

# IEAS

## Working Papers

### TOURISM AND LONGHOUSE COMMUNITIES

Todd Dias

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## **Foreword**

A major role of the Institute of East Asian Studies is to disseminate information relating to contemporary change and development in the region. Tourism is a subject that has a significant economic and cultural impact. Longhouse communities in Sarawak are a focus for tourists, who seek to appreciate the cultural variety of Borneo/Kalimantan. However the impact of visiting tour groups, backpacking youth and at times no visitors at all needs careful analysis in the socio-economic context of the indigenous communities.

Mr. Todd Dias was an exchange student at Unimas during 2000, sponsored by the Institute for International Studies of the University Technology Sydney. During his undergraduate study in Sarawak he completed an assignment on *Tourism and Longhouse Communities*. We are grateful to the External referee for their detailed comments on the manuscript, and recommendation that it be published in this series. The Institute of East Asian Studies is happy that he agreed to the inclusion of his report as a Working Paper on an issue of importance to the communities, and the state.

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## Preface

Borneo has always intrigued me with its contrasting historical images of tribal head-hunters and the rule of the “White Rajas”. The images may be outdated but Sarawak still presents a fascinating diversity of local cultures and traditions. My time in Sarawak was an enlightening experience enabling me to appreciate the extent to which these cultures are adapting to the wider economic development across the state.

Tourism has been carefully developed in Sarawak, relying heavily on both natural and cultural attractions. Longhouse communities play an important role as ‘hosts’ to tourists, which is why my research focused on their perceptions and aspirations regarding tourism.

I am indebted to the residents of the Nanga Sumpa and Benuk longhouses who answered my questions with good humour and particularly to the *Tuai Rumah* (Headman) of both longhouses for their hospitality. I would like to thank the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Abdul Rashid and the Dean of the Faculty of Social Science, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dimbab Ngidang, and my research supervisor, Dr. Spencer Empading Sanggin for his guidance. I would also like to thank Benji ak Jihen from the Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. The Institute for International Studies (UTS) and the Institute of East Asia Studies (Unimas) provided important support for my time in Sarawak.

This is by no means a definitive study, however I trust you will find this paper an interesting and perhaps enlightening insight into tourism from the perspective of longhouse communities.

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