

FOREWORD

**Tun Haji Openg bin Abang Spi'ee**  
S.M.N., P.N.B.S., O.B.E..  
**First Malaysian Governor of Sarawak**

— Compiled By HO AH CHON —

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## FOREWORD

This book depicts the many events, both happy and sad, which took place in Sarawak during the earlier years (1963 to 1966) of Sarawak's independence within Malaysia. The contents, especially the pictures, bring to life many events associated with the travels and deeds of Sarawak's first Governor Tun Abang Haji Openg and Sarawak's first Chief Minister Datuk Amar Stephen Kalong Ningkan.

Readers from outside Sarawak and in particular those who are keen "to get to know" the post colonial great leaders of Sarawak such as the late Tun Abang Hj. Openg, the first Governor of Sarawak since its independence and the late Tun Temenggong Jugah, the first and last Federal Minister for Sarawak Affairs will no doubt find this book a source of invaluable information. One will also have the opportunity to have a few glimpses of the last British Administrators such as the last British Governor Sir Alexander Waddell.

Within a span of about thirty years a period of just over four years cannot be considered too long in the annals of Sarawak. However, the post colonial era of 1963 to 1966 brings back reminiscences of the "dark long days" of the Indonesian confrontation and the height of the communist insurgencies in Sarawak that the first Sarawak Government had to deal with.

I believe this is not the only book about Sarawak and its people. Nonetheless, Mr. Ho Ah Chon ought to be commended for taking such great pains to dig into old records and files to compile this book and to arrange the events of the early sixties in a chronological order. I congratulate him for a job well done.

**Datuk Amar Stephen Kalong Ningkan**

74, Evergreen Garden

Nanas Road West

Kuching, Sarawak.

16th November 1992.



## Acknowledgement

The description of the various events in this issue of the First Malaysian Governor of Sarawak, had been reported solely by the 'Sarawak By The Week' issued by the Sarawak Information Service as from 1963 to 1966.

The biographical sketch of Tun Haji Openg bin Abang Sapi'ee is extracted from Council Negeri Centenary.

I am very grateful to Datuk Amar Stephen Kalong Ningkan for his forward.

This book is dedicated to his excellency Tun Haji Open who passed away twenty two year ago on the 28th March 1969.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ho Ah Chon".

**HO AH CHON**

BBS. A.M.N.

16/11/1992

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# Tun Haji Openg bin Abang Sapi'ee,

S.M.N., P.N.B.S., O.B.E.

## First Malaysian Governor of Sarawak

Tun Haji Openg was born in Kuching on 7th October, 1905, the son of Abang Sapi'ee bin Abang Omar. He is a great-grandson of the Dato Patinggi Gapor who was Governor of Sarawak before the days of James Brooke, and through him is descended from Menteri Hussin, the grandson of Raja Minangkabau, who was also an ancestor of their Highnesses the Sultans Mohammad Tajuddin, Hashim, Mohamad Jumalul Alam and Omar Ali Saifuddin III of Brunei. He is also the great-great-grandson of the Dato Patinggi Ali of Sarawak fame and a direct descendant of Raja Jarum.

Tun Openg was educated at the Government Malay School, Kuching, St. Anthony's School, Sarikei and St. Thomas's School, Kuching.

Tun Openg joined H.H. the Rajah's service in 1924 as a clerk and worked for several years in various outstations.

In 1930 Tun Openg married the present Toh Puan Hajjah Masniah, P.N.B.S., the only daughter of Abang Haji Abdul Rahman, who through his father, Abang Haji Matusin, was a grandson of the Dato Patinggi Gapor. They have four sons and six daughters.

In 1932 Tun Openg was promoted to Native Officer and performed the duties of Senior Native Officer at Sarikei for several years, after which he became Officer-in-charge of Kuching District.

In March, 1940 he was appointed a Member of the Council Negeri and he continued to be a Member until 15th September, 1963.

After one year of the Japanese Occupation of Sarawak, Tun Openg was appointed Guncho or District Officer of Kuching by the Japanese Military Government and he held this post until September of 1945, when he handed over his duties to Officers of the British Civil Affairs Unit.

Tun Openg who was then District Court Magistrate, Officer-in-Charge of the Secretariat for Native Affairs and Vice-President of the Malay National Union was transferred to the Fourth Division in 1947 and served there and in the Fifth Division as District Officer, Limbang, after his promotion to the senior service in 1950 until 1953 when he returned to Kuching as District Officer. In 1951 Tun

Openg was made a Temporary Member of Supreme Council.

In January 1953, Tun Openg as he then was, was appointed a Dato and he attended the Coronation of H.M. the Queen in London as one of the Sarawak representatives in the same year. When the Majlis Islam was established in 1956 he became the first President, with authority to revise the Undang-Undang of the Malay Court which had been laid down in 1915.

In 1958 Tun Openg and his wife made the pilgrimage to Mecca and though he retired from the Senior Service on his return he continued to serve as President of Majlis Islam until 15th September, 1963.

In 1961 Tun Openg was selected by Council Negeri and attended several meetings as a member of the Malaysia Solidarity Consultative Committee and in 1962 he was awarded the O.B.E. by the Queen.

He was subsequently one of the representatives who in July, 1963 went to sign the Malaysia Agreement in London. In addition to the foregoing Tun Openg has served at different times as a Member of the Board of Examiners for Government Officers, Member of the First Division Malay Charitable Trust, Acting Superintendent of Prisons, Member of the Turtle Board and Turtle Trust, Member of the Kuching Municipal Council, Member of the Youthful Offenders Board, and Chairman of the Mesjid Besar, Kuching.

Tun Openg was sworn in as Governor of Sarawak on the 16th September, 1963 for a period of two years.

On 10th July, 1964 Tun Openg became Guardian of the Order of Chivalry styled The Most Illustrious Order of the Star of Sarawak and on the 23rd November, 1964 he was invested by His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong with the insignia of Seri Maharajah Mangku Negara at the Astana in Kuching.

On 15th September, 1965 Tun Openg's term as Governor was extended by His Majesty for a further period of four years. But Tun Openg did not complete his term. He died on 28th March, 1969 and was succeeded by the then Tan Sri Tuanku Haji Bujang.