ATLAS OF UNDER-REPRESENTED POPULATION GROUPS OF BORNEO

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ABSTRACT

Most atlases include demographic aspects of the territories that they cover. However, atlases, which are social reproductions, do highlight what are most pertinent to the societies that reside in the territories that are being represented. Under-representations of groups do occur in any society. For example, current trends do show that gender or minority related issues, among others, are under-represented in atlases. It is with this in mind that this paper seeks to justify the production of an atlas of the under-represented groups in Borneo. Even though it is the third largest island in the world, there is no separate atlas of this vast territory. Political divisions of the island, both during the colonial and post-colonial times, have served to make the production of atlases as national issues rather than for the whole of the island. An atlas of Borneo, with special reference to the under-represented groups, will indeed be an additional resource towards understanding the rich variety that prevails in the society in Borneo.

INTRODUCTION

Thematic maps are well known and widely used among specialists and ordinary citizens to disseminate and receive data and information just about everything which is spatially referenced. Users of the thematic maps can gain the first glimpse of the theme through their visual perception system without a need to refer to any numbers or formulas. This does not mean, however, that received messages are of poor quality or have an indicative character only. Behind every map - thematic maps in particular - are the numbers and formulas that represent the data. The quality of the data is the key factor which, in turn, ensures the quality and usefulness of the maps.

Data acquisition processes related to population could be very difficult and time consuming. Although, almost every country in the world has specialized agencies which conduct regular enumerations of its population, collected data may not be exhaustive, could have limited accuracy and/or completeness. Interestingly enough, among the many difficulties, one is worthy of mention here: difficulty of access to the population by the authority/authorities conducting the census. This is the case in many countries in Africa, and is also the case in many parts of Southeast Asia in general and, for example, Kalimantan, Indonesia, in particular. The nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyles of the people and/or the unrests and ongoing conflicts between various ethnic groups or authorities administering an area, among other reasons, results in the accessibility problem facing those endowed with the responsibility of undertaking census enumerations.

Despite being faced with such problems of conducting a census, most of the countries in Southeast Asia have been quite successful in conducting a population census every decade. The censuses have focused on the key issues of population growth, distribution (spatial and non-spatial), and movements, among others, that have been the backbone in much of the macro-economic planning of these countries as reflected in their five-year development plans. Hence, the general modus operandi of these census authorities is spending about five years on preparations (e.g. defining and redefining enumeration blocks) for conducting a census and another five years analyzing the results of the census that was conducted. A good part of the census information gets explicit coverage in the population census reports. However, there are other issues that remain, at most, only implicitly in the development plans and, perhaps, in research outputs of interested parties.
UNDER-REPRESENTED POPULATION GROUPS

Conventional representations of demographic characteristics of countries in the form of atlases usually appear alongside thematic maps showing political divisions and other socio-economic characteristics. The mapping of sub-populations based on ethnicity, religious affiliations, occupations, etc. help disaggregate the demographic characteristics of countries. However, representations of the more refined breakdowns of these sub-populations remain as lacunae in a good number of atlases produced.

The Demographic Atlas of Poland [2] is one example of an atlas that diverges from the standard norm of atlases. In this atlas, besides the conventional presentations of population by gender, nationality and religious denomination, maps of sub-population groups distinguished by physiological and environmental factors which create problems for the use of conventional types of maps constitute about a half of the entire atlas. The under-represented groups identified and mapped in this atlas include:

- population of 15 and over, by sex and age;
- population of working age;
- female population in the labour market;
- education and professional activity of women;
- motherhood – age and professional activity of mothers;
- motherhood – age, place of residence and level of education of mothers;
- motherhood and family status;
- motherhood and single care of children; and
- denominations of minority religions.

Under-represented groups exist in all countries. This is particularly true in countries which are in a period of transition from traditional, well-established economic structures to new structures demanded by the outside world. The issue of gender-based under-representation of groups in a society has its roots in the culture and religion of a country. Many attempts undertaken in the past in countries around the world, aimed at equalization of rights of females with males, were considered by the societies as acts of aggression on traditional values and beliefs. They were rejected, sometimes using brutal measures. Similarly, resistance prevailed when attempts were made to liberalize the bonding of youths with their families. Some experiments conducted in communist countries to replace the traditional role of the family in bringing up children, by state institutions (e.g. kindergarten, school, etc.) failed. One net result of such activities is the under-representation of the respective sub-populations in products such as atlases. After all, atlases are social reproductions.

A more obvious reason for the under-representation of groups is the spatial distribution of the population over geographically diversified locations – locations which exhibit very diversified livelihoods. Indonesia, with a population of over 200 million people and spreading across over 6,000 islands, presents a situation where the differences between the dominant and non-dominant groups are bound to emerge in their representations. The island of Borneo, of which a good two thirds is part of Indonesia, is a case in point.

THE ISLAND OF BORNEO

After Greenland and New Guinea, Borneo [Figure 1] is the third largest island on the earth. Covering an area of 750,000 km², Borneo is the largest land mass, located in a central position in Southeast Asia. The equator runs through the middle of Borneo, partitioning it into almost two equal halves. Borneo is administered by three countries: the southern part, Kalimantan (631,129 km²), is part of the Republic of Indonesia; the northern part, Sarawak (124,450 km²) and Sabah (73,619 km²), are two states of Malaysia; and the Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam (5,765 km²), sandwiched between Sabah and Sarawak, covers a tiny portion of northern Borneo.

