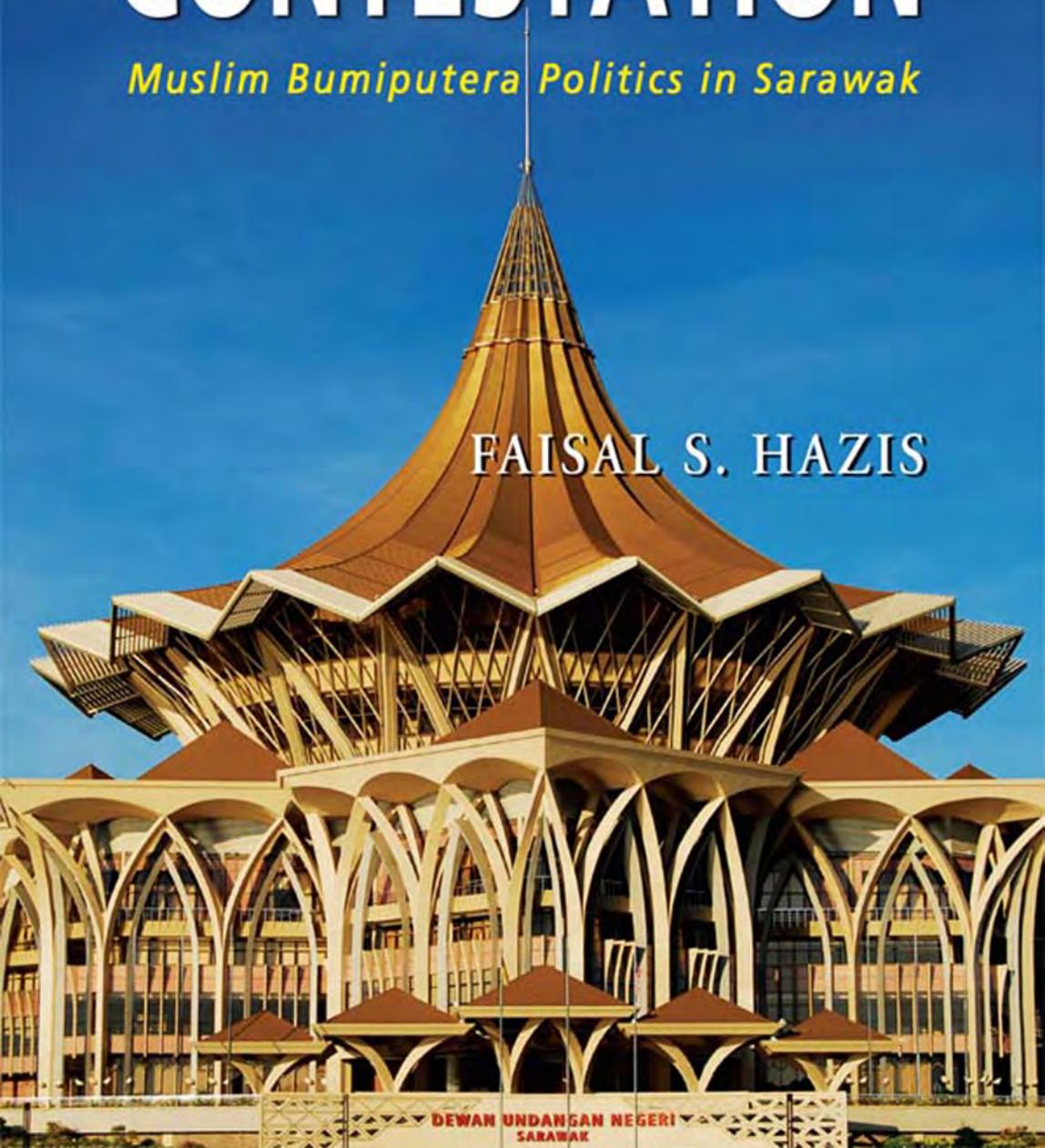


DOMINATION AND CONTESTATION

Muslim Bumiputera Politics in Sarawak

FAISAL S. HAZIS



DEWAN UNDANGAN NEGERI
SARAWAK

DOMINATION^{AND} CONTESTATION

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FAISAL S. HAZIS



INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

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PREFACE

This book is a revised and updated version of my PhD thesis submitted to Universiti Sains Malaysia in 2008. It analyses the political domination of the Muslim *bumiputera* in Sarawak, focusing on the period between 1970 and 2006. The book also draws attention to the most recent development in Sarawak politics particularly the historic 2008 elections which are highlighted in the Postscript.

The idea behind this study was sparked by the need to fill the knowledge vacuum on Muslim *bumiputera* politics that had been left unattended for so long. Since most of the literature on Muslim *bumiputera* politics covered the colonial and post-Independence period, this study analyses political change among the community beyond the corresponding period. At the same time, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing debate on state power in Malaysia especially its capabilities to dominate society. While much of the existing literature tends to focus on the overwhelming power of the state, this study argues that the state has to occasionally accommodate various social forces which subsequently lead to changes in society and the state itself. This strategy would safeguard the state's position in society but paradoxically weaken its authority.

Since the literature on Muslim *bumiputera* politics in Sarawak is relatively sparse, this study had to rely heavily on documentary evidence such as government gazettes, local newspapers and government documents as a major source of information. In analysing the Muslim *bumiputera's* voting trend, this study utilized the electoral data published by the Election Commission of Malaysia. This was complemented by referring to secondary sources, books and journals, on Sarawak politics and on Muslim *bumiputera* politics specifically.

In the course of completing this book, several individuals and institutions had guided, supported and inspired me. My greatest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Professor Dr Francis Loh Kok Wah, for setting ambitious goals and constantly pushing me to achieve them. I am also grateful to Professor Dr Johan Saravanamuttu for his kind advice during the early stage of my study. In Sarawak, I must thank my colleagues at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak for their support and encouragement. The staff at the Sarawak Museum Library were helpful with archival documents. I am

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABIM	Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia
AFO	Area Farmers' Organization
APU	Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah
ASP	Ancient Sarawak Politico-Cultural Area
AZAM	Angkatan Zaman Mansang
BARJASA	Parti Barisan Anak Jati Sarawak
BERJASA	Barisan Jamaah Islamiah SeMalaysia
BDA	Bintulu Development Authority
BERASA	Parti Bersatu Rakyat Jelata Sarawak
<i>bilek</i>	household
BINA	Angkatan Nahdatul Islam Bersatu
BMA	British Military Administration
BN	Barisan Nasional
<i>bomohism</i>	shamanism
BPA	Brunei Politico-Cultural Area
BRIMAS	Borneo Research Institute
Bumiputera	Parti Bumiputera Sarawak
<i>ceramah</i>	public speech
CHMS	Chung Hua Middle School
CMSB	Cahaya Mata Sarawak Berhad
CWC	Central Working Committee
DAP	Democratic Action Party
EC	Election Commission
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
FELDA	Federal Land Development Authority
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
Gerakan	Parti Gerakan Malaysia
HIKMAH	Harakah Islamiah
IADP	Integrated Agriculture Development Program
IGC	Inter-Governmental Committee
IIUM	International Islamic University of Malaysia
IKIM	Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia
IPF	Indian Progressive Front
ISA	Internal Security Act

ISTAC	International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization
JAIS	Jabatan Agama Islam Sarawak
<i>jajahan</i>	district
JAKIM	Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia
JKKK	Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung
JPUNS	Jawatankuasa Penaja UMNO Negeri Sarawak
Keadilan	Parti Keadilan Malaysia
KEMAS	Jabatan Kemajuan Masyarakat
LCDA	Land Consolidation Development Authority
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
MARA	Majlis Amanah Rakyat
MAS	Malaysian Airline System
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MENGOS	Malaysia Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
MIDA	Malaysian Industrial Development Authority
MISC	Malaysian International Shipping Corporation
MNU	Malay National Union
MP	Member of Parliament
MRCS	Malaysia Red Crescent Society
MRP	Minor Rural Project
MSE	Malaysia Shipyard and Engineering Berhad
NAFAS	National Farmers Organization
<i>naik pangkat</i>	promotion
NEAC	National Economic Advisory Council
NDP	New Development Policy
NEGARA	Parti Negara Rakyat Sarawak
<i>negeri</i>	state
NEP	New Economic Policy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NVP	National Vision Policy
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
PAJAR	Parti Anak Jati Sarawak
PANAS	Parti Negara Sarawak
PARAKU	Pasokan Rakyat Kalimantan Utara
PAS	Parti Islam SeMalaysia
PBB	Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu
PBDS	Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak
PBS	Parti Bersatu Sabah

PELITA	Lembaga Pembangunan dan Lindungan Tanah
<i>perentab</i>	government
PERKATA	Persatuan Kanak-Kanak Terencat Akal
PERKIM	Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia
PERMAS	Parti Persatuan Rakyat Malaysia Sarawak
PERNAS	Perbadanan Nasional Berhad
PESAKA	Parti Pesaka Anak Sarawak
PETRONAS	Petroleum Nasional Berhad
PIMU	Project Implementation Monitoring Unit
PKR	Parti Keadilan Rakyat
PNRS	Parti Negara Rakyat Sarawak
POD	Politics of Development
PPP	People's Progressive Party
PRB	Parti Rakyat Brunei
PRS	Parti Rakyat Sarawak
PRM	Parti Rakyat Malaysia
RASCOM	Rejang Area Security Command
RELA	Ikatan Relawan Malaysia
<i>reformasi</i>	reform
RES	Rural Electricity Scheme
RHB	Rashid Hussein Bank
RISDA	Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority
RISEAP	Regional Islamic Organization of South East Asia and Pacific
RM	Ringgit Malaysia
RPR	Rancangan Perumahan Rakyat
RTM	Radio Televisyen Malaysia
RGC	Rural Growth Centre
SALCRA	Sarawak Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority
SAPO	Sarawak People's Party
SBN	Sarawak Barisan Nasional
SCA	Sarawak Chinese Association
SDA	Sarawak Dayak Association
SDI	Sarawak Development Institute
SEDC	State Economic Development Corporation
<i>semangat</i>	spirit of life
SNAP	Sarawak National Party
SPA	Sabah-Sulu Politico-Cultural Area
SPDP	Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party
SPrU	Special Project Unit

SPU	State Planning Unit
STAR	State Reform Party
STU	Sarawak Teachers Union
SUCA	Sarawak United Chinese Association
SUPP	Sarawak United People's Party
<i>surau</i>	house of prayer
TGM	Triennial General Meeting
TM	Telekom Malaysia
<i>tuan</i>	master
TNB	Tenaga Nasional Berhad
UDA	Urban Development Authority
UMAT	Parti Umat Sarawak
UMNO	United Malays National Organization
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
USNA	United Sarawak Natives Association
WARISAN	Parti Warisan Pribumi Sarawak
<i>wazir</i>	minister

INTRODUCTION

In Malaysian politics, Sarawak is popularly known as the Barisan Nasional's (BN) fortress. This connotation is derived from the ruling party's ability to dominate¹ both the parliamentary and *negeri*² elections in Sarawak after the first direct elections were introduced in 1970. Initially, the ruling party faced an uphill battle in cajoling Sarawak's electorate as evident from its dismal performance in the 1970 election; it only won nine parliamentary seats and less than half of the Council Negeri seats.³ The ruling party only began to impose its dominance over the electorate in the following 1974 election when it drastically increased its representatives in parliament and Council Negeri to fifteen and thirty respectively. After that election, BN had persistently maintained its dominance in the Council Negeri by securing more than a two-thirds majority. Meanwhile, in the parliamentary elections, the ruling party constantly delivered more than 78 per cent of the seats which tremendously boosted the national ruling party's presence in parliament (see Table 1.1 and Table 1.2). Without a doubt, BN has shown great capability in cajoling Sarawak's electorate, but its dominance is more prevalent among the Muslim *bumiputera*.⁴ Throughout the elections in Sarawak, the ruling party consistently made a total sweep of the Muslim *bumiputera* seats (except in 1987) and recorded a higher percentage of the popular vote in these seats, compared to the party's overall popular vote.

Unfortunately, the political domination of the Muslim *bumiputera* has not been adequately addressed by the existing literature which leads to the

TABLE 1.1
BN's Performance in Sarawak Parliamentary Elections, 1970–2004

	1970	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1995	1999	2004
Number of seats won by BN	9 (24)	15 (24)	23 (24)	19 (24)	21 (24)	21 (27)	26 (27)	28 (28)	27 (28)
Percentage of BN's popular vote	34.6	62	63.0	56.8	55.6	57.1	63.6	65.9	65.8
Number of seats won by BN in the Muslim <i>bumiputera</i> seats	5 {5}	5 {5}	5 {5}	5 {5}	5 {5}	7 {7}	8 {8}	7 {7}	7 {7}
Percentage of BN's popular vote in the Muslim <i>bumiputera</i> seats	48.0	68.2	68.4	77.6	68.2	74.7	82.8	68.7	82.8

Notes:

1. Figures in () represent the total number of parliamentary seats in Sarawak.

2. Figures in { } represent the total number of Muslim *bumiputera* seats in Sarawak.

Sources: Adapted from Searle (1983, pp. 219–25), Leigh (1974, pp. 136–37), Election Commission Malaysia (1975, pp. 63–67), (1980, pp. 86–89), (1983, pp. 85–87), (1988a, pp. 82–83), (1992, pp. 152–55), (1997, pp. 173–74), (2002, pp. 124–26) and (2006, pp. 190–94).

inception of this study. In analysing this political phenomenon, it is argued that political domination of the Muslim *bumiputera* is achieved through the state's strategy in accommodating social forces in Sarawak. These co-opted social forces would then act as a medium to extend the central state's domination of Sarawak's society including the Muslim *bumiputera*. Hence, the juncture between the state and social forces in Sarawak becomes the basis of domination in the *negeri*, particularly among the Muslim *bumiputera* since the last three decades.

THE STUDY OF SARAWAK POLITICS

There is a large collection of books, articles and monographs on Sarawak politics, encompassing various subjects such as colonial rule, the formation of Malaysia, voting behaviour of major ethnic groups, money politics, political patronage and central state-*negeri* relations. The study of Sarawak's history, including those focusing on the type of change that took place during the Brookes rule, dominates the literature on Sarawak politics with the publication of more than forty works related to the subject. Most of these works were

TABLE 1.2
BN's Performance in Council Negeri Elections, 1970–2006

	1970	1974	1979	1983	1987	1991	1996	2001	2006
Number of seats won by BN	23 (48)	30 (48)	45 (48)	34 (48)	28 (48)	49 (56)	57 (62)	60 (62)	62 (71)
Percentage of BN's popular vote	39	55	61.2	68.5	55.2	62.8	66.6	71.2	62.9
Number of seats won by BN in the Muslim <i>bumiputera</i> seats	11 {11}	11 {11}	12 {12}	12 {12}	9 {12}	17 {17}	22 {22}	21 {21}	26 {26}
Percentage of BN's popular vote in the Muslim <i>bumiputera</i> seats	47.3	70.3	77.2	67.6	59.5	74.5	77.7	77.2	75.3

Notes:

1. Figures in () represent the total number of Council Negeri seats in Sarawak.

2. Figures in { } represent the total number of Muslim *bumiputera* seats in Sarawak.

Sources: Adapted from Searle (1983, pp. 219–25), Leigh (1974, pp. 136–37), Election Commission Malaysia (1985, pp. 36–42), (1988b, pp. 40–45), (1993, pp. 67–78), (1999, pp. 92–111) and (2004a, pp. 85–97).

written by Brookes' court historians such as Gertrude Jacob (1876), Spenser St. John (1879) and S. Baring-Gould and C.A. Bampfylde (1909). In these writings, the narratives of Sarawak's history revolve around the Brookes who were described as "benign rulers" with a mission "to civilize the savage indigenous population". As the dominant force at that time, the Brookes were portrayed as the single major source of change in nineteenth century Sarawak while its multi-ethnic society was deemed dormant. Baring-Gould and Bampfylde's (1909) *History of Sarawak* is one of the most detailed work on the Brookes and the political change in Sarawak during the early nineteenth century. In this pioneering work, the authors discuss chronologically the Brookes' mission to expand the territorial boundary of Sarawak from the Sarawak (Kuching Division) to the Lawas River System (Limbang Division). This territorial expansion was the major change in Sarawak after the establishment of Brookes' rule in 1841. Apart from that, Baring-Gould and Bampfylde also discuss other types of change in Sarawak during that period namely the introduction of free trade, the establishment of mission schools and the spread of Christianity. In amplifying the Brookes' powerful rule, Baring-Gould and Bampfylde (1909) overlooked the roles played by the

Malay aristocrats and native chiefs in sustaining the colonial rule. Although the authors acknowledged the influence of the Malay aristocrats among the local populace, they failed to provide detailed analysis of the Brookes' strategies in winning their support. In fact, most of the earliest work on Sarawak's history lack substantial analysis of Sarawak's society especially their relationship with the Brookes.

In the 1960s, several works that challenge the narrative of Sarawak's early history by the Brookes' court historians started to emerge. This new generation of works does not only provide an alternative perspective of the Brookes but it also contributes towards a shift in the focus of Sarawak's historiography from the Brookes and their administration to the relationship between the colonial masters and the people that they sought to conquer. One of the important works that emerged within this period is Pringle's (1970) *Rajahs and Rebels*. Pringle's (1970) work closely resembles this study in terms of its approach but it differs markedly in terms of its argument, scope and theoretical framework. In his highly acclaimed book, Pringle not only discusses the relationship between the Brookes and the biggest ethnic group in Sarawak, the Ibans, but he also challenges the notion that the Brookes were benign rulers. A more recent study of Sarawak's early history which emulates Pringle's approach is *Power and Prowess* by Walker (2002). By combining the new approach in Asian historiography and political science, Walker reconstructs Sarawak's history by analysing the Brookes' relations with the local populace especially the Malays and Dayaks. According to him, the Brookes' source of power did not come from the British military but it came from the people of Sarawak and its rich resources. Walker further argues that in order to acquire the power to rule Sarawak, the Brookes established a network of clients that helped them to win the support of the local populace. Another important point raised by Walker is the fragmentation of the Malay strongmen due to the intense competition for esteemed positions in the colonial government. This fragmentation led to numerous conflicts among the Brookes' supporters which were not highlighted in the previous studies.

Another work which discusses the relationship between the colonial governments and the people of Sarawak is Sabihah's (1983) *Malay-Muslim Political Participation in Sarawak and Sabah, 1841–1951*. In her doctoral study, Sabihah (1983) focuses on the political role of the Muslim *bumiputera* from the establishment of Brookes' rule until the instatement of British government in Sarawak. Also discussed is the role of the colonial governments in curbing the power of the Malay aristocrats who had been in control of Sarawak since the sixteenth century. The political dominance of the Malay aristocrats, according to Sabihah (1983), was made possible by their strategic settlement,

unifying religion, superior education and higher political consciousness. With the Malay aristocrats' huge influence among the population, the Brookes co-opted them as part of the strategy to rule the *negeri* and its people. Although the Brookes government accommodated the Malay aristocrats, it strategically weakened their power so as to curb their influence within the government and also the masses. This strategy led to the decline of the Malay aristocrats who were subsequently replaced by the Muslim Melanau intelligentsia. This point was inadequately addressed by the previous work on Sarawak's early history, hence making Sabihah's (1993) study a valuable contribution to the existing literature.

Apart from the large corpus of Sarawak's history during Brooke's rule, there is also a range of works that discusses political change in Sarawak during the Japanese occupation and the British colonial rule. Among the works that deserve mention here are those by Ooi (1999), Reece (1998) and Sanib (1985). Ooi's (1999) *Rising Sun over Borneo* examines the Japanese occupation in Sarawak and its impact on the *negeri*'s multi-ethnic society. He argues that the systemic changes witnessed in other Southeast Asian societies during the Japanese occupation did not occur in Sarawak. With limited manpower and financial resources, the Japanese army maintained the pre-invasion patterns of political organization and mobilization in Sarawak with the Malay aristocrats playing the leading roles. Complementing Ooi's (1999) work on Sarawak's history during the Japanese occupation is Reece's (1998) *Masa Jepun* which is a social narrative of the wartime years from the perspective of various actors; the European internees; the urban and rural Chinese dwellers; the Malay civil servants and policemen who worked for the Japanese; the Ibans who resented Japanese policies; and the minority Indian community whose loyalties were torn between their new and old masters. Unlike Ooi (1999), Reece (1998) does not discuss the role of the Japanese occupation in generating change in society. Nonetheless, Reece's (1998) work helps to enrich the scant literature on Sarawak politics during the Japanese occupation.

Another important work that analyses political change after the Brookes' rule is Sanib's (1985) *Malay Politics in Sarawak*. The study by Sanib (1985) is invaluable because it represents a small collection of works that analyse political change among the Muslim *bumiputera* in Sarawak. In his book, Sanib (1985) discusses the conflict among the Muslim *bumiputera* leaders after the Japanese occupation. He argues that the conflict erupted when the young intelligentsia criticized the Malay aristocrats for failing to protect the interests of the Malays. The tension between the intelligentsia and the Malay aristocrats came to a head after the Japanese occupation due to the last Rajah's decision to cede Sarawak to the British colonial government.

The cession controversy aggravated the Muslim *bumiputera* schism when the young intelligentsia opposed the cession, while the Malay aristocrats supported it. Even after Malaysia was formed in 1963, the schism among the Muslim *bumiputera* elites prevailed, leading to the establishment of two Muslim *bumiputera* dominated parties, Parti Negara Sarawak (PANAS) (pro-cession) and Parti Barisan Anak Jati Sarawak (BARJASA) (anti-cession). The split among the Muslim *bumiputera* led to the emergence of the non-Muslim *bumiputera* leaders as the new force in post-Independence Sarawak. The crisis that engulfed the Muslim *bumiputera* was finally resolved after the dissolution of PANAS and BARJASA to make way for a new united Muslim *bumiputera* dominated party known as Bumiputera in 1966. This political consolidation allowed the Muslim *bumiputera* to regain control of Sarawak's government with the help of the central state. Sanib argues that the source of conflict among the Muslim *bumiputera* was attributed to the Brookes' policies of according special treatment to the Malay aristocrats while marginalizing the commoners. Paradoxically, the development in education during the Brookes' and the British colonial's rule became the catalyst for the emergence of the Muslim *bumiputera* intelligentsia who later challenged the authority of the Malay aristocrats. Unfortunately, Sanib's (1985) valuable work ends in 1966, the year when the Muslim *bumiputera* consolidated. Hopefully, this study will fill the dearth of academic writings on Muslim *bumiputera* politics beyond 1966.

When Sarawak helped to form Malaysia in 1963, this historical event generated a host of works on political change in Sarawak during this historic period. The central concern of these works is to analyse the implications of Malaysia on Sarawak politics and its people. Among the essential reading for understanding Sarawak politics within this period are the studies by Leigh (1974), Ongkili (1972), Roff (1974), Milne and Ratnam (1974) and Ross-Larson (1972). Since these studies were published at almost the same time, their scope of analysis did not differ much. However, there is a significant difference in the theoretical argument of these studies with most of them are divided into two schools of thought, one group utilizing modernization theory and the other neo-modernization theory. Leigh's (1974) *The Rising Moon* is the most highly acclaimed work on political change during the post-Independence Sarawak. His approach in studying political change is based on a state-centred perspective with more focus given to political institutions. In terms of the theoretical framework used in his study, Leigh applies the neo-modernization theory which looks at the co-existence of traditional and modern politics. The approach and theory used by Leigh differs markedly from that used in this study, but it still contributes immensely to our understanding

of politics in post-Independence Sarawak. Leigh (1974) basically analyses the incorporation of Sarawak into the Malaysian political system and its impact on the local populace. According to Leigh (1974), the central state supported efforts to assert the primacy of racial politics over those based upon shared interest, so that Sarawak would accord with the national pattern. This strategy was imposed on Sarawak because the central state leaders believed that the consociational model (the concept of power sharing between major ethnic groups) used in the Peninsula had been proven effective in maintaining stability and continued dominance of the ruling party. To subsume Sarawak into the national system, the central state brokered a political alliance which was thought to be supportive of the central state's agenda. However, when the leader of this alliance failed to preserve the national pattern, the central state did not hesitate to replace him with another leader that could uphold the central state's agenda. The removal of Stephen Kalong Ningkan as Sarawak's first Chief Minister illustrated this point. Although Ningkan was replaced by another Iban leader, the latter was merely regarded as an interim Chief Minister. In 1970, the central state manoeuvred a plan to appoint the first Muslim *bumiputera* Chief Minister, Abdul Rahman Yakub, by constructing a state of instability in Sarawak. The political ascendancy of the Muslim *bumiputera* was therefore the result of the central state's agenda of ensuring the sustainability of the national pattern with the Malays playing a pivotal role. Despite the central state's attempt in imposing racial politics in Sarawak, Leigh argues that the resilience and vitality of multi-ethnic parties in Sarawak had prevented racial politics from subsuming all other issues and becoming the major source of cleavage in society. This study agrees with Leigh's contention that the central state played an important role in Sarawak politics especially in appointing Sarawak's first Muslim *bumiputera* Chief Minister. However, this study will go beyond the analysis of ethnic politics as the source of conflict between the central state and the *negeri* government so that an alternative perspective of Sarawak politics can be pursued.

Contrary to Leigh (1974), Ongkili (1972) applies modernization theory to analyse political change in Sarawak during the formation of Malaysia. In his book entitled *Modernization in East Malaysia*, Ongkili (1972) argues that the process of state formation had successfully restructured the traditional system of the people in Sarawak and also increased their political consciousness. This led to a crisis of identity among the *negeri* leaders and also the people in general. The removal of Kalong Ningkan represented the manifestation of this crisis because he was staunchly promoting regionalism which contradicted the central state's agenda of promoting nationalism. Ongkili (1972) argues that the power of the state was so overwhelming that it was capable

of removing the traditional system and replacing it with a modern construct. Roff's (1974) *The Politics of Belongings* complements the study by Ongkili (1972). According to Roff (1974), the patron-client relation in Sarawak would cease to exist when the political consciousness and participation of the people increased. She further argues that patronage politics in Sarawak would not persist because political leaders do not have the resources to sustain the loyalty of their clients. This modernist view of political change has proven to be inadequate because it fails to explain the continued existence of patronage politics in twenty-first century Sarawak.

Milne and Ratnam's (1974) *Malaysia, New States in a New Nation* is another study that discusses political change in post-Independence Sarawak. Compared to all the works discussed earlier, Milne and Ratnam (1974) adopt a more eclectic approach in analysing Sarawak politics during the formative years of Malaysia. Instead of resorting to modernization theory, they take a broader approach by using three different concepts, namely, social mobilization, political stability and institutionalization. In essence, Milne and Ratnam (1974) argue that the rampant practice of money politics and other types of political strategies employed by Sarawak leaders were aimed at mobilizing the electorate behind the ruling party so that stability would be achieved. Although Milne and Ratnam's (1974) work does not have a coherent theoretical analysis, it provides a useful eclectic view of Sarawak politics. Another major work on political change during the early period of Malaysia is Ross-Larson's (1972) *The Politics of Federalism*. This is an account of Sarawak (and Sabah) politics during the early years of Malaysia from the perspective of Syed Kechik, a Malay lawyer, who was instructed by the central state leadership to act as an arm of federal persuasion in the East Malaysian *negeris*. Ross-Larson's (1972) work is important because he provides the inside scoop of the central state's role in effecting change in Sarawak, in particular the dismissal of Ningkan in 1966.

There is a dearth of studies on political change in Sarawak beyond the post-Independence period. Only a handful of studies were carried out with most of them taking the perspective of certain ethnic groups. Some of the works worth mentioning here are the studies by Ishikawa (1998), Searle (1983), Jawan (1994) and Chin (1997). Ishikawa's (1998) *The Formation and Marginalization of A Borderland Malay Community in Southwestern Sarawak, Malaysia 1870s–1990s* analyses the role of state formation in marginalizing the Malays in southwest Sarawak. The root of the Malay's displacement, according to Ishikawa (1998), lied in Brooke's policies which were aimed at weakening the Malay's political and economic power. As a result, the Malays had to rely on subsistence economy based on swidden cultivation while their

leaders were reduced to being titular heads. Unfortunately, the marginalization and the displacement of the southwest Sarawak Malays persisted even after Sarawak gained its independence. In fact, the state's marginalization of the Malays remained to haunt the community even after Malaysia became an industrialized nation. The work by Ishikawa (1998) is definitely important in enriching the limited literature on Muslim *bumiputera* politics in Sarawak but some of his analysis needs further investigation. The utmost important question is why, despite their marginalization, the Malays continue to rally behind the ruling party which is responsible for their misfortune. This question will be addressed in this study.

Another important work on political change which goes beyond 1970 is Searle's (1983) *Politics in Sarawak 1970–1976* which discusses the role of the Iban's social and economic institutions in constructing their political culture. Searle (1983) argues that the Iban's traditional economy which is based on swidden cultivation and their egalitarian social structure are the roots of this indigenous community's political schism. The schism among the Ibans was not only prevalent during the 1960s and 1970s but it continued to be part of the community's political culture in the twenty-first century. Despite this prolonged fragmentation, there were instances where the Ibans were capable of being united. In the mid-1970s, for example, the merger between Parti Pesaka Anak Sarawak (PESAKA) and Bumiputera party prompted the Ibans to abandon the former because it was accused of being subservient to the Muslim *bumiputera* leaders. This led to a sudden surge in the popularity of a rival Iban-dominated party, Sarawak National Party (SNAP), among the Iban community. However, the consolidation of the Ibans proved to be temporary when SNAP faced a leadership crisis which split the party into two. Although Ishikawa's (1998) and Searle's (1983) studies differ markedly in terms of their focus and analysis, they share the same approach, society-centric, in analysing political change in Sarawak. By taking this approach, these studies contribute immensely to the effort of projecting the people's perspective of politics.

Another study of political change among the Ibans is Jawan's (1994) *Iban Politics and Economic Development*. In contrast to Searle (1983) who examines the source of the Iban's political fragmentation, Jawan (1994) analyses the major trend of political change among the Ibans from 1970 to 1990 with a particular focus on their political decline. Jawan (1994) believes that the Iban's failure to sustain supra-regional unity was the major factor behind the weakening of Dayak political parties, paving the way for the emergence of Muslim Melanau leaders. Jawan (1994) argues that the Ibans became further marginalized from mainstream development when the Muslim Melanau leaders took over the

negeri leadership. While Jawan (1994) analyses the political change among the largest ethnic group in Sarawak, Chin (1997), on the other hand, focuses on the second largest group, namely the Chinese. In *Chinese Politics in Sarawak*, Chin (1997) discusses political change via the lenses of a Chinese-dominated party, Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), from the period of its inception in 1959 to 1991. Apart from studying the transformation of SUPP from a left-leaning party to one of the most influential component parties in the conservative ruling government, Chin (1997) also focuses on the factors that had contributed to its popularity among the Chinese. Here, he identifies three factors; the power of SUPP as the kingmaker, the strong sense of regionalism among the Chinese, and the threat of Malay political dominance. Chin (1997) concludes by dividing the major trends of political change among the Chinese into two time frames — the colonial and post-colonial periods. During the colonial period, the Chinese were struggling to locate themselves in the new hostile environment that they were in. After several decades, the Chinese wanted to be accepted as Sarawakians and to be treated as equals. When these goals were achieved, the Chinese established SUPP, the first political party to be established in Sarawak. Following Independence, Chinese politics, according to Chin (1997), had been characterized by fear — fear of being excluded, marginalized, assimilated and treated as second-class citizens — in the face of Malay supremacy. This sense of fear apparently dictated the way the Chinese voted, and also the direction that SUPP had assumed. Although the works by Jawan (1994) and Chin (1997) differ in terms of their scope of study, they share one common observation — the influential role of Muslim *bumiputera* leadership in dictating political change in Sarawak. I concur with their conclusions but this relationship should not be viewed in ethnic term only. Equally important is to avoid looking at the Dayaks and the Chinese merely as the subject of the Muslim *bumiputera* leaders' domination. This study will not discuss in detail the politics of the non-Muslim *bumiputera* and the Chinese, but its application of the "state-in-society" theory may provide an alternative perspective in understanding the relationship between the Muslim *bumiputera* leaders and Sarawak's society.

Apart from the major study of political change in Sarawak after the 1970s, there are a host of unpublished thesis, books and articles on Sarawak politics which are not confined to discussing the subject of political change. Among the notable studies that fall into this category are Aeria (2002), Mersat (2005), Wee (1995) and Nidzam (2006). They might differ in terms of their subject and scope of study but they share the same analytical tool which is institutional analysis that looks at the importance of political and social institutions in society. In *Politics, Business, the State and Development in*

Sarawak, Aeria (2002) examines the relationship between the state leaders, in particular the Muslim Melanau Chief Ministers, and the business communities who were linked to the former. Through the patronage system, the Chief Ministers were able to elicit the support of other political leaders and business communities. As a result, it did not only weaken the political institutions (state and political parties) in Sarawak but also generate negative effects on the people and the environment. Aeria's (2002) work is particularly important to this study because it provides a glimpse into the role of the Muslim Melanau Chief Ministers and their domination of Sarawak's society. However, Aeria's study is skewed towards a state-centred perspective which perceives the state as the sole determinant factor in dictating change. This study will attempt to challenge this perspective by re-evaluating the relationship between the state and society in Sarawak.

Complementing the study of Sarawak politics from the perspective of political economy is Mersat's (2005) *Politics and Business in Sarawak*. In contrast to Aeria (2002) who uses the institutional political economy perspective, Mersat (2005) applies the prism of political-business relations to examine how politics and business in Sarawak have converged into a symbiotic relationship which then influences the distribution of state resources. These resources would subsequently be used to build patronage among political elites and the electorate, leading to the continued popularity of the ruling party. Mersat (2005) further argues that money politics is both the cause and effect of close ties between politics and business in Sarawak, transcending communal interests which tend to be overly emphasized in most of the literature on Sarawak politics. Politicians, according to Mersat (2005), need money for political mobilization while business people need state rents for their business interests. The symbiotic relationship between politics and business acts not only as a glue to hold the ruling party together but it also becomes an effective "partnership" that successfully bind the electorate together. This study shares the same perspective taken by Mersat (2005) who views the practice of money politics and patronage not merely as a form of corruption, but more importantly as the ruling party's strategy to dominate society. The point of departure between this study and Mersat's (2005) study is the theoretical framework employed. While Mersat (2005) adopts a politics-business relation approach, this study adopts a state-in-society paradigm.

In contrast to Aeria (2002) and Mersat (2005), Wee's (1995) *Sabah and Sarawak in the Malaysian Economy* discusses the central state-*negeri* relation in the context of the Malaysian economy. Wee (1995) argues that Sarawak did not receive much economic benefit from Malaysia, although a substantial amount of development fund had been pledged by the central state. When

the idea of Malaysia was mooted by Tunku Abdul Rahman, Sarawak agreed to help form the new nation mainly with the hope of gaining net transfers of public funds for development purposes. Instead, it suffered net revenue losses mainly due to the central state-owned PetroliaM Nasional Berhad's (PETRONAS) appropriation of potential *negeri* government revenue from its petroleum resources. Apart from that, Sarawak also lost its privilege of receiving special grants from the central government after the constitutional review in 1968. Over time, the development allocation for Sarawak had been significantly reduced, thus restricting its capabilities to develop the *negeri*. Other works that complement Wee's study of the central state-*negeri* relation are the articles by Lim (1997) and Chin (2003*b*). Lim (1997) focuses on the central state's control of Sarawak (and Sabah) and its implications on the *negeri*'s autonomy. According to Lim, the central state had successfully extended its control in Sarawak by nationalizing politics in the *negeri*. As a result, Sarawak lost its autonomy and special position within the Federation. Chin (2003*b*), on the other hand, focuses on the central state-*negeri* relation in Sarawak (Sabah, Kelantan and Terengganu) only during Dr Mahathir's administration. He argues that Mahathir took a non-interference policy in administering Sarawak with national interest as the paramount factor in dictating this policy. In other words, Mahathir would only meddle into Sarawak politics if national interest was at stake.

Another major study of Sarawak politics after the 1970s is *Pakatan dalam Politik Sarawak* (2006) which looks at the formation of political alliances in Sarawak since the Brookes' rule until the 1990s. By utilizing the concept of "social constructionism", Nidzam (2006) examines several factors that had shaped the political alliances namely the revolt of Parti Rakyat Brunei (PRB), the fragmentation of Sarawak's society, Ningkan's crisis, the emergence of Dayak nationalism and the Ming Court crisis. According to Nidzam (2006), although the political alliances among the component parties in the ruling coalition was quite dynamic, it could still consolidate the support of majority of the electorate. Nidzam's (2006) work is an important contribution to the existing literature on Sarawak politics because it locates the political change within the context of social realities of the people. But his society-centred analysis overlooks the importance of the state in dictating change, hence skewing our understanding of Sarawak politics.

There are also a handful of short articles that complement the major studies of post-1970s Sarawak politics. Among the notable contributors are Jawan (1987), Leigh (1991), Mason (1995), Mersat (1994), Chin (2003), Aeria (1997) and Mersat (1999). Jawan (1987), Leigh (1991), Mason (1995) and Mersat (1994) discuss the most significant event in Sarawak politics in

the 1980s, the Ming Court Affair. During this period, several Dayak and Muslim *bumiputera* leaders mounted a coup d'état in order to unseat Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud. In *The Sarawak Elections of 1987*, Jawan (1987) argues that Dayakism, a slogan to rally the support of the Dayaks, emerged because the Muslim *bumiputera* leaders discriminated the Dayaks when implementing development policies. As a result, the Dayaks, especially the Ibans, were marginalized and left behind. The poor state of the Dayaks led to the formation of Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS), in 1983 and subsequently the emergence of Dayak nationalism in 1987. Jawan (1987) interprets the phenomenon of Dayakism in purely ethnic terms with the Muslim *bumiputera* leaders as the perpetrator and the Dayaks as the victims. This argument is contested by Leigh (1991), Mason (1995) and Mersat (1994) who look at the phenomenon beyond this narrow ethnic perspective.

Leigh's (1991) *Money Politics and Dayak Nationalism* focuses on two major issues that dominated the 1987 election, namely money politics and Dayak nationalism. He argues that the schism between Taib and his uncle, Rahman Yakub, led to a public debate on money politics with both camps accusing each other as the culprit. This uncle-nephew conflict which clouded Sarawak politics in the 1980s led to an attempt to topple the Chief Minister with the Muslim *bumiputera* leaders in PBB as the frontliners and the Dayaks in PBDS as their ally. The slogan of Dayakism, according to Leigh (1991), was not the result of racial consciousness per se but it was more of a response towards the marginalization of the community by the state. Mason's (1995) *Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak and the Sarawak State Elections of 1987 and 1991* concurs with the findings highlighted by Leigh (1991). According to Mason, Dayakism was not a manifestation of Dayak's chauvinism but a response of the community towards their displacement by the Muslim *bumiputera*-dominated government. Although PBDS managed to win a considerable number of seats in the 1987 election, Mason (1995) argues that the party failed to unite the Dayaks because they were severely fragmented after the formation of PBDS. In order to salvage their survival, PBDS redefined Dayakism as "ruralism" in order to rally the support of the predominantly rural Dayak electorate in the 1991 election. Another work which discusses Dayak politics in the 1980s with an emphasis on the issue of Dayakism is Mersat's (1994) *Perubahan Politik Masyarakat Dayak*. Mersat (1994) argues that the rise of ethno-nationalism among the Dayaks was attributed to their dissatisfaction of being marginalized from mainstream development. Although acknowledging the role of Dayakism in buttressing the support of Dayak electorate towards PBDS, Mersat (1994) points out that not all Dayaks were attracted to this slogan since several strong PBDS candidates were soundly defeated in the polls.

If Jawan (1987), Leigh (1991), Mason (1995) and Mersat (1994) analyse Dayak politics in the 1980s and early 1990s, Aeria (1997) analyses Sarawak elections in the mid-1990s with a special focus on the ruling party's strategy of dominating the electorate. In *The Politics of Development and the 1996 Sarawak State Elections*, Aeria (1997) highlights the role of money politics in cajoling the electorate towards the ruling party. Under the "Politics of Development", a development policy formulated by Taib Mahmud, BN dispensed state funds for development projects during the elections in order to buy votes. In the 1996 election, BN allegedly dispensed development projects worth more than RM476 million which was equivalent to RM7.68 million per constituency. Aeria's (1997) work is an important contribution to the literature on Sarawak politics because of its alternative approach which goes beyond the ethnic paradigm. Although Aeria's (1997) work is commendable, there should be a longitudinal study of the effects of the "Politics of Development" on Sarawak's voters. This vacuum will be addressed by this study. Another complementary work on money politics in Sarawak is the article entitled *Pilihanraya Kecil Kawasan N22 Bukit Begunan* by Mersat (1999). In this article, Mersat (1999) discusses the practice of money politics in Bukit Begunan, an Iban majority seat, which led to the annulment of its 1996 election result. In contrast to Aeria (1997), Mersat (1999) defines money politics as the act of distributing money to the electorate in order to fish for votes. The landmark case in Bukit Begunan proves without a reasonable doubt that money politics or vote-buying did exist in Sarawak and it is strongly believed that this act of corruption continues to persist. Hence, Mersat's (1999) analysis of the 1996 Bukit Begunan election is an important contribution to the study of elections in Malaysia and Sarawak, in particular.

Another equally important work on Sarawak elections in the 1990s is Chin's (2003a) *The Melanau-Malay Schism Erupts Again*. This article discusses the hotly contested 1999 election in Sarawak with a special focus on the Muslim *bumiputera* seats. He argues that the decline of the Malay support towards BN is not because of the Anwar factor which gained prominence among the Peninsula Malays. Instead, the decline of the Malay vote was due to the schism between the Malays and the Muslim Melanaus. Chin's (2003a) conclusion is rather flawed because he does not explain how the ethnic factor actually affect the way the Malays voted, why only the Malays in Kuching switched their votes, and what triggers ethno-nationalism among the Malays. These questions call for further analysis of Chin's (2003a) argument.

The last genre of work that is relevant to this study is on social forces in Sarawak. Unfortunately, there is a vacuum of works related to this topic with

only a handful of books and articles published so far. Among them are Tan (1994) and Mohamad Hasbie (1989). Tan (1994), in his book *Communal Associations of the Indigenous Communities of Sarawak*, discusses various types of indigenous social associations in Sarawak from the Brookes' rule until the post-colonial period. Although Tan (1994) focuses on indigenous social associations, he also discusses a number of Muslim *bumiputera* social associations. According to Tan (1994), the development of communal associations in Sarawak was a response to the need for greater ethnic representation which transcended party politics. Apart from that, the number of communal associations had gradually increased as a result of the competition among Sarawak's multi-ethnic society for their share of the national economy. Tan's (1994) work shows that the social forces in Sarawak are very much alive as evident from the growing number of social associations which Migdal (2001, p. 107) argues is the basis of societal strength. Mohamad Hasbie's (1989) *Perjuangan Anti-Cession Sarawak* complements Tan's (1994) work on communal associations in Sarawak. In contrast to Tan (1994), Mohamad (1989) focuses only on one communal association, Malay National Union (MNU), which was once considered to be the most potent force among the Malay community. His work traces MNU's golden era during which the association was influential in the failed struggle to resist Vyner Brooke's decision to cede Sarawak to the British. Although Mohamad's (1994) work is significant in understanding the MNU's contribution to Sarawak, it lacks analysis on the decline of the association especially after the 1987 crisis. This shortcoming is patched up by Tan (1994) who discusses the marginalization of the MNU after its leaders were involved in the attempt to unseat the Chief Minister in 1987. Despite Tan's (1994) and Mohamad's (1989) invaluable contributions to the existing literature, there is still a serious gap in the literature on social forces in Sarawak in particular other types of organizations such as human rights, environmental, business, religious and language based associations.

In summary, the brief review of the literature on Sarawak politics points to two important gaps. Firstly, there is no major study of Muslim *bumiputera* politics beyond the 1970s. As noted earlier, most of the study on Muslim *bumiputera* politics is confined between the colonial and post-colonial period only. It is hoped that this study will help to fill the literature gap on Muslim *bumiputera* politics beyond the post-Independence period. Secondly, most of the study on political change in Sarawak gives an impression that the state possesses hegemonic power over society, thus neglecting the role played by social forces. This study will contribute to a new perspective in analysing Sarawak politics by applying the "state-in-society" theory which looks at the role of both state and society in generating order and change.

STATE-IN-SOCIETY: NEW APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF SARAWAK POLITICS

Developed by Joel Migdal (1988, 2001), the “state-in-society” theory is an anti-thesis to the argument presented by many state theorists such as Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol (1985) who published a highly acclaimed book entitled *Bringing the State Back In*. In their argument, Evans et al. (1985) and other state theorists argue that states have enormous capacity to transform societies which seemed powerless against the might of these powerful institutions. Migdal (1988, p. 17), however, argues that when the capacity of the state is over-emphasized, we tend to assume that “states in all time and places have had a similar potential or ability to achieve their leaders’ intentions”, leading us to ignore the fact that states have played varying roles in different societies. Although Migdal criticizes the concept of state presented by many state theorists, he still believes that this dominant institution has important roles in affecting order and change in society. He, however, opines that the state power should not be overly emphasized because society, especially social forces, also has the capabilities to affect order and change. This second argument sets Migdal apart from other state theorists like Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol (1985).

The state, according to Migdal (2001, p. 16), represents “the image of coherent, controlling organization in a territory, which is a representation of the people bounded by that territory, and the actual practices of its multiple parts”. There are two components in Migdal’s definition of the state, namely the state’s image and its practices. The state’s image represents the people’s (whether inside or outside the state) perception of its power. In general, the state has an image of a coherent organization which has the ability to control the people within its boundary. This image is then influenced by the state’s practices which refer to the actual actions taken by different components of the state. The state’s practices could either strengthen its pre-conceived image or deconstruct it. In this context, the state is not necessarily strong and dominant because the actual actions of the state could prove otherwise. Another distinctive aspect of Migdal’s definition of the state is his emphasis on the state’s dynamism and fluidity which is determined by the interactions between state actors (political leaders, state secretary, chief secretaries, heads of departments, senior officers, junior officers, ground officials) in the state’s “multiple parts” (ministries, departments, units, sections). This distinctive definition of the state becomes the basis of Migdal’s “state-in-society” theory.⁵

Prior to the birth of the “state-in-society” theory, there were other scholars who used state-society approach in analysing order and change in society. One

of the most notable state-society theorists is Edward Shils (1975), an American sociologist, who published the influential book entitled *Center and Periphery*. According to Shils (1975), the centre which constitutes the dominant values, beliefs, institutions and elites would impose its authority over the periphery which possesses dissenting value system. Although Shils integrates an analysis of society in his study, he still views it as a passive actor in a system with a domineering centre. In fact, Shils argues that post-colonial societies in Asia and Africa which do not have strong centres are considered to be protosocieties — a euro-centric view of society held by the much-criticized modernization theory. With this theoretical flaw, the centre-periphery model could not be used to adequately explain political order and change that is taking place in post-colonial states. The “state-in-society” theory attempts to enhance the argument put forward by the centre-periphery model by first of all discarding the modernist’s perspective, then rejecting the dichotomous model of society and thirdly by amplifying the role of the periphery in affecting order and change in society. This leads us to a discussion of the fundamental tenets of Migdal’s “state-in-society” theory: (1) the state is a social organization that is embedded in society; (2) social forces have the capacity to resist state’s power; and (3) the juncture between the state and social forces would inevitably lead to order and change not only in society but also the state.

First, the “state-in-society” theory rejects the idea that the state is an entity separate from society. The state, according to Migdal (1988, p. 28), is one of the social organizations which represent a mixture of interests in society such as families, clubs and clans. Social organizations including the state would formulate various rules and regulations in order to control the behaviour of their members and also their interaction with members from other organizations. To achieve compliance among their members, social organizations would offer various incentives (security, status, monetary assistance) and when necessary use different form of threats (punishment, imprisonment, physical force). The capability of social organizations to achieve compliance among their members is termed “social control”.⁶ According to Migdal (1988, p. 29), the state as other social organizations alike would compete with each other to achieve “social control” which then leads to conflict.

Second, there are influential and powerful social organizations known as social forces which have the capacity to challenge the state especially in its attempt to dominate society. In many post-colonial states, community leaders such as village heads, land lords, tribal chiefs, urban caciques, rich peasants or intelligentsia who could pose a strong challenge to the state are considered social forces. With their influence and wealth, these leaders, also known as strongmen, have the ability to form a network of clients or

entourages who become the basis of their power. The bigger their network of clients, the more powerful strongmen would become. Hence, states would have great difficulty in dominating society if strongmen call on their clients or entourages to boycott states' policies and programmes. As a result, the state would be deemed ineffective and weak which could lead to its collapse. Apart from strongmen, other form of social forces such as the middle class, ethno-religious groups, business organizations, NGOs and social movements could also pose formidable challenge to the state. These social forces could use various resources available to them to articulate public interests which could be in conflict with the state. The active roles played by social forces prove that society is not merely a subject of the state's domination. On the contrary, social forces can resist the state's power in order to dictate its own future.

Third, the capacity of social forces to resist the state's power would inevitably lead to a constant struggle between social forces and the state over the right to achieve "social control". As the biggest and usually the most powerful social organization, the state could impose its authority over all social relations within its boundary. Social forces, on the other hand, could either submit to the state's domination or resist it. If social forces opt to take the second option, this will create conflict which takes place in various arenas of society such as the distribution of state's resources, the struggle for political power, and the freedom to exercise one's fundamental rights. In addressing this conflict, the state could ignore the social forces and impose repressive or coercive measures to subdue them which could lead to the deterioration of the conflict. Or it could compromise with the social forces, leading to a delicate co-existence between the state and social forces. This compromise is achieved through a variety of accommodative strategies such as the co-optation of strongmen, the creation of multiple networks of clients, and the widespread practice of corruption. Accommodation is, therefore, a situation where "no single group — not the implementers, not the local politicians, and not the strongmen — monopolizes power" (Migdal 2001, p. 90). This accommodation will later become the catalyst for order and change in society.

The "state-in-society" theory is not a "grand substantive" theory, like the "modernization theory", which imposes a uni-centric perspective in explaining order and change in society. It rather proposes a broad analytical framework to study post-colonial states which are based on the three basic tenets discussed earlier. In a nutshell, the "state-in-society" theory views the convergence of the state and social forces as the source of order and change in society. In many post-colonial states, social forces are very powerful that their existence leads to the weakening of the states. In order to maintain

their survival, these weak states would accommodate the social forces so as to neutralize them hence preventing their collapse. On the other hand, in strong states, society is generally considered weak but there are instances where the states' authority could still be contested. Whether in strong or weak states, both states and social forces have important roles in affecting order and change through their constant struggle over various arenas in society. This broad analytical framework is useful to analyse the political domination of the Muslim *bumiputera* in Sarawak since more than three decades ago.

Notes

1. Theoretically, the term “domination” which refers to ‘the ability to gain obedience through the power of command’ is more appropriate to describe the degree of state power (Migdal 1994, p. 30). The motivation to obey the command of power could come from coercive actions taken by the state or could simply be voluntary compliance. Domination can be localized or it can be exercised broadly over society. The term “hegemony”, on the other hand, always entails absolute domination which is exercised broadly over society. Thus, I will not use the term “hegemony” in describing state power in Malaysia; instead the term “domination” is more suitable in analysing the reality of power relations in this country.
2. In order to avoid confusion over the use of the term “state” which could refer to the Malaysian state and also Sarawak as one of the thirteen states in Malaysia, the term *negeri* which is the Malay word for the second type of state will be used throughout this book to refer to the latter.
3. The parliamentary and *negeri* seats in Sarawak can be divided into six categories; Malay/Melanau, Chinese, Iban, Bidayuh, Orang Ulu, and mixed seats (no single ethnic group forms the majority of voters in the constituency). Throughout this book, the Malay/Melanau majority seats are referred as Muslim *bumiputera* seats.
4. *Bumiputera*, which literally means “son of the soil”, is a legal term used to refer to the Peninsular Malay and all indigenous groups both, Muslim and non-Muslim, in Sabah and Sarawak (Mason and Ariffin 2005, p. 2). The *bumiputera* category excludes the Chinese and the Indians, as they are considered migrant communities. However, the *bumiputera* classification also includes other minority ethnic groups in the Peninsula like the Sam-sams, the Malaysian Thai community in the northern *negeris* bordering Thailand, and also the small Portuguese community, found largely in Melaka. The term *bumiputera* is used by the government to accord special privileges to this group of people in securing scholarships, preferential admission into vocational and tertiary educational institutions, employment in the civil service and in securing permit or licence for the operation of any trade or business (Mason and Ariffin 2005, p. 3). The term *bumiputera*, therefore, is not an ethnic category per se but merely a political coinage.

In Sarawak, the population can be divided into three broad categories, namely the Muslim *bumiputera*, the non-Muslim *bumiputera* and the Chinese. In 1970, the *bumiputera* group accounted for 68.1 per cent of Sarawak total population. The percentage of *bumiputera* population in Sarawak increased to 71.1 per cent in 2000; hence it remained the most dominant group in the *negeri*. In Sarawak, the *bumiputera* group is further divided into Muslim and non-Muslim *bumiputera*. The Muslim *bumiputera* consists of the Malay, Muslim Melanau, Kedayan and Jatti Meirek. On the other hand, the non-Muslim *bumiputera* are mostly Iban, Bidayuh and more than thirty other indigenous groups. In terms of religion, Muslims were initially the largest group in Sarawak with about 26 per cent of the population, followed by Christians (17.6 per cent) and Buddhists (7.8 per cent) (1970 census). However, the scenario changed several decades later when Christianity became the most dominant religion in Sarawak. The increase in the number of Christian followers had been very tremendous, from only 17.6 per cent in 1970 to 42.6 per cent in 2000. Although the Muslim population had also increased significantly within the corresponding period, the increase was not as high when compared to the Christian population. The steep increase of the Christian population would probably be due to the conversion of various indigenous groups in Sarawak; this is evident by looking at the declining number of free thinkers (from 15.1 per cent in 1970 to 3.9 per cent in 2000) and animists (from 9.6 per cent in 1991 to 5.2 per cent in 2000) over the last three decades.

5. Scholars offer various definitions of the state but most of them draw heavily on the work of Max Weber (Migdal 1994, p. 11). According to Weber (1964, p. 156), a state which consists of many agencies is headed or coordinated by state leaders who have the power to make rules that control individuals and social organizations within its boundary. Under certain conditions, the state would not hesitate to use force or coercion in order to achieve its goals (in Migdal 1988, p. 19). Weber's definition of the state tends to emphasize the state's institutional character (as an organization or set of organizations), its functions (making of rules), and its resources to coerce. This definition entails the overwhelming power of the state in controlling the behaviour of society or affecting any change that takes place in it. Society, to Weber, is merely an object of domination that lacks any power to resist the state's authority.

The "state-in-society" theorists like Migdal, however, opine that the state does not have absolute power over society primarily because it is not a coherent institution that has the same orientation (Migdal 2001, p. 15). In other words, with a complex structure (departments, levels) and huge manpower, it is quite difficult for any state to act as an organized and coherent unit. With this complexity, the state would face an uphill battle in achieving its goals because of the constraints faced at the many levels or branches of the state. Apart from this internal weakness, the state has to deal with various social forces which are capable of resisting the state's domination.

6. The level of “social control” by the state can be divided into three categories, namely compliance, participation and legitimacy (Migdal 2001, p. 52). Compliance which is the lowest level of “social control” refers to a situation where the people conform to the demands of the state. It is often compelled by the most basic of sanction that is force. Participation is the level of “social control” in which the state demands more than the people’s compliance. At this level of control, the state would organize the people to perform specialized tasks in the institutional components of the state. Legitimacy is the highest level of “social control”. It refers to a situation where the people would accept the state’s rules of the game as true and right.

2

STATE AND SOCIAL FORCES IN SARAWAK

INTRODUCTION

When the Federation of Malaysia was formed in 1963, Sarawak became one of the fourteen *negeris* that made up the new state. This newly acquired status brought tremendous change to Sarawak politics especially in regards to its autonomy. Although physically isolated from the centre of power in Putrajaya, this isolation fails to deter the central state from imposing its authority in the *negeri* that is as vast (geographically-speaking) as the Peninsula. Hence, any study of Sarawak politics cannot be done in seclusion from the realm of central state politics. This chapter, therefore, attempts to locate Sarawak within the larger context of Malaysia in order to capture the state-society relation in the *negeri*. But before that, an analysis of the state formation in Sarawak from the Brunei Sultanate to the establishment of Malaysia will be presented. This analysis provides an understanding of Sarawak politics prior to the formation of Malaysia and the transformation that the former Brunei's territory had undergone since the eighteenth century. The focus of this chapter subsequently shifts to the Malaysian state with a focus on its capability to perform four tasks: penetrate society, extract resources, regulate social relationships, and distribute resources in determined ways. Based on this analysis, we will be able to determine whether Malaysia is a strong or weak state, which is imperative for evaluating its domination of Sarawak politics.

The second part of this chapter examines the role of Sarawak's society in affecting the central state's agenda of dominating the people of the *negeri*, particularly the Muslim *bumiputera*. In evaluating the role of Sarawak's society, this chapter identifies several social forces that are influential in mobilizing the populace hence posing a threat to the state. Through the analysis of state and social forces in Sarawak, this chapter provides the basis for an understanding of the role of both entities in establishing political domination among the Muslim *bumiputera*.

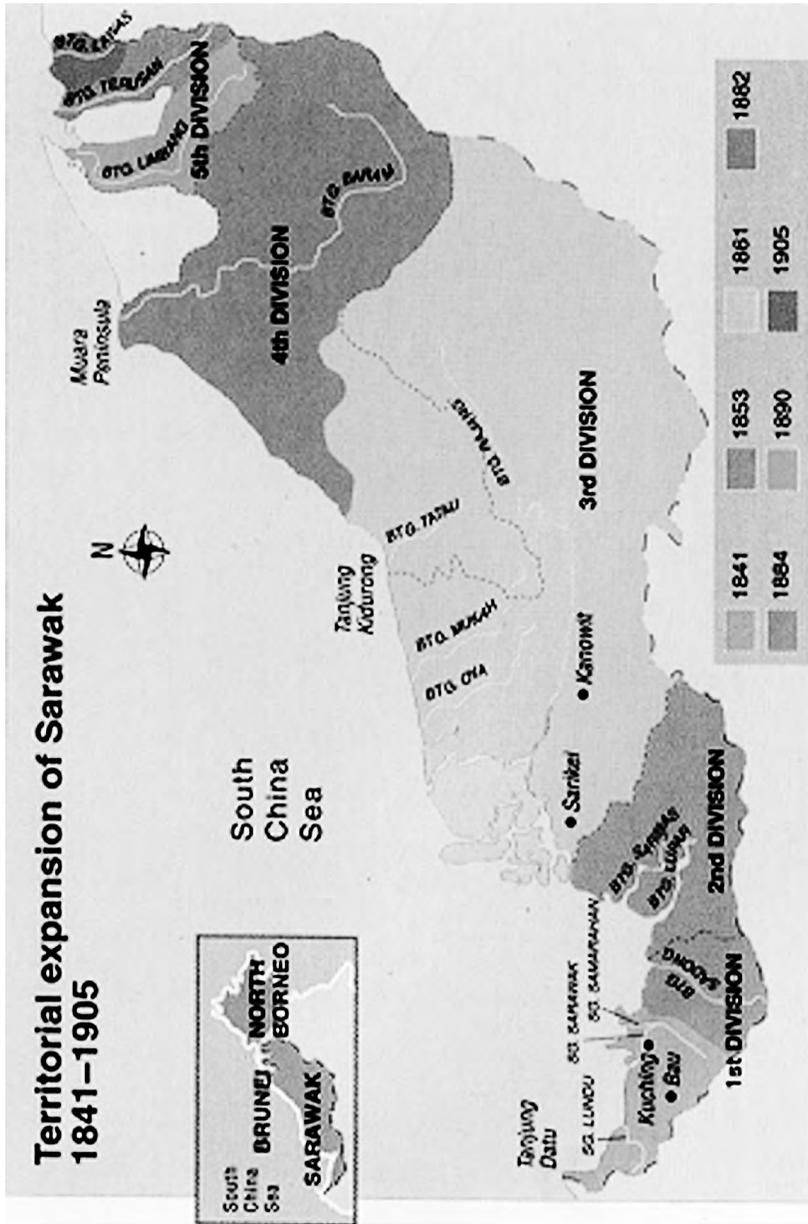
STATE FORMATION IN SARAWAK

The modern *negeri* of Sarawak as we know today is different from the political entity established more than six centuries ago. As a result of colonialization, the physical boundary of Sarawak had been enlarged from the Sarawak River valley, located at southwest of Borneo, to the Lawas River valley, located at north of Borneo. Most historians divide the history of state formation in Sarawak into two, namely, "Old Sarawak" and "New Sarawak", covering the period from the overlordship of Brunei to the Brookes' rule. Apart from this classification, another historian proposes three phases of state formation in Sarawak which traced the history of this *negeri* prior to the Brunei's overlordship, namely, Ancient Sarawak Politico-Cultural Area (ASPA), "Old Sarawak", and "New Sarawak" (Sanib 1999). I do not subscribe to either one of these school of thoughts since I believe that the present concept of "New Sarawak" is quite misleading while I totally reject the concept of ASPA.¹ In this section, I will describe the history of Sarawak based on three phases, namely, "Old Sarawak", "Expansionary Sarawak", and "New Sarawak".

"Old Sarawak"

"Old Sarawak", also known as "Sarawak Proper", refers to the First Division (Kuching division) of present-day Sarawak. Its boundary extended from Tanjung Datu in the west to the Samarahan River in the east and included all the hinterland as far as the mountain watershed, comprising the Lundu, Sarawak and Samarahan river basins. The earliest mention of Sarawak (Old Sarawak) appeared in 1365 in Rakawi Prapanca's *Negarakertagama* which referred it as "Serawak", meaning antimony in old Malay (Reece 1993, p. 3). At that time, Sarawak was said to be one of the tributary states of the Majapahit Empire on the northern coast of Borneo. After the fourteenth century, nothing was heard about Sarawak until it was mentioned in greater detail in the *Silsilah Raja-Raja Brunei*. According to the *Silsilah*,

FIGURE 2.1
Territorial Expansion of “Old Sarawak” to “New Sarawak”, 1841–1905



Source: Cheah (2001, p. 100).

There was once a country called Johor. It was during the reign of Sultan Bahteri when Awang Alak Betatar and Pateh Merbai from the country of Brunei were called to Johor. When Awang Alak Betatar arrived, he was named Sultan who was the first king of Brunei and that Pateh was given the title Pengeran Bendahara Sri Maharaja. As a result, the Sultan was conferred by the Yang Dipertuan Johor with the royal regalia and five provinces of Kalaka, Saribas, Samarahan, Sarawak and Mukah (Sanib 1985, p. 1).

After the fall of Majapahit in the fifteenth century, Sarawak and its neighbouring polities came under the overlordship of Johor Sultans. However, the latter's rule in Sarawak was very brief so little was written about it. Subsequently, Sarawak became part of the Brunei Sultanate beginning from the reign of its first ruler, Sultan Muhammad Shah in 1476 to that of Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin in 1841. The Brunei Sultanate laid down a decentralized system of administration in order to control its vast territory which was divided into numerous *jajahan*. For administrative purposes, these *jajahan* were grouped under three categories namely *kerajaan* — appanages of the Sultan; *kuripan* — appanages of other officials; and *tulin* — private hereditary domains (Sanib 1985, p. 3).

“Old Sarawak” came under the first category. As a *kerajaan*, the Sultan of Brunei delegated the administration of Sarawak to local chiefs who had been bestowed with aristocratic titles, namely Datu Patinggi, Datu Bandar and Datu Temenggong. The probable derivation of Sarawak's Datu Bandar was Brunei's Pengiran Shahbandar who was responsible for the administration of foreign traders in the main port city, while Datu Temenggong was derived from Brunei's Pengiran Temenggong who was generally described as a military and sometimes a naval leader although historically his role seemed to have been limited to the defence of the interior and the administration of justice (Reece 1993, p. 8). Datu Patinggi, on the other hand, was derived from Brunei's Patinggi which was used as an honorific title in Brunei and not as an office of state. The title of Datu was used in Brunei only in relation to district chiefs and believed to have originated from southern Sumatra or from the Malay Peninsula. In Sarawak, the ranks of the Malay Datu were not the same as in the Brunei court. In contrast to Brunei where the Shahbandar was considered the most senior among the *wazirs*, followed by the Temenggong and the Patinggi, in Sarawak the Datu Patinggi was accorded with the highest office, followed by the Datu Bandar and then the Datu Temenggong. The difference in ranking was attributed to the social status of the people the Datus governed, although their duties and rights were more or less the same.² Apart from governing Sarawak's socially stratified society, the local chiefs were

basically responsible for maintaining order and collecting taxes on behalf of the Brunei Sultanate.

In the early nineteenth century, the thriving antimony trade in Sarawak prompted the Sultan of Brunei to dispatch Pengiran Mahkota to administer the *kerajaan*. Pengiran Mahkota established himself and his followers in Kuching which was ten miles down-river from Lidah Tanah, the centre of administration for the local Datus. The arrival of Mahkota in Sarawak was not well accepted by the local Datus who had been administering the *kerajaan* independently for quite some time (Reece 1993, p. 15). As discontent against the Brunei *pengirans* grew among the local Datus not least due to the intense struggle over the antimony trade, the Datus waged an open rebellion against the Brunei *pengirans* in the mid-1830s.³ In response to this rebellion, the Sultan sent Pengiran Raja Muda Hashim, who was the uncle of the Sultan and his heir, as well as Hashim's brother, Budrud'in, "to put the government in order" (Naimah 1999, p. 3). After failing to contain the rebellion, Hashim sought the help of James Brooke⁴ who sailed unexpectedly up the Sarawak River in September 1839.⁵ In an agreement between Brooke and Raja Muda Hashim, the latter promised to cede Sarawak to the former if he helped Raja Muda Hashim to quell the rebellion (Rawlins 1965, p. 19). However, after Brooke succeeded in suppressing the rebellion in November 1840, Raja Muda Hashim, apparently, was reluctant to keep his part of the bargain. Raja Muda Hashim finally handed over Sarawak to Brooke some ten months later following a show of force by Brooke with the support of the Royal British navy. On 24 September 1841, James Brooke was appointed the Governor of Sarawak with the title of Rajah, making him the first European power to establish its presence in the Brunei Sultanate's territory. Sultan Omar Ali of Brunei subsequently ratified the governorship in 1842 and required Brooke to pay an annual sum of \$2,500 (Rawlins 1965, p. 24).⁶ Sultan Omar gave Sarawak to James Brooke unconditionally in 1846, giving the Rajah the freedom to leave Sarawak to whomsoever he pleased.

"Expansionary Sarawak"

The Brooke's reign in Sarawak opened a new chapter in the history of this *negeri*. With the presence of Brooke in Borneo, the physical boundary of Sarawak was expanded from the Sarawak River valley at southwest of Borneo to the Lawas River valley at north of the island. The territorial expansion of Sarawak was carried out in stages starting from the acquisition of (1) Batang Sadong, Batang Lupar, Saribas and Kalaka in 1853, (2) Lower Rajang River

in 1853, (3) Upper Rajang River, Oya, Tatau, Mukah and Bintulu in 1861, (4) Baram in 1882, (5) Trusan in 1885, (6) Limbang in 1890, and (7) Lawas in 1905 (Cheah 2001, pp. 100–101). During this period (1853–1905), Sarawak expanded rapidly, thus it should be referred to as “Expansionary Sarawak”. Only when the territorial expansion stopped in 1890, was the “New Sarawak” finally established.

When James Brooke became the first Rajah of Sarawak in 1841, the *negeri* he set to rule was still known as “Old Sarawak” which constituted the Sarawak River system. Upon his accession as the Rajah, Brooke co-opted three senior Sarawak Malay chiefs, Datu Patinggi Ali, Datu Bandar Lana and Datu Temenggong Mersal whom he had earlier waged his military war against (Reece 1998, p. 18). Without any financial backing from any major European power and with no experience in matters of government, Rajah James had to resort to a system of indirect rule that was led by a small group of European officials who were assisted by Malay and Dayak leaders.⁷ The principles which guided James Brooke in administering the local residents of Sarawak were (1) native customs should be respected but modifications were encouraged should these run contrary to the British sense of justice, (2) native participation in the government was encouraged but they held only symbolic or subordinate positions, and (3) reforms should be introduced gradually (Naimah 1999, p. 8). After establishing his government in Kuching, James Brooke wasted no time in pursuing his colonial agenda by acquiring Batang Sadong, Batang Lupar, Saribas and Kalaka by the late 1840s.

Batang Sadong, Batang Lupar, Saribas, Kalaka and Lower Rajang

In present-day Sarawak, Batang Sadong is located within the Eighth Division (Samarahan division), while Batang Lupar is a huge river system located within the Second Division (Sri Aman division). Saribas and Kalaka, on the other hand, are both located within the newly established division of Betong (Tenth Division). During the reign of Brooke, all the four areas were administratively put together under the Second Division with its divisional headquarter established at Simanggang on 1 June 1873 (Cheah 2001, p. 100). Brooke achieved informal but effective control over Saribas River, Batang Lupar and their tributaries by the late 1840s. This was made possible with British naval assistance, commanded by Captain Henry Keppel who provided the military might for the acquisition of these areas. Starting from the expeditions up the Saribas River and Batang Lupar in 1843 and 1844, Brooke established his presence in the Brunei territory by crippling the activities of “pirates”⁸ who

had been in control of these areas. The expeditions against the Saribas and Batang Lupar “pirates” kept the areas peaceful for five years but they resumed their activities in 1849 by attacking Sadong, Sesang, Sarikei, Paloh, Matu, Bruit, Igan and Sambas (Rawlins 1965, p. 52). James Brooke once again asked the help of the British Navy in Singapore to quash the “pirates” once and for all. In July 1849, the Admiral sent Captain Farquhar who crushed a large Dayak force at the battle of Beting Maru near the estuary of the Saribas River, killing at least 500 Saribas Ibans.⁹ To further fortify its presence in Saribas and Batang Lupar, James Brooke sent Arthur Crookshank to build a fort at the confluence of the Skrang and Batang Lupar rivers in late 1849 (Naimah 1999, p. 12). After completing his task, Crookshank returned to Kuching and William Brereton was dispatched to the fort. Brereton was the first European officer to be stationed outside Kuching where he lived at Skrang Fort for nearly three years without any other European officer nearby. However, in 1852, Alan Lee was sent as Brereton’s assistant and assigned to take control of the new fort at Lingga.¹⁰ In August 1853, after gaining control over the area between Batang Sadong and Saribas, James Brooke persuaded Omar Ali’s successor, Sultan Abdul Mumin, to cede to him Batang Sadong, Batang Lupar, Saribas and Kalaka River in return for half of any surplus revenue that he obtained in the district (Cheah 2001, p. 100). Sultan Abdul Mumin ceded to James Brooke’s demand since he received very little revenue from the area (Rawlins 1965, p. 107).

Lower Rajang River

The lower Rajang River is located within the Sixth Division (Sarikei division) of present-day Sarawak. However, during the reign of Brooke, the lower Rajang was part of the Third Division. James Brooke’s first foothold in the Rajang River valley was established in 1851 when his younger nephew, Charles Brooke, initiated the building of a fort at Kanowit as a mean of controlling the Dayaks along the lower Rajang River. Taking advantage of the rebellion against the Brunei authority by some Malay leaders in the area, James Brooke sought permission from Sultan Abdul Mumin in August 1853 to restore order in the Lower Rajang River valley. In order to establish its presence in the area, Charles Brooke built a fort at Sarikei in January 1856 and installed Charles Fox as the Resident. When Fox and Henry Steele, the Resident of Kanowit, were brutally murdered by Kanowit tribesmen in 1859, Charles Brooke led a punitive expedition against the perpetrators, consolidating informal Brooke authority in the area (Cheah 2001, p. 100).

Upper Rejang, Mukah, Tatau and Bintulu River Basins

The upper Rajang River is located within the Third Division (Sibu division) of present-day Sarawak, while the sago producing areas of Oya and Mukah are both located within the newly formed Eleventh Division (Mukah division). The other two areas, Tatau and Bintulu, are both located within the Ninth Division (Bintulu division). During Brooke's reign, the five areas were administratively put under the Third Division along with Sarikei. Brooke's territorial expansion in these areas started in Mukah when the Rajah succeeded in suppressing the conflict in the area, sparked by the rivalry between Pengiran Ersat who was the Governor of Mukah and Pengiran Matusin who was a respected local figure. After successfully bringing order and peace in Mukah, James Brooke went to Brunei in August 1861 to ask the Sultan of Brunei to cede Mukah along with the Upper Rejang, Oya, Tatau and Bintulu River basins to Sarawak. Because of the troubles in Mukah, the Sultan had not been able to obtain any revenue from the area for a very long time and he was glad to hand it over to Rajah James for an annual payment of \$4,500 (Rawlins 1965, p. 111).

Baram

After the death of James Brooke on 11 June 1868, Charles Brooke assumed the throne and proclaimed himself as the second Rajah on 3 August. Charles's approach to government differed from his uncle's in one important aspect; "he ruled as a patriarchal monarch who supervised every detail of government, while his uncle was contended to leave matters of administration to the discretion of his subordinates" (Naimah 1999, p. 22). Despite this divergence, Rajah Charles continued to allow the participation of the natives in the government which had been the hallmark of James Brooke's administration.¹¹ When Charles assumed control of Sarawak in 1868, the territorial boundary of Sarawak had been extended from the area known as "Old Sarawak" to Bintulu River basins. These areas were administratively divided into three divisions with each division headed by a Divisional Resident. The Brooke's territorial expansion project continued unabated after the death of James when Charles decided to pursue this agenda at the expense of the Brunei Sultanate. As early as 1868, Rajah Charles made overtures to the Sultan of Brunei to cede Baram to Sarawak. Although the Sultan of Brunei received very little revenue from Baram, he refused to cede it because he could not afford to lose his pride by allowing his territory to be reduced further by Brooke (Rawlins 1965, p. 112). The Foreign Office was also hesitant to allow Baram to be

ceded to Sarawak because it concurred with the Governor of Labuan that the expansion of Sarawak would only result in the decline of Labuan (Naimah 1999, p. 36). In 1874, the Rajah began making claims that the people of Baram resented Brunei rule and that the Sultan had permitted the cession of the area to Sarawak. Despite this development, Britain was still reluctant to allow Sarawak to extend its border. However, with the growing interest of adventurers and foreign countries in northern Borneo in the late 1870s and early 1880s, and the granting of a charter to the North Borneo Company in 1881, the Foreign Office found it increasingly difficult to continue refusing permission to Sarawak to acquire Baram. In 1882, the cession of Baram was finally realized on the condition of a perpetual annual payment of \$4,200 to Brunei. The Rajah built a fort at Marudi and stationed one of his officers there to look after the district (Rawlins 1965, p. 114).

Trusan, Limbang and Lawas

The last remaining districts acquired by the Brookes were located at the north of Borneo, between the border of Brunei, North Borneo and Kalimantan. During the period of the Brookes' rule, these areas were administratively under the Fifth Division and they continue to be so in present-day Sarawak. The first district within the Fifth Division to be acquired by the Brookes was the Trusan River in early 1885. A year earlier, twenty Sarawak produce collectors went to Trusan to buy jungle produce and were murdered by Murut tribesmen. The Sarawak government protested to the Sultan of Brunei but the latter admitted that he could do nothing about it. Subsequently, the Sultan ordered the holder of *tulin* rights in Trusan to surrender the area for an annual payment of \$4,500 (Cheah 2001, p. 101). So, in 1885, the Trusan River basin was officially given to Sarawak.

After acquiring Trusan, the Brooke government was given the opportunity to expand Sarawak's territory by obtaining Limbang. The Limbang River was annexed unilaterally by Charles Brooke on 17 March 1890 after a series of rebellions against the authority of the newly crowned Sultan of Brunei, Hashim. After six years of revolt, the people of Limbang requested the Rajah to assume control of their land. The Rajah agreed and soon after annexed the Limbang River basin with an annual payment of \$6,000 to the Sultan who continued to claim ownership over the territory (Rawlins 1965, p. 117). Subsequently, Charles Brooke wanted to acquire by purchase all that remained of Brunei with the exception of the capital itself. In May 1885, he tried to achieve this by offering the Pengiran Temenggong (later Sultan Hashim) an annual payment of \$14,500. He had to be satisfied, instead, with the acquisition of the tip of

the Muara Peninsula, where he established a colliery. In 1893, he made an unsuccessful attempt to buy out the British North Borneo Company (Cheah 2001, p. 101). After failing to expand Sarawak's territory beyond the Lawas River, the process of territorial expansion by the Brookes finally ended. Thus, the present boundary of Sarawak was established with effect from 5 January 1905 which was the date Lawas was ceded to Sarawak.

“New Sarawak”

With the acquisition of Lawas and the failure of Charles Brooke to expand Sarawak's territory beyond the Lawas River, the Brookes' expansionary project finally came to a halt in 1905. Thus, “New Sarawak” which became the foundation of present-day Sarawak, was created with its boundary extending from Tanjung Datu at the southwest tip of Borneo to the Lawas River valley located near the boundary of British North Borneo. It would be misleading to suggest that “New Sarawak” was founded between 1841 and 1905 since the territorial boundary of Sarawak at that time was still in the process of expanding. It would be more accurate to say that “New Sarawak” was created after Charles Brooke had reached a stalemate in trying to acquire more land for Sarawak beyond the Lawas River valley. In 1912, “New Sarawak” was divided into five administrative divisions which were further subdivided into several smaller districts. The First Division comprised of Sarawak and Sadong river systems, while the Second Division included Batang Lupar, Saribas and Kalaka Rivers. The Third Division consisted of Rejang, Oya, Mukah, Bintulu and Matu; the Fourth Division covered the territories of Baram, Trusan and Limbang; and the Fifth Division included Limbang and Lawas districts. Each of these divisions was put under the supervision of a Divisional Resident, normally held by a first class Administrative Officer. Below the Divisional Resident in rank were the second class Resident, Assistant Resident and Cadet (Naimah 1999, p. 37).¹² The responsibilities given to the Residents were indeed substantial; they were directed to “administer inhospitable areas and to ensure that their administrations were self-supporting” (Naimah 1999, p. 17). The Residents were assisted at the lower level of administration by junior local officers known as Native Officers who were mostly Malays of established families and descendants of Arab immigrants. The Native Officers were normally recommended for their posts by the Residents, who referred them to the Rajah, and it was left to the Rajah's discretion whether to employ them (Naimah 1999, p. 45). The Rajah did not always rely on his Native Officers for lower level administration. This was particularly evident in Saribas where Rajah Charles preferred to rely on prominent Iban families

to administer the area. At the lower level of government, the native chiefs (*penghulu*) and village elders (*tua kampung*) were given important roles in maintaining law and order, and also the responsibility to act as a bridge between the community and the colonial government.

The system of independent administrators which was developed under the first two Rajahs was perceived to be anachronistic during the 1930s. Hence, the call for change sprang from the colonial government officers who felt that a review of the administrative system was timely so as to accommodate new demands on the government. They believed that the centralization of administrative power was preferable to regional autonomy, thus leading to a reform in the Brooke government which took place during the reign of the third Rajah, Vyner (1917 to 1941).¹³ Rajah Vyner's leadership was considered weak compared to that of his father, Charles. His policies often suffered from "a lack of direction and purpose, and decision-making was at times described by his officers as being capricious" (Naimah 1999, p. 58). In centralizing administrative power in Sarawak, Rajah Vyner created the post of Government Secretary in 1932, allowing more co-ordination in administrative matters. Despite his lack of leadership qualities, Vyner's main contribution to Sarawak was the introduction of Sarawak's Constitution on 31 March 1941 which contained references to the cardinal principles of the Brookes' rule. Although the introduction of the 1941 Constitution appeared to be a noble and high-minded gesture, it had been prompted to some extent by self-interest and expediency (Reece 1998, p. 64).¹⁴

The Japanese Occupation (1941–45) and the commencement thereafter of the British Military Administration (BMA) in Sarawak (1945–46), was a transitional phase in Sarawak history. As far as possible, the Japanese maintained the pre-war administrative system, but staffed it with Japanese and some of the pre-war native officials. At the apex of each administration in each province was the Governor, while prefectures were in turn subdivided into smaller districts under the control and surveillance of chief Japanese officers or native officers. In the pre-war days, this post was the equivalent to a District Officer. Owing to a shortage of personnel, the Japanese appointed local Malay and Dayak leaders to positions of responsibility in the administrative service.¹⁵ Another channel of native participation was by means of the Ken Sanji or the Prefectural Advisory Council established in October 1943. This body was set up by Setsuo Yamada, an Oxford graduate and an influential Japanese army officer, with the aim of allowing the natives the opportunity to give advice and assistance on administrative matters and economic projects (Reece 1998, p. 76). Meetings of the Ken Sanji were also used to disseminate Japanese propaganda and discredit the former Brooke

government. When the Japanese finally surrendered on 10 September 1945, the Commander-in-Chief of the Australian forces temporarily took control of Sarawak upon the resumption of the pre-war government. On January 1946, the Australian forces ceased control of Sarawak and handed it over to the BMA, which assumed the administration of the British Borneo territories until the next civilian government took office. The military administration formally handed over the government to Rajah Vyner on 15 April 1946. By then, negotiations were already underway for the cession of Sarawak to the British Crown, and the Rajah's return to Sarawak in April was to secure token approval on the cession plan (Reece 1998, p. 76).

Albeit some resistance from the Malays and Dayaks, Sarawak was eventually ceded to the British Crown in July 1946. As a British colony, Sarawak was governed by a Governor and assisted by the Secretary of State who led the administrative service. Apart from these minor changes, the administrative system in Sarawak was basically maintained with the reinstatement of the divisional and district administration. Apart from these two types of government, the British further streamlined the local administration by establishing local governments throughout Sarawak beginning from 1948 and by the mid-1950s more than two-thirds of the population of Sarawak was living within the jurisdiction of local authorities (Naimah 1999, p. 60). Another significant change introduced by the British was the enactment of a new constitution for Sarawak in 1956 to replace the 1941 Constitution. One of the provisions of the new constitution was the introduction of self-government. In moving towards this goal, the British colonial government introduced various measures in preparing the people of Sarawak towards Independence such as the introduction of local council elections and the promotion of party formation. After analysing the process of state formation in Sarawak since the pre-colonial until the post-colonial period, our attention will now turn to the new state which Sarawak became part of in 1963 — Malaysia.

