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A Hybrid Community in East Malaysia: The Sino-Kadazans of Sabah and their Search for Identity

In 1962, an organization called the United National Kadazan Organisation (UNKO) submitted a memorandum to the Cobbold Commission¹ outlining the Kadazan community of North Borneo's (present-day Sabah) position vis-à-vis the idea for the formation of the new Federation of Malaysia. According to the memorandum, "Those who say that the country should first get self-government before thinking about Malaysia are people who belong to the immigrant races; people who have only been in the country for a few years or in the case of a few those who are at the most second generation North Borneans." The memorandum went on to state that:

"If North Borneo gets self-government and independence within the foreseeable future by itself, the heirs when the British leave will be the Chinese. Today they already hold most of the jobs in Government Service and Commerce. Because they always lived in the towns and because of their economic superiority, they had been able to send more of their children to better schools and most if not all the university or college trained men in the country today are Chinese. This will reach the stage where the natives will realize that all hope of their ever reaching parity with the Chinese are gone and there would be only one

1. The Cobbold Commission, or the Malaysian Commission of Enquiry, was appointed by the British and Malayan governments to ascertain the views of the people of North Borneo (Sabah) and Sarawak on the proposed inclusion of these two territories in the newly proposed Federation of Malaysia. The Commission was named after its chairman, Lord Cobbold, and consisted of two other British members and two Malayan members. The commission had 50 meetings in Sabah and Sarawak where the members met 4,000 individuals and 690 groups. See *The Encyclopedia of Malaysia, Volume 11: Government and Politics, 1940-2006*, Kuala Lumpur: Archipelago Press, 2006, pp. 42-43.

resort to undo what they would consider a completely unfair balance – violence. [...] We are also convinced that it is Malaysia which is the best possible security the Chinese themselves can have, if they are genuinely patriotic to the countries of their adoption in this part of the world. [...] The UNKO has been accused of starting a racial organization. But the Kadazans are among the more backward people of the country and without a national organization capable of speaking for them they would have been swallowed up by Chinese-dominated parties and organizations where their rights and their future would be completely forgotten, where they would merely be the tools with which to fashion a so called independent country where the Chinese will be the master and the indigenous their slaves forever”.²

Like all memorandums submitted to the Cobbold Commission, UNKO’s five-page memorandum laid out the views of the organization on the formation of Malaysia while, at the same time, expressing its concerns about the future. The extract from UNKO’s memorandum above clearly echoes the Kadazans’ deep resentment towards the Chinese. There was a strong feeling of apprehension that the Kadazans (and other indigenous people) would be dominated by the Chinese should their memorandum be ignored by the Commission. Who were the Kadazans and what was UNKO?

UNKO was formed in 1961 as an immediate response to the suggestion put forward by Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Prime Minister of Malaya, in May of that year, calling for the formation of a new Federation of Malaysia that would include Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo (Sabah). In many ways, the new organization was an expanded version of the Society of Kadazan that had been formed in 1952. The Society of Kadazan was founded by a group of Dusun people from Penampang and Papar who had decided that there was a need to reinvent their community and to enhance the community’s position in the social, economic and political spheres. The leading issue at that time was the adoption of the name ‘Kadazan’ to replace the generic term ‘Dusun’ which the society claimed to be a derogatory term meaning ‘people of the orchard’ (akin to a country bum). At the time of UNKO’s formation, the Dusuns were the largest ethnic group in Sabah.

There have been several attempts in trying to explain the term ‘Kadazan’. For the proponents of the term, it signifies modernism – as some have explained the term as originated from the word ‘Kekadai’ (to the shops) as opposed to the meaning of ‘Dusun’ or ‘Orchard’. Among the chief proponent of such explanation was Donald Stephens as he tried to popularise the adoption of the term in place of ‘Dusun’. A check with the baptismal record of the Holy Rosary Church in Limbahau, Papar, shows that the earliest entries in the baptismal for 1889 actually used the term ‘Kadazan’ to denote the nationality or race of the candidate. This goes to show that the term is a

2. Memorandum submitted by the United National Kadazan Organisation (UNKO) to the Cobbold Commission, 22 February 1962, CO947/17.

very old term used by the Dusuns in Papar. However, by 1905, the same baptismal used the new term of 'Dusun' to replace 'Kadazan'.³ Owen Rutter writes in 1929 that the Dusuns in Papar and Kimanis were also known as 'Kadazans'.⁴

Interestingly, despite calling themselves Kadazan (and Dusun in earlier times), many of the society's leaders were men of Sino-Dusun origin, many of whom still carried the surnames of their Chinese ancestors. When UNKO was formed in 1961, the Society of Kadazan and its leaders became the backbone of the new party. Hence, when UNKO submitted their memorandum to the Cobbold Commission, with its harsh tone towards the Chinese, it also to a great extent represented the voices of a group of indigenous people with Chinese blood who seem to have embraced their new indigenous identity and rejected their Chineseness and claim to Chinese identity.

This paper is an investigation of the evolution of the identity of one of the leading lights of the Society of Kadazan whose ancestor was a Chinese by the name of Wong, but who by the third generation, used the new family name of Manjaji (after Lothar Manjaji), abandoned the Chinese surname of 'Wong', and fully subscribed to the ideas put forward by the memorandum, including those strong phrases against the Chinese. I will trace the development of this Sino-Kadazan community in Sabah with the aim of answering questions relating to the choice of their cultural practices. This paper will attempt to answer how the emergence of this new group of people being perceived by the Chinese and to gauge the level of acceptance by the Chinese through an incident that took place in Penampang in 1937 where the differences between the Sino-Dusuns and the Chinese was brought out into the open. I will also look at the early career of Joseph Manjaji, the son of Lothar Manjaji, who became a youth leader in the Society of Kadazan in 1953, and who later served in UNKO (and UPKO) as a Member of Parliament, and to contrast his later acknowledgement of his Chinese origins during the twilights of his life, something which was strongly denied during the 1950s and 1960s, especially at the height of Kadazanism. Among the questions that this paper hopes to answer are: How did the Manjaji's identity change over the years? What prompted the Manjaji to adopt their indigenous identity over their Chinese identity? How was this new identity nurtured over the years. The last part of the paper will take a look at what is considered as a likely re-sinicization of these people in the more recent years.

