

“Foreigners’ Nationalism” in Malaysia: Donald Stephens and K. Bali in Making of Sabah Nationhood

By

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INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the formation of national consciousness in a Colonial State previously known as the British North Borneo and now known as the State of Sabah, Malaysia. Before the demarcation of Sabah as North Borneo by the British in the 1880's, there had never been a unified political entity in the region of Sabah. In the 1950's movements emerged in an attempt to establish a nation-state in the region by adopting the colonial borders of North Borneo. This indicates the emergence of a sense of “Sabah national consciousness” or “Sabah nationhood”.

The emergence and development of the national/ethnic consciousness in Sabah has attracted many scholars, including Margaret C. Roff, the writer of “The Rise and Demise of Kadazan Nationalism”¹ and *The Politics of Belonging* and Sabihah Osman, the writer of “Malay-Muslim Political Participation in Sarawak and

Sabah, 1841-1951". Based on the pioneering work on Kadazan nationalism by Roff, Donald Stephens, a Kadazan and the first Chief Minister of the State of Sabah first advocated and promoted the Kadazan nationalism. Roff pointed out that Stephens, being a local born child with an Australian father and a Kadazan mother, became the first president of the Kadazan association², started a "Kadazan Corner" written in the Kadazan language in his newspaper, and campaigned for the replacement of Dusun with Kadazan as the name for the non-Muslim indigenous people of Sabah. Roff added that with the guide and help of Stephens, the Kadazans were successful in proposing to the Colonial Government to celebrate the Kadazan Harvest Festival making it a public holiday in 1960. A political party was founded by the Kadazans in 1961 with Stephens as the president.

However, Roff's theory was challenged as recent findings suggest the possibility of Stephens being a Sabah nationalist rather than a Kadazan nationalist. Stephens' parents were locally born Eurasians and were brought up with little Kadazan cultural influence. In fact, Stephens did not have any intention to start a "Kadazan Corner" in his newspaper. The suggestion came from his staff. According to Herman Luping, Stephens was not the founder of the Kadazan association. He only joined the association several years after its establishment.

In this paper, I shall trace the root of how the idea of Sabah nationhood came about before its independence by focusing on Stephens and his co-advocator of the Sabah nationhood, namely K. Bali. I shall also trace their activities and influence in initiating Sabah nationalism until the eve of the independence. It is also my intention to find that how Stephens tried to mould the Kadazan party to his original idea of Sabah nationalism after independence and to show that Stephens was a Sabah nationalist at heart. In the conclusion, Stephens' thoughts on nation-building will also be examined in relation to the current political development of Sabah through the concept of "foreigners' nationalism".

STEPHENS IN SEARCH OF A SABAH NATION

STEPHENS AND "ANAK SABAH"

Donald A. M. Stephens was born in 1920 in Kudat, the northern district of Sabah, as the first son of Jules Stephens and Edith M. M. Cope³.

Jules was born as a rather unwanted child. His father, Ernst A. Pavitt, was a Caucasian from New Zealand who was stationed in Sabah as a colonial administrator. Ernst raised up his seeds in Sabah with a Kadazan lady called Kwai from Papar, the west coast district of Sabah, but Ernst kept Jules and his sister away from their mother and him by putting them in Christian Missionary schools in Sandakan. Thus Jules was brought up just like any other European child, receiving an English education under Christian influence, while receiving minimal influence from the Kadazan culture, though he had inherited Kadazan blood from his mother.

As a deserted child who was rejected from his family particularly by his father, it was impossible for Jules to based on his Caucasian blood to search for his identity. Rather Jules rejected his lineage with "white men"⁴ by abandoning the family name of Pavitt and giving himself new surname, Stephens, taken from his middle name. Thus it would not be an exaggeration to say that the Stephens family was established with the sense of anger toward white men who sojourned to Sabah and indulged in their passion to make use of the land and the people of Sabah without considering the land as their home. With this antipathy towards the white sojourners, Jules Stephens was nobody but an "Anak Sabah" (Son of Sabah) in spite of his features and lifestyle as a white man.

More or less the same story can be told about Edith, who only knew her mother who was a Japanese residing in Sandakan and never knew who her real father was.

As a son of Jules and Edith, Donald Stephens (hereafter Stephens) was brought up as Anak Sabah by his parents, though naturally Stephens too had the Caucasian's feature and was brought up with English education and Christian influence. This led Stephens to the idea of Sabah nationhood whereby anyone, regardless of their ethnic origins, should be regarded equally as Anak Sabah, if they regarded Sabah as their home and the place where they want to live.

