, the chapter examines both the institutional and programmatic development of Institut Dayakologi. Operating at first under the difficult circumstances of Suharto's New Order regime it surveys the institute's contribution in building spaces and conditions for Dayak culture to be able to survive. This has been achieved through research projects, documentation programmes, collaboration and facilitation programmes, advocacy and networking, publications and legal challenges. Major challenges remain: the appropriation of traditional Dayak land rights and attendant environmental destruction; destructive government policies; and globalisation and its impacts. These new realities compel Institut Dayakologi to play new roles in the context of current Dayak circumstances and challenges.

Keywords Kalimantan · Institut Dayakologi · Dayak · Identity · Research · Publications

15.1 Background

Institut Dayakologi (Institute for Dayak Studies) suffered a great loss when fire destroyed its office on 9 August 2007. An electrical short circuit is believed to have been the culprit though no official investigation was ever undertaken. The fire

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destroyed almost all of Institut Dayakologi's physical products that had been produced and collated since 1991. Institut Dayakologi had conducted research, gathered documentation, produced publications and facilitated empowerment initiatives relating to indigenous peoples, especially in West Kalimantan. Thousands of items of data gathered from its research, oral traditions documentation and publications were actually well stored in an adequate filing room and library. The disastrous fire turned all those products to ash.¹ The fire not only ruined Institut Dayakologi's office but also the offices of other non-governmental organisations (NGOs): Percetakan Mitra Kasih (MIKA, Mitra Kasih Printing House), Lembaga Bela Banua Talino (LBBT, Institute for Community Legal Resources Empowerment), Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Kalimantan Barat (AMA-Kalbar, Alliance of West Kalimantan Indigenous Peoples) and the secretariat of Gerakan Pemberdayaan Pancur Kasih (GPPK, Pancur Kasih Empowerment Movement).

Institut Dayakologi, the LBBT, MIKA and the GPPK all emerged from Yayasan Karya Sosial Pancur Kasih (YKSPK, Pancur Kasih Social Work Foundation) which was itself established in 1981. The LBBT was founded in 1993 to empower community legal resources in dealing with natural resources management. It occupied the same building as Institut Dayakologi and shared a library. Mitra Kasih Printing House specialises in printing publication materials, books, the *Kalimantan Review*, as well as selling stationery to all member organisations affiliated to the GPPK as well as to the general public. The printing house also provides photocopying services. The GPPK office was the coordination centre for all 10 members of the GPPK consortium.

Although Institut Dayakologi's office burned down, a fire of any kind could not destroy its real work. A fire cannot obliterate Dayak culture, their identity and their rights to exist as indigenous peoples of Kalimantan nor the real work of revitalisation and empowerment of Dayak culture. After the fire Institut Dayakologi's activities paused only for a while, and with a new spirit the institute stood up again to continue the struggle.

Institut Dayakologi serves as an information and advocacy centre of Dayak culture. In this role, it is committed to facilitating, enabling and supporting Dayaks to participate in and contribute to a more just, peaceful and sustainable world through their cultural richness, local knowledge, wisdom and experiences. By serving as an information and advocacy centre, Institut Dayakologi is able to provide for Dayak peoples' needs to document their cultural identities and thus contribute to the preservation of the world's cultural heritage. To this end, the institute provides information collected through well-organised documentation, research and studies to make it worth meeting the needs of the people. Therefore, directly or indirectly, these efforts will encourage the advocacy and dissemination of Dayak culture as well as supporting better recognition of their rights at home and abroad.

¹Six other houses of neighbouring residents were also burned down. In this chapter, I use the analogy of a house on fire to describe the situation that the Dayaks face.

After successfully overcoming the emergency situation after the fire Institut Dayakologi immediately set about conducting its recovery programme. This included the establishment of a database centre with its own server at its new office in order to facilitate the management of cultural information that has been collected and collated. A production house facility is in preparation to process Dayak cultural patrimony for educational, campaign, advocacy and promotional purposes. In addition, the new office building has been equipped with a library, conference room, information technology control room, production house and a display room for cultural artefacts and objects.

In order to serve as the medium for disseminating Dayak culture, values, spirituality and knowledge, Institut Dayakologi has been undertaking documentation and research on Dayak oral traditions for the last quarter of a century. This has entailed a major effort to save indigenous knowledge that would otherwise have been on the brink of extinction. To maximise its role, the institute has undertaken collaborative work and advocacy with other actors at local, national and international levels so that the problems and challenges faced by indigenous peoples are more clearly articulated. Through this multilevel networking approach, the focus is on advocacy for cultural revival, environmental and natural resource management, as well as efforts to build peace. Despite Institut Dayakologi's long-standing efforts in collecting and documenting Dayak oral traditions, the results actually constitute only a small fraction of the cultural richness possessed by Dayaks. There have been growing demands for more information on Dayak culture from the government, NGOs, religious institutions, researchers, academics, journalists, university students of different levels as well as from schoolchildren.

15.2 Institut Dayakologi, Dayak Culture and the Challenges

The research findings published by Mil Roekaerts (1985) as *Tanah diri: Kalimantan Barat, land rights of tribals* mentions that Dayak peoples, despite being the majority of the population, played no significant social, cultural, economic and political roles in Kalimantan. Roekaerts describes Dayaks as a 'small people caught in the rapid process of modernisation'. In doing so, he also confirms what P.J. Veth (1854), the nineteenth-century Dutch ethnographer, once said: the Dayaks are 'landlords who are landless'. Roekaerts's research had a great impact on some young Dayak intellectuals in Pontianak in the late 1980s when his findings were distributed internally among a small number of Catholic and university student activists. Another Dutch anthropologist, Ronald Lucardie (in a meeting with the YKSPK in 1987) reminded participants that the lack of information about Dayaks in Kalimantan would pose problems for their future development. He encouraged Dayak activists affiliated to Pancur Kasih to start writing and documenting Dayaks. This further encouraged them to establish a discussion group that they later named

the Institute of Dayakology Research and Development (IDRD), not an easy undertaking when freedom of expression was very restricted under the Suharto New Order regime.

The discussion group came under the direction Albert Rufinus, a member of the board of directors of the YKSPK who was also a lecturer at the local Universitas Tanjungpura. The members of the group were mostly teachers, lecturers and university students, and it was set up to become a think tank for the YKSPK to help in the formulation and design of its programmes and strategies. The YKSPK hoped that the programmes answered the needs and challenges faced by Dayaks, especially those living in West Kalimantan. I was one of those university students then involved in the discussion group.

In May 1991 the IDRD was formally established as an independent organisation with Albert Rufinus as its first executive director. In 1998 the IDRD changed its name to Institut Dayakologi. Stepanus Djuweng then replaced Rufinus in 1994, and the latter was the executive director until 1999 when I replaced him. I resigned from this post in 2015 and was succeeded by Benyamin Efraim. It was a long yet very enriching 15 years. During my period in office it was the *Kalimantan Review* that helped define Institut Dayakologi as a cultural advocacy organisation, and all this could be traced back to the early discussion groups. This bulletin has now become a monthly magazine and serves as a medium for the empowerment and transformation of indigenous peoples, publishing essays, reports and news about Dayak culture and about the problems faced by Dayaks.

Since its establishment, Institut Dayakologi has argued that protecting and preserving Dayak culture could not and shall not be separated from protecting and preserving the natural environment where Dayaks live and on which they depend. Therefore, as already noted, it is not surprising that the first activity that the IDRD carried out was a study on the impact of oil palm plantations and transmigration on Dayaks. At the time criticism of Suharto's authoritarian regime, and its policies and programmes, was treated as blatant subversion. Thus the early discussions dealt with very sensitive issues such as land grabbing, the negative impacts of transmigration programmes, the destruction of forests and Dayak culture by logging and monoculture plantation activities as well as the disappearance of Dayak longhouses, oral traditions and indigenous knowledge.

Why did the IDRD take the risk and jeopardise its existence in the face of such an authoritarian regime? Institut Dayakologi believes that Dayak culture depends on the three most important natural elements to survive: land, forests and rivers. Without them Dayak culture will lose its support system. Without them the Dayaks are simply unable to perform, maintain and protect their unique identity as indigenous peoples along with all their cultural knowledge and practices. When monoculture and industrial plantations occupy Dayak territories, these three important elements and the support system are completely destroyed.² During Suharto's New Order

²I highlighted the significance and importance of these as early as 1992 at the International Seminar held by the Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (WALHI, Indonesian Forum for the

regime there were seminars, workshops, discussions and publications on issues relating to Kalimantan and Dayaks. However, there were very few speakers or even participants who were Dayaks. In those fora, the general image of Dayaks was that they were ‘troublemakers’, mostly ‘forest destroyers’, ‘primitive and backward’, ‘uncivilised and pagans’, ‘poor and stupid’, ‘lazy and undisciplined’. These stereotypes not only came from those who did not understand Dayak culture but also from co-opted Dayaks. For example, before there was an agreement on using the word ‘Dayak’ at the national seminar on Dayak culture held by the IDRDR in 1992, the word ‘dayak’ had been written in various ways such as *daya*, *dyak* and *daya*. The Dayaks could not even define their own identity and did not know who they were. When the idea to establish the IDRDR was proposed in 1987, there were those who thought that using the name Dayak was too risky as it was a sensitive issue and could lead to exclusivism, localism and ethnocentrism because of hegemony and fear. These misgivings were eventually overcome, and the IDRDR operated under the protection of the Lembaga Pelatihan dan Penunjang Pembangunan Sosial (LP3S, Institute for Training and Supporting Social Development) based in Jakarta, and was known as the LP3S West Kalimantan branch.

In November 1992 the IDRDR held a national seminar on Dayak culture and the Dayak cultural exhibition. This seminar is believed to be the second largest Dayak gathering after the famous Tumbang Anoi meeting in Central Kalimantan on 23 May 1884. Dayak representatives from four provinces of Kalimantan, from Sabah and Sarawak, and some Dayaks who lived outside Borneo attended the seminar. Several observers from Japan, France, the Netherlands and the United States also attended. Many critical issues to do with the impact of government policies and development projects in Kalimantan in general were discussed by well-known Dayak intellectuals, anthropologists, government officials and politicians and Dayak activists. This event became a milestone for the awakening and development of Dayaks. The results of the seminar were published in a book entitled *Kebudayaan Dayak: aktualisasi dan transformasi* (Dayak culture: actualisation and transformation) (Florus et al. 1994). The other important result of the seminar was the agreement on the spelling of the word Dayak (with k at the end of the word).

These are the conditions that challenge both the Dayaks and Institut Dayakologi. As an institution that was established to undertake the revitalisation and restitution of Dayak culture, Institut Dayakologi does not have many choices. This explains the reason why, besides its activities in research, documentation and publication, the institute also undertakes advocacy work on environmental issues and

(Footnote 2 continued)

Environment) in Jakarta. Pointing to the Dayak Jalai philosophy about prosperity in the saying ‘*Sasak behundang, arai beikan, hutan bejalug*’ (There are shrimps found in the riverbed, there are fish found in the rivers and there are wild animals found in the forests), I explained the importance of these three elements of nature for the survival of the Dayaks and their culture. Ten years later in 2002 I still warned about this in the international seminar held in Tomellila, Sweden that discussed poverty and indigenous peoples. Even in understanding what is poverty, Dayaks believe it is caused by the failure of human beings to keep a balance and live in harmony with nature.

indigenous peoples' rights at local, national and international levels. Recent advances in information technology have enabled anybody to make use of this new knowledge, including Dayaks who are keen not only to obtain information from other parts of the world but also share their knowledge and information to the world. Institut Dayakologi strongly believes that information technology plays a strategic role in managing the information centre; therefore, over the last few years it has been preparing, setting up and updating its capacities to manage this demand.

15.3 The Institutional Setting

Working as an advocacy NGO under the New Order regime was not easy. From May 1991 onwards the IDR had five programmes: (1) institutional development of the coordinating secretariat; (2) research on language, culture, social economy, history and politics, demography and environment, laws and traditions and appropriate technologies; (3) documentation and publications, a library, museum collection and cultural studio for exhibitions; (4) training and seminars for staff and researchers, the Dayak culture seminar, providing resource persons or participants in other seminars in Indonesia or abroad; (5) improvement of women's roles including development of productive work and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle.

In June 1994 a meeting of the members of the LP3S-IDRD was held for the first time to carry out evaluation, reflection and reformulation of the IDR's mandate. One of the most important decisions that shaped the future of the IDR was an agreement about its roles as a cultural research and advocacy institution. In 1996 a strategic plan was formulated and it was decided that the IDR should be separated from LP3S since it was considered to be strong enough to stand on its own. When the name of the IDR was discussed, the use of the word 'development' (*pembangunan* in Indonesian) in its name was debated. Under the New Order, development projects in Indonesia caused marginalisation, environmental and cultural destruction, appropriation of indigenous peoples' lands and territories, and so on. Therefore, it was agreed to drop the word 'development' from the IDR's name together with the word 'research' in order to give the new institute a more flexible identity in its work. The name of the new organisation became Institut Dayakologi, written fully in the Indonesian language.

The strategic planning initiative that was held in May 1996 also formulated the vision of Institut Dayakologi in the following terms: Dayak peoples are able to determine and manage their social, cultural, economic and political lives towards self-reliance in the spirit of love and brotherhood in order to obtain recognition, respect and protection based on Pancasila (five principles of the Indonesian state) and the 1945 Constitution.³ The mission of Institut Dayakologi was 'to conduct

³During the 1980s all organisations had to adopt Pancasila as the sole ideological principle (*asas tunggal*). Most of the time, the Constitution also had to be used and stated in organisations' statutes.

research and/or advocacy in the spirit of education, independence and solidarity for the revitalisation and restitution of the Dayaks' existence'. In May 1996 a draft statute was ready to be discussed and finalised. This draft explained the substantive and principal issues that had been debated and agreed: the vision and the mission as well as an explanation of the absence of the words 'research and development' in the new name. An important workshop was held in Pontianak and attended by the board of trustees and the board of directors of Institut Dayakologi. The workshop agreed on the following: (1) The adoption of the draft statute of Institut Dayakologi Foundation and the foundation's legal standing which was separated from the LP3S Jakarta; and (2) the official establishment of the foundation on 31 May 1996. The LP3S Jakarta produced a letter dated 15 September 1998 that disbanded LP3S West Kalimantan Branch–Institut Dayakologi Research and Development. Now all matters relating to the former powers, duties and authority of the LP3S–IDRD were fully handed over to the Institut Dayakologi Foundation.

The fall of the New Order regime in 1998 brought significant changes in Indonesia's social and political system. The *reformasi* era focused on the fight against *korupsi, kolusi dan nepotisme* (KKN, corruption, collusion and nepotism) which became the central issue in everyday life. One of the efforts taken by the new government was to enact Law No. 16 of 2001 on Foundations. The law was criticised for having clear objectives but being misdirected. In fact, the target of the law was to take back the wealth accumulated by the previous rulers (Suharto and his cronies) which had been obtained through corruption and camouflaged under the guise of various foundations. However, the new law also affected all foundations in Indonesia, including NGOs and the newly established Institut Dayakologi Foundation as well as social and religious institutions. This law gave authority to the government to intervene and control the activities of all foundations and even disband them.

Responding to this situation, on 10 June 2002 the board of directors of Institut Dayakologi Foundation designed a draft statute to change the foundation's legal status into an association which was validated on 15 July 2002. A meeting of the board of trustees on 20 July 2002 decided to disband the Institut Dayakologi Foundation and to transfer all its authority and properties to the Institut Dayakologi Association.

For its consistency as an alternative media outlet with a long commitment to indigenous peoples rights, Institut Dayakologi was granted three Institut Studi Arus Informasi (ISAI, Institute for the Study on Free Flow of Information) awards from 1999 to 2001.⁴ At the international level, Institut Dayakologi was the Indonesian winner of the 2004 Citigroup Foundation and the Resource Alliance Asia-Pacific NGO award for its 'professional management, innovation in resources mobilisation, and effectiveness of the NGO's respective programmes in improving the life of communities they serve'. One of Institut Dayakologi's documentary films entitled

⁴Institut Studi Arus Informasi is an independent media organisation led by Goenawan Mohamad, a well-known senior journalist with *Tempo* magazine.

Tumbang kabut asap (The victims of haze) was nominated at the Borneo Film Festival in 2006. As Institut Dayakologi's executive director, I was recognised as *Tokoh Budaya Kalimantan Barat* (West Kalimantan cultural figure) by the provincial government in 2012. All these achievements are the result of hard work and the uncompromising commitment of all Institut Dayakologi's activists with support from various parties such as the indigenous peoples themselves, Pancur Kasih, network organisations and partners at local, national as well as international levels that have proffered continuous support.

The current vision of Institut Dayakologi, as agreed within the GPPK, states: 'The Dayak peoples, and other oppressed communities in general, are able to determine and manage their lives in togetherness in the spirit of love, so that they have cultural dignity, economic self-sufficiency, and political sovereignty'. To contribute to the achievement of this vision, Institut Dayakologi's mandate is 'to conduct critical research and studies, documentation and publication as well as advocacy and collaboration for the liberation of Indigenous Dayak peoples from the dominant cultural, social, economic and political oppressions'.

Institut Dayakologi has been able to work in a new office building after its formal opening on 2 September 2013. This was a very important moment in the resurrection of the institute. The opening celebration was attended by hundreds of network members, including representatives of Institut Dayakologi's partners from Britain, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Malaysia. The celebration became more special as Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, the United Nations special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, was present at the celebration. It was also the occasion of the launching of two bilingual books in English and Indonesian about the Pancur Kasih Empowerment Movement and Pancur Kasih Credit Union Movement. The theme of the celebration was '*Langkang pulang betunas punggur balik bedaun*' (the wood in the water grows new shoots, the dying bark of wood produces leaves again) which indicates a new idealism, commitment and spirit of Institut Dayakologi in its work.

In response to the need for more information and data on Dayak culture, a number of activities have been planned. The programme of documentation and research has been carried out more proactively to increase not only its quantity but also its quality. In June 2013 an international seminar of specialists on indigenous knowledge, organised by the Tebtebba Foundation in Manila, the Philippines was attended by GPPK activists, including from Institut Dayakologi. This seminar discussed a series of presentations on traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples from all over the world and the use of this knowledge to manage their natural and social environment wisely. At the end of the seminar, the Dayak delegation agreed that an academic institution that focuses on the revitalisation and management of Dayak indigenous knowledge should be established in the future. However, this remains a long-term goal.

In addition, there are three roles that Institut Dayakologi has to play as the information and advocacy centre of Dayak culture. First, while the situation of Dayaks has changed serious problems still remain. There are now two Dayak governors, many district heads, a number of politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen

and other public figures. This is a new development as the roles of Dayaks in the past were very marginal. While there are some significant achievements, it remains the case that Dayak lands and natural resources are being continuously taken over and destroyed. Although many Dayaks have become high-ranking government officials and are in decision-making positions, the condition of Dayaks at the grassroots remains the same or is getting even worse. One of the reasons is that the leaders are not really representing Dayak interests nor are they holding on to the cultural values and philosophies of Dayaks in implementing their policies. Second, there is the role in building and maintaining the conditions in enabling Dayak culture to progress. Globalisation affects Dayak culture while oil palm plantations and forest destruction have caused massive degradation. To that end, Institut Dayakologi is challenged to play a role in building ideal spaces and conditions for Dayak culture to be able to survive. And third, the institute has a role in providing the basis for the development of Dayak culture that will allow cultural values and philosophies to be maintained and implemented by the people themselves.

Institut Dayakologi has gone through many challenges in its struggle to make Dayak culture better recognised and respected. But it has managed to survive the New Order regime and face up to new issues that have emerged in the democratic era. The next section examines some of the institute's major research projects and their core findings.

15.4 Research Studies

In the context of advocacy, Institut Dayakologi had carried out a number of important research projects that have influenced the government's thinking and policy-making on indigenous peoples, such as traditional farming systems. In the past Dayak agriculture was often regarded as destroying the forests, and was thus called *ladang berpindah* (literally shifting cultivation). Institut Dayakologi's continuous efforts in correcting this wrong perception have resulted in a change in the understanding not only of the government but also the public at large. More and more people have stopped using the term *ladang berpindah* and many of them have stopped accusing indigenous peoples' farming systems as the cause of deforestation.

The research has also helped change the perception of the lack of diversity among Dayaks. While research was ongoing in 2004, government official documents stated that there were only three Dayak subethnic groups found in West Kalimantan. Meanwhile, the ethnolinguistic research of Institut Dayakologi confirmed that in Sanggau alone there are 57 Dayak subethnic groups and this formed the basis of criticism of the government's official data. Dayaks responded by setting up a customary court for the head of West Kalimantan Statistics Bureau to clarify the official data. They also demanded that the data be withdrawn and corrected.

The following are several of the most important projects conducted under the auspices of Institut Dyakologi.

15.4.1 Adat Land Conversion to Oil Palm Plantations

Research on the conversion of traditional *adat* (customary) land for use as oil palm plantations was the first study conducted by Institut Dayakologi when it was still a discussion group under the YKSPK. Given the pressing concerns about so many appropriations and conversions of the *adat* lands, Institut Dayakologi conducted a study of oil palm plantation areas located in Ngabang (Landak), Batang Tarang (Sanggau) and Tumbang Titi (Ketapang) in 1988–1989. The research findings confirmed that the land conversions had been done using intimidation by the police and military, and through deception—the signing of letters of agreement on blank paper by some *adat* chiefs, as well as false promises about compensation that the community would receive but that never materialised. The data gathered was further analysed by the discussion group. The findings and recommendations were then written as papers and published in national newspapers such as *Kompas* and the *Jakarta Post* by Stepanus Djuweng—who had a journalistic background and who was also a member of the discussion group. A version of the paper was distributed at an international conference held by the International NGO Forum on Indonesia (INGI) held in Odawara, Japan (Djuweng 1992). The paper criticised the Indonesian government’s development strategy in relation to oil palm plantations and transmigration and how the plantations negatively affected Dayak livelihoods. The paper received positive responses and support from the participants of the conference and was later published in an extended form. The recommendations drawn from this study also resulted in the establishment of two NGOs working for Dayak legal aid foundations in 1993: the LBBT in West Kalimantan and Lembaga Bina Benua Puti Jaji (LBBPJ) in East Kalimantan.

15.4.2 Dayak Political Participation in Sabah and Sarawak

Research was conducted in 1991 to gain an understanding of the political roles of Dayaks in the Malaysian states of Sarawak and Sabah and to compare them with the conditions of Dayaks in Kalimantan as well as their implications for Indonesia in general. The research findings were discussed internally, published in *Kompas*, the largest-circulation Indonesian newspaper, and attracted the attention of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the most important research institution during Suharto’s New Order and a leading government think tank. The CSIS invited Institut Dayakologi (represented by Djuweng) to present the paper in a seminar specifically organised for that purpose in Jakarta in 1992 and it later published the paper in its journal in both Indonesian and English.

15.4.3 Plant Genetic Resources

Research on the genetic resources concerned the biodiversity of edible plants and was carried out from 1995 to 1997 among two Dayak subethnic groups: the Kanayatn community in Raba and Nangka in Menjalin, Landak; and the Jalai community in Tanggerang, Jelai Hulu, Ketapang. The objective was to document the richness of biodiversity in the farms and surrounding areas as healthy and natural food sources as well as to promote biodiversity managed by the Dayaks. The research shows that natural forest conversions into monocultural oil palm plantations destroyed hundreds of edible plants in indigenous territories. The research findings were published in a book entitled *Kalimantan: earth rich with food*. The research findings are summarised in Table 15.1.

Food that comes from plants is the healthiest since they are grown naturally and do not contain any artificial chemical substances. Research on plant genetic resources was also carried out to encourage people to choose natural foods rather than factory-processed foods. However, in order to protect these sources of healthy food, nature and the environment in the Dayak territories also have to be protected.

15.4.4 Ethnolinguistics

Ethnolinguistic research has been carried out to identify the diversity of Dayak subethnic groups and languages in West Kalimantan. Many welcomed the research as a milestone in the revitalisation efforts for languages and diversity. It took 10 years to complete this research which was published in a book, *Mozaik Dayak: keberagaman subsuku dan bahasa Dayak di Kalimantan Barat* (Dayak mosaic: the variety of Dayak subethnic groups and their languages in West Kalimantan) (Bamba 2008), together with two ethnolinguistic maps showing the distribution of all Dayak subethnic groups and languages identified in the research, a compact disc and a manual for the maps. At the book launch on 17 May 2008 in Pontianak most participants believed that this research was the most important about Dayak culture

Table 15.1 Plant diversity in Menjalin and Jelai Hulu, West Kalimantan

Kinds of plants	Jelai	Menjalin	Total
Fruits	116	74	190
Vegetables	75	53	128
Sugar cane	12	2	14
Tubers	16	7	23
Mushrooms	30	14	44
Padi ^a	1	NA	1
Total	250	150	400

^aPadi could not be identified due to ethnic conflict occurring in West Kalimantan in 1996–1997

produced this century, the results of which have also gained wide media coverage. The initial data compilation comprised 151 Dayak subethnic groups and 100 sub-subethnic groups and 168 Dayak languages/dialects in West Kalimantan. In the future, Institut Dayakologi is also planning to make the research findings available in English and to continue the research in other parts of Kalimantan.

The research findings show that 37 % of Dayak languages/dialects are spoken only by around 1000–5000 people and only one Dayak language has more than 100,000 speakers. Therefore, the condition of Dayak languages is under a very serious threat of extinction. This research received a lot of support, especially from James T. Collins who was the consultant for this project. Collins also facilitated three researchers from Institut Dayakologi—Sujarni Alloy, Albertus and Yovinus—to study ethnolinguistics at postgraduate level at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. In addition, P.M. Laksono, an anthropologist from Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta also provided many inputs for this research. Unfortunately, the 2007 fire destroyed all the supporting field data that had been collected for some 10 years. Institut Dayakologi is in the process of recollecting the field data.

15.4.5 Interethnic Violence and Reconciliation Potential in West Kalimantan

This study was conducted to respond to the repeated ethnic violence, especially that between Dayaks and migrant Madurese in West Kalimantan. It tried to identify the root causes of the violence among Dayaks, Malays, Chinese and Madurese from a grassroots perspective, and to examine any cultural values and practices that could provide the potential for reconciliation, transformation and peace-building efforts.

The data in this study were collected through focus group discussions in eight locations in four districts. The research method used was critical participatory action research. This places those who were involved in the violence as the analysts or subjects of analysis rather than the objects, in order to explore sociocultural realities from colonial times until the New Order era. This method also gives opportunities to the actors of violence to reflect on their own experiences and perceptions of other ethnic groups. This, in turn, allows for self-reflection by the participants on the character of their own culture vis-à-vis other ethnic groups and how different policies of those in power have influenced them. The research shows that the practices, attitudes and characteristics of some ethnic groups were factors that contributed to the violence. It is also reveals that the disharmonious relationships between some ethnic groups and the government also triggered violent conflicts in one way or another. For example, a specific part of this study analyses conflict between Dayaks and Madurese and its correlation with state policies, focusing on Dayak conflicts with the state and its supporters, and between the Kanayatn Dayaks and Madurese. In doing so, the study is able to understand the sociocultural relationships between Kanayatn Dayak and Madurese, including

the levels of knowledge, attitudes and actions of those involved in the conflict. On the other hand, the research also shows that good levels of cooperation and communication among informal leaders in several areas were able to keep Malays, Madurese, Javanese, Chinese and Dayaks away from conflict in 1996–1997 and 1999. In fact, an important conclusion is that the actors in the violence are also victims and that both parties involved in conflict also suffer from it. This study was published in *Dayakology: journal for the revitalization and restitution of Dayak culture* in 2004.

15.4.6 Dayak Religion

This study published in *Dayakology* in 2004 portrays the ways in which the six formal Indonesian state religions—Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism—and government policies have not respected Dayak culture. These external factors have placed Dayak indigenous religion in a state of degradation and marginalisation, worsened by internal factors among the Dayaks themselves. The relationship among the formal religions and Dayak indigenous religion has characteristics of domination and hegemony, leading to a Dayak cultural identity crisis.

15.4.7 Shamanism Among the Dayaks

Shamanism among Dayaks in West Kalimantan is one of the defence systems in the dynamics of everyday existence, and when cultural degradation occurs then shamanism is also in crisis. Shamans perform various cultural roles, not only as herbalists, healers and spiritualists (mediators, diplomats, negotiators, reconcilers, priests) but also teachers. In Dayak communities whose languages and cultures are varied, shamanic rituals are also diverse. However, there is also an essential similarity in that the authority to do the work of a shaman has to be confirmed, and this does not apply to a non-shaman. For particular activities, the spirit of a shaman travels to the world of the spirits of their ancestors to seek help and advice. This shamanic authority goes beyond the spatial dimension and temporal dimension and into the spiritual domain. This study was also published in *Dayakology* in 2004.

15.4.8 Dayak Customary Laws

This critical study on Dayak customary laws focused on the issue of the commercialisation of customary laws by some opportunists who have had very negative impacts on the image of the customary laws themselves. The cases analysed include

those among Dayaks themselves as well as those involving non-Dayaks. This research was conducted in 2005–2006 and was about to be published when the fire destroyed all the data.

15.4.9 Usik Liau, the ‘Gambling’ Ritual of Dayak Dusun in Central Kalimantan

It is interesting to note that the Dayak Dusun communities in a remote area of Central Kalimantan actualise their mystical-spirit rites by practising mass gambling, involving hundreds of millions of rupiah. This gambling game commonly known as *usik liau* or spirit game is an obligation that must be conducted at every death ritual by Dayak Dusun. This is the reason why Institut Dayakologi conducted the research and held a special discussion to examine this issue. The gambling ritual, as one of the most important requirements in practising one of Kaharingan religious teachings in relation to death, actually serves as a mystical message to the spirits of the ancestors, in that their descendants are sincere and joyful in going back to meet the almighty, Alatala. While the stake is now paid in cash, in the beginning it was merely to add more fun when playing. After the game is over, half of the prize money is given to the family that is in grief to help them reduce some of their burden (*duit cuk*). The objectives of this research were threefold: first, to obtain a clearer and deeper understanding about the practices of this gambling ritual; second, to find out what the communities’ indigenous and religious leaders think about the ritual, as well as to obtain narrations on why the ritual has become commercialised; and third, to identify the social, economic, political and cultural impacts of the ritual on Dayak communities, as well as on the life of Central Kalimantan local communities in general, if the gambling continues to be legitimised and maintained. This research was discussed at a seminar at Institut Dayakologi’s office in 2008 to be published as a book.

15.4.10 Other Research and Studies

Since its foundation Institut Dayakologi has conducted a large number of other studies, including:

- 1 Local politics in Sabah and Sarawak and its implications for Kalimantan, 1991.
- 2 Transmigration in Kalimantan, 1992.
- 3 Impacts of government policies on the life of indigenous peoples, 1994.
- 4 Patterns of land control and ownership in Simpang Hulu, 1992.
- 5 Simpang and Kanayatn oral traditions and factors that destroy them, 1993–1994.
- 6 Dayak indigenous farming system, 1995–1998.

- 7 Population census in forest areas, in cooperation with the East-West Center, Hawaii, 1993.
- 8 Environmental assessment impact of the Bukit Baka/Raya project, 1994.
- 9 Patterns of land control and ownership among Dayak communities, 1997–1999.
- 10 Impacts of oil palm plantations on women, 2008–2009.

15.5 Documentation Programmes

Institut Dayakologi undertook the documentation of various Dayak oral traditions continuously from 1991 to 2009. Considering the massive impacts of globalisation on Dayak communities that destroy a large number of oral traditions, the documentation programme has become a primary and urgent priority of the institute's work. The documentation is done using cassette recordings, videos, photographs, slides and CDs. The data were then transcribed into written form, and some data on videos have been processed into documentary films. The work on documentation became more focused in 1993 with the implementation of the Conservation and Publication of Dayak Cultural Heritage of West Kalimantan project, better known as the Oral Tradition 1 (OT1) project. The OT1 project was followed by the Conservation and Restitution of Cultural Heritage of West Kalimantan (OT2) and the Revitalisation and Restitution of Culture of West Kalimantan (OT3).

The OT1 project was conducted among Dayak Kayan in Kapuas Hulu, Dayak Kanayatn in Landak and Dayak Simpang in Ketapang. With Dayak Kayan, the documentation involved Stephanie Morgan, a senior researcher from the United States. Twenty-three Dayak Kayan manuscripts, 532 Dayak Kanayatn manuscripts and 694 Dayak Simpang manuscripts were documented. These scripts are in the form of stories, rituals and non-rituals.

The OT2 project was conducted among Dayak Krio in Ketapang and Dayak Pompakng in Sanggau. Transcriptions of data of the OT1 documentation on the Dayak Kanayatn and Dayak Simpangkng were begun. From the OT2 project some 583 Dayak Krio manuscripts and 234 Dayak Pompakng manuscripts were documented. These manuscripts are in the form of stories, rituals and non-rituals. In the OT2 project, special research was conducted on the farming systems of the Dayak Simpangkng and Dayak Kanayatn. This research focused on the indigenous knowledge of both Dayak groups in managing their lands for agriculture. From the land management systems based on the oral traditions it is obvious that the system they practise is not so-called shifting cultivation which was criticised by government, but a method that uses land in rotation; this was actually proven to be the most suitable and sustainable system for Kalimantan's soil conditions. The OT3 project was directed more towards the transcription of the OT1 and OT2 data using local language speakers.

Table 15.2 Oral tradition documentation data, 1991–2007

Dayak subethnic groups	Number of informants	Number of tapes	Types of oral tradition		Number of transcribed tapes
			Ritual	Non-ritual	
Kanayatn	89	266	97	435	132
Simpakng	144	228	62	663	228
Krio	87	233	90	497	102
Pompakng	86	139	9	139	139
Kayan ^a	–	2	–	–	–
Bekati ⁷	–	22	–	–	–
Jalai-Kendawangan	17	148	97	51	68
Jangkang	–	8	–	–	–
Total	423	1046	355	1785	669

^aWork by Stephanie Morgan

Table 15.3 Documentation data, 1991–2007

Types of documentation	Total		
	Cassette tape recordings	CD/VCD recordings	Photographs
Natural resources and environment	207	26	4561
Cultural activities	203	95	3520
Economic activities	18	26	562
Meetings, seminars, workshops	282	114	2106
General	23	18	5457
Total	733	279	16,206

The work on Dayak oral tradition documentation did not stop after the OT1, OT2 and OT3 projects. Documentation was also conducted on Dayak Jalai and Dayak Kendawangan subethnic groups in Ketapang from 2001 to 2010. Through these projects, a further 160 cassettes of ritual and non-ritual traditions of subethnic groups were collected. A summary of the oral tradition data is presented in Table 15.2.

Documentation work has been continuously conducted on other Dayak subethnic groups. The types of documentation have also been improved to focus not only on oral traditions but also on the problems and challenges faced by the Dayaks, for example on farming knowledge, the impact of oil palm plantations, various community activities and land rights. The range of documentation activities is shown in Table 15.3.

A lot of documentation has been further processed into various types of publications for different purposes. For example, dozens of Dayak short stories recorded during the documentation activities have been published for school students and

have earned recommendations from the head of the West Kalimantan Department of Education and Culture as teaching materials with local content. The documentation process also resulted in the publication of books about Dayaks, their culture and the problems they face. To date Institut Dayakologi has published 61 titles.

15.6 Collaboration and Facilitation Programme

Institut Dayakologi conducted the collaboration and facilitation programme from 2001 onwards together with the communities. Community involvement and participation ranged from formulating the programmes through to their execution. Some of these collaboration and facilitation programmes have been undertaken in the interest of community self-reliance in Ketapang, the teaching of local content and facilitation in community radio broadcasts.

15.6.1 Community Self-reliance in Ketapang

The community self-reliance programme was conducted in six Ketapang districts (Tumbang Titi, Jelai Hulu, Marau, Singkup, Air Upas and Manismata) to build critical awareness in the communities about the potential they have and how to organise themselves in their struggle for better recognition of their rights as indigenous peoples. The programme trained local cadres in the villages, set up people's organisations and facilitated the community in enhancing the organisational and management skills of the local people. A total of 442 local cadres have been trained and five local organisations have been set up and managed by the local communities. A pro-movement credit union, CU Gemalag Kemisiq, was established in 1999 and has around 15,000 members with total assets of about US\$15 million at the end of December 2014. This credit union has contributed much to the economic empowerment of the communities and has served as their key financial institution.

The community self-reliance programme also facilitated the establishment of the Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Jalai dan Kendawangan (AMA-JK, Jalai Kendawangan Alliance of Indigenous Peoples) which helps the local communities to organise themselves and manage productive activities based on local potential and resources such as rubber farmers' groups, integrated natural resources management areas (*dahas*) as well as advocacy against the palm oil and mining companies. There are also local organisations set up for managing a community radio (Radio Komunitas Manjing Tarah), community library, cultural performance group and shamans' associations. The programme also facilitates the teaching of local culture at primary schools in these areas.

15.6.2 *Teaching of Local Culture*

Dayak culture possesses very rich traditions, customary laws, indigenous knowledge, ceremonies and customary institutions. However, this cultural richness is on the brink of extinction as the younger generation no longer follows these traditions nor applies this indigenous knowledge in their daily life.

Institut Dayakologi has tried to respond to this situation by bringing Dayak elders and local experts to schools to teach the students about their own culture that they are abandoning. The teaching of local culture in schools, targeted at the young generation, aims at reintroducing and strengthening Dayak cultural values, philosophies and practices. The teaching materials are designed and formulated with community representatives, and teachers are selected from the communities themselves. The teaching materials consist of local traditions, such as the farming system, indigenous medicine, handicrafts, arts, customary laws and so on.

There are two types of the local culture teaching programmes. The first teaches Dayak culture and traditions to children at schools. This has been done in six state elementary schools (*sekolah dasar negeri*, SDN): SDN Saginah and SDN Tunang in Landak, SDN Semadu in Sekadau, SDN Sanjan in Sanggau, and SDN 03 and SDN 05 Tanjung in Jelai Hulu, Ketapang. In addition, it also facilitated programmes in two junior secondary schools (*sekolah menengah pertama*, SMP): SMP Usaba Balai Semandang in Ketapang and SMP St Fransiskus Asisi, Pontianak.

The second type of local culture teaching has been directed towards deepening pluralism and multiculturalism. The goal has been to build reconciliation and a culture of peace and tolerance in West Kalimantan through teaching in secondary schools. The students are introduced to the cultural diversity in their areas so they gain a proper understanding and positive appreciation of cultural, religious and ethnic diversity. The local culture teaching has not been only delivered to Dayak children at secondary schools but also to Malay, Madurese and Tionghoa (Chinese) children. This programme is located at SMP St Fransiskus Asisi, Pontianak, SMP Harunyah, Pontianak, Catholic SMP Pahauman, Landak, Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs, Islamic junior high school) Nurul Alamiah, Pontianak, MTs Nahdatul Atfal Ambawang Kubu Raya District, SMP Don Bosco, Menjalin, Landak, and MTs Gerpemi, Tebas, Sambas.

15.6.3 *Community Radio*

Institut Dayakologi has facilitated the establishment of 12 community radio stations in West Kalimantan. The stations are owned, managed and used by the communities themselves. Institut Dayakologi facilitated the training for the management and the radio journalists and helped them to build the stations in their areas. Of the 12 radio stations, there are six among Dayak communities and six others in heterogeneous communities in towns (see Table 15.4).

Table 15.4 Community radio station facilitation

Community radio station	Location	Listener community
Radio Bujakng Pabaras	Ayo Gundaleng, Landak	Dayak community
Radio Bambang	Sejiram, Kapuas Hulu	Dayak community
Radio Patanyang	Semandang, Ketapang	Dayak community
Radio Gari Bindang	Manismata, Ketapang	Heterogeneous community
Radio Manjing Tarah	Tanjung, Ketapang	Dayak community
Radio Sunia Nawangi	Tunang, Landak	Dayak community
Radio Gempita	Sungai Pinyuh, Pontianak	Heterogeneous community
Radio Pamela	Ngabang, Landak	Heterogeneous community
Radio Suara Buluh Parindu	Bodok, Sanggau	Dayak community
Radio Suara Melawi	Nanga Pinoh, Melawi	Heterogeneous community
Radio Gema Solidaritas	Ketapang City, Ketapang	Heterogeneous community
Radio Menara Bengkayang	Bengkayang City, Bengkayang	Heterogeneous community

15.6.4 *Peace-Building in West Kalimantan*

West Kalimantan is an area prone to ethnic conflict. There have been many ethnic conflicts between Dayaks and Madurese, and between Madurese and Malays.⁵ The most violent conflicts occurred in 1997 between Dayaks and Madurese and in 2000 between Malays and Madurese. These conflicts have claimed thousands of lives. To respond to this, Institut Dayakologi initiated the establishment of an alliance called Aliansi untuk Perdamaian dan Rekonsiliasi (ANPRI, Alliance for Peace and Reconciliation) in West Kalimantan. This alliance is composed of six institutions: Institut Dayakologi, Gemawan, the secretariat of the GPPK, Program Pengembangan Ekonomi Kerakyatan (PEK, People's Economic Development Programme), the Madurese-run Mitra Sekolah Masyarakat (MiSEM, Public Schools Partners) and Badan Koordinasi Credit Union Kalimantan (BKCUK, Kalimantan Credit Union Coordinating Board). The activities carried out by ANPRI sprang from interethnic dialogue for the youth and university students, training in peace-building, interethnic youth camps, peace journalism and so on.

⁵During the period since Indonesian independence there have been 14 clashes recorded between Dayaks and Madurese, two of them (1979 and 1997) claimed thousands of lives. The violence happened in 1952 and 1967 (Pontianak Regency), 1968 and 1976 (Pontianak), 1977 and 1979 (Sambas), 1982 and 1983 (Pontianak), 1992 and 1993 (Pontianak municipality), 1994 (Ketapang Regency), 1996 (Sambas), 1997 (Pontianak municipality) and 1999 (Sambas). In 1999 Madurese also clashed with Malays in Sambas, immediately followed by Dayaks joining Malays after one Dayak was also murdered by Madurese. Malay–Madurese clashes also rocked Pontianak in October 2000. See John Bamba (2000: 5).

15.7 Advocacy and Networking Programme

The advocacy and networking programme is another important Institut Dayakologi activity that responds to various challenges faced by Dayaks to deal with the destructive aspects of their lives. Considering that destruction of indigenous peoples' lives involves a global scenario, the advocacy strategy comprises various networks at local, national and international levels. Institut Dayakologi has been conducting advocacy primarily on oil palm plantation cases, commercial tree plantations, large-scale mining, forest destruction, river pollution and the expropriation of indigenous peoples' rights. Dozens of cases have been dealt with by Institut Dayakologi such as those of industrial tree plantations (*hutan tanaman industri*) in Sandai (1994) and Empurang-Sanggau (the state-owned company Inhutani's project supported by the Asian Development Bank), the conflict between local communities and the workers of PT Erna Djulawati in Kayu Tunu, Sanggau, the oil palm plantation of PT Hutan Sawit Lestari and several other oil palm plantations in Ketapang (1999–2009), and a mining conflict in Ketapang (2007–2009).

In the advocacy of these cases, Institut Dayakologi cooperated with the communities and also with various local, national and international networks. At the local level, besides supporting community activities and disseminating the cases through various networks, Institut Dayakologi also participated in protests against companies and the government. At the national level, the advocacy targeted the policies of the government, and was generally carried out collectively with network members, such as the Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria (KPA, Consortium of Agrarian Reform), Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (WALHI, Indonesian Forum for the Environment), Jaringan Advokasi Tambang (Jatam, Mining Advocacy Network), the Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN, Indigenous Peoples' Alliance of the Archipelago) and Sawit Watch. In 1992 Institut Dayakologi, together with other national NGOs, sued Suharto at the Pengadilan Tata Usaha Negara (PTUN, State Administrative Court) for misusing reforestation funds to finance the national aircraft construction project. At the international level, advocacy conducted by Institut Dayakologi has been done through case exposures by means of seminar forums, conferences, workshops and meetings. In the international forums, Institut Dayakologi has frequently been requested to be a resource organisation.

15.8 Publications Programme

Institut Dayakologi has published magazines, books, comics, papers, radio dramas, advertisements, documentary films, cassette recordings, pamphlets, calendars and posters. Its first publication activity was the magazine *Kalimantan Review* in 1992 as a medium of empowerment and advocacy. The first magazine published by and

Table 15.5 Institut Dayakologi's documentation and publication output

Type of publication	Total
Books	60
Radio drama cassettes	23
Documentary films	54
Transcriptions of Dayak oral traditions	927
<i>Kalimantan Review</i> (Indonesian)	172
<i>Kalimantan Review</i> (English)	6
Working Papers, papers, scientific research papers, research project reports	123

for the Dayak peoples, *Kalimantan Review* consistently publishes on Dayak cultures and traditions, their present conditions and challenges. Up to 2009 172 Indonesian editions and six English editions had been published. Through this magazine, indigenous peoples are encouraged to be critical of the problems they encounter. The publications programme has also published around 60 important books on Dayak cultures and related issues. In addition, a number of Dayak folklore publications in the form of comics targeting schoolchildren have also been published. Besides books, Institut Dayakologi also produces various papers and articles, some of which are published overseas. Publication is also conducted through documentary films such as *Dayak indigenous farming systems* and *Water pollution*. Publications on folklore arts are also delivered through radio dramas in cooperation with the state-run Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI, Republic of Indonesia Radio) which broadcasts in the Dayak Kanayatn language (Table 15.5).

15.8.1 *Proselytisation of Dominant Religions*

Indonesia is one of the few countries in the world that implements a policy of so-called official state religions. Everyone must include their religious affiliation on their identity card. The official religions are Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism and (more recently) Confucianism. Confucianism was added during Abdurrahman Wahid's administration in 2000. These official religions, especially Islam and Christianity, came to Kalimantan and brought with them symbols of 'modern' civilisation. Many indigenous Dayaks converted. As a result, Dayak rituals were prohibited, their religious symbols destroyed, names changed and non-believers were considered pagans. In West Kalimantan, when Dayaks convert to Islam, they are no longer considered Dayaks but Malays. One of the Dayak religions in Central Kalimantan known as Kaharingan is treated as Hinduism because it is not listed as one of the government's official state religions.

However, in 2013 the parliament changed the law on population administration which obliged every Indonesian to state his/her religion on their identity card. The amendment resulted in the Law No. 24/2013 that allows citizens to leave the

religious designation blank if they believe they do not belong to any of the official religions. In response to this, Human Rights Watch states:

Although the current Population Administration Law gives citizens the choice of whether or not to declare their religious faith on their ID cards, those who wish to declare a faith still must choose from a list of only six protected religions. Individuals who do not declare a religion risk being labeled ‘godless’ by some Muslim clerics and officials and subject to possible blasphemy prosecution. (Kine 2014)

Therefore, though the new amended law is a promising development in terms of state recognition of the freedom of religion, it does not signify any progress in terms of religious tolerance, especially towards religious minorities. Quoting the data released by the Setara Institute, the Human Rights Watch continues:

Across Indonesia, religious minorities, including several Christian groups, Shia, and the Ahmadiyah (who consider themselves Muslims but are viewed as heretics by some other Muslims), are targets of harassment, intimidation, threats and, increasingly, mob violence. Indonesia’s Setara Institute, which monitors religious freedom in Indonesia, documented 220 cases of violent attacks on religious minorities in 2013, up from 91 such cases in 2007. (Ibid.)

15.8.2 Centralised Education System

The centralised education system in Indonesia uproots students from their cultural background. Students are taught that to live in prosperity is to live industriously with modern technologies. Local culture, knowledge and expertise are considered backward and stupid. Therefore, formal education has created a gap between the recipients and their cultural roots. A job, for example, is defined as being a government officer or a company employee. Working as farmers or rubber tappers is therefore considered a form of unemployment. This lack of support for local culture and knowledge has created dependency rather than the spirit of self-reliance, and has created a brain drain away from Dayak villages as more and more of the younger generation look for jobs in towns or cities or nearby plantations and mines. Some of them even end up working as household maids in Malaysia or as waitresses in bars, karaoke joints or hotels or even become sex workers.

15.8.3 Modern Media Technology

The penetration of modern media technology is something that no one can resist. Even Dayaks living in remote areas have access to televisions with satellite channels and mobile telephone communications—in some areas even with access to internet 3G service—are readily available and affordable for most of the community. Though access to electricity and communication networks is not yet evenly

distributed to all areas most people own mobile phones. If a connection is not available in their village they drive motorbikes to the nearest access point in order to get a signal. Television has long replaced traditional, informal social gatherings. It has brought a tremendous impact to Dayak culture. Television programmes introduce new desires and new lifestyles which encourage consumerism. As a result, some villagers are willing to sell their rice stock or rubber sheets in exchange for modern products such as cheap cosmetics and perfumes. Many of them look for jobs in palm oil and mining companies to get cash. The younger generations suffer the most. After finishing education, they already have new perceptions and abandon their culture, perceiving it as primitive and backward. Traditional rituals and festivities are now replaced by New Year's Eve parties, Valentine's Day celebrations and birthday parties. Drug problems are quite common now in some villages in West Kalimantan, while alcoholism and gambling are worsening.

Meanwhile, chainsaws have replaced traditional machetes and knives used in clearing the ricefields. Pesticides and herbicides are used while local knowledge related to pest and weed control has been abandoned and forgotten. Lives in the villages are increasingly becoming more pragmatic, practical and individualistic as clearly seen in the increasing tolerance and acceptance of the use of poisons and fish bombs for catching fish in the rivers. Many are also involved in the local mining activities that use machines to suck the gold mud from riverbeds or other areas around the villages. Traditional animal traps are hardly used any more for hunting wild animals in the forests as the use of modified army rifles and airsoft guns is very common now.

15.8.4 Destruction of Longhouses

Living in longhouses helps maintain the Dayak spirit of democracy, solidarity and collectivity and the transfer of knowledge from the older generation to younger generation. The destruction of Dayak longhouses in the late 1960s to early 1970s had dramatic impacts as longhouses are at the heart of Dayak culture. When Dayaks still lived in longhouses the spirit of solidarity was very strong. Every important moment in life such as births and weddings or sickness and death was shouldered together. All longhouse members would share meat whenever one person caught an animal while hunting. The Suharto regime undermined longhouses in the late 1960s as they were falsely accused of encouraging a communist lifestyle, being unhealthy and prone to lax sexual practices. As a result very few longhouses are now left because most Dayaks live in single houses. Therefore, the destruction of longhouses not only affected the spirit of solidarity, the transfer of indigenous knowledge and culture and the village defence system but also produced a dramatic change in how Dayaks live and the solidarity among them.

15.8.5 *Laws and Regulations*

The Suharto government did not recognise the existence of indigenous peoples in Indonesia as stipulated in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations 2007). The government argued that all Indonesians are indigenous. The government only recognised what they called ‘vulnerable groups’, ‘isolated communities’ and ‘alienated tribes’. Therefore, laws and regulations did not take into account the interests of indigenous peoples. The lands and all natural resources in Dayak territories were considered state lands. The agrarian law, forestry law, mining law and even the new law on local autonomy in the post-Suharto era still did not consider the rights of the indigenous peoples. This policy has resulted in the destruction of forests and the environment, the appropriation of indigenous peoples’ land and territories, the marginalisation of their culture and the co-optation of their local institutions. The development programme that prioritises logging concessions, oil palm plantations, industrial tree plantations, mining and transmigration has destroyed millions of hectares of forests and rendered the indigenous peoples foreigners in their own homeland.

In 2008 one of Institut Dayakologi’s activists, Vitalis Andi, together with Japin, a community member from Silat Hulu, Ketapang, were charged under Law No. 18/2004 on Plantations for protest actions they took to reclaim ancestral lands from an oil palm plantation (Indonesia 2004). The State Court in Ketapang sentenced both to one year in prison. The appeal at the higher court in Pontianak and at the Supreme Court in Jakarta both strengthened the previous court’s decision. With some of its network members, Institut Dayakologi then facilitated Andi and Japin, together with two other farmers who also suffered from criminalisation, Sakri from East Java and Ngatimin from North Sumatra, to file a judicial review at the Constitutional Court to abolish Articles 21 and 47 of the 2004 Law on Plantations that had been used by the government and police to criminalise communities that were protesting against the appropriation of their lands by plantation companies. Article 21 concerned restrictions on activities that disturbed plantations and their assets, and the use of lands inside plantation areas; Article 47 was about the penalties imposed on those who committed such ‘crimes’. Hundreds of farmers and indigenous community members had become the victims of these two articles as the police and the companies could easily accuse those who protested as acting illegally. On 19 September 2011 the Constitutional Court accepted the judicial review and ruled that the two articles in the old plantation law were against the Indonesian Constitution, especially Article 28(D)(1) which states: ‘Every person shall have the right of recognition, guarantees, protection and certainty before a just law, and of equal treatment before the law’ (Indonesia 1945). Institut Dayakologi then filed another review at the Supreme Court by using the Constitutional Court’s ruling as a new legal situation. To date, the Supreme Court in Jakarta has not produced a decision.

By the end of President Susilo Bambang Yudoyono’s administration in 2014 some progress had been made in terms of the opportunities for the recognition of

the existence and the rights of indigenous peoples. Besides the Constitutional Court's ruling, another decision was also produced against Law No. 41/1999 on Forestry, particularly Article 1(6) that stipulated that 'customary forest means state forests located in the traditional jurisdiction areas' (Indonesia 1999). The Constitutional Court redefined Article 1(6) by deleting the phrase 'state forests' and confirmed that 'customary forests are located in indigenous areas and should no longer be considered as state forests'. Though very simple, the deleting of the two words 'state forests' in Article 1(6) has been legally recognised and thus laid the legal foundation for the recognition of customary forests that belong to the indigenous peoples as Constitution Court rulings are final and binding with no possibilities open for further trials or reviews. This decision basically argues that the articles in Law No. 41/1999 contradict the 1945 Constitution and therefore their provisions can no longer be legally binding. As such, the opportunity for indigenous peoples (referred to legally as the 'customary law community' or *masyarakat hukum adat* in the Constitution and other laws) to obtain sovereignty in using and managing their forests in line with their indigenous knowledge is now open, despite several weaknesses that need to be addressed.

In another development, in January 2014 Law No. 6/2014 on Village Governance was agreed by parliament and enacted (Indonesia 2014). Article 26(3) (c) and (d) of this new law stipulates that a village head is in charge of village administration, facilitating village social life and empowering the village community, and thereby is entitled to receive a monthly income, allowance and other legal income in addition to health care and legal protection over policy implementation. It further explains that the source of the income comes from village-generated revenues, an allocation from the state budget, part of the regional tax revenue and regional redistribution revenue of the district and municipality. A village administration is also entitled to financial support from the provincial budget and district/municipality budget, non-legally binding grants and contributions from third parties in addition to other legal village revenues. This new law certainly provides a village the opportunity to become more autonomous in its management considering the fact that the majority of indigenous peoples live in villages.

All indigenous peoples in Indonesia, including Dayaks in Kalimantan, are also eagerly waiting for the Bill on the Recognition and Protection of Indigenous Peoples' Rights to be discussed and agreed by parliament. Many indigenous community representatives and organisations are involved in the drafting process. If the law is accepted and enacted, indigenous peoples will have a strong legal basis for the first time in history that will define and grant their special rights. This will be in line with Article 18(B)(2) of the 1945 Constitution that says: 'The State recognises and respects traditional communities along with their traditional customary rights as long as these remain in existence and are in accordance with societal development and the principles of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, and shall be regulated by law'. This stipulation suggests that recognition of and respect for indigenous peoples should be regulated in a separate additional law despite the fact that several aspects are already covered in other laws.

There are at least three reasons why the potential law on indigenous peoples is very important. First, there exists a mandate from Article 18(B)(2) of the 1945 Constitution that requires their rights to be regulated further by law. Second, such a law is exceptionally important in order to resolve any conflicts involving government policies and private companies over the management of natural resources in indigenous peoples' territories. Finally, such a law is a manifestation of the state's responsibility and obligation towards indigenous peoples that have experienced injustice, oppression, marginalisation and negligence. This special law is expected to be able to protect indigenous peoples' rights from arbitrary expropriation and violations. Indigenous peoples' rights in the economy, the protection and ownership of ancestral lands, conserving and practising their spiritual beliefs and indigenous religion, as well as transferring their cultural values, knowledge and practices to the younger generations should be given a legal foundation. Institut Dayakologi welcomes such a law, as it would provide more space for its advocacy work and to accomplish its vision and mission for the future of Dayak cultural heritage preservation.

