

CONTEMPORARY CHINESE POLITICS IN SARAWAK: A VIEW FROM KUCHING AND SIBU*

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Adalah sukar untuk memikirkan dengan memenangi 3 kerusi dalam mana-mana satu dewan perwakilan dapat dianggap sebagai telah 'memecah kebuntuan'. Ini adalah situasi sebenar kemenangan DAP dalam pilihanraya negeri Sarawak pada 1996. Walaupun DAP telah menikmati kejayaan dari semasa ke semasa dalam pilihanraya umum di Sarawak bagi kerusi parlimen kebangsaan, buat pertama kalinya, dalam jangka masa 18 tahun parti bertapak di Sarawak, ianya telah memenangi kerusi Dewan Undangan Negeri di negeri tersebut. Apakah yang membolehkan DAP 'menebusi kebuntuan' pada kali ini? Mengapa pula SUPP setelah 18 tahun menikmati kejayaan yang hampir sempurna dalam pilihanraya peringkat negeri, bukan sekadar kehilangan setiga daripada kerusi yang dipertandingkan kepada DAP, tetapi juga memperlihatkan Presidennya, Timbalan Ketua Menteri Tan Sri Datuk Amar Dr. Wong Soon Kai telah tumbang dalam kekalahan? Esei ini meneliti beberapa elemen yang menyebabkan persaingan bagi mendapatkan undi penduduk Cina di Sarawak pada tahun 1996 lebih menarik dan keputusannya agak memeranjatkan. Adalah diperkatakan bahawa sementara terdapat beberapa faktor – cara dan organisasi kempen, perjudian dan politik wang, kepuakan dalam parti serta pengaruh dialek dan kelas – setiap satu mempunyai kesan tersendiri dan bersama membantu calon DAP sekurang-kurangnya bagi kawasan Sibu menonjol ke atas. Namun, faktor ini sahaja tidak mencukupi bagi menghuraikan bagaimana DAP dapat memperbaiki keupayaannya. Untuk menerangkan mengapa DAP menunjukkan keupayaan yang lebih memerangsangkan dalam pilihanraya ini dan sebaliknya mengapa

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mengapa keupayaan SUPP telah merosot dengan ketara, kita seharusnya melihat kepada isi kandungan sebenar program pilihanraya parti masing-masing.

It is difficult to think of many elections in which winning three seats in a 62-seat legislature would be hailed as a "breakthrough". And yet, that is exactly what the Democratic Action Party's (DAP) victories in the 1996 Sarawak State election were. Although the DAP, a national, predominately Chinese opposition party, had enjoyed intermittent success in Sarawak in its contests for seats in the Malaysian National Parliament, this election marked the first time in the party's 18-year history in Sarawak that it was able to gain a foothold in the locally much more important State Assembly, the Dewan Undangan Negeri Sarawak (DUN). Running in six urban, Chinese-majority districts, the DAP defeated the Sarawak United Peoples' Party (SUPP), the Chinese-dominated component of the state's ruling coalition, the Sarawak Barisan Nasional (BN), in three contests, including one particularly surprising victory against the long-entrenched SUPP President and Deputy Chief Minister, Tan Sri Datuk Amar Dr. Wong Soon Kai. (The DAP's one attempt to field a candidate in a Chinese-minority constituency was disallowed by the State Election Committee, whose decision was subsequently overturned. A by-election is pending.)

What enabled the Sarawak DAP to "break the egg" this time? Why, on the other hand, did the SUPP, after 18 years of nearly perfect electoral success at the state level, not only lose half the seats it contested against the DAP, but see its Party President go down in defeat? This essay examines some of the elements that made the competition for the Chinese vote in Sarawak in 1996 so interesting and the results so surprising. It is argued that while a host of factors -- campaign styles and organization, gambling and money politics, party factionalism, the influence of dialect and class -- may each have had some effect, and together may have pushed the DAP candidates, at least in Sibu area, over the top, these factors alone are not sufficient to account for the DAP's improved performance, which was much more general and widespread. To explain why the DAP did so much better this election -- and conversely why the SUPP did so much worse -- we must look to what was actually said during the campaign. The SUPP, I argue, stuck to a rhetorical line that had previously been extremely effective, but had gone a bit stale, while the DAP more sharply changed its focus. This, I conclude, is what ultimately made the difference in the election.

Table 1: Comparison of DAP Performance in 1991 and 1996

Constituency	1991 Margin	1996 Margin	Difference
Padungan	- 4,190	- 2,132	+ 2,058
Bukit Assek	- 6,353	+ 226	+ 6,579
Bawang Assan	- 2,892	- 2,709	+ 181
Pelawan (Seduan)	- 5,912	+ 974	+ 6,886
Kidurong	- 3,034	+ 22	+ 3,056
Pisau	- 9,063	- 5,192	+ 3,871

Source: *The Star*, September 10, 1996. James Ritchie and Tan Chin Siang, *State Elections in Sarawak (1969-1991)*. Kuching, Barisan Nasional Sarawak: no date.

THE 1996 ELECTIONS

As nomination day approached, there seemed to be every indication that the 1996 Sarawak state elections would be among the most boring in recent memory. The only organized opposition force other than the DAP, the State Reform Party (STAR), led by former SNAP Senior Vice-President Dr. Patau Rubis, had not been registered, its candidates enjoined from campaigning under a common symbol.¹

The Borneo Post and *The Sarawak Tribune*, the state's leading English-language newspapers, speculated whether the BN would capture a majority of seats unopposed and, if it did, whether it could legally form a government before elections were even held.² Expectations of a thoroughly dull election were only slightly diminished on nomination day when a record number of independent candidates emerged, yielding "only" 19 seats to the BN without contest.³ Conjecture now shifted to the question of whether the BN would chalk up a "clean sweep" of all 62 seats. Other than the rejection, often under rather curious circumstances, of a number of opposition candidates' nomination papers, including those of the DAP's Kemena candidate Chiew Chiu Sing, the only real excitement surrounded the contest between the DAP's Wong Ho Leng and the incumbent "YB",⁴ SUPP strongman Wong Soon Kai, in the central Sibu district of Bukit Assek.⁵ And for the most part, the election itself lived up to its lackluster billing.

The PBDS and SNAP captured every seat they contested. The PBB won 29 out of 30, 12 of which were taken uncontested. In Telang Usan, the only constituency the PBB lost, the victorious independent candidate Keding Wan, a former PBB Political Secretary and Branch Chief (who was apparently disgruntled because he had not been named to stand as a party candidate), applied to rejoin the BN less than a week after his win (the application was rejected).⁶ Even Patau Rubis, the Tasik Biru incumbent, did much worse than was expected, losing by over 1,500

votes.

The whispered rumors, accusations and invective, and comparatively more energetic campaigning that characterized electoral competition in the Chinese urban areas -- to say nothing of the DAP's surprise victories -- stood out all the more, then, against this staid background. And it is to this campaigning that we turn first.

OF CONCERTS AND *CERAMAHs*: CAMPAIGNING IN THE 1996 ELECTION

The 1996 Sarawak State elections was certainly not without its share of petty silliness and rakish personal attacks, aspects of campaigning long familiar to a political observer from the United States. DAP candidate Ng Kim Ho called his opponent Datuk Song Swee Guan a power-hungry (and unmarried) "fat cat" [*fei mao*].⁷ SUPP Secretary General Datuk Dr. George Chan Hong Nam called DAP Secretary General Lim Kit Siang a "running dog" [*zou gou*].⁸ SUPP MP Robert Lau upbraided Jason Wong Sing Nang for shedding "crocodile tears".⁹ Jason Wong and the other two Sibu DAP candidates, Wong Ho Leng and Chian Pao Koh, repeatedly cited passages from the infamous "Fairy, Tiger, and Dog" [*Shenxian, Laohu, Gou*], an unpublished manuscript, supposedly written by a Sarawakian journalist who had fled to Singapore, detailing the corrupt business dealings and sexual transgressions of the Sibu business and political elite, many of whom are in or connected closely to the SUPP.¹⁰ Vincent Goh Chung Siong, Jason Wong's SUPP opponent in Pelawan, felt it necessary to fly his children out from New Zealand to bolster his image as a family man and counter allegations of polygamy.¹¹ (The campaign also had its sinister side: three days before polling day, several black puppies, their throats cut out and wrapped in ceremonial "ghost money", were discovered outside Wong Soon Kai's house and the residences of other top SUPP leaders in Sibu.)¹²

While neither the SUPP and the DAP shied away from the sophomoric side of political campaigning, one could nonetheless observe a marked difference in the electoral styles and tactics employed by the two parties. SUPP Political Secretary and Women's Central Committee Chair Lily Yong frankly conceded that the DAP's *ceramahs* are almost always more popular than the SUPP's, admitting that the DAP's choleric speeches even attract long-time SUPP supporters.¹³ (Because campaign rallies are still technically prohibited, political parties utilize other venues to get their messages across; one of the most common is the "*ceramah*", a "meet the candidate session" held -- at least ostensibly -- indoors, usually in a coffee-shop or restaurant.) For this reason, the SUPP often resorted to glitzy

singing and dancing shows to attract an audience, productions the DAP could simply not afford, even if it managed to obtain the necessary police permits.¹⁴ The DAP, on the other hand, relied on its characteristic blend of fiery rhetoric and muckraking, itself something of a show. DAP *ceramahs* did, in fact, attract very large audiences, particularly in Sibu, many in the crowd no doubt finding a display of active political opposition quite entertaining, if simply for its novelty.

This contrast between the SUPP and the DAP's style of campaigning could be seen with an almost comic clarity in the Padungan area of Kuching on the evening of September 1. The DAP and the SUPP had scheduled political functions within a couple blocks of each other, so I had the chance to shuttle between the two. The SUPP's program, the "Three Stars Together Light-up Cat City Concert" [*San Xing Gong Zhaoyao Mao-Cheng Yanchanghui* ("Kuching" in Malay means "cat".)] was a massive affair, held at the Song Kheng Hai Recreation Grounds, with Chinese pop music singers and a dancing group, all flown in from Kuala Lumpur. The extravagant stage and professional sound and lighting systems must have cost a fortune. The concert was free to the public, though, or nearly so: before the singing and dancing could begin, the audience had to sit through a few political speeches. The candidates were introduced by almost deafening blasts of Cantonese pop as a smoke-making machine kicked in. An enormous balloon with the SUPP party logo hovered overhead.

Two blocks away on Padungan Street, the DAP was beginning its *ceramah* at the King Du Cafe. There was no light show or huge balloon here, just a few small plastic banners and a single poster with the uninspiring slogan "Only in Padungan" [*Zhi you Fuluoan*], reflecting the Sarawak DAP's tactical decision to field only one candidate in the Kuching area. (Not far away the SUPP had a large sign reading, "[We] Don't want an opposition party that ordinarily does nothing, that only cries out at election time" [*Buyao pingshi bu zuoshi, daxuan cai da jiao de fandui dang*].) The audience clustered around the entrance to the coffee-shop was also quite small, probably no more than fifty people in all. The DAP's first speaker, Kuching Parliamentary Liaison Committee Chairman Wong Huan Yu, was making the most of it, though, alternately chiding the SUPP for feeling the need to engage in spectacle and praising the audience for its "mature" decision to listen to a political speech:

Tonight just across from here there's a *ceramah* with singing.... but, singing isn't politics [*gechang bu shi zhengzhi*]. If you want to hear singing, we can go to a karaoke. If you care to listen, I can sing too. My voice isn't bad. But, I think that singing has its time [*changge you ta de shi jian*]. What we're discussing here is politics [*women zheili tande shi zhengzhi*],

something we only have a chance to do once every five years at election time".¹⁵

Wong ended his speech with an impassioned defense of the role of an opposition party and a plea to let the DAP be the people's voice in the state assembly. I walked back to the SUPP function, where the speeches had ended and the show was already in full swing. A young man was crooning a fast-paced tune that had been popular in Taiwan last year; behind him a half dozen spandex-clad dancers spun in tight circles. It was then that I noticed that probably no more than half of the audience were of voting age. I stayed for a few more numbers. The dancers made a quick change, donning top hats and canes, and began to kick their legs to a mixed disco version of "Rhapsody in Blue" and "Ode to Joy". I decided to go back to the DAP *ceramah*, which had by this time gotten quite a bit larger, the crowd outside, now several hundred, spilling out into the street. Ng Kim Ho was in the midst of apologizing in English for calling Song Swee Guan a "fat cat"; before long, though, he switched to Hokkien and warmed to his theme: berating the SUPP for not paying attention to low cost housing and inflation.¹⁶

These contrasting campaign styles were evident in Sibu as well. The SUPP concert tour made a stop in Sibu on September 5; this time the show -- "Night of Loving Hearts" [*Aixin zhi Ye*] -- featured a talented Chinese-educated Indian singer from West Malaysia named Mohan, who interspersed his singing of Chinese pop tunes with fiery exhortations in Mandarin to vote for the BN. Not that this type of showmanship was kept to the city centers, though. Speeches in the September 4 SUPP *ceramah* in the more small-town atmosphere of Sibu's Sungai Merah district were also bracketed by singing acts: before the politicians arrived, the winner of the previous night's singing contest (also held at an SUPP *ceramah*) sang her winning songs into a karaoke machine; after the speeches were over, the main attraction, a minor starlet from Kuala Lumpur, treated the audience to a medley of well-known Mandarin and Cantonese tunes. For its part, the DAP's *ceramahs* in Sibu were, if anything, more lively than the ones in Kuching. The *ceramah* held on September 6 outside the Hii Brothers Stationers, for example, drew a crowd of almost a thousand. (Technically, *ceramahs* have to be held indoors, but what frequently happens is that the podium and microphone are placed just inside the entrance facing out; the crowd assembles outside the establishment.) Wong Ho Leng and Jason Wong worked particularly well together, giving a series of alternating short speeches. Jason Wong played the straight man, so to speak, soberly parrying SUPP charges and admonishing the voters not to succumb to gambling and vote-buying; Wong Ho Leng was the comedian and the muckraker, putting the crowd in stitches as he alluded to the "Fairy, Tiger, and Dog" and exposed alleged SUPP misdeeds.¹⁷ But if one were looking to contrast the SUPP

and DAP's campaign resources and styles, the symbolic high-point of the evening came before the two Wongs had even begun to speak, when the makeshift stage -- an old wooden soft drink crate -- suddenly collapsed, sending Chian Pao Koh, the DAP candidate in Bawang Assan and the *ceramah's* first speaker, hurtling to the ground accompanied by a screech of microphone feedback.

Only the most hardened cynic would accuse the DAP of staging Chian's fall. Strangely enough, though, the accident happened to fit rather nicely into the party's overall campaign strategy, an approach the elder statesman of the Sarawak DAP, former Kuching MP Sim Kwang Yang, aptly described using the Chinese four-character saying, "*Ai bing shangzhen*" [The wounded soldier goes off to battle].¹⁸

Throughout the campaign, the DAP emphasized its weakness and downplayed its chances. Ng Kim Ho repeatedly stated that after its disastrous showing in 1991, the party was at its low ebb, and for that reason was only running one candidate in Kuching.¹⁹ Jason Wong broke down in tears four days after nomination day, saying that after 18 years of frustration, he was ready to call it quits and tend to his family and his career. Lim Kit Siang continually asserted during his trip to Sarawak that if the DAP couldn't break through in this election, it would probably have to close shop in Sarawak.²⁰ From a strategic point of view, underscoring the DAP's frailty served three purposes. *First* and perhaps most importantly, the DAP could deflect the SUPP's previously very effective claims that voting for the DAP would hinder the BN's program of development and force the "Chinese voice" into opposition. The DAP was now asking for only one or two seats; the BN government and its development plans would not be threatened, nor would the balance of power within the BN. *Second*, the DAP could position itself as a disinterested champion of the people. With no ambitions of its own, the DAP could provide an unbiased check on the excesses and inequities of development. *Third*, the DAP could play to the fullest the role of the underdog -- and, in so doing, might be able to pull off a few surprises.

After the election, I asked Sim Kwang Yang if this "wounded soldier" approach was sincere or merely tactical, to which he replied that it was both "100% tactical and 100% sincere".²¹ There seems little reason to doubt him. The Sarawak DAP had been mauled in 1991 (as had the DAP Malaysia-wide in the 1995 parliamentary elections); the party was lacking in funds; its candidates were genuinely fed up after nearly two decades of defeats. Ideological splits, discussed in the third section, had left many within the party discouraged and anxious to try a different approach. There is every chance that the DAP would indeed have ended its operations in Sarawak if it had failed to gain a seat. The SUPP was upset, however, at what they -- also justifiably -- saw as a naked attempt to garner sympathy: "emotional blackmail", as Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, who had come to Sarawak to campaign for the SUPP, put it.²² Wong Soon

Kai publicly complained that Jason Wong's crying was like an "eighteen year-old girl crying 'poor me' [*kelian de wo*] because she was still childless".²³

The SUPP, however, was particularly agitated because, whether tactical or sincere, the DAP's success in presenting itself as a brave but wounded soldier going off to fight its last battle reinforced what was later conceded to be a sense of overconfidence and apathy within the SUPP.²⁴ In spite of the singing and the dancing (or perhaps in part because of it; the DAP in its *ceramahs* did not hesitate to make fun of the SUPP's resorting to glitz), the SUPP's campaign was lackluster, especially in Sibü. If the DAP was able to garner a certain number of "sympathy votes", many more SUPP supporters simply stayed at home. A glance at the returns of the last three elections does show a decline in voter turnout from 1987 to 1996 in the three Chinese-majority districts I most closely examined; in two of the districts the drop-off was quite precipitous from 1991 to 1996 (see Table 2).

The fact that voter turnout only dipped slightly in Pelawan is most probably due to expectations that the race there would be quite competitive.²⁵ The DAP viewed Pelawan -- in which the DAP's strongest candidate, acting DAP State Chairman and former MP Jason Wong, was facing a relatively weak (for reasons discussed below) SUPP newcomer, Vincent Goh -- as its best chance. The SUPP, which was confident of victories in its other races, accordingly focused most of its Sibü party organization on the district.

Table 2: Voter Turnout (%)

Year	Padungan	Bukit Assek*	Pelawan**
1987	74.90	72.08	70.14
1991	71.06	72.62	68.50
1996	61.35	63.30	67.78

* Re-delineated in 1991, previously known as Maling.

** Re-delineated in 1996, previously known as Seduan.

Source: (see Table 1)

The SUPP has a redoubtable electoral machine, made even more formidable given the new method used to count votes. Since 1990, election returns have been tabulated at the individual polling stations, or "streams", rather than at the constituency's electoral commission office, yielding detailed, block-by-block data (in the urban areas there are around 500 voters per stream). With this more detailed information and given the SUPP's impressive network of grassroots party workers, the party can pinpoint exactly where its support lies and where it does not.²⁶ Not only can this intimidate voters into supporting the incumbent governing coalition by giving an added, localized dimension to the BN's implied threat to

deny development assistance to areas that vote for the opposition, knowing where its supporters live also enables the party to direct its electoral machinery more precisely. Here incumbency also has its advantages: "Being in government, you have the money", Yong stated with characteristic candor.²⁷

On election day, for example, the SUPP sends cars around to round up its supporters; in the large housing complexes, such as Kuching's KMC Flats, the SUPP posts campaign workers with lists of supporters at every staircase.²⁸

This time, however, the organization did not function with its usual focus and effectiveness, was "loose", as Yong described it in another interview after the election.²⁹ This malaise was prevalent in Sibu, Yong maintained, but was evident in the Padungan district of Kuching as well, where the SUPP incumbent won, but by a much slimmer margin than had been expected. Members of a visiting group of Gerakan officials from Penang were reportedly astonished to see how disorganized and lackadaisical the Sibu branch offices and service centers were -- a slackness that stood out in marked contrast not only to the Gerakan political machine in Penang, but to the very efficient manner in which the SUPP had run its last several state campaigns. Each of the SUPP people I interviewed after the election spoke of slack organization as a major factor contributing to the party's losses in Pelawan and Bukit Assek and its relatively poor showing in Padungan,³⁰ an opinion with which the DAP concurred.³¹ Most blamed a general feeling of complacency among the SUPP politicians and election workers, a sense of idle over-confidence built on decades of nearly uninterrupted electoral success and fed by the fact that their DAP opponents this year appeared particularly weak. Others, however, attributed the SUPP's organizational slackness to a more acute feeling of disenchantment prevalent among many in the party's local-level organizations, particularly in Sibu. The rift between the upper echelon of the party and its more left-leaning grass-roots activists had never fully healed, it was explained, and many of the branch-level party members -- the people most directly engaged in mobilizing electoral support -- had become dismayed with what they perceived as an increasingly *towkay*-dominated party leadership.³²

But was this the only reason for the lower turnout and the surprising results? In the week following the election, the SUPP came out with a host of allegations -- gambling, press bias, internal sabotage -- to explain its defeat. The DAP, for its part, tended to put more emphasis on a pattern of vote buying that had come back to haunt the SUPP. Many people, both inside and outside of the parties, speculated on the influence of party factionalism. Was there any truth to these claims? If so, how much of an effect was there? We turn now to a discussion of these factors, after which in the essay's third section, we will focus more specifically on the content of the SUPP and the DAP's campaign appeals and the contesting

ideological positions these appeals represented -- elements I consider ultimately to have been of more significance.