Stephens' idea of familyhood was relevant to his idea of Anak Sabah as well. Apart from the children by his marriage with June Lutter in 1958, Stephens fostered some adopted children. For example, John was adopted by Stephens as early as six years before Stephens married June, and spent most of his life with Stephens until he died with Stephens in an air crash in June 1976. Considering the experience of Stephens' parents who were rejected by their parents, this indicates Stephens' idea of familyhood was based not on the inborn lineage but

on the will to be a family, just as Anak Sabah in Stephens' thought was based on the will to be an Anak Sabah but not on the inborn ethnic origin.

Stephens' idea of Anak Sabah could clearly be seen in his article written in December 1960 in a local Chinese daily newspaper. In the article titled "If I were a North Bornean Chinese", Stephens as an imagined North Bornean Chinese confessed his will to become an Anak Sabah. Unquestionably this article was meant as a call to the Chinese in Sabah to think of themselves as Anak Sabah while at the same time calling on the natives of Sabah to accept them as Anak Sabah, if they would be willing to live as such.

I know my ancestors had left China long time ago to look for an "oasis" in overseas. They found a piece of green when they arrived in North Borneo. It was a wild yet fertile land. My ancestors had worked their fingers to the bones ever since to establish the economic status of today. This is my home. This piece of land in this country is the blessing to me. No one can deny my right to belong to this land. This is the land which my ancestors, and later myself, had created from the wild forest!

No one, even my native brothers, can say that I have no right to possess this corner of this land. I have my right on this land, just as an American has his right on America and an Australian on Australia. My ancestors were brave pioneers. They ventured themselves to arrive this wild land, and created the new homeland for themselves and inherited it to their descendants. Their remains rest in this land. What else do I need to prove I am native to this land? How am I different from so called natives?

[Overseas Chinese Daily News 14 December, 1960]

The article reflected a cry of Stephens himself, who tended to be regarded as a white man and yet longing to be recognised as an Anak Sabah.

It should be noted that the above article showed ethnic origin was not given any significance in Stephens' definition of Anak Sabah. Anak Sabah in the local Malay context originally meant the indigenous peoples of Sabah and one was not regarded as an Anak Sabah if the person had a foreign origin. But Stephens transformed it into the new concept of the Sabahan by literally interpreting it as "Son of Sabah", meaning a person who was born and brought up in Sabah and regarded Sabah as his home.

STEPHENS' PLAN FOR INDEPENDENCE

While most people in Sabah could not imagine Sabah's independence a reality, Stephens had already planned for Sabah's independence. Stephens thought Sabah alone would not survive in the world of political reality and thought Sabah would need to establish closer relationships with its neighbouring countries such as Sarawak and Brunei, and eventually with the Federation of Malaya and Singapore. Stephens repeatedly requested the Colonial Government to prepare for independence as according to the plan⁵.

However Stephens did not follow the paths of nationalists in other Asian countries. Stephens was not enthusiastic to resort to the mass mobilisation as a means to pursue independence and was unwilling to form a political organisation. Stephens' unwillingness came from the fear that the people of Sabah would be politically divided accordingly to their ethnic boundaries if political parties were formed then.

It is necessary that the people must be educated to understand the true meaning of the vote before it is put into their hands. Unless this can be assumed elections here can mean the beginning of a clear line of division among the races.[NBNST 3 October, 1960]⁶

Stephens' fear was not baseless. If political parties and elections were introduced in Sabah where the inhabitants are of various ethnic origins, the most possible consequence would be to follow the political development in Malaya where three political parties were being formed according to the ethnic boundaries. The political leaders in Malaya were fortunate enough to form an alliance among themselves, but there was no guarantee to have such an alliance if ethnic based political parties were formed in Sabah. Moreover, should such an alliance be formed, it could not be regarded as the ultimate goal to establish a unified Sabah nation. Indeed, this was what Sarawak had been experiencing at that time. The article written on the current political development of Sarawak shows how Stephens was seriously concerned on the matter.

Maybe Sarawak will end up with three communal parties or organisations like they have in Malaya. This can be a good thing, if the leaders of the three communal parties are Sarawak minded enough to sink their per-

sonal ambitions and animosities and work together as have UMNO, the MCA, and the MIC in Malaya. [NBNST 20 August, 1960]

A question arises. How did Stephens see it possible to realise his dream of a Sabah nation? Contrary to his clear vision on the frame of independence and tireless effort to express it through his articles, Stephens never disclosed his vision on the making of a Sabah nation. This should be interpreted as Stephens' incapability to think of a means to integrate the inhabitants of Sabah with various ethnic backgrounds into a unified Sabah nation. It was K. Bali who brought to Stephens the idea of fostering a nation with a common national language.

