# MALAYSIA

## Kadazans

Activity: 1963-2020

### General notes

- The Kadazan of Malaysia refers to a group of aboriginal tribes (Minorities at Risk Project). According to Minahan (2002), they are "a collection of closely related ethnic and linguistic groups including the Rungus, Lotud, Orang Sungai, Tambanuo, Kuijau, Kimarangan, Sanayou, Minokok, and Tenggera" (Minahan 2002: 877). The Kadazan, numbering around 755,000 people, live in Sabah, Malaysia within mountainous and heavily forested areas. In total, they make up about 54% of the Sabah population. The Kadazan speak a language formally known as the Kadazandusun, which is a standardized version of the Kadazan and Dusun languages.

### Movement start and end dates

- Since 1961, there have been organized calls for Kadazan independence. In 1961, the United National Kadazan Organization (UNKO) was founded in order to discuss the possibility of an independent Sabah as Great Britain went through the decolonization phase (Roff 1969: 333). 1961 is thus coded as the start date of the movement, although the movement is only coded from 1963, when Sabah was incorporated into Malaysia. We indicate prior non-violent activity.
- Nationalist sentiment was exacerbated by the suggestion for the adoption of a formal state religion, Islam, because most Kadazan are Christians. Also, "[t]he development of extensive petroleum reserves in the late 1970s encouraged Kadazan nationalism as the state's Muslim-dominated government signed away 95% of the state's oil and natural gas revenues" (Minahan 2002: 879). Minahan too notes that nationalism was alive in the 1970s in Sabah.
- Kadazan nationalism was on the rise in the 1980s, which resulted in the creation of two nationalist political parties – the Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak and the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS).
- According to Minahan (2002: 879), the Kadazans demanded secession in 1989 due to a Malaysian government campaign emphasizing the predominance of ethnic Malays and the possibility of naming Malaysia an Islamic state. We could not find support for a secession claim, however (see below).
- According to Weiss (2006: 90), the movement lost ground in subsequent years due to intra-group disagreement over their commitment to either of the two parties (Weiss 2006: 90). However, the PBS remains active in politics. The Kadazan also have a history of protest over environmental damages to traditional lands, in particular deforestation that has led to pollution of waters and an increase in flooding (Minorities at Risk Project). In the mid 1990s, the Kadazans launched several protests against the Malaysian government's siphoning of oil and natural gas revenues, which have greatly reduced Sabah's forests. A recent attempt by the central government to impose Islamic penal code reignited separatist sentiment. (Hewitt & Cheetham 2000: 262; Malay Mail Online 2015; Minahan 2002: 876ff; MAR; Parti Bersatu Sabah; Roff 1969; Weiss 2006).
- According to one recent source, "Sabah's indigenous political parties are essentially organized along ethnic rather than ideological lines, although most would claim to be multiethnic in outlook and representation, and irrespective of their origins, most if not all parties generally advocate greater autonomy for Sabah in accordance with the spirit of MA63" (Lai 2022: 281). We therefore code the movement as ongoing as of 2020. [start date: 1961; end date: ongoing]

**Dominant claim**

- The Kadazan claim is ambivalent. Reid (1997) and Puyok (2008) do not indicate any secessionist claims. Minahan (2002), on the other hand, states that Malay predominance and attempts to create an Islamic state "stimulated demands for secession from Malaysia". Finally, secessionist claims can also be found in Roff (1969: 333), who states that the United National Kadazan Organization (UNKO) was founded in 1961 in order to discuss the possibility of an independent Sabah as Great Britain went through the decolonization phase. However, this was before Malaysia's independence. Overall, secession does not appear to be the dominant claim among the political parties representing the Kadazan movement in 1963 and beyond, as confirmed by Cheae (2002; also see Chin 2019). [1963-2020: autonomy claim]

**Independence claims**

- The possibility of an independent Sabah was floated prior to Malaysian independence with the founding of the United National Kadazan Organization (UNKO) in 1961 (Roff 1969: 333). Minahan (2002: 879) suggests that independence claims re-emerged after Malaysia's independence. However, we could not find support for this notion. For example, Roth (2015) instead claims that the main focus of the SDM is for an equal role within Malaysia rather than independence. This is reinforced by other sources (see above, suggesting that independence has not been a politically significant claim in the SDM since incorporation into Malaysia. [no independence claims]

**Irredentist claims**

NA

**Claimed territory**

- The territory claimed by the Kadazans is the Sabah state in the northern part of Borneo island, Malaysia (Minahan 2002). We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database.