SOUR GRAPES?: GAMBLING, THE NEWSPAPERS, AND THE DEFEAT OF WONG SOON KAI

The anthropologist Richard Fidler has called the Chinese coffee-shops in Kanowit "everyone's living room".³³ That characterization seems entirely fitting in Sibu as well, where unassuming but congenial coffee-shops line the streets and are almost always crowded with regulars. I would amend Fidler's description, though, in the weeks leading up to an election to read "...and betting parlor". This realization struck me one evening in a coffee shop on Sibu's Wong Nai Song Street as I sat with my *kopi beng*, shamelessly eavesdropping on a conversation between two men sitting at the table next to mine. One man was Chinese, the other Iban; they were speaking in Mandarin (which itself says something, I think, about ethnic relations in Sarawak). They were discussing the upcoming contest between Deputy Chief Minister and SUPP President Wong Soon Kai and DAP upstart Wong Ho Leng, speaking with an authority and detailed sophistication that I found both curious and impressive. Their dialogue continued for a half hour or so, when suddenly, appearing almost as a *non-sequitur*, the Iban gentleman nodded his head in agreement, a small bit of money changed hands, and the Chinese man made a mark in a notebook. Later, the coffee-shop boss mentioned in an offhand sort of way that those two were betting on the elections.

It is tempting to see this type of transaction as a type of "little man's money politics", an everyman's version of the huge sums of money that office and patronage bring at the commanding heights of Sarawakian politics. It is also tempting to dismiss the activity as inconsequential, of interest in a folksy or metaphorical sense only. Except that from all accounts, wagering over the outcome of elections is widespread enough to frequently play if not a decisive, then at least an important role in determining electoral turnout and results.³⁴ Wong Ho Leng, in an interview the day before the election, claimed that Wong Soon Kai's defeat in the Parliamentary elections in 1982 to the unheralded DAP candidate Ling Sie Ming had everything to do with gambling. "Soon Kai was the Buddha of Sibu", with respect, power, and more than enough patronage, Wong Ho Leng observed, "how could he lose?" The answer, Wong Ho Leng maintained, was gambling: "The odds were ten to one against Sie Ming, people figured they had nothing to lose". As for the election tomorrow, Wong Ho Leng remarked, a twinkle in his eye, "I hear that the odds today are twenty to one against me.... Wong Soon Kai is a very worried man!"³⁵

In the event, Wong Soon Kai had ample cause to be worried, losing to Wong Ho Leng in the Sibu district of Bukit Assek by 226 votes. In the days immediately following the election, Wong Soon Kai came out with widely publicized allegations that a Foochow "gambling clique" [*dubo jituan*] had conspired to manipulate the election.³⁶ Wong Soon Kai claimed that by offering to pay out RM 1,000 for every RM 50 wagered against him, an action he saw as synonymous with vote buying, the gambling syndicate was able to sway enough votes to cause his defeat. Wong Soon Kai alleged that a "similar pattern" of organized gambling had led to SUPP defeats in the Pelawan and Meradong constituencies as well. Although Wong Soon Kai for the most part avoided directly accusing the DAP of collusion, the implication was there, a charge the DAP strongly rejected.³⁷ Indeed, in the week before the election both Jason Wong and Wong Ho Leng repeatedly exhorted the voters not to squander their democratic rights for the sake of a simple wager.³⁸ (A cynic, of course, might see their efforts to inspire moral rectitude a bit differently: as an attempt to publicize the gambling -- in a sense, a disguised advertisement.)

It is impossible to estimate precisely how much of an impact gambling had on the outcome of the three contests the SUPP lost. Nearly all of the politicians I interviewed after the elections, from both the SUPP and the DAP, agreed that betting on the elections probably did play a role. Most also seemed inclined to accept Wong Soon Kai's assertion of a "conspiracy of Foochow tycoons" (or at least, as we will be seen, the interference of one particular tycoon). None, however, saw gambling as the only, or even the primary, cause of Wong Soon Kai's defeat, or those of Vincent Goh and Thomas Hii King Hiong. Neither did anyone take very seriously the more muted allegation that the DAP had an active hand in the matter. Referring to Wong Soon Kai's claim that an organized force was behind the gambling and that this contributed to his defeat, Sim Kwang Yang, a former Member of Parliament (MP) who had previously served as the Sarawak DAP Chairman, conceded, "There is something to it, probably", although he believed that the wagering did not have an overly great effect on the results. Sim also firmly stated that, "the DAP was definitely not behind it [the gambling]".³⁹ Wong Ho Leng⁴⁰ and Wong Sing Nang⁴¹ echoed these sentiments, as did Ng Kim Ho, the DAP candidate for the Padungan seat in Kuching, who added, though, and with detectable relish, that this type of targeted gambling had been used by the SUPP itself in its previous campaigns against Ng.⁴² Officials and politicians from the SUPP expressed similar opinions. Robert Lau Hoi Chiew, a SUPP MP from Sibu, when pressed to explain Wong Soon Kai's defeat, did not mention gambling as a factor.⁴³ Asked directly about the effects of gambling on the Sibu electoral races, Sim Kheng Hui, who successfully defended his Pending seat in Kuching, said that gambling in Sibu was "one factor" [*yinsu zhi yi*], but that it certainly

shouldn't be taken as the primary cause of the SUPP's losses in Sibü.⁴⁴ Or, as the SUPP's Publicity Assistant, Then Joh Kiong, put it, "Gambling's not new or strange, its very common", and while it may have been "one factor among others" [*qizhong shi yi ge yinsu*], it wasn't the SUPP's "biggest problem".⁴⁵

What, then, was the SUPP's biggest problem? In addition to accusing the Foochow gambling clique (whose membership remained unidentified) of sabotage, Wong Soon Kai also pointed his finger at three Sarawak newspapers, the English-language *Borneo Post* and the Chinese *Shihua Ribao* and *Xinhua Wanbao*, complaining loudly that their coverage during the election, especially in the Chinese papers, had been overly biased against the Sibü SUPP. Acting on Wong's allegations, the SUPP Secretary General George Chan on September 20 issued a directive on behalf of the SUPP's Central Executive Committee instructing all party members, branches, and component organizations to boycott the three newspapers.⁴⁶ Wong and the SUPP were upset by a number of articles and editorials that questioned the BN's land acquisition policy and the relative pace and quality of development in Sibü.⁴⁷ What most sparked Wong and his supporters' ire, however, were two particular editorials and a series of letters from an "elderly voter" [*lao xuanmin*] entitled, "Crazy Man Says Crazy Things about the State Election" [*Kuang Ren Kuang Yuhua Zhouxuan*], all appearing in the *Shihua Ribao*. The first editorial called into question the disqualification of a number of opposition candidates (Chiew Chiu Sing's case was not explicitly mentioned, but was clearly what the editorial had in mind);⁴⁸ the second openly endorsed the DAP's bid to win one or two seats.⁴⁹ The "crazy man's" letters debuted on September 2, his "crazy words" directed against those SUPP politicians who waste the people's time with empty "ribbon cuttings" [*jiancai*].⁵⁰ The second installment, already quite a bit more sarcastic, castigated the SUPP for making an issue of Jason Wong's crying, making a not-so-veiled allusion to Wong Soon Kai's rumored sobbing when he lost his parliamentary seat in 1982: "Participating in politics is a struggle.... If you lose, you can't help but be sad. Some strong-man candidates [*qiangren houxuanren*] weep in the bathroom, shedding 'lover's tears' [*qingren de yanlei*] with his companion".⁵¹ By the third and final letter, which appeared two days later, the crazy "old voter" had hit his stride, accusing Wong Soon Kai of surrounding himself with cronies, admonishing the SUPP for making fun of Bintulu hawker-cum-DAP politician Wong Sing Ai, and accusing the SUPP politicians of ignoring demands for fair compensation for land acquired by the government.⁵²

Taken together, the articles, letters, and editorials are quite critical; if seen in isolation, they might indeed give the impression of an anti-SUPP bias. When put in context, however, the pieces seem far less malicious. For every article critical

of the SUPP, the papers Wong Soon Kai fingered published several that presented the party and its candidates in a favorable light -- this is particularly true of the *Borneo Post*, but the *Shihua* and the *Xinhua* seem to have also presented a more than balanced account as well. Moreover, when compared to some of Sarawak's other, pro-government dailies, most especially the overtly sycophantic Sarawak Tribune, the three newspapers' relative neutrality stands out all the more.⁵³ Although the SUPP leadership came out publicly in solid support of Dr. Chan's resolution, many in the party seemed a bit embarrassed. Sim Kheng Hui, while averring that the newspapers were biased, conceded that their influence was minor.⁵⁴ Lily Yong was far more blunt, again putting the blame squarely on poor organization. "...[I]f they [the newspapers] were writing [unfavorable] stories, we should have countered it earlier", she argued. The SUPP, abashed by its losses, was simply "looking for scapegoats", Yong maintained; attacking the newspapers was "only saving face".⁵⁵

VOTE BUYING

Wong Soon Kai claimed that "money politics shoved me off the horse" [*jinqian zhengzhi la wo xiamai*].⁵⁶ Although Wong was referring to his allegations of a gambling conspiracy, his words were perhaps more revealing and more accurate than he intended. When asked to explain the his party's defeats in Sibu, one SUPP leader in Kuching firmly stated that while gambling and unfavorable newspaper coverage may have contributed at the margins, the SUPP's biggest handicap in Sibu was the way in which previous incidents of vote buying had affected voters' expectations and attitudes.⁵⁷ The Kuching party leader maintained that in the 1995 parliamentary elections "there had been a bit of this money politics" [*you yixie jinqian de zhei ge zhengzhi*] and that this had had an "evil influence" [*elie de yinxiang*] on the voters. According to him, this vote-buying was the work of over-zealous campaign workers and was neither centrally planned nor carried out with regularity. It was this inconsistency that caused problems in 1995: people began to expect money and were mad when they did not get any. The party leader explained it this way:

Now, I'm a SUPP Cadre [*ganbu*]. I go and find these four people to vote. I don't give them a penny, nor do I get anything [*wo yi fen qian ye meiyou gei tamen, wo ye mei you dedao*]. But that 'operations director' over there only knows I've gotten in touch with [*lianluo*] four people. He says, 'these four people: RM 200, RM 200, RM 200, RM 200' [*zhei si ge ren: liang bai, liang bai, liang bai, liang bai*]. And he keys it in the computer, says that they all got money [Note: the fact that a computer was used suggests that the vote buying might have been a bit more

organized than the party leader was willing to admit]. Now if you hear this but didn't get your 200, you come up and ask me, 'Why haven't I gotten my 200,' and I say 'I don't know; I didn't get any money [to give you]'. So these four people all scold [ma] me, say I cheated [qipian] them.

The effect was the same in 1996, only worse, because no money was given out this time: "The result was that many voters in this state election wouldn't vote unless they got something like last time". Others were still upset from the year before. Essentially the same story -- there had been vote-buying in the 1995 parliamentary elections; there was none this year; people expected payments and were upset when there were none -- was also given to me just after the election in Sibu by two men, one a reporter, who had served as SUPP bodyguards in the 1996 election.⁵⁸

Indeed, by all accounts, the SUPP conducted a very clean campaign in 1996. Both the Kuching party leader and the men I talked with in Sibu attributed this to the fact that the Sibu leadership, all of them honest men, had found out about the previous year's transgressions and demanded that they stop. The DAP was of course less charitable, arguing that if this year's elections were clean, it was primarily the result of their vigilance and efforts to publicize the matter. In his speech at the DAP's fundraising dinner in Sibu,⁵⁹ Jason Wong distributed a flyer on which was printed a series of photographs taken in 1995 showing a large crowd gathered outside the office of the victorious SUPP candidate's timber company, surrounded by riot police: "Irrefutable Evidence", the flyer asserted, of vote buying.⁶⁰ The crowd, Wong declared, had gathered to demand money that they claimed had been promised to them during the election. No payments had been made, however, and the crowd, refusing to leave, had gotten more and more agitated as the hours passed. Finally, units of the Federal Reserve had to be called in to keep a riot from breaking out. Wong also dramatically disclosed an alleged attempt to buy votes this year in Vincent Goh's district of Pelawan. According to Wong, an envelope containing five polling cards, five identity cards, and five 50-Ringgit notes with consecutive serial numbers were found on the street by a man named Tiong (who stood up and was recognized by loud cheers from the several hundred dinner guests). Wong then read aloud the names and identity numbers of the five people whose votes had allegedly been bought, followed by a solemn "Shame! shame! shame!" [*cankui*]. Scenes such as this were featured at DAP functions up until the day of the election.⁶¹

For his part, Vincent Goh denounced Jason Wong's allegations as yet another example of the pattern of "devious tactics" the DAP uses to smear its opponents' reputations.⁶² SUPP campaign fliers dismissed the episode as a hoax "directed" by

Wong [jiu shi ta yi shou daoyan de]; "basically, it is just not logical [*genben bu he luoji*] unless it was arranged [*anpai*] by Wong himself".⁶³ Goh later confirmed the outlines of the lost envelope story, but maintained that the whole affair had been an innocent mistake, one which had been unfairly "blown out of proportion" by the DAP.⁶⁴ Before the incident occurred, Goh and the other Sibü SUPP politicians complained more than once that the DAP was spreading rumors of uneven vote-buying in his district (of the type that Sim claims occurred in Sibü the year before) in an effort to discredit him and enflame the voters.⁶⁵ Denying that he was engaged in this type of dirty politics, Goh asserted that the rumors were intended to "...make the voters get mad with me because their neighbors were given money but not them [*sic*]".⁶⁶ Whether or not there had actually been attempts to buy support before the election -- and whatever were the actual motivations behind the SUPP's ultimately running a comparatively clean campaign -- perceptions of this type of fraud, amplified by the DAP's forceful and repeated denunciations, seem to have colored the electorate's mood and likely had an effect on voter behavior greater than that ascribed to gambling. The venal and the jealous were angry and supported the DAP, or just stayed away; the upstanding were simply disgusted and did the same. An Iban cab driver I met in Sibü neatly summarized this type of feeling. When I asked him if vote-buying was now typical in Sarawak's urban areas, he sighed, "Of course, that's democracy in Sarawak" [*Memang-lah, itu demokrasi di Sarawak*]. When I asked him if he planned to vote, his answer was simple, "*Tidak*" [No].

MONEY POLITICS AND DIALECT: TWO TIERS OF FACTIONALISM IN THE SUPP

After the election, the SUPP blamed the DAP for its "negative campaigning" (the DAP claimed it was just saying aloud what everyone knew anyway). But this was to be expected. More interesting is the fact that many fingers were pointed in other directions as well: at rivals within the party and at billionaire tycoon Tan Sri Ting Pek Khiing. Newspaper reports claimed that Ting had been "indignant" [*fennu*] when Sibü-area SUPP politicians, Wong Soon Kai presumably foremost among them, blocked his plans earlier in the year to build a campus of the Tunku Abdul Rahman (TAR) College in Ting's hometown of Bintangor.⁶⁷ Ting's anger had been further aroused by delays in his plans to build a series of bridges across the Rejang River.⁶⁸ Not only did he have a motive, Ting, with a business empire that includes Woodhouse Industries, the Pudu Raya Complex in Kuala Lumpur, Sarawak-based Saega Airlines, the Bintulu Industrial Park (the largest in Sarawak); and the Ekran construction company, which is the primary contractor for the immense Bakun Dam project, had more than enough means. He also had ample opportunity. Ting, it was noted, had recently obtained substantial interest in the three newspapers the

SUPP later accused of unfair bias. More to the point, although the SUPP did not want to make any official accusations until it had finished with its own investigation, many people both in and outside the party began to regard Ting as the "black hand" behind the now infamous Foochow gambling clique, which Wong Soon Kai claimed had spoiled his reelection bid. Ting's influence was said to have been felt the most, however, in the already hotly contested Sibu-area constituency of Meradong, where Ting was rumored to have backed an independent candidate, Yii Chu Lek, in his successful bid to unseat the SUPP incumbent Thomas Hii King Hiong, a close associate of Wong Soon Kai.

Here, we enter the murky world of timber money and political/economic alliances, the first source of factionalism within the SUPP. "Money politics" -- simply put, a vicious cycle in which one's political clout is used as leverage to obtain concessions, licensees, and preferential access to capital for oneself and one's associates, the proceeds of which are then employed to consolidate further one's political position -- has become endemic in Malaysian politics,⁶⁹ so much so that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad felt it necessary to impose a complete ban on all campaigning for the 1996 UMNO elections.⁷⁰ This reinforcing connection between wealth and political power is magnified tremendously in Sarawak, where fortunes are to be made exploiting the state's vast timber resources, but where the points of access to this wealth are limited and jealously controlled politically.⁷¹ The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), in a report on the logging industry in Sarawak, neatly summarizes the system by which the rights to extract timber are distributed: "The licensee, i.e. the concession holder or concessionaire, sub-contracts his rights to a second party who in turn sub-contracts the [logging] operation to a third party who employs the people who actually do the logging on the basis of payment by output".⁷² As Stan Sesser aptly remarks, "...the [concession] holder isn't required to know the difference between a live tree and a telephone pole, since the actual logging can be subcontracted".

What is necessary, though, is political connections, and this can be quite lucrative to the politicians involved; Sesser claims that although exact figures are unavailable, it "isn't unusual" to hear reports of politicians receiving up to US\$20 million to secure a single timber contract.⁷³

Under these conditions, it is no mystery why there is precious little political opposition in Sarawak, and why those independents who do win almost invariably scramble to reenter the state BN -- "Only fools stay in opposition", smirked the DAP's Wong Ho Leng.⁷⁴ The rent-seeking opportunities that come from being a part of what the ITTO calls Sarawak's "concession hierarchy"⁷⁵ also explains why there is such fierce competition to be named as a BN candidate and why battles among and factional struggles within the BN's component parties tend to be so cut

throat. But while the general pattern of timber politics and its effects seem clear enough, the identities of those involved and the relationships among them can appear almost opaque. The publicity given to the Meradong case, as well as the very prominence of the personalities associated with it, however, allowed at least a speculative glance at the type of activity that, from most accounts, frequently goes on behind the scenes in SUPP politics.

Two SUPP factions were in contention in Meradong.⁷⁶ On one side stood the incumbent YB Thomas Hii and his patron Wong Soon Kai, who are said to have substantial interests in Delta Timber, as well as David Teng Lung Chi, who would win the Repok state seat uncontested.⁷⁷ On the other side were aligned Senator (appointed) Ting Check Sii and his relative, the MP for Sarekei and SUPP Deputy President Law Hieng Ding, both of whom are said to be involved in Sanyan Timber. Ting Check Sii, backed by Law, apparently wanted to run in place of Hii, who had served as the Meradong YB since 1983. Hii refused to step aside, and was supported in his decision by SUPP President Wong Soon Kai. Ting Check Sii, in turn, began to rally local branch committee members against Hii, culminating in a resolution by 33 of the 44 members to oppose Hii's re-nomination.⁷⁸ The central SUPP office, driven presumably by Wong Soon Kai, however, overruled the branch decision, naming Hii as the official SUPP candidate, thereby denying Law the chance to run. None of this, though, prevented the Ting/Law faction from backing an independent candidate. This is where Ting Pek Khiing, still smarting from the perceived slights over the TAR college and the Rejang River bridges, supposedly stepped in, bringing with him Yii Chu Lek, said to be a relative of some sort, to stand as an independent candidate. During the campaign period, Ting Pek Khiing denied that he was interfering in the Meradong race.⁷⁹ Wong Soon Kai, however, seemed to see things differently, stating after the election, "I thought I had a good relationship with Tan Sri Ting. But there are reports saying that he is not happy with me....He denied planting candidates against [the] SUPP but there are talks stating otherwise [sic]".⁸⁰

People familiar with the SUPP suggest that the brand of factional machination seen in Meradong is fairly common, but fluid, that the alliances involved can shift as political and economic alignments and conditions change. In addition to this type of conflict, however, there also appears to be another, wider and more stable source of factional division within the SUPP, one based on dialect and region. (It should perhaps be noted that the contestants in the Meradong power struggle are all Foochows from the Rejang River area.) Although affiliations based on dialect have retained a certain social significance within the Chinese communities of Peninsular Malaysia, they appear almost to have vanished as matters of political consequence, except perhaps as organizational mechanisms, and even here their

importance seems to be declining.⁸¹ In Sarawak, however, sub-ethnic identifications remain extremely potent politically.

