

History
of
IBAN SETTLEMENTS
around
Kuching City Sarawak

by
Dr. Chang Pat Foh, Ph. D.





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PUSAT DOKUMENTASI MELAYU
DEWAN BAHASA DAN PUSTAKA

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CHAPTER 1

SARAWAK IN GENERAL, GEOGRAPHY AND ITS PEOPLE

(A) Sarawak in General

(I) Introduction

Sarawak is a land of many rivers, rolling terrains and majestic mountains. It has been described as the "Land of Supernatives and Superwonders". Sarawak is also best known as the land of vastness - vast mass of land, vast ethnic diversity and vast natural wonders. The name "Sarawak" was taken from the Sarawak River which flows through Kuching Division.

Sarawak with an area of 124,449.5 sq km. is the biggest state in Malaysia. The State has the longest river (Batang Rajang), the state with the most districts (31 districts) in Malaysia, the world's largest flower (Rafflesia), the world's biggest butterfly (Raja Brooke's Birdwing), the world's largest passage and natural chamber in Gunung Mulu National Park. Even a variety of carnivorous pitcher plants can be found in the State of Sarawak. It has also evidence of the earliest known existence of man in Southeast Asia at Niah Cave, Miri Division. Besides, it also has the rich cultural heritage of the diverse ethnic groups of Sarawak. For record purpose, Sarawak has 27 ethnic groups and it is the only state in Malaysia having the most ethnic groups living together in harmony. Furthermore, Sarawak has an enchanting history which is one of the heroic adventures and romance. It has a patriotic story of brave tribal warriors intensely protective

of their respective territories, engaging in fierce battles to protect their domains against foreign intruders.

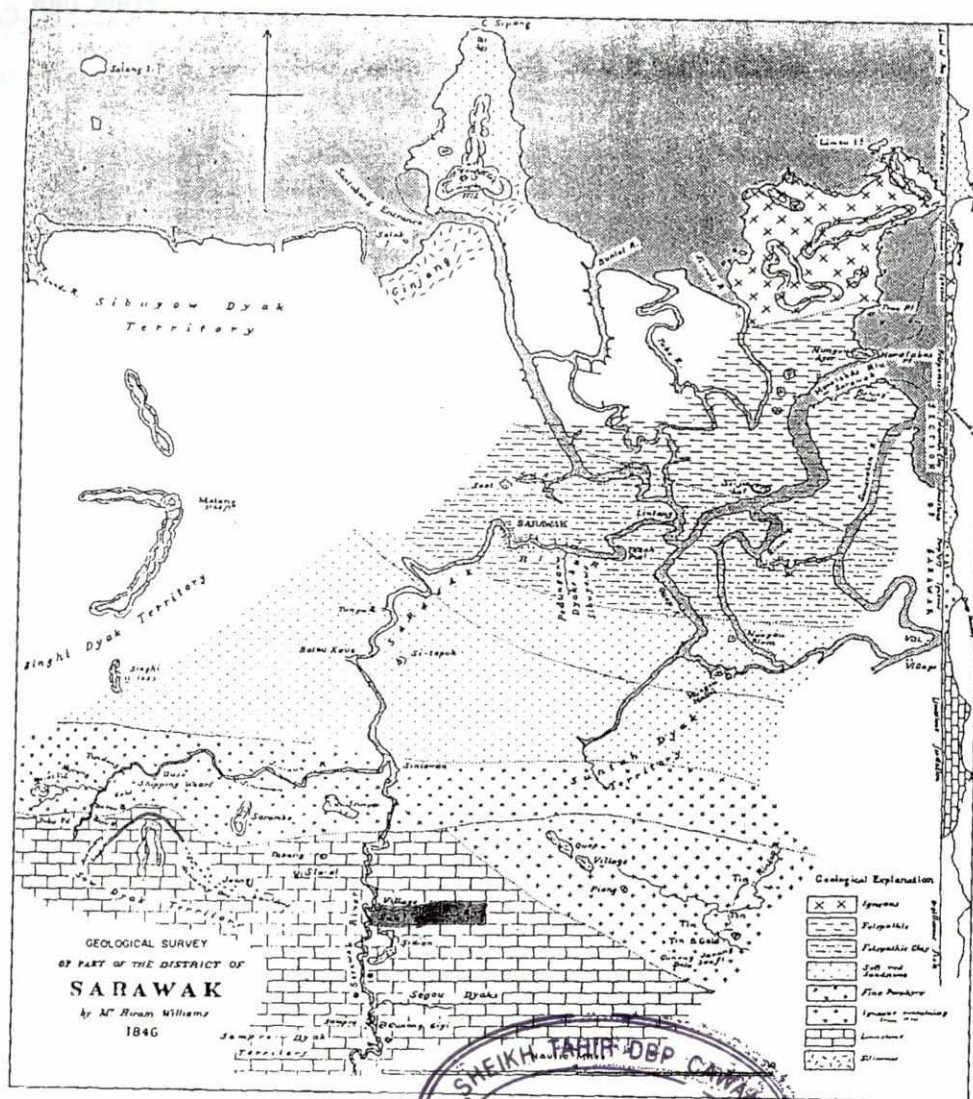
Sarawak saw itself making a sudden leap from being a province under the Brunei Sultanate, a country under the Brooke Regime and, later, a colony under the British Rule to being one of the major dynamic, progressive and bustling business centres and hopefully a developed state in Malaysia by the Year 2020.

