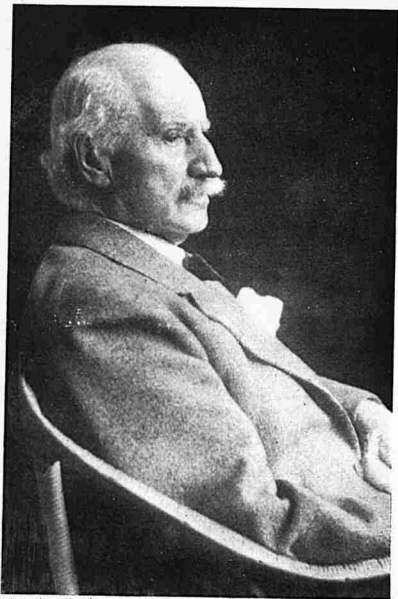


A HISTORY OF MODERN SABAH



*The portrait of Sir Alfred Dent is taken from a slide found among the records of the British North Borneo Company. It is reproduced with the kind permission of his son, L. A. Dent, Esq.*

**SIR ALFRED DENT**  
Founder of the Chartered Company

# A HISTORY OF MODERN SABAH

(North Borneo 1881 - 1963)

BY

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## PREFACE

THE British North Borneo (Chartered) Company was formed in 1881 to administer the territory of North Borneo, over which it had acquired sovereign rights. Chartered Companies were already in disfavour when the great East India Company was dissolved in 1858, and it was surprising to some that this mode of government should be again revived. Its initial success, however, led to the formation of other, more famous, companies in East, West and South Africa, and (by Germany) in New Guinea. These had their day and died, while, little noticed, the unique form of government which they typified was continued in North Borneo. For sixty years (1881-1941) the Chartered Company governed the State, surrendering its sovereignty only in 1946.

The British North Borneo Company was not only the longest lasting of the nineteenth century Chartered Companies, but it was also the only one that preserved its documents. With their help, the history of the Chartered Company is here told in full, for the first time. Piled haphazardly in tin trunks in London are numerous bundles of letters and documents of the Company, and these reveal how an American attempt to found a colony in North Borneo led, step by step, to the formation of the Chartered Company. Other records, official and unofficial, published and primary, in both London and North Borneo, tell the history of the Company and of the territory of North Borneo. It is a little known but very creditable history, a sixty-year rule that produced from warring and poverty-stricken anarchy a peaceful and contented people and an ever-expanding economy. In the light of present-day conditions in South-east Asia this is an achievement that should not be belittled, and one that may well be envied.

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