The line seems to be drawn fairly clearly between the Foochows of the Rejang River basin, with Sibü as its center, and the state's other dialect groups. (In this context, region and dialect identity have become largely synonymous: when people speak of Chinese from the Sibü area, they mean the Foochow; when one mentions that an individual is a Foochow, it is assumed that that person or his or her family comes from Sibü or its environs.) Ask any Sarawakian Chinese, it seems, regardless of whether he or she is a Foochow or from some other speech group, to talk about the Foochows, and almost invariably you will hear about the Foochows' economic acumen and their "aggressiveness". Frequently you will hear the two attributes combined (the Sarawak Chinese Museum, for example, in both its exhibit and its explanatory pamphlet, characterizes the Foochows as "highly economically aggressive"). Quite often, the description will be followed by an anecdote recounting how, depending on who you ask, a Foochow either outsmarted or swindled a competitor.

The SUPP's politicians are by no means immune to the pride and the prejudices surrounding the Foochow community. One high-ranking Hokkien member of the SUPP's Kuching office, who preferred to remain anonymous, quite openly stated that "people in the First Division [Kuching and the rural areas that surround it] don't like the Foochows" because they are "more aggressive" and tend to "stick to their own". The SUPP official then explained that when a member of another dialect group walks into a Foochow-owned store, "if [that person] doesn't speak Foochow [he or she] will not be entertained", and even if the person is able to speak some Foochow, "the price will be higher". Robert Lau, MP for Sibü and a proud Foochow, put the same set of characteristics in a different light:

Most of the Chinese in the Central Region [the Rejang River area] are Foochow. The Foochows are very aggressive in business; they are also far more widely educated, have the highest graduation rates, go abroad to study the most. The Hokkiens remain traders [while] the Foochows are involved in the timber business and have made big money out of it. With money coming in [from timber], we diversified, whereas the Hokkiens were still involved as petty traders.

Lau illustrated his point with a story about how a Hokkien owned a shop in a market town on the Rejang. He opened his store every morning at 9:00, by which time there was always a crowd of Ibans waiting to trade. "But a Foochow moved in, got up at 6:30 and did his business at the wharf", Lau continued, "When the

Hokkien got up [at 9:00] there was no business left!"⁸²

These sentiments permeate the informal political culture of the SUPP and have been the source of an enduring factional struggle within the party ever since the Sarawak Chinese Association (SCA) disbanded following the 1974 elections and was incorporated into the SUPP. The SUPP had since its inception in 1959 been dominated by Hokkiens and Hakkas, while the SCA, a conservative, much smaller and exclusively Chinese party, was controlled by leading figures of the Sibu Foochow and Kuching Teochew business communities.⁸³ Rivalries that were previously played out in electoral contests and in battles for control over the influential Sarawak Chinese Chamber of Commerce were to a large extent, then, brought inside the SUPP in 1974. Now, struggles center around such issues as membership levels in the SUPP Central Committee and the apportionment of leadership positions and cabinet postings. The battle lines have also shifted, with the Teochews now solidly aligned with the Hokkiens and the Hakkas. (An additional regional dynamic has emerged as well: a strong Miri faction, which until this year at least has typically aligned itself with the Kuching branch against the Sibu/Foochow faction.)

This intra-party factionalism has been further amplified in recent decades as the Foochow community, previously found almost exclusively in the Rejang Division, began in the 1970s to expand into Sarawak's other urban centers, particularly Kuching. In 1947, the Foochow population of Kuching numbered just 641; by 1980 the figure had grown to 8,655; current estimates put the size of the Foochow community in Kuching at just over 30,000, nearly the same size as the Hokkien and Teochew populations.⁸⁴ Foochow migration out of Sibu has been the source of keen resentment among the other dialect groups, particularly since the Foochows are perceived to be both clannish and much more shrewd in their business dealings. When the Foochows come in, the SUPP Kuching branch official asserted, "they don't just buy one shop, they buy the whole block". This movement out of Sibu has brought dialect/regional factionalism within the party down to the division branch level, although at least in Kuching, the deck remains stacked against the Foochows: a Foochow moving into Kuching can "only go so far" in SUPP politics, the Kuching branch official remarked.

The SUPP, under the tutelage of first Tan Sri Ong Kee Hui and then Datuk Amar Steven Yong Kuet Tze, continued to be led by Hokkiens until Yong lost his parliamentary seat to Sim Kwang Yang in 1990. This event heralded a sea change in the SUPP's internal balance of power. Yong retired as Party President, leaving the post to Wong Soon Kai, who also became Deputy Chief Minister. Wong, as the senior figure in the Sibu SUPP, had been grooming his men in the Rejang area

for some time, and almost immediately after gaining office began to place his supporters in positions of authority in the party and in government. These efforts, which were seen by many to be "symbolic of a larger Foochow encroachment", as Sim Kwang Yang put it, brought about a certain "uneasiness" in the Kuching and Miri branches, which began to rally around the leadership of George Chan, the SUPP Secretary General and a Hokkien from Miri.⁸⁵

The unexpected defeat of Wong Soon Kai almost immediately prompted widespread speculation about the effects his downfall would have on the regional/dialect balance of power within SUPP.⁸⁶ Attention focused on George Chan as the presumptive heir. Chan, it was said, enjoyed a particularly close personal relationship to Sarawak Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud -- symbolized by what many termed a "political marriage" between Chan's daughter and Taib's son. (I would argue that this marriage says something not just about the almost feudal nature of Sarawak politics, but also about the relatively open state of ethnic relations in the state). Because of these personal ties, it was also frequently said, George Chan was more influential as the State Finance Minister than was Wong, even though Wong, as Deputy Chief Minister, outranked Chan in the cabinet as well as in the party. In fact, many in Sibu were embittered because they believed that Miri had received preferential treatment in the allocation of development funds.

Just after the election, George Chan expressed his disappointment at Wong's defeat, saying that Wong was the "best leader we ever had" and that he [Chan] felt personally "shocked" and "betrayed" by the people's verdict in Sibu.⁸⁷ Chan also indicated that "several assemblymen" were willing to step aside so that Wong could re-contest in a by-election.⁸⁸

As events unfolded, however, it became increasingly clear that the SUPP Secretary General may have protested too much. No sooner than the day after the election, Chan was sworn in as the new Deputy Chief Minister and not long after announced his intention to stand for the SUPP Party Presidency in the upcoming party elections.⁸⁹ Chan also took pains to disavow any intentions of altering the balance of power in the SUPP, saying that he was determined to "stamp out" regionalism in the party.⁹⁰ But here again, Chan's words appeared not to fit the actual situation, as the post-election maneuvering seemed colored by regionalist thinking. In order to restore balance in the state cabinet, Wong Soon Koh, a Sibu Foochow, was named as a full minister, a move that angered many in the Kuching branch, who believed that the more senior assistant ministers Sim Kheng Hui and Alfred Yap Chin Loi should have been given the nod. Nor was the Sibu area MP and SUPP Deputy President Law Hieng Ding, fresh from his victory in the previously

discussed proxy battle with Wong Soon Kai's faction in Meradong, ready to concede that the party presidency would leave Sibu, going so far as to suggest that the party might "splinter" if accommodations were not reached.⁹¹ As for the offer to have a YB vacate his post to allow Wong Soon Kai a chance to run again in a by-election, many people outside the party speculated that the most likely candidate would have been Song Swee Guan in Kuching's Padungan constituency, who as MP, YB, and Mayor, had a post (or two) to spare.⁹² Whether or not such an offer was made, it most likely would have been scuttled by regional/dialect sentiments. In spite of its internal divisions,⁹³ the SUPP's Kuching branch would probably not have relished ceding a seat to a Sibu Foochow. In any case, even if the offer were made, it would probably not be seriously considered, precisely because there was a very good chance that Wong would have lost again -- a possible second humiliation Wong and his supporters would have not been able to countenance.

DIALECT, CLASS, AND VOTING BEHAVIOR

In spite of his impressive credentials and the enormous amount of attention and funds the SUPP would presumably devote to the race, the reason why Wong Soon Kai would very likely have lost in Padungan, had a by-election been held, is simple. The political significance of dialect affiliation is not restricted to factional fighting within the SUPP; sub-ethnicity can strongly affect actual voting behavior as well, a phenomenon that appears to sharply distinguish Chinese politics in Sarawak from that on the Peninsula.⁹⁴ Here, again, the boundary seems largely to be drawn between the Foochows and everyone else. Ng Kim Ho, the DAP candidate in Padungan (who would probably have also faced Wong were he to have contested a by-election), candidly stated that a Foochow candidate would "never get anywhere" in his district, indeed that it would be "difficult to field a Foochow candidate and win" anywhere in Kuching.⁹⁵ Wong Ho Leng, the man who beat Wong Soon Kai in Sibu, concurred. Wong Ho Leng, in fact, believes that being a Foochow was "a big handicap" when he moved from his home town of Sibu to run for a Parliamentary seat in Miri in 1986 and a State seat the next year, although he estimates that he did attract over half of the votes of the city's growing Foochow population.⁹⁶ I asked Sim Kheng Hui, the SUPP candidate in the Kuching constituency of Pending, if dialect makes a difference in voter preference in his district. "We seldom emphasize [*qiangdiao*] this dialect aspect [*fangyan fangmian*]", Sim stated, "Basically in the Kuching area, among the Teochews, the Hokkiens, and the Hakkas there isn't a clear relationship [*mingxian guanxi*]" between dialect and politics. (Another source familiar with SUPP politics disagreed, however, noting that "the Hokkiens, Teochews, and Chao-Ans do not get along -- scratch the surface and the venom comes out".) I then brought up Ng's

statement, and asked if a Foochow could compete in Kuching. "As far as the Foochow are concerned it seems that the sentiment [*guannian*] is different; when they come here they are not so easily accepted [*bu shi hen rongyi jieshou*]", Sim admitted, adding after a pause, "Strictly speaking, if a Foochow were to be named as a candidate, I'm afraid it would not be easy for him to win in this area [*kongpa yao zai zheige difang chusheng bu rongyi*]"⁹⁷

It is impossible to "test" these sentiments, let alone their affect on a possible by-election involving Wong Soon Kai, since there were no Foochows running in the Kuching area (and as far as I know there has never been one). In the Sibü constituency of Pelawan, however, a Foochow candidate, the DAP's Jason Wong, did face a non-Foochow candidate, the SUPP's Vincent Goh, who is a Henghua. The "stream-by-stream" election results are striking (see Table 3). (What is harmful to the democratic process can sometimes be of benefit to the researcher: while the new system of counting votes at each individual polling place -- or, as they are called in Malaysia, "stream" -- can have an intimidating effect on voters, it provides the researcher with an extremely localized record of voter turnout and preference.)

Table 3: Dialect: Pelawan (Sibü) Returns

Area (Number of Streams)	Ethnicity (Dialect)	Vincent Goh	Jason Wong	Total Vote
Rajang Park I (5)	Chinese (Foochow)	869 (38%)	1,443 (62%)	2,312
Rajang Park II (5)	Chinese (FooChow)	1,089 (42%)	1,507 (58%)	2,596
Hua Kiew (7)	Chinese (FooChow)	1,175 (39%)	1,818 (61%)	2,993
Pelawan (2)	Chinese (FooChow)	433 (44%)	546 (56%)	979
Sungai Merah (8)	Chinese (Henghua)	1,663 (65%)	883 (35%)	2,546
Hin Yu (4)	Chinese (FooChow)	653 (43%)	856 (57%)	1,509
Bandong I (1)	Chinese (FooChow)	178 (43%)	238 (57%)	416
Bandong II (1)	Chinese/Iban /Malay	260 (62%)	162 (38%)	422
Postal		166 (96%)	7 (4%)	173
Total		6,486 (47%)	7,460 (53%)	13,964

Source: DAP.

The Pelawan state constituency, which is almost 94% Chinese, is divided into 31 streams. The eight streams in Pelawan's Sungai Merah area have a high concentration of Henghua voters; voters in 22 of the streams are overwhelmingly Foochow. The one remaining stream in the Bandong area is a mixed district, which also has a comparatively high number of Iban and Malay voters. Of Pelawan's 22 Foochow streams, all but one went to Jason Wong (and there Wong lost by only nine votes); Vincent Goh, on the other hand, won by large margins in each of the Henghua streams, as well as in the stream with the high number of non-Chinese voters.

Discounting postal votes, 96% of which favored Goh, we find that Goh attracted 46% of the votes, compared to Wong's 54%. In the Henghua-majority Sungai Merah streams, however, fully 65% of the voters supported Goh, compared to the 35% who backed Wong.

It should be added that, while less conclusive, electoral evidence in Kuching's Padungan constituency -- where a Teochew candidate, the DAP's Ng Kim Ho, faced a Hokkien, the SUPP's Song Swee Guan -- also suggests that, contrary to Sim Kheng Hui's assessment, dialect identification does in fact play a role in influencing voter preference in Kuching, even if no Foochow is involved. Hokkiens and Teochews largely predominate in Kuching's city center (Kuching's Hakkas tend to live in the city's outlying areas). Unlike in Sibu where there is an easily recognizable Henghua area, the Hokkiens and Teochews are spread out fairly evenly, making the stream results less revealing. Ng was able, however, to identify China Street in the St. Mary's section of Kuching's Main Bazaar as a Teochew area. And, indeed, the stream that includes China Street was one of the two -- out of Padungan's 39 -- that Ng won. Even more telling: Ng's vote count in this district was a full 11% higher in that stream than in St. Mary's other four streams, which are otherwise almost completely identical. When asked about this, Ng stated that with such notable Teochew figures as Sim Kwang Yang, Cheng Hui Hong, See Chee Hou, and Ng himself, the DAP in Kuching has come to be known as a "Teochew organization", though Ng hastened to add that this phenomenon is quite accidental and that the DAP does not campaign on this basis.⁹⁸ (The Kuching SUPP does not seem to be identified with any one dialect group, even as its members jealously guard against any perceived Foochow encroachment.)

The enduring importance of dialect affiliation in Sarawak (especially as it concerns the Foochow population) was reflected elsewhere in this year's political campaigning. The leader of the Teochew Association [*Teochew Gonghui*] in Miri, for example, publicly endorsed the SUPP's Teochew candidate in Kidurong

Michael Sim Kiam Hui against his DAP challenger Wong Sing Ai, a Foochow, saying Bintulu's Teochew population should only vote for Teochew candidates.

According to Chiew Chiu Sing (who is a Foochow), this, in addition to attacks by George Chan on Wong's intelligence and credentials, galvanized the Foochow community behind Wong, who in the event pulled off a major upset, winning by 22 votes.⁹⁹ Neither was the DAP, Ng's disclaimer aside, apparently above using this type of tactic, though their approach was somewhat different. In its public functions, SibU DAP politicians were reported to have proclaimed that "Wongs should support Wongs" [*Xing Wong yinggai yao zhichi xing Wong*].¹⁰⁰ With four out of the six candidates in the SibU area named Wong -- two on each side -- the slogan appears at first nonsensical.¹⁰¹ The phrase begins to make sense, though, when it is considered that Wong, along with Lau, is the most popular Foochow surname in SibU, and that stressing one's own identity as a Foochow also, by implication, highlights one's opponent's identity as a non-Foochow (in this case a Henghua named Goh). In addition to having his surname emphasized, Jason Wong also benefited from the tacit support of the Wong Clan Association [*Wong Shi Gonghui*], acknowledging after the election that their unofficial backing had been "quite crucial".¹⁰² The Association, while strongly endorsing Wong Soon Kai, apparently felt that Vincent Goh's organization relied too heavily on Henghua support. Because Jason Wong, after his years of service as an MP in the SibU-area Parliamentary constituency of Lanang, was "seen as an acceptable leader by the Foochows", as Sim Kwang Yang put it, the Association decided to provide assistance, provided that Jason Wong ran against Goh, not Wong Soon Kai.¹⁰³

Dialect grouping is not the only, or even the most important, social fissure within Chinese Malaysian society, however. The Chinese communities of Malaysia (at least in the cities) are also -- and increasingly -- coming to be segmented according to class. What, then, of class? Did class affiliation affect voter preference in the Chinese-majority urban districts of Sarawak? Again, the election returns provide a useful analytic tool. Of the three districts I most closely examined, the data from the Kuching constituency of Padungan, which contains a wide mixture of income and occupation, proved the most revealing (see Table 4). (The data from Bukit Assek in SibU, though less precise, show a similar pattern; the occupational make-up of the Pelawan constituency does not lend itself to this type of analysis.) Although the DAP candidate Ng Kim Ho lost throughout the district, it is still possible to discern areas of relative strength and weakness. Most of the "streams" in Padungan are mixed; that is, residents come from a variety of class backgrounds. Nine, of the streams, do, however, have an identifiable "class character". In these nine areas, there appear to be consistent, if not overly strong, correlations between class and voter preference, correlations that closely resemble those that I have found in my study of the Tanjung area of Penang.¹⁰⁴ In general,

it can be said that the DAP received its strongest support from English-educated professionals, while the SUPP did best among the wealthy. Lower middle-class shop-owners, the *petit bourgeois*, tended to be less inclined to support the DAP than professionals, but were more receptive to the opposition than the working class, which in general supported the SUPP.

Table 4: Class: Padungan (Kuching) Returns

Part of Town: Area	Ng Kim Ho	Song Swee Guan	Total Vote
<i>Working Class</i>			
KMC Flats Padungan: Song Kheng Hai (1-3)	478 (42%)	650 (57%)	1,136
KMC Flats Deshon: Chung Hua No. 3 (1,2)	340 (44%)	411 (53%)	769
Total	818 (43%)	1,061 (56%)	1,905
<i>Middle Class (Shopkeepers)</i>			
Main Bazaar: St. Mary (all)	813 (44%)	1,000 (54%)	1,845
Main Bazaar: St. Thomas (all)	862 (45%)	1,009 (53%)	1,895
Jalan Sekama: SMK Lomba Kuda (4)	184 (46%)	212 (52%)	404
Total	2,553 (45%)	3,007 (53%)	5,641
<i>Middle Class (Professionals)</i>			
Central Road: Chung Hua No.3 (3,4)	344 (48%)	352 (49%)	714
<i>Upper Class</i>			
Batu Lintang (all)	320 (32%)	660 (65%)	1,012
Taplan Gelanggang (all)	102 (33%)	192 (63%)	306
Total	422 (32%)	852 (65%)	1,318

Source: SUPP. I am also indebted to Ng Kim Ho for going through the data with me. Note: I have only included those streams that represent Chinese residential areas with an identifiable "class character". The Malay kampung area and those Chinese streams with a mixed or unclear composition were excluded.

What explains these results? That the more affluent neighborhoods would be a SUPP stronghold seems fairly straightforward: it is presumably the wealthy stratum that has done the best under BN rule and is anxious to maintain and foster the political connections necessary for continued economic success. To the extent that one can equate support for the DAP with support for "democratization" -- and as we will see in the following section, the DAP's appeals to the voters were certainly put in these terms¹⁰⁵ -- Ng's strong performance among the middle classes conforms generally to the expectations of much of mainstream political science,

which posits a positive causal relationship between the emergence of a middle class and the development and consolidation of democratic institutions and practices.¹⁰⁶ Jason Wong and Sim Kwang Yang stated that in recent years the Sarawak DAP has indeed decided to target the middle-classes.¹⁰⁷ The middle classes, having a greater degree of financial security and independence, tend, as Sim put it, to be "more resistant to money politics", meaning they are less beholden to government favoritism and at the same time less likely to be taken in by a small bribe.