15.9 Looking Ahead

Future policy directions and programmes are a response to both internal and external challenges faced by Institut Dayakologi. The challenges are the destruction of the records, data and files in the fire disaster and the different roles that Institut Dayakologi has to play now and in the future. Dayak cultures are continuously changing and face challenges in at least three areas.

- 1 Appropriation of the rights of the Dayaks. The opening up of oil palm plantations and mines by either national or multinational companies appropriates traditional lands. Deforestation is occurring at an accelerating rate. At present, more than 400,000 ha of oil palm plantations are in operation in West Kalimantan. The local governments plan to open up to another 2 million hectares of new plantations. These conditions in turn result in environmental changes and destruction, and when the environment is destroyed Dayak culture is also destroyed.
- 2 Government policies that are not beneficial for Dayaks, including the laws on forestry, plantations and mining, for instance, which are not in favour of indigenous communities and their environment. The policies only benefit investors. Various efforts to change these policies are being carried out by indigenous communities and NGOs.
- 3 Globalisation and its impacts. The impacts of globalisation in all aspects are inevitable and the lack of government support to protect the rights and existence of the indigenous peoples has resulted in the destruction or rapid transformation of Dayak customs, philosophies and ethics.

Institut Dayakologi has been working on these issues for quite some time and with all the capacities, experiences and potential it has, it should play a major role in the advocacy and empowerment of Dayaks. The participants of the institute's reflection exercise on 9 August 2009, which was held to celebrate its seventeenth anniversary, provided some very positive recommendations for Institut Dayakologi's strategic roles in the future. It is believed that Institut Dayakologi should focus more on its role as an information and advocacy centre of Dayak culture. It also needs to play new roles in the context of current Dayak circumstances. The present situation of Dayaks has changed. As noted, there are today Dayak governors, district heads and other high political leaders. The credit union movement has also experienced tremendous development. Institut Dayakologi should be able to position itself within these present contexts and challenges.

Research, studies, documentation and publications are powerful means to be used in the advocacy for changing the paradigm and policies applied by the government. Their findings can be used as tools for campaigns and advocacy against policies and practices that are exploitative and destructive to indigenous peoples' culture and environment. Collaboration and networking programmes can also be deployed as effective tools for at least slowing down the destruction of Dayak cultures and environment by directly involving indigenous communities through community-based activities and empowerment initiatives. Through their direct involvement in various initiatives, the communities are given the opportunities to choose the activities that are beneficial and supportive of their culture and environment and at the same time reject activities that may destroy their cultures.

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Part III
Case Studies

Chapter 16

Kenyah-Badeng Displacement: Bakun Hydroelectric Project Resettlement

Welyne Jeffrey Jehom

Abstract Indigenous livelihoods are placed under pressure because they are relocated away from their roots and their natural environment. It has been typical for the Sarawak state government to relocate settlers to areas where there is large-scale land development, with the assumption that indigenous people are then able to participate in the market economy as a way to ‘develop’ them. The analysis focuses on the period after the movement of the Kenyah-Badeng of Long Geng to the resettlement site in Sungai Asap, where settlers were confronted with many critical issues concerning inadequate compensation for the loss of natural resources, social heritage and land. They faced pressures in resettling without any promising resources to re-establish their livelihoods and improve their situations relative to their position before the resettlement. The discussion makes use of the objectives outlined by the State Planning Unit in its development plan for the resettlement process—entitled *Bakun hydroelectric project: green energy for the future*—to better explain the causes of emotional displacement. In doing so, the chapter illustrates the stark reality of the Kenyah-Badeng situation that has turned out to be the opposite of what was expected from the development plan.

Keywords Sarawak · Kenyah-Badeng · Sungai Asap · Resettlement · Displacement · Development

16.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses displacement among settlers who have been removed from their traditional places of residence due to the development of the Bakun hydro-power dam in Sarawak. Though first approved by the Malaysian federal government in 1986, the project was shelved in 1990 before then being revived in 1993.

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As a result of this decision, the Kenyah-Badeng of Long Geng were one of five communities relocated to the resettlement in Sungai Asap in September 1999. The relocation was carried out through an operation led by state government agencies. The settlers comprise people with various economic backgrounds, though the majority of those in the resettlement area are farmers and unskilled labourers (Jehom 2010: 213).

There are three different levels of emotional displacement among the Kenyah-Badeng discussed here. First, prior to moving to the resettlement site potential settlers faced a critical stage for making decisions about abandoning their natural environment, a process that caused them emotional distress. Second, after moving to the resettlement site in Sungai Asap settlers were confronted with many critical issues concerning inadequate compensation for their loss of natural resources, social heritage and land, which have added further misery to their already distressing situation. And third, there were pressures on them in resettling without any promising resources to re-establish their livelihoods and improve their situations relative to their position before the resettlement.

In this chapter, the analysis focuses on the last two stages of displacement in which the settlers have struggled with the (lack of) availability of resources to develop their livelihoods at the resettlement site. The discussion makes use of the objectives outlined by the State Planning Unit in its development plan for the resettlement process—entitled *Bakun hydroelectric project: green energy for the future*—to better explain the causes of emotional displacement. In doing so, the chapter illustrates the stark reality of the Kenyah-Badeng situation that has turned out to be the opposite of what was expected from the development plan. Empirical studies based on 20 in-depth household interviews are used as the major source of information and analysis. Fieldwork was conducted in 2005 but ongoing research and updating of data have been undertaken continuously to the present, and, as a result, I have established very close relations with the Kenyah-Badeng community at the resettlement site.

16.2 Development and Displacement: Understanding the Concepts

The government says that it is bringing us progress and development.... For us, their so-called progress means only starvation, dependence, the destruction of our culture and demoralisation of our people.

The government says it is creating jobs for our people. But those jobs will disappear along with the forest. In 10 years the jobs will be gone; and the forest which has sustained us for thousands of years will be gone with them.

My father, my grandfather did not have to ask the government for jobs. They have never [been] unemployed. They lived from the land and from the forest [and] we were never hungry or in need. (Anderson Mutang Urud, Sarawak)

This statement illustrates a typical situation in which the state assumes that indigenous people are unaware of the meaning of progress and development. According to the informant, the state has failed to understand that jobs are available even in the forest, and that these indigenous people have never been 'unemployed'. However, jobs would no longer be available if their natural environment were destroyed by government development projects. The purpose of this illustration is to explain that the state is applying similar development strategies to indigenous people over and over again without realising the importance of taking into account their opinions and understanding of progress and development.

In Sarawak, indigenous people traditionally resided in villages in remote areas, living in longhouses and practising shifting cultivation and subsistence agriculture as well as hunting. The definition of traditional communities in this respect includes their way of life, located in their traditional territories and relying on their traditional resources. Indigenous people live as a distinct people and they occupy the last remaining resource frontiers in a state dominated by a profiteering system. Very often, with the advent of the development model applied by the state, monetary profits are appropriated from the indigenous people and they have found that the natural resources in their traditional territories are highly sought after by others. The only way to reach out and exploit these last remaining natural resources is by developing indigenous peoples' territories. However, the concept of development imposed by the state clashes with indigenous peoples' understanding of development. The concept of development among indigenous people is based on the implementation of their collective rights. In contrast, developmental policies pursued by the state consciously or unconsciously ignore the economic and social interests of indigenous people.

The common practice in Sarawak for developing the indigenous population is via the use of land development for commercial crops such as oil palm and by involving the indigenous people through resettlement programmes. Indigenous livelihoods are placed under pressure because they are relocated away from their roots and their natural environment. Their way of life, the attachment to their territories and the distance of their villages from urban areas are all obstacles to their development. It is typical for the state government to relocate settlers to areas where there is large-scale land development in order to limit their subsistence agriculture; the assumption is that indigenous people are then able to participate in the market economy as a way to 'develop' them. There is the promise of progress and development for the settlers because they are getting involved in commercial agriculture. But the promised employment at oil palm plantations does not often provide secure livelihoods because these are low-paid jobs.

As noted by Dimbab Ngidang in the case of Iban native customary land development, indigenous people are required to bear the cost of the state-sponsored market economy by sacrificing their personal liberties, trading away their rights, giving up their lands and selling their labour in order to support the nation-state in achieving economic growth and development (Ngidang 2005: 70). Nevertheless, the reality is that the state is more concerned about how to access and exploit the resources that lie within the territories of the indigenous people, without taking into

account the welfare of indigenous people who comprise only a small percentage of the population compared to the larger proportion of others in the country who benefit from such development. Very often, the exploitation that underlies this process of development leaves the indigenous people with livelihoods of ‘underdevelopment’. A good example of the discussion of a similar situation to that of the Kenyah-Badeng can be found in the work of David Maybury-Lewis (1997).

In the case of the settlers of Kenyah-Badeng relocated to Sungai Asap, the development plan for resettlement has caused them more losses than gains from the start, typically causing destruction to their social environment and economy. Not only have they lost their natural environment they are also placed in a very uncertain and insecure new environment where resources are scarce. In short, they have been displaced in every social and economic aspect.

16.3 The Concept of Displacement and Emotion

The Kenyah-Badeng situation in Sungai Asap is best explained by this statement.

Has it ever occurred to you that after my time out here others may appear with soft and smiling countenances, to deprive you of what is solemnly your right—that is the very land on which you live, the source of your income, the food even of your mouths? If this is lost once, no amount of money could recover it. Strangers and speculators will become masters and owners whilst you yourselves, you people of the soil will be thrown aside.

These words of Charles Brooke, the second Rajah of Sarawak, were spoken at the state council in 1915 (cited in Colchester 1992). The statement basically describes the possible displacement of indigenous people who would face unfair deals for the rights to their land when there were interventions from outside developers who did not include them in development projects. Indigenous people are considered dispensable despite the rights they have in their own lands. The statement elaborates the meaning of displacement, which denotes the state of being displaced or being put out of place. In other words, displacement can be defined as the process of moving someone or something from its natural environment, in this case the settlers. In a more recent definition, displacement can be understood as ‘an ongoing dialectical process that simultaneously embraces natural, material and social dimensions’ (Gellert and Lynch 2003: 16). In this study, displacement is seen as ‘the relationship between development projects and the determinations of both inequality and poverty’ where it ‘often exacerbates rather than mitigates economic insecurity, alienation from community, and rights to land and other forms of private and common property’ (Feldman et al. 2003: 8–9).

Displacement of the population in a resettlement scheme or programme is very much related to the poor planning of the project. Countless studies have vividly reconstructed how displacements erode confidence in self and in society, render much human capital obsolete and unravel social capital (Cernea 2003: 40).

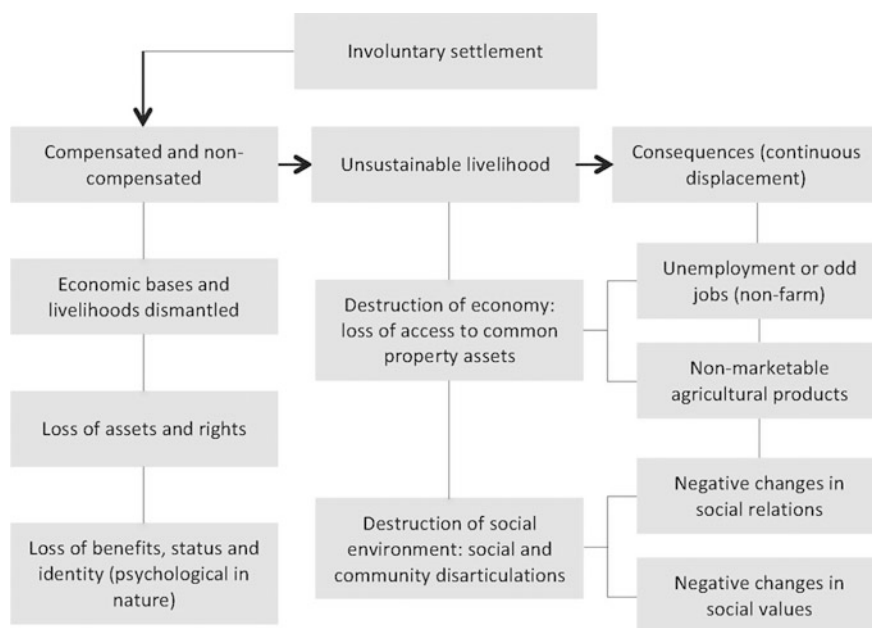


Fig. 16.1 The stages of displacement

Michael Cernea has argued convincingly that central to the social anthropology of population displacement is the impoverishment of those displaced and the options for resettlement (ibid.: 37). These ideas are followed by his sociological critique of the compensation principle that the magnitude and span of material and non-material impoverishment of persons exceed by far the redeeming powers of compensation-centred solutions (ibid.: 40). Formulating an impoverishment risks and reconstruction model, Cernea argues that, depending on local conditions, type of project, sector or type of displacement, the intensity of each individual risk varies and the outcomes vary in severity (see Fig. 16.1). Nevertheless, he demonstrates that compensation is unable to prevent impoverishment; the populations that are displaced often have their economic bases and livelihoods undermined (Cernea 2000, 2003: 37). The loss of income, assets, rights and standing are multifaceted—economic, social, cultural, in cash and in kind, in opportunities and in power. Cernea further states that the loss of capital by settlers includes natural and man-made physical capital, and human and social capital (2003: 40). The income loss is not only cash income but also psychological in nature, including benefits, status and identity which are beyond measurable market value.

As for the Kenyah-Badeng relocated to Sungai Asap, physical displacement seemed at first sight to be minimised as they were moved to a site where new longhouses (similar to their former village) had been constructed and the community structure (households, kinship networks and neighbourhoods) had been

maintained. However, still they were in fact *continuously displaced*, especially by being unable to pursue a sustainable livelihood. Moving them from their natural environment has caused economic insecurity, primarily through losing access to common property and abundant resources, as well as alienation from their original community and their rights to land and other forms of private and common property.

Evidently, physiological needs that include food and water, which are the basic requirements for human survival (Maslow 1943), are not fulfilled completely among the Kenyah-Badeng in Sungai Asap because of economic insecurity and a lack of basic amenities provided by the authorities responsible for the resettlement plan. In the resettlement area, the Kenyah-Badeng and other settlers faced difficulties in developing effective livelihood strategies. Dealing with psychological stress is another element of displacement, something that occurred even prior to resettlement, with negative changes in social relations and values that seem to be pervasive at the resettlement site. It is, however, very difficult to explain theoretically the emotions of the settlers because there are many different levels and layers.

Jonathan Turner and Jan Stets (2006: 25) note that there have been five general theoretical approaches over the past three decades to understanding the dynamics of human emotions in sociology. But there are still unresolved issues, mainly dealing with 'the nature of emotions, feeling and the effect' and 'the degree to which the emotions are biologically based or socially constructed'. Nonetheless, in his theory of power and status J.M. Barbalet (1998) includes an analysis of how emotions such as confidence, resentment, shame, vengefulness and fear can be differentially distributed across the segments of population. Barbalet's insights are helpful in informing a few basic generalisations that can be used to understand the emotional state of the Kenyah-Badeng in their permanent migration to the resettlement site at Sungai Asap. Barbalet's generalisation is that 'the less individuals... hold power, prestige, and other resources or fail to gain these resources, the more likely they are to experience such negative emotions as anger, anxiety, sadness and fear'. In addition, 'the more that individuals make attributions to self for the failure to receive resources, the more likely they are to experience emotions like sadness and, if resources were expected, shame, embarrassment, guilt, and depression' (Turner and Stets 2006: 40). In general, fear and anxiety are the most pervasive emotions that the settlers are dealing with because of being uprooted from their native land, combined with not receiving fair compensation and the prospect of future livelihood insecurity.

How this situation of displacement and emotional distress occurred—especially considering that the resettlement at Sungai Asap was well planned as articulated in *Bakun hydroelectric project: green energy for the future* (Malaysia 1996), a resettlement plan published by the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department—is a question that is addressed next.

16.4 Outcomes of the Bakun Resettlement Plan

In September 1993, when the Bakun hydropower project in Sarawak was revived, at least partly as a response to problems of electricity supply in peninsular Malaysia, the prime minister Mahathir Mohamad stated: 'Bakun will not only provide the cheapest source of energy but will also serve as a catalyst to the country's industrialisation programme' (*The Star* 20 September 1994). Along with this project, the resettlement programme was designed as a means to enable the indigenous population to pursue a livelihood elsewhere, as the construction of the dam and reservoir would flood their natural environment and everything else within it. As the *Bakun hydroelectric project* report stated:

The resettlement site for the affected communities [is] selected based on the following criteria: potential development and soil suitability; semblance of the new environment with the existing affected area; preservation of the existing ecosystem; and strategic location of the area to promote regional development.

The resettlement programme focuses on job-oriented activities to generate higher income for the settlers on a sustainable basis through the restructuring of the existing socio-economic activities. To achieve these objectives, the state government has adopted the following strategies:

- emphasis on commercialisation of oil palm plantations with equity participation of settlers through trusteeships
- commercialisation of food production
- provision of service centres, infrastructure, utilities and social facilities and amenities
- preservation of local heritage and social values

The key development components of the Resettlement Programme consist of:

- oil palm plantation development
- establishment of new settlement/longhouses
- establishment of a service centre/Bakun townships with modern social facilities and amenities like schools, a hospital, government and commercial establishments
- development of infrastructure and utilities such as roads, and electricity and water supply
- promotion of agricultural activities such as padi farming, fruit cultivation, poultry farming and fisheries
- development of tourism and cottage industries

Based on fieldwork among the Kenyah-Badeng, the expressed objectives of the resettlement programme have not been achieved successfully. This raises a key question: Have the implementation agencies not managed the resettlement development plan efficiently or is the state government to be blamed for this outcome?

As there are inadequate data to discuss and answer this question, the only possible evaluation that can be usefully made is the unsuccessful achievement of stated objectives based on the current situation of the Kenyah-Badeng. The objectives are divided into two sections based on the two components of Cernea's impoverishment risks and reconstruction model. The result of each objective is illustrated by a case study.

16.4.1 Loss of Access to Common Property Assets: Struggling for Resources

For poor people who are landless and have no assets, the loss of access to the common property assets that once belonged to relocated communities (pastures, forested lands, water bodies, burial grounds and so on) results in significant deterioration in income and livelihood (Mathur 1998, 2011; Mahapatra 1999a, b). As a result, displaced people tend to be willing to explore just about any available resources. As Cernea (2000: 29) states:

when displaced people's access to resources under common property regimes is not protected, they tend either to encroach on reserved forests or to increase the pressure on the common property resources of the host area's population. This becomes in itself a new cause of both social conflict and further environmental degradation.

In relation to this, the main argument here is that the resettlement programme has not served the purpose of the resettlement programme nor the objectives of its development as outlined in the development plan. Thus, it is important to discuss each objective as outlined in the plan by illustrating the real outcomes of the proposed development.

The most prominent issue that underlies all the discussions is that no proper access was provided to resources to generate livelihood strategies. The surroundings of the resettlement do not cater for job opportunities except for farming on land obtained from the state government or working as labourers on oil palm plantations. However, the three acres provided by the state government are, settlers claim, inadequate to support a sustainable livelihood. They also argue that it is unrealistic to expect households to be able to earn a living from such a small plot because most of the settlers have no experience or the requisite skills in intensive agriculture. Further, the location of the land means it is only accessible by vehicle and most households do not own one. For those who have land near the longhouse, the land is not suitable for farming due to poor soil quality and bad topography. Therefore, the settlers started to farm state lands unaware that these had been leased to oil palm companies. In the process of settling disputes with one of the oil palm companies, the settlers learned that the only source of immediate income made available to them was working on the plantations.

16.4.1.1 Objective 1: The Emphasis on Commercialisation of Oil Palm Plantations

In a report written prior to the resettlement programme, Jérôme Rousseau (1994: 20–22) stated that, with regard to cash crops, the only option that was considered viable was one in which the people received title to plots of land prepared for cash crops. There was a strong rejection of the proposals for plantations where settlers would be wage labourers. With regard to the objective that emphasised the commercialisation of oil palm plantations, the Kenyah-Badeng, from the very beginning, objected to such plantations because they knew that the wages for labourers would not be sufficient to support their families. With wages as low as RM8 per day, the Kenyah-Badeng prefer to work on their own farms growing cash crops such as pepper, while at the same time continuing to grow rice and vegetables for daily consumption the whole year-round. In addition, with three acres of land, the settlers cannot offer their land to the oil palm plantations for joint venture projects that could give them a possible 30 % commission for every RM1,000 worth of oil palm sales. They knew that if they gave up their three acres to a plantation, they would lose all means of supporting their daily food needs because they would not be allowed to grow anything else under the oil palm trees. The trees take a few years to produce fruit. Without any other source of income they would not possibly survive the resettlement.

Box 16.1: Case study: Kenyah-Badeng versus Solid Oil Palm Plantations

The Kenyah-Badeng only realised in December 2004, after a meeting with Solid Oil Palm Plantations Sdn Bhd, that they were surrounded by oil palm plantations and that they had been working on state land (with the exclusion of the three acres they obtained the right to use from the state) which had been leased to the company.

The meeting was held on 18 December 2004 at the office of Solid Oil Palm Plantations. The agenda concerned an invitation to discuss labour compensation at Lot 8, Punan Land District. This invitation was sent to the senior assistant officer who is the highest-ranking government officer in the area. It was the first meeting ever conducted to resolve the problem of land in the area. At the meeting, there were fewer than 10 people present including one of the community leaders of the Kayan; but the senior assistant officer was not present.

During the meeting, the manager of the oil palm plantation explained the situation. As stated in the provisional lease of state land, 5000 ha of land at Lot 8, Punan Land District, had been leased to Sarawak Enterprise Corporation Berhad, a company incorporated and registered in Malaysia under the Companies Act 1965, in consideration of payment of a premium of RM3,088,750. Sarawak Enterprise Corporation became the lessee on 16 June 1997 with an annual rent of RM12,400. The lease was granted for 60 years.

This lease was registered at Kapit land registry office by the superintendent of lands and surveys. However, the land was caveat lodged by Solid Timber Holdings Sdn Bhd on 8 December 2000 and the lease was transferred officially to Solid Timber Holdings for RM6,177,500 (vide Kapit No. L.490/2002) on 26 July 2002. In this document, the locality of the lands is Bakun Resettlement Scheme, Belaga, and categorised as mixed zone land and country land with survey plan reference: MP7/11-30.

This was the first meeting ever conducted to resolve the problem of land in the area. During the meeting, the manager of the oil palm plantation emphasised that the settlers had no right to even claim compensation from the company for the land they had been utilising because the lands were not 'free' lands. He also reminded the settlers that the utilisation of that land by the settlers had delayed the plantation activities that were supposed to begin in 2002 right after the lease was officially transferred to the company.

The settlers responded that it was not their fault that they were settled in an area surrounded by leased lands and that they were not aware of the whole situation. As a result, the settlers demanded some compensation for the lands they had cleared and on which they had grown fruit trees. The manager replied in a very diplomatic manner trying to avoid confrontation by saying that the company did not have any allocation to compensate for the losses and labour. However, he also said that, since the company did pay for clearing land, payment could be negotiated to compensate their losses and labour. Finally, the manager stated that the company could only pay RM300 for every hectare that had been cleared by the settlers.

The settlers were unhappy and threatened to bring the matter to court. The manager responded instantly by mentioning that since they had no rights at all on the land, they would never win any case and they should be grateful that Solid Oil Palm Plantations dealt with the matter without any threat or cruelty. The settlers had to agree with the manager because other oil palm companies had not been diplomatic at all with the settlers. Furthermore, the manager of the plantation had been very transparent with the settlers by showing all the relevant documents that demonstrated the company's right to the land at the Bakun resettlement scheme.

However, before the meeting between the settlers and Solid Oil Palm Plantations took place, there were many incidents that sounded very unpleasant and caused distress among the Kenyah-Badeng who had opened up the leased lands. Before the meeting, overlapping claims of state lands between the company and settlers were a major subject of discussion. Most of the households of Uma Badeng had expanded their three acres of land possession to state lands by turning the lands into hill rice farms and starting to grow oil palm. It is obvious that the three acres were really inadequate as sources of living for the Kenyah-Badeng. As reported by Rousseau (1994), people were well aware that the proposed resettlement area was too small for all of them to continue to practise swidden agriculture, given the intention to

provide plots of about 10 or 12 acres. However, there was also a general agreement that shifting cultivation had to be continued because without it they would be completely dependent on the market and the wholesale move to the cash crop scheme would in effect impoverish them; they would lose access to free rice, fish, meat and vegetables (*ibid.*: 21). People were facing the reality that with three acres and without any possibility of acquiring more land, cash crops were even more unattractive.

According to informants, before they moved to the resettlement, the MP and senator of the region had informed them that they were allowed to farm and occupy state lands the same way they had done at Long Geng, their former village. Therefore, they dared to occupy state lands. Based on a household survey, every household occupied more than two hectares of state land. The Kenyah-Badeng happened to be dealing with Solid Oil Palm Plantations. A few households had disputes with other oil palm companies such as Rimbunan Hijau and Shin Nyang. Around the Bakun resettlement, Solid Oil Palm Plantations, Ekran and Samling started putting up 'No trespassing' signboards on many state lands. However, the settlers had taken down all the signboards in protest.

Disputes occurred between Solid Oil Palm Plantations' workers who surveyed the boundaries of the project and the settlers. The settlers were informed that they should abandon the state lands that they had cleared and stop planting oil palm as the lands belonged to the company, and that the settlers could be brought to court due to their illegal actions. Nevertheless, many settlers wondered why, if they were performing illegal actions by farming state lands, Solid Oil Palm Plantations would bother to offer them compensation for the crops grown on state land. The company even listed the price of each crop (e.g. 50 cents for a cocoa tree that had just been planted and RM1 for a cocoa tree that had produced fruit). Of course, the offer and the price upset the settlers because the prices offered were ridiculous. For a hectare of land Solid Oil Palm Plantations offered RM300 to the settlers. However, according to the lists of the Land and Survey Department, a hectare should be worth RM1200. Since there was a fixed price listed at the Land and Survey Department, the settlers were even more convinced that they should defend the state lands they occupied. The settlers voiced an opinion that they were not interested in trading their lands for cash because the long-term harvest would pay off their efforts and hard work while the cash would soon be gone.

Nevertheless, before a few households made their plans to defend their lands widely known, a few households sold the state land they farmed to Solid Oil Palm Plantations, not knowing that the company had actually leased the lands and the money they received was a gesture of compensation. They feared that they would be brought to court. Furthermore, Solid Oil Palm Plantations' workers threatened them by saying they would have to pay court costs by selling their houses and that they would have to pay compensation to

the company if they lost. They were convinced that they would lose the case because they did not have a lawyer to represent them in court. The settlers were mostly illiterate and did not have any knowledge about land issues.

A few other households at Uma Badeng tried to negotiate with Solid Oil Palm Plantations instead of selling off the lands to the company; they wanted to sell the fruit to the company later. In that way, the settlers and the company would benefit each other by saving the company's expenses on workers and the settlers would not have to find buyers for their products. However, the company totally rejected the suggestion because it wanted the land itself.

The courage to defend the lands from being taken by the oil palm company was initiated by a household (identified as OL household) that refused to take up the offer to sell the lands even though surrounding lands had been sold. Solid Oil Palm Plantations' workers cleared the surrounding lands and simply left the lands that the household refused to sell in the middle of a bare hill. The action taken by this household showed the others that they did have land rights and the company would not be able to clear the lands without permission. OL household continued to clear up to about 10 ha of state land that was still unoccupied by oil palms.

As revealed by the *penghulu* (headman) during a meeting, Solid Oil Palm Plantations even offered the *penghulu* and *tua uma* MYR1000 each, with the idea that both leaders would give full cooperation during negotiations with the settlers so that they would all agree to sell the state lands they had farmed. Both leaders refused the offer and regarded the action as bribery. They insisted on a meeting between the settlers and Solid Oil Palm Plantations. The dispute continued for the whole of 2004 because, instead of dealing directly with the settlers, the company requested that both leaders have a meeting to discuss the matter and inform it of the decision taken by all settlers.

The last meeting took place on 2 November 2004. Before the *penghulu* and *tua uma* gave their decision to Solid Oil Palm Plantations' chief surveyor, about 60 households had signed a disagreement petition to sell their land to the company (out of a total of 197). A few had sold their lands and others did not have lands around the area in dispute. However, the chief surveyor later came to meet the *penghulu* at the longhouse and requested another concession by asking for the three acres of allocated land. The matter became even more complicated because the first issue of dispute was leased land that belonged to Solid Oil Palm Plantations and later came the issue of identifying households who were interested in selling their three acres of land. Solid Oil Palm Plantations offered settlers a 30 % commission on every RM1000 worth of oil palm sales if the oil palms were planted on their three acres of land. However, the settlers' argument was if the only land they had the right to farm was going to be sold to the company, where would they plant paddy and vegetables for daily consumption? Therefore, the suggestion was turned down abruptly.

Since the chief surveyor failed to solve the dispute, the manager of the plantation finally stepped in. There was no other way to solve the problem except to meet settlers personally. This was the meeting that took place on 18 December 2004.

Certainly, these types of disputes are made known to the officers at the local district office. But they do not have the authority to intervene because the lease of the lands is legal and has followed the proper procedures. Therefore, matters were left to the parties involved to resolve. After the meeting, it was clear to the settlers that they did not have the right to the land and reluctantly they accepted RM300 for every hectare they helped Solid Oil Palm Plantations to clear.

A number of interim conclusions can be drawn from the case study of the commercialisation of oil palm plantations. If settlers in the Bakun resettlement scheme at Sungai Asap were to be involved in commercial crops, such as oil palm, they should have been informed of the terms and conditions clearly and in writing from the very beginning when the resettlement programme was planned. The state should also have made arrangements with the oil palm plantations around the area to avoid disputes between companies and settlers. Furthermore, without any experience in oil palm plantation management nor the skills required, the settlers would end up only as unskilled labourers earning between RM8 and RM10 a day. This amount is barely sufficient to cover the daily transportation between the plantation and their longhouses at the resettlement site.

16.4.1.2 Objective 2: Commercialisation of Food Production

The key component underlying the second development objective in the Bakun resettlement plan is the promotion of agricultural activities such as paddy farming, fruit cultivation, poultry farming and fishing. However, the main obstacle to achieving this objective is the land size of three acres. It is unrealistic to expect settlers to rely on agricultural activities on a three-acre plot to earn their living. The settlers can cultivate rice and vegetables on their plot for their daily consumption but simply cannot earn enough cash from the commercialisation of food production from their agricultural activities.

There have also been attempts by households in the resettlement area to sell their vegetables from the farm to earn a little bit of cash when they have an abundance of seasonal vegetables (see Table 16.1). However, there are no free official market spaces for food production at the Sungai Asap resettlement centre. Women sell their vegetables outside premises owned by the Chinese shopkeepers. Normally, they sell a few bundles mainly to the Chinese shopkeepers and truck drivers and bring home the rest of the vegetables in the late afternoon. As the resettlement is isolated and the only inhabitants are settlers, there are not many potential outside buyers except

Table 16.1 Seasonal vegetables in Uma Badeng, Sungai Asap

Month	August	September	October	November	December	January	February
Vegetables	<i>Bayam</i> (spinach)	<i>Daun timun</i> (cucumber leaves)	<i>Buah timun</i> (cucumber)	<i>Buah labu</i> (pumpkin)	<i>Kacang panjang</i> (long beans)	<i>Kacang panjang</i> (long beans)	<i>Kacang panjang</i> (long beans)
		<i>Jagung muda</i> (young corn)	<i>Daun timun</i> (cucumber leaves)	<i>Buah kundur</i> (white pumpkin)	<i>Kucaai</i> (chives)	<i>Kucaai</i> (chives)	<i>Kucaai</i> (chives)
		Chillies	Chillies	<i>Buah timun</i> (cucumber)	<i>Peria</i> (bitter gourd)	<i>Peria</i> (bitter gourd)	<i>Peria</i> (bitter gourd)
				Chillies	<i>Terung iban</i> (yellow eggplant)	<i>Terung iban</i> (yellow eggplant)	
Others (year-round)	<i>Daun ubi</i> (tapioca leaves)	<i>Daun ubi</i> (tapioca leaves)	<i>Daun ubi</i> (tapioca leaves)	<i>Daun ubi</i> (tapioca leaves)	<i>Daun ubi</i> (tapioca leaves)	<i>Daun ubi</i> (tapioca leaves)	<i>Daun ubi</i> (tapioca leaves)

truck drivers who have stopped at the Chinese food centre. Further, the settlers cannot rely on local markets because all households grow the same vegetables. There is greater food supply than demand because the majority of the people in the resettlement area work as farmers. Consequently, the vegetables are mainly grown for household consumption. At Uma Badeng, a few households put out small bundles of vegetables for RM1 per bundle in front of their dwellings on Sundays. As they are buying from each other, no one is making a profit. The season when vegetables are abundant is between August and February (the seedling season until harvesting season for paddy cultivation).

The commercialisation of food production cannot be a viable source of income for settlers because there is no market for their agricultural products even outside the resettlement site. Table 16.2 shows the costs that every household has to take into account before going to the nearest town or market outside the resettlement area. For most households it is not worth going to outside markets because the value of their vegetables would not even cover the cost of the return trip. However, a few households who have families living in Bintulu manage to sell their vegetables every season in the local market. Family members in Bintulu help transport

Table 16.2 Cost of transportation to market

Location	Distance from longhouse	Time	Cost of transportation (return trip)
Semilajau market	Ca. 180 km	2 hours	RM25
Bintulu local market	Ca. 200 km	2.2 hours	RM35

the vegetables to local markets when they come to visit their families in the resettlement area. But as the case study highlighted in Box 16.2 demonstrates, it is almost impossible to market vegetables on a viable scale.

Box 16.2: Failure of marketing food production

In 2001 the women in Uma Badeng attempted to get involved more seriously in the commercialisation of food production. The women formed a group working on a large scale to grow vegetables. It was a project initiated by the agriculture department situated at the centre of Sungai Asap and it provided the women's group with seeds and fertiliser. The vegetable garden was located on one acre of land that belonged to the health centre, near to Uma Badeng.

However, the project did not last more than one season because there was no efficient strategy to market the vegetables. According to a few participants, they had been trying to get a supplier from Bintulu to buy their vegetables from the beginning of the project. Prior to harvesting they did manage to get a deal from a supplier in Bintulu who had established a network with market places in the surrounding area to buy all the vegetables and arrange for their transportation to Bintulu. However, the supplier did not turn up to collect the vegetables after they were harvested. As the vegetables were waiting for the supplier's truck to arrive most started to dry out and rot under the sun.

The women's group then tried to sell some of the vegetables to other longhouses in the resettlement but they did not manage to sell even one third of the vegetables. The supplier came a few days later informing them that he could not get any trucks to collect the vegetables because the other suppliers refused to cooperate with him. He also explained that he would not be able to continue his business if he bought from others outside the network because he would risk a boycott of his business by the market places. Chinese traders occupy the market places in Bintulu and Chinese farmers around and outside the town supply the vegetables. The business network has been long established and it was not possible for outsiders, especially non-Chinese, to enter this business network unless markets for the indigenous farmers were created by the local authority and by the state government.

After this failure, the women's group never again risked growing vegetables on a large scale. Most of the households in Uma Badeng and other longhouses in the resettlement grow vegetables for domestic use. The same is true for poultry and fish ponds. Although the households rear chickens, ducks and pigs in cages, all these products end up for domestic use or are sometimes sold around the resettlement without much profit.

What this case study shows is that the settlers certainly cannot rely on food production as a support for sustainable livelihoods as long as there is no efficient strategy to market their products. It would seem that breaking into pre-existing

distribution networks is almost impossible, and that market opportunities in the resettlement area itself are not viable.

16.4.2 Social and Community Disarticulation

Cernea (2000: 30) offers a powerful exposition of some of the profound consequences of displacement.

[F]orced displacement tears apart the existing social fabric. It disperses and fragments communities, dismantles patterns of social organization and interpersonal ties; kinship groups become scattered as well. Life-sustaining informal networks of reciprocal help, local voluntary associations, and self-organized mutual service are disrupted. This is a net loss of valuable social capital that compounds the loss of natural, physical, and human capital. The social capital lost through social disarticulation is typically unperceived and uncompensated by the programs causing it, and this real loss has long-term consequences.

Cernea further states that dismantled social networks that once mobilised people to act around common interests and to meet their most pressing needs are difficult to rebuild, particularly in projects that relocate families in a dispersed manner, severing their prior ties with neighbours, rather than relocating them in groups and social units (*ibid.*). Although displacement certainly causes social and community disarticulation, studies from similar examples show that other changes may also take place. The breakdown or weakening of old cultural values, power relations, gender statuses and clan allegiances brought about by displacement may stimulate change and innovative adaptation (Keller 1975; Kibreab 1999, 2003: 58).

16.4.2.1 Objective 3: Provision of Service Centres, Infrastructure, Utilities and Social Facilities and Amenities

Sungai Asap centre consists of a few shops owned by Chinese shopkeepers that include a restaurant, an internet shop sponsored by a timber company, the district office headed by a senior officer with a few staff, an office for the agriculture department, a small police office where a few local policemen take turns being on duty, and a meeting space for the local leaders from all of the longhouses at the resettlement site. There is also an office for power maintenance and bill payments. Within this centre, there are also a few unofficial foodstalls run by individuals from the longhouses located behind the shops that attract mostly settlers from the longhouse who seek a spot for social meetings. Sungai Asap centre is mostly visited by truck drivers and others who are working with the timber and oil palm companies. It has the necessary facilities but it does not have the potential to be a highly utilised commercial centre because of its location, accessible only by vehicles from all of the longhouses in the resettlement area. The nearest longhouse is Uma Badeng which is about three kilometres away. The local people do not often come

to Sungai Asap centre, not only because of the distance but also due to its non-commercial condition.

There are a few abandoned buildings and houses around Sungai Asap centre. Approaching the shop lots, there is a row of houses built specifically for rent by government officers who work at the centre. However, only one house is occupied by the senior assistant officer who heads the district office. He is not local and hails from Limbang. There was an attempt by an information and communications technology company to open a branch in the centre but the company cancelled its operation even before opening its business because there was no support from the settlers for its proposed activities, such as computer courses, that were considered too pricey by the settlers. There is also a row of open-air markets for marketing food production by the settlers. However, the market space has never been utilised because there is a fee for each space provided and, realising that there would not be many potential shoppers, the settlers were not interested.

In relation to the longhouses and their environment Rousseau, in his 1994 report to the State Planning Unit, suggested that the planning for the new communities should also take into account population growth (1994: 27). However, based on fieldwork data on the Kenyah-Badeng at Uma Badeng, no new apartments or extensions to the current longhouse were built for new families. According to the local leaders and key informants, these families have been applying for approval from the district office in Kapit to build a new extension at the longhouse since 2001, without any response. Further, a cursory glance at the area surrounding the longhouse shows that there is no space available even to make a kitchen extension. One would have to build the extension on the road or walking path used by the whole community. The resettlement area, in many ways, does provide for communal living and the opportunity to integrate with the other villages. Nevertheless, the resettlement certainly does not cater for the growing population. New families have to continue living within existing households in an extended family environment; many others who obtained jobs in another region or in town took their families to live with them in rented rooms or with other family members at their workplace.

For the other communities in the resettlement area, another problem seems to be the long wait for state government intervention. Uma Ukit and Uma Balui Liko lost their longhouses to fire in 2001. Since there was no fire brigade nearby, the fire could not be prevented from spreading to the other longhouses. These two communities are still waiting for the new construction of the longhouses. The households that lost their compartments during the fires built a temporary shelter and have been living there ever since. The condition of the temporary shelter is squalid. A few families utilise the church building and community hall as their homes.

16.4.2.2 Objective 4: Preservation of Local Heritage and Social Values

Rousseau stated clearly in his report that the upper Belaga, where the indigenous people were living before the resettlement, was not only a fertile area with rich

resources but was also their home. The landscapes in which they lived were part of their history, and people were very sad at the thought that their natal villages and the surrounding land would be flooded. At the time, a proportion of interviewees indicated that they would accept a move to the Belaga area, but only on the condition that they received a guaranteed written title to the part of their existing territories which was not to be flooded and, more generally, that the upper Belaga would be reserved for them and their descendants as an extension area, and as an area where they might return if they did not like the Belaga scheme (Rousseau 1994: 20–22).

With regard to this, the resettlement provided to settlers certainly offered a different environment. The Sungai Asap resettlement is set up by the settlers to mimic their former villages; this is a very positive aspect as it could, of course, minimise the level of displacement. According to the World Bank (1990: 3) operational manual on involuntary resettlement

most displaced people prefer to move as part of a preexisting community, neighborhood, or kinship group. The acceptability of a resettlement plan can be increased and the disruption caused by resettlement can be cushioned by moving people in groups, reducing dispersion, sustaining existing patterns of group organization, and retaining access to cultural property ... if necessary, through the relocation of the property.

However, the Sungai Asap resettlement site also does not provide opportunities for immediate employment or proper access to natural resources; this causes a problem with social relations among the settlers because of the competition and the value of the resources available. Although the settlers are living together within the same community, neighbourhood and kinship group (as suggested is the ideal by the World Bank), they do not necessarily blend in and integrate in the same manner as before they moved. There is competition to access available resources and it is almost always a question of the survival of the fittest. Limited resources have changed people's perception of kinship, neighbourhood and community. And one of the biggest changes was a lack of sharing (e.g. of food, clothing and information) in the resettlement. One informant from the household case studies noted:

Everything is not as the same as before.... People are becoming stingy and calculative ... even between relatives. Neighbours ... we are strangers because we don't share food anymore.¹

Another informant from a different household stated:

My brother who is a good hunter always got a good hunt, like wild pigs or deer, but he does not share much with us now. The most is 1 kilogram or the bones for soup if he got a big pig. We also have to buy from him like the others. People here buy even the toes of the wild pig because we don't get wild pig around here easily. The price is more expensive too now, RM8 for 1 kg. In the old village, it was RM5 for 1 kg, and between relatives we didn't sell to each other.

¹All informant quotations are translated from local Malay.

There is also a comment emphasising that people should not think everything is free of charge:

I become tired of helping the people going to Bintulu when they are sick because they promise to pay at least for the petrol but they seem to forget about it when they are better. If I have a job, I wouldn't mind because they are also my family and I am the only one who has the vehicle but I do not have any income so I am very sad. In Christianity, it is good to help others but living in this resettlement area, I cannot do this for free every time. I want to ask them for the money but I am not comfortable because they are my relatives.

In short, social relations among the settlers have changed. Sharing food among kin and neighbours is no longer a common practice. Once upon a time, assisting family members used to be the norm and something to be proud of. Limited resources have played a big role in these changes.

These findings are echoed in a wide-ranging study made by Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005: 49). One of the most important aspects of positive wellbeing is good social relations: 'Changes in ecosystem services influence all components of human well-being, including the basic material needs for a good life, health, good social relations, security, and freedom of choice and action'. In this context, ecosystem services are benefits people obtain from the ecosystem. These are defined in the following terms:

These include provisioning services such as food, water, timber, and fiber; regulating services that affect climate, floods, disease, wastes, and water quality; cultural services that provide recreational, aesthetic, and spiritual benefits; and supporting services such as soil formation, photosynthesis, and nutrient cycling. (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005: 49)

However, changes in the environment produce many other consequences, including negative ones. A clear example occurs in indigenous societies whose cultural identities are tied closely to particular habitats and whose habitats are destroyed or wildlife populations decline (ibid.: 53–54).

Based on this observation, the wholesale change in their environment, both economic and social, in combination with limited resources, has resulted in drastic changes in Kenyah-Badeng values and social relations. Even their current references to close relatives and kinship are viewed on a much narrower basis than before, referring only to the family members who share the same grandparents as the closest relatives (*saudara dekat*) while those who are outside this realm are considered distant relatives (*saudara jauh*). Basically, with this new scale of reference, the Kenyah-Badeng have reduced the range of social expectations from relatives when compared to the situation before resettlement. Another aspect that can possibly extend the kinship range is economic potential. The Kenyah-Badeng perception of kinship does not imply only blood relations but also outsiders who do not belong to the circle of distant relatives or the longhouse. This is referred to as social kinship. This relationship is special as it is built upon trust and respect, and an economic relationship in which both individuals gain something. One of the

heads of the household in this research proudly spoke about his 'relatives' in Kuching and Bintulu, referring to them as '*saudara saya*' (my relatives). He said:

I have Bidayuh relatives in Kuching and I don't have to find a place to stay when I am there because I stay with them. I bring wild fish or meat from here for them. You [referring to me as the researcher] are now also my close relative because we are helping each other. I help you with your stay here for your research and in return you help me with my household expenses while you are here, and next time you can help me with information for my children's education and scholarship because I am far from the city. It is hard to find good people nowadays because even blood related relatives cheat me, so why not be family with other people who are not blood relatives since they can be trusted better than I can trust my own family members.

With regard to the relations between the elderly and the younger generation, a few grandparents interviewed in a group discussion for this research said:

Young people now show no respect to the old ones. They shout at their parents and their grandparents when we try to give them advice. During our time, not so long ago in the old village, the young people would not do that but here, it is like a fashion, screaming and scolding their parents asking for money to buy this and to buy that. They don't want to go to school and they don't want to help in the farm either. When they go to town saying they find a job, they ask for money and then come back again to stay here but never bring anything back from town. When they are here, all they do is play sepak takraw in the morning, hang around in the afternoon, go here and there with the motorbike, and even start to sing with the guitar very early in the morning at the common area while their parents are preparing to go to the farm. They are useless. They think their parents still have the compensation money! We really don't know what to do with these young people. The girls ... huh ... they can only cook Maggi mee [instant noodles, indicating that the girls do not help with jobs around the house even when their parents are out in the farm].

At the time of the discussion, a few youngsters passed by and one of the grandparents said: 'Look. Even when they pass by, they just walk across our legs showing no respect to the elders. We don't do that in our culture. We bend down and ask permission to walk past and don't walk across the elders' legs!'

Based on these situations, the fourth objective stated in the *Bakun hydroelectric project* report on the preservation of local heritage and social values appears not to be significant for the people in Sungai Asap, particularly the Kenyah-Badeng. It is difficult to maintain common social values when many aspects of their life have changed drastically. Limited resources change the pattern of relations among kin and neighbours from the 'giving relationship' to 'calculative behaviour'. Relationships have been downsized to close family members to decrease expectations and responsibilities, and to extend the family to significant others based on the perception of social kinship. The younger generation does not even observe what the older generation (referring to the grandparents) calls respectable social values. Obviously, it is not possible to maintain local heritage and social values once the people are removed from their natural environment. Furthermore, indigenous communities are not static; changes will take place, either by removing people to other environments or by confronting outside influence that will change their social values gradually.

16.5 Conclusion

There are three stages of displacement. First, displacement in the process of resettlement touches all the losses that the settlers have to face. Second, another facet of displacement faced by the settlers after resettlement is due to the extremely limited resources to generate livelihoods in which it is understood that the settlers have not and do not gain economically and socially from their new environment. Basically, at this stage of displacement, settlers are forced in many directions to explore possible resources even though there are many risks. The settlers, like the Kenyah-Badeng, are facing great economic and social displacement. In other words, they are deprived economically due to limited resources to generate a livelihood. Third, and because of this situation, they are also deprived socially and in an emotionally distressed state. Social relations within the community, among relatives and kin, are declining and changing in a different direction. There is much room for improvement if the state government together with the settlers gives priority to the sustainable development of resources. Only with such security will the negative consequences of displacement be mitigated.

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Chapter 17

Community, River and Basin: Watersheds in Northern Sarawak as a Social Linkage

Jayl Langub and Noboru Ishikawa

Abstract How have distant people living in separate river systems historically maintained contact? What are the factors contributing to the consolidation of their social relationships and networks? By answering these questions, our ethnographic inquiry on northern Sarawak elucidates key features of the cultural, socioeconomic and geomorphological characteristics of Borneo. To examine social formations in a riverine basin, we focus on watershed pathways, or the connecting points between two or more riverine catchments. In doing so, we attempt to separate ourselves from previous studies on migration. First, we look at the social formation from trans- as well as multiethnic perspectives, comprehensively examining more than two dozen ethnic groups and their interrelations. The second vantage point is that we map migratory movements in a wider spatial arena of Sarawak than has previously been studied. The unit of analysis is a vast basin society located in a triangular area carved out by the South China Sea, the Rejang and the Baram rivers. Third, we pay attention to geomorphological features of the basin society. Distance, elevation and connectivity provide the most crucial factors to consider when investigating the formation of Bornean riverine society.

Keywords Sarawak · Riverine society · Migration · Ethnic groups · Social relations

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17.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a set of critical questions concerning social formations in Borneo. How have physically distant, seemingly disconnected people who inhabited a remote upriver basin maintained contact over the course of history? What factors have contributed to the consolidation of their social relationships and networks? By answering these questions, our ethnographic inquiry investigates key features of the cultural, socioeconomic and geomorphological characteristics of Borneo, and, consequently, the formative process of riverine network society. With this objective, we pay particular attention to the relationship between the geospheric characteristics of northern Sarawak, Malaysia and the riverine society there (see Fig. 17.1).

Rivers form a drainage system. A drainage system is a space where rain converges to a point at a lower elevation. Catchment basins drain into other basins in a hierarchical pattern, with smaller sub-drainage basins combining into larger basins. These basin catchments are separated by a watershed—that is, a ridge of a hill. The exit of the basin, the lowest in the system, is the sea, the South China Sea in the case of Sarawak. The catchment basin is also home to numerous ethnic groups that are connected with others through rivers. Rivers are lifelines to local communities and support social connectivity. Riverine networks provide the mode of transport, facilitate trade activities and affect migration, settlement patterns and kin relations. To elucidate social formations in a riverine basin, we focus here on watershed pathways, or the connecting points between two or more riverine catchments.¹

We analyse the movement and social relations of people in the riverine catchments from three vantage points. In doing so, we separate ourselves from previous studies on migration. First, we look at the social formation from trans- as well as multiethnic perspectives. Bornean ethnographies always contain much data on the history of collective or group migration. We have also collected a great deal of such research data. Unlike many such ethnographies, however, we do not deal with a single ethnic group as a separate entity or a focus of investigation. Rather our study is comprehensive and examines more than two dozen ethnic groups and their interrelations for a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of migration in Borneo.² The second vantage point is that we map migratory movements in a wider spatial arena of Sarawak than has previously been studied. The unit of analysis is a vast basin society located in a triangular area carved out by the South China Sea, the Rejang and the Baram rivers. Such attention to the river catchment means that we introduce a bird's-eye view to the conventional migration studies of northern

¹In this chapter 'watershed' refers to a ridge of high land dividing two areas that are drained by different river systems, rather than the entire area draining into one river system, whereas 'catchment area', 'catchment basin', 'riverine catchment' and 'river basin' are used interchangeably.

²They are Berawan, Sebop, Lirong, Penan, Kenyah, Punan Bah, Kayan, Kajaman, Seping, Sekapan, Lahanan, Melayu, Iban, Tatau and Bekatan.

Table 17.1 Generations of Penan Suai leaders

1	Terrau (1712–1742)	Said to have led Penan to occupy a location at Agan Bakau, just above the confluence of Suai and Tap; said to have occupied an area around Diam Benetik
2	Tuk (1742–1770)	Moved to Sungun Pulong (Pulong jetty); occupied territory from Diam Benetik to Diam Bulu'
3	Kabak (1770–1805)	Moved to Apat Kavok; occupied an area from Diam Bulu' to Bala stream
4	Sadutai (1805–1830)	Moved to Tanyit Luan, occupied an area from Bala stream to Long Serai
5	Jaya (1830–1860)	Moved to Bala stream, occupied an area from Long Serai to Diam Petatak
6	Tatip (1860–1890)	Moved to Long Linau, occupied an area from Diam Petatak to Long Paru
7	Sugon Nyeripang (1890–1910)	Moved to Long Sawai, occupied an area from Long Paru to Long Sawai
8	Ajong Nyeripang (1910–1930)	Remained at Long Sawai, extended area from Long Sawai to Long Laie
9	Uso Nyeripang (1930–1950)	Moved to Long Laie, occupied same area from Long Sawai to Long Laie
10	Meneng Nyeripang (1950–1980)	Remained at Long Laie, extended area from Long Laie to Long Gelasah
11	Ugos Sugon (1980–present)	Moved to present site Long Suvak (Jambatan Suai), currently occupies same area from Long Sawai to Long Gelasah

17.2 An Expedition: The Suai–Jelalong Connecting Point

Our aspiration to investigate migration networks in northern Sarawak originated in the accidental discovery of two Penan communities. The two communities, Penan Suai (Rumah Ugos), located in Jambatan Suai, Niah, Miri Division and Penan Saoh (Rumah Julaihi), along the Jelalong, a tributary of the Kemena, Bintulu Division, live far away from each other and yet share the same language, ancestral lineage, migration history and even memories of an outbreak of illness. In the course of our research in Jambatan Suai, we came to realise the common Penan origin that both communities share. As Table 17.1 shows, the village leader of Penan Suai, Ugos Sugon, remembers and records the community history, which dates back 11 generations. He told us that the Penan Suai used to live in the uppermost reaches of the Suai. From the eighteenth century onwards they gradually came downriver and settled in their current location in the 1970s. Penan Suai have always kept regular contact with Penan Saoh,³ visiting each other's relatives or exchanging brides. For instance, Ugos Sugon is married to Bedu Mejiwit, a Penan Saoh from Rumah

³Previously known as Penan Merurong when they were living in Merurong. Currently they live in a village called Rumah Julaihi located at the confluence of the Saoh and Jelalong rivers.

Julaihi. The retired Penan Saoh headman, Keti Jemat, is married to Semah Meneng from Kampung Jambatan Suai.

The distance between the Penan Suai and Penan Saoh communities on the modern map of Sarawak is in a sense deceptive. These communities look quite distant as they are located in different administrative divisions and respective river systems. Before the road networks connected both communities to the town of Bintulu by different routes, Penan Suai, according to their elders, went to the uppermost reaches of the Suai River, crossed the watershed on foot and travelled downstream on the Jelalong to reach the Tubau market and a trading post at Kubulu, above Tubau on the Jelalong. During the Brooke colonial era, the Tubau and Kubulu were important confluences where local people traded forest produce with Bruneian and Chinese merchants. Due to the frequent visits of Penan Suai, local to the upper Jelalong and Tubau, the footpath connecting the Suai and the Jelalong used to be well maintained. It took young travellers only three hours to cross a small hill located between the Suai and Jelalong river systems (see Fig. 17.1).

To experience how the Penan Suai and Penan Jalaong have maintained kin relations and social contact despite living in distant river systems, we trekked from the uppermost reaches of the Suai River to the uppermost reaches of the Jelalong River, traversing a couple of river systems, one of which flows to the sea in Bintulu subdistrict and another in Niah subdistrict. The objective was to recapture and experience the legacy of transriverine linkages.

At 9.00 a.m. on 22 August 2011 we started our expedition. Our team included Japanese and Sarawakian researchers as well as local Penan. We departed Rumah Ugos in a four-wheel-drive vehicle and proceeded along the upper reaches of the Suai River. The area is now covered with oil palms, and we thus followed a plantation road along the riverbank until we reached an old wharf. The wharf was used up to the 1990s. Today only old *belian* posts remain. At 10.30 a.m., from the old wharf we started to climb a small hill to reach its peak of 230 m. The path used to be a Penan hunting trail but had not been used for the past dozen or so years. A villager from Rumah Julaihi had to clear a path covered with thick undergrowth for us; it was hard and time-consuming labour. Heavy camping equipment also slowed us down. At 2.30 p.m. we reached the Bersukat, a tributary of the Muruan and the Jelalong, and set up camp for the night.