3. Baptismal of the Church of Holy Rosary, Limbahau, Papar.

4. Owen Rutter, *The Pagans of North Borneo*, London: Hutchinson & Sons, 1929, p. 39.

Literature

In the 1951 census, the Colonial Government of North Borneo introduced a new category of people – Sino-Native. In the census, a total of 6,468 persons were classified under that category. The same category was maintained in future censuses, except for 1981. These figures, though marginal compared to the more established categories such as Kadazan, Dusun, Bajau, Murut and Chinese, are crucial in trying to understand the interrelations between hybridity and ethnic identity in Sabah. Of late, the question of hybrid community has come in play with the question of native rights, especially in matters pertaining to inheritance of landholdings that are classified under Native Title. These land titles, issued by the Lands Office since the introduction of the Land Ordinance of 1903, were aimed at alienating lands and preserve them solely for the usage of natives. Foreigners, including non-native (or indigenous) local population such as Chinese, were prohibited from purchasing such land. However, the law also provided that offspring of a mixed marriage between a native and a non-native, including a Chinese, would be automatically accepted as native – hence the categorization of Sino-Native. As Native Land titles could only be transacted between natives, they were not valued at open market price and therefore were considered much cheaper – hence the attraction of wanting to be categorized as a native in order to qualify for such perks. However, by the 1980s, many who were categorized under this group faced problems in having their Native Title properties being transferred to their subsequent generation. Especially affected were some offspring of a Chinese ancestor and a native female (in many cases, retaining Chinese surnames), whose native status being questioned and challenged, were not considered as natives by the state administration, and therefore not eligible to inherit properties reserved under Native Title. Under such conditions, it is obvious that the Sino-Native identity was being challenged, if not threatened, thus becoming a contested issue.

A study of the hybrid community has never been undertaken as a unitary study. More often than not, the community was mentioned in larger discussions on a larger community such as part of a native community or the Chinese community. The same could be said of the Sino-Kadazans or Sino-Dusuns in Penampang. The earliest mention of the Sino-Natives was Spenser St. John's 1862 account of the Chinese in Labuan who had left the island for the opposite coast of Bundu and the Klias Peninsula and married into native families.⁵ St. John was, at that time, British Consul to Brunei. According to

5. Spenser St. John, *Life in the Forests of the Far East, Vol. II*, London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1862 [reprinted by Oxford University Press, 1974], p. 315.

St. John, he met many natives who professed to be the sons or grandsons of Chinese, and who could still speak a smattering of Chinese, predominantly the Hokkien dialect. In his *Pagans of North Borneo*, Owen Rutter also mentioned the Bundu Dusuns whom he described as “A group inhabiting the rich sago-growing districts north of the Klias River. These people show more definite traces of Chinese influence than any other Dusuns in North Borneo.”⁶ Monica Glyn-Jones, a Cambridge-trained anthropologist who was commissioned by the Colonial Social Science Research Council to conduct a study on the Dusuns between 1949 and 1951, carried out a study on the Dusun community of Penampang, specifically on the village of Inobong.⁷ In her report, Glyn-Jones also devoted a chapter to the Sino-Natives and referred to the Dusuns’ relationship with the Chinese where she talks about the question of mutual acceptance. Father A.G. Lampe of the Roman Catholic Church wrote a small piece on the subject of Kadazan in the *Borneo Society Journal*.⁸ The article also mentions the existence of the Sino-Kadazans.

The Sino-Kadazans of Penampang

The Dusuns of Penampang are currently known as Kadazans or Kadazandusuns. They belong to the larger Dusun community who lived in the region that stretches from Putatan to Penampang, roughly corresponding to the areas reached by the Moyog River as it flows into the Putatan River before pouring into the sea. In terms of present-day place names, this region would cover the areas of Nosob to Lunghab and Limbahak, and extend to Kepayan-Ganang and Putatan areas. However, it must be mentioned that prior to its coming into its own, Penampang was considered part of the Putatan sub-district. Owen Rutter describes the Dusuns of Penampang as the “near neighbours of the Papar group, though not so nearly akin to them as the Membakut Dusuns are. In this group may be included the Dusuns of Inanam and Menggatal on the north side of Jesselton. Just as the Keningau folks are the most prosperous and advanced of the Muruts, so is this group the most prosperous and advanced of the Dusuns, and owns most of the finest wet rice land in the country.”⁹ They were the main cultivators of paddy on lands traditionally owned by them. This made them some of the wealthiest Dusuns in Sabah.

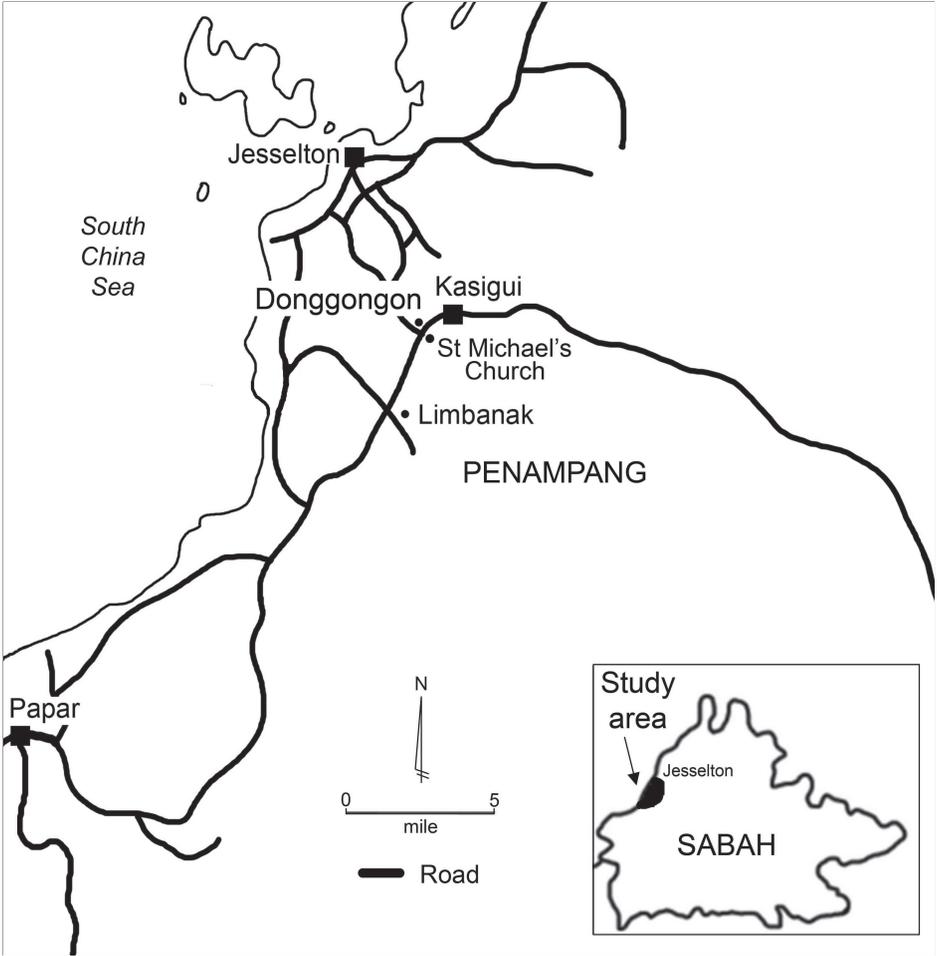
The Putatan River and its adjoining areas came under the administration of the North Borneo (Chartered) Company on 1 May 1884. The Company,