But is this in itself a sufficient explanation?¹⁰⁸ First, we should keep in mind that the correlations between class and voter preference are fairly clear and consistent, they are not very strong. Most of the politicians I spoke with (and here again my findings in Penang have been similar) indicated that while generalizations can be made about the parties' support base, most of the urban Chinese voters are "fence-sitters", not devoted to either party and apt to switch their votes from election to election. The data also has to be more closely examined, as well as the specific reasons one group would support one or the other party, reasons that may be only indirectly connected to economic standing. If we look at the *petit bourgeois* (shopkeepers) and the salaried middle class (largely professionals) separately, for example, we discover different levels of support, and here the findings seem to run somewhat counter to what might be expected if we consider economic factors alone.¹⁰⁹ To account for this split it is necessary to look beyond class, narrowly defined, to educational background and social attitudes.¹¹⁰ In Kuching, the small businessmen who live in the shophouse areas of the Main Bazaar and Padungan and Sekama streets tend to be Chinese educated, while the professionals who live on Central Road are more likely to have received a considerable amount of education in English, even if they also learned Mandarin in elementary school. People in the DAP contend that the party is gaining support among the English-educated faster than it is among those who received a more traditional Chinese education, a fact that seems to have more to do with outlook and partisan ideology than with class, *per se*. As for the relative lack of support for the DAP found among Kuching working class, the most obvious explanation is that the SUPP's electoral machinery functions at its most efficient in the densely populated KMC Flats, where the SUPP's supporters can be counted and transported (and, many observers would add, paid) with comparative ease. These are also, presumably, the voters who would have the most to gain by the numerous small-scale development projects that seem to crop up around election time. But here too, I believe, the effects of education and social perspective need to be considered. To do this, to explain why certain groups seemed to be more inclined to vote for one or the other particular party -- and, more crucially, to account for the recent general trend in support of the Sarawak DAP -- we now switch our focus

somewhat, moving from election tallies to the actual substance of the candidates' appeals.

CAMPAIGN RHETORIC

Perhaps the clearest reflection of the desultory state of political life in Sarawak was the fact that as the 1996 elections unfolded, debate largely centered around the question of whether there should even be an opposition. The DAP, as one would expect, argued forcefully that parliamentary democracy loses its substantive meaning, becomes nothing more than a hollow, formal exercise, in the absence of an organized and assertive opposition party. An opposition, no matter how small, is needed in the State Assembly not only to provide opposing views, but to act as an overseer of policy, to be an agent working "to avoid a corrupting over-accumulation of power" [*bimian tanwu lanquan*], in the words of DAP candidate Ng Kim Ho.¹¹¹ Equally predictably, the SUPP, supporting the Sarawak BN's demand that it win all 62 seats in the State Assembly, asserted that the State government has performed superbly without a strong opposition, providing sustained economic development and social stability. And what's more the Barisan Nasional coalition structure itself ensures that each community is represented, and that many voices are heard. "We don't need to say that only if we give our representation over to the opposition party will there be democracy", SUPP Party leader Wong Soon Kai stated at a *ceramah* in Sibu, "The BN is composed of several races [*gezhong minzu*], several parties. If there's a problem we can discuss it and come up with a solution".¹¹² (Chief Minister Taib Mahmud even made a clichéd contribution to the already well-worn discussion of "Asian Values", stating that "Western democracy", with its culture of opposition, obstructed development and did not reflect the aspirations of Sarawak's "Eastern peoples".¹¹³) But while the question was more than a bit doleful and the overall positions predictable, the debate itself proved to be far from sterile. The ways in which the two parties competing for the Chinese vote in Sibu and Kuching structured and presented their arguments revealed much -- about their political priorities, their views on the state of Sarawakian society, and the place of the Chinese communities within it and within the larger Malaysian nation -- positions that I believe to have been ultimately at least as consequential, if not more so, than the factors discussed in the previous section in deciding the election results. It is to this debate that we now turn.

THE SUPP: PITY AND RACIAL UNITY, SPITE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Two intertwining motifs dominated the SUPP's campaign rhetoric during the 1996

Sarawak State Elections: racial unity and economic development'. In both Sibu and Kuching, the maintenance of communal solidarity and the safeguarding of economic growth were tied together, and repeated like mantras to explain why it was absolutely critical that the SUPP be given a clean sweep of every one of the seats it was contesting. Although nearly all of the party's candidates stressed elements of these twin themes, perhaps the most coherent exposition of the SUPP's position was given by Wong Soon Koh, the SUPP's incumbent candidate in Sibu's Bawang Assan constituency. Wong's set speech, a succinct, forceful admonition against voting for the DAP given several times during the election period, linked race and development, and provides a useful framework for examining the overall content and implications of the SUPP's campaign message. (Substantively, Wong's speech was practically the same each time he gave it; for consistency's sake, I will quote from the one given at the September 4 SUPP *ceramah* in Sungai Merah.¹¹⁴)

Wong contended that, given "the lack of issues" in the election, there were really only two reasons why a person would cast his or her vote for the DAP, neither of which was an appropriate motivation; if acted on, either response could lead to disaster. The first untoward impulse that could lead a voter to support the DAP was pity. Speaking in support of Vincent Goh in his fight against his DAP challenger Jason Wong, Wong Soon Koh repeated Robert Lau's charge that Jason Wong's crying act [*biaoyan*] was "fake" [*jiade*], and warned voters not to be taken in by his duplicity, as this could have dire consequences. "Maybe you feel sorry for him and so might cast a sympathy vote [*tongqing piao*]", Wong Soon Koh argued. "The DAP has been saying, the SUPP is so strong, why not give us just a seat? And maybe some of you feel moved enough to [*gandong dao*] vote for [Jason] Wong Sing Nang. But I say you absolutely can't do that".

Why not? In framing their appeals to Kuching and Sibu's urban Chinese voters, the SUPP's candidates quite often began by reminding their constituents of the rare quality, the preciousness, of Chinese society in Sarawak. Nowhere else in Southeast Asia, it was frequently said, not even in Peninsular Malaysia, has Chinese society had the opportunity to flourish as it has in Sarawak: a "human paradise" [*renjian tiantang*] for the Chinese, as the President of the Sarawak Chinese Association, campaigning for the SUPP in Sibu, called it.¹¹⁵ Speaking in support of Mayor Song Swee Guan at a *ceramah* outside the Wang Nurn Chicken and Duck Specialist, Sim Kheng Hui, the incumbent candidate in the neighboring district of Pending, put great emphasis on the point. Gesturing out at the restored shophouses lining Padungan Street, the center of Kuching's attractive, bustling -- and very "Chinese" -- commercial district, Sim described the reaction of a friend who was visiting from West Malaysia:

He [the friend] says, "Kheng Hui, I'll tell you frankly, I've been to most of the cities in West Malaysia. I haven't been everywhere in East Malaysia, but I have been to Padungan Street, and when I see the street signs [*pailou*] at the intersections, I begin to drool [*liu koushui*]".... This is a West Malaysian Chinese compatriot [*Xima Huayi tongbao*], and he sees these street signs here, with their tangible, thick ethnic flavor [*juyou nonghou minzu secai de pailou*], and he feels a sense of pride and honor [*ganjuedao zihao he guangrong*].¹¹⁶

This nearly idyllic state of affairs was then frequently contrasted with the situation of the Chinese in other parts of the world, particularly in the surrounding countries of Southeast Asia. The prosperity and cultural freedoms enjoyed by the Sarawakian Chinese, it was emphasized, did not arise spontaneously. Rather, as SUPP Party Treasurer and unopposed candidate for Repok David Teng Lung Chi insisted in his speech the next night at Kuching's "Three Stars Illuminate Cat City Concert", these "miracles" [*qiji*] were "built up by men" [*shi ren chuangzao chulai de*], were the product of astute political leadership -- and could collapse if the people chose their leaders unwisely.¹¹⁷ In this context, virtually all of the SUPP candidates stressed the importance of the SUPP's maintaining its share of political power. We return to Wong Soon Koh's paradigm speech: "History tells us a race's rise and fall [*xing gen shuai*] is connected to its political power", Wong argued, "When a race's political power is strong, that race flourishes [*xingwang*], when a race's political power decreases, that race becomes weak [*shuairuo*]"'. "I used to study history and spent many years as a teacher", Wong continued, "History tells us when a race no longer has the strength to play an active part in government, that race is finished [*wandan*]. If you don't believe me, look at Vietnam, look at Cambodia". Chan Seng Khai, the third of the SUPP's Kuching candidates, put the matter more starkly. "Take a look at our neighbors: Indonesia, Thailand, Burma, and the Philippines", the Batu Lintang incumbent YB began, "Although they have many people of Chinese descent [*Huayi*], none of these [Chinese] communities has any chance of sharing power". Chan then evoked images of political turmoil and violent instability in the Middle East and the countries of the former Soviet Union -- countries that are "suffering baptisms in the flames of war" [*zaoshou zhanhou xili*], whose peoples' lives are sunk "in the midst of deep waters of molten fire" [*zai shuishen huore*] -- suggesting that this could be Sarawak's fate if the BN were not returned overwhelmingly.¹¹⁸ Vincent Goh in Sibu employed a similar comparison, juxtaposing Sarawak's tranquility with scenes of ethnic carnage in Sri Lanka, Bosnia, and Rwanda.¹¹⁹

The key, the SUPP candidates argued, is racial unity. As if reading a page out of

Arendt Lijphart's article on "Consociational Democracy",¹²⁰ the SUPP candidates repeatedly stressed that the Chinese community's enviable position depends on its political strength, which rests on the SUPP's ability to represent the community's rights in a governing coalition of communally based parties, which in turn requires that the Chinese community rally behind the political party that acts as their champion. It is here that many of the SUPP and BN politicians stressed that the BN's model of democracy is more appropriate to Sarawak's multi-ethnic population than a "Western" model based on confrontation. Arriving at the Sibu airport to campaign on behalf of the town's SUPP candidates, Penang's Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, for example, argued that the presence or absence of a formal opposition in the State Assembly is not a "decisive factor" [*juedingxing de yinsu*] in determining whether or not the state is democratic. What is important is that the Sarawak BN's four component parties, which represent the state's main racial groups and are able to engage in "frequent debates", serve a "balancing function" [*zhiheng de zuoyong*] within the DUN.¹²¹

It is also here that the SUPP's political rhetoric has come, in fact, to closely resemble the type of ethnic politicking common in Peninsular Malaysia. Almost all pretenses of being a multi-ethnic party, of which the party has in the past been very proud, have been jettisoned. Appeals are now made strictly in the name of racial unity. "The Chinese community wants political power. Increase our strength in the Barisan Nasional", [*Huazu yao you zhengzhi liliang. Jiaqiang zai Guozhen zhong de shili*] read one SUPP poster on display throughout Sibu, while in central Kuching several posters called on voters to, "Safeguard the Chinese community's power to participate in government". [*Quebao Huazu canzheng liliang*]. The logic behind the slogans was outlined by the candidates themselves.

Speaking at an old age service center in Kuching, for example, Sim Kheng Hui explained that Sarawak is composed of many different "racial communities" [*Zhongzu de minzu*], each of which is represented by a political party, "fighting for" [*zhengqu*] that community's rights within the overall structure of the BN. Because the SUPP is the only one out of the four coalition parties that speaks for the Chinese community, Sim argued, "It is only with the SUPP that the Chinese can share political power with the other races, only the SUPP can ensure [*quebao*] that Chinese interests are not neglected [*hulue*]"'.¹²² Song Swee Guan cited demographic trends to bolster the point. Sarawak's Chinese community, Song argued, has declined from 29% to 27% of the state's total population -- "definitely not an optimistic number" [*bingfei leguan de shuma*] -- a fact which makes it that much more critical that the party retain all of its 17 seats: "If the state's Chinese believe the DAP's 'give us one or two seats' talk, then as a result of the SUPP's decreasing number of seats, our [the Chinese] power to speak out, and, even more to do things effectively will also be sharply diminished [*ruijian xialai*]"'.¹²³ This

calculus, the SUPP argued, explains why the DAP represents such a menace.

One of the two most widely repeated charges levied against the DAP was that the DAP threatens communal unity, and in so doing, puts the political -- and therefore economic and cultural -- future of the state's Chinese at risk. The SUPP stressed that the DAP this election only targeted SUPP-controlled Chinese majority districts, while Sarawak's other BN component parties for the most part faced only nominal competition, a fact that made an overwhelming victory for the SUPP that much more essential. The sentiments expressed by the Penang Chief Minister at Sibu's "Night of Loving Hearts Concert" were echoed in speeches by nearly all of the SUPP's Kuching and Sibu candidates:¹²⁴

The DAP only sends its candidates to contest in Chinese districts. Their targets are likewise all Chinese: the Deputy Chief Minister, the Speaker of the Assembly, the Mayor of Kuching, and the Finance Minister. The DAP wants to force them all to step down [*xiatai*]. They [the DAP] are up to no good [*juxin*].¹²⁵

Vincent Goh, in a statement to the press, went as far as to suggest that the Chiew Chiu Sing's decision to contest in the Iban-majority district of Kemena was a ruse, that the mistakes in his nomination papers, which forced him out of the race, had been intentional:

Why is it that the DAP in this election is only contesting in the Chinese areas? Why is it that Lim Kit Siang doesn't dare direct the Rocket [the DAP] to send a candidate to fight it out for real [*zhenzheng de bo-yi-bo*] in a Bumi district? As for Chiew Chiu Sing's nomination forms in Bintulu's Kemena district having mistakes, there are many doubts [*yidian*]. I believe that the real story [*zhenxiang*] will emerge one day, when the water subsides and the rocks emerge [*shui luo-shichu*].¹²⁶

As in the electoral contests between the DAP and its national BN opponents, the MCA and Gerakan, in West Malaysia's urban constituencies, much of the debate between the SUPP and the DAP in Sarawak has come to focus on issues of specific concern to the Chinese community. Here, also, we see a shift in the direction of the West Malaysian pattern, reinforced by Sarawak's state constituencies' increasing ethnic concentration and by the fact that, unlike in the previous state elections, the DAP this year had decided to contest only in Chinese-majority districts (Chiew's annulled candidacy in Kemena excepted). The SUPP's line was

fairly straightforward: the DAP attacks our candidates in Chinese-majority areas, but the opposition cannot pretend to be able to represent the Chinese community as effectively as we do. (Ironically, the fact that, for the first time, the Chinese voters, at least in Sibu, rejected the SUPP's claim in itself marks another significant step in the adoption of the West Malaysian model of communal party politics.)

The SUPP saw the DAP as particularly vulnerable in its stance toward vernacular education, which along with language policy is one of the most volatile "ethnic" issues in Malaysia. Throughout the election period, the Chinese press ran stories that featured SUPP politicians disbursing government allocations and party and private donations to Chinese Primary and Chinese-language Independent schools.

The implied message (and warning) seemed clear enough: this is what working within the government brings; what can the opposition do?¹²⁷ The point was made much more explicitly at the SUPP's campaign functions, in which SUPP politicians directly attacked the DAP's dedication to Chinese education. A flier distributed at the SUPP's *Ceramahs* and concert in Sibu, for example, claimed that only the SUPP "earnestly loves Chinese education" and roundly criticized Jason Wong for not contributing funds to the Chinese Independent Middle School Board of Directors.¹²⁸

This type of criticism is common to Chinese politics in West Malaysia, although the SUPP has, at least until the past few years, maintained a much better track record in securing Chinese support on these issues in Sarawak than have the MCA or Gerakan on the Peninsula. But while the topic ("Chinese issues") and target (the DAP) of the SUPP's criticisms have come to resemble closely those in West Malaysia, the manner in which the SUPP attacked its rival reveals the lasting influence of one of the features of Sarawakian political life that most sharply distinguishes it from politics in West Malaysia: a powerful and enduring regionalism, a strong sense of "Sarawakian exceptionalism". Not only was the DAP throughout the campaign depicted as a divisive influence, threatening to split the Chinese community, the opposition party was portrayed as an alien and sinister pollutant, poised to contaminate *Sarawakian* Chinese society.

No effort, it seems, was spared to link the Sarawak DAP to its national organization in West Malaysia, and especially to its leader, the fiery and controversial Lim Kit Siang -- thus, George Chan's "running dog" comment, as well as the otherwise more innocuous reference to the DAP Secretary General in Vincent Goh's press statement, quoted above. SUPP banners hung opposite the entrance to the Ting Sheng Leu Seafood Restaurant, Sdn. Bhd., where Lim officiated the DAP's Sibu Branch fundraising dinner, read, "The Coming-from West Malaysia [*Xima lai de*] DAP Opposes Sarawak's Increasing its Parliamentary

Seats. Lim Kit Siang: What do you have to Say?" and "The DAP's leaders want to abolish [*feichu*] the Twenty Points and sell out [*chumai*] the Rights of the Sarawak People".



[A 1983 SUPP campaign cartoon depicting the threat posed by the DAP "Rocket". A Chinese, a Malay, and an Iban are pictured standing on an isolated Sarawak; under the Chinese it is written, "Sarawak is our home". The pair of evil-looking hairy arms carrying the rocket emanate from a distant Peninsular Malaysia. The caption in the upper right corner reads, "The rocket is aimed especially at the Chinese!!"]

As the banners that greeted Lim Kit Siang's arrival in Sibu suggest, two manifestations of the so-called "Sarawak sovereignty" issue came to the fore in 1996: the DAP's reaction to a proposal to increase Sarawak's representation in Parliament and a comment by the DAP's National Deputy Chairman Karpal Singh concerning the Twenty Points. In both of these cases, the SUPP's principal target was Chiew Chiu Sing, the Sarawak DAP's sole representative in the Malaysian Federal Parliament. The question, as a campaign flyer distributed at SUPP events in the Sibu area makes clear, is whether the Sarawak DAP can stand up to its West Malaysian leaders.¹²⁹ At the top of the page, the flyer listed the Twenty Points, after which was printed the following:

The SUPP has led the Sarawak people in protecting the rights of Sarawakians through trials and tribulations [*jing fengyu*], enduring boundless hardships [*li jin fengshuang*] to fight for the Twenty Points. But... what is regrettable [*yihan*] is that this April in the National Parliament, the DAP moved [*dongyi*] to have the Twenty Points abolished!

Please ask the DAP:

1. Why are you selling out the rights of the Sarawak people?
2. Why did the Sarawak DAP's MP [ie. Chiew] support the [DAP's] motion?
3. Why didn't the Sarawak DAP dare oppose the West Malaysian DAP's big shots [*da toutou*]?

Dear Sarawakians,

1. This is the DAP's clear-cut policy [*xianming zhengce*]!
2. This is the DAP's indifference [*moshi*] to the personal rights of the Sarawakian people!
3. This is the DAP's neglecting [*hulue*] the Sarawak people's feelings!
4. This is real truth [*lushan zhenmian*] about the DAP!

We turn now to the second prong of the SUPP's rhetorical strategy, development. As the SUPP politicians presented it, the issue of economic development complemented the SUPP's call for racial unity, giving the party's strongly emotive, but largely symbolic appeals for communal solidarity a more tangible material grounding. Again, we return to Wong Soon Koh's speech in Sungai Merah. After explaining why Sibü's Chinese voters should not let sympathy prompt them into supporting the DAP, Wong warned of the pitfalls of the second impulse that could lead them astray: spite. "Some might want to support the opposition in order to cast a protest vote [*kangyi piao*]...". Wong asserted, "My drainage ditch hasn't been finished, my street isn't paved, my telephone hasn't been connected, water service hasn't reached my house. So you vote for the opposition". But, just as "sympathy votes" threaten racial unity and political power, "protest votes" are at best irrelevant and counter-productive, at worst dangerous. Wong urged the audience not to support the opposition merely because they are "dissatisfied with trivial matters" [*suoshi bu man*]. In the end, nothing is gained: "After you've voted, the problem's still there. The road's still unpaved, the water still doesn't reach your house, the phone's still disconnected". All you've managed to do is "vent your spleen" [*chuqi eryi*].

