



Revisiting early Political History of Modern Sarawak through the making of Stephen Kalong Ningkan as Sarawak's first Chief Minister

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Abstract

This paper narrates a political story of modern Sarawak from 1961 to 1974. The modern political history of Sarawak began with the conceptualisation and the formulation of the Federation Malaysia. The significant events that shaped and influenced the political history of modern Sarawak include: the British-Malayan Government meetings in November 1961 and July 1962; the setting up of the Cobbold Commission of Enquiry; the formulation of the Malaysia Solidarity and Consultative Committee (MSCC); the formation of the Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC); the signing the Malaysia Agreement of 1963; the controversies surrounding the making of the first Chief Minister and of the making of the first local State Governor; the cabinet crises of 1965 and 1966; the proclamation of the state of emergency in Sarawak in 1966 by the Federal Parliament which led to the removal of its first Chief Minister; and the establishment of the Sarawak Alliance and the Native Alliance. This historical account of the early history of modern Sarawak is not complete without the description of the ideas and the political struggles of Stephen Kalong Ningkan, the State's first Chief Minister, and the issues affecting his political leadership.

Keywords: *Stephen Kalong Ningkan; political history of Sarawak; formation of Malaysia; Malaysians; Borneonisation; modern Sarawak, first chief minister of Sarawak*

Introduction

The main objective of this paper is to revisit a story about the political history of modern Sarawak, which all began with the conceptualisation and the formulation of Federation of

Malaysia which is made up of the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak. The story of the making of the Federation of Malaysia as we attempt to explicitly articulate here is a story of a nation building that was relatively a straightforward, an uncomplicated, a frank, a sincere, a friendly, and an easy process to accomplish. The implicit component of our story is an account of the political deception, the political manipulation, the political exploitation, the political manoeuvring that had taken place and had impacted the country's political system.

Our description is an attempt to share what we assumed to be the missing elements in the early political history of modern Sarawak, especially in relation to the event about the selection of the Sarawak's first Chief Minister and the State's first local Governor, and of the intention to establish a Council of Chiefs. This is not an analytical paper *per se*. It is the attention of this paper to present a historical narrative to enlighten scholars and researchers on the historical events that shaped and influenced the political processes in Sarawak in recent past. Many of the material that we share in this paper are obtained through archival research, and we hope that they do provide useful and interesting information for future scholars and researchers who wish to study Sarawak politics in particular, and Malaysian politics in general.

British-Malayan Agreement, Singapore and Malaysia

The Federation of Malaysia was inaugurated on 16 September 1963. But in reality, it had come into being in November 1961, six months after Tunku Abdul Rahman, then the Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya, mooted the idea in Singapore in May of that year. The idea about the establishment of a new nation in South East Asia was made public by Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya at a luncheon press conference in Delphi Hotel in Singapore on 27 May 1961. This was not exactly the first time that he had mentioned about the possible formation of a new nation as he had discussed the matter with Lord Perth in London in June 1958.

The British government's initial response to Tunku Abdul Rahman's idea of the formation of the Federation of Malaysia was to invite him to London to discuss the matter. Tunku Abdul Rahman knew what he wanted: to have authority and power over the Borneo territories and to preside over a much larger and prosperous nation. This was why before he accepted the invitation, Tunku wanted to know whether the Prime Minister of Britain had "the necessary authority to hand over the sovereignty of the Borneo territories" to the Federation of Malaya (Ajamain 2015:41). The query invariably meant the transfer of sovereignty to him by virtue of him being the Prime Minister of the new Federation.

The first official meetings between the British Government and the Malayan Government was held on 20-22 November 1961. These meetings were a consequence of series of communication through exchange of letters between the two governments, and the favourable findings of a study conducted prior to the meetings (Cobbold 1962:1). The Tunku must have agreed with the agenda of the meetings that on 13 October 1961, he accepted to go to London the following month:

For discussions with the object of reaching an understanding on the broad issues and to prepare the way for consultation with the Bornean territories without which no commitment could be entered into (Cobbold 1962: 1).

The meetings ended with the signing of a Joint Statement by the British and Malayan Governments on 23 November 1962 and one of the things mentioned in the Joint Statement was the need to establish a Commission of Enquiry in order “to ascertain the views of the peoples of North Borneo and Sarawak” (Cobbold 1962: 1).

The second British- Malayan meeting on the formation of the Federation of Malaysia, took place on 17-31 July 1962. The main purpose for organising this meeting was to discuss the twenty-nine matters that had been raised in the Cobbold Report. On 1 August, the British and the Malayan Governments issued a Joint Public Statement, which also coincided with the release of the Cobbold Report as ‘Command 1794’ (Lansdowne 1963: 18). One of the resolutions mentioned by this Joint Statement was about the transfer of sovereignty of North Borneo, Sarawak and Singapore to Kuala Lumpur by 31 August 1963 (Lansdowne 1963: 50). In a nutshell, this July meeting between the British and the Malayan Governments basically finalised and formalised the creation of the Federation of Malaysia which should be brought into being on 31 August 1963. However, both Sarawak and Sabah were not represented in these two meetings.

Lee Kuan Yew was keen to achieve independence for Singapore and he is conscious that the only way for this to happen quickly was through a merger with the other Territories. On 23 August 1961 Singapore agreed in principle to merge with the Federation of Malaya, and the MSCC recognised the need for these special arrangements for Singapore (Cobbold 1962: 80). A White Paper on the Memorandum which set out the ‘Heads of Agreement’ was published in Singapore on 15 November 1961 (Cobbold 1962: 1, 76 & 80).

Lee Kuan Yew suggested the new federation to encompass the Borneo Territories of Sabah and Sarawak, two of the three territories in South East Asia that had not achieved independence from their colonial master. Meanwhile, perhaps in order to ensure that his attempt to establish a new nation was not a forlorn hope, Tunku Abdul Rahman made a goodwill visit to the Borneo Territories in July 1961.

Malaysia Solidarity Consultative Committee

The Federation of Malaysia was jointly discussed at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Regional Conference held in Singapore in July 1961. As a result of this preliminary discussion, the delegates from North Borneo and Sarawak suggested the formation of a Malaysia Solidarity Consultative Committee (MSSC) of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. They said, in their Joint Statement, that:

They have decided to form a Malaysia Solidarity Consultative Committee consisting of representatives from each of the five territories. The object of the Consultative Committee would be to continue the explanations and discussions initiated at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and ensure that the impetus given to Malaysia is not slowed down ... What emerged clearly from the conference (C.P.A.) was that the delegates who shape and mould public opinion in their respective territories were convinced both of the necessity and inevitability of Malaysia (Cobbold 1962, Index F: 79; Stephens 1962: 1).

The aims and objectives of the MSCC which were formulated and agreed upon at its first meeting in Jesselton (Kota Kinabalu) on 24 August 1961 were as follows:

- (a) To collect and collate views and opinions concerning the creation of Malaysia consisting of Brunei, North Borneo (Sabah), Sarawak, Singapore and the Federation of Malaya;
- (b) To disseminate information on the question of Malaysia;
- (c) To initiate and encourage discussions on Malaysia; and
- (d) To foster activities that would promote and expedite the realisation of Malaysia (Cobbold 1962, Index F: 79; Stephens 1962, para. 3: 1).

On 3 February 1962, The MSCC completed its report referred to as the “Memorandum on Malaysia” and submitted it for consideration by the Commission of Enquiry on 23 February 1962.

James Wong Kim Min (1995), a member of the Malaysian Solidarity Consultative Council (MSCC) and the Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC) revealed that the Federation of Malaysia came about due to a series of circumstances such as mentioned below (p. 5):

- (a) The British Labour Government of the day had decided to shrink their commitments overseas particularly to pull away from their colonies in line with their policy to pull out of east of Suez with the exception of Hong Kong, the gateway to China;
- (b) There was a general yearning from the people in the Colonies to be free;
- (c) In the case of Sarawak, there was Indonesia under Soerkarno next door making threatening overtures against us; and
- (d) There was a Clandestine Communist Organisation (CCO) internal threat in Sarawak.