The multiracial state is very proud of her outstanding image in the country. Sarawak has her own state flag, state crest, state bird, state fish, state tree and state flower to project herself not only in the country but also to the world at large. Besides, Sarawak has some of the world's richest forests and most spectacular scenery. Indeed, it is difficult to find another place in the world that has so much diversity in nature, people and culture in one package.

Sarawak was not only well-known for the production of large quantity of gold from Upper Sarawak (Bau) since 1760, the discovery of diamond at Landeh in 1876 had also made Sarawak famous in the country. A piece of diamond weighing 72 carats was discovered at a small river along Sungai Sarawak Kanan at Landeh. Lau Kian Huat Company bought the diamond for \$20,000.00 from the miner and presented it to Rane Margaret Brooke, the wife of Second White Rajah of Sarawak, Sir



Geological Survey Map of part of the District of Sarawak published by Hiram Williams in 1846



Charles Brooke, and at that time, the diamond was known as "the Star of Sarawak". The river where the diamond was found was called Diamond River in the map published by Hiram Williams in 1846.

The original Sarawak was a small place when Pengiran Raja Muda Hashim, the representative of Sultan of Brunei gave it to Sir James Brooke as a reward of his service to pacify the Anti-Brunei Movement headed by Datu Patinggi Ali on 24-9-1841. It was only 18,000 square kilometres stretching from Tanjung Datu to Samarahan River.



(II) Origin of the Name of Sarawak

The origin of the name "Sarawak" has three following meanings:

1) "Serawak" - the name of a mineral

In old Bahasa Melayu, "Serawak" means "antimony". In 1823, there was a discovery of antimony in Upper Sarawak, especially in Siniawan area, Bau. Until the closure of the Paku Kong Mine in 1985, more than 90,000 tonnes of antimony had been produced and exported from Upper Sarawak. Since Sarawak River flows through Siniawan area, it is likely that people in the olden



Sarawak Antimony

days referred the river which flows through antimony areas as "Serawak" river. Even when Sir James Brooke wrote home while contemplating his navigational plans in 1839, he was aware of the antimony ore in Sarawak. He wrote, "My intention is first to visit Sarawak - a river whence they get antimony ore..."

There are three tributaries which form Sarawak River Proper i.e. Sungai Sarawak Kanan, Sungai Sarawak Kiri and Sungai Sarawak. Sungai Sarawak is found running at the side of Kampung Bombok at Kuching/Batu Kitang Road. The people of Kampung Bombok claim that the name Sarawak River Proper derives from Sungai Sarawak at their Kampung area. However, upon checking the historical data, it was discovered that the people of Kampung Bombok migrated from Gunung Serembu, Siniawan where the original Kampung Bombok was situated sometime after 1842. By then, the name of Sarawak River Proper was already in existence even before Sir James Brooke became the first White Rajah of Sarawak in 1841. Hence, the claim by the people of Kampung Bombok that the name Sarawak River Proper derives from Sungai Sarawak at Kampung Bombok is difficult to be accepted.

2) "Serawak" - the name of pineapple

Another version related to the production of pineapple along Sungai Sarawak especially around Batu Kawa area. In the olden days, the pineapple from the area was extraordinary sweet and, hence, it was called "Nanas Serawak".