As in the question of protecting the state's Chinese population's communal rights, the crux of the matter is power. To put it simply: the opposition has none. "The DAP can't do anything", Wong continued, "We still need the SUPP; we still need a party in government that can accomplish things". Following the same logic it employed when discussing its contributions to Chinese education, only on a larger scale, the SUPP pointed to the projects it had initiated and outlined the development plans it had in store for the future. The Chairman of the Sibü City Council Kong Sien Han, for example, spoke proudly of the recently built hospital, airport, and multi-level car park, as well as plans for a new hawker center and bus

station.¹³⁰ Also mirroring the way in which it applied the issue of Chinese education, the SUPP regularly asserted that the DAP, whatever its rhetoric, would never be able to deliver development. Indeed, the second most frequently heard charge against the DAP (the first being the opposition's intention to split the Chinese community) was that the party was an empty vessel, more than willing to criticize, but in the end totally incapable of producing benefits for its constituents.

Again, banners hung in Kuching and Sibü tell the story: "[We] Don't want an opposition party that ordinarily does nothing, that only cries out at election time" read one sign hung outside a DAP *ceramah* in Kuching; "The DAP only opposes, it has nothing constructive [*jianshe*] to show [*biaoxian*]" claimed another in Sibü.

Calling the DAP a party that "can only talk, can't do; can only destroy, can't build" [*zhi hui jiang, bu hui zuo; zhi hui pohui, bu hui jianshe*], Koh Tsu Koon asserted that a SUPP backbencher is of much more value to his constituents than even the most prominent DAP politician, a not-so-oblique reference to the contest between Acting Sarawak DAP Chairman Jason Wong and the SUPP newcomer Vincent Goh in Sibü's Pelawan district.¹³¹



[A 1996 SUPP campaign cartoon entitled, "The Rocket is Reduced to 'Stealing Credit'!" A sweating Wong Soon Kai is shown as the real driving force behind Sibü's development, speeding the city toward 2005, the target date for its being recognized as a full-fledged city (on the back of the truck are listed several recent development projects). Jason Wong, until last year a Sibü area MP, is shown stealing a ride on back, saying, "I fought for all this! Mine, mine".]

It is at this juncture that the SUPP's talk about development converged with its

emphasis on racial unity. The SUPP presented itself not only as an important component in a State government that had overseen rapid economic development, but as the only party able to secure material benefits *for the Chinese community*.

And just as Sarawak's Chinese society was described as flourishing but fragile, dependent on the preservation of the community's political power, so too was the economic prosperity of the State's Chinese portrayed as a tenuous thing, its continuation contingent on the community's ability to ensure its fair share of governmental favor. The melding of the themes of communalism and development, already quite common in Chinese political discourse in West Malaysia, was given a particular urgency by the Sarawak DAP's decision this year to compete in just a few districts. Unlike in previous years when the DAP, together with other opposition parties, had (at least in theory) the capacity to win quite a few seats, the BN parties could no longer credibly claim that the DAP threatened to derail the government's overall development plan. This year, however, because the DAP was principally targeting Chinese districts -- and because there was little serious opposition elsewhere -- the SUPP could and did assert that DAP victories would deprive the *Chinese* population of its proper measure of economic development.

This fear of being denied economic benefits, generalized to the entire Chinese community, was also presented much more narrowly, to argue that development assistance targeted for one specific area could just as well go to another. And here, it was but a small step, rhetorically, to go from expounding on a fear of economic deprivation to threatening the same. Although the message was put more delicately, the implication was there for all to see: vote for us, or your community will go without. The SUPP, quite naturally, firmly denied that development was being used as a threat.¹³² At the same time, however, by emphasizing both the ties between political power and development and the inability of the opposition to deliver, the SUPP clearly communicated that patronage must be purchased with political loyalty. (Once again, given the new technique for counting votes and the SUPP's impressive political machine, such threats could be targeted very specifically.) The nature of this compact perhaps came out most explicitly after the election. Ever eager to please, the *Sarawak Tribune* printed on the front of its Central Region section a full page announcement, which proclaimed in large white bold-face type set against a black background that, "Tan Sri Datuk Amar Dr. Wong Soon Kai's shock defeat means... SIBU HAS LOST ITS DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER. The next five years is over for the people of Sibu as everything comes to a standstill", while an editorial in the also staunchly pro-government English-language daily, *The People's Mirror*, stated that, "the government cannot, under any circumstances be blamed" if it decides to withhold economic benefits from areas that voted against the ruling

parties.¹³³ George Chan, the presumptive heir to Wong Soon Kai's soon-to-be-vacated Party Presidency, himself put the matter rather bluntly when he stated that he could not believe that the voters of Sibu had rejected Dr. Wong, "who had done so much for them".¹³⁴ Chan continued, ominously:

So, if we have new development projects coming up, I suppose we have to actually assess whether the people will appreciate what we are doing for them. If they don't, what is the point of us pouring in more millions of ringgit for development purposes which will not be appreciated? [They] might as well go to places where our efforts will be appreciated. The government is also human.

"It seems the people in Sibu do not wish to have development", Chan concluded.

THE ROCKET OR THE TIGER HEADS?: THE DAP

The Sarawak DAP politicians I interviewed acknowledged that the SUPP's attempts to characterize the DAP as a dangerous foreign entity, a corrosive West Malaysian transplant, had previously been very effective, "a poison arrow" as Sibu's Wong Ho Leng described it.¹³⁵ "People in Sarawak have a silent, suspicious feeling about West Malaysians, feel they are treacherous", Sim Kwang Kang explained, recounting how the SUPP had capitalized on this sentiment for many years.¹³⁶ Even though by the 1980s the DAP had managed to inspire a degree of confidence, winning a few National Parliamentary seats, the party was still kept at arm's length by Sarawak's Chinese voters when it came to the locally more consequential state elections -- this at a time when the DAP was scoring consistent and impressive victories in West Malaysia's Chinese districts. Reviewing the DAP's history in Sarawak, Jason Wong explained that although it was eventually able to shake off accusations of being a West Malaysian stooge, the party continued to be "viewed by Sarawakians in a national context", considered competent enough to serve in Kuala Lumpur, but still not completely trusted to represent local interests in the Sarawak DUN.¹³⁷ As a result, the general tendency of Malaysia's Chinese voters to split their ticket -- to support the DAP in its Parliamentary races, but vote for the governing party in the State elections -- was amplified tremendously in Sarawak, to the extent that the DAP, in spite of its occasional victories in the national elections, had never in its eighteen-year history in Sarawak won a State Assembly seat.

Given this strong anti-Peninsula sentiment and the SUPP's previously very considerable success in exploiting it, it is not surprising that the DAP went to

considerable lengths to demonstrate its devotion to Sarawak. In both Kuching and Sibu, the DAP's candidates constantly referred to the party's eighteen years in the state, asserting in a clever rhetorical twist that the very fact that it had struggled for so many years without even a single victory itself proved its commitment (though the candidates would then hasten to emphasize the DAP's dire weaknesses and imminent collapse). "Eighteen years is very a long time", lamented Jason Wong at the DAP *ceramah* outside Sibu's Hii Brothers' Stationary, explaining that his tears the previous week were nothing to be ashamed of; after all, "How many 18-years does one have in a lifetime?" [*yi ge rensheng you ji ci shiba nian?*].¹³⁸ Wong and his comrades were particularly anxious to defend themselves against the SUPP's accusation that the Sarawak DAP was somehow complicit in, or at least in no position to resist, attacks by the national DAP on Sarawak's special status. It's a "hackneyed theme" [*laodiao*], Chian Pao Koh announced earlier that evening, referring to allegations that the DAP intended to scuttle the Twenty Points, "They said this eighteen years ago; they're still saying it today".¹³⁹ Although he did not deny that Karpal Singh had questioned the Twenty Points, Chian went on to point out that the Sarawak DAP's MP Chiew Chiu Sing had, in fact, spoken out in Parliament against the DAP Deputy Chairman, something that none of the SUPP MPs had done.¹⁴⁰ As for the other charge directed against Chiew, namely that he objected to the addition of another Sarawak seat in Parliament, Chiew himself insisted that his statements in Parliament had either been taken out of context or sadly misinterpreted, that what he objected to was not an increase in representation, but the manner in which the new district would be delineated.¹⁴¹ (The Parliamentary record supports Chiew's claim. Chiew's statement made two points: first, the size of the new constituency would violate the principle of "one man one vote" [*seorang satu undi*]; second, the increased ethnic concentration that would result from the planned redistricting would be "further inclined to alienate communal groups" [*lebih cenderung mengasingkan golongan kaum*].)¹⁴²

But this year, the Sarawak DAP was not content simply to remain on the defensive, merely to deflect the SUPP's accusations. Although the opposition did not play up the "Sarawak sovereignty" issue as much as did the SUPP, the DAP on quite a number of occasions went on the offensive. The rhetorical angle the DAP chose to take was brusquely summed up by the Sarawak DAP's Parliamentary Liaison Committee Chairman Wong Huan Yu, who practically bristled when I asked if the DAP's status as a national party hurt it in Sarawak. "Well, the BN is also a national party, and the SUPP is part of it", replied Wong abruptly, referring to the SUPP's status as a member of the ruling coalition in the National Parliament.¹⁴³ Wong Ho Leng, for example, publicly accused the SUPP of hypocrisy when it called Lim Kit Siang a "running dog", pointing to the fact

that the SUPP had itself imported politicians from its national BN allies, most prominently Koh Tsu Koon from Penang, to campaign for it:

They [the SUPP candidates] say that the DAP is from West Malaysia. But are they any different? Last night Koh Tsu Koon, Ph.D. came to Sibu. That's just like our Lim Kit Siang coming here. Lim Kit Siang has a 100% right [*yibai baxian de quanli*] to be here; so does Koh Tsu Koon. So does our friend Mohan [laughter]. They all have a 100% right to come to Sarawak.¹⁴⁴

Speaking at the same *ceramah* just after Wong Ho Leng, Jason Wong himself raised the issue of the Twenty Points, attacking the SUPP on its self-proclaimed home turf. Jason Wong not only repeated Chian's assertion that no SUPP politician had spoken up when the DAP's Karpal Singh made his comment about the Twenty Points, but alleged that when senior UMNO politicians made nearly identical statements in parliament, not a single SUPP voice was heard in protest, a telling example, Wong averred, of the SUPP's inability to challenge its national Parliamentary coalition partners.¹⁴⁵ In Kuching, Ng Kim Ho's accusations were, if anything, more pointed, his rhetoric more charged. Ng, for example, condemned the SUPP for not speaking up, for failing to "put Sarawakians first" [*yi Sarawak-ren wei youxian*], when the central government "dispatched [*paqian*]" federal officials to run Sarawak state government departments. "Previously we were a colony of England", Ng declared, "I hope that the Federal government [*lianbang zhengfu*] doesn't give the impression that Sarawak is [again] a colony, that we're a colony of West Malaysia".¹⁴⁶

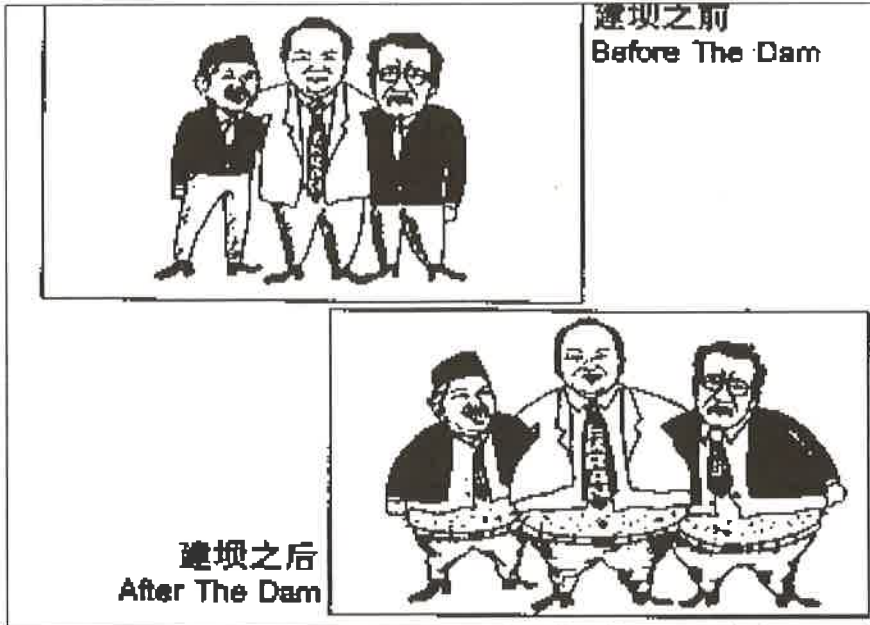
The DAP's more aggressive stance on the issue of "Sarawakian sovereignty" seems to have been an indication that it felt confident that the State's Chinese voters were now more willing to accept the party as their standard-bearer in Sarawak as well as in Malaysia, an inclination borne out by the DAP's unprecedented victories in Sibu (and its comparatively strong showing in Kuching). The DAP's new assertiveness on matters of local concern was certainly evident in its approach to economic development. Robert Lau's comments that that there were no issues to be contested in this election notwithstanding, the DAP still attempted to bring a number of questions to the public's attention. Inflation, public housing, support for the elderly, resource management, privatization of public assets, and land-use rights were frequent subjects at DAP *ceramahs*. It was on these grounds that the DAP chose to counter the SUPP's rhetoric of development. In Sibu and Kuching, the DAP candidates repeatedly emphasized that they were not opposed to economic development, and in any case, the mere fact that the DAP was contesting only a few seats meant that it could not possibly be a threat. The question, the

DAP's "Election Manifesto" stressed, was how development would be carried out and who would benefit.

While it would be something of an overstatement to argue that the DAP framed its discussion of development in terms of "class", its attacks on the BN did take a decidedly populist tone. The contrast with the SUPP is striking. When the SUPP spoke of economic development it emphasized the need to maintain racial unity, when the DAP mentioned development it sought to highlight a growing disparity between the rich and politically well-connected and the rest of Sarawak's population. Where the SUPP's Wong Soon Koh saw spite and racial treachery, the DAP perceived -- and tried to capitalize on -- economic resentment. Nearly all the DAP's statements on the issues listed above, were presented as instances of a political and economic elite enjoying the fruits of economic growth at the expense of ordinary Sarawakians. In Sibü, Jason Wong stated that as MP, he had supported development, but only development that benefited a wider section of the people, that was "good, fair, and healthy" [*lianghao, heping, jiankang*].¹⁴⁷ Chian Pao Koh cited government statistics crediting Sarawak with annual growth rates of 8-11% to make his point about uneven development: "That means that if you got RM 10,000 last year, you'll get 10,800 to 11,100 this year. I don't know about these [government] numbers, but the money in my pocket hasn't grown by 8-11%. Has yours?"¹⁴⁸ All of Sibü's DAP candidates, but Wong Ho Leng most persistently, accused the state BN government of manipulating outdated land codes to expropriate private land without adequate compensation for dubious development schemes.¹⁴⁹

In Kuching, Ng Kim Ho's well-publicized "fat cat" comment at the DAP dinner in Kuching was not simply a gaffe, coming just after some barbed comments about the social costs of a development program skewed toward the privileged and the need to protect Kuching's most vulnerable citizens, particularly the elderly.

It is not particularly surprising that the Sarawak DAP would take this stance. What is interesting for our purposes, however, is the manner in which the DAP pitched its appeals. If the SUPP folded its talk of economic development into a larger discourse on Chinese communal solidarity, the DAP not infrequently adorned its populist message with appeals to Sarawakian regionalism and attacks on the SUPP's Peninsular connections, another example of the Sarawak DAP's new-found willingness to present itself as an accepted Sarawakian institution. Ng, for instance, denounced the Sarawak BN for maintaining an overly cozy relationship with the West Malaysian BN parties and their corporate allies, contending that Sarawak's rich natural resources were being sold out to "West Malaysian companies that are interested in Sarwak only to make money. [*zhuanqian*]"¹⁵⁰



[A 1996 DAP campaign cartoon featuring Taib Mahmud, Ting Peck Khiing, and Mahathir Mohamad, suggesting just who is profiting from Sarawak's biggest development project, the Bakun Dam.]

In Sibü, comments such as these were given a regional punch as well, which also may account for why the DAP's overall rise in fortune was especially pronounced in the Rejang Basin. Alluding to the recent flow of Foochow out of Sibü, Chian Pao Koh suggested that out-migration was not always the product of economic success: because of inflation and a lack of economic opportunity, "...people's lives are getting harder. The economy's getting more and more difficult. Many people now want to leave Sibü for far flung places [*yaoyuan de difang*] where they are strangers".¹⁵¹ Billions of Ringgit in timber flows down the Rejang, Sibü's DAP candidates argued, but how much of it is actually invested in Sibü? Every five years as election time approaches, there is a flurry of new development projects in Sibü, but how many are lasting and beneficial? Echoing the views of Sibü's DAP politicians, the *Shihua Ribao*'s "crazy man" denounced the new projects as empty ribbon-cutting ceremonies -- "Every five days a big cut, every three days a little cut [*wu tian yi da jian, san tian yi xiao jian*]" -- and demanded that Sibü be given the same attention as other cities in Sarawak.¹⁵² What's the use of having a Deputy Chief Minister, Jason Wong asked rhetorically, if all the development money goes to Kuching and Miri?:

Sibu, our adorable [*keai*] Sibu. Has there been development here? Look at other places. Look at Kuching, look at Miri, then look at Sibu... aaah.... [something in Foochow dialect]... No bridges here! TV Three [from West Malaysia] produced a report on development in Sarawak. They talked about Kuching, they talked about Bintulu, they talked about Miri. But not a word about Sibu!¹⁵³

But perhaps the most notable feature of Sarawak DAP's electoral rhetoric may have been what was left out. Strangely enough, although all of the DAP's electoral races featured Chinese candidates running in Chinese-majority districts, and while nearly all of the candidates' speeches were given in Mandarin (those that weren't were given in dialect), "Chinese issues" were notably absent in the DAP's campaign. To be sure, the DAP did not ignore the SUPP's barbs on Chinese education and language policy; the DAP even printed receipts of Jason Wong's private contributions to various Chinese schools on one of its campaign fliers to counter allegations that he did not support Chinese education.¹⁵⁴ In general, though, the DAP chose not to go on the offensive in this area in the same way it did on either economic development or "Sarawakian issues". The Sarawak DAP's reticence not only differed sharply from the SUPP's relentless exhortations to safeguard racial solidarity, it also stood out in dramatic contrast to the stance taken in the last several elections by the national DAP in West Malaysia, which has been criticized for an increasing Chinese chauvinism.¹⁵⁵ Just as significantly, this disinclination to engage the SUPP on Chinese issues represented something of a break from the approach the Sarawak DAP had itself taken in previous years.

Although it is difficult to ascertain if the shift in focus was the product of a conscious strategic decision, the lack of emphasis given to Chinese ethnic themes this year does seem to have marked the resolution of a long-running factional battle within the Sarawak DAP. Factionalism within the Sarawak DAP has by no means been as obvious or cutthroat as it has been within the SUPP -- for the simple reason that as a small opposition party with scant resources and no control over patronage, the DAP has had very little to fight over. (Nor, in spite of the fact that most of the Sibu DAP branch members are Foochow and a sizeable percentage of the Kuching members are Teochew, does there seem to be anything like the SUPP's dialect/regional divisions.) Nevertheless, factionalism within the DAP has at times been quite intense. Precisely because its members' commitments to the party are more ideal than material, internal disputes within the DAP, unlike those in the SUPP, have tended to be ideological in nature. To a considerable extent, the fault line lies between those who have received an English-language education and those whose education has been more exclusively Chinese. The early leaders of

the Sarawak DAP were largely Chinese educated, Sim Kwang Yang explained, and like many in the West Malaysian DAP, were inclined to "look at issues through a Chinese lens". Because of their Chinese-oriented education and background, this first generation of Sarawak DAP leaders were "less willing to look at [Sarawakian] Chinese society in a multi-racial context". Over the years, however, a new generation of leaders has come to the fore, most of whom have received an English or Malay education, many of whom have studied overseas. These leaders have a "more multi-racial outlook", Sim continued, one that "better reflects the situation in Sarawak".¹⁵⁶ Ng Kim Ho argued that the difference, between these two groups, which corresponds largely though not exactly to educational background, reflects larger divisions within Malaysia's Chinese communities. There are two types of Chinese in Malaysia, Ng asserted. The first, represented by the Sarawak DAP's old guard, feels that "Chinese culture must be maintained at all costs, that Chinese civilization is 5,000 years old and must be preserved". This, Ng contended, is the MCA's stance and has come to be the position taken by the National DAP; debate between the two Peninsular parties rests on the common ground of communal loyalty. The SUPP, in spite of its multi-ethnic roots and official doctrine, now increasingly subscribes to this view as well.