The members of the MSCC were regarded by many as “non-representative” enough but Lord Cobbold defended the Consultative Council when he said that,

Most of the participants were leaders in their own right either as leaders of political parties or as the accepted heads of their respective communities. The fact of their membership of the State Legislatures and in some cases, also of the Executive Council or the Supreme Council of their respective territories, reminded us that the Governments concerned have placed high value in respect to their judgment and ability in view of their influence and leadership. Their opinions, therefore, demand serious consideration (Cobbold 1962, para. 175: 46).

The suggestions made by the MSCC with respect to the safeguards of Sabah and Sarawak formed the basis of the demands of the people that were presented to Lord Cobbold when he visited both territories in February 1962.

The Making of Sarawak First Chief Minister

The making of the first Chief Minister of Sarawak was not as straightforward as the making of the first Chief Minister of Sabah. Donald A. Stephens, Sabah’s (formerly North Borneo) first Chief Minister was one of the signatories of the Malaysian Agreement (MA63) and the Inter-Governmental Committee Report (IGC Report) that was signed in London respectively on 9 July 1963 and on 7 February 1963. He also chaired the Malaysia Solidarity Consultative Committee (MSCC) which met four times between the 18th and 24th August 1961 in Jesselton

(now Kota Kinabalu), Kuching, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore (Cobbold 1962: Appendix F: 79; Stephens 1962: 1). In contrast, Stephen Kalong Ningkan, Sarawak's first Chief Minister, did not have the depth of political experience as possessed by Donald A. Stephens. He was not a member of the MSCC, and neither was he involved with the IGC and the MA63.

Eventhough the then Governor Sir Alexander Waddell did not favour Stephen Kalong Ningkan for the job but upon realising that the latter had the majority support in the State Council Negeri (State Legislature), the former still sworn in Stephen Kalong Ningkan as Independent Sarawak first Chief Minister on 22 July 1963. By swearing in Ningkan, Governor Waddell was true to the spirit of the principle of constitutional monarchy whereby the leader of the party that has the majority support in the Legislature has the first constitutional rights to form the government. Governor Waddell's preferred choice for the job was either James Wong Kim Min or Ong Kee Hui.

Governor Waddell's preference for either James Wong or Ong Kee Hui could be due to his familiarity with the two men. Both James Wong and Ong Kee Hui were sitting Members of the Council Negeri (State Legislature) at period leading to independence, and James Wong in particular, was also a Member of the State Supreme Council or the State Cabinet, while Ong Kee Hui was an unofficial member. Both were also Local Government Councillors: James Wong as a Member of Limbang District Council, whereas Ong Kee Hui was a Mayor of Kuching (the Capital of Sarawak). Both men were also members of the MSCC, and come from affluent families.

Two days before Ningkan was sworn in, Governor Waddle (20 July 1963) express his favour for James Wong:

2. "Alliance caucus met Tuesday [16 July 1963 (sic)] in Sibu with Malaysians in attendance. I sent an emissary to summon them to Kuching and at the same time to stress the importance of forming a broad-based government including independents and indeed moderate leaders of non Alliance parties in interests of national unity, efficient administration and security. I had in mind James Wong as Chief Minister and ministerial representation of S.U.P./PANAS in hope of breaking communist grip on S.U.P.P, and avoiding split in Malays through Panas.

6. There is uneasiness amongst Chinese in Third Division who fear a pogrom after 31st August and some tenseness is reported in Kuching with Barjasa/PANAS incidents and apprehension of rule by inexperienced natives. We can no doubt expect more of this in situation where Kuching is the centre of opposition and with no responsibility.

In his earlier telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, it can be inferred that Governor Waddell (15 July 1963) in fact had expressed his preference for James Wong as Sarawak's first Chief Minister:

... There are no local officials up for the job and the appointment of an expatriate would cast doubts on country's readiness for independence and invite charges of neo-colonialism.

2. It seems probable that the best material for the Chief Minister will come from the independents...

James Wong was an independent member of the Council Negeri (State Legislature) at the material time. He later joined the Sarawak National Party (SNAP) and became the state first deputy Chief Minister.

However, Abdul Razak was more keen that the Alliance representatives that met in Sibul would come to a decision on who to be nominated as Sarawak's first Chief Minister "before opportunity for discussion" came by (Acting 19 July 1963). Perhaps, in his pre-emptive bid to influence their decisions, he made arrangement for members of the Sarawak Alliance, as well as Datuk Bandar to go to Kuala Lumpur for discussions. According to Ling Beng Siew, Datuk Bandar, who is the leader of PANAS, also harboured the ambition to be the Chief Minister of Sarawak (Higham 24 May 1963).

The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Selkirk (11 July 1963) concurred with Waddell's view by saying:

James Wong might well make a balanced and competent Chief Minister of Sarawak. The more difficult choice seems to me to be that of Head of State. On this there may well not be full agreement among the parties in Sarawak and the Governor will have to make a personal recommendation. Before the appointment can be agreed this will need to be approved by the Federation Government.

The Commissioner General for the United Kingdom, in his outward telegram to Governor Waddell, revealed that Ling Beng Siew, a member of Sarawak delegation in the IGC, also preferred James Wong over Ningkan to be Sarawak's first Chief Minister. The Commissioner General wrote (12 July 1963):

I saw the Sarawak delegation on their return from London.

3. ... James Wong as Chief Minister, supported by a coalition government of which Ong Kee Hui and Dato Bandar hold ministerial offices and Jugah would be Minister Without Portfolio. He had considerable position suspicion of Stephen Kalong Ningkan (*sic*) ...I encouraged him on his view and said national unity was of great importance at this stage in the evolution of Sarawak".

At the discussion he had with Alliance representatives from Sarawak in Kuala Lumpur, Tunku said that anyone to be appointed as Sarawak Chief Minister "would need to be a man of ability and integrity" (Acting 4 July 1963). The Malayans had insisted that no government should be formed in "advance of talks with Tunku" (Acting 19 July 1963).

In his inward telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Waddell (23 July 1963) had this to say:

I saw Khaw Kai Boh who threatened me with Tunku's displeasure... They distrust Ningkan and find him too outspoken and unpliant for their liking. They had in mind Tawi Sli for Chief Minister, ex court peon and of little account. Apparently Malayans had thought they had negotiated package deal and were expecting all Sarawak Alliance members to troop to Kuala Lumpur for their instructions. After a long discussion in which I elaborated on lines my telegram under reference and Khaw maintained that Malayans had right to nominate government "as they were taking over". I told him flatly that I was not prepared to compromise my constitutional duty nor break faith with the Alliance.

But Khaw Kai Boh, according to Governor Waddell, changed his mind after he had met the members of the State Supreme Council and promised to “urge on Razak their acceptability” (Waddell, 23 July 1963). Tunku was shell-shocked at how he had been overlooked by Governor Waddell when he appointed Ningkan as the Chief Minister of Sarawak. He was very angry because his advice was taken lightly (PRO 1 Sept. 1963). Tunku had thought that Ningkan was no longer in the running to become the Chief Minister.

Though a personable individual, he had proven himself to be boastful and unreliable and despite his position in the Alliance Party, had come into conflict with other Alliance colleagues (Lord Selkirk, 6 July 1963).

There was even a suggestion to nominate an official, albeit on a temporary basis, to be the Head of the Government in the state instead of having a full-fledged Chief Minister.

While I agree *with the (sic)* standards mentioned for Head of State and Chief Minister we will have to take the best we can get. It will be quite impracticable in my view [to] nominate an official as Acting Chief Minister (Waddell 9 July 1963).

The Malaysians preferred a Malay to be the Chief Minister, and their choice was lawyer Abdul Rahman Ya'kub. “Ideally, the Federation would have favoured a Dayak Head of State and a Malay Chief Minister,” and there was a suggestion from the Malaysians at the material time that Sarawak should have only an Acting Chief Minister (Lord Selkirk 6 July 1963).

His disdain towards Ningkan made him and the Malaysian establishment prefer Tawi Sli as Chief Minister of Sarawak. But the Malaysians also acknowledged the fact that the Iban were the backbone of the Ningkan-led Sarawak Alliance, which had emerged to become the main mechanism for promoting the Malaysian concept in Sarawak.

But Ningkan was not to be denied his place in history. When it was assured that he had obtained the majority support from the thirty-six Sarawak State Assemblymen, Governor Waddell, in accordance with the principle of the *Westminster* Parliamentary System of Government, on 22 July 1963 had to swear him as Sarawak's first Chief Minister.