The next morning at 9.00 a.m. we started walking toward the confluence between the Muruan and the Susan, a tributary of the Jelalong. After another three-hour walk, again following a guide who patiently cleared the path with a *parang* machete, we reached a plantation road, which led us to Rumah Julaihi. Our journey from the uppermost section of the Suai River thus took a good two days with one night spent in the middle of the jungle. If the trail was frequently used and well maintained, it would take locals only three hours to cross the watershed travelling from one river confluence to another.

17.3 Watershed Connecting Points in Northern Sarawak

As we have seen, the Suai and the Jelalong rivers, which belong to different river systems and are divided by a mountain range, are nevertheless connected by a small but established path. People were therefore able to maintain close contact. Such close contact across a ridge of high land is not uncommon among other riverine communities in Borneo. Our literature survey and field interviews identified other watershed connecting points that functioned in the past as trade and migration routes and which were frequented for the purpose of social visits. They are usually located along district boundaries such as Belaga–Baram, Belaga–Bintulu, Belaga–Tatau, Kapit–Tatau, Bintulu–Baram and Bintulu–Miri (see Fig. 17.1). There are three migratory route complexes in northern Sarawak where a vast riverine catchment is formed by a triangle carved out by the South China Sea coastline and the Rejang and Baram rivers.

- Baram–Tinjar–Usun Apau complex: Menavan–Dapoi, Tinjar–Merurong, Menavan–Nyivung
- Kemena–Jelalong–Belaga complex: Sepakau–Tubau, Suai–Saoh, Sekalap pass (Seping, Kebulu, Koyan)
- Kakus–Rejang complex: Sematai–Putih, Merit–Takan.

Each of the three riverine complexes has a few important river systems that accommodate specific ethnic groups. The following section provides a detailed description of the relationships between the watershed connecting points and ethnic groups (Table 17.2).

Table 17.2 Northern Sarawak watershed connecting points and ethnic groups

Watershed connecting points	Ethnic group
Baram–Tinjar–Usun Apau complex	
Menavan–Dapoi	Berawan, Sebop, Lirong, Penan, Kenyah
Tinjar–Merurong	Berawan, Punan Bah, Sebop, Penan
Menavan–Nyivung	Penan
Kemena–Jelalong–Belaga complex	
Sepakau–Tubau	Kayan, Kejaman, Kenyah, Seping, Sepakau, Lahanan, Penan,
Suai–Saoh	Melayu, Punan Bah
Sekalap Pass (Seping, Kebulu, Koyan)	Penan, Malay Penan
Kakus–Rejang complex	
Sematai–Putih	Punan Bah, Tatau
Merit–Takan	Iban, Beketan

17.3.1 *Baram–Tinjar–Usun Apau Complex*

17.3.1.1 *Menavan–Dapoi Watershed*

The Menavan–Dapoi watershed connects the western tableland of Usun Apau in Belaga district to the Tinjar River in Baram district. It was an important migration route for several ethnic groups from the Usun Apau to the Tinjar. The first group to move out of the Usun Apau to the Tinjar was the Berawan, who consider the Usun Apau their ancestral home (Metcalf 1976: 89, 2010: 74). When the Berawan moved out of the Usun Apau into the Tinjar we do not know the route they took. We can speculate that they would have taken the route up the Menavan, a tributary of the Luar, which in turn is a tributary of the Plieran, to the watershed into the Dapoi, a tributary of the Tinjar. They established four settlements in the upper Tinjar, making them the first migrant group to occupy the area (Metcalf 2010: 93).

We can only speculate about why the Berawan migrated to the Tinjar. The landscape is rather flat with undulating hills and its main river, the Tinjar, provided an important mode of transportation to facilitate trading activities and interactions with other groups. The Tinjar was also practically empty save for a scanty population of the Lelak and Lakiput people near and around the confluence of the Tinjar with the Baram. In a matter of time, the Lelak and Lakiput, who were then involved in trading networks with Bruneian people, merged with the Berawan people (Metcalf 2010: 77–107).

The Berawan of the Tinjar are linguistically and culturally closely related to the Kajang people who live in Punan Bah, Kejaman, Sekapan and Lahanan of Belaga, Tatau and Bintulu districts. When their longhouse was further up the Tinjar at Long Tisam, it only took the Berawan of Long Jegan a matter of a few hours to walk via the Tinjar–Merurong watershed to reach the Punan Bah farmhouses in Jelalong. The two groups were therefore able to maintain contact with each other. From Jelalong, a route leads up the Tubau to the watershed into Sepakau, which flows to the Belaga River. This route enabled the maintenance of contact with the Kejaman and Sekapan people on the Rejang (Metcalf 1976: 93–94).

With regard to the kind of interactions taking place between the two sides, Peter Metcalf (*ibid.*: 95) notes:

The noble families of both Long Jegan and Batu Belah claim links to the Kejaman and Sekapan aristocracy. There are several Punan Bah men married to the Berawan community at Long Jegan, and Berawan men have gone to the Balui to marry in recent times. Some Long Jegan folk can speak Punan Bah, and even sing Punan Bah death songs. A Punan Bah prophet converted the Batu Belah Berawan to a new revivalist cult in the early 1950s. It may seem odd that the Berawan should be prepared to travel far to marry, and that cultural influences have been felt at such a range. But it must be remembered that when these patterns were evolving, the Baram and Balui were empty apart from the Berawan (and cousins) and the Kajang respectively. They were each others' neighbours in a vast, empty land of forests and rivers.

Historical records show that the Sebop and various subgroups of the Kenyah used to live in the western tableland of Usun Apau (Arnold 1956, 1959; Gockel 1974;

Harrison and Leach 1954; Needham 1953, 1954, 1965; Seling Sawing 1972). The first group of Sebop to move into the Tinjar in the early 1800s was the Long Taballau Sebop (Metcalf 2010: 92–93). Although today's Sebop are unable to identify the Taballau stream in the Usun Apau, there are archaeological evidence and historical records of Sebop settlements along the Plieran, Menapun, Luar and Menavan rivers (Arnold 1956, 1959; Harrison and Leach 1954; Needham 1953; Seling Sawing 1972).

The route taken by the Sebop in their northward migration was most certainly along the Menavan to its watershed with the Dapoi and down the Tinjar. Upon reaching the Tinjar they found the area already occupied by the Berawan. They settled with the Berawan at Long Batan, and formed a formidable community under the famous Sebop chief, Aban Jau (Metcalf 2010: 72–73).

The second wave of Sebop migration to the Tinjar occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century, and involved the Lirong Sebop and the Long Wat people (*ibid.*: 75–76). While the Lirong Sebop established settlements in the upper Tinjar, the Long Wat group moved down to settle at Long Lapuk, with a larger portion of the population moving further across the Baram to settle in the Apoh. This group named their settlement Long Wat.

The third and final wave of Sebop migration from the Usun Apau to Tinjar came about as a consequence of the so-called Great Kayan expedition of 1863 when the whole population of Sebop and others fled the area from Iban raiding parties that accompanied the government Kayan expedition forces (Arnold 1956: 166, 171, 1959: 115–125; Gockel 1974: 325–328). As they fled they went up the Menavan, crossing the watershed into the Dapoi where they moved down into the Tinjar. After settling in the Dapoi for a number of years, the Berawan *penghulu*, Sadimusak, visited the Sebop at Long Telanggau and was given presents of *parang* and a gong by the Sebop leader, Tama Balan, to cement their new friendship (Arnold 1956: 169). Later, the resident of Baram, Charles Hose, visited the fleeing Sebop in 1897, granting them permission to settle and rights to the Dapoi. Seling Sawing (1972: 331–340) has a detailed account of how the Sebop fled from the Usun Apau to the Tinjar.

While the third wave of Sebop migrants came to the Tinjar to escape from being raided, the earlier migrants came to look for a fresh area to settle.

All groups of Sebop have moved from the Usun Apau to the Tinjar, leaving only a few bands of nomadic Penan in the high tableland. There are, however, two groups along the Belaga River that they closely associate with linguistically and culturally. These are the Seping and Bah Mali.⁴ In the early 1960s the whole community of Seping moved to the Tinjar via the headwaters of the Koyan, crossing the Dulit pass into the Aya, and down to the Kenyah village of Long Aya on the Tinjar. As migrants they depended on the goodwill of their Sebop cousins, especially Penghulu Balan Lejau, an offspring of a Sebop father and Seping mother, to provide them land to build a longhouse and to farm. However, after 20 years in

⁴Sometimes spelt as Bemali.

the Tinjar, the Seping moved back to Belaga in the early 1980s to reclaim their customary land, having heard that companies were moving into their territory to harvest timber (Langub 2009). Today, the Sebop of Tinjar maintain cultural ties with the Seping and Bah Mali in Belaga as logging roads now connect the two communities.

17.3.1.2 Menavan–Nyivung Watershed

The Western Penan⁵ trace their origins to the Luar, a tributary of the Plieran, claiming the Usun Apau as their ancestral home (Needham 1953: 59–67). From there they split into different groups, moving in different directions.

Two groups moved northward. One of these groups moved by way of the Menavan, then over the watersheds into the Para, a tributary of the Dapoi, establishing there as Penan Paro ('Paro' being the way they pronounced the name of the River Para) (ibid.: 65). The other group also moved via the Menavan into the Nyivung, another tributary of the Tinjar, and identified themselves as Penan Nyivung (ibid.: 65).

Another line of movement also went northward to the west of the Tinjar, in the area of the Dulit range (ibid.: 65). Berawan oral narratives suggest that many of these migrants moved down to the Temadoh, a tributary of the Tinjar downstream from the northern end of the Dulit range, and identified themselves as Penan Temadoh (ibid.: 66). From the Temadoh, they moved again in different directions. One group moved down the Tinjar and settled at the mouth of the Tuyut, and learned to cultivate rice under the tutelage of the Berawan (ibid.: 66). These Penan are known today as Penan Tuyut (Needham 1965: 67–68) and reside at Long Lapuk. Others of this line moved westward to the upper Merurong, a tributary of Jelalong in Bintulu district. From there they again moved in different directions, to Niah, Suai, Beluru on the Bakong, and Labang and Maskat on the Kemena (ibid.: 62–68). They built houses and began to cultivate rice.

⁵On the basis of dialect, Rodney Needham (1972) divides the Penan population into the Eastern Penan and the Western Penan. The Eastern Penan comprise all those Penan living roughly to the east of the Baram River while the Western Penan are located around the watershed of the Rejang River, and along the Silat River in Baram district. There are also some Penan settlements in the Tinjar, Jelalong, and coastal area of Bintulu district, and in Suai-Niah in Miri district. In linguistic terms, these groups appear to be closely related to the Western Penan. There are some minor differences between the two divisions but, broadly speaking, in way-of-life and socioeconomic terms they are similar and consider themselves, and are recognised by others, as one people.

17.3.2 *Kakus–Rejang Complex*

17.3.2.1 *Merit–Takan Watershed*

There are eight Bekatan settlements in Tatau district, two on the Anap, one on the Sangan, a tributary of Anap, and five on the Penyarai, a tributary of the Kakus (Khoo 2000: 2). They trace their origins to the Kapuas in West Kalimantan and moved over to the Rejang, around the Nanga Merit area, from where several groups moved further north into Tatau. There are two routes that connect the Rejang area in Kapit district, above the Pelagus rapids to the Anap and Kakus: first, going up the Merit and on foot over the watershed to Takan, a tributary of Anap; second, going up the Meta on the Rejang and on foot over the watershed to Penyarai. Benedict Sandin's (1967, 1968, 1980) narratives of Bekatan migrations do not mention the routes taken by the Bekatan from the Rejang to Tatau; they were most likely via the Merit–Takan watershed. From the Anap some groups moved further into the Kakus and settled in the Penyarai.

The Bekatan are a minority group. As a minority they kept moving from one place to another looking for a fresh area to live in. But around the Nanga Merit area the five settlements of Bekatan found themselves surrounded by Iban, likewise the two settlements along the Anap and one in Sangan. The five Bekatan settlements on the Penyarai are the only longhouse villages along that river, but even then there are non-Bekatan, albeit in small numbers and mainly Iban, living in their midst. As Khoo Khay Jin (2000) observes, 'their claim to a distinct identity is their own self-identification and the fact of the continued use of their language; little of their religious, literary and musical traditions remain and, at this point in time, even oral history has become very thin. [They] have inevitably been acculturated, to a greater rather than lesser extent, to their much more numerous Iban neighbours'.

After the Bekatan established settlements in the Penyarai, the Metah–Penyarai watershed became an important route for the Bekatan in Penyarai and those on the Rejang to visit one another. It is a much shorter route. There is also a steady flow of visitors crossing the Merit–Takan watershed from either side of the pass; both Iban and Bekatan use the route when visiting relatives or looking for brides.

17.3.2.2 *Sematai–Putih Watershed*

There are two routes that the Punan Bah used to move from the Rejang in Belaga district to Tatau and Bintulu districts. One is up the Bah, a tributary of the Rejang, into the watershed between the Sematai, a tributary of the Bah and Putih that flows into the Kakus (Clayre 1971: 122). The other is going up the Rejang to the Belaga River, then up the Sepakau and then down the Tubau into the Kemena (Nicolaisen 1976: 70).

The first group of Punan Bah to move to Tatau was led by a Punan Bah aristocrat named Tigeang; they moved up the Bah to the Sematai–Putih watershed, then

descended down the Kakus to establish a settlement there. Tigeang's migration was driven by personal ambition. According to Punan Bah tradition:

[A] younger brother of a ruling aristocrat without a longhouse of his own had very little political influence, so by moving to Tatau and by marrying a girl who belonged to the aristocracy ... Tigeang had made a match of several advantages. First and foremost political bonds were established which brought an end to head-hunting between the Punan Bah and the Tatau. This may have been most important as the Punan Bah were having enough problems with the Kayan. At the same time Tigeang gained control over the Tatau group. (Nicolaisen 1976: 82–83)

With regard to the Punan Bah commoners that followed Tigeang to Tatau, 'push' and 'pull' factors were the reasons to move: the general insurrection caused by the Kayan in the Rejang, and political stability of the Kakus at that period of time (ibid.: 83). The Kakus had a small population and it was not only possible for them to farm in peace but also to access valued items such as birds' nests and other forest resources.

The Sematai–Putih watershed also connects the Punan Bah in Kakus with their relatives on the Rejang. As Iain Clayre (1971: 24) observes, '[t]he Punan people today straddle the watershed between Tatau and the Rejang. T.R. Kupak of the large Punan Ba house above Nanga Merit was born at Rumah Kaseng on the Kakus, a main tributary of the Tatau, and there is constant traffic across the passes by Punan' from both sides of the watershed divide. Ida Nicolaisen (1976: 84) describes these social interactions thus:

[T]hose who have moved to Kakus have done so mainly in order to log timber.... It was chiefly the young men who were tempted by the opportunities to earn money for a period of time in Kakus area. But some married and settled down permanently. Also whole families may take residence in the area for a period for some economic reasons, but they usually combine the trip with visits to relatives.

Of course the Punan Kakus people come to the Rajang, too, but never for economic reasons and rarely to settle for good. Their visits are social: they wish to look up relatives or feel obliged to attend a social occasion such as, for instance, a secondary burial.

17.3.3 *Kemena–Jelalong–Belaga Complex*⁶

17.3.3.1 *Sekalap Pass*

Another group that moved to the Jelalong did not take the Menavan–Dapoi watershed or the Menavan–Nyivung watershed. From the Luar they moved westward to the Seping where they crossed the Belaga River to the upper Koyan, then

⁶For a detailed examination of the multiethnic situation in the Kemena and Tatau catchments, see Kato et al. (2015).

over the Sekalap pass, and down the Kebulu, a tributary of the Jelalong, establishing a settlement there. From there they split into three groups: one remaining in Kebulu and two into the Jelalong, establishing settlements at Suan and Saoh. When the Penan arrived in Kebulu, the Jelalong area was empty; they became the first group to settle there.

When Penan were asked why they constantly moved, their answer was that they were in search of food (Needham 1953: 79). Groups that initially moved to the Tinjar and Jelalong, and later spread to the Bakong, Suai-Niah, Kemena and Labang, all settled down and cultivated crops, with some groups such as those along the Kemena, Labang, Niah and Bakong becoming Muslim.

Although the Penan rarely ventured beyond their settlement to build networks with neighbouring groups, neighbours from near and far came to their settlements to visit and look for brides. Taking the Penan Saoh as an example, of the 32 current marriages in the village, only six are between Penan individuals, while 26 are with other ethnic groups such as the Iban, Kayan, Kenyah, Chinese, Vai Segan, Malay and offspring of mixed marriages (see Table 17.3).

If one looks at the genealogy of an individual Penan, one finds in a number of cases ancestors from different groups. A good example is Julaihi Keti, the current headman of Penan Saoh. Figure 17.2 shows that Julaihi, who considers himself and is recognised by others as Penan, has two Kejaman ancestors who came from the Rejang via the Sepakau–Tubau watershed to take Penan brides; a Vai Segan, who

Table 17.3 Marriage profiles of Rumah Julaihi, Penan Saoh, Jelalong and Bintulu

Marriages	Number	Percentage
Penan married to Penan	6	18.750
Penan married to Iban	6	18.750
Penan married to Kenyah	4	12.500
Penan married to Kayan	3	9.375
Penan married to Chinese	1	3.125
Penan married to Vai Segan	1	3.125
Penan married to Malay (Indonesian)	1	3.125
Penan married to offspring of Penan mother, Iban father	1	3.125
Penan married to offspring of Penan mother, Chinese father	1	3.125
Penan married to offspring of Penan mother, Kejaman father	1	3.125
Offspring of Penan mother, Iban father, married to Kayan	3	9.375
Offspring of Penan mother, Iban father, married to Iban	1	3.125
Offspring of Penan mother, Chinese father, married to Punan Bah	1	3.125
Offspring of Penan mother, Chinese-Punan Bah father, married to Beketan	1	3.125
Offspring of Penan mother, Chinese-Punan Bah father, married to offspring of Iban mother, Chinese father	1	3.125
Total	32	100.00

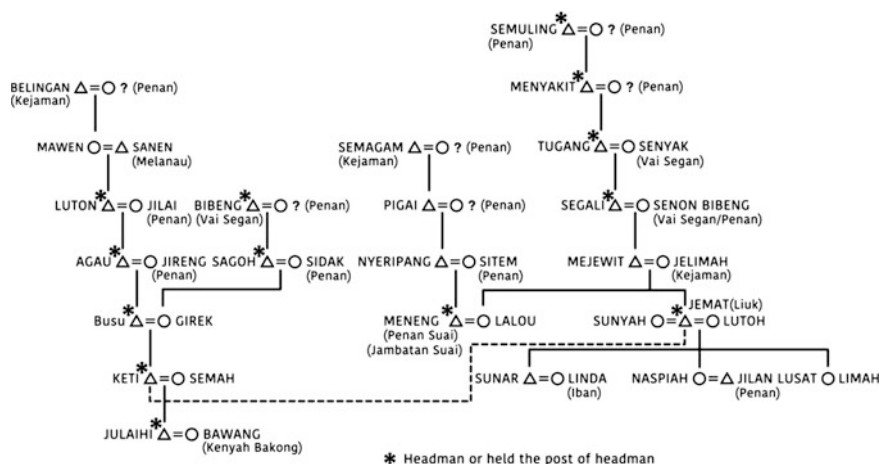


Fig. 17.2 Genealogy of Julaihi Ketu

escaped paying dues to Brunei, fled to Jelalong and married a Penan woman, and a Melanau from Mukah who ventured up the Jelalong and married a Penan woman.

17.3.3.2 Suai–Saoh Watershed

All the groups of Penan that moved out of the Usun Apau in the early 1800s were more concerned about settling in permanent settlements and they had little thought about connecting back to their groups left in the high land or building networks with neighbouring inhabitants. However, the Penan Suai kept in touch with their relatives in Jelalong via the Suai–Saoh watershed. For instance, the May 1882 issue of the *Sarawak Gazette* reports that '[d]uring the month a number of Penans who left Kabulu for Suai during the cholera epidemic of 1877 returned to Kabulu again. Some Suai Penans have also moved with them. They state that they have left their own country because Pangeran Damit had unjustly demanded a heavy fine from them' (Gueritz 1882: 36).

17.3.3.3 Sepakau–Tubau Watershed

A man by the name of Kulan followed by three other families went up the Rejang to the Belaga River, then up the Sepakau stream to the watershed descending downward to Tubau, and onward down the Kemena to establish a settlement in the Labang (Nicolaisen 1976: 70). They mixed with other groups including Malay and Melanau, and Penan who had become Muslim. As the Kemena was largely uninhabited, some of the Punan Bah moved to occupy the area. Punan Bah descendants in the Labang, albeit largely mixed with other groups and becoming Muslim, do not

consider themselves Punan Bah anymore, but as evidence of their occupation of the area, there are still some *kliering* (mortuary poles) standing there to this day.

Another Punan Bah man by the name of Saging led a group of followers to the Kemena. We do not have any record as to which route he took, but he came to Kemena to establish a permanent settlement at Pandan. Saging travelled widely in the area, including in the Anap and Kakus in Tatau district. Like his uncle Tigeang, who moved to the Kakus earlier and married a local Tatau woman as a political strategy, Saging married Njaladai, a Vai Segan girl from Bintulu, and secured peace between the Punan Bah and the Vai Segan (Nicolaisen 1976: 70–71). He also lived in Brunei for 10 years where ‘he raised his rank at the court, and took a Malay wife and became a Muslim’ (ibid.: 85). He came back to Sarawak and settled at Tubau, probably to look after trade between Brunei and the people of the upper Rejang. The remarkable thing about Saging was that through his initiative, various ruling aristocrats in Belaga, such as his older brother Baling, the Punan Bah chief at Long Bah, Taman Tipong, the great Kejaman chief, and Matu, the Sekapan chief, were invited to Brunei and encouraged to promote trade between Brunei and the people of Belaga. The travelling aristocrats and their entourage had to paddle up the Belaga, walk across the Sepakau–Tubau watershed, paddle down the Tubau into the Kemena to the coastal settlement of Bintulu, and finally continue by sea to Brunei. The trip to Brunei resulted in the erection of a simple trading station in Belaga prior to the establishment of a Brooke fort, Fort Vyner, at the confluence of the Rejang and Belaga (ibid.: 85). The trading station seems to have deteriorated at the time Hugh Brooke Low was supervising the erection of Fort Vyner in 1884 (Low 1884a: 33).

Prior to the construction of the Bintulu–Bakun road, the Tubau–Sepakau watershed was an important connecting route for the Kayan, Penan and Punan Bah people living in Tubau, Kamana and Jelalong to visit relatives in the Balui regions and vice versa. This will be discussed later.

As a consequence of the Kayan expedition of 1863, many Punan Bah moved up the Rejang and stayed around the site of the present Belaga bazaar. During their stay they many visited their relatives in Pandan on the Kemena via the Sepakau–Tubau watershed. Ten families decided to farm and settled down in a temporary longhouse at Long Kelaved. Led by Avit, a Punan Bah commoner, a small group moved further upstream into the Jelalong, first to collect raw materials, then with the permission of the Penan who had been there earlier they farmed and finally settled at Long Sebuang.⁷ According to the genealogy of one of the families of the first migrants, the Punan Bah have been in the Jelalong for five generations.

The Punan Bah of Pandan and those at Rumah Hassan in Jelalong maintain regular social and cultural contact with their kin on the Rejang as well as other groups of Kajang (Sekapan, Kejaman and Lahanan) and Kayan people via the Sepakau–Tubau watershed. There are several marriages taking place across the

⁷Interview with Hassan Kila, the headman of the Punan Bah at Long Sebuang, Jelalong, 8 February 2013.

watershed. The Punan Bah headman of Rumah Hassan in Jelalong is, for example, married to a Kayan woman from the Balui.

In the 1830s, two groups of Kayan from the Balui area came over to Tubau via the Sepakau–Tubau watershed (Rousseau 1990: 332). They comprised the Kayan Uma Awai and the Uma Juman who were part of the large movement of Kayan shifting from the Apau Kayan, East Kalimantan to Balui to establish settlements there. When they reached Tubau, the Penan were already living in the Jelalong. The Uma Awai group established its first settlement on the Kemena, below the trading centre located at the mouth of Tubau, and the Uma Juman along the Tubau not far upstream. Much later, another two groups came over to Tubau, the Uma Pako and the Uma San. While the Uma Pako established a settlement along the Pesu stream, a true right bank tributary of Tubau, the Uma San established their settlement on the true left bank of the Jelalong, not far upstream of the Tubau trading centre. According to elders of Uma Awai, their ancestors came over to Tubau in search of a fresh area to settle.⁸ Once the Kayan established permanent settlements in Tubau, it was time to build connection with the people in the Balui, to visit relatives, to attend festivals and rituals as well as to look for brides. Their Kayan relatives also paid similar visits to them in Tubau. The Kenyah of Long Bangan and Uma Sambop, living along the Belaga River, also established social networks with the Kayan of Tubau through several marriages.

17.3.3.4 Trade

The Tubau–Sepakau watershed was historically one of the most important trade routes between the people of Belaga district and the coastal population. Prior to the cession by Brunei of Bintulu and the Rejang region to the Brookes around 1861, there were already intense trade activities between traders from Brunei and the people of the Balui region through the Tubau–Sepakau trade route. A trading station was built at the confluence of the Tubau and the Jelalong, a strategic meeting point between Brunei traders from the coast and people from the Balui. As far as Punan Bah oral tradition is concerned, it was an important trading centre.

As long as the central parts of Sarawak remained under the rule of the Brunei sultans, and also for quite some time during the Brooke rule, Tubau was the most important trading centre. All trades between Brunei and the upper Rejang went to Tubau. Malay traders went up the Kemena and Tubau rivers, walked across the land and then travelled down the Belaga River to the Rejang. This route was followed for several decades after Brooke rule, until Kapit had assumed sufficient size and trading capacity (Nicolaisen 1976: 85).

As Brunei sultans were most interested in promoting trade in the interior regions, a small trading station was established at the confluence of the Belaga and the Balui, the site of today's Belaga town; it was occupied solely by Malay traders from

⁸Interview with a group of Kayan elders at the longhouse of Penghulu Awai, 17 August, 2011.

Brunei (ibid.: 85, Yao 1987: 18–19). Some of the traders married local girls, remained in Belaga, and paved the way for the establishment of a largely Brunei Malay community and *kampung* in the district.

Trade between Brunei traders and the interior people of the Balui region continued even after Bintulu and upper Rejang came under Brooke control. In fact, Brooke officials ensured that the welfare of Brunei traders was taken care of. For instance, in the October 1881 issue of the *Sarawak Gazette* C.A.C. de Crespigny (1881: 7), the resident, made the following order to the Seping debtors thus:

I again spoke to Tama Laang and Tama Sulalang. I said the [Brunei] traders had complained that the Sepengs were very slow in paying their debts. I pointed out the example of the Kenniahs who make no debts but purchase all they require with ready money or produce and I particularly demanded of them that in future they should protect all traders and other strangers that might visit Belaga.

Belaga was a remote district, and rich in forest resources. Of its richness de Crespigny (1881: 7) remarked:

Camphor and gutta of the finest qualities abound in its forests and in the more distant districts between it and Bulongan [East Kalimantan] and these sources of wealth are as yet nearly untouched. The forests are also full of ratans but I do not see how they can be floated in safety down the Balui [because of the number of rapids towards the mouth of Belaga River] nor would their ultimate value stand the costs of conveyance across the Katibap hills [Sepakau–Tubau watershed].

Tubau continued to be an important trading centre well into the twentieth century. For instance, despite de Crespigny's scepticism about the high cost of conveying rattan from Belaga to the market at Tubau, Donald Owen (1909: 7), the officer in charge of the government station at Bintulu, wrote:

These people are exceedingly busy carrying rattan sega overland from Belaga and while I was at Tubau some 10,000 bundles of this rattan were either in Tubau or on their way from Belaga. I found Tubau very badly in want of supplies the Bintulu Chinese keeping their agents there short of rice and other food stuffs. The whole of Tubau trade is with Belaga and thousands of dollars (silver) go over to Belaga as the price of rattan during the year and the consequence is a shortage of silver here. Dayaks keep large quantities of silver in their houses and always refuse copper in payment of rattan.

Brooke officials were not only concerned about the protection of traders, especially those from Brunei. They were also concerned about getting the local population to see the advantage of getting involved in trade. De Crespigny mentioned one ardent Sebop Lirong individual whom he hoped would help encourage others to take advantage of this activity.

The Boling above mentioned is an enlightened Lirong of Pliran, and brother of Tinjan the Pliran chief. He has married at Peninan [Penyuan] and is an ardent trader. By his assistance I hope the resources of the extensive Districts of Ba Sepeng and Balui Peh will soon be opened out and that the people dwelling there will be as sensible of the advantages which all accrue to themselves by the protection of traders as those of Belaga are. (de Crespigny 1881: 6)

17.3.3.5 Establishment of Kampung Melayu, Belaga

Prior to the establishment of Brooke rule in the upper Rejang, Malay traders from Brunei had established trading networks with the inhabitants of what is today the Belaga district. These traders, according to Punan Bah narratives, ‘went from tribe to tribe on safe conduct’, albeit with the backing of the Sultan of Brunei (Nicolaisen 1983: 197). They came by way of the Kemena River in Bintulu district, up the Tubau, climbing the Tubau–Sepakau watershed, then going down the Sepakau to the Belaga River, and finally to the upper Rejang. These traders brought with them items like brassware, ceramics and beads. These items were exchanged with various jungle products such as camphor, aloe and bezoar stones that for centuries found their way into the network of global trade. This trade network continued into the Brooke period where the resident of the Rejang basin based at Mukah periodically travelled up the Kemena and Tubau and crossed the Tubau–Sepakau watershed into Belaga district to encourage trade and ensure the safety of traders, especially those from Brunei (de Crespigny 1881: 40–41).

Some of the Malay traders who had lived among local inhabitants married local women such as Punan Bah, Sekapan, Lahanan and Kayan. The completion of Fort Vyner in 1884 paved the way for a proper station to look after the affairs of what today is Belaga district. With the establishment of an administrative station in Belaga, the Brooke government introduced measures to control trade, one of which was to designate a proper place to trade. In the 1 February 1893 issue of the *Sarawak Gazette*, C.A. Bampfylde reported that ‘[t]here are 14 shops in the bazaar and fifteen more will shortly be erected, 10 by Chinese, 5 Malays, before the fort was built there was only one Chinese here’. Malay traders married to local women and living in longhouses were forced to move to the bazaar, paving the way for the establishment of a Malay *kampung* slightly downriver of the bazaar. Today, the Malay *kampung* comprises 60 households and a population of 353 people. Descendants of the Brunei Malay pioneers probably make up half of the population.

The current *penghulu* of the Malay community in Belaga is Awang Robert bin Awang Osman. His father, Awang Osman bin Awang Drahman, was the son of Awang Drahman bin Awang Japar, a Brunei trader from Kampung Tamoi, Brunei, who married Latifah, daughter of Ibrahim Shah, a Malay trader from Sumatra who married a Punan Bah in Belaga affectionately known as Aki’ Urun.

Awang Robert’s mother was Dayang Senol binti Awang Badar, daughter of Awang Badar bin Awang Tabib of Kampung Burong Pingai, Brunei. Awang Badar came to Belaga with his brother Awang Salleh bin Awang Tabib. Awang Salleh and his wife did not have any children; they adopted a Kejaman boy and named him Awang Jalil bin Awang Salleh. This meant that Awang Jalil was a first adopted cousin of Awang Robert’s mother, Dayang Senol. This genealogy (Fig. 17.3), linking two families and their offspring, shows in one branch an intermarriage between a Brunei trader and an offspring of a Sumatra Malay and a Punan Bah couple, and in another an adoption of a local boy, a Kejaman, by a childless Brunei couple. This genealogical structure is typical in a number of Malay families in Belaga. The Malay village is an interesting mix of Malay from Brunei, other parts

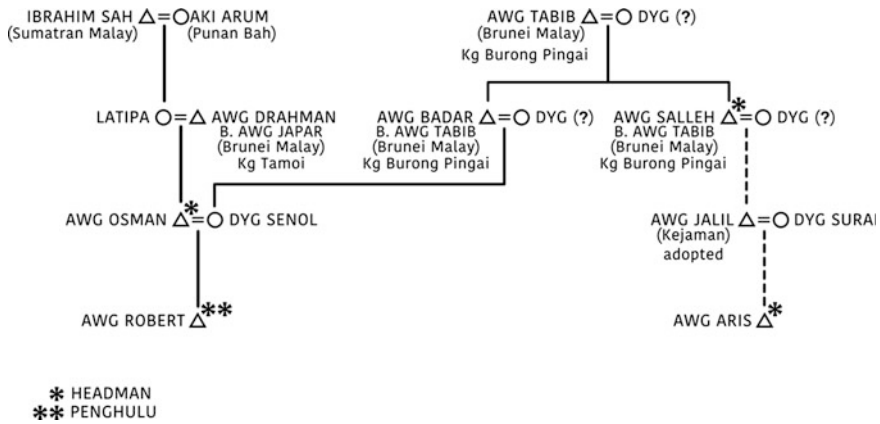


Fig. 17.3 Genealogy of Awang Robert bin Awang Osman

of Sarawak, the Malay peninsula and Sumatra, as well as a number of Kedayan from Sibuti in Miri district, some of whom either married local women or adopted local children.

17.4 Watershed Linkages and Landscapes Incribed in Memories

A basin catchment is a unitary social field penetrated, connected and structured by a major stream axis as well as a number of tributaries with cycles of contraction and expansion. In northern Sarawak, a riverine catchment is a lifeworld, a place of primordial attachment and identity formation for the local inhabitants. The descendants of social groupings are almost always identified with the names of rivers, as are cultivation plots, migration routes and forest commons. Riverine catchments are not only a space of daily livelihood; they also constitute a wider space of social interaction.

By focusing on the watershed connecting points in northern Sarawak, we try to identify and examine a neglected node of social interaction in riverine societies. Watersheds have been traversed by ancestors' footpaths through which locals from one river community travelled to another. Now buried under thick undergrowth and disturbed by massive plantation development, such watersheds have ceased to function as a synapse of social relations, memories, commodities and ethnic identity from one river system to another as well as from one social group to another.

Our attention to the watershed ridge comes from local memories. By listening to elders, we recognise the existence of the remembrance of a wide social space beyond a single river system among the locals, with multiple watersheds as points of reference and remembrance. Memories are stored and conserved, ordered and

inscribed with the riverine landscape. Paths that link to watershed points may have been abandoned but people never forgot their existence, inscribing their paths in a landscape of memory.

This chapter is a step towards making a repository of local knowledge on watershed networks and their quotidian social relations. We hope it will encourage residents and researchers of Bornean riverine societies to participate in their own exercises of inscribing and mapping past connections. Such ethnographic co-work may yield a new mental map of Borneo, where peoples' memories of watershed landscape point to the historicity of their connectivity beyond the social control and division of terrestrial road networks, administrative boundaries and entrepreneurial encroachment.

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Chapter 18

From Inclusion to Social Exclusion in Resource Stewardship among Members of Migrant *Bilik* Families in Pantu, Sri Aman

Dimbab Ngidang

Abstract It is evident that migration and labour mobility have had a major impact on the lives of Iban longhouse dwellers. One result is the problem of social exclusion and vulnerability which is manifested in a number of ways, not least the loss of control over livelihoods and customary rights. These issues are considered here in five major sections. The first part offers a brief overview of the research setting, the three longhouse communities of Empaling, Tekoyong and Munggu Ubah in the subdistrict of Pantu, Sri Aman that have experienced rural–urban migration. The second part of the analysis deals with social inclusion associated with the role of an inheritance institution in resource stewardship. The third part examines the evolution of a resource stewardship by default as an informal arrangement linking to the social position of community leadership as the custodian of *adat* or customary law. The fourth section explains how resource stewardship by default interacts with economic opportunity provided for by a joint venture oil palm project. The fifth addresses the concept of social exclusion and resource conflict associated with the collusion of vested interests from within and without the communities against the interests of absentee landowners, illustrated by a pair of case studies. The discussion suggests that the integrity of community leadership as a custodian of traditional *adat* law and land rights is compromised.

Keywords Sarawak · Iban · Migration · Labour mobility · Resource stewardship · Customary law

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18.1 Introduction

The agrarian transition in post-independent Sarawak demonstrates the vulnerability of Iban longhouse dwellers to the interplay of interacting internal and external forces, which leads to mobility of rural labour into various sectors of the economy. This chapter examines the socioeconomic and cultural costs that migrant families incur in three selected longhouse communities as a result of rural–urban migration.¹

The discussion is divided into five major sections. The first part offers a brief overview of the research setting, the three longhouse communities of Empaling, Tekoyong and Munggu Ubah in the subdistrict of Pantu, Sri Aman that have experienced rural–urban migration. The second part of the analysis deals with social inclusion associated with the role of an inheritance institution in resource stewardship. The third part examines the evolution of a resource stewardship by default as an informal arrangement linking to the social position of community leadership as the custodian of *adat* or customary law. The fourth section explains how resource stewardship by default interacts with economic opportunity provided for by a joint venture oil palm project. The fifth addresses the concept of social exclusion and resource conflict associated with the collusion of vested interests from within and without the communities against the interests of absentee landowners, illustrated by a pair of case studies.

The vulnerabilities of rural people to the agrarian transition as a result of external influences (such as the process of globalisation, market, policies and population pressures) vary with groups, individuals or communities depending on their coping capabilities, which include how accessible are they to resources, their socioeconomic standing and the sustainability of their livelihoods, social capital and political leverage. But one thing that is clear is that the mobility of labour from rural areas to various sectors of the economy is a regional and/or global phenomenon in the twenty-first century, arising from the flow of the workforce and/or human capital from one sector to another in the highly interdependent economies of a globalised world. In a dynamic agrarian transition, the movement of rural labour to nonfarm sectors could be attributed to the interplay of many factors: unsustainable rural livelihoods, urbanisation, urban-biased policies, population pressure on natural resources, displacement of rural population due to megaprojects, and so on. For instance, aggressive efforts made by the state government in promoting the construction industry, wood processing, manufacturing and service sectors in the past three decades have provided conducive environments for the movement of idle and/or surplus rural labour to be absorbed by these sectors, which has triggered most of the rural–urban drift currently taking place in Sarawak. But it is the dynamic interplay and/or compounding effects of these variables that become a

¹This chapter is based on the second phase of my fieldwork on a reconstruction of *bilik* families among migrant Iban in the Kuching urban environment, supported by a UNIMAS research grant 03(73)547/2005(46).

precursor for the market economy, which links the periphery to the process of globalisation at the local level.

With an increasing rate of transition from an agrarian livelihood to a market and/or monetised economy, more and more rural dwellers are now engaged in off-farm employment. This multivariate phenomenon has been explained in terms of the demise of shifting cultivation in Southeast Asia in a special issue published in *Human Ecology* (Mertz et al. 2009). Due to poor technology in the traditional sector, the overcultivation of farmlands using forest-fallowed techniques over time has led to low and unsustainable production, thus affecting the livelihoods of rural dwellers who have long been dependent on subsistence agriculture, but now have to change their livelihoods from farming to an off-farm economy to make a living. As more and more young people leave their longhouses for urban centres, it also changes the demographic landscape in the longhouses where only old people and school-aged children reside, whereas the youngsters or school leavers are now living and working in urban centres. This triggers a major movement from the traditional agricultural sector to the modern economic sector. The movement of farm labourers to the town centres has also precipitated a large-scale exit from the longhouses. Rural–urban migration has been used as a mechanism through which Iban are reconstructing their social space beyond their longhouse territories. But it is commonplace that migration leads to the breaking up of family ties, a decoupling from the *adat* system, and eventually a complete detachment from the household (*bilik*) in their longhouses.

Whether it is a permanent or partial exit from longhouse communities, rural–urban migration, for instance, is a form of livelihood strategy (Ngidang 2008a). But the impact of rural–urban migration on longhouse communities can be beneficial, such as providing remittances to the remaining members of the household and hence a means of poverty eradication. So far, from field observations, remittances have never been used as capital for improving rural areas; rather they are only good for meeting the immediate needs of the beneficiaries. In the first place, as a form of livelihood strategy, migration has been used by the Iban to secure employment and, when they remit some money home, the purpose is to help their family members cope with poverty. On the other hand, rural–urban migration can lead to a shortage of labour in rural areas as a result of depopulation, the increase in squatters and mounting social problems due to overcrowding in urban areas (Ngidang 2008a, b). Even more detrimental is the effect of the depopulation of longhouse communities on the cultural practices of indigenous peoples in rural areas. Some rituals cannot be practised in an urban environment; these migrants would have to go back to their original longhouses to continue such rituals, otherwise they may have to cease practising them (see Saleh 2008).

Another important impact of rural–urban migration that has not been critically examined is provided in the following scenarios. First, there are *bilik* families that have migrated from the longhouses and have no family member looking after their farmlands and other properties. In this case, it is commonplace in longhouses today that farmlands and fruit trees are left under the custodianship of relatives who remain in their longhouses. Second, in cases where none of the members of the *bilik*

families resides in longhouses any longer it is an unwritten rule of customary law that the custodianship of land rights is entrusted to longhouse chiefs or *tuai rumah*. Third, there are cases where many members of *bilik* families who have migrated and are now residing in towns are leaving behind their ageing parents to look after their farmlands and fruit trees. Fourth, there is also a growing number of cases where members of *bilik* families with school-age children who are left behind have been entrusted by migrant *bilik* families with the responsibility of looking after the properties of their *bilik* families.

Generally, one would say that the Iban community, like other indigenous peoples in Malaysian Borneo, is ill-prepared for such a transition. Most indigenous people do not seem to realise that a long absence from the longhouse, especially in the case of rural–urban migration, amounts to an abandonment of forest-fallowed farmlands in the context of the present Sarawak Land Code. Again, if farmlands have been abandoned for too long due to migration, absentee landownership tends to create a social vacuum in terms of resource stewardship especially when the elders have long died, and, in the absence of formal records for all native customary lands, members of *bilik* families have no knowledge of farm boundaries. So when people do not know the exact locations and boundaries of their customary lands, it provides an opportunity for individuals to capitalise on these uncertainties to lay claim to the customary lands of absent landlords. This gives rise to the notion of capitalism from below.

In the absence of formal property ownership, the present informal arrangements of custodianship entrusted to relatives or longhouse chiefs cannot stand the test of time. Competition for scarce land resources will eventually lead to a tendency towards land grabbing. Customary lands are sold by relatives for profit without the knowledge of absent landowners even to the extent of surrendering the whole longhouse territory to companies for plantation development and timber extraction. A conflict concerning rights over fallowed farmland in a longhouse community is very common today, particularly when resource stewardship becomes dysfunctional. In this case the applicability and/or effectiveness of customary law in dealing with opportunistic behaviour are limited in bringing about harmony in social relations in a given community. But when economic pursuits override social relations, it is highly problematic to use customary law to resolve competition for resources. Even the informal arrangements of a custodian among family members can also be problematic. Claims and counterclaims of rights to land are not uncommon among families and between relatives because they boil down to the fact that it is practically impossible to identify boundaries between farmlands in the absence of formal land titles. This situation has an important implication for the relevance of *adat* law in the post-independence political economy of Sarawak. Whether in the present or the past, a custodian under *adat* law assumes that there is no question of its moral value, so mutual respect for ‘the commons’ upholds a high level of personal trust. As in the case of the tragedy of ‘the commons’, opportunistic behaviour in an informal arrangement of resource stewardship can be broken because trust has no absolute value in the pursuit of economic gains. When a mutual arrangement of custodianship is broken customary law is helpless in

regulating social exchanges because these are no longer governed by the moral values of *adat*, but rather by the law of economic profitability.

In this chapter, claims of rights are not only related to boundary conflicts but also go beyond claiming property rights. Over time, absentee landownership is viewed as an abandonment of land rights and whoever farms on the land will eventually claim rights to the abandoned land and own it. Invariably, there is a strong tendency for opportunistic family members, relatives and even nonfamily members and outside agents to collude with each other in land transactions in the name of development. Also, where there is significant depopulation of many longhouse communities associated with rural–urban migration, most customary lands inherited from the pioneering ancestors are left fallow and have become an object of competition for those with vested interests, the state and private investors alike. In the present study, the question is how and/or what mechanism is being used by *bilik* families to maintain the role of the *bilik* as a custodian of customary rights. On the other hand, why does the role of the institution of inheritance as a resource stewardship break down in the absence of social presence due to migration? To what extent do land conflicts occur between members of *bilik* families who have migrated to urban areas and those who reside in the longhouses today?

18.2 Research Setting

The area of the present study covers three longhouse communities: Empaling, Tekoyong and Munggu Ubah in the subdistrict of Pantu, Sri Aman, with a total population of 201 individuals, 110 for Empaling, 44 for Tekoyong and 81 in Munggu Ubah. In terms of households, 14 *bilik* families reside in Munggu Ubah, 28 in Empaling and 10 in Tekoyong. The three longhouses are located a few kilometres from each other with overlapping territorial, ancestral domains or *pemakai menua* and with a long history of common property. In some cases, *bilik* families might move from one longhouse to another, but still maintain their rights to customary lands in the former longhouses. Having an overlapping territorial space strongly indicates that the pioneering ancestors were at one time residing in one longhouse, but later split into different longhouses as population grew with territorial expansion and resource exploitation. In fact, these pioneers were also believed to be responsible for opening up land at Sungai Tenggang, Aping and other neighbouring longhouses. For this reason, the *tembawai besai* (the orchard grove at the site of the pioneering longhouse) at Bukit Tungal, a symbol of heirloom property, is still held in common by many longhouses until today. These families are related to one another either through marriage or they are the descendants of their pioneering ancestors in the Brooke era, or both. These longhouses are located a few hundred kilometres away from Kuching, and roughly a one-and-a-half-hour drive from the Universiti Malaysia Sarawak campus at Kota Samarahan. The nearest towns are Pantu and Lachau bazaars.

Since the formation of Malaysia in 1963 these villages or longhouses have been without water and electricity supplies. In 2004 just a few kilometres of dirt road were constructed linking these longhouses to the Kuching/Sri Aman trunk road in return for landowners' consent to give away their customary lands for an oil palm plantation. It is a substandard plantation road, not even a village road by the standards of the Malaysian peninsula. Prior to the construction of this plantation road, physical mobility was limited as the villagers had to walk several hours from their longhouses in order to reach the main road. In the past four decades, neither the New Economic Policy nor the Vision 2020 paradigm have made a difference to the livelihoods of these people let alone the 1Malaysia concept that has come too late and is too little for these longhouse dwellers. Despite being in the periphery for more than 40 years, today these rural dwellers are very appreciative of this new-found mobility because in the past they were hardly able to navigate their longboats to get to the nearest town for their supplies during the dry season.

I chose this area as a case study to understand the impact of rural–urban migration for several reasons. First, all families in the villages have children who have migrated to town for employment. Second, many *bilik* families had totally left their longhouses with no family member looking after their ancestral lands, fruit trees and other property on their behalf. This leads to the social phenomenon called resource stewardship by default, which I discuss in the next section. Third, the promotion of a joint venture oil palm plantation on customary lands provides a window of economic opportunity to the communities that have been left behind. Fourth, there is a collusion of interests between local elites and private investors to take advantage of idle customary lands in the name of development. With poverty eradication and creating employment as selling points for promoting a joint venture between landowners, private investors and state agencies, this commercial venture not only creates economic opportunities but also gives rise to resource conflicts. However, from the introduction of the New Economic Policy onwards development has remained very elusive for rural dwellers. They have been chasing after development from one Malaysia Plan to the next, but to no avail.

Since the introduction of the joint venture concept of native customary land development in 1996, the private sector has started chasing after longhouse dwellers for their land. In 2004 a state-sponsored, private sector-run joint venture oil palm plantation was formally established in Pantu. The project covers a total area of 6870 ha of native customary land belonging to 34 longhouses. It is a joint venture between Tetangga Akrab Sendirian Berhad as the private investor, longhouse communities and the Land Consolidation Development Authority (LCDA) as the managing agent. For some reason, 10 longhouses withdrew from the joint venture project. As a result, only 1340 ha have been planted by December 2007. As I point out below, the economic opportunity that comes along with this LCDA project is not without controversy.

Here I examine the social cost of the joint venture project in terms of resource stewardship and land conflicts arising from the collusion of vested interests from within and without against the interests of absentee landowners. The first part of the analysis deals with the relationship between resource stewardship and the concept of

social inclusion embedded in the institution of inheritance in the Iban community. The second part examines the evolution of stewardship by default as a result of rural–urban migration. The third section explains how resource stewardship by default interacts with the economic opportunities provided by the joint venture oil palm project. The fourth section draws attention to the concept of social exclusion as it operates through capitalism from below to undermine the trust in resource stewardship.

For the purpose of the present field study, in-depth interviews were carried out with *bilik* families who are currently in conflict with local elites and/or are vested interests concerning land matters under the joint venture oil palm project. For verification purposes, LCDA officials, lawyers and native court officers handling court cases were also interviewed. In this study, the term local elites refers to the *tuai rumah* (longhouse chiefs), *penghulu* (government administrators at the sub-district level who oversee the roles of *tuai rumah*), members of the village development and security committee (Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung, JKKK) and councillors—political appointees of the party in power.

18.3 The Iban Inheritance Institution

The inheritance institution of the Iban community is an age-old tradition that has survived the test of time. It is a repository of cultural practices embodied in oral traditions linking the past and the present via *adat*. The institution provides a mechanism for natural resource stewardship in the Iban community. Richard Worrell and Michael Appleby (2000) define the term stewardship as a responsible use of natural resources that takes a balanced account of the interests of society. It is a unique way of preserving the concept of inherited or ‘heir property’ held in common by *bilik* families. The term ‘heir property’ has been used by Janice Dailey and Conner Bailey (2008) to refer to landed property. In the Iban community, the term heir property includes not only landed property (forest-fallowed customary land or farmland), but also non-landed property such as orchard groves or fruit trees, *pulau galau* (forest reserve) and *engkabang* (meranti) trees inherited from pioneering ancestors.

The inheritance institution has two fundamental elements: the concept of *pun*, which literally means source or origin in Iban; and social inclusion. The concept *pun* has been used by Derek Freeman (1981) to refer to the egalitarian nature of Iban leadership. But in this chapter, I refer to the concept *pun* as ‘the origin’ of the *bilik* family, which has a direct bearing on natural resource stewardship.

With reference to *The encyclopedia of Iban studies*, the term *bilik* family in the Iban language refers to ‘a social group which owns and occupies an apartment in a longhouse’ (Sutlive and Sutlive 2001: 208–213). The concept of *pun bilik* is central to the Iban inheritance institution because the latter defines rights to an heir property, while the former traces the source or origin of the *bilik* to pioneering ancestors who first created rights to land. These rights were passed down to the

present generation via an institution of inheritance governed by customary law or *adat*. In the Iban inheritance institution, *adat* functions as a regulatory mechanism for resource distribution and the social relations or exchanges associated with resource utilisation. The law of inheritance gives rights of custodianship to the *pun bilik*. In other words, *adat* empowers the *pun bilik* as the steward of an heir property. As a custodian to the heir property of a *bilik* family, it has the power to dispose and/or franchise such rights to any member of successive *bilik* families.

By extension, the term social inclusion² in this chapter refers to a social mechanism embedded in the institution for perpetuating and/or preserving the continuity of ownership among the descendants of pioneering *bilik* families or *pun bilik*. It is a paradigm for promoting cohesiveness and/or the collectivity and social capital, and functions as a means of social bonding. In a very simplistic sense, descendants of the *bilik* family are accorded equal rights of access to heir property. As a custodian of heir property, the *pun bilik* is accountable to members of the *bilik* family and is held responsible for ensuring that everyone within a *bilik* family is included and no one should be excluded from rights of access to heir property. Thus, by extension, descendants of pioneering ancestors are entitled to inherit landed properties and fruit trees, because ancestral land (*tanah tuai*) and orchards (*buah tuai*) are held in common (*kunsi*) by the *pun bilik* family. So by the nature of the inheritance institution, it creates a phenomenon called social inclusion in resource stewardship as far as an entitlement of rights of claim is concerned. An interpretation of social inclusion in the institution of inheritance assumes that resources are limited, and for that reason, it requires the *bilik* family to invoke *adat* for regulating the distribution and utilisation of resources. Invoking *adat* limits the (human) freedom of members of the *bilik* family to exploit a finite resource. For this reason, too, the institution of inheritance employs the concept of stewardship for managing an heir property belonging to or held in common by the *pun bilik*. Thus the role of the *pun bilik* as a resource steward in the above context is parallel to the concept of sustainability in development terms because the concept of resource stewardship imposes 'a protective restraint, a taking care of resources through nurturing and thrifty management of their use' (Leopold 1998: 228 cited in McCuddy and Pirie 2007: 961). It takes care of the present generation without jeopardising the needs of the future generations.

However, the question is how many generations of descendants of the *pun bilik* are still entitled to and/or are socially included in the *pun bilik* family. Iban *adat* does not have an explicit answer to this question. This ambiguity is a potential cause of conflict among successive *bilik* families with respect to land rights. So if taken for granted, the nature of social inclusion embodied in the inheritance institution can be very problematic because anybody who claims to be a descendant of pioneering ancestors and the successive *pun bilik* families is entitled to inherit customary lands and orchard groves from their ancestors. In view of the complexity

²The term social inclusion in this chapter differs from the term used in poverty analysis. In the latter, the term is used as a policy instrument to bring the marginalised poor into the mainstream. The former refers to the cultural process of keeping, preserving and maintaining equilibrium in social relations among members and/or descendants of the *bilik* family.

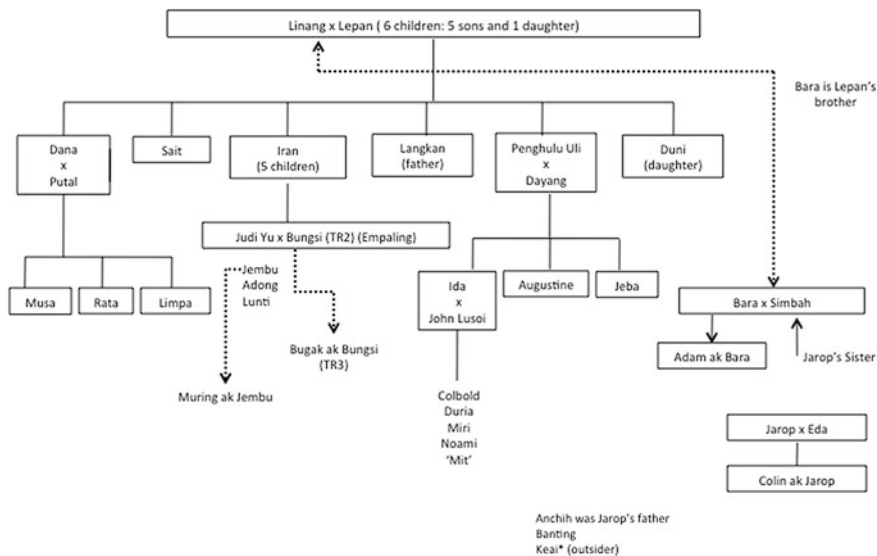


Fig. 18.1 Genealogy of Penghulu Linang’s bilik families

of customary rights with multiple stakeholders, the issue of entitlement can be resolved in the context of the partitioning of the *bilik* family. This can be traced to a mainline genealogy, a succession of *bilik* families in the line of descent from *pun tusut*, from which the *pun bilik* branches into various *bilik* families (see Fig. 18.1). Each branch becomes a new *pun*.

18.4 Creating Resource Stewardship by Default

As I have discussed in the previous section, resource stewardship is ‘a notion of people caring for or being responsible for a local area or resource’ (Roach et al. 2006: 47–48). Inheriting heir property is still commonplace among *bilik* families in the longhouse communities under study. While the role of an inheritance institution as a mechanism of resource stewardship in these longhouses remains the same as it was during the pioneering generation, the practice employed by longhouse communities in managing heir property at the local level in the aftermath of rural–urban migration has apparently shifted from the *bilik* family to a mutual arrangement within longhouses. However, the social reality is that keeping the institution intact and, moreover, making it relevant in the era of globalisation pose a great challenge for longhouse dwellers who depend on customary lands for cultural and economic survival.

