

THE *BUMIPUTERA* POLICY AND “DAYAKISM”: AN INTERPRETATION

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INTRODUCTION

The cry of “Dayakism” in Sarawak politic has somewhat receded over the past decade but during the 1980s through the early 1990s, it was a popular, even fashionable, political slogan among its proponents. The word, of course, comes from the root-word “Dayak,” which is a collective reference for the non-Muslim indigenous groups in Sarawak. When “ism” is added as a suffix, however, it assumes a whole complexity of meanings. It is often assumed that by adding “ism” to such a word, the word is then transformed to describe an ideology or a phenomenon, much like the word “nationalism.”

The slogan became current about the time Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) was formed but it is not clear if it was proponents of PDBS that coined the word. But against the background of the political milieu in Sarawak in the 1980s, “dayakism” might be described as a communal consciousness that has as its programme the economic and political advancement of the Dayak.¹ This reversion to a communal emphasis and identity (Dayak) in preference to the larger rubric of *bumiputera* (natives) may be interpreted as an intense disillusionment with the later rubric in which the Dayak see themselves as second-class *vis-à-vis* the Malay-Muslim *bumiputera*. “Dayakism” may be interpreted as a mixture

¹ Jayum A. Jawan, *The Sarawak State General Elections of 1987: The Dayakism Factor*.

of Dayak chauvinism and protest against long neglect and marginalisation.²

This paper is an interpretative account of “dayakism” over the past four decades following the formation of Malaysia. The paper does not pretend to be comprehensive. It is meant to be no more than an overview of the principal developments in Sarawak politics related to the Dayak and to interpret the disjuncture between “dayakism” and “bumiputeraism” during the recent past.

The term “Dayak” is a colonial construct, referring to the non-Malay natives, basically the Iban and the Bidayuh during the era of the Brooke Raj. The word is probably from the Bidayuh language meaning “man” or “human,” in contradistinction to spirits or animals. To differentiate between the two ethnic groups, the British labelled the Iban as “Sea Dayak” because they settled along delta regions and along the major rivers; and the Bidayuh as “Land Dayak” because the group inhabited the hilly inland parts around what was then the First Division. The term “Sea Dayak” however, is somewhat a misnomer for the Iban because for the Iban themselves, the *Orang Laut* (Sea People) are the Malays. In the post-colonial period, the term Dayak evolved as a collective reference for the Iban, Bidayuh, Orang Ulu and other non-Muslim indigenous groups. The Malaysian Constitution recognises these communities as “natives” and hence as *bumiputera*.

According to the 1990 census, Dayaks comprises some 45.1% of Sarawak’s total population of about 1.6 million (Table 1, below). The Iban, constituting about 30%, forms the single largest ethnic group. They are found mainly along the major rivers throughout the breath of the state. The Bidayuh, constituting some 8.5%, are found in the interior on the western end of the state, the area that roughly corresponded to the original territory of Brooke Raj in 1841. The Orang Ulu (literally people of the interior), making up some 6.3%, are mainly found deep in the interior of the Baram and the Belaga in the eastern end of the state. The remaining 55% of the population consists of the Chinese: 28.1%; Malays: 20.1%; and Melanau: 5.9%.

² Richard Mason, “Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak,” p. 26–58.

It is perhaps noteworthy that although lumped together as "Dayak", the Iban, Bidayuh and Orang Ulu are in fact quite distinct from one another, each having its own distinctive sets of cultural tradition and corpus of beliefs. Of the group, the Iban are the most uniform, sharing a common language, custom and corpus of beliefs. The same is not true of the Bidayuh and the Orang Ulu. The Bidayuh are divided into four mutually incomprehensible dialect groups. Amongst the Orang Ulu, there are at least sixteen ethnic tribal groups categorised under the sub-groups of Kayan, Kenyah and Kelabit. Unlike the Iban and Bidayuh, which are generally egalitarian, the Orang Ulu community is hierarchical. It is also noteworthy that while the Bidayuh have always referred to themselves as "Dayak", it was not until the early 1970s that the Iban began to accept that label. The Orang Ulu continued to resist it until only quite recently, preferring to be called Orang Ulu. The larger identity of Dayak was given a great boost by the official recognition of June 1st as *Hari Gawai Dayak* or the Dayak New Year, corresponding to what was traditionally the Harvest Festival.