The Making of the Governor

Ningkan's first few months in office were preoccupied with issues surrounding the appointment of Sarawak's first local Governor or the first Yang di-Pertuan Negeri. Under the July 1962 Agreement, signed in London between the British and the Malaysian Governments, Sarawak's first Head of State must be appointed by the Agong on the advice of the Malaysian Government. But before tendering advice to the Agong, the Malaysian Government must consult the British Government first. The appointment of the Head of State for Sarawak is also stipulated in Para 20(1) of the Report of the Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC) (Lansdowne 1963: 6), which reads:

The first Head of State should be a person nominated before Malaysia Day by Her Majesty the Queen and His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and should be appointed by him for a period of two years. Thereafter the Head of State should be appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong acting in his discretion after consulting the Chief Minister of the State. The Head of State should be known

as the Yang di-Pertua Negara in the case of North Borneo and as the Governor in the case of Sarawak and should exercise similar functions to those of the Governors of Malacca and Penang.

In his telegram to the Secretary of State, Lord Lansdowne specifically mentioned that the appointment of first Heads of State of Sarawak and North Borneo was discussed during the Malayan meetings in July 1962. They were to be:

appointed by the Agong acting in his discretion but after consultation with the Chief Minister, however, in the case of the first appointments the Malayan would consult the British Government before tendering advice to the Agong (Lord Lansdowne 24 Jan. 1963).

Lord Lansdowne also said the Cobbold Commission “unanimously recommended that the first Heads of State should be appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on the joint nomination of the Queen and the Agong (Lord Lansdowne 24 Jan. 1963).

In his message to Sir Martin, N.B.J. Huijsman (28 June 1963), the Private Secretary to Duncan Sandys (the Commonwealth Secretary) wrote,:

...after consulting local opinion as to the most suitable persons to be the Head of State, should forward their advice to Mr Sandy's. Provided that he is satisfied that he could properly advise the Queen to nominate the persons proposed, the Malayan Government would be asked to confirm that the proposed nomination would be acceptable to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong...Mr Sandys would submit the nominations to Her Majesty and the Malayan Government would be asked to secure the approval of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

In an outward telegram from the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) to Kuala Lumpur dated 22 April 1963, it specifically says the opinion needed to be sought on the nomination of the Head of State (CRO 22 April 1963):

...our provisional view is that Governors after consulting local opinion should forward their advice to us. Subject to our being satisfied that we could properly advise the Queen to nominate the persons proposed we should ask you to obtain the confirmation of the Malayan Government that the proposed nominations would be acceptable to the Agong...”

Para 2. If you and Governors of North Borneo and Sarawak agree with the procedure we shall ask you to obtain Malayan concurrence to it...”

Para 3. When we have agreed the procedure with the Malayan it will be necessary for us to seek The Queen's approval of it. We should like to know whether the Malayan Government would then propose also to seek the approval of the Agong for the proposed procedure...”

The CRO (22 April 1963) in its outward telegram to Kuala Lumpur, provided the procedures for selecting the Heads of State for Sabah and Sarawak.

“Nomination of the Heads of State

“We are considering procedure for nominations by Queen and Agong of the first Heads of State in Sabah and Sarawak: our provisional view is that, Governors, after consulting local opinion, should forward their advice to us. Subject to our being satisfied that we could properly advise the Queen to nominate the persons proposed we should ask to obtain the confirmation of the Malayan Government that the proposed nominations would be acceptable to the Agong...”

2. If you and Governors North Borneo and Sarawak agree with this procedure we shall then ask you to obtain Malayan concurrence to it....

3. When we have agreed the procedure with the Malaysians, it will be necessary for us to seek The Queen’s approval of it. We should like to know whether the Malayan Government would then propose also to seek the approval of the Agong for the proposed procedure....”

G.W. Toby (4 June 1963) explained how he had been asked to seek the views of the Federation Government to settle the problem relating to the nomination of the Heads of State for Sabah and Sarawak:

I have been asked to seek the views of the Federation Government on the procedure which should be followed in settling the nomination of the first Heads of State of Sabah and Sarawak. You will recall that Paragraph 20(1) of the Inter-Governmental Committee Report says that they should be persons nominated before Malaysia Day by Her Majesty the Queen and His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

It is proposed that when the Governors have consulted local opinion and decided on their own views, there should be informal consultation with the Federation Government before those views are forwarded to London as formal advice

At any time after the making of the British Orders in Council containing the State Constitutions. The joint nominations could be announced, and if it were thought to be expedient for the purpose of bringing the Constitutions into operation, instruments of appointments might be issued by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to take effect on the commencement of the Constitutions.

The British authorities would be glad to know whether the above procedure would be acceptable to the Federation Government.....

It would greatly assist the authorities in London if they could be informed before Friday, the 14th June, whether the above proposals are in fact agreeable to the Federation Government, so that Royal approval can be given before the initiating of the Formal Agreement.

In his discussion with the Alliance representatives on 4 July 1963, Tunku explained that “the Head of State would need to be well educated person and at least able to read address for them in English” (Acting 4 July 1963). Bentliff (18 April 1963), in the Commonwealth Relations Office, London described the appointment of the Heads of State of North Borneo and Sarawak as something that is “of interest to the Executive Working Group on Malaysia.”

In his telegram on 1 August 1963, Governor Waddell told the Secretary of State for the Colonies that Ningkan “reassert that Jugah is the only candidate acceptable to the Alliance”

(Waddell 1 August 1963). Governor Waddell also informed the Secretary of State for the Colonies that Ningkan feared the Alliance would break up within a week if Jugah was not appointed and the “whole country would be anti-Malaysia” as a consequence (Waddell 1 August 1963).

Ningkan’s reason for nominating Jugah was due to Jugah’s wide experience as he had been a member of the Council Negeri (the State Legislative Assembly), since 1952, and of the State Supreme Council since 1960. Governor Waddell concurred with Ningkan, saying that the Ibans had ‘claimed priority’ for Head of State to the Cobbold Commission of Enquiry, and that there was a ‘real danger’ in forcing other candidate (Waddell 1 Aug. 1963)

But Tunku’s opposition to the recommendation was resolute and he remained adamant that Sarawak’s first local Head of State must be a Malay so as “to balance Iban Chief Minister” (CRO 8 August 1963). Tunku believed that Dato Openg was qualified and that he had a ‘good record’ eventhough “his connection with politics had been negligible compared to Jugah’s Public Record Office [(PRO) 23 July 1963]. Tunku also warned that, if a Malay was not to be appointed as the Governor, the Indonesian might see this as an opportunity to stir up Sarawak Malays into ‘dangerous hostility’ (PRO 23 July 1963). The opposition PANAS also jumped in the fray, rejected Jugah on ethnicity ground, and had preferred a Malayan to be the governor instead.

The Chairman of the Party, Abang Haji Mustapha Datu Bandar, said it fully supported the stand of the Malayan Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, that the appointment of Sarawak’s first Governor was the prerogative of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (King of Malaya) and the Queen of England. Party Negara would not accept Temenggong Jugah Anak Barieng, a nominee of the Sarawak Alliance Government, as the State’s Governor, Temenggong Jugah is a Dayak, and the party would prefer a Malayan (Reuter 10 Sept. 1963).

Khaw Kai Boh of Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), in support of Tunku’s assertion that there was a need to balance the Iban Chief Minister, expressed opinion that the two offices of the Chief Minister and the Governor should not be held by one ethnic group only.

Tunku was tenacious in rejecting Jugah from being appointed as Governor, describing him as ‘illiterate’ and lacked the ability to hold the office (CRO 8 Aug. 1963). The consequence of having an Iban Chief Minister, reiterated Tunku, was to have a Malay Head of State. The controversy surrounding the appointment of the Head of State of Sarawak was resolved after Tunku, the Commonwealth Secretary of State, the Chief Minister of Sarawak and Temenggong Jugah signed a Joint Statement, which reads (CRO, Sept. 1963a):

The London agreement on Malaysia provides that the first Governor of Sarawak shall be appointed on the nomination of the Queen and the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong.