The second category of Chinese Malaysians, Ng continued, tends to be "more intellectual, in the sense of being English educated, although there are some Chinese-educated [with outlooks] like this as well". This more cosmopolitan group, to which most of the leadership of Sarawak's DAP today belong, "cannot deny their roots in Chinese culture, but they do not emphasize this".¹⁵⁷

At several points throughout the 1980s this second group -- epitomized by Sim, who studied Philosophy and Microbiology in Canada and has an Iban wife; Ng, who studied in Australia is about to receive his law degree from England; and Chiew Chiu Sing, who went to university in the United States, speaks Iban, and was elected to the National Parliament in a Chinese-minority, multi-racial district (Sibu's Jason Wong and Wong Ho Leng, both of whom received English law degrees, belong in this camp as well) -- clashed both with the Sarawak DAP's more traditionally minded bloc and with the national DAP, which by the 1980s had felt obliged in many circumstances to take a much more Chinese-centered stance. Sim, who had emerged as the Sarawak DAP's brightest star, more than once threatened to leave the party. There were also moves to withdraw the Sarawak DAP from national framework altogether. In the end, though, the Sarawak DAP was able to negotiate a substantial -- and given the National DAP's centralized party structure, unique -- measure of independence in such matters as the selection of candidates and the choice of campaign issues, a point emphasized by each of the DAP politicians I interviewed.

The DAP's internal divisions were brought into the open this year as one of the DAP's four branch offices in Kuching, described by Ng as "the opposition party's opposition faction" [*fanduidang de fanduipei*], broke away from the DAP in support of two independent candidates running under the "Tiger Head" logo. Several prominent members of the Stampin branch, "diehard Chinese chauvinists", in Ng's words, "some of whom don't speak a word of English", were angered by the State DAP leadership's decision to overlook the branch's preferred choices and nominate only one candidate, Ng, in the Kuching area.¹⁵⁸ Financed and led by former Sarawak DAP Treasurer Lim Guan Sin, the Tiger Heads put forward Chua Chio Kuia and Ting Kee Kai to stand in Batu Lintang and Pending, the two Kuching-area districts the DAP decided not to contest in its "only in Padungan" strategy. Chua, Ting, and their patron Lim continued to assert publicly that, although running under a different election insignia, Chua and Ting should still be seen as DAP candidates. Claiming that "I was born a DAP man and when I die I will become a DAP ghost" [*Wo sheng shi Xingdongdang-ren, si ye yao zuo Xingdongdang-gui*], Lim sought to assure voters in his district that his faction's dispute with the DAP mainstream was a tactical one only, asserting throughout the election that "The Tiger is the Rocket [the DAP's symbol], the Rocket is the Tiger" [*laohu jiu shi huojian, huojian jiu shi laohu*]. Lim further promised that if elected, the two Tiger Heads would "definitely return to the DAP's embrace" [*kending hui huida minxingdang de huaibao*].¹⁵⁹ While strongly disavowing any connection to the Tiger Heads, the DAP also sought to present the matter as a simple tactical disagreement, maintaining that the real question was one of maintaining party discipline, nothing more.¹⁶⁰

There does seem to have been more to it, however. The DAP's "wounded soldier" strategy aside, one wonders why the DAP only ran one candidate in Kuching, while it sponsored three candidates in the much smaller Sibu area. It is also worthy of note that the Kuching constituencies in which the DAP chose not to field candidates were precisely the ones in which the old-guard Stampin branch had the most influence. In any case, an examination of the Tiger Head politicians' campaign rhetoric reveals just how divergent the two camps were in their ideological convictions. The Tiger Heads, as one might expect, adopted the DAP line on issues such as public accountability, corruption, uneven development, inflation, and pensions.¹⁶¹ But while the DAP candidates in Sibu and Kuching largely avoided Chinese issues, or addressed them only in a defensive manner, the Tiger Heads went on the attack. Just as the West Malaysian DAP, particularly in the 1980s, routinely criticized the MCA and the Gerakan for not standing up for Chinese interests, the Tiger Heads directly challenged the SUPP's claim to have effectively represented the Chinese community in Sarawak.

In their efforts to discredit the SUPP's dedication to Sarawak's Chinese community, the Tiger Heads stressed three issues, representation, education, and language policy, and in so doing at times sounded more like (national) DAP candidates than did the Sarawak DAP's official candidates themselves. In each of these three areas, the Tiger Heads asserted that the SUPP, far from protecting the Chinese community, had betrayed the community's basic rights. Speaking at a joint Tiger Head *ceramah* in Kuching's Pending constituency, Ting Kee Kai castigated the SUPP for "selling out" [*chumai*] Chinese interests by not demanding more representation in the Sarawak State Assembly. Pointing to the SUPP's declining proportion of seats and the fact that the Chinese urban districts are grossly under-represented, Ting castigated the SUPP for passively accepting the Chinese community's diminished representation. Referring to the fact that the SUPP was only awarded one out of Sarawak's six new seats, Ting declared,

It's as if the SUPP were told, 'Now, don't say anything, we'll give you a seat. Just sit quietly and docilely in the back. [*Ni buyao jiang hao le. Women pei gei ni yi xi. Guaiguai-xunxun de zai women hounian zuo.*] Why is it that they feel they can't protest that this is unfair, that we Chinese, one-third of the population, should be treated better?'¹⁶²

The Tiger Heads presented nearly the same argument on education; here again, although the specific objects of contention were local, the Tiger Head candidates' line of attack closely resembled the approach frequently taken by the DAP in its campaigns in West Malaysia's Chinese-majority districts. Lim Guan Sin, for example, argued that the SUPP should hardly be congratulated for its support of the Number Six Chinese Primary School; after all, it's the only one to have been built in recent years: "The SUPP is very proud of its Number Six School. Well, numbers one through five were built before the SUPP joined the BN. One school in 26 years! We say it's not enough!"¹⁶³ Ting echoed Lim's charges, adding that the SUPP does not even deserve credit for the one school it did manage to have built, since the lion share of the school's funding came not from the government, but from private donations, a fact Ting found disgraceful:

The SUPP says they're the only ones who can protect [*weihu*] Chinese education, but I say they're selling out [*chumai*] Chinese education.... Fellow countrymen [*tongbao*], is this school a product of the SUPP joining the BN? No, it isn't. They have no basis [for saying so]. The school is independent. From 1971 until now -- 26 years -- look at all the Malay schools that have been built at government expense, not just in

Malaysia, but in Sarawak. How is it that we [the Chinese community] must build ours ourselves? We don't feel proud or grateful to the SUPP. We can only feel grief, feel pain, feel indignation [*women jiu gandao beifen, gandao tongxin, gandao qifen*].¹⁶⁴

The Tiger Head candidates' attacks on language policy were just as strident, but seemed strained. Unlike in West Malaysia, where the use of Bahasa Malaysia in governmental, educational, and cultural circles was relentlessly promoted in the 1970s and 1980s, in Sarawak, which retained a measure of autonomy on language matters and where the Malays comprise a much smaller portion of the population, the national language has been much less forcefully championed. In a sense, then, even as Mandarin and other Chinese dialects are freely spoken in Sarawak, their use does not carry the same connotations, the same symbolic urgency, as has in West Malaysia. So, while the rhetoric of the opposition party's opposition faction was perhaps as animated as that of the DAP in West Malaysia in the 1980s, the issues the Tiger Heads chose to highlight were not nearly as evocative. Ting, for example, only seemed able to criticize the government for failing to offer Chinese-language flight information at the airport -- hardly the stuff to inspire political outrage:

My mother hasn't been to school, hasn't studied English [or Malay]. If we go to catch a flight, she feels very agitated [*zhanzhan-jinjin*]. She doesn't know which gate to go through, or where the plane is going: to Miri or to Sibü. Why is it that our SUPP after joining the BN saying that they would safeguard [*hanwei*] our Chinese community's rights, can't even provide Chinese announcements in the airport!?¹⁶⁵

CONCLUSION

Gambling, the after-effects of previous incidents of vote-buying, factional battles within the SUPP: these all likely had some effect on the outcome of the 1996 contests between the SUPP and the DAP, at least in Sibü. (Press bias, on the other hand, to the extent that it existed, seems to have been of very little consequence.)

An examination of voter returns reveals that sub-ethnic, or dialect, affinity had a definite impact on the results of one of the races in the Sibü area. There also seems to be a clear and consistent, if generally fairly weak, correlation between class and voter preference in at least two of the three districts I examined -- even if the majority of urban Chinese voters remain "fence-sitters". To explain the overall swing in favor of the DAP, however, we need to look at the campaign

itself. As was argued in the first section, the SUPP, in spite of the glitz and glamour or its rallies, ran a rather complacent, lackluster campaign, while the DAP's "wounded soldier" approach proved to be surprisingly compelling. But, although important, this too is an insufficient explanation for what was, after all, an unprecedented outcome.

It is my contention that the picture becomes complete only if one pays attention to what was actually said during the election, to the substance of the campaign rhetoric itself. In the end, it would seem that the SUPP's twin themes of racial unity and economic development, coupled with its attempts to cast the Sarawak DAP as a West Malaysian interloper -- a frequently repeated and previously very successful electoral recipe -- rang a bit hollow this time. The DAP, meanwhile, adopted something of a new approach. Whether by design or as a consequence of an internal ideological split finally resolved, the DAP all but abandoned its forceful championing of "Chinese rights": a strategy that stood out in marked contrast to the line taken by both the SUPP and the DAP's erstwhile comrades, the Tiger Heads. Instead of challenging the SUPP on "Chinese issues" -- an approach that may have appealed to voters in previous Parliamentary elections, but had gotten the DAP nowhere at the state level¹⁶⁶ -- the DAP this time chose a new approach, adroitly combining its familiar economic populism with a new appeal to Sarawakian regional sentiment. This, I believe, more than anything made the difference. For the first time, the DAP became accepted as a genuine feature of the Sarawakian political landscape.

NOTES

1. "Star's Application to Use Key Symbol Rejected", *Borneo Post*, August 25, 1996, "STAR Candidates Cannot Use Common Symbol: Party not Registered Yet", *Sarawak Tribune*. Observers noted that *STAR*'s application to be registered under the Societies Act had been submitted well in advance and surmised that it was being delayed for purely political reasons.
2. "Can BN Form Govt on Nomination Day?" *Sarawak Tribune*, August 25, 1996, "The Legal Poser of Forming State Government", *Borneo Post*, August 25, 1996. See also, "Bulaoerhuo Yu 31 Xi -- Shouzhang bu Biao Leguan: Zhou Guozhen Shoudao Gexindang Zurao" [31 Seats Uncontested -- Chief Minister not Optimistic: The State BN Hindered by *STAR*], *Malaixiya Ribao*, August 27, 1996.
3. "BN Wins 19 Seats Unopposed", *Sarawak Tribune*, August 28, 1996. "BN Wins 19 Uncontested", and "Independents' Day", *Borneo Post*, August 28, 1996.
4. *Yang Berhormat*, or "The Honourable", as State Assemblymen are called.
5. "Wong Soon Kai dui Wong Ho Leng: Bukit Assek Zhou Yixi Shangyan Shuang Wong

zhi Zhan" [Wong Soon Kai Versus Wong Ho Leng: The Bukit Assek State Seat Features the Battle of the Wongs], *Shihua Ribao*, August 28, 1996. Straight Fight Between Dr. Wong and Ho Leng", *Borneo Post*, August 28, 1996.

6. "BN Door Closed to Independent", *The Star*, September 13, 1996.
7. Ng Kim Ho, Speech, DAP Fundraising Dinner, Kuching: August 29, 1996. "*Xingrong Song Swee Guan wei 'Jijiang Juezhong de Da Feimao' -- Sim Kheng Hui: Shi Gongkai Wuru Shou Aidai de Shizhang*" [Describing Song Swee Guan as a "Nearly Extinct Fat Cat" -- Sim Kheng Hui: This is an Open Insult on our Beloved Mayor], *Shihua Ribao*, September 1, 1996. "*Fanduidang Zuo Renshen Gongji: Song Swee Guan Chi Shangren tai Zhong*" [Opposition Party Making Personal Attacks: Song Swee Guan Denounces as too Hurtful], *Shihua Ribao*, September 1, 1996. The next day Ng retracted his insult and issued a formal apology. Ng Kim Ho, Speech, DAP Campaign *ceramah*, Kuching: September 1, 1996. "*Feimao' Fengbo: Ng Kim Ho Daoqian*" [The "Fat Cat" Disturbance: Ng Kim Ho Apologizes], *Xinhua Wanbao*, September 2, 1996.
8. Lim Kit Siang, Speech, DAP Fundraising Dinner, Sibul: September 3, 1996. "*Dui Chan Hong Nam Shi 'Zougou' Tanhua Minxindang Wong Sing Ai Biaoshi Yihan*" [Wong Sing Ai Expresses his Regret at George Chan's 'Running Dog' Talk.], *Shihua Ribao*, September 4, 1996.
9. Robert Lau Hoi Chew, Speech, SUPP campaign *ceramah*, Sungai Merah, Sibul: September 4, 1996.
10. The "Fairy, Tiger, and Dog" also contained allegations of opium use and counterfeiting. When asked about the manuscript, Wong Ho Leng admitted that it amounted to "murder of character", but added, "We in Sibul know how true it is; its just that the author happened to write it down". Wong Ho Leng, Interview, Sibul: September 6, 1996. For his part, Jason Wong claimed that the DAP's use of the manuscript, "the most widely read book in Sibul", had struck a "vital blow" for the DAP. "People in Sibul all know that it [the contents of the book] is true", Wong explained, "maybe its embellished, but substantially its true". Jason Wong Sing Nang, Interview, Sibul: September 10, 1996.
11. Vincent Goh Chung Siong, Speech, SUPP Concert/Rally, Sibul: September 5, 1996. Goh's ex-wife went so far as to publish a "Special Announcement" [*Tebie Shengming*] on the front page of a leading Chinese evening paper affirming that even though she and Goh have been separated since 1989, "Chung Siong is a good father and a thoroughly responsible man [*jinze de ren*]" and demanding that the DAP immediately stop "concocting [*niezao*] purely fictitious [*wu zhongsheng you*] stories about our family". *Xinhua Wanbao*, September 9, 1996.
12. "*Wong Soon Kai Fushouzhang Zao Kongji: Banye Songshang Bao Li Neicang Si Gou*" [Deputy CM Wong Soon Kai the Victim of a Terror Attack: Dead Dog Hidden in a Package Sent in the Middle of the Night], *Malaxiya Ribao*, September 7, 1996. *Wong Soon Kai Jie Si Gou: Dui Siwu Shihui Fasheng ci Shi Gan Tongxin*

[Wong Soon Kai Receives a Dead Dog: Is Heartsick that this Incident Occurred in Sibul Society], *Shihua Ribao*, September 7, 1996. Although the culprits were not identified, Wong Soon Kai did not hesitate to use the incident politically, publicly accusing the DAP of creating an "environment" that "gives rise to" [*yinqi*] this type of behavior", and stating that "this sort of action resembles the tactics [*shouduan*] used by the opposition". Wong Soon Kai, Speech, SUPP *ceramah*, Sibul: September 7, 1996. "*Soon Kai Xiangxin Goh Chong Xiong Jiang Huo Xuanmin de Zhichi*" [Soon Kai Believes that Vincent Goh will Receive the People's Support], *Xinhua Wanbao*, September 9, 1996. (At the same time, though, he emphasized that in so saying he was not "fingering" [*zhichu*] the DAP as the actual culprits.) The DAP, for its part, strongly condemned the action. Wong Ho Leng, Speech, DAP *ceramah*, Sibul: September 6, 1996. Also, "*Minxingdang Yanli Qianze Weixie Wong Soon Kai Yisheng Judong: Bing Huqing Tingzhe zhei lei bu Fuzereng Shi*" [The DAP Sternly Condemns Threats Against Dr. Wong Soon Kai: Demands that this Type of Irresponsible Behavior Cease], *Shihua Ribao*, September 8, 1996.

13. Lily Yong, Interview, Kuching: August 26, 1996.
14. A shortage of funds and lack of influence with the police are only two of the handicaps the DAP suffers. First, although it is used much more sparingly now there remains, as Ng Kim Ho put it, the "fact of the ISA" (Internal Security Act), under which people deemed to be a threat to public order can be detained for extended periods without trial or right of *habeas corpus*. Both Ng and Wong Ho Leng claimed that members of the Special Branch Police monitor their activities; Ng asserts that several former members of the DAP have been employed as spies (many of whom, he said, hang around in the coffee-shop just below the DAP headquarters in Kuching). Finally, the DAP feels it can only publish the location and time of its *ceramahs* on the day of the event, thus cutting down on attendance, for fear that the coffee-shop or restaurant might be closed down or the *ceramah* disrupted. Ng Kim Ho, Interview, Kuching: August 25, 1996. Wong Ho Leng, Interview, Sibul: September 6, 1996.
15. Wong Huan Yu, Speech, DAP *ceramah*, Kuching: September 1, 1996.
16. Or so I was told later by someone who had attended the *ceramah*. (I don't speak a word of Hokkien.) Ng Kim Ho, Speech, DAP *ceramah*, Kuching: September 1, 1996.
17. Jason Wong Sing Nang and Wong Ho Leng, Speeches, DAP *ceramah*, Sibul: September 6, 1996.
18. Sim Kwang Yang, Interview, Kuching: September 17, 1996.
19. Ng Kim Ho, Speech, DAP Fundraising Dinner, Kuching: August 29, 1996. Ng Kim Ho, Speech, DAP *Ceramah*, Kuching: September 1, 1996. "*Minxing Jinjie Zhuangong Padungan-qu: Ng Kim Ho xiang Chita Qu Zhichizhe Zhiqian*" [In the Coming Election, DAP Targets Padungan: Ng Kim Ho Asks Supporters from the Other Districts to Forgive Him], *Shihua Ribao*, August 28, 1996. "*Guozhen*

Kending Chongxin Zhizheng: Ng Kim Ho Yi Fanduidang Ru Zhouyihui Pingheng Jiandu Zhengfu Shizheng" [The BN will Certainly be Returned: Ng Kim Ho Hopes the Opposition Party can Enter the State Assembly to Oversee Government Administration], *Malaixiya Ribao*, August 28, 1996.

20. Lim Kit Siang, Speech, DAP Fundraising Dinner, Sibui: September 3, 1996. Also see, "*Lim Kit Siang Tanyan Sazhou Daxuan Xingdongdang Mei Xinxin Tupuo*", [Lim Kit Siang Frankly States that in the Sarawak State Election the DAP has no Confidence it can Breakthrough], *Malaixiya Ribao*, August 27, 1996, "*Lim Kit Siang: Sazhou Xingdongdang Cunwang Kan Xuanmin Shouzhong Piao*" [Lim Kit Siang: Whether the Sarawak DAP Lives or Dies is in the Voters' Hands], *Nanyang Shangbao*, September 6, 1996.
21. Sim Kwang Yang, Interview, Kuching: September 17, 1996.
22. "DAP Won't Win Election: Koh", *Sarawak Tribune*, September 6, 1996.
23. Wong Soon Kai, Speech, SUPP *Ceramah*, Sibui: September 7, 1996.
24. Interviews: Robert Lau (Sibui: September 9, 1996), Lily Yong (Kuching: September 20, 1996), Sim Kheng Hui (Kuching: September 23, 1996). See also, "*Bi Ying Yuze Daozhi Zhichizhe Toupiaolu Di: Wong Soon Kai Qing Di Luobai*" [Sure-Win Prediction Leads to Low Supporter Turnout: Wong Soon Kai Overlooks his Opponent and Loses], *Nanyang Ribao*, September 10, 1996.
25. "*Palawan-qu: Goh-Wong Da Zhan Shi Suo Nanmian*" [Palawan District: No Avoiding a Fight between Goh and Wong], *Shihua Ribao*, August 27, 1996. "*Xingdong Dang Shiwu Zhishao Gong San Xi: Palawan Shangyan Long-Hu Dou*" [The DAP Contests at Least Three Seats in Sibui: Palawan Features an Epic ('Dragon-Tiger') Struggle], *Malaixiya Ribao*, August 27, 1996, "*Palawan Xuanju You Jizhan: Goh Chung Siong yu Wong Sing Nang Zhen Zhijie Duilei*" [A Fierce Fight in Palawan: Vincent Goh and Jason Wong Face Off], *Malaixiya Ribao*, August 28, 1996.
26. Lily Yong, Interview, Kuching: August 26, 1996.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Lily Yong, Interview, Kuching: September 20, 1996.
30. Interviews: Robert Lau (Sibui: September 9, 1996), Then Toh Kiong (Kuching: September 20, 1996), Lily Yong (Kuching: September 20, 1996), Sim Kheng Hui (Kuching: September 23, 1996). Three of the four interviews were with people associated with the SUPP's Kuching branch, which may have skewed matters.

