

An overview of cultural research in Sabah

Abstract

Set against a background sketch of its peoples and cultures, this chapter traces the history of cultural research in Sabah, the East Malaysian state situated in northern Borneo. It takes the reader from accounts by European explorers and missionaries, and records of officers of the British North Borneo Chartered Company in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to post-Second World War research and the eventual development of the Sabah Society, the Department of Sabah Museum, the Borneo Research Council and the Institut Linguistik SIL–Cawangan Malaysia (now SIL Malaysia). It then briefly introduces some of the social and cultural research done since the establishment of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) in 1994, especially under its former School of Social Sciences (that combined with the School of Arts to form the Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Heritage in 2014), some of its research units and the Kadazandusun Chair. The discussion highlights some of the main researchers and their work over the years, especially in the fields of anthropology, linguistics, archaeology and ethnomusicology