The Malayan Government have maintained that since the Chief Minister in Sarawak is an Iban, the first Governor should be a Malay. For the sake of unity and goodwill on the eve of the formation of Malaysia, Temenggong Jugah has generously asked that his name should not be considered for the first Governorship. This has enabled general consent to be given to the appointment

of a Malay, it being understood that, when the term of office of the first Governor expires, the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong will be graciously pleased to give favourable consideration to the appointment as Governor of the person whom the Chief Minister may recommend.

The resolution on this matter came about after Mr Duncan Sandys, the Commonwealth Secretary of State, had asked all “the leading personalities in Sarawak” to meet him in Kuala Lumpur on 12 September 1962. This is to hear their views on “the question of the choices of the new Head of State” (CRO, 10 Sept. 1963). Consequently, on 13 September 1963, just three days before the proclamation of Sarawak’s independence, Datu Abang Haji Openg was officially appointed by Yang di-Pertuan Agong under Article 49 of the Sarawak Constitution, as Sarawak’s first Head of State for a term of two years beginning with Malaysia Day. The appointment was read by Ningkan. However, the announcement of Datu Openg’s appointment was embargoed in Malaya until 7.00 pm on that day, as it was to be issued by Governor Waddell upon his arrival in Kuching on the same day (CRO 13 September 1963b).

On the other hand, the Queen had approved of Datu Abang Haji Openg as Governor of Sarawak the day before (CRO 12 Sept. 1963a). Meanwhile, Datu Openg’s curriculum vitae revealed that he had been a clerk in the government department, a Native Officer magistrate, a Senior Native Officer, a District Officer, a Senior Service Administrative Officer, a Local Councillor, a President of Majlis Islam, a Member of the Council Negeri, a member of the State Supreme Council, and he was bestowed his Datuship in 1953 (CRO 12 Sept. 1962b).

Council of Chiefs

The Malaysians entertained the thought of setting up a Council of Chiefs (the *Dewan Orang Besar*) in Sarawak after Malaysia came into being, with Datu Bandar as one of the ‘greater chiefs’ (Lord Selkirk 6 July 1963). The main aim of Council of Chiefs, according to Tunku, was to provide employments “for the boys in a field which was reasonably within their competence” (Earl of Selkirk 11 July 1963). The expected role of the Council of Chiefs was to act as advisor to the Governor on local customs and traditions of the indigenous peoples of the State of Sarawak, but they were not to deal with matters pertaining to the legislation. “The *Dewan Orang Besar* will consist of the *Orang Besar Dua*, *Orang Besar Empat* and the *Orang Besar Di-Lapan*” (PRO 15 July 1963).

But the establishment of this Council of Chiefs could only be made possible by making the relevant changes in the state constitution. The Tunku in fact “had wished the Sarawak delegation to agree ... to undertake to introduce a constitutional amendment after the 31st August making provision for a Council of Chiefs” (PRO 15 July 1963).

The first ‘*Orang Besar*’ in the State were to be appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Chief Minister. Subsequently, the appointment of *Orang Besar* would still be the responsibility of the Governor, but he could only do so on the advice of the Chief Minister who needed to consult the *Dewan Orang Besar* first. The present holders of rank or title peculiar to the State of Sarawak would be the preferred choice of selection. (PRO 15 July 1963).

In his letter to the Commonwealth Relations Office, entitled ‘Council of Chiefs,’ and that was forwarded to the Governor of Sarawak, Higham wrote:

Ghazali Shafie Permanent Secretary Ministry of External Affairs has today 12th August written to me as follows. Begins.

Recently in London during the the final stages of the Malaysia negotiation Cecil Sheridan gave to the Attorney General Sarawak a copy of draft which contained the framework of Dewan Orang Besar in Sarawak to be established after Malaysia. I am sending herewith a draft letter which the Chief Minister of Sarawak may wish to write to the Prime Minister after having given his consideration to the matter (CRO 12 August 1963).

In his reponse to Kuala Lumpur, Governor Waddell (13 August 1963) had this to say:

Your telegram No. 388.

Council of Chiefs

Higham’s letter shows how hazy and ill-considered this proposal is...

2. Nevertheless I mentioned Ghazali’s message to Chief Minister and proposed draft reply without comment. His immediate reaction was this was a plot to confuse the Head of State issue. He is prepared to consider Council of Chiefs on its own merits but not (repeat not) as a device to *rule out (sic)* Jugah into a siding....

Sarawak Alliance

The five pro-Malaysian parties (BARJASA, PANAS, PESAKA, SCA and SNAP) agreed to form the Sarawak United Front, after they had held a meeting at the Rose Room of the Aurora Hotel on 22 October 1962. The meeting was presided by Senator T.H. Tan, the Secretary-General of the Alliance Party in Malaya, and a leader of the Malayan delegates which included Tuan Syed Jafaar Albar (UMNO, Publicity Chief) and Mr Yap Kon Choon (MCA, Liaison Officer) (The Sarawak Tribune 22 Oct. 1962). Their presence were to act as advisors and whose main purpose was to “help right wing parties in Borneo to organise themselves into a strong political force to contest the general election next year [ie. In 1963 sic] (SLIC Nov. 1962). The objectives of the formation of the Sarawak Front included:

- (a) To unite all races to work for the harmony and prosperity of the country.
- (b) To work for the realisation of Malaysia provided adequate safeguards would be obtained by Sarawak.
- (c) To form an alliance among all parties having similar aims and objectives in Sarawak (The Sarawak Tribune 23 Oct. 1962).

At the end of the meeting, a Working Committee and a permanent Sub-Committee were set up, and a resolution was passed to condemn the subversive and prevalent elements whose main purpose it said was “to disrupt the unity of the people and peace of the country by preaching class hatred” (The Sarawak Tribune 23 Oct. 1962).

The first two political parties to form an alliance, known as the Sarawak Alliance, were SNAP and PESAKA. Ningkan, from SNAP, was elected the Sarawak Alliance’s first Secretary-General, while Temenggong Jugah Anak Barieng and Montegrai Anak Tungan were

elected as its first President and Deputy President respectively. Both Jugah and Montegrai were from the conservative PESAKA party (The Sarawak Tribune 27 June 1962). “The alliance was regarded as an important historical occasion for the Dayak peoples of Sarawak because it marked for once the solidarity of these people” (Domough 23 Oct. 1962). Immediately after the proclamation of the Sarawak Alliance, Ningkan talked of the importance of unity within the community when he said:

We must uphold and maintain its solidarity in order that it will become a strong foundation of our political emergence.

Although we are living in different divisions and districts, and quite far from one another, the distance can make a little difference when there exists the great union of determination to walk along the same road of progress, social uplift and political maturity (Domough 23 Oct. 1962).

Initially, the alliance of two Iban-led political parties; two Malay-led political parties; and one Chinese-led political party had difficulty to find a united stand.

Instead of taking advantage of the disorganisation of the SUPP to consolidate their Sarawak Alliance, the right-wing political parties have chosen to fall amongst themselves, largely as a result of personal jealousies and inter-party rivalry (The Sarawak Tribune Dec. 1962).

Ningkan’s Initial Reaction to Malaysia

Initially, Ningkan disliked the idea of the formation of the Federation of Malaysia. He later changed his mind and became a staunch proponent and supporter of the concept. His opposition to the Malaysia Plan Proposal could be attributed to three main factors. Ningkan knew that Sarawak would be dominated by Malaya once the state sovereignty was transferred to the central government in Kuala Lumpur. Malaya has eleven of the country’s thirteen states and about two-thirds of the federal parliamentary seats. Invariably, this means that the federal government can initiate, as it may wish to do so, any constitutional amendments or legislate laws that affect Sarawak without the need to adequately consult the people in the state to seek their consent and approval. Ningkan wanted Sarawak to be granted full independence first before the idea of a merger with Malaya is accommodated.

Ningkan’s initial rejection of the idea of the formation of Malaysia was also derived from the fact that a Sarawakian would never be the Supreme Ruler of the new federation. The transfer of Sarawak sovereignty meant the surrender of the state sovereignty from The Queen to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, the Head of State for Malaya. The position of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong is rotated every five years among the nine Sultans in Malaya.

