open university malaysia

From the SelectedWorks of Rose Fahmi

Summer July 30, 2017

A Study On Ethnic Identity Awareness And Unity Among The Indigenous Peoples in Sabah

Rose Fahmi, open university malaysia

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/rose-fahmi/1/
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the study ........................................ 2……….3
1.1 Problem Statement .............................................. 3
  1.1.1 Definition of Ethnic and Race 3……….5
1.2 Research Questions .............................................. 5
1.3 Research Objectives ............................................. 5……….6
1.4 Scope of Research ............................................... 6
1.5 Hypothesis of the Study ........................................ 6
1.6 Significance of the Research ................................. 7

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Literature Review ............................................... 8
2.1 Introduction ..................................................... 8
2.2 The Dusun ....................................................... 8……….10
2.3 The Kadazan ..................................................... 10……….11
2.4 The birth of Kadazandusun ...................................... 11……….14

CHAPTER 3

FRAMEWORK

3.0 Framework ....................................................... 14
  Reference ......................................................... 15
DUSUN TO KADAZAN AND NOW KADAZANDUSUN

A Study On Ethnic Identity Awareness And Unity Among The Indigenous Peoples in Sabah

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the study

“We must be proud of our identity. There is no matter what race in this world... all things being equal we are as good as anybody else. Any semblance of inferiority should be banished at once...It is here that we should concentrate on more.” - (Dr. Gimfil James, 1999)

This study concerns about indigenous peoples in Sabah. Geographically, Sabah is the second largest state after Sarawak in Malaysia. It covers an area of 73,619 square kilometres which is equivalent to 73.7 million hectares that occupies the northern part of the Borneo Island and borders Sarawak in the southwest and Indonesia in the south. There are several groups of tribes or suku of the indigenous peoples in Sabah as outlined by Dayu Sansalu (Dr) (2008). He named the indigenous peoples as the Dusun family who speak relatively similar language under 3 main groups that is Paitanic, Dusunic and Murutic. Each of these groups has its sub-ethnic. According to him, the Dusun and Kadazan are sub-ethnics to the Dusun family.

Professor Ranjit Singh (2011) wrote that the Kadazans and Dusuns form the biggest number of populations in Sabah that is 321,052 out of a total of 1,730,098 for the state in 1991.

---

4 Ibid.
whereas Herman Luping (Tan Sri Dr) in his book\(^5\) wrote that the Kadazans and Dusuns form about 35% of the population.

This study attempts to explore the ethnic identity awareness among the indigenous peoples in Sabah. The indigenous peoples that referred here are the Kadazans and Dusuns, the Paitanic and Murutic family. The research will be conducted by doing some interviews with the respondents from various background and originate from different places. Focus of the study will be on the ethnics of Kadazan and Dusun for the reason that the major population in Sabah is formed by these groups.

1.1 Problem Statement

“Ethnic identity can be highly emotional, much because it is seen as ancient (something which is shared with the ancestors) and unchangeable. It...helps to explain origins ...[and to] rationalize human destiny – (Fishman in Hutchinson et al 1996:66)\(^6\)."

1.1.1 Definition of Ethnic and Race

Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary\(^7\) defines ethnic as of or relating to large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic or cultural origin or background. On the other hand, Travis Jones in his article\(^8\) wrote that the most commonly accepted definition is that race is biological and ethnicity is cultural. Race is the term that simply describes physical differences (skin, hair, eye, ear, and nose shape etc.) whereas ethnicity describes a cultural identity that is tied to ones geographical region, language, food, heritage, values, beliefs, etc.— one’s culture.

Dennis O’Neil (Dr.) in his article\(^9\) distinguished between ethnicity and race. He wrote

---


\(^6\) Ethnic Awareness and Development “A Study of the Kadazan Dusun Sabah, Malaysia, Bjorn Asgard, 2002.

