

IEAS

Working Papers

Bibliography of Studies on the Orang Ulu Communities in Sarawak

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Profiling the Communities of Sarawak

The location of knowledge is critical for citizens, for scholars, and for policy makers.

Study of the communities resident in Sarawak needs to be based upon a clear understanding of the knowledge that has been documented and analyzed, plus the wealth of oral and anecdotal knowledge. So much of that knowledge must urgently be captured and recorded, as it can be transient, it can just pass away. Add to that knowledge a variety of past and present statistical data, and we have the foundation for a range of important future studies, research that can extend the boundaries of knowledge.

These bibliographies are an initial contribution, and are presented as working papers that need to be revised, corrected and expanded. We shall be most grateful for any comments or corrections, and particularly for the identification of materials that have not been included in these early drafts.

Sarawak is a particularly interesting part of Malaysia, in that all groups, if defined in ethnic or religious terms, are minorities. Unlike the Peninsula, no one group, so defined, can regard itself as the majority. That situation has engendered a measure of tolerance, and respect and recognition of the inherent value of diversity, of how it is possible, through multi-culturalism, to forge even stronger new realities.

These first bibliographies utilize a classification of peoples by ethnicity. However, ethnicity is only one of many ways in which identification can be understood. Other equally valid ways of grouping studies include compilation according to a focus upon social strata, upon wealth, and poverty, upon resource use, upon region, religion or economic change.

“The paradigm of race [is] one of the most basic principles of the colonial mode of classifying the world.”¹

That argument is a strong one, it is the contention that the colonizers made a political decision to emphasize race and ethnicity as the single most important defining characteristic of the population. They did that in part to simplify their administration and in part because it was race that distinguished the rulers from the ruled. Postcolonial societies, with a rich diversity, can benefit dramatically from use of identifiers that go well beyond ethnicity, and consciously employ criteria that productively cut across such colonial constructs. Perhaps this is another challenge for the new millenium.

¹ Nirmala Puru Shotom “The possibilities of “Asian” intellectuals”, *Ideas [Social Science Research Council]* 52:4, December 1998 p.85