K. BALI'S CONCEPT OF A SABAH NATION

K. BALI AND "BANGSA SABAH"

It has been emphasised in various studies on the development of the Kadazan nationalism that Stephens became the president of the Kadazan association in 1958, while there has been little mention on the establishment of another cultural organisation, the Generation of the New Style (Angkatan Gaya Baru; AGABA), established in 1958 with Stephens as the president⁷. Stephens for the first few years was more committed to the AGABA than the Kadazan association until the situation changed in 1960 as we will see later in this paper.

As in other voluntary organisations including the Kadazan association, it was the secretary-general who was in charge of the day-to-day activities of the organisation instead of the president, who decided the overall policy of the organisation. In this sense, it was K. Bali, the editor of the Malay corner of the North Borneo News & Sabah Times, who was the secretary-general of the AGABA at that time.

K. Bali, or Tenh Beng Chuan, was born in 1927 in Tendong village in the Pasir Mas district in Kelantan⁸. Tendong village is well known for its Peranakan Chinese, or localised Hokkien speaking Buddhist Chinese who often marry local Buddhist Siamese (Thais), who live in a settlement beside a Malay settlement in the village, and habitually speak Malay with a Kelantanese accent⁹. There was no better example than K. Bali's parents. K. Bali grew in the village in an environment where the Peranakan Chinese were well mixed with the

neighbouring Malays and was treated as their brothers, as no other differences could be found between K. Bali and his Malay friends in the village, except for his religion and his ethnic origin.

This sense of brotherhood was bolstered by the thought of Indonesian nationalism. K. Bali attended a Malay school in the village in 1939 until he had to leave school to help his mother with his father's death in 1944. There, K. Bali was encountered with the Indonesian nationalism through books and magazines, and K. Bali saw his ideal in the "Bangsa Indonesia" or Indonesian nation which was a union of the peoples with different ethnic origins by using the Malay as the common language. K. Bali dreamt of the "Bangsa Malaya" in Malaya.

But the situation of post-war Malaya went otherwise and went to strengthen the ethnic polarisation. The Malayan Union's plan to treat all the inhabitants as equal Malayan citizens encountered strong criticism from the Malays and this caused the establishment of the ethnic based political party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in 1946. In other words, the idea of Bangsa Malaya was rejected by the Malays to make way for Bangsa Melayu.

Kelantan too was never free from the tide of the ethnic polarisation¹⁰. This made K. Bali live as a Chinese. On returning to school in 1946, K. Bali was enrolled in a Chinese school instead of the Malay school he attended before the war. K. Bali could expect to be accepted as a Malay by the Malay community if he became a Muslim, but it would affect his family ties. Under this circumstances, K. Bali at the age of 14 decided to leave his village and shifted to Sungai Padi, a Malay-dominated village in the south of Thailand in 1948. There he became a Muslim and started his new life as a Malay by using his pen name, K. Bali.

K. BALI IN SABAH

His new life as a Malay in Thailand, however, did not last long. K. Bali was ousted from Thailand under the suspicion of writing an article with political intent in a Malay newspaper and returned to Kelantan in 1954. With no place to return to in his village as he had become a Muslim, K. Bali joined a touring theatre named *Booty Surya Negara* and went on a tour around Malaya and Borneo as an information agent for the theatre, with a hope of migrating to Singapore, where the ethnic polarisation seemed less severe than Malaya.

This brought the casual visit of K. Bali in Sabah in 1956, where K. Bali found a land free from ethnic polarisation and people lived in harmony in spite of the ethnic diversity among the inhabitants. Moreover, he found that Malay was widely used as the lingua franca of the region. There K. Bali saw the possibility of establishing "Bangsa Sabah" by using Malay as the common language, just as Bangsa Indonesia had succeeded. K. Bali accepted Stephens' offer to oversee the Malay corner of his newspaper in April 1956. Thereafter, he advocated the concept "Bangsa Sabah" to the people of Sabah through the Malay corner.