SARAWAK WITHIN MALAYSIA

In a speech at a press luncheon held in Singapore on 27 May 1961, the Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman, mooted the idea for the formation of a political association between Malaya, Singapore and the three Borneo territories of North Borneo, Sarawak and Brunei. Three months later, a broad agreement was reached between the Prime Ministers of Malaya and Singapore for a merger of the two territories. In Sarawak, some quarters were initially hostile towards Tunku's proposal.¹⁶ As a result, an enquiry had to

be carried out in order to ascertain the views of the people before coming to a final decision on the merger. Subsequently an independent body known as the Cobbold Commission was established to carry out this task and to make recommendations regarding the merger (Hanna 1964, p. 165). Based on the findings of the Commission, about one-third of the population in Sarawak strongly favoured the formation of Malaysia without any terms and conditions, another third favoured the proposal with various conditions and safeguards, while the remaining one-third opposed. Since Sarawak's participation in the formation of Malaysia was badly needed to neutralize the influx of Chinese population from Singapore, the Malayan leaders had to offer generous terms of entry to Sarawak as a strategy to entice their support. As a result, Sarawak was granted greater autonomy as compared to other *negeris* which had been part of the original Federation of Malaya.¹⁷

Barely a few years after the formation of Malaysia, the privileges and safeguards enjoyed by Sarawak were slowly taken away especially after the expulsion of Singapore from the Federation in 1965. The central state leaders feared that Sarawak might follow the path taken by Singapore, given the autonomy that Sarawak had. Thus, the central state amended the pre-Malaysia agreement and revoked almost all the privileges and safeguards accorded to Sarawak, except for its power on immigration matters. Apart from that, the central state leaders also intervened in the affairs of Sarawak politics when they played a key role in the expulsion of the *negeri's* first Chief Minister, Stephen Kalong Ningkan, in 1966. The central state leaders opposed Ningkan's leadership because he was vehemently "defending regional interests at the expense of national interests", primarily in matters related to the national language, education policy and the role of expatriate officers in Sarawak's civil service (Leigh 1974, pp. 88–102). Subsequently, Kalong Ningkan was replaced by another Iban leader, Tawi Sli, but his term was short-lived when the central state leaders again intervened by appointing a Muslim Melanau, Rahman Yakub, as the third Chief Minister of Sarawak in 1970. Presently, Sarawak is still under the stewardship of a Muslim Melanau Chief Minister, Abdul Taib Mahmud, who replaced Rahman Yakub when the latter stepped down in 1981.

As a federation, the formation of Malaysia had brought institutional changes in Sarawak through the establishment of various central government offices. The highest central government agency established in 1963 was the Department of Federal Secretary for Sarawak and Sabah, located in Kuching (Nik Ibrahim 1995, p. 1). The main function of this agency was to manage the affairs related to the central government in both *negeris*. In 1967, the central government restructured the Federal Secretary Department by upgrading the

Office of Deputy Secretary in Sabah to the Department of Federal Secretary, thus allowing Sabah to have its own Federal Secretary. In the same year, the Department of Federal Secretary in Sarawak was put under the purview of the Federal Ministry of Sarawak Affairs.¹⁸ With this restructuring, the position of Federal Secretary in Sarawak had to be changed to Secretary General of the new ministry (Nik Ibrahim 1995, p. 41).

The Ministry of Sarawak Affairs was dissolved in 1974, resulting in the restructuring of the Federal Secretary's Office in Sarawak. With the dissolution of this ministry, the position of the ministry's Secretary General was again changed and renamed Federal Secretary of Sarawak. Initially, the legislative power vested in the Federal Secretary's Office was vast; which included the power to detain people under the Internal Security Act (ISA). With such immense power, the Federal Secretary's presence in Sarawak was viewed as an intrusion of the central government into the affairs of the *negeri*. The relationship between the Federal Secretary Office and the *negeri* government was initially considered cordial; however the relationship turned sour when the former was headed by Syed Rosley Syed Abu Bakar while the *negeri* civil service was headed by Abang Yusuf Puteh in the early 1980s. Both personalities were adamant in pursuing and protecting the interests of the governments that they represented, resulting in a constant conflict between the two government officers. This strained relationship came to a breaking point when Syed Rosley was not even invited to attend Abang Yusuf's official functions. This rocky relationship prompted the central government to review the presence of the Federal Secretary's Office in Sarawak. With the recommendation from the Federal Secretary's Office, the central government decided to suspend its operation indefinitely, beginning from late 1982 (Nik Ibrahim 1995, p. 55). However, upon the request of the Chief Minister, Abdul Taib Mahmud, the central government agreed to resume the operation of the Department of Federal Secretary in 1990, albeit with lesser legislative power. Since 1990, the department has played the role of (1) a mediator between the central and *negeri* governments, (2) a coordinating agency in the implementation of central state projects, (3) a public relation office for the central government, and (4) an arbitrator between the central and *negeri* governments (Nik Ibrahim 1995, pp. 78–79). After the re-establishment of the Federal Secretary's Office in 1990, the relationship between the central and *negeri* civil service has remained cordial with the absence of any major conflict.

Apart from the Department of Federal Secretary, there are many other central state agencies and department being set up in Sarawak to facilitate the presence of the state in the *negeri*. Some of these agencies and departments were established in order to carry out the central government's responsibilities

as stipulated in the Federal and Concurrent Lists of the Federal Constitution. Among the central state agencies and departments active in Sarawak are the Department of Co-operative Development, Royal Customs and Excise Department, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Mineral Department, Department of Environment, Labour Department, Administrative and Planning Modernization Unit, Fisheries Department, Human Resource Department, Information Department, Audit Department, Education Department, Marine Department, Statistics Department, Ministry of Finance, Department of Geology, Police Department, Ministry of Defence, Income Tax Department and Department of Workers' Safety and Health.¹⁹

Sarawak had undergone tremendous change after its inclusion in the Federation of Malaysia with the most significant change being the “invasion” of the powerful central state, resulting in the decline of the *negeri*'s political power. It is imperative, therefore, to further examine the power of the central state in order to analyse its role in dominating society not only in this former Brooke fiefdom but also throughout the country. This analysis will be comprehensively discussed in the following part of this chapter.

ASSESSING THE CAPABILITIES OF THE MALAYSIAN REGIME

During its formative years, Malaysia was governed by a fairly democratic government that was adapted from the British parliamentary system suited to the local environment (Khoo 2005, p. 19). However, the new state gradually became authoritarian after the racial riot of 13 May 1969 that made it almost impossible for the ruling coalition to be forced out of office (Crouch 1996, p. 29). Despite the government's increased authoritarian power, it still maintains some features of a democratic model such as frequent elections and some degree of political freedom. This mixture of democratic and authoritarian models led some scholars to use various terms to characterize Malaysia's political system such as quasi democracy (Zakaria 1989), semi democracy (Case 1993), modified democracy (Crouch 1992) and pseudo-democracy (Case 2004). Malaysia's ambiguous regime is best described by Harold Crouch (1996, p. 5) who uses a concept of “responsive and repressive regime” to describe Malaysia's hybrid political system. In essence, a responsive regime is one with a high degree of responsiveness to the demands of its citizens whereas a repressive regime is one in which the ruling elite resorts to the strategies of manipulation, control, and repression, to maintain power (Crouch 1996, p. 3). In the context of Malaysia, these two different measures — responsive and repressive — do not contradict each other, instead the

Malaysian regime uses them strategically to maintain its political dominance for the last fifty years.

As a hybrid regime, one would expect that the Malaysian state has sweeping control over its population. Contrary to this general belief, some studies (Shue 1994; Kohli 1994; Hagopian 1994) suggest that powerful states such as India, China, Brazil, Russia and the United States actually do not have total control over their population; instead they have dispersed domination — having control over some aspects of society while not having control over others. In this section, I will argue that despite being a strong state, Malaysia has limited control over its population especially those in the periphery, like Sarawak. The discussion on the limitations of state's power will start by discussing the capabilities of the Malaysian regime in performing four functions, namely to penetrate society, to extract resources, to regulate social relationships, and to distribute resources in determined ways (these functions invariably overlap each other) (Almond and Powell 1966, p. 195). Strong states have high capabilities to complete these tasks, while weak states are on the low end of the spectrum of capabilities. By analysing the capabilities of the Malaysian regime in performing these functions, we will be able to determine whether Malaysia is a strong or weak state. More importantly, this analysis allows us to identify the arenas that pose serious challenge to the state's capabilities to exercise its power.

Penetrate Society

The ability to penetrate society refers to the state's capability to make its presence felt in society and subsequently affect their livelihood. By penetrating society, "the state would be able to change the very nature of institutional life even in distant villages and towns" (Migdal 1988, p. 5). In achieving this goal, the state could use various measures such as implementing certain policies, carrying out propaganda, enforcing repressive laws and applying physical force. A strong state has impressive capabilities in igniting sweeping changes in the lives of its people, irrespective of their class, race or religion.

In the context of Malaysia, the regime has successfully penetrated into the lives of its people by introducing massive socio-economic and political changes. The regime's agenda of penetrating Malaysian society started in earnest after the 1969 emergency which was lifted in the following year. Since then, the most significant change that the Malaysian regime has brought is within the economic sphere, transforming the country from an agricultural to an industrial based economy. (Further analysis on the most significant socio-economic policy, the New Economic Policy (NEP), formulated after

the emergency, will be discussed in the section on the state's capability to appropriate resources.) In 1970, the agricultural and mining sectors were the two biggest contributors to Malaysia's GDP, with agriculture contributing 32.1 per cent to the GDP while mining contributed 5.7 per cent (Malaysia 1965, p. 36). Malaysia's dependency on the agricultural sector gradually declined through the state's industrialization policies, which elevated the secondary sector as the country's new engine of growth (see Table 2.1). Between the 1970s and 1990s, the secondary sector's annual growth rate increased to about 10.3 per cent, and it continued to grow to about 10.5 per cent between 1991 and 1998 (Okposin et al. 2003, p. 6). The annual growth of the agricultural sector, on the other hand, declined significantly from 5 per cent in the 1970s to 0.8 per cent in the 1980s and 1.3 per cent in the 1990s. In 2000, the contribution of the primary sector to the GDP shrunk further with the agricultural sector contributing only 8.9 per cent while the mining

TABLE 2.1
Malaysia: Gross Domestic Product by Industry of Origin,
1970 and 2000 (RM millions)

	1970		2000	
	RM millions	% of total	RM millions	% of total
Agriculture, forestry, livestock and fishing	3,432	32.1	18,662	8.9
Mining and quarrying	613	5.7	15,385	7.3
Manufacturing	1,307	12.2	67,250	31.9
Construction	481	4.5	6,964	3.3
Electricity, gas and water	245	2.3	8,278	3.9
Transport, storage and communications	606	5.7	16,858	8.0
Wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants	1,423	13.3	31,116	14.8
Finance, insurance, real estate and business services	836	7.8	26,755	12.7
Government services	794	7.4	14,331	6.8
Other services	874	8.1	16,070	7.6
GDP (market price)	n.a.		210,557	

Notes:

1. The GDP for 1970 is based on the current prices while the GDP for 2000 are based on the constant prices of 1987.

Sources: Malaysia (2006, p. 50), (1965, p. 37).

sector contributing 7.3 per cent. Conversely, the secondary sector continued its rapid growth by contributing 35.2 per cent to the GDP in which the manufacturing sector became Malaysia's largest contributor at 31.9 per cent while the construction sector contributed a mere 3.3 per cent.

Malaysia's transformation into an industrialized country has significantly changed the fabric of society, particularly its labour structure. In 1970, majority (52 per cent) of the workforce in Malaysia was employed in the agricultural sector while a substantial number (15.5 per cent) worked in the service sector (see Table 2.2). The number of professionals and technical workers at that time was still small, 4.5 per cent, and so was the number of those employed in the administrative and managerial sector, 0.8 per cent (Malaysia 1976, p. 71). Through the state-led industrialization drive, the employment structure in Malaysia changed drastically within the last four decades. In 2000, the percentage of agricultural workers within the workforce declined to a mere 13.8 per cent, pushing it down to the fourth largest occupation in the country. In the corresponding period, most of the Malaysian workforce was employed as professional and technical workers (18.9 per cent) while a great number of them worked in the production and service sectors (15.1 per cent and 14 per cent respectively). The number of Malaysians employed in the administrative

TABLE 2.2
Malaysia: Employment by Occupation, 1970 and 2000

Occupation	1970		2000	
	Estimated employment (000)	Share of total (%)	Estimated employment (000)	Share of total (%)
Professional and technical	151.0	4.5	1,610.3	18.9
Administrative and managerial	26.4	0.8	630.1	7.4
Clerical workers	163.2	4.9	875.3	10.3
Sales workers	339.1	10.1	—	—
Agricultural workers	1,736.8	52.0	1,178.5	13.8
Production workers	406.4	12.2	1,285.8	15.1
Service and other workers	516.6	15.5	1,192.8	14.0
Craft and related trade workers	—	—	846.9	9.9
Elementary occupations	—	—	903.9	10.6
Total	3,339.5	100.0	8,532.6	100.0

Notes:

1. In 2000, sales workers were included in the service and other workers category.

Sources: Malaysia (2006, p. 334), (1976, p. 71).

and managerial sectors (7.4 per cent) also increased, and the same scenario could also be said about those working in the clerical sector (10.3 per cent) (see Table 2.2). The ability of the Malaysian regime to transform the labour structure is another manifestation of its capabilities in penetrating society, leading to a structural change in their lives.

Apart from transforming the economy, the Malaysian regime has also implemented various policies and programmes aimed at generating social and political changes within society. In terms of social change, one of the most striking changes is the rapid growth of the urban middle class (Drabble 2000, p. 271). Before the colonial period, the major classes in the indigenous Malay society were the aristocrat and the peasant, while elements of a merchant class were also in existence (Abdul Rahman 1998, p. 91). The emergence of the modern classes — especially the business and middle classes — began to appear in the early twentieth century. These new classes consisted of European bourgeoisie, Chinese compradors, Indian money-lenders, a small group of European officers, junior Malay administrators, Asian white-collar employees and a growing proletariat.²⁰ While a small group amongst the middle class was the product of the colonial state, others emerged in response to the demands of expanding colonial capitalism. The formation and growth of the modern classes became much more evident after Malaysia achieved its independence (Abdul Rahman 1998, p. 92).

Apart from the emergence of the middle class, another significant social change taking place in Malaysia due to the state-led modernization is the transformation of Malaysian plural society. A prominent Malaysianist, Abdul Rahman Embong (2001, pp. 61–65) identified five macro-developments in public ethnic interactions in Malaysia. First, the new middle class who primarily consists of managers and professionals working in both the private and public sectors has transformed ethnic relations by bridging the ethnic divide. The new middle class operates across economic, political, social, cultural and religious spaces and serves as brokers for new patterns of ethno-religious interaction in society. Second, the state-led modernization has created new public spheres which allow greater interaction among different ethnic groups. As compared to a few decades ago, people from various ethnic groups especially from the middle class now mingle with one another at work, in residential areas, in associations and other social activities. Third, the new middle class has attained a new “developmentalist” ideology which de-emphasizes ethnicity while highlighting development and growth. Fourth, the articulate members of the new middle class have come forward with new forms of association, self-expression and initiative. Rapid growth of the Internet has facilitated

the growth of this new political culture through inter-ethnic discussion and formation of the *reformasi* movement in 1998. Fifth, various social characteristics of Malaysians such as their language, culture, education and arts have shown pluralist images and values compared to several decades ago. In the learning institutions, children of various ethnic and religious backgrounds studying side by side in national schools using one common language. On the cultural front, new cultural expressions in the form of dances, songs and other artistic expressions are also taking place. In the religious sphere, there has been a significant growth of new religious movements among the major religious denomination. These movements, especially the Islamic movement, have had a significant impact on the state policies, people's everyday lives and ethnic relations. According to Abdul Rahman Embong (2001, p. 65), "these macro developments create a complex situation for pluralism in Malaysia, opening up spaces for cooperation and tolerance, as well as contestation and struggles among different ethnic groups in society".

In the context of political change, the state-led modernization has contributed to the emergence of new political culture, known as developmentalism (Loh 2002, p. 21). Developmentalism has taken root in the political imaginings of the Malays after the introduction of the NEP, and it became prevalent among the non-Malays, especially from the business and middle classes, in the 1990s. According to Loh (2002, p. 21), developmentalism is "the cultural consequence of the *dirigiste* developmentalist state, when citizens begin to enjoy improved living condition as a result of the economic growth the state has brought about". This improved living condition slowly translates into political support towards the ruling government. Due to the rapid transformation of Malaysian society, racial politics has played a less significant role among the electorate. Contesting factors such as "developmentalism" and participatory democracy have considerably balanced the role of race in dictating political decisions, economic policies and social relations. The transformation of Malaysia's plural society arguably has started since the introduction of the NEP and it will continue to do so in the future. Being a plural society, the importance of ethnicity will not be totally replaced but it will surely be balanced up by other competing factors.

For the last five decades, the Malaysian regime has shown great capability in penetrating society by transforming its economic, social and political fabrics. Although certain groups have resisted the state-led transformation, a large section of the population could not avoid the state's intrusion into their lives; generating significant changes to their livelihood. The Malaysian regime has definitely faced little resistance in performing the first function

of the state that is to penetrate society. Although the Malaysian regime has a high capability in executing this task, it is still premature to categorize it as a strong state. Further analysis on the regime's capability to perform the three remaining tasks need to be carried out, beginning with the state's capability to extract resources. This analysis will eventually determine the overall strength of the Malaysian regime.

Extract Resources

The second yardstick used to determine the strength of the state is by measuring its capability to extract available resources either for the personal gains of state leaders or for the collective benefits of the country and its people. Although most resources are owned by the state, in some cases society would also claim ownership, hence creating conflicts between the two. In acquiring private land for the purpose of development, for example, the state might face resistance from the land owners who are not willing to give away their land. In terms of human labour, the ability of the state to extract this type of resources is measured by its capability to acquire human capital that could be used to achieve the state's agendas. Other than extracting natural and human resources, the state's capability to extract resources can also be measured by assessing its ability to collect taxes — personal income tax, company tax, cooperative tax, association and trust bodies tax, petroleum tax, sales tax, withholding tax, real property gains tax and estate duty. Through the collection of various types of tax, the state can raise its revenue in order to provide goods and services to the people. However, the state's capability to collect taxes could be hampered by a widespread practice of corruption and the inefficiency of the tax system. Nonetheless, a strong state would be able to resolve these problems and collect a sizeable amount of taxes to fund its operation and programmes. In analysing the capability of the Malaysian regime to extract resources, this section focuses on the three major resources that the regime seeks to attain: natural resources, human capital and taxes.

Since the colonial period, Malaysia has continuously extracted its rich natural resources such as tin, iron ore, bauxite, crude oil, gas and timber. Based on the Federal List (Article 74 and 77), almost all natural resources except for timber are under the purview of the central government, empowering it to make decisions or enact laws regarding the development of mineral resources, its sale and purchase and the regulation of labour and safety in mines and oilfields. However, in the State List, *negeri* governments are given power to issue permits and licences to individuals or companies who are interested to prospect for mines. Sales of these resources would be taxed by the *negeri*, hence

allowing it to benefit from the mining industry. Apart from that, the central state could also appoint government-linked companies such as Petrolim Nasional Berhad (PETRONAS) to venture into the mining industry which would enable the state to have more control over the sales of the resources.

The mining sector has played an important role in the economic growth of Malaysia by contributing significantly to the GDP. In 1970, the mining sector contributed about 5.7 per cent to the GDP with a value of RM613 million. Production of tin which represented the largest output of mineral resources in Malaysia had shown uninterrupted increase since 1959, reaching a post-war record level of 75,069 tons in 1968 but it declined to 72,630 tons in 1970 (Malaysia 1971, p. 169). Within the First Malaysia Plan (1965–70), tin was the second largest export commodity for Malaysia with an accumulated export value of RM4.3 billion. Other mineral resources extracted by the state within the corresponding period were iron ore, bauxite and petroleum. In 1970, the output of iron ore declined to 4.4 million tons compared to 7.2 million tons in 1963. The sharp decline of iron ore production was due to the closing down of two of the largest iron ore mines at Rompin and Dungun. In terms of its contribution to Malaysia's export earning within the First Malaysia Plan, iron ore was the eleventh largest export commodity with an accumulated export value of RM590.1 million. The third largest output of mineral resources after tin and iron ore was bauxite which had increased its production from 451,958 tons in 1960 to 1,121,318 tons in 1970, despite the closure of the Sematan Mine in Sarawak in 1966. The fourth largest mineral resource extracted from this rich country was petroleum, which several decades later replaced tin as the most important mineral resource in Malaysia. In 1970, petroleum output was at 845,000 tons, which was a significant increase from the level of output in 1969 at 433,000 tons. This substantial increase was made possible with the discovery of an offshore field at West Lutong, Sarawak. In terms of its export value, petroleum brought in about RM778.9 million to the Malaysian economy, particularly due to the high prices of petroleum in the world market at that time despite the country's low production level (Malaysia 1971, p. 169).

After more than three decades, the mining sector continued to grow by contributing 7.3 per cent to the GDP or RM15,385 million in 2000. Within the corresponding period, the share of tin, iron ore and bauxite declined drastically due to the depletion of known reserves (Malaysia 1991, p. 42). The major contributor to the growth of the mining sector in 2000 was petroleum and gas. Within the corresponding year, Malaysia produced a total of 681,000 barrels of petroleum per day from 39 oil fields. Based on the breakdown of the region which produced petroleum, Peninsular Malaysia

was the largest producer by contributing 59.3 per cent of petroleum output, followed by Sarawak with 25.8 per cent and Sabah 14.9 per cent (Malaysia 2002, p. 74). Apart from petroleum, the output of gas has also increased with the discovery of new gas fields in Sarawak. In 2000, the production of gas was 4,367 million standard cubic feet per day in which 15.4 million tones were exported with a value of RM11.4 billion. As compared to three decades ago, the output of tin continued to decrease due to the depletion of tin reserves and also the decline of tin prices (Malaysia 2002, p. 74). In 2000, the output of tin declined significantly to 6,307 tones from 72,630 tones in 1970.

Another type of natural resources extracted by the Malaysian regime is timber. In 1970, the production of saw logs stood at 508.7 million cubic feet while its export earnings was about RM643 million. Between 1960 and 1981, Malaysia's share of world exports of saw-logs rose from 17 to 47.5 per cent, from 13 to 25.5 per cent of sawn-wood products, and from 0.1 to 6.5 per cent of plywood (Drabble 2000, p. 225). Between 1986 and 1988, Malaysia was the source of 92 per cent of the saw-logs exported from the Southeast Asia–Pacific region. Although the extraction of timber has inflicted tensions over the distribution of concessions, access to profits, rates of cutting, impact on the environment and the economic, social and cultural aspects of indigenous groups, the state continues to extract this priceless natural resource, thus demonstrating its strength and capabilities. For the Malaysian regime, the timber industry represents an extremely high return on expenditure, thus it is not willing to sacrifice the economic potential of this industry by giving in to the pressure from society. To ease the tensions inflicted by the timber industry, the state implemented a sustainable forest management by reducing the annual allowable cut rate to 272,800 hectares per year within the Eighth Malaysia Plan. As a result, the production of saw logs declined at an average rate of 1.6 per cent per annum within the plan period. In 2000, the value added of the forestry and logging industry was at RM3,055 million which represented 16.4 per cent of the total value added of the agricultural sector, making it the sixth largest agro-based industry in Malaysia (Malaysia 2006, p. 82). In terms of its export value, saw logs and sawn timber contributed RM2,571 million and RM3,020 million respectively, collectively representing 11.8 per cent of the total agriculture and agro-based exports of Malaysia in 2000 (Malaysia 2006, p. 83). The bulk of saw logs production continues to come from Sarawak (62 per cent), while Peninsular Malaysia accounts for 26 per cent and the rest come from Sabah (Malaysia 2002, p. 71).

The second type of resource that the state has extracted from society is human labour. The capability of the state to extract human labour can be

measured by analysing its ability to offer employment opportunities. In the 1970s, employment grew at a rate of 3.6 per cent per annum which was faster than the growth of the labour force, thus reducing unemployment from 4.6 per cent in 1970 to 3.5 per cent by 1982 (Malaysia 1991, p. 10). However, unemployment rate started to rise in the 1980s following the recession in 1985, and it peaked at 8.3 per cent in 1986. Within the Second Outline Perspective Plan (1991–2000), employment opportunities continued to grow with an average annual growth rate of 3.3 per cent (Malaysia 2001, p. 46). Within the corresponding period, the demand for labour was greater than the growth of the labour force, thus enabling the unemployment rate to be kept low at 3.1 per cent in 2000. This was made possible by the measures taken by the state since the 1970s. Among the measures were (1) to open up new land for agriculture, (2) to establish and expand manufacturing industries, (3) to create more employment opportunities in the construction, transport and public sectors, and (4) to provide training and education to the masses (Chamhuri and Surtahman 1999, p. 35). By providing enough employment to the labour force, the Malaysian state has shown strong capability in extracting human capital as a means to generate economic growth and also to provide better living conditions.

The state's ability to extract human resources can also be measured by analysing its capability in directing this resource to the economic sector which the state intends to develop. When the economy in Malaysia was still agriculture-based, almost 59 per cent of the workforce worked in the primary sector. However, when the state embarked on its industrialization drive in the 1960s, it had to redirect the workforce from the primary to the secondary sector. As a strong state, it succeeded in increasing the number of workers in the secondary sector to about 28 per cent in 2004, while reducing the number of agricultural workers to only 13.7 per cent in the same year. Apart from the state's industrialization drive, the structural changes in the employment sector were made possible by the increase in capital intensity and the use of new technology (Malaysia 2001, p. 47). As a result, there is greater demand for workers who were highly skilled and highly educated.

The third indicator used to measure the state's capability to extract resources is related to its ability to collect taxes. Generally, the regime's capability to collect taxes has grown stronger over the years. In 1991, the regime managed to collect RM13 billion worth of taxes, and this increased significantly to RM29 billion in 2000. In terms of the percentage of direct taxes to the central government revenue, it also increased significantly from 38.9 per cent in 1991 to a whopping 45.93 per cent in 2000 (see Table 2.3).

TABLE 2.3
Malaysia: Tax Revenue, 1991, 2000 and 2005

	1991	2000	2005
Direct Taxes (RM million)	13,199	29,167	56,850
Percentage to Central Government Revenue (%)	38.9	45.93	53.48

Sources: Inland Revenue Board of Malaysia (2001, p. 70; 2006, p. 131).

The increased contribution of direct taxes to the regime's total revenue clearly signifies its strong capability to extract resources, particularly tax-related resources. Between 1991 and 2000, tax collection increased tremendously in tandem with the recovery of the economy, which continued to be resilient after the 1997 economic crisis. Within the corresponding period, the company income tax component remained the largest contributor, followed by personal income tax and petroleum tax (Inland Revenue Board of Malaysia 2001, p. 70). Five years later, the Malaysian regime's capability to collect taxes was amplified when it collected a total of RM56.85 billion in direct taxes. This is 17.6 per cent higher than the regime's revised estimate of RM48.35 billion for 2005 and 94.5 per cent more than the RM29.2 billion collected in 2000. In 2005, the collection of direct taxes contributed 53.49 per cent to the regime's total revenue; representing an increase of 16.4 per cent from 2000. In 2005, company income tax remained as the biggest component of the regime's tax revenue, followed by petroleum tax and personal income tax (Inland Revenue Board of Malaysia 2006, p. 131).

Akin to the first function of the state, the Malaysian regime has also shown strong capability to perform the second function which is to extract resources. However, the state's effort to extract resources, particularly timber, does not void of resistance from the affected natives and also several environmental groups, both local and international. In Sarawak, for example, timber companies have been constantly involved in a series of confrontation with the natives who allege that the former has trespassed into the latter's land. Some of these confrontations would end up in bloodshed which brought casualties to both parties. Local and international environmental groups have also criticized Malaysia's timber industry for causing negative effects on the people and the environment. Despite these criticisms and resistance, the state continues to extract this depleting resource albeit its introduction of a sustainable forest management policy which intends to appease its critics. This demonstrates the state's strong capability of performing its functions which in this case refers to the state's ability to extract resources.

Regulate Social Relationships

Regulating social relationships refers to the state's capability of dictating various forms of social relationships within society. The state regulates social relationships mainly to protect the individual rights of its citizens, to preserve certain norms and culture, and to shape social behaviour which correspond to the state's ideology. Although states have the capabilities to regulate social relationships, their capabilities are not wide-ranging. Usually, the state's ability to regulate social relationships would be strong within a society which is located close to the centre of power, but its capability would be limited at the periphery of the state. In the following discussion, I will analyse the Malaysian regime's capability to regulate social relationships by looking at two types of social relationships that the state aims to regulate: social relationships which concern the fundamental rights of its citizens; and social relationships which constitute the norms and culture of the people.

The first type of social relationships refers to the way individuals or groups in society interact with one another in accordance to preserving their fundamental rights as citizens. The Malaysian regime regulates this type of relationships in order to preserve the country's political ideals, peace and stability. The protection of the fundamental rights of every Malaysians is stipulated in the Federal Constitution which is also the country's supreme law. Among the fundamental rights protected by the Federal Constitution are personal liberty, prohibition of slavery and forced labour, protection against retrospective criminal laws and repeated trials, equality before the laws, freedom of movement, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of religion, rights to receive education and rights of property. In order to protect these rights, the state has taken various measures such as legislating various laws and policies, enforcing them through various state agencies and penalizing the offenders or the non-conformists. By taking these measures, the state ensures that society would interact accordingly without encroaching into the fundamental rights of others. Unfortunately, the fundamental rights in Malaysia are not fully protected by parliament and the executive. There are certain provisions in the Federal Constitution which limit political and religious freedom in Malaysia. Clause 10(4) of the Federal Constitution, for example, gives parliament the power to impose restrictions on the freedom of speech, assembly and association in the interest of the security of the Federation. The power to impose restrictions on the freedom of expression is further amplified through Article 149 of the Federal Constitution which gives special power to parliament to enact laws that could curb activities deemed detrimental to the public. Apart from the restrictions on the freedom of expressions as

stipulated in the Federal Constitution, the ruling regime had enacted various repressive laws such as the Sedition Act, the Presses Act and the ISA aimed at curtailing the freedom of speech, assembly and association in Malaysia. With various legislative measures and also physical force and intimidation, the state has generally succeeded in maintaining peace and order in this country since the bloody incident of 13 May 1969. However, the state does not have hegemonic power to regulate the behaviour of individuals and groups within society especially in relation to the protection of their fundamental rights. There are several trends in society which show that the state's ability to regulate social relationships are actually impaired. Among the trends are the alarming increase of criminal activities such as murder, snatch thieves, robbery, kidnapping, drug and human trafficking; the proliferation of social ills such as incest, drug addiction and prostitution; the increased tension between various ethnic groups and the political appeal of the opposition parties among a significant number of the electorate. Despite the existence of these divergent trends, the Malaysian regime could still dominate society and regulate the behaviour of majority of the population in Malaysia.

The second type of social relationship comprises of certain norms or cultures that are embedded in society. In Malaysia, the state regulates certain norms or cultures in order to preserve the country's unique identity, to resolve social issues, to bring peace and stability, or to attain political mileage. In terms of preserving the norms of Malaysia's multi-ethnic society, the state regulates many types of behaviour or relationship which are commonly accepted by society. Among the norms that have been regulated by the state are personal relationships, ethnic and family relations. To regulate these relationships, the state has enacted various laws and policies, carried out various campaigns and propagandas, and curbed open discussion on issues that might offend the sensitivity of Malaysia's multi-ethnic society.

Since the Malaysian regime is dominated by a Malay national party, United Malays National Organization (UMNO), most of the culture or norms promoted by the state are basically based on Malay values and worldview. Thus, when the state wanted to establish a national identity, it adopted Malay culture and Islam as a basis (Crouch 1996, p. 166). The decision to establish a national identity based on the Malay culture was prompted by the widening gap between Malaysia's multi-ethnic societies. Hence, to resolve this cleavage, the regime introduced several policies that intended to promote a sense of solidarity and tolerance among Malaysians. One of the policies introduced by the ruling regime in order to achieve these goals is the National Cultural Policy which was formulated in 1971. With the introduction of this policy, the regime hoped to instill a sense of national identity which can help to

bridge the differences among the multi-ethnic society in Malaysia. Although various policies have been formulated and numerous programmes have been organized, the state has not fully attained the elusive national identity that it seeks to establish. The symbols of national identity such as the national custom and the national language are only being observed during the state's official functions. In the everyday life of Malaysia's multi-ethnic society, ethnic relations always seem to be superficial. Although there are a growing number of Malaysians especially the urban middle class who are becoming more tolerant and accommodative of others' belief, culture and religion, majority of the population is still dominated by parochial sentiments.

Generally, the Malaysian regime has shown strong capability in regulating the way society interacts with one another. Although the state has succeeded in preserving the norms and cultures of Malaysian society, it could not regulate all types of social relationships that exist within society. Thus, the state's capability in regulating social relationship is much more difficult to achieve compared to the first two functions discussed earlier. Despite this limitation, it is believed that the Malaysian regime has an enormous power to regulate the way people interact with one another, hence validating its status as a strong state.

Distribute Resources in Determined Ways

The final yardstick used to measure the state's power is by analysing its capability to distribute resources in determined ways. The capability to distribute resources refers to the state's ability to allocate goods, services, status and other valuable opportunities to individuals or groups within society. Among the important opportunities that the state could allocate are state rents, security, health care, development projects, employment, education and state honours. In order to allocate these resources in determined ways, the state could use various tools such as tax structure, legislative laws and state policies. In analysing the Malaysian regime's capability in appropriating resources, this section analyses the public sector's development expenditure and the redistributive policies introduced by the state.

First, an analysis on the public sector's development expenditure shows how the state distributes important opportunities to its people. In Malaysia, the public sector's development expenditures are made up of various projects aimed at promoting economic growth and uplifting the quality of living. These projects are divided into four categories, namely economic projects (agriculture and rural development, mineral resources development, commerce and industry, feasibility studies, transport, communications, utilities), social

projects (education and training, health and family planning, social and community services), general administration and security projects (defence, internal security).

In the Second Malaysia Plan (1971–75), the public development expenditure amounted to RM9.8 billion, which was 34.2 per cent greater than the original target of RM7.3 billion (see Table 2.4). Of the total amount spent, RM8.4 billion was for capital formation by the public sector while the remainder constituted transfers to the private sector. As a result, public investment grew by 29.0 per cent per annum in current prices. As prices of capital goods and costs of construction rose rapidly during the period, public investment in real terms grew by 17.6 per cent per annum between 1970 and 1975, raising its share in total investment from 32.2 per cent in 1970 to 43.1 per cent in 1975. This contributed to the acceleration of economic growth in the country despite adverse economic conditions. A major portion of total development expenditure during the Second Malaysia Plan was for economic programmes with a total expenditure of RM7.1 billion or 72.3 per cent of the total development expenditures. The huge amount of money spent on various economic projects indicated the government's commitment in developing the economy during the post-colonial period. Among the economic projects implemented by the government, a special emphasis was given in developing the agricultural, transportation, commerce and industrial sectors.

In contrast to the First Malaysia Plan, the most distinctive feature of the public sector development programme in the Second Malaysia Plan was the sizeable increase in the amount allocated for commerce and industry, the major objective being to enable government-linked companies such as Prbadanan Nasional Berhad (PERNAS), Urban Development Authority (UDA), Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) and State Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) to expand their activities in support of greater involvement of the Malays and other indigenous groups in the secondary sector. The remaining expenditures for commerce and industry went towards the expansion of other government-linked companies such as Malaysian Airline System (MAS), Malaysian International Shipping Corporation (MISC) and Malaysian Shipyard and Engineering Berhad (MSE). Apart from economic projects, the public sector's development programmes in the Second Malaysia Plan were also directed at improving the social conditions of the people. Thus, about RM1.3 billion was spent in implementing various social projects, which included education and training, social and community services, and health and family planning.

After three decades, the Malaysian regime shifted its development focus by initiating more social projects compared to other types of project. In the

TABLE 2.4
Public Sector Development Expenditures in the Second Malaysia Plan
(1971–75) and the Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001–05)

Sector	1971–75 (RM million)		2001–05 (RM million)	
	Estimated Expenditure	%	Expenditure	%
Economic	7,100.3	72.3	65,446	38.5
(a) Agriculture and rural development	2,129.09	21.7	7,749	4.6
(b) Mineral resources development	0.58	0.0	47	0.0
(c) Commerce and industry	1,618.20	16.5	10,174	6.0
(d) Transport	1,781.31	18.1	31,813	18.7
(e) Communications	603.96	6.2	560	0.3
(f) Utilities	931.28	9.5	—	—
(g) Feasibility studies	35.89	0.4	421	0.2
(h) Research and development	—	—	1,960	1.2
Social	1,347.67	13.7	69,377	40.8
(a) Education and training	675.85	6.9	43,729	25.7
(b) Health and family planning	173.92	1.8	9,506	5.6
(c) Social and community services	497.90	5.1	—	—
(d) Information and broadcasting	—	—	450	0.3
(e) Housing	—	—	6,972	4.1
(f) Culture, youth and sports	—	—	1,113	0.7
(g) Local authorities and welfare services	—	—	5,942	3.5
(h) Village and community development	—	—	1,665	1.0
General administration	348.67	3.6	13,135	7.7
Security	1,024.20	10.4	22,042	13.0
(a) Defence	764.89	7.8	17,298	10.2
(b) Internal security	259.31	2.6	4,744	2.8
Total	9,820.85	100.0	170,000	100.0

Sources: Malaysia (2006, p. 529), (1976, pp. 240–41).

Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001–05), public investment on social projects grew to an astounding RM69.4 billion, which represented 40.8 per cent of the total public investment within the plan period, a sharp increase from a mere 13.7 per cent in the Second Malaysia Plan. Among the social projects implemented by the public sector, a significant amount of investment (RM43 billion) was spent on education and training while the rest of the expenditures were spent on health and family planning, housing, local authorities and welfare services, village and community development, culture, youth and sports. The shift in

the government emphasis on its development expenditures was made possible by the increase of the private sector involvement in the economy, reducing the government's burden in promoting economic growth. Apart from social development projects, the public sector continued to promote economic growth through various economic projects. In the Eighth Malaysia Plan, the public investment on various economic projects amounted to RM65 billion which was a sharp increase from the total investment in the Second Malaysia Plan. However, the percentage of the public investment on economic projects declined dramatically from 72.3 per cent in the Second Malaysia Plan to 38.5 per cent in the Eighth Malaysia Plan. The types of economic projects implemented by the public sector also shifted within the corresponding plans period. In the Eighth Malaysia Plan, the bulk of economic investment was allocated for communication projects which amounted to RM31 billion or 18.7 per cent of the total public investment. On the contrary, the emphasis of the Second Malaysia Plan was to develop the agricultural sector and rural areas which became the largest public investment within the plan period.

Based on the analysis of the public sector's development expenditures during the Second and Eighth Malaysia Plans, it is clear that the Malaysian regime had masterfully shifted its emphasis on the opportunities being distributed in the country. During the Second Malaysia Plan, the government had to take the leading role in promoting economic growth by implementing various economic projects. Thus, a great amount of public investment was channelled to develop the agricultural, rural, transportation, commerce and industrial sectors. Gradually, the government introduced a lot of incentives to the private sector in order to promote their involvement in the economy. As the private sector's involvement in the economy increased, the government focused its public investment in increasing the supply of quality manpower, and encouraging more domestic and foreign direct investment, as reflected in the Eighth Malaysia Plan. Evidently, the regime is capable of distributing resources in determined ways and this is demonstrated by the state's ability to implement projects which were suited to its socio-economic policies.

The second analysis on the capabilities of the state to distribute resources in determined ways involves the evaluation of Malaysia's redistributive policies, namely the New Economic Policy (NEP) and New Development Policy (NDP). The NEP and NDP are two affirmative actions adopted by the government in order to "correct" the distribution of state's resources and other economic opportunities in the country. Within the NEP period, among the important resources that the state tried to redistribute were employment and equity ownership. In terms of redistributing employment opportunities, the NEP managed to increase the participation of the *bumiputeras* in the

secondary and tertiary sectors but it failed to totally abolish the identification of race in the economic activity; the *bumiputeras* and Indians still involved in the agricultural sectors while the Chinese were mostly in the secondary and tertiary sectors. The NEP also failed to achieve its target of increasing the *bumiputeras'* equity ownership from 2.4 per cent in 1970 to 30 per cent at the end of the plan. Instead, the *bumiputeras'* equity ownership in 1990 only increased to 19.2 per cent, falling short of the original target by 10.8 per cent (Okposin et al. 2003, p. 39).

At the end of the NEP, the Malaysian regime introduced a new long-term policy known as the NDP which covered a shorter period of ten years (1991–2000). As the NEP failed to achieve some of its objectives, the regime decided to incorporate some of the objectives of the NEP and introduce several new objectives in the NDP. In distributing employment opportunities among Malaysians, the NDP managed to increase *bumiputera* employment in several major sectors, reflecting a shift from agriculture to other economic sectors, particularly manufacturing, finance and transportation. The proportion of *bumiputeras* in the professional and technical category also increased from 60.5 per cent in 1990 to 63.8 per cent in 2000. The proportion of *bumiputera* in the administrative and managerial sectors also increased from 28.7 per cent to 36.9 per cent in the corresponding period (Malaysia 2001*b*, p. 54). Despite these achievements, the NDP failed to erase the identification of race in the economic activity since majority of the *bumiputeras*, 61.6 per cent, was still employed in the agricultural sector. In terms of equity ownership, the NDP failed to achieve its target of 30 per cent *bumiputera* ownership when it only managed to attain 19.1 per cent in 2000. At the end of the NDP period, a total of 19.6 per cent of companies registered with the Registrar of Companies were controlled by *bumiputera*. The proportion of *bumiputera* companies in all sectors of the economy remained low, ranging from 8.7 to 32.6 per cent, with most of them concentrated in the agricultural, construction and transportation sectors (Malaysia 2001*b*, p. 51).

Although the Malaysian regime is capable of redistributing the country's opportunities, its ability to perform this function has been fiercely contested. After more than four decades, the regime still could not totally eliminate race identification in the employment structure, attain 30 per cent *bumiputera* equity ownership and further increase the level of *bumiputera* companies' participation in all economic sectors. There are some quarters who argue that the NEP and NDP only benefit a small group of Malays at the expense of Sabah and Sarawak *bumiputera* who have been marginalized as second class *bumiputera*. As a result, the redistributive policies not only widen the inter-

ethnic differences but also intra-ethnic disparity. Based on this analysis, the regime's capability to perform the fourth task — appropriating resources in determined ways — is considered moderate or even weak because it could not achieve the desired results as set forth by the state leaders.

Albeit having limited power to distribute resources in determined ways, the Malaysian regime can still be considered a strong state because it has high capability in performing the other three functions, namely to penetrate society, to extract resources and to regulate social relationships. As a strong state, it has the capability to exercise its domination over various arenas in society, ranging from economic to political and social activities. However, the regime does not have hegemonic power over society because there are certain forces in society that are capable of contesting the state, making these forces dominant over certain arenas. Hence, even a strong state like Malaysia has limited power to exercise control over society especially in regards to distributing resources. The power of the regime is further eroded within a society located at the periphery of the state, like Sarawak. Here, social forces would be able to pose stronger resistance towards the state's agenda of dominating society.

SOCIAL FORCES IN SARAWAK

The “state-in-society” theory argues that influential and powerful forces in society could pose a threat to state power hence distorting its agenda of domination. These forces are known as social forces which refer to powerful individuals, formal organizations and informal groups that have the capability to rally the support of their members and the general public towards achieving certain goals or purposes (Migdal 2001, p. 107). These goals or purposes might be in harmony with the state or it might be in conflict with it. When social forces are adamant in pursuing certain goals or purposes that are in conflict with the state, this would definitely challenge the authority of the state. Through the concept of social forces, the “state-in-society” theorists rebuke state theorists who argue that state organization is very powerful and cohesive thus allowing it to easily dominate society. The former rejects this line of argument by asserting that in reality the authority of the state is compounded by various forces in society.

Social forces do not operate in a vacuum. They are constantly “competing with one another over material and symbolic matters, vying for supremacy through struggles and accommodations, clashes and coalitions” (Migdal 2001, p. 108). Some social forces attempt to extract as much surplus or revenue as possible, some look for respect and others simply want to rule other people's behaviour as an end by itself. Whatever the motivation and aims, attempts to

dominate will invariably met with opposition from other social forces. Rarely can any social force achieve its goals without finding allies, creating coalitions, and accepting accommodations. Coalitions and accommodations may not only enhance the social force's ability to attain its goals, it may also transform those very goals (Migdal 2001, p. 109). The coalitions and accommodations between social forces do not take place only within the policy arenas but also in basic moral order and the structure within which the rights and wrongs of everyday social behaviour should be determined. Among the contested arenas are affirmative actions, moral policing, women rights, environmental issues, resource allocation, culture, religion and politics.

Before discussing the social forces in Sarawak in greater detail, it is important to note that the concept of social forces and civil society are not synonymous. Although I will look at formal and informal groups, my analysis will not be based on the framework of civil society. According to Migdal (2001, p. 132), civil society assumes "the existence of a normative consensus or hegemony of fundamental ideas among social forces, even among contending groups". This consensus represents a prevailing moral or social order, i.e., a common struggle for a democratic country. Migdal (2001, p. 132) argues that most social science writings about the state and civil society are "mutually reinforcing, even when differences prevail between them". For the most part, it is the legal framework of the state that establishes the limits of autonomy for associations and activities that make up civil society. The heterogeneity of the struggles in society's multiple arenas of domination and contestation, in which social forces pull in different directions, also affect the state profoundly. The way the concept of civil society is commonly used leaves no room for the dispersed struggles over society's moral order. As Naomi Chazan (1994, p. 278) points out, "civil society encompasses only one portion of what has become a complex and diverse associational scene. What distinguishes the groups incorporated in civil society from other associations is their partial nature: they are separate from but address the state". The concept of social forces, therefore, aims to capture the dynamics of associational scene which civil society inclines to ignore.

Formal Organizations

Formal organizations are organized groups of people who pursue certain interests or issues mainly through legal framework. Popularly known as NGOs, formal organizations are non-profit bodies that are registered with the state. In 1963, Sarawak had about fifty-nine NGOs which were mostly communal in nature. After more than four decades, this number had grown

substantially to 2,111 in 2005 (Registrar of Societies Sarawak 2006). Out of this figure, social and recreational associations made up the highest number of NGOs in Sarawak with 483 organizations (22.9 per cent), followed by community-welfare based organizations (473 or 22.4 per cent), religious bodies (1,275 or 3 per cent), cultural bodies (202 or 9.6 per cent), sports clubs (188 or 8.9 per cent), commercial organizations (148 or 7 per cent), occupation-based organizations (90 or 4.3 per cent), collective benefit associations (40 or 1.9 per cent), women associations (21 or 0.9 per cent), education-based organizations (15 or 0.7 per cent), political parties (6 or 0.3 per cent) and youth bodies (5 or 0.2 per cent) (see Table 2.5). The NGOs in Sarawak are fairly backward in their orientation compared to the Peninsular NGOs which have long shifted their focus from communal-based issues to politicized issues such as the environment and civil liberties (Weiss and Saliha 2003, p. 7). Although the number of NGOs in Sarawak has increased significantly, they are still trapped with their parochial struggle of championing communal and religious interests; a scenario reminiscent of the social movement in the Peninsula during the pre-colonial period.

In the 1930s, Malay associations were among the first formal organizations to be established in Sarawak with some of them playing important roles in major political events in the *negeri* at that time (Tan 1994, p. 200). Some of these organizations are still active, while others have been dissolved. In 2005, there were seven Malay organizations in Sarawak; namely the Malay National Union (MNU), Persatuan Melayu Daerah Bau, Persatuan Melayu Bintulu, Persatuan Melayu Miri, Persatuan Melayu Limbang, Persatuan Melayu Lawas and Persatuan Kebajikan Melayu Pesisir Kampung Tembirat. One of the earliest and most important Malay associations in Sarawak is the MNU. It was registered on 10 October 1939 and popularly known as one of the organizations which opposed the cession of Sarawak to the British Colony in 1946. The MNU has strived for the promotion of Malay interest in all fields including religion, language, culture, education and economy. In its early formative years, the MNU played an active political role, especially in the anti-cession movement. However, with the emergence of Muslim *bumiputera*-dominated parties (NEGARA, BARJASA, Bumiputera and later PBB), the MNU's political role was severely eroded, hence shifting its activities to promoting religious, educational and social interests of the Malays (Tan 1994, p. 204). In the late 1980s, the MNU's diminishing influence within the Malay community was further eroded due to its involvement in the 1987 political crisis which saw its leaders, Wan Yusof (president) and Dr Wan Ali (secretary general), openly challenging Taib's leadership. In the late 1990s, MNU was again involved in the political struggle to win the Muslim *bumiputera*

TABLE 2.5
Sarawak: NGOs, 2005

Category	Kuching	Samarahan	Sri Aman	Sarikei	Sibu	Bintulu	Miri	Kapit	Limbang	Total	%
General	89	8	7	5	32	2	18	1	3	165	7.8
Collective benefit	21	2	3	1	7	2	3	1	0	40	1.9
Community Welfare	198	15	0	20	102	35	74	9	20	473	22.4
Culture	94	4	8	9	40	9	27	3	8	202	9.6
Education	8	1	0	1	4	0	1	0	0	15	0.7
Religion	144	9	8	17	38	10	37	3	9	275	13.0
Commerce	n.a.	7	12	27	66	17	0	4	15	148	7.0
Social & Recreation	241	11	13	12	84	31	68	8	15	483	22.9
Women	12	0	1	1	1	3	*	2	1	21	0.9
Youth	0	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	5	0.2
Sports	87	5	10	18	0	14	33	8	13	188	8.9
Politics	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0.3
Occupation	53	2	2	4	15	1	12	0	1	90	4.3
Total	953	65	65	115	391	124	274	39	85	2,111	100

Notes:

1. The politics category does not include political parties' branches and divisions.
Source: Registrar of Societies Malaysia (2006).

support when several of its leaders contested as Keadilan candidates. This anti-government image has severely affected the MNU's attempt to unite the Muslim *bumiputera* in Sarawak. To make matters worse, the MNU is being marginalized by the government due to its involvement with the opposition parties, making it even more inaccessible to the public. As a result, the MNU gradually lost its status as one of the most influential organizations in Sarawak. Apart from the MNU, there are other associations established by the minority groups within the Muslim *bumiputera* community. The Melanau community, for example, established several communal associations such as the Melanau Association of Sarawak, Persatuan Melanau Miri, Persatuan Melanau Bintulu, Persatuan Melanau Kuching and Persatuan Kebajikan dan Kebudayaan Masyarakat Melanau Mukah. The Kedayan established its own communal association, known as Persatuan Kebangsaan Kedayan Sarawak, while the Jatti Miriek formed Persatuan Jatti Miriek.

Compared to the Malays, the Dayaks were rather late in establishing formal organizations as a medium to pursue their interests. This was mainly due to their displacement from mainstream development and the state system. The first formal Dayak organization to be established was the Dayak Co-operative Society formed by the Paku and Rimbas Iban of the Second Division (Tan 1994, p. 8). It was formed as a result of the economic depression in the 1930s which affected the Ibans. The first truly Dayak communal association (not just a cooperative society), formed on the initiatives of the Dayak themselves was Sarawak Dayak Association (Tan 1994, p. 9). It was well-known for its involvement in the anti-cession movement, together with the MNU. Despite its active involvement in the anti-cession movement, SDA failed to secure the support of the Dayak community. Instead, the Kuching Iban formed a pan-Dayak association called Sarawak Dayak National Union in 1956. A year earlier, the Bidayuh formed the Bidayuh National Association as it was then called. This has remained the pattern of Dayak associations in Sarawak with the Ibans forming pan-Dayak Associations (Sarawak Dayak Youth Association Miri Dayak Association, Kelab Sukan dan Rekreasi Dayak Miri, Persatuan Kebudayaan Dayak Tatau) as well as regional Iban associations (Sarawak Dayak Iban Association, Serakup Raban Bansa Iban Miri), while the Bidayuh (Dayak Bidayuh National Association) and the Orang Ulu established their own communal associations (Sarawak Kenyah Badeng Association, Sarawak Kayang Community Association, Persatuan Lunsi Sarawak, Tabung Persatuan Kaum Kelabit Sarawak, Persatuan Kelabit Baram, Highlanders Sports Club Miri, Rurum Kelabit Sarawak, Miri Division Kelabit Association, Persatuan Kayan Sarawak, Pertubuhan Pergerakan Penyelidikan dan Pembangunan Singai Sarawak, Kayang Community Association Miri, Persatuan Kaum Penan

Sarawak, Persatuan Bisaya Sarawak, Lun Bawang Association Sarawak, The Sarawak Berawan Association, Telang Usan Pinyin Association).

The formal organizations in Sarawak are quite dormant and financially dependent on the government. These organizations are not as progressive as their counterparts in the Peninsula mainly because they lack the financial resources and manpower to mobilize the masses. Hence, most of the formal organizations have to rely on the government's financial assistance in order to survive, forcing them to toe the line. Apart from limited financial resources, Sarawak does not have a significant number of middle class who can provide the impetus for meaningful organizational life. As a result, the formal organizations in Sarawak are deprived from having access to exemplary leadership and good organizational skills which the middle class could provide. With the declining influence of the MNU, there is no other formal organization in Sarawak that could pose a serious challenge towards the state's power except for several rich business and clan organizations. By being financially independent, these rich organizations could pursue the interest of their members without having to toe the line. In the issue of land premium in Sarawak, for example, the Federation of Kuching and Samarahan Divisions Chinese Association openly demanded the government to reduce the land premium renewal rates which were deemed unreasonably high by many Sarawakians especially the business community.²¹ In fact, the Chinese association was the only formal organization which was bold enough to publicly air its dissatisfaction towards the new land premium rates although the new land policy affected all Sarawakians. Other formal organizations might not take a confrontational approach in advancing their interests but at the very least, these organizations can alter the state's perspective of the issues that are raised by them.

Informal Groups

Informal groups are collection of people that are binded together by a common interest or concern. These groups may simply meet and discuss issues of their concern and carry out their activities without any formal structure. Most informal groups are community based and are formed in the villages and the cities by groups of men and women who share the same interests. An informal group is organized based on a consensus (written or oral) between its members without any legal obligation. It has no legal personality and cannot enter into legal relations with other bodies. Therefore, informal groups tend to operate outside of legal framework, making them even more effective as a platform to present various concerns and interests of society. In Sarawak, informal groups particularly patron-client network are more influential and

powerful compared to formal organizations mainly because the former has been embedded within Sarawak's society since the pre-colonial period whereas the latter is a recent phenomenon, gaining currency only after the formation of Malaysia. In order to better understand the structure and operation of informal groups in Sarawak and their roles in society, I will focus on the two most influential informal groups namely patron-client and the middle class.

Patron-Client

Patron-client ties are the very foundation of society and politics all over Asia (Neher and Marlay 1995, p. 15). Powerful people in all walks of life (patrons), who control scarce resources, accumulate as many followers (clients) as possible. The primary pattern of social exchange in Southeast Asia is between unequals — the powerful patrons and the feeble clients. The relationship between a superior patron and a subordinate client are personal, face-to-face, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial (Neher and Marlay 1995, p. 15). Patron-client alliances are formed, from the point of view of the clients, for sheer survival. Loyalty to a landowner may mean a sack of rice during a famine. Patrons, on the other hand, are motivated by a desire for social status and recognition.

Patrons have the power to choose clients who will enjoy the resources provided by the former. The more resources the patrons are able to accumulate, the more clients they have; hence, the more powerful they would become. In return, patrons can acquire labour, protection, deference or political support in return for dispensing benefits to clients. These reciprocal relationships are linked with others in a grand pyramid that extends from the large peasant base to a small number of rich families at the apex. Every patron (except the man at the very top) is simultaneously a client of someone who is higher in the pyramid. According to James Scott (1972, p. 66),

The patron-client relationship — an exchange relationship between roles — may be defined as a special case of dyadic (two person) ties involving large instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his own influence resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services to the patron.

Patron-client bonds can evolve into life-long relationships as strong as blood ties. In the Philippine, for example, debts of gratitude (*utang na loob*) tie all Filipinos who have received favours to their benefactors (Neher and Marlay 1995, p. 16). Failure to reciprocate will ultimately break the

relationship. This personal relationship satisfies Filipino's immediate needs, so most citizens ignore institutionalized political structures.

In the context of Sarawak, patron-client network has been in existence since the pre-colonial period with the Malay strongmen playing the role of patrons while the Malays and Dayaks became their clients. The Malay strongmen who comprised of the aristocrats, *nakhodas*, Brunei *pengiran* and Arab Sharifs would use their high social status and personal wealth to build a network of clients who became the strongmen's power base. When Sarawak was under the overlordship of the Brunei Sultanate, the local Malay aristocrats were co-opted by the Sultan to overlook the administration of the *negeri*. The influence of these strongmen, especially the Malay aristocrats, continued to persist during the Brookes' rule although their power had been curtailed by the Rajah. With the impact of colonialization and the introduction of modern politics, the patron-client system was gradually phased out and a new form of social network, known as patronage, was formed. In the context of politics, the term patronage refers to the distribution of favours by higher level politicians who would use the state's resources such as concessions, government funding licences, contracts and privatized projects to build a network of loyal clients who subsequently repay the deeds of their patrons by funding their political campaigns (see Figure 2.2). Political patronage should not be confused with patron-clientele (Wolters 1984, p. 199; Mohd Ali 2004, p. 40). Political patronage is capable of being dispensed without recourse to patron-client relationships. As compared to patron-client relations, the relationships between politicians and the electorate are considered short term, impersonal, instrumental and based on specific transactions (Wolters 1984, p. 199). These relationships endure for a few weeks or months at most and are of a completely different nature compared to the multi-faceted relationships that link landlords and tenants.

With the introduction of modern politics in Sarawak, the intelligentsia became a new force in Sarawak's society, acting as patrons within the new patronage system while the electorate took the role of clients. The clients are expected to provide political support and a sense of prestige to the intelligentsia. In return, patrons are expected to offer monetary support, entertainment, development projects and protection against the law (Milne 1973, p. 899). Within a political patronage system, traditional leaders (village chiefs and community leaders) are not totally discarded, instead majority of them have been co-opted into the system. These traditional leaders subsequently form links in the chain of patronage which stretched from the centre of power in Kuching to the urban and rural areas across Sarawak. Some patrons make more use of traditional leaders than others but none could dispense with them entirely.

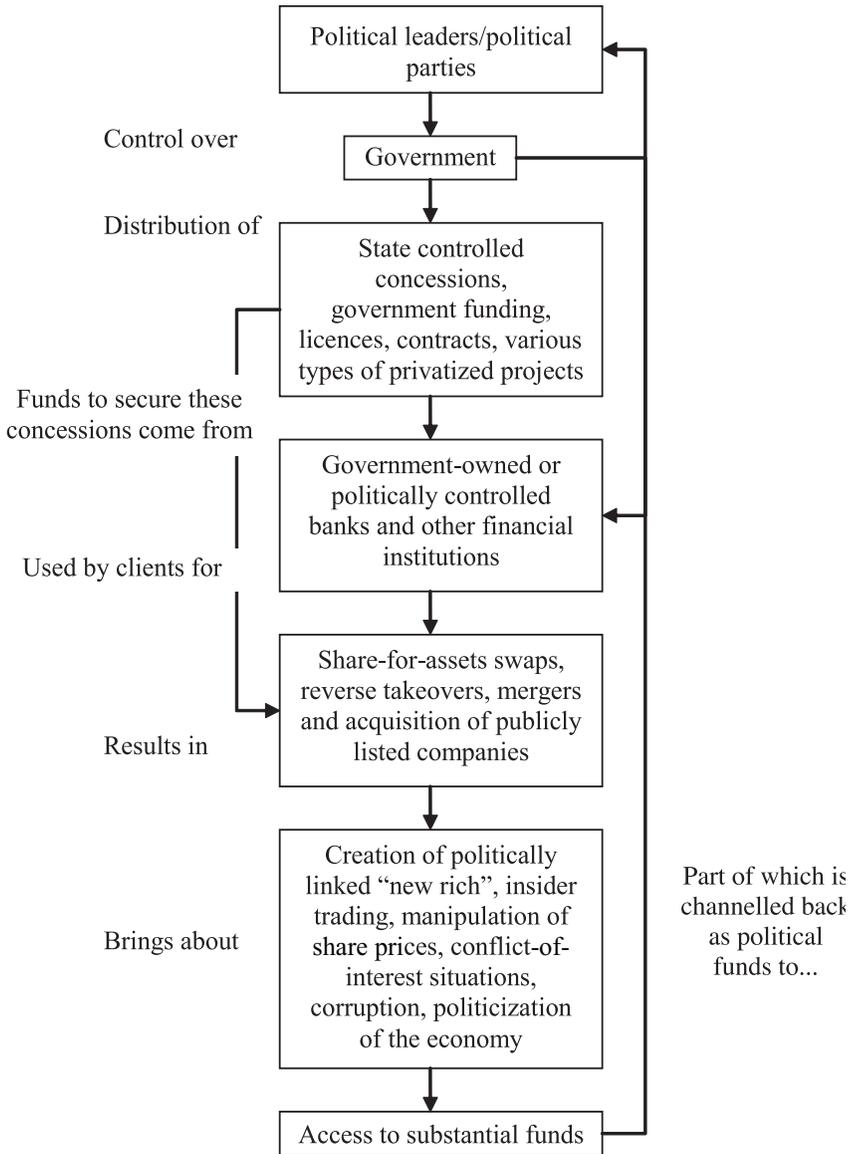
As a powerful force in society, the intelligentsia is capable of resisting the state's attempt to dominate society. In fact, the intelligentsia and their network of clients has been the most influential social forces in Sarawak, surpassing formal organizations and the middle class. The influence of Sarawak's intelligentsia has been very formidable that central state leaders have to co-opt them in order to ensure the state's survival. This will be the subject of discussion in the subsequent chapters.

Middle Class

The formation and growth of the middle class in Malaysia became much more evident during the post-Independence period (Abdul Rahman 1998, p. 92). Based on the occupation of the work force in Malaysia, the number of the middle class (legislators, senior officials, managers, professionals, technicians and associate professionals, clerical workers, service workers and shop and market sales workers²²) had increased significantly from 27.8 per cent in 1957 to 43.2 per cent in 2000. The type of the middle class which experienced the most significant growth is the new middle class comprising of professional and technical workers as well as administrative and managerial workers. Within the corresponding period, the number of the new middle class had increased from 4 per cent in 1957 to 15.2 per cent in 2000 (Abdul Rahman 2002, p. 41). In line with the growth of the middle class in Malaysia, the number of middle class in Sarawak also experienced a significant growth from 12.95 per cent of the total employed in 1970 to 30.6 per cent in 2000. Despite this encouraging growth, the percentage of the middle class in Sarawak is still below the national level. But again, during the corresponding period, the growth of the new middle class had increased tremendously from 3.5 per cent in 1970 to 17.5 per cent in 2000 with the latter figure exceeding the national rate.

In debating the role of the new middle class, Kessler (2001) cautioned those scholars who over-romanticized the democratic potential of this group. He stresses the fluidity of any collective identities which are always forming and fragmenting. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, social forces represent differing interests and goals of society. Therefore, it is crucial to understand that society does not possess any single identity or agenda as suggested by Saravanamuttu (1989). The new middle class, as suggested by Rahman (2002) and Kessler (2001), has dualistic roles with some of them support the establishment while others are critical towards it. According to Migdal (1994, p. 19), "unified social classes and wide ranging social struggles for dominance — class struggles — have often been easier to find in imaginative theorizing

FIGURE 2.2
Political Patronage in Malaysia



Source: Gomez and Jomo (1999, p. 190).

than in real societies". The "state-in-society" theory suggests that society is an arena of domination and contestation, hence, the idea of a unified social class working towards some large class-project that can reshape society may be an "elegant metaphorical device" (Migdal 1994, p. 19). Still, I am not dismissing the role of the new middle class in becoming an influential force in society. As an elite segment of society, the new middle class definitely has the capabilities to influence social change and alter the state's structure. However, I disagree with Marxist view of the middle class since it portrays this group as having a collective identity and agenda. With their superior economic and social status, the new middle class is certainly a potent force in society. If this heterogeneous group could unite to further a shared interest which does not necessarily conform to that of the state, the new middle class would surely be capable of inflicting change in society, making it an extremely powerful social force. Presently, the new middle class in Sarawak has not shown that capability with most of them inclined to maintain the status quo by supporting the ruling party which has provided them this acquired status. So long as the new middle class remains dormant, the state would not face much difficulty in dominating society.

CONCLUSION

In a strong state like Malaysia, society is generally perceived as weak because they are powerless to resist the state's domination. However, this chapter argues that the power of the Malaysian regime could be significantly curtailed by influential forces in society, hence expunging the image of a weak society. These social forces would be in constant struggle with the state over various arenas, prompting the latter to either engage or ignore the former. Migdal (2001, p. 148) argues that a weak state would have no choice but to engage the social forces in order to avoid it from collapsing but a strong state would have the choice to either engage or ignore the influential forces in society without seriously jeopardizing its existence. When a strong state like Malaysia decides to ignore the social forces, it could face various obstacles in implementing its policies or binding the population together. To resolve this quandary, the state would resort to using coercive and repressive measures which could forcibly bring order and stability back in society. This strategy could be effective or it could backfire, leading to the emergence of new groups of social forces which are equally or even stronger and more influential than the old ones. The other option that a strong state has is to engage the social forces by resorting

to the strategy of accommodation. According to Migdal (2001, p. 90), accommodation refers to a situation where there is no single group — not the implementers, not the local politicians, and not the social forces — in society who could monopolize power. When various arenas in society are not being dominated by a single group, social forces including the state have to compromise and accommodate each other. Such accommodation takes place at least on two levels (Migdal 2001, p. 92). First, accommodation takes place at the local or regional level where politicians, social forces and implementers accommodate each other in a web of political, economic and social exchanges. The accommodation between these actors will determine how resources are being distributed, how policies are being formulated and how electoral supports are being won. Second, accommodation takes place beyond the local or regional interest. If local or regional stability can be maintained, this will lead to the stability of the whole regime. In Malaysia, this study argues that the central state would engage with the social forces provided its authority as the ruling government is not in danger. The same strategy is adopted by the central state in extending its power in Sarawak, accommodating the social forces and subsequently dominating the multi-ethnic society of the *negeri*.

Notes

1. Sanib Said traces the origin of ASPA to the pre-colonial period in Sarawak. He (1999, p. 213) defines it as the area which stretched from Sambas to Bintulu. The other politico-cultural areas in northern Borneo were the Brunei Politico-Cultural Area (from the rivers after Bintulu until Api-Api or Kota Kinabalu) and the Sabah-Sulu Politico-Cultural Area. These three areas were defined on the basis of the dominant ethnic groups residing there; the Malays, Ibans and Melanaus in ASPA; the Bruneians, Kedayan, Lun Bawang/Murutic and Kadazan/Dusun groups in BPA; and the southern Philippines groups in SPA. Apart from ethnic considerations, these three areas were also defined in terms of their distinct polities. Within ASPA, there were six autonomous polities, namely, Santubong, Sadong, Gedong, Kabong, Kalaka and the Rejang Delta. According to Sanib (1999, p. 213), ASPA existed prior to the establishment of the Brunei Sultanate in the thirteenth century. I disagree with the concept of ASPA because I strongly believe that the state formation in Sarawak is highly influenced by the colonialization process which started during the reign of the Brunei Sultanate and ended when Malaysia was formed.
2. Datu Patinggi had jurisdiction over the nobility; Datu Bandar governed the non-nobility of high status while Datu Temenggong ruled the commoners.

3. The Brookes' court historians such as Spenser St. John and Bamfylde note that the rebellion was sparked by Mahkota's cruelty and extortions. However, the picture painted by the Brookes' court historians might not be entirely true since the Brookes wanted to exploit the rebellion as an excuse to acquire Sarawak. Other historians believe that the rebellion was instigated by Pengiran Usup, the illegitimate son of the grandfather of the Sultan of Brunei, who arranged for Sarawak to be sold to the brother of the Sultan of Sambas (Reece 1993, p. 16). Pengiran Muda Hashim opposed this proposal which prompted Pengiran Usup to organize a rebellion against the Brunei authority.
4. James Brooke's father was an Englishman who worked for the East India Company. James Brooke was born in India and spent his childhood there. At the age of twelve, he furthered his studies in England. Unfortunately, he was not interested in attending school and decided to run away twice. When James Brooke returned to India as a young man, he joined the East India Company's army. During a mission in Burma, he was seriously injured, forcing the Company to send him back to India. Soon after, James Brooke resigned from the Company. When his father died several years later, he left James with £30,000, a very large sum of money in those days. James used the money to purchase his own sailing ship, *Royalist*, which he used to explore Marudu Bay in North Borneo and the island of Celebs (Rawlins 1965, p. 18).
5. James Brooke came to Sarawak after being persuaded by some traders to deliver a gift to Pengiran Muda Hashim who had assisted a group of shipwrecked British sailors. Brooke had also heard of the profitable antimony trade between Sarawak and Singapore and thus set sail for Sarawak hoping that his ambition of persuading the British to establish some sort of presence in Borneo would be realized.
6. In 1841, Rajah James received the news of Hashim and Budrud in deaths in Brunei and also the attacks against their families. Brooke acted swiftly to punish the culprits. He gathered several Royal Navy ships and headed for Brunei. James Brooke's fleet, with the assistance of Admiral Cochrane, made an awesome show of force and subsequently bombarded Brunei. Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin did not retaliate. Instead, he signed a letter of apology and confirmed Rajah James as the sovereign ruler of Sarawak without the need to pay any annual tribute (Naimah 1999, p. 6).
7. The pioneering officers recruited into the Sarawak Service were mostly relatives of James Brooke and sons of his colleagues. James Brooke's sister, Emma, had three sons — Brooke Brooke, Charles Brooke and Stuart Johnson — who also joined the service. Emma's eldest son, Brooke Brooke, came to Sarawak in 1848. He was made the Rajah's heir and held the title of Tuan Besar. Charles Johnson joined the service in 1852 and was regarded as the Rajah's heir when his elder brother was disinherited in 1863. The third brother, Stuart, came to Sarawak in 1861 and served for five years before resigning to join the prison service in Britain. Recruitment to the Sarawak Service was given a more positive impetus

from 1848 onwards, the year of Rajah James's tour of England, when he earned his Crown appointment. On several occasions, Brooke enticed potential candidates with the possibility of a life full of adventure and tempted them with personal offers (Naimah 1999, p. 10).

8. The threat of piracy was indiscriminately used by the Brookes to pursue their expansionary project within the Brunei's territory. With the help of the British Navy, the Brookes waged a "holy war" against the "pirates", thus indirectly encroaching into the Brunei's territory. After successfully bringing order and peace to these territories, the Brookes demanded that the Sultan ceded them as a form of reward. It is believed that the "pirates" whom Brookes referred to could actually be the Malay *nakhodas* (sea-traders) who were dominating the sea trade around Sarawak at that time. Since the Malay *nakhodas* were economically powerful and socially influential within the Malay and Dayak communities, their presence could be harmful to the Brookes' own existence in Sarawak. Hence, the Malay *nakhodas* were strategically crushed by the Brookes in the name of war against the "pirates".
9. The battle of Beting Maru provoked an outcry in Britain. Allegations were hurled at Brooke, accusing him of using the Royal Navy to kill innocent tribesmen. In 1854, a Royal Commission of Inquiry was formed to investigate the allegation. Although Brooke was exonerated of the charges brought against him, the controversy resulted in the withdrawal of British naval support which severely crippled Brooke's military might (Naimah 1999, p. 7).
10. Both Brereton and Lee lost their lives within a few years after taking up their posts; Lee was killed in a melee with the Skrang Ibans in 1853, while Brereton succumbed to dysentery in the following year (Naimah 1999, p. 13).
11. During James's rule, two councils were established in order to allow the participation of the natives in the colonial government; namely the Supreme Council and the Council Negeri. The Supreme Council, which acted as a forum between the Rajah, his officers and the Malay datu to discuss government affairs, was created in 1855. Another platform for the native participation in government was the Council Negeri, established in 1865, three years before the accession of Rajah Charles Brooke. The Council Negeri, known as the oldest legislative body in Malaysia, comprised of the Rajah, senior European and Native Officers and traditional native chiefs. However, the Council Negeri was more of a formal occasion for the European officers and the native chiefs from all over Sarawak to gather in Kuching.
12. The term "Residency" referred to an important district which was placed under the charge of European officer. It did not exist in Sarawak until the 1920s. Since Charles had served in the Second Division prior to his installment as the Rajah, he took keen interest in the affairs of the division. After becoming the Rajah, Charles continued to keep a close watch over matters in the Second Division and appeared reluctant to delegate authority of the division to the Resident. Unlike the First and Third Divisions, the Second Division did not have a Resident

- throughout most of Rajah Charles's reign. It was only when the Rajah began to feel the stress and strains of his age that he assigned Rajah Muda Vyner Brooke as the Resident of the Second Division (Naimah 1999, p. 39).
13. Rajah Vyner, the eldest son of Charles Brooke, was born in 1874. At the age of sixteen, he was proclaimed heir apparent. Vyner joined the Sarawak Service in 1897 and was later appointed the Resident of Batang Lupa. He remained in this capacity until May 1899 and was then assigned to the Third Division where he served as Resident of Sibu and the Upper Rejang until 1901. For nearly ten years (1904 to 1914), Vyner was stationed in Kuching, sharing the duties of his father. He had nearly eighteen years experience as an administrator in Sarawak before he was proclaimed Rajah in 1917. Vyner had two other brothers, Bertram, who was two years younger, and Harry, four years his senior. Rajah Charles had earlier shown a liking for Bertram, who in character and personality resembled Rajah Charles more than his elder brother (Naimah 1999, p. 59).
 14. At the age of sixty, Rajah Vyner wished to extricate himself from Sarawak in such a way that he and his dependants would be well protected, financially. In late 1940, Vyner proposed that he be paid \$2 million in order to secure his family's financial future. Alarmed at what they regarded as a "raid" on the state funds and at the same time anxious to transfer some of the Rajah's executive power, members of the Committee of Administration called for a limited monarchy as prescribed in a written constitution (Reece 1998, p. 64).
 15. On the morning of 16 December 1941, an estimated 10,000 Japanese troops from the Kawaguchi Detachment landed in Miri. On 24 December, the Japanese captured Kuching and three days later took control of the Kuching airfield. The Kawaguchi Detachment left Borneo for the Philippines on 23 March 1942. After their departure, the fourth Independent Mixed Brigade under the command of the Southern Army took control of Sarawak. In July 1942, the fourth Independent Brigade was reorganized into the fortieth and forty-first Independent Garrison infantry battalions, each with approximately 500 men. The presence of the Japanese army in Borneo was considered small but it was able to dominate British Borneo including Sarawak (Reece 1998, p. 76).
 16. There were three major reasons why certain quarters in Sarawak opposed the proposal to form Malaysia: (1) the opposition towards the ideological position of the Malay leadership in Malaya which hinged on Malay supremacy; (2) the dislike of change and a fear of the unknown; and (3) the demand for Sarawak's Independence before considering the formation of Malaysia (Wong 1995, p. 23).
 17. The privileges and safeguards accorded to Sarawak were: (1) special position and privileges as *bumiputeras*, as accorded to the Malays in the Peninsula, should be extended to all native groups; (2) Islam should not be made the official religion of Sarawak so as to accommodate the interests of the non-Muslims; (3) the Head of State could be appointed among all members of society regardless of their ethnic background; (4) the Malay language shall be accepted as the national

- language but English remained as the official language in Sarawak for ten years after the formation of Malaysia; (5) power over immigration; (6) additional sources of revenue; (7) additional representation in Parliament due to its large geographical size; (8) existing policy and system of administration of education in Sarawak should continue and remain under the control of the *negeri* government; (9) certain provisions on land in the Federal constitution would not be applied to Sarawak; and (10) the power to impose sales tax provided that any federal sales tax would take priority over any *negeri* sales tax (Wong 1994, pp. 124–36).
18. The Ministry of Sarawak Affairs was established in 1963. It was created for Temenggong Jugah who was not appointed as Sarawak's first Governor although he was already nominated by the Sarawak Alliance. With the intervention of Tunku Abdul Rahman, a Malay leader, Abang Haji Openg, was appointed Governor while Stephen Kalong Ningkan was appointed Sarawak's first Chief Minister (Leigh 1974, p. 79).
 19. The size of the civil service in Malaysia expanded tremendously within the last four decades. In the 1970s, the number of civil servants (not including the army) in Malaysia was about half a million. This figure rose to about 668,000 in 1998 (Abdullah Sanusi 2003, p. 24). Within the corresponding period, the number of ministries and departments also increased from only 12 ministries in 1957 to 27 ministries and 231 departments in 2004.
 20. The concept of middle class in Malaysia has been constantly debated, leading to various classifications and methods of categorizing this group of people. Crouch (1984), for example, uses car and television ownership to gauge the size of the middle class in Malaysia (in Saravanamuttu 2001, p. 106). In 1980, 19 per cent of the population in Peninsular Malaysia owned cars while 53 per cent owned television. In contrast to Crouch (1984), Saravanamuttu (2001) uses the classification of occupation to estimate the size of the middle class. He categorizes the middle class as those who worked as professionals and technical workers, teachers and nurses, administrators and managers, clerical workers, sales and service workers. Based on this classification, the number of the middle class in Malaysia had increased significantly from 36 per cent in 1988 to 45.2 per cent in 1998. Abdul Rahman Embong (1998) takes up Saravanamuttu's classification of the middle class but the former further divides them into three categories, namely the business class (employer), new middle class (professionals, technical workers, administrators and managers) and lower middle class (clerical workers, sales and service workers) (in Saravanamuttu 2001, p. 107). In 1947, the business class represented 1.3 per cent of the labor force in Malaysia and it increased to 4 per cent in 1980. However, in 1991, the size of the business class declined to 3.2 per cent mainly because of the increasing number of workers as compared to employers (Abdul Rahman Embong 2002, p. 39). The most rapidly growing segment of the middle class is the new middle class. Between 1957 and 2000, the size of the new middle class had increased dramatically from 4 per cent to 15.2 per cent. Contrary to the new middle class, the lower middle class had

shown only a slight increase from 27.1 per cent in 1990 to 28.3 per cent in 2000 (in Saravanamuttu 2001, p. 107). Generally, the size of the middle class in Malaysia has increased significantly due to the state-led modernization and the growing influence of capitalism, although scholars have different ways to measure it.

21. During the 2006 election, the issue of land premium renewal rates became one of the factors that contributed to the biggest defeat suffered by SUPP in the history of Sarawak elections. It lost eight of the nineteen seats it contested. After the election, the government reduced the renewal rates; for town land, a flat 25 per cent rate was imposed for residential, commercial, and agriculture land not exceeding RM10,000 per acre; for suburban land, a 35 per cent rate was imposed for commercial, industrial and office land and 25 per cent for recreational, residential and agriculture land categorized as not exceeding RM5,000 per acre; for country land, the renewal rate was fixed at 25 per cent for all categories of land use except for agriculture which was fixed at RM200 per acre (*Borneo Post*, 29 May 2007).
22. Here, I use Saravanamuttu's (2001) classification of the new middle class in analysing the growth of this group in Sarawak.

3

THE RESURGENCE OF MUSLIM *BUMIPUTERA* POLITICS, 1970–81

INTRODUCTION

Between 1963 and 1970, the central state was struggling to impose its presence in Sarawak which was administered by a weak ruling party led by the Iban leaders. Without strong grassroots support and high political aptitude, the Iban leaders failed to adopt the right strategy to bring order and stability, leading to a long-running crisis in the ruling party and widespread anti-government dissatisfaction among the masses. To the central state, the volatility of Sarawak politics posed a threat to the existence of the Federation, especially after the cession of Singapore in 1965. Hence, the central state took a coercive measure by declaring a state of emergency on 15 September 1966, after an earlier attempt to remove Chief Minister Stephen Kalong Ningkan of Sarawak National Party (SNAP) failed.¹ Through this declaration, the central state amended the Constitution, empowered the Governor to call a meeting of the Council Negeri which subsequently passed a motion of no confidence against Ningkan, thus effectively removing him from office. In order to avoid Ningkan's removal being turned into a racial issue, the central state endorsed another Iban leader, Tawi Sli, from Parti Pesaka Anak Sarawak (PESAKA) to fill up the vacant Chief Minister's seat. The elevation of Tawi Sli who was one of the Iban candidates nominated for the post in 1963 did not resolve the political instability in Sarawak especially after

SNAP decided to leave Alliance and joined SUPP to establish a formidable opposition force.

After the conclusion of Sarawak's first direct election in 1970, the central state manoeuvred a plan to install a Muslim *bumiputera* who was highly regarded by the central state leaders as the new Chief Minister. The chosen leader was Abdul Rahman Yakub, a prominent Muslim Melanau law graduate from a Muslim *bumiputera*-dominated party, Parti Barisan Anak Jati Sarawak (BARJASA). The appointment of Rahman as Sarawak's third Chief Minister marked the resurgence of Muslim *bumiputera* political dominance which had been momentarily broken by the Iban leaders. This chapter argues that the elevation of Rahman was the result of the central state's strategy of using Sarawak's social forces, specifically the Muslim *bumiputera* intelligentsia who later transformed themselves into strongmen-politicians, as a means to dominate the populace. As Abdul Rahman Yakub was the first generation of Muslim *bumiputera* strongmen-politicians to helm the *negeri* government, this chapter focuses on his political ascendancy and the strategies that he adopted to dominate Sarawak's society, in particular the Muslim *bumiputera*. By scrutinizing Muslim *bumiputera* politics within the context of Rahman Yakub's administration, this chapter demonstrates that the state does not have absolute control over society in Malaysia especially at the periphery, like Sarawak. Thus the state has to rely on the capabilities of strongmen-politicians like Rahman to dominate society, thus ensuring its existence.

FROM MALAY STRONGMEN TO MUSLIM MELANAU STRONGMEN-POLITICIANS

Strongmen have dominated Sarawak society since the pre-colonial period but their power and personalities have changed significantly due to the process of state formation, particularly during the colonial period. The term "strongmen", borrowed from "bigmen" studies in anthropology, is used to describe powerful individuals who exploit the state resources such as land, credit and employment to bind the population together (Migdal 1988, p. 255). Strongmen such as village heads, land lords, tribe chiefs, urban caciques, rich peasants and the intelligentsia could pose a significant threat to the state's authority especially if it is weak. Hence, in maintaining its survival, the state has to accommodate strongmen by co-opting them into the state hierarchy. In return, strongmen are allowed to maintain their regional or local control (Migdal 1988, p. 255). In analysing the role of strongmen in Latin American countries, Hammergren (1977) observes,

The tradition of local caudillos, caciques, or gamonales, especially in more isolated areas of the country, the presence of regional elites even in more developed areas, the maintenance of economic ties between internal and external groups with minimal participation by the state, all point to a very limited penetration of society by the national center (in Migdal 1988, p. 40).

In the case of Latin American countries, the presence of strongmen resulted in the failure of the state to penetrate society and to stimulate desired social changes. In order to overcome this quandary, the state has to co-opt strongmen whose influence and authority could be exploited to pursue the state's agenda. Although strongmen are part of social forces, they are not entirely detached from the state. In fact, strongmen could become the state's representatives with the ability "to convince, cajole and often coerce the community under them to comply with state directives" (Abinales 2000, p. 11). In other words, strongmen who are co-opted by the state will end up being part of the state but at the same time maintain their position in society. In fact by co-opting strongmen, the state legitimizes the power of these influential men hence indirectly bolstering their authority and influence.

