The Land of Complexity 19th and 20th Century Northern Borneo Socio-Demographic History: A Review

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Abstract

North Borneo has always been the object of international interests and politics. This situation is the effect of socio-demographic plurality that led to the absence of a cohesive socio-political identity that can unite them together. This study aims to analyze the social demographic history of the people of North Borneo (Kalimantan) in the 19th and 20th centuries to understand the complex geopolitics in the region during the decolonialisation process in the post-Second World War. Using a literature review, there are some points concluded, first, the Malay Sultanate of Brunei had dominated the political structure of the area that influenced the foundation of the Malay social system in North Borneo for the following centuries. Second, the colonial project of James Brooke changed the social order in North Borneo with the significant presence of non-Malay groups such as the Chinese until the mid-20th century. Third, the Japanese occupation during the Second World War had brought nationalism among the natives. This spirit had led to an attitude of ethnonationalism that makes it was challenging to build a cohesive national identity among different ethnic groups there. Fourth, after the war, regional conflicts due to the Cold War triggered differences in political systems among the new states that gained independence

Keywords: *North Borneo; Socio-Demoghrapic; Geopolitics*

Introduction/Background

European colonialism in Southeast Asia has introduced a new concept of collective identity known as nationalism. This idea, which is often referred to as an ethnicity or homogeneity bond, such as cultural or linguistic features, at a certain point is interpreted differently as a community of belonging crossing these primordial sides in the form of a modern nation-state (Anderson, 2006). Countries like Indonesia or the Philippines as an example can no longer be identified with a particular ethnicity, with so many sub-identity and cultural backgrounds as its component. Historical ties in collective memory under the same colonial regime are the connecting factors for the formation of these modern states (Anderson, 2006)

The formation of the nation states in Southeast Asia in different forms as a result of this colonialism, often through similar stages. First, the emergence of a group of indigenous people educated in European style as a colonial limited educational policy effect. Second, the awareness of cross-society among fellow educated

people. Third, the dissemination of ideas in the massive national conscious movement questioned the right of colonial rule over them (Roff, 1967) In this context, nationalism is interpreted as a collective conscience based on democracy rather than as a product of the policy of the holder of authority including the colonial ruler itself (Anderson, 2006)

The Second World War with the arrival of Japanese introduced a bit more of its fascism to these oppressed nations were also factors that not less important. In the East Indies, the sense of "white supremacy" had diminished and nationalist movement which under Dutch suppressed until the war was quickly supported by the Japanese and even more intensely inflated (Cribb, 1999; Ricklefs, 2001) Despite the war strategy, the Japanese policy provided a sparking effect on the occupants against their former European colonialist. In Burma, the military organisations formed by the Japanese with sympathetic civilians began to formulate national unity, although, in the end, they turned against the Japanese (Tarling, 1993) The Malay nationalist movement in the peninsula also grew, although slightly constrained by a strong traditional political structure (Andaya & Andaya, 2017)

Japanese had also implemented a pro-nationalistic policy in North Borneo, especially among Malays. The establishment of organisations such as Persatuan Melayu Sarawak or Perhimpun Dayak, their movement seems limited by the extent of reaction to certain events that were considered to be detrimental to them (Porrit, 1997; Wright 1970). If in other Japan occupied territories the arrival of Allies forces ignites resistance from the local community, in the case of North Borneo (Brunei, Sarawak and Sabah) there was almost no opposition as has happened in other areas other than the opposition to the re-colonisation restructuring issues as occurred in Sarawak. Another "nationalistic" movement grew far after the wartime of the mid-1950s with the arrival of several prominent figures that spent their youth overseas (Ahmad, 1989)

One of the factors that might hinder the emergence of nationalism in Northern Borneo is a strong traditional structure in the society which was aligned or at least close enough to the colonist (Andaya & Andaya, 2017). The position of the Sultan of Brunei for the Malay community, for example, as well as the Dayak tribesmen, Iban, Kadazan, Dusun, maintain internal social cohesion, but resulted in continuing segregation and undermined the formation of common ideas across ethnic groups. The colonial ruling approach guarantees the traditional aspects of local rulers as long as they were willing to compromise with their interests, making their position endure in their respective societies (Irwin, 1955) The complex structure of the demographic and vulnerability of indigenous people from economic and political aspect itself has created a group sentiment and suspicion interests one another (Chew, 1990) A relatively small population over a large area made British and Brooke, as in the peninsula, prefers to bring large numbers of migrant workers to economic exploration in their colonies. These workers, mainly from southern China, who later settled there and created a new community that was legally part of the colonial society. Due to trends in business and commerce, mastery in economic aspects by this group often trigger social jealousy as well as negative sentiments from other communities (Lockard, 2003).

