

## **NEW THEORY ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE NAME OF SABAH**

*Teori Baharu tentang Evolusi Nama Sabah*

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### ***Abstract***

*This article investigates the origin and evolution of the name "Sabah" and its varying acceptance and use across the state's regions, with a focus on the differences between the east and west coasts. Through an analysis of historical records and recent scholarly discussions among Sabah academics, the study uncovers potential geopolitical implications arising from competing historical narratives, particularly in relation to the claims by the defunct Sulu Sultanate over eastern Sabah. The findings challenge prevailing theories and offer new insights into how the name "Sabah" has influenced regional identities and political discourse. Trouillot (1995) argues that the formation of alternative narratives often involves power dynamics and the deliberate selection of historical facts, which are frequently based on an overreliance on institutional sources from colonial and post-colonial eras. These narratives can either obscure or emphasize certain historical events to align with specific political agendas, leading to the emergence of multiple and potentially conflicting interpretations. This theoretical framework is particularly relevant to understanding the renaming of North Borneo to Sabah, a topic that has been underexplored but carries important implications for regional identity and geopolitical claims. The change from North Borneo to Sabah is a critical aspect of the region's history that has not been widely covered in historical writings, yet it is crucial in understanding Sabah's formation and identity. Therefore, this paper seeks to explore alternative perspectives, supported by historical*

*documents, to challenge and expand upon the existing theories proposed by previous researchers.*

**Keywords** : Sabah, North Borneo, Sabahan, Log Burial

## **Introduction**

Appell (1990) identifies four types of accounts in Sabah that fall under the 'historical memory' genre:

- Accounts of Warfare: These detail which ethnic groups were considered enemies and which were allies.
- Narratives of Colonial Arrival: These accounts describe the arrival of colonial governments in Sabah.
- Descriptions of Rebellions: These focus on uprisings against colonial authorities.
- Accounts of Nobility and Prominent Families: These document the descent lines of noble and notable families.

However, there are also unconventional sources of historical memory, such as street names, village signboards, and inscriptions on monuments, which often lack clear meanings or explanations. For instance, the image below shows a signboard for a village in Sabah, Kampung Solong, which no longer exists or has merged with another village. In colonial records, Kampung Solong is mentioned in the context of a British colonial officer's account where the Dusun people are reported to have conducted a headhunting raid from Labuk—a group referred to as the Salong—who had recently been in conflict with Dato Pangeran of Labuk (Magistrate-in-Charge of the Sugut-Labuk District, 1889) Beyond this record, no further information is provided.



**Photo 1: Kampung Solong**

Source: Field study 2024

In the second and third pictures, the Dumpas are a minority ethnic group residing in Sabah. The area where they are located is mostly named after them; however, aside from some mentions in social media, there is little to no record of them in official documents.



**Photo 2: Jalan Dumpas**

Source: Field study 2024



**Photo 3: Dumpas Estate**

Source: Field study 2024

Between Madai and Tingkayu, there is a road called Jalan Sabahan, located between Lahad Datu and Kunak. This road is significant for its historical memory, with its name associated with the term 'Sabah.' According to an interview with a local resident, the area was once the site of an ancient village (Helmi, 2023). In Sabah, it is common for place names to be linked to significant local events, as illustrated in the examples of Kampung Solong and Dumpas. However, the term "historical memory" in such cases has been critiqued by Richards (2006), who argues that "social memory" is a more appropriate term. "Social memory" refers to how societies understand, discuss, and integrate the past into both historical and present contexts, providing a more comprehensive view of how collective memories are formed and maintained over time. On the other hand, "historical memory" tends to focus more narrowly on the relationship between past events and current socio-political contexts, often emphasizing issues such as human rights and transitional justice, which may align it more closely with political agendas.