Before the overlordship of the Brunei Sultanate, "Old Sarawak" and its neighbouring polities were under the control of traditional strongmen comprising of the Brunei *pengiran*, Malay aristocrats and Arab Sharifs who dominated the Malay and Dayak communities through their personal wealth and social status.² The power of these strongmen was characterized by two essential features: (1) it was conducted within a framework of entourages bound to the leader by complexes of patron-client relationships; and (2) the resources necessary to maintain these complexes often derived from trading activity (Walker 2002, p. 7). Apart from having the capability to form and maintain multiple networks of clients, strongmen also possessed cosmic power known as *semangat* which was highly revered by the people (Walker 2002, pp. 17–21). Among the Malays, *semangat* could be acquired by *naik pangkat* and literally "rubbing off" with someone who was perceived to possess superior *semangat*.³ The belief that a leader possessed a cosmic power was not only accepted among the Malays but also among the natives. This shared conception of power between the Malays and the natives provided the basis through which a degree of unity under Malay strongmen could be legitimized (Walker 2002, p. 21).

When the Brunei Sultanate expanded its territory on the island of Borneo, it had to decentralize power by appointing local strongmen to administer its large kingdom and to collect tributes from the riverine settlements.⁴ Apart from its vast terrain, the Sultanate had to decentralize power because its

legitimacy had been significantly eroded by European imperialistic activities (Ranjit 1991, p. 33). Being a weak kingdom, the Sultan had to co-opt local strongmen in order to sustain his rule. The farther away the district from the Brunei capital (Kota Batu), the greater the degree of independence the strongmen achieved. Thus, the Malay aristocrats in “Old Sarawak” were arguably the most powerful strongmen in the kingdom but their influence began to decline when the Sultan appointed a Brunei *pengiran*, Mahkota, as Sarawak’s Governor.⁵

When James Brooke took over “Old Sarawak” in 1841, he removed the Brunei *pengiran* but maintained the Malay strongmen’s administration, known as the Datu system. However, James Brooke gradually reduced the power of these traditional strongmen by first of all breaking their links with the people of the interior and the coast in order to weaken their power base (Reece 1993, p. 23). As a result, the strongmen’s position within society was reduced to a titular and ceremonial status which was enhanced by the Rajah through the granting of titles and monetary assistance (Walker 2002, p. 53).

The influence of the Malay aristocrats further deteriorated due to the development in education that took place in the early 1930s. With the establishment of several missionary schools in the First, Second and Third Divisions, it paved the way for ordinary Sarawakians to acquire higher level of education which was initially available only to the privileged Malay aristocrats.⁶ Gradually, the development in education led to the emergence of young educated Muslim *bumiputera*, also known as the intelligentsia, who tried to challenge the authority of traditional strongmen. Initially, the intelligentsia did not organize themselves into a cohesive group that was able to seriously undermine the power of the Malays aristocrats. The intelligentsia would use various platforms to openly criticize the traditional strongmen, leading to the further weakening of the strongmen’s influence. One of the first intelligentsia who publicly criticized the Malay aristocrats was Rakawi Yusuf, a custom officer and a prolific writer. Although Rakawi’s education background is not known, it is widely believed that he had a high level of schooling as evident from his strong command of the Malay language and his ability to write proficiently. In 1930, he formed the Sarawak Printing Press and financed the publication of *Fajar Sarawak*, the first Malay newspaper published in the *negeri*. In its first editorial, *Fajar Sarawak* criticized the Malay Datu “for being complacent and not taking the initiative to overcome the backwardness of their community” (Sanib 1985, p. 28). Through *Fajar Sarawak*, the intelligentsia could openly voice their dissatisfaction towards the Malay aristocrats and subsequently raised the awareness of the public on the matter. Other intelligentsia would challenge the authority of the

Malay aristocrats in their own individual capacity. Abdul Kadir Hassan, for example, used his platform as a religious teacher attached to the Sarawak Islamic Council to challenge the Malay aristocrats who in retaliation criticized Kadir for exploiting his position for political purposes (Sanib 1985, p. 89). When Sarawak was ceded to the British colonial government, it aggravated the rivalry between traditional strongmen who mostly supported the cession and the intelligentsia who opposed it.

The rivalry between the traditional strongmen and the intelligentsia continued to prevail when the idea of Malaysia was mooted by the then Prime Minister of Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman. This led to the formation of two Muslim *bumiputera*-dominated parties, Parti Negara Sarawak (PANAS) and BARJASA. PANAS was founded by a Malay aristocrat from Kuching, Datu Bandar Abang Mustapha, who was a strong supporter of Sarawak's cession to the British. The party was established in response to the formation of SUPP, a Chinese-dominated party, in 1959. Datu Bandar and other Malay leaders felt apprehensive towards SUPP because it could lead to the Chinese's domination of Sarawak's economy and politics. On 7 December 1959, the Datu Bandar called all members of the Council Negeri who had not joined SUPP to a meeting at his residence (Leigh 1974, p. 26). This meeting subsequently led to the formation of PANAS which was officially registered on 9 April 1960, ten months after the formation of Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP). Initially, the new party had a fairly balanced representation of Malays who were mostly pro-cession, some wealthy Chinese and a number of Dayaks but it was gradually dominated by the Malays especially from the First Division. Despite PANAS's attempt to draw support beyond the First Division, the party failed to do this because it was perceived as a Malay aristocrat and a pro-cessionist party (Leigh 1974, p. 30). These two perceptions became the stumbling blocks for the anti-cessionists and the intelligentsia to join PANAS. As a result, an alternative Muslim *bumiputera*-dominated party known as BARJASA was formed in the late 1961. In contrast to PANAS, BARJASA was established exclusively for the *bumiputera* but it gradually became dominated by the Muslim *bumiputera* (Leigh 1974, p. 31). If PANAS was spearheaded by the Malay aristocrats, BARJASA was masterminded by the intelligentsia with Abdul Rahman Yakub, Abdul Taib Mahmud and Abang Han Abang Ahmad playing the leading roles. Prior to the formation of BARJASA, the intelligentsia did not have a platform to organize themselves into a formidable force that could seriously challenge the authority of the Malay aristocrats. This new political party provided a common platform for the intelligentsia to galvanize the support of the masses who were equally dissatisfied with the leadership of the Malay aristocrats. The contestation posed by the intelligentsia

through BARJASA severely dented the image of the Malay aristocrats as the paramount leaders of the Muslim *bumiputera*.

The fragmentation of the Muslim *bumiputera* drove PANAS to the opposition bench while BARJASA became a weak partner in the Sarawak Alliance. As a result, the two Muslim *bumiputera*-dominated parties performed miserably in the 1963 election which was held to form Sarawak's first elected government. Within the Alliance, SNAP and Parti Pesaka Anak Sarawak (PESAKA), both Dayak parties, managed to secure a significant number of seats in the Council Negeri compared to BARJASA and Sarawak Chinese Association (SCA) (see Table 3.1). Hence, Dayak leaders were in a better position to dominate the first Sarawak elected government, much to the disappointment of central state leaders.

Despite SNAP and PESAKA's overwhelming victory, Tunku proposed a Muslim Melanau leader, Abdul Rahman Yakub, from BARJASA to helm Sarawak government. The proposal was duly rejected by the Sarawak Alliance who felt that Dayak leaders ought to be appointed Sarawak's Governor and Chief Minister, given their dominant position in the Council Negeri. Hence, the Sarawak Alliance proposed Stephen Kalong Ningkan of SNAP as the Chief Minister, while Temenggung Jugah of PESAKA was nominated for the Governor's post. Tunku opposed this arrangement because he believed that if a Dayak was to be the Chief Minister, a Malay should be the Governor. The deadlock was resolved just two days before the inauguration of Malaysia with a distinguished Malay aristocrat, Abang Haji Openg Abang Sapiee, being appointed Governor while Ningkan was appointed Sarawak's first Chief Minister. To accommodate Temenggung Jugah, the central state made him the Federal Minister of Sarawak Affairs, a post specifically created for him.

The appointment of Ningkan as Sarawak's first Chief Minister marked the beginning of a new era in Sarawak which had long been dominated by Malay strongmen. Despite assuming the most powerful Chief Minister's seat in the Federation (together with Sabah), Ningkan failed to dominate Sarawak politics particularly due to his inability to forge a cordial relation with the central state. The Chief Minister ticked off the central state leaders because of his persistence in pursuing Sarawak interest at the expense of national interest (Leigh 1974, pp. 99–104). Another reason for Ningkan's downfall was his failure to exert control over his fellow cabinet ministers and the Sarawak Alliance which led to a serious crisis within the ruling party. These developments subsequently led to Ningkan's ouster in September 1966 after the central state declared a state of emergency in Sarawak. Replacing Ningkan was another Iban leader, Tawi Sli, from PESAKA which became the largest component party within the Sarawak Alliance after the departure

TABLE 3.1
Party Representation at Each Level of Government, 1963
(In percentages)

Level of Government	SUPP	PANAS	BARJASA	SNAP	PESAKA	SCA	Independent
Member of Parliament	12.5	12.5	20.8	16.7	25.0	12.5	0.0
Council Negeri	12.8	12.8	15.4	17.9	28.2	7.7	5.2
Divisional Advisory Council	23.0	13.0	13.0	23.0	16.0	1.0	11.0
District Council — July	28.7	14.7	17.1	17.1	14.3	1.2	7.0
District Council — June	27.0	13.8	10.3	11.2	10.0	0.7	27.0
Votes cast (April–June)	21.4	14.3		34.2			30.2

Source: Leigh (1974, p. 78).

of SNAP. Despite helming the *negeri* government for almost a decade, Ningkan and Sli could not dominate Sarawak politics because they did not have the resources and social status to establish themselves as powerful men.⁷ With these limitations, the Dayak leaders would not be able to form a network of clients which was important to sustain their political survival. After failing to establish its presence via the Iban leaders, the central state entrusted a Muslim Melanau intelligentsia, Abdul Rahman Yakub, to be its representative.

Compared to the Iban leaders, Rahman Yakub and other Muslim *bumiputera* intelligentsia had already established themselves as respected leaders of their community after displacing the Malay aristocrats as the new force of Sarawak politics. Furthermore, with a strong education background, the intelligentsia had the capabilities to lead Sarawak into the uncharted water of modern politics and open economy which the Iban leaders failed to grapple. After his appointment as Sarawak's third Chief Minister, Rahman gradually transformed himself into a new force in Sarawak's society, known as strongman-politician. The juncture between the central state and the intelligentsia which led to the resurgence of Muslim *bumiputera* political dominance will be discussed further in the following section.

THE CO-OPTATION OF ABDUL RAHMAN YAKUB

Abdul Rahman Yakub was born in Kampung Kuala, Bintulu to an impoverished Muslim Melanau family on 3 January 1928 (Aeria 2002, p. 133). Conscious of the importance of education, Rahman's family left Bintulu and headed for Miri in the hope of getting access to better education. Unfortunately, due to financial problems, Rahman had to leave school in 1947 and worked as an oil tester with Shell in Lutong, earning RM2 daily. Not satisfied with his meagre income, Rahman headed to Kuching to take up a mandore position at Sarawak General Hospital. Rahman thought his new job would require him to supervise other workers; instead he had to sweep the floor and help patients. This unexpected turn of events forced Rahman to leave the hospital after working just for one day (*Sarawak Tribune*, 19 July 1970).

Rahman's search for a better life finally ended when he was subsequently appointed Student Native Officer. Although he succeeded in securing this promising job, he was eager to further his studies. Soon after being appointed Student Native Officer, Rahman was sent to Madrasah Melayu Kuching as a Form Three grader. With his rapid promotion in school, Rahman was sent to Miri as a Probationary Native Officer and a Fourth Class Magistrate in 1948. He stayed in Miri until 1952, mostly doing court work. A year later,

Rahman sat for the Senior Cambridge examination and passed with a Grade Two Certificate (*Sarawak Tribune*, 19 July 1970). By the time Rahman turned twenty-six (in 1954), he was accepted to read law at the University of Southampton. Five years later, Rahman was called to the Bar and later appointed Cadet Legal Officer.

When PANAS and BARJASA were formed, Rahman had a hand in the formation of both parties, which constitutions he helped to draft. The young Rahman, however, decided to join BARJASA which staunchly opposed the leadership of Malay aristocrats in PANAS. In the 1963 election, Rahman contested as a BARJASA candidate but lost miserably, along with other prominent intelligentsia such as Ustaz Abdul Kadir Hassan and Suut Haji Tahir (Sanib 1985, p. 102). Rahman's defeat and his party's dismal performance in the election prevented the young intelligentsia from taking an active role in Sarawak's first elected government. However, the central state saw the importance of the intelligentsia, particularly Rahman, in maintaining the state's presence in Sarawak. Hence, the central state nominated him as Sarawak's first Chief Minister which was duly rejected by the Sarawak Alliance. Undeterred, the central state co-opted Rahman into the central government after he was elected by the Council Negeri to be a member of parliament in October 1963 (*Sarawak Tribune*, 19 July 1970). Subsequently, he was appointed Assistant Federal Minister of National and Rural Development (for Sarawak). The appointment was not meant to be permanent because the central state believed that Rahman could play a more effective role as its representative in Sarawak compared to the less educated Iban leaders. But as long as the fragmentation of the Muslim *bumiputera* in Sarawak continued, it would be impossible for the central state to orchestrate Rahman's return to the *negeri* as its new Chief Minister.

Realizing the importance of political unity, leaders from PANAS and BARJASA initiated a merger plan which started several months after the 1963 election. Based on their initial plan, both parties were willing to be dissolved in order to allow the formation of Sarawak United Malays National Organization (UMNO). However, the national Malay party unexpectedly rejected the proposal because it was not ready to allow non-Malay members of PANAS and BARJASA to join the party. As an alternative, the central state leaders urged the two parties to merge into a single new party. After a series of negotiations, PANAS and BARJASA were finally dissolved on 19 December 1966 to make way for a new party, Bumiputera. The following day, representatives from both parties elected Abang Ikhwan Zaini as president, Tuanku Haji Bujang as vice-president and Taib Mahmud as secretary-general. According to Sanib (1985, p. 120),

The formation of Parti Bumiputera was gratefully accepted by the Malays of Sarawak. Except for a few prominent dissenters, especially some of the former members of PANAS, the new party was supported by both the aristocrats and the young intelligentsia, the latter holding the more important posts in it. It may be justifiably said that at last the young intelligentsia had triumphed. But basically the formation of Parti Bumiputera was a final reconciliation between the two groups and it opened the way for a new era of Malay politics in Sarawak.

Gradually, the Bumiputera party led by the Muslim *bumiputera* intelligentsia enhanced its strength by exercising a leading role within the Alliance. In the Sarawak cabinet led by Chief Minister Tawi Sli, a Muslim Melanau intelligentsia from the Bumiputera party, Taib Mahmud, dominated most of the decision-making. The role played by Taib in Tawi Sli's cabinet further enhanced the Bumiputera party's position within the Alliance, thus demonstrating the intelligentsia's prowess to dominate Sarawak. Meanwhile, in Kuala Lumpur, Tunku who was impressed with Rahman's performance as Assistant Federal Minister promoted him to a full Minister in 1965 with the portfolio of Lands and Mines. The promotion further enhanced Rahman's image among the central state leaders and also his colleagues in the Sarawak Alliance.

The formation of the Bumiputera party and its increasing influence within the Alliance marked the beginning of the Muslim *bumiputera's* political ascendancy. At the forefront of this ascendancy were the Muslim Melanau intelligentsia with Rahman and Taib playing the leading roles at the central and *negeri* level respectively. In 1969, Rahman was given a much more significant and influential portfolio, Education, by the central state. This was his last appointment at the central government before leaving for Sarawak to take up the Chief Minister's post in 1970.

With Sarawak's first direct election set to be held in May 1969, the central state saw this exercise as a perfect opportunity to wrest control of the *negeri*. In the election, polling in eight (out of forty-eight) *negeri* and seven (out of twenty-four) parliamentary constituencies in Sarawak had been completed but polling in the rest of the constituencies had to be called off due to the declaration of emergency on 13 May. When the election was allowed to resume more than a year later, polling in all constituencies had to start afresh but no new nominations were allowed except when the candidate had died or disqualified.⁸ Open campaigning was also banned but the candidates were allowed to distribute posters featuring their pictures and political symbols. These restrictions obviously benefited the Sarawak Alliance leaders who were able to campaign freely under the pretext of carrying out

official government duties (Chin 1997, p. 118). In the 1970 election, the Sarawak Alliance comprising of the Bumiputera party and SCA along with PESAKA failed to secure enough seats in the Council Negeri to form the government.⁹ The Alliance only managed to win twenty-three out of forty-eight Council Negeri seats with the Bumiputera party securing twelve seats, followed by PESAKA with eight and SCA three. In the opposite camp, SNAP and SUPP both managed to win twelve seats respectively, making them equally strong as the Bumiputera party in terms of seat representation. With the consolidation of the Muslim *bumiputera* leaders, majority of the Malay and Melanau electorate threw their support behind the party. Although the Bumiputera party tasted victory in nine out of ten Muslim *bumiputera* seats, it failed to drum up support in the Dayak seats which were dominated by SNAP. Based on the election results, the voting pattern among the electorate was largely influenced by ethnic factor, with the Malays and Melanau mostly supporting the Bumiputera party, the Dayak electorate inclined to support SNAP and PESAKA, while the Chinese electorate was pro-SUPP (Leigh 1974, pp. 138–41).

Since none of the party managed to secure enough seats to form the government, there was intense lobbying among the political parties to form a coalition government. Another thorny issue was the choice of Chief Minister which became a matter of contention between the Bumiputera party and the rest of the parties. Within the Alliance, Rahman refused to be subservient to PESAKA especially when his party managed to secure twelve seats compared to PESAKA with only eight. Refusing to accept Rahman Yakub as the new Chief Minister, PESAKA negotiated a coalition with SUPP and SNAP (Ross-Larson 1976, p. 119). Negotiations covered a broad range of options that even included the dissolution of SNAP and PESAKA in order to form a new Dayak-based party. However, this grand coalition failed to materialize because without the knowledge of SNAP and PESAKA leaders, SUPP was quietly negotiating with the Bumiputera party to form a separate coalition. Through the central state's intervention, the Alliance co-opted SUPP with an arrangement that enabled Rahman Yakub to be appointed Sarawak's third Chief Minister.¹⁰ As part of the deal to form the new coalition government, SUPP demanded the exclusion of SCA from the Alliance and its subsequent dissolution. Realizing the importance of Dayak participation in the new government, Rahman worked a plan to lure Penghulu Abok from PESAKA by offering him a cabinet post. Joining Penghulu Abok a day later was another PESAKA leader Simon Dembab Maja. The latter was enticed to join the Alliance by being offered the Deputy Chief Minister's post (Leigh 1974, pp. 142–44). Soon after, the president of PESAKA, Temenggung Jugah, also

declared his party's support for the coalition government, leaving SNAP as the sole opposition party in Sarawak.

The parliamentary election proved to be a highly contested affair with the national Alliance managed to secure only 91 out of 144 Dewan Rakyat seats which represented less than a two-thirds majority. Out of the ninety-one parliamentary seats won by the Alliance, sixty-six seats were from the Peninsula, sixteen from Sabah and nine from Sarawak. With the co-optation of SUPP, the party's five parliamentary seats enabled the Alliance to increase its presence in the Dewan Rakyat to ninety-six seats, thus securing a two-thirds majority in Parliament. A total of fourteen seats from the Sarawak Alliance (Bumiputera, PESAKA, SCA, SUPP) was instrumental in helping the national Alliance to achieve a two-thirds majority in Parliament, enabling the ruling coalition to form a strong government at the central level. The 1970 parliamentary election clearly demonstrated the important role of the Sarawak Alliance in preserving the coalition's dominance in Kuala Lumpur.

The post-1970 election was considered momentous because it shifted the balance of power in Sarawak from the non-Muslim *bumiputera* to Muslim *bumiputera* leaders. The major change in Sarawak politics was made possible by the central state's intervention which was aimed at installing a Muslim Melanau intelligentsia, Rahman Yakub, as the central state's representative in the *negeri*. Rahman formally became Sarawak's third Chief Minister on 7 July 1970, replacing Tawi Sli from PESAKA. With the appointment of a Muslim Melanau leader as the new Chief Minister, the consensus reached prior to the formation of Malaysia was broken. At that time, Sarawak leaders collectively agreed to appoint a non-Muslim *bumiputera* as the Chief Minister while a Muslim *bumiputera* would be appointed the Governor. This consensus, however, was not included in the Inter-Governmental Committee Report therefore it lacked any binding power (Atung 1991). As a result, the Governor and the Chief Minister posts have been dominated by the Muslim *bumiputera* for more than three decades since 1970. The central state's co-optation of the intelligentsia was not motivated merely by ethnic factor but, most importantly, it was part of a strategy to dominate Sarawak through an influential and powerful medium, the intelligentsia. By holding the highest political office in Sarawak, Rahman transformed himself from an influential intelligentsia into a formidable strongman-politician, allowing him to play the role of central state's representative and also local strongman. The co-optation of Rahman subsequently generated changes in Sarawak's society, especially the Muslim *bumiputera*. This point will be discussed thoroughly in the following part of this chapter.

THE POLITICAL PACT

Upon Rahman Yakub's return to Sarawak, he gradually established himself as arguably the most powerful Chief Minister who introduced sweeping changes not only within the ruling party but also among Sarawak's multi-ethnic society. Unlike his two predecessors, Rahman's leadership was fully endorsed by the central state, thus enabling him to remain in power for more than a decade. This endorsement, however, was not guaranteed because it was based on Rahman's capability to perform the role of central state's representative. Although there is no written agreement stipulating the role of the central state's representative, the political crisis that engulfed Sarawak during the Ibans' administration indirectly spelled out the central state's core demands towards the Chief Minister. Among these demands were (1) to safeguard national interest, (2) to maintain Malay political dominance, (3) to ensure the BN's continued dominance in the *negeri* and parliamentary elections, (4) to transfer the rights to extract the *negeri*'s natural resources to the central state, and (5) to provide political stability. Throughout his term as Sarawak's Chief Minister, Rahman religiously fulfilled all these demands which indirectly brought a wind of change within the populace especially the Muslim *bumiputera*.

Safeguarding National Interest

The central state's foremost important demand was for Rahman Yakub to safeguard its interest in Sarawak. The Ningkan episode sent a strong message to Sarawak leaders including Rahman that the *negeri* leadership should not be overly championing Sarawak's interests at the expense of national interest. This was the most important lesson that Rahman hoped to religiously adhere to if he expected to receive support from the central state. So the first thing Rahman did after becoming the Chief Minister was to make clear his government's policy in relation to the central state. Several weeks after his instalment as the Chief Minister, Rahman declared that he denounced the slogan "Sarawak for Sarawakians" and would adopt a new slogan, "Malaysia for Malaysians" (*Sarawak Tribune*, 11 August 1970). According to Rahman, regional politics was not only divisive but it could also become detrimental to national solidarity. He further argued that Sarawakians should accept the central state's presence and policies because "Sarawak received a lot of money from the federal (central) government, (and) without their assistance we could never hope to progress so quickly" (*Sarawak Tribune*, 18 February 1971).

Apart from declaring his commitment to safeguard national interest, Rahman also introduced several policy changes aimed at accelerating the central state's Malaysianization process. First, the strongman-politician introduced a motion in the Council Negeri to make Bahasa Malaysia along with English as the *negeri's* official languages. The motion was unanimously passed on 26 March 1974 (*Vanguard*, 27 March 1974). Although the Inter-Governmental Committee Report 1963 stated that English would be Sarawak's official language for a period of ten years after the formation of Malaysia, the central state had initiated effort to make Bahasa Malaysia the *negeri's* official language just a few years after Malaysia's inauguration. This prompted fierce criticism from Ningkan. After Ningkan's ouster, English remained as Sarawak's official language until the time when Rahman propelled the national language as Sarawak's official language along with English.

Second, the strongman-politician implemented the national education policy in Sarawak which was crucial to the process of Malaysianization in the *negeri*. At the heart of this education policy was the assertion of Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction in schools across Sarawak. This policy was first implemented in Sekolah Datuk Abdul Rahman which had 100 per cent *bumiputera* students in 1970. Gradually, the national education policy was implemented to all schools in Sarawak, replacing English as the medium of instruction. By 1976, a total of 258 primary schools involving 36,267 students adopted Bahasa Malaysia as their medium of instruction (Syed and Santhiram 1990, p. 219). With the implementation of the national education policy in Sarawak, Rahman was able to show the central state leaders that he was committed in upholding their aspiration to create a united Malaysian identity.

In contrast to his two predecessors, Rahman successfully formed a cordial relation with the central state leaders by projecting a pro-central state image through his commitment to uphold national interest in Sarawak. As a result, the central state threw its support behind Rahman, thus allowing the strongman-politician to remain in power for more than a decade. However, Rahman did not give in to the central state's needs or demand in totality. Occasionally, the strongman-politician would criticize central state leaders (except the Prime Minister) and engaged in a few series of disputes with the central state over certain issues. In the early 1970s, for example, Rahman threatened to institute legal proceedings against the central government over its attempt to wrest control of Sarawak's continental shelf. Another example of Rahman's temperamental attitude towards the central state was exposed prior to the 1974 election. Feeling disappointed with the central government lack of support towards the Sarawak Alliance in facing the election, Rahman

threatened to step down. Two years later, Rahman was again involved in a row with the central state over the unsatisfactory treatment of Sarawak government agencies “in a number of matters” (*Vanguard*, 1 June 1976). Despite Rahman’s occasional outburst towards central state leaders, the relationship between the strongman-politician and the central state remained strong especially during Prime Minister Razak’s leadership.

Maintaining Malay Political Dominance

As a Malay-dominated government, the central state has an agenda of extending Malay political dominance to Sarawak. When the Muslim *bumiputera* was divided, the central state could not persuade the Sarawak Alliance to accept a Muslim *bumiputera* Chief Minister thus halting the central state’s Malay agenda. With Rahman Yakub’s appointment as Sarawak Chief Minister, the strongman-politician would be able to realize the central state’s agenda of extending Malay political dominance. Although Rahman Yakub is a Muslim Melanau, the central state leaders perceived him as a Malay mainly because he is a Muslim. In fact, Rahman Yakub is constitutionally a Malay since he embraces Islam, practises Malay culture and speaks the Malay language. In this context, the central state would accommodate any Muslim *bumiputera* in Sarawak to act as its Malay “agent” although he is not a “pure” Malay. Since Rahman Yakub was highly educated and proven to be a capable leader compared to other Sarawak leaders, he was considered the most appropriate candidate to helm the *negeri*.

In order to amplify Malay political dominance in Sarawak, Rahman appointed Muslim *bumiputera* officers to important positions within the government. In the *negeri* bureaucracy, the strongman-politician appointed his closest and most capable adviser, Abang Yusuf Puteh, as the new State Secretary, replacing Gerusin Lembat who was the first non-European Sarawak State Secretary. Besides Yusuf Puteh, Rahman appointed several other Malay and Muslim Melanau officers to other key positions in the bureaucracy; Bujang Mohamed Nor was appointed as the Financial Secretary, Safri Awang Zaidell as the Secretary of the Community Service Council, Hamdan bin Sirat as Sarawak Commissioner of Police, Mohammed Salleh Askor as the Director of Information, Mohammed Diah bin Haji Nordin as the Director of Education, Wan Habib bin Syed Mahmud as the Chairman of the Sarawak Land Development Board, Mohd Hanis bin Mahlie as the Chairman of the Housing and Development Commission, and Mohd Amin bin Haji Satem as the Chairman of the Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (Searle 1983, p. 136).

To further convince the central state that he would uphold Malay dominance, Rahman Yakub took three major steps to uplift the position of Islam in Sarawak. First, Rahman was responsible for inserting a provision on Islam, known as Article 4(1) and (2), in the *negeri* constitution which states that “The Yang Dipertuan Agong shall be the Head of the religion of Islam in Sarawak” and “the Council Negeri is empowered to make provisions for regulating the Islamic religious affairs through a Council to advise the Yang Dipertuan Agong”. Although the 1976 provision does not declare Islam as Sarawak’s official religion, it empowers the Council Negeri to pass ordinance regarding Islamic affairs. With this legislative power, Rahman could introduce policies or establish state agencies which would protect the sanctity of Islam in the *negeri*. Second, Rahman helped to establish a state-sponsored Islamic NGO known as Angkatan Nahdatul Islam Bersatu (BINA), an offshoot of Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia (PERKIM), which was registered on 3 April 1969. The formation of BINA (later renamed to Harakah Islamiah or HIKMAH in 1994) served as a platform to raise Rahman Yakub’s image as a Muslim leader in the eyes of the central state leaders and the Muslim community in Sarawak. Through this youth organization, Rahman held various Islamic activities without going through the state’s agencies. One of the main objectives of BINA is to propagate Islam among the people of Sarawak. Thus, during Rahman’s tenure as the Chief Minister, BINA was actively involved in the conversion of thousands of natives and Chinese — sensationally publicized on the front page of the local newspapers. Between 1973 and 1980, at least 2,236 cases of conversions were reported in the local dailies (see Table 3.2). These mass conversions were attended by Rahman Yakub himself or other Muslim ministers. Usually held at the Chief Minister’s residence, the conversion ceremonies were aimed at amplifying Rahman Yakub’s image as a Muslim leader. Although no official data is available on the total number of conversions during Rahman’s period as Sarawak Chief Minister, the number is believed to be less than the number of conversions during Tun Mustapha period as Sabah Chief Minister (1967–75) who was reportedly responsible for the conversion of no less than 95,000 Sabahans (Gabriel 1996, p. 6). Although some of the cases of conversions might be genuine, others converted in order to gain access to political office, employment, government contracts and other perks from the government (Gabriel 1993, p. 6). For example, after witnessing a conversion ceremony involving a group of Ibans from Kuching, Rahman disclosed that a forty-door longhouse costing RM150,000 would be built by BINA for the new converts (*Sarawak Tribune*, 11 May 1980).

Third, Rahman amplified his image as a Malay leader by establishing syariah courts in Sarawak. In December 1978, the Majlis Islam (Incorporation)

TABLE 3.2
Reported Mass Conversions during Rahman Yakub's Administration

Title	Commentary	Date
1. "Two embrace Islam"	not available.	24/8/1973
2. "151 Ibans embrace Islam"	The converts were the 15th group of Ibans from the Simunjan district to become Muslims. More than 1,000 Ibans from the district have embraced Islam.	9/11/1976
3. "Another 14 convert to Islam"	Twelve of the converts were from Simunjan, while the rest were from Miri.	17/11/1976
4. "99 embrace Islam"	Among the converts, 55 of them were Chinese, 55 Ibans, 9 Melanaus. All of them were from Binatang. The ceremony was attended by the Chief Minister.	25/12/1976
5. "Eight embrace Islam in Limbang"	Witnessed by the Chief Minister, the new converts were comprised of six Bisayas and two Ibans.	31/1/1977
6. "263 embrace Islam"	The ceremony which was held at the Chief Minister's residence saw the conversion of Ibans, Bidayuh and Chinese. The Chief Minister was there to witness the ceremony.	24/3/1977
7. "76 more embrace Islam"	Held at the Chief Minister's residence, the conversion ceremony involved the Iban communities from Kampung Tadak and Kampung Limo in the Simanggang district.	26/3/1977
8. "Another 26 embrace Islam"	The ceremony involved the conversions of Ibans from Nanga Merit, Kapit. The function was held at the Chief Minister's residence.	30/3/1977
9. "Mass conversion ceremony at Istana"	More than 500 Chinese, Ibans and other communities were converted in this ceremony.	29/6/1977
10. "291 convert to Islam"	The ceremony which was held at the Chief Minister's residence saw the conversions of the Ibans, Bidayuh and Chinese communities from Serian, Simunjan and Simanggang.	12/8/1977
11. "500 converted at Sri Rajang, Sibuh"	not available.	13/10/1977
12. "226 convert to Islam"	The conversion involved the Chinese and Iban communities from Binatang.	21/4/1978
13. "Islam as a source of unity among Bidayuhs: CM"	About 80 Ibans from Kuching were converted.	11/5/1980

Source: compiled from various issues of *Vanguard*.

Bill was amended to make way for the establishment of syariah courts. Previously, all matters related to marriage, divorce and divorce claims were handled by the Malay Court which was regulated by the Sarawak Malay Court Law 1915. The 1978 Majlis Islam Bill was empowered to transfer the power of the Malay Court to syariah courts, comprising of the Supreme Syariah Court, the Appeal Court and several Courts of Kadi (*Vanguard*, 6 December 1978). The jurisdiction of the Supreme Syariah Court and the Appeal Court was enforced throughout Sarawak, while the Courts of Kadi were only empowered to oversee cases in Kuching, Sibul and Miri. The Syariah Courts in Sarawak were given the jurisdiction to oversee betrothal, matrimonial, custody of children, inheritance and criminal cases punishable under the ordinance and the Sarawak Malay Court. However, any disputes over the ownership of customary land rights would still be handled by the Malay Court. Although Rahman initiated the move to introduce syariah courts in Sarawak in 1978, the Majlis Islam (Amendment) Act was only enforced on 1 January 1983.

Under the leadership of Rahman Yakub, Islam featured more prominently in the Sarawak constitution and also government policies. This process of Islamization, however, is not being aggressively pursued by the strongman-politician because he took a moderate approach in extending Islamic influence in Sarawak. To Rahman, the Islamization process was not only meant to fulfill his responsibility as a Muslim leader but most importantly to attain the central state's endorsement of his leadership and to unite the Muslim *bumiputera* community in the *negeri*.

Ensuring the BN's Continued Dominance in the Elections

As a strong ruling party, the national Alliance leaders expected Rahman Yakub to dominate the Council Negeri and parliamentary elections in Sarawak. By performing well in the elections, the Sarawak Alliance would be able to maintain the ruling party's dominance at the *negeri* level and most importantly central level. The 1974 election was Rahman Yakub's first acid test as a strongman-politician. Although he had the support of the central state leaders, this support would be meaningless if he could not lead the Sarawak Alliance to victory in the election. Prior to the 1974 election, the old national Alliance that comprised of UMNO, Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) was replaced with a larger coalition which included Parti Gerakan Malaysia (Gerakan), Parti Islam Se Malaysia (PAS), People's Progressive Party (PPP), SCA, SUPP and Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB). The new coalition was subsequently

named the Barisan Nasional or the National Front. In Sarawak, the most significant development that took place prior to the election was the merger of the Bumiputera party and PESAKA into a single party known as PBB on 5 January 1973. Apart from the formation of PBB, another significant change in Sarawak was the dissolution of SCA. The Chinese party had to be dissolved in order to honour the pact that had been agreed between the Alliance and SUPP for the latter's entry into the ruling coalition. Hence, in the 1974 election, the Sarawak Barisan Nasional (SBN) was represented by only two parties, PBB and SUPP, while the opposition comprised of SNAP and a host of Independent candidates. Although the SBN managed to win thirty out of forty-eight Council Negeri seats (PBB eighteen and SUPP twelve), its victory was slightly overshadowed by SNAP's strong showing in the Dayak seats; winning eighteen seats as compared to only twelve in 1970. The Pesaka wing of PBB was the biggest casualty in the election when it lost thirteen out of seventeen seats that the wing contested. Among the prominent Pesaka leaders who lost in the election were Leonard Linggi Jugah, son of the party's co-founder, and Thomas Kana, the party's co-founder. In the Muslim *bumiputera* seats, PBB did not only win all the seats but it also significantly increased its popular vote from 47.3 per cent in 1970 to 70.3 per cent in 1974 (see Table 3.3). The other SBN's component party, SUPP, fared reasonably well by securing twelve out of the fourteen seats it contested. However, the Chinese dominant party's biggest drawback was the defeat of its Secretary General, Stephen Yong, who was also Sarawak's Deputy Chief Minister.

In the parliamentary election, the SBN won fifteen out of twenty-four seats (PBB nine and SUPP six) while the rest of the seats won by SNAP (see Table 3.4). By securing more than half of the parliamentary seats, the SBN was able to significantly increase the national BN's representation in

TABLE 3.3
The SBN's Performance in the *Negeri* Elections, 1970–79

	1970	1974	1979
Number of seats won by the SBN	23 (48)	30 (48)	45 (48)
Percentage of votes received by the SBN	39	55	61.23
Number of seats won by the SBN in the			
Muslim <i>bumiputera</i> seats	11 {11}	11 {11}	12 {12}
Percentage of votes received by the SBN in the			
Muslim <i>bumiputera</i> seats	47.3	70.3	77.23

Notes:

1. Figures in () represent the total number of Council Negeri seats in Sarawak.
2. Figures in { } represent the total number of Muslim *bumiputera* seats in Sarawak

TABLE 3.4
The SBN's Performance in the Parliamentary Elections, 1970–78

	1970	1974	1978
Number of seats won by the SBN	9 (24)	15 (24)	23 (24)
Percentage of votes received by the SBN	34.6	55.25	63.03
Number of seats won by the SBN in the Muslim <i>bumiputera</i> seats	5 {5}	5 {5}	5 {5}
Percentage of votes received by the SBN in the Muslim <i>bumiputera</i> seats	48.0	68.21	68.38

Notes:

1. Figures in () represent the total number of parliamentary seats in Sarawak.
2. Figures in { } represent the total number of Muslim *bumiputera* seats in Sarawak.

Parliament to 135 seats (out of 154 seats), thus allowing it to form a strong central government. The ability of Rahman-led coalition parties to secure fifteen parliamentary seats was crucial in ensuring the central state's continued support towards the strongman-politician. Although the national BN would expect Rahman to deliver a lot more parliamentary seats from Sarawak, the fifteen seats were enough to convince the central state leaders that the support towards the SBN remained strong.

Rahman realized that the dominant position of the SBN could be threatened by SNAP especially after the party's strong showing in the 1974 election. In overcoming SNAP's potential threat, Rahman co-opted the party by supporting its application to join the ruling coalition. With the return of SNAP to the BN's fold on 1 November 1976, the electoral strength of the ruling coalition was further boosted. For the first time, Sarawak was momentarily without any opposition party. However, Rahman Yakub's leadership was not void of criticism and contestation which came from the SBN component parties and also from the opposition. Within the SBN, Rahman's relations with SUPP became intensely strained especially after the 1974 election. This led to an attempt by the Chinese-dominated party to get rid of the Chief Minister via the central state's pressure (Chin 1997, p. 151). With the intervention of Hussein Onn, Rahman was able to remain in power while SUPP reluctantly stayed in the SBN. Although SUPP failed to oust Rahman, the relations between the party and the Chief Minister continued to deteriorate further. The contestation against Rahman's leadership did not only come from the Chinese but also from some quarters within the Malay community. The Malay's contestation against Rahman led to the formation of Parti Anak Jati Sarawak (PAJAR) on 28 March 1978. With the formation of PAJAR, the schism within the Muslim *bumiputera* leaders suddenly re-

emerged. The central issues surrounding PAJAR's criticism of Rahman Yakub was his increasing tolerance towards cronyism and his marginalization of the Malay community. These two allegations became the permanent features of the Malay's criticisms towards the Muslim Melanau's leadership in Sarawak.

When Parliament was dissolved in 1978 to make way for Malaysia's third general election, Rahman decided not to dissolve the Council Negeri to make way for simultaneous *negeri* and parliamentary elections. The strongman-politician postponed the *negeri* election because he was not ready to face the wrath of the opposition parties, especially PAJAR. Furthermore, the SBN was facing an internal conflict over the allocation of *negeri* seats especially after the inclusion of SNAP as the third member of the coalition. So, for the first time, parliamentary and *negeri* elections in Sarawak were held separately. In the 1978 parliamentary election, the SBN recorded a thumping victory by sweeping almost all twenty-four seats (SNAP nine, PBB eight and SUPP six) except for one seat which was won by SAPO. Apart from Sarawak People's Party (SAPO), other opposition parties lacked the tenacity to put up a strong fight against the ruling party. Still, PAJAR performed relatively well when the party managed to poll 13.66 per cent of the popular vote. The party which was formed by the former Sarawak Deputy Police Commissioner, Alli Kawi, contested mostly against PBB candidates; successfully reducing the PBB's popular vote from 31.25 per cent in 1974 to 20.38 per cent in 1978. Overall, the SBN still managed to increase its popular vote from 55.25 per cent in 1974 to 63.03 per cent in 1978 (see Table 3.4).

Feeling confident with the SBN's sterling performance in the just concluded parliamentary election, Rahman dissolved the Council Negeri a year later to make way for Sarawak's third *negeri* election. Prior to the election, several disgruntled SUPP members formed Sarawak Democratic Action Party (DAP) which became the first national party to be established in the *negeri*. It was widely believed that Rahman had a hand in the formation of Sarawak DAP, a party that could rival SUPP (Chin 1997, p. 160). In the 1979 *negeri* election, the SBN continued to dominate by winning forty-five out of forty-eight Council Negeri seats (PBB won eighteen, SNAP sixteen and SUPP eleven); polling 61.23 per cent of the popular vote (see Table 3.3). Another three seats went to the Independent candidates.

Rahman was able to strengthen his grip on power after he successfully co-opted SNAP into the ruling coalition. With the party's return to the SBN's fold, the opposition force in Sarawak during the 1970s was finally weakened. Although, several other opposition parties were established, they were not able to replicate SNAP's popularity among the electorate. Another reason behind Rahman's ability to increase the SBN's dominance in Sarawak for

more than a decade was the merger of the Bumiputera party and PESAKA, which led to the formation of PBB in 1973. Through the formation of PBB, the Muslim *bumiputera* leaders were able to assert its control not only among then Muslim *bumiputera* but also among the non-Muslim *bumiputera*.

Granting the Right to Extract Sarawak's Natural Resources

Sarawak is one of the three *negeris* in Malaysia that are blessed with rich petroleum and gas reserves. With the high economic values of these natural resources, the central state expects to have control over them at the expense of the producing *negeris*. To gain control over Sarawak's petroleum and gas reserves, the central state leaders held discussions with the *negeri* leaders concerning the rights to the continental shelf in Sarawak in the early 1970s (*Sarawak Tribune*, 3 April 1987). During that period, Rahman's nephew, Abdul Taib Mahmud, was the Federal Minister of Primary Industries who was responsible in overseeing the mining industry, in particular petroleum and gas. Through Taib, the central state persuaded Rahman to hand over the rights of Sarawak's continental shelf to the central government, depriving Sarawak from getting a 10 per cent royalty from the oil-producing company. In order to strike a deal with the Sarawak government, Taib send his loyal aide, Adenan Satem, to discuss with Rahman who was not in favour of the proposal. Despite Rahman's disapproval, Taib introduced the Hydro-Carbon Bill which had the effect of taking away Sarawak's rights to oil, gas and other minerals found in Sarawak's continental shelf. Feeling shocked over the tabling of the bill, Rahman instructed the *negeri's* Attorney General to send a protest letter to the central government stating Sarawak's plan to institute legal proceeding to protect its rights. Rahman's refusal to accept the terms of the Hydro-Carbon Bill was mainly due to his disagreement over the central state's total control of the *negeri's* oil and gas reserves, depriving Sarawak of the 10 per cent royalty. Apart from that, Rahman was not happy with the way Taib dictated the terms of the bill and the way he negotiated the terms with the *negeri* government. The Sarawak's government protest over the Hydro-Carbon Bill subsequently led to the withdrawal of the bill, much to the disappointment of the central state leaders (*Sarawak Tribune*, 3 April 1987).

After the central state's initial attempt to transfer the rights of the continental shelf in Sarawak was blocked by Rahman, Prime Minister Abdul Razak appointed a new team led by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah to discuss new terms with Rahman. The strongman-politician finally agreed to accept the new terms which preserved the *negeri's* rights to its oil and gas by allowing Sarawak

to receive a five percent royalty. Although the *negeri* government received a much smaller percentage of oil and gas royalties, it was better than giving up total control of the mineral resources to the central government. Subsequently, the Parliament passed the Petroleum Development Act in 1974, allowing the state owned company, PETRONAS, to have ownership over petroleum and gas reserves in Sarawak. As prescribed by the Act, the revenue from petroleum and gas will be divided accordingly to the government of the producing-*negeri* (5 per cent), central government (5 per cent), producer-company (41 per cent) and PETRONAS (49 per cent) (Wee 1995, pp. 24–25). The Sarawak government's support of the Petroleum Development Act demonstrated Rahman's willingness to compromise his earlier stand of protecting Sarawak's interests. In the end, the strongman-politician gave his support to the central state's move of transferring Sarawak's rights over its oil and gas within the continental shelf. The central state also compromised by giving 5 per cent royalty to the *negeri* government.

As a result of the enactment of the Petroleum Development Act, Sarawak suffered cumulative net losses of revenue to the central government. Initially, Sarawak received surplus net transfer from the central government as a proportion of the *negeri's* revenue but this trend somewhat changed beginning from the Third Malaysia Plan (1976–80). Within the said plan, Sarawak suffered a deficit net transfer of RM730 million (see Table 3.5). The net transfers of revenue from Sarawak to the central government was due to the latter's control and administration of petroleum resources in the *negeri*, for which it has collected royalties, dividends and taxes (Wee 1995, p. 44).

TABLE 3.5
Net Transfer of Government Revenue from the Central Government,
1964–80 (RM million)

	1964–1965	1966–1970	1971–1975	1976–1980
Central state allocations	72	240	225	300
Central state expenditure	209	614	1,190	1,815
Total (a)	281	854	1,415	2,115
Central state revenue	130	441	692	1,906
Petroleum royalty	—	—	109	355
Petroleum dividend	—	—	—	—
Petroleum tax	—	—	—	584
Total (b)	130	441	801	2,845
Net transfer (a–b)	151	413	614	–730

Source: Wee (1995, p. 43).

Besides direct gains from Sarawak, the central government has also acquired indirect benefits in the form of domestic loans from PETRONAS.

Providing Political Stability

Political stability is paramount to the ruling party's continued dominance in Malaysian politics. Furthermore, it is also one of the key factors in ensuring uninterrupted economic growth in the country. However, in the context of Sarawak, political instability could even lead to its secession from the Federation as in the case of Singapore in 1965. Thus, Rahman Yakub was expected to ensure political stability in Sarawak so that the BN's dominance would be maintained and the *negeri's* presence within the Federation would be preserved.

In the 1960s and 1970s, peace and stability in Sarawak was under threat from the communists who had killed twelve Iban border scouts in the Seventh Division on 27 August 1970. Apart from this massacre, the communists also inflicted fear among the people, resulting in the killing of several villagers in the First, Second and Third Divisions. After several years under the threat of communists, Rahman finally succeeded in curtailing the movement with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the government and the Director of Political Commissar of Pasokan Rakyat Kalimantan Utara (PARAKU), Bong Kee Chok, at Sri Aman on 21 October 1973. This historic event demonstrated Rahman's capability of bringing order and stability in Sarawak hence amplifying his prowess as a capable *negeri* leader and also effective central state's representative.

After quelling the communist threat, Rahman's next step in bringing political stability in Sarawak was to strengthen the ruling coalition. In achieving this, Rahman with the help of the central state used his position to dominate a wider Muslim *bumiputera* — non-Muslim *bumiputera* — Chinese coalition. Through the co-optation of Sarawak's formidable opposition parties, SUPP and SNAP, Rahman was able to obliterate the opposition force and subsequently formed a stable coalition government, comprising of Sarawak's major ethnic groups. Although the strongman-politician faced tremendous pressure from SUPP, he was able to keep the coalition intact and most importantly preserve the BN's prowess at the *negeri* and central government. Padoxically, one of the strategies used by the strongman-politician to maintain the coalition was to weaken its component parties. In the case of SNAP, Rahman was responsible for removing the party's senior leader, James Wong, who was also the strongman-politician's staunchest critic by getting him detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA). With Wong out of the picture, it paved the way

for new SNAP leaders namely Dunstan Endawie, Leo Moggie and Daniel Tajem to helm the party. These new SNAP leaders were more receptive of Rahman's leadership, hence amplifying his authority within the ruling coalition. Apart from that, Rahman further weakened SNAP's dominance in the Dayak constituencies by allowing the Pesaka wing from PBB to contest in several Dayak and Orang Ulu constituencies. Rahman's approach in quelling the influence of SUPP was more confrontational as compared to his dealings with SNAP. Disappointed with the SUPP's constant challenge towards his leadership, the strongman-politician refused to appoint its senior leaders into the *negeri* cabinet. Instead Rahman appointed SUPP leaders who were not even endorsed by their party to assume Sarawak cabinet posts. On top of that, the strongman-politician successfully weakened the Chinese-dominated party by allowing DAP to spread its wings in Sarawak, thus quelling SUPP's influence within the Chinese community.

Through his accommodative strategies and divide-and-rule policy, Rahman was able to bring political stability in Sarawak. This subsequently led to Rahman's control over Sarawak politics and its rich natural resources, particularly timber. Despite becoming overwhelmingly powerful, Rahman did not pursue a confrontational approach in dealing with the central state. He was fully aware that the central state's endorsement of his leadership was crucial for him to stay in power.

Strongmen-politicians will continue to play a vital role in Sarawak politics because the penetration of the central state is considered weak. Although several central state agencies have been established in Sarawak, their presence is overshadowed by a stronger presence of the *negeri* agencies. Through its divisional offices, district offices, sub-districts offices and local councils, the *negeri* government is in a stronger position to penetrate Sarawak's scattered population compared to the central state agencies. In 1963, Sarawak had only four ministries, seven divisional offices and twenty-four district offices. In 2006, the strength of the *negeri* bureaucracy was further fortified when the number of *negeri* ministries and departments increased to twelve and twenty-five respectively. Apart from the increased number of ministries and departments, the *negeri* bureaucracy was also reinforced with twenty-one statutory bodies. At the same time, the number of divisional and districts offices were also increased to eleven and twenty-five respectively. In the face of its weak presence in Sarawak, the central state has to rely on strongmen-politicians to sustain the survival of the regime. However, the power of strongmen-politicians is not absolute since the central state, as the ultimate kingmaker, still has the upper hand in deciding their fate. But as long as the strongmen-politicians are capable of playing an effective role as the central

state's representative, the latter would allow the former to helm the *negeri* government with a certain degree of autonomy.

TWO-PRONGED STRATEGIES TO DOMINATE SARAWAK'S SOCIETY

Once Rahman succeeded in obtaining the central state's support, he had to establish his position as the new force in Sarawak politics. Besides weakening the coalition partners within the SBN, Rahman took two very important measures which helped him to become arguably the most powerful strongman-politician during his time. The two measures undertaken by Rahman were transforming PBB into a dominant force in the SBN and establishing a network of clients through timber politics and electoral patronage.

Transforming PBB into a Dominant Force in the SBN

PBB was established through a merger between the Bumiputera party and Pesaka in 1973. The idea to merge the two parties went as far back as in 1968 but at that time Pesaka leaders were not receptive to the idea because they were afraid that the Muslim *bumiputera* leaders would dominate the new party. Furthermore, Pesaka aspired to become the dominant party within Sarawak Alliance, thus the party leaders believed that it could achieve this without resorting to a merger with the Bumiputera party. However, after the 1970 election, Pesaka's dominance within the Alliance was shattered when the party won only eight *negeri* seats compared to Bumiputera and SNAP with twelve seats respectively. With only eight *negeri* seats, Pesaka lost its dominant position within the Alliance, hence the party was not able to nominate its leader to fill the Chief Minister's seat. Despite forming a coalition government with the Bumiputera party and SUPP, Pesaka became a weak partner within the coalition. With its declining influence, Pesaka leaders finally agreed to hold talks over the merger between their party and the Bumiputera party in September 1972. Two months later, both party leaders principally agreed to the terms and conditions of the merger but the final decision to merge was reached at a meeting on 5 January 1973 (*Vanguard*, 22 January 1973). On 30 April 1973, PBB was officially registered as a new political party. The party is divided into two wings, namely the *bumiputera* wing, which comprises of Malay, Melanau, Kedayan, Jatti Mereik and Orang Ulu members, and the Pesaka wing, which comprises of Iban and Bidayuh members. PBB strives to achieve nine objectives as outlined in the party's constitution: (1) to protect and defend Malaysia's independence, sovereignty

and character, (2) to uphold both the federal and the *negeri* constitutions, (3) to protect and defend the principles enshrined in the Federal and *negeri* constitutions, especially on the position, fundamental rights and special privileges of the *bumiputera*, (4) to protect and guarantee the future rights of the *bumiputera*, (5) to develop the *bumiputera*, specifically, and Malaysians, generally, in the educational, economic, social and cultural spheres, (6) to promote and protect the feeling of harmony and solidarity among Malaysians towards creating a strong and united nation, (7) to protect the rule of parliamentary democracy, (8) to support and defend the United Nation's charter, and (9) to take effective steps in eradicating subversive movements which could compromise Malaysia's security (PBB 2006, pp. 3–4).

To strengthen PBB, Rahman whose political views and outlook were strongly influenced by UMNO, looked to the national party for inspiration. The strongman-politician's inclination towards UMNO was so overwhelming that he became an active member of the party (UMNO Datu Keramat branch vice-president and also a central committee member of the party) despite being a PBB member. At the end of 1970, Rahman was even hotly tipped to be one of the candidates to vie for UMNO's vice-presidency (*Sarawak Tribune*, 18 December 1970). With a strong UMNO background, Rahman had a vision of building PBB into a formidable party which resembled the national Malay party. In achieving this goal, Rahman drafted the PBB's constitution by closely adapting UMNO's albeit with a few modifications that suited PBB's regional character. In terms of party structure, PBB has four levels of bureaucracy, namely the General Assembly, the Supreme Council, branches and sub-branches. The PBB's organization closely resembles UMNO's party structure which is divided into four levels, namely, national, *negeri* liaison office, division and branch. At every party levels, PBB established Youth and Women wings which are also part of the UMNO's set-up.

In PBB, the party's General Assembly is held every three years to discuss party policies, review the responsibilities of the Supreme Council and elect party leaders. Initially, the president would preside over the assembly but the party constitution was later amended so that "the party's system of representation at general assemblies in line with the system used by UMNO" (*Vanguard*, 24 March 1977). Based on this amendment, a permanent chairman would preside over the assembly, thus enabling the president to participate actively. Despite being the highest authority within the party, the General Assembly has no real power in influencing the party's direction and policies. Usually, the assembly is only viewed as a platform to gather party leaders and grassroots members and also to elect second echelon leaders. Rahman Yakub as the party president was the power-broker within the party, giving

him the authority to influence party policies and to dictate party elections. After the General Assembly, the party's Supreme Council is considered the second highest body within PBB. The structure of the PBB's Supreme Council closely resembled UMNO with minor differences in terms of the number of the office bearers. The PBB's Supreme Council comprised of Yang Dipertua, Deputy Yang Dipertua, nine Vice Yang Dipertua, Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General, five assistant Secretary General, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Publicity Chief, Assistant Publicity Chief, eleven appointed Executive Committee members and twenty elected Executive Committee members.

PBB, however, does not have any *negeri* liaison office because it is a regional party which only operates in Sarawak. The next level of bureaucracy within PBB is the party branch which is similar to UMNO's division; set up in every parliamentary constituency in Malaysia, except for Sarawak. However, unlike UMNO, the PBB's branch is established in every *negeri* constituencies while the party's sub-branch (similar like UMNO's branch) is set up under every party branch.

During the formation of PBB, the leaders from both wings agreed to elect a Pesaka leader as the president while a Bumiputera leader would be elected the deputy president. The party had seven vice-presidents whom four of them were from the Bumiputera wing, while the other three from the Pesaka wing. The influential secretary general post was reserved for a Bumiputera leader who was assisted by three Pesaka and one Bumiputera assistant secretary generals. The rest of the party's key posts such as treasurer and publicity chief were also given to Bumiputera leaders whereas the youth chief post was given to a Pesaka leader. In the PBB's first party line-up, Temenggung Jugah was elected president while Abdul Taib Mahmud became his deputy. Surprisingly, Rahman Yakub was only elected as the party's secretary general (see Table 3.6 for the rest of the line-up).

Although Temenggung Jugah was the president of PBB, the party was dominated by the Muslim *bumiputera*, in particular Rahman Yakub and Taib Mahmud. As a dominant party within the SBN, Temenggung Jugah remained as the chairman of the coalition parties in Sarawak and also Federal Minister of Sarawak Affairs. Rahman remained as Sarawak Chief Minister while Taib became the Federal Minister of Primary Industries. With the formation of PBB, Rahman was able to co-opt Dayak forces into his fold, thus further amplifying his strength as a strongman-politician. Furthermore, the merger of Pesaka and the Bumiputera party had prevented the former from establishing an alliance with SNAP in order to bring down the Muslim *bumiputera* leadership in Sarawak. The threat of Dayak leaders uniting under one force was looming at that time especially after several prominent non-

Muslim *bumiputera* leaders namely Stephen Kalong Ningkan, Temenggung Jugah, Temenggung Oyong Lawai Jau, Pengarah Jinggut and Pengarah Bayang held a closed-door meeting in the mid-1960s (Milne and Ratnam 1974, p. 222). This high-profile meeting was seen as a symbol of solidarity among the Dayaks, posing a potential threat to the Muslim *bumiputera*'s political dominance.

PBB held its first general assembly on 13 and 14 July 1974, less than a month before the second general election. All the party's top posts were not contested, enabling the incumbents to retain their posts. However, one of the significant changes that took place during the general assembly was the emergence of new generation of Muslim *bumiputera* leaders such as Abang Abu Bakar and Salleh Jafaruddin who were elected to the party's executive committee. Another significant change was the ascendancy of a young Iban leader, Alfred Jabu, from the Pesaka wing. The Iban leader from Betong was elected Youth Chief, replacing Nelson Kundai Ngareng who left PBB to lead an opposition party, Bisamah, in June 1974.

TABLE 3.6
PBB's First Office Bearers

Party's posts	Office bearers
1 President	Temenggung Jugah Barieng
2 Deputy President	Abdul Taib Mahmud
3 Vice-Presidents	Dr Sulaiman Daud, Simon Dembab Maja, Latip Haji Dris, Penghulu Abok, Haji Awang Baja Awang Besar, Thomas Kana, Awang Hipni Pengiran Annu
4 Secretary General	Abdul Rahman Yakub
5 Assistant Secretary General	Leonard Linggi Jugah, Robert Ridu, Haji Noor Tahir, Kenneth Kayan
6 Treasurer	Bidari Mohamad
7 Assistant Treasurer	Stephen Wan Ulok
8 Publicity Chief	Wan Alwi
9 Youth Leader	Nelson Kundai Ngareng
10 Assistant Youth Leader	Abang Abu Bakar
Committee members	Mohamad Musa, Jonathan Bangau, Mohamad Haji Bakri, Penghulu Mandi, Haji Abdul Rahim, Temenggung Oyong Lawai Jau, Senator Awang Daud, Tajang Laing, John Loyor, Sidi Munan, Awang Ismail, Anthony Nyibong, Lee Thiam Kee, Alfred Mason, Haji Hussaini, George Si Ricord, Haji Awang Wal, Penghulu Lias, Yusuf Muthu and Abang Haji Hood.

Source: *Vanguard*, 3 May 1973.

More than a year later, two significant events led to major changes within PBB. First, Rahman sent shockwaves throughout Sarawak when he announced his intention to step down in September 1975. The strongman-politician's sudden decision to quit was triggered by the growing criticisms against his leadership. According to Rahman, "it was unfortunate that there were people who continue to find faults with the government merely for the sake of finding faults" (*Vanguard*, 7 September 1975). The second significant event was the retirement of Temenggung Jugah. The founding president of PBB announced his retirement a few weeks after Rahman publicly expressed his desire to step down. With the retirement of Temenggung Jugah and Rahman Yakub, the PBB's top posts were left vacant. Subsequently, in October 1975, Taib Mahmud was appointed acting president, replacing Temenggung Jugah, while Rahman gave up his secretary general post to Jugah's son, Leonard Linggi. Rahman, however, remained as an executive member of the party and leader of the SBN. A former youth leader, Alfred Jabu was made the acting deputy president while another Pesaka leader, Celestine Ujang, was appointed acting youth chief. The major leadership change that took place within PBB had somewhat changed the initial arrangement made between Pesaka and Bumiputera leaders. With the retirement of Temenggung Jugah, the Muslim *bumiputera* in PBB outmanoeuvred Pesaka leaders by grabbing the party's top posts. As a result, the party's presidency was taken over by a Bumiputera leader whereas the deputy president was given to Pesaka. The secretary general's seat which was initially held by a Bumiputera leader was given to Pesaka as a form of "trade off". Hence, PBB gradually became a party dominated by the Muslim Melanau strongmen-politicians while the Dayaks and the Malays played a supporting role.

More than two months after announcing his intention to step down, Rahman changed his mind and continued serving the *negeri*; announcing that he would only retire within the next five years (*Vanguard*, 17 December 1975). This presented a dilemma to PBB because Rahman was only the party's executive member whereas he held the highest position in the Sarawak government. Subsequently, the strongman-politician decided to take over the party's presidency from Taib but it would leave his nephew in a lurch. Taib could not go back to his deputy president's seat because it had been given to Alfred Jabu. Being left in a quandary, Taib confronted Rahman and demanded his uncle to amend the party constitution to provide for a second deputy president post which would then be allocated to him (*Sarawak Tribune*, 3 April 1987). So, Rahman ordered the amendment of the party's constitution during the PBB's Triennial General Meeting in 1977, to make way for a second deputy president's post, which was given to Taib, while

Rahman assumed the presidency. Other party's posts such as the secretary general and youth chief were allocated to Pesaka while women's wing leader, treasurer and publicity chief were given to Bumiputera leaders.

As a strongman-politician, Rahman needed a strong party which could provide him the platform to exercise his authority. The formation of PBB presented Rahman with the opportunity to further dominate the Muslim *bumiputera* electorate and also the numerically superior Dayaks. With Pesaka firmly under Rahman's control, the intense clashes between Pesaka and Muslim Bumiputera leaders over the Malay and Melanau support was finally over. Hence, Rahman could strengthen his influence among the Muslim *bumiputera* electorate who became his main support base. Apart from that, Rahman strategically co-opted Pesaka in the anticipation that the party would form a formidable alliance with SNAP, aimed at bringing down the Muslim Melanau leadership. With its ability to field candidates in the Muslim *bumiputera* and Dayak seats, PBB could secure the highest number of seats in the Council Negeri, thus allowing the party to become the most dominant party within the SBN. When the PBB's strength was amplified, it also fortified Rahman Yakub position as Sarawak's strongman-politician.

Timber Politics and Electoral Patronage

Strongmen-politicians rely on a multiple network of clients comprising of middle and lower level politicians, community leaders, businessmen, bureaucrats and the electorate to sustain their influence and authority. In order to bind this network of clients, strongmen-politicians use their political offices to distribute the state's resources to their clients. In return, strongmen-politicians expect their clients to finance their electoral campaign, to support them in party polls and to provide electoral support. In forming a multiple network of clients among the elites, Rahman exploited his political office as a medium to dispense state's resources with timber concessions as his main source of patronage. Through Sarawak's rich timber resources, Rahman was able to build a strong band of political allies and along the way enriching himself and his family members.

During his tenure as Sarawak Chief Minister, Rahman had allegedly disbursed 1.25 million hectares of timber concessions worth \$22.5 billion (US\$9 billion) to his clients and family members (Aeria 2002, p. 140). This represented more than half of the timber licences issued under his administration (*People's Mirror*, 13 April 1987). Among Rahman Yakub's political allies who received timber concessions were Zainuddin Satem, Tajang Laing, Salleh Jafaruddin (Rahman's nephew), Wan Habib Syed Mahmud

(Rahman's nephew), Wan Madzihi Mahdzar (Rahman's nephew), former State Secretary Abang Yusuf Puteh, B.R. Adai (editor of *Sarawak Tribune*), Daniel Tajem and Mohd Kamal Hussain (business advisers). Besides awarding timber concessions to his political allies, Rahman also gave timber licences to his family members: Norlia Abdul Rahman (daughter), Khadijah Abdul Rahman (daughter), Jamil Abdullah (Rahman's brother-in-law), Polycarp Soon (brother-in-law), Thomas Soon (brother-in-law) and Rabiah Yassin (relative) (see Table 3.7).

By establishing multiple network of clients among the elites, Rahman was able to build a strong support base comprising of loyal supporters who would provide him with the financial means to run strong election campaigns and also to build other webs of network among lower level politicians. Furthermore, Rahman's practice of awarding timber licences to his political allies served as a show of authority on the part of the strongman-politician. In establishing his position in Sarawak, Rahman wanted to demonstrate that he had the power to dispense the state's resources and wealth to those who supported him and marginalize those who opposed him. The capability to reward his supporters became one of the important factors that propelled Rahman's status as a powerful strongman-politician. In terms of dispensing timber licences to his family members, it served as a means to buttress his wealth which ultimately reinforce his status in the eyes of the populace. Traditionally, strongmen's source of power was his wealth and social status. With these two assets, traditional strongmen such as Brunei *pengiran*, Malay aristocrats and Arab Sharifs could yield immense influence among the people of Sarawak. Rahman Yakub, on the other hand, came from an impoverished family, thus he needed to build his fortune so that it could uplift his social status and sustain the support of his clients.

After establishing multiple networks of clients among the elites, Rahman also had to build a network of clients among the electorate who formed the support base for the strongman-politician. In cajoling the electorate, Rahman adopted a different set of strategy which Fadzillah Majid Cooke (1997, p. 227) termed as electoral patronage — the practice of distributing or pledging development projects, financial grants and other handouts during the elections in exchange for voters' support. Electoral patronage entails the allotment and pledges of development projects, financial grants and other "goodies" by state leaders or politicians (patrons) to the electorate (clients) with the ultimate aim of winning the elections. Among the state leaders, those who have greater power especially federal and *negeri* ministers are in stronger positions to grant or promise electoral "goodies". These ministers would either distribute development projects which are already allocated under the Malaysia

TABLE 3.7
Abdul Rahman Yakub-linked Companies that Received Timber Licences

-
1. Baltim Timber Sdn. Bhd.
Licence no.: 7/3070
Location: Batang Belaga, Belaga
Acreage: 48,763 hectares
Date of issue: 26/5/81
 2. Syarikat Delapan Sdn. Bhd.
Licence no.: T/3071
Location: Batang Kemena, Bintulu
Acreage: 67,476 hectares
Date of issue: 26/5/81
Directors: Debong Anyi (Tajang Laing's wife), Norlia Abdul Rahman (Rahman's daughter), Zainuddin Satem
 3. Lembahan Mewah Sdn. Bhd.
Licence no.: T/3069
Location: Batang Kemena, Bintulu
Acreage: 92,228 hectares
Date of issue: 26/5/81
Directors: Debong Anyi, Khadijah Abdul Rahman (Rahman's daughter), Norlia Abdul Rahman
 4. Kehutanan Sentiasa Sdn. Bhd.
Licence no.: T/4152
Location: Sungai Jelalong
Acreage: 30,070 hectares
Date of issue: 16/6/81
Directors: Deli Abdul Rahman (Rahman's henchman), Salleh Jafaruddin, Wan Ali Tuanku Mahdi (PERMAS's election candidate)
 5. Barbet Sdn. Bhd.
Licence no.: T/0281
Location: not available
Acreage: 35,554 hectares
Date of issue: 26/5/81
Directors: Norlia Abdul Rahman
 6. Maguari Sdn. Bhd.
Licence no.: T/0261
Location: Melana, Sungai Rumput
Acreage: 33,554 hectares
Date of issue: 16/11/81
Directors: Deli Abdul Rahman, Mohd Kamal Hussain (Rahman's business adviser)
 7. Keruntum Sdn. Bhd.
Licence no.: T/0279
Location: not available
Date of issue: not available
Directors: Deli Abdul Rahman, Haji Mohd Louis Ali

continued on next page

TABLE 3.7 — *cont'd*

8. Shobra Sdn. Bhd.
Licence no.: T/0282
Location: not available
Acreage: 1,163 hectares
Date of issue: not available
Directors: Abang Yusuf Puteh (former State Secretary), Rogayah (Yusuf's wife)
9. Mosku Lumber Sdn. Bhd.
Licence no.: T/3068
Location: not available
Acreage: 69,786 hectares
Date of issue: 8/5/81
Directors: Mohd Kamal Hussain, Norlia Abdul Rahman
10. Sarawtab Sdn. Bhd.
Licence no.: T/0137
Location: not available
Acreage: 104,842 hectares
Date of issue: 22/1/77
Directors: Deli Abdul Rahman, Salleh Jafaruddin, Abang Yusuf Puteh
11. Kabala Sdn. Bhd.
Licence no.: T/6057
Location: not available
Acreage: 1,425 hectares
Date of issue: not available
Directors: Norlia Abdul Rahman, Junaidah Zen, Lucy Lao Puong Siong
12. Sebiyau Logging Sdn. Bhd.
Licence no.: T/3075
Location: not available
Acreage: 17,549 hectares
Date of issue: 1/4/82
Directors: Ali Sheikh Salim, Haji Fathi Haji Duet, Haji Omar Sheikh Salim

Sources: *People's Mirror* (13 April 1987); *Borneo Post* (13 April 1987).

Plan or pledge new projects under their respective ministerial funds. In the 1978 election, for example, federal and Sarawak ministers pledged at least seven new development projects worth RM189.9 million. Other politicians such as *negeri* assemblymen and MPs would dish out development projects or financial grants which were forked out from the assemblymen or the MP Funds; RM200,000 and RM300,000 respectively (Aeria 1997, p. 63).

In electoral patronage, the most vital "commodity" is development projects, which can be divided into three major categories depending on the size and the cost of the project. First, there are big projects which usually incur high cost (more than RM10 million) and require a longer period of

time to complete. Most of the big projects are within the purview of the central government, namely the construction of basic infrastructures such as water and electricity supplies, roads, bridges and airports; educational facilities such as universities and schools; government buildings such as police and fire stations; and health facilities such as hospitals and polyclinics. Second, the BN government distributes or pledges medium-cost development projects which are slightly different from big projects in terms of its size and cost (between RM1 million to RM10 million). Apart from being funded by the central state, medium-cost projects can also be funded by the *negeri* government. Other medium-cost projects, besides those which fall under the central government's purview, are land development projects, recreational facilities and various agricultural schemes. Finally, the most important source of electoral patronage is "instant" projects which mostly fall under the Minor Rural Projects (MRPs) Fund. Living up to its name, "instant" projects are low-cost projects (below RM1 million) which are approved on the spot and require a shorter period of time to complete. Hence, big and medium-cost projects would not have immediate impact on the voters. Except for basic infrastructure projects, most big and medium-cost projects would not be tangible to the men in the street, especially those from rural areas. Thus, "instant" projects are crucial to the ruling party since they offer immediate tangible "goodies" that directly benefit the electorate. The types of "instant" project dished out by the BN leaders are wide ranging. They may include small recreational facilities such as community parks and badminton courts; community-based projects such as jetties, plank walks and community halls; infrastructure projects such as village roads, and bridges; and religious buildings such as mosques, temples and churches.

Apart from distributing and pledging development projects, the ruling party also issues financial grants to individual voters, religious bodies and other social organizations during the elections. These financial grants are usually distributed to villagers for purchasing "essential" goods (such as fishing nets, seeds, agricultural and sports equipments) and social organizations for the financing of their activities. The third and final category of electoral "commodity" is basically non-development or non-monetary goods. These "goodies" are wide ranging, from agricultural subsidies such as fertilizers to various other specific needs of the electorate such as water tanks or even land titles.

In the 1974 election, the local dailies reported that the SBN distributed at least eight development projects and one financial grant worth RM22.4 million or an average of RM0.5 million per constituency.¹¹ In the following 1978 election, the ruling party dished out at least 102 projects worth RM200 million

or RM4.2 million per constituency. The huge increase in the number of projects and financial grants dished out by the SBN in 1978 was mainly due to the intense challenge of the opposition represented by PAJAR, Parti Negara Rakyat Sarawak (PNRS), SAPO, Parti Umat Sarawak (UMAT) and a host of Independent candidates. Among the opposition parties, PAJAR looked capable of springing a few surprises especially when the party was being led by a former senior police officer Alli Kawi. In the 1978 election, the party contested in twelve out of twenty-four parliamentary seats up for grab. Although PAJAR was a Bumiputera party, it focused its assault on Rahman Yakub's leadership by contesting in five Muslim *bumiputera* seats. The leaders of PAJAR were initially confident of putting up a strong challenge in the Muslim *bumiputera* constituencies but their confidence slowly deteriorated due to the onslaught of electoral patronage. According to Alli Kawi (1988, p. 157),

Then came the onslaught. Truckloads and boatloads of water tanks were delivered to longhouses and Malay kampungs. Minor roads were immediately constructed. These were cheap and less bothersome minor works for the government which did not require any planning. Boats powered by two powerful engines were seen anchored in the river near Kampung Pusa with some influential and wealthy people who had come to assist in the Barisan Nasional's campaign. Again it was clear that this was a case of money and more money and we could not fight them dollar for dollar.

The distribution of development projects, financial grants or other electoral "goodies" provided Rahman and the ruling party the much-needed votes to win the elections. When the electorate received tangible goods from the ruling party, they were lured to lend their support to the party. Consequently, Rahman managed to dominate the negeri and parliamentary elections, thus strengthening his position as a strongman-politician.

THE END OF AN ERA: RAHMAN YAKUB'S RETIREMENT FROM POLITICS

Rahman publicly announced his plan to step down as Sarawak Chief Minister three times in 1974, 1978 and 1981. The strongman-politician's first call to quit was prompted by his disappointment with the central state leaders who did not provide him enough support to face the 1974 elections (Alli 1988, p. 101). However, the strongman-politician was persuaded to continue serving the *negeri* after a Sarawak delegate led by State Secretary Abang Yusuf Puteh met the Prime Minister to resolve the issue. Subsequently, Rahman withdrew his plan to retire and continued to rule Sarawak.

Four years later, Rahman again threatened to step down because of the criticism leveled against him by the SUPP leaders and the opposition. The SUPP's criticisms against Rahman led to a plan to remove the strongman-politician through the help of the central state. In May 1978, a delegation from SUPP led by Stephen Yong met the Prime Minister, Hussein Onn, and asked him to get rid of Rahman. In the words of Stephen Yong (1998, p. 227),

On 5th May, SUPP's delegation (comprising me, Wong Soon Kai, Chan Siaw Hee and Jawan Empaling) called on Tun Hussein Onn, the Prime Minister. He had with him Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, then the Deputy Prime Minister, and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, as the Finance Minister. I repeated my complaints: Wong Soon Kai, in his capacity as a State Minister confirmed that, he too, was experiencing a tremendous sense of frustration in merely trying to carry on with his job. The Prime Minister asked me what we wanted of Abdul Rahman Yakub and I said that, at the very least, we expected him to let the respective State Ministers have the power to carry out their assigned portfolios. Abdul Rahman Yakub should consult them on matters of policy and if he disagreed with them, he should take the time to discuss the matters with them.

Since Rahman's political ascendancy was made possible by the support of the central state led by Abdul Razak, the new central state leadership under Hussein Onn would not be obliged to honour this arrangement. The former premier might accommodate Rahman's antics but Hussein Onn took the criticisms against Rahman quite seriously. Instead of brushing aside SUPP's complaint, Hussein Onn called for a meeting with PBB, SNAP and SUPP leaders to discuss Rahman's resignation. Despite an attempt by SNAP and SUPP to nominate a Dayak leader, Dunstan Endawie, as the new Chief Minister, the plan to unseat Rahman did not materialize mainly because the SBN leaders were concerned with the looming 1978 election. When SUPP failed to topple Rahman, the strongman-politician retracted his plan to step down and continued helming the *negeri* "for the time being until such time as a decision is reached otherwise" (*Sarawak Tribune*, 15 October 1978). In retaliation, Rahman tried to weaken SUPP by giving his blessing for the formation of Sarawak DAP in 1978.¹²

The strongman-politician finally called it a day when his failing health stood in the way of his desire to remain as Sarawak's strongman-politician. After a successful heart operation in London in October 1980, Rahman saw it fit to plan for his succession. In contrast to his two previous announcements, Rahman only made public his plan to retire after he had taken several steps to ensure a smooth transition in Sarawak. The first sign of Rahman's

seriousness in stepping down was the return of the designated Chief Minister, Abdul Taib Mahmud, to Sarawak. Upon his return, Taib contested in the Sebandi by-election which he later won uncontested. Subsequently, Taib was appointed Minister of Land and Mines in the *negeri* cabinet. After that, Rahman finally announced for the third and last time his intention to step down as Sarawak Chief Minister and PBB president. So, after helming the *negeri* for eleven years, Rahman Yakub officially tendered his resignation with the rest of his cabinet members on 26 March 1981. Upon announcing his retirement, Rahman's parting message was,

Taib would steer the boat with more skill and speed. I am no longer able to steer the boat but suffice that I wave the flag (*Sarawak Tribune*, 26 March 1981).

As Taib Mahmud took up the challenge of filling the strongman-politician's big shoe, Rahman was appointed Sarawak's fourth Tuan Yang Terutama, replacing Tun Salahuddin. Little did Taib know that Rahman was far from ending his involvement in Sarawak politics.

CONCLUSION

The power of the Malaysian regime is not absolute since it has and will always be contested by various social forces. At the periphery of the state, these social forces would pose a much stronger resistance compared to the one which is closer to the centre of power. Strongmen are one of the social forces, which are in constant competition with the state in trying to wrest control of society. They persist because the state fails to exert its presence in society, especially at the periphery. In facing the might of the strongmen, the state has the choice either to crush or co-opt them.

Since the reign of the Brunei Sultanate to the rule of the BN regime, the state adopted an accommodative approach in dealing with the social forces in Sarawak. Although strongmen continue to play influential roles, the formation of the state since the last three centuries has changed the faces and power of strongmen. The powerful traditional Malay aristocrats and Arab Sharifs, who were not only influential among their communities but also the Dayaks, had been replaced by a new generation of Muslim *bumiputera* leaders who were highly educated but lacked the social status and economic power that were essentials in binding the population. With the shortcomings of the new Muslim *bumiputera* intelligentsia along with the split within the community, these powerful individuals were not able to dominate the *negeri* leadership

when the new Malaysian state was formed. Instead, the Iban leaders were given the responsibilities to assume the Sarawak Chief Ministership in the formative years of Malaysia. However, when the Iban leaders failed to fulfil the central state's demands, they were subsequently replaced by a Muslim Melanau intelligentsia, Abdul Rahman Yakub.

Although strongmen-politicians are allowed to exercise substantial amount of autonomy, they could only remain independent as long as they do not “challenge the centre directly on core issues like the dominance at national level of the ruling BN coalition, states' rights, religion or any aspect of Malaysian federalism” (Mohammad Agus 2006, p. 326). In a political system with a strong central government, Rahman was aware that Kuala Lumpur's support was vital in maintaining power in Kuching. In view of the importance of the central state's blessing, the Muslim Melanau strongman refrained from overly championing Sarawak's interests. Apart from that, Rahman secured the central state's support by fulfilling its core demands; to maintain Malay's political dominance, to ensure the BN's continued dominance in the elections, to transfer the rights to extract the *negeri's* oil and gas reserves to the central state, and to provide political stability. These demands were placed not only on Rahman Yakub but also his successor.

The accommodative strategy adopted by the central state in extending its authority in Sarawak became the catalyst for the resurrection of the Muslim *bumiputera's* political dominance in 1970. Subsequently, Rahman who performed his dual roles as the central state's representative and local strongman generated significant changes in Sarawak including a drastic shift of the Muslim *bumiputera's* support towards the ruling party. At the end of his rule, Rahman passed the baton to his nephew, Abdul Taib Mahmud, who proved to be an even powerful and influential strongman-politician compared to his uncle. The following three chapters will follow chronologically the rise of Taib Mahmud as a powerful strongman-politician in Sarawak and his strategies in dominating Sarawak's society, in particular the Muslim *bumiputera*.

Notes

1. In 1966, twenty-one of the thirty-two Alliance members in the Council Negeri signed a petition to remove Ningkan as Sarawak's Chief Minister. The Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, accepted the petition and subsequently removed Ningkan who declared the heavy-handed action of the central state as unconstitutional. Refusing to step down, Ningkan urged the dissident Alliance members to debate the motion of no confidence in the Council Negeri where he had a great deal of support from other Alliance members. Despite this assertion,

Ningkan was removed, forcing the SNAP leader to challenge the central state's action in court. On 7 September 1966, the High Court of Kuching ruled that the dismissal of Ningkan was unconstitutional and restrained Tawi Sli who succeeded Ningkan as Sarawak's Chief Minister from holding office. This historic ruling further magnified the crisis within the Alliance, leading to the declaration of a state of emergency in Sarawak (Leigh 1974, pp. 102–12).

2. As a highly structured society, the Malays were dominated by the aristocrats who were at the top of the social pyramid. Separated by three major river systems, the riverine population was administered by different groups of aristocrats each possessing distinct characteristics (Sanib 1985, p. 7). In the Sarawak River system, the Malay aristocrats were called *perabangan*: Malays bearing the title abang. The Brunei Sultanate conferred these Malay leaders with official titles such as Datu Patinggi, Datu Bandar and Datu Temenggung. These three Datus were the most influential strongmen in Sarawak. Their authority was accepted not only by their Malay followers but also by the Melanau and Dayak tribes (Reece 1993, pp. 7–8). In the Rejang River system, the ruling class either bore the title Pengiran or Tuanku. Pengiran was commonly used among the Melanau who had inherited the title from the Brunei aristocrats through inter-marriage and their conversions to Islam. Apart from Pengiran, several descendants of Arab traders and missionaries known as Sharif were also considered influential strongmen in the Rejang area by virtue of their economic strength. Meanwhile in the Limbang-Lawas River system, the Malay aristocrats there were known as Brunei *pengiran*. Prior to the Brooke's rule, these strongmen dominated all the districts in "Old Sarawak", Rejang and Limbang-Lawas except for Saribas which was controlled by the Iban chiefs (Sabihah 1991, p. 137).
3. The low-ranking and high-ranking Malay chiefs would gather at the Brookes' Astana to acquire the Rajah's *semangat* by either touching his hand, staying in his presence for a period of time or receiving robes of honour from the Rajah (Walker 2002, p. 62).
4. The strongmen were empowered to collect annual "door" (refers to a family in the Dayak longhouse) tax of one *pasu* (ceramic vase) or 22 kilograms of husked rice.
5. According to James Brooke's account of Sarawak in 1839, several districts such as Sadong, Lingga, Skrang and Sarikei, which were geographically closer to the Brunei capital, paid no more than 200 or 300 reals (Spanish dollars) a year to Brunei, while Sarawak paid nothing for years past. Other far flung districts such as Kalaka paid its tribute in sago, while Mukah, Oya and Bintulu which were closer to Brunei provided the Sultan with the most amount of income (Reece 1993, p. 16).
6. With the support of the British government, the number of Sarawakians studying overseas gradually increased from merely twelve in 1949 to 358 in 1963 (Porrit 1997, p. 132).
7. Stephen Kalong Ningkan (August 1963 to September 1966) and Tawi Sli

(September 1966 to May 1969) became Sarawak's Chief Minister for about three years respectively. Because of their short tenure, they were not able to establish themselves as credible and influential leaders. Without having proper control of the government, Ningkan and Sli could not use the state's resources to establish loyal supporters among the elites and the masses. Furthermore, both leaders did not receive much support from the central state and this proved to be the turning point of their political demise. Apart from lacking the resources to elevate themselves as a new generation of strongmen, Ningkan and Sli also lacked legitimacy among their own communities because of their egalitarian social structure. Since the Dayak communities do not recognize leaders beyond the *bilek* system, it would be difficult for politicians and other community leaders to rally the support of the Dayak community.