The present study identified two specific situations of absentee landownership associated with rural–urban migration. First, landownership in absentia occurs when there is no surviving member of the *bilik* family residing in the longhouse

upon the demise of elders or parents. Second, such a situation also occurs upon the death of parents or elders with surviving members of *bilik* families residing in town or living elsewhere. The two situations create a vacuum in resource stewardship leaving an heir property without a custodian.

For many longhouse dwellers, rural–urban migration is a livelihood strategy of choice in order to escape poverty. Unequivocally, a permanent exit from the longhouse involves both social and cultural sacrifices for migrant *bilik* families. Leaving behind forest-fallowed farmlands and orchards in the process of seeking new alternative livelihoods and/or a better living in cities has compelled migrant *bilik* families conveniently to make a mutual arrangement with community leadership or relatives to take care of their customary land to fill the vacuum. Such an arrangement is called resource stewardship by default as a temporary substitute for the role of the *bilik* family as a custodian or steward to an heir property. The phrase ‘resource stewardship by default’ here refers to a unique social relation, involving a taken-for-granted practice among migrant *bilik* families by placing their heir property in the hands of community leadership. It was an uncommon practice in the past, but now because of the pressure of rural–urban migration stewardship by default has become commonplace. Rather than leaving an heir property without a caretaker, many would prefer to rely on stewardship by default as an option. This is made possible because of the existence of a long-standing relationship among longhouse dwellers that makes it socially comfortable to put their trust in the community leadership as a caretaker of their customary lands. In Lou Wilson’s (2006) terms, the emergence of such an arrangement among migrant *bilik* families fits well with the social capital debate because of the need for maintaining solidarity and cohesion from within.

An explanation of the transition from *bilik* family to stewardship by default is tied to *adat*. For instance, by virtue of his social position as longhouse chief, the *tuai rumah* is a custodian of *adat*. So at the community level, the *tuai rumah* is entrusted as a custodian of customary law or *adat* for regulating social relations pertaining to the harvesting of forest products and fishing, the distribution of land resources, and the protection of rights to land and fruit trees within a *pemakai menua*. The *tuai rumah* has no jurisdiction over the property rights of a *bilik* family as far as the inheritance institution is concerned unless he is a member of the *bilik* family, in the event of absentee landowners, or if there is no surviving member of the *bilik* family to look after their landed property. It is often taken for granted that the *tuai rumah* becomes a custodian of the rights of migrant *bilik* families. This informal arrangement does not necessarily pose a problem in the short term, but, as far as trust is concerned, it is also a rare commodity that can be broken for economic and political reasons over time.

18.5 The Window of Opportunity Comes with a Price Tag

In post-independence Sarawak, resource stewardship based on the inheritance institution in the Iban community has been threatened by external factors ranging from state political policies, demographic changes to market forces, on the one hand, while existing ambiguities in the customary law governing the inheritance institution makes the concept of resource stewardship very vulnerable to competing interests from within, on the other hand.³ Whatever it is worth, resource stewardship by default certainly has a very important implication for policy and practice as far as native customary land development is concerned. But in the absence of social control, monetary incentives and/or rewards associated with economic opportunities can pose a potential threat to mutual arrangements in resource stewardship by default.

For indigenous people in Sarawak a window of opportunity rarely opens in the periphery. Because economic opportunities are so entrenched in the political economy dominated by the haves and the centre, the aspirations and the needs of the have-nots at the periphery seldom appear. Thus it is not surprising that such a relationship is almost always characterised by economic and political division and to a certain extent, it even goes down to a cultural divide, depending on the nature of the discourses. Therefore, a window of opportunity is undoubtedly created by the practice of the politics of development. Who should get what, why and how much, are all determined by the power of politics. It is no wonder that a window of economic opportunity is tied to a selective preferential treatment of individuals or groups, bypassing the masses that put political leaders there through the electoral process.

As I have already stated, the state-sponsored joint venture oil palm plantation has presented a window of economic opportunity. Since the establishment of the LCDA in 1981 the Dayak community in Sarawak, particularly the Iban, has been under constant political pressure to release their customary lands for oil palm plantations via a joint venture concept of land development. It is a tripartite arrangement in which 60 % of the equity is held by the private sector, 30 % belongs to landowners and 10 % is held by the state agency (LCDA), which acts as the managing agent of the project. One of the projects of this kind is the Tetangga Akrab Pelita Pantu plantation at Sungai Tenggang implemented in 2004.

Judging from the controversy over the land development policy in Sarawak today, the explanation for the psychology of consensus among landowners on the joint venture project is entangled in several layers of interconnected strategies for softening local resistance and ensuring absolute support from both the political and community leadership.

The first major effort was winning over the Dayak political leadership to agree to the joint venture concept for developing native customary land in 1995, more than

³Today 50 % of Sarawak's population live in urban areas as compared to 20–25 % in the 1970s. Population mobility due to urbanisation and participation of rural dwellers in the off-farm economy has already compounded the process of globalisation at the local level.

10 years after the concept was first introduced by the LCDA in 1981 (Ngidang 2002, 2003). This was followed by the introduction of the Land Bill to provide a legal framework for using the concept in the Sarawak Land Code. The third strategy was the Land Code Amendment Bill 2000, in which the cultural basis for creating customary rights embedded in section 5(2)f in the land code was deleted.

The fourth strategy was upgrading the status of community leaders as salaried government agents, through which the *tuai rumah* was paid RM450 a month when this study was carried out in 2008. By 2013 the *tuai rumah* monthly salary had been increased to RM800 a month. This ties the political obligation of the *tuai rumah* to the state. Once the *tuai rumah* is convinced then a psychology of consensus is assured. For instance, economic opportunities are tied to land development through the joint venture project. The project is presented to the local community as a means for creating wealth, providing employment, and for poverty eradication. In theory, local communities have a choice: they can either reject or accept the project. Participation in the joint venture project is not without a price tag. It requires landowners to surrender their lands to the joint venture so that they are entitled to have water, electricity, roads and other facilities. But if they reject it they are left without development. Undoubtedly, the joint venture provides employment, but such a partnership also creates a community of labourers. Apparently, the project empowers the private investors by profiteering from consolidating customary lands via economies of scale but also by disempowering landowners instead, who have no control over their land and the production process and eventually become minority shareholders in the joint venture.

The fifth strategy is an exploitation of a cultural weakness pertaining to the role of *adat* in resource stewardship. The window of economic opportunity comes along with the promise of development but not without political pressure, making longhouse chiefs very vulnerable to outside interests. Apparently, by applying political pressure on the community leadership, and given the ambiguity of *adat* in resource stewardship, this provides a platform for the *tuai rumah* to exercise power as custodians of *adat* in their longhouses. Community leaders have the liberty to take upon themselves the role of 'rightful' claimants of 'abandoned' farmlands belonging to absentee landlords in a given window of economic opportunity. This economic opportunity is provided by the state-sponsored joint venture oil palm plantation at Sungai Tenggang. In the following discussion, we shall see how resource stewardship by default is shrouded by the intersecting interests of the community leaders and the private sector.

One important question here is that how does the *tuai rumah* as a custodian of *adat* and a resource steward by default operate in the above economic setting. The scenario represents both an opportunistic setting, on the one hand, and an obligatory role of the *tuai rumah*, on the other. In the past, the *tuai rumah* was elected by the longhouse dwellers. Again, by virtue of his position as *tuai rumah* he is a custodian of *adat* law in the longhouse and supposedly a protector of the community's interests. But unlike ordinary longhouse dwellers, the *tuai rumah* is a salaried government agent, who acts as an intermediary and/or link between the state and the local community (Ngidang 2005).

Community leaders, in fact, have dual interests. Given a window of opportunity, they tend to sidetrack their obligatory role as longhouse chiefs to become economic men and act as facilitators of development. That is, when they collaborate with outside interests they use their political connections as they represent or act as a link between the local community and the government officials. They definitely would not go against their official role. After all, they are the eyes, ears and mouthpiece presenting the voices of the state at the local level. They are government loyalists and, by virtue of their role as political appointees, they occupy a powerful and influential position in the longhouse. In the joint venture oil palm project the community leaders are the facilitators of social change, for better or for worse.

Because they hold the key to unlock access to natural resources held under their custodianship within the *pemakai menua*, and because they exercise sanctions over matters pertaining to land use, harvesting of forest products, inland fishing and so on, and because they grant permission to loggers to harvest timber and give consent to the state government to develop the area for oil palm plantations, the *tuai rumah* are the most sought-after actors who can become reliable agents for both the state and the private sector. As such, they become a focal point of attention and/or attraction for businessmen, aspiring entrepreneurs, politicians and private investors alike. Their position fits very well with the agenda and/or interests of the state and the private sector. In the joint venture project, they have colluded with a private investor and LCDA interests to implement the oil palm plantation. They conspired with other local actors to lay claim to land rights belonging to migrant *bilik* families in the project area. On the other hand, community leaders also face a social dilemma. Protecting the interests of fellow longhouse dwellers would mean that they become a hindrance to the joint venture project, if they choose not to bow to the state interest. In doing so, they have to pay a heavy price for such a role, which may lead to their expulsion as the longhouse chief. Because they still want to maintain their social status, they choose the former (as a facilitator) because of the anticipated socioeconomic and political rewards associated with obedience as opposed to their punishment as deviant civil servants.⁴

18.6 Economic Opportunity as a Precursor of Social Exclusion

An economic opportunity provided by the joint venture project has, to a large extent, created opportunistic behaviour among community leaders. Access to an economic opportunity is central to transforming traditional men and women into economic beings.

⁴It is not worth playing the social activist. As the field observations indicate, the *tuai rumah* have to walk a tightrope between community interest and the official agenda.

There are two sources of empowerment for transforming the former to the latter. The first comes about when longhouse chiefs are entrusted with the role of a steward by default by virtue of their social position as custodians of *adat*, to take care of heir property belonging to absentee landowners or migrant *bilik* families. The second source of empowerment comes from the state officials by giving legitimacy to the position of *tuai rumah* as salaried government agents at the local level. The two sources of empowerment automatically convert longhouse chiefs into key decision-makers on behalf of the longhouse communities they represent. Again, as I have noted, because they hold the keys to resource control in their respective communities, they are also likely to be the first to benefit from the fall-out of government-sponsored joint venture projects. However, as resource stewards, community leaders are supposed to protect the interests of longhouse dwellers regardless of whether the latter remain or leave the longhouse. By the same token, stewards are expected to think 'common' for the sake of the communities they serve. In reality, the temptation of gaining financial reward often clouds good judgement as far as monetary incentives are concerned. As a result, community leaders may contravene their roles by breaking the trust accorded to them by the communities they represent. Thus opportunistic behaviour comes about as a result of potential monetary rewards associated with resource control and the tendency to socially exclude members of the *bilik* family or absentee landowners from drawing on the benefits.

The term 'social exclusion' has been used as an analytical framework in poverty studies, used to describe a group of people who are being excluded from main-stream social, political and economic institutions that prevent them from accessing resources, participating in society and asserting their rights (Stewart et al. 2006). These people are being left out of state contributory benefits (United Nations 2007). In the Malaysian context, this refers to people or groups who have been left out of government-sponsored development programmes. But recent scholarly debate on social exclusion entails its multidimensionality. How it operates and for what purpose it is being executed covers a wide range of issues: social, cultural, power relations, resource allocation, and the economic and structural norms of societies. People can be excluded in terms of social identity (race, ethnicity, religion, gender and age), social location and social status (health situation, migrant status, occupational and educational levels).

Drawing from the United Nations literature review on social exclusion (2007), the process of social exclusion in the context of the present study underscores a monopoly of scarce land resources by opportunistic groups of individuals. Such opportunistic behaviour is not born naturally; rather state authorities create it in order to instil the spirit of entrepreneurship among individuals who are willing to participate in the joint venture project. Again, in this context the state authorities are legitimising opportunism; those who are not willing to participate in the joint venture project are labelled laggards or antidevelopment. The notion of social exclusion here mirrors the tragedy of the commons. Opportunistic behaviour undercuts the solidarity paradigm insofar as social relations are concerned. It ignores collectivity, harmony, social order, common values and norms embedded in

the *adat*, which have long existed in the community. Because the benefit of opportunistic behaviour goes to the vested interest groups rather than being shared, opportunism takes the form of discrimination against family members. As a result, according to the United Nations (2007: 2), social exclusion would lead to ‘social disintegration, a progressive rupture of [the] relationship between individuals and society’.

In order to illustrate how opportunistic behaviour alters the status and mechanism of resource stewardship from trust to mistrust, I now examine two cases.

18.6.1 Case 1: Dispute between Relatives and/or Neighbours

Undoubtedly an economic opportunity presented by the joint venture oil palm project triggered cultural responses from longhouse dwellers with respect to rights to heir property, including ownership of forest-fallowed farmland and fruit trees. Emotions tend to run high when it comes to contentious and/or overlapping claims of landownership by interested parties.

The implementation of the project has been overwhelmed by many land conflicts, some of which have already been resolved while most disputes are still pending. Currently, there are 26 unresolved land conflicts in the joint venture project area, covering 80 ha of land and involving more than 30 *bilik* families from six longhouses. Although land conflicts among longhouse dwellers occurred in the past due to population pressure, the present land conflicts have been aggravated by the absence of boundary demarcation and legal titles to customary lands. Land disputes of this magnitude were nonexistent prior to the project implementation. But because of the anticipated monetary value of these lands, opportunists are motivated to challenge bona fide claimants for economic reasons. In the grey areas where boundaries are unknown, social narratives of the bygone era have become dysfunctional when the original landowners have long since died and even more so when children of the latter have already left their longhouses for jobs in urban areas. Then opportunists tend to gain and are given the benefit of the doubt.

The emergence of the opportunistic behaviour of relatives and/or *bilik* families is not uncommon today in order to take advantage of absentee landowners and the ignorance of the children of the former regarding their heir property. Opportunists by nature are usually relatives or family members who remain in the longhouses for some reason in that they could not make it in town due to their lack of skills or education. All the households in the study area have at least one family member working in town. This highlights another related issue—the only people who reside in the longhouses are either the older generation or pre- and school-age children. Due to the depopulation of longhouses, absentee landowners (migrant *bilik* family members) would naturally expect their relatives residing in the longhouses to become custodians of the land belonging to the absentee landowners by default. Rural–urban migration or employment in towns or cities or changing places of

residence following marriage have all created a situation where resource stewardship in a longhouse becomes loose and easily manipulated by family members and/or local elites exercising their power over heritage property. In other words, they become stewards of somebody else's lands and could even claim rights to those lands in the event of the death of the original landowners or absentee landowners.

18.6.2 Case 2: Dispute between and/or among Members of Bilik Families at Munggu Ubah

The longhouse at Munggu Ubah is located on the left bank of Sungai Sanjau, a tributary of the Strap River that joins the estuary of the Batang Lupar River. It is the first longhouse along the Sungai Sanggau. The establishment of Munggu Ubah longhouse and its territorial domain (*pemakai menua*) was pioneered by the Penghulu Linang. Linang married Lapan and produced five sons: Dana, Sait, Iran, Langkan and Uli and a daughter named Duni. Linang was appointed by the rajah to the position of *penghulu*, but later this position was handed to one of his sons, Uli. Uli married Dayang and they have one son, Augustine, and two daughters, Ida and Jeba. It is important to note here that by succeeding his father, Linang, as a *penghulu*, Uli inherited the position of *pun bilik*, the original *bilik* of Linang's descent grouping. Having inherited *pun bilik*, Uli owned more landed and non-landed properties than his brothers and sister. Uli, by virtue of his position as a *penghulu*, also acted as a keeper of both landed and non-landed properties held in common by Linang's *bilik*.

When Penghulu Uli reached retirement age, none of his relatives and/or immediate family members wanted to succeed him. Uli's descent grouping gave the position that he had held since the colonial administration to Beliang from Sungai Tenggang.

During Penghulu Uli's tenure, the position of *tuai rumah* was held by his brother, Dana Anak Linang. For some reason, Dana was succeeded by Bunsu as the *tuai rumah* of Munggu Ubah. Bunsu (who was originally from Empaling, a neighbouring longhouse located along Sungai Keresik, a tributary of Sungai Sanjau) married Yu, the daughter of Iran Anak Linang. Altogether, Iran Anak Linang had five children: Sidu, Jembu, Adong, Yu and Lunti. As far as Linang's genealogy is concerned, Bunsu is an outsider and therefore has no rights of claim to the heritage property of Linang's descendants. Bunsu was later succeeded by his son, Bugak Anak Bunsu as *tuai rumah* as of today. Thus Bugak came into the picture of Linang's descent grouping through his mother, Yu (see Fig. 18.1).

However, in Iban customary law, most of Linang's landed properties were supposed to be held by Penghulu Uli who controlled the original (*pun bilik*) family. By right, Bugak could only inherit some portion of landed property belonging to his grandfather, Iran. Somehow or other, through the leadership transition at Munggu

Ubah longhouse alongside the demographic mobility of the population of the longhouse, Bugak has managed to establish his claim to heritage property belonging to Linang's descendants at Munggu Ubah through his mother, Yu. Again, as far as the Iban customary law or *adat* is concerned, Bugak, although he is a longhouse chief of Munggu Ubah, has little or no jurisdiction over Linang's heritage property let alone Uli's. Thus Bugak's entitlement to the rights to land belonging to Linang is very limited. He could only claim ownership of shares of heir properties from his grandfather, Iran Anak Linang through his mother, Yu, the daughter of Iran.

Bugak, who succeeded his father Bunsu as *tuai rumah*, has become a custodian of the land rights of Linang's heir property by default for several reasons. First, all Linang's children (Dana, Sait, Duni, Iran, Apai Langkan and Penghulu Uli) had long since died. Second, most of the grandsons and granddaughters of Linang's children have migrated to towns for employment, while some already reside in other longhouses. Third, the original or *pun bilik* family held by Penghulu Uli became dysfunctional, primarily because none of his children or grandchildren resides at Munggu Ubah today. Fourth, as a result of depopulation over time, although they could lay claim to the heritage property, they have no or little knowledge of boundaries and the exact location of forest-fallowed farmlands that they inherited from Linang and/or Uli. They are merely absentee landlords.

With respect to other conspirators, Collin Anak Jarop is a distant cousin of Penghulu Uli's children. The same applies to Adam Anak Bara. Bara was Lapan's brother, whereas Keai is an outsider from Simunjan who married Suda Anak Sering, Uli's cousin.

The establishment of the joint venture oil palm plantation between several longhouses—Empaling, Gayau, Isu, Tekoyong, Munggu Ubah and Sungai Tenggara—as well as the LCDA and Tetangga Akrab as investors poses both a threat to some landowners and economic opportunity for others. This project has created an economic space for a collusion of interest between Bugak, and his relatives Collin, Adam and Keai Anak Lingi. Taking advantage of a dysfunctional *pun bilik* and absentee landowners, they grasped a window of opportunity to seize customary lands belonging to Uli's *bilik* family, lands which are not even theirs. They claimed rights over such lands and surrendered them to the LCDA for the oil palm plantation at Sungai Tenggara. Claims and counterclaims by some of Linang's descendants over such property have resulted in land conflict among members of Linang's *bilik* families and a subsequent lawsuit against the LCDA and Tetangga Akrab over the development of the lands.

This case study exemplifies how social exclusion operates in the name of capitalism from below. Here, the term social exclusion refers to a marginalisation of descendants of the original or *pun bilik* family of Penghulu Linang and/or Penghulu Uli from claiming rightful ownership of customary lands at Munggu Ubah by the vested interests of the relatives of the *pun bilik* family. This scenario best illustrates the demise of pioneering ancestors which, in turn, has led to the demise of many *bilik* families at Munggu Ubah.

This is a common occurrence among rural families throughout the state of Sarawak today. Specifically, the depopulation of Munggu Ubah was the result of rural–urban migration. For educated Iban from the longhouse, the movement to towns was related to education and subsequently employment outside the longhouse. An intricate knowledge about the longhouse territorial domain, boundaries between forest-fallowed farmlands, fruit tree tenure, *tembawai* and so on has been lost due to the lack of written records and/or overdependence on oral traditions to provide narratives of the past when the older generations have gone. It has been commonplace for the elders of *bilik* families to act as custodians of both landed and non-landed properties. In the absence of a custodian either upon death or due to migration of members of *bilik* families, an heir property inherited from pioneering ancestors has become open to dubious claims.

Again, if we examine this problem from the structural perspective, we can trace the source to the failure of the state to exercise settlement order in post-independent Sarawak. By extension of the Land Code, rights to native customary lands are recognised through the concept of legal pluralism, which allows the coexistence of both formal and informal land tenure. Because native customary land has no legal title, claims of ownership can be problematic. Such heir property according to customary law is usually held in common by members of *bilik* families. So the longer it is held in common the more claimants there are to the property over time. Any *bilik* family, for that matter, which, for some reason, is able to establish itself and act as custodian over the rights to a heritage property such as native customary lands in the absence of the *pun bilik* family can eventually socially exclude a once close-knit set of *bilik* families or their relatives from claiming rights to a common property.

Again, because descendants of Linang and/or Uli had left their longhouse for a very long time, they were in a disadvantaged position. This is an issue of decoupling, where an emotional attachment to the *bilik* family and/or sentimental values towards land, and social identification to the former longhouse, become loose or no longer exist and, therefore, come under threat.

18.7 Conclusion

The role of the state and the private sector-sponsored joint venture in establishing an oil palm plantation as a prime driver of transition among Iban shifting cultivators, while providing much needed employment for poor landowners to make ends meet, has undoubtedly created an extended economic opportunity for some local elites, but at the expense of many others. This chapter questions the integrity of community leadership as a custodian of *adat* law and land rights in the longhouses under study. They are vulnerable to financial manipulation by outside interests, most of which originate from private investors and arm-twisting practices by ruling elites through their elected representatives at the local level. So in order to bow to

the latter, community leadership is being pressured to use their social position and pass the costs to the absentee landowners or migrant *bilik* families

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Chapter 19

Stones and Power in the Kelapang: Indigeneity and Kelabit and Ngurek Narratives

Valerie Mashman

Abstract There are traces of early settlement in the lower Kelapang River in Sarawak, Borneo indicated through stone graves, menhirs and stone mounds. Recollections of histories of these sites by the local Christian Kelabit population are hazy, and until the recent resurgence of interest in the stone culture in the area, people were reluctant to visit these places as they were associated with death and the spirit world. A contemporary Kelabit narrative outlines previous occupation of the area with the Ngurek as ‘our people’, and paradoxically states that the Kelabit alone built the stone monuments. This in line with other claims in the highlands of an exclusive association with the stone culture, and can be understood as one of latent indigeneity as it highlights attachment to territory and excludes other groups. Parallel Ngurek narratives in circulation link their settlement in the Kelapang to a time when the Ngurek had supernatural power that enabled them to cut stone. These stories also explain the loss of this supernatural power, the decline of the culture of stone grave and mounds, and the reduction of their population after the Ngurek community left the area. Exploring the gap between parallel accounts of histories in the area creates a future opening for a more dynamic heterogeneous history of the Kelabit highlands and the stone culture. This indicates a need for reconsideration of notions of indigeneity and identity.

Keywords Sarawak · Kelapang · Kelabit · Ngurek · Indigeneity · Stone culture

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19.1 Introduction

This is our history of our Kelabit people. This land is inherently ours. There are people who talk about these stones (graves) ... the stone graves are our earliest history.

This quotation is taken from the narrative of the history of the Long Peluan,¹ stating that stone monuments in the Long Peluan area are evidence of early occupation of land and, as a result, the land belongs to the Kelabit. This extract can be understood as a latent assertion of indigeneity in order to claim land, citing the evidence of a connection to stone monument burial sites. It complies with the following broad definition of indigeneity: ‘it is taken to imply first order connections between group and locality’ and ‘connotes belonging and originariness and deeply felt processes of attachment and identification, and thus it distinguishes “natives” from others’ (Merlan 2009: 304). The statement that land in the Kelapang belongs to the Kelabit to the exclusion of others is taking place at a time when all the communities in the area, including Penan and Sa’ban, have a need to express their own sovereignty over their territory. The land available for forest resources is very much reduced to a limited area of community forest due to forest fires in 1997 and logging activities in the area. Further, there are conflicting perceptions of land use and ownership with the Penan at Long Beruang, because the Kelabit say the Penan are farming Kelabit ancestral land without acknowledgement of its past history. In turn, the Penan state that they were using the land in the area as their *tanah pengurib* (territorial domain) before the Kelabit came to settle there. This chapter does not focus on the land issues in the area per se, but on the Kelabit exclusive claim to land through an oral history.

To return to the Kelabit claim of attachment to the land through identification with stone monuments, I would like to suggest that this exclusive claim, which is also articulated through the reified identification as ‘Kelabit’, is characteristic of situations when there is pressure on territory from outside forces. The Long Peluan narrative begins by outlining the history of ‘our people’ (*lun tauh*) as an inclusive group. This is similar to the case of the inhabitants of the Luaje area in Sulawesi who did not articulate an ethnic identity at a time when their status as original inhabitants was not contested. As Tania Murray Li (2000: 150) notes, ‘the specificity of their identity has not been made explicit’. She goes on to observe that the forming of tribal and ethnic boundaries can be drawn from ‘specific histories of confrontation and engagement’ (ibid.:158). This is borne out by the case of the Kelabit stated above, who see themselves as part of the inclusive grouping *lun tauh* when they formed alliances with the Sa’ban and Ngurek at the beginning of the

¹I have been associated with this village and the Kelabit community for over 30 years through marriage. Fieldwork took place through participant observation and unstructured interviews during visits to the Long Peluan area and related settlements from 1998 to 2000 and from 2010 to the present. In 2012 the award of a Dana Principal Investigator grant through UNIMAS assisted this study. I am grateful to Poline Bala for her support and encouragement. The views expressed in this work are entirely my own.

narrative, yet assert themselves as Kelabit as a fixed bounded group in relation to their claim on the stone culture.

Beyond the narrative, in every day life the claims to land and sovereignty are not made explicit by the Kelabit but remain muted. This is necessary given the need for ethnic groups in the area to get along with each other as neighbours, as they are interlinked economically, as kin and as a wider Christian group encompassed by the Borneo Evangelical Mission *daerah* (district) which comes together at prayer meetings and celebrations in a solidarity of Christian brotherhood and sisterhood. Implicit in this is the paradox that indigenous groups can often live side by side, each with differing and conflicting narratives regarding origins and rights to territory. For example, the way the Kelabit of Long Peluan see the history of their area at any moment is quite different to the version of their Penan, Ngurek or Sa'ban neighbours, yet people get on with their daily lives, work on one another's farms, trade game and fish among themselves, and rely on each other for labour, cash and food supplies in order to subsist and survive.

This paradox of groups living side by side with conflicting narratives is part of a phenomenon identified by Linda Tuhwai Smith as 'oral ways of knowing':

For indigenous peoples ... the idea of contested stories and multiple discourses about the past, by different communities, is closely linked to the politics of everyday contemporary indigenous life. It is very much a part of the fabric of communities that value oral ways of knowing. These contested accounts are stored within genealogies, within the landscape, within weavings and carvings, even within the personal names that many people carried. (Smith 1999: 33)

What Smith describes as oral ways of knowing looks at a wider cultural repository for oral traditions, such as genealogies, naming systems, places and stone monuments in the landscape which feature as keys to the legitimacy of the Kelabit Long Peluan narratives. Yet, as she also stresses, these oral ways of knowing are also complex and multifaceted, characterised by multiple and differing narratives.

Taking this lead from Smith, who emphasises the necessity of considering multiple narratives of the past, this chapter aims to highlight the problem of looking at assertions of indigeneity, latent or otherwise, using a model of exclusive identity for original inhabitants of territory. In parenthesis, I am aware that in contesting notions of indigeneity I am treading on dangerous ground. Alberto Gomes (2013: 12) warns that public discussion of who is or is not indigenous in Malaysia is considered seditious. Further to this, the global concept of indigeneity is used in international circles as a means for advocacy and rights for indigenous peoples and signifies a moral force that makes it difficult to critique (Merlan 2009: 304).

Nonetheless, by utilising multiple narratives this chapter reveals another less exclusive dimension of the stone culture in the Kelabit highlands which the Kelabit use as evidence of the early occupation of their area. It shows that the Ngurek, who lived alongside the Kelabit, also have powerful narratives regarding the stone culture which are still in circulation. This suggests that the claim of the Kelabit to exclusivity has to be treated with caution. With the Ngurek narratives in hand, it does not follow that the Kelabit ancestors' occupation of the land precedes others,

nor can a claim to indigeneity validate that they were there before others. This is because the identities of Ngurek and Kelabit were fluid through alliance and intermarriage and cannot be understood as being set against one another. As Francesca Merlan (2009: 319) notes, 'indigeneity as a category and a set of institutions cannot be adequately understood as based on oppositional relations between native peoples and their others'. This is because many indigenous peoples live side by side with each other and their less indigenous neighbours, each holding conflicting and differing narratives regarding their history and their land.

As indicated earlier, the stone culture is used to promote the notion of continuous Kelabit occupation of territory in the Long Peluan narrative. This is very much in line with the position taken by Kelabit elsewhere:

In relation to neighbouring tribes, cultural evidence of Kelabit occupation of the land was characterized in the past by a unique stone megalithic culture that set the highlands apart as unmistakably inhabited by the Kelabits (Bulan 2003: 19).

These cultural landmarks are revisited as indications and proof of the occupation of the highlands by the Kelabits.... Quite clearly they lived and exclusively occupied the highlands as part of their ancestral homeland for generations from time immemorial (Bulan 2003: 45).

This is in keeping with many accounts of Kelabit origins in the highlands since the beginning of time (Bulan and Labang 1979: 43; Yahya Talla 1979: 13; Lian-Saging 1976/77: 57). The Kelabit scholars Robert Lian-Saging (1976/77) and Yahya Talla (1979) consider a range of origin stories for the Kelabit. First, they both cite the Kelabit belief that the Kelabit have always lived in the highlands. Talla considers the notion that the Kelabit migrated from the Brunei basin up the Limbang River into the Adang River and then from there to the Liu' plain. From the Liu' some people went to the Kayan and Mentarang rivers and some to Sabah and the Trusan, Tinjar and Tutoh rivers (Talla 1979: 17). Lian-Saging discusses a similar range of hypotheses and, like Talla, also considers the possibility of the origin of the Kelabit coming from the Kerayan, acknowledging the bigger picture of the Apad Wat peoples, but is unable to take his arguments further because of a lack of data.

The potential diffusion of the Kelabit is matched by linguistic evidence that related groups who spoke the Apad Wat languages, which include the Kelabit, were spread out over a considerable area (Eghenter and Langub 2008). There is little known of the dynamics of the ancestors of the Kelabit with their neighbours across this vast area. There is a gap in their documented history, which does not take into account the dynamism of alliances in war, and the heterogeneity of intermarriage with neighbours, migrations across and through the highlands and across the Apad Wat range. This is because the Kelabit only came into being as a group in the early part of the twentieth century, with the classification of ethnic groups by the Brooke government. This process of ethnic classification for the purposes of governance overlooked the existing complex heterogeneity of ethnic identities (Gomes 2013: 9), which was demonstrated by the fact that the ancestors of the Kelabit belonged disparate groups who were allied to their neighbours on river systems, such as the Dabpur, the Kelapang, the Akah and the Tutoh, rather than to an ethnic category.

The next sections outline the context of the Kelabit longhouse of Long Peluan on the lower Kelapang River and its relationship to the Ngurek relationship to the Kelabit and discuss the use of narratives. This is followed by an outline of the stone culture in the Kelabit highlands and the claims of Long Peluan that are supported by the evidence of visitors. Next, the authority of visitors and the settlement of Ngurek in the lower Kelapang area with the Kelabit are analysed, followed by an account of Ngurek narratives of supernatural power related to the stone culture.

19.2 The Context of the Study

19.2.1 Long Peluan and the Kelabit Highlands

The focus of this chapter is Long Peluan, a 100-year-old Kelabit longhouse in the headwaters of the Baram River—known locally as the Kelapang River—on the edge of the Kelabit highlands in northern Sarawak.

This area today ranges from the village of origin, Long Di'it, and the settlements which came from there, comprising Batuh Patong, Pa Dalih and Pa Mada. Close by to Long Peluan is Long Banga, the home of Sa'ban and Kenyah Leppo' Ke communities, and Long Beruang, a Penan settlement. The original settlers who came to Long Peluan in the first decades of the twentieth century were a group of Kelabit from Long Di'it under the leadership of Araya Keao and their Sa'ban kin from the Bahau River.² The village of Long Banga was established at Long Pulong and Long Puak, when more Sa'ban arrived in the late 1930s. After the Japanese occupation, further waves of Sa'bans came to live in Long Banga and Long Balong and they brought with them the Leppo' Ke Kenyah, who had lived with them by the Bahau River (Murang 1989, 1993; Egay 2009). In the late 1950s the Penan began to settle in Long Lamai and in the early 1960s in Long Beruang. Downriver, just beyond Lio Matu, live the Ngurek in Long Semeyang, who are described in the next section (Figs. 19.1 and 19.2).

In recent times, prior to becoming Christian before the Japanese occupation, the people of Long Peluan and Long Banga practised secondary burial with prestigious funeral feasts, and after a period of mourning the bones of the deceased were put in Chinese jars and kept in a separate area of the village territory—known as the jar cemetery (*menatoh belanai*) (for details of Sa'ban secondary burial see Clayre 2010). In addition, there are around 18 burial sites of unknown people, consisting of stone dolmens, slab graves in stone cemeteries, standing stones, and stone burial mounds scattered along the river system of the lower Kelapang in the vicinity of Long Peluan, Long Banga and Long Puak. The Ngurek are said to have previously

²The first person to come to the area is identified by both the Sa'ban and Kelabit as Sat Laeng, who was originally from Pa Di'it but was adopted by a Sa'ban family in Long Bingal. However, there are various inconsistencies regarding the approximate date of his arrival, which lead to the conclusion that he came and went back to the Bahau, and came back again.



Fig. 19.1 Long Peluan

occupied this area (Murang 1993: 85), and some elders associate graves at Long Nonar with this period, relating them to the ancestors of one of the founders of the current longhouse Araya Ajin, whose father was Ngurek.

19.2.2 The Ngurek

The Ngurek are recognised as the first people to settle on the Baram River at Long Semeyang in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries (Sellato 1995: 28). Their name for the river, Telang Usan, is widely used by most of the ethnic groups now settled on the river. They have oral histories relating to stone monuments, places, alliances and ancestors living in the area of Long Peluan.³ They were part of a ‘wider ethno cultural entity including the Murut, Kelabit, Kerayan and Lun Dayeh also even the Kajang and Leppo’ Pu’un who covered the whole of highland northeast Borneo’ before the migrations of Kayan, Kenyah and Iban into the area

³Other Ngurek settlements in Sarawak are at Long Iking and Long Banyok originating from Long Tamala, on the Baram River.

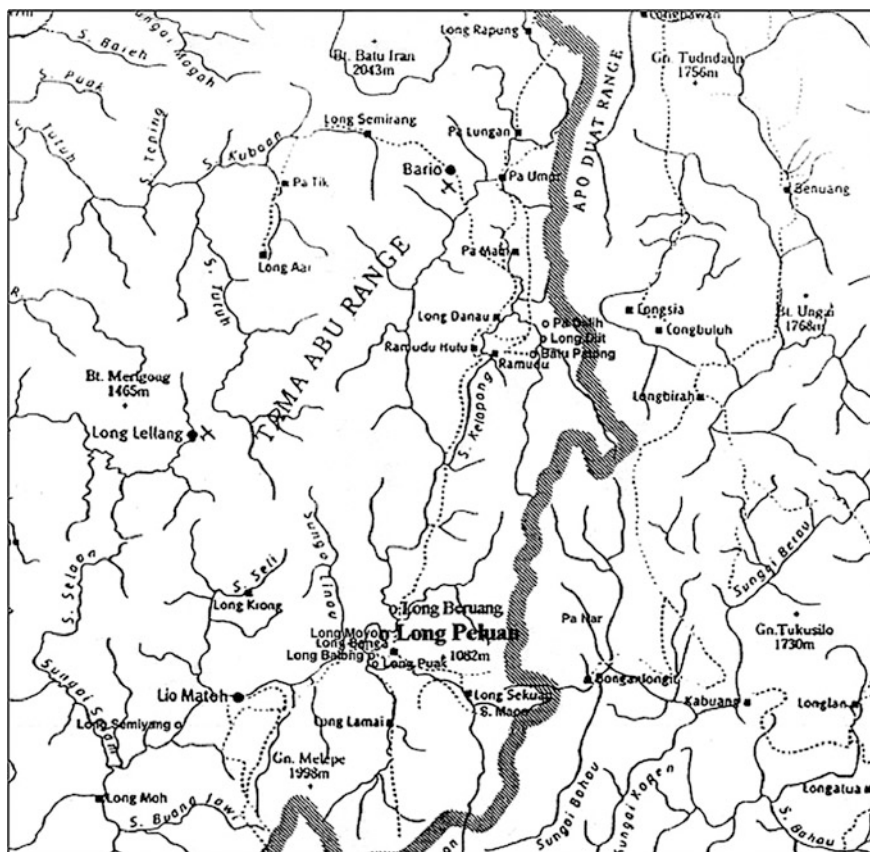


Fig. 19.2 Map of Long Peluan

(Sellato 1995: 7).⁴ Thus, both the Ngurek and the Kelabit have been identified with the earliest inhabitants of central Borneo, part of ‘an ancient cultural substratum’ through their practice of building stone graves and monuments, and secondary burial (*nulang*) (Metcalf 1975).

It is also stated that the ancestors of the Ngurek were Kelabitic (Rousseau 1990: 20) and related to the Sa’ban through the Berau who lived on the Bahau (Sellato 1992, 1995). Further reasons why they were considered Kelabitic are that there are similarities in tattoo patterns on women’s arms and legs and that Kelabit was spoken in Long Tamala and Long Semeyang as an alternative language right up to the 1940s (Bolang and Harrison 1949: 123). This is because there was significant

⁴This is supported by Metcalf (2010: 191), who states that the ancestors of the people of Long Ikang were the Leppo’ Umbo who predate the Kenyah migrations to the Baram as their allies were Long Kiput and the Berawan in the wars against the Tring.

intermarriage between Kelabit and Ngurek communities in the late nineteenth century. For example, Mapping Nyipa, the Ngurek chief from Long Semeyang who led the community during peace-making, married Dayang Ubong, a Kelabit. Further, almost two-thirds of the Long Peluan community has Ngurek blood through different ancestors.⁵ Moreover, according to migration stories and accounts of alliances in warfare in earlier times from both Kelabit and Ngurek sources it is likely that there was considerable intermarriage and communities were heterogeneous.

The Ngurek have been classified as Kenyah rather than Kelabit for the purpose of government administration. Moreover, they are considered Kayanic by linguists (Blust 1974; Soriente 2008), and they had a long association of residence with the Kayan Uma Po and the Sa'ban in the Lurah at Bawang Ipong (Jalong 1989: 170).

19.2.3 *The Long Peluan Narrative*

The narrative that provides the historical material for this chapter is the first in a series of three which account for the major phases of the history of Long Peluan. It was recorded on tape and circulated in 2006. It has since been transcribed and translated into English. Part of the story was handed down from a Ngurek source in Long Semeyang and has been combined with material from sources from elders in Long Peluan and then cross-checked with other Ngurek and Kelabit sources in order to get a wider picture. In presenting material from the narrative it is important to bear in mind that it is a partial view and it was recorded at a time when sovereignty over territory was a big issue in the community. Two additional written Ngurek sources are very useful: Philip Ngau Jalong (1989) and Claimants' Documents (2005). The latter consist of brief histories of Long Semeyang, Lio Matu and Long Tungan and details of Ngurek migration and witness statements for use in a court case claiming native customary land against the Sarawak government and Samling Timber Company and its subsidiaries.⁶

19.3 **Kelabit Beliefs and the Stone Culture**

In the past, the Kelabit believed that the large dolmens and stone slab graves found in the highlands were built by their ancestors, called Seluyah, who were gigantic humans, 11–13 ft tall and possessed extraordinary powers:

⁵Through Ngau Langat, a descendant of Mapping Nyipa; Bilong Salo, father of Araya Ajin; or Nu'uh Pu'un, mother of Lupong.

⁶Malaysia in the High Court in Sabah and Sarawak at Kuching, *Kelesau Naan and others v. Government of Sarawak, Samling Plywood (Baramas) Sdn. Bhd. and others*, Suit No.22-46-98 (MR), 8 May 1998. The Claimants' Documents are dated 2005.

It was traditionally believed that the *Lun Rabada'* (Rabada people) were the ancestors of man, that is they were a heterogeneous race representing all the present races. The *Seluyah* family of the *Lun Rebada* race, who lived and travelled the earth, were the ancestors of the Kelabit. (Yahya Talla 1979: 266)

The period when these stone monuments were built is also said to have been the 'time of great power' or *getoman lalud* (Barker et al. 2008: 134). These beliefs are now seen as historical and are little circulated in narratives within the community. The majority of sites of stone mounds, dolmens, stone slab graves and stone jars in the highlands have no local histories attached to them and nobody knows who was buried there. The practice of secondary burial and the associated beliefs connected with this discontinued after the Japanese occupation when the Kelabit embraced evangelical Christianity, and it is very difficult to find elders today who can remember and describe the beliefs and practices associated with the stone culture.

However, another source of information regarding the stone culture on the Kelapang has come from archaeological research. Archaeologists have established that upriver to Long Peluan, at Long Di'it, in the upper Kelapang, human activity in the form of forest clearance and management took place as early as about 4000 BCE. Furthermore, there was definite occupation at the cemetery site Menatoh Pa Di'it from 300 BCE until 600 CE. Some time after 1000 CE, this site was turned into a cemetery, and there is likely to have been repeated burial there from around 1600 CE until the 1950s (Lloyd-Smith et al. 2013).

19.3.1 *Kelabit Stone Culture and Forgetting in Long Peluan*

While the Long Peluan narrative cites the existence and connection with the stone culture as evidence of early occupation, the custody of such sites is overlooked. When the road to Ramudu was built, a section of the road was designated *batuh narit*, complete with road signs, after a stone carved by a deceased headman, Murang, in the locality of the Peluan River. Ironically, the stone was destroyed as it became dislodged and upturned during roadworks by a local workman utilising a bulldozer to make dam on the river. Another example of such forgetting is the case of Batuh Long Lingap, which marks the place where the Ngurek and Kelabit separated, and features in the Long Peluan narrative, Sa'ban narratives as well as Ngurek histories.⁷ The episode below in the Long Peluan narrative recalls the doomed love of a Ngurek-Kelabit couple who were forced by their parents to separate because the communities are dividing. The couple were under pressure to split up, so in defiance they committed suicide by jumping off Batuh Long Lingap.⁸

⁷Engan Ngau, personal communication, June 2012. In his version, the couple were of different rank.

⁸Tom Harrison (1984: 102) records a similar suicide story from the Long Peluan-Long Banga between a Sa'ban and a Kenyah.

The couple said, 'If we can't get married what shall we do?' But then they were so much in love and they said, 'It's better we die together.' So they went on top of a rock at Long Lingap (just by Long Metapah) and they held each other's hands tightly and they jumped down from the rock and died. That is why there is a partially decaying wooden coffin found in a ledge in the rock, which we used to see. This is a mark (*tada* ') to show Ngurek went down river.

The couple were eventually buried in a wooden coffin, which is wedged in the rock at Batu Long Lingap. The rock is the second site that has been dislodged during road works, and the attitude of the community towards this seems to be have been of passive acceptance rather than regret that this has happened.

Further to this, at Long Nonar—a five-hour journey upriver from Long Peluan on foot and by boat traversing two stretches of rapids—were further signs of previous occupation of their territory:

As our people moved upriver, one can see stone mounds and standing stones that they built along the river, and stone graves at Long Nonar. These are the signs (*edtu*) left by them.

A recent expedition to survey the site at Long Nonar proved to be futile, as it could not be found by any of the younger members of the local community; some people even suspected a logging company had destroyed it some 15 years ago. However, none of the elders who previously knew the site were on the expedition, and there is a possibility it still exists. Thus, two places in the narrative—indicators of previous occupation of the landscape—have become lost either through damage or by the 'forgetting' of the community.

The forgetting and damage to these sites took place at a time when there was little awareness of the importance of having such places gazetted, before the resurgence of interest in the stone culture in the highlands. At that time, these places had little meaning to the Kelabit of Long Peluan, particularly as they were on the furthest, least accessible parts of their territory. One could argue that these places have only become meaningful through the recent gazetting of Kelabit cultural sites after 2000.

It is through the Long Peluan narrative that these places are given importance:

This is our history of our Kelabit people. This land is inherently ours. There are people who talk about these stones (graves). For example, the Kenyah do not use stones (graves) but wooden carved coffins placed on high poles; but they are not lasting. Whereas the stone graves are our earliest history. That's why tourists (*turis*) who visit us say that there are no stones like these anywhere else. These can only be found where Kelabit stay. They say, this land in the headwaters of Kelapang belongs to you, the Kelabit people. That's what we need to think about now regarding the life of our ancestors. And this is our history with the Ngurek.

The narrative uses two vehicles for giving legitimacy to the claims of the Kelabit to territory: the shared history with the Ngurek and the authority of tourists or visitors. This is because evidence over and above the tangible remains—the stone monuments—is needed, since visible marks (*tada* ' *etuu*, *tu* and *edtu*) are being lost as greater modifications are made to the landscape, either by road building or logging.

19.4 Claims to Territory and the Authority of ‘Tourists’

Let us first of all consider the authority of ‘tourists’ who visit and declare—according to the narrative—that the stone monuments can only be found in places previously occupied by the Kelabit. As Long Peluan very rarely has any tourists due to its remote location, it is possible that the narrative refers to the American and British anthropologists and archaeologists who have been visiting the highlands and investigating the cultural sites (Hitchner 2009; Barker et al. 2008, 2009; Lloyd-Smith 2012). Even though little research has taken place in Long Peluan, the word of the archaeologists and anthropologists and their publications have permeated even this periphery of the highlands. These scholarly expeditions have left their own signs (*edtu*) to boost the significance of the stone culture in the eyes of the local community. Outcomes of their research include the posters explaining the stone culture in the longhouses of the Kelapang area, internet videos of Kelabit testimonies and local publications. It is through these publications that the stories of members of the community in the written word are given weight by being juxtaposed with archaeological evidence, providing them with an endorsement to their claims to the stone culture.⁹

A further reason for using the authority of researchers is their argument that the sites of cemeteries have been in continuous use since pre-Christian times, perhaps for thousands of years as ‘the dead had to be placed with other related dead’, indicating a long history of occupation of the area by the Kelabit and their ancestors (Barker et al. 2008: 135). It has also been suggested that populations were mobile and longhouses were often rebuilt with different inhabitants (*ibid.*:143). What is missing from these accounts is that the ancestors of the Kelabit were likely to be different from the Kelabit today, and the possibility that there were other groups living alongside Kelabit at different times and different places in the highlands.¹⁰ Such a possibility is indicated in the history of the Ngurek in the lower Kelapang area. The narrative of this history on the periphery of the highlands is significant as there is a strong belief in the Kelabit community that ‘the Kelabit occupation of the land has been to the exclusion of other parties’ (Bulan 2003: 23). This discussion now turns to the history of the Ngurek in the Kelapang area to uncover how this history adds weight to the claim of people in Long Peluan as the early inhabitants of their territory.

⁹See also Barker et al. (2009: 178). This study also touches on issues relating to Penan perceptions of claims to land. The visit of Monica Janowski and the research team is said to postdate the circulation of the narrative in 2006. This anomaly has yet to be clarified.

¹⁰The cases of the Penan living in Kelabit areas and the Kayan living close to the Long Lellang Kelabit are beyond the scope of this current discussion.

19.5 The Recent History of the Ngurek in the Kelapang River Area¹¹

In this section, I outline the history of the Ngurek in the Kelapang River area using published sources and interviews with Ngurek elders. According to one oral source, in about 1700 the Kelabit drove out the Ngurek from Sarawak, possibly from Long Sebatu (Sellato 1995: 7), and they moved into Kalimantan in the early eighteenth century into the Bahau watershed (Arifin and Sellato 2003: 199).¹²

In the mid-eighteenth century the Kayan, Modang and Kenyah attacked the Ngurek and took over the Pujungan, Lurah and middle Bahau rivers (Sellato 1995: 8). The allies of the Ngurek were the Sa'ban and the Kayan Uma Po, with whom they stayed on the Lurah (Jalong 1989: 160). Consequently, a group left the Lurah in 1770s under Eju Jalong and went north up the Bahau, settling in the lower Kelapang (upper Baram) at Long Puak, Long Balong, Long Peluan and Long Moyo' (Lulao Terong) (Jalong 1989: 161). This was some time before 1820 (Sellato 1995: 28). At Long Balong, their leader was Ngo Awan. This is the version of Ngurek migrations from the Long Peluan narrative:

They lived at Long Upun for quite a long while together with the Sa'ban of Pa' Nar, who are considered as our own people. They moved from there, following the Bahau River and along the path by Belarong River, up the Puak River (in Sarawak). They followed the Puak River until they arrived in Long Balong. They stayed together with our people who have been living there.

After Long Balong they moved to Long Bale, Long Peluan and Long Moyo'. It was in this area, at Long Moyo', that they lived with a group of Kelabit and they encountered an attack by the Lepo Tepu, headed by a Kayan Jau Luhong, which is described in the Long Peluan narrative, and by Jalong (1989: 161).¹³ There is another version told by a third source, Engan Ngau of Long Semeyang, which underlines the importance of charms during warfare:

We fought the Lepo Tepu. At that time, we had charms that gave us supernatural power, *tareng monok*. The war started because our enemies wanted to take it. Jeluhon was a Kayan leader who came over with the Lepo Tepu to capture the *tareng manok* from us. Mawat Ngo' kept the *tareng manok* and he was my ancestor.

¹¹In addition to interviews with elders from Long Banyok and Long Semeyang, the main sources are the work of Jalong (1989) and Sellato (1995). The latter has enhanced Jalong's work by constructing an approximate timescale to the events described.

¹²However, an alternative origin theory is that they were first inhabitants of the Bahau (Schneeberger 1979: 41), coming from the Apau Da'a in the headwaters of the Lura (Sellato 1992).

¹³Jalong sets the attack by the Lepo Tepu on the Selaan River, and Engan Ngau at Long Balong, whereas the Long Peluan narrative states this happened at Long Moyo, highlighting the alliance with the Ngurek closer to their own longhouse.

The *tareng manok* were sacred charms that were kept in a small jar.¹⁴ They provided the Ngurek with the power to overcome their enemies in battle. The belief in supernatural power as a contributing factor to military strength is a theme discussed further in relation to the building of stone monuments. Jeluhon was defeated during this attack and retreated. According to Engan Ngau:

When we heard that Jeluhon threatened to come back, knowing he would collect a large force from Apo Kayan and Ulu Bahau, Mawat Ngau said, ‘When this Jeluhong returns, I believe we cannot withstand; we better retreat to find better land.’

At this point, the Kelabit and Ngurek split up. The Ngurek, led by the son of Ngo Awan, Lawai Ngo, moved to the main Baram River, where they eventually settled at Long Semeyang with over 3000 people (Jalong 1989: 162). This was some time in the early nineteenth century (Sellato 1995: 28).¹⁵

It is also interesting to note that all the places mentioned in the sources stated above are in the Kelapang River area: Long Moyo’, Long Bale, Long Balong and Long Puak. Moreover, Long Moyo’, Long Bale and Long Puak are close to sites of stone monuments. Names of places such as Lio Ayo (which means ‘the island of the enemies’), Lulao Terong (Long Moyo’) and the Ong Muang rapids are still referred to locally as such in the Ngurek language. Thus, according to both Ngurek and Kelabit sources the Ngurek have an established history in the Kelapang River area and they settled with the Kelabit at Long Moyo’.

There is an interest in the stone culture in the Kelapang area, shown by Ngurek visits to the stone sites close to Long Banga and Long Puak, according to the Sa’ban community who live close by.¹⁶ Indeed, Jalong (1989: 161) states that Ngurek cemeteries and fruit trees extend from the Ma’o River to Lio Mato, indicating a wide territory covered by early Ngurek settlement. Ngurek informants assert that their ancestors built the stone monuments in the area and planted *oro urip*, a plant with red leaves.¹⁷ Moreover, archaeological research on a cemetery in the upper Kelapang at Menatoh Pa Di’it reveals parallels with stone jar tombs at Kampong Tempu in the Bahau (Lloyd-Smith 2010: 98).¹⁸ Many of the stone tombs in the Bahau, for example at Long Pulong, have been attributed to the Ngurek by the local populations in the area (Arifin and Sellato 2003). According to Engan Ngau and Penghulu Lenjau Kuleh, the Ngurek of Sarawak visit them (see Fig. 19.3).

Another factor that adds significance to this area is that downriver to Long Moyo’, at Long Belilin, is a major stone cemetery (*menatoh*) consisting of dolmens and slab graves; further upriver at Long Senibong is a *perupun*. However, it is

¹⁴Further details are unavailable, but based on Haddon’s (1901: 202) account of a trip to Long Tamala, it is possible that they consisted of boar tusks, stone hooks and pebbles.

¹⁵The Claimants’ Documents state 1819.

¹⁶See contribution from Jeffrey Jallong (2009: 35).

¹⁷This is possibly *Cordyline fruticosa* which was believed to have ritual power (Christiansen 2002: 141). This plant has not been found at sites surveyed to date.

¹⁸A further site of stone jars in the lower Kelapang has yet to be surveyed.



Fig. 19.3 Ngurek Penghulu Lenjau Kuleh from Sarawak visiting Ngurek grave at Long Bera, Kalimantan

impossible to determine whether these sites date to the settlement of the Ngurek in the area as related in the histories above without archaeological investigation. Bernard Sellato (1995: 28) suggests the recent migration by the Ngurek to the Puak river area took place between 1770 and 1820 (Fig. 19.4).

Thus, through oral narratives and the use of names of places, it is clear that the Ngurek stayed with the Kelabit in the lower Kelapang River area around the end of the eighteenth century. This indicates that there was possibly an earlier migration of the ancestors of the Kelabit to this area.

19.6 Monuments and Supernatural Power

There are specific Ngurek narratives relating to the supernatural power of their ancestors that enabled them to cut the stone used in the stone graves along the watershed of the Bahau River in Kalimantan and on the Puak, Balong and Bale rivers in Sarawak. These add weight to the migration narratives and convey that they had a relationship with the stone culture through their beliefs, which, unlike the case of the Kelabit, have survived in their oral histories to this day. These are outlined below.



Fig. 19.4 Dolmen grave near Long Puak. *Source* Clayre (2010: 285)

When the Ngurek were staying in the Apau Kayan, there were about ten longhouses. They were very successful in farming and hunting and there was plenty of food and they were very strong, able to repel all their attackers. It was at that time that they were in touch with the spirits of their great warriors particularly Uko Parah Leya whose spirit was with them as a guide and protector. It was also at that time that they had the skill cutting stone for stone coffins. (Jalong 1989: 158)

It is significant that the Ngurek believe they were able to make stone from this time when they were living on fertile land and in a position of military strength.

In another narrative, the protective spirit of an elder, as mentioned previously, was in the form of a crocodile, which moved with them in their migrations:

While we were staying in Long Lango (Alango) we had with us a Ngorek elder who was in the form of a white crocodile. At that time the Ngorek elders had supernatural powers that enabled them to cut stone. This white crocodile was with us at every place where we cut stone from Long Mandun to Apau Ping to Long Lian and Long Mao to Long Banga and Long Balong. It is possible to see stone graves from this time at these places, but once we left this area the crocodile left us and we were unable to cut stone again.¹⁹

This power was lost when the crocodile left them. This concurs with the story of the powerful white crocodile which was told on a recent visit to the stone slab cemetery at Long Belilin close to Long Moyo' where the Ngurek stayed with the Kelabit.

¹⁹ 'Asal Usul Kaum Ngorek Kampong Long Semiyang Ulu Baram', in Claimants' Documents.



Fig. 19.5 Stone mound (*perupun*) at Long Senibong

This is relatively close to Long Banga and Long Balong. Upriver is a very big stone mound (*perupun*) (see Figs. 19.5 and 19.6).²⁰

The following story, given by a Kenyah member of the Long Peluan community, explains how this strength came and went.²¹

The headman went to the farm. His two sons wanted to follow him, but when they got to the farm they found that there was no way to get across the river. The crocodile spirit took pity on them so he floated down to the mouth of the Belilin River and helped the two boys across the river on his back. When the boys met their father at the farm they found him angry.