**Photo 4: Jalan Sabahan**

Source: Field study 2024

#### **a. The Origins of the Name "Sabah"**

One might speculate whether Sabah's name is related to this road. The pre-colonial name of Sabah appears in an English-language document dated 29 December 1877, when a group of European businessmen gained concessions from the Sultan of Brunei. The Sultan granted several specified lands to Baron Gustav von Overbeck and named him "Maharajah of Sabah and Rajah of Gaya and Sandakan." In subsequent British documents, the name 'North Borneo' was used, such as in Joseph Hatton's book (Singh, 2000; Hatton, 1881). When North Borneo achieved de facto self-government on August 31, 1963, sixteen days before the formation of Malaysia, it was officially renamed Sabah (Stockwell, 2004). According to the Cobbold Inquiry Report (1962), one of the political parties at that time, USNO, proposed to Lord Landsdowne that the name 'North Borneo' be replaced with 'Sabah' when North Borneo, Sarawak, Singapore, and the Federation of Malaya formed the federation of Malaysia. No further explanation is provided for this request. There was also no opposition to this from counterparts such as Tun Fuad (UNKO), G.S. Sundang (PASOK), the Democratic Party, the United Party, and the Liberal Party. Furthermore, there is strong evidence of their support for the idea, demonstrated by their efforts to promote it through the available media at that time (Wong, 2015).

## **b. Tun Mustapha and the Advocacy for the Name "Sabah"**

Upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that Tun Mustapha, the founder of USNO, was of Suluk descent. He was the eldest of nine children born to Datu Harun Datu Nasaruddin and Norani Hj. Abdul Rahim of Bajau-Suluk ethnicity. His birth name, Dato Badiozaman, derives from his ancestor, Sultan Badiozaman, who once ruled the islands of Sulu and Mindanao. This lineage clearly indicates that Tun Mustapha came from a noble background in the southern Philippines, where the Sulu Sultan was referred to as "datu" (Mat Zin, 2012). Furthermore, this region was historically regarded as part of the "Sulu sphere of influence," a territory allegedly "given" to them by Sultan Muhyiddin of Brunei as a gesture of gratitude for their assistance during the Brunei civil war between 1660 and 1673. Despite repeated denials by Pusat Sejarah Brunei and other sources, there is no definitive evidence that the Sulu ever controlled a large area (Warren, 2007; Joko, 2014). This background may help explain Tun Mustapha's advocacy for the name "Sabah," reflecting his familiarity with and connection to the region's history.

Based on archaeological findings, North Borneo was inhabited by people from as early as during the late Pleistocene era, which is about 11.7 kya (Abdullah et al., 2010; Curneo et al., 2016; Yew et al., 2017). Only the last two centuries did the Europeans arrive in North Borneo and begin record keeping. In 1775, the British East-India Company opened a trading base in Balambangan Island (Warren, 2007). After that, the British North Borneo Chartered Company effectively ruled from 1881 until 1942, before stopped abruptly when the Japanese occupied the state during World War II between 1942-1946 (Gin, O.K, 2010). Post World War II, North Borneo became a British Crown Colony until 31st August 1963 when it obtained self-government from the British (Wong, 2015; Black,1970). On 16th September 1963, North Borneo, Sarawak, Singapore and the Federation of Malaya together formed the Federation of Malaysia (Malaysia Agreement, 1963). It is the second largest State in Malaysia after Sarawak, which it borders to the southwest and is situated in the northern part of the island of Borneo, hence the name "North Borneo".

## **Methodology**

Etymology is a vital field in linguistics that explores the history of words and their development. Its main objective is to trace how words were used in the past, follow the intricate changes in their meanings and forms over time, and identify the specific moments and processes that shaped their current meanings (James et al., 2022). Etymologists rely on thorough analysis of historical writings and texts with well-documented histories to undertake this academic endeavour. This study employs a multi-method approach, combining historical document analysis, a review of existing literature, and semi-structured interviews with local historians and community leaders. Historical records from colonial and post-colonial periods were systematically analyzed to trace the usage and context of the term "Sabah" over time.