8. The decision made by the Election Commission angered many political parties in Sarawak since Tunku Abdul Rahman initially agreed to resume the elections from where it was suspended. The Election Commission, however, went against Tunku's promise because the commission could not guarantee the safety of ballot boxes. Thus, the 1970 elections in Sarawak had to start afresh (*Sarawak Tribune*, 10 April 1970).
9. Prior to the 1970 election, the Sarawak Alliance consisted of three local parties, namely Bumiputera, PESAKA and SCA. However, two members of the Alliance, Bumiputera and PESAKA, could not agree upon a mutually acceptable allocation of seats, prompting a consensus to field their candidates against one another in sixteen constituencies. With this arrangement, PESAKA used its party symbol while the Bumiputera party and SCA continued to use the Alliance symbol. Despite the persistent bickering between PESAKA and Bumiputera, the former reluctantly remained as an Alliance member (Leigh 1974, pp. 127–29).
10. Initially, SUPP proposed an Iban as the Chief Minister because the party members were not willing to accept Rahman Yakub due to his uncompromising stance as Federal Minister of Education (Leigh 1974, p. 143). Rahman, however, did not want to quit his federal cabinet post and returned to Sarawak as one of six *negeri* ministers.
11. Although it would be difficult to ascertain the exact number of projects and financial grants being distributed during the elections, the data published in the local newspapers would be the best available information to gauge the practice of electoral patronage in Sarawak. However, it is important to note that the published data represents only the tip of the iceberg since the print media usually cover the electoral campaigns of ministers and deputy ministers. Most of the campaigns carried out by other SBN candidates would not catch the press's radar, thus the projects or financial grants dished out by these candidates would be left unreported.
12. The Sarawak DAP was formed after the 1978 general election. It was headed by former SUPP assemblyman for Repok, Chong Siew Siang. Chong resigned from SUPP on 24 June 1978 amidst heavy attacks by SUPP officials after he had

enquired in the Council Negeri on why the SUPP Secretary General, Stephen Yong, was still using a government car when he was no longer a Deputy Chief Minister. Later, Chong joined the DAP and became the first state assemblyman from a government party to cross over to the opposition (*Sarawak Tribune*, 15 December 1978).

4

YEARS OF TURBULENCE, 1981–87

INTRODUCTION

The political pact between the central state and Sarawak's first strongman-politician, Rahman Yakub, had proven to be successful in maintaining the state's presence in Sarawak. At the same time, it strengthened the ruling party's domination of the electorate, particularly the Muslim *bumiputera*. Realizing the effectiveness of this political pact, the central state continued to rely on Muslim *bumiputera* strongmen-politicians to dominate Sarawak after Rahman's departure. This paved the way for another influential Muslim Melanau intelligentsia, Abdul Taib Mahmud, to occupy the powerful Chief Minister's seat, hence maintaining the Muslim *bumiputera's* grip on Sarawak politics. Through the highest political office in the negeri, Taib has transformed himself into an even more powerful strongman-politician than his uncle, introducing sweeping changes in the negeri.

Taib's journey towards attaining immense power is not without intrigue and contestation. In his twenty-seven years as Sarawak's Chief Minister, the strongman-politician has survived several attempts to unseat him, outlasted many federal and negeri ministers, witnessed the dissolution and formation of many political parties, led the SBN through six Council Negeri elections and six parliamentary elections, served under three Prime Ministers and overseen the rapid development of Sarawak. This chapter and the following two chapters chronicle Taib's journey as Sarawak's strongman-politician and analyse his dual roles as the central state's representative and local strongman.

These chapters also examine significant political events during Taib's tenure as the Chief Minister with a special focus on the Muslim *bumiputera*. As a start, this chapter discusses Taib's first six years in office which was considered as the most testing years of his long illustrious political career. A particular focus is given in analysing the crisis that engulfed the Muslim *bumiputera* community and also Taib Mahmud's response towards the crisis. But before analysing the turbulent years of Sarawak politics, this chapter will first discuss Taib Mahmud's rise in becoming, arguably, the most powerful strongman-politician in the *negeri*.

ABDUL TAIB MAHMUD: PRESERVING THE STRONGMAN-POLITICIAN'S RULE

Abdul Taib Mahmud's appointment as Sarawak's fourth Chief Minister was highly anticipated by the people of Sarawak. When Abdul Rahman Yakub who was also Taib's uncle decided to step down, it was obvious to everybody that Taib would succeed his uncle as the new Chief Minister. As a young educated Muslim *bumiputera*, Taib's political ascendancy was fast-tracked mainly due to his uncle's patronage. After almost two decades in politics, Taib finally occupied the highest political office in Sarawak, allowing him to continue his family legacy that was started by Rahman. Taib's greatest asset was the experience of working closely with his predecessors; enabling him to study and then adopt the right strategy to remain in power for a very long time.

A Muslim Melanau, Abdul Taib Mahmud was born on 21 May 1936 at Kampung Sungei Merbau, Miri (*Sarawak Tribune*, 1 April 1987). He is the eldest child of Mahmud bin Haji Abang Yahya and Hajjah Hamidah binti Yakub who have eight other children, namely Ibrahim, Onn, Mohamad Ali, Mohamad Arip, Mohamad Tufail, Aisah Zainab, Roziah alias Raziah, Fredahanon alias Faridah Hanon and Zaleha (Aeria 2002, p. 164). Taib's father is a descendant of Pehin Datu Yahya Setia Raja, an aristocrat once attached to the Royal Court of Brunei. Despite coming from a Melanau aristocratic family, Taib had an impoverished life since his father only worked as a carpenter for Shell Oil Company (Aeria 2002, p. 164).¹ When the Japanese army landed in Miri in January 1942, Taib and his family left the oil town and headed to their family's ancestral village in Mukah. A few weeks after the Japanese occupation ended in August 1945, Taib and his family returned to Miri.

The young Taib received his early education at Andi Malay School, Miri, before proceeding to St. Joseph's School, Miri. In 1949, Shell was offering scholarships to its Senior Asian Officers' children to study in secondary schools. Rahman, who was then the Probationary Native Officer in Miri, helped Taib

to get the scholarship despite the latter's illegibility (*Sarawak Tribune*, 1 April 1987). With the scholarship, Taib moved to St. Joseph's School in Kuching to further his studies. When he reached the age to decide his career, the option of becoming a politician was not even considered, instead he envisioned himself to be a doctor rather than a statesman. According to Taib,

I was obliged to study law because of family pressures and expectations. I preferred medicine because I felt Sarawak dearly needed doctors. I was maneuvered toward law by my uncle. When I entered politics in 1963, I told myself that I would give the Party Bumiputera five years of my life (Bullis 1996, p. 75).

Due to Rahman Yakub's persuasion, Taib reluctantly studied law at University of Adelaide after obtaining a Colombo Plan scholarship in 1956.² Not long after that, Taib married Laila Chalecki, an Australian of Polish descent whom he met while studying in Australia. They have four children, two girls and two boys. Their eldest child is Jamilah Hamidah who is married to a Canadian national, Sean Murray. Taib's second child is Mahmud Abu Bekir, the CMSB Group Deputy Chairman. Mahmud Bekir is married to Shahnaz Abdul Majid who was formerly the alternative director of CMS. The third child of Taib and Laila is Sulaiman Abdul Rahman who is the Group Executive Director of CMSB. He is married to Anisa Abdullah Chan, the daughter of Sarawak's Deputy Chief Minister, Dr George Chan. Taib's youngest daughter, Hanifa Hajar, is married to a Singaporean, Syed Ahmad Alsee who is the CMS Deputy Group Managing Director.

After he graduated in 1960, Taib was appointed an associate to Justice Sir Herbert Mayo of South Australia (Jitab and Ritchie 1991, p. 20). Two years after that, Taib returned to Sarawak and was appointed Crown Counsel, the prelude to becoming a judge. However, the judge's bench would never be warmed by the aspiring judge. Taib was coaxed by Rahman to take a plunge into politics, by helping in the formation of Parti Barisan Jati Anak Sarawak (BARJASA) in 1962. With a heavy heart, the young Crown Counsel resigned in order to assume the post of Assistant Chairman of BARJASA. The formation of the Bumiputera party in 1966 marked the beginning of the Muslim *bumiputera's* political ascendancy in Sarawak. The new political party was subsequently controlled by the Muslim *bumiputera* intelligentsia including Taib who was appointed the party's Secretary General.

In Sarawak, Taib is considered a sophisticated man with a strong Western penchant which he acquired while studying and working in Australia for several years. In his early days, Taib would always be spotted with a designer suit, a hat and a smoking pipe, instead of the *baju melayu* and *songkok* (Malay

traditional attire). In his public speeches, Taib would tend to express his sophisticated ideas which were difficult to be comprehended by the people of Sarawak including its elites. Thus, the strongman-politician had to tone down his Western image with a traditional one in order to touch ground with the people. In the words of Milne and Ratnam (1974, p. 345),

Taib has a degree from Australia, and has made contributions to the Council Negeri debates of which few others would be capable; for instance, in the course of a single speech he alluded to the views of the English legal authority, Dicey and to the constitutional relationship between France and Algeria. He has a flexible mind, which is open to receive information from any quarter, and is quick to see future possibilities, for instance in his long-term plans for the use of Sarawak's timber resources. He appears to be interested in ideas and planning as well as in actual administration. However, he has to behave with circumspection. Non-Muslims tend to see him as a channel of federal influence on Sarawak. Many Chinese regard him as anti-Chinese. Muslims are aware of his western education, his comparative youth (he was born in 1936) and the fact that he is a lawyer. It is to his advantage that his European wife is a Muslim, and that he has a genuine interest in Malay literature and in composing *pantuns*. But it would damage his image among Muslims if, for example, he were to speak Malay with a "western" accent, or if on certain traditional occasions he dressed in too western a fashion.

Apart from developing an interest in the Malay literature and *pantuns*, Taib is also known as an avid admirer of P. Ramlee, a Malay legend in the show business. The strongman-politician would occasionally sing the legend's famous numbers in official functions and become the patron for P. Ramlee's singing contest held annually in Kuching. In his younger days, Taib was also actively involved in *bangsawan*, a popular Malay opera, appearing in lead roles in a number of performances. By portraying a traditional image, Taib was able to project a more conventional Muslim *bumiputera* leader's image that fit the people of Sarawak.

The strongman-politician's rise in politics began after the 1963 election. Due to the Muslim *bumiputera* schism, Taib's political party, BARJASA, only managed to secure 44 out of 429 local council seats, thus making it a weak partner within the Alliance (Leigh 1974, p. 70). The biggest casualty in the election was Abdul Rahman Yakub who was expected to lead Sarawak's first elected government. With the defeat of his uncle and the limited number of educated men in BARJASA, Taib was picked to sit in the Council Negeri although he did not contest in the election. On 22 July 1963, at the age of 27 and a complete unknown, Taib became a member of the Council Negeri and subsequently Sarawak Minister of Communication and Works. With

this appointment, Taib ended up with an office he had not even run for. In the words of the strongman-politician,

I never aimed to become a minister. I didn't even stand for election, although I had helped BARJASA by speaking at party conventions about the importance of democracy. I felt I did not have sufficient experience or outlook to decide weighty matters of state. However, since at that time there were few people available with the degree and kind of education I had, I decided to give those five years of my life. Curiously enough, when I returned from Australia to Sarawak as a lawyer, I dreamed of becoming a judge one day. Now I am glad I didn't. My temperament wasn't right for it (Bullis 1996, p. 77).

Despite acknowledging the challenges that he would face in taking up the new responsibility as a *negeri* minister, Taib hoped that his strong education background would help him to make an impact on the cabinet. However, the decision-making process in the Sarawak cabinet at that time was structured into a three-stage process: (1) the Chief Minister would consult the expatriates, (2) the Chief Minister and the expatriates would meet Sarawak National Party (SNAP) and Sarawak Chinese Association (SCA) ministers, and (3) finally a full cabinet meeting which included BARJASA ministers would be held (Leigh 1974, p. 83). This arrangement irked Taib who felt that he was powerless in the cabinet despite having a superior education background. Taib's discontent towards Ningkan's leadership intensified when the latter wanted to amend the Land Bill in 1965 which would allow the Chinese to purchase native land. In resisting the amendment of the Land Bill, the Sarawak Native Alliance comprising of BARJASA, Parti Negeri Sarawak (PANAS) and Parti Pesaka Anak Sarawak (PESAKA) was formed with Taib playing a leading role in the alliance. Furious at Taib's involvement in the Native Alliance, Ningkan expelled him from the cabinet along with another BARJASA leader Awang Hipni (Searle 1983, p. 36). However, as a compromise to end the crisis within the ruling party, Ningkan brought back the two BARJASA leaders into the cabinet in June 1966. Despite this compromise, the hostility between SNAP and BARJASA did not fade away. In fact, the rivalry between the two parties worsened and reached its climax during the 1966 crisis which led to the removal of Ningkan.

In the government led by Sarawak's second Chief Minister, Taib continued to play an influential role in the cabinet through the important portfolio of Development and Forestry. During this period, he was also entrusted to be acting Chief Minister on several occasions. However, when Taib had a fall out with Tawi Sli, the former resigned from the cabinet and shifted

his political struggle to Kuala Lumpur. His first federal appointment was in 1968, assuming the Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry's post. After winning the parliamentary seat of Kota Samarahan in 1970, he moved closer to the corridor of power by becoming the Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department. A year later, Taib was promoted to a full Minister at the Ministry of Natural Resources. In 1980, Taib was appointed Minister of Federal Territory which became his last portfolio before returning to Sarawak to become its fourth Chief Minister. With thirteen years' experience as a federal minister, Taib had the privilege of developing a good relationship with the central state leaders, particularly Dr Mahathir Mohamad who later became Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister and also Taib's great supporter.

In 1981, Taib returned to Sarawak to succeed his uncle as Sarawak's fourth Chief Minister. To pave the way for Taib's return, the Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) assemblywoman for Sebandi vacated her seat thereby allowing Taib to contest in the by-election which was held on 25 March. On 9 March 1981, Taib stepped down from his federal post and contested in the Sebandi by-election which he won unopposed. Taib did not assume the post of Sarawak Chief Minister straight away. Instead, Rahman who was still the Chief Minister at that time first appointed Taib as Sarawak Minister of Land and Mines. A few days later, on 26 March, Rahman announced his retirement from politics and subsequently vacated his parliamentary seat of Paloh, his *negeri* seat of Matu-Daro and also his presidency of PBB (*Sarawak Tribune*, 26 March 1981). Although Taib was popularly touted as the new Chief Minister, it was not publicly known that the Muslim Melanau leader was not Kuala Lumpur's first choice. Instead, the central state leaders preferred Dr Sulaiman Daud³ who was then the Deputy Federal Minister of Health (*Sarawak Tribune*, 7 April 1987). One of the reasons for the central state leaders' resentment towards Taib was his weak grassroots' support due to his thirteen years' service at the central government. By being physically away from Sarawak for such a long period of time, the central state leaders believed that Taib was "out of touch with Sarawak affairs" (Yong 1998, p. 227). As a highly educated Malay leader, Dr Sulaiman would be the best possible candidate to take over Sarawak's leadership from Rahman Yakub. Apart from that, the central state did not want Sarawak to be turned into a family dynasty which would be realized if Taib succeeded his uncle. However, Rahman was able to convince the central state leaders to accept Taib as Sarawak's new Chief Minister (*Sarawak Tribune*, 7 April 1987). The former argued that Dr Sulaiman Daud who was PBB's Vice-President at that time was considered much more junior compared to Taib who was the party's deputy president (*Sarawak Tribune*, 7 April 1987). In fact, Dr Sulaiman had served as Taib's political secretary when the latter was the

Federal Minister of Primary Industries. Thus, Rahman felt that Dr Sulaiman could not leapfrog Taib because it could lead to instability within PBB. The question of seniority put aside, Rahman favoured Taib over Sulaiman simply because the strongman-politician wanted to protect his interest and maintain his family's grip on Sarawak politics. This move reignited the Malay-Melanau tension that had tainted Muslim *bumiputera* politics in the late 1970s.

In Taib's first cabinet line-up, he retained all the cabinet members who served under Rahman, except for Celestine Ujang who gave up his ministerial seat in order to become the new Council Negeri's speaker while Hafsa Harun was promoted to a full minister. PBB's ministerial slot in Kuala Lumpur that was left vacant by Taib was subsequently filled by Dr Sulaiman who was promoted to a full Minister (Federal Territory). Another Malay leader, Abang Abu Bakar, was appointed Deputy Federal Minister (Post) in place of Dr Sulaiman. Abang Abu's *negeri* seat of Satok was later taken over by PBB's deputy youth chief, Abang Johari Tun Openg.⁴ After Taib's elevation, the strongman-politician gradually established himself as the new force in Sarawak politics albeit facing great difficulties in the early phase of his tenure.

Central to Taib's strategy in bolstering his position as the most powerful strongman-politician in Sarawak is to accumulate personal wealth. Emulating Rahman, Taib disbursed timber concessions to his family members and cronies in order to consolidate his power. By the late 1980s, Taib's family and cronies were alleged to control an estimated 1.6 million hectares of timber concessions, the value of this concession can be estimated by comparing it to the 1.25 million hectares concessions owned by Rahman which was estimated at US\$9 billion (Aeria 2005, p. 130). Apart from extracting the *negeri*'s rich timber resources, Taib turned to business monopoly to further buttress his position. The privatization of profitable state enterprises from both the *negeri* and central governments facilitated the setting up of Taib's family-owned business conglomerate in Sarawak known as the CMS Group⁵ (Aeria 2005, p. 173). By the mid-1990s, Taib's family-owned conglomerate managed to secure monopolies on the production of cement, steel, agency services for log export shipments, stock-brokerage services and *bumiputera* banking in Sarawak (Aeria 2005, p. 130). From its humble beginning as a manufacturer of ordinary Portland cement in 1974, CMS's portfolio today spans trading, construction, road maintenance, property development, financial services, technology and education provider. With forty subsidiary companies and group annual revenue of RM6.2 billion in 2006, CMS is a leading conglomerate listed on the Main Board of the Malaysian stock exchange and the biggest private sector player in Sarawak (Cahaya Mata Sarawak Berhad 2007, p. 10). Under Taib's patronage, CMS has secured many state-funded projects, enabling the

conglomerate to maintain an “extremely healthy cash flow and high annual turnover” (Aeria 2005, p. 174). Although it is difficult to estimate the total value of Taib’s wealth, his family’s control of timber concessions and CMS’s widespread involvement in the various economic sectors provides a glimpse of the strongman-politician’s economic standing. Aeria (2005, p. 165) who studied extensively the link between politics and business in Sarawak gave a rather lucid description of Taib’s wealth. In his own words,

Taib is “flamboyant with expensive tastes” and is said to have purchased the piano of the late American showman Liberace for close to US\$2 million” (*FEER*, 12.9.96). He “lives in a well-guarded palatial home in Kuching and rides in a cream-colored Rolls Royce. A dapper dresser, he is partial to double-breasted suits and sports a ring with a walnut-sized red gem surrounded by small diamonds” (*ASWJ*, 7.2.90). Mahmud family members have major multi-million dollar investments in various parts of the world. Laila Taib-Chalecki and children are the majority owners of Sitehost Pty. Ltd., Australia, which owns the Adelaide Hilton Hotel (Australian Securities and Investments Commission 2000). Laila Taib-Chalecki also owns an expansive bungalow in Canada, one of 36 properties worth over a million Canadian dollars in the Rockcliffe area of Ottawa (*Ottawa Citizen*, 6.1.01). Taib’s daughter Jamilah and her husband Sean, are owner-shareholders of SAKTO Corporation, a major real estate operator of non-residential buildings in Ottawa, owning and managing over half a million square feet of prime office space with affiliate offices in the US, Asia, the UK and Australia (*Ottawa Business Journal*, 2.4.01) and Sakto Development Corporation, a multi-million dollar development and construction company in Ottawa (Canadian Building, July/August 1989). Jamilah also heads SAKTO Investment Corporation (Industry Canada Corporations Database Online 2000) and is reputed to be one of Canada’s richest women (*The Frank*, 9.8.00) (Aeria 2005, pp. 165–66).

Taib’s economic prowess elevates his status as a powerful state leader and influential strongman who is capable of constructing and deconstructing alliances among the political and business elites in Sarawak. This capability proves to be decisive in securing Taib’s place in the highest political office in Sarawak for more than two decades.

THE SNAP CRISIS AND THE STRONGMAN-POLITICIAN’S RESPONSE

Taib’s first test as the new strongman-politician was to handle the leadership crisis in SNAP. The crisis within the Dayak party started when the presidency

was left vacant by Dunstan Endawie in June 1980. Endawie, who was later appointed High Commissioner to New Zealand, wanted Daniel Tajem to succeed him as Sarawak's Deputy Chief Minister while James Wong was asked to take over SNAP presidency. However, this arrangement did not go down well with some party members who later nominated three candidates to replace Endawie, namely, Daniel Tajem, Joseph Samuel and James Wong. Subsequently, in a twenty-five-member caucus meeting, the delegates overwhelmingly voted Joseph Samuel as Sarawak's Deputy Chief Minister. However, Rahman who was still the Chief Minister at that time went against the wishes of SNAP members and appointed Daniel Tajem as the new Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Communications and Works. Rahman's action angered many SNAP members who felt that the strongman-politician had undermined the party's authority by not appointing their chosen candidate.

The crisis in SNAP deteriorated even further due to the tussle over the party's leadership. Initially Leo Moggie was appointed the acting president. However, things came to a head at the party's election in December 1981 when James Wong challenged Moggie for the party's number one post. The Leo Moggie faction felt that SNAP, being a Dayak-based party, should be led by a Dayak. While the James Wong faction argued that their leader had contributed a lot to the party financially, thus he should be given the opportunity to lead. After the party's election, James Wong surprisingly succeeded in winning the presidency by defeating Leo Moggie with a majority of fifteen votes.⁶ Leo Moggie's running mate, Daniel Tajem, also lost his bid to wrest the deputy president post from Edward Jeli, Wong's running mate. In order to ease the SNAP's crisis, Leo Moggie and Daniel Tajem were offered the vice-president posts. However, the olive branch offered by James Wong failed to end the animosity between Wong's and Moggies' factions. Considering that the next general election was just around the corner, Taib who had only succeeded Rahman as Sarawak's Chief Minister several months earlier decided to maintain his cabinet by retaining Daniel Tajem.

With SNAP's political crisis looming larger, the parliament was dissolved on 29 March 1982 to make way for Malaysia's fourth general election. The 1982 election intensified the rivalry between James Wong and Leo Moggie when the former excluded the latter's men (Edmund Langgu, Edwin Tangkun, Jonathan Narwin) in the party's list of candidates for the election. As the chairman of Sarawak Barisan Nasional (SBN), Taib accepted James Wong's list of candidates so that he would not be accused of undermining Wong's authority. In the election, the SNAP's crisis proved to be costly to SBN when the coalition lost five seats to the opposition, two to the Democratic Action

Party (DAP) and three to Independents. The three victorious Independent candidates (Patrick Uren, Edmund Langgu, Edwin Tangkun) were actually former SNAP members who were aligned to the Moggie faction. Besides losing five seats, the SBN's popular vote was also drastically reduced from 63.03 per cent in 1978 to 56.75 per cent in 1982. Apart from the effect of world recession, the decline in the voters' support towards BN was largely due to the infighting between SNAP leaders which resulted in the split of Dayak votes. Meanwhile, in the Muslim *bumiputera* seats, the retirement of several PAJAR's top leaders (including its founding president Alli Kawi, former president Haji Abang Kirprawi Haji Mohd Fauzi and founding vice-president Abang Haji Narawi Haji Mohd) prior to the election had weakened the party, thus allowing PBB to dominate all the five Muslim *bumiputera* seats, polling 77.56 per cent of the Muslim *bumiputera* vote.

In 1983, the leadership crisis in SNAP came to a boiling point when the party expelled Daniel Tajem, who was Moggie's strongest ally and also Sarawak's Deputy Chief Minister, due to his involvement in the campaign against SNAP's official candidates in the 1982 election. Despite his expulsion from the party, Daniel Tajem refused to step down from his cabinet post. At the same time, Taib refused to intervene, allowing Daniel Tajem to temporarily remain in the Sarawak cabinet although he was not a SNAP member anymore. Subsequently, in July 1983, Daniel Tajem and Leo Moggie formed a new party known as Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS), which was established solely to challenge James Wong's leadership in SNAP. The Dayak party was led by Leo Moggie, while Daniel Tajem became the party's deputy president. Almost immediately after its inception, PBDS applied to join the national BN but its application was rejected due to a strong rebuff from SNAP. Taib, on the other hand, had other plan for PBDS. Using his prerogative as the chairman of SBN, Taib co-opted PBDS into the ruling coalition at the *negeri* level despite strong opposition from SNAP. According to Taib,

I cannot risk the idea of denying a group of well educated leaders who have gathered in not insubstantial fashion from participating in government (*Sarawak Tribune*, 11 August 1983).

With the inclusion of PBDS into a new coalition known as BN Plus, Taib retained PBDS leaders in his government, including Daniel Tajem (Deputy Chief Minister), Ambrose Gramong (Assistant Minister of Lands and Mineral Resources) and Gramong Juna (Assistant Minister in the Chief Minister's Office). The Secretary General of SNAP, Balan Seling, publicly

objected to Taib's decision to accept PBDS into the ruling coalition but had to accept the decision because "SNAP is a family in the BN and the Chief Minister the head, thus the party had to recognize his prerogative" (*Sarawak Tribune*, 11 August 1983). In Kuala Lumpur, the formation of BN Plus was supported by Dr Mahathir because the premier believed that "the PBDS leaders had the same stand as the BN". The Prime Minister further added, "I see little reason for me to disagree as we are thinking of the stability of Sarawak" (*Sarawak Tribune*, 20 August 1983).

Prior to its leadership crisis, SNAP was a strong partner within the SBN. It was almost as strong as PBB in terms of its representation in the Council Negeri and Parliament. However, Taib's decision to form BN Plus had significantly tilted the balance of power in the ruling coalition in Sarawak. First, the formation of BN Plus had strengthened the position of PBB in the ruling coalition at the expense of SNAP. With the presence of PBDS, SNAP had to concede some of its seats to the former, hence weakening the latter's electoral strength. This arrangement presented PBB with an opportunity to further strengthen its position as the leading party in the ruling coalition, particularly with its superior representation in the Council Negeri and Parliament. Second, the formation of BN Plus helped to propel Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) to a stronger position in the Sarawak government. Prior to the SNAP's crisis, SUPP was considered a weak partner within the ruling party mainly due to Rahman's marginalization of the party and also due to the inclusion of SNAP in the coalition. However, the schism between SNAP and PBDS presented SUPP with a golden opportunity to reposition itself as the kingmaker in Sarawak under the new leadership of Taib Mahmud. Third, the formation of BN Plus had significantly weakened the Dayaks' voice and representation in the government, leading to the marginalization of the community. Prior to the SNAP's crisis, the Dayaks were already fragmented along three political parties, namely SNAP, PBB and SUPP. So when another Dayak party was established, the fragmentation of the Dayak communities became even more severe. Without a strong united voice, the Dayak communities would not be able to articulate their interests forcefully.

Strategically, Taib made a clever decision by bringing PBDS into the government which significantly reduced SNAP's influence within the coalition and also the government. With the amplified strength of PBB, the strongman-politician could use the party as the platform to further enhance his influence and authority in Sarawak. Taib believed that SUPP would be a loyal partner within the BN Plus government compared to SNAP because the Chinese majority party had strongly lobbied for the strongman-politician to replace

Rahman when he decided to step down in 1981. Furthermore, Taib felt that SUPP would not be interested in the Chief Minister's seat compared to SNAP particularly when its former leader, Ningkan, had warmed the seat before. Just when Taib thought that the SNAP's crisis would be his toughest test as Sarawak's Chief Minister, the strongman-politician was hit by another crisis which came from an unlikely source, his own uncle.

UNCLE-NEPHEW CRISIS: THE CLASH OF STRONGMEN-POLITICIANS

Initially, Taib maintained the respect of a nephew for his uncle and of junior politician to his senior. But the relationship between Taib and Rahman began to crumble after Taib's second year in office. Contrary to popular belief, the uncle-nephew crisis was not merely due to a clash of personalities, or a tussle over timber concessions, or a leadership tussle within PBB (Jawan 1994, p. 140). It was actually a manifestation of a struggle between a former strongman-politician, Rahman Yakub, and the new strongman-politician, Taib Mahmud over the control of Sarawak's resources and government. Despite handing over his "throne" to Taib, Rahman acted as if he was still in charge. Taib, on the other hand, refused to allow his uncle to undermine his authority, thus leading to a clash of two powerful men. Subsequently, Rahman realized that there would be only one powerful strongman-politician in Sarawak.

In Taib's first two years in office, there was a continuity of policy, personnel and even leadership in Sarawak (Leigh 1991, p. 181). Although Rahman had relinquished the Chief Ministership and assumed the ceremonial Governor's post, he still wanted to retain his power as Sarawak's strongman-politician. Through his loyal lieutenants who were still in control over key government offices, Rahman tried to dictate the distribution of state's resources and also the operation of government agencies. Taib initially accommodated Rahman's intrusion but the former subsequently had enough of his uncle's unwarranted behaviour (Bullis 1996, p. 144). As the new Chief Minister, Taib realized that he should not let anyone, including the Governor, tell him how to run the government. Thus, as part of a strategy to phase out Rahman's influence in the government, Taib slowly replaced Rahman's loyalists with his own men. Rahman expressed his displeasure towards Taib's action but it was ignored.

The relationship between Taib and Rahman deteriorated further in September 1983 when their animosity turned into public sparks at the opening of the Tanjung Kidurong Port in Bintulu. The ceremony was attended by Federal Minister of Transport, Chong Hon Nyan, who was invited to grace the function on behalf of the central government. When the time came for

Taib to deliver his speech, Rahman rose unexpectedly from his chair and lashed out at the central government for having gone back on its promise to build a new airport for Bintulu. Feeling embarrassed with Rahman's outburst, Taib left the stage while his uncle was still speaking. After the incident, Taib made a public apology over his action in Bintulu and later handed over his resignation letter to Rahman which the latter declined. Instead, the Governor informed his nephew that he had already submitted his resignation letter to the Yang Dipertuan Agong who persuaded him to stay on until his term expired in April 1985 (*Sarawak Tribune*, 12 July 1987). The Bintulu incident marked the start of an open confrontation between Rahman and Taib.

The crisis between Rahman and Taib was largely due to the struggle between two strongmen-politicians who tried to exert their influence and authority over the *negeri*. Prior to Taib's rise to Sarawak's highest political office, Rahman was the most powerful strongman-politician in the *negeri*. Through the exploitation of the powerful Chief Minister's office and the support of the central state, Rahman transformed himself from a mere political leader to a powerful strongman-politician who had the power to dominate the population and dictate its character. Since the individual who occupies the powerful Chief Minister's seat would have the greatest amount of power in the *negeri*, he or she would then be the most powerful strongman-politician. Hence, when Rahman stepped down, he actually relinquished his position as the most powerful strongman-politician without him realizing it. Despite losing his power, Rahman was not willing to withdraw from active politics. Taib, on the other hand, refused to let his uncle interfere in the running of the government. This conflict gradually transformed into a major crisis that completely altered the face of Sarawak politics.

MUSLIM BUMIPUTERA CRISIS WITHIN PBB

After the Bintulu incident, the uncle-nephew crisis became an open confrontation with both factions planning the downfall of their rivals. The confrontation unavoidably spilt over to PBB which became the main battlefield for a proxy war between Rahman's loyalists and Taib's supporters.

In the midst of the uncle-nephew crisis, PBB held its triennial general meeting to elect the party's new office bearers in September 1983. As the president, Taib made sure that his position would be secured by not allowing the number one post in the party to be contested. Apart from the presidency, Taib also directed that the deputy president (Pesaka wing) seat should not be contested either, thus allowing Jabu to retain his post. The other vacant deputy president's post (Bumiputera wing), however, was opened for contest,

which saw three of Rahman's close aides — Salleh Jafaruddin, Wan Habib Syed Mahmud and Wan Yusuf Tun Haji Bujang — along with two other candidates, Dr Sulaiman Daud and Abang Abu Bakar, who were perceived to be “neutrals”, vying for the seat. Due to the intense contest among the five candidates, a lot of mudslinging and damaging remarks were made (*Sarawak Tribune*, 26 August 1983). This situation worried Taib but he was more concerned with the possibility of Rahman's men winning the deputy president's seat which could undermine his position in the party. Hence, Taib stopped the party elections except for the Supreme Council seats of the Bumiputera wing.⁷ Subsequently, a motion was tabled in the general assembly to authorize the president to appoint a suitable candidate as deputy president albeit some spirited objections by the delegates who were aligned to Rahman's faction (*Sarawak Tribune*, 10 September 1983).

After failing to challenge Taib's leadership in PBB, Rahman's faction launched a wave of blistering attack against the Chief Minister. The Matu-Daro PBB, which was formerly headed by Rahman, even tabled a motion to form Sarawak UMNO by merging all the *bumiputera* parties in the *negeri* including PBB (*Sarawak Tribune*, 14 September 1983). It was clear that the proposal to bring UMNO to Sarawak was intended to curb Taib's power. Several UMNO leaders, however, brushed aside the proposal mooted by Rahman's faction. The Deputy President of UMNO, Musa Hitam, insisted that the SBN was still strong, thus there was no reason for UMNO to come to the *negeri* (*Sarawak Tribune*, 24 September 1983). UMNO's refusal to establish itself in Sarawak was due to a secret pact made between Dr Mahathir and Taib which was revealed in 1997 (Chin 2003a, p. 40). Thus, as long as Dr Mahathir remained as the Prime Minister and Taib continued to helm the *negeri*, the Malay national party would not spread its wings to Sarawak. Apart from the motion on Sarawak UMNO, a staunch Rahman supporter, Salleh Jafaruddin, used the PBB's general assembly to criticize Taib over his actions in Bintulu. He opined that Rahman's speech was not offensive to Taib; therefore, the latter should not respond negatively to the former. Still, Salleh commended Taib for making a public apology and reminded the Chief Minister to be respectful towards the elders (*Sarawak Tribune*, 13 September 1983). The open criticism against Taib was unprecedented in PBB especially when the attack came from the Muslim *bumiputera* members who generally respect their leaders.

As the temperature in PBB was rising, Sarawak went into its fourth *negeri* election with polling scheduled for 28 and 29 December 1983. With the inclusion of PBDS in BN Plus, the allocation of seats among the SBN

became a potentially explosive issue especially between SNAP and PBDS. In the 1979 election, PBB and SNAP were allocated eighteen Council Negeri seats each while SUPP was given twelve seats. So, in the 1983 election, SNAP was adamant in retaining its seats and refused to surrender any of them to PBDS. The uncompromising attitude shown by SNAP was expected especially when the party felt betrayed by Taib who unilaterally accepted PBDS into the coalition. To resolve this problem, Taib was given a free hand by the national BN to decide on the allocation of seats for the 1983 election (*Sarawak Tribune*, 29 October 1983). Since SNAP refused to compromise, Taib took a bizarre decision to allow SNAP and PBDS to use their own party symbols to face off each other in the Dayak seats.⁸ Subsequently, PBDS decided to contest in fourteen Council Negeri seats while SNAP fielded its candidates in eighteen seats. Although SNAP and PBDS were contesting under their own party symbols, they were told not to contest against the PBB and SUPP candidates. However, SNAP went against this understanding and stood against the BN candidates in Tasik Biru (PBB) and Padungan (SUPP) which SNAP claimed to be theirs. Not only did SNAP contest against the BN candidates in Tasik Biru and Padungan, the party was also accused of “planting” Independent candidates against several other PBB candidates, including Taib. According to the Chief Minister,

In the past two to three months, SNAP members had covertly moved into PBB areas to lay the groundwork for Independent candidates to challenge the PBB. I also have evidence that SNAP President Datuk James Wong has asked an Independent candidate to stand against me in the Sebandi constituency (*Sarawak Tribune*, 11 November 1983).

Obviously, the SNAP leaders were trying to undermine Taib’s authority because they believed that the strongman-politician had weakened the party by forming the BN Plus and allowing SNAP and PBDS to contest against each other. Suddenly, Taib was dragged into the SNAP-PBDS crisis which momentarily overshadowed the crisis between the Chief Minister and his uncle. The actions taken by SNAP triggered a wave of criticisms from the BN leaders including Dr Mahathir who said the whole episode had embarrassed him. Other groups within the ruling party such as the PBB Youth called for the expulsion of SNAP from the coalition. Against these criticisms, James Wong remained defiant and claimed that the “Independent candidates who were SNAP members were not sanctioned by SNAP” (*Sarawak Tribune*, 13 December 1983). He even blamed Taib for the actions of the BN members

who contested against the ruling party's official candidates. Taib, according to James Wong, failed to take disciplinary actions against PBB and PBDS members who had campaigned against SNAP's candidates during the 1982 parliamentary election, thus allowing this trend to continue in the 1983 election.⁹

Despite SNAP's attempt to undermine Taib and PBB, the Muslim *bumiputera*-dominated party was set to benefit from the SNAP-PBDS crisis. As a result of the crisis, PBB managed to increase the number of seats it contested from eighteen to twenty; the two new seats were Tasik Biru and Belaga. In terms of PBB's list of candidates, Taib tried to avoid further schism within the party by retaining all Rahman's men albeit their open criticisms against him. Another SBN's component party, SUPP, retained all the twelve seats it contested in the 1979 election except for Padungan which the party took from SNAP and Belaga which it gave to PBB.

The BN Plus comfortably won the 1983 election by securing 44 out of 48 Council Negeri seats (PBB nineteen, SUPP eleven, SNAP eight, PBDS six); and polling 68.51 per cent of the popular vote. PBB and SUPP collectively garnered 46.22 per cent votes while SNAP proved to be more popular among the Dayak voters by polling 12.95 per cent votes against PBDS with 9.34 per cent. In the Muslim *bumiputera* seats, PBB fielded four new faces namely Saadi Olia in Kuala Rajang, Wahab Dollah in Matu Daro, Usop Wahab in Subis and Wan Wahab Wan Senusi in Semera. The PBB won convincingly in the Muslim *bumiputera* seats when it managed to sweep all the twelve seats up for grab (two seats, Matu Daro and Oya, were won uncontested) by polling 67.62 per cent votes. Taib Mahmud easily defeated a BERSATU and an Independent candidate by polling 71.65 per cent votes. BERSATU, formerly known as PAJAR, did poorly in the 1983 election when three out of four of its candidates lost their deposits. In fact, some Independents performed better than BERSATU's candidates.

At the conclusion of his first *negeri* election, Taib finally received the mandate he needed from the people of Sarawak to lead the *negeri*. After the 1983 election, Taib decided to retain all his cabinet ministers and their portfolios except for Balan Seling from SNAP. In an apparent frustration towards SNAP, Taib dropped all the party's representatives from his Cabinet, including Assistant Minister, Michael Ben. Prior to the cabinet reshuffle, SNAP tried to reconcile with Taib by supporting the PBDS's application to join the national BN. The strongman-politician, however, was still bitter with SNAP's actions during the election hence he refused to appoint any of its assemblymen to his cabinet. Prior to the 1983 election, PBB had

four ministers and two assistant ministers, SUPP had two ministers and two assistant ministers, while SNAP had two ministers and three assistant ministers. However, after the election, PBB and SUPP maintained the same number of ministers and assistant ministers while PBDS was given a minister and an assistant minister's posts. Several new faces made it to the cabinet, namely assistant minister Abang Johari Tun Openg (PBB) who replaced Abang Ahmad Urai (PBB) and Assistant Minister Dr George Chan (SUPP) who replaced Chia Chin Shin (SUPP). Abang Ahmad Urai was not picked to defend his Semera seat in the 1983 election; instead he was appointed Senator in the House of Senate. Similarly, Chia Chin Shin was not picked to defend his Miri seat which was given to Dr George Chan. The rest of the Assistant Ministers (Gramong Juna from PBDS, Chong Kiun Kong from SUPP, and Robert Jacob Ridu from PBB) were retained. Although still disappointed with SNAP's action in "back-stabbing" the BN in the 1983 election, Taib finally appointed a SNAP member to his cabinet since the party was still part of the coalition. Thus, three months after Taib's cabinet reshuffle, Edward Jeli (SNAP) was appointed the new Minister of Local Government (*Sarawak Tribune*, 13 April 1984).

Just as the political storm between Taib and SNAP was about to subside, the political assault mounted by Rahman and his faction was just getting warmed up. In early 1985, in an effort to get rid of Taib, Rahman wrote a lengthy "personal" letter to his nephew which was copied to the Prime Minister. The letter criticized Taib for his "poor political and personal judgment" (Leigh 1991, p. 183). Rahman ended the letter with the following words,

I venture to suggest that if you find (sic) unable to change from your present thinking and ways of doing things in Sarawak, you had better make an honorable exit. Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu will decide who should be your successor. I don't intend to fight you. You are too small for me (Leigh 1991, p. 183).

Dr Mahathir refused to interfere in the feud which was largely seen as a clash between an uncle and his nephew. After failing to coax the support of Kuala Lumpur, Rahman and his faction intensified their attack towards Taib. Criticisms against Taib were mostly directed at his faith as a Muslim, leadership styles and development policies. First, Rahman's men planned to tarnish Taib's image as a Muslim leader by questioning his faith. Initially, the Rahman's faction did not specifically mention Taib's name when they criticized certain "Muslim leaders" who believed in *bomohism*. However,

Rahman and his supporters started to openly accuse Taib of *bomohism* after Rahman's tenure as the Governor ended. Rahman was replaced by Ahmad Zaidi Adruce, a former assemblyman of Kalaka, on 1 April 1985. In his scathing attack against Taib's faith, Rahman went through a great detail in exposing his nephew's alleged obsession with *bomoh*.

Taib came to see me in 1983 and asked me what I thought would be the best time for an election. I told him that it was not for me to say...but my usual practice was to seek guidance from God by praying. I told him that it was not me who would face the *rakyat* (people), but him. Therefore he must pray the *istikharah* (special prayer to request certain needs) and the best time to pray is after midnight. He could either do that or go to Mecca for about a week. He heeded my advice. But my relatives informed me that he took along with him a *bomoh* from Kampung Gita in Kuching. But Taib said he is a *kiai* (religious teacher). But Onn (Taib's brother) said the *kiai* is a *bomoh* and he was called a *kiai* because he had the powers of an Indonesian man who had died a few hundred years ago (*Sarawak Tribune*, 5 April 1985).

According to Islam, seeking help from other beings other than God is considered blasphemous. Therefore, by questioning Taib's faith, Rahman hoped that the Muslim community in Sarawak would snub Taib and call for his ouster. In brushing aside his critics, Taib argued that nobody had the right to question his faith because only God could judge him. Realizing that the attack on Taib's faith failed to damage his reputation and image as a Muslim *bumiputera* leader, Rahman and his supporters tactically changed their strategy. In an attempt to draw the support of the non-Muslim *bumiputera*, Rahman's faction turned to two larger issues that could affect the community; Taib's leadership styles and his inequitable development policies. With these renewed attacks, the crisis which started as a Muslim *bumiputera* affair later became a full-blown *bumiputera* political crisis. By masterfully shifting their strategies, Rahman's faction succeeded in attracting the support of Dayak leaders especially from PBDS who felt that their communities were being marginalized by the Chief Minister.

Apart from attacking Taib's faith, leadership styles and development policies, Rahman also tried to destroy the cordial relation that Taib had with the central state leaders. Rahman knew that Taib would remain strong in Sarawak as long as the central state continued to support his leadership. Therefore, in order to remove Taib, Rahman strategically tried to cause a rift between the Chief Minister and Kuala Lumpur by repeatedly criticizing the central state leaders. In the words of Salleh Jafaruddin, Rahman's strongest ally,

We seldom see federal ministers coming over to visit Sarawak. Even if they do visit, they come for a couple of hours to see the LNG project, then take another flight back to KL, and sit down in the federal capital telling that Sarawak has not much problem (*Sarawak Tribune*, 16 March 1984).

Another Rahman's loyalist, Wan Habib Syed Mahmud, also publicly expressed his disgust and dissatisfaction over the central state leaders' lack of interest towards Sarawak. In a dialogue session between the National Integration Committee headed by Information Minister Mohd Adib Adam and Sarawak leaders, Wan Habib ticked off central state leaders by saying,

We are not interested in your philosophy of integration, but more on what is being done towards the development of the state (Sarawak). Projects like the building of hospitals, airports and universities are being shelved when it is so obvious that these projects are wanting (*Sarawak Tribune*, 5 May 1984).

In an immediate response to these criticisms, the central state swiftly announced the commencement of several new projects, including the RM400 million Universiti Pertanian Malaysia campus in Bintulu (*Sarawak Tribune*, 20 May 1984). Taib defended his central state counterparts and asked for "the people's patience, tolerance and understanding". According to the strongman-politician, he knew the Prime Minister personally because he had worked closely with him in the cabinet. Taib further added that the Prime Minister "has a very strong view about national integration" therefore he would not marginalize Sarawak (*Sarawak Tribune*, 21 March 1984). The Malay card was not openly used by Taib's critics because the man behind the critics was not a Malay. In fact, by not playing the Malay sentiment, Rahman was able to unite all Taib's critics including the Malays and the Melanaus.

What was Taib Mahmud's reaction towards the organized plan to topple him? Taib's first move was to expose the culprits behind the whole scheme. He identified three leaders, namely, Wan Habib Syed Mahmud, Salleh Jafaruddin and Datuk Wan Yusuf Tun Haji Bujang as the ringleaders behind the plot that used local newspaper and "communist tactics" to bring him down (*Sarawak Tribune*, 10 April 1985). Although the three individuals identified by Taib were staunch supporters of Rahman, the former did not openly acknowledge the latter's involvement in the plot. After exposing his enemies, Taib took offensive measures by removing his fierce critics from their positions in PBB. The first to be disciplined was Salleh Jafaruddin who was removed from his Deputy Secretary General's post. Salleh was subsequently replaced by Taib loyalist, Wan Madzihi Wan Madzhar. In November 1985, the strongman-politician suspended the PBB's vice-president who was also his fierce critics,

Wan Habib Syed Mahmud. Also suspended was Haji A.S. Jaya who was an assistant publicity chief of PBB (*Sarawak Tribune*, 17 November 1985). Another Rahman's supporter who was stripped from his position in PBB was Haji Balia Munir who was then the party publicity chief. Balia was replaced by another Taib loyalist, Adenan Satem.

Taib's next move was to reshuffle his cabinet. The strongman-politician created three new ministries and abolished two others. He also changed the portfolios of his cabinet ministers in order to remove Rahman's men from holding several powerful ministries and departments. Taib placed the newly created Ministry of Resource Planning under him in order to control the distribution of timber concessions which was previously under the control of Rahman's man, Noor Tahir. Despite being Rahman's supporter, Noor Tahir along with another Rahman's loyalist in the cabinet, Hafsah Harun, was retained in Taib's new cabinet because they did not publicly criticize him. However, Noor Tahir was given a less important portfolio, Environment and Tourism, while Hafsah Harun was made Minister of Social Development (*Sarawak Tribune*, 12 July 1985). The rest of the cabinet line-up was as follows: Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Finance: Sim Kheng Hung (SUPP); Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Agriculture and Community Development: Daniel Tajem (PBDS); Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Housing: Alfred Jabu (PBB); Minister of Infrastructure Development: Dr Wong Soon Kai (SUPP); and Minister of Land Development: Edward Jeli (SNAP). All the assistant ministers (Gramong Juna from PBDS, George Chan and Chong Kiun Kong from SUPP, Abang Johari Tun Openg and Robert Jacob Ridu from PBB) were retained while three new assistant ministers (Adenan Satem from PBB, Michael Ben from SNAP and Hollis Tini from SUPP) were appointed. With the cabinet reshuffle, PBB had four ministers and three assistant ministers, SUPP had two ministers and three assistant ministers, while SNAP and PBDS had one minister and one assistant minister each.

Taib's offensive tactics failed to deter Rahman and his supporters' spirit to topple the Chief Minister. In April 1986, Salleh Jafaruddin resigned as the assemblyman of Oya and member of PBB because "he was prevented by the organizers from attending the special assembly of the PBB Oya branch, of which he was the chairman and also he could not tolerate and support Taib's leadership anymore" (*Sarawak Tribune*, 20 April 1986). Salleh's decision to resign from PBB prompted a wave of resignations from other party members throughout Sarawak. Two other PBB's assemblymen, Saadi Olia (Kuala Rajang) and Wan Habib Syed Mahmud (Balingian) also resigned from the party but retained their Council Negeri seats.

Wan Habib along with Saadi Olia and Salleh Jafaruddin later formed a new party called United Sarawak Natives Association (USNA) in 1986. Wan Habib was appointed the *protem* President of the new party which was “mooted by a group of concerned politicians who were dissatisfied with the style of leadership of the present government” (*Sarawak Tribune*, 21 May 1986). With the resignation of Salleh Jafaruddin, a by-election was held in Oya on 1 and 2 July 1986. Since USNA could not be registered on time, Salleh Jafaruddin had to contest as an Independent against Wan Madzihi Wan Mahdzar from PBB. Wan Madzihi who was PBB deputy secretary general surprisingly won the by-election by polling 4,215 votes against the incumbent, Salleh, who polled 2,460 votes. Although disappointed with the result, it failed to dampen the spirit of Rahman’s faction to continue their assault against Taib.

With the crisis between Taib and his uncle coming to a boil, the parliament was dissolved to make way for Malaysia’s fifth general election on 2 and 3 August 1986. In contrast to the 1983 election, the SBN component parties were able to reach a compromise in terms of seats allocation with PBB getting eight seats, SUPP seven, SNAP five, and PBDS four. Both PBB and SUPP retained the same number of seats they contested in 1982, while SNAP lost four seats to PBDS. The SBN managed to win all the seats they contested except for the three seats contested by SUPP: two seats (Serian and Rajang) went to Independents while the other seat (Bandar Kuching) went to DAP. In terms of the popular vote, the SBN only managed to garner 55.61 per cent votes, a marginal decline from 56.75 per cent votes that the ruling party received in 1982.

In the Muslim *bumiputera* seats, all eyes were on Simunjan and Mukah which the media labelled as hot seats. Even, the Prime Minister helped in the BN’s campaign in Simunjan while Musa Hitam campaigned for the ruling party in Mukah. There was a straight fight between Wan Habib Syed Mahmud (USNA’s *protem* president) who stood as an Independent and the incumbent Bujang Ulis from PBB. Bujang Ulis who was then the Deputy Federal Minister of Education won with a comfortable 3,640 votes majority. He polled 66.36 per cent votes against Habib who managed to secure 33.64 per cent votes. Although Habib lost in Simunjan, he succeeded in reducing the popular vote received by BN from 83.93 per cent in 1982 to 66.36 per cent in 1986. Meanwhile in Mukah, the incumbent Dr Leo Michael Toyad contested against Salleh Jafaruddin (USNA’s secretary general) who stood as an Independent. Salleh mounted a fierce challenge against the BN candidate but it was not enough to secure him the seat. Still, Salleh was able to reduce PBB’s popular vote from 70.59 per cent in 1982 to 60.9 per

cent in 1986. The Chief Minister who was challenged by an Independent in Samarahan also secured an easy victory by polling 77.88 per cent votes against 22.12 per cent votes polled by the Independent candidate. Overall, the PBB's performance in the Muslim *bumiputera* seats declined significantly when the party only managed to poll 68.15 per cent votes in the 1986 election compared to 77.56 per cent votes in 1982. The decline in the PBB's popular vote was mainly due to the strong challenge posed by Rahman's men who were considered popular and capable leaders.

Fresh from the 1986 parliamentary election, PBB held its triennial general meeting in September the same year. To avoid further split in the party, Taib decided that the top posts would not be contested. However, as in the last party election, the contest for the Deputy President (Bumiputera wing) which was still vacant proved to be the highlight of the 1986 general meeting. With most of Rahman's staunch supporters already out of the party, Taib gave his consent for the post to be contested in order to let party members decide who was the right man for the job. Two most senior party members, Dr Sulaiman Daud and Abang Abu Bakar, decided to slug it out. Initially Taib did not side anybody but he then openly endorsed Abang Abu as his preferred choice (*Sarawak Tribune*, 29 September 1986). Why did Taib choose Abang Abu? The son of the late Datuk Bandar Abang Mustapha was chosen probably because he posed less threat compared to Dr Sulaiman. Although the latter had worked as Taib's political secretary when he was the Federal Minister of Primary Industries in 1972, the strongman-politician did not see Dr Sulaiman as a potential ally. The fact that Kuala Lumpur preferred Dr Sulaiman to succeed Rahman in 1981 spoke volumes of his credentials as a leader. Taking the cue of Taib's endorsement, PBB delegates elected Abang Abu Bakar who polled 370 votes against Dr Sulaiman who only managed to poll 131 votes (*Sarawak Tribune*, 28 September 1986). Besides the contest for the deputy president's seat, elections were also held for seven vice-presidents and fifteen elected Supreme Council members. From the Bumiputera wing, four members were elected vice-presidents, namely, Abang Johari Tun Openg who received the highest number of votes, followed by Dr Sulaiman Daud, Wan Madzihi Wan Madzhar and Bujang Ulis. Taib's loyalist, Adenan Satem, was the only candidate who failed to secure the vice-president seat. One of Taib's staunchest critics, Datuk Wan Yusuf Tun Bujang, surprisingly did not contest for the deputy president post or defend his vice-president seat. The rest of the vice-president posts were allocated to the Pesaka wing which saw a four-cornered fight. The three successful candidates were Senator Stephen Wan Ulok, Senator Kenneth Kanyan and Dominic Andrew Daguk. Those who were elected as Supreme Council members were Dr Leo Michael Toyad,

Haji Wan Hamid Edruce, Dr Abang Draup Abang Zain, Abang Haji Osman Datuk Amar Haji Marzuki, Haji Khaider Zaidell, Wan Ahmad Habib Salleh, Wan Abdul Wahab Wan Senusi, Haji Annuar Razak, Mutang Tagal, Ambrose Blikau, James Jimbun, Douglas Sulang, Musa Giri, Benedict Bujang and Janggu Bayang. Datuk Leonard Linggi Jugah was appointed PBB's secretary general while Abang Haji Ahmad Urai, Robert Jacob Ridu and Hajah Sharifah Mordiah Tuanku Fauzi were appointed assistant secretary general. Adenan Satem who lost his bid to secure the vice-president post was later appointed the party's publicity chief while his brother, Zainuddin Satem was appointed the party's treasurer (*Sarawak Tribune*, 29 September 1986).

FROM A MUSLIM BUMIPUTERA CRISIS TO A FULL-BLOWN SARAWAK CRISIS: THE MING COURT AFFAIR

On 9 March 1987, four Sarawak ministers and three assistant ministers sent shockwaves when they suddenly resigned from the cabinet. The four ministers were Noor Tahir (PBB), Hafsa Harun (PBB), Daniel Tajem (PBDS) and Edward Jeli (SNAP). The three assistant ministers who relinquished their posts were Gramong Juna (PBDS), Michael Ben (SNAP) and Hollis Tini (SUPP). These seven leaders along with twenty other *negeri* assemblymen were flown to Kuala Lumpur in early March 1987.¹⁰ All the twenty-seven assemblymen gathered at the Ming Court Hotel (hence the Ming Court Affair) in Kuala Lumpur and announced that they had lost confidence in Taib because "he could no longer administer the government properly and has failed to look after the interests of the *bumiputera* in Sarawak" (*Sarawak Tribune*, 11 March 1987). The twenty-seven assemblymen were accompanied by Rahman and Leo Moggie, the president of PBDS. The latter declared his party's support for Rahman, thus withdrawing his party from the SBN. Despite pulling out from the ruling coalition, the Dayak party remained a member of the national BN with its president still an active member of the central cabinet. Prior to 1987, the non-Muslim *bumiputera* and Chinese leaders from the SBN component parties did not interfere in what to be a crisis between an uncle and his nephew. However, the Ming Court Affair suddenly saw the involvement of Sarawak's assemblymen from all four component parties of the SBN. Despite the involvement of SUPP and SNAP leaders in the plot to topple Taib, both parties pledged their loyalty to the strongman-politician. Among the SBN parties, SUPP played the most influential role in maintaining Taib's position by persuading the central state leaders to support the strongman-politician. The Chinese dominated party strongly supported Taib over Rahman because the latter was responsible for weakening SUPP by

instigating the formation of Sarawak DAP in 1978. Apart from that, SUPP and the Chinese community felt uneasy with Rahman's Islamization process during his tenure as the Chief Minister, thus they would not want Rahman to be back in power (Chin 2004, p. 243).

The twenty-seven Sarawak assemblymen who named their group Kumpulan Maju (Progressive Group) sent an ultimatum to Taib asking him to resign or face a no-confidence vote (*Sarawak Tribune*, 11 March 1987). Why did the Kumpulan Maju take this course of action? They could have waited for the Council Negeri in-session and then called for a formal vote of no confidence which could have been passed and a replacement Chief Minister would be appointed. According to Leigh (1991, p. 189), there were two likely reasons behind the Kumpulan Maju's actions. First, the group was anticipating a cabinet reshuffle which could result in the sacking of Daniel Tajem (PBDS) as the Deputy Chief Minister and the appointment of Edward Jeli (SNAP) as the replacement. Daniel Tajem's sacking was anticipated because of his public criticisms against Taib during the PBDS Triennial General Meeting in Sibau. In the TGM which was attended by the Muslim *bumiputera* leaders aligned to Rahman, Tajem spoke bluntly about Taib's role in the marginalization of the Dayaks. In the words of Tajem,

(He) urged Dayaks not to remain just as "soldiers", but aspire to be "generals" who have power and give command. Let us move as from today to the frontline and be fired by our enemies (sic)... On our own, we are a strong community, but we have been picked from here and there like the ingredients of a *piring* (offering). It is good if the sacrifice is meant for God, but if the *piring* is meant for evil spirits then it will be eaten by the spirits (Leigh 1991, pp. 187–88).

Second, the Kumpulan Maju wanted to take advantage of Dayak nationalism mooted by PBDS. Therefore, the situation was ripe at that time to topple the strongman-politician by exploiting the flame of anger and frustration among the Dayaks.

In order to see their plan successfully executed, the Kumpulan Maju had to secure the central state's support. However, Dr Mahathir who could ultimately dictate the course of Sarawak politics was too occupied with his plan to seek re-election as UMNO president.¹¹ Apart from being bogged down by UMNO's election, Dr Mahathir was reluctant to lend his support either to Taib or Rahman because he was not prepared to be blamed for the installation of another non-Muslim *bumiputera* Chief Minister in Sarawak,

like what had happened in Sabah (Leigh 1991, p. 190). Even Rahman's close personal and business link with the Deputy Prime Minister, Ghafar Baba, did not help the Kumpulan Maju's cause. Although the group claimed that they had the support of the Deputy Prime Minister, this claim was vehemently denied by the latter.

In facing the biggest challenge of his political career, Taib boldly dismissed the demand of the Kumpulan Maju. Instead, he decided to dissolve the Council Negeri, paving the way for a snap election. Taib's decision to dissolve the Council Negeri caught the Kumpulan Maju by surprise because they were confident that the Chief Minister would give up and step down. With the snap election, the Kumpulan Maju knew that their plan to topple Taib through the ballot box would be almost impossible especially against the might of the BN election machinery and the government resources.

After dissolving the Council Negeri, Taib appointed three new ministers and four new assistant ministers to replace those who resigned earlier to form the Kumpulan Maju. In the new cabinet line-up, Abang Johari was appointed Minister of Agriculture and Community Development while Adenan Satem was appointed Minister of Land Development. Acknowledging James Wong and his party's support towards him, Taib brought the estranged SNAP president, who was never appointed as a *negeri* or Federal Minister since winning SNAP's presidency in 1983, into the cabinet. In the cabinet reshuffle, James was appointed the new Minister of Environment and Tourism. Wan Wahab Wan Senusi, who was initially linked with the Kumpulan Maju, was appointed Assistant Minister along with Ambrose Blikau (SNAP), Ramsay Noel Jitam (SUPP) and Dr Parau Rubis (SNAP).

THE 1987 ELECTION AND THE POD

Just barely before the 1987 election, Rahman managed to register a new party known as Parti Persatuan Rakyat Malaysia Sarawak (PERMAS). The new party was established to house former PBB members and also other BN members who left their parties to join Kumpulan Maju. The speedy approval of PERMAS sent a signal to Sarawak voters that the group received the support of the central state leaders. This gave Rahman's supporters a much-needed morale booster in facing the daunting task of unseating the SBN's government. In the election, PERMAS and PBDS contested in forty-two out of forty-eight Council Negeri seats with each party contesting in twenty-one seats. The Kumpulan Maju's manifesto was themed "A Government for the People" which contained four major points. First, it called for an end to

the present government that was based on fear, abuse of authority, malice, victimization and intimidation. Second, the manifesto promised to uphold the rule of law and to protect Sarawak rights. Third, it pledged to restore democracy and genuine multi-racial unity in Sarawak. Finally, it promised to ensure that ministerial power was exercised in accordance with the law for the protection and benefit of the people (*Sarawak Tribune*, 7 April 1987). In offering alternative to Taib's leadership, Kumpulan Maju nominated Noor Tahir as the Chief Minister of the new government. The group nominated Noor Tahir as their de facto leader in order to win the support of the central state leaders who would want to see the continuity of Malay leadership in Sarawak. Although Noor Tahir was officially appointed as the leader of Kumpulan Maju, the mastermind behind the group was none other than Rahman. Since the former Chief Minister would also be contesting in the 1987 election, he was widely seen as the man who would dominate Sarawak politics if Kumpulan Maju succeeded in forming the new government.

With the PBDS's crossover to the opposition bench, the BN3 component parties were allocated more seats compared to the previous election.¹² The PBB increased the number of seats it contested from twenty in 1983 to twenty-three in 1987. The SUPP, on the other hand, increased its seats allocation from twelve in 1983 to fourteen in 1987. Another SBN component party, SNAP, ended up with only eleven seats compared to eighteen in 1983. The BN3 released its twelve-point manifesto after Kumpulan Maju made public theirs. The theme of the SBN's manifesto was "Continued Stability through the Politics of Development". The manifesto promised a government that would continue to strive for stability and development in the *negeri*. It also pledged to preserve peace and harmony among the people and to uphold the freedom of worship and cultural practices. The twelve-point manifesto also promised to implement "development politics" for the progress and prosperity of all ethnic groups in Sarawak (*Borneo Post*, 9 April 1987).

During the campaign period, PERMAS and PBDS adopted different strategies in trying to win the election. While PERMAS attacked Taib's leadership styles and his practice of money politics, PBDS was exploiting on Dayak nationalism to woo the voters. Details of timber companies associated with Taib and his cronies were also splashed over the local newspapers, owned by Rahman's supporters. Rahman also ran a nine-series article entitled "Abdul Taib: The Inside Story" in a local daily aimed at exposing Taib's disrespectful attitude towards him. The BN3, on the other hand, relied on its development promises to secure victory in the election. Apart from that, the BN3 leaders also castigated Rahman as being "power-crazy, anti-Chinese and practised

timber politics” (*Borneo Post*, 15 April 1987). In retaliation to Rahman’s exposure of Taib’s timber politics, the BN3 also published a list of companies and individuals aligned to Rahman who had been awarded timber concessions during his tenure as the Chief Minister. Although the BN3 faced an uphill battle in the 1987 election, it managed to retain power after winning twenty-eight seats, three short of a two-thirds majority in the Council Negeri. The biggest casualty in the BN3’s camp was SNAP, which could only win two out of eleven Council Negeri seats that the party contested. SNAP president, James Wong, barely succeeded in retaining his Limbang seat with a slim 454 votes majority. The BN3’s popular vote also declined significantly from 59.17 per cent in 1983 to 55.24 per cent in 1987. The Kumpulan Maju, on the other hand, managed to secure twenty seats in the Council Negeri. By playing the sentiment of Dayak nationalism, PBDS successfully swayed the support of the Dayak voters to the opposition camp. The Dayak party won fifteen seats and increased its popular vote from 9.34 per cent in 1983 to 17.63 per cent in 1987. If PBDS succeeded in wresting fifteen seats, its coalition partner, PERMAS, failed miserably in the 1987 election when the party managed to win only five seats.

In the Muslim *bumiputera* seats, PBB managed to win nine seats while PERMAS secured three. Taib retained his Sebandi seat when he defeated PERMAS’s stalwart Wan Yusof Tun Haji Bujang with a comfortable majority of 2,194 votes. Even though Wan Yusof failed to unseat Taib, he managed to reduce the Chief Minister’s popular vote from 71.65 per cent in 1983 to 66.62 per cent in 1987. PERMAS President and also the leader of Kumpulan Maju, Rahman Yakub was easily defeated in his old seat of Matu Daro by the incumbent Wahab Dolah with 1,625 majority votes. The three Muslim *bumiputera* seats which PERMAS won were Gedong, Kalaka and Oya. Mohammed Tawan Abdullah (PERMAS) who was Gedong’s incumbent succeeded in defending his seat when he polled 59.79 votes against Khaider Haji Ahmad Zaidel of PBB who polled 40.21 per cent votes. The PERMAS candidate won with a majority of 1,140 votes, a slight decline from the 1,464 majority votes that he received in 1983. Kalaka was the other Muslim *bumiputera* seat which PERMAS succeeded in wresting from PBB. In this rural constituency, PERMAS fielded Sarawak’s former State Secretary, Abang Yusuf Puteh who contested against Abdul Wahab Aziz from PBB. The former State Secretary took the Kalaka seat with a wafer-thin majority of 77 votes. The third seat won by PERMAS was Oya. Initially a critic of Rahman, Wan Madzihi Wan Mahdzar of PERMAS was able to defeat Mohd Ghazali Kipli from PBB with a majority of 1,974 votes.

The defeat of the Kumpulan Maju proved that the group could not compete against the might of the BN machinery and the power of political office. Throughout the campaign period, Taib and the BN leaders exploited their political office to dish out “instant” projects, financial grants and other “goodies” to Sarawak voters. In fact, the total number of development projects and grants dished out by the SBN in 1987 was unprecedented in the history of elections in Sarawak at that time with at least forty-eight projects worth RM190.22 million (RM3.96 million per constituency) were pledged by the BN leaders to Sarawak electorate. Apart from promising the construction of new roads and implementation of land development scheme, most of the new projects dished out by the BN leaders were considered minor projects like the building of community halls, bus shades, mosques, *sepak takraw* courts, village roads and water supply systems. The BN leaders also handed out more than RM4.21 million worth of financial grants and other electoral “goodies” to not less than fourteen social organizations across Sarawak. To further accentuate the BN’s track record in implementing various development projects, the ruling party held at least eleven opening ceremonies involving development projects worth RM271.18 million and three ground-breaking ceremonies involving development projects worth RM52.5 million (see Table 4.1). Unable to compete against the development prowess of the BN, Kumpulan Maju was soundly defeated, especially when the voters placed a very high value on development.

Paradoxically, the practice of “development politics” was inherited from Rahman’s administration but it became rampant during Taib’s leadership under the umbrella of the “Politics of Development”. The POD was mooted by Taib in December 1984, amidst growing criticisms of his leadership styles and development policies. The term POD has never been fully articulated by the strongman-politician. In fact, Taib Mahmud contended that he gave the POD a loose definition, similar to the Vision 2020, so that the people could contribute to the interpretation and focus of the policy (Angkatan Zaman Mansang 2000, p. 43). Although there is no specific definition of the POD, it basically incorporates a concept of total development which is not only measured in crude economic terms but also in terms of quality living (Angkatan Zaman Mansang 2000, p. 92). Development decisions, according to Taib, should be based on purely economic considerations and shall not be influenced by political agendas such as political patronage and racial politics that had dominated Sarawak in the 1970s.¹³ Hence, the strongman-politician tried to eliminate the practice of politisizing development by reducing the number of development projects being dished out during the election period.

Table 4.1 clearly shows the declining number of the development projects and financial grants dished out by the SBN from 102 in 1978 to 47 in 1982, 39 in 1983, and 26 in 1986. Despite his altruistic vision, Taib did not live up to the POD initial objectives; instead he transformed development into a “commodity” which the state, as the “producer”, traded with the people of Sarawak in return for their votes. Taib’s POD had sidetracked from its noble objectives because the strongman-politician resorted to using development as a tool to safeguard his position from the threat posed by Rahman and his allies. Being a ruling party, the SBN had the advantage of giving out development projects and financial grants compared to its rival, prompting Taib to exploit this advantage to win over the electorate. Against the promise of upholding democratic principles and the manipulation of Dayak nationalism, Sarawak voters were easily hoodwinked to vote for the ruling party that promised something more substantive and tangible such as roads, schools, water and electricity supplies, agricultural subsidies, community halls, mosques, churches, suspension bridge, employment, sports facilities, clinic, the upgrading of vegetable and fish markets, traditional musical instrument, kindergarten and financial assistance (see Table 4.2).

Under the POD, the practice of electoral patronage has definitely played a vital role in Taib’s effort to dominate the electorate. After witnessing the power of electoral patronage in defeating Kumpulan Maju, Taib embraced this strategy and continued to exploit it as a means to dominate Sarawak elections throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium.

CONCLUSION

Between 1981 and 1987, Taib had to endure the most challenging period of his political life. Not only did Taib have to resolve the leadership crisis in SNAP, he also had to fend off an attempt to topple him by the very person who handed over the Chief Minister’s seat to him. After six years of turbulence, the strongmen-politicians’ crisis reached its climax in the 1987 election. The end result was a victory for Taib. His triumph sent a strong signal to his allies, opponents and also central state leaders that he was in total control of Sarawak.

Although Rahman’s attempt to topple Taib resembled the ouster of Ningkan in 1966, it differed significantly in terms of the central state leaders’ role in these two events. In the case of Ningkan, the central state leaders played a direct role in the removal of the Iban leader due to his failure to fulfill the state’s demands particularly in safeguarding national interest. Taib, on the other

TABLE 4.1
Development Projects and Financial Grants Promised or Distributed by the BN Leaders during Sarawak Elections, 1982–87

	Pledges for various development projects		Issuance of financial grants and other "goodies" to individuals and social organizations		Official openings of completed development projects		Ground-breaking ceremonies of new development projects		Grand total of dev. projects and grants	Grand total cost of dev. projects and grants
	Total	Cost (RM million)	Total	Cost (RM million)	Total	Cost (RM million)	Total	Cost (RM million)		
1978	7	189.87	88	0.06	6	8.85	1	1.30	102	200.08
1982	34	644.28	0	0	12	16.40	1	n.a.	47	660.68
1983	30	40.45	1	0.03	5	15.27	3	54.35	39	110.09
1986	8	620.54	10	0.68	7	28.99	1	0.80	26	651.01
1987	48	190.22	14	4.21	11	271.18	3	52.50	76	518.11

Sources: Summarized from Appendix 3, Table 1.1 to 1.15.

TABLE 4.2
Development Projects, Financial Grants and Other “Goodies” Promised or Distributed by the BN Leaders during the 1987 Election

Item	Number	Division	Cost (RM million)
Pledges for various development projects			
1. The Chief Minister announced that the <i>negeri</i> government had spent nearly RM100 million every year on the Iban, Bidayuh and Orang Ulu students in the residential schools across Sarawak	1	All divisions	100
2. Datuk Amar Stephen Yong approved a government grant of RM5,000 for the construction of a bus shade at Kampung Stakan, Kuching	1	Kuching	0.005
3. The Chief Minister announced that a total of 80,000 acres of land would be planted with rubber and other cash crops under the Samarahan IADP project worth RM1.33 million	1	Samarahan	1.33
4. The Chief Minister announced the government’s plan to develop 500 acres of lands under the Mayang Tea project in Samarahan valued at RM6.25 million	1	Samarahan	6.25
5. The Chief Minister disclosed the implementation of a RM5 million cocoa planting project at the Taice-Bunga area in Samarahan	1	Samarahan	5
6. The Chief Minister approved about RM1 million worth of minor rural projects for the Sundar sub-district in Lawas, Limbang	1	Limbang	1
7. The Minister with Special Functions in the Chief Minister’s Office, Datuk Celestine Ujang, announced that government grants worth RM124,000 had been approved for the implementation of various minor rural projects at 15 longhouses in Kapit	16	Kapit	0.124
8. The Chief Minister disclosed that a 40,000 acre site at the Bario/Long Semadoh/Ba’kelalan highlands had been earmarked for a temperate vegetation scheme	1	Miri, Limbang	undisclosed
9. The Chief Minister approved government grants of RM2 million for the implementation of various projects in Ba’kelalan, including the upgrading of a road near the highland	1	Limbang	2

continued on next page

TABLE 4.2 — *cont'd*

Item	Number	Division	Cost (RM million)
10. The Chief Minister announced that the government had allocated government grants worth RM58,000 for the construction of a new mosque and a <i>sepak takraw</i> court at Kampung Moyan in Sebandi, Samarahan	2	Samarahan	0.058
11. The Deputy Chief Minister, Tan Sri Datuk Amar Sim Kheng Hui, disclosed that the <i>negeri</i> government had approved grants totaling RM400,000 for several community projects at RPR Batu Kawa, Kuching	1	Kuching	0.4
12. The Chief Minister announced an allocation of RM20 million for a 5,000 acre sago estate in Mukah	1	Mukah	20
13. The Chief Minister announced an allocation of RM15 million for the surfacing work of Mukah-Balingian Road in Sibü	1	Sibü	15
14. The Chief Minister approved an allocation of RM1 million for minor rural projects, including the maintenance of houses of worship and purchases of generators and paddy-grinding machine, in Bekenu, Miri	2	Miri	1
15. The Chief Minister approved a government grant of RM200,000 for the construction of Likut Road in Song, Kapit	1	Kapit	0.2
16. The Chief Minister approved government grants totaling RM500,000 for various minor projects in Belaga, Kapit	1	Kapit	0.5
17. The Chief Minister approved a government grant of RM100,000 for the construction of a community hall and RM50,000 for a clinic at Nanga Entawau in Belaga, Kapit	2	Kapit	0.15
18. The South Kuching Mayor, Song Swee Guan announced an allocation of RM300,000 for the renovation and improvement of the Gambier Street Vegetable Market and the Open Air Market at Padungan, Kuching	2	Kuching	0.3

19. The Minister of Agriculture and Community Development, Abang Johari Tun Openg, approved a government grant of RM500,000 for the implementation of various minor projects in Bengoh, Kuching	1	Kuching	0.5
20. Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha announced that the government had approved grants totaling RM47,000 for various projects in Tebakang, Samarahan (RM15,000 for the construction of a water supply system, RM15,000 for a village road, RM15,000 for the town's community hall, RM2,000 for a set of traditional musical instrument for Kampung Tebakang Dayak)	4	Samarahan	0.047
21. The Chief Minister announced an allocation of RM35 million for various projects in the Matu/Daro area under the Fifth Malaysia Plan	1	Sibu	35
22. The Chief Minister announced that government grants totaling RM70,000 had been allocated for the implementation of various projects in Matu, Sibu (RM10,000 for the 10th Mile Matang Mosque, RM5,000 for the Matang Kindergarten, RM5,000 for the Matang 7th Mile School court, RM50,000 for a community hall at Heng Guan Garden)	4	Sibu	0.07
23. Tan Sri Datuk Amar Sim Kheng Hong announced the implementation of a RM1.285 million road improvement project at Stampin, Kuching	1	Kuching	1.285
	48		190.219

Issuance of financial grants/other "goodies" to individuals and social organizations

1. Datuk Dr Wong Soon Kai presented a check worth RM100,000 to the Sacred Heart Church Development Fund in Sibu	1	Sibu	0.1
2. Datuk Dr Wong Soon Kai gave a grant worth RM8,000 to the Catholic High School in Sibu for the construction and improvement of its building	1	Sibu	0.008
3. The Chief Minister approved a government grant of RM250,000 to the Belaga Co-operative Society, Kapit	1	Kapit	0.25

continued on next page

TABLE 4.2 — *cont'd*

Item	Number	Division	Cost (RM million)
4. Tan Sri Datuk Amar Sim Kheng Hui handed over a government grant of \$100,000 to the Hui Sing Garden Welfare Community Association, Kuching	1	Kuching	0.1
5. Abang Johari Tun Openg presented a check worth RM140,000 to the Kuching Chung Hua Primary School No. 4	1	Kuching	0.14
6. Datuk Celestine Ujang handed over a government grant of RM100,000 to the Bintulu Chung Hua School Board	1	Bintulu	0.1
7. Chong Kiun Kong presented a government grant of RM15,000 to the Board of Management of Sekolah Rendah Bantuan Pangkalan Baru at Batu Kawa, Kuching	1	Kuching	0.015
8. Tan Sri Datuk Amar Sim Kheng Hong announced that government grants totaling RM3.159 million would be donated to various temples, churches, <i>suraus</i> and other organizations in Kuching	4	Kuching	3.159
9. Datuk Celestine Ujang handed over an annual grant of RM330,000 from the <i>negeri</i> government to two churches in Bintulu and RM6,000 from the Minor Rural Project (MRP) Fund to the St. Anthony Church in Bintulu	3	Bintulu	0.336
	14		4.208
Official openings of completed development projects			
1. The Chief Minister of Sarawak, Datuk Patinggi Abdul Taib Mahmud, declared open the RM218 million Integrated Agriculture Development Program (IADP) in the Kalaka-Saribas area in Sri Aman	1	Sri Aman	218
2. The Chief Minister declared open a RM1 million community center in Serian, Kuching	1	Kuching	1
3. The Federal Minister of Science, Technology and Environment, Datuk Amar Stephen Yong, declared open a newly tar-sealed road at Kampung Stakan, Kuching	1	Kuching	undisclosed

4. The Chief Minister declared open the RM2 million Sundar-Lawas Road, Limbang	1	Limbang	2
5. The Chief Minister declared open a RM700,000 feeder road near Matang, Kuching	1	Kuching	0.7
6. The Federal Minister of Land and Regional Development, Datuk Dr. Sulaiman Daud, declared open the RM7.5 million Sekolah Menengah Taiee at Serian, Kuching	1	Kuching	7.5
7. Datuk Dr Sulaiman Daud declared open a RM802,683 extension building of Sekolah Rendah Merpati Jepang in Satok, Kuching	1	Kuching	0.803
8. The Chief Minister declared open the RM41 million Song Secondary School in Kapit	1	Kapit	41
9. The Assistant Minister of Environment and Local Government, Chong Kiun Kong, declared open the new St. Gile's Church and a badminton court at Kampung Gita in Penrissen, Kuching (the government contributed RM13,000 to the church and RM2,000 to the court)	2	Kuching	0.015
10. The Deputy Federal Minister of Defense, Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha, declared open a RM165,000 suspension bridge at Kampung Tebakang Melayu in Kuching	1	Kuching	0.165
Total	11		271.183
Ground-breaking ceremonies for new development projects			
1. The Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for the RM1.5 million Integrated Agriculture Development Program (IADP) building at Kota Samarahan, Samarahan	1	Samarahan	1.5
2. The Chief Minister performed the earth-breaking ceremony for a RM10 million silk production centre at Kampung Sebat in Sematan, Kuching	1	Kuching	10
3. The Chief Minister launched a RM41 million agriculture drainage scheme at Sebangon, Samarahan	1	Samarahan	41
Total	3		52.5
Grand Total	76		518.11

Sources: *Sarawak Tribune* and *Borneo Post* (9 to 15 April 1987).

hand, had established a cordial relation with the central state, thus it had no reason to remove the strongman-politician. Instead, the plan to remove Taib was mooted by his uncle who wanted to wrest control of the *negeri*. Since Rahman's faction nominated a Muslim *bumiputera* leader, Noor Tahir, as Taib's possible successor, the central state saw the strongmen-politicians' crisis as merely a Muslim *bumiputera* leadership struggle. Furthermore, the leading party in the BN, UMNO, was also having its own leadership crisis when its president, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, was challenged by Tengku Razaleigh. Hence, the UMNO leaders were too occupied with their own problem that the crisis in Sarawak seemed to be of little concern. Without taking any side in the uncle-nephew crisis, the central state allowed the crisis to be settled through the ballot box.

After surviving the six turbulent years, Taib had to strengthen his position so that he could continue to receive the central state's endorsement which was crucial for him to remain in power. Apart from that, Taib also had to change his political strategies in order to amplify his authority within the ruling coalition and to obliterate his rivals. The post-1987 election which marked Taib's attempt to consolidate his power in Sarawak will be discussed in the following chapter.

Notes

1. According to Jitab and Ritchie (1991, p. 18), Taib's father was a clerk in Shell Miri.
2. Others suggested that Taib received a scholarship from Shell (Jitab and Ritchie 1991, p. 20).
3. Dr Sulaiman was a dental surgeon prior to his involvement in politics. His first political appointment was as political secretary to Taib Mahmud who was then the Federal Minister of Primary Industries in 1972 (*Sarawak Tribune*, 23 July 1972). In the same year, Dr Sulaiman participated in electoral politics when he was picked by the Bumiputera party to contest in the Sebandi by-election due to the retirement of its incumbent, Ikhwan Zaini (*Vanguard*, 5 December 1972). Upon his victory in the Sebandi by-election, Dr Sulaiman was appointed Sarawak's Land Minister. His tenure in the Sarawak cabinet was very brief when in the 1974 election, he was asked to switch from the *negeri* seat of Sebandi to the parliamentary seat of Santubong. Dr Sulaiman won comfortably in Santubong and subsequently appointed Deputy Federal Minister of Lands and Mines. After the formation of PBB, Dr Sulaiman was elected as one of its Vice-Presidents. In a cabinet reshuffle in December 1977, Dr Sulaiman Daud was appointed Deputy Federal Minister of Health.
4. Abang Johari won the Satok by-election by defeating Wan Ahmadul Badwi from

- Parti Anak Jati Sarawak (PAJAR) by a big majority of 5,883 votes. Abang Johari managed to poll 7,857 votes while the PAJAR man managed to poll 1,974 votes (*Sarawak Tribune*, 24 May 1981).
5. CMS Group is owned by Taib's family with his wife (Laila), sons (Sulaiman Abdul Rahman, Mahmud Abu Bekir), daughters (Hanifah Hajar, Jamilah Hamidah) and son-in-law (Syed Ahmad Alwee Alsree) as the major shareholders.
 6. In the SNAP's party election, a total of eighty-three votes were cast by delegates from forty-eight branches and executive members of the party's national council. James Wong managed to garner forty-nine votes, while Leo Moggie won thirty-four votes.
 7. Dr Sulaiman Daud, Abang Abu Bakar, Wan Habib and Wan Yusuf won unopposed as PBB's Vice-Presidents after Bujang Ulis, Abang Ahmad Urai, Abang Haji Ali and Zainuddin Hasan withdrew from the contest. Three other Vice-Presidents posts from the Pesaka wing were also returned unopposed — Stephen Wan Ulok, Kenneth Kayan and Dagok Randan. Meanwhile, six candidates won the race for supreme council's seats allocated for the Bumiputera wing — Bujang Ulis, Adenan Satem, Abdul Rahman Hamzah, Dr Leo Michael Toyad, Wan Madzih Othman Datuk Marzuki, Yusuf Abdullah and Abdullah Mohamed Nor. Seven candidates returned unopposed as supreme council members from the Pesaka wing — Mohamed Hilary Tawan, Douglas Sulang Canda, Mutang Tagal, Ambrose Blikau, Simon Dembab Maja, Janggu Banang and Robert Jacob Ridu (*Sarawak Tribune*, 12 September 1983).
 8. SNAP objected to Taib's decision to force the party to use its own party symbol instead of the BN's symbol. According to SNAP president, Taib disallowed the party to use BN symbol so that PBDS would not be placed in a position to contest the ruling party (*Sarawak Tribune*, 13 December 1983).
 9. According to James Wong, there were a few PBB members who had campaigned against SNAP's candidates but they were never disciplined. The PBB members were (1) Peter Minos, PBB chairman for Tasik Biru, who actively supported Patrick Uren against Patau Rubis, and (2) Daniel Tajem who actively supported Independent Datuk Edwin Tangkun against Rufus Nanang in Sri Aman (*Sarawak Tribune*, 13 December 1983).
 10. Initially, the group claimed that there were twenty-eight assemblymen but one assemblyman, Wan Wahab Wan Senusi, denied his involvement in the group.
 11. In the 1987 party election, Dr Mahathir was challenged by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah. The contest for the number one seat in UMNO at that time was considered historic because it was only the third contest in the forty-one years history of the party. The first challenge was a dull affair in which Hussein Onn was challenged by an ordinary party member named Sulaiman Palestin. Another UMNO president, Tunku Abdul Rahman was also challenged by C. M. Yusof, later Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, in the early 1950s, but Tunku was then only the caretaker president. Although Dr Mahathir successfully defended his seat (with a small forty-three majority votes), the political crisis within

UMNO became intensified after the party election, leading to the deregistration of the party. Mahathir showed no interest in reviving UMNO. Instead, he set in motion the machinery to form a new surrogate party, called UMNO Baru. Eventually the suffix “Baru” was dropped, and UMNO (Baru) became both the *de facto* and *de jure* successor of UMNO (with the old UMNO’s assets handed over).