Unfortunately but understandably, people from the Sibü branch were less available for interviews after the election.

31. Interviews: Wong Ho Leng (Sibu: September 9, 1996), Jason Wong (Sibu: September 10, 1996), Sim Kwang Yang (Kuching: September 17, 1996), Ng Kim Ho (Kuching: September 17, 1996).
32. For a comprehensive history of the SUPP, see Chin Ung-Ho, *Chinese Politics in Sarawak: A Study of the Sarawak United People's Party* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1996).
33. Richard Fidler, "Kanowit: An Overseas Chinese Community in Borneo", Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1973, p.129. Quoted in Chew, p.16, fn. 2.
34. "Quannian Ezhi Xuanju Dufeng" [All Out Effort to Curb Election Gambling], *Meili Ribao*, September 4, 1996. "Xuanmin Que Wu Du Daxuan Mian ba Guojia Qiantu Dudiao" [Voters Musn't Gamble Away the Future of the Nation], *Shihua Ribao*, September 4, 1996. "Sa-Zhou Daxuan, Quanguo Dutu Qingchao Chu" [The Sarawak State Elections, Gamblers from throughout the Whole Country Come out], *Shihua Ribao*, September 8, 1996. As in sports gambling, there appears to be two main ways in which a bet can be made in an electoral contest. The first, which seems to have been the more prevalent in Sibü, is to set odds on one candidate winning. The second is to set a "point spread", that is a straight wager is made on whether the total number of votes a candidate receives will surpass a certain number, regardless of who wins. Sim Kheng Hui, Interview, Kuching: September 23, 1996. PBDS Vice-President Dr. James Masing also asserts that independent candidates in the more rural areas will occasionally decide to run only to win a bet: "As the election gets nearer, a few gamblers will pick one among them to stand as a candidate. Their intention is not to win but to garner an agreed number of votes. If the candidate can win that number of votes, they will win the bet, minimum of which is RM 20,000 [sic]". *Sarawak Tribune*, August 24, 1996.
35. Wong Ho Leng, Interview, Sibü: September 6, 1996.
36. "Dubo Jituan Caozong Daxuan" [Gambling Clique Manipulates Election], *Guoji Shibao*, September 12, 1996. "Wong Soon Kai Luobai Da Bao Muhou you Heishou Cehua: 'Fuzhouren Jituan Dao Wo'" [An Underground Plot Behind Wong Soon Kai's Defeat: "A Foochow Clique Toppled me"], *Meili Ribao*, 9/12/96. "Jinqian Zhengzhi La Wo Xiana" [Money Politics Pushed me off the Horse], *Nanyang Ribao*, September 12, 1996. "I was Sabotaged: Dr. Wong", *Sarawak Tribune*, September 11, 1996.
37. While Wong Soon Kai was apparently quite careful not to name the DAP, *The Star* quoted him as saying, "[The] DAP had gone all out to get me [sic] out of politics by paying RM 1,000 per voter". To which, the DAP Deputy Secretary General Lim Guan Eng replied that Dr. Wong should "Prove his allegations" or "accept defeat gracefully". "Prove your Allegations, Wong Told", *The Star*, September 12, 1996.

38. Wong Sing Nang and Wong Ho Leng, Speeches, DAP campaign *Ceramah*, Sibu: September 6, 1996. "*Minxingdang yu Jinqian Zhengzhi Shi-bu-liang-li': Wong Sing Nang Zhonggao Xuanmin wu wei Qian Maidiao Xuanpiao*". ["The DAP and Money Politics are Fundamentally Opposed": Jason Wong Exhorts the Voters not to Sell their Votes for the Sake of Money"], *Shihua Ribao*, September 7, 1996. "*Wong Ho Leng Lushi Qing Xuanmin Kangju Jinqian Zhengzhi de Chuxian* [The Lawyer Wong Ho Leng Asks the Voters to Reject Money Politics], *Shihua Ribao*, September 4, 1996.
39. Sim Kwang Yang, Interview, Kuching: September 17, 1996.
40. Wong Ho Leng, Interview, Sibu: September 9, 1996.
41. Wong Sing Nang, Interview, Sibu: September 10, 1996.
42. Ng Kim Ho, Interview, Kuching: September 17, 1996.
43. Robert Lau Hoi Chew, Interview, Sibu: September 9, 1996
44. Sim Kheng Hui, Interview, Kuching: September 23, 1996.
45. Then Toh Kiong, Interview, Sibu: September 20, 1996
46. "*Renlian Fadong Dangyuan Zhichizhe Tui bu Kan Guanggao: Dizhi Shihua Jituan San Baozhang*" [SUPP Directs Party Members and Supporters to Remove and not Place Advertisements: Boycott the Shihua Group's Three Newspapers], *Zhonghua Ribao*, September 21, 1996. "*SUPP Boycott*", *Borneo Post*, September 21, 1996.
47. See, for example, "*Yi Qun Dizhumen de Xinsheng*" [A Group of Landowners Speaks from the Heart], *Shihu Ribao*, September 1, 1996; "*Assan Gang Dutou: Chang Long Heshi le?*" [The Assan Ferry: When Will the Long Queue End?], *Shihua Ribao*, September 3, 1996; and "*Sibu Mayelu Jiemeishi Dizhu Wen xiang ge Xuanqu Houxuanren Jihu: xiang Dizhu Mingque Jiaodai Tudi Zhengshou Yu Peichang*", [The Landowners of Sibu Twin Towns' Oya Road Urge Each District's Candidates: Clearly Explain to the Landowners (your Positions on) Land Acquisition and Compensation], *Shihua Ribao*, September 4, 1996.
48. "*Minzhu Xuanju Chengxu Dai Jiantao*" [Democratic Electoral Procedures Await Criticism], *Shihua Ribao*, September 8, 1996.
49. "*Gei Fandui Dang Yi ge Jihui*" [Give the opposition a chance], *Shihua Ribao*, September 2, 1996.
50. "*Kuang Ren Kuang Yuhua Zhouxuan*" [Crazy Man Says Crazy Things about the

State Election], *Shihua Ribao*, September 2, 1996.

51. "Kuang Ren Kuang Yuhua Zhouxuan" [Crazy Man Says Crazy Things about the State Election], *Shihua Ribao*, September 3, 1996.
52. "Kuang Ren Kuang Yuhua Zhouxuan" [Crazy Man Says Crazy Things about the State Election], *Shihua Ribao*, September 6, 1996.
53. A quick look at the titles of the 16 DAP-related stories published by the *Sarawak Tribune* during the campaign period should be enough to suggest where that paper's loyalties lie:
 - "Unopposed Victories Show Rejection of Opposition" (August 28, 1996)
 - "Don't Fall into DAP Trap: Soon Kai" (August 30, 1996)
 - "Don't be Hoodwinked into Voting for the Opposition" (August 30, 1996)
 - "Taib Blasts Kit Siang" (September 1, 1996)
 - "Cut the Personal Insults, DAP Candidate Told" (September 1, 1996)
 - "Sing Nang Rarely Sat through Whole Session in Parliament" (September 1, 1996)
 - "DAP's Accusation on SMC Unfounded, Says Soon Kai" (September 1, 1996)
 - "Reject DAP Candidates, Voters Told" (September 2, 1996)
 - "Voters Advised to be Wary of Opposition's Tactics" (September 2, 1996)
 - "Datuk Wong Soon Kai 'Treats' DAP with Some Information" (September 4, 1996)
 - "Wild and Baseless Allegations Order of the Day in DAP Camp" (September 5, 1996)
 - "DAP, Pray Tell Us... Why You are Working to Deny the People of their Rights to a Better Life?" (September 5, 1996)
 - "DCM Sad that DAP has Stooped to All Time Low" (September 5, 1996)
 - "DAP Won't Win Election: Koh" (September 6, 1996)
 - "State BN Youth: Reject DAP at the Polls" (September 7, 1996)
 - "DAP Practices Same Brand of Politics" (September 8, 1996)

Or one could look at the "Central Region Political Supplement" of the *Sarawak Tribune*, published on the eve of the elections (September 7, 1996). The supplement, subtitled "Say Yes to a Futuristic Sibu by Voting for the Barisan Nasional Candidates", features long, fawning portraits of the SUPP's three Sibu candidates (those who did not win uncontested): "The Leader who will Guide us into the 21st Century: Tan Sri Datuk Amar Dr. Wong Soon Kai", "Datuk Wong Soon Koh Gave up a Lucrative Income to Become a Servant of the People", and "Vincent Goh Working Hard for the People". The profiles were so glowing, in fact, that the Sibu SUPP distributed them free to the audience at their final *ceramah*.

54. Sim Kheng Hui, Interview, Kuching: September 23, 1996.
55. Lily Yong, Interview, Kuching: September 20, 1996.
56. "'Jinqian Zhengzhi La Wo Xiaman'" [Money Politics Shoved me off the Horse], *Nanyang Shangbao*, September 12, 1996.
57. Sim Kheng Hui, Interview, Kuching: September 23, 1996.

58. Interviews, Sibui: September 10, 1996. The men requested that I not use their names.
59. Jason Wong, Speech, DAP Fundraising Dinner, Sibui: September 3, 1996. Wong's claims were further explained in an interview three days later.
60. "*Jinqian Zhengzhi de Tiezheng*" [Irrefutable Evidence of Money Politics], DAP Sibui Branch, Sibui: September 1996.
61. Jason Wong, Speech, DAP *Ceramah*, September 6, 1996. "*Minxingdang yu Jinqian Zhengzhi Shi-bu-liang-li': Wong Sing Nang Zhonggao Xuanmin wu wei Qian Maidiao Xuanpiao*". ["The DAP and Money Politics are Fundamentally Opposed": Jason Wong Exhorts the Voters not to Sell their Votes for the Sake of Money"], *Shihua Ribao*, September 7, 1996. "*Wong Sing Nang Huqing Xuanmin: Bie ba Qiantu 'Mai' Diao*" [Jason Wong Urges Voters: Don't "Sell" your Future], *Malaxiya Ribao*, September 7, 1996. "*Wong Ho Leng Lushi Qing Xuanmin Kangju Jinqian Zhengzhi de Chuxian*" [The Lawyer Wong Ho Leng Asks the Voters to Reject Money Politics], *Shihua Ribao*, September 4, 1996.
62. Goh's statements appear in "Chung Siong Denies Buying Votes", *Borneo Post*, September 5, 1996, and "Envelope Containing 5 IC's and 5 RM50-Notes Used as Election Issue", *Sarawak Tribune*, September 5, 1996. There are, however, some interesting inconsistencies in the reported statements. In the *Borneo Post* article, Goh claims that there had been no money in the envelope when it had been lost and speculates that the bills had been placed there "maliciously" in an effort to frame him. In the *Sarawak Tribune* article, on the other hand, Goh states that the money had been in the envelope, but had been innocently put there by the sister who dropped her purse.
63. "*Qieyu Wong Sing Nan Zenme Shuo*" [Calling on Wong Sing Nang, what do you have to say?], SUPP Sibui Branch, Sibui: September 1996.
64. "*Jiaren Duanran Fouren Zao Renliandang Shou Maipiao Zhize*" [Family Resolutely Denies the Accusation that the SUPP Bought their Vote], *Shihua Ribao*, September 5, 1996.
65. "*Renlian Fandui Jinqian Zhengzhi -- Wong Soon Kai: Goh Chung Siang bu hui 'Maipiao'*" [The SUPP Opposes Money Politics -- Wong Soon Kai: Vincent Goh will not 'Buy Votes'], *Melli Ribao*, September 4, 1996.
66. "Group Out to Smear Vincent Goh's Image...as he Toil [sic] Day and Night for the People", *Sarawak Tribune*, September 4, 1996. "Vincent Goh Promises Better Future, not Cash", *Sarawak Tribune*, September 1, 1996.
67. "*Ting Pek Khiing Quxiao Laman Jihua*" [Ting Pek Khiing Cancels Rahman Plan],

Shihua Ribao, June 6, 1996.

68. For more on the bridge issue see "*Qiao, Ni zai Nali?*" [Bridge, Where are you?], *Shihua Ribao*, July 23, 1996.
69. See two books by Terence Gomez, *Money Politics in the Barisan Nasional* (Kuala Lumpur: Forum, 1991) and *Political Business: Corporate Involvement of Malaysian Political Parties* (Townsville: Center for South-East Asian Studies, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1994).
70. See Anil Netto, "Money Politics: Panadol for a Migraine?" *Aliran*, 16(7), 1996, pp.4-7. Mahathir's effort seems more or less genuine: several top UMNO officials, including Penang's Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Mohamad Shariff, Shah Alam MP Datuk Salamon Selamat, and a former Political Secretary to the Prime Minister Datuk Dr. Malek Hanafiah, were debarred from running for the party's Supreme Council. "Seven Barred: DCM and Four Exco Men among those Disqualified from UMNO Polls", *The Star*, October 8, 1996. An important, but seldom mentioned secondary motivation for the ban on campaigning, however, seems to have been to prevent the supporters of Mahathir's lieutenant, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, from challenging Mahathir's as UMNO President, or at least the positions of Mahathir's favored party officials. S. Jayasankaran, "Equal Opportunity", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 25, 1996.
71. Sarawak's economy is comparatively much less diversified than that in West Malaysia: in 1990 exports of oil and timber accounted for 70% of Sarawak's total Gross Domestic Product. Wee Chong Hui, *Sabah and Sarawak in the Malaysian Economy* (Kuala Lumpur, S. Abdul Majeed and Co., 1995), p.49. Because the central government in Kuala Lumpur, together with the Malaysian national oil company Petronas and its foreign partners, dominate the Sarawakian oil industry, rent-seeking opportunities for State politicians center on timber, control over which is exceedingly concentrated. *The Asian Wall Street Journal* reports that concessions in the huge upper Baram river area, for example, are controlled by just four timber groups, all owned by ethnic Chinese. Raphael Pura, "In Sarawak, a Clash Over Land and Power: A Few Timber Tycoons Flourish as Natives See their Way of Life Eroded", *Asian Wall Street Journal*, February 7, 1990.
72. Quoted in Stan Sesser, "Borneo: Logging the Rain Forest", in *The Lands of Charm and Cruelty* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p.282.
73. Ibid, pp. 282, 284. Also see Raphael Pura, "In Sarawak, a Clash Over Land and Power: A Few Timber Tycoons Flourish as Natives See their Way of Live Eroded", *Asian Wall Street Journal*, February 7, 1990.
74. Wong Ho Leng, Interview, Sibul: September 6, 1996
75. Sesser, p.282.
76. "Hii Blames Internal Conflicts in Meradong SUPP for his Downfall", *Borneo Post*,

September 12, 1996. I should at this point issue a word of caution. A good portion of the information given below derives from rumors repeated by a number of the people I interviewed, as well as by other acquaintances in more casual conversations. I did my best to confirm the stories, and have only here included information that came from at least two separate sources. Parts of the account remain conjecture, however, and should be treated as such.

77. Wong Soon Kai is also said to have close connections to (appointed) Senator Tiong Hiew King, whose family business Rimbunan Hijau, is Sarawak's largest Timber concern, although there is no indication that this had any direct bearing on the situation in Meradong.
78. "BN Man in for Rough Ride", *Borneo Post*, August 30, 1996.
79. "Don't Drag my Name into Meradong Race: Ting", *Borneo Post*, September 4, 1996.
80. "SUPP Believes Tycoons Behind its Defeats", *Sarawak Tribune*, September 13, 1996.
81. Early studies of Chinese Malaysian politics indicates that even when Chinese political parties have operated at the national level and confronted issues of significance to the entire Chinese community, sub-ethnic groupings seem to have been of considerable importance in organizing local constituent support. Heng Peck Koon's detailed study of the formation and early history of the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), for example, reveals that sub-ethnic networks played a major role in maintaining the party's grass-roots organization. Although the top echelon of the MCA's leadership was composed of English-educated Chinese representing a wide variety of sub-ethnic groups, the party depended on local community leaders with ties to native-place, speech-group, and clan *hui-guan* to distribute patronage and mobilize support. Heng Pek Koon, *Chinese Politics in Malaysia: A History of the Malaysian Chinese Association*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). The organizational importance of such associations does, however, appear to be on the wane.
82. Robert Lau, Interview, Sibu: September 9, 1996.
83. Leigh, *Rising Moon*, pp.8-23.
84. 1947 Population Census. 1980 Population Census. Current figures are estimates provided by the Sarawak Chinese Museum.
85. Sim Kwang Yang, Interview, Kuching: September 17, 1996.
86. See, for example, "Winds of Change in Chinese-Majority Areas", *Borneo Post*, September 10, 1996, "Shifting of SUPP Power-Base from Sibu?" *Sarawak Tribune*,

- September 13, 1996, "Discarding Regionalism in SUPP", *The People's Mirror*, September 20, 1996.
87. "No Plot in SUPP to Oust Dr. Wong", *Sarawak Tribune*, September 12, 1996; "New Deputy CM Laments Absence of Veteran Wong", *The Star*, September 10, 1996; "I Feel Betrayed, Chan Says on Dr. Wong's Defeat", *Borneo Post*, September 9, 1996.
88. "Setback Will Strengthen SUPP: Chan", *Borneo Post*, September 14, 1996.
89. "Tang Wong Soon Kai Jianjue Ji Bu Zuo Dang Zhuxi, Chan Hong Nam Yuanyi Jieban" [In Case Wong Soon Kai Continues to Insist on not Being Party Chairman, Chan Hong Nam is Willing to Take Over], *Zhonghua Ribao*, September 14, 1996. "Ruo Wong Soon Kai Jianjue Liuren, Chan Hong Nam Biaoming Yuan Jieban [If Wong Soon Kai Insists on not Keeping his Position, George Chan Expresses his Willingness to Take Over], *Guoji Ribao*, September 12, 1996.
90. "Disregard Regionalism Mentality: Dr. Chan", *Borneo Post*, September 16, 1996, "SUPP to Stamp Out Regionalism in Party", *Sarawak Tribune*, September 16, 1996.
91. "Law on Possibility of Splinter Group", *Borneo Post*, September 13, 1996. "We'll Seek Consensus on Party Top Post: Law", *Borneo Post*, September 18, 1996. Law also flirted with the idea of running himself. "Shoudu Xiaoxi: Renlian Gaixuan Yu Geng Shang Cenglou: Law Hieng Ding Yao Jing Dang Zhuxi" [The News from the Capital: The SUPP Elections Set to Go up a Notch -- Law Hieng Ding to Compete for Party Presidency]. For his part, Chan seemed disturbed by the possibility that Law might challenge him for the party presidency, noting that for the sake of party unity the SUPP's top party posts were conventionally decided without contest and calling on Law not to "break with this tradition". "Chan Hong Nam: Dapo Renlian Gaixuan Chuantong bu Mingzhi -- Juezhu Gaozhi Yilun Like Tingdun" [Chan Hong Nam: It's not Wise to Break with Tradition -- Talk about Contending for High Office Must Stop Immediately], *Zhonghua Ribao*, September 20, 1996.
92. Interview, Ng Kim Ho, Kuching: September 17, 1996.
93. One current example of the factionalism in the Kuching SUPP surrounds the political future of the the leader of the SUPP's Wanita [women's] Movement, Lily Yong. Yong claims that her name had been put been put forward by the Kuching membership as a candidate for the Padungan seat, but was blocked by the city's party leadership. The reason, Yong alleges, was several current party leaders were fearful that as a woman, she might leapfrog over them into the state cabinet (Taib had recently signalled that he wanted women to play a stronger role in state politics). Lily Yong, Interview, September 20, 1996. Another source familiar with SUPP politics, however, cautioned me to regard Yong's claims with scepticism, noting that many in the Kuching branch "do not trust her", and blame her for the party's losses in the 1986 and 1990 parliamentary elections.
94. For a dissenting opinion, one that holds that partisan preference within the (West)

Malaysian Chinese population does at times correspond to regional and speech-group identification, see Moli Siow, "The Problems of Ethnic Cohesion Among the Chinese in Peninsular Malaysia: Intraethnic Divisions and Interethnic Accommodation", in L.A.P. Gosling and Linda V.C. Lim eds. *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, Vol. 2 Singapore: Maruzen Asia, 1983, pp. 170-188.