The interviews were conducted to capture oral histories and alternative viewpoints that may not be documented in written records. This triangulation of data sources allows for a more nuanced understanding of the socio-political factors influencing the adoption and evolution of the name "Sabah." This compilation of historical evidence and scholarly insights forms the basis for constructing factual arguments, ultimately allowing me to uncover the intricate historical origins of the term "Sabah." This meticulous journey into language and history aims to reveal how this term has evolved and its significance in our linguistic and cultural heritage.

## **Literature Review**

Numerous theories have emerged regarding the name Sabah's enigmatic origin. According to one hypothesis, Sabah was a Bruneian Malay phrase that meant upstream, the northern side of the river or simply a direction during the period when it was a part of the Bruneian Sultanate because of its location in relation to Brunei (Wong, 2015; Singh, 2000). There is also a theory that the word "Sabah" may influenced by Filipino roots. The terms Sabah are present in the vocabulary of the Tagalog and Visayan languages; however, they have different meanings than geographical names. Instead, Saba in Tagalog and Visayan refers to a particular banana variety widely grown in Sabah. Another hypothesis put out by a local historian is sabak, which approximately translates to imply a location where palm sugar is extracted and can also be considered as Malay origin. A different hypothesis argues that it might be derived from the Malay term sabak,

as used in Sabak Bernam. Sabah, which likewise has Arabic roots, means sunrise. Finally, some other people hypothesized that the title might derive from Saba or Seba, the Arabic name of the biblical nation of Sheba (Wong, 2015).

These numerous hypotheses make it challenging to determine the name's genuine origin. However, it seems that the word Sabah was no longer an issue after 1963. The name has been adopted widely and is thought to be the most appropriate, accepted, and replaces the colonial appellation of North Borneo. This was spelt out as a demand in the Commission of Enquiry, North Borneo, and Sarawak as a *de jure* requirement (Cobbold Commission, 1962). Since then, the traces of the term North Borneo have been obscured, except for antique stamps owned by philatelic associations, historical texts, and publications. Only the term Sabah has been ingrained in the memories and imagination of generations born post-1963. It is the only name they are aware of as the state's official name (Wong, 2015). Although it is not a very important issue nowadays, how Sabah got its name should be studied carefully and meticulously recorded for future generations to see and appreciate before the meaning of its origin is lost in time.

## **Finding**

### **a. Sabahan tribes and log burial culture**

Archaeological evidence from Darvel Bay reveals the existence of a tribe referred to as the "Sabahans," who, in earlier centuries, were more populous and distinct from other local groups such as the Eraans. Historical records, such as those documented by Roth Ling (1896), suggest that some Sabahan communities maintained separate settlements and continued their unique cultural practices, including burial rituals and, in some cases, human sacrifices. These findings suggest that the "Sabahans" played a significant role in the region's cultural history, although they eventually assimilated with other local groups over time. Within the swiftlet nesting caves, one can observe decaying coffins adorned with rudimentary carvings of strange figures. These coffins are to be believed to have been left by the old Sabahans of the past. Many of these coffins are positioned on rocky ledges at considerable heights. In Roth (1896) it is described as:



"... In Darvel Bay there are the remnants of a tribe which seems to have been much more plentiful in bygone days -- the Sabahans. Most of them are so mixed with the Eraans (Idaan) as to be almost indistinguishable. Some of them, however, still have villages apart, remain heathen in their religion, and would practice their old customs, human sacrifice included, if allowed. In some of the birds' nest caves, moldering coffins are to be seen, rudely carved with grotesque figures, said to have been deposited there in bygone days by the old Sabahans. Many of these coffins are on the ledges of rock at considerable elevations..."

Although the Sabahan tribe inhabits this place, this place witnessed a struggle for control of the area by many contending parties, such as Sultanate's Brunei, Sulu, Segai and eventually the British. This is because they need to control resources such as swiftlet's nest, which can be found abundantly in that area. For example, the west coast of North Borneo is vital to support the Sulu Sultanate's exclusive economy zone between 1768 and 1898. However, in 1850, Segai succeeded in crippling the Sultanate's Borneo trade, deprived the Taosug of manpower, and finally ended up expelling Taosug from Tidung district by 1850 (Warren, 2007). During the power struggle, local population either assimilated, disappeared, or enslaved. The survivors of these raids in the interior were scattered to the north. When BNBC finally established Sandakan on the East Coast as one of their administrative centres in the year of 1878, William Pryer became the first gabenor which led to a more stable situation in the region (Pryer, 1893; Black, 1970).

