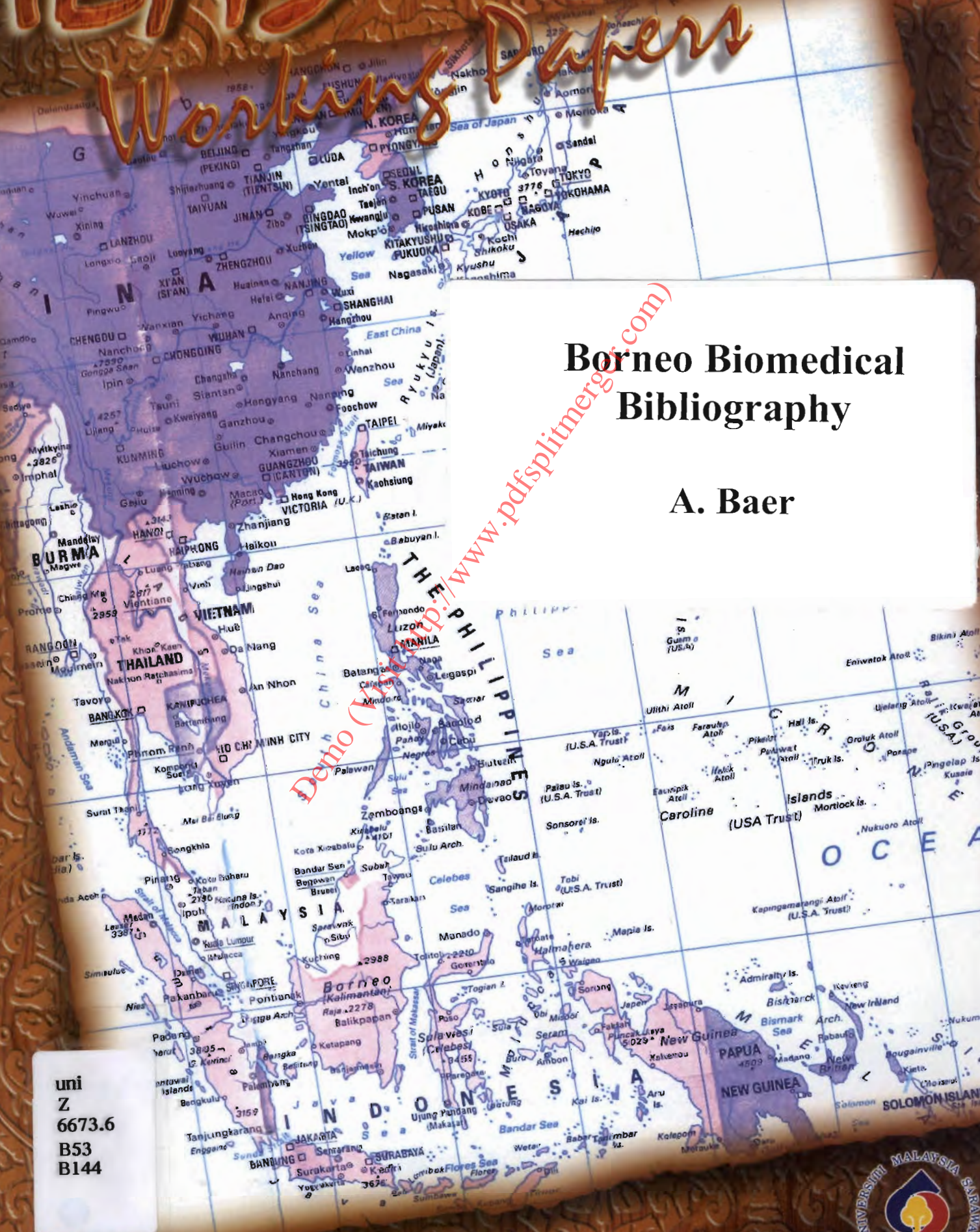


# IEAS Working Papers



## Borneo Biomedical Bibliography

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## Borneo Biomedical Bibliography

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This bibliography was originally published by A. Baer and G. N. Appell in the Borneo Research Bulletin 27:77-89, 1996. It had 173 references. Now updated for the Institute of East Asian Studies, UNIMAS, Sarawak, the bibliography contains over 330 references.

