

Sabah Early History

last of two parts



SECURITY

One of the earliest problems of the owners of North Borneo had been to maintain peace amongst the various tribes and security for the company officers. The British North Borneo Chartered Company (BNBCC) officials soon found that owning 30,000 square miles of territory was only one aspect of the story. Keeping it and deriving beneficial income was another.

Thus when W. B. Pryer became the Resident of Sandakan, one of his first tasks was to establish law and order. In order to do this, he had to have a police force. But since the local natives, although cowed by the guns of the British Navy, considered the British as transgressors in their land, hostility towards the authority of the BNBCC was natural.

Hence Pryer had to import his police from India or Singapore. His first contingent of police was, therefore, made up of Indian Sikhs whose stature alone must have been quite frightening to some of the natives.

The Indian police were probably from the Sepoy Company in India and were generally called "Sipai" by the locals. Even today the older folks would frighten their children or grandchildren by saying "be careful don't wander about or the sipai will catch you". In time, however, expedience and economics necessitated the recruitment of local natives into the constabulary. The Murut, Dayak and Kadazan/Dusun communities became good sources for recruits and all proved excellent policemen. Even today, the Murut and Kadazan/Dusun policemen form the bulk of the Sabah Constabulary.

THE POST WAR LIBERATION

The Liberation of North Borneo, Brunei & Sarawak began during the early months of 1944 during the second World War when the Ninth Division Australian Imperial Forces (A.I.F.) mounted a determined attack on Japanese positions in this areas. The campaign continued for more than a year - and might have continued indefinitely, even though the AIF were gaining footholds everywhere - had not his Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Japan announced his nation's unconditional surrender after the first atomic bombs fell on Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

Memorials of the Japanese surrender and War Memorials are on Labuan Island, where one finds the WWII Memorial and the Surrender Point. On the 10th of September, 1945, Lieutenant General Masao Baba, Commander of the Japanese Army (in North Borneo, Brunei & Sarawak and Natoena Islands) was escorted by Australian Soldiers to the Surrender Point in Labuan, and signed the Instrument of Surrender. The actual surrender date was September 9, 1945.

Immediately after the liberation of North Borneo by the 9th Division of the Australian Imperial Forces, the British Military Administration took charge of administering the state.

The British North Borneo Chartered Company, faced with the gigantic task of reconstruction decided to relinquish its ownership of North Borneo to the British Colonial office for a certain financial consideration. Thus, in June 1946, the BNBCC transferred its sovereign rights and assets in North Borneo to the British Crown and North Borneo thereby changed its status from that of a British Protectorate to a Crown Colony. The proclamation in the Council of the North Borneo Session Order was made 10 July 1945. (Sarawak too became a Crown Colony at the same time when the last of the Raja Brookes decided not to return to Sarawak).



The job of reconstruction in North Borneo was, therefore, undertaken by the British Colonial office. Because of the extent of the Japanese occupation and subsequent devastation in the war the reconstruction was at first painfully. War reparations were made and the state became steady and by the early 1950's much had been done to reestablish law and order, and commerce.

The first Colonial Governor of North Borneo was Sir Edward Twining who relinquished office as Governor and Commander in Chief on the 5th May, 1949. He was succeeded by Sir Ralph Hone who set in motion the machinery for the reconstruction of the Colony. Temporary offices made of timber, attap roofs and nipa palm walls were built in various places and Jesselton was made the new Capital of North Borneo.

War reparation offices were set up along the Tanjong Aru beach. Some of "the pre-war buildings" which were not damaged by the bombings were re-built and re-used. These included the General Post Office (which is now Sabah Tourism's Office), the Lands & Survey Department and the Treasury. In the early 1950's the new Secretariat was constructed at the junction of the Penampang and Tanjong Aru Road. This place was known as "Puku Mangga" as there was a large mango tree growing by the side of the hill. Unfortunately, the tree was cut down to accommodate the new Secretariat. The police headquarters at "Batu Tiga", opposite the State Mosque were moved to Kepyayan, while the Jesselton Police Station was moved to its present site. The old building became later the District Office, located next to the Resident's office - the site of the present State Library.

Sir Ralph Hone was succeeded by Sir Roland Tumbull as Governor and the latter continued the work of reconstruction and reviving the economy. Rubber plantations along the railway lines, along Tuaran Road and elsewhere enjoyed an unprecedented boom in the early 1950's and helped much in boosting the economy. War reparations from the proceeds of Japanese properties in North Borneo were used by the Colonial Government to rebuild the townships that were devastated. Sir Roland Tumbull was succeeded by Sir William Goode as Governor. The latter saw the fast rise of nationalism and ended his Governorship by granting self-government to Sabah on 31 August 1963.

THE MALAYSIAN PROPOSAL

In 1961, the then Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya, YTM Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-haf, mooted the question of a confederation of the three Borneo states (Brunei, Sabah and Sarawak), together with Singapore and the Federation of Malaya to form Malaysia. The proposal initially received only lukewarm reception from the leaders of the three Borneo territories but after considerable talks, they became enthusiastic because the proposal meant faster independence for them.

However, much work had yet to be done before Malaysia became reality. First there was the Cobbold Commission set up by the British Government to determine the wishes of the people of the territories. Next came the United Nations Team set up by the Secretary-General U. Thant at the request of Indonesia and the Philippines. Both the Cobbold Commission and the United Nations Assessment Team found the people of Sabah overwhelmingly in favour of Malaysia.

The birth of Malaysia was actually delayed for 16 days since the U. Thant Assessment Team had to submit its report to the United Nations General Assembly.

The Proclamation of the Malaysia Act was, therefore, made on 16 September 1963. However, on 31 August 1963, Sabah was granted self-government status which was only 16 days away from full independence within Malaysia.

Source: Sabah State Government



WHERE TO STAY

Winner Hotel
Phone: 60 088 243222
Fax: 60 088 217345

Hotel Deleeton
Phone: 60 088 252222
Fax: 60 088 267999

Kinabalu Daya Hotel
Phone: 60 088 240000
Fax: 60 088 263909

Berjaya Palace Hotel
Phone: 60 088 211911
Fax: 60 088 211600

Hotel Shangri-La
Phone: 60 088 212800
Fax: 60 088 212078

Likas Square Business Suites
Phone: 60 088 252233
Fax: 60 088 251122

Tang Dynasty Hotel
Phone: 60 088 263389 /
251155
Fax: 60 088 263989 / 265566

Beverly Hotel
Phone: 60 088 258998
Fax: 60 088 258778

Promenade Hotel
Phone: 60 088 265555
Fax: 60 088 246666 / 253980

Hyatt Regency Kinabalu
Phone: 60 088 221234
Fax: 60 088 225972

Le Meridien Kota Kinabalu
Phone: 60 088 322222
Fax: 60 088 322223

Nexus Resort Karambunai
Phone: 6 088 411222 / 411030
Fax: 6 088 411020 / 412028

Shangri-La Tanjung Aru
Resort
Phone: 60 088 225800 / 41800
/ 293306 (Reserv)
Fax: 60 088 244871 / 217155

Sutera Harbour Resort -
Magellan Sutera
Phone: 6 088 318 888
Fax: 6 088 317 777

Sutera Harbour Resort
- Pacific Sutera
Phone: 6 088 318888
Fax: 6 088 317777

Radius International Waterfront
Kota Kinabalu
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Imperial International Hotel
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