The other native/*bumiputera* groups that comprise the population of Sarawak are the Malay, making up 21%, and Melanau, 5%. The Malay are found along the coasts stretching across the state while the Melanau are concentrated along the coast and delta areas in the Rajang River. All Malays are constitutionally defined to be Muslim and because some 90% of Melanau are Muslim they are, although a distinct ethnic group in their own right, often grouped as Malay. Although constituting only some 26% of the population, the Malay-Melanau group have dominated the political power in the state since the mid-1960s and enjoys the support of the Federal Government.

The remaining 29% of the population are comprised of Chinese. The Chinese are found mainly in and around town areas scattered throughout the state but with heavy concentration in Kuching, Sibul, Bintulu and Miri areas. If the Malay dominates in the political sphere, the Chinese plays second fiddle and dominates in the commercial and economic sphere. The Dayaks were traditionally and are still basically agriculturists. In urban areas most of the menial labourers are comprised also of Dayaks.

Table 1: Sarawak – Population Distribution by District and Ethnicity, 1991

Division	Iban	Bidayuh	O/ Ulu	Malay	Melanau	Chinese	Total
Kuching	28,919 (6.8)	82,838 (19.7)	2,172 (0.5)	136,834 (32.5)	2,989 (0.7)	166,169 (39.6)	419,921 (99.8)
Samarahan	32,838 (20.3)	44,673 (27.6)	273 (0.2)	63,241 (39.1)	221 (0.1)	20,463 (12.6)	161,709 (99.9)
Sri Aman	91,046 (56.1)	765 (0.5)	202 (0.1)	53,159 (32.8)	356 (0.2)	16,668 (10.3)	162,196 (100.0)
Sarikei	51,029 (40.3)	447 (0.4)	282 (0.2)	11,700 (9.2)	28,396 (22.4)	34,811 (27.5)	126,665 (100.0)
Sibu	87,684 (34.2)	1,695 (0.7)	998 (0.4)	20,998 (8.2)	38,068 (14.8)	107,045 (41.7)	256,488 (100.0)
Bintulu	48,954 (46.7)	1,451 (1.4)	7,113 (6.8)	10,510 (10.0)	13,448 (12.8)	23,230 (22.2)	104,706 (99.9)
Miri	68,241 (32.8)	3,121 (1.5)	47,970 (23.1)	18,816 (9.0)	8,821 (4.2)	60,989 (29.3)	207,958 (99.9)
Kapit	64,795 (69.1)	288 (0.3)	16,702 (17.8)	1,447 (1.5)	1,117 (1.2)	9,378 (10.0)	93,727 (99.9)
Limbang	9,962 (16.4)	317 (0.5)	24,376 (40.2)	16,946 (27.9)	305 (0.5)	8,772 (14.5)	60,678 (100.0)
Total	483,468 (30.3)	135,595 (8.5)	100,088 (6.3)	333,651 (20.9)	93,721 (5.9)	447,525 (28.1)	1,594,048 (100.0)

Source: Yearbook of Statistics, Sarawak 1999, p.30.

THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

While they constitute the majority in state's population, the Dayaks are but a small minority in the total Malaysian population. Altogether, the Bidayuh, Iban and Orang Ulu make up only some 3.5% of the total Malaysian population.