Nevertheless, the fact that in many conditions in other colonial states, such as the Philippine, Indonesia, and Burma, the attitude of indirect rule system and also a primordial bond between various communities there was not an obstacle for a more extensive collective identity formation. Even at a certain point this condition

used as an argumentative weapon to question colonialism itself as did Rizal in Filipina or Suwardi Suryaningrat and Sukarno in the Dutch East Indies (Anderson, 2006). The independence movement in Malaya - as same under British control - although its "radical" element was crushed through the Emergency, it continued to grow through moderate-ism in cooperation with traditional rulers as Malay's UMNO and the Chinese-Indian community parties (MCA-MIC) did in *Barisan Aliansi* (Andaya & Andaya, 2017)

In the post-war context the re-entry of Allies including the absorption of the Sarawak Brooke's dynasty into the British authority has resulted in a stronger consolidation of power (Porrit, 1997). In a short period during the 1945-1950s the colonial administration had been upgraded, while the indigenous people involvement in the aspect of government expanded. The British have even begun to discuss the possibilities of decolonising these territories and discussing it with local rulers. If indeed, the nationalists from the Japanese period seemed to lose the narrative and the popularity of their movement in northern Borneo could only be regained as a result of the international dynamics during the Cold War era (Ahmad, 1989).

When the new nationalist movement emerged in the late 1950s and sparked the Brunei rebellion of 1962, again, such heroic acts were easily crushed to no trace at all (Singh, 1984; Majid, 2007) Although the validity of the Cobbold Commission was questioned, decisions were made; Sabah and Sarawak became part of Malaysia, while Brunei remained under British protection for the next few decades (Trenggoning, 1965). In addition to technical factors, the number factor was also significant as expressed by Ahmad & Majid, that with the massive support of the People's Party of Brunei, the number of human powers that can be mobilised in such armed struggle was minimal (Ahmad, 1989). This paper will examine and explore the geo-demographic aspects as the main factors that hinder the growth of nationalism in North Borneo. This key point relates to the structure of society and colonial policies for almost a century before it became the determinant of social attitudes of society in shaping, developing, and championing their collective identity.

Methodology

The method in this research is qualitative research. In a simple way, this approach tends to focus on the humans and its socio-cultural complexity in its terms and conceptions produced in the interactions (Nasution, 1998). According to Judith Preissle qualitative research is "a loosely defined category of research designs or models, all of which elicit verbal, visual, tactile olfactory, and gustatory data in the form of descriptive narratives like field notes, recordings, or other transcriptions from audio and videotapes and other written records and pictures or films" (Cresswell, 1998).

The data collection technique used in this paper is a literature study. It is an action of researchers in finding the required information from reference books, both from textbooks and other library sources (primary or secondary). Data collection techniques that also play a central role in qualitative research are document study. The documents here mean written reports, government records, and other related sources that lead to the primary data from the topic discussed (Satori & Komariah, 2010). For the data analysis, we use the Miles and Huberman technique in a qualitative study. This technique contains four steps (1) data collection, (2) data reduction (critics), (3) data presentation before we produce a conclusion. The conclusion is an interpretative

knowledge based on the information gathered during the collection and reduction in document study (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Result and Discussion
19th Century: From Empire to Protectorate State.

The beginning of political power in Northern Borneo was closely related to the emergence of the Brunei Sultanate that can be traced to the 15th century. Through existing sources, it can be argued that an institutionalised authority has arisen around the late century in the form of Islamic monarch (Singh, 1984). Several rulers later consolidated their power so that in the 16th century the territory of Northern Borneo was united under a Brunei empire that reached its golden age under Sultan Bolkiah, the fifth ruler. In those days, the reign of Brunei stretched from West Borneo Coast in the west to Manila in the northeast. This maritime-patterned state acquired the wealth from trade with other islands including mainland China (Singh, 1984).

Brunei emergence as a regional power according to Singh was more due to the absence of competition with other political forces in the region regarding Majapahit empire declining at the era (Singh, 1984). With the maritime trade structure, the nature of control was more as a tributary system in the form of recognition of submission through tribute payments on a regular basis. Thus, an empire could be formed without a large number of conquering army and abundant population support but a group of skilled sailors active in exploration (Hussainmiya, 2006; Andaya & Andaya, 2017). With such a concentrated and limited demographic condition, the Brunei authorities should be able to maintain the solidity and loyalty of the people towards them. A split within the political figures would have been very easy to shatter or threatening state unity because the conflict would have meant disrupting the central area of authority supporter (Singh, 1984). The extent of the existing territorial cause the number of places that can be used as a centre of resistance, which ultimately complicate the total crackdown and open the space of foreign intervention in internal affairs. Rivalry between Ali and Abdul Gafur in Sarawak was one of the examples of how the elite split managed to open space for James Brooke to take advantage of Brunei's political turmoil (Walker, 2002).

