

THE SARAWAK STATE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1991

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The article examines the basis and veracity of suggestions that Dayak leaders were "racist" or "extremist" in their electoral campaign in the 1991 Sarawak State Election. It finds such suggestions untenable. It further elaborates on the concept of "Dayakism" in an attempt to understand its broad underpinnings and its relevance to the 1991 state election as well as the elections of 1974, 1983 and 1987. The author concludes that Dayakism in a broad sense will continue to permeate all future state elections in Sarawak as long as the socio-economic conditions of Dayaks remain depressed.

Artikel ini meneliti asas dan kebenaran dakwaan bahawa pemimpin-pemimpin Dayak berkelakuan secara "rasis" dan "terlampau" dalam kempen Pilihanraya Negeri Sarawak pada 1991. Ia dapati bahawa dakwaan-dakwaan tersebut tidak dapat dibuktikan. Penulis juga menjelaskan tentang konsep "Dayakisme" supaya memahami asas-asas menyeluruhnya dan relevansnya kepada pilihanraya 1991 dan pilihanraya pada 1974, 1983 dan 1987. Penulis menyimpulkan bahawa Dayakisme dalam ertikata luas akan terus meresapi kesemua pilihanraya Negeri Sarawak masa hadapan selagi keadaan sosio-ekonomi lembab orang Dayak tidak diatasi.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The Sarawak state general election of 1991 was highly tense. Communal feelings ran high and parochialism and stereotyping abounded. Communal issues featured prominently in many statements and speeches of various party leaders and candidates. Such a tense election atmosphere is reminiscent of the 1974 and 1987 elections, when Ibans (Dayaks) made similar attempts to wrest power from the ruling coalition. But there are some fundamental differences between the state elections of 1974, 1987 and 1991, although all three state general elections may be said to be closely associated with the Iban (Dayak) singular aim of re-establishing an Iban/Dayak-led state government.

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The aim of this article is, first, to examine the basis of a number of propositions that have been made regarding Ibans (Dayaks) and their leaders in the 1991 elections. In particular, it discusses the extent to which it was justified in labelling certain Iban (Dayak) leaders, especially those from Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS), "racists", and their supporters "extremists". Second, it discusses the concept of "Dayakism", which has been alleged as the basis of the growing political support of PBDS, with a view to understanding what it really embodies as opposed to what it was accused of portraying. In so doing the article looks at how Dayakism was effectively used by Barisan Nasional Tiga (BN3) to draw support from its component partners, who came in large numbers to Sarawak to help salvage the supposedly difficult elections campaign of BNS. Finally, this paper seeks to examine the relationship between the 1974, 1983, 1987 and 1991 state elections in the context of the Dayakism phenomenon.

It is pertinent to provide a background of the Sarawak political scene so that the reader can better appreciate the issues raised during the 1991 election and other related matters.

MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS AND CATEGORIES

Sarawak is a plural state within the Federation of Malaysia. The main ethnic groups are as follows: the Iban (or Sea Dayak), who form about 30% of the total state population; Bidayuh (Land Dayak) 8%; Orang Ulu (comprising other indigenous peoples formerly referred to as Kayan, Kenyah and Kelabit) 5%; Malay 21%; Melanau 6%; and Chinese 29% (Table 1). In the 56-seats state legislature, Dayak voters constitute a majority in 24 state electoral constituencies, the Malay/Melanau in 16 and the Chinese in 11; in others, Malay/Melanau voters constitute a plurality (i.e. the largest but less than 51%) in four and in one other constituency, Iban and Chinese voters are about equal in proportion (Table 1).

While there are many and diverse ethnic groups within Sarawak, there is some affinity among many of them. In Sarawak politics, it is a common tendency for political observers and scholars to classify them into three larger competing categories, namely the Dayak, Malay/Melanau and the Chinese. The Dayaks are basically an interior population; the majority of them are either pagans or Christians, and are swidden agriculturists. The Malays/Melanaus are coastal populations who have a religious affinity.

Table 1: DUN Seats, Registered Voters & Population by Ethnicity, 1991

Ethnicity	DUN Seats		Reg. Voters		Population	
	No.	%	'000	%	'000	%
Dayak	24	43	268	40	690	43
Iban	17	30	199	30	471	30
Bidayuh	5	9	49	7	133	8
Orang Ulu	2	4	20	3	86	5
Malay/Melanau	16	29	171	26	422	27
Malay	*	*	*	*	330	21
Melanau	*	*	*	*	92	6
Chinese	11	20	228	34	463	29
Mixed++	5	8	+	+	+	+
Total	56	100	667	100	1575	99

Legend: * See Malay/Melanau category.
 + Not Applicable.
 ++ Four Malay/Melanau plurality; Ibans form the second largest group; in one Iban and Chinese voters are almost equal in proportion.

Sources: Sarawak, Dept. of Statistics, 1989; and Malaysia, Election Commission, 1990.