Archeological discoveries in the Niah Caves of Sarawak indicate that Borneo has been peopled for at least 50,000 years. Some 2,500 years ago, Borneo was included in a large trading network that extended between China to India and the Middle East. Frequent visits by the Arabs to the island introduced Islam to the coastal tribes, while the interior areas remained unchanged. In the 16th century the island was colonized by the Dutch and the British. Newer elements of religion and culture were introduced with colonization. Colonization ended when Brunei Darussalam gained independence from British rule in 1984. Currently, it is estimated that the population of the island is about 16 million.

The partition of the island into national territories during the colonial and post-colonial times is one reason that the island is very seldom considered as a single entity. Almost every aspect of the physical or socio-economic environment,
culture and others, that crosses the political boundaries are considered as different entities. Nevertheless, the entities mentioned have been interconnected for several centuries. There is a strong possibility that the political portioning of phenomena that occurs “naturally” could lead to undesirable effects and conclusions.

Borneo is often perceived as being part of the “Malay World”. Such perceptions do hide the kaleidoscope of ethnic, language, religious, and other groups that exist in the island. In the Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam, the word “Malay” incorporates such sub-groups as the Kedayans, Bisayas, Muruts, Belait Malays, Dusuns, Tutong Malays and the Malays themselves. Several researches in the languages of Southeast Asia do point to the diversity of languages that exist in the island of Borneo [1]. In the interior portions of Borneo, there exist several Christian and Animistic groups that often are submerged in the overall classifications [3]. There is a significant presence of the Chinese in almost all the settled parts of Borneo, a presence that has been considered both a boon and a bane, even before the coming of the colonialists [4]. The newer arrivals of the Madurese into Southern Kalimantan have seen the eruption of ethnic riots over the last decade.

Superimposed on these divisions are the other demographic variations, such as those based on age, marital status and gender. While the disenfranchised groups can, to a certain extent, be identified (generally perceived) based on income and the corresponding ethnic characteristics, there is no clear representation for the visually trained to identify and understand the variety that exists. The atlas of the under-represented groups in Borneo is thus an attempt to bring to the fore the variety that exists in the island.

**ATLAS OF BORNEO’S UNDER-REPRESENTED POPULATION GROUPS**

There is no single stand-alone atlas covering the entire island of Borneo. Information on the representations of the physical, socio-economic and cultural environments prevalent in the island are only found in the national atlases of Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Indonesia. It is only by combining information from such diverse sources that one can create a composite of thematic maps of Borneo. The usual problems of compatibility of information between the sources, does prevail.
There are other atlases which cover the whole of Southeast Asia. Examples of such maps are *Historical Atlas of Southeast Asia* by Pluvier [1995] [5] and *The Atlas of Southeast Asia* by Ulack and Pauer [1989] [6]. As early as 1961, Charles Fisher in his book *A Social, Economic and Political Geography of Southeast Asia* (Table 16, p. 240 - 243) [7] identified the characteristics of the various indigenous groups in Indonesia. In all these few sources that is mentioned above, the situation remains such that one only gets a generalized representation of demographic characteristics for the island of Borneo.

The present objective is to produce an atlas of Borneo with special emphasis on the under-represented groups of the society therein. This demographic atlas of Borneo will cover several parameters of the population of Borneo. Special focus will be given to the under-represented groups in the population, notably, women, youth and ethnic minorities. Some sections of the atlas will cover the following aspects of the population:

- age and sex structure of the population;
- female population in the labour market;
- education and professional activities of women;
- motherhood versus professional activities of women;
- motherhood versus place of residence, level of education and religious denomination;
- age and sex structure of population under the age of 15;
- motherhood and family status;
- motherhood and single care of children.

**DATA SOURCES**

All countries concerned have been conducting population census every ten years. In the Republic of Indonesia, the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS-Statistics Indonesia) collects data using the following method: census, survey, compilation of administrative records, and other methods depending on available technology. Previously, population censuses had been conducted in 1961, 1971, 1980 and 1990. The population census in 2000 was also accompanied by the housing census.

A short census questionnaire covered basic information such as age, sex and relation to head of household. This form was used to enumerate all households over the entire country. In addition, a more detailed questionnaire covered such issues as age, sex, place of birth, occupation, religion, educational attainment, migration status, and fertility and mortality related questions. This questionnaire was administered for a select number of households all over the Republic of Indonesia.

Similar censuses for almost corresponding years have been undertaken in both Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam. The kinds of data collected are almost similar too. Besides the censuses both Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam also conduct a census on labour which will serve to highlight the under-represented groups in the labour market. National registration data are also a good source of information for this study.

**CONCLUSION**

This paper is an attempt to put together a rationale for an atlas on the under-represented groups on the island of Borneo. Political divisions of the island, be it of colonial or post-colonial origin, have given rise to a situation where there is a gradual erosion of the variety that exists in these societies. In an age of globalization, especially cultural globalization, homogenization processes have further merged the divisions between the various sub-divisions that exist among the people of Borneo. This atlas is thus a small attempt to celebrate difference.

**REFERENCES**

BIODATA

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