Having succeeded in cracking down on insurgency and piracy in the western region of Brunei, Brooke immediately gained access to power in Northern Borneo. Through the role of Raja Muda Hashim, one of the close relatives of the Brunei court, he was granted the status of a subordinate governor to Sarawak (Walker, 2002). In a short time, Brooke managed to exploit the palace crisis to get the territory of Sarawak with a full sovereignty as a reward for his services to restore the throne to Omar Ali Saifuddin II. From there he was known as White Rajah of Sarawak. His political acumen caused Brooke's territory to grow steadily, partly as a concession to his aid in Brunei domestic affairs and also because of the political pressure he was resorting to the Sultan for his personal interests (Baring-Gould & Bampfylde, 1989).

Brooke's policies in Sarawak were heavily influenced by modernisation, including in administration and economics especially during the reign of Charles Brooke, his nephew, after James's death in 1968 (Walker, 2002). Charles emphasised economic development in particular with the opening of rubber plantations, petroleum exploration, and agriculture. The small number of indigenous population, estimated at under 10,000 in the mid-19th century, encouraged pro-labour migration policies, particularly from southern China (Lockard,

2003). Since the time of James, gold mining in Bau, already employing Chinese coolies. The growing investment further pushed the need for labour, bringing the number of Sarawak residents to increase rapidly (Lockard, 2003).

While Brooke expanded its influence in Sarawak, British had been present earlier in the north-eastern region of Borneo since the mid-16th century. Had set up a trading office, they were quite involved in the politics of the Sultanate of Sulu, especially in relations with Spain in the seven-year war. The occupation of Manila and the liberation of Sultan Sulu to return to his throne resulted in a friendly relationship between Sulu and British (Wright, 1970). Nevertheless, the real presence of its influences in the region only occurred after the European war. The Anglo-Dutch 1824 Agreement on the division of influence areas in Southeast Asia did not affirm British "rights" in the Borneo island (Wright, 1970). In some aspects, the Dutch were hoping to get rid of British influence there. Meanwhile, another less interesting development was the Brooke expedition and his success in obtaining Labuan from Brunei as part of the British colony in 1846 (Wright, 1970)

After a series of dispute about private owned rights for parts of the Sabah region, the more established British administration began in the 1880s with British protection to North Borneo Chartered Company rule in 1881-1882 (Tregonning, 1965). The expansion of the firm's influence westward touches Brunei's territory unabated, in part because of Brunei was too weak to face the territorial expansion from Brooke Dynasty. In 1888 to protect Brunei from total destruction, a protection agreement was granted to both Sarawak and Brunei under the British empire (Singh, 1984). A border agreement was signed in 1891 between British and the Dutch, to avoid possible border rivalries and conflicts, dividing Borneo into the influence of each party (Irwin, 1955),

In the time of James Brooke, the eradication of pirates became one of his priorities. The policy in some way resulted in the antipathy of local people, especially ethnic Malays. The monopoly of antimony business and gold mining has also led to discontent. Opposition to Brooke's rule broke out in several rebellions, as happened in 1953, 1957 and 1960 (Baring-Gould & Bampfylde, 1989). All these political upheavals could be overcome by Brooke despite the exposure of Sarawak's income sources with huge debts. Meanwhile, the British who appointed Brooke as Consul for North Borneo and Brunei seemed to keep a distance from Brooke's activities there, although he repeatedly requested assistance to the British parliament. One of the reason was that Brooke's image in the fight against piracy was also considered by some British figures as a mass oppression to the local population, with the fact that hundreds of indigenous people became victims of Brooke's policies (Wright, 1970)

James's successor, Charles, was fairer to the natives. In addition to encouraging migrant workers, he has involved indigenous people in bureaucracies such as the security forces, adopting traditional leadership, as well as establishing a Supreme Council in 1855 and General Council from 1867 and then the Council Negri in 1903 (Baring-Gould & Bampflyde, 1989). However, in addition to ethnic Malay minorities, equal opportunities were not granted to other ethnic groups. Iban or Dayak mostly live in longhouses on the edge of the forest as before (Chew, 1989). Indeed, because living in coastal areas, the average Malay people have much better access to the outside world.