6. Owen Rutter, 1929, p. 39.

7. Monica Glyn-Jones, *The Dusun of the Penampang Plains in North Borneo*, London: Colonial Social Science Research Council, 1953.

8. A.G. Lampe, “The Kadazan”, *Borneo Society Journal*, Vol. 3, 1962, pp. 5–8.

9. Owen Rutter, 1929, p. 39.



Sketch Map of Penampang District

essentially a commercial company, was formed in 1877 after obtaining much of the territorial concessions of the lands that make up present day Sabah from the Sultanates of Brunei and Sulu. In 1881, it was granted a royal charter by the British Crown to administer the territory. In 1888, North Borneo became a British Protectorate. Subsequently, the Company began to acquire the remaining strips of territories which included the Putatan River. After its acquisition, the Putatan River was initially designated as a sub-district under Province Keppel. The first European officer was S.E. Dalrymple, who was appointed Assistant Resident in charge of Province Keppel. In a report concerning the sub-district dated 31 December 1884, Dalrymple noted that prior to the Chartered Company rule, the sub-district was without a *tamu* (periodic market). By the end of 1884, a *tamu* was established at the Dusun village of Pagansakan, situated a few miles up the Putatan River (in present-day Penampang). The *tamu* was held every tenth day. Goods traded were tobacco, dried fish (*ikan bilis*), iron bars and salt. Tobacco was brought in from Inanam (another Dusun-dominated area) as well as from the foot of Mount Kinabalu.¹⁰

From a list of 47 villages compiled by Dalrymple as under the jurisdiction of Putatan sub-district, it covered the region along the River Putatan all the way up to the village of Babagon on the upper Putatan River (a branch of the Moyog River). The northern part covered the village of Molintod (near Bukit Padang). The southern reach of the sub-district was up to the point of Lok Kawi. Forty of these 47 villages were Dusun, while the other seven were populated mainly by Bajaus.¹¹ Occasionally, the Company's authority also extended into the hilly areas as far as villages such as Mantis, situated between the upper region of the Moyog and Papar rivers. However, the people in these hilly regions were considered as Tagas of the upper Papar and Putatan rivers, different from the Dusuns of Putatan (and Penampang). Tagas is a term commonly used by the Dusuns in Putatan and Penampang when referring to Dusuns from the highlands.

Dalrymple speaks highly of the Dusuns of Putatan (and Penampang):

“The Dusuns form the mass of the population of Putatan. They cultivate the plain country and are a fine well developed race of a genial disposition and characterized by habits of thrift and industry, having a strongly marked idiosyncrasy and being most conservative in their ideas and tenacious of their national customs. Their physical appearance and the exact similarity, in dress, burial customs, & etc. point to their having a strong infusion of the Chinese element.”¹²

10. S.E. Dalrymple, *Report On the Putatan Sub District for the Eight Months ended 31 December 1884*, Sandakan: Government Printing Office, 1885, p. 1. Stair Elphinstone Dalrymple died of typhoid fever at Labuan on 18 June 1886.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

The existence of this Chinese element would have had a lasting impact on the Dusuns of Penampang. It is clear that since the late 19th century, the Dusuns of Putatan, along with the Dusuns of Penampang and Papar, were the most exposed Dusun tribes in Sabah. They were among the first to come into contact with outsiders. Prior to the coming of Europeans to the region, the Dusuns of Putatan were already exposed to outside interference in the form of Brunei rule.¹³ In the long term, this began to affect the lifestyle of these Dusuns, as is apparent from the many changes that confronted the coastal Dusuns in their efforts to maintain their customs and traditions.

One important agent of change was the significant inroads in the sub-district made by the Roman Catholic Church, which had started a station at Inobong as early as 1887. Two years later, St. Michael's Church was founded at what is considered now as Penampang 'proper'. The Roman Catholic Church not only provided spiritual life to the Dusuns but also played an important role in providing the tool for modernization – Western education.¹⁴ This helped transform the community into the most modern Dusun community in the state. By the late 1920s, many Dusuns of Putatan and Penampang were being employed in non-agricultural activities, including as government servants and teachers. It was mainly through the active role played by the Roman Catholic Church in the area and the receptiveness of the people to education that the Dusuns of Penampang became one of the most highly educated Dusun communities.

Another agent of change was the influx of a large number of Chinese into the Putatan-Penampang area from the 1880s. According to S.E. Dalrymple:

The Chinese elements amounts to between fifty and sixty men, chiefly engaged in distilling of rice arrack and not holding land. They have largely inter-married with the Dusuns and can in many cases hardly be distinguished from the latter, the 'tausang' (pigtail) being the sole index of their belonging to the former.¹⁵

In another report published in 1885, Dalrymple also mentioned the existence of around 80 families of Sino-Native marriages along Putatan River (which leads up to Penampang proper). The influx of Chinese into the Putatan-Penampang area came mainly through the business links maintained by the Chinese in Labuan and the natives of the west coast. Many of the Chinese were also ex-miners from the coal mines of Labuan.

The Chinese who had married into the Dusun community in Putatan-Penampang area began to make their presence felt. First, there were

13. See Ranjit Singh, *The Making of Modern Sabah*, Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 2003.

14. John Rooney, *Khabar Gembira: A History of the Catholic Church in East Malaysia and Brunei, 1880–1976*, London-Kota Kinabalu: Burns & Oates Ltd & Mill Hill Missionaries, 1981.