This situation had its origins in the formation of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. Malaya gained independence in 1957 and Singapore received self-government in 1959. In the aftermath of the Suez crisis in

1957, Britain was determined to divest from her colonial possessions east of Suez, including those possessions in Southeast Asia. Singapore presented a concern because of the growth of Communist influence among the island's Chinese population. To check this tendency, a merger between Malaya and Singapore was proposed but this too presented a problem. The Malays were a majority in the Federation of Malaya, but in a merger with Singapore, would be outnumbered by Chinese. The racial balance, however, would be restored if Sarawak and Sabah were included in the federation. Though the Malays would not enjoy a majority, neither would the Chinese. Thus, it was in consideration of this 'racial arithmetic' that Sarawak and Sabah eventually became a part of the Federation of Malaysia. Malayan leaders understood that the majority of the natives of Sarawak and Sabah were not Malay, or even Muslim, but were nonetheless inclined to regard them as "like us".³ At least, they were natives (*bumiputera*) in contradistinction to the Chinese and Indians, who are of migrant communities.

According to the study by Michael Leigh, the Muslim communities, by and large, enthusiastically supported the Malaysia proposal while the Chinese opposed. The Dayak, "on the whole were ill-equipped to assess the merits of the scheme"⁴ but their initial reactions were one of reservation and suspicion. These were soon overcome after British colonial officials had convinced Tun Jugah, Paramount Chief of the Iban, that the proposed federation would be in the best interest of the people. The Kapit Conference, which Jugah organised in mid-February 1962, marked a crucial development in the endorsement of the Malaysia scheme. Ibans of the Second Division generally opposed Malaysia, and were thus not invited to attend the conference. British colonial officials were determined to secure Iban support and excluded many of the better-educated Iban who were known to oppose the proposed federation.⁵

³ Roff, M.C., *The Politics of Belonging, Political Change in Sabah and Sarawak*, 1974, p. 154.

⁴ Leigh, Michael B., *The Rising Moon*, 1974, p. 40.

⁵ Vinson H., Sutlive Jr., *Tun Jugah of Sarawak. Colonialism and Iban Response*, 1992, p. 176-77, 181. Parenthetically, although the Colonial administration had appointed Jugah as Paramount Chief of the Iban, Iban in the Second Division had refused to recognise this, insisting that Jugah was Paramount Chief of only the Iban in the Third Division.

The lure often dangled in front of Sarawak native leaders to support the Malaysia scheme were political progress, which is to say "independence" and rapid economic development. On trips to Malaya, Tun Jugah and other native leaders were shown the development Malaya had achieved since independence. At the same time, Indonesia was presented as an aggressive and predatory neighbour, with covetous eyes on the Borneo states. Thus Sarawak and Sabah either participate in the Federation of Malaysia or be swallowed up by Indonesia.

Following the formation of the Federation, the special position and rights of the Malays as *bumiputera* (natives) were extended to the natives of the two Borneo states. By Article 153 of the Malaysian Constitution, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (the King) was duty-bound to "safeguard the special position of the Malays and natives of the states of Sarawak and Sabah." This include

... the reservation for the Malays and natives of ... Sabah and Sarawak of such proportion (number) as (the King) may deem reasonable of positions in the (federal) public service ... and of scholarships, ... other similar educational or training privileges or special facilities given or accorded by the Federal Government, and, when any permit or licence for the operation of any trade or business is required by federal law, then, subject to the provisions of that law and this Article, of such permits and licences. Article 161A lists out the ethnic groups in Sarawak and Sabah who would be considered as "natives" and thus qualify for "privileged" position.

THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY (NEP) AND THE DAYAK

The special position of the Malays as *bumiputera* was given a great boost by the implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP), launched in 1971 in the aftermath of the ethnic violence in 1969. The outbreak of the inter-racial violence in May 1969 was generally attributed to the inequality in the socio-economic between the Chinese and the Malay. The NEP set first, to eradicate poverty irrespective of race and second, to restructure the Malaysian society. The second goal involved restructuring employment pattern, restructuring ownership in the corporate sector, and creating a *bumiputera* commercial and industrial community. The basic objective was to uplift the socio-

economic position of the *bumiputera*, particularly the Malay. The policy aimed to increase the Malay's share of the corporate wealth to 30% over a period of 20 years.

