



North Borneo (East Malaysia)

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This essay focuses on the political, economic, and cultural history of North Borneo (East Malaysia). I discuss the settlement of Borneo, the kingdoms that ruled the island, the cultural history of the Iban people, the rule of Sarawak by the Brooke family (the White Rajahs, 1841-1946), direct British colonial rule (1946-1963), and political and change in Sarawak as part of Malaysia (1963-present). I wrote these lectures for a Stanford Travel/Study program in North Borneo in October 2011.

I first discuss the settlement of Borneo (40,000-2000 BCE) and contrast the cultures, wealth, and decline of three kingdoms – Srivijaya, Majapahit, and Melaka – that ruled parts of Borneo (7th-16th centuries). Thereafter, I focus on Sarawak in North Borneo (East Malaysia) and on the culture and agricultural practices of the Iban, Sarawak's largest ethnic group. I then look at the rule of Sarawak by the White Rajahs – how James Brooke became Rajah, how Charles Brooke created a viable economy, and why Vyner Brooke ceded Sarawak to Britain in 1946. Lastly, I examine how Taib Mahmud controls independent Sarawak and why resource development creates conflicts. I append a time line, a bibliography, and a description of sites that I visited in North Borneo.

Ancient Borneo (ancient era-1511)

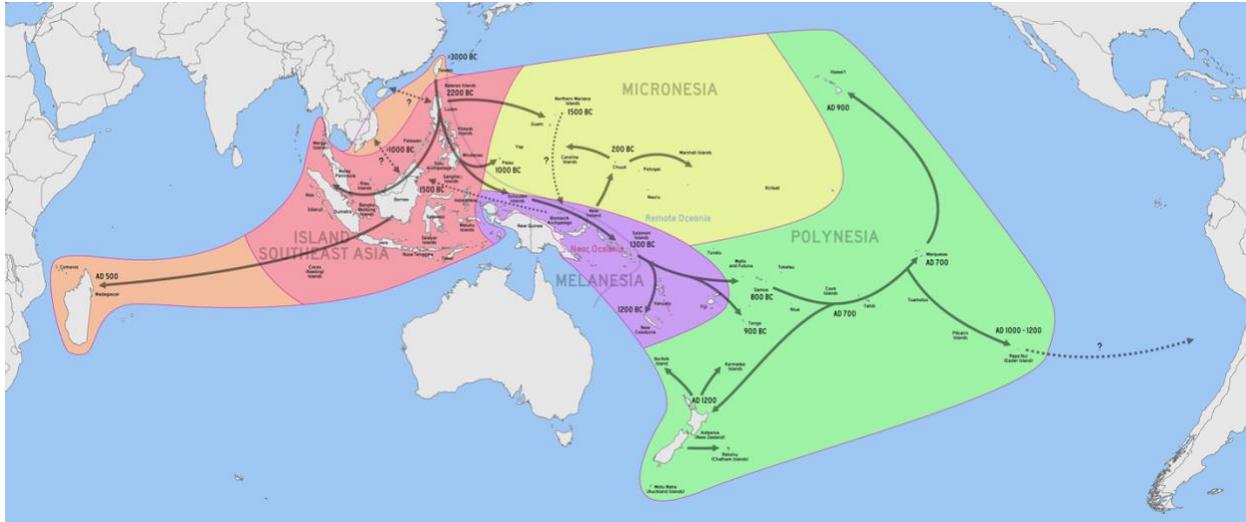
Settlement of Borneo (c. 40,000-2000 BCE). The first people to settle Borneo and the Indonesian archipelago were hunter-gatherers, Austro-Melanesian peoples who spread from southern China through Southeast Asia to New Guinea and Australia more than 40,000 years ago. The Niah Caves in Sarawak were settled then. The Austro-Melanesians had no farming, no domesticated animals, no metals, and engaged in limited trade. Their elemental technology was based on stone, wood, bone, and shell tools. But they worked out means of managing their forest, grassland, or marine environments with fire, stone axes, nets, and traps. Today, about 3,000 Austro-Melanesian Semang people live in the highlands of the Malay Peninsula.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Orang_Asli.jpg>

*Semang (Austro-Melanesian) People
in Highland Malaya (West Malaysia)*

A second wave of settlers into Borneo, from southern China via Taiwan, began about 4,500 years ago. Three of the four subfamilies of the Austronesian language family are spoken only in Taiwan. The fourth, Malayo-Polynesian, comprises 945 of the 959 Austronesian languages, which today are spoken in Indonesia, Malaysia, Polynesia, and Madagascar. The Austronesian diaspora spread from Taiwan to the Philippines (by 3000 BCE), Borneo and Sulawesi (2500 BCE), Java and Sumatra (2000 BCE), and New Guinea (1500 BCE).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
 <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chronological dispersal of Austronesian people a cross the Pacific \(per Benton et al, 2012, adapted from Bellwood, 2011\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chronological_dispersal_of_Austronesian_people_a_cross_the_Pacific_(per_Benton_et_al,_2012,_adapted_from_Bellwood,_2011).png)>

Expansion of Austronesian (Malayo-Polynesian) Peoples – 3000 BCE-1100 CE

The Austronesians had red pottery, stone adzes, shell tools, and bone fishhooks, and they had an advanced agricultural package (taro, coconuts, bananas, breadfruit, pigs, chickens, and dogs). Because the Austronesians' agricultural techniques were superior to the subsistence strategies of the Austro-Melanesian hunter-gatherers, the Austronesians replaced or absorbed those earlier inhabitants of Southeast Asia. The introduction of advanced navigational skills and better marine technology (double-hulled canoes) intensified cultural contact and connected Borneo to the advanced societies of China and Taiwan.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hokule%27aSailing2009.jpg>>

*Hokule'a –
Modern Replica of an Austronesian Double-hulled Catamaran*

Introduction to Early Kingdoms of Borneo. Early kingdoms in Borneo and the Indonesian archipelago accumulated wealth from foreign trade, agriculture, or foreign conquest. Foreign trade was a primary source of wealth for those early kingdoms. Some kingdoms accumulated wealth because their favorable locations permitted control of important trade routes, particularly the route between China and India. Trade-based kingdoms rose and fell as international shipping patterns and techniques shifted over time.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Southeast_Asia_trade_route_map_XIIcentury.jpg>

Trade Routes in Southeast Asia – 12th century

Agriculture was a second source of wealth. Rice, the staple food throughout the region, was produced in irrigated perimeters and on hillsides. Some early kingdoms relied on sales of surplus rice to generate their wealth, whereas others imported residual food needs. Foreign conquest provided a third potential avenue for accumulation of wealth. But only rarely did the conquest of other states – and hence the

ability to tax their agriculture and benefit from their foreign trade – provide a major source of wealth for early kingdoms in Borneo.

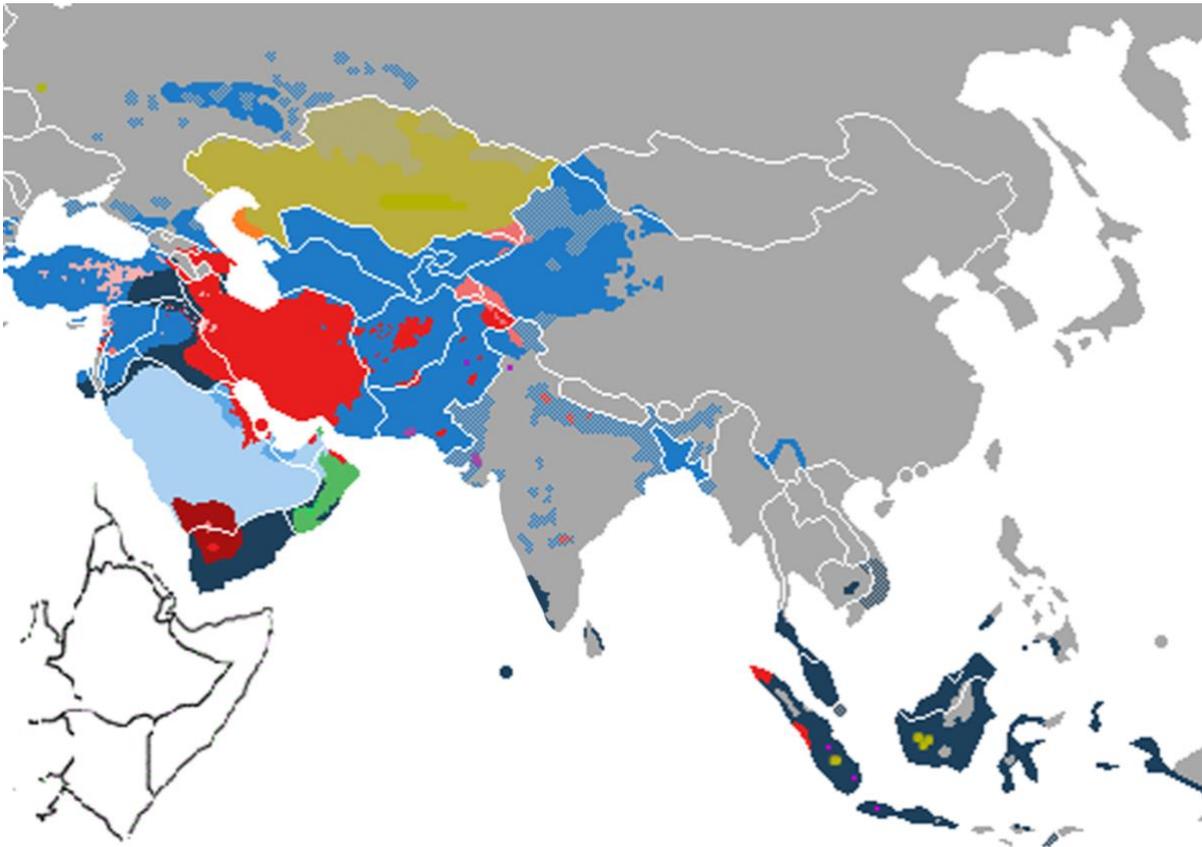


*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bario_\(26664824110\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bario_(26664824110).jpg)>*

Rice Paddy – Bario, Kelabit Highlands, Sarawak, East Malaysia

Common ethnicity and language were key socio-political underpinnings of sustainable kingdoms. The Malay peoples who lived in the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian and Philippine archipelagos all spoke Austronesian languages. Religion often served to unite kingdoms. Three principal religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, gradually spread into Southeast Asia from the Indian sub-continent. A third political requirement for success was the ability to collect taxes.

Successful kingdoms in Borneo during the 7th-16th centuries thus produced wealth mainly through effective control of the China-India trade route or by taxing rice agriculture.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Self-reported_affinity_of_muslims_in_Asia.png

Islam in Asia, 21st century – Sunni (Blue), Shia (Red)

Srivijaya, Sumatra/Malaya (7th-13th centuries). Srivijaya was a Malay kingdom based in southeastern Sumatra that practiced Mahayana Buddhism. The trading entrepôt owed its power to its control of the

Straits of Malacca and Sunda – the only two passages for ships to sail around the Malay Peninsula en route from China to India, Asia’s most important maritime trading route. The Srivijayan kingdom was centered in the port city of Palembang, located on the Musi River about half way between the two key straits. Palembang had an excellent natural harbor, and its river basin produced small rice surpluses to feed in-port visitors and provision ships.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:COLLECTIE_TROPENMUSEUM_Houtvlotten_met_woningen_erop_die_de_rivier_Moesi_afzakken_Palembang_Zuid-Sumatra_TMnr_10007707.jpg>

*Floating Houses in the Musi River, Palembang, Sumatra, 1917 –
Srivijayan Capital Likely Had Many Floating Buildings*

Another of Srivijaya's advantages was its very close link with the Sailendra kingdom in central Java, which provided much of Srivijaya's imports of rice. The Malays in Srivijaya used their nautical skills to engage directly in East-West trade. But the main sources of wealth in the kingdom were trade taxes and entrepôt services – warehousing, ship maintenance, and recreational facilities – in the port of Palembang. Srivijaya had a strong fleet of ships that suppressed piracy and forced all trading ships using either of the straits to enter a Srivijayan port and pay taxes. For several centuries, Palembang was a key exchange center for Chinese silk, porcelain, and jade, Indian textiles, and Moluccan spices (nutmeg, mace, cloves), resins, and sandalwood.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nutmeg_fruit_seed_and_aril.jpg>

Nutmeg – Key Spice Traded Through Srivijaya’s Palembang Entrepöt

At its peak in the 9th century, Srivijaya controlled Sumatra, much of Borneo and the Malay peninsula, and western Java. The power of Srivijaya began to wane in the 10th century and declined considerably in the 12th century when private Chinese ships undercut Srivijaya’s previous commercial monopoly, which earlier had been based on its tributary links to the Tang Chinese dynasty. Srivijaya eventually went into eclipse in the 13th century because of the rise of Ayudhya (in Thailand) and Majapahit (in Java).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Srivijaya_Empire_Map.svg

*Srivijaya Kingdom, Centered in South Sumatra –
 (7th-13th centuries)*

Majapahit, Java (13th-16th centuries). Majapahit began its ascendancy in the mid-13th century. The new kingdom expanded due to the skillful leadership of Gaja Mada, the leading minister between 1330 and 1364. Majapahit became an island empire of vassal states that stretched from Sumatra to western New Guinea. The kingdom directly

controlled eastern and central Java, Madura, and Bali, and its capital, also named Majapahit, was located in eastern Java.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Majapahit_Core_and_Provinces.svg

Core of Majapahit Kingdom, Eastern Java and Bali, 13th-16th centuries

The initial wealth of Majapahit was generated by wet rice agriculture in the fertile Brantas River valley. Although the kingdom practiced both Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism, religious leaders did not control most rice production. The kings taxed rice in Java and exported the rice (paid in kind) to other islands, such as the Moluccas (Spice Islands). Majapahit officials hired mercenary sailors from ports on Java's north coast to protect their trading ships. The kings controlled

the empire's ports, taxed trade, engaged in trade, and shared in the profits of trade. At its peak Majapahit derived its wealth from both land-based and maritime activities and used its rice surplus from Java to initiate its trading activities with other parts of the empire.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Golden_Celestial_Nymph_of_Majapahit.jpg>

*Majapahit Era, A Golden Age of the East Indies –
Bidadari Majapahit, Golden Celestial Hindu/Buddhist Apsara*

The Majapahit Empire began to decline in the early 15th century.

