

Pattern and Trends of the Iban, Chinese and Malay Population of Sarawak, 1947-2010

Lam Chee Kheung



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By Dr. Lam Chee Kheung



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Photo by courtesy of Jabatan Penerangan

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FOREWORD

This is the book I have been waiting for decades, not that the author is my good friend, but the researchers, policy makers and students on Sarawak should take cognizance of the fundamental data of the various ethnic groups over a long period of sixty-seven years since the first census was properly conducted in 1947. More so scholars and books on population studies of Sarawak are rare, hence Dr. Lam Chee Kheung should be congratulated for publishing the first of the two volumes of his labour of love.

I came to know Dr. Lam Chee Kheung when both of us were working in the Social Development Council Sarawak for several years in the early 1990s. He is one of the first few Sarawakians who obtained a Ph.D degree and the only one who specializes in demographic studies. When I became the director of the Institute of East Asian Studies, I invited him to come back to the Institute specifically to work on his unappreciated photostated copies of his study that have gathered dusts for years.

In the course of my own research on the history of Sarawak, I referred to the census reports from 1947-1970 and realized how vital these hard data were in order to understand Sarawak. The censuses provide a quick over view of changes as well as goldmines for multifarious information on Sarawak as a whole and on each ethnic group. Scholars, like Dr. Lam Chee Kheung, are those that can assist non-specialists and students to understand even more by analyzing the data to give *longue duree* views of changes as propounded by Fernand Braudel, a prince among historians. This book and its sequel will certainly be a worthy companion to the pioneering work by *Lee Yong Leng, The Population and Settlement in Sarawak*, Published in 1970.

In his book, Dr. Lam Chee Kheung analyses the pattern and trends of population of the various ethnic groups in Sarawak. The general pattern of the distribution of the population of Sarawak that originally has a geo-ethnic pattern where certain ethnic group could only be found in a specific area in the State is no longer true for most of the indigenous groups and this affects the urban-rural pattern as well. Another salient trend in the past 67 years is the increase of the Malay population while the Iban and Chinese experience declines by 2010.

There were other interesting pattern and trends that could be used as measurements for the development of the State and individual ethnic groups since 1947. The census data show that all ethnic groups have changed and progressed, albeit at different levels as they started from varied points in times while the journey still continues into the unknown end.

I hope this book will inspire young Sarawak researchers to continue Dr. Lam Chee Kheung's pioneering work in population studies.

Datu Dr. Hj. Sanib b. Hj. Said
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December 2013

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A deep gratitude is to Mr. Pung Chee Haw for helping to proof-read the manuscripts of this book, Puan Sukiah Marais to liaise and coordinate with the printer for the publication, Dr. Ahi Sarok, Ketua Bahagian Penesbitan, Universiti Malaysia, Sarawak and Mr. Amzar bin Ashari for the design of the book cover; and InfoGrafik Press Sdn Bhd for printing the book.

Lam Chee Kheung
December 2013

PREFACE

This book focuses on the study of the pattern and trends of population of the Iban, Chinese and Malay, the three largest ethnic groups in Sarawak for over the past sixty (60) years. The main aim of the study is to find out the different demographic behaviors, levels and changes in birth and death rates of these ethnic groups in respect of their distinctive cultural, social and economic conditions, and explains the relationships between those relevant variables.

This book applies direct and indirect demographic techniques, using census data, births and deaths registration and vital statistics from the government sources to measure the demographic differentials, dynamics of growth and change of population among these three major ethnic communities, from 1947 to 2010.

The demographic variables analysed are the sizes, birth rates, death rates, natural increase rates, average annual growth rates, external migration rates (1980), age and sex composition, age-sex pyramid, dependency ratio, religion grouping (up to 2000), literacy rates, employment by industries, urban/rural distribution, population distribution by regions, administrative divisions and districts, internal migration (1980), and the population change phenomenon including the proportion of each of the ethnic population to Sarawak's population, the marital status (single, married, widowed and divorced), mean age at marriage, and marital fertility (1947-1960, 1960-1970, 1970-1980).

Owing to data on religion grouping and external and internal migrations of the 2010 census have not yet been released by the Statistics Department Malaysia, analysis and writing of these demographic variables are not presented in this book. It is hoped that those data can be made available soon, so that analysis can be performed and the findings and descriptions of the study will be more complete.