12. SNAP’s deputy chairman Edward Jeli who was aligned to Kumpulan Maju announced that the party had lost confidence in James Wong. In contrast to the president’s stand, Edward maintained that SNAP endorsed the actions of its five assemblymen (*Sarawak Tribune*, 15 March 1987).
13. In order to carry out the POD, Taib Mahmud took several steps to ensure the smooth implementation of this policy. First, the Chief Minister revamped the *negeri* agencies which were responsible for planning and implementing development projects. Prior to 1982, there were two government agencies responsible in planning and implementing development projects in Sarawak, namely the State Development Office and the State Planning Unit (SPU). In an attempt to streamline the process of coordinating development-related matters, the two agencies were merged and a new department called the State Development Department was established on 1 January 1983 (*Sarawak Tribune*, 1 June 1982). The new structure was in line with the central government’s organizational and management structure, whereby the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) and the Implementation and Coordination Unit were housed under the Prime Minister’s Department. In December 2000, another restructuring exercise involving government agencies responsible for the planning and implementing of development projects was taken. With this restructuring exercise, two new government agencies were established, namely the Project Implementation Monitoring Unit and the Special Project Unit. These two newly established units along with the SPU were merged to form the new Planning and Development Division which was housed under the Chief Minister Department and overseen by the Deputy State Secretary (Planning and Development). However, on 1 August 2004, the SPU was transferred and placed directly under the State Secretary as part of the Planning, Development and Monitoring Division (Sarawak State Planning Unit 2006). Apart from establishing new departments, Taib Mahmud also initiated the formation of the State Development Planning Committee which comprised of the Chief Minister as the chairman, ministers, the State Secretary, Deputy State Secretaries, the State Financial Secretary and Permanent Secretaries as committee members. By overlooking the State Development Planning Committee, the Chief Minister was able to impose his influence over the planning of development projects in Sarawak. Apart from restructuring government agencies, Taib Mahmud also established a new *negeri*-owned statutory body which was named the Land Custody and Development Authority in June 1981. The new statutory body was established with the responsibilities of promoting urban and rural development, plantation development and rural

growth centers (PELITA 2006). In a move to control the functions and activities of PELITA, Taib Mahmud himself was made the chairman of this organization while Alfred Jabu, became the Deputy Chairman.

Second, Taib Mahmud ensured that his men were placed in key positions in the State Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) and also the *negeri* administrative service in order to control the distribution and implementation of development projects. In September 1981, Taib Mahmud appointed his strong supporter, Effendi Norwawi who is a Muslim Melanau, as the new SEDC's chairman (*Sarawak Tribune*, 2 September 1981). The successful businessman continued to lead SEDC until 1995 when he became actively involved in politics. Apart from Effendi, Taib also appointed his family member, Aziz Hussein, as the new Deputy Chairman of SEDC on 1 September 1981. Aziz who was a former Senior Executive in the State Financial Secretary Office prior to his appointment as the Deputy Chairman of SEDC was later appointed to various senior positions in the Sarawak civil service. Ultimately, Aziz Hussein was appointed State Secretary on 25 August 2000, a post he held until his retirement in December 2006.

Third, Taib Mahmud helped to establish the government's development propaganda machines in order to facilitate the implementation of the government development policies. Realizing the importance of the people's participation in the development process, Angkatan Zaman Mansang (AZAM) was launched in March 1983. Though registered as an NGO, the organization receives an annual grant from the Sarawak government, thus making it subservient to the interest of the government. Furthermore, the chairman of AZAM was the State Secretary, Aziz Hussein, hence demonstrating the strong link between the organization and the government. One of the main objectives of AZAM is to facilitate the promotion of development consciousness among the people through seminars, publications and various other activities. Besides AZAM, Sarawak Development Institute (SDI) was established by the government in the mid-1990s. SDI is entrusted to undertake inter-disciplinary research on development issues for policy inputs to the government and other organizations (SDI 2006). Apart from that, the SDI also acts as a channel to disseminate development-related information or knowledge to the public. As in the case of AZAM, the chairman of SDI was also the State Secretary, Aziz Hussein.

CONSOLIDATION AND DOMINATION OF THE MUSLIM *BUMIPUTERA*, 1987–2003

INTRODUCTION

During Taib's first six years in office, Muslim *bumiputera* politics was tainted with contestation and fragmentation, leading to an unprecedented plan to topple the strongman-politician. By calling for a snap election, Taib survived the political onslaught led by his own uncle Rahman who launched a formidable challenge to his power. After the election, Taib further strengthened his position by taking several repressive and accommodative measures, aimed at consolidating the support of Sarawak's electorate, especially the Muslim *bumiputera*. These measures eventually strengthened Taib's position as the central state's representative in Sarawak and also the most powerful strongman-politician in the *negeri*.

Taib's amplified strength was manifested in the domination of Barisan Nasional (BN) in Sarawak elections throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium. This domination, however, was slightly tainted by the ability of DAP and Independent candidates in capturing several Chinese and Dayak seats. On the other hand, the dominance of the ruling party in the Muslim *bumiputera* seats was almost absolute. Although some Malay and Melanau electorate voted for the opposition, an overwhelming majority of them

continued to support the ruling party, thus preventing the opposition from wresting control not even a single Muslim *bumiputera* seat. This chapter, therefore, analyses Taib's ability to consolidate and dominate society in Sarawak, in particular the Muslim *bumiputera*, after the 1987 election. Before analysing Taib's strategies in dominating Sarawak politics, this chapter will first of all discuss developments in Sarawak politics within the corresponding period, with a special focus on the Muslim *bumiputera*.

THE POST-1987 CRISIS

Several significant changes were made by Taib to the *negeri* cabinet after winning the 1987 election. Since Daniel Tajem and his party joined the opposition, Taib decided to scrap the third Deputy Chief Minister's post which was traditionally allocated for an Iban leader from a Dayak party. Prior to the formation of Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS), the third Deputy Chief Minister's seat was reserved for Sarawak National Party (SNAP) but it was subsequently given to PBDS. Although Alfred Jabu from the Pesaka wing of Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) was retained as one of the two Deputy Chief Ministers (the other one was allocated for a Chinese leader from Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP)), he was largely seen as representing PBB and not Dayak parties. Hence, the decision to abolish the third Chief Minister's post significantly reduced the power of Dayak parties but it propelled SUPP to an even greater position in the government. In the new cabinet line-up, Taib retained his portfolio as Minister of Resource Planning, while Sim Kheng Hung (SUPP) was reappointed Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Finance. Alfred Jabu (PBB) was also reappointed as the Second Deputy Chief Minister but his portfolio was changed from Minister of Housing to Minister of Agriculture and Community Development. Another change involved Abang Johari (PBB) whose portfolio was changed from the Ministry of Agriculture and Community Development to the newly created Ministry of Industrial Development. Adenan Satem (PBB) was reappointed Minister of Land Development while James Wong (SNAP) was reappointed Minister of Environment and Tourism. Two new faces in the cabinet were Celestine Ujang (PBB) who was appointed Minister of Housing and Dr George Chan (SUPP) who was appointed Minister with Special Functions in the Chief Minister's Office. All the Assistant Ministers (Chong Kiun Kong and Ramsay Noel Jitam from SUPP, Wan Wahab Wan Senusi from PBB and Dr Patau Rubis from SNAP) were retained and two new Assistant Ministers (Sharifah Mordiah Tuanku Fauzi from PBB and David Teng from

SUPP) were appointed (*Sarawak Tribune*, 21 April 1987). With this cabinet reshuffle, PBB and SUPP increased its representatives in the cabinet to five and three respectively while SNAP had only one representative. As a result of the cabinet reshuffle, PBB reaffirmed its position as the leading party in the SBN with SUPP becoming its most influential partner, while the Dayak's interest in the cabinet was significantly reduced.

Despite failing to make a strong impact in the 1987 election, Parti Persatuan Rakyat Malaysia Sarawak (PERMAS) continued its waning struggle to woo the Muslim *bumiputera* by trying to capture the oldest Muslim Bumiputera organization in Sarawak, Malay National Union (MNU). In the past, MNU had been very influential in fighting for the Muslim *bumiputera* especially before the formation of political parties in Sarawak. A few notable Muslim *bumiputera* leaders had become office bearers of the organization which was formed on 10 October 1939. Even Taib himself had served as a Committee Member of MNU for one term (1964–66) (Mohd Hasbie 2004, p. 40). Since the formation of PANAS and BARJASA, MNU had been dormant and stayed clear from the political limelight. Prior to the 1987 political crisis, most of the MNU's activities were directed at providing social services to the Muslim *bumiputera* in Sarawak. However, the political rift between Muslim *bumiputera* leaders in 1987 unavoidably spilt into MNU. At the organization's Triennial Delegates Conference in June 1987, PERMAS's leaders in MNU secured all the key posts after Taib's supporters led by Safri Awang Zaidell and Taha Ariffin left the conference as a sign of protest. Wan Yusof, who failed to unseat Taib in 1987, was returned unopposed as the president. Another defeated PERMAS candidate in 1987, Hafsah Harun, was elected the new deputy president in replace of Safri Awang Zaidell (*Sarawak Tribune*, 20 June 1987). Unfortunately, taking control of MNU did not help PERMAS's political struggle. In fact, Taib responded to PERMAS's take over of the MNU by stopping the government's financial support to MNU, leaving it "dry" and powerless.

Sensing that PERMAS and PBDS could mount another challenge towards his leadership, Taib decided to obliterate whatever was left of the opposition and his critics. In annihilating the opposition, Taib took two types of action, repressive and accommodative. The strongman-politician had to resort to repressive measures because the "politics of compromise" which he adopted in the earlier years of his administration failed to bring political stability in Sarawak. Several decisions made by Taib prior to the 1987 political crisis reflected his inclination towards accommodating various political forces in Sarawak such as the PBDS's inclusion in the ruling coalition (to avoid schism within the Dayak communities) and Taib's offer to resign as the

Chief Minister (to resolve the feud between him and his uncle). The failed attempt to topple Taib forced the strongman-politician to resort to repressive measures in order to silence his critics. The first repressive measure taken by Taib was to terminate the services of community chiefs who supported the opposition during the 1987 election. According to the strongman-politician, the services of these chiefs were terminated because “they went against the ethics of the service which required them to carry out their duties and be neutral in politics” (*Sarawak Tribune*, 20 July 1987). Most of the community chiefs were appointed by Rahman’s administration, thus some of them still pledged their loyalties to the former Chief Minister. Since the government-appointed community chiefs were influential at the grassroots level, it was important for Taib to take control of the grassroots administration by replacing Rahman’s loyalists with his own men. The second type of repressive measure undertaken by Taib to consolidate his power was to discipline government officers who helped or campaigned for the opposition during the 1987 election. Stern actions including dismissal were taken against these “dissenting” government officers in order to “maintain discipline in the civil service” (*Sarawak Tribune*, 11 June 1987). Like the community chiefs, most of the government officers had served under Rahman’s administration too, thus some of them were sympathetic towards the former Chief Minister’s struggle. In fact, one of Rahman’s right-hand men in PERMAS was the former State Secretary, Abang Yusuf Puteh, who had tremendous influence in the Sarawak bureaucracy. The two repressive measures taken by Taib were not only intended to get rid of Rahman’s loyalists in the bureaucracy but most importantly it tried to instill fear among the people especially civil servants and those who were dependent on the government. This fear prevented the public from openly supporting the opposition parties or resisting the authority of the state.

The third repressive measure was to weaken the opposition through several legislative means. In August 1987, the Kuching High Court granted an application by a timber company aligned to Rahman seeking to declare null and void the suspension of its licence by the Director of Forestry.¹ Shocked by the court’s decision, the Sarawak government responded by amending the Forest Bill which empowered the Director of Forestry “to transfer a license or permit in the event of death, incapacity or bankruptcy besides clarifying the non-transfer of license or permit issued, failure of which would empower the Minister concerned to cancel or revoke the license or permit”. The 1987 amended bill also empowered forestry officers to arrest without a police warrant any person committing forest offences such as setting up barriers or obstruction to any logging operation, which upon conviction would be liable

to a two years jail plus a \$6,000 fine (*Sarawak Tribune*, 19 November 1987).² By amending the Forest Bill, Taib tightened his grip on the distribution of timber licence at the expense of Rahman's supporters. Since "timber money" was the major source of funding for the opposition's campaign in 1987, the revocation of timber concessions owned by Rahman's loyalists would definitely cripple the opposition's struggle. Another legislative measure taken by Taib in order to weaken the opposition was to introduce the Party Hopping Bill which aimed at preventing the BN assemblymen from crossing over to the opposition bench. During the Ming Court affair, several PBB and SNAP assemblymen left their parties to form a new opposition party, resulting in the weakening of the ruling party's representation in the Council Negeri. In order to avoid the repeat of this catastrophic action, the Party Hopping Bill was introduced albeit being deemed to be unconstitutional by the opposition.

With the support of the central state, Taib resorted to the use of the Internal Security Act (ISA) to cripple the opposition forces after the 1987 election. By denying the accused their rights to defend themselves, this draconian law not only weakened the opposition forces in Sarawak but it also projected a negative image of the opposition. The crackdown on the opposition leaders started in the late 1980s when the then Deputy Home Minister Megat Junid Megat Ayub exposed a so-called "conspiracy to topple Taib by assaulting him" (*Sarawak Tribune*, 5 July 1989). According to Megat, the purported plan to topple Taib involved several plots which included the use of a suicidal squad to bomb the car used by Taib, the use of remote control model airplanes to bomb the strongman-politician's house and the mafia-style plot to gun him down. The Deputy Home Minister also revealed that PERMAS leaders were the culprit behind the plot to kill the Chief Minister in order to wrest control of Sarawak (*Sarawak Tribune*, 5 July 1989). Apart from plotting to kill Taib, the same group of people allegedly tried to incite hatred against the Chief Minister and create instability in the *negeri* by setting up fires at several strategic locations around Kuching. In view of this "threat", the government launched Operation API which saw the detention of eleven people under the ISA. Those detained were all PERMAS members, namely Wan Yusuf Tun Bujang, Abdul Rahman Hamzah, Kadri Tan Sri Mohamad, Husaini Jol, Senawi Sulaiman, Bujang Sapawi and Wan Fauzi Tuanku Ayubi (*Sarawak Tribune*, 6 July 1989). Despite denying their involvement in the plot to kill Taib, the negative allegations hurled at the opposition leaders put a hefty toll on the image of the opposition, in particular PERMAS.

In consolidating his power after the 1987 election, Taib did not resort to repressive measures alone. Accommodative measures were also taken by the strongman-politician in order to bring back stability in Sarawak. One of the

accommodative measures was to co-opt several opposition assemblymen to the BN's fold. With the promise of material rewards and political appointments, nine opposition assemblymen (eight from PBDS and one from PERMAS) were lured to join BN in April 1988, thus increasing the number of the SBN's representative in the Council Negeri from twenty-eight to thirty-seven.³ With the co-optation of these opposition assemblymen, the SBN successfully secured a two-third majority in the Council Negeri which was crucial to form a strong government.

The Ming Court affair and the subsequent challenge of the *Kumpulan Maju* in the 1987 election prompted Taib to take repressive measures in order to strengthen his position. Apart from co-opting opposition assemblymen, the rest of the measures taken by Taib after the 1987 election were deemed repressive. The strongman-politician took these aggressive measures in order to obliterate his critics and also to assert his authority among the SBN's component parties. Apart from that, the stern action taken by Taib was intended to send a strong signal to Kuala Lumpur that he was in total control of the situation in Sarawak, hence the central state should allow him to continue administering the *negeri*. The repressive and accommodative measures initiated by Taib played a crucial role in consolidating his authority after being severely challenged by the *Kumpulan Maju*.

MUSLIM *BUMIPUTERA* POLITICS IN THE 1990s

Throughout the 1990s, there were several developments in Muslim *bumiputera* politics that interestingly liven up Sarawak's rather docile political scene. In the early 1990s, PERMAS and PBDS tried to resurrect their challenge against Taib's leadership without the participation of Rahman and other PERMAS top leaders who had earlier abandoned the party. Although the coalition between PERMAS and PBDS was dissolved after the 1987 election, both parties continued their struggle by contesting in the 1990 and 1991 elections. In 1990, the national BN was challenged by a loose opposition alliance led by Tengku Razaleigh from Semangat 46. Along with Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM), Democratic Action Party (DAP), Parti Islam Se Malaysia (PAS) and Barisan Jamaah Islamiah Se Malaysia (BERJASA), Semangat 46 initiated two separate alliances known as Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (APU) and Gagasan Rakyat, so as to accommodate the ideologically conflicting parties, PAS and DAP, into the pact. Comprising of PAS and Semangat 46, APU was formed to challenge BN in the Malay seats, while Gagasan Rakyat, which comprised of Semangat 46, PRM and DAP, was slated to contest in the rest of the seats. After the nomination day, the opposition received a huge boost

when PBS withdrew from BN in order to join Gagasan Rakyat. Despite their optimism of forming the new government especially after the defection of PBS, the opposition only succeeded in winning fifty-three parliamentary seats (including four seats won by the Independents) or 29.4 per cent of the total parliamentary seats up for grab. In Sarawak, the BN3 (PBB, SUPP, SNAP) won comfortably by sweeping seventeen out of twenty-three parliamentary seats with PBB winning all ten seats, while four and three seats went to SUPP and SNAP respectively. A member of the national BN but an opposition at the *negeri* level, PBDS also managed to win easily by retaining all the four seats that the Dayak party contested. The twenty-one parliamentary seats secured by the SBN (including PBDS) were crucial to the national BN's defence of the two-thirds majority that the coalition managed to attain over the last three decades. Despite the SBN's enormous strength, DAP and Independent candidates were able to deny its total domination by securing two and four seats respectively. PERMAS, on the other hand, failed to make any impact in the election when all of its candidates lost in their first attempt to challenge PBB in the parliamentary election. With the Muslim *bumiputera's* support towards PERMAS significantly reduced, PBB was able to retain all the Muslim *bumiputera* seats. In fact, PBB increased its popular vote among the Muslim *bumiputera* electorate from 68.15 per cent in 1986 to 74.72 per cent in 1990.

With the waning influence of PERMAS, a new Muslim *bumiputera*-dominated opposition party was formed in January 1991 by several Malay leaders who felt marginalized by Taib, leading to a fresh Malay-Melanau tension among the political elites. A breakaway party from PERMAS, the new party was named Parti Warisan Pribumi Sarawak (WARISAN) with Mohamad Bakri bin Jol appointed as its protem President (*Sarawak Tribune*, 22 January 1991). Although Mohamad Bakri was WARISAN's de facto leader, the real man behind the new party was allegedly Abang Abu Bakar who was then the Minister in the Prime Minister Department and also PBB's Deputy President. Abang Abu, however, denied his involvement in WARISAN (*Sarawak Tribune*, 3 May 1991). The new party was planning to bring UMNO to Sarawak with the former acting as a temporary vehicle for "transporting" the national party to the *negeri* (*Sarawak Tribune*, 23 April 1991). In brushing aside WARISAN's plan, Taib reasoned that "this national type of politics (UMNO) is not yet well understood in the state (*negeri*)" (*Sarawak Tribune*, 23 February 1991). Several UMNO leaders including Dr Mahathir also refuted WARISAN's UMNO project by insisting that PBB had successfully maintained stability in the *negeri*, thus there was no reason for the Malay national party to spread its wing here. The attempt by WARISAN to challenge Taib's leadership and

PBB came to a halt when its application to be registered as a political party was rejected by the Registrar of Societies. Subsequently, the issue of Sarawak UMNO also fizzled away.

Apart from the contestation of the Malay leaders in PERMAS and WARISAN, another major source of resistance towards Taib's leadership in the early 1990s came from two Dayak parties, namely PBDS and Parti Negara Rakyat Sarawak (NEGARA). In the 1991 election, the two Dayak parties formed an alliance which devised a grand project called the "Sarawak Chief Minister Project 1992", aimed at installing a Dayak Chief Minister if the two parties succeeded in forming the government. With the continued manipulation of Dayak nationalism, PBDS was expected to win at least twenty-two Council Negeri seats (Mason 1995, p. 45). However, when the election was concluded, PBDS's optimism abruptly came to an end. Surprisingly, the BN3 secured forty-nine (PBB twenty-seven, SUPP sixteen, and SNAP six) out of fifty-six Council Negeri seats, while PBDS only managed to take seven seats. The rest of the opposition parties (PERMAS, NEGARA and DAP) failed to secure even a single seat in the election. In the Muslim *bumiputera* seats, PBB was successful in wresting back three seats that PERMAS won in 1987. The support of the Muslim *bumiputera* voters towards PBB improved significantly when the party increased its popular vote from 59.48 per cent in 1987 to 74.46 per cent in 1991. One of the factors that led to PBB's thumping victory in the Muslim *bumiputera* seats was the Muslim Bumiputera's fear of losing their political power due to the Chief Minister Project mounted by PBDS and NEGARA. Apart from that, all the three PERMAS incumbents did not defend their seats, allowing the BN candidates to easily secure the seats back. Realizing that its popularity among the Dayaks was declining, PBDS decided to rejoin the SBN in April 1992. After two years of waiting, PBDS was finally readmitted to the SBN's fold on 1 June 1994.⁴ With the inclusion of PBDS in the SBN, the opposition force in Sarawak was virtually eliminated, leading to a new period of stability in the *negeri*.

Without any credible opposition party, SBN dominated the subsequent elections held in 1995 and 1996. In the 1995 parliamentary election, SBN recorded its best performance under Taib's leadership by winning twenty-six (PBB ten, SUPP seven, PBDS five, SNAP three, and direct BN candidate one) out of twenty-seven parliamentary seats, leaving one seat to DAP.⁵ The ruling party also significantly increased its popular vote from 57.09 per cent in 1990 to 63.56 per cent in 1995. In the Muslim *bumiputera* seats, PBB's domination was further elevated when the party increased its popular vote from 74.72 per cent in 1990 to 82.83 per cent in 1995. A similar voting trend was shown in the 1996 election with the ruling party taking fifty-

seven (PBB twenty-nine, SUPP thirteen, PBDS eight, SNAP seven) out of sixty-two Council Negeri seats. The remaining seats were secured by DAP (three) and Independent candidates (two). The popular vote gained by SBN increased slightly from 62.75 per cent in 1991 to 66.62 per cent in 1996. Again, without a strong Muslim *bumiputera* alternative party, PBB continued to dominate all the Muslim *bumiputera* seats and also increased its popular vote from 74.46 per cent in 1991 to 77.72 per cent in 1996.

Despite successfully dominating Sarawak politics for more than fourteen years, Taib shockingly announced his intention to retire from politics during an interview with *Asiaweek* on 22 November 1995. Giving himself five more years before he called it a day, Taib insisted that he would stay in power only "to make sure those things were stable in the state" (*Sarawak Tribune*, 7 December 1995). Several days after publicly declaring his intention to step down, Taib announced three candidates to succeed him: Adenan Satem, Effendi Norwawi and Abang Johari Tun Openg (*Sarawak Tribune*, 8 December 1995). Missing from the list was PBB's Deputy President Abang Abu Bakar who had a fall out with Taib over his alleged connection with WARISAN and Sarawak UMNO. More than eleven years later, the strongman-politician continued to helm the *negeri* although the question of retirement was constantly raised by his critics.

Sarawak's political stability in the mid-1990s was short-lived when PBB, the backbone of SBN, faced another leadership crisis in 1998. The crisis erupted due to the long-standing feud between Taib and Abang Abu Bakar. The strongman-politician showed his displeasure towards Abang Abu when he allowed the deputy president's post held by Abang Abu to be contested in the party's triennial general meeting in August 1998. According to a former PBB youth leader (1999), Taib identified three Malay leaders to contest Abang Abu, namely Adenan Satem, Abang Johari Tun Openg and Dr Sulaiman Daud. As a compromise between the three leaders, Abang Johari decided to stand against Abang Abu since Adenan and Dr Sulaiman lacked the grassroots support needed to stage a commendable challenge towards the incumbent. However, without Abang Johari's knowledge, Taib wanted Adenan to have a go at the party's number two post. This led to a three-cornered fight for the PBB's deputy president post with Adenan hotly tipped to win the seat since he received the highest number of nominations with thirty-two, followed by Abang Johari with fourteen nominations, while Abang Abu received one nomination only (*Sarawak Tribune*, 13 August 1998). Initially, Taib resisted from publicly taking sides. But during the party's general meeting, Taib endorsed Adenan as his preferred candidate thus boosting the latter's chance of winning. The party delegates from the Bumiputera wing heeded

Taib's signal but the Pesaka wing went against the strongman-politician's wish by voting Abang Johari. With the support of the Pesaka wing, Abang Johari unexpectedly won the deputy presidency by polling 377 votes against Adenan who polled 268 votes, while Abang Abu secured only twenty-seven votes (*Sarawak Tribune*, 30 August 1998). Despite losing to Abang Johari, Adenan's political career was salvaged by Taib who unilaterally amended the party's constitution in order to create a new post for his loyalist. The newly created senior vice-president posts, however, were allocated to the party's seven vice-presidents, hence one of the elected vice-presidents had to relinquish his seat to make way for Adenan. In a move which angered the party delegates, Awang Tengah Ali Hasan decided to relinquish his vice-presidency to Adenan. Subsequently, Taib appointed Adenan as one of the new senior vice-presidents of the party, thus neutralizing Abang Johari's influence in the party. The appointment of Adenan as the party's senior vice-president was seen as Taib's attempt to consolidate his authority in the party. The strongman-politician felt that Abang Johari's victory symbolized the party members' resentment against his leadership, thus he had to impose his authority by appointing the very person the members rejected, Adenan Satem. Although Abang Johari became PBB's second highest ranked leader, his power was severely curtailed by Taib who refused to accept the former's victory. In fact, the strongman-politician sidelined the newly elected deputy president through numerous cabinet reshuffles, shifting Abang Johari from the influential portfolio of Industrial Development to a less significant portfolio of Tourism in September 2000, and Housing in July 2004. The marginalization of Abang Johari who was a very popular Malay leader increased the Malay-Melanau schism in PBB. Many Malays believed that Taib tried to weaken the Malay leaders by pitting them against each other in order to consolidate the Muslim Melanau's position in PBB and the government. The Malays' resentment towards the Muslim Melanau leaders was further ignited with the appointment of an influential Muslim Melanau leader and also Taib loyalist, Effendi Norwawi, as Federal Minister of Agriculture to replace Abang Abu. Despite a growing Malay-Melanau tension in PBB, Taib was able to keep this animosity under check without causing a major split in the party.

Barely a month after PBB's leadership crisis was resolved; a bigger crisis was already brewing in Kuala Lumpur. Following the dismissal of Anwar Ibrahim from the cabinet and UMNO in September 1998, an unprecedented coalition of social activists, opposition parties and NGOs was formed. Together, these social forces started the *reformasi* movement which appealed to a great number of Malaysians especially the Malays. Several prominent scholars such as Shamsul Amri Baharuddin (2001), Abdul Rahman Embong (2001)

and Francis Loh and Johan Saravanamuttu (2003) described the profound changes that took place in the political landscape of the country at that time as the proliferation of “new politics”. Although these scholars have different definitions and interpretations of “new politics”, they mutually agreed that the *reformasi* movement constituted the changing phase of Malaysian politics from an ethnic and regional based to a more national, issue-based and participatory type of politics.⁶

Against these backdrops, Dr Mahathir boldly called for the dissolution of parliament on 11 November 1999 to make way for Malaysia’s eighth general election. Prior to this election, a new political party known as Keadilan was formed by the *reformasi* supporters who came from various political, ethnic and social backgrounds. The 1999 election was very significant because there was a shift in the voting behaviour of the Malaysian electorate, especially among the Peninsular Malays who voted against the ruling party. Contrary to the outburst of protests from the Peninsular Malays, the Muslim *bumiputera* in Sarawak did not respond in the same manner with their counterparts partly because the *reformasi* movement was seen as a “Peninsular problem”. As a result, the SBN (PBB ten, SUPP seven, PBDS six, SNAP four and direct BN candidate one) swept all the twenty-eight parliamentary seats, demonstrating that “new politics” had not penetrated the *negeri*, yet. Although the opposition in Sarawak was soundly defeated, they created history when all the opposition parties which formed a coalition called Barisan Alternatif were made up of Peninsula-based parties, except for the State Reform Party (STAR). With the presence of national opposition parties in Sarawak, the durability of the opposition force in the *negeri* could be at least assured. Established in 1978, the Sarawak DAP is an embodiment of the national opposition party’s resilience compared to regional opposition parties such as Parti Anak Jati Sarawak (PAJAR), PERMAS and NEGARA that could not survive beyond two elections.

In the Muslim *bumiputera* seats, two Peninsula-based parties, Keadilan and PAS, threatened to challenge PBB’s dominance over the Muslim *bumiputera* electorate. Still, PBB was able to retain its control over the Muslim *bumiputera* when the party swept all the Muslim *bumiputera* seats. Despite failing to deny PBB’s dominance, Keadilan and PAS were successful in significantly reducing PBB’s popular vote from 82.83 per cent in 1995 to 68.71 per cent in 1999. In contrast to the Peninsular Malays who voted against BN due to the Anwar factor, their counterparts in Sarawak especially in Kuching voted against PBB because of local factors especially land issues (Mohd Faisal Syam 2002, p. 17). Although the issue of Melanau leaders marginalizing the Malays in PBB was played up by the opposition, it did not significantly sway the

Malay voters away from PBB as suggested by Chin (2003*b*). The Malay and Melanau schism might be prevalent among the Muslim *bumiputera* elites but it had little impact on the electorate.

In Sarawak, most Keadilan members were former members of PERMAS, DAP, PBB and Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM). PAS, on the other hand, was masterminded by a few Peninsular Malay religious teachers with the local Malays as its shadow leaders. Initially both parties tried to emulate the type of politics that their national leaders were propagating. Keadilan, for example, was committed in pursuing the issue of democracy and the injustice that befell its leader, Anwar Ibrahim. Thus, the Sarawak Keadilan blindly took up these issues which were deemed irrelevant to the Muslim *bumiputera* in Sarawak as evident from the 1999 election results. Gradually, Sarawak Keadilan changed its tactic by pursuing local issues such as land-related matters, the marginalization of the Malays and the lack of development in rural areas. Apart from local issues, the central criticism of Sarawak Keadilan was Taib's leadership which was allegedly riddled with corruption, cronyism and nepotism. These criticisms resembled the type of politics adopted by PERMAS mainly because the top Sarawak Keadilan leaders were former members of the defunct party. Keadilan, therefore, was used by some Malay opposition leaders to challenge Taib's leadership and not to address a larger issue of democracy in the *negeri*.

Similar to Sarawak Keadilan, PAS also initially adopted the agenda of setting up an Islamic state as its struggle which was deemed to be too "extreme" for Sarawak's "moderate" Muslims. In accommodating Sarawak's Muslim *bumiputera*, PAS diluted its image by pursuing local and regional agenda similar like Keadilan. As the first Islamic party in Sarawak, PAS has a huge task in breaking the stranglehold of Sarawak's multi-ethnic and multi-religious political parties over the electorate. Since the formation of SUPP in 1959, all political parties in Sarawak have maintained their multi-ethnic character even though they were subsequently dominated by a single ethnic group. This multi-ethnic character is essential to the survival of political party in Sarawak because not a single ethnic group can rule the *negeri* without forming alliances with other ethnic groups. To the Muslim *bumiputera* electorate, mono-religious ideology is not readily accepted, for now, because they put more priority on their development needs.

Taib's dominance over Sarawak society, in particular the Muslim *bumiputera*, became much stronger in the 1990s. Despite some resistance from various segment of society, the strongman-politician easily thwarted the opposition forces which could only make little inroad in the Dayak and Chinese seats. The Malay opposition forces, on the other hand, failed

to break Taib's control over the Muslim *bumiputera* electorate when they were unable to win a single Muslim *bumiputera* seat since the 1987 election. With his overamplified strength, Taib continued to steer Sarawak into the new millennium albeit increasing apprehension towards his leadership from certain groups in Sarawak.

“OLD POLITICS” IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

The “new politics” that emerged in the Peninsula after the 1999 election did not entirely affect Sarawak's political landscape despite the nationalization of opposition parties in the *negeri*. After more than three decades, three features of Sarawak “old politics” still dominate the *negeri*, namely racial politics, regional politics, and “development politics”, which became the source of consolidation and contestation among the populace. Racial politics which has increasingly become dominant due to the process of state formation continues to dominate Sarawak politics in the new millennium. Although most of the political parties in Sarawak are considered multi-ethnic, each one of them is still dominated by a single ethnic group — PBB by the Muslim Melanaus, SUPP by the Chinese, SNAP and PBDS by the Ibans. These political parties might not openly champion the rights of the Melanaus, the Chinese or the Ibans, but they still pursue the interests of certain ethnic groups over those of the others. This strategy has divided most of the electorate in Sarawak along ethnic lines with the Muslim *bumiputera* generally align themselves with PBB, while the Chinese identify themselves with SUPP and the Dayaks supporting either SNAP or PBDS. Paradoxically, racial politics has not only consolidated the support of Sarawak's electorate towards the ruling party, it also becomes the source of contestation by several marginalized groups. Apart from racial politics, twenty-first century Sarawak continues to be dominated by regional politics which is manifested by the continued popularity of the ruling coalition as opposed to the national based opposition parties. The ruling coalition exploits regional and local sentiments in order to mobilize the masses especially during elections. In fact, one of the barriers that have prevented national opposition parties such as Keadilan and PAS from breaking PBB's dominance in the Muslim *bumiputera* seats is the manipulation of regional sentiments by PBB leaders in rallying the support of the electorate. Another manifestation of regionalism is the continued schism of Sarawak society along the *negeri*'s major river system; namely Sarawak, Rajang and Lawas. Among the Muslim *bumiputera*, they have been historically divided between the Kuching Malays, the Sibü Malays and Melanaus, and the Limbang

Malays. The same schism can also be observed within the Chinese and Iban communities in Sarawak. The other feature of Sarawak “old politics” which continues to dominate the *negeri* in the new millennium is “development politics”. This is the ruling party’s strategy of manipulating the distribution of development projects in order to cajole and coax the electorate. Through Taib’s Politics of Development (POD), the ruling party pledged or distributed development projects to constituencies that were deemed in danger of falling to the opposition. Subsequently, the government “punished” opposition supporters by withdrawing development projects which were promised to them earlier or by totally depriving them of new projects. The government’s strategy of politicizing development has been extremely powerful in binding the population together, resulting in the continued dominance of the ruling party for over three decades.

With “old politics” still strongly embedded in Sarawak’s society, there was inconsequential change taking place in the *negeri* after the 1999 election. The recurring issue within Muslim *bumiputera* politics was the marginalization of the Malays and the criticism towards Taib. After the 1999 election, Abang Abu Bakar who had been removed earlier from PBB decided to fight back by attempting to revive his father’s (Datu Bandar Abang Mustapha) dream of bringing UMNO to Sarawak. Again, a chorus of PBB and UMNO leaders denounced Abang Abu’s UMNO plan, but he persisted by sponsoring a host of Independent candidates as the national party’s proxy in the 2001 election. Initially the former PBB’s deputy president boasted that he would be sponsoring forty-two Independent candidates but in the 2001 election, only twenty-nine Independent candidates contested against the SBN, and not all of them were from Abang Abu’s faction. Apart from Independent candidates, four other opposition parties (Keadilan, PAS, DAP and STAR) took part in the 2001 election. However all of them failed to pose serious challenge towards the ruling party which successfully secured sixty (PBB thirty, SUPP sixteen, PBDS eight, SNAP six) out of sixty-two Council Negeri seats. The remaining two seats went to DAP and an Independent candidate who Abang Abu claimed to be one of his sponsored candidates. The Independent candidate, however, denied his link with Abang Abu’s faction, thus landing a blow to his Sarawak UMNO’s project. For the proponents of Sarawak UMNO, the formation of the Malay national party could put a stop to the perceived marginalization of the Malays by Taib and other Muslim Melanau leaders in PBB. With the arrival of UMNO in Sarawak, PBB could be dissolved to make way for the Malay national party, hence, eliminating Taib’s source of power which has enabled him to dominate Sarawak for more than two

decades. The opponents of Sarawak UMNO, on the other hand, argued that the formation of UMNO would lead to the Peninsular Malay's dominance at the expense of the local populace.

Paradoxically, Sarawak UMNO is a manifestation of the Malays' opposition towards Taib's leadership but on the other hand it symbolizes the Malays' continued loyalty towards the ruling party. Prior to 1999, this had been the trend of the Malay opposition parties in Sarawak such as PAJAR and PERMAS. During their active years, these parties publicly declared that they opposed the Muslim Melanau Chief Ministers but not the national BN which was responsible for constructing the system that bred these powerful men. This parochial struggle explained why the Malay opposition parties in Sarawak lacked perseverance but this somewhat changed in 1999 with the arrival of two national opposition parties, Keadilan and PAS. Although these two parties are increasingly pursuing regional and local based issues including criticism of Taib's leadership, they have shifted their struggle to the larger issues of democracy and good governance.

Despite the minor shift in the type of politics espoused by the Muslim *bumiputera* opposition forces in Sarawak, there was inconsequential change in the voting behaviour of the Muslim *bumiputera*. In the 2001 election, majority of the Muslim *bumiputera* electorate still supported PBB and the ruling party. The only talking point among the Muslim *bumiputera* voters at that time was Taib's decision to move from his traditional seat of Asajaya which was a Malay majority seat to Balingian which was a Melanau majority seat. Again, the issue of Taib being a Melanau-chauvinist was played up by the opposition. In dismissing this allegation, Taib candidly said 'which area is more developed? Is it a Malay area or a Melanau area? The Melanau areas in the central region of Sarawak are more backward than any other area. This shows that I love the Malay people more' (*Borneo Post*, 14 July 2001). Although Taib made this statement in order to appease the Malay electorate, he foolishly admitted that the Melanau in the central region of Sarawak had been marginalized by the government despite having a Melanau leader at the helm. Despite this admission, the Melanau electorate continued to throw their support behind the ruling party.

Akin to Rahman, Taib has successfully remained at the helm of Sarawak government for more than two decades due to his capability to play the dual role of central state's representative and local strongman. The first role is imposed by the central state which requires the strongman-politician to fulfil the same demands that the previous strongman-politician, Rahman Yakub, had religiously performed. By fulfilling these demands, Taib has been given the much-needed central state's support and subsequently the "freedom" to

dominate Sarawak's society. With the limited "freedom" that the central state accorded to him, Taib uses his political office to perform the role of a local strongman with the sole aim of strengthening his position within the SBN and also Sarawak's society in general. The subsequent part of this chapter discusses in depth Taib's attempt to perform these two complementing roles which subsequently led to the political domination of Sarawak's society in particular the Muslim *bumiputera*.

WINNING OVER THE CENTRAL STATE'S SUPPORT

Similar to the political pact formed between Rahman and the central state, Taib was also required to play the role of the central state's representative by performing five of its core demands, namely (1) to safeguard national interest, (2) to maintain Malay political dominance, (3) to ensure the BN's continued dominance in the *negeri* and parliamentary elections, (4) to maintain the central state's control over petroleum and gas, and (5) to provide political stability. By successfully meeting all of these demands, Taib acquires the extremely important ingredient to remain in power in Sarawak which is the central state's support. Throughout Taib's tenure as the Chief Minister, the strongman-politician has religiously adhered to the central state's demands hence allowing him to stay "relevant" (at least to the central state) for more than two decades in Sarawak. First, Taib carefully ensures that the central state's interest in Sarawak is securely protected because this is vital in forming a strong "partnership" with the central state. In safeguarding the central state's interest in Sarawak, Taib adopted several policies introduced by the central state with the aim of bringing the *negeri* closer to the centre. Among these policies were the clock-in system, the common time zone, the national education policies, and the elevation of Bahasa Malaysia as Sarawak's sole official language. Apart from implementing these national policies, Taib ensures that he would not overly champion Sarawak's interest or challenge the authority of the central state. In comparison to Rahman who would occasionally tick off central state leaders with his stinging remarks, Taib is more accommodative of the central state's interests, thus making him an even more "likeable" strongman-politician compared to his uncle.

Second, Taib's appointment as Sarawak Chief Minister allowed the central state to extend Malay dominance in the *negeri*. Despite being a Muslim Melanau, the central state leaders consider Taib a Malay because he is a Muslim just like his uncle. As a "Malay" leader, Taib is expected to advance the Malay agenda by appointing Muslim *bumiputera* leaders to key positions in the government and in implementing Malay or Islamic

initiatives in Sarawak. Following his uncle's strategy, Taib appointed Muslim *bumiputera* leaders who were mostly his political allies such as Effendi Norwawi, Adenan Satem, Awang Tengah Ali Hassan and family members such as Aziz Hussein to key positions in the government. In order to bolster his image as a Malay and Muslim leader, Taib introduced a comprehensive shariah laws and streamlined the administration of Islamic affairs in Sarawak. With the introduction of these Islamic initiatives, Taib hopes to demonstrate his commitment in upholding the sanctity of Islam and Malay supremacy, thus silencing his critics who question his faith as a Muslim and his commitment towards the Malay community.

Third, the central state expects Taib to maintain the SBN's electoral dominance in Sarawak so that it could help the national BN to maintain its supremacy at the central level. In the context of Sarawak parliamentary elections, Taib managed to increase the SBN's dominance from taking nineteen out of twenty-four seats in the 1982 election to twenty-seven out of twenty-eight seats in the 2004 election. In fact, in the two elections prior to the 2004 election, the SBN managed to sweep almost all the parliamentary seats by winning twenty-six out of twenty-seven seats in 1995 and twenty-eight out of twenty-eight seats in 1999. In terms of popular vote, the SBN managed to increase the number of votes it received from 56.75 per cent in 1982 to 65.85 per cent in 2004. Winning parliamentary seats in Sarawak is crucial to the central state's dominance at the central level especially when the *negeri* has the highest number of parliamentary seats in Malaysia. Hence, the SBN's performance could determine whether the ruling coalition could form a strong central government by winning a two-third majority in parliament. In the 1999 election, for example, the national BN faced a formidable challenge from the opposition parties due to the *reformasi* movement led by former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. From a total of 193 parliamentary seats, the national BN could only secure 148 seats, which represented about 76.7 per cent of the total seats. Out of the 148 seats won by BN, twenty-eight of the seats were delivered by the SBN, thus allowing the ruling coalition to secure the vital two-thirds majority in parliament. In this context, Sarawak is very important to the central state. Consequently, Taib's ability to lead the SBN in winning a large number of parliamentary seats in Sarawak becomes one of the reasons why the central state continues to support the strongman-politician's leadership in the *negeri*. The BN's dominance in Sarawak parliamentary elections was even more glaring in the Muslim *bumiputera* seats. Since the 1982 parliamentary election, PBB managed to win all the Muslim *bumiputera* seats and at the same time increased its popular vote from 77.56 per cent in 1982 to 82.75 per cent in 2004 (see Table 5.1).

TABLE 5.1
The SBN's Performance in the Parliamentary Elections, 1982–2004

	1982	1986	1990	1995	1999	2004
Number of seats won by the SBN	19 (24)	21 (24)	21 (27)	26 (27)	28 (28)	27 (28)
Percentage of votes received by the SBN	56.75	55.61	57.09	63.56	65.95	65.85
Number of seats won by PBB in the Muslim <i>bumiputera</i> seats	5 {5}	5 {5}	7 {7}	8 {8}	7 {7}	7 {7}
Percentage votes received by PBB in the Muslim <i>bumiputera</i> seats	77.56	68.15	74.72	82.83	68.71	82.75

Notes:

1. Figures in () represent the total number of parliamentary seats in Sarawak.
2. Figures in { } represent the total number of Muslim *bumiputera* seats in Sarawak.

Apart from delivering a substantial number of parliamentary seats in Sarawak, Taib is also expected to dominate the Council Negeri. Except for the 1987 election, Taib had led the SBN to a comfortable victory in all the *negeri* elections. Although, the strongman-politician had to endure various challenges and obstacles in his first six years in office, Taib managed to gradually dominate the *negeri* elections by winning forty-nine out of fifty-six Council Negeri seats in 1991, fifty-seven out of sixty-two seats in 1996 and sixty out of sixty-two seats in 2001. During the corresponding period, the SBN managed to increase its popular vote from 68.51 per cent in 1983 to 71.21 per cent in 2001. Meanwhile in the Muslim *bumiputera* seats, PBB was able to maintain its almost absolute control over the Muslim *bumiputera* when the party managed to sweep all the seats except in the 1987 election. In terms of PBB's popular vote in the Muslim *bumiputera* seats, the party had significantly increased it from 67.62 per cent in 1983 to 77.21 per cent in 2001 (see Table 5.2).

Fourth, the central state expects Taib to guarantee its control over Sarawak's petroleum and gas reserves which are considered to be the country's most prized natural resources. Since Taib was one of the key figures in the legislation of the Petroleum Act in 1974, his commitment towards preserving

TABLE 5.2
The SBN's Performance in the *Negeri* Elections, 1983–2001

	1983	1987	1991	1996	2001
Number of seats won by the SBN	34 (48)	28 (48)	49 (56)	57 (62)	60 (62)
Percentage votes received by the SBN	68.51	55.24	62.75	66.62	71.21
Number of seats won by PBB in the Muslim <i>bumiputera</i> seats	12 {12}	9 {12}	17 {17}	22 {22}	21 {21}
Percentage of votes received by PBB in the Muslim Bumiputera seats	67.62	59.48	74.46	77.72	77.21

Notes:

1. Figures in () represent the total number of Council Negeri seats in Sarawak.
2. Figures in { } represent the total number of Muslim *bumiputera* seats in Sarawak

the central state's control over these resources would not be questioned. Despite numerous calls from certain quarters in Sarawak especially from the opposition to increase the royalty given by the central state to the *negeri*, Taib ignores this request and continues to support the stipulated agreement in the Petroleum Act.

Fifth, the central state expects Taib to bring political stability in Sarawak so that the ruling coalition can continue to dominate the *negeri* and most importantly maintain its presence in the Federation. Despite numerous challenges mounted against his leadership, Taib had successfully fended them off through repressive and accommodative measures. Crucial to Taib's strategies of bringing political stability in Sarawak is to tighten his control over PBB and the ruling coalition. Within PBB, Taib has masterfully dictated the rise and fall of party leaders with the aim of strengthening his position within the party. This strategy has transformed Taib as the ultimate kingmaker in PBB which becomes his platform to extend his dominance in the ruling coalition in Sarawak. With his position in PBB safely guarded, Taib applies the same strategy used by his uncle in wresting control of other component parties in the SBN. If Rahman made SNAP as his strongest ally in the SBN, Taib relies on the Chinese-dominated party, SUPP, as his strongest partner in the ruling party. Taib believes that SUPP would not have any ambition to install a Chinese Chief Minister, hence the party would not pose a serious threat to the strongman-politician's position in the government. By making SUPP his strongest ally, Taib indirectly weakens the influence of Dayak-based parties which the strongman-politician believes as a potential threat due to their relentless ambition to recapture the Chief Ministership from the Muslim Melanau. Apart from forming an alliance with SUPP, Taib has also pitted

Dayak leaders against each other, thus further weakening their influence in Sarawak. Although Dayak communities are divided due to their egalitarian social structure and the process of state formation, the schism within the community has been inflated by the strongman-politician through his divide and rule policy.

Throughout Taib's tenure as Sarawak Chief Minister, the strongman-politician has loyally abided by the central state's demands, allowing him to establish a strong relation with the state especially under Dr Mahathir's leadership. By executing the central state's demands, Taib successfully acquires the state's seal of approval which allows him the "freedom" to dominate Sarawak. In the following part of this chapter, my discussion focuses on Taib's role as a local strongman who dictate Sarawak's society, in particular the Muslim *bumiputera*, as a strategy to amplify his power in the *negeri* and also in the eyes of the central state leaders. In performing the role of a local strongman, Taib has devised three strategies which have been proven effective in cajoling the Muslim *bumiputera* towards the ruling party. These strategies are vote-buying through the POD, consolidating the Muslim *bumiputera* through the process of Islamization and penetrating the Muslim *bumiputera* through an expanded Sarawak civil service.

VOTE-BUYING THROUGH THE POD

As discussed in Chapter 4, the practice of electoral patronage under the POD was highly effective in cajoling the electorate especially in the 1987 election. Realizing the potential of the POD in mobilizing the electorate, Taib abandoned the "noble" objectives of this policy and intensified the politicization of development in order to maintain his supremacy as Sarawak's most powerful strongman-politician. Apart from that, Taib also needs to deliver as many parliamentary seats as possible to the national BN so that the central state would continue to support his leadership. Hence, contrary to the vision of the POD, Sarawak's development approach under Taib is very much influenced by political decisions, which in this case, refer to the ruling party's desire to win elections.⁷

By analysing the pattern of development expenditure in Sarawak between 1981 and 2004, I will argue that Taib's POD is strongly influenced by the strongman-politician's agenda of dominating the electorate (see Table 5.3). In the 1980s, there was a trend where the total development expenditure increased when the election year was approaching and it gradually declined after the election. For example, in 1980, the total development expenditure in Sarawak was about RM669 million but it suddenly jumped to RM882 million in 1982.

TABLE 5.3
The Public Sector's Development Expenditure in Sarawak, 1964–2004 (RM'000)

	Central Government Development Expenditure		Sarawak Government Development Expenditure		Total Development Expenditure		% Change in Total Development Expenditure
	RM ('000)	%	RM ('000)	%	RM ('000)	%	
1981	420,304	62.8	248,510	37.2	668,814	100.0	66
1982	592,785	67.2	289,761	32.8	882,546	100.0	32
1983	424,758	58.5	301,730	41.5	726,488	100.0	-18
1984	287,989	42.9	382,764	57.1	670,753	100.0	-8
1985	378,176	53.8	324,636	46.2	702,812	100.0	5
1986	318,053	40.8	460,980	59.2	779,033	100.0	11
1987	277,422	41.4	392,444	58.6	669,866	100.0	-14
1988	193,135	28.1	494,083	71.9	687,218	100.0	3
1989	263,727	32.5	547,557	67.5	811,284	100.0	18
1990	367,221	31.7	791,626	68.3	1,158,847	100.0	43
1991	420,842	30.6	954,842	69.4	1,375,684	100.0	19
1992	519,239	26.0	1,477,438	74.0	1,996,677	100.0	45
1993	429,222	22.8	1,450,146	77.2	1,879,368	100.0	-6
1994	398,207	24.4	1,234,011	75.6	1,632,218	100.0	-13
1995	469,140	22.7	1,596,789	77.3	2,065,929	100.0	27
1996	401,232	20.2	1,580,634	79.8	1,981,866	100.0	-4
1997	464,874	17.8	2,152,885	82.2	2,617,759	100.0	32
1998	436,573	18.3	1,951,008	81.7	2,387,581	100.0	-9
1999	562,715	25.2	1,673,112	74.8	2,235,827	100.0	-6
2000	714,167	21.5	2,608,750	78.5	3,322,917	100.0	49
2001	883,689	28.9	2,169,417	71.1	3,053,106	100.0	-8
2002	1,030,650	41.7	1,439,705	58.3	2,470,355	100.0	-19
2003	1,852,145	53.2	1,629,904	46.8	3,482,049	100.0	41
2004	1,264,610	49.2	1,305,211	50.8	2,569,821	100.0	-26

■ Parliamentary elections

■ *Negeri* elections

Despite the *negeri* election in the following year, the development expenditure declined to RM726 million in 1983 and further reduced to RM671 million in 1984. However, when the 1986 election was approaching, the development expenditure gradually increased to RM703 million in 1985 and continued to increase to RM779 million in 1986. This trend persisted throughout the 1980s but it became less visible in the 1990s and in the new millennium. Instead, the development expenditure increased only after the election years. Although development expenditures did not increase during the election years in the 1990s and the new millennium, I would argue that the ruling party continued to politicize development albeit with a different strategy. In the 1980s, the ruling party would implement projects during the election years so that it could cajole the electorate in supporting them. But in the 1990s and in the new millennium, this strategy had been changed by giving out more development promises during election years and these promises would only be fulfilled after the elections. With this new strategy, the ruling party could “punish” the electorate who had supported the opposition while “rewarding” those who voted for BN. This strategy is definitely more powerful than the one adopted by the ruling party in the 1980s. On the contrary, the government would argue that it would be impossible to distribute development projects only during the election period. The state leaders would further argue that most development projects require a lot of time to plan, approve and later implement, thus, one could not simply dish out development projects during the election period in order to “buy” the support of the electorate. However, such argument does not hold water since the very opposite happens during the elections in Malaysia, including Sarawak. This view will be further justified in the following discussion.

To demonstrate the ruling party’s agenda of politicizing development, one should take a closer look at the government expenditure on Minor Rural Projects (MRP) from 1981 to 2004. Within this corresponding period, the expenditure on the MRP increased significantly during the election years and declined substantially after that. For example, in the 1980s, the value of MRP increased to about 118 per cent in 1982 compared to the expenditure in the previous year and continued to increase to about 48 per cent in the following 1983 *negeri* election. In the subsequent year, the value of the MRP declined significantly about 20 per cent but it shot up again in 1985 in the anticipation of the 1986 election (see Table 5.4). This trend continued to persist throughout Taib’s tenure as the Chief Minister. In contrast to the overall development expenditure that I have discussed earlier, the MRP usually involves the implementation of

TABLE 5.4
The *Negeri* Government Expenditure on Minor Rural Projects 1981–2004
 (RM'000)

	Total Value of MRP	Percentage Change in the Total Value of MRP
1981	3,113	—
1982	6,794	118.2
1983	10,064	48.1
1984	8,046	-20.1
1985	15,335	90.6
1986	42,762	178.9
1987	94,246	120.4
1988	60,528	-35.8
1989	93,142	53.9
1990	120,028	28.9
1991	143,424	19.5
1992	116,958	-18.5
1993	116,822	-0.1
1994	120,808	3.4
1995	115,972	-4.0
1996	134,743	16.2
1997	125,156	-7.1
1998	145,315	16.1
1999	172,378	18.6
2000	187,431	8.7
2001	210,082	12.1
2002	189,203	-9.9
2003	214,683	13.5
2004	185,657	-13.5

■ Parliamentary elections

■ *Negeri* elections

small projects which could easily be dished out during the elections without much planning.

Based on the analysis of the expenditure on MRP from 1981 to 2004, it is clear that the development policies in Sarawak had been clouded by the ruling party's political agenda which is to win elections. Taib knew that it

would be an uphill battle to mobilize the electorate without the promise of tangible goods such as development projects, thus the strongman-politician defied the ultimate philosophy of the POD by reinforcing the practices of cronyism and patronage that dominated Sarawak during his uncle's tenure, of which he had been critical off in the early 1980s.

After analysing the development expenditure (including MRPs) in Sarawak between 1981 and 2004, I will discuss the practice of electoral patronage that has become an integral part of the POD. By analysing the practice of electoral patronage in Sarawak, one would be able to better understand how the ruling party politicizes development, leading to a strong domination of the electorate, in particular the Muslim *bumiputera*.

Under the POD, the ruling party adopts four strategies of electoral patronage which intends to cajole Sarawak electorate (see Table 5.5). First, during the campaigning period, Federal and Sarawak ministers would pledge various new development projects in order to fish for votes. This is thus far the most important part of the ruling party's electoral strategy as evident from the huge number of pledges made during the election period between

TABLE 5.5
Development Projects and Financial Grants Promised or Distributed by the BN Leaders in the Sarawak Elections, 1990–2001

	Pledges for various development projects		Issuance of financial grants and other "goodies" to individuals and social organizations		Official openings of completed development projects		Ground-breaking ceremonies of new development projects		Grand total of dev. projects and grants	Grand total cost of dev. projects and grants (RM million)
	Total	Cost (RM million)	Total	Cost (RM million)	Total	Cost (RM million)	Total	Cost (RM million)		
1990	9	2,024.40	7	0.55	3	2.91	2	11.40	21	2,039.25
1991	33	445.63	11	2.85	14	367.01	19	215.82	77	1,031.32
1995	42	180,663.07	50	1.24	17	465.82	6	13.75	115	181,143.87
1996	41	38,738.98	8	0.05	11	162.35	11	96.53	71	38,997.91
1999	31	168.42	198	150.75	11	127.35	24	153.73	264	600.25
2001	504	4,414.04	373	5.07	19	158.24	16	171.55	912	4,748.90

Notes:

1. The parliamentary elections in Sarawak were held in 1990, 1995 and 1999.
2. The *negeri* elections were held in 1991, 1996 and 2001.

Sources: Summarized from Appendix 3, Tables 1.1 to 1.15

1990 and 2001. Among the most popular projects dished out by the ruling party are the MRP which are funded by the *negeri* and also the central government. Usually, the MRP involves the implementation of small-scale projects such as the construction of village roads, the purchase of building materials, the supply of generators, the awarding of financial grants and the supply of computers. Some of these minor projects would be implemented on the spot but others would remain as empty promises. Apart from dishing out infrastructure projects, the ruling party would also pledge the construction of new mosques and *suraus* for the Muslim *bumiputera* electorate, aimed at projecting the PBB's image as a Muslim *bumiputera* party that strived to preserve the sanctity of Islam in Sarawak.

The allocation of development projects during the election period is varied according to the threat posed by the opposition in the affected constituencies. Usually, only contested seats would be allocated new development projects as in the case of Ba'Kelalan, an Orang Ulu majority seat within the Limbang division. The Ba'kelalan seat was created in 1996 but was never contested (it was won uncontested by the BN candidate) until a by-election was held in 2004 due to the tragic death of its assemblyman, Dr Judson Sakai Tagal. In the 2004 by-election, the seat saw a straight fight between an Independent candidate, Baru Bian, and the BN candidate, Nelson Balan Rining. Geographically, Ba'kelalan is a huge seat about the size of Perlis (a northern *negeri* in the Peninsula) but it has a relatively small number of voters, less than 8,000. The most striking reality in Ba'kelalan is the slow pace of development in the area where even basic infrastructure such as tar-sealed roads, water and electricity supplies are inadequately provided to the people (*Sunday Tribune*, 12 September 2004). With the possibility of losing the by-election, the ruling party promised to deliver nine projects worth more than RM97.2 million to the area (*Berita Harian, Sarawak Tribune, Borneo Post*, September 2004). This is the ugly face of Taib's POD in which development is being politicized and voters are punished for subscribing to opposing political views. Another important factor which can determine the allocation of development projects during the election period is the classification of the seat, whether it is a white, black or grey seat. A white seat is labelled as a safe seat to BN, while a black seat implies that the opposition has a higher chance of winning. The third classification is a grey seat which denotes that both sides, BN and the opposition, have equal chance of winning. In the 1991 election, for example, a total of RM50 million worth of development projects were allocated to the Batu Lintang seat which saw an uphill battle for the BN candidate, Chan Seng Kai (SUPP), against DAP stalwart, Sim Kwang Yang. By using their access to the 3Ms (Media, Machinery, Money)

and via promises of various development projects, BN won the black seat of Batu Lintang with a majority of 2,434 votes.

Second, leaders of the ruling party distribute financial grants and other “goodies” to voters, religious bodies and other social organizations in order to lure their support. The practice of handing financial grants to voters and social organizations started in the 1970s and persisted into the new millennium. In the Muslim *bumiputera* seats, the usual beneficiaries of the financial grants would be mosque committees and various communal organizations. Apart from these two bodies, the ruling party also handed financial grants to various church and temple committees, and to other numerous communal organizations. By giving financial assistance to these organizations, the ruling party hopes to create a sense of gratitude and dependency among these organizations which then translates into votes for the SBN.

Apart from financial grants, the ruling party also distributes other “goodies” which could be anything under the sun. For example, when the issue of land titles almost resulted in the defeat of the BN candidates in several Muslim *bumiputera* seats in the 1999 election, the ruling party acted swiftly by issuing land titles to the electorate⁸ (Appendix 3, Table 1.12). After the 1999 election, more land titles were handed over to the electorate, especially the Kuching Malays, in order to lure back their support. Suddenly, land titles became hot electoral “commodities” which were irresponsibly traded to the electorate in exchange for their votes.

Money is another powerful electoral “goodies” which is widely distributed during the elections in Sarawak. Money politics can take many forms. When migrating voters return home to vote, political parties or their agents would give money to these voters as a token to compensate the expenses that they incurred while coming back home to vote. In other cases, political parties or their agents would enclose certain amount of money to the voting slip (containing information about the voters’ polling stations) that they distributed to voters several days before polling. Within the Muslim *bumiputera* seats, some Muslim campaigners even resorted to the use of the holy Quran to coerce voters who had received money to vote for them (Abang Yusuf 1999, p. 41). Although the total expenditure for the elections in Malaysia had increased from RM30,000 to RM100,000 for a *negeri* election and from RM50,000 to RM200,000 for a parliamentary election, the amount of money spent by the ruling party for every constituency still exceeded the permitted limit. In the hotly contested 1987 election, the Chief Minister estimated that the cost of his campaign was between RM300,000 to RM500,000 per constituency (Leigh 1991, p. 192). Meanwhile an estimated RM2 million per constituency was spent in the 1991 election (Aeria 2005, p. 133). Although these claims

lack strong factual evidence, one should not brush aside the practice of money politics in the elections. So far, the strongest evidence to prove the practice of money politics in Sarawak is the nullification of Bukit Begunan election in 1996 due to vote-buying.⁹ In the Bukit Begunan case, the plaintiff, Independent candidate Donald Lawan, claimed that on 5 September 1996, RM10 notes were distributed to the voters in Lachau, Sri Aman when they attended a function organized for the respondent, Mong Dagang who was the BN candidate for the constituency. The plaintiff also claimed that on 6 September 1996, Tuai Rumah Radin Tungang of Rumah Radin, Sri Aman received a sum of RM5,580 from the respondent in order to lure the Tuai Rumah and his longhouse residents to vote for Mong (*Sarawak Tribune*, 14 February 1997).¹⁰ In passing his judgment, Justice Chin who presided over the case pointed out;

the photographs taken by the petitioner's nephew, Affendy Michael, at Lachau bazaar were accepted by the court as sufficient evidence to establish the charge of bribery. Eighteen photographs of three persons distributing money at the bazaar as inducement for them to vote for Mong and attended a public function there. It was estimated that about 1,000 persons attended the function, graced by PBDS president. It is inescapable conclusion that the money was to buy votes of the voters. Given the estimate of at least a thousand people there, and that at least four persons were mentioned with the pictures showing at least four persons in the act of distributing the money, it also leaves no doubt in my mind that the target was to procure the votes of everyone present at that meeting (*Sarawak Tribune*, 14 February 1997).

The practice of money politics during the elections is rampant in Sarawak and the Bukit Begunan case is a testimony to this. As long as politicians continue to be corrupt, the true meaning of elections which intends to elect responsible and visionary leaders to lead the country would not materialize. In fact, the whole practice of electoral patronage under the umbrella of the POD has hampered the progress of democracy and the emergence of a civic-minded citizen in Sarawak. The POD has clearly impeded the discourse on much more important issues such as good governance, justice and equality, corruption, issues related to education, poverty and the increasing incidence of crime in the country.

Third, the ruling party accentuates its development success by holding official opening ceremonies to commemorate the completion of its development projects. The number of development projects being officially opened during the elections had increased from at least three functions in 1990 to more than nineteen functions in the new millennium, involving

projects which cost more than RM158 million (see Table 5.5). Some of the projects had been completed several years prior to the elections but they were declared open only during the campaign period. In some cases, the same project would be declared open more than once by different ministers or political leaders.¹¹ Attended by ministers, community leaders, government officers, party supporters, local populace and the mass media, official opening ceremonies are intended to remind voters that only the ruling party can bring progress. These official ceremonies (including ground-breaking ceremonies) are also the ruling party's strategy to win the psychological war against the opposition ahead of polling. The ruling party can go to the extreme of ferrying "imported" attendees such as university students, government workers and villagers from other localities just to boost the number. These functions would then be featured in news bulletin and special programmes over the national television, radio and the mainstream newspapers as part of the ruling party's election propaganda.

The fourth and final strategy of electoral patronage involves the holding of ground-breaking ceremonies in order to announce the commencement of new projects. Similar to official opening ceremonies, ground-breaking ceremonies have the same ultimate goal which is to indoctrinate voters that development is synonymous with BN. Therefore, if voters want development, they have to vote the ruling party. As a result, development becomes the ideology of the people of Sarawak, making it an integral part of their life. To further accentuate the ruling party's role in bringing new development projects to the electorate, billboards declaring that these new projects belong to the BN government would be erected at the site of the projects, again intended to remind the voters that the ruling party should be the one to be credited. In the early 1990s, the number of ground-breaking ceremonies held by the ruling party was considered small but this figure rose tremendously to about twenty-four ceremonies in 1999 and ten in 2006 (see Table 5.5).

Between 1990 and 2001, the ruling party had intensified its development propaganda by pledging an average of 110 new projects and handed out an average of 108 financial grants and other goodies. Apart from that, the ruling party also held an average of thirteen official opening ceremonies and thirteen ground-breaking ceremonies within the same period. Whereas in the 1980s, the average number of opening ceremonies and ground-breaking ceremonies held by the ruling party was two and thirty respectively. The number of new projects being pledged by the ruling party and the number of financial grants and other "goodies" being handed out was also much lower within the corresponding period; an average of thirty new projects and six financial grants and other "goodies". By looking at the trend of electoral patronage in

Sarawak, it is clear that this practice will continue to increase in terms of its importance as evident from the increasing number of development projects, financial grants and other “goodies” being distributed to the electorate since the 1970 election. Throughout Rahman and later Taib’s tenure as Sarawak Chief Minister, development has become a political tool to dominate the electorate as evident from the SBN’s sterling performance in the elections except in 1987. The ruling party’s dominance, particularly PBB, over the electorate is even more glaring within the Muslim *bumiputera* communities. Since 1970, PBB had dominated the parliamentary and *negeri* elections (except for the 1987 election) in the Muslim *bumiputera* seats by winning all the seats up for grab. In the *negeri* elections, PBB managed to increase its popular vote in the Muslim *bumiputera* seats from 68.51 per cent in 1983 to 77.04 per cent in 2001. The same scenario could also be observed in the parliamentary elections within the Muslim *bumiputera* seats where PBB again demonstrated its prowess by increasing its popular vote from 77.56 per cent in 1982 to 82.75 per cent in 2004.

Despite the ruling party’s strategy of politicizing development, Sarawak still achieved rapid progress with its GDP (at factor cost) grew significantly from RM438 million in 1961 to RM860 million in 1970 (current prices), an average growth rate of over 7 per cent per annum. For the period between 1971 to 1980, Sarawak’s GDP (at factor cost) continued to grow from RM909 million (in constant 1970 prices) in 1971 to RM2,980 million (in constant 1978 prices) in 1980, again representing an annual growth rate of about 7 per cent (Hamid 1988, p. 49). Growth performance during 1981 to 1985 was somewhat curbed as a result of adverse global economic conditions. Still, Sarawak’s GDP (at factor cost) grew from RM1,474 million in 1981 (in constant 1970 prices) to RM6,948 million (in constant 1978 prices) in 1990, recording a staggering annual growth rate of 18.6 per cent (Table 5.1 and Okposin et al. 2003, p. 132). In the late 1990s, the Malaysian economy was again hit by a crisis which also affected Sarawak. However, the *negeri* still recorded a tremendous growth in the 1990s when its GDP (at factor cost) grew from RM10,941 million (in constant 1987 prices) in 1991 to RM17,522 in 2000 (in constant 1987 prices). Sarawak’s per capita income also registered a rising trend over the last thirty years. Within the corresponding period, per capita income of the *negeri* rose from RM881 in 1970 (in constant 1970 prices) to RM12,755 (in constant 1987 prices) in 2000 (see Table 5.6).

Albeit recording an impressive growth, Sarawak’s economy remains structurally unchanged as evident from its continued reliance on the primary sector particularly mining and forest industry (Kaur 1998; Berma 2005;

TABLE 5.6
Sarawak: Gross Domestic Product by Kind of Economic Activity at Constant Prices, 1970–2004 (RM million)

	1970	1980	1990	2000			
Agriculture, forestry, livestock and fishing	319	824	27.7	1,679	24.2	2,613	14.9
Mining and quarrying	30	739	24.8	1,855	27.1	5,543	31.6
Manufacturing	81	257	8.6	1,170	16.8	3,843	21.9
Construction	46	195	6.5	278	4.0	479	2.7
Electricity, gas and water	11	40	1.3	129	1.8	403	2.3
Transport, storage and communications	56	122	4.1	344	4.9	981	5.6
Wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants	116	279	9.4	560	8.0	1,377	8.0
Finance, insurance, real estate and business services	66	180	6.0	322	4.6	621	3.5
Government services	45	296	10.0	554	7.9	1,138	6.5
Other services	90	48	1.6	57	0.8	524	3.0
GDP at factor cost	860	2,980	100.0	6,948	100.0	17,522	100.0
GDP at purchasers value	10,708	43,510		80,151		218,658	
	n.a.	3,097		6,857		17,444	
	n.a.	44,702		79,103		209,269	
Per capita GDP	881 (8)	2,292 (10)		3,883 (7)		12,755 (9)	
	994	3,221		4,392		14,584	

Notes:

1. The GDP for 1970 is based on the current prices while the GDP for 1980 and 1990 are based on the constant prices of 1978.
 2. The GDP for 2000 is based on the constant prices of 1987.
 3. Figures in () represent ranking among *negeri* for the year.
- Sources: Malaysia (2001a, pp. 35, 139), (1991b, pp. 124–25), (1986, p. 172), (1976, p. 12), Department of Statistics Malaysia, Sarawak (2005, p. 229).

Wee 1995). Since 1970, the primary sector had long been the mainstay of Sarawak's economy with agriculture, forestry and mining as the contributors to the GDP. In 1970, these three sectors collectively contributed 37 per cent to the GDP and continued to be the major contributor until the early 1980s (see Table 5.6). Initially, agriculture was by far the most important of the three sectors (with rubber, pepper and sago flour as the major exports), followed by forestry. Unlike Sabah, timber contributed to a much smaller part of Sarawak's exports in the 1960s (Malaysia 1965, p. 22). Still, saw logs and sawn timber exports (at current prices) from Sarawak increased from RM5 million in 1951 to RM3,135 million in 1990 (Wee 1995, p. 76).¹² Since timber industry is export oriented, it does not generate much benefit to the *negeri*. Although the timber industry provides employment to the local population, much of the profits generated by the industry go to timber licensees (Wee 1995, p. 76). Worst, timber concessions became a source of political patronage to the ruling government which then led to the emergence of "instant" *bumiputera* millionaires who were mostly the family members and political loyalists of the Chief Minister (Alli 1988, p. 119).

During the first half of the 1970s, the relative contribution of agriculture and forestry declined following expansion in other sectors, notably mining. By 1983, mining became the biggest single contributor to Sarawak's GDP (Hamid 1988, p. 52). This trend continued to persist into the new millennium. In 2004, the export of crude petroleum and LNG from Sarawak totalled RM28,288 million or 63 per cent of Sarawak's GDP (Department of Statistics Malaysia, Sarawak 2005, p. 153). Akin to the timber industry, the oil and petroleum industries also do not contribute much to the people of Sarawak since the industries are predominantly foreign owned and capital intensive, generating relatively few employment opportunities (Wee 1995, p. 80). Furthermore, Sarawak only receives 5 per cent of the petroleum revenue thus losing a substantial amount of development funding for the *negeri*.

The contribution of the secondary sector (manufacturing and construction) to Sarawak's GDP is considered small compared to that of the primary sector. Although the contribution of the manufacturing sector to the GDP increased from 9.4 per cent in 1970 to 21.9 per cent in 2000, the growth of the construction sector had somewhat decreased from 5.3 per cent in 1970 to 2.7 per cent in 2000 (see Table 5.6). Meanwhile, overall growth of the tertiary sector (transport, communications, wholesale and retail trade, banking, insurance) had been fairly steady despite being depended on the need to provide services to the primary and secondary sectors (Hamid 1988, p. 51).

Apart from failing to structurally change the economy, the economic growth in Sarawak also fails to address the issue of equitable growth or balanced development. According to Cramb and Dixon (1988, p. 1), equitable growth refers to the process of economic growth which enhances the livelihood of the poorest sector of the population. In the case of Sarawak, the poorest sector of the population is the rural populace who is made up of the *bumiputera* communities, especially the non-Muslim *bumiputera*.

In his speech at a symposium held at University of Malaya in 1962, Sarawak's Information Officer, Alistair Morrison, emphasized that "rural development is the key to making Sarawak a strong, stable and reliable partner in Malaysia" (Ho 1991, p. 31). Morrison's concern of rural development was understandable since more than two-thirds of the population in Sarawak at that time lived in rural areas, working in the agricultural sector (including fishery and forestry). Thus, it was vital for the government to develop the primary sector in order to uplift the livelihood of the people in rural Sarawak. Initially, a total of RM86.7 million or about 32 per cent of the total development expenditure for Sarawak under the First Malaysia Plan (1966–70) was spent on agriculture and rural development (Malaysia 1971, pp. 68–71). However, with Malaysia's rapid industrialization drive, the state's economic focus changed drastically, leading to the marginalization of the primary sector and also rural folks. In the Third Malaysia Plan (1976–80), the percentage of the public sector's expenditure on agriculture and rural development in Sarawak was reduced dramatically to a mere 8 per cent (Malaysia 1971, pp. 68–71; 1976, p. 431). Unfortunately, about 56 per cent of Sarawak population in 1980 was still employed in the primary sector. As a result, Rahman's government was severely criticized for neglecting rural development and for adopting an urban-bias type of development, thus marginalizing the non-Muslim *bumiputera* which formed the largest rural population (Leigh 1980, p. 243). Apart from the criticisms of the non-Muslim *bumiputera*, Rahman's development policies also raised constant flak from the Malays. This led to the formation of PAJAR in 1978.

In the 1980s and 1990s, certain groups especially the Dayak communities continued to express their displeasure towards the government's lack of initiative to develop the rural areas. These criticisms were articulated by PBDS through the call of Dayak nationalism or Dayakism which enabled them to win a significant number of seats in the 1987 and 1991 elections.¹³ After PBDS was co-opted by BN, the plight of the rural population was again neglected although the number of workers employed in the agricultural sector (which was closely associated with the rural population) was still high in 1991 (see Table 5.7). However, the Sarawak government's expenditure on agriculture in

TABLE 5.7
Sarawak: Employed Population by Occupation, 1970–2004

	1970	1980	1991	2000	2004
Professional, technical & related workers					
Number	11,044	23,388	45,307	92,275	139,703
Percent	3.0	5.1	7.6	13.2	15.2
Administrative & managerial workers (includes government administrators)					
Number	1,826	3,143	6,731	31,457	514,696
Percent	0.5	0.7	1.1	4.3	5.6
Clerical & related workers					
Number	11,167	23,525	48,499	52,666	69,852
Percent	3.1	5.1	8.2	7.2	7.6
Sales workers					
Number	14,346	24,325	40,643	87,735	104,777
Percent	3.9	5.3	6.9	11.9	11.4
Service workers					
Number	18,056	33,799	51,409	0	0
Percent	4.9	7.4	8.7	0.0	0.0
Agricultural, animal husbandry & forestry workers, fishermen & hunters					
Number	246,545	258,535	268,708	209,418	255,509
Percent	67.8	56.5	45.3	28.5	27.8
Production & related workers, transport equipment operators & laborers					
Number	35,731	66,677	130,813	184,891	181,063
Percent	9.9	14.7	22.1	25.2	19.7
Craft & related trade workers					
Number	0	0	0	69,962	116,726
Percent	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.5	12.7
Occupation/Activities inadequately described					
Number	25,374	4,517	239	0	0
Percent	6.9	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Occupation unknown					
Number	0	19,283	603	1,152	0
Percent	0.0	4.3	0.1	0.2	0.0
Total					
Number	364,089	457,192	592,952	734,556	919,100
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notes:

1. In 2000 and 2004, the figures for sales workers and service workers are added together.

Sources: Department of Statistics Malaysia (2003, pp. 114–24), (1995, pp. 122–23), (1984, pp. 738–47) and Searle (1983, pp. 58–59), Department of Statistics Malaysia, Sarawak (2005, p. 193)

the corresponding year was a paltry 4.7 per cent out of its total development expenditure. The declining trend in the expenditure of the agricultural sector continued into the new millennium. In 2004, only 2.9 per cent of the total development expenditure incurred by the Sarawak government was allocated for agriculture, leaving the rural population (about 52 per cent in 2000), who were mostly involved in this sector, in a state of quandary (Department of Statistics Malaysia Sarawak 2005, p. 22).

The voices of dissent in Sarawak have been sparked by the failure of the state's economic policies in addressing the issues of rural-urban and inter-ethnic inequalities. Since the launch of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1970, the state has failed to reduce these inequalities. The debate on the success of the NEP and the New Development Policy (NDP) has been exhaustively studied elsewhere and need not be repeated here. Instead, I want to focus my next discussion on one of the drawbacks of these two economic policies which is inter-ethnic inequalities within the context of Sarawak's rapid economic growth. Madeline Berma (2003, p. 250) argues that the NEP and NDP had only benefited the Malays and the Chinese, but they marginalized the non-Muslim *bumiputera* communities, especially the Ibans. In 1976, Sarawak's mean monthly household income was at RM427 while about 41.5 per cent of the households received less than RM200 a month. Comparatively, 65.3 per cent of the Ibans, 64.9 per cent of the Bidayus, 51.4 per cent of the Melanaus, 31.5 per cent of the Malays, and 14.8 per cent of the Chinese earned less than RM200 in 1975 (Berma 2003, p. 228). Clearly a large section of the *bumiputera* earned less than the non-*bumiputera* community. However, there was also disparity within the *bumiputera* community with the Ibans and the Bidayus in the worst off positions.

When the NEP officially came to an end in 1990, Sarawak's mean monthly household income increased significantly to RM1,208 which was higher than the national figure of RM1,167 (see Table 5.8). Correspondingly, the mean monthly household income of various ethnic groups in Sarawak also increased tremendously with the Chinese earning RM1,754, followed by the Malays with RM1,332, the Melanaus RM951, the Bidayus RM833 and the Ibans RM710 (Berma 2003, p. 232). Again, the non-Muslim *bumiputera* earned less than the rest of Sarawak population. Several factors might have contributed to the displacement of the non-Muslim *bumiputera* in Sarawak during the NEP period. Among others, (1) the NEP was conceived by the Malay leaders in UMNO without much consultation with the people of Sarawak, especially the non-Muslim *bumiputera*, (2) the NEP's ultimate objective was to address inter-ethnic rather than intra-ethnic inequality, and (3) the problem of classifying the indigenous communities of Sarawak into the *bumiputera*

TABLE 5.8
Sarawak and Malaysia: Mean Monthly Household Income
(in current prices), 1976–2004

		1976	1990	1999	2004
Mean monthly household income (RM)	Sarawak	427 (n.a.)	1,208 (4)	2,276 (6)	2,725 (7)
	Malaysia	505	1,167	2,472	3,249

Notes:

1. Figures in () represent ranking among *negeri* for the year.

Sources: Malaysia (2006, p. 358), (2001a, p. 143), (1996, p. 149).

category which made them invisible over the economically advanced Malays (Berma 2003, pp. 251–52). The marginalization and discrimination of the non-Muslim *bumiputera* in Sarawak gave rise to Dayakism, a slogan used in the 1980s and 1990s in order to rally the support of the Dayak electorate against the Muslim *bumiputera*-led government. According to Mason and Jawan (2003, p. 190), although the state's economic policies, particularly the NEP, were aimed at uplifting the *bumiputera*, the Dayaks felt that they were being treated as second-class *bumiputera* as compared to the Muslim *bumiputera*. In the Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001–05), the state acknowledged the displacement of the non-Muslim *bumiputera* in Sarawak (and Sabah), and reassured that “special efforts” would be taken to address this issue (Mason and Jawan 2003, p. 183).

When the NEP ended in 1990, a new long-term economic policy known as the NDP was introduced. Under the NDP, Sarawak's mean monthly income further increased to RM2,276 in 1999. However, in comparison to other *negeri*, Sarawak was ranked sixth and its mean monthly income was way below the national figure of RM2,472. Still, Sarawak's mean household income continued to increase to RM2,725 in 2004, but its position among the other *negeri* declined further to seventh place, a rank lower than in 1999. Although, there is no available data on the mean household income of various ethnic groups in Sarawak for the corresponding years, it is fair to suggest that inter-ethnic inequalities would have widen within this period.