All Malays are constitutionally defined to be Muslims (*Article 160[2], Federal Constitution of Malaysia*), and while the majority of Melanau are Muslims, a smaller proportion are Christians. Traditionally, the Malays have been closely associated with government, for example as agents of the Brunei Sultanate and as junior administrators in the Brook and Colonial governments (Reece, 1982); the Melanau are sago planters and fishermen. The Chinese are mainly urban dwellers, who dominate the economic activities of the state. In addition, these five ethnic groups can be further regrouped into *bumiputera* (native), comprising the Dayaks and the Malays/Melanau, and non-*bumiputera*, the Chinese and other non-indigenes. Even within the *bumiputera* category, there is also a division between Muslim and non-Muslim

bumiputeras; the former comprising Malays and the majority of Melanaus and the latter, Dayaks.

Knowledge about the distribution and groupings of these ethnic groups is important to an understanding of potential political strength among the various ethnic communities. From the population proportion and their potential communal strength, it is clear that only a coalition government supported by at least two ethnic communities is possible (Table 1). To a large extent, coalition governments in Sarawak have been formed based on inter-ethnic cooperation, but there also have been instances in which the state government has been formed from the cooperation of two ethnic communities and to the exclusion of others. For example, in the period between 1963 and 1970, the backbone of the Sarawak Alliance government was a coalition of Dayaks and the Malays/Melanaus; the Chinese were then nominally represented by Sarawak Chinese Association (SCA) (Leigh, 1974). The situation changed after the 1970 elections, when the Chinese provided the political weight for the ascent of the Malay/Melanau leadership to head the state coalition government. It was the Dayaks who have since then been marginally represented in the state coalition, except for the interim period between 1976 and 1987, when all main political parties, representing the three main ethnic categories, became partners in the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition.

COMMUNALISM VERSUS MULTI-RACIALISM: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT SINCE 1963

Since the first state general elections in 1963, the pattern of political support in Sarawak has, to some extent, been communal. This has been the case particularly amongst the Malays/Melanaus and the Chinese, who have strictly supported the Malay/Melanau-dominated, multi-*bumiputera* Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) and the Chinese-dominated, multi-ethnic Sarawak United Peoples' Party (SUPP) respectively. The same communal commitment has not emerged among the Dayaks, whose pattern of political behaviour has tended to oscillate between support for a Dayak-dominated/based party and a multi-ethnic/*bumiputera* ones.

The formation of political parties in Sarawak prior to independence was, to some extent, multi-ethnic, although all were clearly dominated by one or the other ethnic group (Leigh, 1974). For example, SUPP, the first multi-ethnic party to be formed in 1959, had emerged from the consolidation of the various Chinese commercial organisations. The party's leadership was

dominated by its Chinese members. In 1960, a multi-ethnic Parti Negara Sarawak (PANAS) was formed and dominated by the Malay aristocrats of Kuching. In the following year, Sarawak National Party (SNAP) and Barisan Rakyat Jati Sarawak (BARJASA) were formed; the former was an Iban-dominated multi-ethnic party and the latter a Melanau-dominated multi-bumiputera party. Before the District Council elections in 1963, six political parties had been formed. This followed the formation of a Dayak-based Parti Pesaka Anak Sarawak (PESAKA) and the Chinese SCA in 1962.

The formation of the six parties reflected cleavages between and within particular ethnic communities. The Chinese were basically divided between SUPP and SCA, with the majority in favour of the former. SUPP was seen as a radical party and its alleged infiltration by communists did not help to soften that image. Therefore, a group of Chinese formed SCA as a vehicle of Chinese participation in government because the left-wing SUPP was deemed not acceptable as a coalition component in any future state government. The Dayaks were basically divided between SNAP and PESAKA, although there was a substantial number of them supporting other non-Dayak oriented parties. The formation of SNAP and PESAKA reflected a historical schism between the Saribas (Second Division) Dayak Ibans, who supported SNAP, and their Rejang (Third Division) brothers, who supported PESAKA. PANAS and BARJASA housed two conflicting groups of Muslims; the former was supported by the Malays/Melanau, who had favoured the retention of Sarawak's status as a British Crown Colony and the latter by their counterparts, who supported independence.

Despite the above problems, the ethnic division was not insurmountable for close collaboration between and within these communities. The first state government formed in 1963 comprised the coalition of SNAP, PESAKA, BARJASA and SCA in the Sarawak ALLIANCE (Leigh, 1974). But the initial coalition government was rather unstable for several reasons. First, SNAP's Stephen Kalong Ningkan, a Dayak Iban, was a compromise Chief Minister (CM) and there was an initial federal suggestion that the leader of BARJASA, Abdul Rahman Ya'kub, a Muslim Malay/Melanau, should be made CM. Second, Kalong Ningkan was a steadfast believer in state rights. This stand brought him into direct conflict with the federal leaders, who wanted Sarawak streamlined quickly to achieve full integration within the Federation. Thirdly, Kalong Ningkan's improper treatment of his main supporter, PESAKA, was the vital factor that brought his government down. Kalong Ningkan's Chief Ministership had been made possible through the cooperation of SNAP and PESAKA in the ALLIANCE, but the latter was not rewarded in the state government. Because PESAKA was not represented in the state cabinet, it was

therefore easy for BARJASA to manoeuvre PESAKA against SNAP by promising PESAKA greater role in a new state government. Although, it was PESAKA which provided the candidate for the Chief Ministership in 1966, after Kalong Ningkan's removal, it was arguably BARJASA that had dominated major decision-makings in the cabinet (Leigh, 1974; Searle 1983).