\(^7\) Found at [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)

\(^8\) A Point of View: Revisiting Race and Ethnicity found at [http://www.theinclinationsolution.me/a-point-of-view-revisiting-race-and-ethnicity/](http://www.theinclinationsolution.me/a-point-of-view-revisiting-race-and-ethnicity/)

\(^9\) Ethnicity and race: An introduction to the nature of social group differentiation and inequality Found at [http://anthro.palomar.edu/ethnicity/ethnic_1.htm](http://anthro.palomar.edu/ethnicity/ethnic_1.htm)
that ethnicity refers to selected cultural and sometimes physical characteristics used to classify people into groups or categories considered to be significantly different from others. For example, American ethnic groups include American Indians, Latinos, Chinese, African Americans, European Americans, etc. He further stated that in some cases, ethnicity involves a loose group identity with little or no cultural traditions in common such as the Irish and German Americans. Dr Dennis O’Neil also stated that the some newly arrived immigrant groups are considered as coherent subcultures as they seem to have shared language and body of tradition. As for race, Dr Dennis O’Neil defined it as a biological subspecies or variety of a species, consisting of a more or less distinct population with anatomical traits that distinguish it clearly from other races.

Coming back to this study, the rising of the issue of identity labelling as Dusun or Kadazan in the early 1980’s had been quite serious and reason for debate among the Dusun and Kadazan peoples. During pre 1995, Kadazans and Dusuns were considered as two different ethnics among the indigenous peoples in Sabah. The distinction between these ethnics can be explained like how we perceive other types of ethnics such as the Bajau and Chinese peoples.

The declaration of understanding between the Kadazan Cultural Association (“KCA”)

10 and the United Sabah Dusun Association (“USDA”) had been concluded to signify unity and brotherhood among the various ethnics and dialects, whereby the standard and common ethnic identification for all type of indigenous peoples in Sabah is called the “Kadazandusun”, not Kadazan or Dusun. The words Kadazan and Dusun are spelt in one word.

Nevertheless, the idea of imposing the label “Kadazan” for all indigenous ethnic groups in Sabah is not acceptable by certain groups. They viewed that the name Kadazan is the name of the peoples of Penampang, Putatan and Papar only and they prefer the term Dusun to be maintained on them. The open ended question that needs an answer is that, does adopting the term of Kadazandusun as the common ethnic group for all ethnics in Sabah, could clearly specify the actual identity of a person? Would an individual who has parents that both

10 Kadazan Cultural Association (“KCA”) was first founded by the late Tun Fuad Stephen in 1963. This was among other efforts he did in bring up the standard of the Dusuns to a higher level of recognition in the eyes of the society during that time. The KCA was later on changed to Kadazan Dusun Cultural Association (“KDCA”) fully on 25th September 1991 despite that agreement between the President of the KCA and the President of USDA had been entered on August 1989.
originate from Penampang who presumably does not speak the dialect of Dusun Bundu-Liwan be happy to be labelled as Kadazandusun? On the other hand, would a person originates from Ranau (a place known as the biggest community that speaks Dusun Bundu-Liwan) accept the label as *Kadazandusun* while he or she does not speak the dialect of Kadazan-Penampang (Tanggaras or Tangaah) at all?

Another situation is when a Sabahan indigenous person is asked about his or her race, would he or she state Kadazandusun as his or her race despite of the fact that he or she belongs to the Murutic or Paitanic *suku* or ethnic family? Another question is, would parents originate from Penampang, Putatan or Papar who habitually speak the Tanggaras or Tangaah dialect, register in the birth certificate of their kids as Kadazandusun or only Kadazan?

Thus, this paper aims to examine the level of awareness, acceptance and understanding by the indigenous peoples in Sabah in respect of their common cultural ethnic identity that is *Kadazandusun*.

1.2 Research Questions

The following are the research questions:

1) Do the indigenous peoples in Sabah understand the scope and the meaning of the term Kadazandusun?

2) To what extend do the indigenous people in Sabah accept the common cultural identity into their life?

3) How does the acceptance of the common cultural identity reflect the unity among the indigenous peoples in Sabah?

