

EVERYDAY POLITICS



Patronage politics is still very much a salient feature of Sarawak politics. At a much higher level politicians use patronage to mobilise and sustain grassroots support while grassroots supporters look for ways to hook themselves to the patronage networks in return for tangible benefits. Patronage is often in the form of business opportunities, contracts, job opportunities, and even information. Distribution of patronage is controlled by politicians who distribute them in return for political support. This study goes to the ground to get a first hand feel of grassroots sentiments on democratization, patronage and political control. It examines grassroots leaderships and the dynamics of everyday politics using the institution of village chief (*Tuai Rumah*) and politically appointed local councillors who sit in the local council as examples. They are the front liners and supposedly the “bridge” between grassroots supporters and the politicians or power holders. Central to grassroots leaderships are the “developmentalist state” approach adopted by Sarawak. People are often asked to trade-off their political rights with economic development. Sarawak politics of development has some features of a “developmentalist state.” The study is based on interviews and field observations. Village chiefs and councillors are chosen based on convenient sampling method. A total of 50 community leaders will be interviewed. Information gathered during months of fieldwork will be cross-checked using “triangulation” method by interviewing politicians and the retired civil servants who have dealt directly with grassroots leaderships. The finding of this study will contribute to the study of local politics at the grassroots level which ultimately shapes both state and national politics.

Researchers

Dr Neilson Ilan Mersat, Associate Professor Dr
Spencer E. Sanggin