15. Dalrymple, p. 6.

offspring of the unions between these Chinese and the Dusun women. Many of these children actually followed the culture of their mothers. This was understandable as there were very few Chinese-based institutions – including Chinese schools and temples – in the area. Writing in 1953 about the ties between the Dusuns and the Chinese in Penampang, Monica Glyn-Jones mentioned that many mixed marriages continued to take place even in the 1950s. However, she observed that while many of the offspring of these marriages followed their mother's culture, some were more Chinese-inclined. The latter were mostly children of Chinese of slightly better standing with Dusun women.¹⁶ Glyn-Jones also found that the grandchildren of Sino-Dusun marriages would usually called themselves Dusun, though if asked they would say they had a Chinese grandfather, but in subsequent generations the Chinese ancestor is often forgotten and many today who think of themselves as pure Dusuns probably have several Chinese ancestors.¹⁷

Another district in North Borneo (Sabah) also reported the emergence of a similar Sino-Native community. During his visits to the southwest coast of North Borneo in the 1850s, Spenser St. John met with natives who were descendants from Chinese. Most of those encountered by St. John were probably offspring of Chinese petty traders who came over from Labuan (the island was taken over as a Crown Colony in 1846) and their native wives. Today they form a community of Sino-Dusuns called the Tatanas. Father Lampe mentioned the Sino-Kadazans in Klias and Kuala Penyu (the same area where St. John met his Sino-Natives) in passing: "The Tatana, moreover, have Chinese blood in them and many of their customs are of Chinese origin."¹⁸

Generally, these Chinese were accepted as part of the Dusun community despite their Chineseness. However, the same could not be said of the reverse. According to Herman Luping, who grew up in Penampang proper in the late 1940s and early 1950s, it was very difficult for many offspring of Sino-Dusun marriages to be accepted into the Chinese community.¹⁹ The

16. Monica Glyn-Jones, 1953, p. 105.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Lampe, "The Kadazan", p. 5.

19. Interview with Herman Luping, 7 March 2008. Herman Luping was born in a Roman Catholic family (his mother was Sino-Dusun). He was educated at St. Michael's school before completing his tertiary education in New Zealand. He was a young member of the Society of Kadazan and became active in the United National Kadazan Organisation (UNKO). He later became a member of the Supreme Council of the United Pasok Kadazan Organization (the renamed UNKO). After the party was dissolved in 1967 following its defeat in the State Elections that year, Herman Luping joined the rival United Sabah National Organisation (USNO) and went on to become a cabinet minister before assuming the position

sense of cultural superiority of the Chinese-educated Chinese inevitably resulted in the latter looking down on these children of mixed parentage, in spite of the fact that many had proper Chinese names. Some of the leading lights of the Society of Kadazan, for instance, were men with full Chinese names such as Fong Peng Loi, Richard Yapp, V.J. Lim, and Fred Jenu Tan. Yet, because they were not educated in Chinese schools they ended up adopting Dusun (or Kadazan) culture, and spoke Dusun fluently.

The other impact of the Chinese presence in the Penampang area was all the negative attributes allegedly associated with the Chinese. Two such activities stand out: gambling and the distilling of *arrack* (rice wine). This was one of the main reasons that eventually prompted the Government to issue an eviction notice in 1937. The making of *arrack* or *tapai* (*montakuk*) was considered a normal activity for many of the natives of North Borneo, including the Dusuns. However, while the native method of making *tapai* involved the fermentation of rice, the Chinese method involved actual distilling, resulting in a drink with more 'lethal' taste. As for gambling, the Chinese were accused of having introduced the vices to the Dusuns.

It is in this light that we come to consider the case of the Manjaji family, Sino-Natives who were a product of this Chinese infusion in the local Dusun community, which resulted in the emergence of a hybrid family. The descendants of the Manjaji became staunch proponents of Kadazanism and, in the process, rejected their Chineseness.

The Provenance of L.W. Manjaji

The Manjaji family of Penampang descended from Lothar Wong Manjaji (1898–1945) who, in turn, was descended from Wong Pungun, who was the son of Wong Loong. In the souvenir magazine entitled *The Descendants of Wong Loong* published by a committee consisting of families who claimed to have descended from a Chinese named Wong Loong and his two Dusun wives, the Chinese origin of the family was clearly acknowledged, if not amplified. The main families who have claimed Wong Loong as their ancestor numbered no fewer than eight, with the Manjaji as one of the primary branch. The others include Ligungjang, Toisim, and Leiking (directly linked to Wong Loong and Manjaji) as well as Funk, which are families related to the descendants of Wong Loong (and Manjaji) through marriage. The committee was first started by the late Joe (Joseph) Manjaji, the great-grandson of Wong Loong, who felt that it was important for the family to

of Deputy Chief Minister. After USNO was defeated in the 1976 elections, he returned to practice law and went on to serve as the State Attorney General before retiring from active service and politics. Since then, he was referred to as the main proponent on Kadazanism.

acknowledge their Chinese heritage.²⁰ Yet it was the same Joe Manjaji who, during the 1950s and 1960s, championed hard for the promotion of the Kadazan identity. First, as Secretary to the Society of Kadazan and, later, as an active central committee member of the United National Kadazan Organisation. As Secretary in the 1950s of the Society of Kadazan, one of the chief custodians of Kadazanism, Joe Manjaji completely shunned – if not obliterated – the family’s Chinese origins, at least in the public sphere. Yet the emergence of this new identity (Kadazan) and its embrace by the family was a recent event that can be traced to the person of Lothar Wong Manjaji, the father of Joe Manjaji.

Lothar Wong Manjaji was born in 1898 in Limbanak, Penampang, the second son and third child of Antonius Pungun Wong and Siaham, who had six children. The family traced its Sabah ancestry to Wong Ah Lung (also known as Wong Loong), supposedly a Hakka Chinese who came from the province of Guangdong in southern China.²¹ The family’s account says that Wong Ah Lung (Wong Loong) was born in 1835 and died on Gaya Island in 1895. According to the family, Wong Loong first came to Labuan and worked as a blacksmith at the coal mines. Later, he was believed to have crossed over to the mainland and made his way up the Papar River and ventured inland through Koiduan and Timpangoh before arriving in Penampang. Not much else is known of Wong Loong except that he had married two Dusun women – Siapa and Muata. With Siapa, there were two children, Wong Pungun and Lin Oi, while Muata bore him three, whose names were Umbikan, Musayam and Tombii Jomina Wong (d. 1971).²² Lothar Manjaji’s father, Wong Pungun, converted to the Roman Catholic religion in 1930, and was christened Antonius.

