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Editors' Note

In partnership with Associate Professor Dr Fadzilah Majid Cooke of the Universiti Malaysia Sabah and Dr Olivia Guntarik of RMIT University, *SOJOURN* has the privilege of publishing in this edition of the journal five articles addressing dimensions of the theme, “Representing Borneo: Contradiction, Continuity, and Change”. Its territory shared by three modern Southeast Asian nation-states, Borneo figures as one of the most dynamic — if least understood — arenas of social and cultural change in the region. An active interest in developments on Borneo has characterized *SOJOURN* for nearly three decades. This edition of the journal underlines its commitment both to continuing to publish significant scholarship on Borneo and to working closely with scholars at institutions in Southeast Asia and outside the region. The sixth contribution to this edition of *SOJOURN*, Robert Elson’s comparison of debates over the relationship of Islam to the Indonesian constitution in the late 1950s and late 1990s, also reflects a central concern of the journal: processes of religious change in Southeast Asia.

In their exploration of historical and contemporary enactments of relations of power and strategies of contestation, the five articles on Borneo bring together scholars from a range of disciplines, all engaged with the politics of representation. Collectively, the articles address some of the “big questions” in the study of Borneo on the basis of rigorous empirical research. Each article considers possibilities that shift representations beyond old binaries, proceeding from the notion that representations are politically grounded (Said 1978, p. 311) and that they serve when inscribed with power to create knowledge that offers solutions to societies’ problems (Li 2007, p. 26). These five articles capture the complex nature of different forms and practices of representation, and show that the study of representation requires a flexible interpretative approach.

The contribution of Chiarelli and Guntarik offers a chronicle of early anthropology through an analysis of the British explorer A.C. Haddon's photographs, taken during the period of Brooke rule in Sarawak. It examines a time in which anthropology was evolving from a field that relied on second-hand materials towards one marked by a new empiricism. With their strong tensions between objective knowledge and subjective experience, Haddon's photographs highlight his reservations about the classification of people into ethnically different "tribes".

Other contributors examine a range of contemporary vehicles of representation, including the media (Barlocco), development agents (Bissonnette; Majid Cooke) and international conservation programmes such as that aimed at "reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation", or REDD (Niall, Godden, Tehan and Godden). These vehicles make clear the sheer diversity of means and subjects of representation on Borneo. Subjects of representation at the local/national interface include the Kadazandusun community, whose identity the media have promoted through an emphasis on a shared consumerism (Barlocco); smallholder farmers in Kalimantan, whose escape from poverty through participation in large oil palm schemes has been prescribed by agents of development (Bissonnette); and indigenous peoples in rural Sabah, whom such agents seek to "protect" from their own "weaknesses" as these weaknesses are made manifest in customary land transactions (Majid Cooke). At the international level, experts on climate change work to draw on appropriate traditional knowledge and practices to structure commercially viable projects that can operate in global carbon markets (Niall, Godden, Tehan and Godden).

The range of claims to knowledge examined in these articles reflects the complex mix of issues confronting the peoples and environments of Borneo. The five articles make no pretence to definitive coverage, of presenting an exhaustive analysis of the concerns that Borneo confronts. The articles neglect, for example, significant areas of Borneo, especially Brunei. But their geographical coverage aims to address representational politics as broadly conceived. They work

from different theoretical perspectives and are thus able to submit such issues as poverty or environmental degradation or identity to interdisciplinary examination.

Bissonnette, for example, combines theoretical approaches from geography and anthropology, while Majid Cooke applies social movement theory, an approach developed in environmental sociology, human geography and the political-science sub-field of political ecology. Barlocco deploys the tools both of communications and media studies and of anthropology. Niall, Godden, Tehan and Godden combine approaches from the sub-discipline of international environmental law with those of geography. The contribution of Chiarelli and Guntarik marries social history to visual cultural studies. Taking representation as the central reference point, Associate Professor Majid Cooke and Dr Guntarik invited contributions that variously embraced or resisted assumptions generated by particular representations. They urged contributors to politicize the implications of these representations or to challenge the discourses in which they were embedded.

Li (2007, pp. 26–27) observes that expert assumptions about indigenous peoples and their environments are “repossessed by demands from below”. Behind these demands lie people’s loss of entitlements in the context of top-down development programmes designed largely by experts but fraught with uncertainties beyond those experts’ control. These uncertainties range from waning political will to pursue projects after new governments come to power, miscalculations of soil fertility in project areas and price fluctuations on global commodity markets. Majid Cooke’s article explores criticisms of expert solutions as voiced by peoples’ organizations in Sabah, while Niall et al. demonstrate experts’ own determination to build meaningful participation into projects. Bissonnette tracks small farmers’ abandonment of the very projects designed for them, and Chiarelli and Guntarik expose dissent from within the ranks of colonial-era anthropologists.

Together the five articles on Borneo in this edition of *SOJOURN* seek to privilege local voices (Battiste 2000), colonial-era or

contemporary, powerful or weak. At the same time, they reflect an awareness that local developments are themselves linked to larger processes of exclusion and inclusion affecting rights and privileges (Hall, Hirsch and Li 2011, pp. 4–7). The articles raise questions drawing on the diverse research concerns of their authors. How are local and indigenous communities in Borneo implicated in relations of power and privilege? How do local communities participate — or not — in processes of knowledge production? Do they have roles in the acknowledgement — or the failure to acknowledge — their traditional knowledges and cultural practices? What might we gain from comparative perspectives on environmental and land-management issues? How do popular cultural forms of representation support or suppress minority group identities and political agendas? What can early anthropological knowledge tell us about the politics of colonialism and local ecologies? How do residual — that is, colonial — forms of representation subsist in contemporary everyday life in Borneo?

Rapid commodification and intense consumerism have raised the stakes in discussions of the political implications of representation. Borneo's diversity only intensifies the challenges that those discussions must surmount. In framing some of the most significant issues relating to representation, this edition of *SOJOURN* seeks to give new scope to critical engagements with contemporary change in Borneo. It seeks, too, to respond to the urgent need to interrogate the legacies of colonial-era representations of ethnic identities and the impacts of the regulating processes of postcolonial nationalism. These legacies and impacts remain powerful, in the structures of development, resource planning and social policies.

Professor Elson's contribution to this edition of *SOJOURN* addresses a legacy of a different kind. Fifty-five years ago, the scholar who would serve as ISEAS's founding director, Harry J. Benda, published a classic study of the brief flourishing and sudden eclipse of political Islam during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia. Developments in Indonesia since the demise of the New Order have given new relevance to Benda's book. They have made clear his

recognition of the importance of dynamics that would for some four decades suffer from neglect among Indonesianists. In his comparison of efforts to Islamize the Indonesian constitution in the late 1950s and at the turn of the twenty-first century, Professor Elson joins the group of scholars seeking to make up for that neglect. In so doing, he brings history to bear on topics of considerable contemporary interest, both in Indonesia and in other parts of Southeast Asia.

Fadzilah Majid Cooke and Olivia Guntarik, guest editors
Michael Montesano

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