1.3 Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are as follows:
1) To measure the level of awareness and understanding of the meaning of Kadazandusun among the various levels of generations and from different background of respondents as follows:

   a) Ethnic
   b) Education level
   c) Age
   d) Place of origin

2) To assess the respondents’ acceptance of the common cultural identity as Kadazandusun.

3) To examine their readiness to implement and adopt the term Kadazandusun into their birth certificate.

1.4 Scope of Research

The scope of this research is confined to the populations of the indigenous peoples of Sabah from different ethnic with different dialect groups and different geographical place of origin. The age will be ranging between 18 to 65 years old from all sexes.

1.5 Hypothesis of the Study

Hypothesis for this paper are as follows:

H1: There still many indigenous peoples of Sabah who are not aware of the common cultural identity for indigenous peoples of Sabah.

H2: The indigenous peoples in Penampang, Putatan and Papar still consider themselves as Kadazan instead of Kadazandusun.
H3: The indigenous peoples outside Penampang, Putatan and Papar still consider themselves as Dusuns.

H4: The indigenous peoples of Sabah prefers to be known according to their original ethnic compared to the common cultural identity i.e. *Kadazandusun*.

H5: The indigenous peoples outside Penampang, Putatan and Papar are not prepared to register the race as “Kadazandusun” to their children but rather choose the type of tribe or *suku* that they belong to such as Murut, Lundayeh, Tombono etc.

1.6 Significance of Research

This research has significance importance as it will reflect the level of awareness and acceptance of the common cultural identity by all indigenous peoples of Sabah and it also provides a general view of the role of the Kadazandusun Cultural Association (“KDCA”) as the main governing body which carries the Mission, among others, to foster harmonious unity in diversity as basis for synergy and a facilitative venue for the cooperative, educative and developmental involvement and participation of the multi-ethnic Kadazandusuns and which the Objective of the body, among others, is to promote friendship, understanding, cooperation and progressive harmonious unity through cultural programs and activities among the multi-ethnics and multi-dialects of the indigenous of Sabah.
CHAPTER 2

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Several literatures relating to this research area are found. For the benefit of clearer understanding of the evolution of the term from Dusun to Kadazan and now to Kadazandusun, it is interesting to get some enlightenment from these literatures.

There had been many writes up including books, articles and journals in respect of the battle of identity among the indigenous of people in Sabah, particularly between “Kadazan” and “Dusun”. Reid (1977) explained that those peoples inhibiting the West Coast of Sabah ranging from Penampang, Putatan and Papar identified themselves as Kadazan whereas those peoples occupying the interior and upperland such as Ranau, Tambunan dan Keningau are labelled as “Dusun”. He further stated that the Kadazans or Dusuns are known to be expert in farming, growing rice, planting rubber trees, keeping cattle, pigs, poultry etc.

There had been many versions from different writers about the origins and history of the terms Dusun and Kadazan.

2.2 The Dusun

Whelan (1970) wrote that the word Dusun is used to describe the Rungus who live in the north in Kudat and Bengkoka peninsula, the people who live in upper Kinabatangan and other. Those who live by the great river such as Kinabatangan, Segama and Labuk are called Dusun Sungai which means “people of the river”. He added that the word Dusun also used to refer to the people in Tuaran (Dusun Lotud) and in Tambunan (Dusun Tegaas or Tagaras). The word Tegaas or Tagaras was given to them by the Dusuns from Penampang and in return, the Dusuns of Tambunan called them Dusun Tanggara or Tangaah. He further explained that the native people of Sabah speak languages that belong to the Malay-Polynesian group of tongues which span throughout Borneo, Indonesia, Malaya and the

