

glass beads etc. and these were barter trade with local products such as rhinoceros horn, birdsnests, camphor etc. This trading activity with China went on until the Ming Dynasty in the 15th century AD.

Lucas Chin

SARAWAK MUSEUM

Functions

The Sarawak Museum was established in 1891. It is a state department under the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, and is entirely financed by the State Government of Sarawak with an annual estimated budget of \$462,418 and a staff of 43 (based on 1976 Approved Estimates).

The Sarawak Museum is charged with the administration of the following Ordinances and Regulations:

- i) The Antiquities Ordinance, 1954;
- ii) The Sarawak Museum (Deposit Library) Ordinance, 1961;
- iii) The Preservation of Books Act, 1966; Malaysia, Act of Parliament, No.35 of 1966;
- iv) The Local Newspapers Chapter 139, The Laws of Sarawak, 1958;
- v) The Miscellaneous Licence (Edible Birdsnest) Regulations, 1963;
- vi) The Turtle Trust Ordinance, 1957;
- vii) The Wild Life Protection Ordinance, 1958.

Under these Ordinances and Regulations, it is the responsibility of the Curator and his staff to search, to acquire, to regulate and to protect antiquities and historical monuments which form part and parcel of our national heritage. As Executive Officer of the Turtles Board, the Curator is responsible to extend protective

measures to conserve the marine turtles. As a Game Warden, the Curator renders assistance to the Chief Game Warden in the conservation of wild life. It is also the responsibility of the museum to acquire all books, departmental reports, school magazines and newspapers and other publications published in the country.

The Sarawak Museum is a research institution engaged in the fields of anthropology, archaeology, natural history and history.

It is a multi-functional agency. It serves the integral needs of our developing nation, in education, cultural expression and socio-cultural understanding of our multi-racial society by our visual expression in exhibitions and publications.

Since its inception in 1891, the Sarawak Museum has acquired and accumulated a very vast collection of ethnological, archaeological, natural history and historical materials.

The collection is made up of the following materials and is shown in quantity in the table below:

a) ethnological materials	textiles and fabric, woodcarvings, baskets, mats, personal ornaments, weapons and other cultural artefacts.
b) archaeological materials	stone age artefacts and pottery, excavated ceramics and other artefacts.
c) antiquities	imported ceramics, brass cannons and other brass artefacts.
d) natural history materials	specimens of every known mammal, bird, reptilian, amphibian, pisces (fish) and insect.
e) historical materials	historical maps, stamps, currency notes and coins, photographs and other historical documents and objects.
f) reference library and archival materials	reference books on Borneo; State archival materials including Brooke letters, the Sarawak Gazettes, official records, school magazines and newspapers.

	Ethnology	Archaeology	Antiquities	Natural History	Historical	Reference library and Archives
In reference collection	7,955	91,087	4,225	75,792	4,225	Please see statistics below
On display	2,358	614	462	3,056	1,224	
Total	10,313	91,701	4,687	78,848	5,449	

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Statistics of reference library and archival materials

- a) Reference library: 8,682 volumes, with average annual addition of 210 volumes occupying 800 lineal feet of shelving space.
- b) Archival materials: Brooke papers and files, the Sarawak Gazettes, the Sarawak Government Gazettes dating back to 1870 and earlier, occupying 250 lineal feet of shelving space.
- c) Periodicals: 391 titles including 45 titles of newspapers, occupying 2000 lineal feet of shelving space, with additional 80 lineal feet of new materials annually.

Since 1956, we have salvaged all the surviving Brooke records, letters and orders, Resident and District Officers' Reports, court and treasury records etc. that had survived through the Japanese occupation. This is our basic archives collection which has been extensively made use of by research scholars and students. However, we must now also collect and preserve records created by the various government departments, local authorities and other quasi-government bodies since 1946 and since the formation of Malaysia. These records are the foundation upon which the governmental structure is built. They will also become the principal source of facts and data for research on the study of the political, economic and social history of Malaysia in general and Sarawak in particular.

The Museum Reference Library holds one of the best collections of books on Borneo in general and Sarawak in particular. It also contains the essential reference books on anthropology, archaeology, antiquities, natural history, Southeast Asian and Asian history and general social studies. Furthermore, it acts as a depository library for all local publications through the Sarawak Museum (Deposit Library) Ordinance, 1961.