At the same time, the ethnic Chinese who were the leading proponents of economic activity despite having an important role but were under strict supervision (Chew, 1989). Since the time of James, a small

number of ethnic Chinese have settled around Kuching and border areas with Dutch Borneo which has Chinese concentrations like Sambas. Although Brooke's attitude toward these gold miners had led to armed resistance in 1860, in Charles's time their presence was highly expected (Chew, 1989). The positive development of the Sarawak economy during the early 20th century immediately faced the shortage of employment with the small number of indigenous or existing population. This condition worsened by the fact that they scattered in a vast area. Charles also considered the Malay and Iban were not suitable to be farmers and industrial farmers and more focus on encouraging them to involve more in government (Lockard, 2003).

The flow of migration occurred very rapidly started from 1888, since British protection of Sarawak was granted, until the first years of World War through Singapore as an entry point for the workers (Lockard, 2003). First, the flow of migration takes place through the contract collie system and employee recruitment by the Sarawak Chinese population in need of personal labour, known as individual migration. The mass migration with specific placements and designations (usually rice cultivation or plantation commodities) run by the government between 1898-1911, known as communal migration. Both types of migration were supported by the government which succeeded in increasing the number of ethnic Chinese from a few dozen in the 1860s to over two hundred forty thousand in 1960s (Lockard, 2003; Wong Tze-Ken, 1999)

A relative sudden influx in demographic aspect also impacted the social services demand. In the educational aspect, the first initiatives were mostly done by Anglican and Catholic missionaries. The government itself seems to be trying to introduce education in a limited way, but the response from the indigenous in particular was low, partly because the prospect of a European-style school does not seem to be very profitable in social status in their community (Ahmad, 1989; Porrit, 1997; Tregonning, 1965; Wong Tze-Ken, 1999). For ethnic Chinese, counting and language skills are very important. Long-term residents of Sarawak or migrant workers who, after the contract, decided to stay there enthusiastically involved in church schools that adapted to cultural aspects such as their language in the lessons from the 1850s (Lockard, 2003). Although in the early 1900s there were already two schools for Malays, education was still voluntary (Tregonning, 1965). And although an inclusive school system existed before 1910, its development has been slow.

In Sabah, public education was introduced later. Although it was initiated since the late 19th century, public reception in school remains low. And because of this lack of enthusiasm, the government reluctantly provides access to community education (Tregonning, 1965; Wong Tze-Ken, 1999). Private educational institutions such as Catholic and Protestant missionaries, as well as ethnic communities such as Chinese and Japanese, become primary education service providers but its focus on their own community development. It was not until the 1930s that a more extensive education system more intensified by the government-sponsored schools among the indigenous population via vernacular school in agriculture (Tregonning, 1965). Many teachers there were educated at the Sultan Idris Training College, on the Peninsula. The same thing happened in Brunei that only introduced public education in 1914. The government established an elementary school and required children to attend school since 1929 (Ahmad, 1989). In 1930, Brunei began to send its citizens to get an education in Malaya, on average as prospective teachers. However, the newly structured to mid-level public school system was only introduced in the 1950s (Bakar, 2006; Mail, 2006). Thus, in addition, the colonial

education in Sabah and Brunei remains fragmented in ethnic and religious sentiments.

The Rising Sun and Modern Nationalism 1941-1945

The Japanese occupation of Northern Borneo began in late 1941. Ahead of the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Sarawak's weak British-defence was quickly paralysed within ten days (Ooi Keat Gin, 1999). On 16 December the oil city of Seria has been occupied, while less than a week later Bandar Brunei has fallen. A military operation to subdue Sabah began on 1 January with Labuan's occupation. Japan was able to control the entire territory of British protectorate (Sarawak, Brunei and Sabah) on 1 February 1942 with the landing of their troops in Kudat, Sabah, and compleetly surender in next weeks (Tregonning, 1965; Wong Tze Ken, 2010)

One of the main factors of the rapid conquest of Japan was the lack of defence within the three British protectorate territories. The Rajah government and British efforts to strengthen the area with the Punjab regiment force only succeeded in reaching of 2500s troops with minimal combat equipment (Ooi Keat Gin, 1999). The Sabah and Brunei have no defence at all and its local administration desperately mobilised people in such paramilitary group. A police force reinforced by volunteer troops was formed in 1938, divided into four sections according to the race of origin: Europe, China, India, and natives. These security forces until 1940 could only collect 650 people (Wong Tze-Ken, 2010). The spread of the population and the small number caused some difficulties in rapid and massive mobilisation. Military forces that have been incorporated in the Sarawak Ranger - even formed since 1862 - consisting mainly of Malays, who are the minority and some of the Iban warriors (Ooi Keat Gin, 1999; Ooi Keat Gin, 2011).