The concept of Bangsa Sabah had influenced Stephens greatly. K. Bali called the territory "Sabah" instead of "North Borneo" and this was accepted by Stephens. Stephens, who at the outset had no hesitation to call the territory "North Borneo" even though he named his newspaper the Sabah Times in 1953, suggested the change of name from North Borneo to Sabah in December 1959 [NBNST 7 December, 1959]. Though this motion was not passed in the Legislative Council, the idea of a common language which could be used to establish a nation with ethnic diversity was Stephens' greatest hope. There were some differences between Stephens' "Anak Sabah" and K. Bali's "Bangsa Sabah". However, the combination of the two ideas gave rise to the idea of a Sabah nation.

SABAHAN AND KADAZAN

AGABA AND THE AGABA FESTIVAL

Apart from rallying support from the readers through the Malay corner, K. Bali took an initiative to establish a cultural organisation, AGABA, in 1957 (recognised by the Colonial Government in 1958). AGABA, named after the group of literators called "Angkatan 45" who took part in the Indonesian independence revolution, was established with the aim to unite the Sabahan people, especially the natives of Sabah, by advocating the slogan "Language, Art and Culture" [NBNST 4 October, 1958].

One of the most significant achievement of AGABA was organising AGABA Festival (Pesta AGABA) in 1957, which was held annually since. Apart from programmes to promote the local culture such as arts & literature contests, the AGABA Festival also offered programmes similar to the annual Tamu Besar,¹¹

including horticultural shows, free cinema shows, football matches and the like. On top of all these, beauty queen contests were also organised and became very popular among the Sabahans.¹²

After seeing the success of the first AGABA Festival, Stephens urged the Colonial Government to make AGABA Festival a public holiday for the native. After a few years of the such Festivals, the Colonial Government in February 1960 decided to make Festival a public holiday. This was a great achievement for both Stephens and K. Bali who strove to create a Sabah nation through the activities of AGABA. Unfortunately, both Stephens and K. Bali were soon to learn that this was the beginning of the decline of AGABA.

FROM AGABA FESTIVAL TO HARVEST FESTIVAL

The year of 1960 saw the rise of Kadazan nationalism driven by the Kadazan associations. The most significant event for the rise of Kadazan nationalism was making AGABA Festival a public holiday.

As mentioned earlier, AGABA Festival was given recognition by the Colonial Government as a Native Festival Day in February 1960. Both Stephens and K. Bali welcomed the decision and began preparing for AGABA Festival scheduled in June 1960. Kadazan leaders from Penampang took this opportunity to hold the native festival in various districts in Sabah. As the Native Festival Day drew closer, the Kadazan associations proposed to hold the Native Festival throughout Sabah. Stephens as the president of Penampang Kadazan association repeatedly assured the people that the Native Festival was a festival for Sabahans in spite of their ethnic origin. Hence, AGABA Festival was postponed to make way for the Harvest Festival and it seemed that the Native Festival Day was held for the Kadazans only.

In fact, the Harvest Festival was a combination of a Kadazan ceremony called *magavo* for celebrating the post harvest and the great feast of *moginakan*.¹³ Other variety in programmes included horticultural shows, free cinema shows, football matches, and beauty queen contests [NBNST 24 June, 1960]. The Harvest Festival (Pesta Kaamatan) is celebrated throughout Sabah until now and is recognised as the Native Festival, and it is a public holiday in the State.

DUSUN OR KADAZAN?

The replacement of AGABA Festival to the Harvest Festival did not seem to disappoint Stephens much. Stephens did not see the festival, promoting the Kadazan consciousness among the non-Muslim natives, as an obstacle to forge a Sabah nation. For Stephens, a Sabah nation should be created encompassing the various cultural differences in the State.

By the first Harvest Festival, Stephens was convinced by other Kadazan leaders to change name "Dusun" to "Kadazan" as the name "Dusun" seemed inferior to the name "Kadazan". In the first State-wide Harvest Festival held in June 1960, Stephens wrote an article in North Borneo News & Sabah Times entitled "Dusun or Kadazan?". This was the first time Stephens officially expressed his view on the issue. An extract of Stephens' article as quoted below:

If the Kadazans everywhere in the country can be united into one solid whole, the Kadazan people will be able to be in a better position to have their voice properly heard, and given its due weight, and when [the] time comes, they will also then be able to play their part in the affairs of this country in a more fitting manner.

[NBNST 30 June, 1960]¹⁴

This article, disconnected from its context somehow, has been considered to suggest Stephens' thought of the Kadazan nationalist. However, it was not Stephens' intention to force the use of the name Kadazan replacing the name Dusun. Rather Stephens was fond of the name Dusun:

Although the harvest is long past and some of our people are already beginning to plough up the land for planting, we are today celebrating our harvest, or maybe I should be more correct in saying, our Padi Festival. The Kadazans are known for their love of the land — and they were in fact given the name Dusun by others because of this love of the land, Dusun meaning people who work on the land.