How ancient is this Sabahan race? How dispersed is this race before their abrupt extinction? To answer this, it was described that they were the first to populate this area, as evidenced of their unique burial sites using heavy log interred inside the caves around the area. The burial sites are carbon-dated as to be more than 1000 +/- BP (Roth, 1881; Chia, 2014; Sabin 2015). Most coffins are placed in caves limestone along the Kinabatangan and Segama Rivers and in some recesses shade in Lahad Datu and Semporna. This separate placement is done according to community groups or their respective families besides, it is also a sign of the ownership of a place, especially a cave that has economic results such as a swallow's nest. The results of this study also found that the distribution of log coffins. Most log coffins in Sabah are concentrated in Kinabatangan and Segama valleys. The

following Table 1 show the dispersion of such culture of log burial in East Coast:

**Table 1: Quantity of log coffins burial according to location in Sabah**

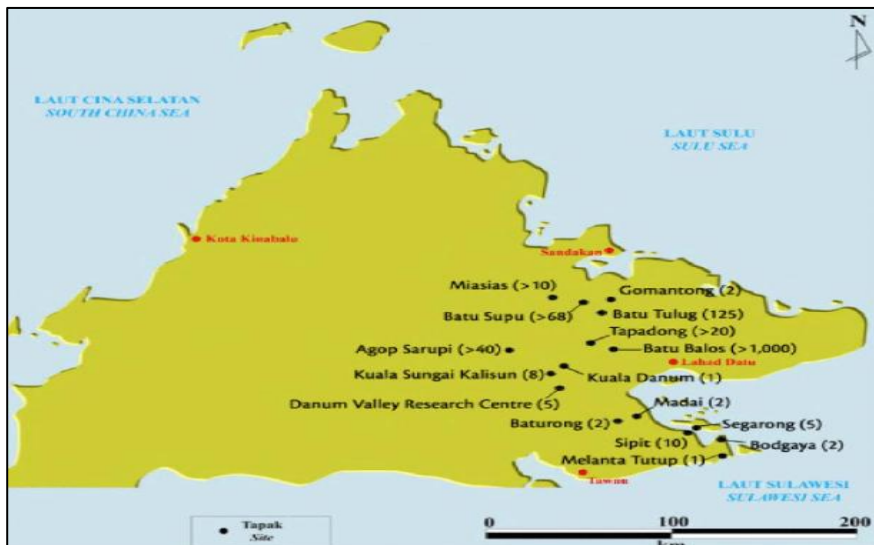
| # | Place                          | Quantity |
|---|--------------------------------|----------|
| 1 | <b>Kinabatangan Valley</b>     |          |
|   | Gua Gomantong                  | 7        |
|   | Batangan                       | 8        |
|   | Batu Tulug                     | 129      |
|   | Kompleks Batu Supu             | 68       |
|   | Miasias                        | 18       |
|   | Sarupi                         | 111      |
|   | Malog                          | 1        |
| 2 | <b>Segama Valley</b>           |          |
|   | Batu Balos                     | 250      |
|   | Samang Buat                    | 1        |
|   | Samang Buat 2                  | 27       |
|   | Kuala Danum                    | 1        |
|   | Kuala Sg. Kalisun              | 8        |
|   | Mandag Awan                    | 10       |
| 3 | <b>Kompleks Madai Baturong</b> |          |
|   | Madai Atas                     | 1        |
|   | Samang Alag                    | 3        |
|   | Samang Tas                     | 1        |
|   | Kabunatok                      | 2        |
|   | Hagop Bilo                     | 4        |
| 4 | Gua Sipit                      | 3        |
| 5 | Melanta Tutup                  | 1        |
| 6 | Segarong                       | 1        |
|   | Total                          | 655      |