3) "Serawak" - "Give it to You"

There was a legend being related by the old people in the olden days that when Brunei authority took over Sarawak River area in the 15th century, the local people at that time welcomed the move. Hence, they agreed and said, "Serah ke Awak" which means "Give it to you". Eventually, "Serah ke Awak" became "Serawak" (Sarawak) until today.

A check on the meaning of Serawak (Sarawak) from Kamus Dewan (Dictionary published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 1997 Third Edition) reveals that there are two meanings to the word "Serawak" i.e. "Antimony" or "Sweet Pineapple" (Nanas).



Version 1 of the origin of Sarawak is therefore more reliable because antimony was discovered in Upper Sarawak in the early 19th century and Sarawak River flows through Upper Sarawak (Siniawan) and Kuching District before reaching the South China Sea.

(II) State Flag

In 1998, Sarawak celebrated the 25th year of independence since forming part of the Federation of Malaysia, a new State Flag was adopted to reflect the time, the mood and the aspiration of the people of Sarawak. The design of the State Flag reflects the rich heritage of Sarawak. It consists of a diagonal red and black Terabai (shield) with a yellow background.

Sungai Sarawak flows along the side of Kampung Bombok, Kuching / Batu Kitang Road.



Sarawak State Flag

The Star symbol also embodies the aspiration of the people of Sarawak in their quest to improve their quality of life.

The present Sarawak Flag was hoisted at Kuching State Stadium on 31-8-1988 by Ketua Menteri Sarawak, YAB Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri (Dr.) Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud on the occasion of the State 25th Anniversary of Independence within Malaysia.

Red Colour: it symbolises courage, determination and sacrifices of the Rakyat in their tireless pursuit to attain and maintain progress and esteem in the course of creating a model State;

Yellow Colour: it denotes the supremacy of Law and Order, unity and stability in diversity;

Black Colour: it represents the rich natural resources and wealth of Sarawak such as petroleum, timber, etc which provide the foundation for the advancement of her people;

The yellow nine pointed Star denotes the nine divisions where the Rakyat lives in harmony.

(IV) State Anthem

The State Anthem symbolizes the character and spirit of Sarawak and inspires love and loyalty among the people. This new anthem *Ibu Pertiwiku* replaces *Sarawak Bahagia* and was approved by the State Legislative Assembly on 23-5-1988. The original song upon which *Ibu Pertiwiku* was based is the composition of a local musician and son of Sarawak and was widely popularized in the 1950s. The melody and lyrics have, however, been improved to reflect the love and patriotic feeling of the people of Sarawak.

(V) State Crest

The State Crest consists of the symbol of a ceremonial Burung Kenyalang with its wings and tails each comprising 13 strips to represent 13 states in Malaysia and Bunga Raya appearing on each of the outer sides of the legs. The bird stands on a ribbon with the





About The Author

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Dr. Chang Pat Foh was born at 15th Mile Bazaar Kuching / Serian Road near Kampung Seratau on 5-1-1945. He is the holder of Diploma in Legal Studies (W. Australia), B.Sc. Sociology (CHU, USA) and Ph.D. Sociology (BIU, USA). He joined Sarawak Government Service in May 1967 as a Sarawak Administrative Officer and served in Sri Aman (Simanggang), Roban and Saratok. He had served as District Officer, Serian for two terms (1981-1982 and 1983-1985) and District Officer, Bau (1985-1987). He was the Principal Assistant Secretary for Ministry of Land and Minerals, Principal Assistant Secretary for Ministry of Resource and Planning, Principal Assistant Secretary for Ministry of Social Development and Assistant Director of Sarawak Agriculture Department from 1987 to 2000. Now he is a part time lecturer and a local writer for Sarawak, Malaysia.

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Dr. Chang Pat Foh is the author of the following local books:-

- (1) "Chinese Festivals, Customs and Practices in Sarawak" published in 1993;
- (2) "The Land of Freedom Fighters" published in 1995;
- (3) "Heroes of the Land of Hornbill" published in 1997;
- (4) "Legends and History of Sarawak" published in 1999;
- (5) "History of Bidayuh in Kuching Division, Sarawak" published in 2002; and
- (6) "History of Serian Bidayuh in Samarahan Division, Sarawak" published in 2004.

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