[NBNST 4 July, 1960]

What was important to Stephens was to give the Kadazans a sense of pride. It was not Stephens' intention that the Kadazans should be considered as the only native people of Sabah. What Stephens wanted was for the Kadazans to enjoy a status no less than other ethnic groups in Sabah. He wanted the Kadazans to

have a part to play in building a Sabah nation. He even tried to persuade the local Chinese in Sabah to join AGABA, by calling them "the non-indigenous Sabahans". This was his idea of a united Sabah nation.

His article of "Dusun or Kadazan?" drew much attention. Letters were sent to the North Borneo News & Sabah Times from by Sabahans all over Sabah to express their views¹⁵. Although not all letters were published in the papers they were sufficient to show how complex the issue was. Some favoured the name Dusun while some argued that they should be Sabahans and there were some who thought they should be categorised as Malay because Borneo was a part of the Malay archipelago. It was almost impossible to reach a conclusion on how the community should be called. Finally Stephens had to write again to reassure the people that he did not have a strong preference for the name Kadazan to replace Dusun.

There the matter now rests: if the people concerned prefer to be called Dusun, there is nothing to stop them and if they prefer to be called Kadazan they are of course free to do so. The time may come when all the people concerned prefer to go under one name Dusun or Kadazan, until then no harm done.

[NBNST 25 July, 1960]

STEPHENS AS LEADER OF THE KADAZANS

NATIONAL LANGUAGE: ENGLISH OR MALAY?

From the success of the Harvest Festivals, Stephens preferred to appear in public as the president of the Kadazan association rather than as the president of the multi-ethnic AGABA.

One of the reasons for Stephens' preference was due to the apparent fact that the integration of Sabah nation through AGABA was not progressing well. After being ruled by non-Muslim Europeans, the Muslim population of Sabah felt that their way of life as Muslims were well safeguarded only under a Muslim leadership, hence they sought for leaders who were Muslims. Therefore it became obvious that AGABA, with Stephens as its president, would not be appropriate to unite the peoples of Sabah, including Muslims. The leaders in AGABA were well aware of this fact [NBNST 20 April, 1960].

Another reason was in relation to the national language of Sabah. As stated earlier, K. Bali had intentions of forming Sabah nation with Malay as the national language, imitating the successful implementation of Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian national language). However Stephens was of the opinion that Sabah nation should adopt the English language as the national language.

Malay is already in many ways the lingua franca of the community. ... but can Malay become a national language? Malay is not yet practical enough a language to act as the thread to knit all races together in this country although it is, and will remain, a very important language. Nor can Kadazan or Chinese ever claim priority in any estimate made regarding their use as a national language. Kadazan has only been recently made into a written language and Chinese will not be acceptable by the other races. There remains English.

There is also another greater advantage, one which is important: it is what may be termed a "neutral" language, it need not cause jealousy on the part of any race.

[NBNST 26 September, 1960]

It was not because Stephens was brought up with an English education, but because Stephens thought it to be the best way to uplift the life of the people of Sabah to a standard comparable to those of the United States of America, one of the most advanced countries in the world at that time. This idea was came about during Stephens' tour in the United States¹⁶. In the latter half of 1959, Stephens visited the United States by invitation of the Department of Defence of the country. Stephens was impressed by the wealth of the country, the gap between the whites and the blacks, and the situation the American Indians were in. What surprised Stephens the most were the blacks; there already emerged some blacks who could rival the whites though they had started with nothing when their ancestors were brought to the country some generations ago. This was only possible through the unified national education system. If the Black Americans could do it, then there was no reason why the people in Sabah could also not do it. By standardising the education system through the use of one national language, the inland peoples in Sabah could catch up with more advanced peoples such as the coastal Kadazans, Chinese, and Muslims. And if they used English as the national language, it would not be impossible for them to

catch up with the Americans, as the Black Americans had proven. Therefore Stephens thought the national language of Sabah must be English.

The people of all races want to see that we merge into one people and have agreed that this can best be done by the use of a common or national language. It has been generally accepted that the English language, not because we are British Colony and want to carry favour with the British, not because we have no pride in our Asian heritage, ... but because we prefer to listen to the dictates of common sense and know that English would be the vehicle which can bring us forward in the quickest possible way.