At the expiry of the policy in 1990, the *Sixth Malaysia Plan, 1991–1995*⁶ reported that the NEP had managed to improve the overall socio-economic position of the *bumiputera* by about 20%. Just how much of this 20% has trickled down to the non-Muslim *bumiputera*, in the East Malaysian states? The Sixth Malaysia Plan does not provide a statistical breakdown of the distribution according to ethnicity but the performance of the various ethnic groups in Sarawak during the twenty years of the NEP period may be gleaned from the *Sarawak Population and Housing Census 1970, 1980 and 1991*. Table 2 (Appendix) shows the attainment in percentage of the population of post-secondary education completed by the various ethnic groups in the State. Of the Dayak components, the Iban lagged behind the Bidayuh and the Orang Ulu. Taken together, the Dayak lagged very far behind the Malay and Chinese. Table 4 (Appendix) charts the industrial mobility of the various ethnic groups between 1970 and 1990. Dayak Iban accounted for some 14% of professional workers in Sarawak in 1990, an improvement from the 12% in 1970. By comparison, the Malay, who accounted for some 17% in 1970 increased to some 30% by 1990.

After the 1990 census, statistical breakdown according to the various ethnic group are no longer available. The various native communities were lumped together under the single category of *bumiputera*, thus making it impossible to gauge how the various *bumiputera* groups have fared after 1990. But it would not be unreasonable to assume that the uneven pattern of development the various indigenous communities in Sarawak (and presumably Sabah also) continued unabated. The Federal Government tacitly admitted as much in the *Eighth Malaysia Plan, 2001–2005*, which recognised that "special efforts" were needed to redress quickly the position of the minority *bumiputeras* (i.e. the indigenous inhabitants of Sabah and Sarawak)⁷ that have been left behind in development. This was later reaffirmed by the Prime Minister,

⁶ Malaysia, *Sixth Malaysia Plan, 1991–1995*, 1991.

⁷ Malaysia, *Rancangan Malaysia Kelapan, 2001–2005*, 2001, p.81 referred precisely to the need to increase the *bumiputera* minorities' share of the corporate equities.

Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed, when he declared open a "Workshop on the Outline Perspective Plan III and the 8th Malaysia Plan," organised by the Sabah Institute for Indigenous Economic Progress (INDEP) and Sarawak Dayak Graduate Association in Kuala Lumpur in April 2002.

Dayakism

It is the sense of discrimination and marginalisation that the emergence of "dayakism" in Sarawak politics in the 1980s and 1990s can be understood. Some 95% of the Dayak live in rural areas, which, in most cases, are amongst the poorest areas in the state. Indeed, according to the 1982 statistics, some 75% of the Sarawak poor are Dayak. The incidence of poverty and economic development among the Dayak community has been documented elsewhere and need not be repeated here.⁸ Juxtaposed besides the relatively better standing of the Malay and Chinese communities in the states, the plight of the Dayak, especially the Iban community, is especially jarring.⁹

The sense of discrimination and of marginalisation was not limited to the rural areas. It also spanned the urban areas. The concerns of the rural communities were basically issues relating to land rights, subsidies for cash crops, infrastructure development, logging and the depletion of communal forest, basic amenities, i.e., issues affecting the subsistence of rural folks. Urbanised and middle-class proponents of dayakism, on the other hand, points to a sense of discrimination with respect to admission into vocational and tertiary educational institutions, scholarships, and promotion in the civil service. Beyond these, a frequent refrain was the lack of Dayak millionaires, industrialists, bankers, and professionals. It is noteworthy that these refrains echo remarkably Dr. Mahathir's refrains *vis-à-vis* the Malays in his book, *The Malay Dilemma* (1970).

⁸ See especially the paper by Madeline Berma in this volume. Joseph Ko, "A Socio-Economic Study of the Iban Today," *Sarawak Museum Journal*, Vol. XL, December 1989. Also James Masing, "The Role of Resettlement in Rural Development" in Cramb, R.A. and Reece, R.H. (eds.), *Development In Sarawak: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Clayton: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1988.