While the period between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s had worked to consolidate Chinese and Malays/Melanaus behind SUPP and Parti Bumiputera (BUMIPUTERA--a merger of PANAS and BARJASA) respectively, it has not done the same for the Dayaks. In part, this can be attributed to a number of factors. First, Dayak division between SNAP and PESAKA was entrenched by the merger of PESAKA and BUMIPUTERA in PBB. The merger removed any possibility of Dayak integration because the PBB-absorbed Dayaks would always pose an obstacle to any unification movement, unless they could also be accommodated in the process. The significance of the PESAKA-BUMIPUTERA merger was that it brought into the PBB some Dayak support. Second, since the 1970s, SUPP have also been successful in retaining some Dayak seats, which the party had won in previous elections. Opportunities for the PBB and SUPP to penetrate further into Dayak areas came, first, in the 1983 election and, thereafter, in subsequent elections in 1987 and 1991. In 1983, Dayak unity behind SNAP, which had earlier entered the BN coalition in 1976 with 18 Dayak seats, was undermined. The formation of PBDS in the same year reduced strong Dayak support in SNAP because seven of SNAP's Dayak assemblymen left the party to join the then newly-formed PBDS. In the 1987 elections, the PBDS, which was then in the opposition at the state level, won 15 Dayak seats; but this victory was shortlived because eight of its Assemblymen later defected to rejoin the BN3 coalition. In 1991, the distribution of Dayak seats held by the BN3 components and the opposition PBDS was about the same proportion as they had been since the 1983 general elections.

Since 1970s, the voting patterns of the Malays/Melanaus and Chinese can be said to have been communal, while it has been multi-ethnic for the Dayaks. This is clearly evidenced from the fact that non-Malays/Melanaus and non-Chinese have never been elected from Malay/Melanau and Chinese dominated constituencies respectively. However, non-Dayaks have been successfully elected in some Dayak-dominated constituencies.

Through their political strength, arising from their initial communal unity in the early 1970s, the Malays/Melanaus and Chinese have been able to control the ethnic agenda in subsequent elections. Specifically, this refers to the

PBB's and SUPP's monopoly of the Malay/Melanau and Chinese areas respectively, while at the same time polarising Dayaks between various component partners of the coalition. PBB and SUPP have jealously guarded their "exclusive rights" to represent the coalition in nominating candidates in Malay/Melanau and Chinese constituencies respectively. These are in addition to some Dayak seats, which both parties would also contest, as determined by the number they held prior to an election. Although SNAP had entered the Barisan coalition in 1976 with 18 Dayak seats, this was slowly to change in subsequent elections, when SNAP lost two Dayak seats in 1979 to independents alleged to have been backed by either the PBB or SUPP. This undercutting went on, and in 1983, two seats (Engkilili and Dudong), previously held by SNAP, were lost to the SUPP-backed independents. The eventual erosion of SNAP's power base came in the mid-1983, when the party was divided between two rival factions-- i.e. the James Wong and Leo Moggie groups (Jawan, 1984a). The latter left the party to form the PBDS.

FORMATION OF PARTI BANSAR DAYAK SARAWAK

Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak, or literally, the Party of the Dayak peoples of Sarawak, was formed by SNAP's splinter group in early 1983. The significance of the SNAP-PBDS split showed the extent to which Dayak leaders in SNAP were feeling the pressure of being unable to help their community, despite the fact that they had been a party to the state coalition government since 1976. The ascent of James Wong to the presidency of the party in 1981 provided the basis to shift some blame for their inability and ineffectiveness in bringing about development to their community. But by then, Dayaks had been in the coalition for about seven years, and James Wong had only been president for about two years. Hence, the split was not, as argued by some PBDS leaders, due to SNAP being led by a Chinese; this was simply a convenient excuse to diffuse criticism levelled by Dayaks against their leaders. In fact, although the party was led by a Chinese, almost all major political appointments were held by its Dayak members.

The SNAP-PBDS split can also be attributed to a clash between James Wong's and Leo Moggie's factions, whose ideas for SNAP were sharply opposed to each other. The Wong faction favoured the multi-ethnic approach, while the Moggie faction supported the communalisation of SNAP under the Dayaks. It was argued that SNAP should become the basis of Dayak participation in the coalition, as PBB is for the Malays/Melanaus and SUPP the Chinese. The argument was based on the fact that SNAP's political strength was derived solely from Dayak legislative support. In view of the communal development

which has taken shape in the Malay/Melanau and Chinese communities, it was only to be expected that such a movement would come about among the Dayaks. However, it was also expected that such a move would not be well taken by leaders of PBB and SUPP, as that would change the *status quo* of the coalition government, which had so far worked well between PBB and SUPP.

