

*Nation-building  
in Malaysia  
1946-1974*

James P. Ongkili

38 - 68

Singapore  
Oxford University Press  
Oxford New York  
1985

370385

*Oxford University Press*  
*Oxford London New York Toronto*  
*Kuala Lumpur Singapore Hong Kong Tokyo*  
*Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Karachi*  
*Nairobi Dar es Salaam Cape Town*  
*Melbourne Auckland*

*and associates in*  
*Beirut Berlin Ibadan Mexico City Nicosia*

© Oxford University Press 1985

*OXFORD is a trademark of Oxford University Press*

*All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,  
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,  
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise,  
without the prior permission of Oxford University Press*

ISBN 0 19 582574 8

71  
324.9595  
ONG

*Printed in Singapore by Koon Wah Printing Pte. Ltd.*  
*Published by Oxford University Press*  
*10, New Industrial Road, Singapore 1953.*

370352

2 0 AUG 1985

*Pustaka Negara*  
*Malaysia*

## *Preface*

THIS book is a thematic study, an examination of the process of political evolution which gave birth first to Malaya and then to Malaysia and the major problem that had to be faced by those directly involved in guiding the destiny of the country, namely, communalism. Malaysia might not have gone through a phase of violent struggle to achieve independence but the way to nationhood was nonetheless thorny because of the plural nature of the society.

Undoubtedly, communalism was the fundamental problem of nation-building in Malaysia during the period under study. Communal groups, such as the various political parties, ranging from the UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance, the PAP, the PMIP, to the SUPP, BARJASA, UPKO, USNO and others, sought representation during the period of nation-building from the Malayan Union of 1946 to the formation of Malaysia in 1963. Every major effort to establish a nation highlighted communalism in the country; but the same problem of communalism also determined at length the nature of politics and political system which the Malaysians adopted.

It is pertinent to mention here that what is attempted is a broad historical view of the efforts made by the Malayan/Malaysian leadership to weld together disparate parts so that there would emerge a general sense of national consciousness. It is not a study of the psychological and sociological aspect of communalism. Malaysia's peculiar communal problems have been studied by many scholars belonging to various disciplines. Very few indeed have been inclined to look at the problem from the perspective of those who have been entrusted with the serious responsibility of running the government of the country.

Although at the time when I first began this academic study my own experience was limited to that of a former civil servant, I was subsequently placed in a situation where I had first-hand experience of the kind of problems which the Malayan/Malaysian leadership had to grapple with in dealing with a very heterogeneous society. If there is an easy

solution to the very acute problem of communalism, I am certain it would have been adopted a long time ago.

The sources used here have been as varied as possible. In addition to published official and unofficial documents, I have been fortunate in being able to interview and have discussions with Malaysian, Singaporean and British leaders and personalities who played significant roles in the events of the period under study.

I would like to record my appreciation and deep gratitude to the numerous individuals and institutions that have helped me in the course of preparing this work which was originally written as a Ph.D. dissertation. Among these must be mentioned Professor S. Arasaratnam who initially supervised the research. As the second and greatly involved supervisor, Royal Professor Ungku A. Aziz, sacrificed a lot of his busy time as Vice-Chancellor to the benefit of the present writer. Among many other academics who gave the benefit of their varied and valuable viewpoints on the issues and problems of nation-building in Malaysia were Professors K. J. Ratnam, Wang Gungwu, Khoo Kay Kim, J. M. Chandran, Zainal Abidin bin Abdul Wahid, (the late) Wong Lin Ken, Nicholas Tarling and Damador Prasad Singhal.

Through the assistance of the University of Malaya, I was able to go to Britain to consult records on Malaya, Sarawak and Sabah, particularly at the Public Record Office and the State Papers Room of the British Museum. Professor C. D. Cowan of the School of Oriental and African Studies helped greatly with suggestions as to where to locate various research materials in London.

In Malaysia itself, the Arkib Negara (National Archives) proved helpful and useful. Both the Sarawak Museum and Archives and the Sabah Central Archives assisted me in obtaining sources which helped to fill in gaps in the histories of the two Borneo states. The staffs of these institutions were very obliging indeed.

Had it not been for the fourteen months which I was invited to spend at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, the dissertation would not have been completed so soon. The Director, Professor Kernial Singh Sandhu, and his staff were immensely helpful, while Peggy Lee Giok Huay, Celina Heng Sang Noi and Ong Beng Thye patiently typed the dissertation.

*Department of History  
University of Malaya  
Kuala Lumpur  
1982*

JAMES P. ONGKILI

# Contents

<i>Preface</i>	v
<i>Tables</i>	ix
<i>Abbreviations</i>	x
<b>1 Background</b>	1
Malay Society	1
The Indigenous Society of Sarawak and Sabah	3
The Growth of Immigrant Communities	5
The Development of Foreign Administration	8
Political Activity in Malaya prior to 1941	17
The Impact of the Japanese Occupation	19
<b>2 The Unification of the Malay Peninsula, 1946-1948</b>	38
The MacMichael Mission	38
The Malayan Union Proposals	40
Malay Reactions	42
The Federation of 1948	53
Opposition to the Federation Proposals	59
Overview	67
<b>3 In Quest of Racial Unity</b>	75
The Emergency and Race Relations	75
Constitutional Developments during the Emergency	88
The Growth of Party Politics	91
The 1955 Elections: the Dawn of Nationhood	94
<b>4 A Nation is Born</b>	105
Education and Language	105
Citizenship	112
The Alliance and the Achievement of Independence	114
Economic Planning and Rural Poverty	122