For the four states that do not have a Sultan, their Heads of States or the Yang di-Pertua Negeri are appointed by the Agong. In the colonial days, the task of governing the state was the responsibility of a Viceroy. Though the Yang di-Pertua Negeri could not be equated to be exactly similar in descriptions to that of a Viceroy, their similarity however lies in the nature of job they undertake that is to represent and act on behalf of the monarch. In one of the requests

he made to Lord Cobbold, Ningkan demanded that Sarawakians should be considered as Head of State for Malaysia as well even though he did not specify how it could be implemented.

The Iban community, to which Ningkan belonged to, is the largest single ethnic group in Sarawak. But in the new political arrangement, his community, the Iban, would constitute a small minority. The new political arrangement could be unsympathetic to the Iban. The many issues that were in the hearts and minds of the Iban include religious freedom, language and education. Ningkan was worried that in this new political arrangement, Iban language, culture and tradition could be marginalised (Kadang 1979).

The Iban traditional way of life revolved mainly around the community's system of land-use and land-administration. Any disruptions to this system have the potential to affect negatively the community's way of life and its livelihood strategies. Ningkan was particularly bothered by the notion that his community could be assimilated in the broader concept of Malaysia.

Change of Mind

The pace of political development leading to general acceptance by the people of the Malaysia Plan Proposal had been relentless, especially among the Malays. In the Excerpts from the Annual Reports of Administrative Officers for the Year 1962, the District Officer of Kuching, I.A.N. Urquhart (1963:111), described the Malay overwhelming support as follows:

The Cobbold Commission arrived out in February and interviewed representatives of all groups and parties. It was quite clear that well over 90 per cent of the Malays vociferously welcomed Malaysia. This loud welcome was unfortunate as it reinforced the majority of the Land Dayaks in their feelings that they did not want Malaysia because it would lead once again to their domination by Malays.

The Rejang Iban also agreed with the concept when fifty-one Iban Chiefs from the area met in Sibul on 15 February 1962 to declare their support. These Iban Chiefs represented about fifty *percent* of the Iban as about half of the Iban lived in the Rejang basin. These fifty-one Iban Chiefs produced the Kapit Resolution that was presented to the Cobbold Commission of Enquiry in Sibul on 19 March 1962 (Cobbold, 1962: 8-9). The Rejang basin was also the area where Temenggong Jugah, the President of Parti Pesaka Anak Sarawak (PESAKA), originated from. The smaller groups too supported the idea, but with minor reservations which was easy to deal with. The only open objection was from the Chinese community.

The Sarawak United Front ... has decided to submit a memorandum to the United Nations countering the joint petition sent to the U.N in September by SUPP, Party Rakyat Brunei and United Pasok Momogun Party of North Borneo. Ther latter party has now informed the U.N. that it has withdrawn its support of the petition" [(Sarawak Local Intelligence Committee (SLIC), Oct. 1962)].

Lord Cobbold provided the 'Summary of Evidence from Various Racial Groups and Political Parties,' in Section E of his report, which basically described their agreement to the Malaysia Plan Proposal (Cobbold, 1962: 8-19).

The formation of the Cobbold Commission of Enquiry was a further evidence that formation of Malaysia was eminent. The Commission was established by the British Government after its Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan met Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Prime Minister of Malaya in London, about the formation of the Federation of Malaysia in November 1961.

Ningkan changed his mind about the Malaysia Plan Proposal after his party met in Betong to discuss the safeguards to be forwarded to Lord Cobbold and his Team of Enquiry. One of the factors that led to this switch was the communist threat. The Ibans were vulnerable to communist propaganda, as the communists began to increase their activities – through the SUPP – and had increasingly directed activities towards winning over the Dayak and other natives (SLIC 6 Nov. 1962). From the Office of the Governor, it was reported that the Chinese, who were the main supporters of SUPP and the main proponents communist ideology, had grown to be more aggressive :

I have the *honour (sic)* to refer to the report of the Sarawak Local Intelligence Committee for June 1960 ...my secret savingram No. 433 dated 7th July.

2. ...The Chinese are now openly and aggressively advocating racial schools primarily for themselves and as a corollary for the indigenous peoples as well...they are making an all-out attack on the educational policy of the government, branding it as ‘colonialist’ and ‘imperialist’ ... there is no doubt that this continuing Chinese outburst has caused the races to grow further apart and it would not surprise me if it hastened the formation of a Dayak political party (Office of the Governor 15 July 1960).

A larger country would have bigger pool of resources to counter the threat of the communist insurgency. Ningkan then declared that Malaysia dream had to come true.

Ningkan’s and SNAP’s protestation the Malaysia Plan proposal caused their omission from the Malaysia Solidarity Consultative Council (MSCC), which, as already been mentioned, was established for the purpose of continuing the discussion on the formation of Malaysia. The MSCC members from Sarawak were Ong Kee Hui, Yeo Cheng Hoe, Temenggong Jugah, Pengarah Montegrai, Datuk Abang Haji Openg, Ling Beng Siew, James Wong and Remigus Durin. None of of these people had any association and link with SNAP. As outsiders, Ningkan and his group were not involved in determining the agenda for discussion in the MSCC. Ningkan’s and SNAP’s protestation had little impact in swaying public opinion to go against the Malaysia Plan idea. Ningkan then declared that Malaysia dream had to come true.

Supporting Malaysia

The Cobbold Commission arrived in Sarawak in February 1962. When the Commission visited Betong on 26 March 1962, Ningkan and SNAP forwarded the conditions for acceptance of the Malaysia Plan Proposal. To restrain federal interference to protect and safeguard state rights and Iban socio-political interests, Ningkan and SNAP forwarded altogether eighteen demands, which included the retention of State jurisdiction over customary rights, land rights, immigration, development, and educational opportunities. Specifically, Ningkan and SNAP demanded safeguards on the followings: the preservation of customary rights; the protection of land rights; the adoption of English as official language and medium of instruction in schools, the recognition and acceptance of Iban as one of the secondary languages in Sarawak; the control over immigration by the state; state civil service; religious freedom; fair and equitable

opportunity to be given to the indigenous Dayaks in government employment, education, overseas training and scholarships; financial provision; adequate and fair recruitment of the Indigenous people in all the three components in the Armed Forces – the Army, the Navy and the Air Force) (Kadang 1979). These safeguards were important as Ningkan believed that Sarawak had to be insulated from federal interference.

In his report on the District, Saribas District Officer, D.W. Rowbotham described how the Malaysian Plan Proposal affected the average Dayak (Rowbotham April 1963:81):

This year has been notable for the way political affairs have affected the average Dayak. The proposal to form the Federal State of Malaysia stimulated longhouse discussion and not a little controversy. It took a great deal of patient explanation (undertaken mainly by my late colleague and predecessor, Hermanus Assan) to translate a rather complicated idea into a simple and accurate picture of what the new form of State would be. It can be said that this was done successfully for later in the year when opinion had sufficiently crystallised it was Dayak opinion in the main that sought sufficient safeguards to ensure that Sarawak would not lose by joining Malaysia.

Anti-Communist

Ningkan was anti-communist. Even though he did not want any merger with Malaya initially as he said so in July 1961, his anti-communist stance provided him the opportunity to stand in good stead with the Malaysians and the pro-Malaysia elements in Sarawak. He believed that the Clandestine Communist Organisation is the “principal threats to the peace and prosperity” of Sarawak (Ho 1992: 23).

In Sarawak, the Clandestine Communist Organisation (CCO) had penetrated the Chinese-based political party, the Sarawak United Peoples’ Party (SUPP).

Perhaps the most ominous point, certainly the most depressing, is the reluctance of the leaders of SUPP to take a stand against communism. Their utterances have been equivocal, and, in particular the attitudes of Ong Kee Hui President of SUPP...shows a weakness that can only be attributed to the strength of the extreme left wing within his party”. (Office of the Governor 17 August 1960).

Borneonisation

One of Ningkan’s main policy initiatives was to implement the Borneonisation program. The whole notion about this Borneonisation process was to retain the service of expatriate officers until local Sarawakians were ready to take over from them (Kadang 1979: 97). The Malaysians were not happy with this policy as they favoured the Malays to take over. Ningkan insisted that he was right to carry out the Borneonisation policy as it was recommended by the MSCC as constitutional safeguards for Sarawak.

