## **BORNEO RESEARCH COUNCIL**

## ANNUAL NEWSLETTER REPORTING THE ACTIVITIES

# **FOR THE YEAR 2016-17**

#### November 2017

#### **DEAR FELLOWS AND MEMBERS:**

It is the season to renew your Fellowship or Membership status. We have enclosed your invoice and a flyer on our recent publications. It has been an extremely busy year!

#### **BORNEO RESEARCH COUNCIL BIENNIAL CONFERENCE 2018**

The 2018 Conference will be held in Kuching at UNIMAS. The Institute of Borneo Studies (UNIMAS) will act as the Secretariate for the Conference. Louise Macul will be handling correspondence with international participants to the conference. She may be contacted at: macullm@gmail.com.

#### **FELLOWS/MEMBERS:** Please Note – PDF copies of BRC publications:

All publications are now available in PDF format with the exception of *Psychiatric Research Among the Iban* and the *Iban Diaries of Monica Freeman*, and the publications listed in the flyer of recently published works. This makes them available for searches.

Fellows/Members may request free of charge any five items in our publication list. If Fellows/Members want additional items, we will charge US \$10 for each additional set of five. Please send requests to brc@borneoresearchcouncil.org.

These PDF-formatted items are only available to Fellows/Members.

#### BOOK REVIEW EDITOR AND BIBLIOGRAPHER FOR THE BRB

The Members and Fellows of the BRC want to express our thanks for the long term and excellent work of Dr. A.V.M. Horton in keeping the BRB up to date on book reviews and publications. This work for the field of history was undertaken by Dr. Robert Reece, and we want to thank him for that work.

Cliff Sather writes that now the review editorship and bibliographer has been taken on by Dr. John Walker, a historian, who can be reached at his email address: <u>doctorjhwalker@gmail.com</u>

Dr. Walker is currently in the process of relocating to Kuching, and a physical address will be available shortly.

Cliff writes that it would be nice to have, in addition, someone covering the biology/environmental literature. Are there any volunteers?

#### **COMPREHENSIVE ENGLISH-IBAN DICTIONARY**

Vinson Sutlive, the principal lexicographer of the dictionary, writes with regard to the work he and Joanne Sutlive have been doing:

The Comprehensive Iban-English Dictionary, of 1,890 pages featuring 31,000 entries of headwords and derivatives with definitions, synonyms, antonyms, idioms, pronunciations and etymologies, was completed in 2015 and officially launched by the Chief Minister of Sarawak on September 6, 2016, in Kuching. The dictionary contains an estimated 50 percent of lexemes of Iban and Ibanic dialects. Through the first phase of the project, Dr. Phillip Thomas has worked steadily, having written two programs, the first of which identifies every lexeme in a text, and the second, which selects words that are already in the lexicon, distinguishing them from words not yet entered. Dr. Thomas has completed work on 22 of the 108 volumes of the Borneo Literature Bureau. Revision of this dictionary is continuing. The second phase of the project is about half-way completed. Vinson writes: Currently, I am working on entries from the *Kamus Bahasa Kantuk-Bahasa Indonesia* which Joanne translated into Indonesian and English. We still are awaiting completion of translation of the 3000 entries Mualang wordlist. We have been told that there is a wordlist for Sebuyau, and have short lists of words for other dialects. Contact Vinson: vhsutl@wm.edu.

The dictionary was published by The Dayak Cultural Foundation. Those interested in getting a copy can order the dictionary from The Dayak Cultural Foundation at Level 6, Tun Jugah Tower, No.18, Jalan Tunku Abdul Rahman, Kuching, or by email dayakcultural@gmail.com. RM170 per copy.

Vinson Sutlive and Joanne Sutlive and their team are continuing to add entries to their Comprehensive English-Iban Dictionary.

## **NEW PUBLICATIONS:**

Dr. Sather's new monograph, *A Borneo Romance: Ritual Storytelling and the Sugi Sakit: A Saribas Iban Rite of Healing*, will be published jointly by the Tun Tugah Foundation and the Borneo Research Council in the next month as part of the BRC Classic Text Series in Oral Literature. The price from the BRC is \$55.

It is also available from: The Tun Jugah Foundation, P.O. Box 734, 93714 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia

#### PRECIS OF DR. SATHER'S A BORNEO HEALING ROMANCE

A Borneo Healing Romance had its beginnings in 1977 when the author, while doing fieldwork in the Saribas, witnessed a performance of the *Sugi Sakit*. The event left a lasting impression and in 2003, Cliff, together with his wife, Louise, and their Iban co-worker, Jantan Umbat, recorded a performance of the ritual, sung and interpreted by the late Lemambang Renang anak Jabing, the last experience priest bard still able to perform it, at his longhouse, Rumah Tarum, in the Debak subdistrict.