The kingdom was greatly weakened in 1401-1406 when a dispute over

royal succession led to internecine warfare. It began to lose its control over international commerce after Melaka was founded by Malays in 1402. With the support of Ming China, Melaka assumed control of the principal East-West trading route passing through the Strait of Melaka. Throughout the 15th century, Majapahit gradually lost power, territory, and trading shares, and by the early 16th century the kingdom had been reduced to minor importance.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Majapahit_Empire.svg

Majapahit Kingdom – At Its Peak in the 14th century

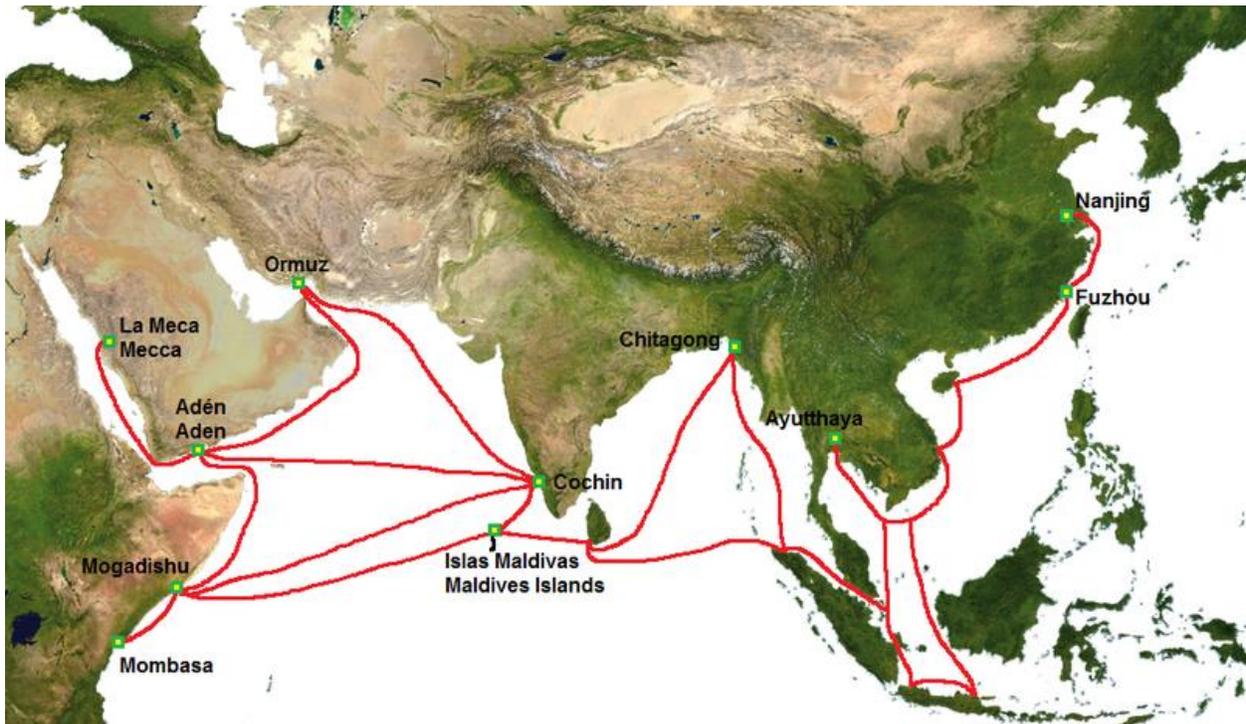
Melaka, Malaya/Sumatra (15th-16th centuries). The trade-based Melaka Sultanate was founded in 1402 at a propitious place and time. The port city of Melaka is located on the southwestern coast of the Malay Peninsula on the Strait of Melaka – a strategic bottle-neck on the China-India maritime trade route. Melaka had a good natural harbor.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Malacca_Sultanate_en.svg

Sultanate of Melaka (Dark Tan Color) – 1402-1511

In the early 15th century, the Ming Chinese emperor dispatched Admiral Zheng He to establish trade and tributary relations with Asian states. Melaka agreed to vassalage in return for trade privileges with China. The rulers of Melaka governed astutely, instituted predictable laws and tax rates and standard weights and measures, and built warehouses and wharves. The Malay ruler of Melaka converted to Islam in 1414, in part to boost trade with Gujerati merchants who controlled the staple product of Asian trade – Indian textiles.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zheng_He.png>

Journeys of Ming Chinese Admiral Zheng He, 1405-1433

The Melaka Sultanate soon became the wealthiest state in Southeast Asia. Its wealth was drawn from trade and tribute, not from agriculture. The port of Melaka served as a center of exchange for Indian textiles, Moluccan spices (nutmeg, mace, and cloves) and sandalwood, and Malay aromatic woods and sea and forest products. Melaka offered entrepôt services (accommodation, food and supplies, ship repair, finance, warehousing) to domiciled and itinerant foreign merchants, and the government taxed those transactions. The Sultanate also received tribute from vassal states in southern Malaya and northern Sumatra.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Malaccapalace.jpg>>

Replica of the Melaka Sultanate's Palace, Late 15th century

Melaka fell suddenly in 1511. Portuguese adventurers with superior arms conquered the Malay sultanate to gain control of the key port on the Strait of Melaka and thus monopolize the spice trade. The Malay rulers relocated to nearby Johor, but were not able to produce significant wealth there.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portadesantiago.jpg>>*

*Surviving Gate of the Portuguese Fortress in Melaka –
Portugal Ruled Melaka, 1511-1641*

Comparative Summary of Bornean Kingdoms. Three principal kingdoms controlled island Southeast Asia, including coastal Borneo, and the Malay Peninsula between the 7th and 16th centuries. Two of those kingdoms – Srivijaya (7th-13th centuries, southern Sumatra) and Majapahit (13th-16th centuries, eastern Java) – were based in the Indonesian archipelago, and one – Melaka (15th-16th centuries, southwestern Malay Peninsula) – was headquartered on the Asian mainland. Speakers of Austronesian languages largely peopled Borneo, the Indonesian islands, and the Malay peninsula. Of the three kingdoms that ruled coastal Borneo, Srivijaya was Mahayana Buddhist, Majapahit was both Hindu and Mahayana Buddhist, and Melaka was Muslim.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Candi_Jabung_B.JPG>

Jabung Buddhist Temple, Majapahit Peirod, Probolinggo, East Java

All three of those kingdoms were absolute monarchies, but none was a theocracy. All three kingdoms took advantage of their favorable locations to control the Melaka and Sunda Straits and tax foreign trade on the main East-West trade route connecting China and India. In the Java-based Majapahit Kingdom, rice agriculture was also an important source of wealth creation. A lesser part of Srivijaya's wealth was derived from rice agriculture.

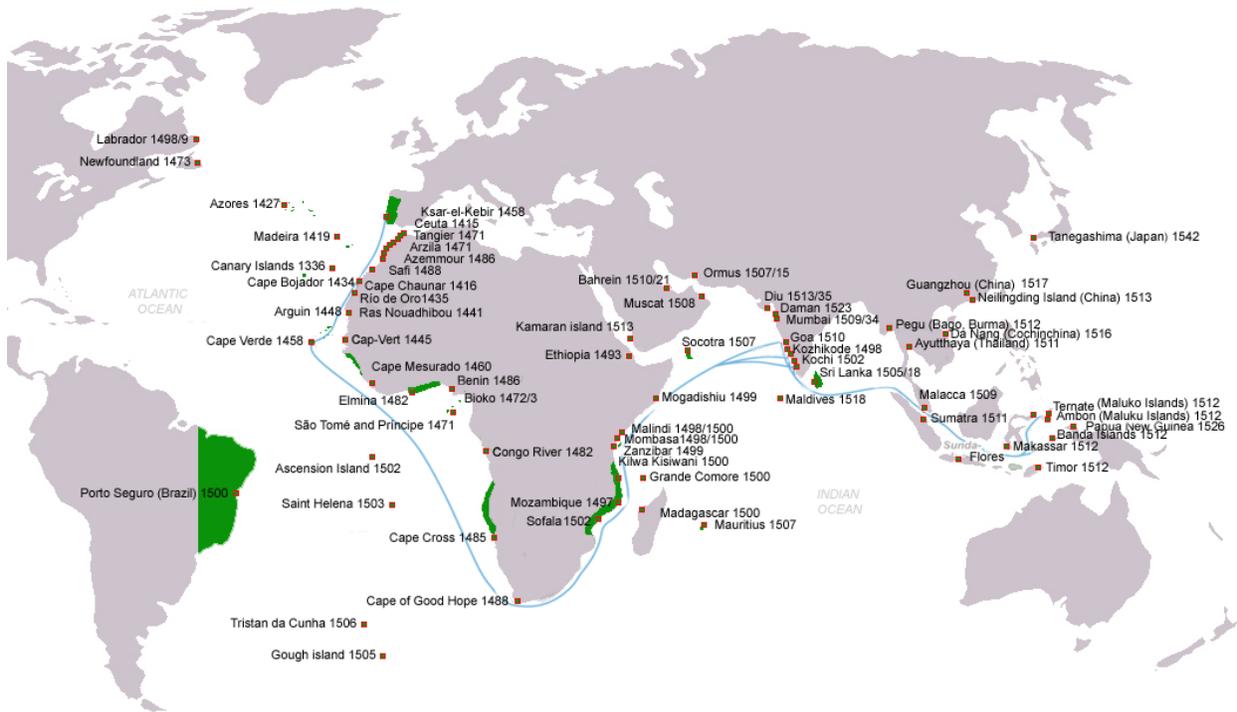


*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rice_plantation_in_Java.jpg>*

*Planting Rice Near Prambanan, Central Java –
The Majapahit and Srivijaya Kingdoms Relied on Rice*

Both Srivijaya and Majapahit receded after losing control of primary trade routes through the Straits of Melaka and Sunda and suffering political crises over royal succession. Portuguese expansionists conquered Melaka in 1511, established control of the capital and key port, introduced Christianity, and destroyed the Islamic Malay Kingdom of Melaka. As their legacies, those three island

kingdoms in the Malayan-Indonesian archipelago endowed their successor states with remarkable religious monuments, ingenious trading techniques, and creative strategies for empire building.



