

Preface and Acknowledgements

This volume has had a rather long chequered history. As is often the case a project emerges from chance meetings and happy coincidental circumstances. After delivering an overview paper on the theme of ‘Culture and Identity: Some Borneo Comparisons’ at the Biennial International Conference of the Borneo Research Council, held at Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) during 25–27 June 2012, Victor King happened to be speaking with Poline Bala about the progress and development of anthropological studies in Borneo. It was really at her suggestion that we then began to think about providing a more comprehensive overview of Borneo Studies, and it was from this initiative that the current volume emerged. The co-editors, Zawawi Ibrahim and Noor Hasharina Hassan, enthusiastically embraced this project.

When Victor King was actively engaged in teaching and research at the Institute of Asian Studies, UBD from August 2012, and working closely with Zawawi Ibrahim, the opportunity presented itself and the decision was taken to organise, host and fund a workshop on Borneo Studies. This duly took place during 30 November–1 December 2012 at UBD when we brought several leading local scholars together in order that we could consider where we might take this proposal.

What was clear, however, was the following:

1. We had to try to widen the agenda beyond anthropology (though this remains a vitally important focus) to examine the contribution of the social sciences more generally to our understanding of Borneo societies and cultures and their transformations since the Second World War (which should also include the multidisciplinary fields of development studies, environmental studies, social policy studies, cultural studies and gender studies).
2. We should try to address a range of conceptual issues as well as more substantive problem areas in that, though Borneo Studies has quite understandably been preoccupied with ‘real world’ issues of modernisation and development and with the application of social science knowledge to practical and everyday problems and processes, there have been some significant contributions to concepts and theory as well.

3. We should attempt to locate Borneo Studies within the wider studies of Malaysia and Indonesia and within the context of Southeast Asian Studies; widening the frame of reference also applies to the only fully national territory in Borneo, Brunei Darussalam.
4. We should endeavour to locate Borneo Studies within disciplinary contexts and examine the contribution of the study of Borneo societies, cultures and transformations to the development of the social science disciplines more generally.
5. And, in contemplating the 'state of the art' in Borneo Studies we should be prepared to look to the future, and try to determine where we go from here. What are the urgent matters which we need to address that have not received the attention they deserve? What subjects have we been concerned with already but which need further elaboration and research? What is the scope for disciplinary and multidisciplinary collaboration? What is the scope for collaboration between some of the participants in this workshop?

We then invited the participants of the workshop to prepare their papers for publication and we contacted several other active researchers on Borneo to add to the range of issues and topics on what we wanted to cover and present. We do not claim that this is a comprehensive treatment of research on Borneo undertaken since the late 1940s when what we might term modern social science, based on primary field research, emerged in Borneo. Sadly we are still underrepresented in Kalimantan, and, as has always been the case, the field continues to be dominated by social science in Sarawak. We have managed, however, to secure some contributions from our Indonesian colleagues and to ensure that some of the major developments in the largest part of the island have been covered. As the workshop was organised in Brunei we have also been able to include recent research contributions from colleagues at the university there, and we have been fortunate in securing contributions from scholars in Sabah. Nevertheless, we recognise that this is only a modest beginning in the attempt to capture some of the major scholarly post-war developments in Borneo Studies, and much more needs to be done and continuing glaring gaps need to be filled.

The rather extended delay between the initial planning for this volume and its publication requires some explanation. After Victor King's temporary departure from Brunei in December 2012, though with a brief 10-week revisit in mid-2013, the project stalled due to the pressure of other research and publication commitments. It was re-energised in 2014 when Zawawi Ibrahim, as the local coordinator at UBD, and Victor King, with the assistance of Noor Hasharina Hassan, contacted those contributors who had committed to the publication and then approached other potential contributors to at least begin to fill some of the gaps in coverage. Much of 2014 and 2015 have been preoccupied with bringing together and editing the volume.

The project might not have materialised had it not been for the support of colleagues in Universiti Brunei Darussalam's Institute of Asian Studies. We wish to acknowledge the financial support provided by the institute to enable the initial workshop to take place, and the copy-editing and indexing to be undertaken, a

substantial task given the size of the volume. Had it not been for the enthusiasm and encouragement of the then Director of the Institute, Prof. Tong Chee Kiong, for arguing for the importance of developing a Borneo Studies agenda within the university and securing funding for it, this project would not have been completed successfully. We owe him an enormous debt of gratitude. Sincere thanks are also due to Dr Yabit Alas at UBD for developing the network of Borneo institutions and for providing a framework for the inclusion of our contributors from Kalimantan. Our heartfelt thanks also go to Gareth Richards of Impress Creative and Editorial, Penang, who, in many respects has been our fourth co-editor. His professionalism, good humour, patience and sheer determination to see the project to a conclusion, and his meticulous copy-editing, ably assisted by Julia Tan and Siti Aishah Kamarudin, have ensured that what started as an interesting concept has turned into a publication which we hope will set an agenda for Borneo Studies in the next decade.

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