Another aspect of inter-ethnic inequalities in Sarawak is the different level of poverty among the ethnic groups in the *negeri*. Under the NEP, the incidence of poverty in Malaysia was significantly reduced from 42.4 per cent in 1976 to 17.1 per cent in 1990 (see Table 5.9). At the end of the NDP period in 2000, the poverty level in Malaysia was further reduced to 7.5 per cent. During the middle of the National Vision Policy (NVP)

TABLE 5.9
Sarawak and Malaysia: Incidence of Poverty, 1976–2004

		1976	1990	1999	2004
Incidence of poverty (%)	Sarawak	56.5 (6)	21.0 (5)	6.7 (6)	7.5 (4)
	Malaysia	42.4	17.1	7.5	5.7

Notes:

1. Figures in () represent ranking among *negeri* for the year.

Sources: Malaysia (2006, p. 358), (2001a, p. 143), (1996, p. 71), (1986, p. 88), (1991b, pp. 46–52),

period (2001–2010), the level of poverty in Malaysia was further reduced to 5.7 per cent. In the corresponding period, Sarawak also managed to reduce its poverty level. Under the NEP, Sarawak managed to reduce its incidence of poverty from a staggering 56.5 per cent in 1976 to 21 per cent in 1990. The level of poverty in Sarawak was further reduced under the NDP and NVP to 6.7 per cent and 7.5 per cent respectively. In comparison to other *negeris*, Sarawak was still considered among the *negeri* with the highest rate of poverty in Malaysia even though it had drastically reduced its poverty level. In 1976, Sarawak was ranked sixth among the *negeri* with the highest level of poverty, and its position became worst in 2004 when it was ranked fourth (see Table 5.9). Although the level of poverty in Sarawak had declined significantly, the inter-ethnic dimension of poverty was still high. In 1976, it was estimated that 74.9 per cent of the Bidayuh, 71.5 per cent of the Iban, 64.1 per cent of the Melanau, 48.5 per cent of the Malay, and 21.1 per cent of the non-*bumiputera* households were classified as poor. Based on these figures, more than half of the *bumiputera* households were considered poor but non-Muslim *bumiputera* households, especially the Bidayuh and the Ibans, were worst off. At the end of the NEP, 36.4 per cent of the Iban, 33 per cent of the Melanau, and 25.8 per cent of the Bidayuh households were still poor. In contrast, only 16.5 per cent of the Malay and 4.3 per cent of the Chinese households were classified as poor. In fact, the incidence of poverty among the Ibans and the Melanau were among the highest in Malaysia in 1990 as compared to other ethnic groups (Kadazan 49.5 per cent, Murut 46 per cent, Bajau 34.4 per cent) (Berma 2003, pp. 221–27). The disparity among the non-Muslim *bumiputera* further fortified their claims of being marginalized by the state's development policies. Interestingly, the Melanau do not benefit much from their leaders who dominate the *negeri*, since a significant number of this community is still poor.

Aside from analysing the urban-rural and inter-ethnic dimensions of inequalities, a few selected socio-economic indicators can further illustrate the POD's failure in bringing equitable growth in Sarawak. Overall, Sarawakians have seen some improvements in their quality of life with an increase in their purchasing power (based on an increase in the number of registered vehicles, the number of telephone subscribers and television licences), higher literacy rate, better access to basic infrastructures (piped-water, electricity and roads), higher ratio of doctors and the decline in infant mortality rate (see Table 5.10). However, the progress in all these areas is not so significant especially when we compare them with the other *negeri* in Malaysia. Based on the nine selected socio-economic indicators in Table 5.10, Sarawak was ranked among the bottom *negeri* in all variables. In some indicators like the access to paved roads, electricity supply, doctors and televisions, a significant number of Sarawak population was still deprived of these basic needs. In fact, about 20 per cent of Sarawakians were illiterate in 1995.

Despite the POD's questionable achievement in bringing development to Sarawak, it has been proven effective to the SBN in cajoling Sarawak's electorate especially the Muslim *bumiputera* as evident from the ruling party's continued dominance since the 1970 election. After more than three decades of politicizing development, the SBN has successfully embedded the culture of developmentalism in Sarawak's society, making it almost impossible for the opposition parties which do not have access to these political "goods" to unseat the ruling party. Paradoxically, the POD has triggered a wave of contestation by a small number of Malay and Dayak groups who criticize the

TABLE 5.10
Sarawak: Selected Socio-Economic Indicators, 1990 and 1995

	1990	1995
Registered cars and motorcycles per 1,000 population	176.6 (11)	215.0 (11)
Telephones per 1,000 population	68.0 (8)	116.8 (10)
Television licenses per 1,000 population	56.3 (13)	67.2 (12)
Literacy rate (%)	76.0 (13)	80.6 (13)
Population provided with piped water (%)	70.1 (11)	85.3 (10)
Population provided with electricity (%)	52.0 (13)	80.0 (13)
Infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births	22.3 (2)	19.2 (2)
Number of doctors per 10,000 population	2.5 (13)	2.9 (13)
Length of paved roads per 10 sq. km (km)	0.1 (14)	0.2 (14)

Notes:

1. Figures in () represent ranking among negeri for the year.

Source: Malaysia (1996, p. 151).

ruling party's development policies as being urban-biased and pro-Melanau's cronies. The importance of "development politics" in Sarawak would persist for many decades to come as the pace of development in the *negeri* is still far to be desired. And as long as development is scarce, it would remain as a priceless "commodity" which the ruling party could effectively exploit as a tool to remain in power.

CONSOLIDATION THROUGH THE PROCESS OF ISLAMIZATION

Islam is a strong cultural marker, capable of uniting the heterogeneous Muslim population in Sarawak. Since so many factors such as ethno-nationalism and regionalism could potentially divide the community, the religion of Islam has the ability to unite the Malays, Muslim Melanaus, Kedayans, Jatti Mereik and Dayak converts in Sarawak. Through Islam, the Muslim *bumiputera* could identify themselves as brothers and sisters of Islam despite having different ethnic and cultural background. Since the early 1980s, the process of Islamization initiated by Taib has amplified the Islamic identity of the Muslim *bumiputera* hence consolidating their support behind the ruling party led by the strongman-politician.¹⁴ This is the second strategy employed by Taib in dominating the Muslim *bumiputera* electorate.

Taib's Islamic policies are actually an extension of the central state's Islamization process spearheaded by Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad since the early 1980s. Compared to his predecessors who implemented Islamic policies which were considered symbolic and defensive concessions to Islamists, Dr Mahathir embarked on a series of Islamization programmes which were seen more substantive and progressive. In fact, some scholars such as Hussin Mutalib (1994) argue that Dr Mahathir had a genuine interest in pursuing "the universalistic Islamic values and principles in his governance of the country", despite "using Islam as a legitimating instrument".¹⁵ These Islamization programmes were actually the central state's response towards the growing influence of the Islamic movements which started to gain prominence in the 1970s. In Sarawak, Taib embraces the Islamization programmes primarily to lend support to the central state's agenda which is paramount to his political survival. Subsequently, the strongman-politician introduced several Islamic programmes aimed at complementing the central state's Islamization programmes and also to amplify his image as a Muslim leader. Apart from these two motives, the Islamization programmes initiated by Taib were also motivated by the need to consolidate the Muslim *bumiputera* under the umbrella of the ruling party since their unity is imperative to the

strongman-politician's political survival. Since the early 1980s, the strongman-politician had introduced four major Islamic initiatives in Sarawak; namely the introduction of comprehensive *shariah* laws, the streamlining of the administration of Islamic affairs; the ban on lotteries; and the increased allocation for the construction of mosques, *suraus* and religious schools.

The first Islamic initiative introduced by Taib was the *shariah* laws which comprised of several Islamic ordinances intended to regulate the affairs of the Muslims in the *negeri*. The initiative to introduce *shariah* laws came from the central state's decision to uplift the status of *shariah* courts and judges at par with the civil courts. So, on 14 May 1991, the Council Negeri passed six motions relating to Sarawak Islamic Ordinances, namely, the Shariah Court Ordinance, the Shariah Criminal Procedure Ordinance, the Shariah Civil Procedure Ordinance, the Shariah Criminal Offences Ordinance, the Islamic Family Law Ordinance, and the Shariah Evidence Ordinance. All these laws were enforced on 1 September 1992, making Sarawak the first *negeri* in Malaysia to implement a complete *shariah* laws (Jabatan Kehakiman Shariah Sarawak 2007). This so-called milestone is even remarkable considering Sarawak is not a Malay *negeri*. A decade later, the *shariah* laws were revamped and a new set of amended laws were introduced on 6 November 2001. The new set of *shariah* laws introduced in 2001 were the Shariah Courts Ordinance, the Islamic Family Law Ordinance, the Shariah Civil Procedure Ordinance, the Shariah Criminal Procedure Ordinance, the Shariah Criminal Offences Ordinance and the Shariah Evidence Ordinance. With the introduction of these *shariah* laws, Taib was able to demonstrate his commitment in upholding the sanctity of Islam in Sarawak, thus silencing these who question his faith. Furthermore, the strongman-politician wanted to convince the central state that he was willing to uphold national interest by implementing a comprehensive *shariah* laws for Sarawak.

The second Islamic initiative introduced by Taib was the setting up of six new Islamic institutions and the restructuring of the existing institutions in order to streamline the administration of Islamic affairs in Sarawak. In order to make these changes, the PBB-led government had to amend the Majlis Islam (Incorporation) Ordinance 1954 at least five times. In 1984, the Ordinance was amended to make way for the establishment of the Baitul-Mal (tithe fund) to replace the Zakat and Fitrah Fund which was formed in 1966. The newly formed Baitul-Mal was established to promote Islam; to generate socio-economic development of the Muslim community; to alleviate poverty among the Muslims; and to maintain places of worship (*Sarawak Tribune*, 17 July 1984). The Majlis Islam (Incorporation) Ordinance 1954 was again amended in 1989 in order to reorganize the administration of

the Islamic Council by appointing a chief executive officer for the Council. The 1989 amendment also involved the establishment of Jabatan Agama Islam Sarawak (JAIS) which serves as the secretariat to the Islamic Council. With the establishment of JAIS, the role of the Islamic Council was reduced to formulating policies concerning Islamic matters in Sarawak while the newly established department was responsible for implementing policies and administering matters related to the religion (JAIS 2007*b*). Among the main objectives of JAIS are to guide the Muslim ummah in understanding the true Islamic teachings; to ensure the implementation of Islam based on *ahlul sunnah wal jemaah*; to promote Muslim solidarity; and to develop the *negeri*-sponsored religious school. The 1989 amendment also empowered a Minister to administer the Islamic affairs in Sarawak. Prior to this amendment, Sarawak did not have any de facto Minister in charge of Islamic affairs. During Rahman's tenure as the Chief Minister, all affairs related to the religion of Islam were handled by himself or one of his Muslim cabinet Ministers. With the 1989 amendment, Taib appointed Abang Johari who was then the Minister of Industrial Development as the Minister in charge of Islamic Affairs. However, after Abang Johari's fall out with Taib in 1998, the post of Minister in charge of Islamic Affairs was given to Adenan Satem. When Adenan Satem was unceremoniously sidelined by Taib in 2006, there seemed to be a void on the post of the Minister for Islamic Affairs. At present, the Assistant Minister in the Chief Minister Department, Daud Abdul Rahman, is entrusted to administer the Islamic affairs in Sarawak. Apart from creating the portfolio of Islamic Affairs, the 1989 amendment also empowered the President of the Islamic Council to exercise the functions and powers of the Mufti during the period in which the Mufti's office is left vacant.

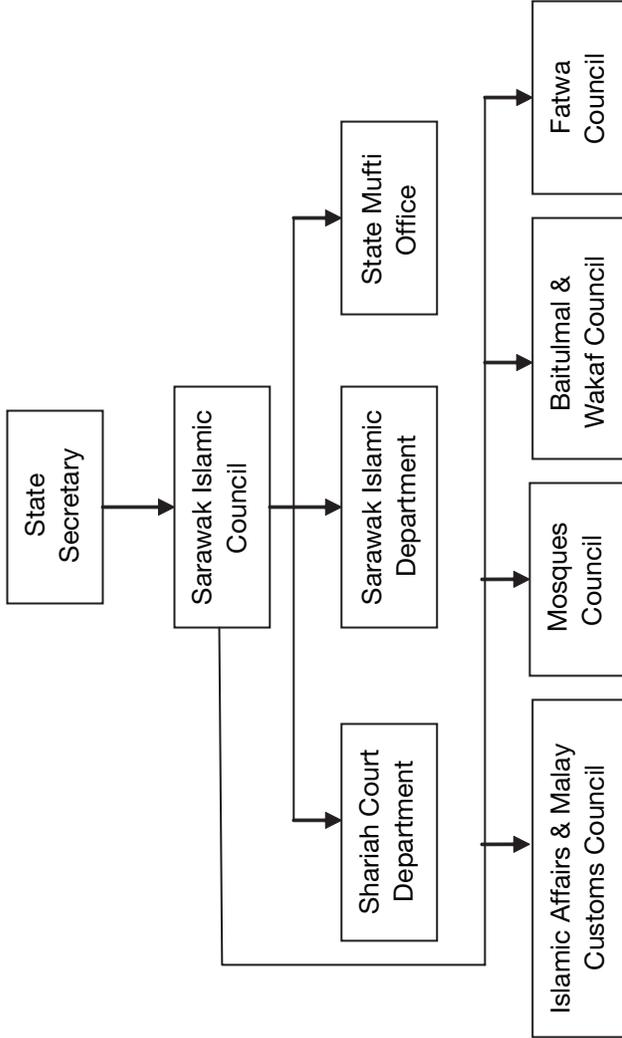
In 1994, the Majlis Islam (Incorporation) Ordinance was again amended to streamline the administration of Islam in the *negeri*. Under the 1994 amendment, four new Islamic bodies were established, namely the Baitul-Mal and Wakaf Board — to monitor the collection of alms; the Fatwa Council — to issue religious rulings; the Islamic Affairs and Malay Cultural Board — to ensure activities organized by Islamic organizations would be carried out systematically; and the Mosque Board — to monitor and supervise the administration of all mosques in the *negeri* (*Sarawak Tribune*, 8 November 1994). These organizations were established to assist the Islamic Council in the administration and supervision of Islamic matters and Malay culture. Apart from that, they were also used as a medium to regulate the Muslims' faith and also the activities organized by Islamic institutions. The most recent Islamic institution established by the *negeri* government is the State Mufti Office. The post of Mufti was created in 1941 by the Brooke government but

after the formation of Malaysia, the Mufti received his appointment from the Yang Dipertuan Agong based on the recommendation from the Tuan Yang Terutama. Prior to the formation of the State Mufti Office on 1 January 1997, the Mufti was placed under JAIS (see Figure 5.1).

The third Islamic initiative introduced by Taib was the banning of all type of lotteries in Sarawak. In January 1991, the Sarawak Turf Club, a Sarawak-based company, was told to cease operations of Big-4 and other lotteries under its wing. At the same time, the Sarawak government also made representation to the central state to ban 4-D and Sports Toto in the *negeri* (*Sarawak Tribune*, 1 January 1991). However, most of the lotteries continued to operate beyond the grace period imposed by the *negeri* government. Apart from the lottery operators' defiance to cease operation, the *negeri* government's attempt to ban gambling activities was further compounded by the central state's decision to overrule the former's directive. Subsequently, the central state renewed the licence of lottery operators in Sarawak, effectively hijacking Taib's plan to ban lotteries in the *negeri* (*Sarawak Tribune*, 11 January 1992). In response to the central state's decision to overturn the ban, Abang Johari who was then the de facto Minister of Islamic Affairs in Sarawak questioned Kuala Lumpur's move and even asked its leaders to explain their heavy-handed action (*Sarawak Tribune*, 12 January 1992). What was initially thought as a move to support the central state's Islamization programme ended up as a potential source of friction between the central state and *negeri* government. To put the issue to rest, Taib defended the central state's decision by reiterating that a complete ban on lotteries would only encourage illegal gambling in Sarawak (*Sarawak Tribune*, 29 January 1992). Obviously, Taib accepted the central state's decision because he did not want to tick off the central state leaders and jeopardize the good central state–*negeri* relations.

The fourth major Islamic programme introduced by Taib was the construction of more mosques, *suraus* and religious schools throughout Sarawak. Since 1981, the number of mosques and *suraus* had increased tremendously, signifying the government's effort to project its image as the protector of Islam and also to meet the spiritual demand of the Muslim *bumiputera*. The fund to build mosques and *suraus* comes from either the *negeri* or central state. To solicit these funds, the Muslim *bumiputera* community has to start the initiative by forming mosque or *surau* committees which would then be responsible for the overall planning of the buildings. Usually, the *negeri* government would not allocate more than RM250,000 for a single contribution to the mosque or *surau* committee. But, over time, the government could contribute more to the fund until the final completion of the mosque or *surau*. Apart from the construction of mosques and *suraus*,

FIGURE 5.1
Islamic Institutions in Sarawak



Source: Jabatan Agama Islam Sarawak (2007 b).

Taib also initiated the establishment of several new religious schools which were quite scarce in this huge *negeri*. Unlike the Malay *negeri* in the Peninsula, Sarawak does not have independent *madrasah* or *pondok* system established by the local Muslim community. Thus, to provide religious education in Sarawak, the Muslim *bumiputera*-led government has to take the initiative to build government-sponsored religious schools which would provide religious education to its Muslim population. The practice of distributing “Islamic projects” (mosques, *suraus*, religious schools) is further accentuated during the elections when the ruling party would promise to build new religious buildings and renovate or refurbish the old ones. Apart from that, the ruling party would also dish out financial grants to various Islamic organizations, in particular mosque and *surau* committees in order to secure their votes (see Table 5.11). In the 1980s, the distribution of “Islamic projects” during the election period was not so prevalent but after that period this practice became one of the most important strategies of the ruling party in binding the Muslim *bumiputera* electorate. In the 2004 election, for example, Taib declared open four new mosques: (Darul Ibadah Mosque at Kampung Semariang, Kuching; Tan Sri Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud Mosque at Kampung Jaie in Batang Sadong, Samarahan; Serian District Mosque in Samarahan; and Kampung Semariang Lama Mosque in Kuching). He also performed a ground-breaking ceremony for the extension of a religious school in Samarahan and launched an extension project for Surau Bandarshah at the Ajibah Abol Road in Kuching. This is a common itinerary for a Muslim *bumiputera* leader during the elections not only in Sarawak but throughout the country. The construction of mosques, *suraus* and religious schools not only symbolizes the government’s commitment in safeguarding the sanctity of Islam in Sarawak but it is also intended to accommodate the Muslims’ demand of spiritual development in the *negeri*.

Without a doubt, Taib has played a leading role in uplifting the position of Islam in Sarawak but his efforts are far-fetched from the Islamization exercise that has taken place in the Peninsula since the late 1970s. Despite introducing various Islamic institutions and *shariah* laws in Sarawak, Islam remains to be at the periphery of the government’s policies. There are several factors that have contributed to the minimal role of Islam in Sarawak government, namely, the absence of influential Islamic movement that are capable of contesting the *negeri*’s official Islam; and the need for the Muslim *bumiputera* strongmen-politicians to allay the fear of the non-Muslims who represent the largest population in Sarawak.

Without any strong contestation from other Islamic movement in Sarawak, the *negeri*’s official Islam stands unchallenged, enabling it to unite the Muslim

TABLE 5.11
 “Islamic Projects” Promised or Distributed by the BN Leaders during the Sarawak Elections, 1982–2004

	Pledges for new mosques, suraus or religious schools		Issuance of financial grants and other “goodies” to Islamic organizations		Official openings of mosques, <i>suraus</i> or religious schools		Ground-breaking ceremonies of mosques, suraus or religious schools		Grand total of dev. projects and grants	Grand total cost of dev. projects and grants (RM million)
	Total	Cost (RM million)	Total	Cost (RM million)	Total	Cost (RM million)	Total	Cost (RM million)		
1982	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	n.a.	0	0.0	2	n.a.
1983	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
1986	0	0.0	1	0.06	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.06
1987	6	0.128	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	0.128
1990	0	0.0	1	0.1	3	2.905	1	2.4	5	5.405
1991	5	0.144	0	0.0	4	0.286	4	0.51	13	0.94
1995	2	0.25	8	0.065	3	0.3	1	0.25	14	0.865
1996	3	0.88	0	0.0	1	0.28	4	5.85	8	7.01
1999	2	0.3	1	0.12	3	2.15	1	12	7	14.57
2001	1	n.a.	1	0.1	3	1.1	3	15.05	8	6.25
2004	0	0.0	10	0.005	4	2	2	0.25	16	2.255

Sources: Summarized from Appendix 3, Tables 1.1 to 1.15.

bumiputera, especially the Malays and the Muslim Melanaus, under a single interpretation of Islam.¹⁶ Apart from the Islamization programmes introduced by the state, the Muslim *bumiputera* leaders in PBB consolidate the Muslim *bumiputera*'s support by instigating the perceived fear among the Muslims towards the numerically superior non-Muslim *bumiputera* and Chinese. In the 2004 election, for example, Assistant Minister in the Chief Minister's Office Awang Tengah Ali Hasan stressed that "PAS shouldn't even be contesting in Sarawak because it doesn't understand the diversity we have in the state, and therefore, it will only break the unity among the Muslims here" (*Borneo Post*, 20 March 2004). By playing up the issue of Muslim unity, the BN leaders reminded the Muslim *bumiputera* electorate that a split within the community could lead to the rise of other ethnic groups as evident from the political turmoil that hit Muslim communities in the early 1960s. At present, the state of unity among the Muslim *bumiputera* in Sarawak is still strongly intact, resulting in the political consolidation of the community under the patronage of the Muslim *bumiputera*-led government. Although there has been constant contestation from several Malay groups through the Malay National Union (MNU), Sarawak UMNO, PERMAS, Keadilan and PAS, this movement has not been successful in breaking the ruling party's grip on the Muslim *bumiputera* electorate and it will continue to face a stalemate for many years to come.

A TOOL OF PENETRATION: THE EXPANDED SARAWAK CIVIL SERVICE

Sarawak has a vast landscape with a relatively small population scattered throughout the *negeri*. Hence, it would be difficult for the state to penetrate Sarawak's society. In facing this daunting task, the Muslim *bumiputera*-led government exploits the large Sarawak civil service as the source of penetration because of its presence at the grassroots level, reaching every small district in the *negeri*. Apart from that, the civil service has also been used as a source of patronage to the strongmen-politicians' cronies and clients who were given employment and access to the state's resources. Furthermore, the civil service, known locally as *perentab*, is a highly respected institution among the local population especially the Muslim *bumiputera*, thus further enhances its capability as a tool of penetration. As a result, the civil service proves to be a much more effective tool of domination compared to the other influential political institution in Sarawak, namely PBB. Although the Muslim *bumiputera*-dominated party has grown stronger under Taib's rule (with 71 divisional offices, 1,095 branch offices, and 226,346 registered members),

it still lacks the financial resources and the manpower to effectively bind the scattered population of Sarawak. Moreover, the PBB, just like any other political parties, becomes “active” normally during the election period, while most of the time it lays idle. The seasonal nature of PBB impedes any attempt to exploit the party as a vehicle to penetrate Sarawak’s society. Hence, the civil service offers a much more viable alternative to Taib.

As a strategy to use the civil service as a source of penetration and patronage, Taib enlarged the negeri bureaucracy by creating new ministries which ultimately allow the appointment of more cabinet ministers, assistant ministers and civil servants. When the strongman-politician took over the helm from his uncle in 1981, the negeri government was divided into eight ministries, namely, Lands and Mineral Resources; Finance and Development; Agriculture and Community Development; Housing; Communications and Works; Local Government; Forestry; and Culture, Youth and Sports. The number of Sarawak ministries was limited to eight primarily because the number of cabinet ministers at that time was also limited to eight as stated in Article 6, clause 3(b) of the Sarawak Constitution. In terms of the ethnic composition of Taib’s first cabinet, it was equally balanced with three Muslim *bumiputera* (PBB), three non-Muslim *bumiputera* (two from SNAP and one from PBB), and two Chinese leaders (SUPP).¹⁷ Since Article 6, clause 3(b) of the Sarawak Constitution indirectly dictated the number of ministers and ministry that Taib could create, the strongman-politician decided to amend the constitution in order to expand the negeri bureaucracy.

The first amendment made to Article 6, clause 3(b) of the Sarawak Constitution was on 4 November 1995, which allowed Taib to increase the number of Sarawak cabinet members from eight to ten. Prior to the 1995 amendment, the cabinet was made up of three Muslim *bumiputera* (PBB), three Chinese (two SUPP and one SNAP) and two non-Muslim *bumiputera* leaders (PBB).¹⁸ Although Article 6, clause 3(b) had been amended in 1995, Taib only made a major cabinet reshuffle at the end of 1997 by restructuring several ministries and redesignating the portfolios of five ministers. With the cabinet reshuffle, the number of ministries increased from eight to ten with only two ministries retaining their portfolios (Finance and Public Utilities, and Industrial Development). The rest of the ministries were either renamed or divided into two separate portfolios. Among these ministries were Social Development; Rural and Land Development; Agriculture and Food Industries; Housing; Environment and Public Health; Infrastructure Development; Tourism and Planning; and Resource Management. Despite the expansion of the cabinet, there was no major change in the composition of the cabinet since Taib only added one more non-Muslim *bumiputera* minister from PBDS.

Out of nine Sarawak ministers, three of them were Muslim *bumiputeras* (PBB), three Chinese (two SUPP and one SNAP) and three non-Muslim *bumiputeras* (two PBB and one PBDS).¹⁹ The creation of new ministries and the restructuring of old ministries prompted the establishment of new departments and statutory bodies within the *negeri* civil service. This exercise resulted in the growth of the civil service in Sarawak, comprising of twelve ministries, sixteen departments, and twenty statutory bodies.

Another step taken by Taib in expanding the *negeri* civil service with the aim of exploiting its capabilities to penetrate society and provide patronage to Sarawak society, in particular the Muslim *bumiputera*, is the introduction of four new administrative divisions, namely Samarahan, Bintulu, Mukah and Betong. With the creation of these four new divisions, the *negeri* government would be in a stronger position to penetrate Sarawak society especially in rural areas. The creation of new administrative divisions also meant that more development projects would be channelled into these areas, thus providing further business and employment opportunities not only within the public sector but also the private sector.

The first new administrative division created by Taib was Samarahan. Being officially declared Sarawak's eighth division on 1 January 1986, Samarahan was part of the First Division (Kuching) prior to its elevation. It has four administrative districts (Samarahan, Asajaya, Simunjan and Serian) and two sub-districts (Sebuyau and Tebedu). In 2004, the population in Samarahan was mainly made up of the Malays (40.4 per cent), followed by the Bidayuh (26.8 per cent), Iban (19.9 per cent) and Chinese (11.1 per cent) (Department of Statistics Malaysia Sarawak 2004, pp. 32–33). The motive behind the elevation of Samarahan into a full-fledged division was obvious. As a member of parliament for Samarahan since 1970 and the assemblyman for Asajaya (a *negeri* seat within the Samarahan parliamentary seat) since 1981 until 2001, Taib elevated Samarahan into a new division in order to boost the pace of development in the area, hence strengthening his popularity among the constituents. So, less than five years after becoming the Chief Minister, Taib elevated the largely rural area of Samarahan into a division popularly known as Sarawak's education hub with the presence of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Universiti Teknologi Mara and Samarahan Teachers' Training College.

A year after Samarahan was inaugurated as Sarawak's eighth division, Taib further expanded the civil service by creating another administrative division in the northern part of Sarawak. The new division was Bintulu. Prior to its elevation as Sarawak's ninth division on 1 January 1987, Bintulu was part of the Fourth Division (Miri). Despite its huge size, Bintulu is only divided into two administrative districts, namely Bintulu and Tatau, and one

sub-district, Sebauh. As of 2004, the population in Bintulu comprised of the Ibans (42.4 per cent), Chinese (17.2 per cent), Melanau (10.6 per cent) and Malay (8.9 per cent) (Department of Statistics Malaysia Sarawak 2004, pp. 32–33). About 60 per cent of the population in Bintulu is concentrated in its three major towns, namely, Bintulu, Tatau and Sebauh while the rest are scattered throughout its vast rural landscape. The elevation of Bintulu as Sarawak's ninth administrative division was largely influenced by the pace of industrial development taking place in the area. Apart from that, Bintulu is also historically important to Sarawak as the oldest Council Negeri in Malaysia was established there.

Sarawak's civil service continued to expand when Taib created another administrative division, Mukah, on 1 March 2002. The elevation of Mukah was largely due to the strongman-politician's decision to move his *negeri* seat of Asajaya to Balingian (one of the *negeri* seats in Mukah) in 2001. Initially Mukah which is largely known as the sago-producing district of Sarawak was part of the Third Division (Sibu). It is the seventh largest division in Sarawak with four administrative districts (Mukah, Dalat, Daro, Matu) and three sub-districts (Balingian, Belawai, Oya). Widely known as the home of the ethnic Melanau, Mukah is mostly populated by this ethnic group (48.9 per cent), followed by the Ibans (40.7 per cent), Chinese (5.6 per cent) and Malays (2.9 per cent) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, Sarawak 2004, pp. 32–33).

In the same month Mukah was elevated to a division, the eleventh Sarawak's division, Betong, was created on 26 March 2002. Measuring only 4,180.8 sq. km., Betong is the smallest division in Sarawak with two administrative districts (Betong and Saratok) and seven sub-districts (Spaoh, Debak, Pusa, Maludam, Roban, Kabong). Prior to being elevated into a division, Betong was one of the districts in Sri Aman. The Eleventh Division is mostly populated by the Malays (51 per cent), followed by the Ibans (43.4 per cent) and Chinese (4.7 per cent) (Department of Statistics Malaysia Sarawak 2004, pp. 32–33). Unlike Samarahan, Bintulu and Mukah, the elevation of Betong as Sarawak's Eleventh Division is not clearly known. It could be prompted by Taib's vision of promoting growth in the central region of Sarawak which still lags behind compared to the northern and southern part of the *negeri*.

The creation of four new administrative divisions in Sarawak helped to further enlarge the *negeri* civil service with the establishment of various government agencies at the divisional, district and sub-district level. At the divisional level, the *negeri* government had to establish a Resident Office along with about twenty-four central state and *negeri* agencies which include

the Public Works Department, Land and Survey Department, Agriculture Department, Forest Department, Social Development and Urbanisation Office, State Treasury, Welfare Department, Education Department, Medical Department, Information Department, Immigration Department, Labour Department, National Registration Department, Youth and Sports Office, National Accountant Department, Fire and Rescue Department, Malaysia Radio and Television Branch, Islamic Department, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry, Road Transport Department, National Unity Department, Co-operative Development Office, Syariah Court and Hospital. Apart from these agencies, the *negeri* government also established various statutory bodies at the divisional level such as the Social Security Organization, Sarawak Rivers Board and Sarawak Electricity Supply Corporation. Under the new division, it is further divided into several districts which are administered by the District Office. Besides the District Office, about eleven other government agencies were established at the district level such as the Public Works Department, Agriculture Department, State Welfare Office, Police Station, Education Office, Information Office, National Registration Department, Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) Office, Jabatan Kemajuan Masyarakat (KEMAS), Ikatan Relawan Malaysia (RELA) and Health Clinics. The administrative districts in Sarawak are further divided into several sub-districts which are administered by sub-district offices.

The growth of the *negeri* civil service could be driven by the need to increase service delivery and efficiency but it could also be influenced by political motives. According to Keith Dowding (1995, p. 32), the growth of the public sector could be influenced by two powerful external factors, namely vote-trading and rent-seeking.²⁰ In the case of Sarawak, the establishment of four new administrative divisions, in particular Samarahan and Mukah, clearly had been influenced by these two political motives. By expanding the civil service, Taib was able to provide more employment to the masses with 25,000 Sarawakians employed as civil servants as of 2006 (*Bernama*, 15 December 2006). Although the data on the ethnic breakdown of Sarawak's civil servants is not readily available, it is widely known that the majority of the workforce in the public sector comprised of the *bumiputeras*. Thus, the expansion of the civil service provided the government with another source of patronage to Sarawak society, in particular the Muslim *bumiputera*. As civil servants, majority of the Muslim *bumiputera* would feel a sense of indebtedness and dependency on the ruling government, hence preventing them from contesting the state.

The expansion of Sarawak civil service presents the government with the ability to better penetrate society at the grassroots level. Prior to the

elevation of Samarahan as a division, for example, it was a large district with a divisional office located in Kuching, which is about 50 kilometre away. But after 1986, Samarahan has its own divisional office with a host of central state and *negeri* agencies which could amplify Taib-led government's presence in the division through the implementation of various community programmes and development projects.

Another extension of Sarawak's civil service is the headmen institution which is arguably the most influential institution at the kampong level, especially in rural areas. During Taib's tenure as the Chief Minister, the strongman-politician has revolutionized the headmen institution through various changes aimed at dominating Sarawak's society. To the Muslim *bumiputera*, particularly the Malays, the headmen institution has existed since the fourteenth century.²¹ Being a highly structured society, the Malays and Melanau have much respect for these traditional leaders who have played an influential intermediary role between the state and local communities. The most important and influential leader at the grassroots level is the village headman who is not only responsible for solving issues in his kampong, but most importantly acting as a bridge between his people and the government. Although the strongman-politician is very powerful, he would not be able to penetrate all level of society, especially those who are far away from the centre of power. Thus, by co-opting community chiefs into the *negeri*'s bureaucracy, the strongman-politician could create a network of little strongmen in every kampongs, longhouses and housing estates in this vast *negeri*. They become an extension arm of the strongman-politician at the grassroots level.

CONCLUSION

The repressive and accommodative measures taken by Taib between 1987 and 1990 proved to be decisive in consolidating Sarawak's electorate in particular the Muslim *bumiputera*. After successfully consolidating his power, Taib became even more powerful and influential, enabling the strongman-politician to dominate Sarawak politics for more than two decades. Throughout his tenure as the Chief Minister, Taib has effectively performed the role of the central state's representative by religiously fulfilling its demands. In return, the central state accords its endorsement of Taib's leadership and also some degree of autonomy to the strongman-politician to dominate Sarawak's society along with the state's rich resources. In analysing the political domination of the Muslim *bumiputera*, this chapter identifies three strategies adopted by Taib which have been proven effective in binding the Muslim *bumiputera* electorate. The three strategies are vote-buying, the consolidation of the

Muslim *bumiputera* through Islam and the exploitation of the *negeri* civil service as a tool to penetrate the community.

The pact between the central state and Taib has been effective in dominating Sarawak's society as evident from the SBN's strong performance at the polls especially after the 1987 election. However, the retirement of Dr Mahathir in 2003 raised a big question on Taib's future because the former premier played a key role in the strongman-politician's rise in Sarawak politics and his ability to remain in power for more than two decades. Will the central state leadership under Abdullah Badawi continue to accommodate Taib as its representative in Sarawak? Will strongmen-politicians remain a permanent feature in Sarawak politics? If not, how would the central state continue to dominate Sarawak's society, in particular the Muslim *bumiputera*? These questions will be the focus of my discussion in the following chapter.

Notes

1. The High Court ruled against the government because it failed to give three months' notice before revoking the timber licence (*Sarawak Tribune*, 11 August 1987).
2. The confrontation between the natives and timber operators had been on the rise prior to the amendment of the Forest Bill. The angry natives alleged that timber operators encroached into their land but the authorities did not take any action against the latter despite the natives lodging numerous complaints. Frustrated with the authorities' inaction, the natives staged a number of blockades which forced the timber operators to halt their operations. Prior to 1987, it was not an offence to stage a blockade but an amendment of the Forest Bill enabled the authorities to take legal action against the dissenters.
3. From the nine opposition assemblymen, six former PBDS leaders and one former PERMAS assemblyman joined PBB, while another two former PBDS members rejoined SNAP. The seven opposition assemblymen who joined PBB were Datuk Balan Seling (PBDS), Michael Ben (PBDS), Sora Rusah (PBDS), Bolhassan Kamar (PBDS), Gramong Juna (PBDS), Mikai Mandau (PBDS) and Mohamed Tawan Abdullah (PERMAS). The other two former PBDS members who rejoined SNAP were Edward Jeli and Geman Itam (*Sarawak Tribune*, 11 April 1987).
4. Before accepting PBDS's application to join the SBN, the PBDS leaders were forced to prove that it had abandoned its racial (Dayakism) politics. In heeding the SBN's request, PBDS amended its constitution in March 1993 in order to allow non-Dayak to become its members, hence, erasing its strictly Dayak-based party status.
5. In an unprecedented move to avoid a split within the SBN, Taib decided to field a direct BN candidate who did not belong to any SBN component parties.

The direct BN candidate, however, could choose to either join PBB, SUPP or SNAP after the election.

6. The “new politics” that emerged in the 1999 election had brought new source of contestation and fragmentation among the electorate (Loh 2003). In new politics, Malaysian society is not only fragmented along ethnic lines, Islam, socialist ideology and developmentalism but there is a new source of fragmentation, namely participatory democracy. At the centre of this democratic movement, which transcends the dichotomy of ethno-religious sentiments, is the middle class. Despite some scholars’ assertion that the middle class is fragmented, it would be wrong to totally discredit their role in promoting the issue of transparency and justice through various NGOs in Malaysia.
7. Under Taib’s leadership, the POD is not only being used to cajole the electorate but it is also used to build a network of clients among Sarawak’s political and business elites. Others such as Andrew Aeria (2002) had studied this subject extensively, thus I will not discuss it in detail.
8. In the 1999 election, some of the Malays in Kuching feared that their lands which were still without titles would be taken over by the government for the purpose of development. In fact, prior to the election, several villages at the bank of Sarawak River were issued eviction order by the government.
9. In the 1996 election, Mong Dagang (BN-PBDS) defeated an Independent candidate, Donald Lawan, with a majority of 2,165 votes. Mong Dagang managed to poll 4,891 votes against Donald Lawan who only managed to secure 2,726 votes (Mersat and Sarok 1999, p. 7).
10. After the nullification of the Bukit Begunan election in 1996, a by-election was held on 15 and 16 March 1997 which saw a contest between Mong Dagang (BN) and Jack Sparrow (Independent). Donald Lawan surprisingly did not contest in the by-election. As expected, Mong Dagang comfortably defeated the Independent candidate with a bigger majority, 4,615 votes (Mersat and Sarok 1999, p. 14).
11. During the 2001 *negeri* election, a mosque at Kampung Sindang in Samarahan was declared open three times by three different BN leaders.
12. According to the MIDA and World Bank joint survey in 1991, it was predicted that log exports from Sarawak should cease by the year 2010 (Wee 1995, p. 49). A failure to generate other sources of economic growth, especially from the secondary sector, would definitely affect Sarawak’s future development. And so far, the growth of the secondary sector, especially construction, is very dim.
13. In the 1987 election, PBDS won fifteen out of twenty-one Council Negeri seats that the party contested. However, the PBDS’s popularity among the Dayak electorate declined tremendously in the 1991 election when it only secured seven out of the thirty-four seats it contested.
14. The new strongman-politician had been actively involved in various Islamic organizations, both internationally and nationally. In 1957, he was elected the Secretary General of South Australia Islamic Association in Adelaide. He was also

instrumental in initiating the publication of the *Minaret* which later became a widely circulated Islamic journal in Australia (Abang Mohd 2003, p. 154). On 31 December 1989, Taib Mahmud was elected president of Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia (PERKIM), taking over the helm from the ailing Tunku Abdul Rahman who was the founding father of the national Islamic organization. Much of PERKIM activity is concentrated in one major area, namely the conversion and the protection of the converts (Hussin 1990, p. 90). Sarawak and Sabah had the largest number of membership since converts would automatically become members of PERKIM. In 2006, Dr Mahathir was elected as the new chairman of PERKIM after Taib declined re-election. Apart from his involvement in PERKIM, Taib Mahmud was also actively involved in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Regional Islamic Organizations of South East Asia and Pacific (RISEAP).

15. Throughout Dr Mahathir's administration, the government introduced a host of Islamization programmes which included the introduction of Islamic banking, insurance and pawnshop systems (1981–83); the official sponsorship of an Islamic Medical Centre (1983); the expansion of the Islamic Centre to cover seven principal units including distinctive *Dakwah* and Quranic Institutes (1984); the introduction of Islamic values into the government machinery based on the slogans "leadership by example" and "clean, efficient and trustworthy" (1984); the upgrading of the status of *shariah* (Islamic law) courts and judges so as to be at par with their civil judiciary counterparts (1988); the establishment of an Islamic think-tank, Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (IKIM) (1992); the increased allocation for the airing of Islamic programmes over radio and television; the allocation for more sections on Islam in the state-controlled press; the pumping of more money into mosque-building and Islamic infrastructural facilities; the hosting of sumptuous Islamic occasions such as the Annual Quranic Recitation Competition; the major revamp of school curricula at all levels to reflect religio-moralistic conceptions of life; the introduction of compulsory Islamic Civilization courses at tertiary level; the founding of the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) (1983); and the establishment of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) (1987).
16. In comparison to the Peninsula, Islamic organizations such as Angkatan Nahdatul Islam Bersatu (BINA), ABIM, Darul Arqam and *tabligh* do not seem to have gained a secure foothold in this *negeri*. According to Nagata (1984, pp. 170–71), there were four reasons why dakwah movements in Sarawak failed to secure strong footing here: (1) distance from centre; (2) small Malay population; (3) lack of necessary social support groups and networks for the maintenance of the *dakwah* way of life; and (4) lack of commanding leadership of Tun Mustapha.
17. Apart from Taib Mahmud (PBB) who was then the Minister of Lands and Mineral Resources, other Sarawak ministers were Sim Kheng Hung (Finance and Development) and Dr Wong Soon Kai (Communication and Works) from SUPP; Alfred Jabu (Housing), Noor Tahir (Forestry) and Hafisah Harun (Culture, Youth

- and Sports) from PBB; Daniel Tajem (Agriculture and Community Development) and Joseph Balan Seling (Local Government) from SNAP (*Sarawak Tribune*, 28 March 1981).
18. The cabinet ministers were Abdul Taib Mahmud (Chief Minister and also Minister of Resource Planning), Abang Johari Tun Openg (Industrial Development), Adenan Satem (Social Development) and Alfred Jabu (Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Agriculture and Community Development) from PBB; Wong Soon Kai (Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Tourism and Infrastructure Development) and George Chan (Finance and Public Utilities) from SUPP; and James Wong (Housing and Environment) from SNAP (*Sarawak Tribune*, 27 October 1995).
 19. After the cabinet reshuffle in December 1997, the Sarawak cabinet comprised of Abdul Taib Mahmud (Chief Minister and Minister of Planning and Resource Management), Alfred Jabu (Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Rural and Land Development), Adenan Satem (Agriculture and Food Industries), Celestine Ujang (Housing) and Abang Johari Tun Openg (Industrial Development) from PBB; Dr George Chan (Deputy Chief Minister, Minister of Social Development and Minister of Finance and Public Utilities) and Wong Soon Koh (Infrastructure Development and Communications) from SUPP; James Wong (Environment and Public Health) from SNAP; and Dr James Masing (Tourism) from PBDS (*Sarawak Tribune*, 20 December 1997).
 20. The vote-trading theory argues that “governments provide more goods than the public actually wants”, while the rent-seeking arguments refer to “the process by which money is spent trying to persuade the government to provide special benefits for a firm or industry or any other group” (Dowding 1995, pp. 33 and 41).
 21. Prior to the arrival of Datu Merpati in Santubong in about the fourteenth century, the coastal Malay kampong was already under the leadership of two brothers, namely Abang Kuley and Abang Adi, who were known as the village headmen of Santubong. Malay kampongs would appoint respected figures among them as village headmen who were entrusted to resolve various issues affecting the villagers, based on customary law, and to collect taxes on behalf of the state.

6

MUSLIM *BUMIPUTERA* POLITICS IN THE POST-MAHATHIR ERA, 2003–06

INTRODUCTION

Since 1970, the central state has relied on Muslim Melanau strongmen-politicians to administer Sarawak albeit the changes in the central state leadership. When Rahman Yakub took over the helm from Tawi Sli in July 1970, the central state was still led by Tunku Abdul Rahman. However, Tunku had lost the legitimacy to rule following the racial riots of 13 May 1969, which triggered the formation of the National Operations Council headed by Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Razak. As the *de facto* central state leader, Razak was the prime figure in elevating Rahman as Sarawak's third Chief Minister after the 1970 *negeri* election. When Razak finally became the Prime Minister in September 1970, Rahman's position was firmly secured with the former lending his undivided support towards the strongman-politician. The sudden death of Razak in 1976 paved the way for Hussein Onn to assume the central state leadership which inevitably changed the political landscape in Sarawak. Unlike Razak, the new premier was not willing to accommodate Rahman who became increasingly powerful and sometimes critical of the central state. Without the strong support of the central state coupled with the instability within the Sarawak Barisan Nasional (SBN), Rahman finally stepped down as Sarawak's third Chief Minister; five years after Hussein Onn's appointment as the premier.

On March 1981, Abdul Taib Mahmud succeeded his uncle during which Hussein Onn was still holding the helm of the central state leadership. Although Taib was not the central state's preferred choice, his candidacy still received the central leaders' support especially from Dr Mahathir Mohamad who was then the Deputy Prime Minister. Two months after Taib's appointment as Sarawak's Chief Minister, Dr Mahathir rose to become Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister. During Dr Mahathir's tenure, the central state forged a strong relationship with Taib, allowing the strongman-politician to become arguably the most powerful politician at the periphery of the state.

After dominating Malaysian politics for twenty-one years, Dr Mahathir unexpectedly announced his resignation during the UMNO general assembly in June 2002. The longest-serving premier, however, was coaxed by his party members to stay on, prompting Dr. Mahathir to delay his retirement until October 2003. Under Dr Mahathir's leadership, Taib was allowed to dominate Sarawak because he was able to perform his role as the central state's representative effectively. So when Dr Mahathir finally resigned in 2003, the big question was whether the new premier would continue to rely on strongmen-politicians to rule Sarawak? Or will the central state dispose Sarawak's social forces and impose its authority on the *negeri*? If the central state decides to override the Muslim *bumiputera* strongmen-politicians, would this lead to the fragmentation of Sarawak's society, in particular the Muslim *bumiputera*? These are some of the questions which will be discussed in this chapter. Apart from these questions, this chapter also analyses significant developments that had taken place in Sarawak politics since the retirement of Dr Mahathir, up until the 2006 *negeri* election.

THE IMMINENT QUESTION OF RETIREMENT

Dr Mahathir resignation prompted his long-serving lieutenants in the central and *negeri* governments to also address the imminent question of retirement. In Sarawak, Taib who had served in the *negeri* and central governments for forty-five years (twenty-five years as Sarawak Chief Minister), was also pressed by some quarters especially the opposition to call it a day. Despite the strongman-politician's desire to remain in power beyond Mahathir's administration, he inevitably needs to pass the baton to his successor. Actually, Taib had raised the issue of retirement several times prior to Dr Mahathir's retirement in 2003. As noted in Chapter 5, the first time Taib publicly expressed his intention to step down was in 1995. He even publicly announced three candidates as his possible successor: Effendi Norwawi, Adenan Satem and Abang Johari. Of the three candidates shortlisted by Taib, Effendi Norwawi and Adenan

Satem were the “hot favourites” after Abang Johari’s fallout with the Chief Minister after the Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) general assembly in 1998. Between Effendi and Adenan, the former had the upper hand because he had exhibited the business acumen and the managerial skills needed to take over Sarawak.¹

The anticipation of Taib’s retirement was reignited when the strongman-politician decided to field his chosen successor, Effendi, in the 1999 parliamentary election. Traditionally, the future Chief Minister has to serve as a Federal Minister in order to provide him the platform to establish good rapport with the central state leaders, in particular the Prime Minister. Upon winning the Kuala Rajang seat, Effendi was appointed Federal Minister of Agriculture, a post which he held until the 2004 general elections. In that election Effendi declined to defend his Kuala Rajang seat but was still appointed Minister of Special Functions in the Prime Minister’s Department. However, two months after that, he quit due to health and personal reasons.

With the sudden retirement of Effendi, Taib’s succession plan was in jeopardy. To the strongman-politician, Effendi was the right man for the job despite not having strong grassroots support.² Most importantly, Effendi was a strong Taib loyalist, hence his elevation would safeguard the interest and position of the strongman-politician. With Effendi out of the picture, Taib had to rely on his second candidate, Adenan Satem³ who was also a known Taib’s loyalist. The speculation of Adenan’s appointment as Sarawak’s fifth Chief Minister heightened when the Malay leader contested in the 2004 parliamentary election, leaving his Sarawak cabinet post for a central state’s post in Kuala Lumpur. After winning the parliamentary seat of Batang Sadong in the 2004 election, Adenan was appointed Federal Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, the post he held momentarily before returning to Sarawak to take up an even bigger responsibility.

In January 2006, Taib underwent an operation in Singapore to remove a lump in his colon that was suspected to be cancerous. Although the strongman-politician appeared strong after the operation, he knew that the time had come for him to fast track his succession plan. After Taib’s return to Sarawak, Prime Minister Abdullah paid him a visit which was also attended by the strongman-politician’s two deputies, George Chan and Alfred Jabu, along with Adenan. Although the visit was said to be personal, it was widely speculated that the issue of Taib’s successor was also discussed. This speculation seemed to hold water because after the meeting, Adenan suddenly announced his intention to resign from his central state’s post. With his resignation, Adenan was expected to be appointed Sarawak’s new Chief Minister after his return from Kuala Lumpur. When asked by reporters why did he resign

from his central state's post, he responded by saying that he wanted to focus more on Sarawak politics (*Utusan Malaysia*, 26 February 2002). However, Taib was furious with Adenan's arrogant and presumptuous attitude prior to his "planned" appointment as Sarawak's new Chief Minister, leading to a breakdown in the mentor and protege's relation (*Utusan Malaysia*, 5 September 2006). Adenan was subsequently sidelined by Taib. When the 2006 election loomed, it was widely speculated that Adenan would be dropped from the PBB's candidate list but his flagging career was kept alive when he was fielded in Tanjung Datu (instead of defending his Muara Tuang seat). Adenan's disappointment with Taib was evident when the former decided to relinquish his PBB's senior vice-presidency in February 2007. With Adenan out of Taib's equation, Abang Johari who was also PBB's deputy president became the only surviving candidate among the three candidates publicly announced as the strongman-politician's possible successor. But it was widely believed that the highly regarded Abang Johari would not be picked to succeed Taib despite having the support of federal leaders. More than anything, Taib needs a loyalist who is strong and will protect his interests well after his departure from active politics. Abang Johari is not known to be such a man.

Apart from the three senior PBB leaders, another prominent figure speculated to succeed Taib was his own son, Sulaiman who was better known for being the poster boy of CMSB, the multi-million ringgit financial and infrastructure conglomerate owned by his family. Sulaiman joined the board of CMSB in January 1995, and was appointed group chairman in May 2002. Throughout the "search" for Taib's successor, Sulaiman or his other siblings was never considered by the general public as the possible heir to the strongman-politician. As a group chairman of CMSB, Sulaiman had been regarded merely as the guardian of his family's business empire. This perception proved to be misguided when Sulaiman was speculated to contest in the 2006 *negeri* election. Although Sulaiman was not holding any post in PBB at that time, this was not a big issue in the party because Taib had, in the past, nominated non-party members as election candidates. The speculation of Sulaiman's entry into Sarawak politics via the 2006 election suddenly made him the front-runner for the Chief Minister's seat, succeeding his father. However, when Taib announced the SBN's list of candidates for the 2006 election, his son was surprisingly not in the list. Instead, the strongman-politician nominated his brother, Ali Mahmud, to stand in Muara Tuang, which was the seat initially thought to be given to Sulaiman. Although Sulaiman did not make his much-anticipated entry into Sarawak politics, one should not dismiss his future role in the *negeri's* leadership. Ali Mahmud's sudden rise in the 2006 election may be limited to warm the *negeri* seat of Muara Tuang

before Sulaiman is given the green light to take a plunge into Sarawak politics. If the Chief Minister's seat is handed over to Sulaiman, he will continue the legacy of a family dynasty in Sarawak, reminiscent of the Brookes. This will further fuel the Malay-Melanau tension that has marred Muslim *bumiputera* politics in Sarawak since the late 1970s.

Putting aside the question of Taib's successor, the strongman-politician has to retire whether he likes it or not. He might still have the burning desire to steer Sarawak into his second wave of POD, which is said to be focusing on bringing development to the rural areas, but his health might not permit him to do so. Furthermore, there was growing pressure from Abdullah faction who expected the longest serving Chief Minister in Malaysia to call it a day. One of the telling signs of the central state leaders' impatience towards Taib's stalled plan to step down was the publication of an allegation by a Japanese newspaper that Taib received RM32 million kickbacks from Japanese shipping companies in *Utusan Malaysia*, a newspaper owned by UMNO.⁴ Apart from *Utusan Malaysia*, other newspaper refrained from publishing this sensational news which was posted earlier by an online news portal, *Malaysiakini*. In an unprecedented move, Taib retaliated by taking legal action against *Utusan Malaysia*, *Malaysiakini* and two opposition leaders in Sarawak. Although *Utusan Malaysia* subsequently retracted its report on the timber kickbacks, the allegation had somewhat tarnished the strongman-politician's credibility and image. It was also believed that the government-owned newspaper would not publish a damaging report against the Chief Minister without the blessing of influential central state leaders. Apart from the issue of timber kickbacks, another sign that the central state leaders were becoming impatient over Taib's reluctance to step down was the formation of Jawantankuasa Penaja UMNO Negeri Sarawak (JPUNS) or Sarawak UMNO Protem Committee. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, the issue of Sarawak UMNO will always crop up as a form of contestation towards the political dominance of Muslim Melanau leaders in Sarawak. However, the formation of JPUNS represents a bolder move by some quarters in Sarawak in trying to bring the biggest party in Malaysia to the largest *negeri* in the country. Through the initiative of fourteen Sarawakians, the JPUNS was formed on 11 September 2006. According to the group, they had about 100,000 members in Sarawak although the figure could not be verified. Apart from its campaign to recruit members among the Muslim and non-Muslim *bumiputera*, JPUNS also carried out campaigns to put up UMNO flags in Malay kampongs and Dayak longhouses across Sarawak. Although UMNO leaders including the Prime Minister publicly said that the party did not sanction the formation of JPUNS, many believed

that influential people in UMNO actually supported the Sarawak UMNO project.

Three years after Abdullah Badawi took over the central state leadership from Dr Mahathir, the new premier refrained from interfering directly in Sarawak political affairs, in particular the change of leadership in the *negeri*. Since Taib was religiously adhering to the central state's core demands, the central state found it difficult to meddle in Sarawak politics. As far as the central state leaders were concerned, Taib would have to relinquish his position sooner or later, and they would allow the strongman-politician the freedom to decide on his successor as a true strongman would do. The Muslim *bumiputera* chosen leader would then be expected to adhere to the central state's demands as practised by previous strongmen-politicians including Taib.

Despite the change in central state leadership, the state has to accommodate Muslim Bumiputera strongmen-politicians and rely on their prowess to dominate Sarawak's society. Since the strategy of accommodation has been proven effective in maintaining the state's presence in Sarawak, it would be foolish for central state leaders to ignore the role of these social forces and take a more direct approach in administering this large *negeri*. Unless Taib's successor fails to safeguard national interest in Sarawak, maintain the Muslim *bumiputera's* political dominance, ensure the SBN's dominance in the *negeri* and parliamentary elections and provide political stability in the *negeri*, the central state would not hastily change the political order that has been molded since 1970. However, there are several developments in Sarawak during the post-Mahathir period that could undermine this political order.

FRAGMENTATION OF THE RULING COALITION IN SARAWAK

Under Abdullah Badawi's leadership, Taib continued to forge a cordial relation with the central state by not championing regional interests at the expense of national interests. Apart from that, the strongman-politician was able to maintain peace and order in this huge *negeri* albeit contestation from certain quarters towards his authoritarian rule. In terms of electoral dominance, the SBN continued to perform astoundingly well in the first election (2004 election) held during Abdullah's term by winning twenty-seven out of twenty-eight parliamentary seats. Despite meeting all the central state's demands, Taib was confronted with a string of leadership crisis within the SBN component parties, starting with Sarawak National Party (SNAP), Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) and the oldest party in Sarawak, Sarawak United People's

Party (SUPP). Although the crisis did not lead to instability in the SBN government, it somewhat increased the pressure on Taib.

The first SBN component party to be hit with leadership crisis was SNAP, resulting in the party's deregistration in 2002. SNAP's leadership crisis started when its president, James Wong, decided not to defend his *negeri* seat of Limbang in the 2001 election, thus relinquishing his Sarawak cabinet's post. Taking over his seat was Richard Wong who was SNAP's senior vice-president and also James Wong's son. It was also speculated that Richard would succeed his father as the new SNAP president, which irked some party members especially William Mawan Ikom who aspired to be the new party leader. As a rising star in SNAP, Mawan's aspiration to assume SNAP's leadership from James was ignited when the former was appointed full Minister after the 2001 election in place of James Wong. Apart from nepotism, another source of contention that triggered the plan to topple James Wong was his decision to hold on to his presidency after quitting electoral politics in 2001. According to James, he would still helm the party "as long as the party wants me and as long as my health permits" (*Utusan Malaysia*, 26 June 2001). The crack in the party started to appear when SNAP's central executive committee chaired by James expelled member of parliament for Bintulu, Ting Kiong Sing, from the party for alleged breach of party constitution. This decision prompted eight central executive committee members (later known as the Group of Eight) led by deputy president Peter Tinggom to walk out from the meeting as a sign of protest against Ting's sacking.⁵ Losing confidence in James's leadership, the Group of Eight demanded James's resignation during the party's triennial general meeting (TGM) in February 2002. James Wong, however, refused to give in to the Group of Eight's demand and continued to helm the party. After their move to unseat James went awry, the Group of Eight held an Emergency General Meeting in August 2002 and elected William Mawan as SNAP's new president. The Group of Eight's unilateral action put the party in danger of being deregistered since it had two sets of office bearers. In view of this development, the Registrar of Societies issued an ultimatum to the feuding factions to resolve their differences or risked being deregistered. After failing to heed the Registrar of Societies' warning, the once powerful and dominant party in Sarawak was deregistered on 5 November 2002 (*Utusan Malaysia*, 15 September 2002). With SNAP's deregistration, the Group of Eight quickly seized the opportunity to outmanoeuvre James Wong and his supporters by forming a new political party known as Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (SPDP), just three days after the deregistration of SNAP. Led by William Mawan, SPDP applied to join BN on 13 November 2002 and its application was duly accepted on 19 November 2002.

Throughout SNAP's leadership crisis, Taib refused to intervene even when James Wong demanded Taib to expel one of the members of the Group of Eight, Dr Judson Sakai Tagal, who was Sarawak's Assistant Minister for his involvement in the dissenting group. In his own words, Taib reiterated that Dr Judson "is my Assistant Minister and until I decide otherwise, he will still be my Assistant Minister" (*Utusan Malaysia*, 4 October 2002). To add insult to James's predicament, the strongman-politician retained two other members of the Group of Eight, William Mawan, as Sarawak Minister of Environment and Public Health, and Dr Tiki Lafe, as Deputy Federal Minister of National Unity and Community Development. Although Taib's decision to retain the three SNAP leaders was not meant to meddle in the internal crisis of the party, it actually helped the Group of Eight's struggle since they could use the state's resources and their connections in the government to achieve their goal of toppling James Wong. This was evident when the Group of Eight's application to join BN through SPDP was swiftly approved despite James Wong's effort to overturn the Registrar of Societies' decision.

An almost similar leadership crisis struck yet another Dayak party, PBDS, in 2003. Like the crisis in SNAP, the PBDS's leadership crisis started when its president, Leo Moggie, who was then the Federal Minister of Energy, Communications and Multimedia privately expressed his intention to give up active politics in 1999 (*Utusan Malaysia*, 27 June 2003). The looming retirement of Moggie sparked a power struggle between two factions in the party led by Daniel Tajem who was PBDS's deputy president and Dr James Jemut Masing who was the party's vice-president. In the PBDS's party polls on 5 August 2000, Dr James took the bold step of challenging Daniel for the party's number two post while Moggie retained his presidency unopposed. Despite not holding any ministerial position, Tajem managed to outwit James Masing who was then the Minister of Social Development and Urbanisation with eighty-two majority votes. Three members of Tajem's faction also won the vice-presidency, further bolstering his position in the party. In trying to reconcile the two factions, Moggie appointed James Masing as the party's publicity chief but this did not help to ease the rivalry between the two groups. In 2000, Moggie finally announced his intention to step down and hoped that a smooth transition would take place, leading to the formulation of the Miri Formula. Based on the Formula, Tajem would be the new president while Dr Masing would be the deputy president.

With the party's succession plan intact, Moggie suddenly resigned as party president on 25 June 2003, less than a month before the start of the party's TGM which supposedly witnessed the formal handover of the party's leadership. Moggie's unexpected move caught James Masing's camp

by surprise. According to Moggie, he hastily decided to step down because James Masing reneged on the party's succession plan. The Iban strongman-politician lambasted James Masing who was once his protégé as "a paranoid who will go to any length in wanting to be the President" (*Utusan Malaysia*, 6 September 2003). With the resignation of Moggie, Tajem automatically took over the presidency by virtue of his position as the deputy president, leaving James Masing at the mercy of his rival. As soon as Tajem took over the helm of PBDS, he sacked nine appointed supreme council members including James Masing in order to put his men in the party's important positions. The unilateral move by Tajem sparked a fierce retaliation by James Masing's faction who subsequently held a Triennial Delegates Conference in July 2003 to elect their own office bearers with James Masing as the president. The formation of two separate office bearers for PBDS meant that the party would have to go down the same path that SNAP took which led to its ultimate demise.

Anticipating PBDS's imminent deregistration, several individuals aligned to James Masing formed a new party known as Parti Rakyat Sarawak (PRS). The new party led by Sidi Munan applied formally for its registration in early November 2003. As expected, PBDS was deregistered on 5 December 2003 but its fate was slightly better than SNAP's when the Registrar of Societies reinstated PBDS on 10 March, three days before the nomination day for the 2004 election. According to PBDS sources, the temporary reconciliation was made possible when both factions agreed to nominate three candidates each for the 2004 election (*Utusan Malaysia*, 12 March 2003).⁶ Both factions also agreed that a fresh party election should be held to elect new office bearers in order to resolve the leadership crisis. When the party was preparing for the list of delegates for the Triennial Delegates Conference (TDC) scheduled for 9 to 10 October 2004, Tajem refused to use the 2000 TDC's list, prompting another stalemate. The former Sarawak Deputy Chief Minister subsequently postponed the party's TDC, leading to the party's deregistration for the second time on 21 October 2004. On the same day, the application for the formation of PRS was approved by the Registrar of Societies. The next day, James Masing joined the new party and was subsequently made president. Expectedly enough, the new party was accepted into the SBN, leaving Tajem and PBDS out cold. The immediate admission of PRS and also SPDP into the ruling party was in stark contrast to the scenario in the Peninsula where a pro-BN party like the Indian Progressive Front (IPF) failed to be admitted to the coalition after many years of waiting. As the chairman of the SBN, Taib accepted PRS's and SPDP's applications to join the ruling party with the aim of strengthening his position and that of the coalition.

As in the case of the leadership crisis in SNAP, Taib insisted that he would not interfere in the PBDS's affair either. At the beginning of the leadership tussle between Tajem and James Masing, the strongman-politician merely said that it was an internal party affair, thus he would not interfere. Taib argued that he would only take action when the situation worsened (*Utusan Malaysia*, 6 June 2003). However, when the crisis within the party deteriorated, Taib refused to make any effort to resolve the conflict. The speedy acceptance of PRS into the SBN proved that the strongman-politician had a hand in ensuring that James Masing would turn victorious in his struggle over Tajem. Obviously, Taib would prefer to work with James Masing rather than Tajem who was once a staunch critic of the strongman-politician during the PBDS's opposition years.

Amidst the crisis faced by the SBN, the ruling party could still dominate the 2004 election when it secured twenty-seven out of twenty-eight parliamentary seats (PBB eleven, SUPP six, PBDS six, and SPDP four). It was evident that the split among the non-Muslim *bumiputera* elites had little effect on the electorate. In fact, the only defeat that the BN suffered was in Bandar Kuching where Wee Kok Tiong from SUPP lost to DAP's Chong Chien Jen by a majority of 2,041 votes. Although the SBN failed to maintain its 100 per cent record in the 1999 election, the ruling party was able to maintain its share of the popular vote at 65.85 per cent as compared to 65.95 per cent in 1999. Meanwhile in the Muslim *bumiputera* seats, PBB continued to dominate the Muslim *bumiputera* when the party swept all the seats up for grabs. In fact, PBB was able to win back most of the Muslim *bumiputera* votes that were lost in 1999 when it successfully polled 82.75 per cent votes compared to 68.71 per cent votes in 1999.

After the 2004 election, Sarawak prepared to hold its first *negeri* election under the leadership of the new Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi. On 24 April 2006, Taib announced the dissolution of the *Council Negeri*, paving the way for Sarawak's ninth *negeri* election. The Election Commission fixed 9 May as the nomination day while polling was set on 20 May 2006. With the inclusion of SPDP and PRS in the SBN, the allocation of seats for the *negeri* election became a source of contention between the two new parties. In resolving this potentially explosive issue, Taib decided to allocate SPDP with the same number of seats allocated to SNAP prior to its deregistration since the former is the offshoot of the later. The same principle was applied to PRS which is a PBDS's breakaway party. As a result, PRS was allocated more seats compared to SPDP although the latter joined the SBN much earlier than the former. Despite this compromise, the animosity between the two Dayak parties persisted when SPDP tried to lure former PBDS assemblymen,

Gabriel Adit (Ngemah) and Stanley Ajang Batok (Belaga) who refused to join PRS, to join SPDP. The former PBDS assemblymen were promised that they would be allowed to defend their seats on the SPDP ticket, despite the seats had been allocated to PRS.⁷ This plan failed to materialize when the Chief Minister reiterated that the former PBDS assemblymen who joined other parties could not defend their seats on other parties' tickets. In reaction to this decision, the two former PBDS assemblymen left SPDP in order to defend their seats as Independents. Despite the rivalry between SPDP and PRS, the non-Muslim *bumiputera* electorate were not affected and continued to give their support towards the SBN. The only Iban seat that the SBN lost in the 2006 election was Ngemah. The rural seat was taken by Gabriel Adit who successfully defended his seat despite contesting as an Independent.

Surprisingly, the biggest casualty in 2006 was SUPP which lost a total of eight seats — six to DAP and one each to PKR and Independent. As a result, the SBN only secured sixty-two out of seventy-one seats which became the ruling party's worst showing since the historic 1987 election. Apart from local and national issues such as corruption, oil price hike, choice of candidates and the renewal of land lease, the central issue behind SUPP's dismal performance was its declining influence within the SBN and Taib's leadership.⁸ In the Muslim *bumiputera* seats, PBB retained control of all twenty-six seats by polling 75.28 per cent votes which was slightly lower than what the party garnered in 2001 (77.21 per cent). The SUPP's dismal performance triggered the call by rival groups in the party, led by deputy president Law Hieng Ding, for the removal of party president Dr George Chan. Prior to 2006, Law Hieng Ding who was the former Federal Minister of Science, Technology and Environment had criticized Dr George Chan over the issue of government and political appointments. The former Federal Minister was visibly upset when the SUPP president did not nominate him for a federal post after the 2004 parliamentary election (*Utusan Malaysia*, 4 May 2004). Despite the open criticism against Dr George Chan, SUPP managed to avoid the discord between its two top leaders from bursting into a major crisis, at least momentarily. However, when the Chinese dominant party performed miserably in 2006, this presented Law Hieng Ding and his group the opportunity to topple George Chan. In the party Central Working Committee (CWC) meeting held five months after the election, Law Hieng Ding surprised the CWC members by proposing a motion of no confidence against the president, seconded by another CWC member, Daniel Ngieng. According to Law, he proposed the motion because the support for George Chan's leadership was declining and this would affect the people's support for the party (*Utusan Malaysia*, 8 October 2006). The motion, however, was

rejected by the CWC because it did not have the power to remove the president. After surviving the first attempt to oust him, George Chan saw the movement to bring him down become increasingly strong when the Sibü group led by the party deputy secretary general, Wong Soon Koh, teamed up with Law's faction. In order to save himself and also the party from being deregistered, George Chan made a compromise with his rival group by signing a pact to allow him to finish his term which ran until 2008. Despite this compromise, the crisis within the oldest party in Sarawak failed to be resolved when another explosive issue emerged not long after the pact was signed. The new source of discord between the president and his rival was the appointment of the protem committee for the new Dudong branch in Sibü. The Sibü leaders who were aligned to Law Hieng Ding wanted the MP for Lanang, Tiong Thai King, to lead the committee but the supreme council appointed the president's man who is also the assemblyman of Dudong, Dr Soon Choon Teck, to head the committee. To resolve this potentially divisive issue, the SUPP Supreme Council appointed its organising secretary, Peter Chin Fah Kui, to head the committee that oversaw the formation of Dudong branch. However, this compromise did not deter Dr Soon from gaining control of Dudong branch when he suddenly announced the Registrar of Societies' approval for its formation. This sudden announcement caught SUPP leaders including the president off guard, sending the party back to an impasse. In contrast to the leadership crisis in Dayak parties, the quandary in SUPP could potentially affect the SBN's performance in the election especially when the party's popularity had declined significantly as evident in the 2006 election. Since Taib is expected to lead BN's domination in Sarawak elections, his position could be seriously undermined if he fails to live up to the central state's demands.

The fragmentation of Dayak political elites continued to dominate Sarawak politics during the post-Mahathir era when PRS was hit by yet another crisis which involved its president, James Masing and his former ally, Sng Chee Hua who was also the party's deputy president. The source of contention between these two leaders was the candidate's list for the 2006 election. James Masing alleged that his deputy tried to push through his list of candidates, hence undermining his authority as president. The Sng faction, on the contrary, accused James Masing of campaigning against his son who were defending the Pelagus seat on the BN's ticket. In May 2006, the crisis in PRS deteriorated further when James Masing expelled the party's secretary general, Sidi Munan, along with seven members of the executive committee.⁹ In retaliation to James Masing's action, Sng held an emergency meeting which issued a censure against the president. At the same time, the

emergency meeting appointed Sng as the party's acting president, leading to a perilous crisis within the young party. In September 2006, the party was given a 30-day grace period to reply to a show cause letter issued by the Registrar of Societies or risk being deregistered (Bernama, 9 September 2006). Despite being issued a show cause letter, the crisis in PRS intensified when Sng's faction expelled James Masing as the president. In response to the bold move made by Sng's faction, James Masing held a TDC in December 2007 to elect the new office bearers. The TDC re-elected Masing as the president and his men to the Supreme Council, ousting Sng Chee Hua and his supporters from the party's top leadership body. In a repeat of the crisis in SNAP and PBDS, Sng's faction held its separate TDC in March 2007 in order to elect their own office bearers. Subsequently, Sng passed the baton to his son, Larry Sng, who was Sarawak's Assistant Minister and also Pelagus assemblyman. The move to appoint Sng was seen as a tactical move by the senior Sng in order to better their chance of toppling Dr Masing. Since the senior Sng was not holding any government post, his son would become a better *de facto* leader for PRS as compared to him. Furthermore, Sng Chee Hua's close relationship with Anwar Ibrahim who is presently the advisor of PKR might have negative impact on their group.

The crises in SNAP, PBDS and SUPP led to the weakening of their influence in the ruling coalition, but it had an opposite effect on PBB. As a result of the non-Muslim *bumiputera* and Chinese schisms, the political dominance of the Muslim Melanau via PBB was consolidated. History has shown that the Dayaks could take over the *negeri* leadership from the Muslim Melanau if they are united and strong. Hence, the fragmentation of Dayak elites prevents this numerically powerful community from embarking on another plan akin to the "Sarawak Chief Minister Project 1992". So when two Dayak political parties, SNAP and PBDS, embroiled in a destructive leadership crisis which led to their dissolution, the "Sarawak Chief Minister Project" was effectively put to a rest. The leadership crisis in SUPP, on the other hand, played a role in checking the growing influence of the Chinese-dominated party in the government. The perception that the Chinese is controlling Sarawak's economy has led to much criticism by the *bumiputera* communities against the Chief Minister and PBB. So, when SUPP was ridden with a leadership crisis, it eroded the party's influence in the SBN but it boosted the Muslim *bumiputera's* political dominance via PBB.

The fragmentation in the SBN during the post-Mahathir period might not equal the severity of the 1987 crisis but it definitely dampened the strongman-politician's authority as the head of the ruling coalition in Sarawak.

Since the new central state leadership was keen to see a leadership transition in Sarawak, the bickering within the ruling coalition would definitely increase the pressure on Taib to relinquish his position. Although Taib seems adamant in holding on to his seat, the strongman-politician has to step down, either when his health fails him or when he finally finds the “right” replacement, or when the central state “demands” for his resignation. With the passing of Taib’s era, a new Muslim *bumiputera* strongman-politician will rule Sarawak. However, in the long run, the role of strongmen-politicians in Sarawak politics would not be certain due to various factors that could erode the influence and authority of these powerful individuals.

THE END OF STRONGMEN POLITICS IN SARAWAK?

For more than three decades, Muslim *Bumiputera* strongmen-politicians have dominated Sarawak politics with the support of the central state. The imminent retirement of Sarawak’s most powerful strongman-politician, Taib Mahmud, will pave the way for another strongman-politician to rule this *negeri* for maybe another decade or two. However, this hybrid institution will not stay idle forever because there are several factors that could challenge its supremacy. Among these factors are the change in the central state–*negeri* relation, the transformation of Sarawak’s society, the public’s increased access to alternative information, and the strengthening of the *negeri*’s political institutions.

First, the Muslim *bumiputera* strongmen-politicians cease to dominate Sarawak politics if the central state abandon its strategy of accommodating these powerful individuals as a mean to sustain its presence in this large *negeri*. The elevation of Muslim Melanau intelligentsia by the central state in 1970 was done in order to remove Dayak leaders who were not willing to fulfill the central state’s core demands. Sarawak, at that time, needed a strong leader who could maintain the state’s political dominance since Dayak parties were capable of contesting its power. This political threat was real when the Council Negeri had twenty-nine Dayak seats in 1970. However, after several delimitation exercises, the Dayak seats were drastically reduced, while the Muslim *bumiputera* seats were significantly boosted. In 2006, the number of Dayak seats was twenty-eight (including Orang Ulu seats) whereas the number of Muslim *bumiputera* seats was twenty-six. As a result, Dayak parties would not be able to form the government without the support of other political parties. Without the political threat of the Dayaks, the central state does not have to rely on strongmen-politicians to sustain the state’s presence. Although

the Muslim *bumiputera* strongmen-politicians religiously adhere to the central state's demands, the central state could ignore this unwritten arrangement and remove these powerful individuals.

Since strongmen-politicians are not as powerful as traditional strongmen who dominated Sarawak's society in the pre-colonial period, the decision not to accommodate Sarawak's social forces would not lead to the collapse of the state. As compared to traditional strongmen, strongmen-politicians are too dependent on the state in order to maintain their power and influence. Without the political office accorded by the state, strongmen-politicians would be powerless as in the case of Rahman Yakub after his retirement in 1981. Traditional strongmen, on the other hand, were a powerful force within Sarawak society even before the state co-opted them due to their control of the trading activities and also their high social status. Without being dependent on the state, traditional strongmen could pose a real threat to the colonial governments if they did not accommodate these powerful individuals. Hence, Migdal's theory that the state could collapse if it does not accommodate the social forces might be true in describing Sarawak during and after the colonial period. However, in present-day Sarawak, the central state could actually displace the Muslim *bumiputera* strongmen-politicians with ordinary politicians, without witnessing the collapse of the Malaysian state.

The central state can displace Muslim Bumiputera strongmen-politicians by forming Sarawak UMNO. With the establishment of this national party, PBB has to be dissolved so that it becomes the backbone of Sarawak UMNO. The formation of Sarawak UMNO would definitely cripple the power of Muslim Melanau leaders who would lose the political platform (PBB) to exercise their regional power. Although the Muslim *bumiputera* leaders would be expected to lead Sarawak UMNO, their power could be checked by national UMNO leaders who would make all the important decisions such as political appointments and election candidacy as in Sabah and other *negeris* dominated by UMNO. To the central state leaders, the formation of Sarawak UMNO would further strengthen their grip on Sarawak without having to deal with strongmen-politicians.

Second, the transformation of Sarawak's society, especially the emergence of the new middle class, could also play a significant role in eroding the strongman-politician's institution. As discussed previously in Chapter 2, the new middle class in Sarawak had grown significantly over the last three decades. However, this figure was still considered low compared to other *negeris* such as Selangor and Penang that have a significant number of middle class actively involved in the process of democratization. Akin to the role of Muslim *bumiputera* intelligentsia during the colonial period, the new middle class has

the potential to challenge the political dominance of strongmen-politicians through active participation in the social movement and electoral politics. Today, the social movements in Sarawak are considered dormant except for the active engagement of the local and international environmental groups which are fighting for the Penans and other indigenous groups in regards to their land rights.¹⁰ The absence of vibrant social movements in Sarawak could be resolved when the *negeri* has a large pool of middle class who could play the role of pressure groups. As the most educated segment of society, the middle class is expected to be the backbone of this movement by providing leadership, wisdom and even financial assistance to achieve their cause. With the middle class at the heart of a vibrant social movement, the political dominance of strongmen-politicians could be in peril. In certain circumstances, such as the emergence of the *reformasi* movement in 1999, the middle class plunged into electoral politics and contested as candidates. By contesting in the elections, the middle class would then openly challenge strongmen-politicians' grip on power. It is imperative to note here that I do not subscribe to the idea that the middle class is a cohesive social unit. In fact, I acknowledge that there are some middle class who support the ruling regime in order to maintain their status quo. On the other hand, there are others who subscribe to the ideals of democracy and are willing to engage in its struggle.

Third, the Muslim *bumiputera* strongmen-politicians would not be able to continue dominating Sarawak politics if the public has greater access to information through the advent of information and communications technology (ICT). Presently, Sarawakians are only privy to the information provided by the state-controlled media which lacks the tenacity to act as a medium of check and balance. Usually operating on the principle of self-censorship, the state-controlled media is largely used as a propaganda machine for strongmen-politicians and the central state leaders by providing bias reporting. In Sarawak, several individuals who are closely linked to Sarawak's strongmen-politicians even established regional-based newspapers (such as *Malaysian Today*, *Borneo Post*, *Utusan Sarawak*), private television and radio stations (NTV7 and Cats FM) as a means to provide local-based content to the public. In terms of their news coverage, the regional-based newspapers such as *See Hua Daily News* and *The Borneo Post* do run positive news about the opposition but their somewhat "balanced" reporting becomes less visible during the elections. Other regional Malay and English newspapers simply act as the government unofficial news agency by putting an embargo on the opposition news. For example, when the influential online newspaper, *Malaysiakini*, ran a story on the RM32 million kickbacks allegedly given to the Chief Minister which was surprisingly picked up by the UMNO-controlled

newspaper, *Utusan Malaysia*, none of the local newspapers in Sarawak reported it. In places where printed media is not available, Sarawakians have to depend on the information or news provided by the state-controlled electronic media. Without having access to independent information, the public would not be able to assess their leaders' performance and their state of integrity objectively. This is one of the factors that has contributed to the SBN-led strongmen-politicians' dominance in Sarawak politics.

But when the control of information is shattered, the abuse of power and malpractice of strongmen-politicians and other BN leaders will be exposed, leading to the erosion of strongmen-politicians' dominance. The most influential ICT which has the potential to act as the third estate in Malaysia is the Internet. In 1998, the Internet penetration rate in Malaysia was a mere 1.8 per cent but it jumped significantly to 14 per cent in 2006 (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission 2007, p. 23). In terms of the trend of Internet usage, Malaysian surfers are increasingly turning to the Net for information (84.5 per cent) while others use it as a tool to communicate (80.7 per cent), to be entertained (52.6 per cent), to study (45.9 per cent) and to do financial activities (23.6 per cent) (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission 2006, p. 15). The rapid growth of the Internet in Malaysia has led to the proliferation of political blogs and other sources of alternative information which becomes influential in mobilizing the masses especially those who are attracted to the democratic appeal. Among the popular political blogs in Malaysia are MalaysiaToday, Harakahdaily.net, Screenshots, Lim Kit Siang for Malaysia, Rocky's Bru, RantingsbyMM, The Scribe A. Kadir Jasin, Kudakepang, The Other Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim, Aisehman, Kickdefella and Susan Loone's Blog. Interestingly, even the former premier, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who had a fallout with Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, had turned to the Internet to launch his criticism towards his hand-picked successor. Apart from using his own blog, Prime Leadership, Mahathir also used other political blogs such as MYKMU NET, MalaysiaToday and The Scribe A. Kadir Jasin to attack Abdullah. Through political blogs and other sources of alternative information provided by the Internet, the public could be swayed from supporting the ruling party. In fact, Internet was one of the medium used by the *reformasi* movement to launch an unprecedented challenge towards the government in 1999, leading to a shift in the voting trend especially among the Malays. In Sarawak, the low Internet access rate, standing at 6.8 per cent in 2006 (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission 2007, p. 24), prevented Sarawak's populace from receiving alternative information let alone launch a mass reform movement to challenge the strongman-politician's institution. But if the Internet access in Sarawak

grows significantly thus allowing Sarawakians to have access to alternative information, these informed masses will put more pressure on the strongmen-politicians, leading to a possible collapse of their authoritarian rule.

Fourth, the Muslim *bumiputera* strongmen-politicians' grip on power can be severely challenged if the weak political institutions such as political parties and the *negeri* bureaucracy are strengthened, thus preventing strongmen from exploiting them for their personal agenda. The central state's strategy of accommodating strongmen-politicians has allowed the latter to dominate political institutions in Sarawak which in turn, led to the weakening of these institutions. One of the manifestation of the weakening of political institutions in Sarawak is the collapse of SNAP and PBDS after their long-time presidents who were also considered to be strongmen-politicians decided to step down. The collapse of these political parties is indicative of the reliance of these political institutions on strongmen-politicians to sustain their existence. Apart from the collapse of SNAP and PBDS, the leadership crisis that engulfed the SBN's youngest component party, PRS, also proves that political institutions in Sarawak is very fragile especially when the issue of succession comes into picture. The only political party in Sarawak which can be considered "strong" in terms of its ability to remain stable and resilient despite various crisis faced by the party is SUPP. PBB's status, on the other hand, could not be ascertained because the party has been in the strong hand of Taib Mahmud for more than two decades without any serious threat towards his leadership except in 1987. During this period, the strongman-politician had masterfully dictated the direction and the leadership structure of the party in order to strengthen his own position in Sarawak. Political parties, however, are not the only political institutions susceptible to the strongmen-politicians' domineering control. The *negeri* bureaucracy is another political institution which increasingly becomes the tool of strongmen-politicians especially the powerful Chief Minister to pursue their political agenda. As discussed in Chapter 4, Taib controls the *negeri* bureaucracy by appointing his loyalists, including his brother-in-law, at important positions in the government, thus allowing him to influence the government policies and also the distribution of *negeri*'s resources including state rents.