Table 1. Sarawak population in 1939 and 1947 (Ooi Keat Gin, 1999)

Community	1939	%	1947	%
Iban	167 700	34.2	190 326	34.8
Chinese	123 626	25.2	145 158	26.6
Malay	92 709	18.9	97 469	17.9
Land Dayak	36 963	7.5	42 195	7.7
Melanau	36 772	7.5	35 560	6.5
Other Indigenous	27 532	5.6	29 867	5.5
Others	4 579	0.9	5 119	0.9
European	704	0.2	691	0.1
Total	490 585	100.0	546 385	100.0

Japan incorporated the administration of three British territories in Northern Borneo into a single Gunseibu or military government, under the 37th army. Five provinces formed: two for Sarawak, two for Sabah, and one for Brunei and surrounding areas (Wong Tze Ken, 2010; Ooi Keat Gin, 1999). This government has involved natives - even interned Europeans - due to the shortage of civilians in the Japanese occupied area. Brooke's employees, mostly from Malays, were promoted to their posts or at least granted authority with Japanese as supervisors. A provincial council, *ken-sanji*, was formed in every capital city consist indigenous leaders appointed by the military governor (Ooi Keat Gin, 1999). The Council itself was more functioning as a legitimation tool to support their programs.

In addition to Japanese-formed organisations such as the Northern Borneo voluntary army (kyodotai), police (kempetai), and air safety forces (jikeidan), the occupation government also supported the formation of

indigenous awareness organisations. Perimpun Dayak, a pro-Japanese Iban ethnic group, was given financial support (Ooi Keat Gin, 1999; Ooi Keat Gin, 2011). At the centre of homogeneous ethnic concentration such as Brunei, a sense of ethnic nationalism strengthens. The Sarawak Malay National Union and the Brunei Malay Union emerged during that period. Japanese at every opportunity tried to propagate the anti-European sentiment to the natives, including a "revolution" campaign against British in Sabah before a military operation was launched (Wong Tze Ken, 2010).

Table 2. Demographic pattern of pre-war Borneo (Jones, 1966)

Census	Sabah (1931)	Brunei (1931)	Sarawak (1939)
Indigenes	210 057	26 746	361 676
Chinese	50 056	2 683	123 626
Other Asians	22 202	706	5 283
Total population	282 315	30 135	490 585
Area (sq km)	75 821	5 743	124 485
Total Area		206 049	

Japan's policy toward the Chinese may be most discriminatory. In addition to restricting their political space in all areas, the government collects them forcibly in government-controlled organisations that were so humiliating their status, such as the necessity of providing brothels (served with Chinese women) to Japanese soldiers as well as large amounts of funds for the government (Ooi Keat Gin, 1999; Wong Tze-Ken, 2010). Some Chinese figures had been detained for months without any criminal charge, while their assets were forcibly demanded for war purposes (Wong Tze-Ken, 2010).

In Sabah, perhaps ethnic Chinese were treated better than in Sarawak. They were allowed to remain in their political position even though they also asked to "contribute" by providing some money to the government. This condition was likely due to the ethnic Chinese attitude in Sabah that welcomed Japanese troops from its early presence and quickly wanted to cooperate with the wishes of the occupying force (Wong Tze-Ken, 2010). However, Sabah Chinese ethnic access to the outside world - including the Sino-Japan sentiment of hostility since 1937 - led to the 1943 Jesselton uprising, when the Chinese leading militia succeeds to kill Japanese army, capture city of Jesselton for a while, although defeated harshly soon. After that, Japan has tightened its policies on the Chinese, including executing some of the responsible Chinese figures (Wong Tze-Ken, 2010; Tregonning, 1965).

Meanwhile, ethnic Malays during the Japanese occupation - which was a minority in Sabah and Sarawak - were more privileged in both government and social life (Ooi Keat Gin, 1999). Many of them were promoted to positions higher than before the war, including police and para-military force. However, the lack of non-governmental educated Malay figures in each region led to a movement like KMM in Malaya or Putera in Java difficult to do. Japan even provided scholarships for Malays to study abroad, such as those granted to some Brunei youth who are schooled in Java and Tokyo (Ahmad, 1989). There was no armed resistance among the Malays to the Japanese in all of Northern Borneo except for some who join the pre-war colonial corps (Wong Tze-Ken, 2010; Ooi Keat Gin, 1999).