[*NBNST* 11 February, 1961]

This coincided with the intention of the leaders of the Kadazan associations, who were mostly from Penampang. They acknowledged their task to uplift the standard of living of fellow non-Muslim natives. With the strong influence from Catholic and English education, Penampang Kadazans thought that the uplifting of the standard of living of the interior people was best done by giving them English education and by introducing the Christian faith, following the Europeans' pattern. On this point, both Stephens and other Kadazan leaders from Penampang consented in unity.

STEPHENS LEADS THE KADAZAN PARTY

In March 1960, The Kadazan associations from all over Sabah met in Jesselton and decided to form a national-level central body called United National Kadazan Organisation (UNKO). The UNKO was not meant to be a political party at that time. Instead, Stephens had planned to name the political party in Sabah as United Sabah National Organisation (USNO), the party for the Sabah nation.

This plan changed when a plan to form a federation called Malaysia was announced in May 1961 by Tunku Abdul Rahman, Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya. Rahman expressed his wish to form a closer relationship between the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, and the Bornean Territories of Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei. Initially, Rahman did not take into account the aspiration of the Bornean people and was not well received by the Bornean leaders including Stephens and other Kadazan leaders¹⁷. At the height of opposition to Rahman's

plan in July 1961, UNKO was going through its final stage of inauguration. UNKO was formed as a political party in August 1961, different from its original plan to be the central body for the cultural associations throughout the State.

It was not Stephens' intention to form an ethnic based political party. Indeed, Stephens was said to have examined the possibility of leading a Muslim party, which was not possible. As we have seen from the past experience of AGABA, it was not realistic for Stephens to expect the Muslims of Sabah to support him as a leader. Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to presume that Stephens did not try to form a multi-ethnic Sabahan party. Although Stephens was committed to UNKO, Stephens also suggested another political party which UNKO neglected — a Muslim native party. Stephens persuaded Mustapha bin Harun, a friend of Stephens from his childhood days in Kudat, to lead USNO. In fact, Stephens would like to see UNKO and USNO merged to form a true Sabahan party.

Stephens also agreed UNKO to be an ethnic based party because of the Chinese factor. When the timber concession monopoly by the British Borneo Timber Company ended in 1953, many businessmen ventured into the timber business to seek their fortune¹⁶. The Colonial Government favoured the European and American big timber companies and was not in favour of the local small timber businessmen, who were mostly Chinese from the East coast of Sabah. The local Chinese timber businessmen formed the Timber Producers' Association in 1956 as a platform to negotiate with the Government. At that time, the timber businessmen in Sandakan through the Chinese Chamber of Commerce sent their representatives to the Legislative and the Executive Councils to voice their views to the Government.

When the independence of Sabah drew nearer, the timber businessmen thought of forming a political party to ensure their economic privileges were not affected. They expressed their wish to form a multi-ethnic political party for all Sabahans [NBNST 3 March, 1960], with the underlying intention to avoid being seen as a Chinese-based party. At the beginning, Stephens watched this movement rather favourably [NBNST 3 March, 1960], but later changed his stance and criticised their plan instead [NBNST 1 August, 1960]. Stephens said that it was an open challenge to him to form a multi-racial party and advocated that the Chinese formed a Chinese-based party which can later form a coalition with other ethnic-based parties in Sabah. The underlying reason for his change of mind was that Stephens was then in favour of the formation of Malaysia. but

the Chinese leaders were not in favour of the formation. Should the Chinese timber towkays form a multi-ethnic party, they could use their wealth to buy the natives' support and this could lead to the failure of the Malaysia plan. To speed up the independence process, Stephens chose to have ethnic-based parties instead of multi-ethnic party [*Sabah Times* 12 March, 1965].

The three major political parties in Sabah namely UNKO, USNO and Sabah National Party (SANAP) were fortunate to form an alliance before the formation of Malaysia. Thus the fear of the people of Sabah being politically divided was avoided, though Stephens was well aware that it was useful as a temporary means and was never a final solution.

CONCLUSION

Stephens, with the help of K. Bali, had never dreamt of Sabah as being for the Kadazans only but they had been pursuing Sabah for Sabahans. Unforeseen circumstances had forced Stephens to play his role as a leader of the Kadazans. In fact Stephens was best understood as a Sabah nationalist rather than a Kadazan nationalist.