The bibliography was originally assembled with two goals in mind. One was to delineate what is and is not known about human biology, particularly health, in Borneo. The other was to encourage the compilation by research workers of base-line data on neglected biomedical topics. Sustained biomedical research can contribute both to an illumination of practical problems and to an historical/evolutionary perspective on health and culture.

The reports referenced here all deal with Borneo. Recent papers published in peer-reviewed journals and edited books accessible through computer databases or libraries were favored for inclusion. Dutch language materials were omitted, but many are cited in Rousseau (1988). An earlier medical-anthropology review provides background information, specifically on groups in the Malaysian state of Sabah (Appell, 1968). Rousseau's (1988) bibliography on Central Borneo contains pertinent references on health, demography, botany, and other topics. Another bibliography (Cotter, 1965) contains little biomedical information.

The selected reports provide an overview of the health status of ethnic Bornean groups, based largely on studies in East Malaysia. Yet a coherent picture is elusive, since the studies were done at different times and places with disparate aims. No single report provides a thorough health survey of any particular group, one in which all ages were surveyed, demographic features of the group were ascertained, and past and present medical conditions were noted. Moreover, even for so dire a disease as malaria, little longitudinal information is available, despite the fact that 70% of reported malarial cases in Malaysia in 1990 were from Sabah (Lim, 1992). Rather, an early malarial survey of Sarawak and Bruner (De Zulueta, 1956) provides reliable information only on age 2-9 yrs. at single time points in various areas, despite known seasonal and annual variation in malarial parasitemia. Recent malarial reports have not built systematically on this 1956 survey base.

The cited reports do highlight some long-standing health problems in Borneo. These include both childhood and adult malnutrition, filariasis, intestinal parasites, malaria, and some microbial infections. For example, Schwenk (1975) reports that the Iban once had "one of the highest" incidences in the world of tetanus neonatorum, or newborn lockjaw; this resulted from cutting the umbilical cord with an unsterilized bamboo splinter and controlling bleeding of the cord with kitchen-fire ashes. The effect of these practices on infant morbidity and mortality has not been assessed.

Conditions on which little has been published include complications associated with pregnancy

or childbirth (that is, female reproductive health), geriatrics, childhood communicable diseases, dental problems, venereal diseases, and genetic disorders, to name a few. With notable exceptions, health-oriented demography has also been neglected, especially the many parameters of fertility and viability. Thus it is unclear which medical conditions are major causes of age-specific morbidity and mortality among Bornean ethnic groups now, or which were the major causes in the past.

The bibliography is divided into thirteen sections, the first covering general and miscellaneous topics. Later sections cover cancer, demography, dengue, filariasis, genetics, goiter, leprosy, malaria, mental health, nutrition, tuberculosis, and typhus. These section headings are meant to provide entryways for both biologists and anthropologists to the Bornean biomedical literature. For many of the references cited, the name(s) of the ethnic group(s) studied and the location of the study site are noted.

Bornean ethnic groups have received vastly different amounts of attention in biological or biomedical journals. The only biomedical reports on the Kenyah are on nutrition and malaria, while at least eight biomedical topics have been studied on the Iban.

## **I. General and Miscellaneous Topics**

1. Ai, C. J. The dental status of the Kayans of Long Atip, Baram, Sarawak. *Med. J. Malaysia* 42 (2):110-112, 1987.
2. Alexander, J., and P. Alexander. Economic change and public health in a remote Sarawak community. *Sojourn* 8 (2):250-274, 1993. (On nutrition, maternal health, etc., in a Lanahan area, upper Rejang River.)
3. Alexander, J., and P. Alexander. Gender differences in tobacco use and the commodification of tobacco in Central Borneo. *Soc. Sci. Med.* 38 (4):603-608, 1994. (On Lanahan in Sarawak who smoke cigars, in part, to keep insect pests away when reaping hill paddy; alcoholic drinks and betel chews are also discussed.)
4. Andrew, S. A., and C. M. Wong. Participatory action research in a community health development programme in an Iban longhouse community in Sarawak, Malaysia. In *Borneo2000: Environment, Conservation and Land*. M. Leigh. ed. UNIMAS, Kuching, Malaysia, 2000. Pp. 385-400.
5. Anonymous. Health data at a glance. *Sarawak Gazette* 109 (Apr.):29-32, 1985.
6. Anonymous. *Power Play: Why We Condemn the Bakun Hydroelectric Project*. Ed. 2. INSAN, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, 1996. (Pp. 125-126 discuss public health)