**Sovereignty declarations**

- Minahan (2016: 484) suggests that there was an independence declaration on August 31, 1963, shortly before Sabah's merger with Malaysia in September. We could not corroborate this.

**Separatist armed conflict**

- UCDP/PRIO codes an armed conflict over Sabah in 2013. The UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia suggests that the conflict involved the Sultanate of Sulu, which is based in today's Philippines but has a historical claim to Sabah. In 2013, the sultanate sent a 235-strong force to Sabah by boat from Tawi-Tawi in the Philippines with the goal of re-claiming Sabah, leading to violent clashes shortly thereafter. As the violence was not associated with the local Kadazan and we found no other evidence for separatist violence, we code the entire movement with NVIOLSD. [NVIOLSD]

**Historical context**

- In 1658, the Sultan of Brunei ceded the territory of Sabah (North Borneo) to the Muslim Sultanate of Sulu in return for support in settling a civil war in the Brunei Sultanate. The tribal peoples had little contact with the outside world until the middle of the nineteenth century, when the British acquired the island of Labuan in 1847 and gained control of North Borneo in 1877-79, signing a treaty with the sultan of Sulu in exchange for arms to hold off the Spanish. In 1881, the British North Borneo Company was granted the right to administer the region in return for an annual rent of 5000 ringgit, and North Borneo became a de-facto British protectorate in 1888. In the following years, the Kadazan areas were heavily proselytized, and the leadership of the traditional dominant Muslim minority was replaced by Christian Kadazanese (Lim 2008; Minahan 2002; UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia).
- North Borneo was occupied by the Japanese from 1942 until 1945. After the Japanese surrender, it was ceded to the British Crown together with the island of Labuan. Together with Brunei and Sarawak, the territory became a British Crown Colony in 1946.
- In August 1963, the colony gained complete independence from Great Britain and in September North Borneo was renamed Sabah and – together with Sarawak and Singapore - joined the independent federation of the British Malay States. The merger with Malaysia was favored by the inhabitants of Sabah mainly to stave off inclusion into Indonesia. Indonesia continued to sponsor guerillas in North Borneo. The Philippines, which also pressed territorial claims to Sabah due to the latter's historic status as a part of the Sulu Sultanate, passed a bill in 1968 laying formal claim to North Borneo, but to no avail (Minahan 2002; UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia). North Borneo joined the federation under the provisions of the 20-point agreement. The agreement was proposed by the North Borneo interim government and submitted to the Malayan government prior to Sabah joining the federation. The agreement intended to safeguard the rights and autonomy of the people of North Borneo and stated that Islam would not be imposed on the Kadazan, and that English would be the only official state language. Point 11 of the agreement furthermore allowed North Borneo to "retain control of its own finance, development and tariff, and should have the right to work up its own taxation and to raise loans on its own credit" (Hewitt and Cheetham 2000; Lim 2008; Minahan 2002; Strategic World Impact 2013; UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia). The twenty points were incorporated in the Malaysia Bill of the Malaysian Agreement between the United Kingdom, the Federation of Malaya, North Borneo, Sarawak and Singapore. [1963: cultural rights concession, autonomy concession]