The present book records in full the Iban text and translation of the entire ritual performance, plus Renang's extensive commentary. A distinctive feature of the *Sugi Sakit* is that it incorporates a narrative epic, a story of adventure and romance featuring Bujang Sugi, the Iban culture hero Keling in disguise. An annotated text and translation of this epic comprises roughly two-thirds of the present book. This is introduced by an account of Renang's performance, his life-history as a bard, followed by chapters describing Iban notions of illness and well-being, traditional healing practices, and the role of the priest bards and other ritual specialists as healers; the bard's use of poetic language in constructing his ritual performances, and a description of the *Sugi Sakit* itself, its social and symbolic setting, and how it was structured as a rite of healing. The Sugi epic is followed by a brief sequel and a chapter describing the concluding stages of the ritual. A final chapter deals with the role of romantic love and compassion, not only in the *Sugi Sakit*, but in Iban society more generally and the way in which a story of adventure and romance was made to serve, in the context of traditional Iban society, as an instrument of healing.

A major purpose of this book was to record the living reality and enduring significance of a ritual, now disappearing, that had once been an important part of the repertoire of Saribas Iban healers. The work on which it is based was carried out under the auspices of the Tun Jugah Foundation in Sarawak and the original recordings and transcriptions used in writing this book are deposited in the Foundation's archives in Kuching.

## CHARLOTTE HEMMINGS, A LINGUIST, writes:

I am currently in the process of arranging travel to Sarawak in October as part of my current research project on the 'Information structure in the languages of Northern Sarawak'. This is part of a Leverhulme early career research fellowship at the University of Oxford and will involve some documentation and description work with Kelabit, Lun Bawang and Saban and a comparison of how information structure (i.e. the status of information as new, given, topical etc., in discourse) can affect the choice of sentence structure in the languages. I am hoping to produce a grammar of Kelabit by the end.

I recently completed a PhD at SOAS which focused on the structure of Kelabit:

Hemmings, Charlotte. 2016. The Kelabit Language, Austronesian Voice and Syntactic Typology. Ph.D. Dissertation, SOAS, University of London.

This provides a preliminary documentation, description and analysis of voice, pronouns and word order. I am in the process of archiving the primary materials from this research with ELAR: <u>https://elar.soas.ac.uk/Collection/MPI1029735</u>

Hemmings' email is: is <a href="mailto:charlotte.hemmings@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk">charlotte.hemmings@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk</a>

## THE BORNEO CULTURED RAINFOREST PROJECT

Professor Graeme Barker (gb314@cam.ac.uk) and his colleagues at the McDonald Institute For Archaeology research, University of Cambridge have made major advances in our understanding of the peopling of Borneo and Insular SEA. Their Cultured Rain Forest Project has been doing research in Niah Cave and the Kelabit highlands.

Publications include:

G. Barker, ed. 2013. Rainforest Foraging and Farming in Island Southeast Asia: The Archaeology of the Niah Caves, Sarawak. (McDonald Institute Monographs.) Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.

Graeme Barker and Lucy Farr, eds. 2016. The archaeology of the Niah Caves, Sarawak. (Volume II). A companion volume to the Rainforest Foraging and Farming in Island Southeast Asia: the Archaeology of the Niah Caves, Sarawak. Together, they describe the most significant results of the Niah Caves Project.

G. Barker, et al. 2016. The "Cultured Rainforests" of Borneo, Quaternary International, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.quaint.2016.08.018.

From this article I quote some of their findings:

"Borneo has a 50,000-year record of *Homosapiens*' interactions with rainforests on the coastal lowlands... the present-day rainforests of Borneo are the product of a deep ecological history related both to natural factors such as climate change and cultural factors such as how different groups of people chose to extract their livelihoods from the forest, including in ways that do not have simple analogies with a subsistence activity of present-day rainforest foragers and farmers in Borneo.. (p.1)

 $\dots$  that hominins, almost certainly atomically modern human beings also were regularly visiting the NIAH Caves during the late Pleistocene from at least 50 ka...(p. 4)

... rice cultivation may have started in the Kelabit Highlands around 3 ka, some 100 years or so after the earliest occurrence of rice grains in the Neolithic ceramics at Niah... (p. 14)