According to Lothar’s son, Joe Manjaji, Lothar Wong Manjaji was born Wong Kah Kee (Huang Jiaqi) but after a while, probably influenced by the local setting, especially the influence of his mother, the name Wong Kah Kee was localised to become Manjaji.²³ It is interesting to see how all of his siblings have different names. The eldest daughter was named Tiandim Pungun (after the given name of her father, Wong Pungun, but minus the

20. Joseph David Manjaji, “Foreword”, in *Wong Loong Family Tree 2004*, Kota Kinabalu: 2004.

21. This fact was never fully established though Joe Manjaji also spoke some Hakka, the most widely spoken Chinese dialect in Sabah, especially on the west coast. Interview with Joseph Manjaji 20 April 2007.

22. *Wong Loong Family Tree*.

23. In the case of the Sino-Kadazans of Penampang, localization of Chinese names such as that of Manjaji was not the norm. Rather, it is more common to find that children of Sino-Kadazan parentage adopted names from the villages or the names of a more senior member of the family. Interview with Joseph Manjaji, 20 April 2007.

surname of Wong) followed by Emmanuel Ligunjang, Lothar Wong Manjaji, Leopald Toisim and Oswin Wong Leiking. Of the six siblings, only Lothar and Oswin are known to have maintained the name Wong up to a certain point in their lives. In the case of Lothar, the rightful family name of Wong was later conveniently put down as the initial 'W'; later, the 'W' was dropped altogether. The indigenizing of their names, however, may not have been as straightforward as Joe Manjaji related as only Manjaji and Leiking used Wong. It is known that many other Sino-Dusuns also adopted the names of their Dusun maternal grandparents as family names. In the case of Manjaji, however, it is more likely that the name was Chinese.

The first official record on Lothar Wong Manjaji is found in the baptismal records of the Roman Catholic Church of St. Michael's at Penampang. Entry No. 333 of the Baptismal dated 24 December 1912 shows that Lothar Manjaji was baptised with the name 'Lothar Manjaji'(sic).²⁴ His age is given as 16. This is a curious point as the family have listed 1900 as Lothar Manjaji's year of birth. Working backward, Lothar Manjaji was actually born in 1898. His father's name was given as Bungon (Pungon) and his mother's Siaham, and the family address was at Kitavuo (in Penampang). The priest who baptised him was Father Wachter, a Tyrol priest from the St. Joseph (Mill Hill) order. Wachter was to play a very important role in shaping up Lothar Manjaji's personality and character. Lothar's nationality (ethnicity) was given as 'Dusun'. This is an interesting classification as prior to this some people of mixed parentage had been classified as 'Chinese Dusun'. For example, the case of Clara Kisoen, whose name was also listed in the baptismal, whose parents' names were merely given as gentiles (not church members). Clara was baptised in 1902 at the age of 21. This also brings into question the notion of identity (at least officially) being determined by the priests. In Lothar Manjaji's case, Father Wachter had decided that (or helped to decide that) Lothar Manjaji, in spite of his clear Chinese origins (Sino-Dusun), was given the identity of 'Dusun'.

From the records, it is obvious that Lothar was the first member of his family to be baptised into the Catholic Church. The next of his siblings to be baptised were his elder brother, Emmanuel Ligunjang and two younger brothers, Leopald Toisim and Osim Leiking. All were baptised on 23 December 1917, five years after Lothar's baptism. With regard to his three brothers, there are some differences between the church records (entries 548, 549 and 550) and the family records. Emmanuel Ligunjang's name was

24. Entry No. 333 in the baptismal records of St. Michael's Church, Penampang. I am grateful to the Church of St. Michael's, Penampang, for having allowed me to consult the baptismal of the Church.

listed as Emile Ellagunsang (aged 22), and Leopald's name was given as Leopald Teising (born 1903).²⁵

Most important of all, there was no mention of Lothar's Chinese family name of 'Wong' in either his or his father's name. It is evident that Lothar Manjaji's dropping of his Chinese name was not the first in his family. This had begun one generation earlier, during his father's time. It is clear that his father, Wong Pungun, who was the son of Wong Ah Lung, a Chinese, was more inclined to his mother's Dusun culture and was beginning to lose his 'Chineseness' with the dropping of his Chinese name.

It is interesting at this point to consider the reason behind Lothar and his siblings having gone through the ritual of baptism when their father Pungun was himself not baptised. The decision can clearly be attributed to the influence of the Church on the siblings through their education at St. Michael's School. Entry 70 of the Inobong Church's marriage records shows that Lothar Manjaji married Thresa Loggism on 17 June 1918. His father's name was listed as Pungun and the mother was Siaham. So, for Pungun, the family name of Wong had probably been given up or not used by this time. The address was Limbanak and the entry for *nationality* (ethnicity) was Dusun. Thresa's parents were Jonel and Lasim, and they too were listed by Reverend Wachter as Dusuns. At that time, Lothar was working as a clerk at the Accounts Office of the Railway Department. Interestingly, both the sponsors to Manjaji's marriage were also people with hybrid backgrounds. The first was Aloysius Gonzaga and the second Bruno Sin Sang, whose parents were given as Ah Long and Putaram. Bruno, who was classified as Chinese Dusun, was a teacher at St. Michael's.

The *North Borneo Establishment List* provides an annual personnel account of the civil servants of the North Borneo Company administration from top officials such as Governor to the lowest including cooks and water boy. In the 1922 Establishment List, Lothar Manjaji's name was listed as Lothar Wong, a Clerk Grade II in the Accountant's Office, Railway Department. Thus it is evident that the name Manjaji was not used officially until a few year later. By 1928, however, Manjaji's name was listed as L.W. Manjaji, still a Clerk Grade II, but in the Traffic Department, drawing a salary of \$660 (non-pensionable).²⁶ After 1928, Lothar's name was no longer found in the Establishment List, signifying that he had left the government service. However, it is clear that by the end of the 1920s, the family name of 'Wong' was no longer a significant part of Lothar's name.

25. Entry No. 548, 549 & 550 in baptismal records of St. Michael's Church Penampang.

26. In 1927, he drew \$720 and was in a service scheme that was pensionable. See *North Borneo Establishment List*, 1922, 1927 and 1928.

