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## INTRODUCTION

**Ding Seling and Jayl Langub**

This volume contains various papers on the Orang Ulu presented at the Orang Ulu Cultural Heritage Seminar held at the Sarawak Teachers' Training College, Miri on June 21—23, 1988 as a series of cultural seminars in conjunction with the 25th Anniversary of Sarawak's independence within Malaysia. We wish to record our gratitude to the State Government for funding most of the cost of running the Seminar, and the Sarawak Teachers' Training College, Miri for allowing us to make use of its facilities.

The Orang Ulu Cultural Heritage Seminar at Miri was significant in that it brought together representatives of the various Orang Ulu groups to share their experiences and to identify the common features of their arts, dances, music, folklore, technology and traditional social organization. It can be said that this was the first time a large gathering of Orang Ulu came to present and discuss their varied cultures before an audience which shared common interest.

The papers presented by the local participants may not be on par with scholarship standard, but there is much to be learnt. Although the views from within the community are considered more representative, the views from outside are equally important because they provide a different perspective of the community. For this reason, it is fitting that the contributions of scholars from overseas are included in this volume.

The Orang Ulu are not well known among their fellow Sarawakians, but as a unit they show a greater degree of cultural and linguistic diversity than the major groups of Sarawakians. They have a very rich culture, and because they are becoming more and more integrated into a multicultural society, it is important that their culture be recorded and kept alive in the modern context.

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Many Orang Ulu are now residing in the urban areas and are out of touch with the old ways. Although they are conscious of the opportunities which the modern world offers, many are aware that acceptance of new ideas does not necessarily mean that they should reject their traditions and identity. Indeed, many educated Orang Ulu are very concerned about the urgent need to record what is currently known about the old ways, primarily because those who remember the old ways are not going to be around much longer. As one local participant of the Seminar bluntly put it, "each time one of these elders dies, it is comparable to a library destroyed by fire."