In the educational aspect, Japan emphasised the importance of acquisition of Japanese culture,

especially for language. This policy was implemented in schools as well as in government along with using local languages such as Malay and Iban (Ooi Keat Gin, 1999). The use of local languages with the aim to generate indigeneity awareness, as well as hatred to European colonialism, in practice was not effective and lack of enthusiasm. The lack of aspiration of national consciousness, especially in the absence of interethnic coherence perhaps come from the fact that there was no urgency to establish a concerted action together. Urban areas such as Kuching in Sarawak, Bandar Brunei, and Jesselton and Sandakan in Sabah were not a densely populated urban centre with the discourses of modernity (Ooi Keat Gin, 2011; Ahmad, 1989; Tregonning, 1965). The community mid-class was busy with daily routines and modernity that was limited to some technical aspects, while ethnic Chinese were diligently leading economic activity (Wong Tze-Ken, 2005; Trenggoning, 1965; Ooi Keat Gin, 2011).

The presence of Japan itself at least for Sabah, since the beginning, has been getting a lot of rejection (Wong Tze-Ken, 2010). Before the war reached the Pacific, some anti-Japanese activity had arisen especially among the Chinese who got information about Japanese expansion into their ancestral lands. This nationalist group - which although difficult to trace in relation to the Chinese nationalist and communist movements, gained support from their community in Sabah actively raising funds to support the country's struggle against Japanese. The economic activity between the Japanese and Chinese people in Sabah - which was once very tight - became cold and led to a boycott of trade products. The colonial authorities of Sabah, considering the deterioration of British-Japanese relations, made various restrictions on the ethnic Japanese so from the beginning in line with the Chinese movement (Wong Tze-Ken, 2010)

In addition to encouraging localised sentiments, the Japanese seem to favour the Malay-Muslim minority, compared to Dayak-Animist-Christian and China's significant minorities (Ooi Keat Gin, 1999). This preference can be said to make relationships between occupation societies also do not support mutual understanding. The national awareness that has emerged in various regions of Northern Borneo was almost hampered in the ethnic aspect and faces serious problems with such divide and rule politics. For ethnic Chinese, a feeling of solidarity towards ancestral lands, one of them as a result of Japan's harsh policies resulted in the strengthening of "different" sentiments from other citizens (Wong Tze-Ken, 2010; Ooi Keat Gin, 1999). After the war, this had an impact on suspicion and accusations of political collaboration on certain ethnicities - in this case, Malay - although the "punishment" of the post-war British government such as the dismissal from the public servant position affected most of the Iban compared to Malays (Andaya & Andaya, 2017).

Post-World War, Regional Conflict and Aftermath

Japan's defeat in world war restored colonial rule in Southeast Asia. Australia's troops represented Allies landed in Borneo to free prisoners of war as well as take over authority from Japanese (Andaya & Andaya, 2017). The official handover took place in Kuching on September 11, 1945. British then formed a military administration (BMA) between 1945-1946 as a temporary administration before the reorganisation of government institutions there. Although the return of British was well received by not only the old political elite but also the common people, the post-war world international situation was fuelled by spirit and opportunity for the nations to determine their own destiny (Tarling, 1993). This situation prompted British to

prepare decolonisation plans including over its colonies in Southeast Asia.

In contrast to the nationalist and communist movements that soon took on the role of post-war discourse on the Malay peninsula, in the British territory of Northern Borneo such dynamics were virtually non-existent. (Porrit, 1997; Andaya & Andaya, 2017; Tregonning, 1965). Although Japan was equally encouraging the emergence of the spirit of defiance of the state and nationalism as described in the previous sub-chapter, the arrival of allies seems to deprive them from their spirit to fight for modern nationalist discourse. Traditional rulers such as the Sultan of Brunei regained a vital position in the local political structure. As for Sarawak, the White Rajah surrendered its sovereignty to the British thus occupying the territory as a crown colony as did Sabah in 1946 (Porrit, 1997).

The formation of the mass movement organisation among the Malays can be said to have existed since the 1950s with the creation of the People's Party of Brunei. Before that, a youth association, the *Barisan Pemuda Brunei* (Barip), recognised by the sultan was founded in 1946 (Ahmad, 1989). Its purpose was to mobilise and promoting unity among Malays for the community improvement. Like the PRB later, Barip has branches of Malays outside Brunei including in Jesselton, Sabah and Labuan. This Malay sentiment also appears to be influenced by the Indonesian revolution, which seems in a red-and-white symbol that Barip also acquired in its activities (Ahmad, 1989). However, in the small community of Brunei Malay, especially Brunei, there was not much that can be initiated. Barip's activities dwindled by the 1950s. Other Malay based organisations existed much like the *Angkatan Pemuda Brunei* (APB) and *Persatuan Murid Tua Brunei* (MUTU) (Ahmad, 1989).

