

# NINETEENTH-CENTURY BORNEO

A STUDY IN DIPLOMATIC RIVALRY

BY

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In past years, I have sometimes thought what a thing it would be, could the Queen 'in Council' (in Parliament or wherever it were) pick out some gallant-minded, stout, well-gifted Cadet, — younger son of a Duke, of an Earl, or a Queen herself; younger son doomed now to go mainly to the Devil, for absolute want of a career; — and say to him, "Young fellow, if there do lie in you potentialities of governing, of gradually guiding, leading and coercing to a noble goal, how sad is it they should be all lost! They are the grandest gifts a mortal can have; and they are, of all, the most necessary to other mortals in this world. See, I have scores on scores of 'Colonies', all ungoverned, and nine-tenths of them full of jungles, boa-constrictors, rattlesnakes, and Parliamentary Eloquences.... one of these you shall have, you as Vice-King; on rational considerations, and *ad vitam aut culpam* it shall be yours (and perhaps your posterity's if worthy): go you and buckle with it, in the name of Heaven; and let us see what you will build it to!"

THOMAS CARLYLE

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Landgenooten! volgen wij het voorbeeld van Engeland! Het eigenbelang roept ons naar Borneo, maar brengen wij den Borneooten de weldaden, die het christendom ons schenkt, en die met het goud van hunnen grond niet te betalen zijn.... Wij zijn geroepen, om die ongelukkigen uit hunne stoffelijke en zedelijke ellende op te heffen, en daardoor onze eigen nationale grootheid en rijkdom te vermeerderen. Thans is het nog tijd om aan die roeping te voldoen; maar verwaarloozn wij onzen plicht, dan houdt Engeland het dreigend zwaard van Damocles boven onze hoofden, dan 'wordt de scepter van ons genomen en aan een ander gegeven'.

Dr W. R. BARON VAN HOEVÉLL

24 OCT 1985  
Perpustakaan Negara  
Malaysia

## PREFACE

This study deals with the years 1809 to 1888, during which the fate of modern Borneo was being decided. In 1809, under the stress of the Napoleonic Wars, and after more than two centuries of intermittent occupation, the Dutch were forced to withdraw from the island entirely. They returned in 1817, but largely neglected their newly-restored possessions until the arrival on the north-west coast in 1839 of James Brooke, the future 'White Raja' of Sarawak. This event — the most important single occurrence in the history of nineteenth-century Borneo — not only stimulated British interest in the north-western corner of the island, and led directly to the founding of Labuan in 1846, but also obliged the Dutch to look more carefully to the security of their possessions in the south. The succeeding forty years saw a steady increase in the influence and dominion of both powers, until by 1888 the island had been partitioned between the two.

Most writers on nineteenth-century Borneo so far have concentrated on its internal history. Veth, Kielstra, van der Kemp, van Rees, Baring-Gould and Bampfyld, Keppel, St. John, Rutter, and others have described in great detail and with substantial accuracy the various wars and expeditions, political developments and administrative changes in the areas and during the periods with which they were respectively concerned. I have not attempted to recapitulate their narratives. My purpose has rather been to interpret existing knowledge in the light of my own researches into the policies and ambitions of the British and Dutch Governments, to view the history of the island not from Bandjermasin or Kuching, but from ~~Batavia, London~~ and The Hague.

The chief sources which I have used are the manuscript records relating to Borneo of the English East India Company, 1812—24 (preserved at the India Office Library, London), of the British Foreign and Colonial Offices, 1842—92 (at the Public Record Office), and of the Netherlands Ministries of the Colonies, 1813—75, and of Foreign Affairs, 1838—70 (at the Rijksarchief in The Hague). Some volumes in these series have been consulted by other writers for particular purposes but, so far as I am aware, no systematic use of them has previously been made. Because no 'student's guide' to the Dutch colonial

archives has yet been produced, I have given in Appendix 'A' a brief description of the records of the Netherlands Ministry of the Colonies which refer to the nineteenth century and which are to be found in the Rijksarchief. This, I hope, may be of value to students working in the same field.

The present work is based on a dissertation entitled 'British and Dutch Policy in Borneo, 1809—1888', which was approved for the degree of Ph. D. at the University of Cambridge in October 1953. I have since re-written some sections and modified others, using information contained in books and articles which have appeared during the past twelve months.

I am glad to have the opportunity of thanking Prof. D. G. E. Hall and Mr. C. D. Cowan of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, both of whom read portions of my original manuscript in draft and provided me with many valuable comments and suggestions. During my visits to Holland I was privileged to meet and received generous assistance from a number of Dutch scholars, including Prof. mr. F. M. baron van Asbeck, Prof. dr. J. H. Boeke, Prof. dr. W. Ph. Coolhaas, Prof. dr. J. J. L. Duyvendak, Prof. mr. J. H. A. Logemann, and Prof. dr. T. H. Milo. I am also indebted to the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde for generous financial support; to Mr. J. F. Trotter for producing an excellent set of maps from the sketches with which I supplied him; to Mrs. Emily Hahn Boxer for drawing my attention to a collection of Dutch manuscripts which I had missed; to the Secretary of the Borneo Company, Limited, for allowing me to see the early minute books of that organization; and to the staffs of the Public Record Office, the British Museum, and the Rijksarchief, and of the Libraries of the Colonial Office, the Royal Empire Society, the Universities of Cambridge, London, and Leiden, and the Ministerie voor Unie-zaken en Overzeese Rijksdelen for numerous acts of kindness and attention.

Finally, I wish to express my great sense of gratitude to Dr. Victor Purcell of the University of Cambridge and Prof. dr. G. Gonggrijp of the Nederlandsche Economische Hoogeschool, Rotterdam, who jointly supervised the research which has resulted in this book.

University of Malaya, May 1954.

GRAHAM IRWIN

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*Maps*

1. Dutch Borneo: Western Division
  2. Dutch Borneo: South and Eastern Division
  3. Sarawak and Brunei
  4. North Borneo
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