

constraints. The East Asian success stories on the other hand were able to nurture and develop a world-class indigenous manufacturing sector. In contrast the Malaysian government played a fairly passive role, concentrating on developing a Malay capitalist class and greater Malay share ownership. However, unlike the East Asian success stories, Malaysia was able to rely on resource rents to make up for the weaknesses in this sector, to bail out loss-making state enterprises as well as firms of the well connected.

Leete also asserts that Malaysia has had stunning success with poverty eradication but concedes that the restructuring objectives of the NEP are perceived to have primarily benefited an elite minority and did not contribute to growth. Many costly errors were made in Malaysia both in the manner that the NEP was implemented and in terms of spawning a group of beneficiaries who are closely connected with the ruling party and have a vested interest in ensuring its continuation.

A political economy perspective is indispensable in gaining an understanding of both the achievements and the shortcomings of Malaysia's social and economic development. An occasional slap on the wrist was delivered with some critical observations at the end of some chapters, however it would have been far more beneficial if all of these could have been combined into one chapter assessing some of the failings of the Malaysian model.

After reading this book, those with little familiarity of the Malaysian experience may be forgiven for coming away with the impression that it is an unqualified success. In some respects, there is little mention of the silence of debate, the press and political opposition through the use of various pieces of legislation. The erosion of the rule of law, lack of meritocracy in the civil service, inefficient state enterprises, and the cost of government intervention in the economy, not to mention corruption, are also little mentioned.

Even more disconcerting are the reports that after fifty years of Independence, communalism is on the rise and the lack of political will to address an issue that is now a binding constraint on Malaysia's future prosperity, i.e. the NEP. The

opportunity costs of the NEP have been high and are rising as Malaysia strives to achieve Vision 2020 within the context of globalization. Given the positives as well as the inconvenient negatives, exactly which aspects of the Malaysian models should other developing countries seek to emulate and which should they eschew?

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Beyond the Green Myth: Borneo's Hunter-Gatherers in the Twenty-First Century. Edited by Peter Sercombe and Bernard Sellato. Denmark: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2007. Pp. 384.

Recent research on the Penan, Punan, and other indigenous communities (Dayak) have been sporadic at best; much more was written and researched on such communities in the 1970s to late 1990s by noted anthropologists, with some very noteworthy publications to be found in *The Sarawak Museum Journal*. In that respect, the present publication fills a very important gap, serving both policy-makers and academics with a comprehensive collection of works related to the impact of economic development and modernization on the subsistence economic needs of indigenous communities.

I will situate the analysis of this book within the context of analysing the sustainability of forest use by indigenous communities, and the violation of their forest property rights in the context of modernization.

In this respect, a clear definition and enforcement of property rights is essential for apportioning forest benefits and for concurrently addressing the needs of indigenous community groups, timber and business communities, and nature conservationists in the quest for modernization and development. If rights to one

group has been overlooked or ignored at the expense of another, it is likely that the “distressed” group will express dissent.

For instance, the native blockades occurring in Sarawak because of illegal encroachments by timber companies into their subsistence areas and burial grounds in the mid-1980s serves as a very good example of the impact of modernization on the “violation” of property rights of indigenous communities. It was with the assistance of the Friends of the Earth (Malaysia) or Sahabat Alam Malaysia that brought this to the wider attention of the public, civil organizations, and concerned individuals, which subsequently gave rise to a better understanding of the subsistence needs of native communities and the need to correct such anomalies.

In recent years, negative impacts have continued to affect the livelihood of indigenous communities because their concerns have still not been adequately addressed by the state: their communal rights to forest and the use of resources within such areas (hunting wild animals, gathering of wild plant foods like sago palms and non-food items, and fishing) have been continually undermined by the more powerful interests of timber groups, business groups constructing dams and also oil palm plantations, and the state in deriving revenues and profits from dam construction, agricultural, and logging endeavours. The present publication details some of these issues in a very comprehensive, critical, and systematic manner.

On an important level, this book covers the nomadic and semi-nomadic groups of hunter-gatherers of Borneo’s tropical forests that include communities in three countries, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Written by scholars currently involved in this field, most of whom have spent substantial time with indigenous communities, it comes as no surprise that the present volume would be an invaluable source for students, policy-makers and researchers who would like to update their knowledge about the plight of indigenous communities, and to also corroborate their research with more recent evidence.

The writers have focused on ethnography of hunter-gatherers in various parts of Borneo, taking

full account of the distinctive histories of individual groups. Various aspects are covered on the impact of modernization on the cultural-social, economic, and political facets of hunter-gatherers.