While PBDS might appear to have been more "communal" in its character, it was, perhaps, no more chauvinist than the multi-ethnic parties such as the PBB and SUPP, and the communal United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) of the Peninsula. Basically, what the PBDS aspired to achieve was to unite the Dayaks behind Dayak leaders in a Dayak party. In that respect, the aim was similar to what the PBB and the SUPP had accomplished among the Malays/Melanaus and Chinese. But, this clearly posed a threat both to the stability of the PBB's leadership of the BN and the SUPP's role as power-broker. Dayak unity would inevitably reduced the roles of PBB as the dominant partner in any future coalition and SUPP as the effective power-broker between the united Malays/Melanaus and the divided Dayaks.

WHAT IS DAYAKISM?

Dayakism is a concept of ideas about Dayak politics and prospects for economic development (Jawan, 1987; 1991; and 1993). It is an awareness of the problems pose by Dayak political disunity attributed to the oscillating loyalties they have had for individual leaders and party politics. At one time, Dayaks may value individual leaders thereby guaranteeing these leaders firm support regardless of the party which they might represent as candidates in elections, and at other times, Dayaks have also been known to support a political party without giving much thought to whom the party may actually nominate as candidates (Jawan, 1991). More recently, Dayaks have come to realise that this was the main problem which contributed to the socioeconomic disparities that existed between them and the more prosperous and united Malay/Melanau and the Chinese populations (Jawan, 1984b and 1991). The notion emerged that the only way to change the present trend of uneven socioeconomic development among the Iban (Dayaks) *vis-à-vis* the other ethnic groups in Sarawak was through integrating Dayak legislative strength behind one political party, of which the PBDS presented one alternative. It was expected and argued that a united Iban (Dayak) community can better draw the attention of the government to their problems.

Although Dayaks have been represented in coalition governments formed since 1970, when the Chief Ministership ceased to be held by a Dayak, their position was weak because their legislative seats were distributed among three (and since 1983, four) political parties as opposed to those of the Malays/Melanaus and the Chinese, which have been integrated behind PBB and SUPP respectively. Hence, Dayak political disunity has given added legislative strength to PBB and SUPP whose ability to polarise, and in the process acquire several Dayak seats for their respective party, serve only to strengthen their respective political positions at the expense of the Dayaks.

Since Dayakism has been successfully misconstrued to mean a Dayak intent to dominate Sarawak's plural society, all Dayak leaders, regardless of their party affiliations, must also take equal blame for such ruthless exploitation of the issue. What is more, PBDS leaders, who had been pinning their hopes on riding on the issue to electoral victories, had also failed to explain what Dayakism actually embodies. Instead, in an attempt to diffuse the heat generated against them in 1991, PBDS leaders gave Dayakism (supposedly) a new meaning--"ruralism". The shift suggested that the PBDS leaders were cracking under pressure and that they themselves were also uncertain about what Dayakism was all about. In fact, there is no basic difference between "Dayakism", as I have argued elsewhere (Jawan, 1987 and 1991), and "ruralism", which aimed for the betterment of the rural people given that the bulk of the rural population are Dayaks.

The popular reference to Dayakism may be associated with the formation of PBDS in 1983, but the ideas expressed by the concept certainly had originated long before then. It was the same concept of ideas that had been largely responsible for the emergence of SNAP as a strong Dayak party in the mid-1970s. Then, the issue did not meet much opposition from the ruling coalition as there were other issues which the ruling coalition could then effectively use in their campaigns such as the threat to security posed by the communist terrorists and the Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation. Furthermore, the basis of SNAP's challenge then was multi-ethnic, as opposed to the PBDS, which was launched as a communal party.

THE RESULTS OF THE 1991 STATE ELECTION: EMERGING OR PERSISTENT TRENDS?

As generally expected, the 1991 elections returned the PBB-led state coalition to power for the sixth consecutive term; the latter three terms being under the

leadership of Abdul Taib Mahmud. BN3 (comprising the PBB, SUPP and SNAP) secured 49 seats. Of the 49 seats, 27 were won by PBB from the following ethnic constituencies: 16 Malay/Melanau majority and three Malay/Melanau plural seats; four Dayak Iban majorities; two Dayak Bidayuh and two Dayak Orang Ulu majority constituencies. SUPP won all the 11 Chinese majority constituencies; in addition, the party also bagged two Dayak Iban and two Dayak Bidayuh majority seats, and one a mixed constituency where Chinese and Dayak Iban voters are about equal in proportion. SNAP's six seats were won from the following constituencies: four Dayak Iban constituencies and one Dayak Bidayuh majority and one Malay/Melanau plural area. The remaining seven Dayak Iban majority constituencies were won by PBDS, the only opposition party that was successful in the elections.