In Sarawak, the Rajah Brooke proposal to cede his power to British became the main issue that shaped the political structure there in the post-war years (Porrit, 1997). The situation had heated up with a series of protests, agitations, and strikes. Hundreds of government officials from the Malay element decided to resign. This activity was coordinated under the *Persatuan Kebangsaan Melayu Sarawak* (PKMS) established in 1939. In 1950 this rejection could be suppressed by the government in connection to the assassination of governor Duncan Stewart in 1949 (Porrit, 1997). It seems to be related to the imposition of an emergency 1948 in Malaya. The Bidayuh people, on the other hand, have established the Sarawak Dayak Association (SDA) organisation that rejected the cession proposal in March 1946 (Porrit, 1997).

In regard to the post-war euphoria among third world nations, there was a strong aspiration to gain independence. The British themselves since the 1930s already had plans for the establishment of a limited federation in northern Borneo (Porrit, 1997; Tarling, 1993). The proposal, which was subsequently developed in the late 1940s, was rejected by the Sultan of Brunei who feared his oil royalties would be reduced by subsidising the administration of the federation (Majid, 2007; Harry, 2015). And without financial support, the plan itself was cancelled. The other proposal was merging the area with the Malayan peninsula. This idea emerged in the mid-1950s under commissioner general Malcolm McDonald. In the early 1960s regional level discussions were held in both Malaya and Sabah and Sarawak. Brunei looks interested but has not stated their commitment (Ahmad, 1989).

British plans in the decolonisation of Malaya and northern Borneo were heavily influenced by demographic considerations and their implications for regional politics. In the context of the Cold War, the

position of the Chinese people after the fall of the 1949 Kuomintang nationalist government further heightened the western one's concerns because the majority communist supporters (including the armed of Malayan Communist Party) came from this ethnic group (Andaya & Andaya, 2017; Porrit, 1993; Bakar, 2006). After the handover of independence in 1957, Malaya was in a delicate balance of demographics between indigenous Malays who reached almost 50% and Chinese-Indian 45%. However, the remaining colonies of Singapore, Brunei, Sabah and Sarawak if combined will create a predominantly ethnic Chinese state. This fact led to the proposed merger with Malaysia becoming more relevant and strategic (Majid, 2007; Tarling, 1993; Harry, 2015).

As a domestic affair, the decolonisation of Britain before 1962 did not particularly concern neighbouring countries in the region such as Indonesia and the Philippines. In addition to expressing no objection, they support the decolonisation proposal as a good intention from British (Poulgrain, 2014). However, due to the PRB rebellion in Brunei in December 1962, the situation deteriorated rapidly (Majid, 2007; Andaya & Andaya, 2017). Malayan Prime Minister appeared to be furious, issuing a unilateral claim that accused Indonesia of being a mastermind behind the uprising. This hostility sparked a war of statements among the two countries leaders in the media (Poulgrain, 2014). In 1963, Malaysia stood up a political confrontation including an undeclared armed conflict from its neighbours (Poulgrain, 2014; Harry, 2015). Meanwhile, Brunei remains under British protection for the next two decades.

The development of a national identity after the formation of two separate states, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam eventually gave rise to two distinct patterns of nationalism development altogether. If Brunei takes the road of consolidating the state and nation in Malay-Islamic ethnicity as Malay-Islamic-Monarchy or MIM (Tsun Hang Tey, 2008; Talib, 2002; Bakar, 2006), Malay-Malaysian characterisation becomes more dynamic in Sabah and Sarawak (Andaya & Andaya, 2017). The special status of indigenous people, tribes of inland Borneo, significant ethnic Chinese minorities, as well as crony politics of the *Barisan Nasional* government coalition, have resulted to a negative sentiment about multiculturalism in Malaysian nationality (Hazis, 2015). Entering the 2000s local awareness movements sourced from "original minority" revivalism led to the discourse of separation from Malaysia that was particularly popular in cyberspace (Hazis, 2015). Sarawak and Sabah incorporated in Malaysia through a special agreement in 1963, have an exclusive status compare to other states. Among the specialties is the allocation of parliamentary seats through local parties (Tregonning, 1965; Poritt, 1997).