The political dominance of strongmen-politicians, however, can be seriously challenged if political institutions, in particular political parties and *negeri* bureaucracy, are strengthened, thus preventing these powerful individuals from dictating them. Political parties could acquire their strength when they have grown into bigger parties with their branches and members spread all over the *negeri*. By evolving into big organizations with a lot of members, political parties would be less vulnerable to the risk of collapsing

because their presence has been firmly rooted in society. Apart from that, political parties could become stronger when their party members achieve a certain level of maturity. Here, political maturity refers to the ability of party members to be fully committed in upholding the party's ideology, to discard parochial sentiments, to place higher value on party's interest instead of party leaders' personal agenda, to be an informed member so that they would not be easily hoodwinked, to stamp out the practice of money politics or other form of corruption, to exercise restraint and discipline even during severe internal crisis, to exercise their rights as party members without fear or favour, to put aside emotion when making decisions and to have a strong sense of party identification or comradeship. If party members achieve this level of maturity, strongmen-politicians would not be able to exploit and manipulate their parties easily. Hence, without a strong party base, strongmen-politicians would not be able to exercise their power arbitrarily, leading to a total collapse of the strongman-politician's institution. The influence of strongmen-politicians will be further eroded if the *negeri* bureaucracy is transformed into an organization that operates on the principles of good governance such as transparency, rule of law, responsiveness, accountability and efficiency. If the bureaucracy is being driven by these principles, it will not be easily exploited by strongmen-politicians who have relied on it as a tool of penetration. Apart from good governance, the *negeri* bureaucracy will cease from becoming strongmen-politicians' tool of domination if it becomes exceedingly large. The *negeri* bureaucracy has expanded tremendously under Taib's rule but it can still be controlled by the strongman-politician. However, the time will come when the *negeri* bureaucracy becomes exceedingly large that its many organs and huge personnel will pull the bureaucracy in different directions, making it difficult to operate uniformly. As a result, the strongmen-politicians will not be able to dictate the *negeri* bureaucracy at their whim and fancy. With the transformation of the *negeri* bureaucracy, it will curtail the power of strongmen-politicians who have exploited it as a tool to strengthen their position within society and the state itself.

CONCLUSION

In the post-Mahathir era, the increased pressure on Taib to end his long grip on power was obviously the most significant political development. Sooner or later, he has to step down either on his own accord or through the central state's intervention. When the strongman-politician finally steps down, his successor will definitely have a big shoe to fill. The chosen leader might not be as powerful as Taib but if the present political arrangement

between the central state and *negeri* government is maintained, another strongman-politician's rule will emerge. The new strongman-politician could create another long legacy of authoritarian rule in Sarawak and maintain the central state's presence here.

In the post-Mahathir era, the central state under the new leadership continued to accommodate Muslim Melanau strongmen-politicians as a strategy to dominate Sarawak's multi-ethnic society. Since this political strategy had proven to be effective in maintaining the state's presence in Sarawak, the new premier found no reason to change its approach in administering the *negeri*. However, this does not mean that the strongman-politician institution in Sarawak will persist forever because various forces might challenge or even displace this institution. These forces could come from the state or it could originate from within Sarawak's society.

Notes

1. Prior to his involvement in politics, Effendi was handpicked by Taib to lead the State Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) in 1981 at the young age of thirty-four. Under his stewardship, the Sarawak SEDC became one of the most successful *negeri* development corporations in the country. This remarkable achievement convinced Taib that Effendi would make a capable and trusted successor to his throne. In 1990, Taib appointed Effendi as the Chief Operating Officer of Bank Utama, a Kuching-based bank owned by Taib's family. Once again, Effendi was instrumental in turning over the bank's fortune. With his success in the business and banking sector, Taib finally brought Effendi into the political scene by fielding him in the *negeri* seat of Dalat in the 1991 election. He subsequently won the seat which he held until 2001.
2. In the 1998 PBB's party election, Effendi Norwawi succeeded in becoming the party's vice-president but among the four candidates elected to the post, he received the lowest number of votes.
3. Akin to Taib, Adenan started his career as a prosecutor at the Crown Law Office in Adelaide (1969–70) prior to his involvement in politics. Adenan's first foray into the world of politics started when he was appointed as Taib's Assistant Secretary at the Ministry of Primary Industries between 1972 and 1974. Within this period, Adenan formed a strong relation with his mentor who was responsible for the former's political ascendancy. Furthermore, Adenan was once married to Taib's sister, Zainab Mahmud, making him not only Taib's loyalist but also part of his extended family member. In the 1978 election, Adenan made a first appearance in Sarawak's electoral politics by contesting in the *negeri* seat of Muara Tuang, which was within Taib's parliamentary seat of Kota Samarahan. Seven years later, Taib repaid Adenan's loyalty by appointing him the Assistant Minister of Land Development. The Ming Court Affair came as a blessing to Adenan

because with the defection of several senior PBB's assemblymen, he was able to make way into the negeri cabinet. After 1987, Adenan held several portfolios which included Land Development, Social Development, and Agriculture and Food Industries, which was the last portfolio he held before joining the central government.

4. On 29 March 2007, *Japan Times* reported that nine Japanese shipping companies that transported lumber from Sarawak allegedly failed to report 1.1 billion yen (RM32 million) of income for a period of up to seven years. The money, according to the newspaper, constituted kickbacks to Sarawak officials via a Hong Kong agent. According to the Tokyo Regional Taxation Bureau, the shipping companies' remuneration payments to Regent Star, a Hong Kong agent, which had link with Sarawak Chief Minister Taib Mahmud and his family, were considered rebates, not legitimate expenses. The shipping companies allegedly used the rebates as lubricant to facilitate their lumber trade. Despite this strong allegation, the nine shipping companies claimed the transactions with Regent Star had been legitimate and denied any wrongdoing. The shipping companies accused of the alleged tax evasion were Mitsui O.S.K. Kinkai Ltd. and NYK-Hinode Line Ltd. belonging to the Nanyozai Freight Agreement (NFA), a cartel formed in 1962 to avoid excessive competition in import of lumber from Southeast Asia. According to NFA and other sources, the Japanese cartel concluded an agreement in 1981 with Malaysia's Dewaniaga Sarawak regarding lumber transport. Dewaniaga is a Sarawak-affiliated concern in charge of lumber export control and is headed by the Sarawak Chief Minister's younger brother (*Japan Times*, 29 March 2007).
5. The eight SNAP leaders who walked out from the central executive committee meeting were Peter Tinggom, William Mawan, Jacob Dungau Sagan, Peter Nansien, Sylvester Entri, Geman Itam, Peter Nyarok and Dr Judson Sakai Tagal. They were later known as the Group of Eight.
6. The candidates nominated by the Tajem faction were Datuk Joseph Salang (Julau), Jawah Gerang (Lubok Antu) and a new face, Aaron Ago Dagang (Kanowit). The candidates from Masing's group were Entulu (Selangau), Jimmy Donald (Sri Aman) and Billy Abit Joo (Hulu Rajang).
7. After PBDS's deregistration, three MPs and two state assemblymen from the party refused to join PRS. They were Deputy Foreign Minister Datuk Joseph Salang (Julau MP), Jawah Gerang (Lubok Antu MP), Aaron Dagang (Kanowit MP) and assemblymen Gabriel Adit (Ngemah) and Stanley Ajang Batok (Belaga). The five leaders initially wanted to join PBB but their plan was rebuffed by the Chief Minister who was also PBB's president. Subsequently, Gabriel Adit and Stanley Ajang joined PRS with the hope that they would be able to defend their seats in the 2006 election. However, their hopes to defend their seats via SPDP were quashed when the Chief Minister insisted that PRS would nominate other candidates for the seats which were already allocated to the party. With this decision, Gabriel Adit and Stanley Ajang decided to leave SPDP and contested the 2006 election as independents. Only Gabriel Adit successfully defended his

- seat. After the 2006 election, two other former PBDS MPs joined SPDP, namely Aaron Dagang and Jawah Gerang, while Joseph Salang remained partyless. However, when PRS was split into two camps led by its president Dr James Jemut Masing and Larry Sng, Jawah Gerang left SPDP and joined PRS to team up with Larry.
8. In June 2004, Taib made a major cabinet reshuffle which saw the strongman-politician taking over the powerful finance portfolio from Dr George Chan. Traditionally, the finance portfolio was allocated to SUPP which reflects the importance of the party within ruling coalition. The SUPP's president was instead given two portfolios, namely Industrial Development and Modernisation of Agriculture. By losing the powerful finance portfolio, the Chinese community saw this as a sign that SUPP's influence in the government had declined, thus it would not be able to articulate the voices of the community in a meaningful way. Also, the Chinese community was not happy with Taib's growing influence within the government and his monopoly of the economy. The Chinese community also believed that it is high time that the strongman-politician retires from active politics, giving way for younger leaders to lead the *negeri*.
 9. Apart from Sidi, the other executive members of PRS expelled by Dr Masing were treasurer, Clement Eddy; information chief, Wilfred Nissom; deputy secretary general, Larry Sng; deputy publicity chief, Ernest Chua; Sng Chee Beng; Thomas Tommy and Peter Ato.
 10. One of the NGOs is Borneo Research Institute (BRIMAS) which was established in July 1993. BRIMAS was formed in response to the appalling situation faced by the indigenous Dayak communities and concerns about their native customary rights, resources, environment and development taking place on their traditional lands. Since its inception, BRIMAS has been working actively with the indigenous communities who face massive problems related to unwanted development on their land. To help achieve its cause, BRIMAS teams up with other environmental NGOs in Malaysia which unite under a loose coalition known as Malaysian Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (MENGOS).

THE COASTAL MALAYS OF SOUTHWEST SARAWAK

A Case Study of the Muslim *Bumiputera's* Political Domination

INTRODUCTION

To better comprehend the state's strategies in dominating the Muslim *bumiputera*, this chapter presents a micro analysis of the state's domination based on the study of the coastal Malays in southwest Sarawak.¹ In analysing the domination of the southwest Sarawak Malays, this chapter begins by giving a brief description of the community. Through this description, an understanding of the local context that shaped the coastal Malays' loyalty to the state can be achieved. To validate the state's domination of the coastal Malays, this chapter then discusses the voting trend of the community who had strongly backed the ruling party despite its apparent marginalization. Subsequently, an analysis of the strongman-politician's three-pronged strategies in dominating the coastal Malays and the community's response towards this domination will be discussed.

THE COASTAL MALAYS OF SOUTHWEST SARAWAK

Southwest Sarawak constitutes the northern region of "Old Sarawak" which is now the First Division or also known as Kuching Division. On the west

FIGURE 7.1
Southwest Sarawak



of southwest Sarawak is the border between Indonesia Borneo and Sarawak, which runs along the ridge of the most westerly point of Borneo, Tanjung Datu (see Figure 7.1). Moving eastward from Tanjung Datu, southwest Sarawak stretches for nearly 100 miles of coastline until it reaches another cape known as Tanjung Po, located at the mouth of Sarawak River. Southwest Sarawak had been a zone of intense human activity since more than one thousand years ago (Harrison 1970, p. 118). Based on the excavations by Sarawak Museum in Tanjung Datu (five archaeological sites) and Muara Tebas (four sites) in 1950, there is substantial archaeological evidence to suggest that human activity in southwest Sarawak was at its peak between the eighth and fourteenth century (Bongkissam in Santubong) (Harrison 1970, p. 118).

During the colonial period especially the British's rule, the Malay population in southwest Sarawak increased significantly, transforming the region into a Malay land. This trend continues to persist when the independent *negeri* of Sarawak moves into the new millennium under the rule of the Muslim Melanau strongmen-politicians. Despite the overall growth of the Malay population in southwest Sarawak, some Malay kampongs experienced a slower growth rate compared to other Malay kampongs. In 1960, Bako was the most populated kampong in southwest Sarawak, and it continued to maintain that status after more than forty years. The second most populated kampong in 1960 was Santubong but it became only the seventh largest in 2000 mainly due to its low population growth rate and the migration of its populace to

other parts of Sarawak, particularly to Kuching city. Among the kampongs in southwest Sarawak, Sejingkat recorded the highest population increase from only 110 residents in 1960 to 1,685 residents in 2000, representing a staggering increase of 1,431 per cent. Being one of the nearest kampongs to the Kuching city, Sejingkat becomes a strategic place for people outside of Kuching to live while working in the city. Furthermore, its strategic location within the Demak Jaya Industrial Park also induced the “outside” Malays who work in various factories within this industrial zone to make Sejingkat their homes. This phenomenon triggered a tremendous population growth in Sejingkat compared to other Malay kampongs in southwest Sarawak. However, the two most isolated kampongs in this region, Telok Melano and Teluk Serabang, recorded the smallest number of population mainly because of their poor accessibility and lack of infrastructure. In fact, the two kampongs were once faced with the prospect of literally being wiped out during the Confrontation period in the early 1960s. Being borderland communities, Telok Melano and Teluk Serabang were very vulnerable to the threat of Indonesian soldiers and this vulnerability became real when the Indonesian forces invaded the two kampongs and killed three locals in 1963 (Ishikawa 1998, p. 132). This incident forced the government to issue an evacuation order to the villagers who then moved to Sematan, Lundu and Kuching upon their eviction. As a result, Telok Melano and Teluk Serabang were deserted for five years. After the peace agreement was signed between Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur in 1967, the villagers from Telok Melano and Teluk Serabang were allowed to return home in the following year. Some of them returned home but others decided otherwise which led to the sharp decline of the population in the two affected kampongs. Kampong Telaga Air, on the other hand, is the most recently established Malay settlement in southwest Sarawak, opened up only in the early 1980s. The emergence of Telaga Air was the result of the government’s initiative to relocate several small Malay kampongs (such as Kampong Sibu Laut, Pulau Salak, Pasir Pandak and Pasir Panjang) scattered across the central region of southwest Sarawak to one locality so that they could be easily administered.

Apart from the Malays, the Chinese has a strong presence in southwest Sarawak especially within the east-side of the region. As mentioned earlier, the Chinese population in southwest Sarawak has been in existence since the Brooke’s rule, especially during the reign of Charles Brooke. In fact, in some Malay kampongs such as Muara Tebas, the Chinese immigrants settled there even before the arrival of Malay settlers from Saribas. Based on the 2000 census, the Chinese population in southwest Sarawak totalled to 522 people or 3.5 per

cent of the total population (Kampong Bako and Kampong Buntal are the two Malay kampongs with the highest Chinese population standing at 155 and 114 respectively) (see Table 7.1). Most of the Chinese in southwest Sarawak traditionally worked as farmers but subsequently they earned their livings as shopkeepers, traders and seafood restaurant operators. The relationship between the Malays and their Chinese neighbours is generally cordial and fits well into Furnivall's concept of plural society. In some kampongs such as Sejingkat, Santubong and Buntal, the grocery stores, coffee shops or seafood restaurants operated by the local Chinese act as a meeting point between the local Chinese and their Malay neighbours. In Kampong Buntal, for example, several seafood restaurants operated by local Chinese businessmen offer job opportunities especially to Malay women who work there as waitresses. However, in other kampongs where the Chinese do not run any form of business, there is little opportunity for socialization or contact between these two ethnic groups. In most of the Malay kampongs in southwest Sarawak, the Chinese houses are grouped together normally at the periphery of the kampong except for the Chinese shopkeepers who normally build their premises at the heart of the kampong.

Traditionally, Sarawak Malays are known as coastal and riverine dwellers whose main subsistence activities were trading and fishing. Some of the Malay traders, known as *nakhodas*, became so powerful that they were able to dominate the Malay community and the natives prior to the arrival of James Brooke. However, the economic prowess of the Malays was crushed by the Brookes as a strategy to fortify their strength and position in colonial Sarawak. As a result, the Malays depended on fishing as their main source of livelihood. In the 1960s, fishing remained as the coastal Malays' main economic denominator with 42 per cent of them involved in direct aquatic activities (fishing) and another 4 per cent involved in indirect aquatic activities (making fishing nets and boats). However, among the eight Malay kampongs studied by Harrisson (1970), only Muara Tebas was considered a predominantly fishing community where 71 per cent of the villagers worked in aquatic-related activities. In two other fishing kampongs, namely Buntal and Bako, less than 31 per cent of the population was involved in aquatic activities, meanwhile in other Malay kampongs such as Telok Melano, Teluk Serabang, Sematan, Santubong and Pasir Pandak, most of the villagers worked in land related activities, such as rubber plantation, carpentry, rice plantation, fruits and vegetable plantation, swamp related activities (collecting firewood, making nipah-roof and rattan) and collecting jungle produce. Although most of the coastal Malays was involved in aquatic activities, they also engaged

TABLE 7.1
Population in Southwest Sarawak by Ethnic Groups, 1960 and 2000

Kampung	1960	2000							
		Total	Total	Malaysian Citizen					Non-Malaysian Citizen
				Malay	Melanau	Chinese	Bidayuh	Iban	
Telok Melano/Teluk Serabang	147	301	272	0	1	6	0	5	17
Trusan Jaya/Tanah Hitam	526	1,601	1,426	24	22	25	39	3	62
Sampadi	355	518	481	0	28	5	2	1	1
Telaga Air	-	1,498	1,433	12	22	11	11	0	9
Sibu Laut/Santin	205	320	281	0	39	0	0	0	0
Pulau Salak	163	477	468	0	3	1	4	1	0
Pasir Pandak/Pasir Panjang	391	697	641	0	27	10	9	1	9
Santubong	1,062	1,325	1,227	11	32	2	41	4	8
Buntal	963	2,371	2,221	2	114	6	17	7	5
Bako	1,649	2,690	2,458	4	155	25	24	5	19
Muara Tebas	552	1,380	1,282	5	48	1	14	9	21
Sejingkat	110	1,685	1,602	0	31	3	34	2	13
Total	6,123	14,863	13,792	58	522	95	195	38	164
%	—	100.0	92.8	0.4	3.5	0.6	1.3	0.3	1.1

Sources: Harrison (1970, p. 57) and Department of Statistics Malaysia, Sarawak (2003).

in a wide range of land activities, for cash or for their own consumption (Harrison 1970, p. 340). Thus, it would be misleading to perceive the “fishing community” in southwest Sarawak to be exclusively involved in fishing activities (as in the case of Raymond Firth’s study of Malay fishermen in Kelantan), except for Bako.²

However, the economic activity of Sarawak Malays had changed tremendously since the last three decades. In 1970, about 52 per cent of the Malays were working in the primary sector, particularly fishing, but this figure declined to only about 16 per cent in 2000. As a result of rapid progress in the education sector, more and more Malays are working in the secondary and tertiary sectors. In 2000, about 21 per cent of the Malays worked in the professional and managerial sectors, 16.1 per cent in the service sector, 10.6 per cent in the manufacturing sector and 9.6 per cent in the clerical sector. However, this structural change is not taking place among the Malays in southwest Sarawak. After more than forty years, 35.9 per cent of the Malays in this region still relied on fishing as their main source of livelihood except for Telok Melano and Teluk Serabang which have been traditionally known as farming communities. In Pulau Salak, for example, more than 85 per cent of its labour force still worked as fishermen. Apart from the continued importance of fishing as the main economic denominator of southwest Sarawak Malays, the employment structure of this community had diversified with many Malays employed as labourers (11.8 per cent), factory workers (6.3 per cent), shopkeepers and hawkers (5.8 per cent), farmers (4.3 per cent), administrators (4 per cent), drivers (3.3 per cent), clerical workers (3.3 per cent), teachers (3.3 per cent), service workers (2 per cent), technicians (1.4 per cent), hotel and resort workers (1.3 per cent), soldiers and policemen (1.1 per cent), construction workers (1 per cent) and boatmen (0.3 per cent) (see Table 7.2). All of these “new” occupations are generated from the secondary sector which in southwest Sarawak usually entailed low working skills, meagre income and a high degree of volatility. Only a small number (7.4 per cent) of the coastal Malays were employed in highly paid professions such as administrators (4 per cent), teachers (3.3 per cent) and professionals (0.1 per cent).

Although most of the coastal Malays in southwest Sarawak still relied on fishing as their main source of income, there were several kampongs which had experienced a tremendous level of change in terms of their employment structure. Among the most affected kampongs were Sejingkat, Muara Tebas and Bako, all located within the Demak Jaya Industrial Park. Sejingkat was initially known as a *nipah*-roof producing community mainly because of its topography where *nipah* was in abundance in the area.³ However, with the

TABLE 7.2
Occupation of the Coastal Malays in Southwest Sarawak, 2003

Fishermen	13.9	22.2	47.5	43.3	59.1	34.2	47.1	85.7	25.5	28.1	31.1	30.8	38.2	29.6	35.9
Laborers	0.0	0.0	10.0	6.7	4.5	7.9	5.9	0.0	18.2	15.6	13.3	20.0	14.5	13.9	11.8
Factory workers	0.0	0.0	2.5	13.3	4.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.4	5.2	5.8	7.7	18.2	7.0	6.3
Shopkeepers, hawkers	2.8	33.3	0.0	10.0	4.5	21.1	11.8	0.0	5.5	8.3	3.7	3.1	3.6	3.5	5.8
Agricultural workers	52.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.1	0.0	11.8	0.0	3.6	1.0	1.5	0.0	5.5	0.9	4.3
Administrators	0.0	0.0	5.0	3.3	2.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.6	2.1	8.9	1.5	0.0	8.7	4.0
Drivers	8.3	0.0	7.5	0.0	4.5	2.6	0.0	0.0	3.6	2.1	3.7	3.1	3.6	3.5	3.3
Clerical workers	11.1	11.1	0.0	3.3	2.3	5.3	0.0	5.7	0.0	1.0	3.7	1.5	3.6	4.3	3.3
Teachers	2.8	11.1	0.0	0.0	2.3	2.6	0.0	0.0	7.3	3.1	4.4	4.6	0.0	5.2	3.3
Service workers	0.0	11.1	5.0	0.0	2.3	2.6	5.9	0.0	3.6	0.0	3.0	0.0	1.8	2.6	2.0
Technicians	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.6	0.0	0.0	3.6	2.1	1.5	3.1	0.0	1.7	1.4
Hotel/resort workers	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	1.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	3.5	1.3
Soldiers and policemen	2.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	4.2	0.0	4.6	0.0	0.0	1.1
Construction workers	0.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.1	0.7	3.1	0.0	0.9	1.0
Boatmen	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.3
Professionals	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.1
Others	0.0	0.0	10.0	10.0	4.5	2.6	11.8	5.7	7.3	8.3	6.7	7.7	7.3	5.2	6.6
Unemployed	5.6	11.1	7.5	10.0	0.0	18.4	5.9	2.9	9.1	14.6	8.9	7.7	1.8	9.6	8.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Survey data 2003.

opening up of Demak Jaya Industrial Park, a significant part of the land in the area was cleared to make way for the construction of factories, roads and other physical infrastructures. Thus, the people of Sejingkat were forced to leave behind their traditional occupation and had to seek alternative employment in the industrial sector. In 2003, about 7 per cent of the population in Sejingkat worked in the manufacturing sector, making it the third largest occupation in the kampong after fishing and labour intensive work. Apart from Sejingkat, the people of Muara Tebas had also seen significant changes in terms of the kampong's employment structure. In 1960, 70 per cent of the population in Muara Tebas was involved in fishing but this figure declined to only 38.2 per cent in 2003. As in the case of Sejingkat, a significant number of the villagers in Muara Tebas (18.2 per cent) ended up working in the manufacturing sector, making it the second most popular economic activity in the kampong after fishing.

Since the structure of employment in southwest Sarawak remained almost the same, the economic well-being of the coastal Malays remained almost unchanged with a significant number of them living in poverty. In 2003, about 32.6 per cent of the coastal Malay households (consisting of five family members) were earning less than RM500 a month, while 34.1 per cent earned between RM501 to RM1,000 a month (see Table 7.3).⁴ Surprisingly, the level of poverty among the coastal Malays of southwest Sarawak exceeded Sarawak's incidence of poverty in 2000 which stood at 6.7 per cent (Malaysia 2001, p. 143). Among the fourteen Malay kampongs in southwest Sarawak, Salak was the worst off where all the families in the kampong earned less than RM1,000 a month, with about 80 per cent of them living below the official poverty line. Besides Salak, other kampongs such as Santubong, Trusan Jaya, Tanah Hitam and Bako also recorded a significant number of poor households. Only 33.2 per cent of the coastal Malays in southwest Sarawak earned more than RM1,000 a month, with 15.1 per cent earning between RM1,001 to RM1,500 a month, while 6.1 per cent earned between RM1,501 to RM2,000 a month and 12 per cent earned more than RM2,000 a month. Although Sarawak recorded per capita GDP of RM12,755 in 2000, majority of the coastal Malay households in southwest Sarawak were still earning less than RM1,000 a month. Despite the state-led modernization in southwest Sarawak, it still failed to significantly improve the standard of living of the coastal Malays. The economic backwardness of this community presents a more fragmented picture of the Malays as compared to the one painted by Berma (2005, pp. 228–32). Akin to the Dayak community, there is much disparity among Sarawak Malays as evident from the survey in southwest Sarawak.

TABLE 7.3
Household Income of the Coastal Malays in Southwest Sarawak, 2003

	None	RM100 and below	RM101– 500	RM501– 1000	RM1001– 1500	RM1501– 2000	RM2000 and above
Telok Melano	2.8	0.0	25.0	30.6	5.6	8.3	27.8
Teluk Serabang	0.0	0.0	11.1	11.1	0.0	55.6	22.2
Trusan Jaya	0.0	0.0	47.5	30.0	20.0	0.0	2.5
Tanah Hitam	0.0	0.0	46.7	26.7	13.3	6.7	6.7
Sampadi	0.0	0.0	34.1	43.2	15.9	2.3	4.5
Telaga Air	5.3	0.0	13.2	31.6	15.8	18.4	15.8
Sibu Laut	0.0	5.9	23.5	35.3	17.6	11.8	5.9
Pulau Salak	0.0	0.0	82.9	17.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pasir Pandak	9.1	1.8	12.7	21.8	18.2	7.3	29.1
Santubong	34.4	1.0	19.8	31.3	6.3	2.1	5.2
Buntal	0.7	0.0	17.0	41.5	20.0	6.7	14.1
Bako	7.7	0.0	35.4	30.8	9.2	6.2	10.8
Muara Tebas	0.0	0.0	12.7	49.1	21.8	3.6	12.7
Sejingkat	0.9	0.0	18.3	39.1	22.6	5.2	13.9
Total	6.0	0.4	26.3	34.1	15.1	6.1	12.0

Source: Survey data 2003.

As argued by Ishikawa (1998), the process of state formation did not help to incorporate the majority of the coastal Malays into the modern state economy; many therefore had no choice but to continue their traditional way of livelihood, fishing and farming. The argument pursued by Ishikawa is not only relevant in the context of the farming community in Telok Melano but it can also be observed throughout the Malay kampongs in southwest Sarawak. The fact that fishing is still the main economic denominator among the coastal Malays demonstrates that the state-led development in southwest Sarawak has failed to uplift the standard of living of the Malays despite the *negeri's* considerable economic growth: its GDP (at factor cost) grew from RM438 million in 1961 to RM17,522 million in 2000 (in constant 1987 prices). Despite this impressive economic growth, the coastal Malays in southwest Sarawak have not fully integrated into the mainstream economic development, hence hindering real change from taking place.

After discussing at length the socio-economic characteristics of the coastal Malays and the pace of change taking place in southwest Sarawak, let us turn our discussion on the political culture of the community, in particular

their voting behaviour. One of the most intriguing questions that will be addressed in the following section is whether the coastal Malays economic backwardness has any bearing on the way they vote? Do the coastal Malays support the ruling party although it fails to bring substantial development to the Malay kampongs? By addressing these questions, we will be able to better comprehend the coastal Malays' voting behaviour which is imperative in understanding the level of state's domination of the community.

THE VOTING TREND OF THE COASTAL MALAYS

The coastal Malay kampongs in southwest Sarawak fall under three *negeri* seats, namely Tanjung Datu, Pantai Damai and Demak Laut.⁵ Prior to the delimitation exercise in 2005, the *negeri* seat of Tanjung Datu was categorized as a mixed seat, with an almost equal number of Malay (33.8 per cent) and Bidayuh (32 per cent) voters. However, after the delimitation exercise in 2005, the Bidayuh voters in Tanjung Datu were removed and a new seat, known as Opar, was created for them. At present, Tanjung Datu is a Muslim *bumiputera* seat (51.21 per cent Malay voters) with the Chinese (20.97 per cent), the Bidayuhs (14.56 per cent) and the Ibans (13.26 per cent) making up the rest of the voters. Pantai Damai, located at the centre of southwest Sarawak, is a predominantly Muslim *bumiputera* seat (95.7 per cent Malay voters) with a small number of Chinese (3.06 per cent) and Iban (1.17 per cent) voters. Initially Pantai Damai was known as Semariang but it was later changed to Petra Jaya after the 1977 delimitation exercise and finally to Pantai Damai after the 1987 delimitation exercise. Prior to 1977, the number of Malay voters in Pantai Damai was only 75.1 per cent but after two delimitation exercises, the percentage of Malay voters increased significantly, reaching 95.7 per cent of the total population in 2006. Another predominantly Muslim *bumiputera* seat in southwest Sarawak is Demak Laut which was created after the 1987 delimitation exercise. Initially, Demak Laut was known as Sejingkat but after the delimitation exercise in 1996, its name was changed to Demak Laut.

In 1970, Tanjung Datu which was known as Lundu at that time (until the delimitation exercise in 1987) saw a six-cornered fight between the Alliance, Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), Sarawak National Party (SNAP), Parti Pesaka Anak Sarawak (PESAKA) and two Independent candidates. The Alliance represented by Suud bin Udin from the Bumiputera party lost the seat when he only polled 22.89 per cent votes against Chong Kim Mook from SUPP who garnered 28.66 per cent votes. Voting, at that time, was highly influenced by ethnic factor with the Malays mostly voting for the

Bumiputera party, while the Dayaks split their votes between SNAP and PESAKA, and the Chinese voted for SUPP. When SUPP was co-opted into the ruling party after the 1970 election, Tanjung Datu remained as the Chinese dominated party's seat. The support for SUPP in Tanjung Datu increased significantly after joining BN when Chong Kim Mook increased his popular vote to 59.8 per cent in the 1974 election. However, Chong Kim Mook was almost defeated in the 1979 election by an unknown Independent candidate, Mohd Shamsudin Mokhtar, who managed to poll 2,854 votes against the incumbent from SUPP who polled 41.21 per cent votes.⁶ PBB was accused of backing Mohd Shamsudin because the relationship between Rahman Yakub and SUPP was becoming fragile at that time (Chin 1997, p. 166). Rahman, however, denied this allegation. Realizing the dwindling influence of Chong Kim Mook, SUPP replaced the Tanjung Datu incumbent with Ramsay Jitam in the subsequent 1983 election.⁷ Consequently, Ramsay increased the BN's popularity among the electorate in Tanjung Datu except in the 1991 election when he suffered a marginal decline in popular vote.⁸

In fact, when Ramsay was challenged by Noor Tahir from PERMAS in 1987, the former not only managed to retain his seat but also increased his popular vote against the formidable opposition leader who was tipped to become the new Sarawak Chief Minister.⁹ Ramsay continued to dominate the Tanjung Datu seat in the subsequent 1991 and 1996 elections by polling 52.1 per cent and 68.5 per cent votes respectively. After serving the Tanjung Datu constituents for four terms, Ramsay decided not to defend his seat for a fifth consecutive time, allowing a new face from SUPP to replace him. In the 2001 election, Tanjung Datu saw a five-cornered fight between SUPP (BN), Keadilan, DAP and two Independent candidates. With a new face in its line-up, SUPP comfortably defended the Tanjung Datu seat by polling 76.5 per cent votes, forcing all the opposition candidates to lose their deposits.¹⁰ After the delimitation exercise in 2005, Tanjung Datu was further divided into two seats, namely Opar and Tanjung Datu. With this delimitation exercise, Opar became a Bidayuh majority seat, while Tanjung Datu became a Muslim *bumiputera* seat. With the creation of Tanjung Datu, PBB was able to take back the seat from SUPP. In the subsequent 2006 election, PBB nominated its senior vice-president, Adenan Satem, as its candidate in Tanjung Datu. Adenan successfully increased the percentage votes received by BN in Tanjung Datu when he polled 91.1 per cent votes, while Sobey Daud from PKR garnered 8.2 per cent votes. Another candidate, Larry Dominic Linang (Independent), only secured a meagre 0.7 per cent votes. Clearly, the coastal Malays in Tanjung Datu were considered strong supporters of the ruling party, which was evident from Adenan Satem's thumping victory in Tanjung Datu.

Only after Tanjung Datu became a Muslim *bumiputera* seat in 2006 did the ruling party record a percentage vote higher than the average percentage votes received by the ruling party in the other Muslim *bumiputera* seats. This is a manifestation of the ruling party's appeal among the coastal Malays not only in Tanjung Datu but throughout southwest Sarawak.

The ruling party's dominance over the coastal Malays is more revealing in the two predominantly Muslim *bumiputera* seats in southwest Sarawak namely Pantai Damai and Demak Laut. In Pantai Damai, BN initially recorded a winning percentage which was higher than the average popular vote received by the party in all the Muslim *bumiputera* seats but it gradually declined in the 2001 and 2006 elections. In the 1970 election, Ajibah Abol from the Bumiputera party comfortably secured the Pantai Damai seat for the ruling party by polling 54.5 per cent votes which was markedly higher than the average votes (47.3 per cent) received by the Bumiputera party in the Muslim *bumiputera* seats throughout Sarawak¹¹. In the subsequent 1974 and 1979 elections, PBB gradually increased its popular vote to a record 78.8 per cent and 79 per cent respectively (again significantly higher than the average votes received by PBB in all the Muslim *bumiputera* seats). There was a slight decline in the BN's popular vote in 1983 due to a three cornered fight in Pantai Damai (known as Semariang then). In that election, Hafsah Harun who replaced Ajibah Abol due to her sudden death on 14 June 1976 was challenged by an Independent candidate, Mohd Fauzi Bolhassan, and Eden Abdullah from BERSATU. Although the BN's popular vote declined in the 1983 election, its candidate managed to increase the party's winning majority from 4,540 votes in 1979 to 4,842 votes in 1983.¹² During Rahman Yakub's administration, the popular vote received by BN in Pantai Damai increased steadily from 54.5 per cent in 1970 to 79 per cent in 1979. However, during Taib Mahmud's tenure as the Chief Minister, the BN's percentage votes declined from 79 per cent in 1979 to 63.1 per cent in 2006. The decline started from the 1987 election when the incumbent, Hafsah Harun, left PBB and contested the seat as an opposition candidate, PERMAS. Hafsah Harun who polled 2,696 votes was defeated by another woman candidate from PBB, Sharifah Mordiah, who polled 6,006 votes. Although Hafsah Harun was a highly respected leader, the majority of the Malay electorate (69.01 per cent) voted for the ruling party instead of the popular opposition candidate.

The declining support of the Malay electorate in Pantai Damai is in contrast to the overall voting trend of the Muslim *bumiputera* electorate in Sarawak which had been increasingly supportive of the ruling party. In the 2001 election, however, the ruling party managed to win back some of the opposition votes, albeit with a reduced number of popular vote. In this

election, PBB was represented by Dr Abdul Rahman Junaidi who replaced the incumbent, Sharifah Mordiah, who contested in another Muslim Bumiputera seat, Semariang. It was widely speculated that the switch was made due to Sharifah's declining popularity in Pantai Damai. By fielding a new face, BN maintained its dominance in Pantai Damai although the ruling party's popular vote continued to decline. In the 2001 election, Dr Abdul Rahman Junaidi polled 6,072 votes against Husaini Hamdan from Keadilan who secured 2,757 votes and Norita Azmi, an Independent, who received 280 votes. The declining support of the electorate in Pantai Damai towards the ruling party continued to persist in the 2006 election when its candidate, Dr Abdul Rahman Junaidi, only managed to secure 5,217 votes or 63.1 per cent of the popular vote against Idris Bohari from PKR who polled an impressive 3,053 votes. Pantai Damai had seen a contrasting fortune for the ruling party when its popularity increased significantly during Rahman's administration (1970–79) but it gradually dropped during Taib's rule (1983–2006). Despite the BN's volatile performance in Pantai Damai, majority of the coastal Malays in this constituency strongly backed the ruling party despite constant contestation by the opposition forces.

Demak Laut is another BN's stronghold in Sarawak as evident from the ruling party's continued dominance of the rural seat from its inception in 1991. In the first contested election in Demak Laut (then known as Sejingkat), a new face from PBB, Dr Abang Draup Abang Zen, won comfortably by polling 77.46 per cent votes against an Independent candidate, Baharuddin Mokhsen, who polled 21.69 per cent votes while another opposition candidate, Suhaili Mumin, from NEGARA garnered 0.85 per cent votes. After the 1991 election, BN continued to increase its popularity in Demak Laut when it polled 90.52 per cent votes in the 1996 election.¹³ However, in 2001, there was a significant decline in the BN's popular vote in Demak Laut, particularly due to the electorate dissatisfaction towards the government's failure to issue land titles to them and their fear of being relocated from their traditional homes in order to give way for development. This issue was swiftly exploited by Keadilan in the 1999 election where the opposition party almost defeated the BN candidate in the Santubong parliamentary seat which comprised of Pantai Damai and Demak Laut. In the 2001 election, Dr Abang Draup retained his seat, albeit with a reduced winning margin. The incumbent from PBB polled 4,974 votes against Ahmad Lukman Aba from Keadilan who secured 1,129 votes, while another opposition candidate, Dr Abang Yusof Abang Abdul Razak (Independent), only managed to secure 886 votes. After being jolted by Keadilan in 2001, BN regained its footing in Demak Laut by increasing its popular vote from 71.1 per cent in 2001

to 77.4 per cent in 2006. Defending his seat for the fourth term, Dr Draup managed to secure 5,094 votes against Saidan Sahini from PKR who only polled 1,489 votes. Compared to the BN's performance in Pantai Damai, the ruling party's popularity in Demak Laut had been erratic as evident from the party's increased (1996), decreased (2001) and again increased (2006) popular vote. Despite this fluctuating performance, one should not overlook the BN's strong dominance in this predominantly Malay seat which had seen the ruling party recorded more than 70 per cent popular vote in every election it contested since 1991.

Based on the analysis of the voting trend in Tanjung Datu, Pantai Damai and Demak Laut, it is evident that the coastal Malays in southwest Sarawak were more inclined to support the ruling party albeit some volatility in terms of their support. The voting trend of the coastal Malays proves that the state had a strong degree of dominance over the community despite being economically backward compared to the rest of the community in Sarawak. Equally evident is the BN's strong popularity among the coastal Malays (and also the Muslim *bumiputera* electorate in general) compared to the Chinese and non-Muslim *bumiputera* electorate (the constantly higher percentage of popular vote received by BN in Tanjung Datu, Pantai Damai, Demak Laut and the rest of the Muslim *bumiputera* seats compared to the ruling party's overall popular vote in Sarawak duly illustrates this point — see Table 7.4).

TABLE 7.4
Percentage of Popular Vote Received by BN in Three *Negeri* Seats in Southwest Sarawak, 1970–2006

Election Year	Tanjung Datu	Pantai Damai	Demak Laut	Overall Popular Vote Received by PBB in the Muslim Bumiputera Seats	Overall Popular Vote Received by BN
1970	22.89	54.5	—	47.3	39.12
1974	59.8	78.8	—	70.3	55.35
1979	41.3	79.0	—	77.23	61.23
1983	55.2	77.15	—	67.62	68.51
1987	57.9	69.01	—	59.48	55.24
1991	52.1	uncontested	77.46	74.46	62.75
1996	68.5	uncontested	90.52	77.72	66.62
2001	76.5	66.48	71.06	77.04	71.17
2006	91.1	63.1	77.4	75.28	62.95

Sources: Adapted from *Borneo Post* (21 May 2006), Election Commission Malaysia (1975, pp. 123–31; 1985, pp. 36–42; 1988, pp. 40–45; 1993, pp. 67–68; 1999, pp. 92–111; 2004, pp. 85–97), and Leigh (1974, pp. 206–12).

The political loyalty of the coastal Malays evokes an intriguing question on the role of the Malaysian regime in generating a great sense of compliance among this community. Since the previous four chapters have compellingly argued for the effectiveness of the politics of accommodation adopted by the central state in dominating Sarawak's society in particular the Muslim *bumiputera*, the following part of this chapter attempts to explain the coastal Malays' political "loyalty" by applying the same analysis.

DOMINATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

At the local level, the state's domination of Sarawak's society is also dictated by Muslim Melanau strongmen-politicians who aim to strengthen their power and influence not only in government but also among the local populace. In striving to achieve domination, strongmen-politicians relied on the politics of accommodation which hinges on three strategies; the buying of votes through "development politics", the consolidation of the Muslim *bumiputera* through Islam and the penetration of the community through the civil service. These strategies proved to be effective in cajoling the coastal Malays in southwest Sarawak despite the marginalization of the community.

Vote-buying through "Development Politics"

In the central region of southwest Sarawak which comprises of Sempadi, Pulau Salak, Pasir Pandak, Santubong and Buntal, the ruling government had transformed this region into one of the *negeri*'s main tourist destinations by opening up three huge beach resorts (two of them owned by the *negeri* government through the State Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) while another one owned by a local businessman who is closely linked to the *negeri* leaders) and a cultural park (owned by the SEDC). These grand projects were supposed to provide employment to the local communities but only 3 per cent of the labour force in Buntal was employed in the tourism industry. The participation of the people in Pasir Pandak and Santubong was even lower at 1.8 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. Even more striking, the other two Malay kampongs in the central region of southwest Sarawak, Sempadi and Pulau Salak, were totally marginalized from the state-sponsored projects. The only substantial benefit that the local communities received from the tourism projects was access to better physical infrastructures such as roads and bridges. Meanwhile, in the eastern region of southwest Sarawak which comprises of Bako, Muara Tebas and Sejingkat, the government had transformed this rural

area into an industrial zone known as Demak Laut Industrial Park in 1988. However, the elevation of the eastern region of southwest Sarawak into an industrial park had failed to generate structural change to the socio-economic well-being of the coastal Malays. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the Malays in Bako, Muara Tebas and Sejingkat remained dependent on their traditional occupation with only a small number of them found employment in the manufacturing industries located within the locality. Compared to the central and eastern region of southwest Sarawak, the western region which consists of Telok Melano, Teluk Serabang, Trusan Jaya and Tanah Hitam had no niche economic activity, despite the existence of tourism and manufacturing related industries in the area. Still, the government built a road network from Kuching to Sematan as a mean to link the most isolated region in southwest Sarawak to Kuching city.

At the kampong level, the types of development projects that had been carried out in southwest Sarawak were mostly social and infrastructural projects funded by both central and *negeri* governments. Among the development projects, the most widely provided were mosques or *suraus* with 98.3 per cent of the Malay kampongs in southwest Sarawak having this facility. Mosque or *surau* is not only a place of worship for the Malay community but also acts as a medium to nurture Muslim unity. Apart from mosques and *suraus*, other types of development projects being widely provided by the government were kindergartens and community halls which could be seen in more than 80 per cent of the Malay kampongs in southwest Sarawak. Almost all the kindergartens were sponsored by the state; KEMAS kindergartens run by the central government while SeDidik Kindergartens run by the *negeri* government. Community halls were also a common sight in the Malay kampongs, providing the community with a place to socialize through various activities (sports, wedding ceremonies) and also a place to meet their elected representatives and other political leaders.

The establishment of mosques, *suraus*, kindergartens and community halls is actually part of the state's strategy to bolster its presence within the community at the grassroots level. Although mosques and *suraus* are administered by the local communities, they are controlled by Jabatan Agama Islam Sarawak (JAIS) which pays the allowance of *imam* and Tuk Siak and also controls the content of the Friday sermons. Other than JAIS, Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) also plays an important role in dictating the type of activities being carried out in these religious institutions and also the notion of Islam being propagated by them. During the 2006 election, for example, religious officials from JAKIM visited various mosques and *suraus*

within the coastal Malay kampongs in order to disseminate the fundamental ideas of Islam Hadhari and the importance of Muslim unity which were both important tenets of the ruling party. Although JAKIM officials refrained themselves from directly campaigning for the ruling party, the message that they tried to impart on the Muslim congregation and the timing of their “tour” clearly explained their hidden agenda. Apart from the intrusion of JAIS and JAKIM, the mosques and suraus within the Malay communities also unfortunately become an ideal place for Muslim *bumiputera* politicians to campaign during the elections although there is a directive made by the EC not to campaign in places of worship. The state-sponsored kindergartens also play an important role in the state’s effort to penetrate society at the grassroots level. They do not only provide pre-school education to the children in the Malay kampongs but more importantly they provide an opportunity for the community, especially the kampong women, to be involved in various state-sponsored projects. This community project indirectly helps to bind the kampong folks together under the patronage of the state. Other form of development brought by the state in southwest Sarawak were basic infrastructure projects such as treated water and electricity supplies, schools, community clinics, community libraries, public phone and recreational parks. These facilities could in some degree uplift the living condition of the coastal Malays but they seemed to fall short in generating structural change within the community. Apart from the proliferation of “cosmetic” development, the ruling party’s policy of politicizing development had also resulted in the inequitable distribution of development projects. In the case of southwest Sarawak, five Malay kampongs did not even have electricity and treated water supplies, depriving them from having access to two essential things in life. With Malaysia moving closer towards achieving the status of a developed nation in 2020, the failure of state leaders to provide basic facilities such as electricity and water supplies to the very people who elevated them to the corridor of power is considered unacceptable.

The slow pace of development in southwest Sarawak is mainly due to the ruling party’s manipulation of development as a tool to dominate the electorate and build networks of clients. Without a doubt, this political strategy had brought some level of development in southwest Sarawak but they were merely “cosmetic” because of their inability to structurally change the socio-economic character of the people. On top of that, the politicization of development would only lead to an inefficient use of public fund because development projects were being dished out indiscriminately without proper planning and clear direction. Between the 1978 and 2006 elections, various development projects had been promised and distributed by the ruling party

in southwest Sarawak, involving at least 103 projects worth RM46.76 million (see Table 7.5). Among the projects were the construction of roads and bridges, schools, mosques and *suraus*, low cost housing, new government buildings, community halls and new agricultural schemes. Apart from development projects, the ruling party also dished out other electoral “goodies” such as horse-power-in-board engines, fishing nets and fishing licences.

TABLE 7.5
Development Projects and Financial Grants Promised or Distributed by the
BN leaders to Southwest Sarawak Malays during the Elections, 1978–2006

Development Projects/Financial Grants	Year	Number of Projects/ Grants	Cost (RM million)
1. The Deputy Federal Minister of Health, Dr Sulaiman Daud, announced the government plan to build a RM1 million polyclinic on a three acre site along the Petra Jaya-Bako Road, Kuching	1978	1	1
2. The Chief Minister of Sarawak, Datuk Patinggi Abdul Rahman Yakub, handed over certificates of ownership of 14 horse-power in-board engines worth about \$14,000 each to three fishermen from Kampong Buntal, Kuching	1978	3	0.042
3. The Chief Minister of Sarawak, Datuk Patinggi Abdul Rahman Yakub, announced the government's donation of fishing nets worth about \$13,000 to 85 fishermen from Kampong Buntal, Kuching	1978	85	0.013
4. The Chief Minister of Sarawak, Datuk Patinggi Abdul Taib Mahmud, performed the earth-breaking ceremony for a \$10 million silk production center at Kampong Sebat in Sematan, Kuching	1987	1	10
5. The Chief Minister of Sarawak, Datuk Patinggi Abdul Taib Mahmud, announced the <i>negeri</i> government plan to open up 500,000 acres of land for agricultural projects in Santubong, Kuching	1990	1	undisclosed
6. The Chief Minister of Sarawak, Datuk Patinggi Abdul Taib Mahmud, laid the foundation stone for a new district office and a new community hall in Lundu, Kuching	1991	2	undisclosed

continued on next page

TABLE 7.5 — *cont'd*

Development Projects/Financial Grants	Year	Number of Projects/Grants	Cost (RM million)
7. The Chief Minister of Sarawak, Datuk Patinggi Abdul Taib Mahmud, declared open a RM8 million feeder road which linked Kampong Pasir Pandak and Kampong Pasir Panjang in the Pantai Damai area, Kuching	1995	1	8
8. The Federal Education Minister, Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud, declared open Sekolah Menengah Kerajaan Santubong and laid the foundation stone for the school's new surau	1995	2	undisclosed
9. The Minister of Social Development, Datuk Adenan Satem, laid the foundation stone for a RM6.6 million sports complex in Lundu, Kuching	1995	1	6.6
10. The Chief Minister of Sarawak, Datuk Patinggi Abdul Taib Mahmud, laid the foundation stone for the RM20 million Batang Kayan Bridge in Lundu, Kuching	1996	1	20
11. The Federal Minister of Agriculture, Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud, handed over trawler and <i>sampan</i> (boats) licenses to more than 280 fishermen from Kampong Goebilt, Kuching	1996	1	undisclosed
12. The Minister of Agriculture and Food Industries, Datuk Adenan Satem, declared open a new community hall at Kampong Muara Tebas, Kuching	1999	1	undisclosed
13. The Minister of Tourism, Datuk Abang Johari Tun Openg, performed the earth-breaking ceremony for the construction of the RM450,000 Surau Darul Salam at Kampong Rampangi Phase I, Kuching	2001	1	0.45
14. The Chief Minister of Sarawak, Datuk Patinggi Abdul Taib Mahmud, performed the earth-breaking ceremony for a medium-cost housing project at Jalan Bako, Kuching, which would be developed by the Housing Development Corporation and financed by Syarikat Perumahan Negara Bhd	2006	1	undisclosed
15. The Federal Minister of Rural and Regional Development, Datuk Seri Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin, pledged an allocation of RM650,000 from his ministry for various development projects in Demak Laut, Kuching	2006	1	0.65
Total		103	46.76

Sources: *Sarawak Tribune, Borneo Post, Eastern Times.*

The development projects pledged and distributed by the ruling party in southwest Sarawak came mainly from the *negeri* government although there were a few central state-funded projects such as schools and health clinics. Apart from the *negeri* and central state-funded projects, there were other smaller projects dished out by the MPs and *negeri* assemblymen from their respective MP and ADUN funds. Since “development politics” has been embedded in southwest Sarawak’s community, the appeal towards development and other electoral “goodies” seems to be strong among the coastal Malays. Hence, they treat election not as a mean to exercise their democratic rights in electing representatives to the Council *Negeri* and Parliament but as an opportunity to gain material benefits especially development projects. This political culture has been partly constructed by the ruling party through its “development politics” which proves to be effective in binding the coastal Malays together. To further illustrate the effects of “development politics” on the coastal Malays, our next discussion will be focused on the interplay of electoral politics in one of the Malay kampongs in southwest Sarawak, namely Pulau Salak.

Pulau Salak is located about 20 kilometres from Kuching, the capital city of Sarawak. As its name suggests, Pulau Salak is a small island just a few kilometres away from Pasir Pandak. To get there, one has to take a fifteen minutes boat ride from a jetty near the Pasir Pandak road. Most of the houses in Pulau Salak are built on stilts and situated very close to each other. These houses are cramped together near the water bank since 90 per cent of the island is made up of hilly slopes. In fact, there is a large quarry behind the kampong which is owned by Pulau Salak Quarry Sdn Bhd, a private company that has been in operation since 1996. Reported cases of debris from the quarry hitting nearby houses, along with noise and air pollution coming from the quarry resulted in the quarry being perceived as an unwelcome development in the kampong. There are about 75 households in Pulau Salak with a population of 477 of which 98 per cent are Malays. Fishing is the main economic activity for Pulau Salak folks. With most of them working as fishermen, the community in Pulau Salak is considered among the poorest in southwest Sarawak. About 83 per cent of the households in Pulau Salak were categorized as poor, while the rest (17.1 per cent) earned between RM501 to RM1,000 a month.

The pace of development in Pulau Salak is very slow. Even basic facilities such as treated water and electricity are still not available in the kampong. Prior to 1999, the people of Salak had to depend on their private generators as their source of electricity which only a small number of them could afford. In terms of water supply, the villagers have to rely either on rain or underground water. During the dry season, some villagers have to abandon their homes and seek shelter temporarily with their relatives (outside of Salak) because of

water scarcity. There is no tarred road in Salak. Instead, the houses in this kampong are connected through a network of plank walks. Apart from that, Pulau Salak does not have many facilities that are available in most other Malay kampongs in southwest Sarawak, such as, phone lines, community clinic and recreational park. Despite these shortcomings, it is misleading to suggest that Salak has been totally deprived from any development projects promised by the *negeri* leaders. Just like in other Malay kampongs in southwest Sarawak, Salak has some of the facilities essential to a rural community, such as, a mosque, a primary school, a kindergarten and a community hall. However, in comparison to the rest of the Malay kampongs in southwest Sarawak, Salak is definitely less developed, largely due to its geographical isolation. The lack of development in Salak had ignited a general feeling of dissatisfaction among the community towards the government. Based on the 2003 survey, 60 per cent of the people in Salak noted that they are not satisfied with the government performance particularly in regards to bringing development to their kampong (this figure could be higher because 17.1 per cent did not answer this question while 11.4 per cent said that they are not sure). According to the village headman, the community in Salak had requested for the supply of treated water and electricity since the 1970s but their plea had fallen on deaf ears. Due to their frustration with the government and the hardship that they had to endure, the Malays of Pulau Salak decided to take the matter into their own hands. Since the 1970 election, the electorate in Salak had “loyally” supported the ruling party even though their demand for development was not fulfilled by the BN government. But after years of accommodating the ruling party’s indifferent attitude towards them, the electorate in Salak collectively decided to use the 1999 election as a platform to express their dissatisfaction towards BN. With the consent of the village headman, the electorate in Salak strategically planned to cast their votes in order to ensure that the ruling party would not receive more than 80 per cent votes from their kampong (more than 80 per cent of Pulau Salak electorate had constantly voted for BN). In fact, the villagers worked out a plan where slightly more than 50 per cent of the villagers would vote for BN while the rest would vote for the opposition. Strategically, the electorate did not want the opposition to win in Salak, but they wanted to make sure that the BN’s victory would be marginal so as to send the ruling party a message. The people of Salak feared that by letting the opposition win in their kampong, their strategy to hold the government at ransom would backfire. Instead of getting the development projects they wanted, the government would further marginalize them. By executing this political ploy, the Salak electorate hoped that the ruling party would notice

the change in their voting behaviour, thus making the government more sensitive towards their demand for development.

In the 1999 parliamentary election, the BN candidate, Rohani Karim who contested in the parliamentary constituency of Santubong (Salak's parliamentary constituency), almost suffered a humiliating defeat in the hand of a Keadilan newcomer, Husaini Hamdan.¹⁴ Rohani managed to poll 7,955 votes against Husaini who managed to garner 6,060 votes, presenting the former with a winning majority of 1,895 votes. Keadilan's strong showing in Santubong was a surprise to many observers because the seat was considered a safe seat to BN. This perception was bolstered with the BN's ability to win the seat in 1995 with a big 9,911 vote majority. Among factors that contributed to the BN's reduced strength in the 1999 election were the opposition's strategic plan to highlight land-related issues, the general dissatisfaction of the electorate towards the lack of development in this constituency, the electorate's disappointment with the Pantai Damai's assemblywoman (Sharifah Mordiah), the strong appeal of Husaini Hamdan and the Anwar Ibrahim's factor. However, the ultimate issue in Salak was the electorate's dissatisfaction towards the level of development in their kampong, and the 1999 election presented them with an opportunity to demonstrate their disapproval of the ruling party's development policies.

Based on the 1999 election, only 51.7 per cent of the electorate in Pulau Salak voted for BN while 48.3 per cent voted for the opposition. Realizing that they had lost considerable votes in Pulau Salak, the BN leaders especially from PBB stepped up their effort in winning back Salak electorate. Thus, when PBB leaders visited Salak after the election, the villagers used this meeting as a platform to push their demand for various development projects. The villagers claimed that if the ruling party did not fulfil their demand, more voters in Salak would shift their support away from the ruling party. Fearing that BN would lose more support in Salak, the ruling party agreed to implement three new projects for the kampong, namely the construction of a community hall, the allocation of four big generators to light up the whole kampong and the construction of new plank walks (made of belian wood). Although the people of Salak did not receive the much-awaited supply of treated water, they managed to get three new development projects for their kampong. In return, the electorate promised to give back their support to the ruling party which they did in the 2001 election: 70.9 per cent of the electorate in Salak voted for BN.

The scenario in Salak demonstrates the strong appeal of development projects among the coastal Malays in southwest Sarawak. Being located within a short distance away from Kuching, the coastal Malays expect rapid pace of

development spills over to its surrounding areas including their kampongs. Thus, it is deemed unacceptable that some kampongs in southwest Sarawak such as Telok Melano, Teluk Serabang, Sampadi, Sibu Laut and Salak are still deprived from having the supply of treated water and electricity. Furthermore, the coastal Malays expect that they should not be in the backwater of Sarawak's rapid development drive, especially when the *negeri* is being led by a Muslim *bumiputera*. Thus, when the government continues to disregard the coastal Malays and fails to uphold its development promises, the electorate will not hesitate to show their displeasure by voting the opposition. According to Ismail Ali (2003) from Sejingkat,

'Kerajaan tidak pernah memberi bantuan kepada pakcik. Kerajaan hanya berjanji semasa waktu pilihan raya sahaja selepas itu tidak ada sebarang tindakan. Pada pendapat pakcik, rugi sahaja pakcik mengundi BN tetapi tidak menolong golongan seperti pakcik. Saya pernah cuba menyertai parti Keadilan kerana tidak puas hati dengan layanan kerajaan. Masa ya kamek coba-coba masuk adil bah, hati rasa manas gilak, berpuluh tahun dah mengundi BN, sik dapat apa-apa, baju pun sakit nak mintak sigek'

[The government never provides any assistance to me. They only give promises during the elections and never fulfill them. To me, it is just a waste to vote BN that never helps people like me. I tried to join the Keadilan party because of my dissatisfaction towards the government. I was angry at the government, I voted them so many times and yet they never give me anything, not even a t-shirt]

Ismail's anger is a representation of the dissenting voice among the Malays who switch their allegiance from the ruling party to Keadilan. Ismail supports Keadilan, not because of its political ideology which is based on the struggle to uphold democratic principles such as transparency, equality and justice. Instead, he supports the opposition because he is angry with the government, particularly in its failure to develop his kampong and also his livelihood. Apart from being a means to consolidate the support of the Malays towards the ruling party, development could potentially become a source of conflict among the Malay community as in the case of Salak. However, the dissenting voice within the coastal Malay is still rather small. Based on the 2003 survey, only 4.1 per cent of the coastal Malays admitted that they are not satisfied with the government's performance especially in implementing development projects in their kampongs. Most of the coastal Malays or 85 per cent of them revealed that they are strong supporters of the government, albeit a general lack of development in their kampongs.

Pulau Salak is unique because the people there were bold enough to collectively manipulate the election process as a means to exert their demand

for development from the ruling party. Being isolated from other kampongs, the sense of solidarity among the people of Salak was strong, hence they were able to turn the table against BN. Besides a sense of solidarity, the resistance put up by the voters in Salak was made possible due to the roles played by their headman. Being a respected figure within the kampong, the village headman was able to pull together his men and subsequently deployed a strategic plan to fight for their rights.

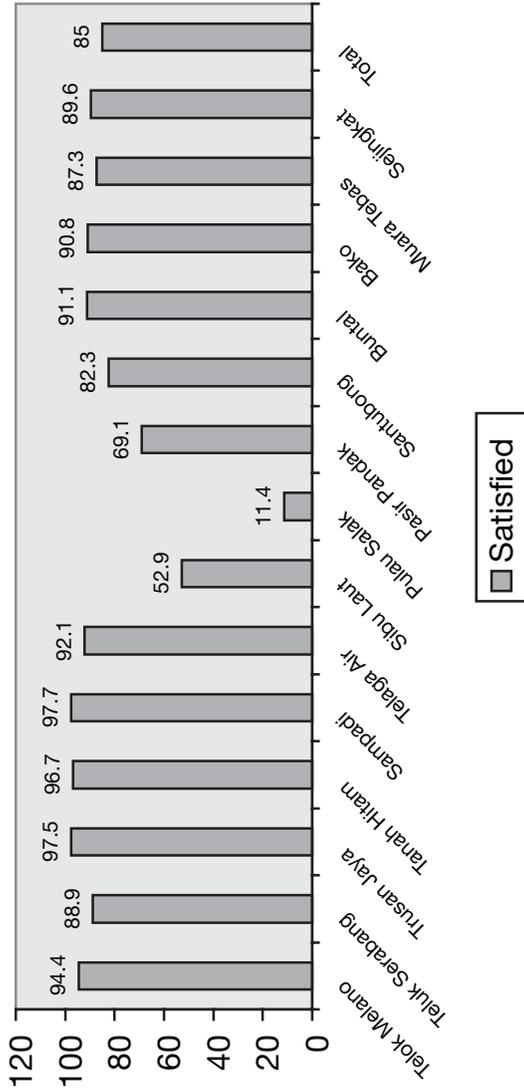
The level of development in southwest Sarawak still lags behind, both in terms of physical and also socio-economic development. Still a great majority of the coastal Malays continue to support the ruling party which is evident from the popular vote received by the party in Tanjung Datu and Demak Laut. However, some coastal Malays have shifted their loyalty mainly because of their unhappiness towards the government's effort in delivering development projects to their kampongs. However, the support of the coastal Malays can be easily secured back by dishing out instant development projects and pledging more development promises. Apart from development projects, the ruling party could also give away other electoral "goodies" such as fishing nets and horse-power engines in order to subdue any potential resistance from the coastal Malays. This strategy has effectively ensured the continued support of the coastal Malays towards the ruling party.

Islam as a Medium of Consolidation

In southwest Sarawak, Islam is generally being observed by the coastal Malays who see it is an important component of their lives. The majority of the Malays in southwest Sarawak claimed that they are actively involved in religious activities such as *doa selamat* (thanksgiving ceremony), *tahlil* (special prayer for the dead) and *jamaah* prayers (daily prayers performed together at the mosque or *surau*) held in their kampongs. A significant number of Malay women wear veils, a practice which is required by Islam for all adult women. During the fasting month, a special *kenduri* (thanksgiving ceremony) to welcome the arrival of Ramadan would be organized by the kampong folks. Apart from holding this special *kenduri*, most of them would exchange food for the breaking of fast, while at night they would collectively light up their kampongs with oil lamps which the locals popularly called *betuntong*. During Hari Raya, they would participate in the house-to-house *takbir* (reciting special prayers to glorify God) which usually takes place during the eve of the festival.

Since Islam is an integral part of the coastal Malays' way of life, the ruling party exploits Islam as a medium to further consolidate its power. In order

FIGURE 7.2
Level of Satisfaction among the Coastal Malays in Southwest Sarawak towards the Government, 2003



Source: Survey data 2003.

to achieve this goal, the ruling party assists the southwest Sarawak Malays in building mosques or *suraus* in their kampongs. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, mosques and *suraus* are the two most popular development projects in southwest Sarawak with almost all the Malay kampongs are endowed with these religious institutions. With the establishment of these institutions, the ruling party could use them as a medium to propagate the state's official Islam and also the state's agenda in instilling unity among the coastal Malays. Fundamental to the state's official Islam are the principles of moderation and solidarity. The tenet of moderation is espoused by the ruling party especially PBB because Sarawak is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious society. Although the *negeri* government has established various religious institutions and organized many religious activities, the assertion of Islam should not undermine the rights and sensitivity of the non-Muslim population who forms the majority in Sarawak. Therefore, the assertion of Islam by the *negeri* government is only directed at improving the administration of Islam in Sarawak and not transforming the whole fabric of Sarawak's society. The idea of moderation in the state's official Islam is basically an anti-thesis to Islamic opposition parties' such as PAS agenda of forming an Islamic state in Malaysia. Since the Muslim population in Sarawak is relatively small as compared to the non-Muslims, a hardline Islamic agenda could pose a threat to the *negeri*'s stability and the strongmen-politicians' dominance. Another important aspect of the state's official Islam is its emphasis on Muslims' solidarity. Again, being a minority group in Sarawak, the Muslim population cannot afford to be divided because it will lead to the erosion of their political power. The Muslim *bumiputera* electorate is therefore obliged to support PBB so that the political dominance of the Muslim *bumiputera*-dominated party within the ruling government is secured hence safeguarding the interests of the Muslims in Sarawak. Without any strong contestation from other Islamic NGOs and political parties, the state's official Islam becomes the version of Islam that the Muslim population in Sarawak accepts, including the coastal Malays of southwest Sarawak.

During the election period, the ruling party fortifies its effort to consolidate the coastal Malays through its *ceramah* which normally takes place in the state-controlled mosques or *suraus*. The coastal Malays would be reminded of the importance of unity and the fragile position of the Muslim population if their political dominance through PBB is challenged. Apart from *ceramah*, this message of solidarity would also be communicated through the Friday sermon, based on the text prepared by JAIS. With the solidarity of the coastal Malays, the majority of them rallied behind the ruling party even when Keadilan played up the issue of Malay nationalism. By igniting the schisms

between the Malays and the Muslim Melanau, Keadilan hoped to break PBB's stranglehold on the Malay electorate. However, only a small number of Malay electorate in southwest Sarawak voted for Keadilan in the 1999, 2001, 2004 and 2006 elections. Among those who voted for Keadilan in these elections, not all of them supported the opposition party because of its call for Malay nationalism. In fact, as discussed earlier, most of the coastal Malays voted for the opposition because they were frustrated with the government's failure to bring development to their kampongs.

The unifying force of Islam in consolidating the Muslim *bumiputera* in Sarawak is the key factor that enables the ruling party to successfully cajole the community much more effectively than the Chinese and the non-Muslim *bumiputera* electorate. Without contesting interpretations of the state's official Islam, the religion of Islam acts as a glue that keep the Malays, Muslim Melanau, Jatti Mereik, Kedayan and other converts together. Despite the heterogeneity of the Muslim *bumiputera*, Islam acts as a shared identity that transcends ethnic, cultural and political boundaries. With the unifying force of Islam, the ruling party strategically uses Islam as a medium to consolidate the Muslim *bumiputera* through a process of Islamization as discussed in Chapters 3 and 5. This Islamization process helps to fortify the Muslim *bumiputera's* religious consciousness which the ruling party easily exploits as a means to consolidate them.

The Civil Service as a Tool to Penetrate Society: The Headmen Institution

The strategy of co-opting headmen as a measure to control social forces has been used in Sarawak since the reign of the Brookes and it continues until now.¹⁵ Being an influential extension of the civil service at the grassroots level, the headmen institution has been effectively used by Muslim Melanau strongmen-politicians as a tool to penetrate society, including the coastal Malays in southwest Sarawak. The legal provision for the appointment of headmen in Sarawak is stipulated in Article 140 of the Local Authorities Ordinance 1996. The article states that the "Yang Dipertua Negeri may appoint for any local authority area any number of headmen holding the rank of Tuai Rumah, Tua Kampong, Penghulu, Pemancha or Temenggong for such period and upon such terms and conditions as he may deem fit". Other than the clause on the appointment of headmen, Article 140 also spells out the general responsibilities of these community chiefs. According to the Article, the headmen are entrusted to "assist a local authority in the exercise of its

powers and the performance of its duties, including the provision of services and amenities to or for the benefit of the inhabitants of the local authority” (Sarawak 1996, p. 93). The said Article, however, does not provide any detail provision on the appointment of headmen and their responsibilities. Thus, the government issued two separate circulars which become the basis for the administration of the headmen service in Sarawak.

The first circular is known as the Terms and Conditions of the Headmen Service, dated 24 March 1973. This circular explains in detail about the different level of authority in the headmen service, the responsibilities of the headmen, and the criteria used in selecting these community chiefs. The headmen service is an active extension of the government administrative machinery at the local level, and is entrusted to be the custodians, interpreters and administrators of customary laws of their respective communities. Hence, the headmen service is structured according to the local level administration with the *temenggong* representing community chiefs at the divisional level, the *pemancha* at the district level and the *penghulu* at the sub-district level. As the highest authority within the headmen service, the *temenggong* is entrusted to represent the major ethnic groups in every division in Sarawak. In a division which has several small ethnic groups, a *temenggong* shall be appointed to represent all of them or they shall come under the jurisdiction of a *temenggong* who is representing one of the major ethnic groups in the division. In theory, the *temenggong* has a supervisory function over the *pemanchas* and the *penghulus*. However, in practice, the *pemanchas* and the *penghulus* are not required to report to the *temenggong* on the affairs of the community under their jurisdictions. Instead, the *pemanchas* and the *penghulus* are only answerable to the District Officer and the Assistant District Officer in charge of the headmen service. The *temenggong*, therefore, only holds a symbolic power in Sarawak just like the Datu system during the Brooke’s rule. In the Kuching Division, there are four *temenggongs* who represent the four major ethnic groups namely the Malays, the Chinese, the Ibans and the Bidayuhs. A former Resident of Kuching, Datuk Yusuf Arbi, is currently the Malay *temenggong* for the Kuching Division. However, this is not the fixed rule in appointing *temenggong* since any respected leader could be installed to this position.

The second highest authority within the headmen service is the *pemancha* who represents Sarawak’s major ethnic groups at the district level. In the Kuching Division, there are currently ten *pemanchas* who are given supervisory roles over the *penghulus* within a district. However, as for the *temenggongs*, the *pemanchas*’ supervisory roles are only in theory. In fact, the

relationship between the *pemancha* and the *penghulu* is almost non-existent (apart from casual meetings at the District Office) since the latter is not obliged to inform the former about the affairs of the kampongs under his jurisdiction. Apart from supervising *penghulus*, the *pemancha* is also entrusted to administer the administration of justice in the Native Court. Within the coastal Malay kampongs in southwest Sarawak, there are two Malay *pemanchas* namely Rashidi Junai for the Malay community in Petra Jaya which includes Santubong, Buntal, Pasir Pandak, Pulau Salak, Sejingkat, Bako, Muara Tebas, Telaga Air, Sibu Laut, while Bujang Jalli Man is the *Pemancha* for the Malay community in Sematan which includes Telok Melano, Teluk Serabang, Trusan Jaya, Tanah Hitam and Sempadi.

The lowest rank community chief in the headmen service is that of the *penghulu* who is responsible for the welfare of various ethnic groups at the sub-district level. There are presently sixty-seven *penghulus* in the Kuching Division. In the coastal Malay kampongs in southwest Sarawak, there are nine *penghulus* whose jurisdictions are divided along several kampongs: Penghulu Mahli Sadam (Telaga Air, Sibu Laut), Penghulu Haji Razali Sebli (Santubong), Penghulu Haji Nawi Jamain (Buntal), Penghulu Haji Bujang Sum Drahim (Salak), Penghulu Haji Sebi Masran (Sejingkat, Muhibah, Tanjung Bako, Hijrah, Sepakat Jaya, Pinggan Jaya), Penghulu Saili Osman (Bako, Bako Perpindahan Baru, Bako Hijrah) and Penghulu Fauzi Ramli (Muara Tebas, Selabat, Sungai Buda, Pasir Puteh). Although the *penghulu* is the lowest rank headman, he is the most powerful leader at the grassroots level. As a *penghulu*, he performs various functions and responsibilities within his jurisdiction such as registering new marriages, resolving domestic problems, ensuring the safety and security of the village, assisting in land probate, assisting in child adoption cases, addressing social problems within his area, attending government functions and planning the whole development of kampongs within his jurisdiction. Apart from that, some *Penghulus* have been appointed as judges in the Native Chief Court, as in the case of Penghulu Sebi Masran from Sejingkat, where he would preside over issues mostly relating to land dispute.

Initially, headmen took an active part in politics. Some of them even participated in electoral politics, and subsequently became MPs or assemblymen. In the 1970 election, for example, a total of twelve headmen contested in the election, most of them standing as Independent candidates (seven) while the rest represented PESAKA (three), Bumiputera (one) and SUPP (one). Among the headmen who contested in the 1970 negeri election were Tua Kampung Suud Udin (Bumiputera) in S.1 Lundu, Tua Kampung Suaidi (SUPP) in S.7 Sebandi, Penghulu Tawi Sli (PESAKA) in S.15 Lingga, Penghulu Manau

(Independent) in S.18 Ulu Ai, Penghulu Pengabang Impak (Independent) in S.29, Penghulu Umpau Empam (PESAKA) and Penghulu Ujok Andeng (Independent) in S.36 Ngemah, Pengarah Sibat Semada (Independent) in S.39 Baleh, Penghulu Matu Puso (Independent) in S.40 Belaga, Penghulu Angkalom Latib (PESAKA) in S. 41 Tatau, Penghulu Arin (Independent) in S.45 Marudi, and Penghulu Balan Lejau (Independent) in S.46 Telang Usan. Despite the large number of headmen contesting in the election, only one managed to secure a seat in the Council Negeri, namely Penghulu Tawi Sli who became Sarawak's second Chief Minister. Meanwhile, in the 1970 parliamentary election, a total of twelve headmen contested in the election, mostly as Independent and PESAKA candidates (five each). While the rest of them contested on a SNAP ticket. Among the headmen who contested in the 1970 parliamentary election were Pengarah Rahun Dabak (SNAP) in P.126 Serian, Tua Kampung Bujang Amin (Independent) in P.127 Simunjan, Penghulu Poh (PESAKA) in P.135 Rajang, Pengarah Banyang (PESAKA) in P.137 Julau, Penghulu Masam (Independent) in P.138 Kanowit, Penghulu Abit Ankin (SNAP), Penghulu Jinggot Atan (PESAKA) and Penghulu Kuleh (Independent) in P.139 Kapit, Temenggung Jugah Bareng (PESAKA) in P.140 Ulu Rajang, Penghulu Guyang (Independent) in P.142 Miri-Subis, Penghulu Gau Jau (PESAKA) in P.143 Baram, and Pengarah Ngang Bundan (Independent) in P.144 Limbang-Lawas. In contrast to the negeri election, the number of headmen who won in the 1970 parliamentary election was much higher, four. Among the headmen who managed to secure the parliamentary seats were Pengarah Rahun Dabak (SNAP), Pengarah Banyang (PESAKA), Penghulu Abit Angkin (SNAP) and Temenggung Jugah Bareng (PESAKA). However, with the enforcement of the Headmen Service's circular in 1973, all headmen are prohibited from playing an active role in politics. In view of this new ruling, the headmen who held political office had to choose between remaining as a headman or as an elected representative.

In terms of the criteria used in selecting headmen, the "Terms and Conditions of the Headmen Service 1973" explains that the candidates should not be below thirty years old, should be Malaysian citizens and medically fit. Academic qualification is not an important criterion in appointing the headmen because most of the respected and influential figures at the village level do not have high academic qualifications. In fact, some headmen are illiterate but they are still entrusted to lead their communities because they can perform their responsibilities even with this shortcoming. The nomination of a headman will usually be done by the District Office through the Resident Office which will then submit the application to the State Secretary. In appointing a *penghulu*, the District Office could consult the *pemancha* or the

temenggong in order to find a suitable candidate. Apart from that, politicians especially elected representatives might offer their choice of candidates to the District Office for consideration. In the case of a *pemancha*, the District Office could choose the longest serving and most respected *penghulu* to become the *pemancha*, while the *temenggong* could be selected among the *pemanchas* or former senior government officers.

All headmen receive monthly salary, thus making them part of the government bureaucracy. Their salary, however, was capped at such a low rate that it did not reflect the amount of responsibilities that these leaders had to shoulder. In 1973, the monthly salary for *temenggong* was set between RM420 to RM520, *pemancha* between RM320 to RM380 and *penghulu* between RM200 to RM300. Due to the meagre salary, not many people were interested in becoming headman even after being offered the job. When a *penghulu* from Sejingkat passed away in 1976, the government offered the vacant post to his son, Abu Samah Mohamad. With a family of twelve, Abu Samah who earned RM400 a month making *nipah* roof had to decline the offer since it would be impossible to raise his big family with RM200 a month. Those who accepted the offer did it out of responsibility to serve their community and for the honour and prestige of being associated with the post. After almost twenty years, the government finally reviewed the headmen's salary, which took effect in 1991. Based on this review, *temenggong* received between RM630 to RM830, *pemancha* between RM500 to RM690, and *penghulu* between RM360 to RM605 (Sarawak 1991a). With this salary review, headmen were expected to enjoy better pay, albeit receiving marginal increase. Twelve years later, in an effort to win over the minds and souls of Sarawak's headmen, the government made a promise to review their salary for the second time. However, this promise was not implemented immediately, leading to questions about the government's sincerity in uplifting the well-being of community chiefs. The government's promise to review the salary of headmen was finally fulfilled in late 2006 with financial aid from the central government. Based on the 2006 salary review, *temenggongs* are entitled to receive between RM850 to RM1,050, *pemanchas* between RM700 to RM860, and *penghulus* between RM600 to RM810.

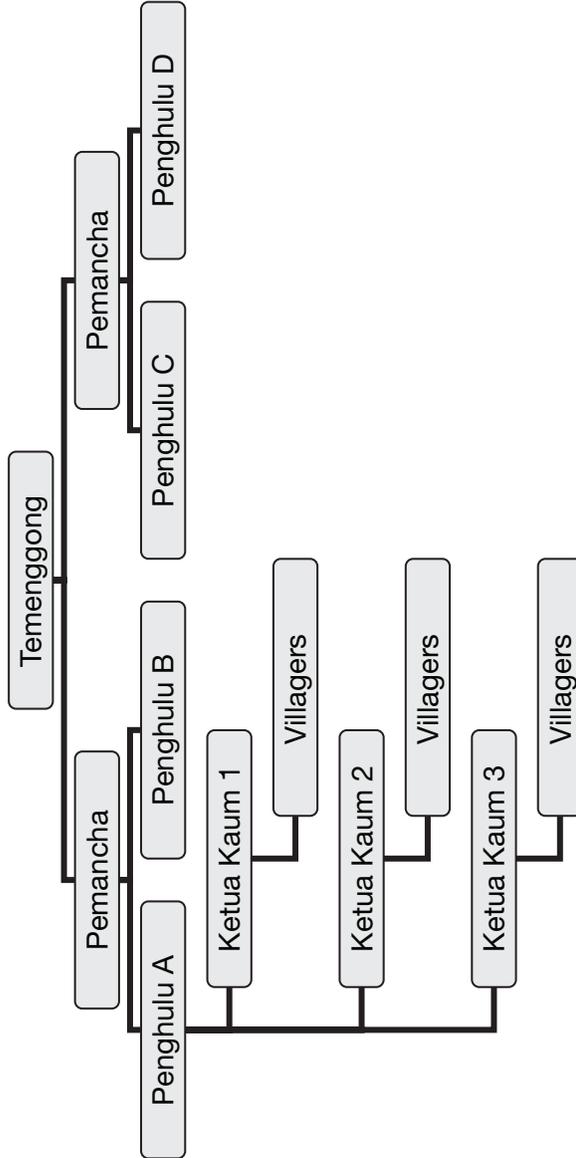
Initially, there was no age limit for headmen, enabling them to retain their posts until death or as long as their health permits. Later, the government imposed an age limit of eighty to ensure all headmen are medically fit to serve their communities. However, in 1998, the government decided to lower the age limit to seventy. This change took immediate effect on all new appointments. Another change made to the headmen service also involved the

tenureship of these community chiefs. Prior to 1986, the government did not impose any time frame in the appointment of headman. With the change, the appointment of headman is limited to a five-year period or less. At the end of the five-year term, the contract will be reviewed in order to renew or terminate it. With this change, the government would be able to control the appointment of headmen and ensure that these leaders perform their duties as expected, failing which their contract would be terminated.

The second circular issued by the government in regards to the headmen service pertained solely on *ketua kaum* who is responsible for a village or a longhouse. The provision on the *ketua kaum* is stipulated in a circular dated 2 October 1980, entitled “Terms and Conditions of Service of Ketua Kaum”. The title of *ketua kaum* differs according to ethnic groups with the designation of Ketua Kampong for the Malays, Bidayuh, Melanau and Bisaya; Tuai Rumah or Tuai Uma for the Ibans and Orang Ulu; and Kapitan China for the Chinese. According to the “Terms and Conditions of Service of Ketua Kaum”, the village head is responsible for (a) assisting the *penghulu* as and when required in the administration of the area, (b) encouraging and leading his community to participate in government activities or projects, (c) settling family squabbles or minor disputes based on his community’s respective *adat* and customary law and where applicable the Native Courts Ordinance, (d) promoting closer links between his community and the government, and (e) carrying out government instructions from time to time.

The appointment of *ketua kaum* is based on the recommendation of the *penghulu* and the District Officer who will then submit their recommendation to the State Secretary through the Resident Office. Some *penghulus* would organize elections in order to elect three candidates with the highest number of votes as their new *ketua kaum*. These names would then be submitted to the District Office which will screen all the candidates and subsequently appoint one of them. As in the case of Telok Melano, the villagers initially nominated three candidates namely Mat Jai, Haji Zai and Mohamad Pani as candidates for the *ketua kaum* post in their village. Their names were then submitted to the District Office which subsequently appointed Mohamad Pani as Telok Melano’s new *ketua kaum* (Mohamad 2003). In other cases, the *penghulu* would nominate two or three candidates from the affected kampong after consulting the elected representative from the area. After that, the *penghulu* would submit the names of the candidates to the District Office for further action. The appointment of Ketua Kaum Haji Jublie Jelani from Kampong Buntal, for example, is based solely on the recommendation of the *penghulu* and not based on the nomination made by his kampong folks.

FIGURE 7.3
Grassroots Leadership in Sarawak



The criteria set by the government in appointing *ketua kaum* are relatively simple: Malaysian citizen, free from any criminal record, local resident from the village, and medically certified as healthy. Apart from these criteria, the selection of *ketua kaum* either by the *penghulu* or the villagers is still influenced by hereditary factor. For example, Haji Jublie Jelani, who was appointed the *ketua kaum* of Kampong Buntal in 2000, is the relative of a former *penghulu* from that area. The same scenario can be observed in Kampong Sibulau where its *ketua kaum*, Baidi Saini, inherited the post from his father-in-law, Penghulu Mahli. Usually, the appointment of a kin or relative of a former *ketua kaum* or *penghulu* is made because the villagers have been indebted to the former *ketua kaum* or *penghulu*.

In contrast to *temenggong*, *pemancha* and *penghulu*, *ketua kaum* initially did not receive any monthly allowance, which meant they were not considered as government servants. Instead they were paid annual allowances which did not justify their various duties and responsibilities. Since 1980, *ketua kaum* only received an annual allowance of RM200 or about RM16.67 a month (payable half yearly) which made it unattractive to kampong folks. In fact, in kampongs without *penghulus*, the *ketua kaum* had to perform many duties which restrained them from taking up another job as a means to sustain their livelihood. In view of this shortcoming, the government reviewed the annual allowance given to *ketua kaum* in 1991. Based on this review, the government increased the amount of allowance given to the *ketua kaum* to RM1,000 a year or about RM83.33 a month. Still, the amount was considered very low compared to the responsibilities of *ketua kaum* which exceeds that of *penghulu*. In fact, among the community chiefs in Sarawak, *ketua kaum* has the most responsibilities but he receives the lowest amount of payment. However, on 1 March 2006, the government decided to scrap the annual allowance given to the *ketua kaum* and replaced it with a monthly allowance of RM450 (Sarawak 2006a).¹⁶ This move was aimed at uplifting the position of the *ketua kaum* who played an important role at the village level. With this renewed position, *ketua kaum* can play a more influential role as the strongman-politician's agent at the local level.