The 1991 election results reinforced the communal pattern of votings among the Malay/Melanau and the Chinese communities. This is clearly evidenced from the fact that all Malay/Melanau and Chinese majority constituencies were again won, as they had been in past elections, by the PBB and SUPP respectively. This has been the consistent patterns of Chinese and, to a large extent, Malay/Melanau voting behaviours. But the same pattern of Iban (Dayak) voting polarisation continued as they had been in previous elections. With the exception of the voting pattern among the Dayak Orang Ulu, whose only two majority constituencies were both won by PBB in 1991, all Dayak Iban and Bidayuh constituencies were fairly distributed among the four political parties that had been successful in the elections.

Based on the continuing pattern of voting shown by the Dayak community, it was therefore somewhat malicious to have associated many Dayaks and their leaders with Dayakism in its extreme form. Since universal suffrage was first introduced into Sarawak, Dayaks have, to some extent, consistently disregarded ethnicity in voting. In between state elections, this has allowed Chinese leaders to be elected from Dayak majority state constituencies, for example, SCA's Ling Beng Siong in the Dayak Iban constituency of Igan in the 1970s; PBDS's Sim Choo Nam and SUPP's Toh Heng San in the Dayak Iban constituency of Engkilili in 1987 and 1991 respectively; and PBDS's Syn Chee Hua in Pelagus in 1991.

The expectation that PBDS would do better in the 1991 elections was a reasonable assumption. This was based on the political development in the 1987 state and 1991 parliamentary elections. In the 1987 elections, PBDS had secured 15 seats from the Dayak majority constituencies, an increase of eight seats from seven it had secured in the 1983 state elections. And in the 1991

parliamentary elections, four independents who had then claimed to be closely associated with and covertly supported by PBDS won in their respective constituencies. However, to suggest that PBDS had a possibility of winning a simple majority based on its narrow communal appeal in Sarawak's plural state was not only misguided, but also an insult to Iban/Dayak leaders who were and still are in the various component parties of the BN3. In fact, communal parties that appeal to their respective communities alone will never stand a chance of winning and forming a state government on their own. Assuming that voting is strictly communal and that the three ethnic categories nominate their candidates in all 56 constituencies, Dayaks can count on winning in only 24 seats, which is five short of the required 29-seats majority needed to form the state government. This differs in significant measure from the communal political setup in the Peninsula, where UMNO can, on its own, easily win enough majorities to form state, except perhaps in Pulau Pinang, and national governments alone.

Table 2: Dayak DUN Seats held by Party and Year.

Party	1970	1974	1979	1983	1987	1991
<u>Iban:</u>						
PESAKA/PBB	7	3	3	3	2	4
SNAP	6	12	12	3	1	4
SCA/SUPP	2	2	2	4	2	2
Others	2	0	0	0	1	0
PBDS	-	-	-	7	11	7
Subtotal	17	17	17	17	17	17
<u>Bidayuh and Orang Ulu:</u>						
PESAKA/PBB	0	2	1	2	2	4
SNAP	4	4	3	4	1	1
SCA/SUPP	4	2	2	1	1	2
Others	0	0	2	1	0	0
PBDS	-	-	-	0	4	0
Subtotal	8	8	8	8	8	7
Grand total	25	25	25	25	25	24

Sources: Malaysia, Election Commission, 1972, 1975, 1981, 1985 & 1988.

PBDS's "Ketua Menteri (Chief Minister) Sarawak 1992" campaign and the party's intent on "going it alone" did not help quell some of the allegations levelled at the party. Although PBDS had opened its door to non-Dayaks and had many non-Dayaks among its candidates in the 1991 state elections, this did not work towards changing its image as a communal party. In fact, the opening up of PBDS to non-Dayaks has been seen as a desperate attempt by the party and its leaders to deflect criticism. Even if the opening up of PBDS had been sincere, the position of the party's non-Dayak members would still appear peculiar under a party which has a Dayak label. The appearance of a Dayak domination of the party will always be there.

The 1991 election did not, as many political analysts have argued, reduced the PBDS political strength. The PBDS won seven Dayak seats, which has been the number held by the party since it was formed in 1983 (Table 2). The sudden jump of its political strength to 15 seats in 1987 could not really be attributed to its widening appeal among Dayaks, because all the 15 seats had not been won based on the party's merit. Instead, some had been won based on the political personalities that had, in 1987, momentarily supported the PBDS. As can be seen later, the same group who had initially defected from the BN3 to the PBDS also left the latter to rejoin the coalition. It would be more accurate to say that the relative political strengths of the four main political parties, that is the PBB, SUPP, SNAP, and PBDS, have been more or less sustained in the 1991 election (see Table 2).

THE ROLE OF DAYAKISM IN SARAWAK STATE GENERAL ELECTIONS

Although Dayakism has only been popularly used since the early 1980s, the important role it played in the 1991 and previous state general elections can also be established. Dayakism embodies issues, problems and prospects for socioeconomic and political development among the Ibans (Dayaks) (Jawan, 1984a; 1984b; 1991; 1993). In that respect, only the concept used to express Iban issues, problems and prospects for development varies, but the form and messages remain basically similar. Some similarities and differences between the six state general elections can be discerned by studying the background in which Iban (Dayak) political support has been expressed. Except for the elections in 1983, Iban (Dayak) political expressions especially in the 1974,

1987 and 1991, state general elections were calculated to establish Iban (Dayak) unity in an effort to either form the state government or increase Iban/Dayak leverage within the state coalition government. However, the political climate in which Iban/Dayak political expression occurred justified such a pursuit at one time and made it look outrageous during other periods.