‘How did you cross the river to get here?’ he asked.

‘We went on a log,’ they replied.

As they got back to the riverbank to return, he asked them, ‘Where is the log you used?’

‘It’s that crocodile—but when we used it, it was a log—it’s now a crocodile.’

So the headman addressed the crocodile: ‘You were the one who ferried my children across the river,’ he said. He was worried they would get killed. So he went to get a *parang* and spear to kill the crocodile.

He wounded the crocodile.

²⁰The size of the *perupun* at Long Senibong: 98 ft (30 m) in diameter and 11 ft (3.4 m) high.

²¹This was given to me on a visit to the stone gravesite at Long Belilin by a Leppo’ Ke Kenyah, Tama Gerawat, who stays in Long Peluan. This story is still in circulation among the Leppo’ Ke in Long Banga. It must be remembered that the ancestors of the Leppo’ Ke in Long Banga and Long Selaan have a shared history of migration with the Ngibun since the eighteenth century at Bawang Ipong (Sellato 1995).



Fig. 19.6 Tama Gerawat uncovering a slab grave at Long Belilin

‘You are unkind to me. I was trying to help your children cross the river. You are the headman but you are not kind to me like the leaders before. The other headmen were good to me. So I’m leaving you. Whatever you try to do in future you won’t be able to do. You won’t be able to get across this river and you won’t be able to carry these rocks again.’

This story continues the theme of the power of cutting stone, associated with a crocodile and that this power was lost when the Ngurek were living in the Kelapang area, which prevails in Ngurek accounts.²² Engan Ngau continues the story of the white crocodile.

We moved from Indonesia he came with us but its tail was short as if it was cut off. This crocodile was our spirit. We left Long Balong and the crocodile spirit left and went back to the Bahau to the Lepo Ma’ut.²³

In the old days, when children wanted to go with their parents, the crocodile would appear to ferry the children across. That crocodile really looked after us. It looked after the Ngurek group. It looked after the children. It really looked after the Ngurek ethnic group. It’s still there now at Long Mandun. When I was there, Lepo Ma’ut people invited me to see the crocodile in Long Mandun. It’s possible to see it, but Im not sure whether it is still alive.

²²The story below is also narrated in the ‘History of Long Semiyang’ in the Claimants’ Documents (2005).

²³The Lepo Ma’ut were the overlords of the Ngurek in the Bahau (Schneeberger 1979: 41).

In Central Borneo the crocodile was held in respect and treated as a blood brother to humans. It appeared to humans in dreams and bestowed success in hunting (Hose and McDougall 1993: 76). More specifically, it conferred prowess in headhunting and warfare among the Lun Dayeh and Lun Bawang (Topp and Egenther 2005: 145). It was also akin to the dragon as a protector spirit related to fertility (Sellato 1989: 44).

Relating back to the theme of supernatural power and the stone culture, the community had to be in a position of military strength and to be settled in a place that gave them the time to take on such an onerous undertaking of making a stone monument. This is because it is likely that the skill of building and cutting stone graves depended on the ability to muster a large labour force consisting of kin or slaves to support the enterprise of marking the landscape, and hosting death feasts in the community (Lian-Saging and Bulan 1989: 95; Janowski 2003: 47). Ngurek oral history, as related by Engan Ngau, confirms that they were in a position of power at the time they were at Long Moyo' (Lulao Terong):

There is another story that tells how numerous the Ngurek were in Lulao Terong. When the women pounded rice the water in the river would ripple (from the vibrations). This shows that the Ngurek had the spirit with them. When the men come back from bathing in the river in the morning, the hair they had shaved off would fill a long pig-feeding trough. That shows how many in number they were.

What is interesting is that these stories relating to crocodiles and supernatural power and the stone culture do not appear to be widely circulated among the Long Peluan Kelabit. This may be because in the past they were not particularly interested in the stone culture and, as devout evangelical Christians, they are reluctant to acknowledge any supernatural power that does not come from the Christian God.

Something happened while the Ngurek were staying with the Kelabit in the upper Baram which caused them to be weaker and to disperse so they had no power to continue making the stone culture. 'After they left Long Balong they had no supernatural power, everything had gone when they tried to make a *liang batu* [stone slab grave] it was futile'.²⁴ According to the Long Peluan and Engan Ngau narratives, it was the enmity of the Lepo Tepu which caused the communities of Kelabit, Sa'ban and Ngurek to disperse. The Kelabit went upriver on foot as they were used to the mountainous territory of the headwaters of the river, whereas the Ngurek went downriver as they were used to handling boats. Thus, there are a number of sources that associate the stone culture in the Kelapang with the time the Ngurek were staying there together with the Kelabit. The skill of making stone monuments was linked to the presence of a white crocodile that protected the community with its supernatural power until it was killed. After this, the power to make monuments disappeared. This is borne out by the fact that there appear to be

²⁴Engan Ngau, personal communication. See also the Claimants' Documents (2005).

no more traces of early stone culture associated with sites that were subsequently occupied by the Ngurek on the Baram. Thus, there is a strong association between the Ngurek and the stone culture of the upper Kelapang based on oral histories of the Ngurek.

19.7 Conclusion

Before the resurgence in interest in the stone culture in the Kelabit highlands, the Kelabit of Long Peluan paid little attention to the sites in their territory. A few sites have even been damaged due to logging and road building. With the rediscovery of the stone culture, the Long Peluan narrative states that the Kelabit built the stone monuments in the area. This is in line with claims that the Kelabit have been making elsewhere regarding the stone culture and the highlands (Bulan 2003). This is further supported by archaeological and anthropological work in the highlands, which is recognised by the local community as the authority of *turis*. Yet in the same Long Peluan narrative, the history of the Ngurek as ‘our people’ (*lun tauh*) in the area is outlined, though their relationship with the stone culture and narratives of supernatural power are overlooked by the Kelabit who see themselves as a bounded ethnic group. In doing so, an opening has been made for exploring further the relationship of the ancestors of the Kelabit with the Ngurek, opening up possibilities for a more dynamic and heterogeneous history of the Kelabit highlands and their stone culture. This contributes to the critique of a definition of indigeneity, which relates to first order connections to territory by showing the need to juxtapose layers of history utilising multiple discourses of the past. As Merlan (2009: 319) notes,

despite its powerful historical and emotional content, indigeneity does not have meaning on the basis of something that is ‘simply there’ or objectively ascertainable about those we call indigenous people but, like many other social categories, is a contingent, interactive, and historical product.

I would argue that the use of oral history provides insight into a time when identities were fluid and heterogeneous and histories overlapped. The creation of fixed ethnic identities by the nation-state, which classifies people, has been embraced by minorities such as the Kelabit, and their potential identification with the concept of indigeneity may become enhanced by a wider historical understanding of their own possible heterogeneity. It has yet to be determined whether this heterogeneity is limited to the periphery of the highlands in the lower Kelapang area, or whether the ancestors of the Kelabit were alone—to the exclusion of others in the highlands.

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Chapter 20

Social Change and the Contributions of the Tionghoa, Dayak and Melayu (*Tidayu*) in West Kalimantan

Zaenuddin Hudi Prasajo

Abstract This chapter explores the contribution of West Kalimantan in the process of change and development of customary communities in Borneo and, more generally, in Indonesia. It begins with a discussion of written materials produced at local institutions and mostly by local authors in relation to West Kalimantan that have helped frame the terms of the discourse. These materials demonstrate that the perspective of insiders and local authors, especially on issues of social change, comprises an important contribution to the local community as it grapples with dynamic transformations. In this same context, it is clear that local values remain an important part of the development of the community of West Kalimantan in general, including in the fields of politics, economy, society and culture. The core of the chapter examines linkages between local values and the consolidation of ethnic consciousness among the *Tidayu*—Chinese, Dayaks and Malays—as well as other ethnic groups such as the Bugis, Javanese, Madurese and Batak. The *Tidayu* possess a strong sense of ethnoreligious identity which is interrelated to the more recent emergence of ethnic consciousness and awareness. Religion, ethnicity and identity have indeed become very important factors in influencing social change in West Kalimantan.

Keywords West Kalimantan · *Tidayu* · Social change · Ethnicity · Religion · Identity

20.1 Introduction: Social Change and Local Community in West Kalimantan

Social change not only characterises the dynamics of human life but has also become a parameter for the development of human civilisation. The study of social change explores the relationships between individuals and groupings of people in

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society. With regard to local communities, and particularly rural communities in the face of socioeconomic changes resulting from globalisation, industrialisation and economic competition in the modern world, Irwan Abdullah (2006) has argued that the survival of their values and culture is particularly vulnerable in the context of modernising societies. This is because humans are forced by economic necessity to compete and survive in a globalising world. But they do so by deploying a range of strategies: adaptation, compromise, compliance and resistance. For example, some indigenous peoples in West Kalimantan, in the face of such external pressures and challenges, have exercised resistance through recourse to customary law by revitalising and strengthening their customary forest management and elements of their traditional culture (Alqadrie 1990). Cultural resistance movements also express themselves through raising the consciousness of local identity and ethnic solidarity both at the provincial and national levels.

This chapter focuses on the contribution and experience of local communities in West Kalimantan undergoing processes of change and development, primarily by using the publications of local researchers and institutions. In addition to providing views from the perspective of the insiders, we also have to address the issue of the role of local values which have become an important part of community development in West Kalimantan. These local values appear in the description of the concept of *Tidayu* which consists of three major ethnic groups of the province: Tionghoa (Chinese), Dayak and Melayu (Malay).

20.2 Research on Local Issues: Local Organisations and Institutions

Responding to the introductory remarks by Victor King in the earlier chapters of this book with regard to current studies on the region, I consider the main issues, discourses and themes that have been addressed by local researchers and sponsored by institutions in West Kalimantan. Institutions in the province have also played significant roles in hosting research and academic activities relating to Borneo. It is important to examine this material in any review of Borneo Studies since much of it has been published in Indonesian, in local academic and research institutions, in limited editions and with restricted circulation, and is not generally accessible to the international scholarly community. Furthermore, the number of active Indonesian researchers in Borneo Studies in the province is still relatively limited, though interest and expertise are growing. For example, there is a collection of work, primarily in Indonesian, by local scholars based at the Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Pontianak, Pontianak State Institute of Islamic Studies), Universitas Tanjungpura (UNTAN) and Institut Dayakologi in Pontianak (see also John Bamba, Chap. 15 in this volume). In addition, collaborative research with the use of information technology between local institutions and individual researchers has

also increased on such topics as the rapid development of oil palm plantations and mining activities in Kalimantan and their effects on local communities.

In this chapter I focus on universities and colleges, UNTAN and IAIN Pontianak, though there are other research institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, that are noted in passing. UNTAN hosts a number of centres including the Research Centre for Malay Studies, Mandarin Language Centre, Centre for Politics and Development, and a group of lecturers working on Dayak studies. IAIN Pontianak is the home of the Malay Corner with a significant number of research collections, Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian pada Masyarakat (LP2M, Centre for Research and Community Service) with research reports and book collections published by the IAIN Press, and a student writing club with book collections on West Kalimantan.

Then there is the second category of government-affiliated research institutions that have contributed significantly to academic discussions on West Kalimantan including Balai Kajian Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional (BKSNT, Centre for Studies of History and Tradition) which is the home of researchers on history and local knowledge. Research reports, articles and books are available at the library of BKSNT. Besides various issues on history, BKSNT also provides study reports on local languages including Chinese, Dayak and Malay. The Museum Pontianak provides articles on the archaeology of Chinese, Dayak and Malay sites and findings in West Kalimantan. The Pusat Bahasa Kalimantan Barat (West Kalimantan Language Centre) is also the home to researchers who have published a significant number of research reports and books available at its office in Pontianak.

In the last category of non-governmental institutions is Institut Dayakologi (Institute for Dayak Studies) that, as its name suggests, mainly works on Dayak studies. It has significant collections of research reports, articles and books. Institut Dayakologi has also published the journal *Kalimantan Review* which disseminates findings on local research by both local and international contributors. Some of the members of Majelis Adat Dayak (MAD, Dayak Traditional Council) have also joined Institut Dayakologi for access to research and the publication of articles and books. Besides the Dayaks, the Malays also have their own organisation called Majelis Adat Budaya Melayu (MABM, Malay Custom and Cultural Council). The institution has undertaken various academic projects in addition to cultural activities, including seminars, discussions and research. Seminar proceedings, research reports and books on Malay-related themes are available at the library of the MABM. In addition, the Chinese also have the Majelis Adat Budaya Tionghoa (MABT, Chinese Custom and Cultural Council). Chinese leaders and activists join the MABT for social and cultural activities although some also get involved in local politics as do some members of the MABM and MAD. A number of articles and books are also available at the MABT. Contributions on research and publications by organisations, institutions and individual researchers on Borneo issues are available in various disciplines including natural science and the social sciences (sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, history, economics, agriculture, religion and politics), while ethnic identity issues have become one of the most significant topics discussed by both local and international scholars. I indicate some of these

contributions in the following discussion which are mostly taken from recent publications in order to get a sense of the dynamics of the issues in the province in the post-New Order era from 1997/1998 onwards.

Materials related to the Tionghoa include Hari Poerwanto (2005), *Orang Cina Khek dari Singkawang* (The Hakka Chinese from Singkawang); Samsul Hidayat (2005), 'Marginalisasi sistem keyakinan di Indonesia: kasus hegemoni negara terhadap Matakin' (Marginalisation of belief system in Indonesia: a case of state hegemony toward Matakin); Samsul Hidayat (2013), 'Fungsi ritual tatung dalam perayaan Cap Go Meh pada masyarakat Tionghoa di Singkawang' (Tatung ritual functions in the Cap Go Meh celebration of the Chinese in Singkawang); M. Ikhsan Tanggok (2000), *Jalan keselamatan melalui agama Konghuchu* (Path to salvation through Confucianism); Mary Somers Heidhues (2003), *Golddiggers, farmers, and traders in the 'Chinese districts' of West Kalimantan, Indonesia*; and Ririt Yuniar (2011), *Harmoni dalam keberagaman: potret etnisitas di Kalimantan Barat* (Harmony in diversity: ethnic portrait in West Kalimantan) which provides a photographic analysis of Chinese cultures, religious practices and politics, captured during the Cap Go Meh festival in Singkawang and Pontianak.

As a matter of fact, there are some other materials on the Chinese of West Kalimantan available at the public library in Pontianak which need more elaboration. Research in the region, therefore, is a challenge for international scholars having an interest in Chinese Indonesians given the available materials, although they are mostly in Indonesian. The materials mentioned also show the growing interest of scholars in the local issue of the Tionghoa as an important part of the dynamics of West Kalimantan society. In addition, the growing interest in Chinese studies in West Kalimantan has been supported by the founding of the Mandarin Language Centre at UNTAN in 2012. The fact that the number of ethnic Chinese in West Kalimantan is significant is also very important to note. According to a statistical report of 2013, the ethnic Chinese population in West Kalimantan reached 17 % of the total, making the group the third largest in the province.

The Dayaks have also been a magnet for researchers in West Kalimantan. The indigenous ethnic groups of Indonesia's East, Central, South and North Kalimantan provinces do not usually apply the term Dayak at the local level; instead they use their own ethnic names such as Ngaju, Bakumpai, Kenyah, Iban, Kayan and so on. I take up the discussion of Dayak terminology below. Materials in Dayak studies have become more available since the establishment of Institut Dayakologi in August 1992 which is the host institution for Dayak scholars. There have been a great number of publications (books, articles and research reports) provided by local researchers. Unfortunately, the office of Institut Dayakologi caught fire on 9 August 2007; it also happened to be the International Day of Indigenous Peoples. Most materials were burned and very little could be saved. There has been an effort to reproduce the lost materials by contacting the authors and other sources. The office of Institut Dayakologi has now been rebuilt with some available materials.

Materials on the Dayaks include, among others, a book by Paulus Florus et al. (1994) *Kebudayaan Dayak: aktualisasi dan transformasi* (Dayak culture: actualisation and transformation). The director of Institut Dayakologi, John Bamba, has

also been very active in research on Dayak issues which can be seen from his publications such as *Kumpulan papers/makalah John Bamba* (2004). A book by Nico Andasputra et al. (2001) *Pelajaran dari masyarakat Dayak: gerakan sosial dan resiliensi ekologis di Kalimantan* (Lessons from the Dayak: indigenous social movements and ecological resilience in Kalimantan) is also very important to the discourse of Dayak ecology. Included in the topic of environment and local people are another edited book by Nico Andasputra (1999), *Perlawanan rakyat di hutan Kalimantan: kumpulan berita tentang perlawanan masyarakat adat terhadap HPH, HTI dan pertambangan* (Popular resistance in the forests of Borneo: a collection of stories about the resistance of indigenous people to HPH, HTI and mining) and a paper by Acap Suherman (2002) 'Adat istiadat dan hukum adat Wilayah Persekutuan adat Benua Sarra, Sango, dan Riuk Sangau Ledo di Bengkayang'. Y.C. Thambun Anyang (1998) also contributes to the topic of culture and modernisation of Dayak people in *Kebudayaan dan perubahan daya taman Kalimantan dalam arus modernisasi* (Culture and power changes in the current modernisation of Borneo wildlife). Some materials on Dayak culture and social life include Albertus (2003), 'Klasifikasi varian Tengon dalam rumpun Bidayuhik (Borneo Barat)' (Classification of the Tengon variant in clumps in Bidayuhik (western Borneo); Alloy Sujarni (1993), *Analisis struktur cerita 'Dara Itam' sastra lisan Dayak Kanayatn, Kabupaten Pontianak, Kalimantan Barat* (Analysis of the structure of the 'Dara Itam' oral literature of Kanayatn Dayak, Pontianak District, West Kalimantan); Dalawi (1996), *Cerita Bukit Batu sastra lisan Dayak Kanayatn, Kabupaten Pontianak, Kalimantan Barat: kajian latar dan amanat* (Bukit Batu story of Kanayatn Dayak oral literature, Pontianak District, West Kalimantan); Albert Rufinus (1994), 'Pengetahuan Dayak Kanayatn dalam tradisi lisan' (Kanayatn Dayak knowledge in oral tradition); John Bamba (2008), *Mozaik Dayak: keberagaman subsuku dan bahasa Dayak di Kalimantan Barat* (Dayak mosaic: subtribal diversity and Dayak language in West Kalimantan); Said Yakob and Zaenuddin Prasojo (2009), *Materi adat dan hukum adat istiadat warga Katab Kebahan, Wilayah Nanga Pinoh* (Customary materials and traditional customary laws of Katab Kebahan, Nanga Pinoh district); and James T. Collins and Chong Shin (2001), 'Six Bidayuhic variants of the Sekadau River'. These publications illustrate the issues being addressed by scholars including culture, ecology, the environment, indigenous customary law and Dayak languages among various ethnic groups in West Kalimantan.

Some materials on politics, especially on political ethnic identity, are also available. To begin with, as an example, Gerry van Klinken's (2004) 'Dayak ethnogenesis and conservative politics in Indonesia's outer islands' is a clear analysis of the growing consciousness of the Dayak in West Kalimantan of local politics. After the fall of Suharto in 1998 politics in Indonesia has changed dramatically, giving local people the opportunity to get involved. Van Klinken elaborates the involvement of the Dayak in local politics as part of the arena of identity politics. Both Chairil Effendy (2000), 'Dayak Islam dan IKDI, usaha mendudukkan agama dalam konteks sejatinya' (Dayak Islam and KDI, placing trade in the context of true religion) and I in 'Identitas etno-religio di Kalimantan Barat: studi atas masyarakat Dayak Katab Kebahan di Kabupaten Melawi' (Prasojo 2009) (Ethnoreligious identity in

West Kalimantan: a study of the Dayak Katab Kebahan community, Melawi) also agree with van Klinken through the evidence of our case studies of Muslim Dayak in Pontianak and the Kebahan Dayak in Melawi. Before these studies were published, Syarif Ibrahim Alqadrie (1990) had written his PhD dissertation entitled 'Ethnicity and social change of Dyaknese society in West Kalimantan, Indonesia' and Yekti Maunati (2004) had produced *Identitas Dayak: komodifikasi dan politik kebudayaan* (Dayak identity: the commodification of culture and politics). These two publications indicated the degree of engagement of the Dayaks in identity politics as part of their consciousness of ethnicity within West Kalimantan society and in Indonesia in general. Jamie S. Davidson in his "Primitive politics": the rise and fall of the Dayak Unity Party in West Kalimantan' (2003) clearly supports the notion of politicking in the context of Dayak ethnic identity formation and maintenance by the Dayak.

The Malays, as the last component of *Tidayu*, have also received a lot of attention from both Malay and non-Malay scholars. Hermansyah (2010), for example, wrote a book on *ilmu gaib* or the occult ('esoteric knowledge') based on the Embau people's daily life in Kapuas Hulu district. The book focuses on ethnic Malays who were formerly Dayak and assumed a Malay identity after the arrival of Islamic teachings in the region. Hermansyah suggests that *ilmu* has functioned as an agent of change when the Embau Malays changed their language and began to develop *ilmu* as part of their life. In addition, Yusriadi and Hermansyah (2003) also published on the Embau in *Orang Embau: potret pedalaman Kalimantan* (The Embau people: portrait of the interior of Borneo) which examines the daily life of the hinterland Malay people living in the upper Kapuas and Embau River basin. In addition to cultural issues, the book also contains discussions of faith, geography and demography. Chairil Effendy (2006) has also contributed to the Malay discourse in his *Becerite dan berdande: tradisi kesastraan Melayu* (Becerite and berdande: Malay literary traditions) which examines Malay literary culture. Education and economics have also become part of the issues analysed by local Malay scholars. Examples include Eka Hendry (1999), 'Nilai-nilai pendidikan Islam dalam petuah suku bangsa Melayu Pontianak' (Values of Islamic education in ethnic Pontianak Malay wisdom); Ismail Ruslan (2005), *Entrepreneurship etnik Melayu di Kota Pontianak* (Ethnic Malay entrepreneurship in Pontianak); and Syarif Ibrahim Alqadrie (1995), *Etos kerja: kelompok etnik Melayu di Kota Madya Pontianak* (Work ethic: the Malay ethnic group in the Pontianak municipality). The topics being studied on the Malays have grown and more materials are available at the Malay Corner of IAIN Pontianak. More related materials can also be found at the Malay Centre at UNTAN and at the office of the MABM of West Kalimantan.

Language studies are also very important within scholarly work on the Malays as in the work on the Dayaks as well. Yusriadi is among those having a strong interest in Malay linguistics which can be seen from his PhD thesis 'Bahasa dan dentiti di Riam Panjang' (2004) (Language and identity in Riam Panjang, West Kalimantan [Indonesia]) and *Dialek Melayu Ulu Kapuas Kalimantan Barat* (2007) (Malay dialect of Ulu Kapuas, West Kalimantan). An important publication is James T. Collins's (2005) 'Pulau Borneo sebagai titik tolak pengkajian sejarah

bahasa Melayu' (2005) (Borneo as the starting point for the study of the history of Malay). This article suggests that Borneo is the home of old Malay dialects so that the Malay language must have originated there. Collins's thesis has provoked local Malay scholars, mostly linguists, to elaborate on the history of the Malay language. Researchers at BKSNT have published a book entitled *Sejarah penyebaran dan pengaruh budaya Melayu di Kalimantan* (Purba and Effendy 2011) (The history of the spread and influence of Malay culture in Borneo). Collins (2007) also published 'Bahasa dan ruang di Alam Melayu' (Language and space in the Malay world). This reinforced Collins's thesis in his earlier publication. The debate on the history of the Malays has been a major challenge to existing theories that hold that Malay origins can be traced to the region of the Straits of Malacca, including the Srivijaya empire, as the symbol of the early appearance of Malay people and culture (Andaya 2008).

Other relevant topics in the study of West Kalimantan are religion, conflict and peace studies. On religious studies, Hermansyah (2009) in *Islam dari pesisir sampai ke pedalaman Kalimantan Barat* (Historical development of Islam in West Kalimantan), for example, discusses the spread of Islam in the region. There are also a number of works on the history of Christian missionaries in West Kalimantan. They are very important contributions to the *Tidayu* historiography since Islam and Christianity have been the major religious influences on the people together with Chinese religions. Samsul Hidayat (2012) wrote an article based on his research in Singkawang entitled 'Agama orang Tionghoa di Singkawang' (Chinese religion in Singkawang). With regard to conflict and peace studies, we have already mentioned Ririt Yuniar's (2011) *Harmoni dalam keberagaman*, which provides a picture of peaceful relationships between the Chinese, Dayaks and Malays as seen in the *barongsai* (lion dance) performance for the Cap Go Meh festival. The book shows the intimacy between the three ethnic groups at the grassroots level. Jamie Davidson (2002) in his PhD thesis, 'Violence and politics in West Kalimantan, Indonesia', suggests that the political elites have been dominated by considerations of ethnic group-based representation and mobilisation. This argument is supported by Gerry van Klinken in 'Indonesia's new ethnic elites' (2002) and 'The forest, the state, and the communal conflict in West Kalimantan, Indonesia' (2006) which examine the growing engagement of local elites in West Kalimantan politics. Taufiq Tanasaldy's (2012) *Regime change and ethnic politics in Indonesia: Dayak politics of West Kalimantan* and the collection of essays edited by Jamie S. Davidson and David Henley (2007), *The revival of tradition in Indonesian politics: the deployment of adat from colonialism to indigenism* show more specifically the involvement of not only the *Tidayu* in ethnic politics but also other ethnic groups, including the Madurese, Bugis and Javanese. Indeed, Reed Wadley (2000) in 'Reconsidering an ethnic label in Borneo: the "Maloh" of West Kalimantan, Indonesia' emphasises the existing debate on the use of Dayak terminology in the society. The discussion of ethnic group identity is actually influenced by cases of interethnic riots breaking out in the region as reported by me in *Riots on the news in West Borneo* (Prasojo 2008), and some other conflicts in the pre-independence era documented in works by Machrus Effendy (1995), *Penghancuran PGRS-PARAKU dan PKI di Kalimantan Barat* (PGRS-PARAKU destruction and the PKI in West Kalimantan),

Syarif Ibrahim Alqadrie (2008), *Matahari akan terbit di Barat* (The sun will rise in the west) and his *Kalimantan dan Kalimantan Barat: potensi, fenomena dan dinamika sosial budaya dan politik dan tantangan ke depan* (2011) (Kalimantan and West Kalimantan: potential, phenomena and socio-cultural and political dynamics and the challenges ahead). This work explores the experiences of riots among ethnic groups. Alqadrie suggests that the riot phenomenon occurred in a regular pattern every 20 years, although his hypothesis has been challenged by many scholars. In this context, it is important to note that ethnic group relations in West Kalimantan are very dynamic and changeable.

Border area issues also add another dimension to *Tidayu* research since they reside in the five border settlements of West Kalimantan–Sarawak. Dayaks, for example, reside in Badau, Senaning, Jagoi, Entikong and Aruk. Malays and Chinese are also found in the border gateways as they get involved in trade activities using the border. Riwanto Tirtosudarmo (2002a) discusses West Kalimantan as a border province. Its geographic position has forced people of the province to interact with those from outside and they are vulnerable to international criminal threats. Irwan Abdullah (2012) argues that Badau is one of the five border towns which has been neglected by the Indonesian government, both central and local, since the founding of the republic as a nation-state. The Dayaks, Malays and Chinese are also part of the Badau border society that requires attention in order to compete with the Malaysian market centre of Lubok Antu on the other side of the border. Border issues have also been the focus of research by Universitas Indonesia together with UNTAN who organised a special conference in 2002 (Tirtosudarmo 2002b).

20.3 Ethnoreligious Identity in West Kalimantan

One of the most important phenomena is that of globalisation which can act to diminish the importance of geographical condition and location (Abdullah 1999; Tomlinson 1999). Globalisation does not destroy locality, as in the thesis of homogenisation and the emergence of cultural uniformity, but it affects the locality, including the experience of identity, in a variety of ways. In fact, what is most important in the determination of global cultural experiences is the emergence of the idea of deterritorialisation in cultural identity in which the actor then has a broader reference about culture from the outside. The distance and location of the culture then are not essential to be defended. One of the triggers of the penetration of a new cultural experience into the locality is human interaction with the media and global communication technology such as television, cell phones, e-mail and the internet that transform local communities into becoming increasingly more international (Tomlinson 1999).

To further understand cultural identity and the effects of the advent of modernisation and globalisation in shaping the character of cultural identity, it is important to note that ethnoreligious identity in West Kalimantan is significant among the Malays and Dayaks since local ethnic groups are interrelated with the

world religions of Islam and Christianity as well as within the framework of globalised interactions. In fact, the strengthening of ethnoreligious identity is also a continuation of the interaction of these two ethnic groups with those of immigrants such as the Chinese, Javanese, Madurese and so on.

There have been two forms of strengthening the consciousness of ethnic group identity of the Malays and Dayaks in West Kalimantan: first, the strengthening consciousness of non-Muslim Dayak identity as a result of a reciprocal relationship with the reinforcement of Muslim Malay identity; and second, the consciousness of Chinese identity that tends to be bound up with Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity. Both these processes result from the interaction between the Dayaks and the Malays as the indigenous populations and the Chinese as immigrants in West Kalimantan. Both forms of consciousness in practice merge and are inseparable from the relations of ethnic groups in West Kalimantan as a whole.

It can be argued that a sense of common Dayak identity had begun to emerge slowly over a period of a century. One key historical moment was the Tumbang Anoi peace meeting of 1894 when up to a thousand Dayak elders met to resolve intra-Dayak conflicts. Almost a hundred years later a Dayak Ekspo was held in Pontianak, a large gathering that focused on issues of culture and identity. One symbolic debate centred on the term 'Dayak' itself. As Lahajir (2001) explains, there had been four forms of spelling, i.e. Daya, Dyak, Daya and Dayak, which were generally unknown by the indigenous people themselves. The issue was settled at the Dayak Ekspo meeting which agreed to the spelling 'Dayak' (Petebang 1998). Since the fall of the New Order regime, ethnicity and identity have become so important, especially for the Dayaks in Kalimantan (Davidson and Henley 2007). Moreover, in the wake of the violence involving several ethnic groups in Borneo, ethnic identity has become crucial to examine, because economic, political and cultural issues are all intertwined with ethnicity (van Klinken 2007).

During the New Order period (1965–1998), Yekti Maunati (2004) argues that the government categorised the Dayak people as 'isolated tribes' that required modernisation. In the post-reform era, the influence of the New Order ideology decreased dramatically so that identity construction also changed in line with the development of the community's political, social and cultural life. We have witnessed the rise of identity politics in West Kalimantan, especially with regard to the identity of the Dayaks and the Malays, and the relationship between indigenous peoples and religions, as well as the contestation between locality and globalisation and political conflicts that have occurred between the major ethnic groups. In fact, after the fall of the New Order regime, which had shut down local political opportunities, the post-Suharto period witnessed a real awakening of ethnic politics in West Kalimantan.

The rise of Dayak consciousness of their collective identity, along with that of the Malays and the Chinese, is one of the new phenomena emerging as a representation of the resurrection of local community issues in the dynamic interaction between local people and immigrants (Alqadrie 2011). In the past, members of Dayak subethnic groups were often regarded as 'primitive'. Albert Rufinus (2000: 9) explains that there are many labels used to describe the members of the Dayak

subethnic groups, among others ‘isolated, the hicks, the primitive, the villagers’, and people who only ‘communicate’ with a spoken language. These Dayaks lived in the forest, in the hills, and the interior of Borneo and always moved from one place to another, and were even often considered ‘unbelievers’. On the other hand, although they used to be considered marginal and unknown, they have increasingly attracted the attention of many outsiders from the West in published research and scholarly gatherings (King 1993). Now many Dayaks have enjoyed education overseas, and some have undertaken research on their own societies and cultures.

Interest in Dayak identities should also be seen in the context of a wider interest in ethnicity and identity in Southeast Asia (see, for example, Christie 1996). According to Clive Christie, religious factors in identity formation in Southeast Asia have tended to blend with other cultural factors. Religion is almost impossible to separate from social identity in everyday life (*ibid.*: 132; and see Mahmud Akil 1994). In line with Christie’s argument, Imtiyaz Yusuf (2001: 145) also suggests that ethnoreligious identity is very clear and significant in Southeast Asia. Christie’s and Yusuf’s views emerged from the results of research conducted in different parts of the region; Christie in Malaysia and Singapore and Yusuf in Thailand.

I have argued similarly in relation to Dayak and Malay ethnic identity in West Kalimantan as well as in other parts of Kalimantan (Prasajo 2008, and see Widen Chap. 12 in this volume), supported by Alqadrie (2008: 24–27). Ethnoreligious identities operate both at the subethnic level of the Dayak people and at the more general level of the Dayaks as a whole, while those who are Muslims usually identify themselves as Malay. In West Kalimantan Dayak identity tends to be expressed at the broader level, as in Central Kalimantan (see Widen, Chap. 12). It is based on the ethnic group and a single religion, namely Christianity. The consequences of the community identification model in West Kalimantan described by Alqadrie (2008, 2011) lead to strong ethnic solidarity and loyalty which tend to be solid and unified and not diffuse. This solidarity has consequences that have a huge potential for conflict.

Religious and ethnic identity is also apparent in the Islamic discourse and among Muslim ethnic groups in West Kalimantan. These issues have attracted the attention of the public after the outbreak of the so-called ‘war’ (interethnic riots) between Malays and Madurese that occurred in the 1960s and 1990s. The dispute finally ended in 2002. The causes of dispute offer a clue to the interaction between indigenous peoples (Malays) and newcomers (Madurese). The Madurese, for example, even though their number is relatively small compared to other ethnic groups, carry a strong identity as Madurese. Another example includes Indonesians of Chinese descent. Like the Madurese, Chinese group identity is also strong and they are a migrant population. However, when they embrace Islam, their identity in the region changes to Malay (Alqadrie 2011). Tirtosudarmo (2002a) reports that the Dayak people of Borneo, and Christians in general, have always been contrasted with the Malays. The Malays are always synonymous with those who are Muslim, but they are in fact very heterogeneous, and most are actually indigenes who later converted to Islam.

The question, then, is when did the ethnic and religious identification process begin to take place. I conducted a study on the identity of the community in West Kalimantan and argued that the Dayak people, together with Malays, Chinese and other ethnic groups in Kalimantan in their everyday lives, have always been identified with the religion embraced by the majority of the members of the respective ethnic group (Prasojo 2008). Elsewhere, I explain that the view of the identity of the communities in West Kalimantan is related to the history of the interaction between the local culture which is still held strongly by the subethnic groups with the missionaries of modern religions, Christianity and Islam (Prasojo 2011). My argument is supported by the fact that social relationships during the heyday of the sultanate period demonstrated that the Malays had a superior position compared to the Dayaks and Chinese in terms of political and social status. Meanwhile, the Christian missionaries operated outside the sultanate system among the Dayak and Chinese communities.

20.4 *Tidayu* and Ethnic Consciousness

As noted earlier, the unique properties of the Dayaks of Kalimantan/Borneo, the island's indigenous inhabitants, as well as those of the Malays have been interesting to researchers, including local researchers. Chinese Indonesians residing in West Kalimantan, the Tionghoa, have also been studied by researchers due to their contributions to West Kalimantan society. As we have seen, there has been local research on all these populations. Local–global interactions have played a significant role in constructing and shaping the identities of people in this region. The establishment of ethnic institutions has further served to strengthen identities.

Davidson and Henley (2007) suggest that local movements in Indonesia are driven by several factors: international influence and globalisation, ideology and the opportunities afforded by the reform era. They further provide detailed examples that demonstrate how the new opportunities have allowed the use of customary law to request the return of their rights in areas such as natural resource management and in the capacity to exercise political discretion over their own lives. The negative effects of increased ethnic consciousness have been the riots that took place in the region, the most serious being in 1997–1999. Munawar Saad (2003) has written a very important work on the issue of conflict involving the Malays and Dayaks in Sambas. I also conducted research on the riots involving Dayaks and Malays in Pontianak and in other areas of West Kalimantan (Prasojo 2005). Another negative contribution is the fact that there has been some territorial division along ethnic lines, including Malay districts (such as Sambas and Pontianak city), Dayak districts (such as Landak and Bengkayang) and a Chinese district (Singkawang). Such divisions can sometimes trigger tensions in ethnic relations among the *Tidayu* groups, especially in the political sphere. The role of the government and political elites is becoming very important in efforts to control the negative potential of ethnic consciousness.

On a more positive note, first, there has been increasing competition in various fields involving ethnic groups which has served to stimulate development in education, the economy and other fields. For example, the credit union founded by the Dayak is supported by a Christian mission; Syariah Baitul Maal wa Tamwil (BMT), an Islamic financial institution, is mostly Malay owned; businesses and religious-based efforts also involve Buddhists and ethnic Chinese. The competition, however, sometimes causes friction. Second, revivalism/revitalisation movements of local wisdom and local knowledge have also made a positive contribution to the local community. The Dayaks, for example, through their activism have become involved in the Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN, Indigenous Peoples' Alliance of the Archipelago) that struggles to restore the traditional rights of local communities. In fact, many ethnic Dayaks have been successful in business because of the credit union that has also inspired communities outside the province. Ethnic Chinese have also won their demand to hold Chinese New Year celebrations with activities that used to be banned, such as the lion dance and dragon dance, even though such celebrations had been the subject of objections from other ethnic groups. The Malays have also regularly organised a Malay cultural festival. Third, positive contributions also appear in the form of cultural infrastructure development. As symbols of the progress of Pontianak society, a grand West Kalimantan Malay house, a replica of a traditional Dayak house constructed by the Pontianak city government, the Betang Radakng, and several huge temples belonging to ethnic Chinese have been constructed. Ethnic consciousness appears in various forms, and despite the difficulties, tensions and conflicts there has also developed an attitude of openness to ethnoreligious diversity and pluralism to foster tolerance and mutual respect.

Some important factors serve to drive ethnic consciousness among the *Tidayu* ethnic groups. First, there is the kinship system. Among the Chinese the teaching of Confucianism is undertaken in the family. Parents are also obliged to teach family members about the political procedures of the country so that they can accept the authority of the state. Chinese political culture emphasises the interdependence of the government and the family, and so the family acts as the main buttress to avoid chaos in public institutions. The kinship system of the Malays is divided into two groups, i.e. one that holds to a bilateral family system and the other that practises a matrilineal kinship system, as used by the Minangkabau and Negeri Sembilan Malays. However, because the two groups embrace Islam, the Malay kinship system is heavily influenced by the Islamic family system. Like the ethnic Chinese, the Malays in West Kalimantan also have strong kinship ties that provide the main social capital for ethnic solidarity (Prasajo 2008). Similarly, ethnic Dayaks also have their own kinship system. In Dayak subethnic groups, kinship is the main component in the way they view other groups as shown by the Benyadu and Bekatik society in Bengkayang. The Bidayuh Dayak, for instance, also have a strong kinship system.

Second, ethnic consciousness among the *Tidayu* is characterised by a variety of expressions in everyday symbols such as traditional clothing and folk songs, traditional architecture and housing, tourism-related artistic activities and *adat*

(custom). The Malays, for example, express their ethnicity with the preservation of the *pantang larang* (prohibitions or the absence of the bad) in order to maintain social order and protect the values and rules which achieve balance and harmony between human life and nature. As for the Chinese community, one of the symbols of their customs is the celebration of the Chinese New Year; this lasts for 15 days (starting from the first day of the lunar month until the festival of Cap Go Meh—the fifteenth night of the first month of the new year). During the period of celebration the houses are decorated with a variety of ornaments, congratulating each other because one year has already passed and everyone is ready to welcome the new year. Fireworks decorate the night sky; lion dances have become community attractions. The Cap Go Meh celebration marks the end of the New Year festival and is enlivened with dragon and lion dance processions where *tatung* (people with powers as intermediaries with the ancestors) are also present; every corner of Pontianak turns red with typical Chinese decorations. In the Dayak community, where many subgroups exist, one of the most important celebrations is the ceremony of *naik dango* as an expression of gratitude in post-harvest period among the Kanayatn Dayak. *Dango* or *dange* can also be described as an indigenous Dayak feast that serves to express their identity. The ceremonies that are still performed to this day by the Malays in various places in West Kalimantan include the *tepung tawar badan* which is intended for young children who perform a hair cutting or hammock-riding activity (*naik tojang*), marriage rituals and circumcision for both males and females. Another tradition is the *saprahan* (a feast with people seated in long rows) which is very well known among the Sambas Malays.

20.5 Conclusion

Research on issues of concerning the *Tidayu* is very important, especially for those working on ethnic and identity issues. There are four important points that need emphasis in relation to the current stage of social science research in West Kalimantan. First, religion, ethnicity and identity have become very important issues and are influential in policy-making (thereby carrying a political dimension), development, the economy and education and in processes of social change. Second, with regard to the current stage of research, the question that should be posed is how have these research projects addressed significant issues within Kalimantan studies. It is important that researchers should be aware of the real issues of importance for the local people aside from their own academic interests. Third, the wider availability of published works is a key to the improvement of the local research contribution to society. Local perspectives on Borneo issues are extremely important for the better development of the region. Views from within, together with those from outside, will provide an invaluable contribution to Borneo Studies. Fourth, there is a tendency that the *Tidayu* ethnic groups become potential resources for serving the need for political identity. Thus, ethnoreligious identity is part of the strategy for strengthening political bargaining positions. This

assessment, importantly, can provide a valuable contribution to the discourse on local traditions and their engagement with globalisation, in which these traditions provide a means of responding to global pressures in the postmodern world.

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Chapter 21

‘Wild Borneo’: A Study of Visitor Perception and Experience of Nature Tourism in Sandakan, Sabah, Malaysian Borneo

Rosalie Corpuz

Scattered along the fringes of the world are certain places whose names ring in the ears of youth like trumpet calls. They are the passwords to romance and high adventure. Their very mention makes the feet of young men restless.

—E. Alexander Powell, *Where Strange Trails Go Down* (1921)

Abstract The word ‘Borneo’ has, through the generations, held the enduring potential to conjure up a myriad of visual and perceptive imagery, thus bestowing the third-largest island in the world a near-mythical status. The imagery is so evocative and compelling that it yields the subtle power to entice modern-day travellers to make that journey of a lifetime. ‘Wild Borneo’ is a study aimed at international travellers visiting three world-famous visitor destinations in the state of Sabah in Malaysian Borneo. It seeks to establish the power of these organic images acquired during the travellers’ formative years and analyses how these images translate into actual travel choices. The study also examines visitor experience and overall satisfaction rates in relation to the individual sites and, ultimately, postexperience images in the form of photographs and travel narratives that could be potentially communicated to other prospective travellers to Borneo.

Keywords Borneo · Sabah · Sandakan · Tourism · Imagery

21.1 Introduction

Borneo, the fabled land of the ‘wild men’, impenetrable rainforests and adventure, has been a source of fascination for explorers and travellers for centuries, thus breathing life into a series of organic images that were broadcast to a larger audience

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through historical and modern-day literature and film. It can be argued that travellers to Borneo arrive with predetermined perceptions and a 'sense of place' that have permeated their consciousness over time through a variety of means that are beyond the reach of destination marketing strategies (Saunders 1992). Set against this backdrop, 'Wild Borneo' is a visitor study that explores the entire visitor experience from image conception to postexperience perception. It does so from the perspective of the Western tourist, focusing on three wildlife attractions around the town of Sandakan in Sabah. The study charts the transition of the formation of first impressions and expectations, and explores the power of visual images over travel motivation and choice. Reinforced by visitor accounts and satisfaction, the study also explores the communication of the 'Borneo experience' through personal and visual narratives, concluding with an assessment of postexperience perception.

21.2 Formation of Destination Imagery

Several studies in travel and tourism have suggested that image has a fundamental role in traveller expectations and motivation, travel choice and consequently, the level of satisfaction which is dependent upon the comparison of a perceived destination image and the actual travel experience (Hunt 1975; Mayo and Jarvis 1981; Pizam et al. 1978). Clare Gunn (1989) argues that the evolution of the destination image emerges at two levels: an organic and an induced image. An organic image is borne from an individual's historical and ongoing assimilation of images and information of the destination in visual, written and broadcast forms of communication, which include world events reportage, newspapers, periodicals, television, geography and history books, fiction and nonfiction, and film. This list could be extended to include school lessons, personal travel accounts and photographs, modern-day and historical travel writing and other visual and written representations. According to Gunn, children's geography and history books are probably the most influential in early image formation. Organic images are acquired over time and the individual's personal development has just as much to do with the formation of perception as to the degree of frequency and sources of exposure. On the other hand, induced images are acquired from more contrived sources, more specifically from marketing and promotional activities of the destination. Gunn argues that tourism developers have little influence in modifying the organic image but are able to influence the induced image to a larger degree.

Several studies have been conducted regarding the role of images in destination perception and choice. Daniel E. Berlyne (1977), in his research in psychological aesthetics, reveals that visual representations have a marked influence on perception and preference judgements. In the Borneo context, the potential visitor is exposed to a variety of images through different means over time and thus would have developed their own individual perception. Success in tourism development may have just as much to do with a 'sense of place' derived from images as the destination's tangible attractions because unfamiliarity with the destination has led the potential

visitor to base travel purchase decisions on the perceived image rather than 'objective reality' (Hunt 1975). Lloyd Hudman (1980) argues that travel decisions are based on the interaction between the individual's motivation or 'push' and the destination's attractiveness or 'pull' factors. A number of travel and tourism researchers assert that push factors can be derived from Abraham Maslow's (1943) notion of the 'hierarchy of needs' (see Tocher 1971; Kaplan 1984; Hudman 1980; Young and Crandall 1984). The potential traveller needs to feel a sense of self-actualisation leading to travel motivation (Mills 1985). According to Edward Mayo and Lance Jarvis (1981), choice is dependent upon factors affecting the individual's judgement, the most important being the subjective ability of each image to fulfil personal requirements. Donald O. Hebb (1966) has established that attraction is based on familiarity to an optimum point, beyond which familiarity becomes less attractive. In the context of tourism, the desire to experience a different or exotic location occurs beyond this optimal point. In determining satisfaction rates, the individual evaluates the effectiveness of the destination by comparing previously held images and expectations and the perceived outcome of the experience to satisfy needs (Pizam et al. 1978; Chon 1989). The implications of the visitor experience, whether they are positive or negative, have far-reaching effects for the destination.

21.3 Borneo Media Review: Land below the Wind

For centuries Borneo has attracted a myriad of travellers. Western cultural and natural history interpretations, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, infused European consciousness and created an endless fascination for this wild and mystical island. Early Arab and Chinese traders were drawn to the island's rich forest produce and one of the earliest travelogues was written by Ibn Battuta who is thought to have visited Borneo in the fourteenth century. The earliest European account of Borneo was narrated in diary of Antonio Pigafetta on his visit to Brunei in 1521 when he accompanied Ferdinand Magellan on the first circumnavigation of the globe.

As Europe began to extend its colonial reach, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw a profusion of written accounts. Borneo attracted famous explorers, adventurers, traders, missionaries, anthropologists, zoologists, entrepreneurs and naturalists, including Henry Keppel (1846), Rodney Mundy (1848), Spenser St John (1862), Hugh Low (1848), Alfred Wallace (1869), Odoardo Beccari (1904) and Carl Lumholtz (1921). Writings by these visitors took the form of scientific and exploratory accounts and journals, some of which were sensationally titled: *The home-life of Borneo head-hunters* (Furness 1902) and *Headhunters: black, white, and brown* (Haddon 1901). The increasing European presence saw the emergence of personal accounts that could be likened to modern-day travel writing. Ida Pfeiffer, an Austrian traveller, wrote *A lady's second journey round the world* (1855) with observations of the scenery and the native 'Dyaks'. This genre included *The head-hunters of Borneo* (Bock 1882) and *Borneo: the stealer of hearts* (Cook 1924) among many others. Carl Bock's beautifully illustrated book was translated

into three languages. This work, combined with other travel accounts, introduced the West to a sensationalised world of adventure.

Early writings also inspired fiction writers such as Emilio Salgari and Joseph Conrad whose works are still read today. Salgari's adventure novel *La tigre della Malesia* enhanced the European perception of Borneo. First published in 1883, Salgari's book was translated into seven languages, and was immortalised on film in the 1960s and 1970s. The fact that Salgari himself had never been to Borneo did little to diminish the appeal of his novels. Apart from Ada Pryer's account on starting a colony in *A decade in Borneo* (1894), one of the most popular novels in the twentieth century was *Land below the wind* by Agnes Keith (1939). This fascination with Borneo has continued, with recent personal travel accounts such as *Into the heart of Borneo* (O'Hanlon 1984) and *Stranger in the forest* (Hansen 1988), as well as biographies, children's books, works of fiction, photographic essays and natural history publications. Redmond O'Hanlon romanticised the Borneo of old and, as with many modern-day visitors, he arrived in Borneo with certain preconceptions.

The twentieth century also saw the emergence of film and television productions as Borneo was featured in various popular films such as *Borneo* (1937), *From hell to Borneo* (1966) and *Farewell to the king* (1989), and a number of documentaries covering drama, travel, environmental issues and natural history including *Ring of fire* (1987), *Blowpipes and bulldozers* (1988), *The place of the dead* (1996), *Full circle* (1997), *The living Eden* (2000) and *Survivor* (2000, 2001). Since 1990 several incidents in Borneo have made international headlines; these include forest fires, logging and its related issues, the abduction of tourists and a disastrous expedition on Mount Kinabalu, Sabah.

21.4 'Wild Borneo' Study Sites and Visitor Profiles

The main focus of the Wild Borneo study is based on the three wildlife attractions around the town of Sandakan. There are no direct international air routes into Sandakan and a network of road, air and sea routes facilitates access within the state. Sandakan prospered during the timber boom years of the 1970s and 1980s, and has now turned to oil palm as a lucrative income earner with an increasing interest in nature tourism. Although huge tracts of land have been converted into plantations, large pockets of rainforest are still intact.

21.4.1 Study Site 1: Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre

The Kabili-Sepilok Forest Reserve, under the jurisdiction of the Sabah Forestry Department, is one of the earliest protected areas of virgin lowland dipterocarp

forest in Sabah with a total area of 4294 ha. Located 25 km from Sandakan town, the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre is the first of its kind in terms of primate conservation. The Game Branch of the Sabah Forestry Department started the centre as a small-scale experiment in 1962. In 1998 the Sabah Wildlife Department became wholly responsible for the management of the centre. Although the rehabilitation centre was set up with purely conservation motives, tourism development plays an increasingly significant role in the funding of the rehabilitation programme. Thus the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre has emerged to become Sandakan's biggest visitor attraction forming the core of all tourism activities in the area. From 2004 to 2013, total visitor numbers at the centre increased steadily by 24 % from 85,387 to 106,414 (Sabah Wildlife Department 2014). However, there is a disproportionate growth in international and domestic tourists, with a rise of domestic visitors of 46 % from 36,268 to 53,046, while numbers for international tourists increased by 9 % from 49,119 in 2004 to 53,368 in 2013. Currently, there are equal proportions of domestic and international visitors to the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre. During the period of the study in 2003, visitors from Britain (38 %) formed the majority of international visitors, followed by the rest of Europe (16 %), North America (25 %), Japan (9 %) and Oceania (8 %). The visitor figures are an indication of the influx of international visitors into northeast Sabah and would most likely reflect upon tourism activity in the satellite tourist sites of the Kinabatangan floodplain and the Turtle Islands.

21.4.2 Study Site 2: The Kinabatangan Floodplain

The Kinabatangan floodplain is a unique natural habitat made up of riverine forests, freshwater swamps and mangroves, limestone outcrops and oxbow lakes forming the core of existence for many protected and endemic species such as the proboscis monkey, orangutan and Asian pygmy elephant, including an impressive array of birdlife. Augmented by several studies in the early 1990s, the floodplain achieved the status as a prime site for conservation and tourism resulting in the gazetting in 2002 of 26,000 ha of fragmented land as the Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary. The lower Kinabatangan is a microcosm of Borneo's natural assets and the density and diversity of wildlife observed in their natural habitat by boat is a crucial part of the visitor experience, enhanced by sound guiding and interpretation. Core visitor activities consist of river safaris that take place at dawn, at night and at peak viewing times in the late afternoon. Visitors can also take guided jungle walks and visit the local villages and the birds' nest caves. Due to logistical reasons, the open access nature of the site, the complexity of the natural environment, combined with the physical safety and wellbeing of visitors, all trips are guided. Visitor experience in the floodplain differs from the other two sites where the encounter with nature is highly controlled. As a result, the open and unpredictable nature of the site provides the visitor with a unique experience of wildlife viewing in their natural habitat.

21.4.3 Study Site 3: Turtle Islands Marine Park

The Turtle Islands Marine Park, established in 1977, covers 1740 ha and is situated 40 km off the coast of Sandakan in the Sulu Sea. Managed by Sabah Parks, the marine park comprises three prime nesting islands for the green and hawksbill sea turtles: Pulau Selinggaan (8 ha), Pulau Gulisaan (1.6 ha) and Pulau Bakkungaan Kecil (8.5 ha). Although these islands have been an important livelihood source through the harvesting of turtle eggs under exclusive collection licences in the past (Mortimer 1991), the harvesting of turtle eggs became prohibited from 1973 onwards. For conservation purposes, the first turtle hatchery was established in 1966 on Selinggaan under the management of the Game Branch of the Sabah Forestry Department. The overnight visitor experience on Selinggaan follows a set daily itinerary. Being a conservation site, strict codes of conduct are rigorously reinforced by rangers and guides during turtle watching.

21.4.4 Visitor Profiles

The study sample is based on international visitors who have visited at least one of the three Sandakan sites. A total of 44 semi-structured interviews were conducted with interview groups with differing site combination visits, which included day trips to Sepilok and the Kinabatangan between June and August 2003. The majority of international visitors use Sepilok as a central site from which journeys are planned to the other two sites. Therefore, the sample is benchmarked against the breakdown of nationality figures from the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre for 2000. As the study aims to explore the 'Wild Borneo' perception from a Western perspective, the sample concentrated on interview groups from Britain, the rest of Europe and Australasia. The study sample represents a cross section of international visitors to Sandakan and is not a representation of the general visiting population to Sabah.

The sample profile consisted of Britons (21, 48 %), other Europeans (16, 36 %) and Australians (17, 38 %). There were 19 single interviews, 19 couples, three families and three groups of friends with two in each group. A total of 31 male and 42 female visitors were interviewed in varying group combinations with 49 % (36 people) falling in the 26–35 years age group. Site combination visits included one group who visited Sepilok only, one who visited Sepilok and the Turtle Islands, 26 who visited Sepilok and Kinabatangan and 13 who visited all three sites. Traveller types can be categorised into package holidaymakers (20, 45 %) and independent travellers (24, 55 %), including divers. All package holidaymakers (20, 100 %) and 20 (83 %) independent travellers visited a minimum of two sites. Package holidaymakers were also most likely to include a three-site combination as part of their Sandakan itinerary (8, 40 %) as compared to independent travellers (5, 21 %). The interview groups spent an average of 12.48 nights in Sabah with an average of 4.98 nights at all the Sandakan sites.

