



The Sarawak Museum Journal

Vol. XL No. 61

December 1989



ISSN: 0375-3050

E-ISSN: 3036-0188

Citation: Zainal Abidin Zulcify. (1989). Language and Oral Tradition: The Role of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. The Sarawak Museum Journal, XL (61): 159-166

LANGUAGE AND ORAL TRADITION: THE ROLE OF DEWAN BAHASA DAN PUSTAKA

Zainal Abidin Zulcify

It is generally conceived that Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka is a language planning and development agency, far surpassing all others in Malaysia. Its numerous objectives include the advancement and enhancement of the national language, inculcating progressivism in literary talents and print as well as publish, or render assistance in the printing of books, magazines, newsletters and other modes of literary works in the national language or other vernaculars. Functioning as a statutory body, such objectives however, can be modified conformable to conditions and necessities.

Based on prevailing situational requirements, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in 1977 thus established branches in Sabah and Sarawak. By way of generalisation, the objectives of setting up such branches are purely to promote the dominant role of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in the building and development of the national language and literature, alongside the publication and marketing of books, with special emphasis on those written in the national language. Resulting from this, the preponderant activity of the Sarawak Branch of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP/SAR) focuses on the expansion and greater intensification of the usage and success of the implementation of the national language as the sole official language in Sarawak.

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Nevertheless, apart from the aforementioned endeavour, DBP/SAR does not disregard Sarawak's principal aspiration in relation to its literature and local socio-culture, most importantly, its oral tradition in the form of folklores in order that such folklores will not be obliterated thus.

Since 1985, *bahasa* Malaysia has been accepted as the sole official language in Sarawak. Its enrichment has become the main task or responsibility of DBP/SAR. However, local languages have never been given negligence simply because we believe that the contribution of regional languages in the development of word vocabulary and *bahasa* Malaysia terminology is immensely significant for the purpose of fostering national integration. The absorption of words from regional/dialectic languages has been conducted over recent years. Hitherto, 50 words in various regional languages have been officially assimilated in the *bahasa* Malaysia word vocabulary. Efforts towards its protraction is currently being carried out. Apart from this DBP/SAR is in the process of compiling *bahasa* Malaysia-regional language vocabulary (totalling 21 all in all). This particular venture is conducted