It was agreed that, like Singapore, the ... Borneo territories should have certain local safeguards ... example, control of migration, Borneonisation, and special provision for taxation, customs and other fiscal matters ... (Cobbold 1962: 80; Stephens 1962: 2).

In the paper signed on 4 January 1962 that endeavoured to explain the framework of the Malaysian concept and the visit of the Commission of Enquiry to the the state, the Government of Sarawak had this to say about Borneonisation policy:

The State service, over which Sarawak would have complete control There would be opportunities for Bornean Federal officers to serve other parts of Malaysia and in external affairs posts overseas The progress in Borneonisation of the local service would continue (Cobbold 1962: 75).

In implementing the Borneonisation policy, Ningkan maintained that the idea was also mentioned in the Report of the Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC) which formed the basis for the 1963 London Agreement on the creation of the Federation of Malaysia. "I wish to emphasise to you," he said, at 17th Annual General Meeting of the Sarawak Government Asian Officers Union on 12 January 1964 that "that the Sarawak Government intends to see that the terms of the Inter-Government Committee Report are strictly observed as regards Borneonisation, and that Malayanisation will be resisted (Ho 1992: 42). In Appendix B under the title "The Public Service," IGC Report describes the policy of Borneonisation this way (Lansdowne 1963: 29-30):

5. Borneonisation of the Public Services in the Borneo States is a major objective of policy. For a number of years to come special arrangements will be necessary to secure this objective and to protect the legitimate interests of the Native people. There are two problems: the preference to be given to Native over other candidates for State and Federalised posts and the laying-down of suitable schemes of service.

6. In relation to the State Service there will be provision in the State Constitution on the lines of Article 153 of the Federal Constitution to empower the State Government to prescribe, from time to time, the extent to which preference will be given to Natives. The Term "Natives" will be defined in the Constitution by adopting –

- (i) in Sarawak the definition in the Sarawak Interpretation Ordinance; and
- (ii) in North Borneo the definition that will appear in the State Constitution.

Similarly, the State Governments will prescribe in respect of the State Services their own scheme of services and decide how far external recruitment is needed. If such recruitment is needed the State may either make its own arrangements through the Department of Technical Co-operation or from any other sources acceptable to the Federal Government or ask the help of the Federal Government.

7. In relation to posts in the Federalised Departments, Article 153 of the Federal Constitution will be construed as if Natives were substituted for Malays. The Yang di-Pertuan Agong will continue to exercise his powers under Article 153 on the advice of the Federal Cabinet, but in relation to the Borneo States there will be provision that such advice shall be given after consultation with the Chief Minister of the State concerned. In relation to the Public Service as a whole (as distinct from the Federalised Departments in the Borneo States)

Natives should be included with Malays for the purpose of the application of Article 153.

On the needs to retain the service of the expatriates, Ningkan said this was going to be a short period only. The State government, he said, would honour the understandings and the safeguards as specified in the Cobbold Commission Report. He emphasised that it is important to have “the smooth transition of the Public Service from being a service operating in a dependent territory to becoming an efficient Public Service in an independent country” (Ho1992: 226). He denied the allegation by Tuan Syed Nasir, Director of the Language and Literature Agency, that expatriate officers in Sarawak are “sabotaging the introduction of the National Language” (Sarawak Gazette, 31 July 1964: 180). He said that it was the policy of Sarawak Government to expedite and speed up the teaching of Malay in the schools in the state. But policy to use English would continue, he reiterated, as this was one of the understandings embodied in the IGC Report and in the London (Sarawak Gazette 31 Aug. 1964: 208).

The Malayan leaders and elites wanted to exert control over the Borneo States as soon as the British relinquished their responsibility and released their grips on power in Sabah and Sarawak as they knew that the people in these two states did not have the required knowledge and skill to govern (Ajamain 2015:72). The retention of expatriate staff during the transitional period stunted this aspiration.

To replace those vacancy left by the departing expatriate officers, four local Sarawak officers were appointed to the senior positions in the State Civil Service. Mr. Gerunsin Lemat was given the position of the Deputy State Secretary effective 17 May 1965. Three other local officers were promoted to Class 1B officers. They were Mr. Yao Ping Hua, Mr. Peter Tinggom and Mr. Arai bin Haji Lampan. All the three officers were to respectively act as the Residents of the First Division (now Kuching Division), the Second Division (now Sri Aman Division) and the Fifth Division (now Limbang Division).

As the three local officers were inexperienced, they were to be assisted by expatriate officers who were of the same level of service as them. Mr Yao Ping Hua was to be assisted by Messrs D.S. Cottrell who acted as Administrative Officers Class 1B, while Mr Peter Tinggom by Mr H.R Harlow, also a Class 1B Administrative Officer and Mr Arai bin Haji Lampan by Mr. R.J. Pole-Evans. (The Sarawak Tribune, 11 May 1965).

Cabinet Crisis

In a parliamentary democracy, a leader is dismissed when he loses in the general elections, loses the confidence of his cabinet members and the backbenchers, loses the support from his party, and losses the support in the House of Representatives (the Lower House of a Bi-Cameral Parliament). The so-called first Cabinet Crisis in 1965 was triggered by the government’s attempt to introduce the Land Bills, which Ningkan described as “to satisfy all sections of the community” (Ho 1992:59). But his effort was vehemently opposed, in particular, by BARJASA party (Barisan Rakyat Jati Sarawak). On 12 April 1965, BARJASA, together with PESAKA (Parti Pesaka Anak Sarawak) and PANAS (Parti Negara Sarawak), formed the Native Alliance, with aim of consolidating “the unity of all natives in the state” (Lee June 1965: 195). Jugah (an Iban Temenggong or Paramount Chief) was elected its President, while the Deputy Presidents went to Oyong Lawai Jau (a Kenyah Temenggong) and Tuanku Bujang (a Malay).

Abdul Taib Mahmud and Thomas Kana were elected as Joint-Secretaries. According to Abdul Taib Mahmud, SNAP (Sarawak National Party) was excluded from the Native Alliance because of its multi-racial outlook ((Lee June 1965: 195).

The rebels accused Ningkan of “adopting ‘shocking’ tactics and being autocratic” ((Lee June 1965:195) as he and his Alliance Government wanted to introduce a bill to amend the Sarawak Constitution which sought to remove the three ex-officio members from the State Cabinet. His opponents perceived this move as an attempt to strengthen his government.

Ningkan’s six-member Cabinet and the three ex-officio members (the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the attorney-General) were all appointed by Governor Waddell. The Governor also appointed three members to the Sarawak State Assembly. Two of whom, Abdul Taib bin Mahmud and Teo Kui Seng (Ho 1992: 3), became cabinet ministers right away. The other appointed member of the Sarawak State Assembly was Ling Beng Siong. Ningkan’s first cabinet comprised two Iban (himself and Dunstan Endawie), two Malays in Abdul Taib Mahmud and Awang Hipni bin Pengiran Anu, and two Chinese in James Wong and Teo Kui Seng. A Parliamentary system of government as practised in Malaysia provides the Chief Minister, as the Head of the Government, the power to hire and fire members of the Cabinet and the power to advice on the appointment as the Head of State.

Jugah’s unwillingness to split the Dayaks helped Ningkan to reassert his leadership in Sarawak and avert further damage. (Lee 1965: 195). Abdul Taib Mahmud and Awang Hipni bin Pengiran Anu were reinstated to their respective portfolios on 14 June 1965. They had been dropped from the state cabinet after their party left the Sarawak Alliance on 11 May 11. Abdul Taib Mahmud said, he was giving the Chief Minister his “re-assurance of loyalty for the purpose of collective responsibility” (Lee July, 1965: 226).

To pacify varied interests, Ningkan made three additional cabinet appointment and this included BARJASA’s Abang Othman Bin Abang Haji Moasili as Minister for Social Welfare, Youth; PESAKA’s Tajang Laing, as Minister of State; and Francis Umpau another PESAKA man, as Minister of Land and Mineral Resources. This solved the cabinet crisis of 1965. The new Ningkan cabinet, now expanded to nine, was deemed as unity cabinet.

