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MUSEUM AND TOURISM***Peter M. Kedit****"MUSEUM IN TOURISM"****Exhibition**

By their very nature as institutions to collect, conserve, and display cultural and natural heritage of a place or country, museums serve the needs of tourism industry as avenues to inform and entertain visitors. Since the arrivals of visitors to Sarawak on organised tours, especially to Iban longhouses in the mid-60s, the Sarawak Museum has played a useful and meaningful role in the development of tourism in the State. From its commanding location in the centre of Kuching, the museum has attracted many visitors since the building was opened in 1891. An average of 16,000 people visit the museum monthly. The Sarawak Museum is one of the places in the itinerary of tour operators who bring in visitors from overseas. Since the last two years with the constructions of civic centres in main towns of Sarawak there is a growing demand from local communities outside Kuching to establish mini-museums in the civic centres. The purpose of such exhibition is to serve the purpose of local culture and history to be on display- for the people in the district/division, as well as, to provide a place for visitors/tourists to go to when they are in town. Such mini-museums were organised with the assistance of the Sarawak Museum. At present there are museums at Mukah, Sibul, Kapit, Bau; and in the planning stage are museums at Miri, and Betong. We are also planning to start three new museums in Kuching - the Cat Museum, Islamic Museum, and History Museum. Exhibitions such as these are functionally related to tourism.

MUSEUM AND TOURISM*

by

Peter M. Kedit

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Cultural Resources

Another museum service that is of much importance to tourism in Sarawak is in the role of custodian of the State's cultural resources. This entails the collecting, preserving and researching the rich cultural heritage of no less than 25 ethnic groups, each with its colourful history, rituals, festivals, music, dances, handicrafts and artefacts. Sarawak's cultural resources are assets in attracting tourists to the state. Cultural tourism and nature tourism are the two main attractions in promoting tourism for Sarawak. But cultural tourism is far more significant where museum's contribution is concerned. The museum

* This paper was presented at the Sabah Museum Seminar and Conservation Workshop held in conjunction with its 25th Anniversary celebration in July 1990.

provides back-up service as advisors in government committees for the planning and developing tourism, such as serving in the State Task Force on Tourism. In the private sector, the museum is represented in the Sarawak Tourist Association's board. The Tourist Development Corporation conducts tourist guide courses where Museum staff provide lectures on culture and history of Sarawak. The State Ministry of Culture in promoting tourism overseas require exhibitions to inform potential overseas tour operators of the country – the museum have on several occasions provided such services to Australia, Europe, Japan and other countries. We have in the past also provided dancers and craftsmen to these promotions. Our research section has been conducting research on the impact of tourism on Iban longhouse communities frequented by tourists. With our cultural resources accumulated over 100 years and the experiences of our staff in local cultures, we were able to assist such organizations as the Sarawak Economic Development Corporation to set up the Cultural Village at Damai Beach, near Kuching.

Handicrafts and Artefacts

In the area of souvenirs for tourists, the museum play a small part in setting standards for local craftsmen to follow through the conduct of workshops and handicraft competitions. The museum provide free service to check on the authenticity of ethnic crafts and antique; and serves also as the controllers in the export of antiques. All antiques purchased by tourists have to be certified by the museum before they could be taken overseas. Ongoing researches are conducted on the material and methods of handicrafts making, e.g. Iban *pua kumbu* (cotton fabric). Fieldwork is done on video film and photographs for records and maintenance of traditional methods of craftsmanship. Sarawak's arts and crafts have distinctive design and patterns that are being used in projecting an indigenous image for the promotion of tourism in such places as hotels, restaurants, and advertisements.

Historical Monuments and Sites

Sarawak is blessed with a unique history created by the Brookes. Its important prehistoric sites, and also ethnohistoric monuments of its peoples are important tourist attractions. Recognising the importance of history as a valuable source of local pride and identity, as well as, for the needs of scholarly research, the State government passed legislations to protect such historical monuments and sites. The task falls on the Sarawak Museum to oversee the maintenance and preservation of these State properties. The Director of Sarawak Museum, as Controller of Antiquities and Historical Monuments, is given powers under this ordinance. There are now 15 buildings throughout the State that have been gazetted as historical monuments; these include the many forts built by the Brooke's government, and the Sarawak Museum Building. The Museum also maintain the important archaeological site at Niah Cave where the skull aged, 40,000 was excavated, and the rare Painted Cave of 2,000 years old was discovered. We are also involved in the salvaging of huge carved burial poles (*kelirieng*), and the preservations of rock carvings and megalith.