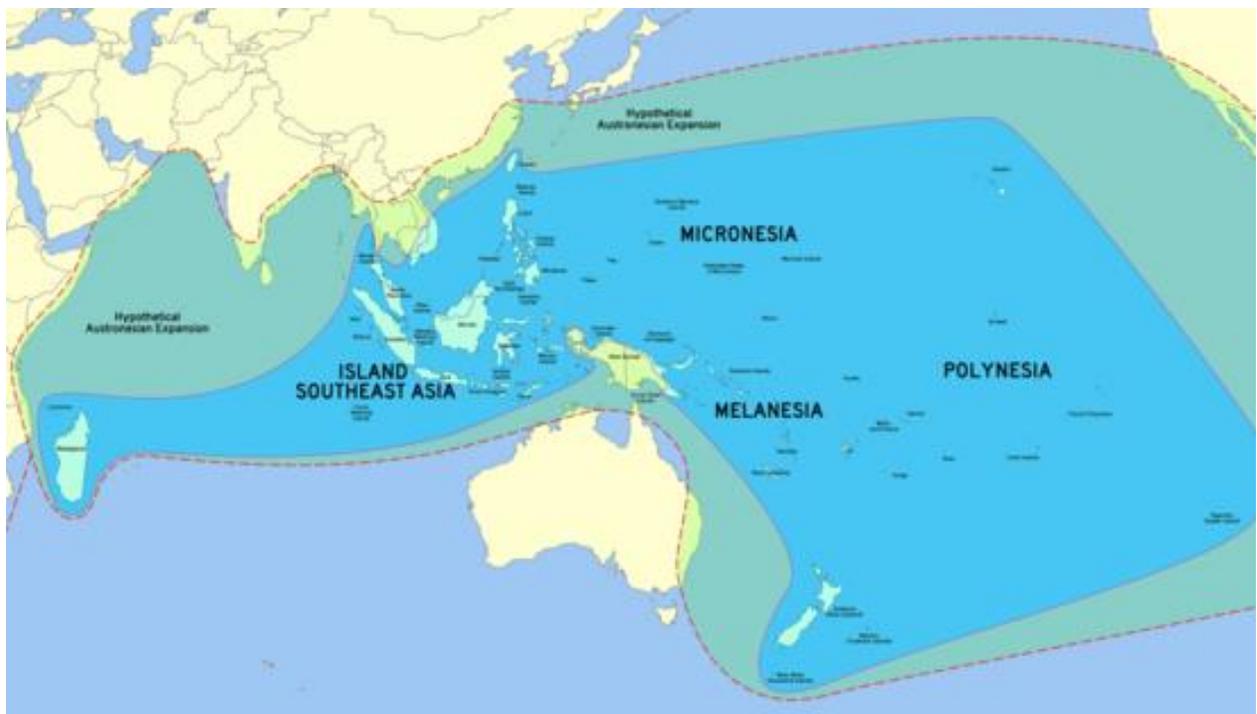
Source: Wikimedia Commons available at

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portuguese_discoveries_and_explorationsV2en.png

Portuguese Trade Routes and Settlements – 16th century

The Iban of Sarawak

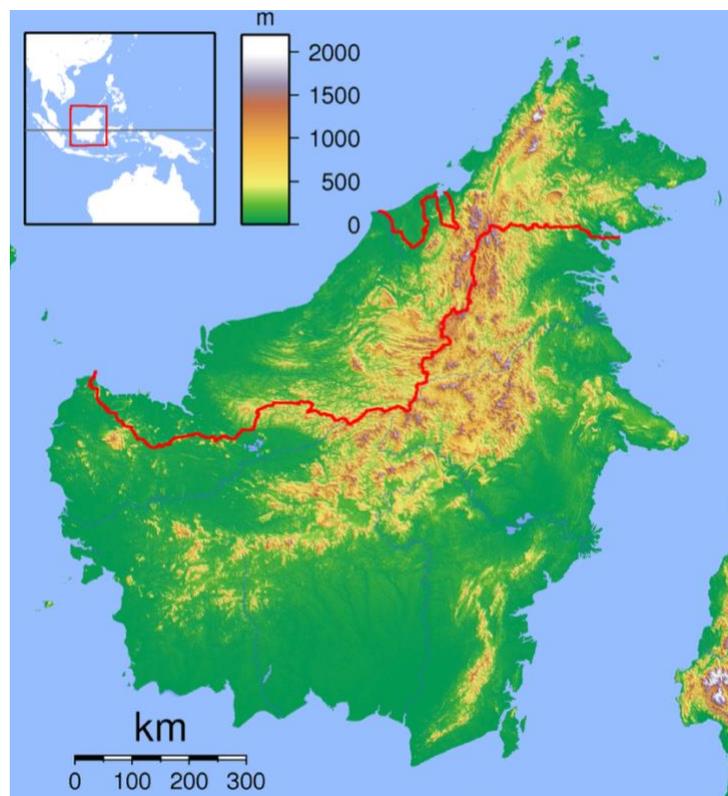
Peoples of Sarawak. About 2.8 million people currently inhabit Sarawak. Sarawak has been settled for at least 40,000 years. But none of the current residents are descendants of the original Austro-Melanesian settlers. All of the indigenous peoples of Sarawak (and Borneo) speak Malayo-Polynesian languages and are descended from Austronesian migrants who arrived in Borneo about 4,500 years ago.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Austronesia_with_hypothetical_greatest_expansion_extent_\(Blench,_2009\)_01.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Austronesia_with_hypothetical_greatest_expansion_extent_(Blench,_2009)_01.png)>

*Migrations of the Austronesian-speaking Peoples from Taiwan –
To Borneo c. 4,500 Years Ago*

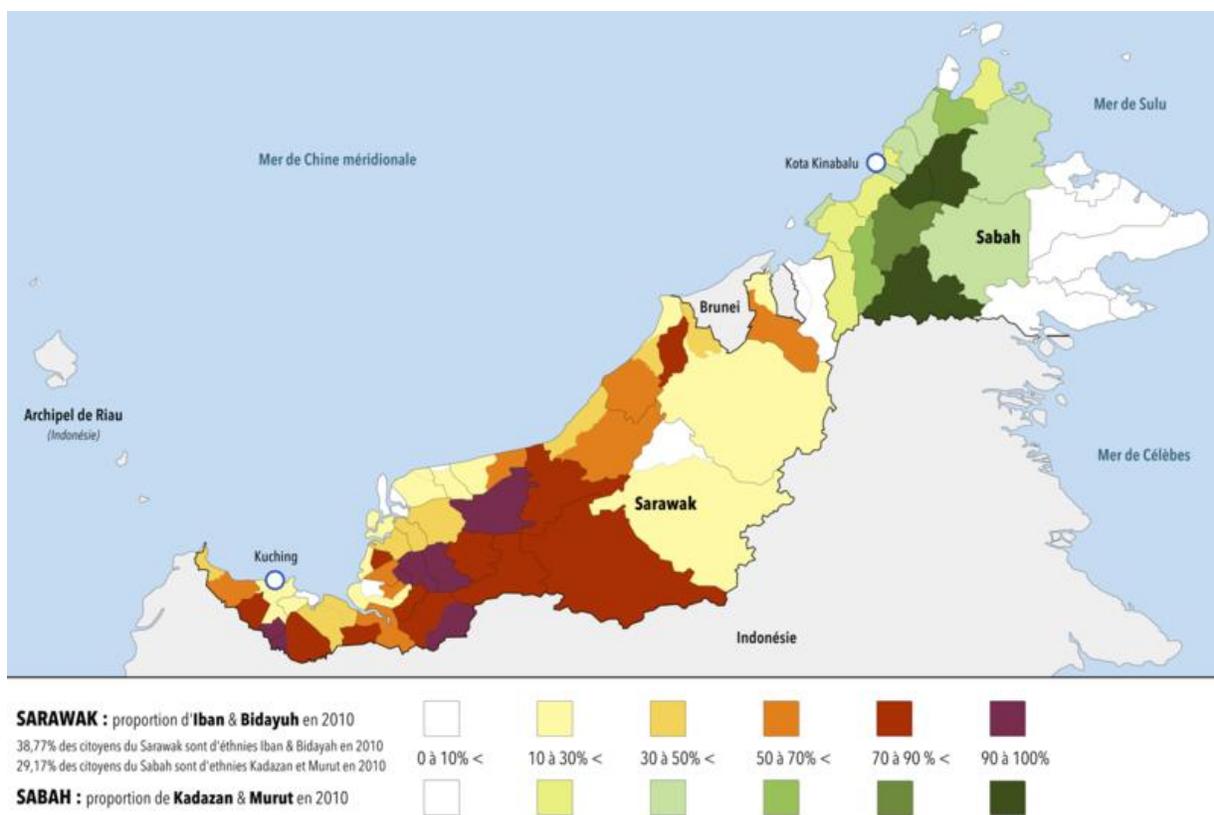
Sarawak has three ecological zones that run in west-east belts. The most northerly is a coastal/estuarine belt in which subsistence activities are limited to fishing and raising swamp sago. Inland and to the south lies a belt of river valleys, which permit farmers to grow irrigated rice and cash crops. Most of the towns are in these first two belts. Further inland are the hills and mountains. Residents of the interior grow hill rice and tubers, using shifting cultivation (swidden).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Borneo_Locator_Topography.png>

*Sarawak's Ecological Zones –
1) coastal belt, 2) river valleys, 3) interior hills*

Three ethnic groups predominate in Sarawak. The Iban (29 percent) migrated into the hill region of Sarawak from western Borneo in the late 18th century and moved into the river valleys in the 19th century. Today, most Iban practice Christianity, influenced by traditional beliefs.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sarawak %26 Sabah ethnies 2010.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sarawak_%26_Sabah_ethnies_2010.png)

Population Densities of Major Ethnic Groups in Sarawak and Sabah, 2010 – Iban and Bidayuh Densities Highest in Red and Orange Areas

The Chinese (24 percent) arrived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to farm and trade. Today, most Chinese live in the towns or farm in the river valleys and practice Buddhism. The Malays (24 percent) migrated into Sarawak in the 19th century, settled in the valleys and towns, and practiced their Muslim religion. Of the numerous indigenous ethnic groups in Sarawak, only two account for a significant portion of the current population – the Bidayuh (8 percent), who inhabit the river valleys near Kuching and practice Christianity, and the Melanau (7 percent), who live in the coastal swamps and towns and are mostly Muslims.

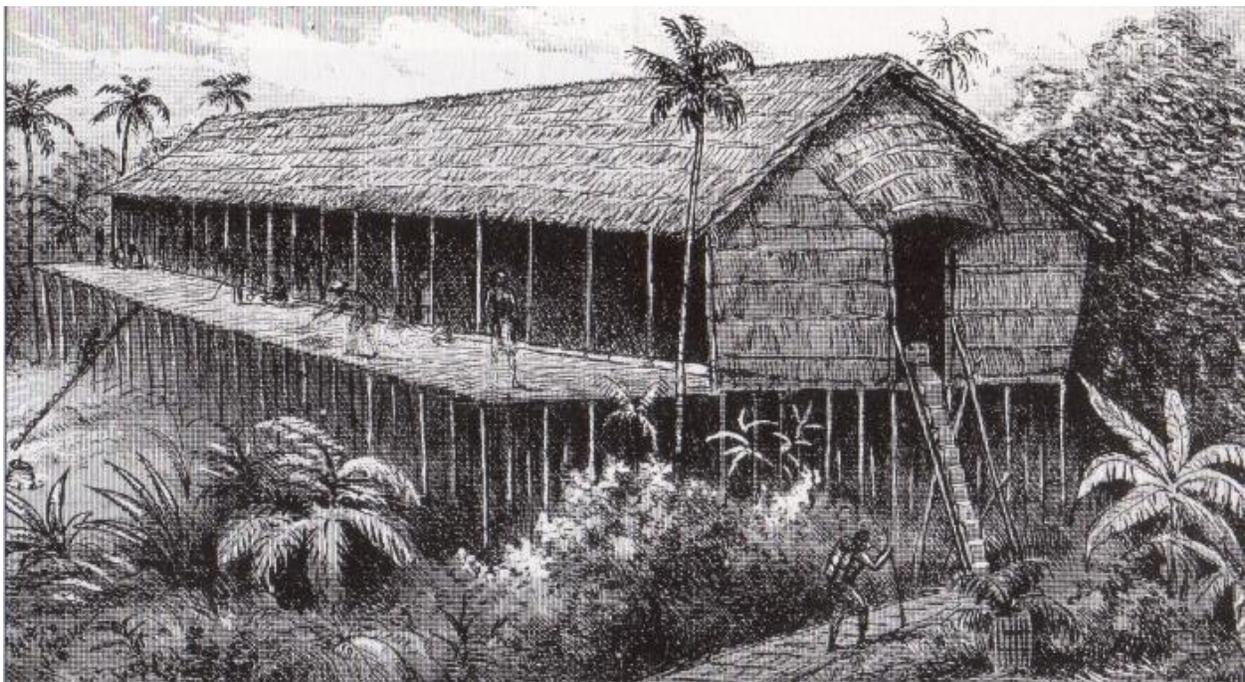


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ethnic_groups_in_sarawak.png>

Ethnic Groups in Sarawak – Iban Warrior (Top Left), Melanau Women (Top Right), Bidayuh Girl (Bottom Left), Chinese Woman (Bottom Right)

Iban Culture. More than 745,000 Iban inhabit the hills and river valleys of Sarawak. Iban social structure is based on longhouse communities, each consisting of five-to-seventy *bilik*-families. Each family has about six members, representing two (sometimes three)

generations, and is expected to be self-sufficient. There are no hierarchies and thus no chiefs, clans, tribes, or patron-client relationships. Families group together in longhouse communities to enhance their capabilities for self-defense, emergency food-sharing, religious ceremony, and adjudication of land disputes.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iban_Langhaus.jpg>

Traditional Iban Longhouse, Photographed in 1896

Families do not live communally. Every family unit in an Iban longhouse is constructed with four essential components – a communal open porch (*tanju*) that extends the entire length of the longhouse

(sometimes 300 yards), a covered verandah (*ruai*) where men meet and sleep, a walled family apartment (*bilik*) which houses women's activities, and a loft (*sadau*) used for storage of food and implements and for female visitors.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iban_longhouse1.JPG>