⁹ For comparative statistics, see Jayum A. Jawan, *The Iban Factor in Sarawak Politics*, 1993, especially chapter 5.

It should be emphasised that these sense of and marginalisation did not appear suddenly in the 1980s. Nor were they articulated only after the formation of PBDS. In the 1970s, Sarawak National Party (SNAP) undertook to champion the interests of the Dayak community as *bumiputera* as provided for in the Federal Constitution and in terms of the applicability of the NEP. In the 1970s, SNAP state assemblymen continually pointed out that the implementation of that policy by the Federal and particularly State governments were distinctly in favor of Muslim *bumiputera* as opposed to non-Muslim *bumiputera*.¹⁰

PBDS's politics during the 1980s and early 1990s may be interpreted as a more radical brand of "dayakism". This party was formed in 1983 by a splinter group from SNAP, following a leadership crisis within SNAP. In July 1980, Dunstan Endawie suddenly resigned as President of the party. James Wong, the long-time Deputy President, assumed the post of Acting President, pending the elections of new office bearers at the party's Triennial General Meeting scheduled for December 1981. But at the appointed TGM, the party was split into two. At the crux of the conflict was the issue of SNAP as a multi-racial party versus SNAP as a Dayak-based party. James Wong, a Chinese, who had then been Deputy President for seventeen years, appealed that he be allowed to led the party for at least one term. He argued that SNAP should not deviate from its multi-racial stance. Leo Moggie, the Secretary General, and Daniel Tajem, the Senior Vice President, supported by young and educated members of the party, insisted that SNAP have always been a Dayak-based party and should therefore be led by a Dayak. The top leadership in the party, they argued, must reflect that representation.

In the event, in the contest that ensued, Moggie's faction was all defeated. Wong had shrewdly allied himself to the party's "old guards," those older and less educated Dayak leaders whose positions were threatened by those better-educated ones. Subsequently, Moggie and Tajem formed a new party, the PBDS. In explaining the reasons behind the formation of the party, Moggie emphasised that although SNAP is multi-racial by constitution, it was historically a Dayak-based party. The seats that SNAP won since elections were first held in the state were seats in predominantly Dayak majority constituencies. SNAP's

¹⁰ See especially Peter Searle, *Politics in Sarawak, 1970-1976. The Iban Perspectives*, chapter 8.

admission into the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition was on the ground that the party was Dayak-based, representing the voice of the Dayak, for it was thought essential that the Dayak community must feel that they are not left out from the government. The present leadership of SNAP, Moggie charged, have veered away from the original course for which SNAP was set up.

The setting up of PBDS is a reflection of the Dayak community to self-reliant and be responsible in determining the future of our community within the context of the New Economic Policy and the plural nature of our the Malaysian polity....[PBDS would strive to be a] responsible spokesman through which the Dayak community can progress together with their other Malaysian brothers in the years to come. We are still very much behind in many things: education, economics, the very nature of our livelihood and so on. The problem of rural poverty and rural Sarawak is synonymous with the problem of the Dayak community. Our priority must be...[to] bring to the Government's attention to the need to give priority to rural development in Sarawak, the urgency of setting up properly planned resettlement schemes to regroup scattered communities, the construction of more roads, the improvement of education opportunities, the extension of the Economic Policy beyond its present time frame, and so on.¹¹

The party was initially exclusively Dayak in membership. Its original constitution did not allow for non-Dayak to be members although this was amended in early 1987 to allow other races to become "associate members." As Moggie explained: "We are communal in the same way that United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), and Parti Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) are communal." He added, however, that "although PBDS is communal in membership, it is committed to a moderate and pragmatic policy required in a plural society such as Malaysia where the interests of the various communities as reflected in the New Economic Policy is safeguarded. PBDS, Moggie emphasised, would subscribe and practice the concept and spirit of the Barisan Nasional."¹²

¹¹ Speech by Leo Moggie at the Official Launching of Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak, Kuching, 15 September 1983.