In both parts of Borneo rice appears to have been relatively actively resisted as a plant food stable in favor of Sago until recent centuries... (p. 14)

The Niah Caves project has shown that, from their arrival at Niah around 53 ka, modern humans

used a wide range of cognitive and technical skills to exploit rainforests as well as a wide variety of other habitats. (p.13)"

Barker et al also argue that the two stage model of pre-Austronesian foraging and Austronesian farming is increasingly criticized as an explanatory model for the spread of domestic rice across Island Southeast Asia and the practices associated with its cultivation "Instead of a dichotomy between pre-Austronesian foraging and Austronesian farming, a complex variety of resource management economies can be increasing discerned across this vast region throughout the course of the Early and Mid Holocene that combined different mixes of hunting, fishing, gathering arboriculture, and vegeculture associated with different degrees of rainforest intervention." (p.15).

Is it now time for a re-assessment of the peopling of Southeast Asia, Melanesia, and Australia with archaeologists, linguists, ethnographers, genetists and biologists? The recent genetic work on the Australian Aborigines suggests that they broke off from New Guinea about 50,000 years ago. What is the relationship of the current population of New Guinea to the Australian Aborigines? Then there is that work done at ANU on the early agriculture in the highlands of New Guinea approximately 8,000 years ago. There is also the early occupation of the caves at Sulawesi. And the skull in Niah cave, which is dated to about 37,000 years ago and is representative of current populations in the area.

How is this work related to the peopling of the Pacific and to the Lapita culture?

Is it time for a new re-assessment? If it is, who would undertake this? The BRC would be interested in participating in this and perhaps could contribute funds to it.

# LOUISE M. MACUL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FRIENDS OF THE SARAWAK MUSEUM WRITES:

September, 2017 marked the 5th anniversary of *Friends of Sarawak Museum*. Over the past five years we have collaborated with other like-minded organizations to provide a number of public programmes, have held monthly talks, and have assisted the Sarawak Museum in basic, but much needed, documentation of their Iban textile collection. The FoSM mission statement still holds strong as we continue "to promote an appreciation of Sarawak's heritage". Further information can be obtained by visiting the *Friends of Sarawak Museum* facebook page or sending an email to fosmuseum@gmail.com; we are working on building a website. Our membership includes local residents, overseas residents, and institutional membership-- all are welcome to join, volunteer, or make a much-appreciated donation. We are a non-governmental, non-profit, self-funded, Malaysian registered society.

## **DEDICATED FUNDS**

<u>The Reed Wadley Memorial Fund</u>: established by the Borneo Research Council to honor the life and work of Dr. Reed Wadley (1962-2008). The fund will provide supplemental grants to graduate

students in cultural anthropology planning to do research in Borneo. Applicants should apply to the BRC. The fund now is at \$20,404.

Laura W. R. Appell Memorial Fund: In recognition of Laura W.R. Appell's commitment to the preservation of Borneo oral traditions and her contributions to Borneo ethnography, a fund was established in her honor with the initial contribution made by Cliff and Louise Sather. Laura was a Fellow of the Borneo Research Council and one of the founding members. This Fund will support the activities and publications of the Borneo Research Council. The fund now is at \$143,172. Contributions to the Laura W.R. Appell Fund of the Borneo Research Council may be sent to: Borneo Research Council, Box A, Phillips, ME 04966.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

I want to thank all those who have made contributions to the BRC over the past year. It is because of these we can keep the cost of publications low so that they can be enjoyed by everyone.

# **Contributions to the BRC Endowment Fund**

Dr. Michael Dove, Professor H. Arlo Nimmo, Mr. John D. Pearson, Ms. Vicki Pearson-Rounds, Dr. Anne Schiller, Fr. Brian Taylor, Dr. Phillip Thomas, and Dr. W.D. Wilder.

## Contributions to the BRC Operating Fund

Dr. Adela Baer, Dr. Donald Brown, Dr. Jay Crain, Professor Ian Douglas, Dr. & Mrs. Allen Drake, Dr. A.V.M. Horton, Dr & Mrs. Alfred Hudson, Mr. Thomas Murray, Ms. Vicki Pearson-Rounds, Mr. Quentin Phillipps, Dr. Robert Pringle, Dr. Rolf Schlömer, Prof & Mrs. F. Andrew Smith, Dr. & Mrs. Otto Steinmayer, Dr. W.D. Wilder and Mr. William Wilkinson.

We thank each of these individuals for their generous support.

## FINANCIAL REPORT

The operating statement is attached.

**G. N. Appell, Ph.D.** October 2017