**Concessions and restrictions**

- The use of Kadazan was banned in schools when Kadazan schools became part of the national schooling system (Reid 1997: 130). [1969: cultural rights restriction]
- In 1973, Malay was established as the sole medium of instruction and the National Language Act increased the use of Malay in the public administration (Barlocco 2013). Furthermore, Islam was declared the only state religion in Malaysia (Reid 1997: 130). With a majority of Kadazans being Christians or animists (Minority Rights Group International), we code a cultural rights restriction. [1973: cultural rights restriction]
- The use of all languages except for English and Malay was banned from radio broadcasts (Reid 1997: 130). [1974: cultural rights restriction]
- The Malay government conceded that Kazadandusun would be the fifth language that could officially be taught in schools in 1997 (Reid 1997: 120). This was not implemented until 2007, however (Khemlani David and Dealwis 2008: 267). We code a cultural rights concession, but only in 2007. [2007: cultural rights concession]
- EPR stops coding the Kadazans as autonomous after 2009. We could not find corroborating evidence. It is worth noting that Kadaza identity is somewhat fluid, which can mask the extent of Kadazan representation in Sabah politics; however, this does not mean that there are no political parties representing Kadazans' interests (see e.g. Lai 2022).

**Regional autonomy**

- Upon its merger with Malaysia, Sabah was granted extensive autonomy, which is also confirmed by EPR's coding of regional autonomy. [1963-2020: regional autonomy]
    - Note: EPR stops coding the Kadazans as autonomous after 2009. We could not find corroborating evidence. It is worth noting that Kadaza identity is somewhat fluid, which can mask the extent of Kadazan representation in Sabah politics; however, this does not mean that there are no political parties representing Kadazans' interests (see e.g. Lai 2022).

**De facto independence**

NA

**Major territorial changes**

- [1963: host change (new); establishment of regional autonomy]

**EPR2SDM**

| | |
|---|---|
| *Movement* | Kadazans |
| *Scenario* | No match/1:1 |
| *EPR group(s)* | Kadazans |
| *Gwgroupid(s)* | 82004000 |

**Power access**

- EPR codes the Kadazan as powerless throughout. We apply the 1964 coding also to 1963, which is not coded in EPR. [1963-2020: powerless]

**Group size**

- We use EPR data on group size. [0.021]

**Regional concentration**

- According to Minahan (2002: 876), the Kadazan are "concentrated in the state of Sabah", where they make up 34% of the local population. Other groups in the area are Chinese (22%), Malays (24%), Bajaus (12%), and Muruts (5%). According to MAR, the Kadazans' share in the local population is even lower: 18%. The 2010 census leads to the same conclusion.
- However, data from GeoEPR suggests suggests that the Kadazan tend to be concentrated in the northern part of Sabah, which raises the question whether they can be concentrated there. We browsed census data (2010 census), and found that this most likely is the case (though it is very close and there is a caveat, see below). Note: we could not find equally detailed data for earlier years, but if the threshold is met in 2010 this makes it very likely that the threshold was also met in earlier years. The narrative in Minahan (2002) suggests that the Kadazans' share in the local population has decreased massively over the years (see especially p. 880). In support of Minahan, the 1960 census put the Kadazans' population share of Sabah at 32%, compared to 18% in 2010 (Sadiq 2005). [concentrated]

- Uncertainty arises because the census figures we found remain ambiguous about the total number of Kadazans in Malaysia, as the Kadazans are separately recorded only for Sabah. According to Minahan (2002: 876) there were approx. 755,000 Kadazans across Malaysia in 2002. Minahan's estimate appears exaggerated. All sources consulted suggest a smaller number (MRGI e.g. approx. 490,000, though referring to 2000). Furthermore, all sources that we consulted suggest that the vast majority of the Kadazans lives in Sabah. And according to the 2010 census only 569,000 Kadazans resided in Sabah. If we use an estimate of approx. 600,000 Kadazans, the Kadazans can be considered concentrated.
- Sabah is divided into 5 divisions, which are again divided into districts. We found that the Kadazans make up an absolute majority in only 3 districts (Kota Marudu, Ranau, and Tambunan). 155,000 Kadazans, or approx. 26% of all Kadazans, resided in these districts (population share: 78% across districts). The Kadazans formed a plurality in an another 5 districts (Kota Belud, Penampang, Tuaran, Keningau, and Kuala Penyu). Not all of the eight districts with Kadazans majorities/pluralities are spatially contiguous. If we exclude the non-contiguous district (Kuala Penyu), the threshold for territorial concentration is (marginally) met: A total of 353,000 Kadazans live in these eight district (59% of the total), while the Kadazans make up 50.3% of the local population.
- These are the detailed figures (see Department of Statistics Malaysia 2010: 71):
  - West Coast division
    - Kota Belud district: 39,000 out of 93,000
    - Penampang district: 44,000 out of 126,000
    - Tuaran district: 45,000 out of 105,000
    - Ranau district: 82,000 out of 96,000
  - Kuda division:
    - Kota Marudu district: 42,000 out of 68,000
  - Interior division:
    - Keningau district: 70,000 out of 178,000
    - Not included: Kuala Penyu: 6,000 out of 19,000
    - Tambunan district: 31,000 out of 36,000