¹² Ibid.

PBDS was subsequently admitted as a member of the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition, both at the state and federal levels. In 1987, however, PBDS left the State Barisan government, (but not the federal government) to team up with PERMAS, a splinter group of the Malay-Muslim wing of PBB, in an effort to oust the Chief Minister, Taib Mahmud. The apparent reason for PBDS defection from the state government was Taib's purported neglect of the rural, which is to say, Dayak community. At the PBDS triennial meeting in Sibu in March 1987, PBDS leaders came out openly to criticise the government of which it was part. Leo Moggie, PBDS President, declared:

The Dayaks, though *Bumiputera* by law, were not enjoying that status in the practical implementation of the New Economic Policy. The story is the same when you look at the intake into institutions of higher learning, recruitment and promotion in the civil service, participation in Government business and participation in the exploitation in natural resources. Whether by design or omission, the NEP has passed the Dayaks by. Land development scheme, the only viable alternative to shifting cultivation...if successfully implemented would be able to redress poverty in the rural areas. Land development schemes had long been publicised but yet to be seen.¹³

PBDS leaders saw in the situation an opportunity to redress the distribution of power in the State government via the Maju Group and also for PBDS to break out of the seven seats limited to the party in the then current arrangement in the state coalition government. The hope was to form a new government, one whose policies would be more oriented toward rural development.

That attempt to oust Taib failed however. At the end of polling the incumbent State Barisan was returned to power though denied the crucial two-thirds majority. The Barisan Nasional won 28 seats. The Maju Group secured 20 seats; PBDS 15 and PERMAS 5. In predominantly Chinese and Muslim constituencies, the poll returns were clearly for the Barisan and against Persatuan Rakyat Malaysia Sarawak (PERMAS) and the Democratic Action Party (DAP), a Chinese-based opposition party. And while "Dayakism" may have been responsible for

¹³ As quoted in Michael Leigh, "Money Politics and Dayak Nationalism: The 1987 Sarawak State Election", 1987.

the 15 seats PBDS won, that sentiment was evidently not enough to allow PBDS to make a clean sweep of all the Dayak-dominated constituencies. Indeed, even in some constituencies won by PBDS, the margins of majority were in fact slim. Perhaps one important reason for this was the fact that PBDS had allowed itself to be caricatured as subservient to PERMAS and the Muslim wing in the Maju Group.

Reeling from the charges that PBDS had been too willing to sell out Dayak interest in being subservient to PERMAS in the last election, PBDS decided to 'go it alone' in the 1991 election. In 1989, in anticipation of an upcoming election, the party launched what it called "Projek Ketua Menteri Sarawak, 1992," promising that PBDS would vie for the position of the Chief Minister for Sarawak after the anticipated election victory. How seriously committed the party was to the project is highly questionable. In the 1991 election the party contested in only 24 out of the 56 constituencies, contesting only in absolute and marginal Dayak-majority constituencies. Giving the incumbent State ruling coalition, a 22 seats lead is hardly a credible strategy for providing Sarawak with an alternative government after the election. In any case, the slogan "Projek Ketua Menteri Sarawak" would later subject PBDS to merciless ridicule by the Barisan Nasional during the campaigning leading to the poll when Leo Moggie did not resign from his Federal Cabinet post to lead his party in the election and assume the post of Chief Minister in the event PBDS won the election. The rife speculation then was that Moggie was given an ultimatum by the Federal leadership that PBDS would be sacked from the Federal BN should he resign from his ministerial post to contest in the state election. The number of UMNO and Federal Cabinet Ministers who were in Sarawak campaigning for the State BN gave some credence to such speculation, if indirectly. It is probable that the Federal leadership was actually apprehensive that PBDS would put a credible showing in the election, particularly in Dayak majority constituencies. Indeed, one keen observer of Sarawak politics from the Peninsula predicted on the eve of the election that PBDS would sweep at least 22 seats.¹⁴ In such a case, PBDS would have emerged as the single largest party in Sarawak.