Ruai (Covered Verandah) of an Iban Longhouse

Iban men are extremely competitive, but individual competition is intended to further societal goals. Iban men traditionally gained prestige and became leaders (*raja berani*) through pioneering new land, successful farming (especially of rice), and military prowess. Formerly,

headhunting was highly valued because it demonstrated courage, gained new land, and appeased evil spirits (spirits of the heads on display in homes were deemed beneficial to owning families).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ceremonial_Textile_\(Pua_Kumbu\)_MET_vs1999.47.163za.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ceremonial_Textile_(Pua_Kumbu)_MET_vs1999.47.163za.jpg)>

*Handwoven Pua Kumbu Ceremonial Blanket, 18th century –
Formerly Used to Transport Human Skulls to the Longhouse*

The first Iban man to clear virgin forest gained usufruct rights to land in perpetuity. But the original clearer of land might have multiple heirs claiming use rights. Land conflicts were adjudicated in longhouses

through consensus. Chinese immigrants and British officials wrongly thought that fallow Iban land was unclaimed.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dinner_with_Iban_family_\(8035179786\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dinner_with_Iban_family_(8035179786).jpg)>

Iban Family Eating Dinner of Rice and Rice Wine (Tuak)

Hill Rice. In the hilly region of interior Sarawak, Iban grow hill rice (also known as rainfed or upland rice). Because of the steep slopes and poor soils, Iban farmers practice shifting cultivation (technically termed swidden and pejoratively called “slash-and-burn”). Shifting cultivation has an undeservedly bad reputation. If practiced correctly, it can be efficient and sustainable. The Iban use only human labor and

have no animal-draft power. Men clear the fields and use dibble sticks to make holes for planting. Women do the planting and weeding. Everyone participates in harvesting, transportation, and threshing. Fields are cleared by burning. It is essential to have a complete burn to clear debris, kill weeds and pests, and provide maximal amounts of natural fertilizer. Fields, rather than crops, are rotated. In each field, a single crop of rice is planted during each of two years followed by 7-15 years of fallow. Then the planting-fallow cycle is repeated.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hill_paddy_in_Data_Kakus.jpg>

Hill Rice Farming, Datu Kakus, Ulu Kakua Tatau Division, Sarawak

Rice provides much more than food to the Iban. For Iban, rice is a gift from the gods and defines humanity. The ability to grow rice separates humans from animals. Rice is central to the human life cycle – rice sustains life, the spirits of the dead descend as dew, and the dew sustains the rice. Each Iban family has one variety of rice that serves as its rice of origin (*padi pun*) and is the symbol of family unity. The *padi pun* is planted in the center of the rice field and harvested last. Iban believe that rice has a soul. During the ritual harvest, they leave family clothing in the field so that the *padi pun* soul will find its way to the family's longhouse.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Longhouse,_Sarawak_\(7246599192\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Longhouse,_Sarawak_(7246599192).jpg)>

*The Rice Soul Resides in the Longhouse –
Contemporary Iban Longhouse, Sarawak*

About half of the Iban diet consists of supplements to rice – other sources of starch (taro, cassava, yams), fish, jungle vegetables (ferns, bamboo shoots), and fruits (jackfruit, durian, rambutan, banana, mangosteen, and mango).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Durio_Zibethinus_Van_Nooten.jpg>

Durian Fruit (Durian zibethinus) – Odiferous Delicacy in Sarawak

Migration and Adaptation. The willingness to migrate and re-settle had long been highly valued Iban cultural traits. The expansionist Iban had moved from the Kapuas River region of western Borneo into the hilly region of western Sarawak in the late 18th century. Iban migrated within Sarawak in two ways. In the early 19th century, they moved northward from the hills into the river valleys, notably the Saribas and Skrang Valleys. Thereafter, the Iban moved inexorably northeastward across Sarawak until by 1950 they occupied nearly every river valley in the country.

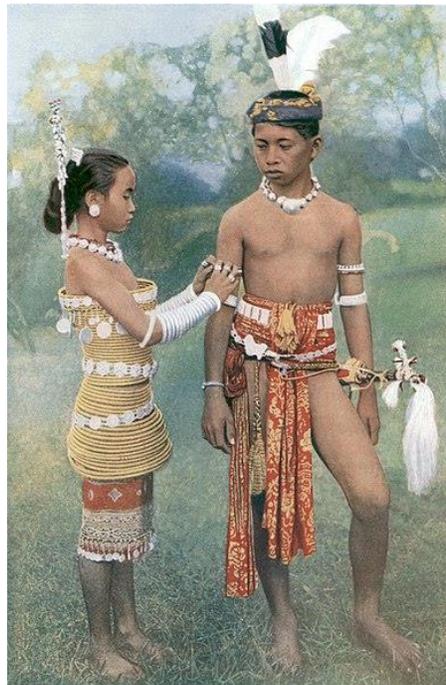


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Borneo_map.png>

*The Iban Migrated Northeastward –
 From West Kalimantan, Across Sarawak*

The takeover of Sarawak by the Brooke family in 1841 forced the Iban to adapt. In opposition to the Brooke family fortune and the British Navy, Iban warriors were no longer the strongest force in the region. In

1843-1844, James Brooke and his allies brutally plundered and destroyed Iban settlements in the Saribas and Skrang River Valleys. To maintain their freedom, many upriver Iban chose to fight the White Rajah or retreat from his rule. Most downriver Iban chose to accommodate to Brooke rule and serve in his police force. Iban made up most of the Sarawak Rangers, the Brookes' elite palace guard.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Young_Ibans,_or_Sea_Dayaks.jpg>

*Most Downriver Iban Accommodated to Brooke Rule –
Young Coastal Iban Couple, Pictured in 1922*

For a century, the three Brooke Rajahs manipulated Iban factions to divide and rule. But Iban migration and expansion continued.

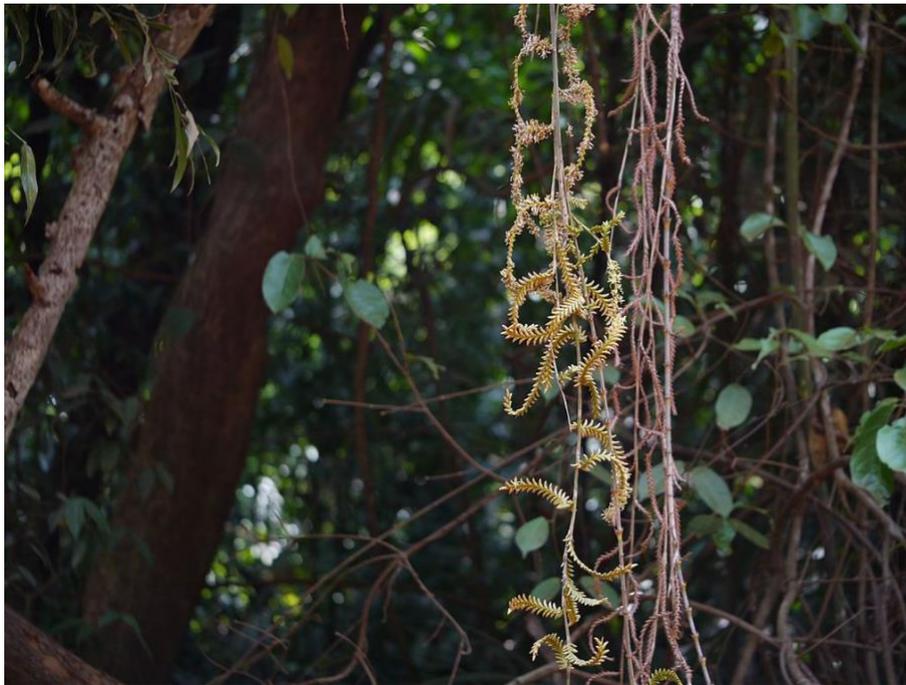
Between 1844 and 1861, James Brooke took over the Rejang River Basin. He received full control in a treaty with the Sultan of Brunei in 1861. The Rejang was then the wealthiest region of Borneo. Sago, produced by Melanau in the coastal swamp and exported by monopolistic Malay traders from Brunei, accounted for half of the world's export supply. The Iban exchanged rice and beeswax for Malay salt and cloth. Following Brooke's takeover, some Iban migrated but most adapted to Brooke control.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hornbill_Figure_from_Borneo.jpg>

*Iban Artisans Carved Figures for Trade –
Iban Hornbill Carving, 19th century, Fowler Museum, UCLA*

Agricultural Evolution. During the first 70 years of Brooke rule (until 1910), Iban livelihood strategies remained traditional. They lived in longhouse communities, farmed hill rice with shifting cultivation, and gathered rainforest products (beeswax, resins) to trade for salt and cloth. The only significant change was the employment of some Iban men in the Brooke police force.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rattan_Cane_\(5661053551\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rattan_Cane_(5661053551).jpg)>

Rattan – Wild Rainforest Vine, Exported for Making Furniture

After the introduction of commercialized rubber production about 1910, Iban agriculture evolved. The time needed for production of

rubber fit easily into the Iban labor calendar for hill rice cultivation, and the rubber gardens enriched the forest fallow for land. Hence, rubber production was complementary to the cultivation of hill rice. The government supplied the rubber seeds, and Chinese traders carried out the marketing. The Brooke government limited rubber estates, and indigenous smallholder rubber gardens accounted for three-fourths of Sarawak's output and exports.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Langkawi_Malaysia_Rubber-trees-02.jpg>

*Iban Smallholders Specialized in Growing Rubber –
Tapping a Rubber Tree in Langkawi, Malaysia*

The Iban evolved a new livelihood strategy beginning about 1970. They gradually specialized in the production of pepper in small gardens, and many started to abandon hill rice cultivation. Pepper production is risky, because the plant is susceptible to disease and export prices fluctuate widely. Pepper also has high cash input costs – for ironwood poles (around which the pepper vines climb) and fertilizers.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sarawak_pepper_plant_climbing_poles.jpg>

*Iban Pepper Garden, Serian District, Sarawak –
Requires Cash for Ironwood Poles and Chemical Fertilizers*

Iban males migrate for wage work outside the community, and their emigrant remittances allow Iban families to ride out periods of low

pepper prices or disease infestations. The Iban have been able to change their mix of livelihood activities – food crops, cash crops, and wage work – because their longhouse communities have provided cultural continuity. Iban men now gain prestige from cash crop farming and trade rather than from headhunting and raiding.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dayak_Iban_Statue.jpg>*

*Traditional Iban Carving, 17th century, Indonesian Heritage Museum –
Once Ritual, Now for the Tourist Market*

The White Rajahs of Sarawak (1841-1946)

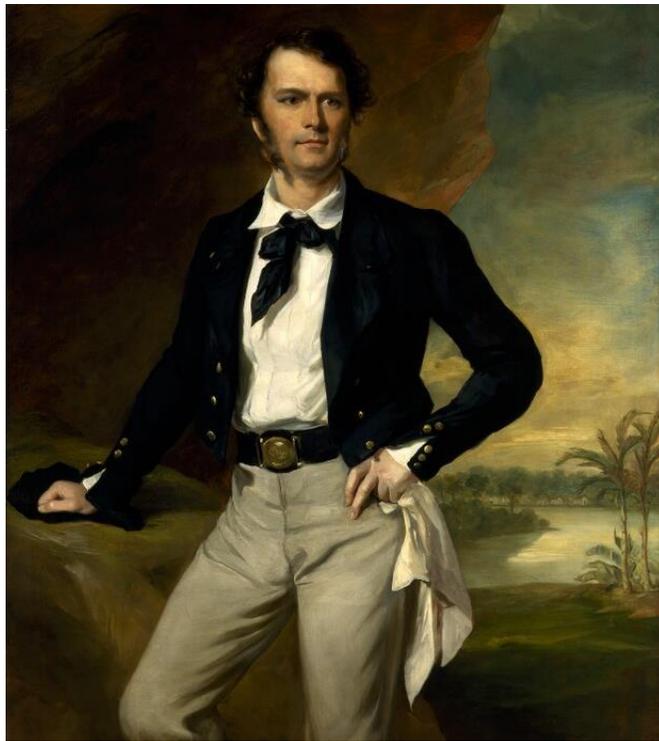
James Brooke (1841-1868) – Political Control. From his privileged childhood in Benares, India, James Brooke (1803-1868) gained a concern for foreign cultures and a desire to become a benevolent despot. The beneficiary of a substantial inheritance (£30,000), James used his wealth for adventure, imperialism, and prestige. In 1841, he sailed his ship, *Royalist*, to Kuching, Sarawak, then ruled by the Sultan of Brunei. Britain's establishment of Singapore in 1819 had undercut Brunei trade and weakened the sultanate.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China_unknown_artist_c_1850_-_painting_of_Singapore_oil_on_canvas_IMG_9419_Museum_of_Asian_Civilisation.jpg>

*Singapore in the mid-19th century –
Chinese Painting, c. 1850, Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore*