**Kin**

- Neither EPR, MAR nor Minahan (2002: 876) suggest ethnic kin. [no kin]

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## Sarawakians

Activity: 1963-2020

### General notes

- The Sarawakians consist of Ibans, the largest Dayak (indigenous) group in Sarawak, and Sarawakian Chinese. Because the political aims of these two groups are rather similar, we merge them into one regionally defined SDM.

### Movement start and end dates

- According to Minahan (2002: 754), the Ibans and dissident Chinese began to form nationalist organizations in the 1950s, but we could not find clear evidence for separatist agitation before 1962, when Britain considered ceding Sarawak (the Northeastern part of Borneo or Kalimantan) to the Malaysian Federation, which was soon to be created. This prompted a revolt, which was quickly suppressed by the British, however. Sarawak joined the Malaysian Federation on September 16, 1963. We code the start date in 1962 but only code the movement from 1963, the year Sarawak joined Malaysia. We did not find evidence for casualties for the 1962 revolt, and so code prior nonviolent activity. The movement is ongoing (Chan 2022; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000; Lexis Nexis; MAR; Minahan 2016). [start date: 1962; end date: ongoing]

### Dominant claim

- Minahan (2002) reports that the movement demanded secession up until recently, but we could not find much evidence of explicitly secessionist claims beyond the 1960s, and even then they were relatively tame and "strategic". For instance, in 1966, secessionism was used as an election threat (Burns 1966), but already then the core demand was for autonomy. Generally, although there are some sentiments regarding secession (Chin 2019), the focus is on cultural rights, autonomy, and land rights and the restoration of the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (Minorities at Risk Project). The only clear-cut mobilization for secession was in 1963, the year Sarawak was incorporated into Malaysia. Hence, we code a claim for increased autonomy from 1964 onwards, and a claim for secession in 1963. [1963: independence claim; 1964-2020: autonomy claim]

### Independence claims

- There was contention for independence in 1962/63, and more limited claims for independence continued for some time (see above). We code an independence claim until 1973, in keeping with the ten-year rule. [start date: 1962; end date: 1973]

### Irredentist claims

NA

### Claimed territory

- The territory claimed by the Sarawakians consists of the Sarawak state in Malaysia. We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database.

**Sovereignty declarations**

- Minahan (2016: 485) suggests that there was an independence declaration on July 22, 1963, shortly before Sarawak's merger with Malaysia in September. We could not corroborate this.

**Separatist armed conflict**

- UCDP/PRIO codes a territorial armed conflict over North Borneo in 1963-1966. According to the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia, the relevant group was the CCO (Clandestine Communist Organisation), which mainly involved local Chinese. This is confirmed by van der Kroef (1964), who describes the CCO as Chinese-led. We found no other separatist violence above the threshold. [1963-1966: LVIOLSD; 1967-2020: NVIOLSD]