95. Ng Kim Ho, Interview, Kuching: August 25, 1996.
96. Wong Ho Leng, Interview, Sibü: September 6, 1996.
97. Sim Kheng Hui, Interview, Kuching: September 23, 1996.
98. Ng Kim Ho, Interview, Kuching: September 18, 1996.
99. Chiew Chiu Sing, Interview, Bintulu: September 12, 1996. Sim Kwang Yang also singled this out as a reason for Wong's victory in Kidurong. Interview, Kuching: September 17, 1996. See also "Zhi Wuru Lim Kit Siang ji Xiaofan Tongye, Wong Sing Ai Cu Chan Hong Nang Daoqian" [Pointing to Insults Against Lim Kit Siang and his (Wong's) Fellow Hawkers, Wong Sing Ai Calls on George Chan to Apologize], *Miri Ribao*, September 4, 1996.
100. "Fanduidang zai Palawan Xuanqu Xuancheng 'Xing Wong Yingdang Yao Zhichi Xing Wong': Wong Soong Kai Yisheng Zhi zhei bu Cheng Liyou" [In the Palawan Constituency, the Opposition Claims 'Wongs should vote for Wongs': Dr. Wong Soon Kai Says this is Unreasonable], *Shihua Ribao*, September 8, 1996.
101. On that basis, Wong Soon Kai attacked Wong Ho Leng for urging people named Wong to vote for like-named candidates, saying, "...according to that logic, I would also attract [huo] support". Wong Soon Kai either did not realize that he was most likely not the target of Wong Ho Leng's remarks or wanted to call attention away from the real mark. "Soon Kai Xiangxin Chung Siong Jiang Huo Xuanmin de Zhichi" [Soon Kai Believes that Chung Siong will Attract the Voters' Support], *Xinhua Wanbao*, September 7, 1996.
102. Jason Wong, Interview, Sibü: September 10, 1996.
103. Sim Kwang Yang, Interview, Kuching: September 17, 1996. The involvement of the Wong Clan Association was first mentioned to me by a Sibü-area journalist, who prefers to remain anonymous.
104. For a different perspective on class and voter preference in Penang, see Chan Kong Yew, "Pilihanraya Umum Pulau Pinang 1995: Pergelutan Antara PGRM dan DAP dalam Arus Hubungan Kaum dan Pembentukan Kelas dalam Kapitalisme yang Berkembang", [The 1995 General Elections in Penang: The Struggle between the PGRM (Gerakan Party) and the DAP and the Connection between Communal Affiliation and Class Formation in Developing Capitalism], unpublished B.Soc. Sc.

Thesis, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1996, pp.60-70.

105. See, for example, "Don't Choose a One-Party State, DAP Urges Voters", *Borneo Post*, September 7, 1996. "Zhi Sazhou Yihui Xu Fandui Shengyin: Xingdongdang Jingxuan Celue Chenggong" [Pointing Out that Sarawak Assembly Needs an Opposition Voice: The DAP's Strategy is Successful], *Nanyang Ribao*, September 10, 1996.
106. The "democratization" literature is, of course, too vast to list in a footnote. Two of the classic texts that assert that the emergence of an independent and assertive middle class is a precondition for democracy are Seymour Lipset, *Political Man* (New York: Doubleday, 1960) and Barrington Moore, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966).
107. Interviews: Jason Wong, Sibü: September 10, 1996, Sim Kwang Yang, Kuching: September 17, 1996.
108. For a theoretical discussion of the complex connections among class, social context, and political change as it applies to the countries of Southeast Asia, see Kevin Hewison, Richard Robison, and Gary Rodan, "Political Power in Industrializing Capitalist Societies: Theoretical Approaches", Hewison, Robison, Rodan, ed., *Southeast Asia in the 1990s* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1993), pp.9-38.
109. To show how it is often impossible to separate class from its social and political environment, consider the case of Taiwan, where we find a similar split in the urban middle classes, but one with a very different -- and much greater -- political significance. There, the source of the split is not educational background, but ethnic categorization based on language and "native-place" (the term is used with some reservation since most of the "mainlander" [*waishengren*] population was born on Taiwan). The largely "native-Taiwanese" [*benshengren*] petit bourgeois tend to support the liberal and pro-independence opposition Democratic Progressive Party (and now the reform wing of the Guomindang led by Lee Teng Hui), while the professionals and civil servants, who until recently were almost exclusively mainlanders, tend to support the conservative faction of the Guomindang and its recent offshoot, the conservative, pro-unification New Party.
110. For an incisive, if dated examination of the social and political implications of educational difference among the Chinese of West Malaysia, see two articles by Wang Gungwu: "Traditional Leadership in a New Nation" (1968) and "Chinese Politics in Malaya" (1970), both of which are reprinted in Wang Gungwu, *Community and Nation* (Singapore: Heinemann, 1981).
111. "Ng Kim Ho: Fanduidang Jiandu Zhizheng - Zu Zhizhengdang Tanwu Lanquan" [Ng Kim Ho: An Opposition Party can Oversee the Government and can Prevent a Corrupting Over-accumulation of Power by the Ruling Party], *Shihua Ribao*, August 28, 1996.
112. Wong Soon Kai, SUPP *Ceramah*, Sibü: September 7, 1996.

113. "Taib: Sarawak has its own Formula for Democracy", *Sarawak Tribune*, September 5, 1996.
114. Wong Soon Koh, Speeches, SUPP *Ceramahs*, Sungai Merah: September 4, 1996 and Sibu: September 7, 1996. Wong Soon Koh, Speech, SUPP Concert, September 5, 1996. Also, "Wong Soon Koh Yu Xuanmin Yao Kanqing Minxingdang Laoqu Xuanpiao Jiliang" [Wong Soon Koh Appeals to the Voters to See Clearly the DAP's Vote-Gaining Tactics], *Shihua Ribao*, September 6, 1996. "Xuanju Shi Xuan Zhengfu: Bu neng Tou Tongxing Piao" [An Election is to Choose a Government: You can't Cast Sympathy Votes], *Shihua Ribao*, September 7, 1996. Wong Soon Koh: Minxindang Xuanchuan hen 'Dongting' -- Xuanmin wu shou Gandong Tou Tongqing Piao" [Wong Soon Koh: The DAP's Propaganda is very "Pleasant Sounding" -- Voters, don't be Moved to Cast a Sympathy Vote], *Malaixiya Ribao*, September 7, 1996.
115. "Huayi ruguo zai Sifen-Wulei Jiang Shiqu Xianyou Zhengzhi Diwei" [If the Chinese are Again Rent Asunder, they will Lose their Present Political Position], *Malaixiya Ribao*, September 8, 1996.
116. Sim Kheng Hui, Speech, SUPP *Ceramah*: Kuching, August 30, 1996.
117. "Zhengci Lingdao Jueding Guojia Xingshuai -- Teng Lung Chi: Zuqun Fenxiang Zhengquan hen Zhongyao" [Policy Leadership Decides a Country's Fate -- David Teng: A Race's Enjoying its Share of Political Power is Very Important], *Malaixiya Ribao*, September 3, 1996.
118. Chan Seng Khai: *Fenxian Zhengquan -- Huashe Zihao* [Chan Seng Khai: Enjoying its Share of Political Power -- Chinese Society is Proud], *Malaixiya Ribao*, September 8, 1996. Chan Seng Khai: *Shen zai Fuzhong Yao Zhifu -- Zhichi Guozhen Renmin Anju-Leye* [Chan Seng Khai: Our Good Fortune Should be Appreciated -- Support the BN so that the People can Live and Work in Peace], *Malaixiya Ribao*, September 8, 1996.
119. Vincent Goh, Speech, SUPP *Ceramah*. Sungai Merah: September 4, 1996.
120. Arendt Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy", *World Politics*, 21(2), 1969. Whether the workings of the Sarawak state government is accurately described by its politicians' rhetoric is, of course, another matter. Again, there is considerable debate about the extent to which Malaysia's national and state governments actually conform to Lijphart's model. For the purposes of the argument here, however, such a question is somewhat peripheral. The important point is the images of ethnic community and politics employed by the competing parties.

121. "Koh Tsu Koon: Sa Guozhen 4 Chengyuan neng geng Youxiao Zhengxing Zheng Piancha" [Koh Tsu Koon: The Sarawak BN's 4 Components can more Efficiently Correct Administrative Shortcomings], *Malaixiya Ribao*, September 5, 1996.
122. "Sim Kheng Hui: Huaren Yao Canzheng -- Yu ge Minqun Fenxiang Zhengquan" [The Chinese Must Participate in Politics in Order to Share Political Power with the Other Races], *Malaixiya Ribao*, September 4, 1996.
123. "Song Swee Guan Cu Padungan Xuanmin Zhichi Renlian Zhengqu Quanyi" [Song Swee Guan Urges Padungan Voters to Support the SUPP Fight for their Rights], *Malaixiya Ribao*, September 3, 1996.
124. Sim Kheng Hui, Speech, SUPP Campaign Workers' Rally, Kuching: September 28, 1996. "Zhengzhi bu keyi Tongqing: Song Swee Guan Yu Zhichi ta wei Min Fuwu" [No Sympathy in Politics: Song Swee Guan Calls on Voters to Support him to Provide Services for the People], *Xinhua Wambao*, September 2, 1996. "Chan Seng Khai: Fenxian Zhengquan -- Huashe Zihao" [Chan Seng Khai: Enjoying its Share of Political Power -- Chinese Society is Proud], *Malaixiya Ribao*, September 8, 1996. Wong Soon Kai, Speeches, SUPP Concert, Sibü: September 5, 1996, *Ceramah*; September 7, 1996. "Guozheng Zhengfu yi Shishi Xingdong Dailai Fazhan: Renmin zai Zhouxuan zhong Ying Zuo Zui Mingzhi Xuanse" [BN Government will take Real Action to Bring Development: The People should Make the Wisest Choice in the State Elections], *Shihua Ribao*, August 29, 1996. For Wong Soon Koh, see footnote 54.
125. Koh Tsu Koon, Speech, SUPP Concert/Rally, Sibü: September 5, 1996. Also, "Koh Tsu Koon Yu Zhichi Renlian Houxuanren: Zengqiang Huaren Daibiao Zheng Quanyi" [Koh Tsu Koon Urges Support for SUPP Candidates: Strengthen Chinese Representation to Fight for your Rights], *Malaixiya Ribao*, September 7, 1996.
126. "Goh Chung Siang Yu Xuanmin xiang Bin-zhou Kanqi Yonggan de Fójue Minxingdang" [Vincent Goh Calls on Voters to Emulate Penang and Bravely Vote Against the DAP], *Shihua Ribao*, September 6, 1996.
127. An excellent example: "Wong Soon Kai Yisheng Xiunuo ruo Sibü-qu Guozhen Houxuanren Quanzhong: Ding xiang Zhou Zhengfu Zhengqu Er-bai-wan Geiyu Sibü Duzhong yu Huaxiao" [Dr. Wong Soon Kai Promises that if all of Sibü's Candidates Win, he will Definitely Strive to have the State Government Give Sibü's Independent Middle and Chinese Primary Schools 2,000,000], *Shihua Ribao*, September 8, 1996. Referring to the obligation to obtain support for Chinese education, Wong states that, "Our [the SUPP's] method is to deal with and fight for things internally; this is more effective than the intense [*qianglie*] methods used by the opposition party".
128. "Zhei Jiu Shi Wong Sing Nang dui Huaxiao de Gongxian!!!" [This is Wong Sing Nang's Contribution to Chinese Primary School Education!!!], SUPP Sibü Branch, Sibü: September 1996.

129. "Zhei Jiu Shi Sarawak 20 Tiaokuan" [This is Sarawak's Twenty Points], SUPP Sibü Branch, Sibü: September 1996.
130. "Kong Sien Han: Zhichi Guozhen Houxuanren -- Quebao Sibü Jixu Fazhan" [Kong Sien Han: Support the BN Candidates -- Ensure Further Development for Sibü], *Malaixiya Ribao*, September 3, 1996.
131. "Koh Tsu Koon: Guozhen Houzuo Yiyuan Jiaose bi Fanduidang Yiyuan Zhongyao" [Koh Tsu Koon: BN Backbenchers are more Important than Opposition Party Assemblymen], *Guangming Ribao*, September 7, 1996.
132. See, for example, "SUPP Denies 'no Development' Allegation, *Sarawak Tribune*, September 1, 1996.
133. *Sarawak Tribune*, Central Region Supplement, September 9, 1996. "Development Projects: For Whom?" *The People's Mirror*, September 21, 1996.
134. "Implementation of New Development Projects in Sibü -- People's Wish to be Assessed First: Dr. Chan", *Borneo Post*, September 12, 1996. Also, "Chan Hong Nam: Jiuqing Yao Sheilai Tuidong Zen Yang de Fazhan? Renlian jiang Yanjiu Sibü-ren de Xintai" [Basically, Who Will Push for what Kind of Development? The SUPP will Study the Wishes of Sibü's People], *Shihua Ribao*, September 11, 1996.
135. Wong Ho Leng, Interview, Sibü: September 6, 1996.
136. Sim Kwang Yang, Interview, Kuching: August 30, 1996.
137. Jason Wong Sing Nang, Interview, Sibü: September 6, 1996.
138. Jason Wong, DAP *Ceramah*, Sibü: September 6, 1996.
139. Chian Pao Koh, Speech, DAP *Ceramah*, Sibü: September 6, 1996.
140. Chiew confirmed this in an interview after the election, saying that he had taken "a political risk" by openly telling the Jelutong MP that he "doesn't correctly understand the political aspirations of the Sarawak people".
141. Chiew Chin Seng, Interview, Bintulu: September 12, 1996.
142. Chiew Chiu Sing's Statement to the *Dewan Rakyat*, April 11, 1996.
143. Wong Huan Yu, Interview, Kuching: August 30, 1996.

144. Wong Ho Leng, DAP *Ceramah*, Sibü: September 6, 1996.
145. Jason Wong, Speech, DAP *Ceramah*, Sibü: September 6, 1996.
146. "Ng Kim Ho: Tusheng--Tuzhang Ji Shi Tuzhe -- Bu Ying You Tuzhe-Feituzhe zhi Fen" [Ng Kim Ho: People Born and Bred (in Sarawak) should be Considered Bumiputras -- There Shouldn't be a Division between Bumiputras and Non-Bumiputras], *Malaixiya Ribao*, August 31, 1996.
147. Jason Wong, Speech, DAP *Ceramah*, Sibü: September 6, 1996.
148. Chian Pao Koh, Speech, DAP Fundraising Dinner, Sibü: September 3, 1996.
149. Wong Ho Leng, Speech, DAP *Ceramah*, Sibü: September 6, 1996. Also see, "Hongxian-Di Peichang de Wenti" [The Question of Compensation for Red-Line Land (ie. land expropriated by the government)], DAP Sibü Branch, Sibü, September 1996.
150. Ng Him Ho, Speech, DAP Fundraising Dinner, Kuching: August 29, 1996.
151. Chian Pao Koh, Speech, DAP Fundraising Dinner, Sibü: September 3, 1996.
152. "Kuang-Ren Kuang-Yuhua Zhou Xuan" [Crazy Man Says Crazy Things about the State Election], *Shihua Ribao*, September 2, 1996.
153. Jason Wong, Speech, DAP *Ceramah*, Sibü: September 6, 1996.
154. "Minzhu Xingdong Dang Zhichi Huaxiao Jiaoyu" [The DAP Supports Chinese Education], DAP Sibü Branch, Sibü: September 1996.
155. See, for example, Kua Kia Song, *Inside the DAP, 1990-1995* (Kuala Lumpur: Kua Kia Song, 1996).
156. Sim Kwang Yang, Interview, Kuching: September 17, 1996.
157. Ng Kim Ho, Interview, Kuching: October 30, 1996.
158. Ng Kim Ho, Interview, Kuching: September 17, 1996.
159. "Lim Guan Sin: Laohupai Zhichi Duli Renshi Fei Cuowu Xingju: Mudi Shi Fensan Duishou Liliang" [The Tiger Team's Supporting Independent Candidates was not Mistaken: the Purpose was to Disperse Opponent's Power], *Xinhua Wanbao*, September 12, 1996. "Laohu Biaozhi Duli Renshi Ruo Zhongxuan, Lim Guan Sin: Kending Touru Minxingdang Huaibao" [If the Tiger-Symbol Independent Candidates are Elected, Lim Guan Sin: They will Definitely be Thrown Into the

DAP's Embrace], *Shihua Ribao*, September 2, 1996. "Lim Guan Sin: Laohu Jiu Shi Huojian -- Pai 2 Lao yi Duli Renshi Chuzhan" [Lim Guan Sin: The Tiger is the Rocket -- Sends 2 Tigers to Battle as Independents], *Malaixiya Ribao*, September 3, 1996.

160. "Lim Kit Siang Foujue Laohu Shi Huojian" [Lim Kit Siang Denies that the Tiger is the Rocket], *Sinhua Wanbao*, September 2, 1996. "Huojian' 'Laohutou' bu Xianggan" [The "Rocket" and the "Tiger Head" Have Nothing to do with Each other], *Malaixiya Ribao*, September 3, 1996. "Zhou-Daxuan Qijian Shoudao Laohu de Ganrao: Daodi Kuching Minxingdang Fasheng le Shenma Shi?" [Facing the "Tiger's" Interference During the State Election: What's Really Going on in the Kuching DAP?], *Shihua Ribao*, September 11, 1996.
161. "Pending Duli Houxuanren Ting Kee Kai Yu Xuanmin Fan Guozhen Zhuanzheng, Fan Tongpeng" [Pending Independent Candidate Ting Kee Kai Appeals to Voters to Oppose Concentration of Power and Inflation], *Shihua Ribao*, August 29, 1996. "Chua Chio Kuia: Zhoulihui Meiyou Fandui Shengying -- Renmin Wenti Kending Pu Shou Zhongshi" [Chua Chio Kuia: If the State Assembly has no Opposition Voice, the People's Problems are Certain to be Overlooked], *Shihua Ribao*, September 2, 1996. "Chua Chio Kuia: Xuanmin Ke yi Piao Jue Zhouyihui Yao-bu-Yao You fandui Shengyin" [Chua Chio Kuia: The Voters Can Use their Ballots to Decide whether the State Assembly Needs an Opposition Voice], *Shihua Ribao*, September 2, 1996. "Ting Kee Kai Zhiyi Renliandang Dong-bu-Dong Canzheng de Yiyi" [Ting Kee Kai Doubts if the SUPP Understands the Meaning of Participatory Politics], *Shihua Ribao*, September 2, 1996.
162. Ting Kee Kai, Speech, Independent (Tiger Head) *Ceramah*, Kuching: September 2, 1996.
163. Lim Guan Sin, Speech, Independent (Tiger Head) *Ceramah*, Kuching: September 2, 1996.
164. Ting Kee Kai, Speech, Independent (Tiger Head) *Ceramah*, Kuching: September 2, 1996.
165. Ting Kee Kai, Speech, Independent (Tiger Head) *Ceramah*, Kuching: September 2, 1996.
166. See James Chin, "The Sarawak Chinese Voters and Their Support for the Democratic Action Party", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, September 1996, pp. 387-491. Writing before the elections, Chin rather presciently concludes that "The current Chinese voting trend will change in the near future", in large part because, "The SUPP accusation that [the] Sarawak DAP is a "Semenanjung" [Peninsular] party will not work in the long run".