¹⁴ Datuk Mohamed Sopia's Column, "PBDS Likely to Gain Most," *Sunday Star*, September 15, 1991.

But that was not to be. PBDS won only seven seats and with only slim majority in most cases, a far cry from the pre-polling predictions. Thus immediately after the result of polling was known, Moggie congratulated the BN for its handsome victory and announced that PBDS would like to rejoin the State BN and that PBDS would support the leadership of Taib Mahmud, the Chief Minister. What was more the party attached no condition to its rejoining the State BN. Indeed, with only seven seats, PBDS was in no position to impose any condition. As Moggie later explained the decision: "The prospect for rural development and the improvement of the quality of life of the rural community would be better served if rural-based political parties and their supporters are part of the Government."¹⁵

The party's decision to rejoin the State BN was reiterated at the party's Extraordinary Delegates' Conference in March 1993. At this meeting, it was also decided that PBDS amend its constitution and open its membership to other ethnic groups, thus transforming PBDS into a multi-racial party. As Moggie put it in his speech:

But in fact the amendment is merely a logical extension of what PBDS already is, in spirit and in practice and named those Chinese State Assemblymen who had been elected on the PBDS ticket. However, because PBDS's Constitution restricts membership to...Dayak community, the party has conveniently been labelled with a racist hue.... [T]he removal of [that] Constitutional restriction...will remove an excuse which has been used by other to paint us with a false communal stigma.¹⁶

PBDS's opponents invariably saw dayakism as Dayak chauvinism and muscle flexing. Dayak politicians within the state coalition government emphasised that PBDS hold no monopoly over the spokespersonship of Dayak interests; that indeed, being in the opposition, PBDS was in no position to do anything for the Dayak and that Dayak interests would be served only through the State Barisan. Non-Dayak opponents, on the other hand, suggested that PBDS's brand of politics to be narrow and could harm the interests of other communities. The inability to win

¹⁵ Speech by Leo Moggie, Opening of PBDS Supreme Council Meeting, Kuching, April 12, 1992.

¹⁶ Speech by Leo Moggie, PBDS Extraordinary Delegates' Conference, Sibul, March 27, 1993.

Chinese support was a major reason for the failure of the PBDS-PERMAS coalition in 1987 and the election in 1991.

The party was eventually readmitted into the ruling state coalition in June 1994 and three of its State Assemblymen appointed junior ministers in the cabinet. Since then the cry of "dayakism" has not only receded but had died down. Criticism of the government, of which PBDS was now part, was suddenly muted. Instead, the party's preoccupation shifted to political in fighting, which eventuated in the party's deregistration and demise in 2004. Wither dayakism?

CONCLUSION

One major aim of the NEP, launched in 1971, was to uplift the socio-economic standing of the *bumiputera* communities, both Malay/Muslim and the non-Muslim, whose economic positions were historically inferior to the migrant Chinese. In this regard, the NEP has achieved significant successes *vis-à-vis* the Malay, such as the creation of a sizable Malay middle class and Malay entrepreneurs. But the same could not be said of the other indigenous ethnic communities. This is especially true of the Dayak communities in Sarawak; and it is this sense of discrimination and marginalisation that gave rise to dayakism. In a sense, dayakism marks a reversion to a more narrow communalistic emphasis in preference to the larger rubric of *bumiputera*. For in the larger *bumiputera* rubric, the Dayak felt themselves to be treated as second-class *vis-à-vis* the Malay-Muslim communities who wield political power in the state.

The slogan dayakism itself was perhaps an unfortunate choice for it was open to charges of chauvinism, which, in a sense, it was. Dayak forms the largest ethnic community in the state (45%) and up until 1987 there were 28 Dayak majority constituencies in a 48 seats State Assembly. In theory, therefore, the Dayak could wrest the political leadership of the state if they stood united under one political party. PBDS's strategy in the 1987 and 1991 elections were based on the fabled assumption of Dayak unity. In reality, the Dayak are hopelessly divided and scattered among all the political parties in the state. Indeed, PBDS itself was split as a result of irreconcilable leadership struggle in the party, eventuating in its deregistration in 2004.