Instead, the name Manjaji was used more frequently and soon became the new family name of Lothar's family.

This is evident in Lothar's efforts in the naming of his children. He named the eldest of his sons Joseph Manjaji. The Chinese family name of 'Wong' was not used in his case, or for the other children. However when his eldest daughter, Kate Manjaji, married in 1952, her name was given as Kate Wong Manjaji.²⁷

It is clear that Lothar Manjaji's origins were Sino-Native, yet by the time he was baptised and later married, both church records provided no clue to his Chinese origins. It was in his official position as a clerk in the Government service that his Chinese name was used; even then, the name was gradually changed to be merely Manjaji. All of his children, except his eldest daughter, Kate, grew up with no attachment to their Chinese identity, including their original Chinese surname of 'Wong'. Everyone adopted the name of 'Manjaji'.

The question would be 'why?' Why abandon Chineseness and embrace native identity? Perhaps part of the answer to this enquiry can be found through the question of acceptance of Chineseness in Penampang during the 1930s. The next section will investigate the position of Sino-Natives in the Penampang area during the height of Colonial rule in the 1930s by looking into a case that took place in Penampang, the heartland of the Kadazans in the late 1930s, when the Chartered Company administration took steps to evict Chinese who lived in the area. It is hoped that through this case it will be possible to detect some sense of demarcation between those deemed to be Sino-Natives and those who were regarded as Chinese. Perhaps by doing so it may be possible to provide some answers to the question of Lothar Manjaji's choice of ethnic identity.

The Anti-Chinese Campaign in 1937 Penampang

On 17 May 1937, Governor Jardine's office received a petition signed by the Chinese living in Kadazandusun villages in Penampang area, and forwarded by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of West Coast and Interior.²⁸ The petition was a reaction from the 123 Chinese living in the Kadazandusun villages against the notice issued on 14 April 1937 by the

27. Kate Manjaji, interview on 23 July 2010.

28. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce of West Coast was first established in 1911 as an organization that represented Chinese business interests on the West Coast of North Borneo. Based in Jesselton, the organization later also included Chinese businesses in the Interior Residency. Throughout its administration, the North Borneo Company Government looked upon the Chamber as the legitimate representative of the Chinese community as well. See Danny Wong Tze Ken, *The Transformation of an Immigrant Society: A History of the Chinese of Sabah*, London: Asean Academic Press, 1998, pp. 65-70.

Jesselton District Officer, J. E. Longfield – Penampang and Putatan were administered as part of Jesselton District. The notice contained five main items concerning the presence of the Chinese in Penampang area:²⁹

1. No hawker's licence will be issued to Chinese living in Dusun villages or on land without a title, after the end of April 1937.
2. All Chinese living in Dusun villages must move elsewhere by the end of May.
3. All Chinese living on Government land without a title will be prosecuted unless they move by the end of May.
4. All Chinese living on Dusun land without permission will be prosecuted as well as owners of land unless they have moved by the end of May.
5. No Chinese may open shops in any place unless authorised.

The notice caused great concern among the Chinese living in the area. Many were obviously distressed by the prospect of being forced to abandon their family and a lifestyle where they were accepted as members of the Dusun community of Penampang. The five items listed in the notice basically constituted an eviction notice which would effectively remove the Chinese from the Penampang area. The notice in question was the brainchild of Richard F. Evans,³⁰ the Resident for West Coast (1937-1942). According to Evans, during the course of prosecuting several cases for distilling *arrack* he had noticed that many Chinese were living in Dusun villages at Penampang without the permission of the Native Chief or headman, or the approval of the District Officer. He added that many had no work and were living on the Dusuns. Others were hawkers or owners of small shops without authority.

Hence the question of whom the eviction notice was to be applied to. This was among the issues contested by the Chinese.³¹ The Petition pointed out that “the Notice under question is concerning two classes of Chinese. (1) Those living on Government land without a title. (2) Those living on Dusun land, Dusun wife's land inclusive”.³² In arguing for the latter class, the petition also pointed that by evicting those Chinese with Dusun wives would lead to “divorce and the break-up of their homes which are composed of children and grandchildren”. The petition went on to argue that the notice was “quite against reason, civilization, and enlightenment, because three-fifths of the population of Penampang/Putatan are Chinese descendants from

29. “Notice of Eviction issued by District Officer”, 14 April 1937, North Borneo Secretariat File, No. 1395.

30. Richard Evans was the last Resident of West Coast under the Chartered Company administration.

31. “Petition submitted by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, West Coast and Interior to Governor Secretary”, 9 May 1937, North Borneo Secretariat File, No. 1395.

32. *Ibid.*

Chin Swee, Li Yung, Lee Tsiu, Li Tshiung, Li Yu and many others who arrived from Labuan and settled there before the building of Jesselton town. [...] Even Orang Tua Michi of Lunghap and Orang Kaya-Kaya Lajungah are Chinese issues. They may not realise it but history can prove it.” The information clearly supports what Dalrymple had reported in 1884 on the number of Chinese who had married Dusun wives.

However, the irony was that, despite the petition’s claim that Orang Kaya-Kaya Lajungah was of Chinese issue, it was Lajungah who was not happy with the Chinese presence. According to Resident Richard Evans, Orang Kaya-Kaya Lajungah was not in favour of Chinese living in Dusun villages as he thought the Chinese would interfere in their customs and had taught the Dusun to distil *arrack*. The notice was issued based on the provisions of the Village Administration Ordinance and the Land Ordinance. The ordinance, which was first introduced as a proclamation in 1891 by the North Borneo Company Government through its official gazette, provided for the recognition and preservation of native customs. The proclamation made legal the position of the Village Headmen, and it was through these Headmen that judicial matters relating to customs were administered. Thus when Orang Kaya-Kaya Lajungah made clear his views with regard to the Chinese residents in his district, the Resident would have to take note of his sentiment.

Lajungah’s anti-Chinese sentiment was perhaps the first official manifestation of a Sino-Dusun against the Chinese. In many ways this sentiment was also a denial of his own alleged Chinese origins despite common knowledge of them. This denial was similar to Lothar Wong Manjaji’s decision not to have his surname ‘Wong’ listed as his name.