Against the wish of Stephens and K. Bali, the peoples of Sabah became politically divided into three main categories in the process of de-colonisation; the Kadazans, the Muslim/Malays, and the Chinese. However it does not mean that the efforts of Stephens and K. Bali to realise a Sabah nation did not bear fruit at all. The three categories were parts of one Sabah nation. Generally, the people of Sabah wanted a Sabah nation with their individual ethnic identity, a variation from the multi-ethnic Sabah nation promoted by Stephens and K. Bali.

What I would like to draw to attention here is Stephens' character of "foreignerness" in Sabah. Though legally Stephens was not a foreigner, in reality, Stephens was widely regarded as a person with Caucasian ancestry, therefore not a native to the country. Stephens too was aware that he could not do away with his image of being a foreigner in Sabah. At least in the beginning, Stephens did not have any local community which he could claim to be a member of. This very fact made Stephens a Sabah-minded person instead of leaning towards any ethnic group in Sabah, thus driving Stephens to work tirelessly for the realisation of a Sabah nation regardless of ethnic origins. Lest we forget that K. Bali, who devoted his life to promoting the concept of a Sabah nation, too had

a "foreigner" character in Sabah. Sabah nationalism can be said to be designed and driven by these Sabah-minded "foreigners".

Sabah has been a frontier where various peoples from every corner of the world have gathered and stayed. The people of Sabah are so accustomed to the existence of peoples of different origins around them that anyone who came to Sabah would have no difficulty in settling down in the country. However, being a "foreigner", one may feel that he would never be fully accepted into the local community, even if he had never experience any real obstacle in making his living in the country. In order to be accepted in the local community, a "foreigner" needs to show his contribution to the local community. In other words, those who are aware of their "foreignerness" felt that they must keep showing and proving their commitment to the local community so as to be recognised and accepted in the country. This applied to the case of Stephens, who progressively moved to the Kadazan camp by emphasising his Kadazanness, even though people's perception of him being a semi "white man" prevailed. It is interesting to note that Stephens, being a "partial foreigner", advocated for Sabah nationalism and not a local Sabahan who advocated Sabah nationalism.

NOTES

- * This article is based on a paper presented at the 16th International Association of Historians of Asia (IAHA) Conference, 27-31 July, 2000, Magellan Sutera & Spa Resort Hotel, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia.
- ¹ The term "nationalism" is used in this paper as the movement of people's self-awareness and self-assertion, with the ultimate intention of establishing the autonomous homeland for the people. For the usage of the term "nationalism" in the context of Malaysian studies, see also. Anthony Reicl, "Endangered Identity: Kadazan or Dusun in Sabah," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 28 (1), pp. 120-130.
- ² After the inauguration of "The Society of Kadazan" in Penampang in 1953, there emerged many Kadazan associations with variation of names throughout Sabah. The name "Kadazan associations" is used here as a generic term for such associations.
- ³ For more detail information on the family background of Stephens, see P.J Granville-Edge, *The Sabahan: The life and Death of Tun Fuad Stephens*, Selangor: The writers Publishing House, 1999.
- ⁴ The term "White men" is used here as a direct translation of "Orang Putih", which literally means Caucasians but usually used with the implication of Colonial masters. In certain contexts interchangeable with "Europeans" if Oceanian and North American are excluded.
- ⁵ For more detail argument, see Yamamoto Hirouyuki, "From Borneo Federation to Malaysia: Analysing Stephen's plan for Merdaka," *Manu*, USM, Sabah vol. 2, pp. 59-80.
- ⁶ See also, James P. [Ongkili Nation-building in Malaysia, 1946-1974, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, p.13] and William Roff. *The origins of Malay Nationalism*, Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1974, p.86].
- ⁷ The only exception I have found so far is Sabihah Saidina Osman, *Malay Muslim Participation in Sarawak and Sabah*, Ph.d. Thesis, University of Hull 1983 p. 348, where the AGABA is mentioned, though no detail is given.
- ⁸ Description on K. Bali is based on the information obtained at Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (Sabah Branch) and confirmed through the interviews in Tendong and Sungai Padi in February, 2000. Some information on K. Bali is also available in Abd. Nadin Shaidin, "K. Bali dalam Kenangan," *Dewan Sastera*, Aug 1999, pp. 46-49. and Siti Hadiah Haji Abu Mutalib "K. Bali," in Ahmad Kamal Abdullah dan Zaiton Ajamin (eds) *Jamiah 3*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, pp. 159-173 though some of the information is inaccurate.