The banner of dayakism now appear to have been taken up by non-political organisations, such as the Dayak Graduate Association and the Dayak Chamber of Commerce and Industry, often working together with Kadazan-Dusun non-political organisations counterparts from Sabah. Like the Dayak in Sarawak, the Kadazan-Dusun communities in Sabah are also non-Muslim native ethnic communities; and like the Dayak, the Kadazan-Dusun communities appear also to have been discriminated against. In April 2003, the Sabah Institute and the Sarawak Dayak Graduate Association jointly organised a "Workshop on the Outline Perspective Plan III and the Eight Malaysia Plan," which highlighted the socio-economic positions of the non-Muslim ethnic groups in Sarawak and Sabah *vis-à-vis* the NEP and the National Development Plan (1990–2000). A resolution drawn up at the end of the workshop suggested, among other things, for the creation of a Department or Unit within the Office to the Prime Minister that would cater to the affairs of the *minority bumiputera*, particularly as it relates to the implementation of the NEP. Implicit in the call of such a department or unit under the purview of the Federal Government is a general distrust of the respective state governments to implement the NEP *vis-à-vis* their communities. It is also noteworthy that the Dayak and the Kadazan-Dusun, although a majority ethnic group in their respective home states, now refer to themselves as *minority bumiputera*, which they of course are within the national context. The term *minority bumiputera* distinguish them from the Malay/Muslim *bumiputera*, who had been the main benefactors of the NEP.

PBDS, the self-acclaimed flag-bearer of dayakism has been deregistered but the issues the party had raised during the 1980s and early 1990s, particularly pertaining to rural development and the general sense of discrimination, were matters of real and continuing concerns to the Dayak community and would continue to haunt Sarawak politics if not properly redressed. To be sure, the cry of dayakism has muted somewhat over the past decade but the sense of dissatisfaction among the Dayak would not disappear merely by co-opting a few Dayak politicians into the ruling coalition. Both the State and the Federal governments have the responsibility to ensure that the fruits of development and socio-economic advancement peculate down to all the targeted groups. Moreover, with forty years of nationhood, the grouses of communal issues and ethnic rights should no longer be the issue. Rather, the main

agenda should be equitable socio-economic advancement of the peoples and general prosperity in the process of nation building.

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APPENDIX

Table 3: Post-Secondary Education Completed by Ethnicity (in %)

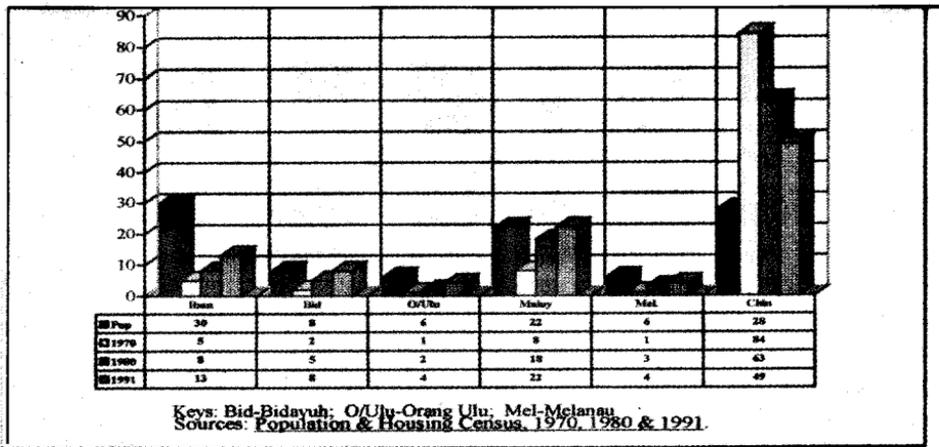


Table 4: Professional by Ethnicity (in %)