After further investigations, Evans’ views remained strong, and the Governor decided not to interfere with the Resident and the District Officer’s recommendation. Nonetheless, the petition did result in obtaining an assurance from the Governor that no eviction of Chinese would be carried out without careful and sympathetic investigation in each case. The Governor also assured the petitioners that those who were married to Dusun women would not be affected. However, the decision to prevent further influx of Chinese into the Dusun villages was upheld.

Although many lessons could be learned from this incident, it is apparent that in terms of ethnicity, the case proved to be a watershed in distinguishing between those who were Chinese and those who were Sino-Dusun, but had increasingly been adopting the identity of a native. In many ways, it also showed that despite having Chinese origins, many of the Sino-Dusuns (including those with Chinese surnames) found themselves inclined more towards being a native than being identified as Chinese. As many had married Dusun wives, and had children and even grandchildren from such

unions, it is apparent that the 1937 case also marked the beginning of the consciousness of these Sino-Dusuns as a distinctive community of their own – which could have served as the impetus towards the formation of the Society of Kadazan in 1953, hence completely assuming the identity of a native. The latter development also erased the community's Chinese links.

One minor point observed from the case was the nature of the petition. Interestingly, despite having intermarried with Kadazandusun women, and possibly adopted certain aspects of Kadazandusun culture, including speaking the language, these Chinese petitioners still turned to the Chinese Chamber of Commerce for help. The Chamber took on the case as the appeal for help had come from the Chinese who had lived with their Dusun spouses for many years amongst the Dusun community in Penampang. This tendency, however, was to change over the years when their offspring further assimilated into the Kadazandusun culture, and were no longer willing to be identified as Chinese. In the same token, the Chamber would probably no longer recognise these offspring of the Sino-Dusun marriages as Chinese, especially when they had abandoned Chinese culture.

It must be pointed out that even though Lothar Manjaji's name was not mentioned at all throughout the event, the existence of the group alleged by the Chinese petitioners to be of Sino-Dusun mixed parentage was sufficient to show that by then the line had already been drawn by those regarded as Sino-Natives, distinguishing them from those who remained Chinese, or who were regarded to be less Chinese. Even the latter group regarded themselves more as natives than Chinese. Certainly, by the next generation, their children would be regarded as Sino-Natives (or even Dusuns), and the question of them being evicted for not being native would not have arisen at all.

Joseph Manjaji and His Sino-Kadazan Identity

While written evidence were scarce to show Manjaji's wealth, it was likely that he was rather well-to-do. Prior to the outbreak of the War, Manjaji purchased a plot of land in Karamunsing and had a very large house built for his family. The house, known to many as the 'Big House', also had some sections being rented out to tenants as a means of obtaining income. This sound financial position had probably allowed Manjaji to indulge in the sporting activities which made him famous and remembered among people of his community, as well as to be able to live quite comfortably. More importantly, this sound financial standing could also provide Manjaji with the confidence that was lacking in many of the Dusuns and Sino-Dusuns of his time, and accorded him the strength to play the pivotal role within his community.

During the Japanese occupation from 1942 to 1945, Lothar Manjaji was made a native magistrate by the Japanese Military Administration. One of

his duties was to supervise the collection of paddy and other foodstuff from the Dusun cultivators in the district. At that time the people were starving and it was impossible to collect all the foodstuff that the Japanese demanded. However, beyond this appointment, not much else was known about Manjaji's life under the Japanese. Towards the end of the war in 1945, Lothar Manjaji was involved in actively instructing the local people to attack the Japanese communication from the rear in the event of an Allied landing. He was working closely with V.J. Lim, another Sino-Dusun from Penampang on this.³³ In any event, the anticipated Allied landing did not take place. The Japanese authority arrested both of them, suspected of making *parangs* and spears in preparation for an uprising, and also of engaging in activities to prevent the Japanese from hiring coolies.³⁴ Both Manjaji and Lim were executed by the Japanese.

Joseph Manjaji, the eldest son of Lothar Manjaji, was 20 at that time. He was a teacher residing at the Big House at Karamuning. While giving testimony to the war crime trials of the Japanese officer who was responsible in issuing the order to execute his father and V.J. Lim, Joseph Manjaji gave his ethnicity as Dusun. Following a brief stint as teacher after the war, Joseph Manjaji joined the North Borneo Armed Constabulary (police) as an Inspector. Like his father, Joseph was also active in sports, with boxing being his favourite. Joseph's career in the police was cut short when he resigned to join the press as a sub-editor for the *Kinabalu News and Sabah Times*,³⁵ owned at that time by Donald Stephens. Donald Stephens was an Eurasian with some Dusun blood. Born and bred in North Borneo, he became a protégé of the British administration and was groomed to be one of the post-independent leaders for Sabah. He was a journalist by training. Stephens was making use of his position as the owner and editor to promote the idea of native emancipation, and later, as a political base. As a way to encourage greater awareness of Kadazanism, the new identity conjured by the Sino-Dusuns in the Society of Kadazan, the paper also had a Kadazan section – transforming the hitherto spoken language with hardly any written texts into a proper written language. The editor for the Kadazan section was Joseph Manjaji, himself a faithful member of the Society of Kadazan.

33. Not much is known of V.J. Lim apart from the fact that he was a Sino-Dusun from Penampang like Manjaji.

34. "Statements of 2nd Lieutenant Kiyoji Shimizu at the War Crime Trials of Captain Kensei Harada", 8-11 July 1946, *WO235/884*.

35. The *North Borneo News* and *Sabah Times* began as two separate newspapers. The *North Borneo News* was started in Sandakan in the late 1940s, whereas the *Sabah Times* was started in Jesselton in 1953. Both merged in 1954 to become *North Borneo News and Sabah Times*, the most influential newspaper in North Borneo (Sabah) at that time. The chief editor was Donald Stephens. In 1963, following independence, the newspaper was renamed *Sabah Times*.

Joe (Joseph) Manjaji continued to work for Donald Stephens, who was regarded as the paramount chief (Huguon Siou) of the Kadazan people. Apart from being the editor of the Kadazan Section of Donald Stephens' newspaper, Joe Manjaji was also actively championing the cause of the Society of Kadazan, being its organising secretary for Kudat area and later Sandakan and its surrounding areas. When the United National Kadazan Organisation (UNKO) was formed by Donald Stephens in 1962, Joe Manjaji was considered part of the younger leaders of the party.