The attempt to re-establish an Iban/Dayak-led state government was conceivable only in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Before the delineation exercise of electoral boundaries in 1988, Sarawak was divided into 48 state constituencies. In the 48 state constituencies, Dayak Iban voters constituted majorities (of at least 51% of the total registered voters) in 17 state electoral constituencies, Dayak Bidayuh in five, Dayak Orang Ulu in three, Malay/Melanau in 12 and Chinese in eight (Jawan, 1987). Together, the Dayak category had 25 seats which, assuming voting was strictly communal, they could count on winning and which were also enough to form a simple majority state government. But this situation has changed. In the expanded state legislature, Dayak Iban voters still constitute majorities in 17 constituencies, Dayak Bidayuh in five and the Dayak Orang Ulu in two. The only two communities to have benefited from the 1988 delineation exercise of electoral constituencies were the Malay/Melanau and the Chinese. Malay/Melanau voters now constitute majorities in 16 constituencies, an increase of four from the previous 12, while Chinese voters form majorities in 11, an increase of three from the previous eight. In five other constituencies, Malay/Melanau voters form pluralities with Iban voters constituting the second largest group in four while in one, Iban and Chinese voters are about equal in proportion.

The attempt to unite Iban/Dayak and re-establish a state government led by them was more practical during the state election in 1974 compared to later attempts in 1987 and especially in 1991. But the state election in 1983, when PBDS was formed, could not really be considered in the context of the ongoing Iban/Dayak attempt to wrest power from the ruling coalition because the fight they put up then was merely limited to a popularity contest between it and SNAP. In 1974, the attempt was made through a multi-ethnic approach, although SNAP then was to a large extent dominated by Dayaks. While the attempt failed, it nevertheless united, to a large extent, Dayaks under SNAP. Having won 18 seats then, SNAP was able to deny the state Alliance the two-third legislative majority. But another similar attempt made in 1987 was fraught with problems. First, the communal approach through PBDS was, to some extent, frowned upon by many political quarters. But this did not really become the main issue then because of the electoral partnership it had with

PERMAS which housed strong Malay/Melanau political figures such as Abdul Rahman Ya'kub, the former leader of PBB, CM and Yang di-Pertua Negeri (Governor). The pact had the effect of putting at bay potential federal support for BN3. Second, the alliance PBDS forged with PERMAS was self-defeating as some leaders of PERMAS were not exactly innocent of the charges PBDS levelled against the ruling BN3 coalition. PBDS withdrew from the state Barisan because, its leaders pointed out, Ibans/Dayaks have not significantly benefited from their partnership in the state Barisan coalition. In this respect, many had also questioned the timing with which PBDS had brought up such issues. Some had asked why had it taken that long for the PBDS to realise that Ibans/Dayak were missing out on development and furthermore, that Taib Mahmud, who only took over the state leadership from Rahman Ya'kub in 1981, was not entirely to be blamed. Third, the same group of Iban/Dayak leaders who charged that Iban/Dayak development had been neglected had themselves been parties to the ruling coalition. The fact of the matter is that PBDS took the opportunity provided by the emergence of the Malay/Melanau schism between PBB and PERMAS to retest their popular appeal among Dayaks. In addition, teaming with PERMAS ensured not only that they had some financial backing, but also the opportunity to contest in a greater number of Dayak seats than they would have been allocated had they stayed within the state Barisan. Lastly, according to a reliable source within the PBDS-PERMAS alliance, the electoral pact between PBDS and PERMAS allegedly also contained some elements of deception. This was related to the allocation and division of seats. On the surface, it appeared that all Dayak seats were assigned to PBDS members to contest and Malay/Melanau and Chinese seats to PERMAS candidates. In reality, some of the PBDS candidates then were actually PERMAS men. Hence, they would work to PERMAS's advantage in deciding which party should nominate their man for the post of Chief Minister in the event that the Maju coalition had won a simple majority.

The expressed Iban/Dayak attempt to secure a simple majority to form the state government during the 1991 elections was an ill-conceived idea despite the fact that the party had a considerable number of "Dayak intellectuals". For reasons already mentioned at the beginning of this section, such an attempt is no longer tenable. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that when PBDS went on to promote its "Ketua Menteri Sarawak 1992" project by "going it alone", it was clear that the party and its leaders had acted on bad advice. Significantly absent from their attempt in 1991 was the strong support of Malay/Melanau leaders, who had in 1987 lend some weight to their cause. PBDS was formed in 1983 because Iban/Dayak leaders felt that SNAP should

be led by an Iban (or a Dayak). Of late, this old problem seems to have resurfaced in PBDS. There is a growing indication that the party is heavily dependent on certain Chinese "towkays". Although, according to a reliable source within PBDS, the Chinese towkays did not visibly lead and dictate party policies and directions, their influence was increasing felt by some Dayak leaders. The fact that two Dayak majority areas of Engkilili and Pelagus were sacrificed for the sake of its Chinese members to contest lends some weight to this conjecture.