In general, headmen are subservient to the government which has been responsible in uplifting their social and economic status. However, in 1987, there was a small group of community chiefs who supported the opposition parties that attempted to topple Taib. Most of these community chiefs were appointed by Rahman Yakub's government, thus there were some leaders who still supported the former Chief Minister when he mounted an attempt to challenge Taib. Thus, during the 1987 election, some of these community

chiefs were seen campaigning for the opposition party, PERMAS, which angered the ruling party. Hence, after the election, the government sacked these leaders, sending a clear signal to all the community chiefs that they were not indispensable.

In a *negeri* as big as the Peninsula and the population scattered all over its huge terrain, the *negeri* government has a monumental task in penetrating society at the grassroots level. However, since the Brookes reign, the state in Sarawak has depended on the community chiefs to penetrate society and subsequently control them. After the cession of Sarawak to the British, the colonial government streamlined the grassroots administration which became the basis of the headmen service used by the Sarawak government today. With more than 5,000 villages across the *negeri's* eleven divisions, it would be almost impossible to reach out to these communities without a structured grassroots institution. Hence, the *negeri* government establishes a network of leadership institution, starting from the division, district, sub-district and village level, in order to penetrate Sarawak's society. With the presence of the community chiefs, they are capable of being the eyes and ears of the state which is important in allocating state resources, particularly development projects and other electoral "goodies".

CONCLUSION

The southwest Sarawak Malays are considered a weak community which has no substantial force to resist the state's agenda of dominating them. However, with their population scattered along the 100 miles of coastline from Tanjung Datu to Tanjung Po, it is almost impossible for the state to penetrate and regulate every aspects of the coastal Malays' lives. Faced with this challenge, the ruling party in Sarawak led by Muslim Melanau strongmen-politicians adopts a strategy of accommodation which entails the subjugation of social forces and potential resistance from society. As discussed in the previous chapters, Rahman Yakub and Taib Mahmud have both used almost similar strategies in dominating the Muslim *bumiputera*, namely vote-buying through "development politics", consolidating the Muslim *bumiputera* through the use of Islam, and penetrating the community via the civil service. These strategies have proven to be effective in dominating the Muslim *bumiputera* based on the steady increase of popular vote received by PBB in the Muslim *bumiputera* seats since the 1970 election.

This chapter aims to better illustrate the effectiveness of the strongmen-politicians' strategies in dominating Sarawak's society, in particular the Muslim *bumiputera*, by studying the political domination of the coastal

Malays in southwest Sarawak. Based on the case study presented in this chapter, I conclude that there are three powerful strategies adopted by the strongmen-politicians in binding the Muslim *bumiputera*. First, the strategy of vote-buying through “development politics” had effectively turned Tanjung Datu from an opposition hot-bed into a BN’s stronghold. Meanwhile in Demak Laut, with the implementation of many development projects and the opening up of Demak Jaya Industrial Park, the support of the coastal Malays in this constituency had significantly increased. However, the slow pace of development in Pantai Damai sparked a great sense of discontent among some of the Malay electorate, resulting in the decline of the popular vote received by the ruling party. Still majority of the electorate in Pantai Damai continued to support the ruling party especially when it pledged to bring various development projects in the constituency. Equally important in cajoling the Muslim *bumiputera* electorate is the strategy of using Islam as a medium to consolidate them. In order to achieve this objective, the ruling government built mosques and *suraus* in every Malay kampong in southwest Sarawak so that these religious institutions could become a medium to exert the state’s official Islam among the coastal communities. Apart from that, Islam is also being used to unite the Malays and other Muslim communities in Sarawak against any forces that attempt to split them. The third and final strategy used by Muslim Melanau strongmen-politicians in dominating the Muslim *bumiputera* is by exploiting the civil service, particularly the headmen institution, as a tool to penetrate society. At the grassroots level especially in rural kampongs, the headmen institution is very influential thus it is used as a medium to rally the support of the local populace. Apart from that, the local headmen could act as the eyes and ears of the government, allowing it to distribute development projects or electoral “goodies” appropriately and to plan electoral strategy accordingly.

Certainly, there has been some resistance from the coastal Malays towards the state’s attempt to dominate them. The source of this resistance ironically comes from the same “bait” that the ruling party uses to consolidate the Muslim *bumiputera* which is development. Angered with the government’s failure to bring more development to their kampongs, the coastal Malays in southwest Sarawak vented their anger by voting the opposition parties. This form of resistance is not only evident in southwest Sarawak but throughout the Muslim *bumiputera* seats in the *negeri*. Issues related to development (including land development) at the community level often become obstacles to the ruling party’s agenda of dominating the Muslim *bumiputera* of Sarawak. However, the force of resistance among the Muslim *bumiputera* electorate is quite insignificant as evident from their voting behaviour since the 1970 election.

The political inter-play between the state and the coastal Malays is a micro representation of Muslim *bumiputera* politics in Sarawak. Since 1970, majority of the Muslim *bumiputera* has persistently supported the ruling party especially PBB despite several attempts by the opposition to sway their “loyalty”. This has been the major trend of Muslim *bumiputera* politics in Sarawak ever since the first direct election held in the *negeri*. Based on the analysis presented in this chapter and also in the previous chapters, the ruling party’s dominance of the Muslim *bumiputera* is unlikely to erode in the near future but it will surely be contested.

Notes

1. In this study, a total of 800 respondents were randomly chosen from fourteen Malay kampongs namely Telok Melano, Teluk Serabang, Trusan Jaya, Tanah Hitam, Sampadi, Telaga Air, Sibu Laut, Pulau Salak, Pasir Pandak, Santubong, Buntal, Bako, Muara Tebas and Sejingkat. Approximately 68 per cent of the respondents were men. In terms of age structure, 30 per cent of the respondents were above 50 years old, 27.2 per cent were between 40 to 50, 24.4 per cent were between 30 to 40, 14 per cent were between 20 to 30 and 3.0 per cent were below 20.
2. According to Harrison (1970, p. 341), the villagers in Bako depended so much on fishing because (1) they practised forms of fishing which were suitable to the waters of the bay, (2) they were suffering from an acute land-shortage due to the large numbers of Chinese population within the locality, and (3) they were denied from participating in other economic activity especially during the monsoon season due to topographical reasons.
3. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Malays in Sejingkat made *nipah* roof on a daily basis with one household would normally make about 100 roofs a day. Each *nipah* roof was sold for about RM4 a piece. At present, with the limited supply of *nipah* roof, the price of the commodity had skyrocketed to about RM40 to RM50 per 100 pieces.
4. The Poverty Line Income for 1999 was RM584 per month for a household size of 4.8 in Sarawak (Malaysia 2001*b*, p. 50).
5. Among the fourteen Malay kampongs in this study, four of them are situated in the *negeri* constituency of Tanjung Datu namely Telok Melano, Teluk Serabang, Trusan Jaya and Tanah Hitam. Meanwhile, all the Malay kampongs located within the central zone of southwest Sarawak such as Sempadi, Telaga Air, Sibu Laut, Salak, Pasir Pandak, Santubong and Buntal are within the *negeri* constituency of Pantai Damai. The rest of the kampongs namely Bako, Muara Tebas and Sejingkat are within the boundary of Demak Laut constituency.
6. Apart from Mohd Shamsudin and Chong Kim Mook, the seat was also contested by two other Independent candidates, Jonathan Saban and Andrew Jipam Nayok who managed to poll 290 and 920 votes respectively.

7. In the 1983 election, Ramsay Jitam secured 4,146 votes against Shamsudin Mokhtar, an Independent, who polled 2,092 votes, paving the way for a comfortable BN's victory with a majority of 2,054 votes. Four other Independent candidates, Jehim Milos, Ahmad Som, Hassan Mawi and Winston Tujang Pata, all lost their deposits when they only managed to secure 891, 208, 127 and 44 votes respectively.
8. In the 1991 election, Tanjung Datu saw a four-cornered fight between Ramsay Jitam from SUPP (BN), Sidi Munan from PBDS, Aton Kajit from NEGARA and an Independent candidate, Ahmed Abang Ali. The BN candidate was fiercely challenged by PBDS's heavyweight, Sidi Munan, who managed to poll 4,294 votes against Ramsay who received 5,088 votes which enabled the SUPP man to win by a majority of 794 votes. The other two candidates, Aton Kajit and Ahmad Abang Ali, lost their deposits when they only managed to poll 133 and 268 votes respectively.
9. In the 1987 election, Tanjung Datu saw a straight fight between the incumbent, Ramsay Noel Jitam, from SUPP and Noor Tahir from PERMAS. The former managed to retain his seat by polling 4,890 votes against the PERMAS leader who garnered 3,561 votes.
10. In the 2001 election, Tanjung Datu was contested by Ranum Mina from SUPP, Awang Asmadi Awang Ahmad from Keadilan, Teo Chung Chai from DAP and two Independent candidates, Sulaiman Aban and Chen Yiew Zean. The SUPP candidate, who was a new face in this election, won comfortably by polling 5,605 votes, while Chen Yiew Zean received the second highest votes (552 votes), followed by Sulaiman Aban (508 votes), Teo Chung Chai (394 votes) and Awang Asmadi (268 votes).
11. Abdul Kadir Merican (SUPP) received the second highest votes (971 votes), followed by Cikgu Shukri (Independent) (54 votes), Abang Bueng Abang Amin (SNAP) (526 votes) and Ben Jomel (Independent) (250 votes).
12. In the 1983 election, Hafsa Harun won the Semariang seat (known as Petra Jaya at that time) by polling 6,107 votes, while Mohd Fauzi (Independent) received 1,265 votes and Eden Abdullah (BERSATU) secured 544 votes.
13. In the 1996 election, Dr Abang Draup successfully retained his seat by polling 5,365 votes against the Independent candidate, Junaidi Putih, who only received 536 votes.
14. The parliamentary constituency of Santubong comprises of three *negeri* constituencies, namely Pantai Damai, Semariang and Demak Laut.
15. The Brooke Rajahs were able to rule Sarawak with only a handful of European officials because they permitted the perpetuation of the native system of village administration (Naimah 1999, p. 47). During James Brooke's reign, he uplifted the status of village administration by officially appointing the headmen to oversee the affairs of the growing Malay kampongs and also to collect taxes on behalf of the Rajah. James's action angered Datu Patinggi Abdul Gapur because the latter perceived the appointment of village headmen as detrimental to his position as the paramount chief of the Malays (Walker 2002, p. 102). The titles of community

headmen, exact duties and the methods by which they were recruited varied over time and space (Pringle 1970, p. 156). When there were disputes involving several villages, Tua Kampongs would represent the interest of their villages in the Resident's Court. In empowering Tua Kampongs, the Brooke government equipped these community leaders with magisterial powers in order to settle minor offences and matters relating to Islam. With the authority given by the state to the village headmen, their status at the grassroots level was elevated, making them very influential and powerful. However, Tua Kampongs were not given any salary or allowance but they were allowed to keep a percentage of revenue accruing from taxes and fines (Naimah 1999, p. 47).

16. Almost 90 per cent of the new salary scheme or RM400 is subsidized by the central government, while the rest (RM50) is paid by the *negeri* government (Sarawak 2006a).

8

CONCLUSION

STATE POWER AND THE CONTESTATION OF SOCIAL FORCES

Most of the literature on Malaysian politics portrays the ruling regime as a powerful force that possesses hegemonic power to dominate society (Zakaria 1989; Case 1993, 2004; Crouch 1992). This study re-evaluates the strength of the Malaysian regime by aggregating its capabilities to perform four tasks, namely: to penetrate society, to regulate social relations, to extract resources, and to distribute resources in determined ways. Based on this analysis, the Malaysian regime is undoubtedly a strong state but its power is curtailed by the prevailing forces in society, known as social forces which are in constant struggle with the state over the right to dictate “social control”. The state which is usually the biggest and most powerful social organization could dominate in certain arenas but would have to compete with social forces in acquiring control over other arenas. A weak state would have no choice but to accommodate the social forces which resist its authority, failing which the state could collapse. But a strong state could either engage or ignore the contesting social forces. When a strong state engages the social forces, this would result in the weakening of the state functions and its capabilities to achieve the goals envisioned by its leader. If a strong state decides to ignore the social forces, this will not result in the collapse of the state as in the case of a weak state. Instead, the strong state might face difficulties in implementing its policies and programmes within the contested arena.

In Sarawak, the most potent social force in the early period of Independence was the Muslim Bumiputera intelligentsia who had replaced the Malay aristocrats as the new force in Sarawak politics. The intelligentsia had successfully displaced the Malay aristocrats because the latter's position had been severely weakened through the process of state formation during the Brookes' rule. When the number of the intelligentsia soared during the British colonial rule, they started to challenge the authority of the Malay aristocrats as the undisputed leaders of Sarawak's society. Weakened, the Malay aristocrats were not able to fend off the contestation mounted by the intelligentsia who were more knowledgeable about the nitty-gritty of modern politics as compared to the traditional strongmen. Furthermore, the image of traditional strongmen as the paramount leaders cum patrons of Sarawak's society, in particular the Malays, was badly tarnished due to public criticisms of their failure to address the Malay community's deteriorating conditions. Consequently, the schism between the Malay aristocrats and the intelligentsia during the pre-Independence period prevented the latter from dominating Sarawak's first elected government in 1963.

Despite not helming the first elected Sarawak government, the intelligentsia maintained its influence in the central and *negeri* governments through a Muslim *bumiputera*-dominated party, Parti Barisan Anak Jati Sarawak (BARJASA) with two of its prominent leaders, Rahman Yakub and Taib Mahmud, playing the leading roles. After failing to become Sarawak's first Chief Minister, Rahman was appointed Assistant Federal Minister for National and Rural Development (for Sarawak). Impressed with Rahman's performance, the Prime Minister promoted him to a full Minister with the portfolio of Lands and Mines in 1965. Four years later, Rahman was given a much more significant and influential portfolio of Education. This was his last appointment at the central government before returning to Sarawak to take up the Chief Minister's post in 1970. In Sarawak, Taib who was appointed as Sarawak's Minister for Communications and Works became an influential cabinet Minister in Ningkan's government by virtue of his superior education background. Taib was instrumental in contesting Stephen Kalong's Ningkan's leadership which led to the former dismissal from the cabinet in 1965 and 1966. Although the Muslim *bumiputera* intelligentsia failed to dominate Sarawak government in the post-Independence period, they succeeded in projecting a strong image of themselves. With this image, the Muslim *bumiputera* intelligentsia proved that they were the force to be reckoned with after the demise of the Malay aristocrats.

The argument put forward in this study resembles the portrayal of state power by Crouch's (1996) *Government and Society in Malaysia* which proposes a

convincing depiction of the regime's continued success in dominating electoral politics in Malaysia since 1955. He argues that the ruling party has remained in power for a very long time because it practises a "responsive-repressive" approach in dominating society. Based on this approach, the state would be responsive towards the people's demands as long as they don't challenge its authority. But once the state and its leaders' positions are under threat, it would not hesitate to use repressive measures to subdue potential resistance from powerful forces in society. Crouch (1996) opines that the ruling party would not be able to sustain its power if it only resorts to repressive measures, thus the responsive measures are taken in order to avoid a catastrophic backlash from excessive repressive actions taken against the state's detractors. However, unlike Crouch (1996), this study argues that the responsive or accommodative approach taken by the state is a manifestation of its limited power due to the contestation of social forces. To Crouch (1996), the responsive measures are not a symbol of state weakness, instead they represent the regime's ability to use alternative means to maintain stability and order. Apart from that, this study also analyses the impact of the state's strategy of accommodation beyond electoral politics which Crouch (1996) did not adequately address. To conclude, this study demonstrates that despite the Malaysian regime's overwhelming capabilities to dominate society, its power is not absolute because of the contestation by influential social forces. The regime's vulnerability is most glaring in places where they are physically distant from the centre of power like Sarawak.

DOMINATION AND ACCOMMODATION

During the first seven years of Malaysia, Sarawak was in a state of turmoil due to the strained relationship between the central and *negeri* leaders. When the first Sarawak Chief Minister, Stephen Kalong Ningkan, pursued regional interests, the central state came down hard on the Iban leader by forcefully removing him. The Sarawak National Party (SNAP) leader was subsequently replaced by another Iban leader, Tawi Sli, from Parti Pesaka Anak Sarawak (PESAKA) but the latter lacked the leadership qualities that were needed to restore stability in Sarawak. To resolve this "problem", the Malaysian regime opted to accommodate the Muslim Melanau intelligentsia after a failed "experiment" with the two Iban Chief Ministers. Apart from restoring political stability in Sarawak, the accommodation of the intelligentsia was aimed at extending the central state's domination in the *negeri* which seemed "alien" to the central state leadership. The appointment of the first Muslim Melanau Chief Minister, Rahman Yakub, in 1970, also signalled the resurgence

of Muslim *bumiputera* politics in Sarawak. Most of the literature highlights ethnic factor as the motivating factor behind the central state's decision to appoint Rahman. Apart from expanding Malay supremacy over Sarawak, this study argues that the appointment of Rahman was also part of the central state's strategy to co-opt the most potent social force in Sarawak, the Muslim *bumiputera* intelligentsia. With the co-optation of the intelligentsia, the central state hoped that they would be able to cajole Sarawak's society and maintain the central state's presence and interests there. As an extension arm of the central state, the intelligentsia is expected to meet the central state's core demands as a prerequisite to the state's continued support towards their leadership. This study identifies five central state demands that ought to be fulfilled by the intelligentsia: safeguarding national interest; maintaining Malay political dominance; ensuring the BN's continued dominance in the *negeri* and parliamentary elections; transferring the rights to extract the *negeri*'s petroleum and gas reserves to the central state; and providing political stability.

Once the intelligentsia receives the central state's support, they are accorded a certain degree of autonomy to control Sarawak's society and the *negeri*'s rich resources. With this freedom, the intelligentsia gradually transformed themselves into a new generation of strongmen, known as strongmen-politicians. When Rahman Yakub and Taib Mahmud dominated Sarawak politics, they had to undertake several measures in order to maintain their supremacy with accommodative measures being the utmost important strategy. Between 1970 and 1981, Rahman commandingly strengthened the ruling party's position in Sarawak and built his image as a wealthy and powerful leader. The strongman-politician was able to achieve this feat by using a combination of repressive and accommodative measures. One of the strategies used by the strongman-politician was to weaken SNAP and the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), both component parties of the Sarawak Barisan Nasional (SBN). In the case of SNAP, Rahman was responsible for removing the party's senior leader, James Wong, who was also the strongman-politician's staunchest critic, by arresting him under the Internal Security Act (ISA). With Wong out of the picture, it paved the way for new SNAP leaders such as Dunstan Endawie, Leo Moggie and Daniel Tajem to helm the party. These new SNAP leaders were more supportive of Rahman's leadership, hence amplifying his authority within the coalition government. The strongman-politician further weakened SNAP's influence in Sarawak by fielding PBB candidates in the Dayak seats, thus reducing the Dayak party's representation in the Council Negeri and parliament. Rahman's approach in quelling the influence of SUPP was more confrontational as compared to his dealings vis-à-vis SNAP. Disappointed with the SUPP leaders' constant criticism of

his leadership, the strongman-politician adopted two aggressive strategies to subdue the Chinese-dominated party. First, the strongman-politician refused to appoint SUPP leaders who were critical of his leadership to the Sarawak cabinet. Instead Rahman appointed junior SUPP leaders who were not even endorsed by their party to assume Sarawak cabinet posts. Second, Rahman attempted to weaken SUPP by allowing DAP to spread its wings to Sarawak. With the DAP's presence in the *negeri*, the opposition party would be able to check SUPP's influence within the Chinese community.

Apart from imposing his authority within the ruling coalition, there were two other measures undertaken by Rahman in order to buttress his position in Sarawak; transforming Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) into a formidable force, and establishing a network of clients through timber politics and electoral patronage. By strengthening PBB, Rahman could use the Muslim *bumiputera*-dominated party as a vehicle to build his power base within the ruling party and also among Sarawak's population at large. The establishment of multiple network of clients through timber politics and electoral patronage further fortified Rahman's power, enabling him to form political alliances and to dominate Sarawak elections for over a decade. As a result, Rahman was able to bring order and stability to the former Brookes' fiefdom, outperforming his predecessors who had failed to achieve the same goals during the formative years of Malaysia.

The political dominance of the strongmen-politicians continued to prevail after the retirement of Rahman in 1981 when another influential intelligentsia, Taib Mahmud, was appointed to succeed him. In his first seven years in office, Taib's leadership was seriously tested by Rahman who was paradoxically responsible for Taib's ascendancy in Sarawak politics. The uncle-nephew conflict was not only personal in nature; it was also a struggle between two powerful strongmen-politicians who were each trying to wrest control of Sarawak. Sitting in the highest political office in Sarawak, Taib was able to use his position to outmanoeuvre Rahman despite the latter's formidable influence and wealth. With a combination of repressive and accommodative measures, Taib was able to subdue his political enemies and build new alliances within the SBN's component parties which helped him to survive the most challenging period of his political life. After the 1987 crisis, Taib took several other measures to consolidate his position in the eyes of the central state and among the general public in Sarawak. Among the measures undertaken by Taib were vote-buying through the POD, consolidating the Muslim *bumiputera* through the process of Islamization, and penetrating society via the civil service. These accommodative measures especially "development politics" have enabled the ruling party to rally the

support of the electorate, in particular the Muslim *bumiputera*, throughout the 1990s and into the early twenty-first century.

The juncture between the state and social forces in Sarawak has generated significant changes among the population. Within the Muslim *bumiputera* community, the most significant change affecting them after 1970 is their increased support towards the ruling party. Prior to the co-optation of the Muslim *bumiputera* intelligentsia, the electorate was deeply divided with the Muslim *bumiputera* supporting either Parti Negara Sarawak (PANAS) and Parti Barisan Anak Jati Sarawak (BARJASA), the non-Muslim *bumiputera* rallying for PESAKA and SNAP, while the Chinese was divided between SUPP and Sarawak Chinese Association (SCA). However, the Muslim Melanau intelligentsia who later became strongmen-politicians of Sarawak have successfully cajoled the electorate towards the ruling party, transforming the *negeri* into one of the BN's bastions. This domination, however, is not absolute. The Chinese electorate would every now and then switch their votes to the opposition, DAP, depending on the issues at play. In the 2006 election, for example, the Chinese overwhelmingly gave their support to the opposition parties with the Democratic Action Party (DAP) winning six seats while PKR secured one seat. The non-Muslim *bumiputera*, on the other hand, are less inclined to vote for the opposition, as compared to their Chinese counterparts. Only in the 1987 and 1991 elections, the non-Muslim *bumiputera* resisted the ruling party by voting Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) which was involved in the failed attempt to unseat the Chief Minister. The Muslim *bumiputera* is generally aligned to BN but there are a minority who resist the ruling party's dominance by supporting the opposition. To the non-conformists, various factors have influenced their political choices with unequitable development as the major source of contention. Apart from that, other sources of resistance are ethno-nationalism which has slowly become embedded in Sarawak's society and the struggle towards democracy which is still at its infancy. These two factors along with other localized issues (especially land-related matters) would continue to challenge the state and strongmen-politicians' attempt to dominate Sarawak's multi-ethnic society. Despite the central state's successful agenda in dominating Sarawak, it is imperative to note that the state's domination is not absolute even among the docile Muslim *bumiputera*.

The central state's strategy of co-opting Muslim Melanau strongmen-politicians will not be a permanent feature of state-society relation in Sarawak because various factors could alter this relationship, consequently eroding the power of strongmen-politicians. As discussed in Chapter 6, the future of strongmen-politicians in Sarawak could be influenced by internal forces

such as the transformation of Sarawak's society, the public's increased access to alternative information, and the strengthening of the *negeri's* political institutions. Apart from these internal forces, the state-society relation in Sarawak could be influenced by external factor with the central state as the prime source of change. As the biggest and most influential social organization, the central state could dispose the strongmen-politicians by further nationalizing Sarawak politics through the establishment of Sarawak UMNO which would displace PBB as the dominant party within SBN. The elimination of social forces would not lead to the collapse of the state since the strongmen-politicians would not be able to pose commendable challenge towards the state without the political offices accorded to them. Then again, the fall of the Muslim *bumiputera* strongmen-politicians could pave the way for the emergence of other social forces such as the new middle class, communal groups and other type of social movements which have the capabilities to resist the state's agenda of dominating Sarawak's society. This could pose a new challenge to the central state in its attempt to dominate Sarawak's society beyond the era of the strongmen-politicians.

THE WEAKENING OF THE STATE

The central state's decision to engage the social forces in Sarawak has generated changes not only in society but also the state itself. By accommodating the Muslim *bumiputera* intelligentsia, the state is forced to transfer some of its power to these influential individuals who exploit the state's resources and agencies to maintain their dual positions. As a result, the central state's agenda and policies are being compromised while malpractices such as corruption and abuse of power are rampant. In the context of Sarawak, some of the signs of state weaknesses are the failure of the POD to achieve its objectives of bringing equitable development to Sarawak's multi-ethnic society; the collapse of the state's agencies (political parties) after the departure of strongmen-politicians; the widespread practice of money politics during Sarawak elections; the supremacy of regionalism and localism over national issues and democratic idealism; and the purported RM32 million kickback received by the Chief Minister from several Japanese shipping companies. These weaknesses are not merely a sign of dysfunctional or corrupt state but more than that they represent the state's strategy to accommodate the social forces in society. Apart from that, the state's weaknesses are also a manifestation of a state system which is far from being coherent and structurally coordinated due to the complex nature of the state's many organs and also the contesting interests of state leaders and public officials.

Although the state's weaknesses symbolize the erosion of its strength, paradoxically they did little in unsettling the state's presence because of the role of strongmen-politicians in stabilizing this delicate equilibrium. In other words, to achieve order and stability in Sarawak, the central state has to sacrifice some of its power and authority, leading to the weakening of its functions and efficiency. Albeit these weaknesses, the state would continue to persist with untenable policies, abuse of power, corruption, inefficiency and parochialism as the common features of the state system. In fact, these weaknesses act as a glue to sustain the survival of the sort of strong state that Malaysia has become.

POSTSCRIPT

Something shocking was brewing when the 2008 election results were not forthcoming on the tube that night. Except for a string of positive results for BN courtesy of its component parties from Sarawak and Sabah, there was an unusual delay in the announcement of the rest of the results which would normally become public knowledge by 10 p.m. Puzzled and intrigued with the unusual turn of events, many Malaysians turned to the Internet to look for answers. The results posted on the popular and widely read news portal, Malaysiakini, sent shockwaves throughout the country. Several BN's leaders were facing defeat while the opposition had secured a significant number of parliamentary and *negeri* seats throughout the Peninsula. By 3 a.m., the opposition remarkably formed governments in five *negeris* (Kelantan, Penang, Kedah, Selangor and Perak) and historically denied the ruling party a two-third majority in Parliament. Initially, there was a sense of fear that the ruling party would try to overturn the results or even declare a state of emergency in order to nullify Malaysia's twelfth general elections. However, the air of trepidation was subsequently cleared when the ruling party graciously accepted its worst performance since the 1970 election in the wee hours of 9 March.

The failure of the ruling party to defend its two-third majority in Parliament and its defeat in five *negeris* was likened by many political analysts as a tsunami that brought catastrophic effect on the formidable party. Prior to the March 8 election, everyone including the opposition expected BN to maintain its dominance albeit with a reduced parliamentary seats and popular vote. Many analysts doubted the opposition's capabilities to pose a serious challenge towards BN mainly because of the ruling party's ability to exploit the state's resources and the mass media to win elections. This assumption was severely contested in the March 8 election. The people power was too strong that even the practice of vote buying, the manipulation of the electoral process, the ruling party's control over the mainstream media, the exploitation of racial sentiments and the politicization of development could no longer ensure the ruling party's dominance in the elections.

In Sarawak, the political tsunami that erupted in the Peninsula did not reach the shore of this *negeri*. Based on the 2008 election, the SBN under the stewardship of Taib made an almost clean sweep of the thirty-one

parliamentary seats up for grab. As discussed previously in Chapter 6, the schism in the SBN component parties helped to strengthen PBB's grip on Sarawak politics. This scenario was clearly manifested in the 2008 election when the biggest component party in the SBN bullied its way in securing all the three new parliamentary seats (Igan, Sibuti, Limbang), despite SUPP's public demand for one of the seats (Sibuti). With the three new seats, PBB contested in fourteen parliamentary seats while SUPP, PRS and SPDP faced the opposition in seven, six and four seats respectively. Leading the opposition front in Sarawak was PKR with twelve candidates, accompanied by seven DAP, three SNAP and one PAS candidates. In contrast to the Peninsula, the opposition parties in Sarawak failed to form an alliance, thus making their attempt to challenge the ruling party even more difficult.

The SBN's popularity was not only evident from its capability of securing thirty out of thirty-one parliamentary seats but also from the popular vote the party garnered; 64.2 per cent which was 1.6 per cent lower than in 2004 (see Table P.1). The only seat that went to the opposition was Bandar Kuching with Chong Chien Jen from DAP succeeded in increasing his winning majority from 2,041 votes in 2004 to 9,952 votes in 2008. Despite failing to repeat its historic feat in the 2006 *negeri* election, DAP was able to increase its popularity by securing 20.2 per cent votes in contrast to only 15.14 per cent votes in 2006. This result emphatically demonstrates that the storm that hit the Chinese constituencies two years ago was still blowing strong. Apart from

TABLE P.1
The 2008 Sarawak Parliamentary Election Results

Political Parties	Number of Seats Contested	Number of Seats Won	Popular Vote	% Popular Vote
BN				
PBB	14	14	131,243	25.0
SUPP	7	6	119,264	22.8
SPDP	4	4	52,645	10.0
PRS	6	6	33,410	6.4
SNAP	3	0	8,615	1.6
DAP	7	1	105,650	20.2
PAS	1	0	2,923	0.6
PKR	12	0	44,020	8.4
Independents	13	0	26,473	5.1
Total	67	31	524,243	100.0

Source: Adapted from the *Borneo Post*, 9 March 2008.

Bandar Kuching, the other hotly contested seats were Sarikei (51 majority), Limbang (676 majority) and Lubok Antu (1,610 majority). The DAP could have won the Chinese majority seat of Sarikei if not for the five-cornered fight that took place there with three of the Independent candidates were all former DAP leaders. The new seat of Limbang also proved to be a difficult seat for SBN, in particular PBB, when the party managed to squeeze through by a slim majority. Among the factors that almost led to an unlikely triumph to the opposition in this mixed seat were the PBB's choice of candidate, the lack of support from other SBN component parties particularly SPDP (the SNAP's splinter party argued that Limbang was formerly its seat), and the pattern of voting along ethnic lines (PBB was represented by a Malay leader while the opposition from PKR was represented by a Chinese). Lubok Antu, on the other hand, had always shown strong opposition support in the past and it was reflected again in 2008.

In the Muslim *bumiputera* seats, PBB maintained its dominance by defending the seats it contested in 2004 including the new seat of Igan. Two of the eight Muslim *bumiputera* seats were won uncontested by PBB: Tanjong Manis and Igan. There were three new faces fielded by PBB in the Muslim *bumiputera* seats but the candidacy of two personalities sparked the most interests. The two were Norah Abdul Rahman and Sulaiman Taib: both related to the Chief Minister. Norah is the daughter of Rahman Yakub, Sarawak's third Chief Minister, and also Taib's cousin. The political ascendancy of Norah was a symbol of reconciliation between the former and present strongmen-politicians who were not on talking terms since their fallout in the mid-1980s. A few months prior to the 2008 election, Rahman and Taib finally buried their long-standing feud, which had brought a tremendous amount of change to Sarawak's political landscape. Although some quarters believed that the reconciliation of these two influential figures would augur well for Muslim *bumiputera* politics, sceptics perceived it as a move to consolidate Taib's family empire. Furthermore, Rahman's political wits and undying influence would significantly boost Taib's plan to maintain the political dominance of the Muslim Melanau, particularly the strongman-politician's family dynasty. This popular belief was further strengthened when the much-anticipated entry of Sulaiman Taib in electoral politics finally materialized. Despite the Chief Minister's assertion that the nomination of his son was made in response to the request by the PBB's grassroots members in Kota Samarahan, it would be difficult to brush aside the perception that Sulaiman's candidacy was aimed at consolidating the strongman-politician's grip on Sarawak politics.

In terms of popular vote, the influence of PBB in the Muslim *bumiputera* seats declined quite significantly from 82.8 per cent in 2004 to 77.2 per cent

in 2008 (see Figure P.2). As in the Peninsula, the “feel good” factor that accompanied Abdullah Badawi’s campaign in the 2004 election somehow wilted in 2008 albeit with lesser impact on Sarawak Muslim *bumiputera* electorate. Apart from the perceived weakness of Abdullah Badawi, other bread and butter issues also played a role in eroding the Muslim *bumiputera*’s support towards the ruling party. Among the issues were land lease’s renewal rate, inflation and lack of development. Other factors such as Taib’s leadership, corruption and cronyism also contributed to the decline of the PBB’s popularity among the Muslim *bumiputera* voters. Despite losing quite a substantial number of votes, the PBB’s performance was still considered strong especially in comparison to the 1999 election which saw the party polling a mere 68.7 per cent votes (the lowest popular vote since the 1986 election). Interestingly, the PBB’s popularity declined more significantly in several rural constituencies which quite the reverse in 1999. In Batang Sadong and Mukah, for example, the party’s appeal among the electorate recorded the most significant decline with 16.4 per cent and 9 per cent respectively.

Based on the March 8 election, Sarawak was still being dominated by “old politics” that had been constructed by the Muslim Melanau strongmen-politicians. Through the three-thronged strategy of politicizing development, exploiting Islam and manipulating the state bureaucracy, the strongmen-politicians had successfully cajoled Sarawak’s electorate in particular the Muslim *bumiputera*. With “old politics” — racial politics, regional politics

FIGURE P.2
The Sarawak Parliamentary Election Results
in the Muslim Bumiputera Seats, 1999–2008 (%)

Parliamentary Seats	1999		2004		2008		BN’s Vote Change 2004–2008
	BN	Opp.	BN	Opp.	BN	Opp.	
1 Santubong	56.8	43.2	86.1	13.9	80.4	19.6	–5.7
2 Petra Jaya	56.9	43.1	77.1	22.9	79.2	20.8	–2.1
3 Kota Samarahan	70.7	29.3	MTB	—	75.5	24.5	—
4 Batang Sadong	70.9	29.1	91.2	8.8	74.8	25.2	–16.4
5 Batang Lupar	74.6	25.4	MTB	—	77.6	20.6	—
6 Kuala Rajang/ Tanjong Manis	79.4	20.6	MTB	—	MTB	—	—
7 Igan	—	—	—	—	MTB	—	—
8 Mukah	75.3	24.7	81.7	18.3	72.7	27.3	–9.0
Total	68.7	31.3	82.8	17.2	77.2	22.8	–5.6

and “development politics” — being deeply embedded in Sarawak’s society, the opposition found it difficult to break the PBB’s dominance.

The SBN’s particularly PBB’s triumph was expected to be rewarded when the Prime Minister announced his new cabinet line-up. This intent was publicly expressed by senior Sarawak leader, Awang Tengah Ali Hassan,

rakyat sudah membuktikan kesetiaan tidak berbelah bahagi kepada BN hingga Sarawak sentiasa menjadi kubu kuat BN setiap kali pilihan raya diadakan. Mandat dan sokongan padu rakyat itu harus diterjemahkan dengan memperuntukkan lebih banyak perwakilan negeri ini menyertai kerajaan Persekutuan

[the people had shown their undivided loyalty to the BN, allowing Sarawak to become the ruling party’s bastion in this election. The mandate and support given by the people has to be rewarded by giving more seats to the *negeri* representatives at the federal government] (*Utusan Malaysia*, 11 March 2008).

Prior to the 2008 election, the central state cabinet was not being represented by even a single Sarawak Malay leader. Instead, a Muslim Melanau, Effendi Norwawi, was picked by Taib to represent the Muslim *bumiputera* community from Sarawak. There was hope that the March 8 election and the SBN’s commendable performance would change this skewed arrangement.

Despite the anticipation of an increase in the number of Sarawak members of parliament in the central state cabinet, the Prime Minister surprisingly maintained the pre-election arrangement. Only one cabinet seat was allocated to PBB while three other leaders from the party were appointed Deputy Ministers. To the surprise of Muslim *bumiputera* leaders, Douglas Unggah (Natural Resource and Environment) was picked by the Prime Minister while the Deputy Ministership was given to Rohani Karim (Agriculture), Fadillah Yusuf (Science, Technology and Innovation), and Sulaiman Taib (Tourism). The extra Deputy Ministership was given to PBB because the Prime Minister decided to scrap the Parliamentary Secretary’s post. Since 1963, this is the first time Sarawak Muslim *bumiputera* was not being represented at the central cabinet. Another talking point was the appointment of Sulaiman Taib who was a first time parliamentarian but received his appointment due to his close relation with the Chief Minister. Paradoxically, prior to the election, Taib said

beliau perlu tunjukkan dirinya sebagai Sulaiman dan saya percaya beliau boleh lakukan, beliau akan jadi ahli Parlimen biasa, apa yang dia nak buat terpulang padanya

[he has to project himself as Sulaiman and I believe he can, he will be an ordinary Member of Parliament, what he wants to do is up to him] (*Utusan Malaysia*, 21 February 2008).

The political ascendancy of this influential strongman-politician's son sent a strong signal that he could succeed his father. However, his shock resignation from the government and party (PBB's Deputy Youth) in early 2010 put an end to this speculation. The rumour mill, subsequently, went into overdrive when the out of favour Adenan Satem made a comeback into Sarawak cabinet. He suddenly became a hot favourite to be Sarawak's fifth Chief Minister. Then again, only time will tell.

Sarawak was given two full Ministers (another one from SUPP) and nine Deputy Ministers (three from PBB and two each from SUPP, SPDP and PRS). Although SBN leaders were disappointed with the allocation of central cabinet seats, they refused to take a confrontational approach in voicing their displeasure. In fact, the SBN leaders did not even make their disappointment publicly known. This silence was a manifestation of Taib's strong grip on Sarawak politics. Although some quarters criticized the SBN's silence as a sign of weakness, Taib saw his party's success in the March 8 election as an opportunity to reassert his dominance over Sarawak's future. The strongman-politician believed that the ability of the SBN to deliver thirty seats to the national BN was solid enough to convince the central state leaders that the political pact between the central state and Muslim *bumiputera* leaders in Sarawak since 1970 should be preserved. This was more important to Taib than cabinet seats.

The political tsunami that swept through the Peninsula would go down in history as the most defining moment in Malaysian politics. So many unprecedented events took place after the March 8 election with the announcement of Abdullah Badawi's resignation in 2009 as the most significant one. Multiculturalism suddenly becomes the buzzword against the parochial racial politics espoused by many BN leaders. The Malay rulers are trying to flex their muscles in an attempt to assert their authority in the affairs of their respective *negeris*. Fragmentation in the ruling party appears irreconcilable. Some quarters including non-Malay BN leaders are openly challenging the concept of "ketuanan Melayu" and UMNO's dominance. In the context of Sarawak, the political tsunami that swept the Peninsula also has a wide-ranging effect on the *negeri*. First, Sarawak's position in the interplay of national politics became suddenly elevated after March 8. Prior to the election, the largest *negeri* in Malaysia somehow appeared invisible to the eyes of national leaders (both BN and the opposition) especially after the ruling

party's formidable victory in the 2004 election that made several national BN leaders especially from UMNO became excessively arrogant. For example, when PPP President M. Kayveas demanded more seats for the party in the 2008 election, UMNO Vice-President, Ali Rustam, ticked him off by asking the small Indian-dominated party to leave the coalition if it was unhappy with the present seat arrangement. The national opposition leaders, on the other hand, distanced themselves from Sarawak because they knew that it would be almost impossible to challenge the ruling party without enough resources and strong party machineries. Hence, not a single national opposition leader set their foot on Sarawak during the 2008 election campaign since most of them believed that it was a forgone conclusion. Strategically, the opposition parties decided to focus their energy and money on winnable seats in the Peninsula. This scenario changed drastically after March 8. Both the national BN and opposition leaders realized how important Sarawak (and Sabah) turned out to be. This newfound awareness was made even more glaring when the opposition's campaign to entice BN MPs to cross over in order to form the new central government was launched. Popularly known as the September 16 project, Anwar confidently claimed that at least thirty BN's MPs who were mostly from Sabah and Sarawak wanted to cross over thus allowing PR to form the new government. The BN leaders initially brushed aside Anwar's grandiose plan but when September 16 was getting nearer they started to treat the former Deputy Prime Minister's plan quite seriously. Making things worse for the ruling party was the increasing animosity between the component parties especially over their dismal performance in the election. So when one of the BN's smallest component parties, SAPP, decided to leave the ruling party along with its two MPs, the almost impossible September 16 project suddenly became plausible. Although the two SAPP's MPs refrained from joining PR, their presence on the opposition bench put more pressure on the ruling party. Consequently, various baits and incentives were offered by the central state leaders to prevent more BN MPs from crossing over. Apart from offering carrots, threats were also issued to potential defectors. To further quash Anwar's plan, the BN's backbenchers club organized a working tour to Taiwan just several days prior to September 16 as a strategy to hijack the opposition's purported plan to form the new government. Despite the failure of the September 16 project, Sarawak continues to play an important role in dictating the future of Malaysian politics. Hence, at the PKR congress which was held eight months after the 2008 election, Anwar declared that Sarawak would be the opposition's key to Putrajaya. As the next *negeri* election is looming, the national BN will do whatever it takes to defend its fortress while the opposition will have a renewed confidence to break the

ruling party's dominance. This development is a manifestation of Sarawak's increasing influence in Malaysian politics after March 8.

Second, the "new politics" that has increasingly gained currency in the Peninsula during the 2008 elections would inevitably creep into Sarawak, thus affecting the voting behaviour of its electorate. With the advent of "new politics", voters including the Muslim *bumiputera* will not vote solely on the basis of race, religion, development needs and undivided loyalty. They will be more inclined to weigh candidates' or parties' stand on various important issues particularly national or even global issues before making an informed decision. Apart from assessing candidates' and parties' stand on pertinent issues, the Sarawak voters who subscribe to the idea of "new politics" will also find the ideals and principles of democracy and good governance more appealing. The growth of "new politics", however, will not completely displace "old politics" that has been deeply rooted in Sarawak's society. For the time being, the discourse and practices of "old politics" is very much alive and appealing to Sarawak's electorate but its dominance could be contested in the near future. Several factors could contribute to the emergence of "new politics" in Sarawak such as societal transformation which leads to the emergence of the new middle class, higher accessibility to alternative information and the consolidation of political institutions especially the *negeri* bureaucracy.

Third, the political tsunami that swept the country on March 8 sent a strong signal to both sides of the political divide that the people are the real *tuan* in a democracy. For more than five decades, BN had acted like an authoritarian *tuan* while the people watched helplessly from the side. And when the people resisted, the BN government used readily available state resources to curtail and subsequently subdue them. Throughout this period, the BN government exploited the election process as a tool to extract the people's endorsement of its authoritarian rule. The opposition, on the other hand, had irresponsibly resorted to a populist approach in trying to break the BN's dominance in the elections. With the theme of change, the opposition was sometimes guilty of offering false promises which could not be fulfilled if they succeeded in forming the new government. The March 8 election demonstrated that the electorate's dissatisfaction towards the ruling BN could actually be translated into protest votes, leading to the worst defeat faced by the ruling party since the 1970 election. Despite its massive resources, control of the mass media, strong party machineries, usage of repressive laws, rigging of the election process, and gerrymandering of the electoral boundaries, the ruling party could not prevent the people's desire for change. The March 8 election serves as an important lesson not only to the BN government but also to the opposition.

APPENDIX 1

SARAWAK ELECTION RESULTS, 1970–2006

APPENDIX TABLE 1.1
The 1970 Sarawak Parliamentary Election

Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)
Alliance				
Bumiputera	11	5	41,818	17.4
PESAKA	15	2	30,765	12.8
SCA	3	2	10,520	4.4
SNAP	23	9	64,593	26.8
SUPP	18	5	71,293	29.6
Independent	24	1	21,975	9.0
Total	94	24	240,964	100.0

Source: Adapted from Searle (1983, pp. 219–25) and Leigh (1974, pp. 136–37).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.2
The 1970 Sarawak Parliamentary Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

Parliament	BUMI	PESAKA	SNAP	SUPP	IND	Won By
	%	%	%	%	%	
1 P.123 Santubong	47.2	—	10.5	42.3	—	ALL/BUMI
2 P.124 Samarahan	55.5	—	17.4	27.1	—	ALL/BUMI
3 P.127 Simunjan	53.8	—	33.7	—	12.5	ALL/BUMI
4 P.133 Payang	48.1	11.5	7.3	33.1	—	ALL/BUMI
5 P.136 Mukah	36.0	18.8	22.8	13.6	8.9	ALL/BUMI
	48.0	5.9	17.2	25.2	3.7	

APPENDIX TABLE 1.3
The 1970 Council Negeri Election

Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)
Alliance				
Bumiputera	22	12	36,989	14.77
PESAKA	33	8	34,281	13.69
SCA	11	3	26,676	10.66
SNAP	47	12	61,241	24.46
SUPP	40	12	72,178	28.83
Independent	66	1	18,987	7.59
Total	219	48	250,352	100.0

Notes: BN won uncontested in three constituencies (N.24 Matu Daro, N.32 Oya, N.44 Miri).

Source: Adapted from Election Commission, Malaysia (1985, pp. 36–42).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.4
The 1970 Council Negeri Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

	DUN	ALL	SNAP	SUPP	SUPP	IND	Won By
		%	%	%	%	%	
1	S.3 Kuching Barat	50.18	9.98	38.06	—	1.78	BN/PBB
2	S.5 Semariang	54.48	8.86	16.36	—	20.3*	BN/PBB
3	S.7 Sebandi	59.1	—	24.08	16.82	—	BN/PBB
4	S.13 Semera	64.03	25.68	10.29	—	—	BN/PBB
5	S.19 Saribas	42.6	30.22	—	17.21	9.97*	BN/PBB
6	S.21 Kalaka	30.47	25.21	—	42.52	1.8	BN/PBB
7	S.23 Kuala Rajang	44.42	15.27	17.08	7.63	15.6*	BN/PBB
8	S.25 Matu-Daro	65.04	2.4	9.79	10.94	11.83**	BN/PBB
9	S.31 Balingian	31.96	17	17.6	16.24	17.3*	BN/PBB
10	S.32 Oya	28.86	25.59	8.94	25.22	11.39*	BN/PBB
11	S.48 Lawas	39.01	33.81	—	24.19	2.99*	BN/PBB
		47.3	16	15.9	12.8	8	

Notes: * 2 Independent candidates, ** 3 Independent candidates.

APPENDIX TABLE 1.5
The 1974 Sarawak Parliamentary Election

Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)
BN				
PBB	15	9	83,722	31.25
SUPP	9	6	64,235	24
SNAP	24	9	117,503	43.88
Independent	4	0	2,322	0.87
Total	52	24	267,782	100

Source: Adapted from Election Commission, Malaysia (1975, pp. 63–67).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.6
The 1974 Sarawak Parliamentary Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

Parliament	BN	SNAP	Won By
	%	%	
1 P.133 Santubong	66.69	33.31	BN/PBB
2 P.134 Samarahan	72.52	27.48	BN/PBB
3 P.137 Simunjan	59.94	40.06	BN/PBB
4 P.143 Payang	74.44	25.56	BN/PBB
5 P.146 Mukah	66.87	33.13	BN/PBB
	68.21	31.79	

APPENDIX TABLE 1.7
The 1974 Council Negeri Election

Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)
BN				
PBB	32	18	89,534	34.3
SUPP	16	12	54,958	21.05
SNAP	47	18	111,438	42.69
Independent	12	0	5,088	1.96
Total	107	48	261,018	100.0

Source: Adapted from Election Commission, Malaysia (1985, pp. 36–42).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.8
The 1974 Council Negeri Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

	DUN	BN	DAP	IND	Won By
		%	%	%	
1	N.3 Kuching Barat	62.2	37.8	—	BN/PBB
2	N.5 Semariang	78.82	18.38	2.8	BN/PBB
3	N.7 Sebandi	77.91	22.09	—	BN/PBB
4	N.13 Semera	64.32	30.13	5.55	BN/PBB
5	N.19 Saribas	59.87	40.13	—	BN/PBB
6	N.21 Kalaka	62.75	37.25	—	BN/PBB
7	N.23 Kuala Rajang	78.09	21.91	—	BN/PBB
8	N.24 Matu Daro	89.19	10.81	—	BN/PBB
9	N.31 Balingian	76.21	23.79	—	BN/PBB
10	N.32 Oya	61.47	38.53	—	BN/PBB
11	N.48 Lawas	70.19	29.81	—	BN/PBB
		70.3	29.0	0.7	

APPENDIX TABLE 1.9
The 1978 Sarawak Parliamentary Election

Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)
BN				
PBB	8	8	52,222	20.38
SUPP	7	6	64,099	25.01
SNAP	9	9	45,218	17.64
PAJAR	12	0	35,009	13.66
NEGARA	3	0	861	0.34
UMAT	3	0	3,898	1.52
SAPO	1	1	10,150	3.96
Independent	16	0	44,831	17.49
Total	59	24	256,288	100.0

Notes: BN won uncontested in three constituencies (P.135 Padawan, P.153 Baram, P.154 Bukit Mas).

Source: Adapted from Election Commission, Malaysia (1980, pp. 86–89).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.10
The 1978 Sarawak Parliamentary Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

	Parliament	BN	PAJAR	PNRS	UMAT	IND	Won By
		%	%	%	%	%	
1	P.133 Santubong	63.89	35.28	0.83	—	—	BN/PBB
2	P.134 Samarahan	69.75	24.41	—	1.25	4.59	BN/PBB
3	P.137 Simunjan	60.7	36.53	2.77	—	—	BN/PBB
4	P.142 Paloh (Payang)	77.85	22.15	—	—	—	BN/PBB
5	P.146 Mukah	72.97	27.03	—	—	—	BN/PBB
		68.38	29.98	0.72	0.2	0.72	

APPENDIX TABLE 1.11
The 1979 Council Negeri Election

Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)	
BN					
PBB	18	18	76,043	23.94	} 61.23
SNAP	18	16	52,927	16.66	
SUPP	12	11	65,544	20.63	
PAJAR	17	0	16,186	5.1	
DAP	11	0	31,928	10.05	
SAPO	5	0	13,101	4.12	
UMAT	1	0	238	0.07	
Independent	53	3	61,715	19.43	
Total	135	48	317,682	100.0	

Notes: BN won uncontested in four constituencies (N.18 Batang Ai, N.20 Layan, N.31 Balingian, N.34 Meluan).

Source: Adapted from Election Commission, Malaysia (2004b).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.12
The 1979 Council Negeri Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

	DUN	BN	PAJAR	IND	Won By
		%	%	%	
1	N.5 Petra Jaya (Semariang)	79.01	20.99	—	BN/PBB
2	N.6 Satok (Kuching Barat)	77.6	16.94	5.46	BN/PBB
3	N.7 Sebandi	89.94	15.06	—	BN/PBB
4	N.8 Muara Tuang	84.0	16.0	—	BN/PBB
5	N.13 Semera	71.85	28.15	—	BN/PBB
6	N.14 Gedong	63.03	15.17	21.8*	BN/PBB
7	N.19 Saribas	61.83	34.01	4.16*	BN/PBB
8	N.21 Kalaka	78.31	21.69	—	BN/PBB
9	N.23 Kuala Rajang	76.29	10.92	12.79*	BN/PBB
10	N.24 Matu Daro	92.64	7.36	—	BN/PBB
11	N.31 Balingian	uncontested	—	—	BN/PBB
12	N.32 Oya	74.1	2.58	23.32*	BN/PBB
		77.23	17.5	5.27	

Notes: * 2 Independent candidates.

APPENDIX TABLE 1.13
The 1982 Sarawak Parliamentary Election

Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)
BN				
PBB	8	8	28,700	10.71
SUPP	7	5	81,993	30.62
SNAP	9	6	41,295	15.42
DAP	5	2	48,623	18.16
SAPO	1	0	178	0.07
PAJAR	1	0	1,415	0.53
Independent	26	3	65,594	24.49
Total	57	24	267,798	100

Notes: BN won uncontested in six constituencies (P.133 Santubong, P.134 Samarahan, P.139 Lubok Antu, P.149 Kapit, P.150 Ulu Rejang, P.154 Bukit Mas).

Source: Adapted from Election Commission, Malaysia (1983, pp. 85–87).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.14
The 1982 Sarawak Parliamentary Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

Parliament	BN	PAJAR	IND	Won By
	%	%	%	
1 P.133 Santubong	uncontested	—	—	BN/PBB
2 P.134 Samarahan	uncontested	—	—	BN/PBB
3 P.137 Simunjan	83.93	16.07	—	BN/PBB
4 P.142 Paloh	77.5	—	22.5	BN/PBB
5 P.146 Mukah	70.59	—	29.41	BN/PBB
	77.56	4.87	17.57	

APPENDIX TABLE 1.15
The 1983 Council Negeri Election

Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)
BN Plus				
PBB	20	19	77,694	21.52
SUPP	12	11	89,161	24.7
SNAP	18	8	46,741	12.95
PBDS	14	6	33,712	9.34
DAP	7	0	31,246	8.65
BERSATU	4	0	2,540	0.7
Independent	80	4	79,931	22.14
Total	155	48	361,025	100

Notes: BN won uncontested in three constituencies (N.24 Matu Daro, N.32 Oya, N.44 Miri).

Source: Adapted from Election Commission, Malaysia (1985, pp. 36–42).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.16
The 1983 Council Negeri Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

	DUN	BN	DAP	BERSATU	IND	Won By
		%	%	%	%	
1	N.5 Petra Jaya	77.15	—	6.87	15.98	BN/PBB
2	N.6 Satok	86.2	—	13.8	—	BN/PBB
3	N.7 Sebandi	71.65	—	1.27	27.08	BN/PBB
4	N.8 Muara Tuang	80.22	—	5.18	14.6	BN/PBB
5	N.13 Semera	45.86	—	—	54.14**	BN/PBB
6	N.14 Gedong	58.27	—	—	41.73***	BN/PBB
7	N.19 Saribas	48.14	—	—	51.86*	BN/PBB
8	N.21 Kalaka	61.54	—	—	38.46**	BN/PBB
9	N.23 Kuala Rajang	64.11	—	—	35.89	BN/PBB
10	N.24 Matu Daro	uncontested	—	—	—	BN/PBB
11	N.31 Balingian	60.29	11.76	—	27.95*	BN/PBB
12	N.32 Oya	uncontested	—	—	—	BN/PBB
		67.62	1.14	3.93	27.31	

Notes: * 2 Independent candidates, ** 3 Independent candidates, *** 4 Independent candidates.

APPENDIX TABLE 1.17
The 1986 Sarawak Parliamentary Election

Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)
BN				
PBB	8	8	48,367	13.42
SUPP	7	4	93,018	25.81
SNAP	5	5	34,221	9.49
PBDS	4	4	24,822	6.89
DAP	5	1	68,197	18.92
Independent	28	2	90,843	25.2
Total	57	24	360,435	100

Notes: BN won uncontested in two constituencies (P.156 Santubong, P.165 Paloh).

Source: Adapted from Election Commission, Malaysia (1988a, pp. 82–83).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.18
The 1986 Sarawak Parliamentary Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

Parliament		BN	IND	Won By
		%	%	
1	P.156 Santubong	uncontested	—	BN/PBB
2	P.157 Samarahan	77.88	22.12	BN/PBB
3	P.160 Simunjan	66.36	33.64	BN/PBB
4	P.165 Paloh	uncontested	—	BN/PBB
5	P.169 Mukah	60.9	39.1	BN/PBB
		68.15	31.85	

APPENDIX TABLE 1.19
The 1987 Council Negeri Election

Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)
BN				
PBB	23	15	97,950	21.7
SUPP	14	11	117,058	25.94
SNAP	11	2	34,281	7.6
PBDS	21	15	79,548	17.63
PERMAS	21	5	64,152	14.22
DAP	11	0	51,341	11.38
BERSATU	1	0	84	0.02
Independent	16	0	6,840	1.51
Total	118	48	451,254	100

Source: Adapted from Election Commission, Malaysia (1988*b*, pp. 40–45).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.20
The 1987 Council Negeri Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

DUN		BN	PERMAS	BERSATU	IND	Won By
		%	%	%	%	
1	N.5 Petra Jaya	69.02	30.98	—	—	BN/PBB
2	N.6 Satok	69.62	29.78	0.6	—	BN/PBB
3	N.7 Sebandi	66.62	33.38	—	—	BN/PBB
4	N.8 Muara Tuang	74.75	25.25	—	—	BN/PBB
5	N.13 Semera	56.53	43.47	—	—	BN/PBB
6	N.14 Gedong	40.21	59.79	—	—	PERMAS
7	N.19 Saribas	58.39	40.24	—	1.37	BN/PBB
8	N.21 Kalaka	49.47	50.53	—	—	PERMAS
9	N.23 Kuala Rajang	60.64	39.36	—	—	BN/PBB
10	N.24 Matu Daro	59.05	40.95	—	—	BN/PBB
11	N.31 Balingian	59.51	40.49	—	—	BN/PBB
12	N.32 Oya	36.63	63.37	—	—	PERMAS
		59.48	40.32	0.09	0.11	

APPENDIX TABLE 1.21
The 1990 Sarawak Parliamentary Election

Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)
BN 3				
PBB	10	10	101,243	22.04
SUPP	8	4	102,687	22.35
SNAP	5	3	35,754	7.78
PBDS	4	4	22,590	4.92
DAP	8	2	87,017	18.94
PERMAS	9	0	27,618	6.01
PLUS	1	0	162	0.04
Independent	25	4	82,327	17.92
Total	70	27	459,398	100

Notes: BN won uncontested in one constituency (P.164 Lubok Antu).

Source: Adapted from Election Commission, Malaysia (1992, pp. 152–55).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.22
The 1990 Sarawak Parliamentary Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

Parliament		BN	PERMAS	IND	Won By
		%	%	%	
1	P.155 Santubong	78.27	21.7	—	BN/PBB
2	P.156 Petra Jaya (new)	80.69	19.31	—	BN/PBB
3	P.159 Kota Samarahan	87.39	12.61	—	BN/PBB
4	P.161 Batang Sadong (Simunjan)	64.1	34	1.9	BN/PBB
5	P.162 Batang Lupar (new)	54.43	29.4	16.17	BN/PBB
6	P.167 Kuala Rajang	72.53	—	27.47*	BN/PBB
7	P.173 Mukah	77.82	22.18	—	BN/PBB
		74.72	19.17	6.11	

Notes: * 2 Independent candidates.

APPENDIX TABLE 1.23
The 1991 Council Negeri Election

Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)
BN				
PBB	31	27	142,028	29.6
SUPP	17	16	126,107	26.28
SNAP	8	6	32,932	6.87
PBDS	34	7	104,216	21.72
NEGARA	28	0	5,651	1.18
DAP	18	0	46,469	9.69
PERMAS	12	0	16,159	3.37
Independent	19	0	6,209	1.29
Total	165	56	479,771	100.0

Notes: BN won uncontested in two constituencies (N.3 Pantai Damai, N.24 Saribas).

Source: Adapted from Election Commission, Malaysia (1993, pp. 67–78).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.24
The 1991 Council Negeri Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

DUN		BN	DAP	PERMAS	PBDS	NEGARA	IND	Won By
		%	%	%	%	%	%	
1	N.3 Pantai Damai (P.Jaya)	uncontested	—	—	—	—	—	BN/PBB
2	N.4 Sejingkat (new)	77.46	—	—	—	0.85	21.69*	BN/PBB
3	N.5 Tupong (new)	78.2	—	20.49	—	1.31	—	BN/PBB
4	N.6 Satok	84.37	—	15.63	—	—	—	BN/PBB
5	N.12 Asajaya (Sebandi)	68.43	9.18	21.79	—	6.1	—	BN/PBB
6	N.13 Muara Tuang	88.08	—	—	—	11.92	—	BN/PBB
7	N.16 Semera	69.78	—	29.46	—	0.76	—	BN/PBB
8	N.17 Simunjan (Gedong)	63.05	—	1.24	31.42	0.95	3.34	BN/PBB
9	N.18 Sebuyau (new)	62.3	—	13	23.24	0.47	0.99	BN/PBB
10	N.19 Beladin (new)	81.03	—	1.1	—	0.38	17.49	BN/PBB
11	N.24 Saribas	uncontested	—	—	—	—	—	BN/PBB
12	N.26 Kalaka	83.87	—	14.44	—	1.69	—	BN/PBB
13	N.28 Belawai (K.Rejang)	52.93	—	47.07	—	—	—	BN/PBB
14	N.29 Serdeng (new)	56.67	1.07	28.88	—	0.68	12.7	BN/PBB
15	N.30 Matu Daro	74.09	7.08	17.45	—	1.38	—	BN/PBB
16	N.41 Dalat (Oya)	77.8	—	—	21.21	—	0.99	BN/PBB
17	N.42 Balingian	77.42	2.28	—	14.67	—	5.63	BN/PBB
		74.46	1.16	12.73	6.36	1.79	3.5	

Notes: * 2 Independent candidates.

APPENDIX TABLE 1.25
The 1995 Sarawak Parliamentary Election

Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)
BN	1	1	6,731	1.78
PBB	10	10	42,210	11.21
SUPP	7	7	116,403	30.92
SNAP	4	3	44,185	11.74
PBDS	5	5	29,768	7.91
DAP	6	1	78,456	20.84
PBS	3	0	5,536	1.47
Independent	15	0	53,180	14.13
Total	51	27	376,469	100

Notes: BN won uncontested in nine constituencies (P.168 Petra Jaya, P.171 Kota Samarahan, P.174 Batang Lupar, P.176 Lubok Antu, P.177 Betong, P.179 Kuala Rejang, P.180 Sarikei, P.182 Kanowit, P.185 Mukah).

Source: Adapted from Election Commission, Malaysia (1997, pp. 173–74).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.26
The 1995 Sarawak Parliamentary Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

Parliament	BN	IND	Won By
	%	%	
1 P.167 Santubong	86.73	13.27	BN/PBB
2 P.168 Petra Jaya	uncontested	—	BN/PBB
3 P.171 Kota Samarahan	uncontested	—	BN/PBB
4 P.173 Batang Sadong	78.57	21.43	BN/PBB
5 P.174 Batang Lupar	uncontested	—	BN/PBB
6 P.179 Kuala Rajang	uncontested	—	BN/PBB
8 P.185 Mukah	uncontested	—	BN/PBB
	82.83	17.17	

APPENDIX TABLE 1.27
The 1996 Council Negeri Election

Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)
BN				
PBB	30	29	93,795	25.73
SUPP	17	13	109,785	30.12
SNAP	7	7	15,639	4.29
PBDS	8	8	23,620	6.48
DAP	6	3	32,421	8.89
Independent	60	2	89,294	24.49
Total	128	62	364,554	100.0

Notes: BN won uncontested in 19 constituencies (N.3 Pantai Damai, N.12 Asajaya, N.13 Muara Tuang, N.15 Tarat, N.20 Sebuyau, N.27 Layar, N.28 Kalaka, N.30 Belawai, N.34 Repok, N.40 Dudong, N.43 Nangka, N. 47 Kakus, N.48 Pelagus, N.49 Katibas, N.52 Kemena, N.58 Marudi, N.60 Limbang, N.61 Lawas, N.62 Ba'kelalan).

Source: Adapted from Election Commission, Malaysia (1999, pp. 92–111).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.28
The 1996 Council Negeri Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

DUN	BN	IND	Won By
	%	%	
1 N.3 Pantai Damai	uncontested	—	BN/PBB
2 N.4 Demak Laut (Sejingkat)	90.92	9.08	BN/PBB
3 N.5 Tupong	90.45	9.55	BN/PBB
4 N.6 Satok	89.13	10.87	BN/PBB
5 N.7 Semariang (new)	70.93	29.07	BN/PBB
6 N.12 Asajaya	uncontested	—	BN/PBB
7 N.13 Muara Tuang	uncontested	—	BN/PBB
8 N.18 Sadong Jaya (Semera)	67.91	32.09	BN/PBB
9 N.19 Simunjan	90.13	9.87	BN/PBB
10 N.20 Sebuyau	uncontested	—	BN/PBB
11 N.21 Beting Maro (Beladin)	71.27	28.73	BN/PBB
12 N.26 Saribas	56.71	43.29**	BN/PBB
13 N.28 Kalaka	uncontested	—	BN/PBB
14 N.30 Belawai	uncontested	—	BN/PBB
15 N.31 Serdeng	73.45	26.55*	BN/PBB
16 N.32 Matu Daro	82.89	17.11	BN/PBB
17 N.43 Nangka (new seat)	uncontested	—	BN/PBB
18 N.44 Dalat	72.27	27.73	BN/PBB
19 N.45 Balingian	64.08	35.92	BN/PBB
20 N.54 Jepak (new seat)	88.26	11.74*	BN/PBB
21 N.55 Lambir	73.2	26.8*	BN/PBB
22 N.61 Lawas	uncontested	—	BN/PBB
	77.72	22.28	

Notes: * 2 Independent candidates; ** 3 Independent candidates.

APPENDIX TABLE 1.29
The 1999 Sarawak Parliamentary Election

Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)
BN	1	1	11,327	2.21
PBB	10	10	100,062	19.52
SUPP	7	7	129,356	25.24
SNAP	4	4	45,519	8.88
PBDS	6	6	51,749	10.1
Keadilan	13	0	49,774	9.71
DAP	7	0	75,992	14.81
STAR	4	0	23,048	4.5
PAS	1	0	2,438	0.48
Independent	12	0	23,332	4.55
Total	65	28	512,527	100

Notes: BN won uncontested in one constituency (P.178 Betong).

Source: Adapted from Election Commission, Malaysia (2002, pp. 124–26).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.30
The 1999 Sarawak Parliamentary Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

Parliament	BN	Keadilan	STAR	PAS	IND	Won By
	%	%	%	%	%	
1 P.167 Santubong	56.76	43.24	—	—	—	BN/PBB
2 P.168 Petra Jaya	56.87	43.13	—	—	—	BN/PBB
3 P.171 Kota Samarahan	70.72	27.06	—	—	2.22	BN/PBB
4 P.174 Batang Sadong	70.92	6.49	—	22.59	—	BN/PBB
5 P.175 Batang Lupar	74.61	—	25.39	—	—	BN/PBB
6 P.180 Kuala Rajang	79.36	20.64	—	—	—	BN/PBB
7 P.186 Mukah	75.31	24.69	—	—	—	BN/PBB
	68.71	26.16	2.49	2.26	0.38	

APPENDIX TABLE 1.31
The 2001 Council Negeri Election

Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)
BN				
PBB	30	30	174,699	32.53
SUPP	17	16	143,593	26.74
SNAP	7	6	29,329	5.46
PBDS	8	8	34,606	6.44
Keadilan	25	0	37,244	6.93
DAP	13	1	45,326	8.44
STAR	5	0	12,211	2.27
PAS	3	0	2,854	0.53
Independent	63	1	57,220	10.66
Total	171	62	537,083	100

Notes: BN won uncontested in four constituencies (N.11 Batu Kawah, N.25 Batang Air, N.49 Katibas, N.62 Ba'kelalan).

Source: Adapted from Election Commission, Malaysia (2004*a*, pp. 85–97).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.32
The 2001 Council Negeri Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

	DUN	BN	Keadilan	IND	PAS	DAP	Won By
		%	%	%	%	%	
1	N.3 Pantai Damai	66.66	30.27	3.07	—	—	BN/PBB
2	N.4 Demak Laut	71.17	16.15	12.68	—	—	BN/PBB
3	N.5 Tupong	74.25	23.25	2.5	—	—	BN/PBB
4	N.6 Satok	71.02	28.98	—	—	—	BN/PBB
5	N.7 Semariang	67.71	25.63	4.1	5.56	—	BN/PBB
6	N.12 Asajaya	70.6	9.85	19.55	—	—	BN/PBB
7	N.13 Muara Tuang	89.38	10.62	—	—	—	BN/PBB
8	N.18 Sadong Jaya	73.87	—	7.37	18.76	—	BN/PBB
9	N.19 Simunjan	62.56	36.12	1.32	—	—	BN/PBB
10	N.20 Sebuyau	78.61	16.24	5.15	—	—	BN/PBB
11	N.21 Beting Maro	75.33	—	0.9	23.77	—	BN/PBB
12	N.26 Saribas	63.2	25.78	11.02**	—	—	BN/PBB
13	N.28 Kalaka	84.36	13.1	2.54	—	—	BN/PBB
14	N.30 Belawai	58.52	—	41.48*	—	—	BN/PBB
15	N.31 Serdeng	76.1	—	23.9	—	—	BN/PBB
16	N.32 Matu Daro	80.11	—	19.89	—	—	BN/PBB
17	N.43 Nangka	87.37	6.23	6.4	—	—	BN/PBB
18	N.44 Dalat	88.51	—	11.49	—	—	BN/PBB
19	N.45 Balingian	94.64	—	5.36**	—	—	BN/PBB
20	N.54 Jepak	74.31	—	20.78*	—	4.91	BN/PBB
21	N.61 Lawas	95.61	4.39	—	—	—	BN/PBB
		77.04	12.2	8.71	1.8	0.25	

Notes: * 2 Independent candidates; ** 3 Independent candidates.

APPENDIX TABLE 1.33
The 2004 Sarawak Parliamentary Election

Political Parties	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)
BN				
PBB	11	11	80,408	18.98
SUPP	7	6	101,869	24.05
SPDP	4	4	50,350	11.89
PBDS	6	6	46,292	10.93
SNAP	7	0	28,579	6.75
DAP	5	1	67,631	15.97
PAS	1	0	1,035	0.24
Keadilan	1	0	5,420	1.28
STAR	1	0	6,270	1.48
Independent	10	0	35,682	8.43
Total	53	28	423,536	100

Notes: BN won uncontested in six constituencies (P.197 Kota Samarahan, P.201 Batang Lupar, P.206 Kuala Rajang, P.214 Kapit, P.217 Miri, P.219 Bukit Mas).

Source: Adapted from Election Commission, Malaysia (2006, pp. 190–94).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.34
The 2004 Sarawak Parliamentary Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

Parliament	BN	PKR	PAS	IND	Won By
	%	%	%	%	
1 P.193 Santubong	86.11	—	—	13.89	BN/PBB
2 P.194 Petra Jaya	77.09	22.91	—	—	BN/PBB
3 P.197 Kota Samarahan	uncontested	—	—	—	BN/PBB
4 P.200 Batang Sadong	91.23	—	8.77	—	BN/PBB
5 P.201 Batang Lupar	uncontested	—	—	—	BN/PBB
6 P.206 Kuala Rajang	uncontested	—	—	—	BN/PBB
7 P.212 Mukah	81.69	—	—	18.31	BN/PBB
	82.75	8.4	1.6	7.25	

APPENDIX TABLE 1.35
The 2006 Council Negeri Election

Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes Polled (%)
BN				
PBB	35	35	160,331	29.55
SUPP	19	11	113,505	20.92
PRS	9	8	33,014	6.08
SPDP	8	8	34,737	6.4
SNAP	29	1	51,459	9.48
PKR	25	1	47,350	8.73
DAP	12	6	82,134	15.14
PAS	1	0	1,901	0.35
Independent	20	1	18,213	3.35
Total	158	71	542,644	100.0

Notes: BN won uncontested in two constituencies (N.37 Daro, N.50 Dalat).

Source: Adapted from *Borneo Post* (21 May 2006).

APPENDIX TABLE 1.36
The 2006 Council Negeri Election in the Muslim *Bumiputera* Seats

DUN	BN	DAP	PKR	IND	PAS	Won By
	%	%	%	%	%	
1 N.3 Tanjung Datu	91.1	—	8.2	0.7	—	BN/PBB
2 N.4 Pantai Damai	63.1	—	36.9	—	—	BN/PBB
3 N.5 Demak Laut	77.4	—	22.6	—	—	BN/PBB
4 N.6 Tupong	74.9	—	25.1	—	—	BN/PBB
5 N.7 Semariang	65.1	—	34.9	—	—	BN/PBB
6 N.8 Satok	74.8	—	25.2	—	—	BN/PBB
7 N.14 Asajaya	78.7	—	21.3	—	—	BN/PBB
8 N.15 Muara Tuang	80.1	—	15.7	4.2	—	BN/PBB
9 N.20 Sadong Jaya	59.4	—	40.6	—	—	BN/PBB
10 N.21 Simunjan	76.9	—	23.1	—	—	BN/PBB
11 N.22 Sebuyau	74.2	—	25.8	—	—	BN/PBB
12 N.23 Lingga (new)	70.2	—	29.8	—	—	BN/PBB
13 N.24 Beting Maro	59.5	—	—	—	40.5	BN/PBB
14 N.30 Saribas	50.9	—	49.1	—	—	BN/PBB
15 N.33 Kalaka	83.4	—	16.6	—	—	BN/PBB
16 N.35 Belawai	83.9	—	16.1	—	—	BN/PBB
17 N.36 Semop (Serdeng)	78.1	—	21.9	—	—	BN/PBB
18 N.37 Daro (new)	uncontested	—	—	—	—	BN/PBB
19 N.38 Jemoreng (Matu Daro)	65.8	—	—	34.2	—	BN/PBB
20 N.49 Nangka	81.7	—	18.3	—	—	BN/PBB
21 N.50 Dalat	uncontested	—	—	—	—	BN/PBB
22 N.51 Balingian	90.6	—	9.4	—	—	BN/PBB
23 N.58 Jepak	73.3	26.7	—	—	—	BN/PBB
24 N.61 Bekenu (new)	77.2	—	22.8	—	—	BN/SPDP
25 N.68 Bukit Kota (new)	70.5	—	—	29.5*	—	BN/PBB
26 N.71 Bukit Sari (Lawas)	93	—	1.6	5.4	—	BN/PBB
	75.28	1.16	19.22	3.13	1.21	

Notes: * 2 Independent candidates.

APPENDIX 2

SARAWAK PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES, 2004

	Parliament	Total Voters	Percentage of the Voters' Ethnic Background					
			Malay/ Melanau	Chinese	Iban	Bidayuh	Orang Ulu	Others
1	P.192 Mas Gading	28,800	15.7	22.1	6	56.2	—	—
2	P.193 Santubong	23,238	92.1	5.6	2.3	—	—	—
3	P.194 Petra Jaya	39,365	80.6	13.4	5.3	1		0.6
4	P.195 Bandar Kuching	55,012	5.8	90.3	1.8	1.3	0.1	0.7
5	P.196 Stampin	59,809	12.5	76.2	3.9	6.4	0.3	1.2
6	P.197 Kota Samarahan	27,628	64.1	14.1	21.3	0.1	0.4	1.3
7	P.198 Mambong	35,652	7	29.4	—	63.5	—	0.1
8	P.199 Serian	31,601	6.9	11	9.1	72	—	0.1
9	P.200 Batang Sadong	18,496	67.6	6.2	26.2	—	—	0.1
10	P.201 Batang Lupar	19,027	74.4	9.3	16.3	—	—	—
11	P.202 Sri Aman	28,015	18.4	16	65.4	0.1	—	—
12	P.203 Lubok Antu	17,647	1.5	9	89.4	—	—	—
13	P.204 Betong	20,737	35	8.8	56.24	—	—	—
14	P.205 Saratok	24,607	35.4	7.4	56.9	—	0.3	—
15	P.206 Kuala Rajang	28,706	74.8	3.6	21.7	—	—	—
16	P.207 Sarikei	35,880	7.7	67.2	25.1	—	—	—
17	P.208 Julau	19,765	0.9	6.3	92.7	—	—	—
18	P.209 Kanowit	18,181	2.8	14.8	82.5	—	—	—
19	P.210 Lanang	40,100	5.5	73	21.6	—	—	—
20	P.211 Sibü	60,832	17.8	67.9	14	—	0.1	0.2
21	P.212 Mukah	25,853	71.2	9.5	19.3	—	—	—
22	P.213 Selangau	20,459	2.6	4.9	90.6	—	1.9	—
23	P.214 Kapit	23,330	4.6	12	82.6	0.4	0.4	—
24	P.215 Hulu Rajang	17,185	2	1.1	60.6	—	36.2	—
25	P.216 Bintulu	49,374	24	26.3	49	—	0.4	0.3
26	P.217 Miri	74,266	29	49.5	18.4	0.9	2	0.3
27	P.218 Baram	25,361	6.4	12.9	37.9	—	42.8	—
28	P.219 Bukit Mas	35,865	40.3	18.2	20.3	1	20.2	—

Source: *Berita Harian*, 1 December 1999, 22 March 2004.

APPENDIX 3

SARAWAK COUNCIL NEGERI'S CONSTITUENCIES, 2006

	Negeri Constituencies	Total Voters	Percentage of the Voters' Ethnic Background					
			Malay/ Melanau	Chinese	Iban	Bidayuh	Orang Ulu	Others
1	N.1 Opar (new)	7,379	3.16	6.82	11.4	78.6	—	0.03
2	N.2 Tasik Biru	14,983	5.52	27.8	0.01	66.62	0.01	0.03
3	N.3 Tanjung Datu	7,973	51.21	20.97	13.26	14.56	—	—
4	N.4 Pantai Damai	12,073	95.69	3.06	1.17	0.07	—	0.01
5	N.5 DemakLaut	10,080	90.91	7.44	1.58	0.01	—	0.06
6	N.6 Tupong	14,787	75.08	16.96	4.71	2.52	—	0.73
7	N.7 Semariang	13,498	90.21	1.22	8.48	0.02	—	0.07
8	N.8 Satok	10,835	76.53	19.23	3.56	—	—	0.67
9	N.9 Padungan	24,512	5.26	91.79	1.22	0.89	0.14	0.71
10	N.10 Pending	29,503	5.21	90.45	2.24	1.66	0.16	0.29
11	N.11 Batu Lintang	24,783	5.81	84.47	6.33	2.14	0.45	0.79
12	N.12 Kota Sentosa (new)	18,934	10.46	77.15	5.93	5.68	0.27	0.5
13	N.13 Batu Kawah	16,237	21.38	60.08	1.6	16.46	0.15	0.33
14	N.14 Asajaya	12,016	81.24	9.8	8.96	—	—	—
15	N.15 Muara Tuang	14,303	48.5	18.72	19.37	12.98	—	0.43
16	N.16 Bengoh	20,077	6.29	27.83	0.06	65.72	—	0.1
17	N.17 Tarat	15,171	4.28	30.22	—	65.45	—	0.05
18	N.18 Tebedu	11,793	6.83	1.81	—	90.9	0.02	0.45
19	N.19 Kedup	15,994	6.59	18.09	—	73.91	0.06	1.35
20	N.20 Sadong Jaya	6,917	82.91	7.91	9.08	—	—	0.1
21	N.21 Simunjan	9,846	60.03	5.29	34.54	—	—	0.13
22	N.22 Sebuyau	7,549	62.56	3.91	33.51	0.01	—	—
23	N.23 Lingga (new)	7,545	62.88	5.55	31.57	—	—	—
24	N.24 Beting Maro	7,267	90.99	2.28	6.73	—	—	—
25	N.25 Balai Ringin (new)	8,244	3.66	8.47	87.64	0.01	0.01	0.17
26	N.26 Bukit Begunan	7,644	7.89	4.77	87.31	—	—	0.03
27	N.27 Simanggang	9,849	11.5	34.38	54.04	—	—	0.08
28	N.28 Engkilili	9,477	1.56	12.57	85.86	—	—	0.01
29	N.29 Batang Ai	7,997	1.59	3.75	94.66	—	—	—
30	N.30 Saribas	7,145	81.23	4.3	14.43	—	0.03	0.01
31	N.31 Layar	7,415	14.08	13.62	72.12	—	0.16	0.01
32	N.32 Bukit Saban (new)	6,876	25.25	4.58	69.87	—	0.25	0.06
33	N.33 Kalaka	13,379	63.85	10.26	25.85	—	0.01	0.02

34	N.34 Krian	10,429	0.25	3.81	95.92	—	—	0.03
35	N.35 Belawai	8,004	68.1	3.61	28.29	—	—	—
36	N.36 Semop (Serdeng)	9,162	73.88	6.28	19.84	—	—	—
37	N.37 Daro (new)	7,411	63.74	3.12	33.07	0.07	—	—
38	N.38 Jemoreng (Matu Daro)	8,545	92.55	3.91	3.55	—	—	—
39	N.39 Repok	16,750	5.52	77.47	16.69	0.3	—	0.01
40	N.40 Meradong	14,584	2.86	60.11	36.99	—	—	0.03
41	N.41 Pakan	9,034	1.44	6.29	92.27	—	—	—
42	N.42 Meluan	11,169	0.92	3.64	95.42	—	—	0.02
43	N.43 Ngemah	7,849	0.37	7.82	91.81	—	—	—
44	N.44 Machan	9,966	4.31	17.95	77.72	—	—	0.01
45	N.45 Bukit Assek	26,002	1.8	94.95	3.21	0.01	0.01	0.02
46	N.46 Dudong	21,819	9.79	53.23	36.86	0.05	0.06	0.01
47	N.47 Bawang Assan	16,844	4.95	65.25	29.76	—	0.03	0.01
48	N.48 Pelawan	22,559	6.38	90.82	2.51	—	0.13	0.16
49	N.49 Nangka	12,973	53.42	27.12	18.79	0.22	0.19	0.27
50	N.50 Dalat	11,423	74.37	7.34	18.26	—	0.01	0.02
51	N.51 Balingian	11,326	69.89	13.18	16.88	—	—	0.04
52	N.52 Tamin	10,900	0.81	4.13	95.06	—	0.01	—
53	N.53 Kakus	9,417	4.52	3.95	91.33	—	0.19	—
54	N.54 Pelagus	13,898	5.25	16.99	77.1	0.25	0.42	—
55	N.55 Katibas	8,146	2.95	5.48	91.58	—	—	—
56	N.56 Baleh	9,731	0.12	0.07	99.51	—	0.3	—
57	N.57 Belaga	6,691	4.08	3.27	27	—	92.38	—
58	N.58 Jepak	12,049	57.21	6.73	35.94	—	0.12	—
59	N.59 Kidurong	23,726	15.41	50.69	33.06	0.32	0.39	0.13
60	N.60 Kemena	13,338	7.89	4.37	87.05	—	0.68	—
61	N.61 Bekenu (new)	10,095	49.65	16.18	33.85	—	0.32	0.01
62	N.62 Lambir	11,245	42.61	26.79	26.79	0.8	2.87	0.05
63	N.63 Piasau	17,256	19.56	65	13.41	0.24	1.62	0.16
64	N.64 Pujut (new)	20,098	18.54	65.95	10.99	1.91	2.1	0.5
65	N.65 Senadin	16,925	28.79	49.6	17.83	0.86	2.79	0.14
66	N.66 Marudi	12,425	11.25	17.57	60.51	1.39	9.25	0.03
67	N.67 Telang Usan	12,793	1.43	5.18	16.16	0.73	76.42	0.08
68	N.68 Bukit Kota (new)	13,328	53.9	33.55	10.14	0.54	1.77	0.1
69	N.69 Batu Danau (new)	6,889	4.62	2.76	49.31	1.6	41.62	0.1
70	N.70 Ba'kelalan	6,284	3.42	3.45	4.44	0.56	88.06	0.06
71	N.71 Bukit Sari (Lawas)	9,373	71.63	14.49	2.77	0.09	10.83	0.19

Source: *Borneo Post*, 21 May 2006.

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