For Brunei itself, the small number of people, although the majority ethnic group does not reach 70%, makes the pattern of national identity formation in a centralistic way easier (Bakar, 2006; Tsun Hang Tey 2008; Singh, 1984). The control of the state, in this case, the sultanate, supported by the abundant natural wealth funds from oil and gas exploration throughout the 1960-70s gave rise to a desire for full independence from the 1971 accord for British to gradually transfer power to the local authorities (Talib, 2002; Talib 2013). With serious efforts, the two sides finally declared full sovereignty in January 1984. Nevertheless, the new MIM concept itself was downgraded as a national identity in 1990 to coincide with the 44th anniversary of the sultan. The purpose of this concept itself is more as a doctrine of loyalty to the traditional authority with its absolutism (Talib, 2002; Talib 2013; Tsun Hang Tey, 2008).

The concept of authenticity and religion in modern Brunei nationality itself becomes a sensitive issue when it comes to ethnic Chinese status that is still largely "permanent-resident" or stateless (Tsun Hang Tey, 2008; Talib, 2013; Talib, 2002). With the number reaching 15% of the population, their existence seems to be second class citizens. On the one hand, this issue is a consistent form of national ideology for protecting the rights of indigenous peoples, namely ethnic Malays, but other issues arise in the context of non-Malay and non-Muslim citizen status from indigenous people such as Iban, Dusun and Melanau as many of them are non-Muslim (Kumpoh, 2011). The position of the Sultan, in this case, became very central to guarantee the "privilege" of the Malay majority people in the allocation of state resources and public services. In the favoured position, the risks of uncertainty, and the support of small human resources (Talib, 2002; Bakar, 2006). It appears that the "official" national concept as a continuation of the old institution alone is sufficient even to sacrifice aspects of their own political and democratic rights

Conclusion

In addition to the colonialism and local political structures that in some way impede the growth of a trans-ethnic sense of nationalism in Northern Borneo, the most important factor to be considered as an impediment is its socio-demographic aspect. The small number of population with widespread distribution was worsened by colonial policy in bringing migrant workers into isolated groups which formed a separate, untouched, and sometime hostile heterogeneous society. This policy complicates the formation of a collective identity which in its initial stages requires communication and common ground to work together.

Historically, the socio-demographic aspects of Northern Borneo that developed throughout the 18th and 19th centuries can be divided into three important phases; firstly, expansionist politics which implies the weakening of existing social structures through various means including territorial acquisition and human resources. Both were carried out by both Brooke and British through agreements with local authorities such as Sultan Sulu and Brunei. This phase can be said as paralysation of the traditional political institution that led to the protection treaty 1888. This point marks the end of expansionism as well as forming the political status quo of Northern Borneo.

The second phase is marked by a major British exploration policy on Sabah plantations and mines, as well as by the Brooke dynasty in Sarawak. Both brought many migrant workers from China to deal with the small number of local populations there. The indigenous Dayak, Iban, and others are left in conditions as they are, relatively untouched by modernisation. While in certain limits Malay people up to several degrees was given the freedom to encounter European modernisation, including in education and governance. The absence of assimilation or acculturation was achieved for stability but gradually disrupts the demographic balance. This second phase can be said to run until the arrival of Japan in the Second World War, 1942. The importance of this phase historically is to support a social segregation both vertically (the social caste aspect) as well as horizontal (livelihood separation).

The third phase, or so-called demographic side effects, began to be felt with Japan's pro-nationalist politics during the Second World War, which ended without enough strength to survive. Between 1942 and the Brunei uprising of 1962, nationalism as a great idea can be said to be popular in particular, mainly among

Malays. Even within the Malay community itself, there was a separation of identity between pro-monarchy and the revolutionaries known as the "immigrant" Malays (most of them has a connection to Indonesia). Meanwhile, other communities especially in Sabah and Sarawak until the 1960s experienced a vacuum from the discourse of nationalism. It was not until after the Malaysian proposal was introduced that the concept of "nationalism" as a basis for the "nation-state" began to gain space. The significance of the population of foreign backgrounds, Chinese descent there, the small number of "local" residents, and the politics of separation carried out over the years led to the failure of discourse for a sovereign Northern Borneo nation.

Indeed, looking at the European examples there are small nation-states in terms of a population that manages to exist to this day (like Liechtenstein, San Marino, or Monaco). What needs to be considered, however, is the demographic homogeneity they possess as the main capital for the creation and maintenance of that common identity. In the case of Northern Borneo, the small number of "local" residents (dealing with the "immigrant" issue) cannot sustain the idea of being an integrated community. The balance of power is expected to occur in the absence of majority and minority dominations, as the Chinese and Indians (including 35% of the population) try in Malaysia in their national politics. These "suspicious" feelings and racist sentiments are the effects of demographic conditions in general and thwart the idealistic equality discourse as a nation-state of Northern Borneo.

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