Despite the fact that PBDS and its leaders may at times be taking contradictory courses of actions and making conflicting statements about its political struggle for the Ibans/Dayaks, the influence of Dayakism in future elections will continue to be felt. This can be deduced from the consistent electoral support the party has been receiving despite the frequent display of erratic decisions and actions of its leaders. In 1991, PBDS received about 78,882 votes from the 24 Dayak majority constituencies as opposed to 94,001 polled by BN3 component parties; but in terms of seats, the party only won 7 as opposed to 17 secured by BN3 (Jawan, 1993:99-104). Hence, if votes polled by PBDS can be taken as some indication of Iban/Dayak dissatisfaction with the ruling coalition, this displeasure seems likely to continue until such time as the Iban/Dayak socioeconomic problems are addressed or resolved. The fact that both BN3 and PBDS have secured considerable proportion of Dayak votes in Dayak constituencies indicates that the degree of acceptance of the ruling coalition among Dayaks is qualified. Unlike in Malay/Melanau and Chinese areas, which were usually won with decisive majorities, the majority of Dayak seats had in most elections have been won on very narrow margins.

DAYAKISM AND IBAN VOTING BEHAVIOUR

In *Political Change and Economic Development among the Ibans of Sarawak* (1991), I attribute the problem of Dayak unity to their quavering political loyalties, which have oscillated between support for individual personalities (regionalism) and a political party (supra-regionalism). Although my study was based largely on the Dayak Ibans, there is some validity in linking my findings to Dayak Bidayuhs and Dayak Orang Ulu because there is some cultural affinity between the three Dayak groups (Avè and King, 1986). I termed "regionalism" political support which tended to be given to regionally-based "individual personalities" and "supra-regionalism" support for a particular political party. Hence, the behavioural dichotomy of the Dayaks is individual versus institutional loyalty. This tendency has, on the one hand,

given rise periodically to Iban disunity and, on the other hand, led to temporary phases of relative unity. Over several election periods, we have seen the emergence of Dayak leaders who may or may not be aligned to a particular political party. Since independence, the Dayak community has had a high turnover of independent members of either the state assembly or parliament.

The pattern of individual-institutional loyalty among the Dayaks is imbedded in their socio-cultural matrix. In traditional society, the individual (regional) component was heavily stressed through such values as egalitarianism, competition and cooperation (Freedman, 1955; Sutlive, 1978; Sandin, 1962 and 1967). Leaders emerged because they have demonstrated certain abilities in various aspects of sociocultural pursuits such as warfare (*ngayau*) and migration (more specifically *mubok menua* [opening up of new land/area]). Once established, individual (or regional) leaders tended to develop followings. In traditional Dayak society, this phenomenon tended to polarise the Dayak communities, as their scattered riverine pattern of settlement gave rise to many "regional"¹ leaders. While Dayak have been traditionally polarised, this did not present an insurmountable problem for regional integration. They have sufficiently demonstrated that they were also capable to integrating when circumstances warranted. This was especially true in warfare, where victors dominated the conquered; but where competition produced no clear winners, Ibans have also been flexible in forging alliance with opponents (Sandin, 1967: 18-20). This factor was particularly useful for the Brookes, who often had to resort to recruiting Dayak mercenaries to stabilise their initial rule (Runciman, 1960; Pringle, 1970).

Since independence, Dayak rotating emphasis between regionalism and supra-regional loyalty has been one of the main obstacles to their political integration. This problem is further compounded by many socioeconomic problems facing the community. About 95% of the Dayaks live in the interior (Masing, 1988). In 1976, incidence of poverty in the rural area was reported to be about 60% (MP4: 34). Living in the interior also mean that Dayaks lack many basic amenities and opportunities. The majority of the Dayaks are trapped in labour-intensive agricultural and agriculture-related activities. In 1980, of the total active Dayak Iban labour force of about 161,000, about 142,000 or 88% of them were engaged in this sector (Jawan, 1991: 63). The percentages for Dayak Bidayuh and Dayak Orang Ulu were 78% and 80% respectively. These are in contrast to the percentages for the Malay, Melanau

1 The term regional here refers to "area" as opposed to elsewhere where they have been used specifically to refer to individuals.

and the Chinese communities which were 38%, 61% and 29% respectively. On the other hand, the tertiary (or high income) sector found only about 8,000 or 5% of the total Dayak Iban labour force, 11% Dayak Bidayuh, and 8% Dayak Orang Ulu. This differs from the generally higher participation rate of the Malay, Melanau and Chinese communities in this sector. About 29% of the total Malay labour force were engaged in this lucrative sector, which also had 11% of the Melanau and 22% of the Chinese (Jawan, 1991: 62). This trend of uneven development is not helped by a similar pattern of educational disparity between these ethnic communities. Despite the general availability of education to the average Malaysian, educational opportunities among the rural Dayaks are still lacking particularly in terms of quality. For example, in 1980, students who completed their Higher School Certificates by ethnicity were as follows: Dayak Iban 200; Dayak Bidayuh 100; Dayak Orang Ulu 70; Malay 500; Melanau 70; and Chinese 2,200 (Jawan, 1991: 67).