- 9 For the Chinese and the Siamese in Kelantan, see Eh Mooi a/ Ah Chit, "Latar belakang masyarakat Siam di Kelantan," *Warisan Kelantan* Muzium Negeri Kelantan, vol. 16, pp. 66-8, Louis Golomb, "Brokers of Thai Ethnic Adaption in a Rural Malayan setting, University of Hawai, 1978, Mohd. Yusof Ismail, *The Siamese of Anl: A Study of an Ethnic Minority Village*, Bangi: UKM, 1980, Maning Nash, *Peasant Citizen: Politics, Religion and Modernization in Kelantan*, Ohio: Ohio University, 1974, Tan Chee Beng, "Peranakan Chinese in Northeart Kelantan with Special Reference to Chinese Riligion," *JMBRAS*, vol. 55 no.1, 1982, pp. 26-52, Tan Goe Sim, "Latarbelakang Masyarakat cina di Kelantan," *Warisan Kelantan*, Kelantan, Muzium Negeri Kelantan, vol. XV, pp. 93-120, Wee Khoo Hock, "Kelantan and Kelantan Chinese," in Nik Hassan Shuhaimi bi Nik Abdul Rahman (ed), *Kelantan Zaman Awal*, 1987, pp. 216-228. and Robert Winzeler, "The Rural Chinese of Kelantan Plain," *JMBRAS* vol. 54 No. 3, 1981 pp. 1-23].
- 10 For the post-war political development of Kelantan, see Nash 1974 *Perasant Citizens* and [Nik Mohamed Nik Mohamad Salleh, "Tentang Orang-orang Melayu Kelantan terhadap "Malayan Union," *Warisan Kelantan*, Muzium Negeri Kelantan 1986 vol. 5, pp. 84-126].
- 11 "Tamu Besar" is an annual "open house" activity held at the weekly "Tamu" (market) place in each district. In some districts it is called the Annual Tamu and Agricultural Show. For the programme of a Tamu Besar, refer to *NBNST* 9 January; 17 May, 1956.
- 12 A beauty contest was held for the first time in Jesselton in January 1956, organised by a group of film stars from Malaya and Indonesia, *NBNST* 16 December, 1955; 3 January, 1956], and later included in the programme of the Tamu Besar since August 1956.
- 13 See Josephine Boenisch Burrough and Alik Jamin, "Traditional Mehtod of Dusun Rice Cultivation," *Sabah Jurnal*, 1972, vol 5 No. 4, pp. 352-364.] for the *magawo* (*magawau*) ceremony, and see [I. H. N. Evans, *Studies in Religion, Folklore and Caustom in British North Borneo, and the Malay Peninsula*, Cambridge, 1923, p. 19, Monica Glyn Jones, *The Dusun of the Penampang Plains in North Borneo*, London, 1953, pp. 96-97, Jipanis Monolekum, *Monogit: A Native Costiom*, *Sabah Society Journal*, vol, 1 No. 2 pp. 17-19, Peter R. Phelan, *The Monogit Ceremony of the Kadazans (Dusun) of the Penampang Putatan Region*, *Sabah Society Journal*, 1980, vol 6. No. 4 pp. 151-177] and Kadazandusun cultural Association, *Laman Keamatan Poingu kab KACA/Huguan Sion* 97. Kota Kinabalu: KACA, 1997, pp. 48-49] for the *moginakan* (*maginakan*).
- 14 Despite being the president of the Kadazan association, Stephens never referred to the Kadazans as "we" but "they" in that article. This practise was criticised by

Syed Kechik, a political advisor of Mustapha bin Harun, who was a political rival of Stephens'. He alleged Stephens of not being pro-Kadazans, during Stephens and Mustapha's "battle of words" at the election campaign in 1967. For Syed Kechik, see Bruce Ross-Larson, *The Politic of Federalism: Syed Kechik in East Malaysia*, Singapore: Bruce Ross-Larson, 1976.

- ¹⁵ See *NBNST* 30 June - 28 July, 1960.
- ¹⁶ Stephens had sent his articles to the *North Borneo News & Sabah Times* during his tour in the United States. See *NBNST* 3 June; 8 June; 10 June; 15 June; 22 June; 10 July, 1959.
- ¹⁷ For a more detailed background, see Yamamoto Hiroyuki, "From Borneo Federation to Malaysia: Analysis of 'Stephens' plan for Merdeka, *MANU*, University Malaysia Sabah, 1999, vol. 2 pp. 59-80.
- ¹⁸ For the timber business and the emergence of Chinese political leaders, see Adwin Lee, *The Towkays of Sabah: Chinese Leadership and Indigenous Challenge in the last phase of British Rule*, Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1976.

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