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December 2013

Chapter 1

Introduction

Sarawak is the largest State among the thirteen States in the Federation of Malaysia. It straddles across the north-west of the island of Borneo, having an area of approximately 124,449.5 square kilometers, comprising eleven administrative divisions, and these divisions are further sub-divided into 31 administrative districts.

Sarawak is a multi-ethnic society in which the six major communities, according to priority order in number, are Iban, Chinese, Malays, Bidayuh, Orang Ulu and Melanau. These ethnic communities have had distinctive cultural, social and economic conditions which yield different demographic behaviors, levels and changes in birth and death rates.

Based on the above perceptions, this book applies the census data, births and deaths registration and vital statistics from the government sources to measure the demographic differentials, dynamics of growth and change of population among the three major ethnic communities, namely the Iban, Chinese and Malay, and identify the economic, social and cultural factors influencing these pattern and trends of population for the last 60 years, from 1947 to 2010.

Chapter 2

Perceptions of Population and Development

2.1 Population denotes the people who live in a place. To understand the people is to study about their size, composition and distribution. This implies the quantity as well as the quality of the people.

The quantity of a population refers to the size, the rate of birth, death, natural growth, external migration and total growth of the people, whereas the quality refers to the distribution, that is urban/rural and internal migration, and composition, which includes age/sex, social and economic grouping of the people.

The size of a population is the number of people, which includes males, females, children and adults. The birth rate of a population can be observed generally from the crude birth rate(CBR).

The death rate of a population is observed through the crude death rate(CDR).

It is a commonly shared opinion that the rapid growth of a population is the result of high birth rate and a decrease in mortality in response to social and economic developments. As a result, infants survive to reproductive years, thus increasing the birth rates and accelerating the growth of population. It is also true that the decline of births and mortality of a population is associated with certain specific social and economic factors, such as urban population, literacy level, labor- force, employment, industrial and income status, health status and family structure.

Since birth rate influences age structure, distribution and the rate of growth of a population, it has a substantial impact on income and investment, and also on the demands for housing, education, employment, health and other services. As the provision of these

services is the function of the government, the influence of births should be taken into consideration in the government's development plans.

2.2 Development is about changes in economic, political and social systems which warrant the need for ensuring optimum use of a country's resources, human as well as physical, to raise the standard of living of the people. Therefore development is conceived as a means to an end concerning man and his welfare.

All people play a dual role as producers and consumers, and they are the important actors to the social and economic progress of that society and nation where they live. Population is therefore viewed as one dimension in the complex system of interacting variations which integrate the development process.

The influence of population in the economic growth is visualized through its effect upon the basic economic inputs of land, labor and capital. The supply of agricultural land is influenced by the pressure of population upon the extensive land margin. The level and growth of employment are affected by both the supply and demand side. From the supply side, it is influenced by the size and growth of the population, and from the demand side by the level of employment-generating investment in the non-agricultural sector. Investment is affected by the impact of population, upon the saving-consumption investment, such as schools, houses or direct productive equipment. For example, a basic measurement of economic growth is the per capita income. Increases in population and labor force require investments to satisfy the needs of the enlarged population and to provide the additional labor force with the necessary equipment and materials. The higher the rate of population growth, the larger would be the share of these "human investments" needed to maintain prevailing levels of living in total capital outlays. Higher human investments will in turn leave very little for more productive investment.

The size of a population contributes positively to either a rising per capita income with a smaller size or a falling capita income with a larger population size. The population growth rate on economic development implies that a higher rate of population growth requires a higher level of needed investment to achieve a given per capita output.

The ratio of capital investment to annual population growth is 3 to 1; therefore, a higher population growth will require more supply of capital for investment. Population age distribution affects economic development in terms of the burden of dependency.

Population influences social development, which is based on man's demand for social goods and services which are the base for his welfare. The rate of population growth may depend upon and affect not only aggregate social development but also the distribution of social goods and services.

As a developing state within Malaysia the development policy emphasis in Sarawak has followed cyclical trends, which have seen an emphasis on urban development, followed by a realisation that imbalances in urban-rural development and growth need to be addressed