Source: Sabin (2011)

The prevalence of log burials is primarily concentrated in the east coast areas of Sabah, particularly around Darvel Bay. This concentration of burial sites suggests that an ancient Sabahan community once inhabited a substantial portion of this region. The geographical distribution of these burial practices is significant, as it provides insights into the cultural and social organization of early inhabitants. It is noteworthy that this tradition of log burials appears to have been

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practised almost exclusively in certain specific regions along the east coast, such as the Kinabatangan Valley, Segama Valley, Lahad Datu, and Semporna. This localized practice indicates that these areas were not only key settlements for these communities but also sites of cultural significance where specific burial customs were maintained over time. The unique distribution pattern of log burials in these regions further implies a strong cultural continuity and the presence of a community with distinct funerary practices that were likely tied to their spiritual beliefs and territorial claim. The culture consists of two types of burials: burials in caves and in open areas. According to one study, to this day, more than 600 ancient log coffins have been found, and this does not include coffins buried in the open, and coffins are still being practised continuously today. Most log coffins are placed in caves limestone along the Kinabatangan and Segama Rivers and in some recesses shade in Lahad Datu and Semporna (Sabin, 2015) (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Distribution of log coffins burial in Sabah**

Sources: Chia (2014)

However, this data is only inconclusive because of instability caused by the change of past local authority for this area, and when they are in power, they proceed with the cleansing of the log coffin. For example, the Sulu have sought and often succeeded in wresting control of the place from the locals. When they gain control of the area, they attempt to remove the log coffin from the caverns to seize control of the right to gather swiftlet from the locals. The cleaning is done on purpose to provide a more suitable nesting site for swiftlets, whose nests are

valuable items owing to the natural formation of limestone caverns. There is also a story of locals retaliating by burning resin to keep birds away. As a result, the cave becomes desolate. After this occurred, Sulu concluded that the location was no longer economically viable and left. This happened several times. The last attempt was in 1923 when Sulus occupied this place again; however, they left it after three years after it was unsuccessful in attracting the bird (Sabin, 2010).

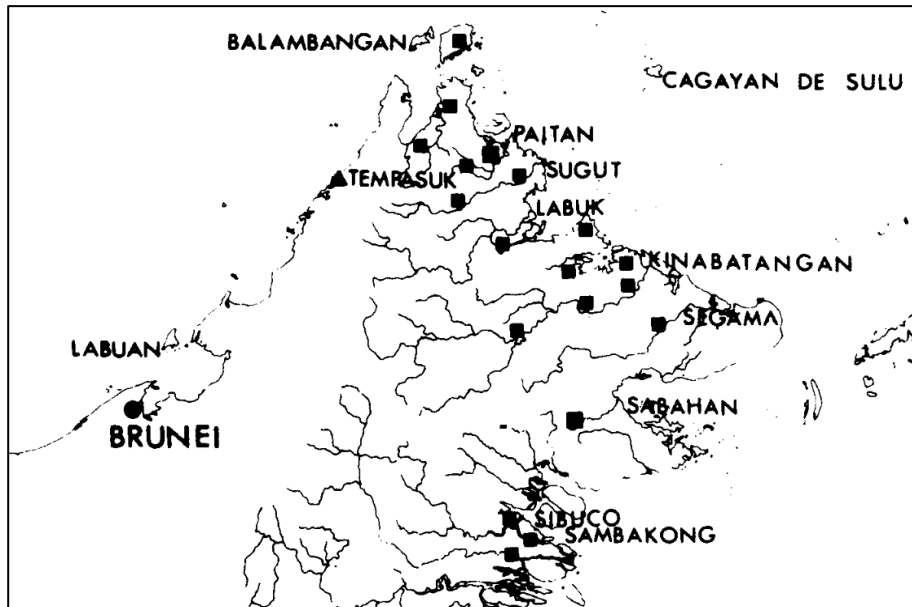
## **b. Geographical area of Sabah**

Why this is related to Sabah name? It is because the area latter was named Sabah. From the writing of Pryers (1883), in his notes, he describes the geographical area around Labuk Hills, Unsang, and Kinabatangan, as Sabah:

"... In North-Eastern Borneo, or Sabah as it is called the formation is principally sandstone, with limestone in good many places, the latter frequently forming steep, sharply angulated peaks ..."