Upon the readmission of BARJASA and PANAS, the Sarawak Alliance Council met in Kuching on 14 June 1965 and came out with four resolutions. Apart from affirming their support to Ningkan, as its Secretary General, and Jugah, as its Chairman, the Sarawak Alliance adopted two other resolutions. The first one was on the need to uphold the terms and safeguards as stipulated in the London Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC) Agreement. The second one was on the agreement to not reinitiate or participate in any move to reinitiate or to reinvent the Native Alliance (Ho 1992: 210). In a statement released to put the matter to rest, Jugah said that the Sarawak Alliance should continue to work for inter-racial harmony and cooperation and the well-being of the country, and that there was no justification in the proposition of the Native Alliance (Lee 1965: 196).

The second cabinet crisis in Sarawak started with the sacking of Abdul Taib Bin Mahmud on 12 June 1966. The following day, on June 13, three Ministers tendered their resignation: Minister of Land and Mineral Resources, Penghulu Francis Umpau; and ministers of state, Tajang Laing and Awang Hipni Bin Pengiran Anu. On 14 June 1966 with the recommendation of the Sarawak Alliance and tacit of the Federal, Governor Openg dismissed Ningkan as the Chief Minister of Sarawak.

But Ningkan, who still had the support of 18 of the 30 elected members of the State Legislature at the material time of his dismissal since PANAS and SCA (Sarawak Chinese Association) were still with him, claimed that his dismissal was null and void, and asked the court to declare the illegality of the action of the Governor and to issue a restraining order to Tawi Sli and his cabinet to prevent them from discharging their duties. The case was heard under Civil Suit No. 45 of 1966. In the preliminary hearing, the Acting Chief Justice of the Borneo High Court, Mr. Justice E.R. Harley, ruled that Ningkan's suit could be heard on 29 August 1966. Ningkan was reinstated as the Chief Minister on 7 September 1966 after Justice Harley handed down his judgement in his favour (Sarawak Gazette, 31 Oct. 1966).

State of Emergency

On 14 September, the Federal Government declared a State of Emergency in Sarawak. Under Section 150 of the Federal Constitution, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong may issue a Proclamation of Emergency, but this Proclamation and any Ordinance promulgated must, as stipulated in Clause (3), be laid before the House of Parliament. In Clause (4), and as specified, any Proclamation of Emergency may be extended to:

any matter within the legislative authority of the State and to the giving of directions by the Government of the State or to any officer or authority thereof (ILBS, 2018:183).

To legitimise the action of Federal Government, the Federal Parliament then passed an Emergency Bill on 19 September 1966. The Emergency Bill was introduced in the Lower House by the Acting Prime Minister, and was endorsed by the House of Senate after it resumed its sitting at 9.15 pm, following suspension of its sitting at 2.45 pm, at 6.05 pm and at 7.05 pm. In debating the Emergency Bill, a Member of the House of Senate (Wan Mustapha Bin Haji Wan Ali) put it this way:

... I heard in the Radio that the reason why the telegram was sent was because Parliament had to have this Emergency session to discuss the Sarawak crisis ... that the Government was going to pass a Bill which give absolute discretion to the Governor to dismiss the Chief Minister, or even to sack the Speaker if he would not obey his orders ...

Sir, I am sure this Bill is quite serious. We have listened to the Honourable Acting Prime Minister, when he introduced the Bill in the Lower House ... and we have listened to ... Abdul Rahman bin Ya'kub; and what is the pattern. All they say is that we have to pass this Bill, then the communist will run in ... we have to forget democracy, and I am saying in this House we have to discard democracy, just because we fear the communist might come in. However, I say say, we do not fear the communists ... The Government has never feared the communist. It only says so on the pretext that this Bill should be passed, in order to give power to the Governor, so that he might sack Dato Ningkan. Dato Ningkan is not my brother, he is not even from my Party; but when a question of principle is at stake then it is my duty to speak (Dewan Negara, 19 September 1966: 735).

He continued:

... I would say that we, from the Opposition, expected that at least the Government should have explained the reason why this Bill had to be passed, should explain whether it would be legal, should explain that by the passing of this Bill we would not break the Constitution, we would not break the convention. All that was stated was, “We have crisis in Sarawak, and the crisis was emphasised in fact on security – not political crisis (Dewan Negara 19 September 1966: 736).

And he continued:

It is not guilty conscience. In fact, I went there as a lawyer, not as a politician ... and I took the opportunity of hearing this case ...I know that it was to lose this case, because everything contravened the Constitution. It is quite clear in the Sarawak Constitution that the Governor cannot dismiss the Chief Minister ... he could dismiss the other Ministers or the other Members of the Supreme Council at pleasure but not the Chief Minister.

..... A few days before we meet today, Dato’ Ningkan did officially go see the Governor to ask for a general election – and we knew before that he did ask the Governor to hold an election (Dewan Negara 19 September 1966: 737-38).

The bill allowed the Federal Government to amend temporarily the Sarawak Constitution so as to provide its Governor the authority to convene a meeting of the State Legislature, whereas in normal circumstances, the Governor could only summon the State Legislature to meet on the advise of the Chief Minister.

The Emergency Bill received Royal Assent on 20 September 1966. Governor Openg called for the Sarawak State Legislature (the Council Negeri) to meet on 23 September 1966 where it passed a motion of no confidence against Ningkan in a 25-to-0 votes. The following day, the Governor dismissed Ningkan from office.

Fighting Spirit

After his removal as the Chief Minister, Ningkan promised that “I shall return”, echoing what, General Douglas McArthur, the American General who commanded the South Pacific in World War II. While General McArthur came back to wrest back the sceptre of power from the on 2 September 1945 to end the World War II in the Pacific, Ningkan’s and SNAP’s attempt to come back in the 1974 General Elections were thwarted by a combination of factors.

First, it was noted that realignment in the state politics with the merger of the Native Alliance parties into one political party, starting with the merger of BARJASA and PANAS in 1966 to form Parti Bumiputera, and later with the merger of Parti Bumiputera with PESAKA in 1973 to form Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) provide a good reason for Ningkan’s weakened support.

Second, the gerry-mandering where twelve new seats were added to the Sarawak State Assembly seats and in which areas Ningkan's SNAP had no chance of winning at all. Third, was Federalism and the formation of the National Front, the Barisan Nasional (BN), the umbrella party for all the UMNO-friendly political parties in the country. Lastly, the staggered voting system was adopted in the 1974 General Elections where polling in Sarawak for both the State and Federal seats were conducted in two weeks. This was unprecedented in a Parliamentary system of government where voting often was done in a single day. The United States style of voting in Sarawak fast depleted Ningkan and his SNAP party of their already limited resources. As well as having abundant resources, Meanwhile, the BN also had the government machinery and its abundant of resources used to engage Ningkan and his group into a lengthy and bruising battle.

In preparation for the independence Sarawak held its first state election on 27 June 1963, albeit an indirect one. The Malaysians wanted to influence the outcome of the election, scared that result may unfavourably impede the progress of creating the new nation (Higham 24 May 1963). The Tunku and his emissaries had always been in constant touch with the Sarawak Alliance to try to exercise:

A degree of direction over the alliance during the whole period of elections, almost entirely without our knowledge of what was going on (Waddell 9 July 1963).

In the 1969 general elections, polling was suspended in Sarawak after a state of emergency was declared in the country in the aftermath of the May 13 racial riot in Kuala Lumpur. The Federal Parliament was also suspended and the country was run by a National Operation Council (NOC), which was headed by a politician but its members were mainly made up of top-level public servants. In Sarawak, the roles and functions of the State Chief Minister had been taken by the Chairman of the State Operation Council (SOC) who was not a Sarawakian. Despite of all this, polling resumed in the state in 1970.

In 1974, the Sarawak State elections were conducted simultaneously, for first and last time, with the country's general elections. There was no question that the National Coalition or the Barisan Nasional would win in a landslide at the federal level, and in all the states in Malaya, including Sabah. But Sarawak can be a thorn in the flesh for the federal establishment.

The stated goals of any incumbent government was to return to power, but through an understanding of the broader scheme of things, there was without any reasonable doubt, that it is impossible not entertain the premise that the operational goal for the incumbent government in Sarawak was to rid of Ningkan from Sarawak, and Malaysian politics, once, and for all.