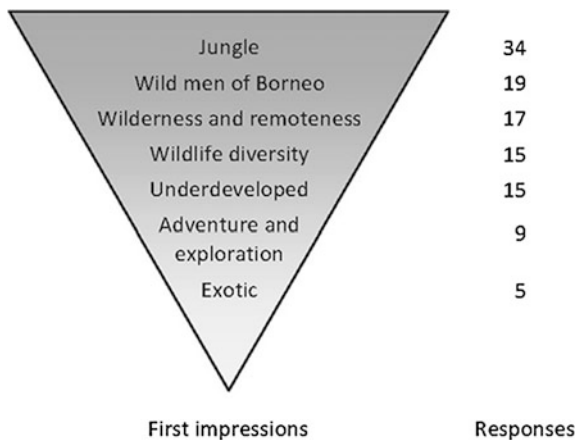
21.5 Borneo Expectations

21.5.1 First Impressions: Awakening the 'Wild Within'

When asked when and where they first heard about Borneo, 23 (52 %) interview groups responded that it was at school. Seven mentioned geography lessons and an equal number cited history classes: 'Oh my god! Way back in time as a young kid at school. I have always been hooked on geography and Borneo was always a place I wanted to go to'. Borneo featured in history lessons because it formed part of the colonies as mentioned by British and Dutch interview groups. The second most cited source (10, 23 %) were stories from family, friends and colleagues who have lived in Borneo or in the region. Seven (16 %) mentioned natural history and wildlife documentaries on television. Six (14 %) said it was 'something you just know about' and that they could specifically recall where they heard about Borneo: 'A long time ago I knew there was an island called Borneo but I don't know where I got it from'. Four (9 %) responses included books and magazines: 'So many years ago from a children's adventure book about men going into the jungle. I can't remember the name but the book was on typical English explorers with wide-brimmed hat and khaki outfits'. Three groups first heard about Borneo through the wild men of Borneo terminology: 'My father used to describe us as the wild men of Borneo when we were children. I didn't know what it was until last week when I was in the Sepilok information centre and I saw a drawing of someone's impression of the wild man of Borneo; they thought it was human. The orangutan is the wild man of Borneo and I didn't know that'. This finding illustrates Gunn's (1989) assertion that children's geography and history books, in this case school lessons, are the most influential in early image conception.

When interview groups were asked about their first impressions of Borneo, an overwhelming 34 out of 44 interview groups mentioned the word 'jungle' or 'rainforest', underlined by vivid descriptions such as 'virgin', 'pristine', 'dense', 'untouched', 'lush', 'like Papua New Guinea' and so on (see Fig. 21.1). Borneo was

Fig. 21.1 First impressions of Borneo



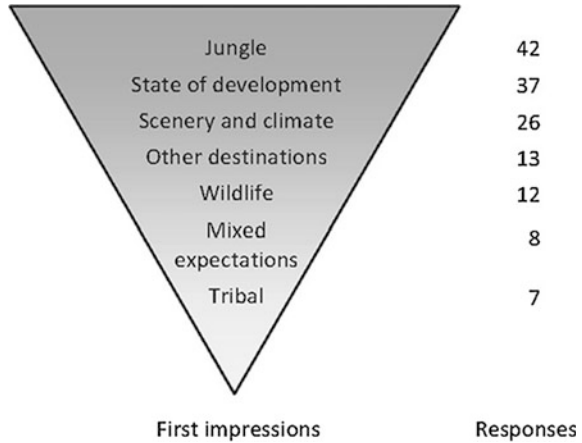
considered to be ‘one of the last places in the world you can find real jungle’ and ‘one of the few remaining outposts of virgin jungle’. An image of tribal Borneo also emanated from the analysis and was the second most prominent impression with a total of 19 mentions. Eight out of 44 responses cited the words ‘tribes’, ‘tribal’ and ‘natives’ or made similar references. The natives were described as ‘strange people dressed in funny clothes’. One group mentioned ‘the wild men of Borneo is the first thing you think about the natives’. This image was accentuated by references to Papua New Guinea, exemplified by the following quote: ‘Borneo is the wild frontier, a place you couldn’t go to, full of savages like Papua New Guinea’. Borneo also conjured up a headhunter and cannibal image, as another eight responses demonstrated. ‘You hear about the wild men of Borneo and headhunters as a child—cutting heads and shrinking heads and that sort of thing. These are just childhood impressions but it’s funny when you talk about these things’.

Visual impressions of the jungle and the wildlife also evoked a perception of wilderness, highlighted by descriptions such as the ‘wild frontier’, ‘untouched’, ‘unspoilt’, ‘untempered’, ‘unexplored’, ‘unpenetrated’ and ‘inaccessible’. Five responses made references to its remoteness, a part of the world where ‘no one goes to’. The dense jungle elicited visions of wildlife diversity as one response relayed: ‘I would describe it as an Asian Africa, full of wildlife’. Twelve responses mentioned ‘wildlife’ and ‘animals’, with three responses mentioning the orangutan as part of first impressions: ‘The orangutan has always been the image that one conjures up. Whenever someone says Borneo, I think about the orangutan’. The perception about the state of development made an appearance with 15 references as Borneo was also seen to be ‘primitive’, ‘un-Westernised’, ‘provincial’, ‘underpopulated’ and ‘underdeveloped’. There were also hints of a historical nature referring to colonisation and an ‘Old World feel’. Borneo is also perceived to be a place of adventure (five) and exploration (four). An ‘exciting’, ‘dangerous’ and ‘lonely’ place where ‘you think about explorers, adventures all the way through, coming across ancient ruins, new civilisations’. That was the imagination of a child about Livingstone. Five responses portrayed Borneo as ‘exotic’ with an overall impression of a place that is ‘unique’, ‘beautiful’ and ‘fascinating’. ‘Borneo is an exotic name’.

21.5.2 Expectations and Conflicting Realities

When asked what they expected Borneo to be like, a total of 42 (95 %) responses mentioned ‘jungle’ or the ‘rainforests’, with expectations of ‘lushness’ of vegetation, ‘greenery’ and ‘national parks’ (Fig. 21.2). This includes six groups who cited an awareness of deforestation plus the same number (six) anticipating ‘more jungle’. A total of 37 (84 %) responses referred to a perceived state of development. Six responses highlighted ‘basic towns’ and ‘villages’, with ‘simple living’ standards in ‘rural settings’. Borneo was also seen to be ‘sparsely populated’ with ‘differences between rich and poor’, ‘backward’ and ‘underdeveloped’, ‘the poor element of Malaysia’. In contrast, a certain degree of development was already

Fig. 21.2 Expectations of Borneo



expected by two responses: 'I expected some development already; in the 1960s there were already oil palm plantations but didn't realise how much of this kind of development has already taken place'. Seven (16 %) responses were not expecting the presence of oil palm plantations while another six (14 %) did not expect the existence of cities. Borneo was expected to be 'inaccessible' and 'harder to travel', and the 'good infrastructure' was unexpected. Eight responses expected Borneo to be 'less Westernised', 'modern', 'developed' and 'untouched'.

Apart from expectations of the jungle and vegetation, respondents (13, 30 %) were also expecting different scenery and landscapes, which included 'mountains', 'golden beaches', 'tropical islands' and 'waterfalls', and were described as 'picturesque' and 'rugged'. The climate was expected (13, 30 %) to be 'hot', 'humid' and 'fresh' with 'tropical thunderstorms'. A total of 13 (30 %) responses made references to other destinations which highlighted the level of travel experience among visitors. Other country references revealed that visitors expected densely populated cities such as Bangkok and other Southeast Asian destinations. Some respondents had also come to expect 'hassle' in association with other destinations. Borneo was also expected to be culturally similar to Indonesia with associations with Lombok and Bali. The friendliness of the people was also something visitors came to expect with references to Thailand and Sri Lanka. The diversity of wildlife was acknowledged by 12 (27 %) responses including two responses specifically mentioning the orangutan. A total of eight (18 %) responses had conflicting expectations: 'We wanted to be noncommittal because we have travelled a fair bit just in case we get disappointed'. Another three (7 %) mentioned that they imagined Borneo to be exactly 'like it is'. One response 'didn't know what to expect' after having heard about 'the rainforests and the logging'. The tribal and cultural component in visitor expectations was evident but on a lesser scale with a total of seven (16 %) responses. Five groups mentioned they expected indigenous tribal cultures: 'I imagined there would be a few indigenous tribes living in authentic ways with a strong sense of culture'.

21.6 The Power of Imagery

21.6.1 *Pre-Borneo Images*

Pre-Borneo images can be broadly classified into three groups: natural features, wildlife and other. The top five images were ‘jungle and rainforests’ (39, 89 %), orangutan (25, 57 %), wildlife (23, 52 %), ‘islands and the sea’ (15, 34 %) and nature (10, 23 %). A composite visual portrait of Borneo described a land mass, home to a diversity of wildlife, blanketed with rich vegetation with a range of natural features encompassing the jungle and rainforests, mountains, rivers and the islands and the sea, inhabited by tribes and scattered with small villages. There was a distinct absence of cultural images, which could be due to the concentration of media coverage on wildlife and natural history subjects. Furthermore, Sabah has been promoted distinctively as a wildlife and activity destination with cultural tourism largely underdeveloped and underrepresented. A perceptive image of Borneo emerged unprompted, alongside visual images, to a lesser degree, thus adding to a ‘sense of place’. Borneo was perceived to be a beautiful and wild place, remote and inaccessible, untouched and sparsely populated. It can be deduced that the visual images have stimulated, to a certain degree, the respondents’ imagination and emotions, thus leading to the evolution of perceptive images and adding depth and dimension to the ‘wild Borneo’ imagery.

21.6.2 *Sources of Pre-Borneo Images*

The main image sources emanated from television programmes with citations from 37 (93 %) groups, followed by word-of-mouth, guidebooks, travel and adventure literature, the internet, magazine articles, nature and wildlife photography books, destination advertising and travel brochures and general news coverage. Thirty out of 37 interview groups mentioned that they obtained images from natural history, wildlife and travel documentaries, specifically on the Discovery Channel and the BBC covering programmes such as *Wish you were here* and *Survivor* in Britain. The second most cited source was word-of-mouth (14, 32 %). Ten out of 14 responses said they obtained these images through stories and photographs from family, friends and colleagues who had visited or lived in Borneo. Ten responses (23 %) mentioned that they got the images from guidebooks such as *Lonely planet*. Eight (18 %) mentioned travel and adventure literature including one respondent who read ‘a book by a British explorer who travelled in Borneo with his family in the early 1920s. I have read many books as a kid but this book made a big impression on me more than 20 years ago’. The internet was used by eight groups (18 %) to research information covering specialist destination websites. Thirteen

groups (30 %) mentioned magazine articles, nature and wildlife photography books with references to *National Geographic* magazine and *GEO*. With the internet, destination exposure was further enhanced by advertising and travel brochures as cited by five (11 %) groups.

21.6.3 *Travel Motivation: Seeing and Feeling*

In his 1946 book *Black Borneo*, Charles C. Miller stated that 'the only difference between an explorer and a tramp is an excuse'. Miller's comments however unfounded could reflect travel motivation of the modern-day traveller (Millum 1994). An overall score of 4.82 on a Likert scale suggests a high agreement rate among visitors that images had a strong influence on motivation. Visual images of the wildlife motivated 17 (41 %) groups, and were described as 'exotic', 'rare', 'endemic', 'interesting', 'special', 'diverse' and 'different from any other place'. In two cases, wildlife viewing was the primary reason for visiting Borneo: 'It is one thing to see it on TV and another to see it in real life. When you see it on TV, it is served on a silver platter. When you come here you realised it is not simple to see rare animals. For example, it is not easy to see wild orangutan and you are lucky if you see one'. The experience of the jungle was cited by 10 (24 %) responses and was triggered by a variety of subconscious needs that formed the basis of fascination of the jungle. This is illustrated by the following quotes: 'People are motivated by visual images and feeling. When you come to the jungle you get a sensation which is not like on TV where you just see. You come to experience and "feel" the jungle'. 'I wanted to experience the rainforests like a child with wild animals living there'. And 'I have not experienced the rainforest as I have a great deal of fear so I came to conquer that fear'. National parks and biodiversity were cited by five (12 %) interview groups. Four (10 %) mentioned the culture and the same number (4, 10 %) cited the variety of the experience. Images of orangutan motivated four groups (10 %) 'because they are endangered and not many left and there are not many places in the world where you can see them wild or semi-wild'.

Images of Borneo's unique and endangered wildlife, coupled with a deep fascination for the jungle, have the potential to influence travel motivation and hence fulfil a sense of self-actualisation as illustrated by A.S. Mills's (1985) study. Findings have also highlighted that visual image assimilation has a profound impact on the way prospective visitors perceive Borneo, thus illustrating Berlyne's (1977) work in psychological aesthetics. Furthermore, it could be deduced that perceptions are just as powerful as visual representation in determining travel motivation. This statement can be augmented by an almost equal number of responses relating to visual (55) and perceptive image (56) motivation. Fifteen (37 %) groups were motivated to experience a 'place with a difference'. Borneo was seen to be 'exotic', as having 'a unique identity', being 'completely different from home'. As one

response suggested: 'It's totally different from what we have seen before, something to remember your whole life, to go somewhere our friends have never been before'. Visual images also kindled the urge to explore as demonstrated by eight groups (20 %) who were motivated to learn about the 'unknown' and 'to learn for myself, to experience rather than judge'.

Six (15 %) groups mentioned that they had 'always wanted to come'; 'I had a subconscious urge to go to Borneo; one of the largest islands and one of the most remote and untouched places in the world'. In the past, 'there had been issues of difficulty of travel and made other destinations more attainable and easier to get to'. Four (10 %) responses mentioned that Borneo appealed because it was perceived not to be a 'normal tourist destination'. The same number (4, 10 %) associated Borneo with a need for adventure and because it seemed 'exciting', 'challenging' and 'the fact that people come here to find adventure in the old sense of the word and to go back to my childhood notions'. Another four (10 %) responses mentioned their need to be 'away from developed society', 'away from McDonald's and towards proboscis monkeys and crocodiles'. The same number (4, 10 %) cited the need to go 'back to nature and basics' and to experience the 'wilderness'. There were also the less prominent needs to go to a place that is 'remote and untouched' (3, 7 %), where 'people don't go' (3, 7 %) and 'to see it before it is gone' (3, 7 %). Borneo was seen to be 'the last stronghold of virgin territory and unspoiled land'. Responses mentioned that the urge to visit was for 'the same reasons people don't want to go are the same reasons we wanted to come'. However, environmental issues featured in the list of lesser needs: 'To go somewhere under threat'. The overriding theme in this analysis of perceptive images portrays Borneo as an unfamiliar territory 'remote', 'exotic', 'unique' and 'untouched', a threatened terrain full of the unexpected and the unseen.

21.6.4 Travel Choice

The top five reasons for choosing Sabah as a holiday destination were travel recommendation with 18 (41 %) mentions, followed by Sepilok (14, 32 %), wildlife (13, 30 %), jungle and nature (13, 30 %) and discounted flights (12, 27 %). As Sabah was seen to be off the tourist trail, potential visitors relied partly on personal endorsements to decide on a satisfactory holiday. Destination attributes can be subdivided into two further categories: experience and site specific. The specific sites represented are located in areas of natural diversity, ranging from mountains (Mount Kinabalu), floodplains (Kinabatangan), the sea and islands (Sipadan and Selingaan Turtle Island) and primary rainforest (Sepilok and Danum valley). Five of the six sites located on the east coast are the state's main wildlife attractions, with Sepilok being the biggest draw with 14 (32 %) citations, followed by Kinabatangan (10, 23 %) and the Turtle Islands (5, 11 %). Six (14 %) responses mentioned a 'complete Borneo experience' by groups who had already visited or were planning to visit other Borneo destinations of Sarawak and Kalimantan. Sabah's cultural

attributes hardly featured in visitor motivation with only one mention. Additionally, travel logistics played a very important role in holiday purchase. Discounted flights were strong motivators as demonstrated by 12 (27 %) groups. Accessibility within Sabah (6, 14 %), limited holiday time (5, 11 %) and short distances between sites (4, 9 %) were also facilitators.

21.7 Communicating the Experience

Overall recommendation rates stood at 100 % (44), while return rates for Sabah and Sandakan registered at 75 and 66 % respectively. Visitors were initially attracted to Sabah partly due to recommendations from family, friends and colleagues (14, 32 %) and travel agents (4, 9 %). Additionally, the Sandakan sites were approved by family, friends, colleagues and other travellers (18, 41 %) and travel agents (15, 34 %). However, even if the predilection to return does not yield actual results, this could translate into personal endorsements imparted through verbal, written and visual accounts and would remain a potent form of communication.

21.7.1 Site 1: Visitor Highlights: Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre

The findings reveal that the main visitor highlight at Sepilok was the opportunity to observe and encounter semi-wild orangutans in natural surroundings. Furthermore, the fascination for the primates due to their human-like quality and unpredictable behaviour formed the basis of a positive visitor experience. Viewing of the orangutans at feeding times was a highlight for 28 (64 %) groups. Coming close to an orangutan was memorable for 11 (25 %) groups. Observations of a mother and a baby were a highlight for eight (18 %). Two (4 %) found the experience to be contrived and found seeing wild orangutans in the Kinabatangan more exciting. The surroundings in Sepilok were also a highlight for visitors, but to a lesser extent. Seeing other wildlife (12, 27 %) was unexpected and, hence, complemented the visitor experience: 'A highlight for me is to see things I have never seen before like this afternoon. I saw three flying squirrels, flying all over the place.... Highlights are surprises and unexpected outcomes'. However, for some visitors (7, 16 %), the awareness and appreciation of the rehabilitation programme accentuated their experience. One respondent said: 'Sensational! The good that is coming out of Sepilok. It takes so long to rehabilitate them into the wild'. A total of five (11 %) visitors mentioned the beauty of the jungle and being surrounded by noises: 'It was wonderful and the proximity was great.... The afternoon session was a lot more entertaining.... It is good to see them happy in the wild. The orangutans touch you because they are so much like you. They are so human'.

21.7.2 Site 2: Visitor Highlights: Kinabatangan Floodplain

Although the lower Kinabatangan has been promoted as a wildlife attraction, the visual and sensory atmosphere of the floodplain was an overpowering contribution to the experience. The beauty of the floodplain was cited by 21 (54 %) groups. One response stated: ‘The landscape is what you have expected; it is almost like stepping back in time. Coming here today really fulfilled the image of Borneo’. Being in the jungle (13, 33 %) brought forth strong feelings: ‘I was just overwhelmed by the feel of the place. The highlight for me is when the rainforest closes in around you ... taking the boat into the canopy of the orangutan. It’s really special. It was eerie as the jungle draws in on you’. The river cruises (9, 23 %) gave visitors the opportunity to experience both the wildlife and the natural beauty: ‘The narrow boat cruise in the morning was excellent because you can almost touch the bushes. Not a speck of sun came through. It is so peaceful and serene’. Six (15 %) groups stated that they would recommend the Kinabatangan and/or would most likely return. The tropical storms (5, 13 %), jungle sounds (4, 10 %), the friendliness of the people (4, 10 %) and the heat (2, 5 %) created an added dimension.

The unconstrained and unexpected observation of wildlife diversity in their natural habitat was an overriding factor in tourist satisfaction, with charismatic wildlife such as the proboscis monkeys (13, 33 %) and wild orangutans (12, 31 %) featuring highly in the visitor experience: ‘The jumping and diving monkeys (proboscis). We didn’t expect a monkey to swim. The mother monkeys jumped with their babies on their belly.... She jumped and then looked behind to see if her baby was safe. It was a wonderful experience’. The sightings of wild orangutans translated into a highlight because ‘seeing an orangutan in the wild was a lot more exciting than seeing one on a feeding platform ... because it’s wild.... It was just doing its own thing’. The birdlife impressed nine (23 %) interview groups. One respondent stated: ‘I am amazed at the diversity of the birds. The colours of the birds were just amazing, especially the kingfishers. You see them in a book, but when you see them the colours are just outstanding and beautiful’. Encounters with the wild elephants were experienced by only six (15 %) interview groups: ‘Wild! The wild Asian elephants and how close you can get to one. They were feeding and swatting flies with leaves and rolling in the mud’. Exploring the floodplain by boat gave visitors a sense of liberty and excitement. Although the main motive of visitors was to view the wildlife, many did not expect the natural beauty of the environment to captivate them. The element of seeing and sensing the unexpected enhanced the quality of the experience thus giving rise to strong visual and sensory images of the lower Kinabatangan. ‘I will remember the sun over the river and the rainforest and the egret flying up to the sun. That is the picture I will remember. The stream brings water from faraway and brings a lot of different things; you can almost hear what the water has to say’.

21.7.3 Site 3: Visitor Highlights: Selinggaan Turtle Island

The contact and the observation of turtle hatchlings on Selinggaan were the most mentioned highlights. The chance to touch (11, 85 %) and release (7, 54 %) the hatchlings were memorable moments. One response stated: 'The baby turtles are so small and so full of energy.... Something really special and beautiful'. This was followed by the experience of a nesting turtle (8, 62 %). One response summed up the experience: 'The highlight was seeing things we cannot get elsewhere in the world and to see things in the natural environment.... We saw the turtle laying eggs and watched them take the eggs away to bury them in artificial nests. They were really good with the children. They let them touch the eggs and let them put the eggs into the nests. Then we saw and watched the baby turtles and released them on the beach and watched them go into the sea in the moonlight. It was really nice'. Two groups appreciated the beauty of the environment: 'Getting to the island was magical; this jewel in the middle of the sea, it was lovely'. Two (15 %) groups thought highly of the turtle conservation programme: 'I was happy because this is the strictest set up I have ever experienced. I have been to Abang Rantai in Terengganu ... and nobody was paying any attention to the rules.... I have never seen so many nesting holes for turtles like you do on Selinggaan. Before this I had a really low opinion of Malaysia's conservation programmes'.

21.7.4 Communication Through Visual Narratives

Visitors were highly enthusiastic about photographs that they had taken. Twenty-three (53 % of 43) visitors who had taken photographs at Sepilok mentioned that their most anticipated images were of the orangutans in their natural environment. Images of the verdant and serene environment of the Kinabatangan River fringed with rainforests and wildlife diversity featured highly on the list of most anticipated pictures. Thirty-one (82 % of 38) groups mentioned that they were looking forward to their photographs of the 'wildlife in natural settings' and the 'jungle and the Kinabatangan'. This was particularly true of the proboscis monkeys 'jumping from tree to tree', 'feeding' and 'swimming and diving', 'the big fat males which remind me of myself. They are species you don't see in other parts of the world and are definitely different and you don't come across them in zoos'. Visitors were also looking forward to the photographs of other wildlife. There were also five (13 % of 38) who mentioned the plants and the insects. The visitor experience on Selinggaan was nocturnal and flash photography was prohibited during turtle watching and, as a result, only four groups (29 % of 14) mentioned that they were looking forward to the photographs. The scenery from the summit of Mount Kinabalu was another highly anticipated image: 'The sunrise was superb and it was very clear. The sun came up and cast a big shadow on the other side of the mountain. A big triangle of light—it was so beautiful'. Sixty-five percentage of

interview groups (28 of 43) mentioned that they would show all their photographs to family and friends. One group surmised: ‘We have been writing a travel journal to family and friends by e-mail. They are waiting excitedly for the every journal. We wrote about what we felt and what we saw and they really love it. They now have the stories and when we go back we will show them the pictures’.

21.7.5 Communication Through Practical Advice

Messages are communicated not only through visual narratives but also travel advice to potential visitors. Twenty-six (59 %) responses stated that they would like to spend more time in Sabah followed by the desire to spend less time in Kota Kinabalu (7, 16 %) and to plan ahead and be better organised (7, 16 %). Seven (16 %) groups said, however, that they would not like to change anything about their holiday. Three (7 %) mentioned that they missed a cultural experience in Sabah. Another two (5 %) stated that they would have liked to have experienced a combination of touring and relaxing. There was only one mention of a possibility of a self-drive holiday. Visitors mentioned that they would like to spend more time in Sabah to visit other sites (26, 59 %). Six out of the eight (31 % of 26) groups who had visited the Kinabatangan wished to have spent more time there, while seven (27 % of 26) groups said they would have liked to have spent more time on the east coast of Sabah for the range of attractions.

21.8 Postexperience Perception

Sabah was described by 15 (34 %) groups to be ‘full of surprises’, ‘unexpected’, ‘special’, ‘mind-opening’ and as offering ‘so many “first” experiences’. The combination of things to see and do were mentioned by 12 (27 %) responses: ‘A special combination—you can do the mountain, lowland jungle and the islands. So when a family comes over you can find something that each one likes. There will be something here for most people’. Sabah was also seen as a destination for wildlife (12, 27 %) and the rainforests (9, 20 %). Eight (18 %) groups mentioned the beauty and the exotic character of the place. Due to the absence of mass tourism and its related issues, four (9 %) interview groups saw Sabah as unspoilt by tourism. Although unprompted, 29 (73 %) groups mentioned the friendliness of the people, accentuated with comparisons with other destinations: ‘The friendliest people anywhere in the world.... From the minute we stepped off the plane’. The multi-cultural aspect of Sabah was noted by five (11 %) responses: ‘Everybody is different. When you see people you don’t know what race they are and they are tolerant of each other’s culture’. Sabah was described by five groups (11 %) as being ‘a peaceful and hassle-free location’.

Even though overall satisfaction rates were high (4.93 on a Likert scale), Sabah lived up to the visitor expectations of only 14 (32 %) interview groups. This included 10 (23 %) responses that said Borneo lived up to the original expectations and images, albeit for different reasons. Two of the 10 responses expected Borneo to be much like it was except that it was more developed than anticipated. Four (9 %) groups mentioned that expectations were met and much more. One response said: 'There is a lot more to Borneo than I have ever imagined; culture-wise, beauty-wise, the environment ... much, much more interesting'. Notwithstanding the positive overall experience, the extent of development in Sabah, particularly regarding the huge expanse of oil palm plantations on the east coast, had a disconcerting effect on 10 (23 %) groups. One response noted: 'Overdeveloped because of the oil palm plantations. This is a beautiful and stunning country but, selfishly, I would like to see more jungle'. The accessibility and the short distances between the sites were cited by five (11 %). 'You don't have to travel far distances.... For a totally different experience you can take a few hours' trip and be there. That is perfect'. Three (7 %) interview groups expected to see more rainforests including one who described Sabah as only 'wild in parts.... You only hear about it but it not until you see it that you realised the extent of deforestation'.

21.9 Conclusion

Borneo. The name in itself has the power to conjure images and impressions of mythical proportions. In this context, organic imagery has a profound impact on Western visitors' expectations, motivation and hence their travel choice. Although visuals are strong motivators, the results disclosed that not only do visitors desire to experience the destination visually but also to fulfil a sense of self-actualisation in their choice of wilderness, with the latter being an intrinsically powerful factor in determining travel choice. Moreover, the extent of past travel experience combined with individual comparisons of Borneo with other destinations played an important role in travel motivation. Personal communication through verbal, written and visual narratives are vital in the formation of images and perception for potential visitors as this would most likely translate into personal endorsements of the destination provided that the experience is satisfactory. In this context, the overall satisfaction rate for the Sandakan experience (4.93 on a Likert scale) was greater than the average rate of the individual sites of Kinabatangan (4.79), Sepilok (4.77) and Selingaan (4.62), thus underpinning the strength of the site combination. These findings offer added emphasis to the importance of guiding and interpretation in enhancing the visitor experience, as highlighted by agreement rates at Sepilok (4.75), Kinabatangan (4.79) and Selingaan (4.77), regardless of the differing nature of the sites. Particularly for Sepilok and Selingaan, site restrictions could form the basis for dissatisfaction. However, this can be offset with sound guidance and interpretation to garner visitor support for the conservation process. In contrast, the experience in the Kinabatangan gave visitors the liberty to sense a communion with

nature and even with less rigorous codes of conduct; the complexities and logistics of the floodplain still require solid guiding and interpretation.

Visitors have described their Borneo experience as fascinating and diverse, and to reflect upon their travel experience they will return home armed with enduring images and riveting tales. Notwithstanding this, the prevailing 'wild Borneo' imagery has been, to a certain extent, harnessed for product differentiation and marketing strategies. To this end, the Sandakan product in its entirety has the potential to be marketed as a microcosm of the Borneo experience. Furthermore, based on the recommendations that emanated from this study, tourism developers and marketers should consolidate their efforts for the development of cultural and historical tourism, improving site management, enhancing the visitor experience and managing expectations through the continuous improvement in guiding and interpretation in order to sustain Sabah's success as a visitor destination.

The most exciting country. Everything together, the wildlife, the islands, spots of paradise. It's so different and really beautiful.

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Chapter 22

Challenges in Indigenous Language Education: The Brunei Experience

Noor Azam Haji-Othman

Abstract In August 2010 the Language Centre, Universiti Brunei Darussalam took the unprecedented step of introducing modules in Tutong and Dusun, two unwritten traditional languages of distinct indigenous ethnic groups in Brunei. This chapter outlines the challenges faced by the centre in bringing these dying languages into the classroom, defying the official position of the Ministry of Education on teaching indigenous languages, and succeeding in (re)introducing the languages to a new generation of young Bruneians who never had the chance to learn the languages from their parents. No one had ever imagined these languages—that have traditionally only been spoken and have no ‘teachable standard’—would one day form part of a university minor degree programme. Today the classes continue to receive a steady stream of students every semester. This discussion shows how this was achieved mainly through the persistence of linguistic staff who saw merit in formally teaching these languages but also knew the administrative and pedagogical challenges would be onerous.

Keywords Brunei · Universiti Brunei Darussalam · Language education · Tutong

22.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the pioneering project of the Language Centre, Universiti Brunei Darussalam in introducing Bruneian ethnic languages, including the Tutong language (spoken by only 10,000 people), as elective modules for students, and issues surrounding the introduction of the course. A prime concern in this initiative was the very fact that these languages have traditionally only been spoken and thus do not have any writing system. The course designers and lecturers had first to

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ensure a clear understanding and description of the structures of the languages, as well as come up with a stable and teachable writing system for each language. In the process, they also had to contend with issues of creating a 'false' standard for the languages and, in doing so, ask whether their efforts are actually of benefit to these heritage languages.

In 1996 Peter W. Martin wrote on the ethnolinguistic vitality index of each of the indigenous languages of Brunei, as well as other languages such as Iban, Penan and Mukah. Of direct relevance to this is Martin's ethnolinguistic vitality rating (EVR) of 2.5 out of 6.0 for the Tutong language. This rating was derived from Howard Giles, Richard Y. Bourhis and Donald M. Taylor's (1977) ethnolinguistic vitality theory which considers factors such as status, demography, institutional support and control in assessing the vitality of ethnolinguistic groups. An ethnolinguistic group's perceived strengths and weaknesses in each of these dimensions can be used to classify it as having low, medium or high vitality. Writing in 2005 I suggested that Martin's ratings could all have changed significantly, and by now the EVR for Tutong could in fact be significantly lower (Noor Azam 2005). A major factor in this for me—and as also indicated by other researchers such as Peter Sercombe (2002), Ramlee Tunggal (2005), Adrian Clynes (2010) and James McLellan (2014)—is the lack of institutional support for Brunei's minority languages, particularly in terms of indigenous language education.

My doctoral study cited the official reasons given by the Brunei Ministry of Education's Curriculum Development Department (CDD) for not including these ethnic languages in the national curriculum: these languages have no 'standard' variety and they cannot perform the formal and official function of a language of academic instruction; and their currency was limited only to the indigenous population who traditionally spoke them (Noor Azam 2005). The study also reported on the surprising admission that the CDD's working policy 'neither reflects the multiethnicity nor the multilinguality of the population'. So it would appear that any ambitions to introduce the ethnic languages into the curriculum at whichever level would never come into fruition.

However, in August 2010 the Language Centre at Universiti Brunei Darussalam embarked on a pioneering project of teaching indigenous Borneo languages, in particular Tutong, Dusun and Iban, initially for undergraduates. These were chosen to start with only because linguistics staff were available who were willing to be involved in the pioneering project. The responses varied for each language with Dusun recruiting 12 students, while Iban attracted eight students, two short of the required minimum for a module to run. Meanwhile, Tutong received its first batch of 30 students, who spent 14 weeks (four hours per week) learning the language. Enrolment was initially 39 but this number dwindled due to timetable clashes. This point is significant in showing the high level of interest in this new language module.

Past experiences from elsewhere around the world have shown that teaching minority languages or lesser known languages, which are very often endangered,

has never been easy. For instance, Nadine Dutcher (2003) raised the issue of finding specialist teachers and providing specialist teacher training in mother tongue education. Dutcher has also highlighted the significance of political will for minority language programmes 'to begin and thrive'. This concern is echoed by the educational journal *ID 21* (id21 2006) which, in its editorial page, raises the issues of feasibility and costs for education authorities to develop a writing system and a curriculum, and to provide teachers and materials for every language in the country.

These known issues had been anticipated and been borne in mind when the Language Centre toyed with the idea of introducing the Tutong language module, and these will be addressed below. But the discussion first highlights the actual issues and complications that were experienced by the Language Centre in making the Borneo language modules a reality, with specific reference to the Tutong language module.

22.2 Creating a Tutong Language Module

Among the students registering for the Language Centre's Tutong language module were children of a Tutong-speaking parent or parents. Most, if not all, of these students with Tutong links had little knowledge or practical use of the language itself. In other words they had not inherited the language of their parent(s). So when the centre included the Tutong language, many of these students were interested, some bemused, in its novelty as a new language module. These sentiments (and their motivations) are captured in the following excerpts:

Student 1:

Mulo ni jayi' muwok kelas basa' Tutong itu gala-gala' mayi kawan ji'. Samo od ji ado kenya'id kelas basa' selalu ni' mudah untok kala' markah lengkau.... Minat ina' mulo ni endo tindah ado. Tapi pali' ji' muwok kelas ina' setiap minggu, jayi' makin tertarik ngan basa' Tutong ina'.... Hebat anyamji' rimo bebasa' selain basa' Melayu samo Inggeris.

[Initially I joined the Tutong language class because my friends did. I also heard that language classes would be easy to score high marks in.... The interest wasn't there. But after coming every week, I began to be interested in the Tutong language.... It feels great to be able to speak a language other than Malay and English.]

Student 2:

Jayi' endo sangka' jayi' kan belajar basa' Tutong. Mulo ni ji' kan temban unit gala'.... Jayi' awal ni gego muwok kelas pasal endo manja' nuwi-nuwi pasal Tutong atau basa' ni ... tapi makin buai ji' belajar basa' ina' makin mayek anyamji'.... Alu-alu jami' isu' basa' Tutong kalau kan chat atau facebook atau kan ngumpat urang.

[I never expected I would ever learn Tutong. At first I only wanted the course units.... Initially it was awkward joining the class because I didn't know anything about Tutong or its language ... but after a while learning the language I began to feel excited.... We began to use the language everyday in online chatting or Facebook or when talking about other people.]

Student 3:

Mulo-mulo endo tindak ji' umu' kan ngala' basa' Tutong na' pasal kan mu'on nuwi od? ... Mulo-mulo muwok, tekencor od pasal ramai yo ngala'. Piker duwo telu urang gala'. Kan mupus tiru'.... Awal ni sait od uku' belajar pasal adukan ingot.... Buai-buai, mayek tindak kan muwok kelas pasal kan reseng-reseng gala' kerjo jami'. Sekurang-kurangni kala' od bebasa' lain kalau endo umu' urang lain ngerati munyi jami'.

[At first I didn't really want to take the Tutong language because, what for?... When first joining, I was shocked to see so many people taking it. I thought maybe two or three people only. I nearly left.... It was a headache at first because there were too many things to remember.... But after some time, I was excited to attend class because it was fun. At least I got to learn a new language so other people wouldn't understand what we're saying.]

Student 4:

Asal gala' ji' sempon basa' baru uli' ji' kod kelas Tutong, ji' kan ngisu' dalam ji' bebasa' ngan kawan-kawanji' ge Tutong.... Rimo dai jayi' kan bebasa' ngan kawan-kawan dalam basa' Tutong. Kelas basa' Tutong nginju' kesedaran ge jayi' pasal basa' Tutong tu segetip demi segetip perkataanni kenubah ngan basa' Nabai walaupun ado basa' Tutongni yo asli.

[Every time I learned at new word in Tutong class, I would use it with my friends in Tutong.... I began to like speaking to friends in the Tutong language. The class made me realise that Tutong is slowly changing with the use of Brunei Malay words.]

It is evident from these statements that there was an almost incredulous or even apprehensive attitude toward the unexpected introduction of a *bahasa kampung* (village language). Despite this apparent apprehension, by May 2012 two groups of students had successfully completed the beginners' level requirements of Tutong language instruction (module one and module two, over two semesters totalling 112 study hours).

The first cohort completed two semesters of what was largely an experimental curriculum; the second cohort went through a more refined and fully developed syllabus. The two modules were designed based on other beginners' level modules taught at the Language Centre in terms of the target language skills, but the contexts were localised to Brunei or to the Tutong district, the traditional locale of the Tutong community and language, in order to create a more realistic scenario that reflects traditional and practical usage of the language.

The discussion here identifies core issues related to the decision to teach the Tutong language formally at university level, based on the experience at the Language Centre.

22.2.1 Standardisation and Codification

The first challenge in teaching ethnic languages is the codification of those languages that have traditionally only been spoken and not written. A generation of

literate speakers did emerge and began to apply Malay and English writing systems to the Tutong language in their personal communication (letters to family, and so on) from the 1970s and 1980s onwards, as well as later forms of communication in the 1990s with the advent of computers, digital communication and the internet (e-mail, SMS texting and so on), leading into more advanced communication such as blogging, MSN chats, Facebook and Twitter. But the spelling system in all these communications has been arbitrary. There was simply no single agreed or standardised formal spelling system. A Tutong–Malay dictionary was published by the Brunei Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (Language and Literature Bureau) in 1991. Although ground-breaking, it hardly had the effect of standardising spellings as the language was never taught in schools; hence, the spelling system was never adopted by the Tutong-speaking public, making spelling among them still largely arbitrary.

So in teaching the Tutong language, this standardisation hurdle had to be overcome to make it not just teachable but also for it to be taught meaningfully. A realistic, consistent and teachable spelling system therefore had to be put in place. Fortunately, an experimental Tutong language website called Tutong Kita' (tutongkita.blogspot.com) was created in January 2010, whose spelling and writing system was believed to be stable and consistent enough to teach in the proposed Tutong classes at the Language Centre UBD (though its spelling conventions have evolved over the course of its existence).

22.2.2 Selection of Variety

Even among the 12,000 Tutong-speaking population there are differences in terms of the varieties used by them according to geographical as well as chronological divisions (Martin and Poedjosoedarmo 1996; Noor Azam 2005). Despite the language being spoken only in a relatively enclosed geographical area in the middle of the country, the various villages known to be the traditional settlement areas of the Tutong have shown distinctive features. Researchers such as Bernd Nothofer (1991) and Peter Martin and Gloria Poedjosoedarmo (1996) have identified two general varieties of the Tutong language observed through geographical differences: the inland variety and the coastal variety (Fig. 22.1).

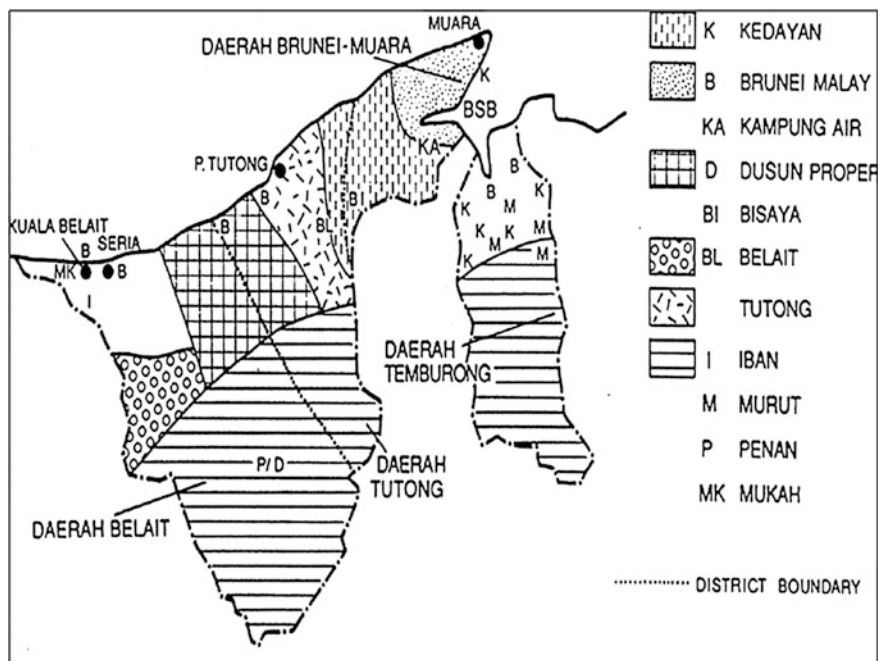


Fig. 22.1 Map of Tutong language areas. Source Nothofer (1991)

The inland variety is spoken by Tutong inhabiting villages in the interior parts of the Tutong district including Birau, Kiudang, Lamunin, Tanjung Maya, Bukit Sibut, Lubuk Pulau, Layong and Penapar. This variety can be identified by its more pronounced final position plosive /d/.

'climb' (noun)	
Inland	/taQod/
Coastal	/takot/
'to climb up' (verb)	
Inland	/tenaQod/
Coastal	/tenakot/

The coastal variety, on the other hand, is spoken by inhabitants of villages in the coastal area of Tutong, such as Sengkarai, Pekan Tutong, Suran, Panchor Dulit, Panchor Papan, Penanjong, Keriam and Luagan Duduk. It is generally deemed to sound 'milder' than the inland variety.

There is also a generational variation between older and younger Tutong speakers, as is the case with most languages. The older generation (those aged above, say, 50 years) employ lexical items, discourse styles and syntactic constructions noticeably different from those used by younger speakers who are mainly the products of the bilingual English–Malay education system, as well as the

recipients of the impact of the social predominance of the Brunei Malay language (Martin and Poedjosoedarmo 1996; Sercombe 2002; Martin 2002; Noor Azam 2005; Clynes 2010). Hence, one of the main questions in introducing the Tutong language module was the contentious debate about which variety to teach.

In the end, it was decided that the variety would be that spoken by the course designer, who was a male in his thirties from Keriam (coastal area), and who speaks Tutong as a mother tongue together with Dusun, Malay and English, but is also a product of the bilingual education system. This aspect was significant in the development of the module because it would provide a model that the students could relate to. The course designer spoke a variety of Tutong typically used by younger speakers, and therefore was likely to appeal to them, rather than a 'purer' variety spoken by the older generation.

In 2012 the Language Centre hired an adjunct lecturer, who is a female English-language teacher in a secondary school. She is a native speaker of Tutong of the inland variety (Tanjung Maya). This influenced the variety learned by the students to some extent, although the textbook she used was to a large extent the same as the one designed by the first tutor.

Both tutors agreed that it was more important to ensure that the teaching approach in class should emphasise language awareness, in which it would inform students of the possible variations in terms of expressions, lexis, pronunciation and accents.

22.2.3 Issues of Resource and Material Production

The role of an independent website, the Tutong Kita' website, as a source of reference for the Tutong language course became central since it provided the main reading material for the students enrolled on the course. This was in the form of short and long texts (see Boxes 22.1 and 22.2) that provided materials for contextualised reading, examples of usage and other linguistic points of reference. A minor issue with the Tutong Kita' webpage is its journalistic discourse (a new discourse for the Tutong language in itself) since the content (news reports) is translated from English or Malay sources. Bearing these issues in mind, the students still benefited from having cohesive texts as reference in their study.

But the Tutong Kita' webpage was far from adequate. While it did provide some useful teaching material that could be accessed by students independently, there was still a substantial body of original teaching material that had to be created specifically for the course pitched at the right level for the pioneering group of learners. This included the preparation of realistic conversations, examples and contexts, targeted at facilitating communicative language teaching and learning to reflect the real world and current use of the language. Although examples of such materials for other languages are aplenty and could easily be adapted for the Tutong language course, it was also necessary to ensure that the nuances and subtleties of a traditionally spoken language (and essentially an unwritten one) within specific cultural contexts were captured and reflected.

Box 22.1: Short Tutong text**Nabai ke-67 dalam Senarai Pelancungan Dunia**

Published on Thursday, May 31, 2012 by Tutong Kita Admin ·

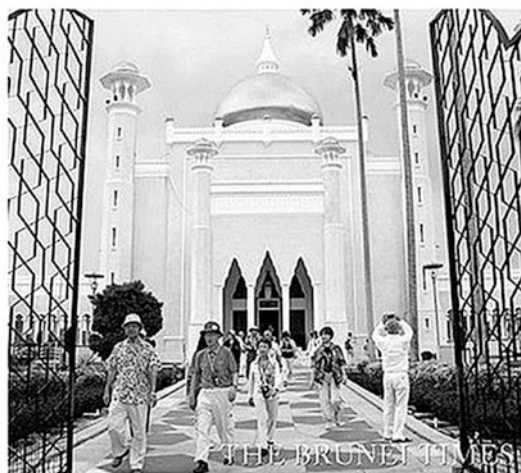


Foto: BT

Khamis, 31 Mei 2012.

NABAI nombor ke-67 dalam laporan terbaru yo mbuktikan Nabai ado "kekuatan yo jelas samo seimbang ngan kelemahan".

Kajian terbaru itu senukung gama World Economic Forums Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI), yo ngatur 139 buah negeri mayi ido kuan pencapaian dalam bidang-bidang yo mala' narek pelaburan untuk sektor pelancungan.

Negara-negara ASEAN ketabi' bebagi' dalam senarai - ado yo tengod, ado yo go lempu' - menurut kenyataan kod World Economic Forum.

Singapura, negara ASEAN telengkau dalam senarai ina, kala' kedudukan ke-10 kod 139. Malaysia (35) samo Thailand (41), yo ketabi' kala' pencapaian jya' misti dai ado kelemahan kakal.

"Kumpulan ketelu, tomuwok Nabai (67), Indonesia (74) ngan Vietnam (80), ntu kekuatan yo jelas tapi pada masa yo samo adu kelemahan," menurut laporan ina'.

Filipin (94) ngan Cambodia (109) ntu kelemahan paleng adu.

Napon kod Brunei Times Online. Khamis, 31 Mei 2012.

<http://www.bt.com.bn/news-national/2012/05/31/brunei-67-in-global-tourism-list>

Box 22.2: Long Tutong text**UBD perkenal program Minor dalam Basa'**

Published on Friday, March 30, 2012 by Tutong Kita Admin ·

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, 28 Mac - Dalam usaha'ni mendalami' basa' ngan budaya' antarabangsa', kita' endo mala' kebilukan basa' ngan budaya' masarakat Nabai sendiri.

Jadi sebagai jalo' inisiatif kan memartabatkan budaya' samo keunikan khazanah basa' masarakat Nabai, Pusat Basa', Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) tiru' nawarkan program Minor in Language atau Minor dalam Basa' gala' penuntut mala' ngala' status Minor dalam basa' Borneo temuwok basa' Tutong, Belait, Dusun, Lun Bawang samo basa' Daya' yo ketabi'ni basa' Warisan Borneo yo penting.

Perkara' itu nunyi Pengarah Pusat Basa', UBD, Dr Noor Azam bin Orang Kaya Maha Bijaya Haji Othman dalam kata' alu-aluanni ge majlis pelancaran Minggu Basa' ngan Budaya' Jipun ge Dewan Canselor Universiti Brunei Darussalam, yo keno sempurna'kan gama' tetamu' kehormat, Menteri' Pendidikan, Yang Berhormat Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Kema Dato Seri Setia Haji Abu Bakar bin Haji Apong.

Beliau menerangkan pengenalan program Minor basa' ina' merupa'kan sebahagian kod strategi pendidikan menyeluruh UBD yo membenarkan pelajar yo memenuhi' sarat atau modul yo tiru' keno tetapkan kala' status Minor dalam basa' Borneo, basa' Jipun, basa' Arab, basa' Perancis, basa' Korea' ngan Mandarin.

Dr Noor Azam munyi pengajaran basa'-basa' ina' gama' Pusat Basa' dengan arapan kan mempromosikan kemahiran penting ge kalangan pelajar samo graduan gala' ido mala' jadi rakyat global yo aktif yo mala' bebasa' kudo jenis basa' yo lain-lain.

Beliau nemban walaupun program ina' taman keno perkenalkan Januari 2012 tapi usaha' samo penyelidikan awal utuk program ina' keno umu' kod ta'un 2008 dengan memperkenalkan basa' Dusun, Daya' ngan Tutong.

Dalam temubual ngan *Media Permata*, Dr Noor Azam menjelaskan dengan lanjut atin bahawa pengenalan program Minor dalam basa' na' adolah inisiatif Pusat Basa' kan pejiya' profail UBD samo njadikan UBD pusat pengajian Borneo, selaras dengan Visi 2015 UBD - iyo umu' UBD jadi antara' 50 universiti tejiya' ge Asia'.

"Kita' arus paham basa'-basa' Borneo itu secara' tradisi'ni adolah basa' yo nisu' bebasa' gala', kekah yo tenulis. Jadi yo mu'on jami' adolah mengkaji' cara' nulis ge iyo, struktur basa'ni yo mesti keno terangkan, samo ngumu' bahan-bahan ngajar utuk ketabi' basa'-basa' ina'.

Dr Noor Azam munyi melalui' usaha' ina', ido bearap kan nyediokan sebuah sistem penulisan bagi' basa'-basa' Borneo ina'.

Mengulas mengenai' tenaga' pengajar dalam kursus Basa' Borneo, Dr Noor Azam munyi ido adolah guru-guru yo ado latihan asas dalam pengajara basa', samo ido mesti' od mala' bebasa' dalam basa' najar ido na' dengan fasih gala' ido mala' nenan keaslian basa'-basa' borneo ina'.

Mengenai penerima'an pelajar terhadap basa'-basa' Borneo, Dr Azam Noor munyi sambutan penuntut na' "sungguh menggalkakan". Basa' Tutong ngan Dusun tiru' keno jalankan duwo ta'un tiru', samo ado duwo kumpulan tiru' nenga' belajar dalam basa'-basa' Borneo na' belajar bahasa berkenaan.

Napon kod Media Permata. Jumaat, 30 Mac 2012.

<http://www.mediapemata.com.bn/hamis/mar2012.htm>

22.2.4 *Staffing and Training in Tutong Language Teaching*

Given the background outlined earlier, it would be impossible to find anyone with a degree in Tutong language or indeed Tutong language education, the normal entry requirement for teaching staff at the Language Centre. Therefore, the alternative was to find a staff member with suitable linguistic and academic ability who could speak the target language and had the academic and professional training and aptitude to design, develop and teach the curriculum. This issue became more evident in an advertisement put out by the Language Centre (Box 22.3).

Box 22.3: Language Centre, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, advertisement (February 2012)

Adjunct Lecturer [2 positions][Borneo languages]

Applicants must have at least a Bachelors degree in language teaching or a relevant degree from a recognised university, with at least 5 years language teaching experience. Preference will be given to applicants who are fluent in and can also teach more than one language from those offered at the Centre, particularly in a Brunei/Borneo language (Belait/Dusun/Murut/Tutong/Iban). Successful applicants will be expected to be involved in teaching undergraduate/postgraduate/Continuing education courses/programmes, research, consultancy and other language-related services, as well as in relevant student/language club activities. In particular, successful applicants will be expected to focus on curriculum, resource and material development for Borneo language modules.

As articulated in this advertisement, the applicant would have to have at least some language teaching experience (in any language). This would encompass an ability to apply pedagogical considerations in the development of the language courses (Borneo languages: Tutong, Dusun, Belait and so on), which would of course benefit from mother tongue knowledge of the target language. As of August 2014, no one has actually been hired to fill the positions. As a result the August 2014 semester did not include the Tutong language for the first time since its introduction. But it is heartening to note that the university received a few applications and a selected few were interviewed as possible recruits. It remains to be seen whether anyone will actually be appointed at the end after such a long-drawn-out process. If the appointments materialise, they would be a ground-breaking boost that could be interpreted as formal institutional support for indigenous languages. But if eventually no one is hired, for whatever reasons—prohibition of practice or covert institutional resistance—it remains significant that these proposed positions were even considered, a development without precedent at the highest level of university recruitment.

22.2.5 *Demand*

A significant issue is that of demand from students for the Tutong language. In fact this was the first question that was raised at by the university administration as the Language Centre sought approval to proceed with the proposal. This issue was handled in a pragmatic and experimental way. Given the flexible framework of the new GenNEXT degree at the university that allows students to switch modules within the first four weeks of the semester, the pioneering group of Tutong language learners at the Language Centre only stabilised in week four of the semester. The first cohort in August 2010 initially had only 30 students registered for Tutong level one, from which only 12 went on to complete Tutong level two for another semester.

Of the second cohort that joined the course in August 2011, only 24 out of 99 students were allowed to register. This sudden increase in the number of students wanting to learn Tutong can be taken as a sign of growing interest in and awareness of the language among the university's students, so much so that in December 2011 the university approving bodies agreed to a minor programme in Borneo languages—a first in Borneo.

22.2.6 *Self-doubt*

Is the right version of the Tutong language being taught? Are we in fact doing more harm than good in creating a 'false' standard?

A major epistemological dilemma for the course designer was whether in creating the course a 'false standard Tutong' was being created. The repercussions would ensue from creating a new standard for a language that was never fully written or codified, or at least a generally accepted standard or convention among the Tutong-speaking community. The creation of a standard in this regard occurs on two levels: orthographic and formal. Although the orthography and spelling system was derived from a substantial corpus of Tutong-language texts from the Tutong Kita' website, this was created independently and not specifically for educational purposes, and certainly not for the creation of a standard for the Tutong language.

The Tutong Kita' writing system has been adopted by the Language Centre and it is the one taught to students. In terms of the form of the standard, there is a risk that what is taught maybe misconceived as *the* standard form of Tutong while in fact no standard exists yet. Certainly it has to be accepted that a 'consistent form' has to be taught in order to achieve language learning objectives. But this must not be mistaken for a prescription of a standard variety of the language used by all Tutong speakers. Therefore, the students are constantly reminded that they are being taught the variety used by Tutong Kita' website. Again, this is where language awareness becomes an important aspect in the teaching approach.

22.3 Discussion

A survey was conducted involving 108 students (aged 19–23) taking various language courses at the Language Centre (Noor Azam et al. 2009). In one of the questions the students were asked to name two languages they would like most to learn. Among the languages they said they should be offered were Brunei indigenous languages ‘because they’re our national heritage’. In a way, therefore, the introduction of the Tutong language course was a reaction to this finding.

The issues identified by Dutcher (2003) and *ID 21* (2006) cited earlier may now be addressed in the context of Brunei Darussalam. First, political will needs to be strong to push for and prove the value of formally teaching endangered languages such as Tutong. The Language Centre seemed the perfect champion for this cause, since it is the highest language learning institution in Brunei Darussalam. The need for specially trained staff is addressed by involving academically and pedagogically trained staff of the university, though not specifically for the Tutong language. However, as argued above, those involved experimented and persisted, and produced results. The seemingly insurmountable hurdle of non-existent institutional support stated at the beginning was overcome by drawing on the experience of the staff and making use of research into those languages.

Second, the university administration certainly had valid concerns about the cost-effectiveness of the new courses, given that these were unprecedented initiatives as far as Brunei languages were concerned. However, the fact that there were suitably qualified researchers and willing teachers within the university itself who managed to convince the administration that these ‘experiments’ would not involve prohibitive financing meant the first small steps could be taken.

Third, the production and development of original teaching materials will undoubtedly take time, energy and a lot of creativity on the part of those involved. But now that official support from the university has been secured, the future looks promising. I have written about the importance of ‘creating relevance’ in producing the content of the Tutong Kita’ website; and this principle is carried over into the creation of original teaching materials for the Tutong language course (Noor Azam 2010). Relevance comprises both the sense of content and context, as discussed above, as well as relevance in terms of technology to make materials fully accessible to a technologically conscious generation.

22.4 Conclusion

Researchers such as Martin, Clynes and Sercombe have always argued for the need to preserve or at least document the indigenous languages of Brunei. The Language Centre has taken a leap of faith in introducing the minority languages in full knowledge of all the challenges and issues outlined. But the fact that it eventually gained approval to run a minor degree programme in Borneo languages is a positive

development. It was fortunate that the university exercised autonomous powers in approving the modules to be taught, breaking away from the Ministry of Education's stated position, and despite running into operational difficulties. Perhaps Rusty Barrett's (2009) conclusions in his study of the teaching of Guatemalan and Mayan languages may be applied to this context. He states that (minority) language programmes may challenge language ideologies that denigrate minority (including endangered) languages, foster language documentation and description, and create opportunities for new research. The Language Centre's experience with Tutong hopefully will achieve some, if not all, of these goals with Borneo languages. Although reversing language shift was never a primary aim of introducing the course, it has exposed the language to a new generation of interested learners in a new setting and using new approaches. A renewed interest among the younger generation, if achieved, would certainly ease the struggle.

