

## Opinion on SSKM and Sabah Country Myth

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### Opinion

*Sabah Sarawak Keluar Malaysia* (SSKM) is a separatist organisation who intends to separate the states of Sabah and Sarawak from the Federation of Malaysia. It was established on 9 August 2011 by its founder, namely Doris Jones, a Sabahan residing in the United Kingdom. In 2013, SSKM was officially registered under a new non-governmental organization based in the United Kingdom under the name Sabah Sarawak Union-UK (SSUK). I feel compelled to write about this organization because of its dangerous ideology that deifying the country status of Sabah and Sarawak on the harmony and unity that exists between the people in Peninsular Malaysia, Sarawak and Sabah since the establishment of the Federation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963.

I'm focusing on Sabah as the struggle of SSKM are more powerful based here than in Sarawak. In fact, as a Malaysian history scholar, I was amazed and amused about the origin of the idea that Sabah is a country because it is already evident that Sabah or North Borneo, its former name before the formation of Malaysia has never been an independent state since it was under the reins of the Sultanate of Brunei, Sultanate of Sulu, British North Borneo Chartered Company, the Japanese and the British government until it gained its independence through the formation of Malaysia.

Through my reading of several domestic and abroad journal articles as well as books such as H. Morse Stephen in the article 'The Administrative History of the British Dependencies in the Further East' (1899), Jeremiah W. Jenks in the article 'English Colonial Fiscal System in the Far East' (1900), George McT. Kahin in the article 'The State of North Borneo 1881-1946' (1947), article on North Borneo in *The Economic Weekly* (1952), C. Paul Bradley in the article 'Communal Politics in Malaysian Borneo' (1968), K. G. Tregonning in the article 'The Philippine Claim to Sabah' (1970), Nicholas Tarling in the book 'Sulu and Sabah: A Study of British Policy towards the Philippines and North Borneo from the Late eighteenth Century' (1978), Amity Doolittle in the article 'Historical and Contemporary Views of Legal Pluralism in Sabah, Malaysia (North Borneo)' (1998), Muhammad Agus Yusoff in the article 'The Politics of centre-state conflict: the Sabah experience under the ruling Sabah Alliance (1963-1976)' (1999), Amity Doolittle in the article 'Colliding Discourses: Western Land Laws and Native Customary Rights in North Borneo, 1881-1918' (2003), Flory Ann Mansor Ginging in the article 'I Lost My Head in Borneo': Tourism and the Refashioning of the Headhunting Narrative in Sabah, Malaysia' (2007), Charles W. Parton, MD in the book 'The Fork Once Taken: From The British Crown Colony of North Borneo to the Federated State of Sabah, East Malaysia: 1963-1965: A Creative Memoir' (2008), Mohd Rizal Mohd Yaakop in the article 'Isu Pemisahan Singapura-Malaysia: Rasional Keselamatan Politik' (2009), B.A. Hussainmiya in the article 'Malcolm MacDonald and Brunei: Diplomacy with intimacy' (2014), Danny

Wong Tze Ken in the article 'The Name of Sabah and the Sustaining of a New Identity in a New Nation' (2015), D. S. Ranjit Singh in the article 'The Formation of Malaysia: Advancing the Theses of Decolonization and Competing Expansionist Nationalisms' (2015), all studies has same findings, that North Borneo was a British Crown Colony after the Second World War and not a country, let alone before the Second World War.

I am sure there are many more studies that will highlight the same findings, simply because of lack of time caused me to not be able to list more research. It certainly requires a high level of genius when Doris Jones often shouted to her followers that the North Borneo used to be a country and as a follower, they have a sense of extreme fanaticism to believe. This is because journal articles and books using various primary and secondary sources as a reference, including archive files that are either in the United Kingdom or Malaysia. Do SSKM shows that they are more powerful than K. G. Tregonning that is recognized globally as an expert in the history of Sabah? Unfortunately until now SSKM still failed to prove which reference sources they are using to prove that North Borneo was a country before the formation of Malaysia.

Is North Borneo become independent on 31 August 1963? Actually, that date is the day North Borneo was granted self-governing to give locals an administer experiences before consolidated with the Federation of Malaya. The last British Governor of North Borneo, William Allmond Codrington Goode still holds full power up to 16 September 1963. The case is the same with Sarawak and Singapore. According to Prof. Michael Leigh, who is known for his study of Sarawak politics, "Sarawak was self-governed in 31 August 1963, not independent. Singapore was self-government from 1959 to 1963, and it became independent between 31 August and 16 September; then (independent) again in August 1965."

How North Borneo is a country when the Union Jack flag was lowered only on 15 September 1963 the same as the Union Jack flag was lowered in the Federation of Malaya on 30 August 1957 before gaining independence from the British? If North Borneo is a country, why does the Union Jack flag still flutters in Jesselton for 15 days? If North Borneo is a country, why British authorities determine its integration into the Federation of Malaysia while SSKM claimed poll conducted by the Cobbold Commission was not representative of the majority of the North Borneo people? Where is the sovereignty of North Borneo as a country?

I saw two factors leading supporter of SSKM assumed that North Borneo is a country because of its involvement in the Olympic Games 1956 in Melbourne and the use of the name 'Yang Dipertua Negara Sabah' when the declaration of the formation of Malaysia. R.M. Jasni, Chacho Haji Bulan & Jasni Matlani which are the three leading Sabah writers in the book 'Sejarah Parti Berjaya' said the leader of North Borneo when given the right of self-governing thought that the post of

Yang Dipertua Negara Sabah is the same with the British Governor since they still lack experience in administering. About North Borneo's involvement in the Olympic Games, it is the capacity of it as a British protectorate and has a National Olympic Committee that was subject to the laws of the International Olympic Committee. On the launch of the book 'Sabah Sebuah Negara' by Daniel Jebon Janaun, I see the term 'state' or 'nation' is used to refer to 'a large aggregate of people united by common descent, history, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular country or territory'. The same concept of Malay 'nation' Malays who make up the population in region of the Malay world was discussed by Rahim Aman in the book 'Minda Pelaut dan Kenangan Tanah Leluhur: Kemelayuan Malaysia-Indonesia'.

Although I saw the misunderstanding among the people of Sabah that causing support to SSKM, these things can be corrected if Sabahan leaders who fight for the people are there to publicize the real history of Sabah to the people and not treat them like the enemy because it is just a mind war and requires a lot of facts strength on the opponents of the existence of SSKM. If the respondent fails to do so, the myth of Sabah country will be run in accordance with the time and is inherited by the next generation of the current generation, and the next generation will bequeath to the next generation, just like the myth of Shangri-La, which has been running for so long.