---

12 A History of Sabah, Singapore, Macmilan, 1970
Pacific Islands, whereby the largest group is the Dusuns. The author stated further that the word “Dusun” used to describe these people is not the name that claimed by the Dusuns themselves, but was given to them by the outsiders. These outsiders were referred to those “folk migration”\(^\text{13}\) who had taken place in Borneo a long time ago. This label is seen as an exonym compared to the term Kadazan which is a preferred term to be used to label all the indigenous peoples in Sabah as vigorously promoted by the late Tun Fuad Stephen. During that time, the preference of the term Kadazan over Dusun was simply for the reason that the word Dusun connotes the meaning of “backwardness”. According to Professor Jacqueline Pugh –Kitingan in her book\(^\text{14}\), there are 3 main groups of ethnics in Sabah namely the Dusunic, Murutic and Paitanic. Each ethnic has main tribes whereby the Dusunic had 13 tribes, Murutic has 12 tribes whereas Paitanic has 4 tribes. All of these groups of ethnics are classified under the Poly-Austronesia (Miller, 1988; Spitzack, 1984; King, 1984)\(^\text{15}\)

Dayu Sansalu (Dr.) (2008) in his book\(^\text{16}\), the Kadazans and Dusuns are the largest ethnic group in Sabah which makes 18.5% of the total population in Malaysia. The Kadazans and Dusuns comprise several ethnics of peoples whom speak different type of dialects. Based on his observation, he categorised the indigenous peoples under one label that is the Dusunic family who speak the Dusunic languages. There are 3 major Dusunic languages group which are the Paitanic, Dusunic and Murutic. \(^\text{17}\) The categorisation of the Dusunic family into their particular group can be illustrated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paitanic</th>
<th>Dusunic</th>
<th>Murutic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abai sungai</td>
<td>Bisaya</td>
<td>Alumbis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bagahak</td>
<td>Bonggi</td>
<td>Baukan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kawananan</td>
<td>Bundu</td>
<td>Gana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelobuan</td>
<td>Dusun</td>
<td>Kalabakan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lingkabau</td>
<td>Dumpas</td>
<td>Kwijau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobou</td>
<td>Garo</td>
<td>Kolod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makiang</td>
<td>Gonsomon</td>
<td>Lundayeh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melapi</td>
<td>Kadazan</td>
<td>Lun Bawang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paitan</td>
<td>Kimaragang</td>
<td>Ngabai/Nabay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pingas</td>
<td>Lintaga</td>
<td>Okolor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^\text{13}\) Ibid, page 24.
\(^\text{14}\) Kadazan Dusun “ Siri Etnik Sabah, ITBM-UMS, 2012
\(^\text{15}\) Ibid, page 13.
\(^\text{17}\) Ibid.
There are varieties of versions available pertaining to the origin of the term Kadazan. Reid (1977) wrote that the word Kadazan was derived from the word kakadazan which means towns that signifies semi-urbanised coastal inhabitant as opposed to those living in upper land such as Ranau and Tambunan. Some believed it to come from the word kedaian which means people of the town. Whelan (1970) cited that the words Kadazan refers to the people in Penampang, Putatan dan Papar.

Over the years, more Dusun peoples got the access to education and development, particularly the Dusuns occupying the West Coast of Sabah, that is along the Penampang, Putatan towards Papar plains and some of them started to realise that the word Dusun means “orchard” in Malay which does not bring good connotation to them due to its meaning. They viewed that the labelling of Dusun is equivalent to calling a person a less educated, a yokel, a peasant or a country bumpkin and so on. Thus, the Dusuns people prefer to be known or identified as Kadazan and this meant to include all the indigenous people who speak the Dusunic language groups. These educated Dusuns viewed that their race and the language
they speak is of Kadazan despite that, the British administration in the then North Borneo stick to recognise them as Dusuns. In early 1882, the Catholic Mill Hill Mission started opening schools for the Dusun (or Kadazan) inhabitants on the West Coast area such as Penampang and Papar. By 1953, there were about 40 Catholic schools in Sabah with majority indigenous students, where 3,385 students were classified as Dusun. The language that was taught in the churches were the local dialect of the Kadazan Penampang and Papar as seen in the catechism and prayer books *Vazaan doid Surga* (Reid, 1997). Then in 1953, the late Tun Fuad Stephen introduced one page of news in Romanised Malay and Dusun. He called that page or section as ‘Kadazan Corner” and the spelling of the words used was that dialect of Penampang and Papar by the Mill Hill Missionaries. The year 1954 marked the first radio broadcast of the Dusun daily programme of 15 minutes durations which had been increased to 15 hours a week by year 1960.

