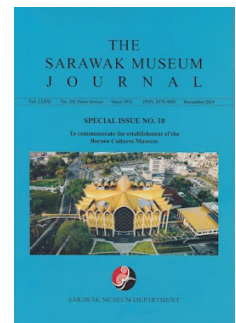




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## LOOTED OBJECTS, BADENG HISTORIES AND BROOKE PEACE-MAKING

**Valerie Mashman**

### ABSTRACT

This paper explores the meaning of objects that were looted from the Badeng and were subsequently donated by a Brooke administrator to the Sarawak Museum, as a trigger to examining Badeng responses to Brooke rule. The official histories of Sarawak express the satisfaction of the Brooke officers with their efforts at state-making through punitive expeditions, but these are underpinned by local oral histories of arson, violence and devastation. Through intermediaries, the Badeng succumbed to Brooke rule and are portrayed as being happy with the efforts of peace-making, yet they eventually migrated away from the Brooke domain. As such, these looted objects provide an opportunity to include Badeng historical narratives which convey agency, cunning, resistance and independence in the face of Brooke rule. At the same time, the reconstruction of the history of the Badeng through oral narratives makes a potentially rich contribution towards the popular history of the nation. This leads to the wider issue of the need for a methodology to retell these histories without reopening old grievances and enmities in order that history can be told and understood within a plural society.

**Keywords:** Badeng, oral history, looted objects, biography of objects, source community



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## INTRODUCTION

One day, I was scanning the pages of the Sarawak Museum ethnology registration book, looking for references to objects related to the Brooke era. I was surprised to come across a set of six museum objects that were originally donated to the Museum by the Resident C.A. Bampfylde, who was an officer in the Brooke government in Sarawak from 1875 to 1903. These were looted from the Madangs (Badeng), possibly during a punitive expedition commissioned by him in 1895 or 1896 against the peoples of the upper Rajang River. In investigating the origin of the objects, and the circumstances of their acquisition, there are questions raised about the voice of the source community

and how this voice can be given a place in the Museum. The second part of this paper analyses oral histories which leads to an exploration of Badeng responses to government which reflect pride, autonomy and resistance.

Set against this background, Resident Charles Hose's perceptions of peace-making and 'winning' over the Badeng are short-sighted and self-aggrandizing (Hose 1899, 1900, 1988). This is because he fails to consider, even with hindsight, how the Badeng were left unprotected against a series of attacks in 1902 and 1903, after the grand peace-making in Marudi of 1899. Further to this, their histories reveal they migrated away from the Baram and Sarawak into the Apau Kayan. This shows that the series of peace-makings from 1896, 1897, 1898 to the 1899 grand peace-making in Marudi had little effect on the discord between the Badeng and the Iban or on the relationship between the Badeng and Resident Hose and his successors. In addition, these peace-makings did not impact the Badeng plans to move away from Sarawak to the Apau Kayan.

## PART I

### **Objects, method and new museology**

The analysis of the story of these objects raises issues in museum studies, as for the last forty years there has been a shift in museology to include what is termed "the native voice" in the museum, as Christina Kreps has noted (Kreps 2011). "Native" in this context is not a patronizing term but its sense refers to a point of origin, or where relevant the source community or "communities from which museum collections originate" (Kreps 2011: 70). This change in museology has come about through the influence of post-colonial theory on anthropology and museology. Using European colonialism as a point of departure, post-colonial theory addresses the effects of colonialism on the peoples ruled by colonisers, such as the experiences of "migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender and place and responses to the master discourses of imperial Europe" (Ashcroft *et al.* 2007: 1-4). This has led to a critique of museums which raises issues regarding the Western basis for museum collections, built as the tools and products of colonialism. As a result, questions are being asked regarding the effect of colonialism on the interpretation of objects and there is a need to accept that

source communities should collaborate and contribute to make new meanings regarding objects in collections. This has come about through the reflexive turn in anthropology, whereby anthropologists interrogate the power relations within their own discipline.

The post-colonial approach to museology is about muting the dominant view and giving voice to the source community. This means that professionals such as museum specialists, anthropologists and art historians need to relinquish authority:

The post-colonial museum is fundamentally about inverting power relations and the voice of authority. In the post-colonial museum, the voice of authority is no longer that of anthropologist, art historians and professional museum workers, but the voices of the people whose cultures are represented in museums (Kreps 2011: 74).

Therefore, a new approach is taken to the stories of objects in the Sarawak Museum by interrogating the narratives of the British 19<sup>th</sup> century administrators and anthropologists, such as Hose, Haddon and the correspondents of the *Sarawak Gazette*, using oral histories from the voices of the source community, in this case the Kenyah Badeng. I'd like to emphasise that the arguments for the post-colonial re-evaluation of history and museology are relevant, even though the use of the term 'colonial' for the Brooke regime is not clear-cut. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to dwell on this point. What is important is the opportunity for the contribution of the history of ordinary people, living on the periphery of the nation, to create their story in the mosaic of histories of a plural nation.

## **The objects**

The six objects in question are documented in the Sarawak Museum Registration Book. These were presented by C.A. Bampfylde as having been looted from the Madangs (Badeng). Of these, one object, a hat, was presented to the Rajah and is likely to be item 1923.86.102, now in the Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford. The registration book also records the receipt of two cooking tripods, two wooden plates and two sunhats (Table 1).