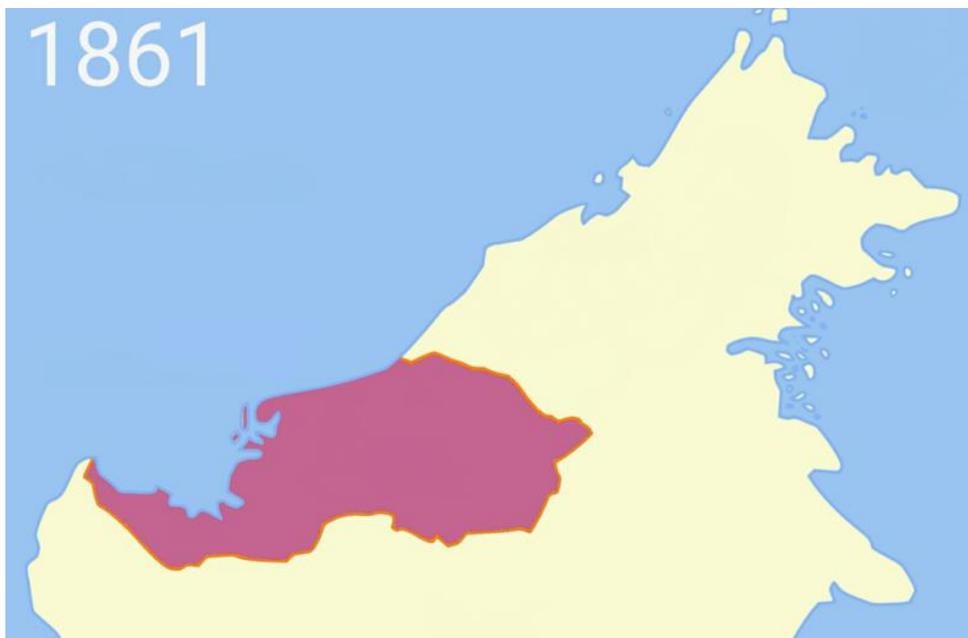
James Brooke helped Rajah Muda Hassim, the Brunei minister, quell an insurgency. He sided with Sarawak Malay nobles in their struggle to control recently-discovered antimony deposits. For his assistance (plus L500 annually), Brooke gained control of Sarawak, a small territory around Kuching with only 10,000 residents. Because of his success in creating Sarawak, Queen Victoria made Brooke a Knight Commander of the Bath in 1847.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sir_James_Brooke_\(1847\)_by_Francis_Grant.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sir_James_Brooke_(1847)_by_Francis_Grant.jpg)>

*James Brooke (1803-1868), Rajah of Sarawak (1841-1868) –
Painting by Francis Grant, 1847*

Brooke worked assiduously to expand eastward the territory under his control at the expense of Brunei. During the 1840s, he overwhelmed Iban resistance in the Saribas and Skrang River Basins, and in 1853, Brunei ceded those areas to Brooke's Sarawak. Brooke continued expanding northeastward in the 1850s with military campaigns and construction of small forts at river mouths in the Rajang Basin. Brunei ceded the Rajang region to Sarawak in 1861.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:James_Brooke_territorial_acquisition_\(1861\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:James_Brooke_territorial_acquisition_(1861).png)>

James Brooke's Expanded Sarawak, 1861

Brooke's power in Sarawak rested on four pillars – military strength (aided by the British Navy and Iban levies), official British

approval (Britain annexed Labuan, an island near Brunei, as a coaling station in 1847 but had no other immediate imperial designs in Borneo), spiritual prowess (*semangat*) in the eyes of Iban and other peoples in Sarawak, and the manipulation of patron-client networks.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Coat_of_arms_of_the_Raj_of_Sarawak.svg>

Royal Coat of Arms of the Raj of Sarawak

James Brooke (1841-1868) – Economic Change. As Rajah, James Brooke declared a personal monopoly on the production and export of antimony (used in metal alloys). He later declared a second monopoly on coal exports, and he expanded into the Rejang region to gain control over its sago exports (starch used in textile manufacturing).

In 1856, Brooke ended his opposition to foreign investment and extended monopolies in Sarawak to the new Borneo Company (L60,000 capitalization in Britain) for the production of antimony, coal, and timber and for the export of sago and Chinese-mined gold.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rajah_James_Brooke.jpg>

*Sir James Brooke, Rajah of Sarawak (1841-1868), c. 1860 –
Extolled Indigenous Virtues, Granted Trade Monopolies*

But revenue from export taxes and mineral royalties was insufficient to finance Sarawak. James Brooke spent L12,000 of his personal fortune in Sarawak by 1844, and he claimed to have spent L30,000 in total. He also received sizeable transfers and loans from

Angela Burdett Coutts, a wealthy British heiress with humanitarian interests. In the 1840s, Brooke relied on Malay *datus* (nobles) to collect taxes on the rice production of Bidayan and Iban farmers. Thereafter, most tax revenue came from Chinese tax farms (government monopolies run by wealthy Kuching merchants) on opium, alcohol, gambling, and pawn-brokering activities of Chinese miners, farmers, and merchants.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Angela_Georgina_Burdett-Coutts,_Baroness_Burdett-Coutts_from_NPG.jpg>

*Angela Burdett-Coutts (1814-1906), English Heiress –
James Brooke's Benefactor*

In the 1860s, the Brooke family experienced a succession struggle involving two brothers, both nephews of James Brooke (who had no

children) and both experienced administrators in Sarawak. The original choice, Brooke Brooke, fell out with his uncle (after organizing a rebellion to oppose James's desire to cede Sarawak to Belgium) and was expelled from Sarawak. James then designated Charles Brooke as his successor, and the leadership transition occurred smoothly after James Brooke died in 1868.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:John_Brooke_Rajah_Mudah_of_Sarawak.jpg>

*Brooke Brooke (1823-1868), 1863 –
Initial Choice to Succeed James Brooke*

Charles Brooke (1868-1917) – Political Control. Charles Brooke was efficient, stubborn, arrogant, fiscally careful, and pro-Iban (after his many younger years of working in Iban regions). Still, Charles

manipulated Iban factions to carry out a classic divide-and-rule strategy. He centralized power, ruled as an absolute autocrat, and issued political directives at will.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charles_Brooke,_Rajah_of_Sarawak.jpg>

Charles Brooke (1829-1917) – Rajah of Sarawak (1868-1917)

His administrative structure for governing Sarawak was intended to be a slim and efficient bureaucracy. Beneath the Rajah, there were Residents, almost always British officers, who ruled in their Divisions with great autonomy and few expatriate aides. Sub-divisions were governed by Native Officers, who mostly were aristocratic, region-

specific Malays who acted as quasi-chiefs. At the bottom of the structure were ethnic leaders, each representing his own group. Their main functions were to collect taxes, attend to local affairs, and implement policy directives from above.

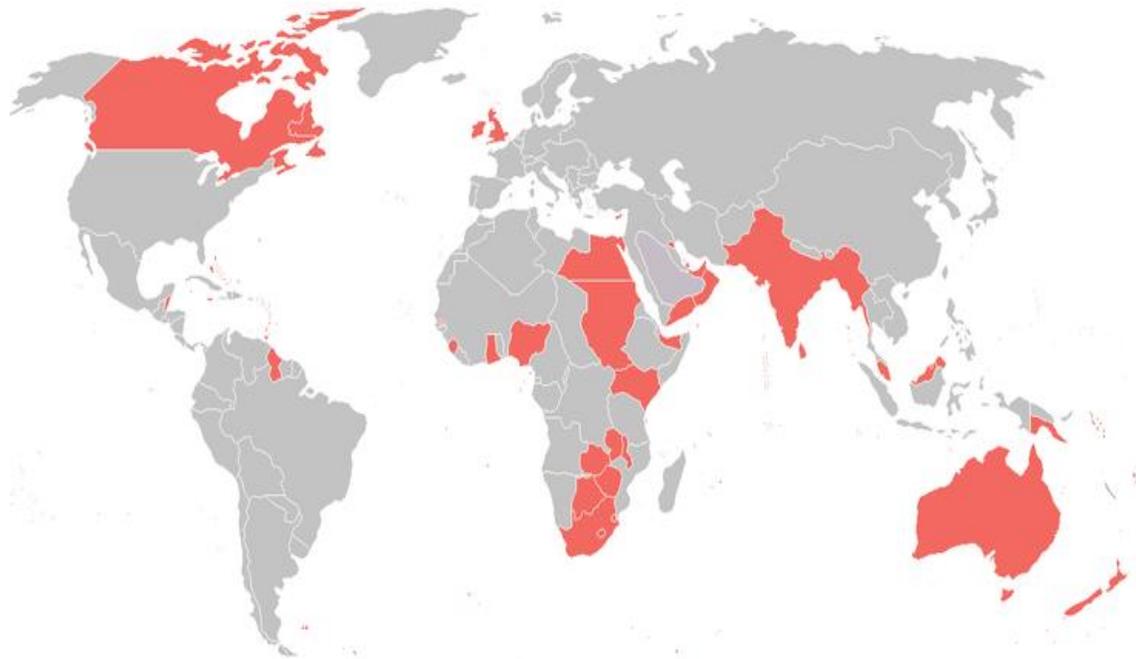


*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Malay_Keris.jpg>*

*Malay Keris (Dagger), With Its Sheath on the Left –
Used Ceremonially by Malay Nobles in Sarawak, 19th century*

Also mirroring James Brooke, Charles worked hard to expand Sarawak's territory at the expense of the Sultanate of Brunei. In 1881, a rival appeared to the east when the British North Borneo Company received a charter to monopolize production and trade in northeastern Borneo (modern Sabah, formerly controlled by the Sultans of Brunei and

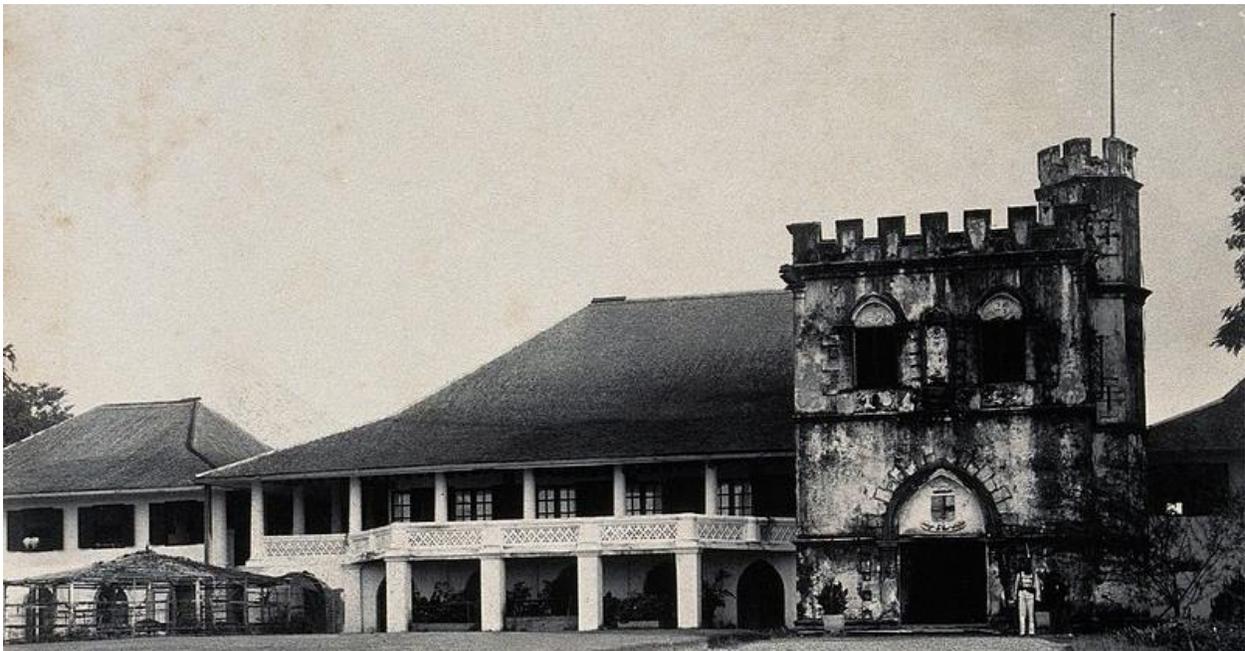
Sulu). Between 1882 and 1904, Charles Brooke forced Brunei to cede territories that surrounded Brunei on three sides – Baram (1882), Limbang (1890), and Lawas (1904). His hope to annex Brunei itself was thwarted by the British Colonial Office. Fearing French and Dutch expansion in the region, Britain declared Protectorates over Sarawak, Brunei, and North Borneo in 1888. Charles Brooke was pleased with that arrangement, in which Britain guaranteed external security in return for the right to carry out foreign policy.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:British_Empire_in_1914.png>

The British Empire in 1914, One-fourth of the World's Land Area and Population – Protectorates in Sarawak, Brunei, and North Borneo

Charles Brooke (1868-1917) – Economic Change. Three separate, though linked, economies emerged in Sarawak under Charles Brooke's rule. In the ports, especially Kuching, there was a mercantile economy, dominated by the Borneo Company and Chinese merchants. By 1900, Kuching, the capital, had 25,000 residents.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kuching, Sarawak; the Astana, a partly castellated building. Wellcome V0037394.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kuching,_Sarawak;_the_Astana,_a_partly_castellated_building._Wellcome_V0037394.jpg)>*

*Astana Palace, Kuching, Built in 1870, Pictured in 1896 –
Home of the White Rajahs of Sarawak*

In the coastal region and river basins, many farmers – mostly Chinese, but also Malay and Iban – grew cash crops for export with increasing specialization. There were 45,000 Chinese residents of

Sarawak by 1910. In the interior, the rolling hills and mountains, the Iban and other indigenous peoples practiced subsistence agriculture, producing mostly hill rice and tubers with traditional shifting cultivation.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fort_Margherita_Kuching.JPG>*

Fort Margherita, Kuching – Constructed by Charles Brooke in 1879 To Control the Growing Population of His Capital City

The Brooke government continued to rely on Chinese tax farms for revenue, but revenue from export taxes gradually became dominant during Charles Brooke's tenure as Rajah (1868-1917). In that half century, the composition of Sarawak's agricultural and mineral exports changed. Between 1868 and 1890, the principal exports were sago flour

(for textile manufacturing), forest products (beeswax and resins), antimony (for metal alloys), and coal (after 1880). During the second half of Charles's rule (1890-1917), pepper became Sarawak's leading export and rubber gained prominence. After 1900, the Borneo Company expanded gold production and exports by introducing a new cyanide process for extraction, and in 1913 Sarawak Oilfields Company (a Shell Oil affiliate) began exporting petroleum from its Miri field.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sago_logs.jpg>

*Sarawak Led the World in Sago Flour Exports –
Sago Palm Logs, Prepared by Melanau Exporters in Sarawak*

Near the end of his life, Charles Brooke decreed that his two sons, Vyner and Bertram, should rule Sarawak jointly after his death.