Tun Fuad Stephen explained that the usage of the word Kadazan is an effort by the Dusun peoples to be known by their own name and not by the name which was labelled on the indigenous peoples without their consent and that name bear no meaning to them, and therefore, by using the term “Kadazan”, a standardised identity and language could be achieved and the Dusun peoples could be united under a single identity that is, Kadazan. Hence, Tun Fuad Stephen urged to use the dialect of Kadazan of Penampang and Papar to be adopted for the clear reason that such dialect had been commonly understood and used since much earlier as a written language in Roman as evidence by the catechism and prayer books title *Vazaan Doid Surga* (Reid, 1977). It followed that the first modern dictionary was introduced in 1958.

### 2.4 The birth of “Kadazandusun”

Herman J. Luping (2009) outlined that, in Sabah, there are many tribes and dialects amongst the same speech communities. Therefore, within the Kadazans and Dusuns ethnic community, there are more than 14 major tribes and several sub-tribes with the same speech community but with different dialects. This situation is similar to the Chinese community

---

19 Ibid.
20 The first Sabah Chief Minister. He is a noble person from a mixed parentage that is father of New Zealand origin and mother of Kadazan-Japanese descendent.
23 Ibid.
which has numbers of dialects such as Hakka, Hokkien, Hainanese etc and having variety of dialects amongst them and this does not mean that there are many Chinese communities in Sabah. The same analogy applies to Kadazans and Dusuns.

An understanding and compromise had been achieved between the Dusuns and Kadazans as demonstrated by the signing of the agreement on 11th April 1995 by the President of the KDCA, the celebrated Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan and the President of the United Sabah Dusun Association (“USDA”), Datuk Mark Koding and witnessed by the KDCA Secretary General, Benedict Topin and the USDA Secretary General, Raymond Boin Tombung for the Bunduliwan dialect to be used as the standard dialect for the Kadazandusun as decided during a symposium *Towards Standardisation of Kadazan Language* held at Perkasa Hotel, Kundasang, Ranau on 13th January 1989. The selection of Bunduliwan was simply for the reason that the Bunduliwan has high intelligibility compared to other ethnics within the Dusunic language family groups, whereas, in terms of geographical, the Bunduliwan dialect is spoken by bigger indigenous populations in Sabah. Despite the fact that the Bunduliwan dialect was selected to be the standard language for Kadazandusun language, the term Bunduliwan was never agreed to be used as an identity by the Kadazan and Dusun peoples. Following that, a declaration of mutual understanding between the Kadazans and Dusuns for a common identity to be used had been made to signify unity and brotherhoods among them which include all other ethnics whose mother tongue speak the Dusunic language.

Eventually, in August 1989, the Kadazan Cultural Association (“KCA”) executive announced that its name to be changed to the KDCA so to remove the impression that the KCA belongs only to the *Kadazan* peoples. A unanimous agreement had been concluded and passed on the 4th and 5th November 1989 at the Kadazan Cultural Association KCA with regards to the term “*Kadazandusun*” as the best alternative approach to resolve the Kadazan or Dusun identity crisis that had crippled and impeded the growth and development of the Kadazandusun multi-ethnic community socio-culturally, economically and politically ever since the Kadazanism versus Dusunism sentiment became one of the political issues in the early 1960’s. Having said that, the Kadazandusun peoples, despite of the multi-ethnic background, now share a common cultural identity for a united, cooperative and progressive

---

26 Ibid.
community, that is “Kadazandusun” which means: **Divinity in Humanity.** The shared identity brings a unifying sense of dignity and brotherhood among the indigenous peoples in Sabah. Subsequently, in 1995, the first Kadazan Dusun Malay English Dictionary was published by the KDCA. It provided two types of dialects used in the dictionary namely the dialect of Kadazan Penampang and the dialect of Central Dusun of Tambunan-Ranau. And equally significant, in 1997, the official language introduced into schools was named Kadazandusun which using the *Dusun Bundu-Liwan* as the standard dialect and spelling for the language.