"... One of the chief geographical features of Sabah is an enormous low plain, bordered on the north side by the Labuk Hills, the west by the mountains of the interior, and on the south by the hills crossing to the root of Unsang promontory, comprising altogether some 4000 square miles ..."

Further evidence about the place called Sabah or Sabahan comes from the James Warren map (2007). Based on the map of the trading centre of Sulu, here, it showed a place called Sabahan which is located in the East Coast of Sabah, between Segama and Sibuco. (Figure 2):



**Figure 2: The Sulu Zone Trading Center, depicting the history trading area and areas of influence (1768-1898)**

Source: James Warren (1978)

In his book, he also wrote that:

"... Sabahan was situated well up a small river but navigable river in Darvel Bay, on the southern periphery of Sulu's "sphere of influence". It owed its existence to the inland riverine network which linked the mercantile activity of the Bugis in southeast Borneo to hinterland communities in the north as far as the Kinabatangan. (p 83)"

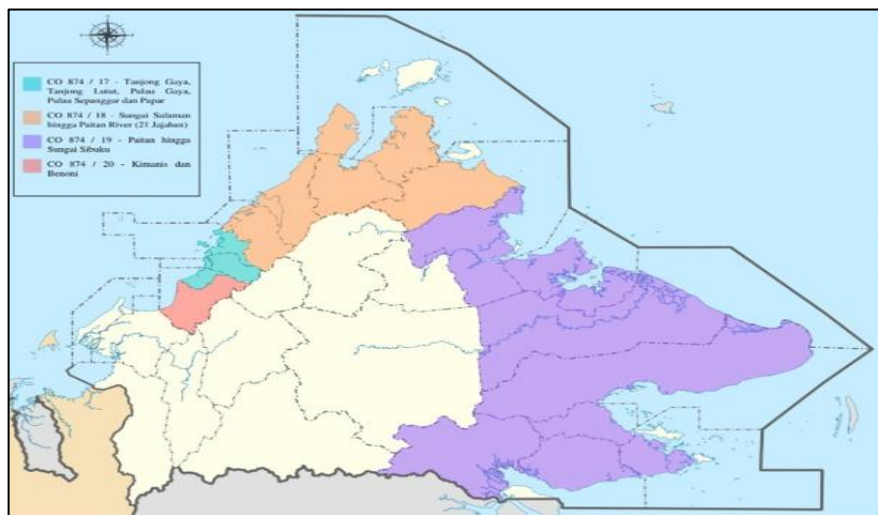
This clearly explains that Sabahan is in conjunction with a place name. A place that was near to a river and located around Darvel Bay. Subsequently, J. Hunt, an East India Company servant, which was dispatched to the Sulu archipelago shortly after the occupation of Java in 1811 described Sabahan as a remote but flourishing market centre on the interior Sulu trade route. In his record, he also mentioned that Bajau Laut were dependent on collecting and processing Tripang for their livelihood in all these localities as well as in Sandakan Bay, Sabahan and places further south along the coast (Moor, 1969; Warren, 2007; Warren, 2010):

"...not marked on any chart, is the grand port of the Suloo on Borneo called Sabahan, situated upon a small river of considerable length and it is five days pull up to the negri..."

The first documented use of the name "Sabah" can be traced in Joseph Hatton's book (Wong, 2015; Hatton, 1881). Hatton in his book wrote that:

"... The Dutch claim sovereignty all other portions of Borneo that are not occupied by Rajah Brooke in Sarawak, the British North Borneo in Sabah and the Sultanate of Brunei..."