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Chapter 23

Everyday Finance and Consumption in Brunei Darussalam

Noor Hasharina Hassan

Abstract The global financial crisis in 2008 caused by financial liberalisation triggered a ripple effect on economies, politics and social welfare, forcing governments to intervene and regulate finances. Brunei Darussalam is not isolated from global financial flows and consumerism. It has created a distinctive and evolving personal finance and consumption culture as the government continues to play a fundamental and proactive role in monitoring and regulating financial institutions. A Ministry of Finance directive in 2005 saw the start of stringent controls over finance to combat the high dependency on borrowing for consumption rather than as a reaction to global economic and financial instability. This chapter examines the evolution of personal finances and consumption in Brunei. Deeper consideration of the social and cultural practices of consumers and governments is needed to understand the financial and consumption culture and its dynamics. By employing mixed methods—in particular qualitative semi-structured interviews—the study presents empirical evidence of the transformation and reactions of financial structures and consumer borrowing patterns after the introduction of the directive. It also identifies functions and motivators of consumption that have influenced consumers' everyday finances. The findings suggest that individual choices and cultural intermediaries, particularly the family and traditions, shape Bruneians' financial access and consumption culture, reinforcing the fact that financialisation and consumption culture are not homogenised across different geographies.

Keywords Brunei • Economy • Financial liberalisation • Consumption culture

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23.1 The Welfare and Financial Structure

The discovery of oil and gas and the achievement of political independence in 1984 were two milestones in the transformation of local consumer purchasing power and consumption patterns in Brunei Darussalam. The policies of the Sultan of Brunei's government have emphasised social and economic development and brought about significant improvements in the standard of living and lifestyle. Two important elements of government policy that have made the standard of living comfortable and increased consumer purchasing power are the presence of subsidies and the provision of allowances. Subsidies provided by the government include fuel for cars, gas for cooking, electricity, water, rice, sugar, free education up to university level, free medical and healthcare, including travelling overseas for treatment not available in Brunei, housing provision, including national housing and subsidised payment of private rentals for government workers, no personal income taxes and pension funds for retired people (Borneo Bulletin 2015; Hajah Sainah 2010; MoF 2012; Oxford Business Group 2013).

Levels of government benefits have changed with the introduction of the Tabung Amanah Pekerja (TAP, Employees' Trust Fund) in 1993 (see Hajah Sainah 2010, World Bank 2007).¹ The government stipulates that 5 % of every government worker's salary be paid into the TAP while there is an 8 % monthly deduction for the supplemental contributory pensions scheme instead of paying a monthly pension to retired government workers. The government is the dominant employer with about 56 % of the total local and permanent resident workforce in the public sector (IMF 2013). Benefits include an annual performance bonus, fixed leave and passage allowance,² an educational allowance (as it is subsidised by the government parents often decide to send their children to private schools rather than the free government schools), an interest-free loan to purchase a car, and an interest-free housing loan where the amount of credit given depends on years of service left and monthly income (Hajah Sainah 2010; MoF 2012; Rabiatul Kamit 2012).

Bruneians often express their modernity through their consumption patterns and the country is often seen as a status-driven society. However, this luxurious lifestyle has not only been funded by money earned but also by money borrowed from banks. This means that some consumers borrow amounts they will never earn, thus leaving them in debt (Azaraimy Hazib 2008; Hadthiah P.D. Hazair 2008). The Brunei welfare state has always put social wellbeing before anything else. The government's comprehensive welfare system, the shift from traditional to better-paid government and

¹In 2012 the government reduced the electricity subsidy by more than half (Oxford Business Group 2013).

²Four-yearly leave allowances in which a fixed amount is given to the individual to use on leave (this was previously given after every three years of service with the government); an allowance after 10 years of service originally for an air ticket and a per diem allowance for a holiday in Britain (this will terminate on 1 January 2017); and concession allowances for children (money for air tickets and expenses for four children not exceeding the age of 18 years). See MoF n.d.

private sector jobs, and access to bank lending have helped make living conditions comfortable and increased purchasing power and a consumption orientated lifestyle.

During my research, the Financial Institutions Division (FID) under the Ministry of Finance was given supervisory authority over banks and other financial institutions.³ Currently, there are seven conventional banks and an Islamic bank. This highlights the geographies of financial culture: not all Islamic countries operate only Islamic banking systems and not all Muslim consumers in Islamic countries bank only with Islamic banks. According to a senior FID officer, Brunei's banks have always focused on the retail lending sector by attracting many consumers to use their financial services, mainly borrowing facilities. Brunei makes a good case study as it has gone through its own regulated financialisation by the government as well the 2005 directive that puts a cap on the level of personal loans. This suggests that the credit restriction and financial reform were the result of in situ or localised reasons, i.e. excessive borrowing from banks by consumers rather than as a result of the global financial crisis, which began in 2007 and was mainly caused by excessive subprime loans in the United States.

In 2008 many economies experienced a credit crunch—a financial global crisis instigated by financial liberalisation, securitisation and the excessive supply of new forms of money, specifically subprime mortgage lending. Some critics argued that imprudent lending had facilitated new forms of consumerism, involving high materialism, affluence and excessive borrowing (Schor 2002). Since then, governments have begun to regulate banking in order to avoid the problems of predatory and excessive personal lending. In addition, a number of writers have highlighted the significance of examining the relationship of consumers with political, social and cultural networks that influence not just the financial supply or structure but also consumer access (demand) to finance, their usage and management (Lee 2002; Lee et al. 2009; Langley 2008; Pike and Pollard 2010). As a result, key questions arise as to how far, and in what ways, states can regulate personal credit and consumer practices.

Despite the fact that Brunei's banks were largely unaffected by the global financial crisis, this was not necessarily the case with their international parent groups (Oxford Business Group 2008). The government issued warnings about the worrying levels of personal debt. On 16 May 2005 the Ministry of Finance implemented a directive whose purpose was to decrease dependency on borrowing and shift the borrowing culture to more of a savings culture (Too 2008). It was hoped that financial reform could manage how people use their money and control consumer dependency on credit. Subsequently, these financial reforms have led to changes in the financial culture of Bruneians based on materialist consumption practices.

³The FID has now been transferred to the Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (AMBD, Monetary Authority of Brunei Darussalam) which was established on 1 January 2011.

The chapter provides an examination of the evolving financialisation and consumption culture in Brunei. The research considers the uneven access of consumers to finances and the everyday finance culture of consumers (Kempson and Whyley 1999). Through an analysis of the consumption patterns of personal finance and commodities, of the importance of spatial differences and differences between social groups in levels of access to finance, as well an examination of the social and cultural intermediaries who shape finance use and consumption, the discussion reveals the factors influencing the consumption of commodities and the uses of consumer finance (Lee et al. 2009; Langley 2008).

Much of the research regarding personal debt and credit has employed quantitative methodologies, which more usually identify trends but do not explain the experiences and practices of consumers. In contrast, this research used qualitative research methods, in particular face-to-face semi-structured interviews both with consumers and personnel in financial institutions such as the FID and banks. These data were supplemented with secondary sources to help understand general trends as well as consumers' everyday finances and consumption habits.

23.2 Financial Reform

Brunei is an excellent example of a country that experienced a form of state regulated financialisation, especially in its lending sector, even before the global credit crunch of 2007/2008. Government financial reform implemented in 2005 witnessed the capping of personal loans to control and reduce the debt binge and dependency on credit for spending. The personal loan cap certainly altered the borrowing culture of those Bruneians interviewed, a phenomenon that is also revealed in general patterns of lending in government statistics.

The Ministry of Finance directive emphasised the control of personal loans and borrowing time. This meant those entitled to a personal loan could apply for a maximum loan of up to 12 times their gross monthly income, including allowances and overtime. Previously, consumers could take a loan of up to 36 times their gross salary. Before 2005 an average graduate who earned about BN\$3000 a month could borrow as much as BN\$108,000 for a personal loan or 36 times their gross salary. After the implementation of the directive, a graduate could only take a maximum loan of BN\$36,000. According to an officer from the ministry, the repayment period for personal loans before 2005 could continue until retirement age. The new regulation stipulated a repayment period of not more than six years. Before 2005 consumers could top up a personal loan at any time; but after the reform they could only top up after having paid off 75 % of the total loan. As a result, some banks actually offered consumer financing or loans, increased credit card limits and home refinancing loans.

The directive also encompassed credit cards.⁴ One banker interviewed believed that the directive's credit card limitations were slightly more relaxed compared to credit limits prior to 2005, depending on which tier a consumer fell into. For credit card applications, there were different amounts of credit approved according to income. Those whose basic salary was between BN\$500 and BN\$1999.99 were entitled to a credit limit of twice their net salary. The second tier were those who earned between BN\$2000 and BN\$3999.99, which was common among young degree holders who had just started working, and they enjoyed a credit limit of four times their net monthly salary. Finally, those who fell within the upper tier, earning BN\$4000 or more, could have a credit limit of eight times their net monthly salary.

The directive had an impact on financial management and consumption patterns. Those mostly affected were consumers who had just started working after 2005. Interviews with consumers who obtained a personal loan before the directive came into force revealed an obvious unhappiness with the reform as they felt it minimised spending and it made it harder for them to make a new loan. On the other hand, 80 % of consumers interviewed felt that the directive did not affect them or stop them from consuming at all. The remaining 20 % of informants felt the pinch as a result of financial reform, such as those planning to get married, forcing them to find other means to finance their weddings. Additionally, after the directive was introduced the FID required banks to categorise loans more carefully as well as introduce further reforms to borrowing, such as on credit cards and housing loans which had a noticeable impact on lending trends. However, the discussion here focuses on the after-effects of and consumer reactions to the 2005 reforms.

23.3 Reactions to Financial Reform

Unlike financial liberalisation in the United States and Britain, where financial institutions have control over the inclusion or exclusion of consumers (Langley 2008; Kempson and Whyley 1999), in Brunei the government plays a significant role through the 2005 directive in regulating and limiting consumer access to finance involuntarily by forcing lending institutions to constrain consumer access to borrowing by limiting their credit. This reform affects all income levels. Similarly to Anglo-American financial institutions, Brunei's financial institutions see income levels as an important determinant of consumer access or exclusion to their financial products, especially credit.

Borrowing trends after 2005 changed. Personal loan debts almost halved from about BN\$4 billion in 2004 to BN\$2.5 billion in 2008. The implementation of the

⁴In 2010 new credit card reform was introduced. Consumers were allowed to carry credit cards of banks into which their salaries were deposited. Consumers who wished to keep or apply for credit cards with other banks needed to have a fixed deposit account with that bank prior to their credit card approval. The credit limit depended on and matched the amount in the consumer's fixed deposit account (Izam Said Ya'akub 2010).

directive was undoubtedly successful in reducing the amount of indebtedness in terms of reducing personal loan debts. However, reducing the amounts people can borrow in personal loans did not mean that there was a decrease in the overall problem of indebtedness. Rather, some consumers and financial institutions reacted swiftly to overcome the restrictions. This is evident in the change in mortgage trends. Mortgage rates increased nearly fourfold in the same period, from BN \$449.48 million in 2004 to BN\$1168 million by September 2008. This shows the reaction of both finance companies and consumers in dealing with the sudden shortage of money for consumption. Bank managers who were interviewed observed that despite the loan directive, the demand for personal loans remained high. An Islamic Bank senior manager, for example, stated that he approved between 60 and 120 applications a week depending on the time of year. He added that during the Hari Raya or Eid al-Fitr period, applications for loans and mortgages tended to be twice those of average months.

Credit card use and dependency also grew after 2005. According to the FID (2009), the number of credit cards approved in 2005 was 114,371, an increase of about 18 % compared to the previous year. At the same time, the roll-over-balance for credit cards increased by about 17 % from BN\$160 million in 2004 to BN\$193 million in 2005. The Fiscal and Monetary Review for 2005 indicated that the average credit card debt per cardholder was BN\$1701 in 2004 but declined slightly to BN\$1687 in 2005 (MoF 2006). This can be compared to Singapore, where the credit card roll-over-balance was BN\$2.8 billion, with 6.2 million credit card holders and an average card debt of only BN\$618 in 2005 (Monetary Authority of Singapore 2015). Senior bank managers interviewed in 2009 claimed that consumers often possessed more than a single credit card,⁵ as is the case in many countries including the Britain and Singapore, and that like mortgages, demand for credit cards usually peaked during the festive seasons, particularly during Eid al-Fitr.

Bruneians' excessive borrowing originates from personal loans, car loans and credit cards chiefly from prime lenders, while in Britain and the United States the main source of the credit crunch or financial crisis was due to credit card debt and mortgage loans, especially from subprime lenders to fuel high levels of consumer spending (Langley 2003, 2008; French and Leyshon 2004; Smith and Searle 2008; French et al. 2008, 2009; French and Kneale 2009; Lee et al. 2009; Christophers 2009; Cook et al. 2009). Most of those interviewed did not own a house and depended on housing provided by the government, or they still lived with their parents or extended family. The reasons given by informants for borrowing or using credit were mainly for goods and services that offered instant gratification value rather than long-term benefits such as a house.

People use money from their personal loan to pay their credit card bills including existing debts they have already accumulated, like when they studied abroad or wedding expenses,

⁵Referring to the period immediately after the introduction of the directive until 2010 when the new credit card directive was introduced.

is especially common among fresh graduates.... Some use personal loans for home improvements but the bulk of the loan is used for shopping for consumer durables ... and holidays abroad. You also get people applying for loans from several different banks before the loan directive.... But this is not the case now with the loan directive. Now the government only allows consumers to get a loan from the bank where their salary is remitted into.

Weddings in Brunei, in particular Malay weddings, are expensive, usually costing between BN\$30,000 and BN\$60,000 for most graduates. This cost often makes up a huge portion of their debts. These consumers are often under pressure to conform to social obligations and customs to spend as much as their wealthier neighbours or relatives. This costly culture still pervades society, together with the purchase of cars (often beyond their means) that are mistakenly viewed by others as social symbols of success or assets (Hadthiah P.D. Hazair 2008). Consumption and the use of finance to facilitate this consumption are heavily influenced by sociocultural factors. Paul du Gay et al.'s (1997) concept of the importance of 'cultural intermediaries' explains how a consumer's demand for goods and finance, as well as how finance suppliers operate, are influenced by cultural intermediaries through culture, norms and regulations. Weddings and Eid al-Fitr festivities are two traditions or relevant cultural elements that influence Bruneian finance and consumption culture.

23.4 Finance and Consumption Culture

Findings suggest that those interviewed used between 20 and 40 % of their monthly incomes for cash expenditures.⁶ Aside from monthly debt repayments, which made up the biggest proportion of their outgoings, the next biggest expenditure using cash comprised monetary gifts or contributions towards the family, particularly parents (often BN\$300–500 monthly) to help ease the burden of household expenses. People believed it was their duty, in accordance with Islamic norms, to give back to their parents after many years of living with and being cared for by them. Some of those interviewed stated that they gave money to their parents while they had a separate amount set aside for the household expenses such as groceries and utility bills. The majority of those interviewed who still lived with their parents indicated that home expenses were often shared with the rest of the family, especially siblings who already earned a monthly salary unless that sibling was undergoing financial difficulties. Contributions by some not only covered those living in their household but also extended to family members outside their homes, such as grandparents, unemployed siblings as well as nephews and nieces. This shows that the spaces of consumer spending for the family extended beyond the home.

⁶This spending does not include monthly debt repayments.

Table 23.1 Consumer indebtedness

Monthly income spent on debt repayment (%)	Number of consumers
0	6
<36	34
>36	48

The other cash expenditure was for individual consumption, such as mobile telephone bills or top-ups, petrol and clothes to luxuries such as dining out, films, facials, gym membership, purchasing of DVDs and CDs as well as snacks. The reason for cash payments is that the majority of these providers (especially petrol stations, tailors, tuck shops, stores selling top-ups, films and music) rarely accepted payment by credit card. Moreover, the majority of those interviewed stated that they often used cash to pay for food unless it involved a large amount, such as when they were treating friends and family to a meal costing BN\$100 or more. Although bankers argue that cash transactions are more expensive than using credit cards due to the benefits offered by credit cards, including special promotions, discounts or reward points earned with every card transaction, certain merchants often impose a minimum purchase amount of BN\$20 and above for consumers to be able to use their credit cards or are not equipped with the right technology. My findings therefore differ from those of Paul Langley (2008) who demonstrates that Anglo-Americans have a close relationship with credit networks through technological innovations, such as the installation of vast authorisation and payment system terminals in many retail merchant tills and cash registers.

The other spending that involved a large proportion of interviewees' monthly income comprised their monthly debt repayments. Local bankers recommended that monthly debts should not exceed 36 % of monthly incomes. The majority of consumers spent more than 36 % of their income on debt repayments, mainly because of personal loans that made up the largest proportion and/or car mortgages and credit card repayments (see Table 23.1).⁷

Those interviewed who borrowed before 2005 mainly secured two kinds of products: personal loans and loans via credit cards from banks. This contrasts with the majority of those who borrowed after 2005, who applied for credit cards and car loans as their preferred types of borrowing rather than personal loans. This change in preferences reinforced the shift in the financial culture after the Ministry of Finance directive. Only a third of those interviewed had credit cards, car loans and personal loans simultaneously. Table 23.2 shows the forms of borrowing of informants and that the credit card was the most popular form of borrowing, followed by car loans and personal loans.

After 2005 many people with salaries between BN\$2000 and BN\$5000 had two credit cards from different banks. About 90 % of interviewees with credit cards

⁷Those who borrowed after 2005 and used more than 36 % of their income to service their debts are mainly paying for their car loans and credit cards.

Table 23.2 Popular forms of borrowing

Type of borrowing	Personal loan	Car loan	Home loan/mortgage	Consumer durables loan	Credit card
Number of consumers	36	51	4	2	82

were ‘credit revolvers’, with diverse salaries ranging from BN\$1000 to BN\$4000. Credit revolvers, according to Langley (2008), are borrowers who regularly use revolving credit facilities and manipulate their outstanding balances and express their ‘freedom’ that way. Two-thirds of Americans are credit revolvers who do not usually repay their monthly outstanding credit card debts in full. Bruneian credit revolvers interviewed were either in need of money to pay for their family’s livelihood in ways similar to the ‘defensive consumption’ described by Johnna Montgomerie (2009) and Juliet Schor (2002) and/or for spending related to ‘conspicuous consumption’ (Veblen 2003). George Ritzer (1995), Robert D. Manning (2000) and Schor (1998, 2002) argue that an increase in materialism and consumerism has resulted in greater demand for credit and borrowing facilities. Credit helps consumers achieve a certain lifestyle that they aspire to, which often involves superior status and prestige (Schor 1998, 2002).

For many interviewees, credit cards were increasingly becoming a safety net as well as being used to purchase comforts and luxuries, especially after the directive was implemented. These included groceries, clothes, gadgets such as iPods or updating their mobile phones or notebooks with high-end ones, furnishings for their private spaces, in particular bedrooms, flatscreen high-definition televisions and so on. A quarter of those interviewed admitted to using credit cards for their monthly survival or what Montgomerie (2009) calls ‘social support’. These users are often the sole breadwinners of household with lower incomes, and their purchases include paying for basic family needs including groceries, costs of car repairs, utilities and so on. Generally, informants used credit cards as a strategy to overcome the shortage of funds for consumption. Those who paid for weddings often used their credit cards to the maximum limit as well as having personal loans.

Only a third of consumers were repaying their personal loan debts and these were either married or would marry within a year. This type of loan took up a large proportion of their monthly income. Informants who took up a personal loan before 2005 often spent on collective consumption, i.e. the family and home, such as furnishings, electronics, family holidays, shopping for family and relatives, home renovation or expansion. Paying for family obligations and treats was commonplace. They saw this as a way of expressing gratitude for the family’s support and care over the years as well as a means of maintaining social relations. Personal loans were also used to pay for costly social and cultural events or practices, such as a wedding, which met the norms and expectations of their social group and family,

as well as ensuring the comfort of their relatives and guests who attended the different wedding ceremonies:

I applied for my personal loan back in 2004 because I was about to get married. I didn't have any savings so I asked for the full loan because I wanted to do a lot of things with it, plus it'll be a hassle if I have to go to the bank frequently to ask for a top-up.... So I got the full BN\$100 k plus and spent about BN\$40 k on my wedding ceremony which included the caterers, wedding decorations and clothes, souvenirs for guests for the *bebedak*⁸ night and the actual wedding day.... Oh, and I also bought gifts for my husband to be exchanged during our *nikah* day⁹ and hiring the *pengangun*,¹⁰ cameraman and photographer. Paid for the *malam jaga jaga* where my relatives came to our house to help wrap the souvenirs but also karaoke and ate dinner at home throughout the wedding ceremony which lasted almost two weeks.... What else was there? I bought my car which cost about BN\$27 k. Oh, yeah! I renovated my room for my wedding also.... Went abroad for my holiday with the family. I also treated my family, especially my parents. (Suri, 32, a government officer)

Most of those who applied for personal loans after 2005 also spent them on wedding expenses, but also to cover the shortages of funds due to the lower credit provided.

Generally, those with personal loans used them for various reasons, ranging from necessities such as paying debts or house renovations and repairs due to a growing family, comfort, leisure and luxury. The examples of goods bought were almost identical to those who had taken out personal loans before 2005. However, the apparent difference was that they depended on various kinds of loans or borrowing to fulfil most of their desires, because the personal loan was often not enough to buy a car, for example. Nizam (29, government worker), for instance, bought himself a European car using his car loan; he used his personal loan to purchase luxuries and leisure products including a motorbike, holidays abroad, gadgets, car modifications and investments in fixed deposits, an engagement ring and ceremony that met social and cultural norms.

Instead of using credit or loans only for the individual's use and pleasure, as described by Manning (2000) in relation to young consumers in the West, Bruneians also extended their personal loans to their family and loved ones,

⁸The 'powdering ceremony night' which is part of a series of wedding ceremonial events among Malays in Brunei where selected guests, often consisting of close family members of the bride and groom, put powder on the bride and groom's palms, and those selected are given special gifts or souvenirs. All guests attending this ceremony are treated to a buffet dinner and gifts as well as cakes or biscuits to take home.

⁹The day when both the bride and groom go through the process of solemnisation and are legally married according to Islam. On this day, the bride and groom exchange gifts, often in the form of luxurious consumer durables and food. Guests are treated to food and in affluent families guests are given money as gifts from the newlyweds.

¹⁰These are often elderly women with years of experience in preparing the bride and groom for their wedding ceremonies according to Islam and Malay culture. *Pengangun* often perform rituals, prayers, provide advice on marriage, and take care of the bride and groom from the start until the end of the wedding ceremony. They ensure that the bride and groom feel more composed and look regal, like a queen and king for a day.

including financé(e)s. Two-thirds of those interviewed with personal loans after 2005 used them to treat or help family and relatives, out of a sense of obligation:

I used my personal loan to pay for my brother's education. He is studying in KL and taking a tourism course which is not available in Brunei. I didn't want to take an education loan.¹¹ I think it's a hassle. So I might as well take a personal loan so I can use most of the money for my brother and the rest for my leisure. (Shai, 30, professional)

Shai is single with a well-paid stable job. He volunteered to pay for his brother's education abroad, which he considered an investment, in the hope that he would get some returns if his brother paid him back one day when he got a job or contributed towards household expenses. Others used their personal loan for emergency reasons and out of a sense of social responsibility for their family—including car repairs, medication and health treatment, family home maintenance such as house renovation and roof repairs, as well as capital for failing family businesses.

Aybe (24, manager) admitted spending her personal loan on a few comforts and luxuries for herself and her family, such as paying for hotel room charges while on holiday abroad, transportation, food, shopping money and gifts or souvenirs for relatives from their holiday destinations. Aybe also used her loan to pay for gifts such as biscuits and fabrics or cash contributions during Eid al-Fitr:

I use this loan to pay for my credit cards and the cash needed for my holiday recently and for some shopping and leisure ... especially my unplanned holidays abroad. On a recent holiday abroad I bought some shoes including a pair of Guess shoes, clothes, supplements for me, handbags including a few Guess and Elle handbags, an LV purse, toys for my younger brother, gifts for my family and my transportation costs. I also used my PCN¹² to buy some Hari Raya stuff such as coloured decorative lights for the outside of the house, some cakes and biscuits for the house or to give to my aunties.

My findings concur with those of Matthew J. Bernthal et al. (2005), Jose F. Medina and Chak-Tong Chai (1998), Rokiah Talib (2000) and Andrew Worthington (2006), who argue that credit facilitates consumers' urban lifestyles. I would go a step further and assert that in Brunei consumer credit, whether credit cards or personal loans, was also used to facilitate the lifestyles of the borrower's family and loved ones. Further, personal loans were not just used for the individual and the collective (family and loved ones) consumption for necessities, leisure and luxury but also for 'good debts'. Examples included paying off existing loans or debts with higher interest rates such as credit cards, or investing money in a financial product that provides returns (a third of those interviewed used this loan as capital for investment) such as fixed deposits, insurance, bonds and unit trusts, online foreign exchange investment schemes and so on. Personal loans were also used to pay money owed to family members, such as

¹¹Parents and guardians take up an education loan from the bank for the student. This type of loan is not popular among Bruneians.

¹²The personal credit line is a type of revolving personal loan that can be compared to the straight line loan that most banks offer. The PCN works like an overdraft where consumers can reuse the amount paid in their personal loan offered by a few conventional banks.

Aybe who owed her mother because the latter had paid or advanced her money for car repairs (a few thousand dollars) after she was involved in an accident.

My research has shown that reforming and regulating financial structures alone may not be sufficient to change consumers' culture of spending and materialism. To overcome the personal loan cap, consumers, especially those who applied after 2005, opted for more flexible and revolving personal loans and credit cards. This strategy of 'recycling borrowed money' allowed consumers to use money they had repaid to pay for their monthly consumption for necessities and luxuries. As highlighted, the use of personal loans was not solely for the consumers' individual consumption but also to facilitate social as well as cultural obligations and relations, i.e. a form of collectivism (Wong and Ahuvia 1998). Here, social intermediaries, particularly family and loved ones, influenced consumers' financial use and culture as well as their consumption patterns (du Gay et al. 1997). Similarly, this reinforces the importance of appreciating that different spaces have different regulations and social obligations associated with governments and social institutions, particularly the family (Lee et al. 2009).

My findings have suggested that the family plays a significant role as a 'cultural intermediary' (du Gay et al. 1997) and shapes as well as influences Bruneians' everyday finance and consumption patterns. The majority of consumers interviewed lived with their parents, which is the norm in Brunei until people get married and have their own family. Informants often sought family assistance during financial hardship or when making important decisions involving borrowing large sums of money such as for car purchase or wedding ceremonies based on the family's knowledge and experience. Families intervened and often tried to minimise consumer debts from formal institutions, especially banks. A third of those interviewed admitted to having made a 'parental loan' where they borrowed a large amount from their parents to pay for car deposits, land purchase, car insurance renewal or for part of their wedding costs to meet social expectations, especially maintaining the 'face' of the family and social relations with family and relatives.

Moreover, Bruneians have also used up their income and borrowings to pay for both individual and collective consumption. This individual and collective consumption does not just carry functional values but also social symbolism, particularly expenditure involving maintaining social relations and the 'face value' of their social group (Wong and Ahuvia 1998). The finance and consumer culture of Bruneians is very much shaped by social and cultural practices led by the family and the government. Hence, regulating and changing the formal financial structure alone are insufficient without altering or understanding the individuals' social relations with their cultural institutions (Baker and Jimerson 1992) or cultural intermediaries (du Gay et al. 1997).

In understanding personal choices, then, cultural and social intermediaries such as the family and government are important elements that should be considered when studying Brunei's evolving finance culture as well as when developing financial regulations. Social and cultural intermediaries also stimulate consumption and the functions of commodities consumed that inevitably puts pressure on Bruneians' finances. This differs with consumption in most Anglo-American societies which are individualistic and hedonistic (Wong and Ahuvia 1998;

Chua 2000). Consumption fuelled through income and borrowing is not just for luxuries to achieve a superior lifestyle practised by the upper class ('keeping up with the Gateses') but also for everyday consumption especially improving and maintaining the livelihoods of consumers who have or are undergoing financial hardship, i.e. defensive consumption (Montgomerie 2009; Schor 2002).

I appreciate that Western consumer culture is not monolithic. For example, there are ethical consumption trends and even anti-consumerist movements. But for this research, I have broadly referred to what I consider to be a dominant trend, i.e. individualistic consumption in Western consumer culture. I focused on issues relating to collectivism and individualism because consumers and institutions in Brunei often highlight these as the main motivators of consumption and borrowing. The findings show clearly distinct cultural and consumption practices in different societies. Anglo-American financial access can be hindered by the decisions of financial institutions based upon factors which make up consumers' socioeconomic background, such as income and education (Kempson and Whyley 1999; Langley 2008). However, in Brunei the government plays a fundamental role in influencing levels of financial access. There are obvious differences between consumer spending and access to finance in Brunei.

Informants have shown that, like most Western societies, they depended on borrowing to maintain and improve their urban lifestyle (Langley 2008; Lehtonen 2007; Montgomerie 2009; Schor 2002). It would be unfair to solely blame the high consumer indebtedness on the financial structure alone (as Ritzer 1995 does). Despite the banks' responsibility for financial exclusion from certain financial products according to consumers' income and occupation, I found that the Bruneians interviewed also had agency in accessing or excluding themselves from financial products offered, similar to shopping in the high street. Results from my interviews also concur with the findings of both Vivien Lim and Thompson Teo (1997) and Jeffrey R. Hibbert et al. (2004) who assert that the family's experience in terms of financial assistance and advice plays a significant role in shaping the consumers' financial access and capability.

23.5 Conclusion

The general trend of borrowing by consumers has evolved after the 2005 directive with more Bruneians realising the importance of savings and ensuring financial security for their future. Those interviewed overcame financial reform by accessing other forms of lending and revolving credit or loans to facilitate their consumption culture. Regulating and reforming formal financial structures alone, without considering consumers' social and cultural practices, are therefore insufficient in overcoming debt problems. Understanding social and cultural influences on consumer demand for borrowing and materialism is also important (see Baker and Jimerson 1992; Lee 2002; Langley 2008; Lee et al. 2009; Pike and Pollard 2010). Social and cultural factors stimulate consumption and the functions of commodities

consumed, and this inevitably influences and puts pressure on finances. Bruneians' finance culture demonstrates a strong family influence. Similarly, the family has a significant influence on everyday consumption, a finding that concurs with the arguments of du Gay et al. (1997), Mark Jayne (2006), Juliana Mansvelt (2005) and Roberta Sassatelli (2007) that consumption involves an individual's relationships, interactions and practices with objects and social intermediaries such as the family. Jayne (2006), for example, emphasises the importance of culture, social relations and traditions in shaping structures and consumption in urban areas.

Many geographers have examined different spaces of consumption (Mansvelt 2005; Redfern 2003; Goss 1999; Wrigley and Lowe 2002). Brunei has a complex consumption culture created by a process of blending individual and collective consumption as they crisscross different spatial scales, despite the generalising of North America and Europe as having individualistic consumption patterns (Mansvelt 2005; Featherstone 1991; Hebdige 1979), while stereotyping East Asian countries as having collective consumption (Wong and Ahuvia 1998). There is a degree of difficulty of boxing in or dichotomising Bruneians' everyday consumption culture into either individual or collective culture. This is because Brunei represents a mix of both cultures due to interaction, practices and relationships with 'cultural intermediaries' such as the family and traditions (du Gay et al. 1997). Although traditions such as weddings and annual holidays abroad are seen as 'big events', nevertheless they affect consumers' everyday finances.

My research covered the financing and consumption of young working Bruneians immediately after the Ministry of Finance directive was introduced in 2005. There are several issues that have emerged during and after the research that I was not able to address, such as the new credit card and home loan directives. Nevertheless, my research highlights the importance of exploring not just structures such as financial institutions and the significant influence the government has on consumer finance and consumption but also the mixture of underlying personal and sociocultural factors that affect personal finance and consumption choices. Social and cultural intermediaries, including traditions practised by these intermediaries, affect the development and evolving consumer financing and consumption and should be given equal importance by policymakers when developing new financial strategies.

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Chapter 24

The Relevance of Contextual Components in the Religious Conversion Process: The Case of Dusun Muslims in Brunei Darussalam

Asiyah az-Zahra Ahmad Kumpoh

Abstract Employing Lewis Rambo's stage-based theory of religious conversion, this chapter aims to explore the conversion process of Dusun Muslim converts to Islam in Brunei and to demonstrate the existence of the stages in their conversion experience. Analysing the interview data of the Dusun Muslims against the spread of results of previous studies, the main finding of this study reveals the unique experience of the Dusun Muslim converts. This is primarily due to the specific influences of the contextual components, in which each of these influences the characteristics of a specific conversion stage. The discussion shows how the different contextual components are at work at each point or stage and how they determine the sequence of the conversion stages. If the relevant component does not exist or is not available, the function of the stage could not operate, potentially causing the convert to sidestep the stage in the conversion process. This will lead converts to experience a specific sequence of conversion stages, as determined by the contextual components.

Keywords Brunei · Dusun Muslims · Religious conversion · Islam

24.1 Introduction

From 1971 to 2013 some 16,859 cases of conversion to Islam in Brunei Darussalam were recorded by the Pusat Da'wah Islamiah (2014), adding significantly to the Muslim population, which comprises 66 % of the country's total population. The number of cases of conversion to Islam has, without doubt, increased remarkably year after year, an observation that makes religious conversion an interesting subject for research in the diverse contexts of the social, cultural and religious dynamics of the country. However, not much attention has been devoted to this

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issue to date. A review of the existing local literature reveals that there have never been any detailed empirical studies of religious conversion conducted in Brunei from a social science perspective. The existing literature primarily focuses on the practical goal of *da'wah* (propagation of Islam), for instance, exploring strategies and methodologies to achieve conversion and the creation of relevant institutions to support this (Adam 2003; Serbini 2001; Mail 2001; Yusof 2001). Such work tells us very little about the nature of the conversion processes.

With this consideration in mind, this chapter examines the conversion process to Islam in Brunei, with a focus on the Dusun ethnic group as a case study. The Dusuns constituted the largest number of Muslim converts in 2013 comprising 28 % of the total number of converts for that year (Pusat Da'wah Islamiah 2014). The Dusuns are traditionally animists. They conceptualise reality in a close interconnectedness with spirit beings, particularly with *Derato*, the main god that determines the fundamentals of the Dusun cosmology. In recent times, however, adherence to the animist belief system among the Dusuns has been found to be less than adequate, particularly among the younger generation. More often than not, their rational understandings of the world around them have caused young Dusuns to rely less on the logic of their ancestral religion. In addition, the constant exposure to Islam through the education system, mass media and society at large has created a greater familiarity with Islam compared to their ancestral religion.

By examining the conversion accounts of Dusun Muslim converts collected through interviews, this study aims to examine the conversion process and, more particularly, the different stages of the process that were experienced by the converts. In order to achieve this, the study employed the model formulated by Lewis Rambo (1993). Refining John Lofland and Rodney Stark's (1965) and Alan Tippet's (1987) earlier process-orientated model, Rambo developed a seven-stage model that readily assimilates cultural, social, personal and religious components of the religious conversion process and integrates the different basic concepts that have been formulated from the sociological, anthropological and missionary understandings.

The first stage, the *context* stage, is extremely influential as the factors, agents and forces that configure the stage can either facilitate or inhibit a conversion. The second, *crisis*, stage can be initiated by religious, political or cultural forces. Mystical, near-death experiences, illness and healing can also trigger a crisis phase for a potential convert. The crisis dimension is naturally followed by the *quest* stage in which a potential convert is in search of a better belief system to alleviate the crisis and a new means to deepen their religious commitment. The religious quest consequently leads to the *encounter* stage which presents the point of contact between a potential convert and a religious advocate. An advocate, according to Rambo (1993: 80) can be any individual ranging from a family member, a working colleague, a close friend, a community member or the religious advocates themselves. A successful religious encounter will enable a potential convert to experience the subsequent *interaction* stage that allows experimentation with the prospective religion under a controlled environment called the encapsulation. The encapsulation strategy essentially limits the interaction of a potential convert with

the outside world so the person can experience a closer relationship with the community of the prospective religion and establish a sense of familiarity with the ritual practices.

A successful interaction stage will culminate in a religious commitment. The *commitment* stage is seen as ‘the fulcrum of the change process’ (ibid.: 124) and a religious commitment is illustrated through a public declaration. Such a declaration is to validate the switch in religious allegiance and the consequent formal affiliation with the community of the new religion. The final stage in religious conversion, as identified by Rambo, is the *consequences* stage which embodies the ongoing transformations in the new convert’s life after the public solemnisation. Profound or subtle psychological and theological changes will bring the convert to a new task of assessing the viability of the religion. The outcome of this assessment task will either lead the convert to experience positive religious transformation or it will raise questions that could be potentially destructive to the new religious life of the convert.

From this description of Rambo’s conversion stages, his model of religious conversion seems to have precise definitions of stages. However, drawing together a number of religious conversion studies that exclusively employ the Rambo model as the theoretical basis of their analysis (Hawwa 2000; Al-Qwidi 2002; Martinez-Pitulac and Nastuta 2007; Parker 2007; Vazquez 2008; Bowen 2009), this chapter identifies significant differences in these studies’ findings, particularly in terms of the characteristics and the sequence of the conversion stages. I thus attempt to analyse comprehensively the conversion process of the Dusun Muslim converts and offer concrete explanations for the unique characteristics and the particular sequence of the conversion stages as they were experienced by the converts. In doing so, this analysis critically engages Rambo’s model of religious conversion in a way that will help to enhance the dynamic potential of the model to cut across different types of conversion processes and patterns.

24.2 Redefining the Context

Based on the findings of previous studies, the so-called context stage should be treated as the background setting within which the conversion process transpires. Patrick Bowen (2009), Glynis Parker (2007) and Hjamil Martinez-Vazquez (2008) all perceive the context as the background setting of the conversion process of their research subjects. Similarly, Tudor Pitulac and Sebastian Nastuta (2007: 84) also argue that the context ‘is not a stage per se; it refers to the medium in which religious change takes place’. Evidently, such an adjustment to the framework of Rambo’s model effectively enables Pitulac and Nastuta to produce findings that represent the true picture of the conversion experience of their sample.

Hence, it is unmistakable that the general conclusion that was drawn by the existing studies is that the context is more appropriately defined as the background setting against which a conversion process unfolds. In addition, in view of the

all-encompassing impacts that Islam has on Brunei's populations, this study sees the relevance of the redefinition of the context so that the true character and definition of the stages in their conversion experience can be properly examined. The redefinition of the context stage thus leads to the identification of the different types of contextual components that are relevant to the conversion stages. The following analysis of the conversion process of Dusun Muslim converts demonstrates the many ways in which the contextual components define the character of the conversion stage and determine its sequence. The analysis also makes comparative references to the conversion process to other religions presented by previous studies as illustrative examples to support the arguments presented.

24.3 The Persuasion and Trust Components of the Encounter Stage

The interview data of the Dusun Muslim informants reveal that Rambo's definition of a religious encounter does not represent the meaningful religious encounter as experienced by the informants. According to the Dusun Muslims, their meetings with religious missionaries and the acquisition of religious knowledge through the education system and mass media, which by definition represent Rambo's encounter stage, failed to motivate them to study Islam further. Many informants admitted that the sense of understanding they had towards Islam when they learned about the religion at school fell short of allowing them to recognise its theological significance. This was primarily because Islam as a subject had always been seen as comparable to any other secular subject taught at school that the students needed to study for assessment and examination. Furthermore, the Islamic studies were regarded among students as an easier subject and hence an easier way to get good marks, particularly in important school examinations. Thus, the popularity and demand for religious education, especially among the Dusuns, could be taken as a reflection of their genuine interest in Islam.

What this study found instead is that the Dusuns generally experienced what can be termed as the personal encounter at the very beginning of their conversion process. The term 'personal encounter' refers to a type of religious encounter that occurs between a potential convert and non-missionary individuals, but the implications of such an encounter are similar to those of Rambo's encounter stage that is strictly defined as a contact point between an individual and religious advocate (Asiyah az-Zahra 2011: 115)

For the Dusuns, the limitless amount of religious information available to the non-Muslim population in Brunei minimised their level of acceptance and their sense of sensitivity towards the majority religion. They were not attracted to Islam despite the constant contact they had with religious information which otherwise, by Rambo's definition, should have been seen as a religious encounter. Instead, the Dusuns only became interested in getting to know Islam better after observing and

constantly interacting with the Muslims within their personal networks, as illustrated by the following interview excerpts.¹

Three of my Muslim sisters lived with us before they got married. Although I was quite young at the time of their conversion, after years and years living with them, I somehow looked up to my Muslim sisters more than I did to my non-Muslim siblings. The Muslim sisters were always attentive every time I had problems and they helped me with school, and I remember thinking, they were nice because Islam must have taught them to be so, and I wanted to be like them too. (Female, 32, teacher)

The conversion experience of the following informant also illustrates the fact that the meaningful religious encounters occurred within his personal network.

I learnt, rather indirectly, about Islam from my workmates. Yes, I know Muslims have to pray five times a day and that they have to fast during Ramadan and this did not even trigger my interest at that time. Who would want to complicate himself with such obligations? I wouldn't, that's for sure.

[Q: What then changed your perception?]

After living tens of years under one roof with my Muslim children and their families, that opinion gradually changed. I could see they lived good lives and noticed how Islam has helped them through difficult times. That was when I began to reflect on my own religious conviction. (Male, 65, security personnel)

As these excerpts illustrate, the informants already had regular communications with Muslims within their personal networks and their constant observation of the latter's everyday lives helped the informants to understand what Islam is all about and how Muslims actually behave within the religion. In addition, the informants generally found that their observation of how Islam helped Muslims through difficult times and the ways Islam improved the lives of these Muslims were motivations for them to learn more about the religion at a personal level. This consequently made them aware of the appealing side of Islam, which was in complete contrast to the preconceived idea that they had towards Islam and Muslims. Thus, these positive circumstances significantly elicited persuasion and trust components, which then transformed the point of contact that Dusuns had with Islam through personal networks as meaningful and relevant to their conversion experience.

To illustrate further the role of persuasion and trust as the contextual components relevant to the encounter stage, studies of the conversion process of Kelabits in Sarawak and Javanese in Indonesia reveal the ways that Christian missionary activities attracted the attention of local people to join a Bible study group through words of persuasion and courteous acts (Amster 2009: 316; Mujiburrahman 2001: 33). The 'superiority' of the Western background of the Christian missionaries evidently facilitated the tendency among local people to accept the invitation to explore Christianity, although many actually had no serious issues with their animist religion. As a result, Matthew Amster's and Mujiburrahman's studies of the

¹All interview extracts are translated by the author.

conversion experience of Kelabits and Javanese to Christianity reveal that their first contact with Christian preachers successfully persuaded them to learn further about the religion. This represents the meaningful religious encounter between the converts and their new religion.

Thus, putting the experience of Dusun Muslims alongside that of Kelabits and Javanese, one can see how the availability of the persuasion and trust components support the occurrence of the encounter stage. In the case of Kelabits and Javanese, proselytisers created scenes of persuasion to bring non-followers within their reach and accordingly led the indigenous people to experience a religious encounter. In contrast, the persuasion component in the conversion experience of the Dusun Muslim converts surfaces through the dynamics of constant observation and social learning. This circumstance thus determines the occurrence of the encounter stage, which accordingly led the Dusun converts to evaluate their life situation and question their religious upbringing. This is the outset of the crisis stage.

24.4 The Awareness Component of the Crisis Stage

With the changing perception they had of Islam, it was inevitable for the Dusuns to evaluate their ancestral belief system against this religion. The once ignored Islamic knowledge now served as the fundamental ground to compare the two religions. This evaluation process is the essence of a crisis stage, as identified by Rambo. What this study further identifies is the emergence of the contextual component, the awareness component, which supports the occurrence of the stage. Thus, with the availability of the awareness component, the Dusun Muslims were becoming increasingly conscious of the inherent weaknesses they started to see in the Dusun religion, while at the same time perceiving Islam in a better light than they had in the past.

Long before I had interest in Islam, I always thought there was something wrong with the Dusuns' *adat* of mourning. Traditionally, relatives would come over to the house of the deceased to mourn together with the family for 40 days. Over time, however, such a period of mourning has become an avenue for the Dusuns to get together with lots of drinking and gambling activities. This tends to be carried on for 40 days non-stop, causing a real inconvenience to the family of the deceased. At the same time, I started to learn about Islam from school and I learnt that Muslims would hold a *tahlil* [repeated chanting of the confession of faith] recital to pray for the deceased. Unlike the Dusuns' way of mourning, there is no huge celebration or party-like atmosphere during the Muslims' period of mourning, and I am convinced this is how mourning should be done. (Female, 44, housewife)

It is inevitable for me to compare the Dusun religion with Islam especially when I was surrounded by Muslim children and their families. The most obvious thing I saw was how the Muslims have clear directions and a life map to follow. Take Friday afternoon, for example. While the Muslims would go to mosque to perform their religious duty, I would be at home, most likely wasting my afternoon by sleeping until later in the day. In the past, I tended to justify this situation by saying that I practised a different religion, but over time I found myself repeatedly asking the same question as to why my Dusun religion does not

provide me with specific instructions that are equally deserving of rewards as Islam does?
(Male, 65, security personnel)

Analysing the conversion experience of new converts to other religions, this study also finds that the existence of the awareness component has facilitated the occurrence of the crisis stage in the conversion experience. For instance, the experience of the Christian converts among the Forest Tobelo community in Indonesia illustrates the finding.

I did not start believing until [I heard the story about how] Jesus was crucified and resurrected. In all of the stories I had ever heard about spirits from my parents and grandparents, no one had ever come back from the dead like they said they would. But Jesus Christ had said before He died that He would come back in three days and then He actually did. He did not die and then never return as others do, He came back and that shows that God's word is true and caused my thinking to walk towards God (O. Feredi's interview, cited in Duncan 2003: 319).

It is worthwhile noting that the Christian converts experienced the crisis stage after the quest stage occurs and this is in contrast to the experience of the Dusun Muslims whose experience indicates the encounter–crisis stage sequence. Nevertheless, the exposure to a different religious alternative during the quest stage of the potential converts to Christianity inevitably caused the convert to compare the stories about his religion, which he heard from his elders, with the story about Jesus told by the Christian missionaries. Such comparison between two religious alternatives illustrates the presence of the awareness component of the context which intensified the evaluation process during the crisis stage. As a result, O. Feredi was convinced of the ideals of Christianity which, according to his evaluation, made more sense than the explanation offered by his existing religion.

In the case of the Dusun Muslim converts, they experienced the intensity of the persuasion and trust components before the emergence of the awareness component. As suggested earlier, the personal observation and social learning package conceived new kinds of religious information and knowledge that accordingly instilled the persuasion and trust components that brought about the occurrence of the personal encounter. This finding helps us to understand the justification as to why the encounter stage is the first stage to occur in the religious conversion process of the Dusun Muslims. The crisis stage can only be experienced after the converts had acquired the necessary information about the prospective religion, i.e. through the personal encounter. This is mainly because the acquisition of religious information is vital to support the very function of a crisis stage which is an informed evaluation of the prospective faith vis-à-vis the individual's existing one. This accordingly leads to the precipitation of the awareness component that supports the occurrence of the crisis stage, and hence determines the encounter–crisis sequence in the conversion experience of the Dusuns to Islam.

As the potential converts are confronted with religious choices, it is natural for them to become inquisitive as they search for more information pertaining to the potential religious alternative. This directly leads them to experience the quest stage. As a stage of knowledge discovery, the quest stage embodies the role where

potential converts search for relevant religious information which later functions as a solid support to their ultimate decision to branch out from their existing religion. The quest stage is discussed next.

24.5 The Knowledge Component of the Quest Stage

The quest stage is one of the conversion stages with regards to which certain studies of conversion have raised some interesting issues. For instance, Maha Al-Qwidi's (2002) study of British Muslim converts finds that the converts carried out the quest stage mainly because they only possessed a vague idea of Islam which was inadequate to support their intention to convert to the religion. By contrast, Peter Kahn and A.L. Greene (2004: 254) reveal that the tendency to search for religious information is higher among potential converts who seek a non-Christian religion compared to those who are interested in Protestantism, which is the religion of the majority in the United States. The findings of the previous religious conversion studies essentially demonstrate the fact that the tendency to carry out a religious quest among potential converts depends on the availability of religious information pertaining to the prospective faith. Free flows of religious knowledge could cause potential converts to sidestep the quest stage in a conversion process. Thus, a religious quest is generally experienced by potential converts who encountered a lack of religious knowledge within their context.

The interview data of the Dusun Muslims reveal that none of the informants searched for more information about Islam as the dissemination of religious knowledge had been active within the informants' context. Such familiarity with Islam was further intensified by their experience of personal encounters with Muslims within their immediate circle which, over time, had allowed them to gain a better understanding of Islam, as illustrated by the following interview excerpts.

Because I was enrolled into a secondary school in Brunei/Muara District, I stayed in the school hostel throughout my secondary years. There, I shared a room with four Muslim girls. My roommates normally performed the daily prayer together in our room, and after five years staying with them, I somehow learnt through observation how the daily prayer is done. (Female, 37, education officer)

It is rather inevitable for me to listen to religious programmes on radio especially on my way to work and from work. The programmes are quite informative and I guess that's where I gained some knowledge about Islam. (Female, 61, retiree)

What is significant about such existing familiarity with Islam is that it cancelled out the necessity for a religious quest in the conversion process of the Dusun Muslim converts. All informants involved in this study revealed that they conveniently relied on their existing religious knowledge, as shown by the following interview excerpts.

I did not actually make any conscious evaluation between Islam and [the] Dusun way of life. But over time I somehow felt Islam would fit me and my life expectations better. The way of life that Islam promotes and the way my Muslim siblings lived their lives are already enough to illustrate what Islam is about. So there is nothing more to seek. (Male, 55, village head)

Why do I need to search for Islam? I was brought up in a Muslim neighbourhood, my friends are all Muslims and I went to religious school until I graduated. (Male, 25, education officer)

I don't know anyone who actually has to search for Islam in Brunei because the religion is virtually everywhere. I remember I used to question the Dusun religion a lot before I converted. I asked what happens to a deceased after a funeral? Or does the Dusun religion have its own prophet? Or how does the Dusun God create the earth? But every time I had those questions in mind, I seemed to find the answers in Islam instead, because I learnt about funerals in Islam at school, I also studied about Muslim prophets and how this world was created from the Islamic subjects. (Female, age 32, teacher)

Further evidence of the absence of the quest stage in the religious experience of converts who have developed a sense of familiarity towards the prospective faith can also be found in Mogen Mogensen's (2003) study on conversion to Christianity in Denmark. The fact that Christianity is the religion of the majority in Denmark, a large section of the population experiences an inevitable exposure to Christianity either through the education system or through casual interaction with the Christians within their immediate milieu. Accordingly, Mogensen (*ibid.*: 306) found that the Christian converts did not sample any other religion before their conversion. The converts relied on what they already knew about Christianity as a sufficient precondition in making an informed evaluation of the religion. This caused them to fall short of sampling other religions that otherwise would indicate the occurrence of a religious quest in their conversion experience.

These observations further validate my argument that the occurrence of the conversion stages is significantly determined by the existence of relevant contextual components. The conversion experience of the Dusun Muslims demonstrates that the ready availability of the knowledge component in their contextual surrounding leads to the apparent absence of the quest stage. This is also to say that the quest stage is a necessary stage within a context where the lack of religious information is evident. Potential converts who only have a vague idea about the prospective religion, or might possibly have never heard anything trustworthy about it, would recognise the necessity of seeking relevant information so that a successful informed evaluation of the religion can be made.

For instance, the limited dissemination of information about Islam in Britain led Daud Talbot, a British Muslim convert who participated in Al-Qwidi's study, to search for a Muslim community on his return to Britain after experiencing a chance encounter with Islam in Papua New Guinea. His search for a Muslim community eventually led him to Leeds where he spent time with the community and attended religious talks before he made the decision to convert to Islam (Al-Qwidi 2002: 289).

It would also be appropriate to mention here the possibility that the dissemination of the knowledge component occurs in different stages throughout a conversion process. The first stage of the knowledge dissemination can be considered as the dissemination of frame knowledge, which consists of the broad outline and general principles of the religion in question. This type of knowledge is normally

disseminated during the encounter stage and defines the information value of the persuasion component which can be influential in transforming a point of contact between a potential convert and the prospective religion into a meaningful religious encounter.

As the initial interest in the religion has been cultivated by the dissemination of the frame knowledge during the encounter stage, the distribution of detailed knowledge becomes vital in order to feed the interest of the potential converts. This is the type of knowledge that forms the knowledge component of context that supports the quest stage in a conversion process. The detailed knowledge component will fill in the information gaps within the frame knowledge and will therefore provide the necessary relevant details of the religion to the potential converts.

This discussion thus provides further evidence to evaluate the stage sequence analysis. The necessity of having the frame knowledge before the detailed information indicates how the encounter stage should occur prior to the quest stage. Moreover, it can also explain how and why an individual who knows nothing about the religion in question can be motivated to learn more before he or she embarks on a conversion process.

Throughout the first three stages in a conversion experience—crisis, encounter and quest—potential converts generally have evaluated their new religious option when, by the end of their quest stage, potential converts crucially decide either to go on or to opt out of the conversion process. In a successful conversion process, the evaluation of the existing religion against the prospective one leads the potential convert to choose the latter as a worthy replacement of the former. Subsequently, the potential converts will experience the interaction stage, which is essentially a preparatory stage towards the break from the existing religion of the potential converts. The interaction stage is discussed next.

24.6 The Direction and Control Components of the Interaction Stage

There is no doubt that the interaction stage in the conversion experience of the Dusun Muslim converts exists due to the strong presence of the direction and control components, significantly conceived from the institutional framework of the country and the existing reliable relationship that the converts have with the Muslims within their personal network. The Islam-driven state policies have been found to impact and dictate the religious and social developments of Brunei in the past two decades. The Muslim way of life, such as its dress sense and the restrictions on non-*halal* food items, has been adopted not only by the mainstream Muslim society but also increasingly by the non-Muslim population. Thus Islam, as the assertive state religion, has long been engendering direction and control components that can be utilised in preparing potential converts to repudiate ties with their existing religion and to form new ones with Islam during the interaction stage.

However, despite the omnipresence of the direction and control components, the interaction stage cannot occur at any point of the conversion process. This study reveals that the need to carry out the ritual experimentation was only considered and acted upon after the Dusun Muslim converts had made the decision to convert to Islam. Such a decision to convert is likely to have been made by the converts after they experienced the crisis stage where the awareness component generated a critical examination of their Dusun religion vis-à-vis Islam and their existing way of life, leading them to conclude that Islam was preferable to their existing religion. It was only at this point in the conversion process that the already available direction and control components had meaningful impacts, as the Muslim Dusun converts started to view their existing religion as unreliable.

The utilisation of the direction and control components thus indicates the occurrence of the interaction stage in their conversion experience. Moreover, the existing relationship and limitless interaction that the potential converts had with Muslims within their immediate circle further reinforced the availability of the direction and control resources to support the converts' preparation to break from the Dusun religion. Such utilisation of the direction and control resources was revealed by the Dusun Muslim converts.

I decided to experiment with the Muslim prayer after I consulted my uncle about my intention to convert to Islam. He advised me to learn more about this particular Muslim duty because, from his experience, the prayer had helped him to make the ultimate decision to convert. I basically know about the prayer, but obviously I never paid any attention to its details. So he was willing to guide me through the experiment and throughout the process until I finally converted. (Male, 58, retired army personnel)

Being familiar with Islam is not similar to actually practising the religion. I learnt this fact when my wife and I tried to fast before we converted, simply to see how it actually felt to fast. It was definitely not easy especially at our age. But my daughters taught us how to deal with the thirst and hunger during the fasting, and *Alhamdulillah*, we finally managed to fast one whole day after trying for almost a week. (Male, 61, self-employed)

I remember a month before I converted, I asked my siblings to teach me the proper way to recite the *Syahadah*. I even asked them to teach me the Arabic alphabets and their pronunciation so that I could at least recite the *Syahadah* from the Arabic script. Although I know *Jawi* writing from school and they are almost similar to the Arabic writing, I never had the intention before to learn the Arabic writing. I actually regret my ignorance because it took me a while before I could recite the *Syahadah* properly. (Male, age 57, retired army officer)

Examining these interview excerpts, it is clear that despite the readily available direction and control components, the components nevertheless played a rather insignificant role outside a conversion process as the informants had taken the availability of these components for granted. In fact, the direction and control components remained insignificant at the early part of the conversion process. The interview data reveal that the ritual experimentation process could only occur after the Dusuns were certain about their intention to convert. The certainty that the informants had before the ritual experimentation was an effect of the awareness component, which essentially led the informants to lose confidence in the Dusun religion during the crisis stage that subsequently convinced them to pursue Islam.