Currently, under the KDCA constitution in Article 6 (1), the Kadazandusuns is defined as the definitive indigenous peoples of Sabah comprising the dialectical ethnic groups and including persons whose mother tongue is any of the dialects below and who habitually practices and expresses the traditions, custom and other cultural manifestations of the same, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bisaya</th>
<th>Kuijau</th>
<th>Murut</th>
<th>Sungei</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonggi</td>
<td>Lingkabau</td>
<td>Nabai</td>
<td>Tatana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundu</td>
<td>Liwan</td>
<td>Paitan</td>
<td>Tangara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumpas</td>
<td>Lobu</td>
<td>Pingas</td>
<td>Tidong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gana</td>
<td>Lotud</td>
<td>Rumanau</td>
<td>Tindal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garo</td>
<td>Lundayo</td>
<td>Rungus</td>
<td>Tobilung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ida’an</td>
<td>Makiang</td>
<td>Sinobu</td>
<td>Tolinting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadayan</td>
<td>Malapi</td>
<td>Sinorupu</td>
<td>Tombonuo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimaragang</td>
<td>Mangkaak</td>
<td>Sonsogon</td>
<td>Tuhawon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolobuan</td>
<td>Minokok</td>
<td>Sukang</td>
<td>Tutung</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: This Table is obtained from the KDCA website [http://kdca.org.my/about](http://kdca.org.my/about)*

Thus this study aims to examine the level of ethnic identity awareness of the indigenous peoples in Sabah. The outcome of the study is crucial in order to assess the necessity of conducting more ethnic awareness campaign among the indigenous people to adopt the spirits sense of unity and brotherhood among all the indigenous peoples in Sabah. Effective and active ethnic awareness program and campaign by the relevant authorities and bodies towards the indigenous peoples in Sabah is vital in order to ensure the Missions, Objective and the very purpose of the body such as KDCA could be materialised. Lacking of awareness about the shared cultural identity despite of the multi-ethnic within the indigenous peoples in Sabah could lead to fraction within the multi-ethnic in this state.

---

27 Website: [http://kdca.org.my/about](http://kdca.org.my/about)
29 From the KDCA website: [http://kdca.org.my/about](http://kdca.org.my/about)
3.0 FRAMEWORK

The research at hand is exploratory in nature. Nayak and Singh (2015) stated that exploratory research usually starts with reviewing the available literature and data or qualitative approaches such as informal discussions, case studies, focus groups etc. Cavana et al (2001) wrote that exploratory research is usually carried out to explore the constructs and field when information and research is limited on the specific area. And therefore, qualitative research is the best method for exploratory research (Creswell: 2007). Since this study is an exploratory in nature, qualitative method will be the best approach to adopt. Among benefit of the qualitative approach is that the information is richer and has a deeper insight into the phenomenon being studied upon. Qualitative research methods are concerned with the study of opinions, feelings and experiences. They describe social phenomena as they occur naturally as there will be no attempt made to manipulate the situation but rather just understand and describe. Qualitative data is collected through direct encounters such as through interviews or observation and they are usually time consuming.  

---

30 See The benefits of the qualitative approach is that the information is richer and has a deeper insight into the phenomenon under study

31 See http://libweb.surrey.ac.uk/library/skills/Introduction%20to%20Research%20and%20Managing%20Information%20Leicester/page_52.htm
REFERENCES


Jacqueline-Pugh Kitingan, *Kadazan Dusun “Siri Etnik Sabah, ITBM-UMS, 2012*

Kroger, Paul R., Linguistic relations among the Dusunic groups in the Kota Marudu District, Borneo Research Bulletin, Vol. 17:1 (April 1985); 31-46