However, when Charles died in 1917 (at age 88), Vyner convinced Bertram that joint rule was infeasible and became the sole Rajah.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charles_Anthony_Johnson_Brooke_\(1898\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charles_Anthony_Johnson_Brooke_(1898).png)>

Charles Brooke – Caricatured in Vanity Fair, 1899

Vyner Brooke (1917-1946) – Political Transition. Charles Vyner Brooke (ruled 1917-1946) was shy, unconfident, compassionate, and overly sensitive. Although Vyner professed to promote Iban culture, in 1933 he introduced a Land Order to appropriate customary land rights. He also greatly expanded government bureaucracy, doubling the number of British officers.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charlesvynerbrooke.jpg>>*

*Charles Vyner Brooke (1874-1963), Rajah of Sarawak (1917-1946) –
Pictured in 1932*

Sarawak enjoyed a decade of prosperity in the 1920s. Exports earnings and tax revenue expanded. Rubber overtook pepper as the leading agricultural export crop. By the late 1920s, over three-fourths of Sarawak's rubber was produced by indigenous smallholders, mostly Iban and Malays. Chinese merchants carried out the marketing of the latex (rubber sheets). Sarawak Oilfields (an affiliate of Royal Dutch Shell) exported petroleum from its Miri oilfield. Production peaked in

1929 at 15,000 barrels per day. From 1928 to 1946, oil was Sarawak's leading export and provided half of government revenue.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Grand_Old_Lady_Miri_Malaysia.jpg>*

*Oil Well No. 1 (The Grand Old Lady), Miri, Sarawak –
First Commercial Oil Well in Malaysia, In Production 1910-1972*

Sarawak suffered hardship during the Depression (1930-1939). Export earnings in 1932 were only a fourth of their 1929 level. The Japanese Occupation (1942-1945) was far worse. Japanese rule was brutal, in part in retaliation for British destruction of the oilfields. Allied attacks on Japanese mercantile shipping constrained Japan's export of

raw materials from Southeast Asia. Many rubber planters in Sarawak converted their gardens to subsistence food crops at great loss.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Greater_Japanese_empire.png>*

*The Japanese Empire At Its Peak in 1942-1943 –
Japan Occupied Sarawak and Southeast Asia, 1942-1945*

Because of the high costs of post-war rehabilitation, Vyner Brooke favored cession of Sarawak to Britain. Control of internal affairs in Sarawak by the British Colonial Office had been presaged in the new Constitution of 1941, but the war had prevented its implementation. Despite considerable opposition to the cession within Sarawak, the transition was peaceful.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brooke_rajahs_graves_at_Sheepstor.JPG>

*Graves of the Three White Rajahs of Sarawak –
St. Leonard's Church, Sheepstor, Devon, England*

Colonial and Malaysian Sarawak (1946-present)

British Colonialism (1946-1963) – Political Evolution. In 1946, Britain took possession of Sarawak, Brunei, and North Borneo (renamed Sabah) and ruled the three crown colonies of British Borneo directly from the Colonial Office in London. Britain put a governor in charge of each crown colony. In Sarawak, many Malays had opposed the transfer to Britain because they feared loss of control under colonial rule. Extremists in the Malay Youth Movement assassinated the British governor in 1949.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sarawak_anti-cession_demonstration.JPG>

Malays Opposed British Rule in Sarawak

British administrators recovered and made significant achievements in post-war reconstruction. They imposed political stability, created efficient bureaucracies, and implemented development plans. They rebuilt and expanded public infrastructure, especially ports, roads, and airports. They thus revived the export economies of all three North Borneo colonies. In Sarawak, colonial administrators allowed the timber concession of the Borneo Company to expire and granted new timber concessions, largely to local Chinese operators.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Logging_trucks_in_Sarawak.jpg>

Timber Exports from Sarawak – Logging Truck in Sarawak Rainforest

By 1963, the economies of Sarawak and Sabah were strong enough to consider federation with Malaya and Singapore in a proposed new

state to be called Malaysia. (Brunei opted to stay out of Malaysia to protect its oil wealth.) Tunku Abdul Rahman of Malaya and Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore both viewed Sarawak and Sabah as swing states in Malaysia, and both leaders hoped to gain their electoral support (Abdul Rahman was willing to extend the definition of *Bumiputera* to include indigenous (i.e., non-Chinese) peoples in Borneo). In the 1963 elections in Sarawak and Sabah, pro-Malaysia alliances won decisively. Both states received their independence from Britain in September 1963 and joined the new federation of Malaysia.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Malaysia_states_named.png>

*Formation of the Federation of Malaysia, 1963 –
Malaya (West Malaysia) and Sarawak and Sabah (East Malaysia)*

British Colonialism (1946-1963) – Economic Change. British colonial officials faced a daunting challenge in reviving Sarawak's export economy. Before World War II, oil was Sarawak's leading export and source of government revenue. But by 1946, the Miri oilfield was in decline and no new petroleum discoveries were made until the end of the colonial period.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Miri_City,Sarawak,Malaysian_Borneo.jpg>

Miri – The Oil and Gas Capital of Sarawak

Sarawak continued to produce modest amounts of gold, and western Sarawak had a brief boomlet (1958-1961) of bauxite exports to Japan. But Britain needed to develop non-mineral resources to make Sarawak pay. One possibility was agricultural exports produced by indigenous peoples. The Land Code (1958) reserved all land, except the

mostly-urban mixed zone (8 percent), for indigenous use and protected native customary rights. British technicians provided extension services, finance for inputs, and improved seeds to promote smallholder production of rubber and pepper. The Rubber Planting Scheme (1956) subsidized replanting of rubber gardens with high-yielding varieties.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hevea_brasiliensis -
K%C3%B6hler%E2%80%93s_Medizinal-Pflanzen-071.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hevea_brasiliensis_-_K%C3%B6hler%E2%80%93s_Medizinal-Pflanzen-071.jpg)>

*Natural Rubber (Hevea brasiliensis) –
British Officials Expanded Production in Colonial Sarawak*

However, Britain solved its revenue problem by exploiting Sarawak's timber resources. The colonial government granted 15-20-year concessions, primarily to local Foochow Chinese operators. They

introduced mechanized technology (chain saws and skidder tractors) to harvest Sarawak's extensive stands of tropical hardwoods. Log exports, only L340,000 in 1950, leaped to L5 million in 1960. By 1963, timber, rubber, and pepper together accounted for 80 percent of total export earnings.

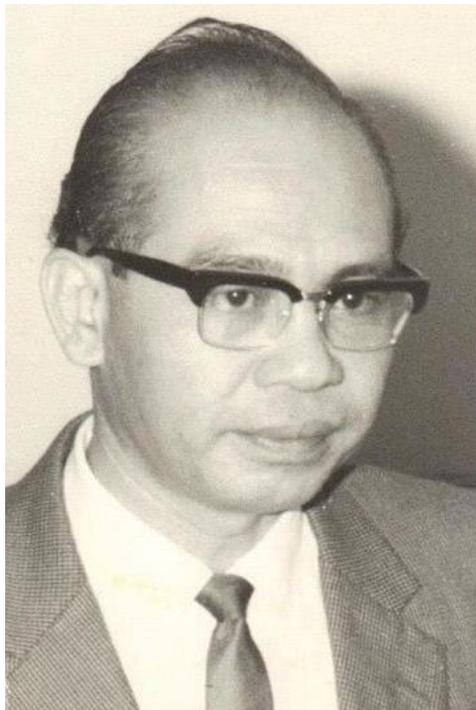


*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sarawak,_Cultural_Village_11.jpg>*

*Logging Exports from Sarawak Grew –
Logging Camp on the Rajang River, Near Kapit, Sarawak*

The Foochow Chinese, whose population nearly doubled under colonial rule, dominated Sarawak's economy. In addition to forestry, they were prominent in small-scale manufacturing (wood and rattan furniture and building materials), trade, finance, and urban property.

Sarawak in Malaysia (1963-present) – Political Control. The Sarawak Alliance, a coalition of five political parties, formed the first state government of independent Sarawak (in Malaysia). Stephen Kalong Ningkan, an Iban, served as Chief Minister for three years (1963-1966). He was dismissed by the federal government on charges of secessionism because he pressed for special concessions to guard the rights of Sarawak's indigenous peoples.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stephen_Kalong_Ningkan.jpg>

Stephen Kalong Ningkan – Sarawak's First Chief Minister (1963-1966)

Since then, Sarawak's government has been controlled by Malay-Muslim politicians in coalition with the national alliance, Barisan Nasional. Most of Sarawak's leaders have been Melanau, including the Chief Minister from 1981 to 2014, Abdul Taib Mahmud. Politics in Sarawak have been marked by elite dominance and heavy patronage.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tun_Pehin_Sri_Abdul_Taib_Mahmud.jpg>

Abdul Taib Mahmud (1936-present), Sarawak's Chief Minister (1981-2014) and Governor (2014-present) – Pictured in 2017

New fields of oil and gas were discovered offshore Sarawak in the early 1960s, and production reached 150,000 barrels per day. However, the Petroleum Development Act (1974) allocated only a 5-percent royalty to the oil-producing states and permitted the federal government to reap most of the windfall. The provinces thus transfer huge revenues to the center. Sarawak produces about one-fourth of Malaysia's oil and gas, but its royalties provide only a seventh of state revenues.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Petronas Towers, Kuala Lumpur \(3323152170\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Petronas_Towers,_Kuala_Lumpur_(3323152170).jpg)>

Sarawak's Oil and Gas Revenues Go to Kuala Lumpur – The Petronas Towers, Kuala Lumpur, The Tallest Buildings in the World (1998-2004)

Distributive politics in Sarawak, instead, focus on timber concessions and land allocations. Sarawak's Malay-Muslim leaders have overridden native customary land rights and discriminated against interior indigenous peoples in their rush to open land for logging and oil palm plantations. Enormous private fortunes are at stake. During the past three decades, the state allocated 1.6 million hectares of land for new oil palm plantations. Three-fourths of those plantations are private and only a quarter is in public land development schemes.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Abdul_Taib_Mahmud%27s_private_residence.jpg>

Abdul Taib Mahmud's Private Residence and Yacht on the Sarawak River – Demak Jaya, Sarawak

Sarawak in Malaysia (1963-present) – Economic Change.

Since independence, socio-economic indicators in Sarawak have shown

great improvement. Between 1963 and 2010, the level of per capita income in Sarawak increased at an annual rate of 4.5 percent, identical to that achieved in all of Malaysia. However, between 2010 and 2019, the rate of annual increase of per capita income in Sarawak (4.6 percent) exceeded that in all of Malaysia (3.7 percent). The incidence of poverty in Sarawak declined from 57 percent in 1970 to only 8 percent in 2019 (compared with 6 percent in Malaysia). The size of Sarawak's middle class rose apace – from just 8 percent in 1963 to 35 percent in 2019. Adult (over age 15) literacy in Sarawak improved from 30 percent at independence to 95 percent today (equivalent to the Malaysian average).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chancellory_Universiti_Malaysia_Sarawak.JPG>

*The University of Malaysia, Kota Samarahan, Sarawak –
Founded in 1992*

Income growth in Sarawak has depended on the export of natural-resource-based commodities. Offshore petroleum and liquefied natural gas (LNG) led the way for two decades (1963-1985), providing three-fifths of export earnings in 1982. Natural rubber, produced from high-yielding trees in smallholder gardens, accounted for a small share of export earnings in that period. Between 1985 and 2010, exports of timber propelled Sarawak's economy, reaching \$8 billion in 1988. During the 2010s, Sarawak's leading exports were liquefied natural gas, petroleum, timber, palm oil, rubber, and pepper (produced by Iban smallholders in tiny gardens).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bintulu_LNG_port.jpg>

Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Export Facility at Bintulu, Sarawak



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sarawak_pepper_plants.jpg>*

Pepper Plants Growing in Iban Gardens in Sarawak

Industry provides about one-sixth of Sarawak's state income (GDP). Industrialization in Sarawak is constrained by high production costs (expensive labor, remote location), the reliance on politicized federal funds for development projects, and the focus of Sarawak's entrepreneurs on timber rather than manufacturing. Sarawak's main manufactures are basic consumer goods (food, beverages, and cement) and processed resources (nitrogenous fertilizer).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ASEAN_Bintulu_Fertiliser_Plant.jpg>

ASEAN Nitrogenous Fertilizer Plant – Bintulu, Sarawak

Sarawak in Malaysia (1963-present) – Resource Conflicts.