However, it is essential to note that during this era, the geographical area differed from what it is now. According to an old document stored in the London Archives, it can be confirmed that the entire coast of North Borneo from the east coast to the west coast in 1877 was a colony of the Sultanate of Brunei, it was meant to denote a geographical rather than a political entity while the interior of Sabah, was known as Terra Nullius which is a Latin expression meaning No Man Land (Singh, 2000; Shari Jeffri@Kumis-Kumis, 2022, Oktober 30) (Figure 3).



**Figure 3: 19th century Malay Sultanate colony of Brunei in North Borneo**

Source: Shari Jeffri@Kumis-Kumis (2022)

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Because of this, it is reasonable to argue that Sabah may not denote the entirety of the geographical region but could instead pertain to a more specific, smaller area. In the era of the BNBC, its administration was situated in Sandakan, which suggests that Joseph Hatton might have been referring to a location within the BNBC's administrative boundaries during that period. Additionally, this area too fell under the jurisdiction of the Sultanate of Brunei, although it was subject to disputes with other powers in the region. However, it's worth noting that during that time, the Sultanate of Brunei was perceived as too weak to exert significant control in the eastern (Joko, 2014).

As it turns out, in earlier days, Darvel Bay is also known as Lok Sabahan, which translates as Sabahan Bay. In Pryers (1893), it is written that:

"...we are on board the B.N.B Coy's revenue boat Sabine in Looe Sabahan (Dravel Bay) on a bird's-nesting expedition."

This reinforced the idea that Hatton merely refers to Sabah to a smaller geographical area or location on the east coast of Sabah.

**c. Usage of the term "Sabah" in BNBC record**

During the BNBC administration, the name Sabah was mentioned a few times in British North Borneo Herald by the British officer stationed or working there. British North Borneo Herald is a compilation record of events, financial reports, and day-to-day reporting:

"... On the 15th I left Silam in company with Capt. R.D. Beeston for the Sabahan river... I reached the Bole River the day after leaving Sabahan... (Herald 1st July, 1893)

"... 8th Sailed to Sabahan ... 9th Left Sabahan at day-break and sailed to Silam, passing S.S Hecuba as she left..." (Herald 1st August, 1896)

"... Having taken a rough survey of the Sabahan which makes an almost east and west course, the head being slightly to the north of its mouth ..., This fact coupled with Mr. Dunlop's march to Bole is conclusive to my mind that the country above there contains the source of the Bole river, Bear and Sabahan river gold, and is rich in quartz

reef in a slate and serpentine country...' (Herald 1st May, 1893)

"... On the 27th I visit the Sabahan gold fields. There are 21 men still working but at the time of my visit most of them were away at Silam getting provisions..." (Herald 1st January, 1894)

"... 21st Went to Sabahan ...There is now no one, not even a native on this river. The Bole Road is covered with light undergrowth but much cut by Elephant and other wild animals..." (Herald 1st August, 1899)

The British officers' careful records show that Sabah held great importance to them. They described Sabah as a place with rivers, gold mines, and lots of quartz, indicating that they saw it as a valuable region due to its natural resources. This suggests that the British highly regarded Sabah for its economic and strategic significance.

## **Discussions and Conclusion**

The findings suggest that the name "Sabah" reflects a complex interplay of cultural, linguistic, and historical factors rather than a straightforward attribution to a single ethnic or cultural group. This complexity challenges the practicality of renaming the region to reflect any one group's identity, given the diverse cultures and historical narratives that coexist within the state. Smith (1979) argues that national identities should reflect shared histories and cultural autonomy; however, in the context of Sabah, this idea is complicated by the region's colonial past and the imposition of external names and identities. Anthony Smith (1979) posited that a national ideal should revolve around the belief that communities share a common history and possess a culture that is independent, cohesive, and distinctive within their recognized homelands. To begin, aside from the similarities imposed by colonial powers, the region lacks natural commonality.