When the *Sandakan Daily News* published the *Sandakan Sunday News* in English, Malay and Kadazan,³⁶ its editor was Joe Manjaji and its tone was critical of the government. The paper was an attempt by Donald Stephens to expand his influence over to Sandakan – Joe, always a champion of Kadazanism and Donald Stephens' steward in the Society of Kadazan and the *North Borneo News and Sabah Times*, was sent to Sandakan to spearhead UNKO in that town.³⁷ It is difficult to determine of Joe Manjaji's position after his Sandakan stint. A report from the Government associated him with radical elements, "[...] Joe Manjaji, a Kadazan malcontent ever apt to crop up when mischief is afoot, who has recently visited Kuching where he is understood to have had discussions with Mr. Ong Kee Hui, the leader of the SUPP (Sarawak United People's Party), the party from Sarawak that was initially opposed to the idea of Malaysia. Manjaji was reported to be actively canvassing for support for a new party to be known as the Workers' party and has been seen with wharf stevedores and Indonesian Association leaders".³⁸ When UNKO and another Dusun(Kadazan)-based party, Pasok Momogun, merged in 1964, Joseph Manjaji was named as one of the delegates from UNKO to hold discussion with the Pasok group for merger to form the United Pasok Kadazan Organisation (UPKO).³⁹

When Sabah achieved independence through joining Malaysia on 16 September 1963, Joseph Manjaji's reward came in the form of an appointment to the first Parliament as an appointed Member of Parliament. At that time, he was the political secretary for Donald Stephens.⁴⁰

36. The *Sandakan Daily News* or *Sandakan Jih Poh* was established in 1960 in Sandakan. In September 1962, the paper also published the *Sandakan Sunday News*, a weekly paper in English, Malay and Kadazan.

37. North Borneo Local Intelligence Committee Report, September 1962, in A1838 (A1838/280) (3028/2/1PART 1). Australian National Archives.

38. North Borneo Local Intelligence Committee Report, July 1963, in A1838 (A1838/280) (3028/2/1PART 1). Australian National Archives. The initiative however, did not materialize.

39. *Daily Express*, April 14 1964. Pasok Momogun was set up by a group of indigenous leaders who were mainly from the interior of North Borneo. The party had initially refused to subscribe to the idea of the use of 'Kadazan' as the name to replace that of 'Dusun'. The party was also initially opposed to the idea of the formation of Malaysia.

40. Interview with Herman Luping, 7 March 2008.

Joe Manjaji's involvement with Kadazanism seemed to have faded some time after the United Pasok Kadazan Organisation (UPKO) was disbanded in 1967. Nonetheless, Joe Manjaji soldiered on in defending the Kadazan rights until around 1970. Thereafter, his days as a political activist seemed to have numbered. He faded from public life and contended with living in his family home along the Penampang-Papar Road. It was while living the life of a country squire that Joe Manjaji began his research on his family.

In 1999, Joe Manjaji published his book, *Wong Loong and His Descendants*, where he traced his family history to a man called Wong Loong. This openly acknowledgement of his Chinese origins was a contrast to his long denial of his Chinese origin and his Chineseness. This new beginning actually opened the doors to more of the family members to come forward and to be counted as descendants of Wong Loong, and thus, acknowledging their Chinese origins. Joe Manjaji was not alone in this endeavour. Other Sino-Kadazan families also came out to acknowledge their Chinese origin, some even went to China in search of their roots. Herman Luping, the veteran Kadazan cultural expert and political elder, described his recent visit to China as "returned to Fujian, China" to visit his maternal ancestral home. Such admission would have been disastrous for his political career in 1960s to 1980s. At that time, both Joseph Manjaji and Herman Luping, and other Sino-Kadazans, were fighting for their new identity as Kadazan through their idea of Kadazanism and political parties. This struggle was to transform the new identity of Kadazan that was proposed in 1952 with the Society of Kadazan to be an integral part of the indigenous peoples of East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak) ethnic categorization of the new nation-state of Malaysia. This categorization was incorporated into Article 153 of the amended Federal Constitution of Malaysia in 1963, which "safeguards the special position of the Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak and the legitimate interests of other communities [...]"⁴¹ This struggle would help to ensure that under this categorization, the Kadazan people's interests and welfare would be secured and that the Kadazan people would be able to enjoy the special privileges that come with this ethnic categorization. Identification with the Chinese would not have allowed them to enjoy such privileges.

After thirty to forty years of struggle, the position of this new people – the Kadazans – is already politically and economically secured. Their ethnic identity has been recognised by the state. Under such condition, both Herman Luping and Joseph Manjaji as well as their Kadazan brethren need not worry about acknowledging their Chinese origin for their Chineseness is

41. See *Federal Constitution of Malaysia (As at 1st August 2005)*, Kuala Lumpur: International Law books Services, 2005.

no longer a problem. This transformation of identity comes with the assurance from the Government in providing preferential treatment to the indigenous people or Bumiputera.

This resinicization could also be attributed to the rising importance of China since the 1990s. The business opportunity afforded by the vast Chinese market could also be an attraction for the Sino-Kadazans who would like to capitalise on their claim to Chinese ancestry to facilitate their business ventures in China if any.

Conclusion

This paper sets out to investigate the evolution of the Sino-Kadazan community in Penampang, Sabah, East Malaysia, by looking into the evolution of identity amongst these people. It also focuses on the history of a family by tracing its origins to the arrival of a Chinese ancestor, Wong Loong, in the 1880s. Wong Loong found his way from Guangdong to Labuan before settling down in Penampang. Wong Loong married two Dusun women who provided him with offspring who eventually became part of the local community. The family's transformation from being Chinese becoming indigenous was a natural process that saw the offspring from the initial mixed marriage giving priority to the indigenous dimension of the family life in subsequent marriages. This was coupled with the push factor from the Chinese community which rejected them as part of the Chinese community. This in itself had contributed to the increasingly clearer demarcation between the Sino-Natives and the Chinese. Subsequent events, including the 1937 attempt to evict the Chinese from Penampang and the setting up of the Society of Kadazan in 1953, helped to reinforce such divides and at the same time pushed Sino-Natives like the Manjaji to choose to be identified as natives, and called themselves Kadazans.

As Sabah moved towards independence through the creation of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963, the Kadazans created their own political party and championed for the rights of the Kadazans and other natives. In the process, they began to alienate the Chinese and reinforced their newly created identity. This paper also shows that the trend was reversed in the 1990s when more and more of the Kadazans began to acknowledge their Chinese origins.