Since 1981, Sarawak has had three Chief Ministers – Abdul Taib Mahmud (1981-2014), Adenan Satem (2014-2017), and Abang Abdul Rahman Zohari Abang Openg (2017-present). All have practiced variants of the “politics of development,” originally introduced by Mahmud. Patron-client deals have permitted the Malay-Melanau elite, using local Chinese capital, to exploit indigenous land under the guise of developing the economy and reducing poverty. Concessions of land – to harvest timber or plant oil palms – have been granted corruptly to elite

clients. The indigenous groups in Sarawak vigorously have opposed this land grab, because it violates their customary native land rights. The state government amended the Land Code in 1996 to allow conversion of native land to private plantations.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sarawak_state_assembly_building.jpg>

*Sarawak State Assembly Building, Kuching –
Where the Politics of Development Play Out*

The indigenous peoples won a legal victory in 2005, when the Court of Appeal ruled that customary land rights could not be changed by legislation. However, by that time much of Sarawak's land had been turned over to development. Timber concessions cover 70 percent of the

state's total land area. During the 1980s, Sarawak led the world in hardwood log production and harvested timber at more than twice sustainable levels. When timber production peaked in 1991, more than 30 percent of Sarawak's forest area had been denuded with consequent erosion, siltation, and loss of habitat.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Another_pile_of_Logs_-_panoramio.jpg>

*Sarawak, World Leader in Hardwood Log Exports –
Mao Sen Sawmill Company, Sibul, Sarawak*

Oil palm plantations occupy 1.6 hectares – over half of Sarawak's agricultural area and 80 times more than the oil palm area in 1980. Of the total area under oil palm, three-fourths is owned by large private corporations and only a small fraction is operated by smallholders.

Plantation monoculture is high risk, because export prices for palm oil fluctuate widely and the dwarf high-yielding varieties are susceptible to pests and disease. Local groups receive little employment since most of the labor force is Indonesian. The current land policy thus is both unsustainable and inequitable.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palm_forest.jpg>

Evolution from Dypterocarp Rainforest (Top) To Developed Palm Oil Plantation (Middle) To Irreversibly Eroded Landscape (Bottom)



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PRN_Sarawak_2021.svg>

Political Constituencies in Contemporary Sarawak – East Malaysia (North Borneo)

Time Line for North Borneo (East Malaysia)

<i>c.</i> 40,000 BCE	migration of Melanesian hunter-gatherers from southern China into Borneo
<i>c.</i> 2500 BCE	migration of Austronesian-speaking farmers from Taiwan through the Philippines into Sulawesi and Borneo
<i>c.</i> 2000 BCE	migration of Austronesian-speaking farmers from Sulawesi and Borneo into Java and Sumatra
<i>c.</i> 1500 BCE	migration of Austronesian-speaking farmers from Java and Sumatra into New Guinea and Near Oceania
7 th -13 th centuries CE	Srivijaya Kingdom – Sumatra, Malaya, Borneo – Palembang – Malay – Mahayana Buddhist – wealth from foreign trade, rice
8 th -9 th centuries	Sailendra Kingdom – Java – Javanese – Mahayana Buddhist – wealth from rice and foreign trade
9 th -15 th centuries	Khmer Kingdom – Cambodia, southern Vietnam, southern Laos, central-southern Thailand, northern Malaya – irrigated rice
9 th -10 th centuries	Saivite Kingdom – Java – Javanese – Hindu/ Siva – wealth from rice and foreign trade
13 th -16 th centuries	Majapahit Kingdom – Java, Sumatra – Javanese – Hindu and Mahayana Buddhist – wealth from rice and foreign trade

- 1339-1364 Gaja Mada, leading minister of Majapahit Kingdom
- 1402-1511 Sultanate of Melaka, Malay kingdom – Malaya, Sumatra – Islam – vassal of China in return for trade privileges – controlled trade through the Strait of Melaka
- 1405-1433 Ming Admiral Zheng He – led massive Chinese tribute and trade expeditions – Southeast Asia (including Melaka), Indian Subcontinent, Western Asia, East Africa
- 1511-1641 Portugal conquered and ruled Melaka – destroyed Islamic Malay Kingdom of Melaka – controlled trade through the Strait of Melaka – introduced Christianity
- 1521 Ferdinand Magellan landed in Cebu – claimed the Philippines archipelago for Spain – native inhabitants killed him
- 1571 coastal Philippines, including Manila, under Spanish control – except Muslims of Mindanao, Sulu (called Moros by Spanish)
- 1587-1755 Mataram Sultanate – Java, Sumatra – Javanese – Muslim – wealth from rice and foreign trade
- 1602 establishment of Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (Dutch East India Company, VOC) – merger of competing companies

1641-1800	Netherlands and Dutch East Indies Company controlled Melaka and trade through the Strait of Melaka
1786	Britain claimed the island of Penang, Malaya – established a trading port
1795	France invaded the Netherlands and installed a new government
late 18 th -19 th centuries	Iban people migrated into hill region of Sarawak from Kapuas River region of western Borneo – later moved northeastward into the Saribas and Skrang river valleys
19 th century	Malay people migrated into Sarawak from Malaya – settled in the valleys and towns – practiced Islam
1800	VOC dissolved – assets, territorial possessions became property of Dutch government
1808-1811	Herman Willem Daendels – Governor-General of Dutch East Indies – for Napoleonic regime in the Netherlands
1811-1816	Great Britain, led by Thomas Stamford Raffles, conquered and ruled Java
1819	Thomas Stamford Raffles negotiated a treaty with the Sultan of Johore – Singapore island ceded to the English East India Company
1824	Treaty of London – Netherlands ceded Melaka and Singapore to Britain, agreed to British control

- of Malay peninsula – Britain ceded Bengkulu to the Netherlands, recognized Dutch hegemony in Sumatra
- 1826 Britain formed the Straits Settlements colony – Penang, Singapore, Melaka – governed from Calcutta
- 1841-1946 White Rajahs (the Brooke Family) ruled Sarawak
- 1841-1868 James Brooke (1803-1868), Rajah of Sarawak – helped Rajah Muda Hassim, the Brunei minister, quell an insurgency – was ceded a small area around Kuching
- 1841-1844 James Brooke and allies brutally plundered and destroyed Iban settlements in the Saribas and Skrang River Valleys of Sarawak – Brunei sultan's cession in 1853
- 1844-1861 James Brooke and allies took over the Rejang River Basin – wealthiest region of Borneo – received full control in treaty with Sultan of Brunei in 1861
- 1847 Britain annexed Labuan, an island near Brunei, as a coaling station – but had no other immediate imperial designs in Borneo
- 1856 James Brooke extended monopolies in Sarawak to the new Borneo Company – production of antimony, coal, and timber – export of sago and Chinese-mined gold

- 1867 Straits Settlements – Penang, Singapore, Melaka – became British Crown Colony, governed from London
- 1868-1917 Charles Brooke (1829-1917), Rajah of Sarawak – centralized power, ruled as an autocrat, issued political directives at will – expanded Sarawak at expense of Brunei
- 1869 opening of the Suez Canal – shortened the Europe-Asia trade route – attracted greater traffic to the Strait of Malacca, Singapore
- 1874 Treaty of Pangkor – allowed Britain to place a Resident in Perak – Britain put Residents in Selangor and Negeri Sembilan to increase colonial control in Malaya
- 1881 British North Borneo Company – charter to monopolize production and trade in northeastern Borneo (modern Sabah, earlier controlled by Sultans of Brunei and Sulu)
- 1882-1904 Charles Brooke forced Brunei to cede Baram (1882), Limbang (1890), and Lawas (1904) to Sarawak – British Colonial Office thwarted Brooke’s hope to take all of Brunei
- 1888 Britain declared Protectorates over Sarawak, Brunei, and North Borneo – guaranteed external security in return for the right to carry out foreign policy
- 1888 Britain put a Resident in Pahang, Malaya

- 1896 Britain formed the Federated Malay States – Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang – ruled from Kuala Lumpur
- 1896 Britain introduced natural rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*) into Malaya – from Brazil
- 1898 Battle of Manila Bay – US Navy defeated Spanish Navy – US troops secured Manila – Filipinos declared independence – Spain ceded Philippines to US for \$20 million
- 1901-1941 Philippines under American colonial rule – Philippines exported sugar, hemp, coconut products, and tobacco to US – imported manufactures and processed goods from US
- 1909 Kingdom of Siam agreed to transfer four northern Malay states to Britain – they (plus Johor) became the Unfederated Malay States
- c. 1910 Iban agriculturalists in Sarawak – began cultivating rubber gardens along with traditional hill rice – produced three-fourths of Sarawak’s export earnings
- 1910 First commercial oil well in Malaysia – Oil Well No. 1 (The Grand Old Lady), Miri, Sarawak – in production 1910-1972
- 1913 Sarawak Oilfields Company (a Shell Oil affiliate) began exporting petroleum from its Miri field

- 1914-1918 World War One – Japan entered on the side of the Allies (the UK, France, and Russia – Japan took control of German-held territories in Micronesia
- 1917-1946 Charles Vyner Brooke (1874-1963), Rajah of Sarawak – professed to promote Iban culture – appropriated customary land rights – doubled the number of British officers
- 1930-1939 Great Depression – global downturn in employment and income – Sarawak’s export earnings fell by three-fourths
- 1937-1945 Japan invaded China – conquered large parts of eastern China – but could not defeat Nationalists in west or Communists in north
- 1941-1945 Japan fought and lost World War II in the Pacific – early successes in Southeast Asia, Melanesia – Allies formed Pacific corridor of air bases to bomb Japan and win the war
- 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor (December) – buy time to establish a defensive perimeter – hoped Nazi Germany would win in Europe and US would not fight a long war in Pacific
- 1942-1945 Japan occupied and colonized Borneo, Dutch East Indies, Hong Kong, Malaya, Philippines, Singapore, and Taiwan
- 1945 US President Harry Truman chose to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (August) – caused 200,000 deaths

- 1945 Emperor Hirohito announced Japan's surrender (August) – Allies' victory over Japan resulted from superior production capability and better military strategy
- 1945 Hong Kong, Malaya, North Borneo, Sarawak, and Singapore reverted to British colonial control – Taiwan reverted to China – Philippines became independent
- 1945-1949 Dutch resisted Indonesian independence – four-year war – Dutch nearly won – stalemate – US forced Netherlands to give up and allow Indonesian independence
- 1946-1963 Britain claimed Sarawak, Brunei, and North Borneo (renamed Sabah) – ruled British Borneo from Colonial Office in London – put governor in charge of each crown colony
- 1948 Britain formed the Malay Federation – Straits Settlements, Federated Malay States, Unfederated Malay States – gave privileges to Malays – alienated Chinese residents
- 1948-1960 The Emergency in Malaya – overwhelming British force (80,000 police versus 8,000 guerrillas) – resettlement strategy placed Communist supporters into New Villages – Britain eventually won the civil war
- 1949 extremists in the Malay Youth Movement assassinated the British governor of Sarawak

- 1950-1953 Korean War – stalemate – Japanese economy gained from provisioning Allies, from US aid to Japan, and from carrying out post-war reconstruction in Korea
- 1950 Indonesian government reconstituted as new Republic of Indonesia – capital in Jakarta
- 1955-1956 David Marshall – Prime Minister of Singapore
- 1957 Malaya received independence from Britain – United Malays National Organization (UMNO) dominated politics
- 1957-1970 Tunku Abdul Rahman – Prime Minister of Malaya (1957-1963) and of Malaysia (1963-1970) – leader of UMNO
- 1957-1965 Sukarno’s Guided Democracy in Indonesia – authoritarian rule, socialism, nationalism
- 1958 Land Code in Sarawak – reserved all land, except urban (8 percent), for indigenous use – protected native customary rights – British technicians gave input finance and improved seeds for smallholder rubber and pepper
- 1959-1990 Lee Kuan Yew – Prime Minister of Singapore
- 1963 Sarawak and Sabah gained independence from Britain – Malaysia was formed – Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore – Brunei stayed out to protect its oil wealth