**Historical context**

- In the early 19th century, the Ibans rebelled against the sultan of Brunei, who received assistance from the British. Sarawak (under a newly minted British raja) was recognized as independent by the US in 1850 and the UK extended diplomatic ties in 1864. In the late 19th century, the Ibans were frequently in rebellion, but further Iban lands were added to Sarawak in the late 19th century. After WWII, the raja ceded Sarawak to the UK and it became a British colony (Minahan 2002: 754).
- The 1957 Malaysian Education Ordinance preserves the rights of non-Malay groups to be educated in their mother tongue and vernacular schools (Gill 2014: 91). This ordinance mainly targeted the Chinese and Indian communities in Malaysia.
- When Sarawak was a British Crown Colony, Indonesia laid claim to Borneo including Sarawak, but the British wanted to include it in a Malay Federation. The Bornese, who desired independence, protested against this inclusion. The North Kalimantan Liberation Front (TNKU) was subsequently founded, and it had a lot of connections with the local communism movement, where ethnic Chinese played a vital role (Van der Kroef 1964). Sarawak gained independence in July 1963, but only under the condition that it would join Malaysia, which it did in September 1963 (Minahan 2016: 369). Upon its merger with Malaysia, Sarawak was granted extensive autonomy (Minority Rights Group International). [1963: autonomy concession]

**Concessions and restrictions**

- In 1973, Malay was established as the sole medium of instruction and the National Language Act increased the use of Malay in the public administration (Barlocco 2013). Furthermore, Islam was declared the only state religion in Malaysia (Reid 1997: 130). [1973: cultural rights restriction]
- In 1974, the use of all languages except for English and Malay was banned from radio broadcasts (Reid 1997: 130). [1974: cultural rights restriction]
- In 1995, the Malay government conceded that Iban would be officially taught in schools (Reid 1997: 120). Implementation was slow, but the concession was finally implemented in 2007 (Khemlani David & Dealwis 2008: 267). Given the long implementation period, we only code the concession in 2007. [2007: cultural rights concession]
- In 2003, the Malay government lifted a ban on the Iban translation of the Bible (Minority Rights Group International). [2003: cultural rights concession]
- EPR stops coding the Ibans as autonomous after 2009 based on the argument that they lost influence at the regional level. Similar to the situation for the Kadazans, the evidence we found suggests otherwise (see e.g. Puyok 2022). Notably, the movement is also defined more broadly in terms of regional terms, i.e., including local Chinese.

**Regional autonomy**

- We code the Sarawakians as autonomous throughout. Note: the first of January rule does not apply because autonomy became effective with Sawarak's accession to Malaysia. [1963-2020: regional autonomy]
    - EPR stops coding the Ibans as autonomous after 2009 based on the argument that they lost influence at the regional level. Similar to the situation for the Kadazans, the evidence we found suggests otherwise (see e.g. Lai 2022). Notably, the movement is also defined more broadly in terms of regional terms, i.e., including local Chinese.

**De facto independence**

NA

**Major territorial changes**

- Upon its merger with Malaysia, Sarawak was granted extensive autonomy. [1963: host change (new); establishment of regional autonomy]

**EPR2SDM**

| | |
|---|---|
| *Movement* | Sarawakians |
| *Scenario* | 1:n |
| *EPR group(s)* | Chinese, Dayaks |
| *Gwgroupid(s)* | 82001000; 82002000 |

**Power access**

- EPR codes the Dayaks/Ibans as powerless throughout and the Chinese as junior partner throughout. The Chinese are the smaller group in Sarawak, and there are also Chinese in other places of Malaysia. We could not find evidence for inclusion in the central government until the late 2000s. According to Chin (2019), the turning point for East Malaysia came in the 2008 and 2013 elections, where many MPs in the central government came from Sarawak and Sabah, forcing the federal government to take their autonomy demands seriously. The Sarawak Parties' Alliance remains a significant force in the subsequent elections and served in the coalition government. We hence code the Sarawakians as junior partners from 2009 onwards. [1963-2008: powerless; 2009-2020: junior partner]

**Group size**

- We could not find data on the number of self-identified Sarawakians and, therefore, rely on the regional population. According to the 2020 national census, the population of Sarawak was 2,453,677 while the entire population of Malaysia was 33,871,431. [0.0724]

**Regional concentration**

- The movement is regionally defined and so we assume regional concentration. [concentrated]

**Kin**

- There are approx. 3 million Dayaks in neighboring Indonesia. The other major groups in Sarawak including ethnic Chinese and Malays, and both groups have a significant presence in neighboring countries (MAR; EPR; Minahan 2002: 751; Minahan 2016: 369). [kin in neighboring country]

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