Based on these socioeconomic disparities between the various ethnic communities in Sarawak, it is reasonable to conclude that the goals of the Malaysian New Economic Policy (NEP [1971-1990]) have failed to (1) resolve the problem of poverty among *bumiputera* Dayak Iban and (2) re-organise society in its effort to eliminate ethnic identification with economic functions. While the NEP can be said to have been generally successful in increasing the competitiveness of Peninsular Malay *bumiputeras*, the same can not said of its role among Dayaks as reflected in some of the 1980s socioeconomic statistics discussed above. It is also doubtful whether Dayaks might benefit from the National Development Policy, the successor to the NEP. This is because the NDP does not set up any specific targets to be achieved since the earlier disadvantaged Peninsula Malay *bumiputera* are deemed to have achieved on level of competitiveness to compete in a free market. It has been also further argued that setting specific targets would only serve to impede the procurement of a greater degree of economic success among those *bumiputeras* who already acquired the competitive edge.

CONCLUSION

Contrary to what BN3 has portrayed its victory to be, the election results did not decisively show "increasing" Dayak acceptance of the coalition and neither did it show the rejection of the PBDS. This is clearly evidence from the marginal re-alignment of Dayak seats won by the four main parties (Table 2). On the other hand, the election results confirmed Malay/Melanau and Chinese strength in the coalition, whereby the PBB swept all Malay/Melanau seats, while the SUPP collected all the Chinese ones.

To what extent Dayak problems will be properly addressed by the BN3 coalition, which claimed to have a widespread multi-ethnic mandate, remains to be seen. Although roughly the same number of Dayaks have been retained in the state cabinet, there is some doubt about their capabilities to deal with some of the Dayak issues raised during the election campaign, particularly the development gap between Dayak and the other ethnic groups. This stems from the fact that some of them have held their cabinet posts during the whole period when Dayaks were alleged to have been neglected.

As the PBDS prepares itself to "crawl back" into the state level coalition, there is a chance that Dayak problems may be "swept under the carpet". This might arise from the PBDS's willingness to submit to the "humiliating terms" of re-entry into the coalition. When PBDS leaders apologised to the BN3 coalition in order to gain readmission, this clearly contradicted all their earlier campaign speeches, statements and actions pertaining to the various Dayak socioeconomic problems they had raised. However, in my opinion, the humility showed reveals the true nature and quality of the leadership within the party. The PBDS struggle has been fraught with many contradictions, uncertainties and inconsistencies, especially between its goals and actions. First, the party is Dayak-based, but, since its formation, the PBDS has consistently fielded non-Dayaks in Dayak constituencies. Second, it has, as a matter of convenience, created Special Liaison Committees for non-Dayaks in order to diffuse criticism of communalism. Lastly, the party President, often figuratively described as the "General", never stood in state elections to lead his "lieutenants", particularly in the crucial 1987 elections; he declined again in 1991 when the party launched its "going alone" and "Ketua Menteri Sarawak 1992" projects.

The basic problem in Dayak unity rests on breaking the individual-institutional loyalty cycle, and at the same time sustaining institutional loyalty. Since 1963, the individual-institutional pattern of Dayak political behaviour has given rise periodically to phases of disintegration-unity, such as in the periods of pre-1963 (disintegration) and 1963-66 (unity), 1966-76 (disintegration) and 1976-83 (unity), 1983-87 (disintegration) and for only a few months in 1987 (unity), and 1987 onwards (disintegration) (Jawan, 1991). The planned re-entry of PBDS into the coalition would only serve to institutionalise Dayak division because PBDS will be rejoining from a position of weakness and Dayak seats are polarised among the various components of the coalition. In future elections, division of seats is likely to be based on the number of seats won in 1991 among respective parties. For

the PBDS, this means that it could, as a component party of the state coalition, contest in only seven seats it presently holds. Hence, the question as to whether there will be any further movement to unite the Dayaks may temporarily be put to rest.

Dayakism is a phenomenon which will permeate all future state elections in Sarawak. It is an idea about issues, problems and prospects for development which all Dayaks hold, although the form in which these issues, problems and prospects may be resolved differs from one individual Dayak to another. In this respect, Dayakism transcends party politics. Until the Dayak feeling of being deprived is reduced through the opening up of more opportunities for them, Dayak opposition to a ruling coalition will continue regardless as to whether PBDS will eventually re-join the state coalition or not. Since the mid-1980s, PBDS merely represents a vehicle to express Dayak socioeconomic grievances, as SNAP had been in the second half of the 1960, 1970s and the first half of the 1980s.

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