1963-1966	Stephen Kalong Ningkan – Chief Minister of Sarawak
1963-1965	Indonesia-Malaysia confrontation – instigated by Sukarno – investment fled
1964-1975	Second Indochina War – Democratic Republic of Vietnam defeated United States and SEATO
1965	Tunku Abdul Rahman, UMNO leader, expelled Singapore from Malaysia – independent Singapore recognized by Britain, US – joined United Nations
1965-1967	Suharto sidelined Sukarno in Indonesia – assumed power in military coup – violent aftermath – 500,000 died – PKI wiped out
1966-1970	Tawi Sil – Chief Minister of Sarawak
1967-1998	Suharto, President of Indonesia – Golkar Party, military – rigged 5-year elections – moderate Islam, Javanese mysticism
c. 1970	Iban agriculturalists in Sarawak – began cultivating pepper gardens – many stopped producing traditional hill rice
1970-1981	Abdul Rahman Ya'kub – Chief Minister of Sarawak
1971-1990	New Economic Policy in Malaysia – poverty declined from 49 to 15 percent – Malay share of equity ownership increased from 2 to 20 percent

1974	Petroleum Development Act of Malaysia – allocated only a 5-percent royalty to the oil-producing states – permitted federal government to reap most revenue
1981-2014	Abdul Taib Mahmud – Chief Minister of Sarawak
1981-2003	Mahathir Mohamad – Prime Minister of Malaysia
1990-2004	Goh Chok Tong – Prime Minister of Singapore
1998-2004	The Petronas Towers, Kuala Lumpur – tallest buildings in the world
2003-2009	Ahmad Badawi – Prime Minister of Malaysia
2004-2014	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono – President of Indonesia
2004-present	Lee Hsien Loong – Prime Minister of Singapore
2009-2018	Najib Razak – Prime Minister of Malaysia
2014-present	Abdul Taib Mahmud – Governor of Sarawak
2014-present	Joko Widodo – President of Indonesia
2014-2017	Adenan Satem – Chief Minister of Sarawak
2017-present	Abang Abdul Rahman Zohari Abang Openg – Chief Minister of Sarawak
2018-2020	Mahathir Mohamad – Prime Minister of Malaysia
2020-present	Muhyiddin Yassin -- Prime Minister of Malaysia

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Sites Visited in North Borneo (East Malaysia)

The World Less Traveled by Private Jet

Stanford Travel/Study Program

January 24-February 16, 2013

Airplane-based, Aboard a TCS and Starquest Expeditions Jet

Brunei (Bandar Seri Begawan)

Brunei is a tiny country, about the size of Delaware, with a population of 420,000 (primarily Malay) residents. Brunei is renowned for two features – high wealth and an autocratic sultan. The per capita income of Brunei, \$49,000, is slightly higher than that of the United States. The same family has ruled Brunei for six centuries, and the current sultan, Hassanal Bolkiah, has reigned since 1967. The Sultanate of Brunei's influence peaked in the 17th century, when it controlled north Borneo and the southern Philippines. Brunei declined because of disputes over royal succession and the colonial expansion of European powers, notably the White Rajahs of neighboring Sarawak. In 1888, Brunei became a British protectorate. The Muslim country re-gained its independence in 1984.

Our group took a city tour of Brunei's capital, Bandar Seri Begawan, and visited the lavish Jame 'Asr Hassanal Bolkiah Mosque. The highlight of our explorations in Brunei was a river trip to visit two Iban longhouses in the Temburon region. More than 600,000 Iban inhabit the hills and river valleys of Sarawak and Brunei. Families (in groups of 5 to 70) live together in longhouse communities to enhance self-defense, food-sharing, and religious ceremony. Each family unit in an Iban longhouse is constructed with four essential components – a communal open porch that extends the entire length of the longhouse, a covered verandah where men meet and sleep, a walled family apartment which houses women's activities, and a loft used for storage of food and implements.

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**Borneo Suitcase Seminar, Aboard the *Orient Pandaw*
Stanford Travel/Study Program
October 6-20, 2011
River-boat-based, with One Domestic Flight**

Kuching

Kuching, the capital of Sarawak Province, Malaysia, is a clean, bustling city with about 500,000 residents. The city houses about one-fourth of Sarawak's 2.1 million people. In addition to its administrative functions, Kuching is the trading, financial, and industrial center of booming Sarawak, boasting an elegant parliament building, a busy port, and numerous sawmills and food processing plants. When James Brooke became the first White Rajah of Sarawak in 1841, Kuching and its environs along the Sarawak River contained a *mélange* of about 10,000 Chinese, Malay, and indigenous people. By 1900, Kuching had expanded its population to perhaps 25,000 and was predominantly Chinese. Kuching remained the administrative center of Sarawak throughout the reign of the White Rajahs (1841-1946), the period of British colonialism (1946-1963), and Sarawak's independence within Malaysia (1963-present).

Our group spent a delightful two days touring Kuching and its surrounding area. We took a walking tour through the old waterfront area, which is reminiscent of Singapore in the 1930s. Blocks of family stores with living quarters above are divided along Chinese clan lines, each protected by a temple and a clan house. We walked by the former headquarters of the White Rajahs and visited the fascinating, 130-year-old Sarawak Ethnographic Museum. At the Semenggoh Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, we marveled at the antics of Ritchie, a 300-pound, dominant male orangutan and of a mother and her youngster. Because of the loss of habitat to forestry and oil palm plantations, only about

50,000 orangutans remain in Borneo and Sumatra (their only domiciles). We also boated to Taman Negara National Park near Bako, where we saw proboscis monkeys, found only in Borneo, and hiked along a rugged, root-filled trail in the dense rainforest.

Sibu

Following a short flight eastward from Kuching, we landed in Sibu, a bustling city of 180,000 residents, which is sited near the mouth of the Rajang River. In the early 1900s, to ensure control of Sarawak's longest river (360 miles), Charles Brooke, the second White Rajah, encouraged Foochow (Fukienese) Chinese immigrant merchants and farmers to settle in Sibu and farm pepper. Today, the population of Sibu consists nearly entirely of Foochow Chinese, the dominant ethnic group in Sarawak's economy. Large, Foochow-owned companies carry out much of the forestry exploitation in Sarawak (70 percent of the province is under timber lease). Sibu is the center of log and sawn-timber exporting, and sawmills stretch for miles along the Rajang River east of the city. Prior to departing on the *Orient Pandaw* on our cruise up and down the Rajang River, our group took a walking tour in Sibu and visited a huge, aromatic fruit-and-vegetable market.

Kanowit

We sailed overnight eastward on the Rajang River from Sibu to Kanowit. James Brooke, the first White Rajah, built Fort Emma in Kanowit in 1859 to facilitate his control of the lower Rajang region and encourage settlement of Iban farmers and Chinese merchants. Brooke named the fort after his sister, Emma Brooke Johnson, the mother of Charles Johnson, who later changed his surname to Brooke and became the second White Rajah. Rather than explore the town, the *Orient Pandaw* sailed up the Kanowit River, a tributary of the Rajang, to permit us to visit an Iban farm. When the river became shallow, we boarded the *Pandaw Adventurer*, a smaller tender boat to complete our journey up the Kanowit. Our local guide, Edward Mansell, had worked as a

tree-crop specialist for 35 years before retiring and becoming a guide. On the farm, he introduced our group to a wide range of trees that produce cash crops – oil palm, rubber, cocoa, and durian.

Kapit

The second White Rajah, Charles Brooke, constructed Fort Kapit in 1880 to control the Rajang River entrance to the boundary region between the expansionist Iban and the indigenous Orang Ulu (up-country indigenes). Following the pacification of the area, Chinese merchants created a small town. In 1918, the third White Rajah, Vyner Brooke, renamed the fort, Fort Sylvia, to honor his wife, Sylvia Brett Brooke. A massive meeting occurred in Kapit in 1924 to establish peace among all ethnic groups in the interior region. Today, Kapit is a busy trading center with about 35,000 residents, mostly Iban and Chinese. Those of us expecting to see a quiet, interior river town instead observed an impressive, well-kept settlement with extensive infrastructure. The confluence of the Rajang and Batang Rivers is sited a few miles east of Kapit. After another 10 miles, river traffic on the Rajang is interrupted due to the notorious, seven-mile-long Pelagus Rapids.

In Kapit, we visited the Kapit Museum, which contains a collection of Iban and Orang Ulu artifacts and memorabilia, and historic Fort Sylvia, which holds a wide array of historical documents, photographs of the 1924 peace palaver, and Chinese porcelain. Near Kapit, we paid a fascinating visit to an Iban longhouse and watched a warrior dance (the *ngajat*). The longhouse housed 37 nuclear families, each with about six members. Ironically, the highly individualistic Iban live in incredibly close quarters. Although ritualistic head-hunting ceased in the 1980s, the longhouse proudly displayed several sets of human skulls (each believed to have a helpful spirit). From Kapit, we took two interesting excursions on the *Pandaw Adventurer* – one up the Batang River to visit a Methodist primary school and a government clinic, and another to the roaring Pelagus Rapids. A skilled, local pilot navigated the *Pandaw Adventurer* through the lower rapids.

Bangun Kecil

After sailing back down the Rajang River to Sibu on the *Oriental Pandaw*, we got on the *Pandaw Adventurer* and motored northward down the Igan River for 90 minutes. Our destination was Bungan Kecil, a small Melanau village on the north coast of Sarawak. The 125,000 Melanau constitute about six percent of Sarawak's population and are mostly Muslim. The Melanau have formed an alliance with the Muslim Malays (20 percent) in the Parti Bumiputera to rule Sarawak. The Chief Minister (leading provincial politician) has been a Melanau for more than four decades (Abdul Taib Mahmud has ruled since 1981). The Melanau produce sago palm starch for home consumption and export (Sarawak exports 40,000 tons of sago starch per year). We visited a backyard sago-processing operation, saw how the starch is removed from the center of the sago tree, and tasted a variety of home-made sago products (porridge, cookies, and beads).

Sarikei

We sailed southwestward from Sibu to Sarikei, another inland port town in the coastal delta region. Like Sibu, Sarikei is mostly inhabited by hard-working Foochow Chinese who migrated to Sarawak more than a century ago. We drove in mini-buses to a Chinese-operated pepper garden near Sarikei. Sarawak produces high-quality white and black pepper, both grown on the same vines, mostly in small gardens owned by Chinese, Malay, or Iban farmers. We next walked in the Sebangkoi Jungle Recreation Area and observed the numerous canopies of trees at varying elevations in the tropical rainforest. After returning to town, we strolled through the food market and many in our group bought Sarawakian white and black pepper to take home for gifts. We then motored deeper into the delta to embark on a sunset cruise in small Iban boats in the mangrove forest. The skies, forests, and rivers gave stunning contrasts, but we saw little wildlife.

Kampung Rajang

On our last morning aboard the *Oriental Pandaw*, we docked near Kampung Rajang, a Melanau village in the coastal delta region. Our group walked into Kampung Rajang and was surprised by the levels of wealth on display there. The homes were spacious, well-maintained, and colorfully painted, and they sported attractive gardens with many species of flowers and fruit trees. Many of the 3000 residents of the village were away, working on ships or for forestry companies. They remitted funds to build and maintain their attractive homes. Kampung Rajang is renowned for its Songket weaving, and the women weavers produce some of the finest hand-made woven cloth in northern Borneo, including custom pieces for the family of the Sultan of Brunei. Most of the Melanau in Kampung Rajang are Muslims. Near the village, we visited an interesting Muslim cemetery, where the men's gravestones are rounded and the women's are rectangular.

Kota Kinabalu

Kota Kinabalu is the capital of the East Malaysian province of Sabah (formerly British North Borneo). The mostly Chinese residents of the thriving city of 400,000 prosper on timber and palm oil exports and growing tourism. Sabah is located in the northeastern part of Borneo on the South China Sea. Just east of the capital city is Kinabalu National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site which contains Mt. Kinabalu (13,435 feet elevation), the highest mountain in Borneo. The park has 150 orchid species, many endemic. The political economy of Sabah is similar to that of Sarawak – a Muslim-dominated party, closely aligned with the Barisan Nasional party in the Malaysian federal government, runs the provincial government, a large Chinese minority dominates the economy, and both groups benefit from exploitation of natural resources – timber concessions and oil palm plantations – at the expense of the majority indigenous peoples.

Our group disembarked the *Orient Pandaw* in Sibuan and flew to Kota Kinabalu. From the airport, we drove in two buses through impressive scenery up to Kinabalu National Park to visit the unusual botanical garden there, located at an elevation of 4900 feet. Many species of orchids were flowering, including the spectacular necklace orchid. We also saw several different carnivorous pitcher plants. It was delightful to experience a temperate climate again. Although the park receives 200 inches of rainfall per year, we were fortunate to avoid getting wet. The following morning, we took motor boats to Pulau Sapi (Cow Island) in Tungku Abdul Rahman Marine Park, a group of five islands sited offshore Kota Kinabalu. From a marvelous beach, we snorkeled above numerous species of healthy coral and observed endless brightly-colored tropical fish. We enjoyed a Malaysian barbecue on the beach before returning to the bustling city.

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