Tidong Nation for example, who flourished in eastern North Borneo at the end of the 17th century, has a strong resemblance to the predicament that we faced now. First, they comprised of various natives who relocated to the coastal districts and played an central part in the area's overseas trading. As a result, Tidong is made up of Muruts (or



Islamized Murut), Lundayeh, Idahan, Sesayap groups (Tarakan, Malinau, Betayau), Sembakung-Sebuku groups (Bengawong, Sumbol, Dengusan, and so on), and Bulungan tribes. In their situation, their rulers consolidated them under the label "Tidung Nation" instead of recognizing their unique distinctions, making it challenging to trace their specific origins (Okushima, 2003). Parallel to this, the acquisition of North Borneo by the imperial power is a long painstaking process from Sultan Brunei, Sultan Sulu, and local ruler. During the imperial age, North Borneo was, at the very least, divided into three or four distinct entities or jajahan (Joko, 2014; Singh, 2000).

Most of these jajahan were established along the coast or persisir only. Therefore, unification of what we know as Sabah now is only possible by striking countless deal with local ruler in form grant, treaty, or forced occupation as happen in interior (Tregonning, 2008; Black 1970). This leads us to conclude that the local population felt pressured to adopt a unified identity in this area. In where they (colonial master) imposed what is deem fit according to their standard as a part of the nation-building process even to the extent of taking on a state name that is unfamiliar to the local. Another example of this kind of imposition is the term "Dusun," which originated from a foreigner's classification of the inhabitants of Borneo and does not align with any ethnic divisions acknowledged by the native population. Consequently, there is no self-identified Dusun ethnic group, and many communities labeled as "Dusun" do not consider themselves as such. This term was also employed by early British administrators and included as a category in their population surveys. Presently, it is the most commonly used label for various individuals categorized as "Dusun" in these surveys. Nevertheless, the composition of this category frequently varied from one census to another (Jude et al., 2022; Udea, 2006; Appell, 1968).

Social order confusion is inevitable with the emergence of new identities, often driven by fears of abandoning historical narratives. There is a tendency of questioning if the potential new identities and structures will address both the communities need and and interests. However, dominating a nation and its national identity may be, people nonetheless hold a variety of allegiances in today's world. According to Smith, they will have multiple identities which could either support or contradict national identities. On the other hand, a collective identity may have a better chance to be pervasive and resilient. They are more intense and long-lasting and less susceptible to sudden alterations (Smith, 1992).

The study concludes that the Sabahan tribes have largely assimilated into contemporary society or have become extinct, leaving only traces in historical narratives and archaeological evidence. This reinforces the idea that the name "Sabah" is rooted in a complex historical and cultural legacy that warrants further scholarly exploration. Future research should focus on uncovering additional evidence that could provide deeper insights into the region's pre-colonial history and the socio-political implications of its naming. One interesting thing about the log burial culture is that the relationship between the people living in the area today is unclear (Sabin, 2015). This was also recorded in Tom Harrison's research while inspecting their oldest document, which consists of their genealogies (Harrison, 1970). He found that their record ceases without a reliable connection to present-day people. On another hand, whether the younger generation eventually accepts this new name (or not), they will undoubtedly question the reasoning behind adopting such a name. It is hoped, that this article will enhance their understanding of Sabah's historical background and stimulate further scholarly discussion on the evolution of its name.

### **Further Recommendation**

The ongoing exploration of burial practices utilizing wooden logs is of utmost importance as it offers an invaluable opportunity to delve deeper into the historical and cultural heritage of one of the ancestors who played a pivotal role in shaping the identity of the people in Sabah, from which the state derives its name. A sense of urgency characterizes this endeavor, as it is imperative to act swiftly to prevent the irreversible loss of this historical evidence, which holds the key to unlocking a significant chapter of Sabah's past. By continuing this effort, we honour our ancestors and preserve a vital piece of our cultural legacy for future generations to appreciate and learn from.

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### **Websites**

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### **Interview**

Mr. Helmi@Sadik. 43 Years Old. Kg Sepagaya, Lahad Datu. Jalan Sabahan, Ancient Village Location. 04 September 2023.