The materials accumulated in the Museum are invaluable for research, education and display purposes. The archaeological artefacts and in fact many of the ethnological materials are now irreplaceable as contemporary people no longer produce such items.

The Sarawak Museum is world renown. Its wealth of materials has been internationally recognised, research work undertaken is made known through our journal which has a world-wide distribution and our display has been well praised.

Organisation

The Sarawak Museum is a general museum consisting of eight sections as follows:

- a) Ethnology section
- b) Archaeology section
- c) Antiquity section
- d) Natural History section
- e) Archives and Reference Library section

- f) Conservation section
- g) Display/Education section
- h) Administration and Accounts section.

Each section should be under the charge of a sectional head with the Curator assuming overall responsibility. However, with the present available manpower, only three sections, that is, the Ethnology, the Archives and Reference Library and the Conservation sections are under full-time sectional heads. The other sections are still without sectional heads, and therefore come within the direct responsibility of the Curator.

Activities

Apart from the normal functions of a museum such as collecting, documenting, preserving and exhibiting materials, the staff of the Sarawak Museum are also actively involved in research in all the disciplines within the scarce manpower resources available at present. For example, the following are some of the projects the staff of the Sarawak Museum are and will undertake in the next five years:

- a) To carry out detailed studies on modernisation and acculturation on groups in districts which are exposed to intensive development projects and the impact of socio-cultural changes with special emphasis to minority groups who are being 'threatened' by extrinsic agents of cultural changes.
- b) To carry out semi-detailed studies of topical and important cultural patterns of material of all cultural groups. These studies would include the recording and publishing of such cultural items as weaving, pottery, basketry etc.
- c) To collect oral traditions such as rare rituals and festivals, traditional weddings, funeral rites and traditional medicine and healing rituals.
- d) To index and classify published material with the view of compiling a comprehensive bibliography of all articles written about Sarawak and its people.

- e) To develop Niah archaeological sites as site museums.
- f) To extend protective measures to cultural properties such as megaliths, rock-carvings, burial poles etc.
- g) To carry out a survey on rare antiquities in private collections with the view of registering them.
- h) To set up a conservation laboratory to treat and preserve the many ethnographic and other perishable materials which are deteriorating.
- i) To improve and translate labels and captions of exhibits on display into Bahasa Malaysia.
- j) To organise school services by giving lectures and demonstrations of traditional works of art, music and dances and other subjects.
- k) To organise temporary or mobile exhibitions for outstations.
- l) To carry out a survey on State Department closed files with a view to advise the respective departments on the best method of storing closed files of historical value for preservation and eventual transfer to the State Archives and disposing of others in accordance with General Orders and Treasury Instructions.
- m) To carry out research on the values and norms of the ethnic groups in collaboration with Majlis Penasihat Kebangsaan Berkenaan Kebudayaan.
- n) To map out cultural and ethnic boundaries for eventual drawing up of a Sarawak ethnological map.

Research works carried out by museum personnel are published in the *Sarawak Museum Journal* annually. This journal is distributed world-wide.

Problems

The main problems the department is facing are inadequate space, manpower and funds. Despite our very rich and vast collection of materials, our total space for exhibition is only 10,748 square feet, i.e. about one-quarter the size of Muzium Negara. We are, therefore, only able to exhibit 7714 representative items which constitute just about 5% of our total collection. We badly need more space to exhibit more materials and thus making available more of our cultural heritage for the enjoyment of our people as well as for tourists.

Since 1974, an average of 250,000 persons were recorded to have visited the museum annually. The number of visitors to the museum is expected to increase in view of the increasing flow of tourists.

On the other hand, our huge reference collection, consisting 95% of our total materials, is presently housed and crammed together with the administrative and working offices, the taxidermy workshop, archives and reference library in a separate building of an area of slightly over 9000 square feet. It is, therefore, impossible with the present available space to arrange our reference materials in any systematic manner as this should be the objective of every museum. If properly arranged, our reference library and archival materials alone will take up the whole of the present museum office building.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Museum as a whole is very much understaffed. We need to have at least half a dozen more senior officers (ethnologists, archaeologists and zoologists) as well as a strong supporting staff to carry out our many research projects as well as to expand our other services.

In addition to further recruitment, there should be 'specialist training' in research methodology for our serving officers who are responsible to do research. Every opportunity should be taken for them to broaden their experience by attachment or attending seminars, whereby they could be exposed to the present trend of research findings, and to exchange views with their professional colleagues.

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