Sarawak Government's Paper

The Sarawak Government's paper published on 4th January 1962, informed the people about the Malaysia Plan Proposal and about the arrangement for the visit of the members of the Cobbold Commission to Sarawak. We would like to highlight here some of the key points of the paper, thus,

...to set out the framework of a greater Federation and to direct attention to the special interests of Sarawak has in such matters as religion, land development, migration, education, language and the civil service, and to indicate an approach

to the solution of such problems with the intention of assisting the public to the Commission constructive proposals for an acceptable plan (Cobbold 1962: 78).

The Sarawak Government's paper was translated into all the major languages in the state. The Resident's Office and the District Office had been given the task to distribute this paper. The administrative staff in the two offices were instructed to distribute it "as widely as possible and every effort made to ensure that the implications of the proposals were understood" (Cobbold 1962: 76). The title of the paper is simply "Malaysia and Sarawak". The first article in the paper explained that the Federation of Malaysia is a "desirable aim," and that the British view on this matter was that Malaysia provided the best opportunity for the British to grant independence to Sarawak as this arrangement would help it thwart attacks from other countries (Cobbold 1962: 75).

The paper was published so as to explain to the people of Sarawak "in simple terms what "Malaysia" means' and to assist them "in making up their minds what views they should present to the Commission when it comes" (Cobbold 1962: 75). The paper specifically reminded the people that Sarawak as a small defenceless country had no option, as it would "find it difficult and very expensive to stand alone as an independent territory" (Cobbold 1962: 76). The paper aimed to convince that they would blend in nicely with the people from Malaya as Borneo has close cultural, economic and historical links with Malaya. Fundamentally, the Sarawak Government's paper was all about an attempt to get an informed consent of the people.

Final Analysis and Conclusion

There is no question that Malaysia would not have been formed the moment Tunku and Harold Macmillan met in London in November 1961. The only question then was when and how would the sovereignty of Sabah and Sarawak be transferred from the British to the Malayan. The setting up of the Malaysia Solidarity Consultative Committee (MSCC) had set the tone on how to move forward with a number of issues. This includes dealing with the Malayan,. The MSCC brought out into the open various issues that affected the minds of the Borneo peoples. Basically these issues became the basis of demands made by the various racial and political groups in the two Borneoan states of Sabah and Sarawak.

The Cobbold Commission of Enquiry was formed to basically determined the degree of agreement of the people of the two states, which, if understood correctly, had already aligned with the idea of the formation of the Federation of Malaysia. The only drawback with respect to the formation came from the Chinese community, where by majority did not support the concept. At the regional level, for Sabah and Sarawak, their role was clearly spelt out: it was primarily to acknowledge the resolutions of the British-Malayan meeting in London in July 1962. This has to be evidenced by the passing of the bills in support of those resolutions. On 26 September 1962, the Sarawak Council Negeri passed a motion to adopt without dissent the decision to accept in principle the Malaysia Plan Proposal. This was exactly two weeks after the Sabah Legislative Council had passed a similar motion on 12 September 1962 (Lansdowne 1963: 2).

Controversies started to develop the moment the idea of the formation of a new federation was confirmed at the British-Malayan Meeting in London in July 1962. The first hurdle was how to approach the state's election in the context that the right-wing establishment in Malaya has tried to intervene in the process to determine the outcome of the election. The

second issue was on how to nominate, and whom to nominate to be the first Chief Minister of Sarawak. The third and the most controversial one was on how and who to be appointed as Sarawak's first local governor. The fourth one was on the issue of the need to establish a Council of Chiefs.

It cannot be further from the truth that the primary intention of the Malaysians in setting up the Council of Chiefs was to use it as a counter-argument to resolve a conflict of opinion with Ningkan and the Sarawak Alliance on the appointment of Sarawak's first local governor. The Council of Chiefs as its name implies was about the need to maintain and uphold the value of patriarchy, conservatism, traditionalism and hierarchy in the society. Nonetheless, the purpose of having this Council of Chiefs died down after an aristocrat was appointed as Sarawak's first local governor.

The three most critical, significant and a game-changing events that were to impact and effect the politics and the political processes in Sarawak after the formation of Malaysia were: the Proclamation of the State of Emergency; the formation of the Native Alliance; and the creation of a coalition government in Sarawak in 1970. The Proclamation of the State of Emergency in Sarawak by an Act of Parliament suggests that the Federal Government could resort to the use of the power of Parliament to intervene and interfere in the political affairs at the state level.

The formation of the Native Alliance was a prelude to the strengthening of a right-wing political establishment in Sarawak. The conceptualisation of the formation of the Native Alliance which began during the first cabinet crisis in 1965 had eventually led to a merger of BARJASA and PANAS to form Parti BUMIPUTERA in 1966, and in 1973, PESAKA joined them to form the Parti Pesaka Bumiputra Bersatu (PBB), which was to become the backbone of the Sarawak State Government until today. The creation of the coalition government in Sarawak in 1970 between BUMIPUTERA and the once left-leaning and anti-Malaysia SUPP helped to transpose the Malayan type of coalition government to Sarawak, where PBB is playing the role of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) at the state level in Sarawak, while the SUPP is emulating the role of the Malaysian (formerly the Malayan) Chinese Association (MCA).

Ningkan dominated Sarawak politics in the first decade of its independence within Malaysia. But this was not only due to the fact that he was in power for the entire decade. His domination of Sarawak politics in the first decade can be attributed to a number of elements: his persona, his ideas and principles, and his fighting spirit, which the right-wing establishment could not tolerate, and in the process Ningkan was labelled as divisive. Henceforth, there was a need to remove him through an Emergency Ordinance which was called in 1966.

For Ningkan, it was vital that all safeguards as described in the IGC Report be honoured and respected. Ningkan always stood firm in defending Sarawak's rights and the interests of the Dayak community which many then thought as being unacceptable. He was particularly vocal on the Borneonisation issue. Ningkan employed the slogan 'Sarawak for Sarawakian' (Kadang 1979) to express his assertion that the rights of Sarawakians needed to be protected through a non-interventionist and a non-interference federal policy.

One of his valuable legacies was the introduction of a policy where the government recognised the existence of a significant ethnic and cultural group through a community-based celebration popularly known as the 'Gawai Dayak'. Since 1 June 1965, the Gawai Dayak is

celebrated every year as a public holiday in Sarawak. For Ningkan, the Gawai Dayak is a celebration of hope, aspiration and unity for the diverse Dayak groups in Sarawak.

Eventhough Tunku did not trust Ningkan, the later had always been an unwaveringly loyal Malaysian, and had campaigned unrelentlessly to ensure that the Malaysia Plan Proposal came into being. In campaigning to promote the concept of Malaysia, Ningkan opined:

Now it will be our common endeavour in the years to come to foster cosmopolitan spirit which has moulded the different races of Malaya so that Sarawak too can play its own part in the strengthening of the bonds that bind us in our march towards full nationhood – *Hidup Malaysia* (Ho 1992: 12).

He was an ardent anti-communist and a staunch supporter of Malaysia. In the leaders of Commonwealth Conference in Kensington in Jamaica in 1964, Ningkan explicitly stated that Malaysia was not, as alleged by Sukarno, a neo-colonialist political arrangement. He declared that Sukarno's confrontation policy had contravened international law and order, and described it as a 'stark-naked act of aggression' (Sarawak Gazette 31 Jan.1965: 26). In defending the rights and interest of his community, Ningkan said that, there was nothing wrong to be proud of one's own ethnic background, but he also agreed that this must not disrupt the peoples' duty as responsible citizens to develop and defend the country (Ho 1992). Ningkan was a proud Iban nationalist and a proud Sarawak patriot. And for what he stood for, Ningkan incurred hostility from the established political order in Malaya. In particular, the Iban politics, and in general, the politics of the State of Sarawak, has never been quite the same since he left the political scene in 1974.

The story we have put forward here is a historical narrative about political understanding, political compromise, political bargaining and political accommodation. It is also a narrative about public policy-making, interest articulation and interest aggregation. At the same time, this narrative is also an account of political deception, political manipulation, political exploitation, and political manoeuvring that still has tremendous repercusion on the political affairs in Sarawak, and on its politics and on its political system. We hope that this narrative of events in the early days of political history of modern Sarawak will provide some background knowledge to interested scholars and researchers on the subject matter.

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