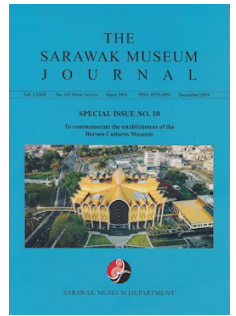




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**LOOTED OBJECTS, BADENG HISTORIES AND BROOKE PEACE-MAKING**

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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## 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.

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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