Accordingly, the informants revealed that the only point during their conversion process when they received direction and guidance had been during the ritual experimentation process at the interaction stage. Hence, this shows how the direction and control components could only be utilised after the awareness component and thus defines the sequential position of the interaction stage in the conversion process of the Dusun Muslims, when the stage should only occur after the crisis stage and not before.

The orderly utilisation of the contextual components can also be found in the study of Christian missionary activities among the Forest Tobelo in Java. Despite being perceived by the Forest Tobelo as superior Westerners and as the preachers of a civilised religion, the Christian missionaries could not impose the readily available direction and control resources over the entire community. Only those who were convinced of the truth of the messages disseminated by the Christian preachers after evaluating the messages vis-à-vis their animist religion during the crisis stage could be brought further to experience the religion (Duncan 2003: 315). Such orderly utilisation of the contextual components defines the sequential position of the interaction stage in a conversion process. The direction and control components cannot be prematurely utilised without the prior utilisation of the awareness component that supports the earlier occurrence of the crisis stage in the conversion process of the Forest Tobelo to Christianity.

24.7 The Support Component of the Commitment Stage

Reviewing the existing literature on religious conversion, the commitment stage is one of the conversion stages that was sidestepped by some converts. Morgensen's (2003) study on the conversion to Christianity in Denmark reported the observable occurrence of the stage through the public declaration. Al-Qwidi's (2002) study, however, reveals the nonoccurrence of the commitment stage in the conversion experience of British Muslims. For instance, Suliman kept his conversion to Islam a secret for three months. When he finally announced his conversion to his parents, Suliman's father demanded an explanation as to where he had gone wrong bringing him up (ibid.: 219). Although the real reason as to why Suliman decided to keep his conversion to himself is not mentioned in Al-Qwidi's analysis, such a decision is a sufficient hint of the fact that Suliman must have forgone the public ritual enactment of his commitment to Islam. What is equally significant here is the fact that his father's anger was a reflection of the lack of support that Suliman received from his family. Just as the low degree of social interpersonal relationships between potential converts and the followers of the prospective religion can paralyse the modes of persuasion and trust which are vital for the encounter stage to occur, the anticipation of potential disapproval and objection from family quarters can easily disable the modes of support, which otherwise are necessary for the commitment stage to occur and operate.

In contrast, the formal commitment is evidently present in the conversion process of the Dusun Muslims. The interview data reveal that the availability of the support resources, which were mainly sourced from the personal networks of the Dusun Muslims, allowed them to experience the formal affiliation to Islam in the public domain. It is worthwhile mentioning here that this is the same network circle that provided the converts with the persuasion and control components crucial for the respective encounter and interaction stage to occur and operate, as illustrated by the following interview excerpt.

So we told our family about our intention to convert to Islam; not just my family but also my wife's family. We were very fortunate because my siblings and my wife's sister have supported us all the way through, guiding us to learn the Muslim prayer and teach[ing] us the dos and the don'ts when fasting during Ramadan. So, they were happy for us when we made the final decision and to set the date for our conversion. (Male, 57, retired army officer)

Apart from the close kin relationships generating the support component of the context of conversion, it is also the existing familiarity with Islam that equally engendered such support from the converts' personal network and thus empowered them to commit and convert to Islam. The availability of such support is evident from the interviews of the Dusun Muslim converts, particularly those who converted from the 1990s onward when they had their public declaration of faith in a ceremony attended by their Dusun family and relatives. This illustrates how the existing familiarity with Islam has helped to foster support and understanding from the Dusuns that consequently allowed the converts to have their commitment ritual to be performed in a public ceremony.

To further this argument and to appreciate how vital the support component is in supporting the commitment stage, the following interview excerpts illustrate how an absence of family support could effectively impede the converts' initial intention to commit to a new religion. These interview excerpts are part of the data that were obtained from the interviews of those whose conversion took place before the 1990s, when the non-Muslim population in Brunei was not yet fully exposed to Islam, which otherwise could lend a strong sense of familiarity and understanding towards the religion. For instance, the conversion experience of a 60-year-old male convert demonstrates how his family's objection delayed the pace of his conversion process.

I initially intended to convert in 1980 but my mother strongly objected [to] my intention. I understood why she objected. I was the eldest son and she didn't want my conversion to bring shame to our family. So there I was, feeling frustrated, and yet I didn't dare to go against my mother's wish. (Male, 60, municipal staff)

Whereas in the case of a 37-year-old female convert, the fear of disapproval from her family impeded her from progressing further towards the commitment stage in the 1990s.

The desire to convert was already there but I was still in college at that time. If I decided to carry on with my intention to convert back then, my parents might have disowned me because that was what normally happened to new converts during that period. (Female, 37, education officer)

These excerpts demonstrate the fact that the lack of a support component could effectively prevent a potential convert from realising their intention of converting to Islam. In the past, the Dusun hardliners viewed conversion to Islam as an act of betrayal that violated the rules within family relationships. Even worse, as revealed by one of the key informants of this study, there were Dusun parents who resolutely cut off the familial relationship with the converted offspring, inevitably turning a religious conversion into a factor in long-standing family feuds.

Because of this, many informants who could not elicit an adequate amount of support from their family circle were left with no option but to delay their conversion to a much later time. Thus, unlike the Dusun Muslims whose family network supported their intention to convert to Islam, where it took them a maximum of a year to finally commit to the religion, the informants who were deprived of the support resources had to delay their conversion until such resources could be garnered. For instance, a 56-year-old homemaker took eight years before she finally converted to Islam, while there was about a 10-year lapse between the time a 47-year-old female clerk intended to choose Islam as her new religion and the day she finally became a Muslim. A 55-year-old female teacher waited for 35 years before she had the support from her personal network and finally converted to Islam in 2007.

Given this understanding of the effects of the support component on the commitment stage, one can further argue that the commitment stage is a big leap in choice. Without the support resources, potential converts would not be able to allay their fears and insecurities about converting to a new religion. Thus, the absence of support resources will either effectively delay the occurrence of the commitment stage as experienced by some informants or cause the converts to completely sidestep the stage, as illustrated by the British Muslims in Al-Qwidi's study.

What can also be added to this argument is that the role of the interaction stage is therefore to diminish the gap of the big leap to a new religion by preparing the potential converts to experiment with the ritual practices of the prospective religion. It is clear from the discussion on the interaction stage of the Dusun Muslim converts (and to put it alongside the analysis of the characteristics of the commitment stage) that the ritual experimentation of fasting and the Muslim prayer as well as the injunction to dress modestly helped the converts be less fearful of the major step they were about to take. This argument defines the interaction–commitment stage sequence in the conversion experience of the Dusun Muslims.

The discussion now comes to the final stage in a conversion process—the consequences stage. This argues that it is the existence of the acceptance component with the context of conversion that ensures the sequential position of the consequences stage as the final stage in a conversion process.

24.8 The Acceptance Component of the Consequences Stage

In the case of the consequences stage, the intuitive way to explain it as the final stage in the conversion process is to suggest that its occurrence is simply due to the logical arrangement of the stage. It is expected for new converts to acquire a new religious identity to replace the one they have abandoned as a result of their religious conversion. This already defines the logical function and the sequential position of the consequences stage in a conversion process.

There is no reason for this study to reject the validity of this logical presupposition. However, this does not mean that the examination of the consequences stage cannot be carried out in the same way as the examination of the earlier stages. The following discussion offers an equally significant explanation as to why the consequences stage is the final stage in a conversion process by examining the stage from the standpoint of the relevant contextual component that comprises the acceptance.

The presence of the acceptance component in a conversion process will not only allow new converts to adopt new religious behaviour and a new outlook. More significantly, the availability of the acceptance resources will prevent new converts from reverting to their previous religion. Ali Köse (1996: 140) argues that a conversion would move new converts into a realm of social unacceptability from their comfort zone of acceptability. Their immediate social circle might reject new converts if their parents were convinced that the new converts ‘had turned their back on everything they had given them’ (ibid.: 137). Bailey Gillespie (1991: 73), however, argues that ‘the obvious organisational affiliation of the conversional change provides a new sense of belonging and acceptance’. Thus, as the Muslim community is the mainstream society in Brunei, there is a definite spectrum of social acceptability offered by the Muslim community to the converts that can ensure the successful acquisition of a new religious identity. The interview data reveal that it was natural for the Dusun Muslims to forge quality relationships with other Muslims in their community. Such social interaction generated a sense of acceptance and belonging that accordingly encouraged the new converts to adopt new religious behaviour. In other words, the affiliation between new converts and the community of their new religion guaranteed the presence of the acceptance component that facilitates the religious transformation of the new converts.

Moreover, the fact that non-Muslims in Brunei are rather familiar with Islam further expanded the spectrum of social acceptability and guaranteed the presence of the acceptance component which allowed the converts to easily observe their religious duties and comfortably externalise their new religious identity while maintaining good relationships with non-Muslim Dusuns.

If I could understand and accept my relatives’ adherence to *temarok* [religious ceremony] and the Dusun *adat*, I hope they could also accept my religion too. *Alhamdulillah*, I can see they have accepted my conversion especially when I visit them during Ramadan and they will not serve me with any meal or drink. (Male, 58, retired army personnel)

I started to notice that every time I was about to pray at home, my father would turn down the volume of the TV or the radio, and my younger siblings would stop playing outside my room. It seems like they gradually accepted me as a Muslim. (Female, 23, technical college student)

To further strengthen the key arguments on the relevance of the acceptance component to the consequences stage, this study takes into account the findings of the previous research on conversion cases that occurred in contexts that demonstrate an apparent outweighing of social unacceptability against social acceptability. For instance, the Latino converts to Islam in the United States immediately found themselves experiencing ‘challenges, questioning, confrontation, even ridicule’ from the Latino community itself (Martinez-Vazquez 2008: 67), as well as from family members whom they tried to convince that their conversion to Islam was an educated decision. The Latino converts who participated in Martinez-Vazquez’s study revealed that they were induced to ‘work harder on their transformation’ as their family had grown suspicious of Islam as they really thought the converts were being manipulated by the religion (ibid.: 69). Sonia, for instance, received constant criticism from her father as she began to wear *hijab* (head covering) after her conversion. Another female convert named Iris had to explain to her family, who could not accept her conversion, as to why Islam requires its followers to cover up (ibid.).

Likewise, Al-Qwidi’s informants also revealed a similar experience. The lack of support the British Muslim converts received from their parents that caused them to sidestep the commitment stage was noted earlier. Kate, one of Al-Qwidi’s respondents, revealed that her conversion severed her relationship with her father as the latter resolutely cut off all communications with her for 10 years after her conversion to Islam (Al-Qwidi 2002: 218–219). As a result, British Muslims chose to forgo the physical manifestation of their new religious identity. Köse (1996: 134) argues that the British Muslim converts ‘do not make their new identity central to all interactions in society’. Al-Qwidi’s respondents confirmed Köse’s view in that they had not seen the necessity of adopting the Muslim dress sense as they believed that ‘Islam is for all people and that cultural traditions like style of dress were not necessary to be a Muslim’ (Al-Qwidi 2002: 210). Likewise, Köse’s (1996: 131) informant Rebecca ‘does not see a scarf as necessary and she concentrates on changing herself “inside”’. Analysing Rebecca’s conversion experience further, Köse found that her non-emphasis on observing the Muslim dress code after her conversion was because of the restrictions imposed by the accepted norms of the society she lives in. As wearing a headscarf is not a part of the accepted norms of British society, Rebecca believed it could elicit unwanted attention if she wore one in public (ibid.). This viewpoint was echoed by Rachel, Al-Qwidi’s respondent, who equally believed that the Muslim dress sense would inevitably change people’s perception towards her: ‘I do not feel I need to wear *shalwar kameez* [traditional South Asian outfit] and *hijab*. I feel that because people have a negative impression of it, every time you say you are a Muslim, you have to explain everything’ (Al-Qwidi 2002: 210).

Köse argues the non-emphasis on the outward manifestation of the Muslim identity is part of the careful negotiation that some British Muslims made in view of the minimal level of social acceptance within mainstream society towards such religious identity. Köse (1996: 134) further asserts that his respondents only made their new religious identity 'central in their interaction with the Muslim community'. It is clear, then, that Muslim converts will only express their identity more visibly once they have crossed over into the Muslim community where they understand there is a strong presence of social acceptability of their new religious lifestyle. This therefore reflects the conscious decision to only externalise their new religious identity when they are within social circles that can ensure acceptance.

In sum, the discussion has shown just how essential the acceptance component is in ensuring the occurrence of the consequences stage as well as its sequential position as the final stage in a conversion process. It is also evident that new converts could easily find the unconditional acceptance components within the realm of the existing Muslim community that can outweigh the associated costs and negative consequences following their conversion to Islam. The new converts could therefore experience the consequences stage as intended at the end of their conversion process.

24.9 Conclusion

The identification of the different contextual components, where each of these influences a specific conversion stage in terms of its characteristics and sequential position in a conversion process, is the main finding of this study. Taking the conversion experience of the Dusun Muslims as a case study, the analysis has demonstrated how these components construct the definitions and characteristics of the conversion stages as the converts experienced them. Comparative findings from other studies were also taken into account across different religious conversion experiences in order to reveal the distinctive characteristics of particular conversions. This study concludes that such unique characteristics of the conversion experience are primarily due to the specific influences of the contextual components. It also shows how contextual components determine the sequence of the conversion stages. Analysing the interview data of the Dusun Muslims against the spread of results of previous studies, the analysis demonstrates how the different contextual components are at work at each point or stage. If the relevant component does not exist or is not available, the function of the stage could not operate, potentially causing the convert to sidestep the stage in the conversion process. This will lead converts to experience a specific sequence of conversion stages, as determined by the contextual components. Overall, the exploration of the conversion experience of Dusun Muslims has generated an improved understanding of the phenomenon of conversion to Islam in Brunei as well as offering meaningful explanations that are beyond a simple description of similarities and inconsistencies across different religious conversion experiences.

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Chapter 25

Borneo Studies: Perspectives from a Jobbing Social Scientist

Victor T. King

Abstract The chapter comprises an intellectual journey through Borneo. It focuses on a particular style of research, referred to here as ‘jobbing’. Popular reactions to the use of such a concept usually turn on the images that it conjures of an unprofessional and unscholarly approach to what are serious matters of academic endeavour. Research that can be characterised as ‘jobbing’, it is argued, falls somewhere in the middle of a continuum from theory to practice, drawing on concepts in an eclectic and pragmatic way. In order to analyse and present materials gathered from a diverse range of sources in a logical and meaningful explanatory narrative, it is proposed that much of the research undertaken in Borneo over the last half century can also be categorised in the same fashion. The chapter ranges over ‘jobbing concepts’, the relations between area studies and a jobbing lifestyle, the apprenticeship of a jobbing researcher, the ways in which research both on the Maloh of interior Kalimantan and on Borneo more generally can be appreciated from this perspective and the problems posed by globalisation approaches for those whose work is rooted in the understanding of on-the-ground structures and processes.

Keywords Borneo studies • Social science • Jobbing research • Area studies • Maloh • Globalisation

25.1 Introductory Remarks

This concluding chapter offers a synoptic account of my perspectives on social science research on Borneo. In addressing these themes, I had in mind a comment made by James Chin to the effect that social scientists in Borneo tend to feel

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somewhat isolated from their Malaysian colleagues elsewhere and that Borneo remains understudied in comparison with the peninsula. This apparent marginality and the lack of attention to Borneo need further scrutiny. Up to 2012 my research connections with Borneo have been fitful and irregular, and therefore I cannot claim any special authority to comment on what has been done most recently (see, for example, King 1999a, b). Among other things, my last 10 years have been spent in writing and editing general books on Southeast Asia and not specifically on Borneo.

Therefore, with regard to Borneo I am unable to provide an informed overview of the social sciences let alone a comprehensive one, though I note that the Borneo Research Council has commissioned a series of reviews of different disciplinary and subject fields. In any case, a cursory survey of the theses listed on the council's website compiled by Robert Winzeler (2004) suggests that to read all those which fall within the social sciences presents a daunting task for anyone who wishes to provide even a summary appreciation of this scholarship. Indeed, there appears to be an abundance of studies on Borneo. A thesis list comprises some 540 titles with abstracts; this is by no means an exhaustive record, nor does it include many of the dissertations and academic exercises that students in Malaysian (or indeed in Indonesian and Bruneian) universities have undertaken. Tan Chee Beng (1996), for example, provided such a list for the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at Universiti Malaya from 1972 to 1996, which then amounted to 50 pieces of work. Even a review of contributions to the *Borneo Research Bulletin* during its almost 40 years of publication from March 1969, as well as the council's publications series and the enormous number of papers presented at its successful biennial conferences in Borneo since 1990 (now 12 in number up to 2014) is way beyond the scope of what I can cover in this chapter. If we also take into account the research and publications generated in the universities, museums and specialist research and government institutions in Sarawak, Sabah, Brunei and Kalimantan, and elsewhere in Malaysia and Indonesia, my task becomes impossible.

Faced with this demanding situation, and acknowledging that it is always easiest to talk about oneself and one's own work, I decided that it would be profitable for me to look back over my 40 years of engagement with Southeast Asia and particularly Borneo, when I first encountered it as a student of geography and sociology in the late 1960s, and examine briefly what I think I have been trying to do and then consider some other work which appears to connect with it. However, I should emphasise that I am not making any grand claim for my own approach, only that in the Borneo context it seems most appropriate.

25.2 A Jobbing Lifestyle

I have styled myself a 'jobbing social scientist'. I see it as a kind of lifestyle and vocation. I first used the term in a paper published in the *Sarawak Gazette* in 1994 when I was reflecting on the changes which had taken place in Sarawak during my two decades of interaction with the state from the early 1970s. I believe the term

'jobbing' captures my kind of work, though various meanings, some popular and some technical, have been attached to that term. In chatting with a close colleague in the Department of East Asian Studies at Leeds University, and informing him that I was thinking of using the term, he looked somewhat alarmed. 'Isn't it rather self-deprecating and belittling to call yourself a jobber and doesn't it smack of a lack of professionalism?' he asked. I responded that, though I thought that I had tried to be professional, jobbing is not only what I have been doing for most of my career, but from what I knew of his research in an area studies department I thought that he had been doing it as well. I also subsequently discovered a publication examining the relationships between social science research, practice and policy entitled 'Confessions of a jobbing researcher' (Parker and Baldwin 1992). Perhaps my colleague, in some sense, was right after all in that if you 'job' then you might be inclined to 'confess' that you do so and beg forgiveness.

Well, I have no regrets. What then is 'jobbing'? It refers to a range of activities, in particular to working occasionally at separate short tasks or undertakings and doing odd or occasional pieces of work for payment. With regard to academic activity it has taken on a more specific meaning. Tony Barnett and Piers Blaikie (1994), in their research from the late 1980s in rural Uganda on the social and economic impact of the AIDS epidemic, characterised what they were doing as 'jobbing'. I can say honestly that I was using the term before I read their paper, but it corresponded very much with the way I was thinking about the kind of social science in which I was engaged at the time (see King 1999a, b, c).

What did they mean by this term (which is also what I mean)? They traced the route by which a research project comprising a series of specific research questions and which required the piecing together of a range of materials gathered from field observations, interviews, surveys, casual conversations and encounters, and a mix of published and unpublished data, and drawing eclectically on certain concepts, frameworks and theories, was eventually translated into 'a "coherent" [empirical] account which in some way relates to the "problem" from which the journey originated' (Barnett and Blaikie 1994: 226). It is a logical narrative which should, as its main objective, make sense in relation to the questions asked. Barnett and Blaikie's research also had to feed into policy and be accessible to policymakers and practitioners, and though it made recourse to theories, it was not involved in formulating theory. Barnett and Blaikie argued that what they did fell somewhere in the middle of a continuum from theory to practice (*ibid.*: 227). At its grandest it might, in Robert Merton's (1957) terms, approach 'middle range theory', but perhaps more correctly the concepts which Barnett and Blaikie (and which I) use are at a relatively low level of abstraction and do not form a unified or coherent body of theory as such. This approach draws on concepts in an eclectic and pragmatic way; utilising them where it is thought necessary (Barnett and Blaikie 1994: 247–248).

25.3 Jobbing Concepts

What are some of these low-level concepts that I have in mind? In my early years of research in the 1970s and 1980s I, like many other anthropologists of the time, had fun with such notions as the personal kindred and ego- and conjugal pair-focused networks. In describing and analysing cognatic social systems such other concepts as household, family and domestic group were valuable, and in the stratified societies of Borneo notions of social rank and status were indispensable. Much of this work now seems rather tired and old-fashioned, and not something that will excite current undergraduate students. One way in which I encourage students to take my anthropology courses now is by telling them: 'Stay cool, I don't do kinship'.

In any case 'kinship' can also get you into potential trouble. I well remember engaging in a rather unsettling exchange with Derek Freeman who, when he read a paper I had written which was critical of his distinguished and widely acclaimed work on the concept of the kindred, sent me a long typed questionnaire to complete on kinship relations among the Embaloh (Maloh) of West Kalimantan, the subject of my first field study. He did this so as to determine whether or not I had interpreted Iban kindred relations properly from my Maloh perspective. In effect I became one of his informants and I returned the questionnaire duly completed. He obviously thought I had got it all wrong. Fortunately for me he was then distracted both by his extended demolition of Margaret Mead's Samoan studies, and then his rather irritable exchange with Jérôme Rousseau on Iban inequality and Kayan comparisons. So, thankfully, he never got round to tackling me on my rather upstart criticism of his conceptualisation of Iban and other cognatic systems of organisation.

Moving on I found another low-level concept particularly useful, that of dual symbolic classification, a concern that also preoccupied me in the 1980s. It could be interpreted as part of Lévi-Straussian high theory, but it is not, or at least it can be detached from it and used in the analysis of cognatic systems. It helped illuminate some aspects of Bornean symbolism in the work of Erik Jensen, Peter Metcalf and Hans Schärer, among others, and it caused me to enter into a relatively amiable exchange with Rodney Needham and sporadically Edmund Leach.

However, more importantly, from the mid-1980s up to the end of the 1990s I moved into other more development- and sociologically orientated fields and have been deploying such concepts as ecosystem, informal sector, centre-periphery relations, ethnicity, cultural construction, social class and strategic group in helping explain various aspects of social change in Southeast Asia, as well as employing relatively straightforward analytical schemes to address such issues as resettlement and agricultural development. I must emphasise that none of these relates to a coherent or distinctive body of theory. I have selected ideas from here and there because they seemed appropriate at the time and helped me develop what I hoped was a coherent empirical account of this or that problem which, in certain cases, might also serve practical purposes.

In all of these exercises I have steadfastly tried to proceed on a case-by-case basis, recognising that there are significant variations at the local level between the circumstances of different communities. Even a low-level conceptual framework might not capture the diversity of lived experiences. I have tried to address these diversities in a comparative and historical way in my recent general books on the sociology and anthropology of Southeast Asia because I have always been troubled by grand theories and purported universalisms, however seductive they often seem in their desire to explain all before them (King 2008; King and Wilder 2006 [2003]). A more recent example of these universalisms is that of globalisation theory on which I shall comment in a moment.

Like Barnett and Blaikie in Uganda, in some of my later work in Borneo and elsewhere I too was involved in some of the more immediate issues of policy and practice, particularly in such matters as rural development, land schemes, resettlement, environmental change and cultural and ethnic tourism (King 1986a, b, 1988, 1990a, b, 1993a, 1999a, c). This required the use of certain concepts in addressing on-the-ground data in order to say something that might be practically useful to government and other agencies. So it is in this area of work where concepts interact with practice in most immediate ways where jobbing seems to be most appropriate. I also tried to make sense of this in another comparative book which examined the relationships between anthropology and development in Southeast Asia and specifically those between doing theory and engaging in practice, arguing against the position that they were separate domains of activity (King 1999b: 10, 1999c: 4–7, and see King 1996, 1998).

As I was writing this chapter I happened to be reading Rob Cramb's book *Land and longhouse* (2007) in which he evaluates the roles of community, market and state in the transformation of Saribas Iban livelihoods. In his cross-disciplinary exercise as an agricultural economist Cramb sets out the kind of approach which I have in mind in my term 'jobbing', though he does not use this term himself. He says, 'I emphasize the humble and pedestrian nature of my profession to forestall some of the inevitable criticism I will encounter for having strayed inexpertly into the fields of anthropologists, sociologists, historians, legal experts, and political scientists' (ibid.: xviii). He should not be so apologetic. This is precisely what we should be doing and, in my view, it's no bad thing for an agricultural economist to embark on *bejalai* and move beyond his homeland in search of adventure.

Let me now extend the discussion into area studies and the influence that this kind of academic environment has on research styles and approaches.

25.4 Area Studies and Jobbing

I do not wish here to become embroiled in debates about the definition of region and specifically Southeast Asia and the place of Borneo within it. I have spent the last few years in dialogue with several researchers, particularly American scholars, and like Heather Sunderland and Ruth McVey have argued that Southeast Asia is

for research purposes a ‘contingent device’ and, depending on the topic or subject addressed, can vary in its definition and scope so that we might conceive of several Southeast Asias or indeed several Borneos (King 2006).

However, the important point to make is that working in area studies programmes strengthens the inclination to adopt a ‘jobbing’ approach. In other words, researchers usually work in a multi- and sometimes interdisciplinary mode and draw eclectically on concepts and frameworks from more than one discipline. In collaborative work and in the supervision of research one tends to get involved in several different topics of interest, often simultaneously, which may not have very direct or demonstrable connections with each other. At one time or another I have been involved in work on kinship, household and residence relationships; on symbolism and classification; material culture, including work on textiles; photographic and ethnographic collections; ecology and environmental change; rural development and resettlement; colonial, economic and political history; religious conversion and social change; oral tradition; cultural tourism and heritage; social class and youth cultures; gender and work; urban redevelopment; local-level politics; and ethnicity and identities. Even though several of the projects have been concerned with Borneo, overall they have ranged over Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, Myanmar and northeast India, Thailand, Laos, the Philippines and Vietnam. I have also worked in or supervised research on hunter-gatherers, shifting cultivators, irrigated rice farmers, commercial estate workers, industrial and mining communities and urban populations. I dip in and out of projects, moving from one discipline or subject to another in haphazard fashion and generally hunting, gathering, cultivating and grazing over broad expanses of academic territory, usually occupied by others. One thing that is constant in this lifestyle is the desire to understand the on-the-ground ‘realities’ of the region.

I was struck by how different my experience has been from those who work in strongly focused disciplinary departments or programmes of study focused on particular approaches or paradigms. Recently I read with great interest Kirk Endicott’s affectionate reminiscence of Rodney Needham in the *Borneo Research Bulletin*. As one of Needham’s postgraduate students at Oxford in the mid-1960s, Endicott (2007: 10–11) observed:

The Diploma year was an intensive indoctrination into the Oxford approach to social anthropology, the approach that has been called ‘British structuralism’.... The faculty, despite their differing regional and topical interests, all (with the partial exception of Edwin Ardener, who had studied at the L.S.E.) subscribed to this basic paradigm.... We students were expected to learn to think and view the world in this way, which most of us willingly did. Other approaches were presented mainly to show why they were wrong.

What a radical difference from my background and training! I never experienced that unity of purpose and coherence of perspective which Kirk Endicott, Signe Howell, Hood Salleh, Erik Jensen and others enjoyed. So where did my rather different jobbing lifestyle begin?

25.5 An Apprentice Jobber

I have pondered why I took the jobbing route. More than this, despite the apparent unfocused approach are there nevertheless certain guiding principles? Three things come to mind, which characterised what I began to do during my own research: first, the need to travel across borders and boundaries (political, ethnic, disciplinary) (see King 1993b); second, the acknowledgement that whatever one does a historical perspective will help you do it better; and finally, the recognition that the case you want to concentrate on is part of a much wider set of relationships (but you have to determine how far you want to pursue those relationships and undertake comparison). And how did I arrive at these simple precepts? It was along routes with which all of you will be familiar: in relationships with immediate mentors, in various kinds of departmental and institutional interaction, and in exchange with significant others.

I am sure that, like me, many people decided on an academic career or were influenced in that direction by a committed, inspiring, supportive teacher or supervisor. I had the great good fortune to have three during my undergraduate days. The most important was James Jackson who read for his PhD at Universiti Malaya and published his thesis there, *Planters and speculators* (1968a), a historical-geographical examination of Western and Chinese commercial agriculture in colonial Malaya. I was privileged to attend his lectures in cultural and historical geography. Jackson was the consummate academic, combining his current research interests with his teaching and introducing us to a fascinating world of cultural landscapes and how they had developed. In his lectures, among other things, he presented us with material on his recently published work, including drawing from his *Sarawak: a geographical survey of a developing state* (1968b). My first academic contact with Borneo had been made. He brought his students to the cross-disciplinary concept of development and the different dimensions of what the newly independent territories and peoples of the developing world had to address in their uncertain futures. Yet he went beyond geography into history and culture, and he did not confine himself to Sarawak and Malaya because he was also developing an interest in Chinese enterprise in the former Netherlands East Indies.

Up to the 1980s, at least if you undertook research in the northern, former British territories of Borneo, you did not usually move into Kalimantan (see also King 1993b). Instead Jackson, after engaging with Sarawak, shifted his sights to western Indonesian Borneo in his study of Chinese gold mining (1970). He argued for the importance of examining communities from a historical perspective, the crucial significance of detailed comparative case material whether or not it was contained within particular political borders, and the effects that different cultures have on landscapes and environment. This rootedness in space and place made me somewhat sceptical of higher-level theory and speculation.

Jackson's influence was reinforced by Mervyn Jaspán, the then professor of Southeast Asian sociology at Hull, an Indonesian specialist familiar with Dutch scholarship on Indonesia. A one-time professor of sociology in Java, he subsequently

undertook research in Sumatra, Cambodia and the Philippines. He combined both sociology and anthropology in his teaching and research and reinforced my interests in working across disciplines. Importantly in an Indonesian context it was not only the Dutch historical-sociological and comparative tradition on Indonesia developed by W.F. Wertheim in Amsterdam, whose influence on me was considerable, but also the Leiden structuralist approach established primarily by P.E. de Josselin de Jong and W. H. Rassers. Jaspán also eschewed theory. He was a committed empiricist, with a range of scholarly interests and insisted that students must go to the field with no preconceptions; he wanted the thesis to emerge from the data collected.

Jaspán, as an Indonesianist, was also insistent that my main research should focus on the Indonesian side of the border, whether among the Kalimantan Iban or a neighbouring group. Interestingly, at that time he was also engaged in a comparative project with Tom Harrisson and Benedict Sandin on oral traditions and the indigenous scripts of the Rejang of Sumatra and what Harrisson rather misleadingly referred to as Iban 'writing boards'. In rather abrupt correspondence with Harrisson I became increasingly attracted to the idea of studying the famous silversmiths of Borneo, referred to in much of the literature, and by Harrisson (1965), as 'Malohs'. The Maloh had especially close relations with the Iban and some other Iban-related groups like the Kantu'; they spoke Iban, intermarried with them and were the main customers for Maloh-manufactured silver adornments.

The third influence was Lewis Hill who had undertaken library-based anthropological research at Oxford on upland communities of the Burma–northeastern Indian borderlands under the supervision of Rodney Needham. It was Hill who introduced me to Oxford structuralism, to the fascination of particular kinds of marriage and symbolic classification systems in northern upland Southeast Asia, Sumatra and eastern Indonesia, and to Rodney Needham (and Edmund Leach). While Needham stated in our exchanges that he was not the slightest interested in much of the work that I had undertaken on Borneo and other parts of Southeast Asia, he did appreciate my irregular excursions into symbolic classification. For me, Oxford structuralism was something of a sideline, though it required me to read a large body of work on Southeast Asia that not only came out of Oxford but also Paris, Leiden and Cambridge. This was an extraordinary mix of influences, but my field situation in the upper Kapuas seemed conducive to this eclectic approach.

25.6 Jobbing in Maloh Land

Even in what was a relatively remote part of the island in the early 1970s, the casual visitor to interior West Kalimantan would have been immediately aware of change (King 1985). What I was aware of was a complex mix of differently named ethnic groupings; significant levels of cultural exchange, intermarriage, trade and migration; expanding markets; the effects of colonial intervention; and relatively rapid socioeconomic transformations during the stormy late Sukarno period and the modernisation, ideological indoctrination and administrative incorporation of rural

communities in the early Suharto years. In the case of the Maloh there was considerable internal cultural variation, shifting identities and fuzzy boundaries. It is interesting that, although there has been much debate about such terms as ‘Iban’, ‘Bidayuh’, ‘Kayan’, ‘Kenyah’, ‘Penan’, ‘Punan’ and so on in Sarawak, at least these terms now seem to enjoy a measure of agreement; not so the exonym ‘Maloh’. It is still surrounded by dispute among the people themselves and outside observers. I attempted to address the reasons for this in two interrelated papers in which I compared the plural society of the Brunei sultanate and the small Malay states of the upper Kapuas region in which the Maloh had participated (King 2001a, b). I also argued that one could not begin to comprehend these dynamic sociocultural systems using ‘traditional modes of anthropological enquiry’ (King 2001a: 113). Returning to my present theme, I maintain that you need to take a jobbing approach, move across disciplines, do not languish in one place, travel and try to capture variations, and then look to the wider relations within which the communities under study are embedded.

In doing this you also have to find what I call ‘nodal points’ in overarching, transethnic social systems; specifically in the recorded history of Borneo these are Malay-Muslim politico-economic centres (King 2001b). There has to be a focal point which arranges modes of discourse, organisation and categorisation in mobile, fluid, and cyclically expanding and contracting situations. These shifting relations and ideas have to be anchored in space and time articulated by such organisational principles as rank, status, residence and ethnicity. This is where one moves beyond particular communities or ethnic groupings, placing them in a wider context, and this is why it is fruitful to compare what might seem to be disparate cases. We return to border crossing, historical analysis, wider relationships and low-level concepts which help organise comparative cases without assuming that there is something essential and characteristic about a particular case or community.

25.7 Borneo Studies and Jobbing

I have noted the particular circumstances of my own fieldwork, but I want to turn briefly to other literature, specifically on Sarawak, though we can say the same for Sabah and Kalimantan, and examine its major characteristics in relation to my preoccupations. I maintain that the emphasis of much of this work relates again to my jobbing theme. What strikes me about the roughly 65 years of post-war social science research in Sarawak is that much of it is concerned with development, change and modernisation. If I were to attempt to identify one of the major contributions of social science research, particularly in Sarawak but also Sabah and Kalimantan (though not Brunei), then it is in this field where an impact has been made on Malaysian and more generally Southeast Asian studies. Rather than theoretical formulation, it has been concerned, if not directly with policy, at least with

many of the down-to-earth matters of socioeconomic change, agricultural transformation, educational provision, rural–urban migration and planned development. This is so both for work undertaken by expatriate and local scholars. Of course I acknowledge the excellent research that has been done on oral traditions and ethnohistory, ethnic identities, religions, cognatic social organisation, customary law and material culture, and there have been some outstanding historical studies. Yet the weight of the work, in my view, lies elsewhere in spite of the towering presence in studies of oral history of scholars such as Benedict Sandin, and the very important research sponsored by the Tun Jugah Foundation, the Sarawak Museum and the Majlis Adat Istiadat Sarawak.

In a survey which I undertook in the mid-1980s reviewing the relationships between anthropology and development in Sarawak, it was striking just how much attention had been devoted not only to the gathering of basic ethnographic data but also to such issues as socioeconomic development and change (King 1986b). George Appell (1977: 32), writing in the late 1970s, stated, with specific reference to Sarawak, that anthropological research was initiated early on ‘for the purposes of learning what significance its findings might have for the formation of policy and for the future of the country’. The early studies of Derek Freeman, Bill Geddes, Stephen Morris and T’ien Ju-K’ang, and even the general survey by Edmund Leach, under the auspices of the Colonial Social Science Research Council, can be read in various ways: colonial knowledge, ethnographic infill, socioeconomic studies, structural-functionalist analyses or applied anthropology (and see Shamsul 2006). However, the context of the studies was the imperative of post-war development and the practical aims of government. They are still models of ethnography which continue to serve as points of reference for subsequent research, even though there have been recent criticisms drawing attention to certain colonial and other preoccupations in their work.

Interestingly, many social scientists who made significant academic contributions to social science research in Sarawak were involved, at one time or another, in research on socioeconomic development (see Cramb and Reece 1988). Erik Jensen, for example, did his doctoral study on Iban religion but also worked in the development field in the 1960s. Much of Peter Kedit’s research has focused on issues of modernisation and development primarily among the Iban (for example, 1980), and it was probably Kedit’s (1975: 32) well-known statement, as the then government ethnologist, in the *Sarawak Museum Journal* which set the tone of much of the subsequent research, when he said specifically of anthropology that it ‘should offer more studies of a practical nature [and also broaden] ... its empirical scope to understand and analyse, and to offer “solutions” to the sociocultural problems and processes that are taking place among the very subjects that anthropologists seek to study’. This call to action proved to be very influential in shaping subsequent research agendas.

Through the 1970s and 1980s and into the 1990s we find numerous social scientists undertaking development-orientated and socioeconomic studies (even if they

had been engaged in other kinds of research as well) with their findings relating in some way to social, economic and cultural transformations and local responses to these: Robert Austin, Don Cobb, Rob Cramb, B.G. Grijpstra, Michael Heppell, Margit Kományi, Christine Padoch, Jérôme Rousseau, Clifford Sather, Richard Schwenk, James Seymour, Simon Strickland, Vinson Sutlive. I could go on.

If we examine the contributions of social science research to our understanding of the transformations generated by large-scale forest clearance and the exploitation of other natural resources since the 1980s then the amount of data accumulated is truly substantial. This is in addition to a continuing interest in rural change and the effects of the incorporation or resettlement of small farmers into large-scale plantation agriculture. A considerable amount of work has been done on Sarawak and Sabah in this field, but, in my view, some of the most interesting studies and wide-ranging multidisciplinary work have been undertaken in Kalimantan by, among others, Lucia Cargill, Carol Pierce Colfer, Simon Devung, Michael Dove, Cristina Eghenter, Mary Beth Fulcher, Timothy Jessup, Danna Leaman, Nancy Peluso, Bernard Sellato and Reed Wadley (see, for example, Eghenter et al. 2003).

This emphasis continues. If we examine the work of most of the local scholars who have undertaken social science research in Sarawak during the last 20 years, the focus on socioeconomic change and development issues is overwhelming, even if, like some of the expatriate researchers, their initial research was not specifically development-orientated: Madeline Berma, Henry Chan, Wilson Dandot, Spencer Empading, Hew Cheng Sim, Evelyne Hong, Jayum Jawan, Jayl Langub, Francis Jana Lian, James Masing, Dimbab Ngidang, Jegak Uli, Abdul Rashid Abdullah, Peter Songan, Shanthi Thambiah, Hatta Solhee, Abdul Majid Mat Salleh, Mohd Yusof Kasim and many more. By and large this research has been primarily and soundly ethnographic, using low-level concepts where necessary and focusing to a greater or lesser extent on practical issues. Whether or not specific pieces of research have made a difference to government policies, programmes and projects is often difficult to establish. In some cases clearly they have, but it would take detailed research to determine the precise lines of influence and the main contours of debate (see, for example, Abdul Majid et al. 1988; Songan 1992; Dandot 1987, 1991). My view is that much of this research has demonstrated the crucial need to address the human dimensions of development, the complexity of development interventions and the need to listen to the voices of ordinary people who are the targets of centrally planned policies. It is something that Zawawi Ibrahim (1998, 2001), among others, has been championing in Malaysia.

25.8 Universalisms and Jobbing

You now know where I stand on the importance of detailed ethnographic work and on relating concepts to practice so there should be no surprise at what I am going to say about globalisation theory. Despite an undoubted increase in interest in the

processes and consequences of globalisation in Southeast Asia I wonder whether we shall discover hidden treasures in Sarawak and elsewhere in Borneo using globalisation analyses. What seems to have happened is that the term has increasingly cropped up in social science discourse on Borneo, but, in most cases, it has either not added anything significantly new to the analysis or else analyses have been conducted quite satisfactorily using familiar, often low-level concepts within local and national contexts. I am prepared to accept that in certain cases a carefully framed concept of globalisation which deconstructs both the 'global' and the 'local' might be useful, but we need to be much more specific about what we mean and what we do (see Khondker 1994). I have long held serious doubts about the utility of globalisation analysis when applied to specific locales. Following Clive Kessler's observations (2000, 2012), I concur that we seem to have been involved in a rather time-consuming 'new-fangled discourse' which obfuscates rather than clarifies. In this connection Kessler asks the very pertinent question whether or not globalisation 'represents just another—and merely the most recent—of the false or compromised universalisms which have emerged within human history' (2000: 931 and see Emmerson 2004: 24).

A brief pause to consider what we mean by the term is necessary. Hans-Dieter Evers (2006: 5) has indicated that globalisation comprises 'a particular way of constructing reality'. In a world in which 'all aspects of life, social organisation, economic activities, spatial arrangements, etc.' are increasingly interconnected he argues for 'the necessity' of viewing and understanding these aspects 'from a worldwide perspective' (*ibid.*). Global political economy, technological innovation, especially in the arena of communications, and identities, lifestyles and consumerism are the major areas of interest, as is 'knowledge and the power of knowledge' (Zainal 1999: 4; Evers 2000, 2003). In my view an appropriate way in which this increasing multidimensional interconnectedness can be captured is by continuing to use Anthony Giddens's concept of time-space compression (1990, 1991, 2002; Hutton and Giddens 2000) in which 'events in one place directly and immediately affect those in another' (Mittelman 2001: 213).

It has also been argued that globalisation is a differentiated and differentiating process which moves unevenly and irregularly (Mittelman 2000: 923). This differentiation operates in a hierarchical mode in that some people are rendered less able to control events and processes than others and this in turn may lead to various forms of resistance (Parnwell and Rigg 2001: 205–211). However, we should not forget there are those, and there may be considerable numbers of them, who remain relatively untouched or disconnected from the forces of globalisation (Mittelman 2001: 213).

In spite of all of this, we must acknowledge that globalisation is not an entirely new phenomenon. There is much going on in the world that can still be contained and understood within the paradigms of modernity. Using such familiar concepts as modernisation, dependence, underdevelopment, world systems and the international division of labour, the character and direction of global interactions have been

pondered and debated for some time, especially in their economic dimensions. I tend towards Will Hutton's view, expressed strongly in his conversation with Giddens, that 'we have to sort out what is new, and what is unchanging' (Giddens and Hutton 2000: 3–4; Giddens 2002: xi–xxxiii).

Globalisation has for many (and for me) become a vague, ungraspable set of forces and processes which appears not to be connected to any individuals, groups or concrete settings, which is expressed variously and unsatisfactorily in terms of 'transnational pressures and processes', 'impulses', 'external influences', 'supranational regionalisation', 'deterritorialisation' 'an all-enveloping process of erasure' and 'Westernisation' (Parnwell and Rigg 2001: 206–209). Indiscriminate use of the concept can also lead to a displacement of responsibility; we are often told that we are all subject to mysterious forces which seem to emanate spontaneously from some part of the world or another, which affect us, and over which we have little or no control. This problem is deeply unsettling for anthropologists who are used to dealing with social interactions, encounters and everyday relationships among living and breathing people. What seems to have happened is that because we consider ourselves to be living in a globalised world and we constantly articulate our current condition and status in these terms the various structures and processes which we used to address in the rather more specific terms of commoditisation, bureaucratisation, the reinvention of tradition, marginalisation and centre–periphery relations are now seen as globalised ones. In my view this does not necessarily increase our level of understanding or the quality of our analyses.

Clearly one area of interest in the globalisation literature has been the exploitation of natural resources on a worldwide scale by transnational commercial interests, hence the importance of Borneo in this debate (see, for example, Brookfield et al. 1995; Padoch and Peluso 1996). On the positive side, it has also led some researchers interested in environmental issues to consider the island of Borneo as a unit of analysis (see, for example, Cleary and Eaton 1992; Wadley 2005: 1–21). It has long been one of my main concerns that up until recently we have not treated the island as a whole and we have paid insufficient attention to Malaysian and Indonesian Borneo as parts of wider nation-states (see Avé and King 1986). Thankfully, this island-wide perspective has become more popular during the past couple of decades (see, for example, Rousseau 1990; Sercombe and Sellato 2007; Bala 2002, 2007). But even those using a Borneo-wide frame of reference in considering policy-making and the politics of resource use and environmental change do not engage in globalisation issues to any extent other than with rather vague reference to such things as the world market in natural resources, multinational enterprises and the expansion of commercial agriculture (see, for example Cooke 1999, 2002, 2003a, b, 2006).

Perhaps it is in relation to the activities of international and local non-governmental organisations and to local resistance within global frames of reference that we might expect to see more explicit attention to globalisation, though again it is often not explicitly conceptualised within a globalisation

framework (see, for example, Eccleston 1996a, b; Eccleston and Potter 1996; Lian 1993). I maintain that much of what we refer to as globalisation is quite appropriately addressed in political economy analysis and the progressive integration of Borneo into world markets (Kaur 1995, 1998a, b).

25.9 Globalisation and Resistance or James Scott Again?

Perhaps an overriding concern in the rapidly increasing literature on globalisation is the resistance (or the several resistances) to it and the ‘widespread dissatisfaction’ with it on the part of ‘local people’ and the ‘powerless’ (Parnwell and Rigg 2001: 205). This concern with resistance, which is much more complex than notions of outright opposition, is bound up with the equally problematical notion of civil society. Nevertheless, if we are concerned to address local agency (local meanings, identities, knowledge, customs, practices) we must also try to specify what precisely local people are resisting and whether or not what they are resisting is best conveyed, captured and analysed in terms of globalisation.

Mike Parnwell and Jonathan Rigg (*ibid.*: 208) raise the whole issue of what precisely ‘the local’ comprises and whether, in the cases which interest them, local action is much ‘more about development than globalisation’. In similar fashion and from the other end of the global–local spectrum, James Mittelman (2000: 920) attempts to humanise the global and poses the very pertinent question of who precisely sponsors, champions, controls, governs and manages these apparently mysterious processes. So, despite the arduous task before us, what we must do, as Mittelman proposes, is to do something other than just focus on ‘big, abstract structures’ (*ibid.*: 921).

Perhaps he would not have conceptualised it in terms of a response to globalisation, but James Scott (1976, 1985) detected some time ago the kinds of resistances in specific cases that local people might be prepared to struggle or ‘in extremis’ die for. In much of the recent work on local agency and resistance in Sarawak against logging, dams, resettlement and large-scale agriculture I wonder if we have really moved further forward than Scott in our thinking about ‘globalised’ resistance (see, for example, Sabihah 2000). It is perhaps best to access ‘the voices’ and ‘discourses’ of indigenous communities and listen to them both in a structured way (Zawawi 1998, 1999, 2001, 2008) and in a more informal fashion (Kua 2001). In this connection, nicely grounded studies that do address the issues of indigenous voices and narratives in the encounter with the state, logging companies and foreign environmentalists are those by Tim Bending (2006) and Peter Brosius (1997a, b, 1999a, b, 2001, 2003) on the Penan. The tensions and interactions between different perceptions of the environment, and the variations and transformations in human–environment relationships have been persistent themes in the study of

environmental issues and processes in Borneo (see Eghenter et al. 2003). They are especially well conceptualised in the field not of globalisation but of what is usually referred to as ‘political ecology’ or ‘resource politics’ (see, for example, Bryant 1998; Parnwell and Bryant 1996).

25.10 What Is Left for Globalisation?

It appears that it is in the cultural realm, in the construction and contestation of identities (Appadurai 1996), and in the discourses which are generated in the interfaces between people and the state that the concept of globalisation can make a contribution to the study of Sarawak and Borneo more widely, though again it has not had a great deal of impact up until now (but see Winzeler 1997a, b; Tsing 1993).

One might also expect that concerns about globalisation would surface most directly in studies of urbanisation in Sarawak where local people experience some of the most immediate effects of late modernity, through encounters with the state and bureaucracy, nation-building, the media, technology, international tourists and representatives of other ethnic groups. However, attention to the urban context of globalisation in Sarawak has not been substantial, and even less so in other parts of Borneo (but see Hew 2003, 2007a, b; Lockard 1987; Sutlive 1972, 1977, 1993). One researcher whose work does touch on these issues is Clare Boulanger (1999, 2000, 2008) with her interest in changing Dayak urban identities and the implications of modernity and ‘being modern’ for the identification with and conceptualisation of Dayak traditions and religion, and distinctions between the present (the future) and the past, and the urban and rural.

Another site to investigate globalisation is in the encounter with the modern media. Benedict Anderson’s (1991) excursion into the mechanisms of nation creation in the period of early modernity has to be augmented by attention to the effects of diverse forms of electronic and print media in the era of late modernity. One of the few researchers to address this subject in a Sarawak context is John Postill (1998, 2001, 2002, 2006). In his work on the relationships between the media and nation-building in Malaysia, he examines the ways in which the Iban have responded to and been affected by state-led and media-directed Malaysianisation processes and global flows of information and knowledge in the arena of cultural politics and identity formation (and see Gunn 1993, 1997 on Brunei).

Another welcome addition to the literature on global communications in Sarawak is the doctoral research of Poline Bala (2007) on the Kelabit which develops her interests in identities, boundaries and change (2002). Her thesis examines the processes and consequences of the introduction of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the context of the eBario development programme in the Kelabit highlands (see Shamsul et al. 2004) and she explores a range of issues to do with local responses to state-generated development. ICTs and the recently constructed ‘telecentre’ have been mediated, used creatively and

reconfigured, providing a focus and vehicle for social mobilisation and the formation of social groupings and factions. However, much of Bala's and indeed Postill's analyses can still be phrased in terms of centre-periphery relations and dependence even though the focus is on electronic media and wider systems of information exchange.

25.11 Conclusions: Embracing Jobbing

So in conclusion let us embrace and rejoice in jobbing. I think there are advantages in explicitly recognising this as a perspective and approach. The world of development and modernisation is here to stay and the informed social scientist who relates concepts to primary research, policy and practice should be allowed to flourish, I hope, and have a significant role to play in that world. On the other hand, I am still sceptical about the utility of higher-level theoretical propositions. In reflecting on some recent research on Sarawak and more widely in Borneo I am forced to conclude that much of this literature has not yet addressed the issues and processes of globalisation directly, and perhaps, in many cases, there is no need to. What we seem to have done is contemplate very general issues in globalisation without relating them to on-the-ground situations. In other words the kinds of considerations to which commentators like Giddens (2002), Giddens and Hutton (2000) and Zygmunt Baumann (1998) draw our attention have not been brought into relationship with empirical material at the local level other than in a very general and speculative way (see Shamsul 1999; Zainal 1999; Zawawi 1999). However, I do accept that some of the work on media, communications, identities and international discourses on the environment and indigenous communities might feed into globalisation debates, though even here I suspect that we already have very serviceable concepts to address these issues. In this context I also acknowledge that there has been increasing interest in Borneo scholarship in flows, contacts and encounters across borders and boundaries (see, for example, Amster and Lindquist 2005; Bala 2002, 2007; Eilenberg 2005). But what matters more than anything else is that we continue to undertake detailed, sensitive, informed research and bring to a wider audience the diversity, complexity, adaptability and movement which characterises the societies and cultures of Borneo, characteristics which first attracted me to this great island in my youth and which continue to fascinate me today.

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Glossary of Non-English Terms

- adat* Customary law
- adat gawai* Paddy culture
- ahli warisan* Heritage specialist/caretaker
- Alatalla** God
- bahasa kampung* Village language
- bandung* Covered trading boat
- barongsai* Lion dance
- basir* Ritual specialist
- batuh narit* Rock carving
- batuh senuee* Standing stones
- batuh senuped* Standing stones
- bebedak* Powdering ceremony night
- bejalai* Journey away from the village
- belian* Rare timber tree, known also as Bornean ironwood
- belombah adat* Live together according to customary law
- betang* Longhouse
- bidai* Mat
- bilek (bilik) family* Household
- bobolian* Female ritual specialists/priestesses
- bobolizan* Female ritual specialists/priestesses
- buah tuai* Orchard
- bupati* Regent or district head

- da'wah* Propagation of Islam
- daerah* District
- dahas* Integrated natural resources management area
- damang* Expert in customary law
- daun sengang* Leaf used in basket-making
- doo* Good
- engkabang* Meranti tree
- gabang* Bamboo xylophone
- gawai* Festival
- getoman lalud* Time of great power
- hampatung* Carved wooden figures
- hijab* Head covering worn by Muslim women
- hutan tanaman industri* Industrial tree plantation
- ikat* Dyeing technique used to pattern textiles
- ilmu* Science or estoteric knowledge
- iyuk* Progress
- juah bireh* Red basket
- kabih* To die
- kalung éla'* Human figure design motif
- kalung kelunan* Human figure design motif
- kampung* Village
- kampung air* Water village
- karuhei* Carved wooden figures
- kecamatan* Subdistrict
- kepala adat* Customary chief
- kliering* Mortuary poles
- kobis* To die
- konfrontasi* Confrontation
- korupsi, kolusi dan nepotisme* Corruption, collusion and nepotism
- kabis* To die

- kulintangan*** Row of small, horizontally laid gongs
- kunsi*** Held in common
- kəbəs*** To die
- ladang berpindah*** Shifting cultivation
- lahat*** Village
- liang batu*** Stone slab grave
- lun ruyung*** Close relatives
- lun tauh*** Our people
- magawau*** Chant
- mamahui pogun*** Cleansing the universe
- masyarakat hukum adat*** Customary law community
- menatoh*** Stone cemetery
- menatoh belanai*** Jar cemetery
- moden*** Modern
- museum daerah*** Regional museum
- museum negeri*** Provincial museum
- naik dango*** Harvest festival
- naik tojang*** Hammock-riding activity
- nikah*** Marriage solemnisation
- nulang*** Secondary burial
- oro urip*** *Cordyline fruticosa*
- Pancasila*** Five principles of the Indonesian state
- pantang larang*** Prohibition or the absence of the bad
- parang*** Large knife or machete
- pemakai menua*** Territorial or ancestral domain of a longhouse
- pengangun*** Older women who look after the bride and groom at weddings
- penghulu*** Headman
- perupun*** Mounds of stones
- Pesta Kaamatan*** Harvest Festival
- petak ayungku*** My land

- pulau galau* Forest reserve
- pun* Source or origin
- pun tusut* Mainline genealogy
- ra'ing* Reaping basket
- raong* Cylindrical hat
- raung basung* Cylindrical hat
- reformasi* Reformation
- rinait* Ritual poetry
- sa'ung seling* Sun hat made of plaited bamboo
- saprahan* Feast with people seated in long rows
- sapundu* Sacrificial wooden posts or effigies
- sarjana* University/college graduate
- saudara dekat* Close relatives
- saudara jauh* Distant relatives
- sepak takraw* Foot volleyball
- shalwar kameez* Traditional South Asian outfit
- Sus barbatus* Bearded pig
- tagunggu'* Gong
- tahlil* Repeated chanting of the confession of faith
- tanah pengurib* Territorial domain
- tanah tuai* Ancestral land
- tantagas lawid* High priestess
- tareng manok* Sacred charms
- tatung* People with powers as intermediaries with the ancestors
- tayen* Reaping basket
- temarok* Dusun religious ceremony
- tembawai besai* Orchard grove at site of pioneering longhouse
- teping tawar badan* Children's hair-cutting ceremony
- tiwah* Funerary ceremony
- tua uma* Headman

tuai rumah Longhouse chief

ulap doyo Patterned woven fabric

usik liau Spirit game

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