B. Sellato and P. G. Sercombe, who are the editors, provide a detailed and apt introductory chapter defining the study of hunter-gatherer groups, by covering earlier written literature on such groups, and examining specific patterns pertaining to the culture and outlook of Borneo’s hunter-gatherer groups across the island (environment and subsistence, society and way of life, forest and trade, material and spiritual culture, economy and politics, and identity and ideology) with a special discussion on nomads and change. A springboard is then provided for the reader to understand later discussions of the various aspects of hunter-gatherer groups in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 by Rodney Needham provides a short but comprehensive introduction to the hunter-gatherer groups of Borneo in terms of their identification, location, geographical setting, linguistic affiliation, demography, history, cultural relations, settlement pattern, economy, trade, kin groups and religion.

Chapters 3 to 12 then covers either specific hunter-gatherer groups in Indonesia (Kalimantan), Brunei Darussalam (Belait), and Malaysia (Sarawak), or examine themes across hunter-gatherer groups in the whole of Borneo. The nuances of modernization and its impacts on the various aspects of the indigenous peoples’ livelihood have been very well captured by the various authors.

Bernard Sellato examines the Kalimantan Punan through the twentieth century in Chapter 3 of the volume. According to Sellato, the Punan have gained ground in terms of their visibility and land ownership rights; this contrasts with that of the Penan of Sarawak who do not own land rights. In the next chapter, Shanti Thambiah looks at the emergence of the ethnic category Bhuket and the diversity of the hunter-gatherer identity in Borneo. The Bhuket emerged because of the political-economic upheavals in the Balleh, Kapuas, Mahakam, and Mendalam areas.

Jointly authored by K. A. Klimut and Rajindra

K. Puri, the study of the Punan from Tubu' River in East Kalimantan (Chapter 5) involves Puri commenting on the thoughts and experiences of K. A. Klimut, a Punan elder from the Menabur River, in northeastern Kalimantan. Puri examines the Punans' central dilemma of relocation arising from modernization through the experiences of Klimut. In Chapter 6, Lars Kaskija discusses the Punan Malinau identity and their perception that they are often stuck at the bottom of hunter-gatherer groups. Mering Ngo looks at nested disputes and mediation procedures for the Punan in West Kalimantan in Chapter 7. Specifically, Ngo studies the conflict over the collection and control of edible swift nests. Three case studies have been used to illustrate the dynamics behind conflict resolution and in the context involving profit-seeking outsiders.

Stefan Seitz examines attitudes towards game, pets, and animal husbandry among the Penan and Punan groups in Chapter 8. In Chapter 9, the history of the Punan Vuhang and their response to economic and tenure change in Sarawak is researched by Henry Chan. Based on oral history, Chan reconstructs major events that have affected this hunter-gatherer group and how they have settled to become sedentary and abandon their traditional belief system in order to adopt the practices of an agricultural economy. However, the Sarawakian logging industry has presented an impending crisis to the Punan Vuhang, as their resource tenure is not recognized by Sarawak's state legal system. Peter G. Sercombe looks at continuity and adaptation among the Penan of Brunei in Chapter 10. Sercombe's updated ethnographic examination provides more than an update by contrasting present developments with that of the past.

Robert A. Voeks examines the Penan understanding of ethnobotany in terms of its subsistence strategy and breadth of knowledge in Chapter 11. His study, for most part, supports earlier works which predict that cultivating societies maintain larger plant lexicons, and a greater breadth of ethnobotanical knowledge than the hunter-gatherer groups. J. Peter Brosius

researches on the resistance and acquiescence of the Penan to logging in Sarawak, Malaysia (Chapter 12). Since 1987, the Penan have resisted incursions by logging companies by the erection of blockades. They have also become the focus on an international environmental campaign. However, Brosius points out that not all Penan groups have engaged in resistance, the Western Penan have been conspicuously acquiescent of logging activities.

The present publication corrects some long-standing misconceptions. Notably, that the Penan, Punan, and other hunter-gatherer groups are completely nomadic. Indeed, in recent years, some groups have chosen not to practise full-time hunting and gathering, and have chosen to settle into modern farming and also logging activities. Also, the distinction between hunter-gatherers and farmers does not always exist in actual behaviour as some past anthropological works have led us to believe. Indigenous groups also have not always harvested forest resources in a sustainable manner; under some circumstances they have tended to overharvest resources (notably incense wood and edible birds' nest) for immediate gain when competing with outside collectors.

The recent development proposed in UN climate talks in Bali in December 2007, of the world compensating developing countries for preserving their forested areas adds further justification to protect such areas. With indigenous communities depending, substantially if not completely, on such areas for their economic and non-economic livelihood, adds another reason why forest preservation should have a higher priority in the agenda of policy-makers.

The present volume will therefore be invaluable for those wanting a broad sweep of developments in terms of the impact of modernization on hunter-gatherer groups in Borneo. For those interested in particular aspects or a particular group, the volume also manages to satisfy their requirements in a very commendable manner.

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