

**ETHNICITY, CULTURE AND INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP IN
MODERN POLITICS: THE CASE OF THE KADAZANDUSUN IN
SABAH, EAST MALAYSIA**

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This paper is based on an on-going study that examines the role of ethnic identity, cultural unity and indigenous leadership institutions in shaping political change among the Kadazandusuns. The analysis of the three issues is complemented by a survey conducted in 2009 among 200 Kadazandusuns from Kota Kinabalu, Ranau and Tambunan. The preliminary findings suggest that ethnic identity remains a crucial component in the political survival of the Kadazandusuns. The Kadazandusun political elites not only use the identity issue as a 'bargaining tool' but also use this issue to raise ethnic sentiment to win popular support. A majority of the Kadazandusuns surveyed in the study believed that the identity issue has been used for political mileage and that it is time for the Kadazandusun leaders to solve the issue once and for all. All of the Kadazandusun-based cultural associations remain an important 'grassroots base' for the Kadazandusun political elites. The respondents believed that the Kadazandusun political leaders are not united and should be blamed for causing the Kadazandusuns to split. Joseph Pairin Kitingan is seen as the prominent figure that is capable of uniting the Kadazandusuns. Although his status as Huguang Siou is relevant to some Kadazandusuns, other respondents wanted Pairin not to use his Huguang Siou title for political expediency.

Keywords: Joseph Pairin Kitingan, Huguang Siou, Kadazandusun Cultural Association (KDCA), Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS)

INTRODUCTION

The Kadazandusuns are at a crossroads. Although they are the largest ethnic group in Sabah, they are unable to exert political control and are still grappling with the issues of under-development and political marginalisation. Part of the problem is the disunity among the Kadazandusun political elites and their lack of vision to develop their community. Currently, there are three major parties that represent the Kadazandusuns: Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS), United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (UPKO) and Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS). Each party has its own struggles and strategies to maintain Kadazandusun support. PBS appears to receive the most support, followed by UPKO and PBRS. A number of studies have suggested that the Kadazandusuns

remain loyal to PBS due to Joseph Pairin Kitingan's role as Huguan Siou (Paramount Leader) and PBS's status as a strong, locally based party (Chin, 1994: 904–915; 1996: 98–126; 1999b; Puyok, 2007: 289–310).

However, more Kadazandusuns have now turned to UPKO as an alternative to PBS simply because, compared to the latter, the former has been aggressively campaigning for Kadazandusun sentiment. Conversely, PBRs appears to be losing its support partly because it does not have a strong grassroots base. Kadazandusun politics has been shaped by at least three factors: (a) ethnic identity, (b) cultural unity and (c) the Huguan Siou leadership institution. In the case of ethnic identity, the Kadazandusun ethnic label is arguably a product of political, rather than legal or socio-cultural, invention (Reid, 1997: 120–136 and Stephen, 2000: 1–22). For the purpose of political expediency, all three of the Kadazandusun-based parties have consistently exploited the Kadazandusun identity issue. Again, PBS appears to be at an advantage because Pairin has been at the helm of the Kadazandusun Cultural Association (KDCA), whose functions including promoting Kadazandusun culture. The issue of leadership deals primary with the influential Huguan Siou title currently held by Pairin. Pairin is the only the second Kadazandusun leader to have been conferred with the title, placing him in a unique position both as a traditional and a political leader of the Kadazandusuns. Pairin's status as Huguan Siou has fortified his image as the Kadazandusun leader, who becomes a symbol of strength and unity to the Kadazandusuns (Luping, 1984: 83–87 and Puyok, 2007: 289–317). It appears that the status not only legitimises Pairin's position as the Paramount Leader but also ensures his strong grip on the Kadazandusun political base. Studies on Kadazandusun politics, however, appear to have neglected these two aspects.

This article aims to address the above-mentioned knowledge gap. The research finding in this paper is partly derived from the on-going study that looks at the interplay between the Kadazandusun identity, culture and indigenous leadership tradition in the changing politics of the Kadazandusun community. This article seeks to answer the following questions:

1. In what ways do the issues of ethnic identity, cultural unity and indigenous leadership contribute to political change among the Kadazandusuns?
2. To what extent do these three issues affect the Kadazandusun political participation in mainstream Malaysian politics?
3. What are the responses of the Kadazandusuns to the current debates on their identity?
4. What are the responses of the Kadazandusuns to the current issues related to their cultural unity?

5. What role does the Huguang Siou leadership institution play in shaping Kadazandusun politics?
6. What are the perceptions of the Kadazandusuns towards the Huguang Siou leadership institution?

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The Kadazandusuns have been represented by numerous political parties since the formation of Malaysia in 1963. According to the Yearbook of Statistics Sabah (2004), the Kadazandusuns comprise approximately 17.97% of the total population in Sabah, making them the biggest ethnic group (Table 1). Politically, however, the Kadazandusun have not been able to exert any political control, except from 1985 to 1994 under PBS. PBS, however, could not have been said to be a Kadazandusun-based party, as its Muslim and Chinese members were equally predominant. When PBS was formed in 1985, its main objective was to gain the support of all the indigenous people of Sabah. PBS's multiracial outlook began to diminish after gradually losing its Chinese and Muslim support. The 'peninsular political dichotomy' introduced by the Barisan Nasional (BN) also forced the PBS to become a communal party (Chin, 1999a: 20–40).

Table 1: Mid-year population estimates by ethnic group, Sabah, 2004

Ethnic Group	Number	Percentage
<i>Malaysian Citizens</i>		
Malay	330,600	11.55
Kadazandusun	514,400	17.97
Bajau	381,500	13.32
Murut	94,000	3.28
Other <i>Bumiputera</i>	421,700	14.73
Chinese	277,300	9.68
Others	138,000	4.82
Sub-Total	2,157,500	75.38
<i>Non-Malaysian Citizens</i>		
	704,800	24.62
Total Population	2,862,300	100

Source: Yearbook of Statistics Sabah, 2004.

The first party that represented the Kadazandusuns was the United National Kadazan Organisation (UNKO), founded in 1961 and led by the first Huguang Siou, Donald Stephens (later Fuad Stephens). The UNKO later merged with the rural Pasok Momugun to form the United Pasok Momogun Kadazan

Organisation (UPKO) in June of 1964. After the merger, the UPKO became a formidable force for the Kadazandusuns to exert their political influence. The UPKO, together with the Muslim-based United Sabah National Organisation (USNO), the Chinese-based Sabah Chinese Association (SCA) and the Sabah Indian Congress (SIC), formed a coalition—the Sabah Alliance—and became the first government to rule Sabah after the formation of Malaysia in 1963 (Luping, 1994; Ongkili, 1989: 61–79 and 1967). However, the rule of the Sabah Alliance was short lived due the fallout between Stephens and the founder of the USNO, Mustapha Harun, in 1965. The UPKO was later pushed into the political periphery, and Stephens had no choice but to support the USNO.

Following Mustapha's fallout with the Federal Government, the Kadazandusuns political fortune took a different turn again. Stephens abandoned Mustapha and pledged his support for the Federal Government led by Prime Minister Abdul Razak. Razak sought a new party to topple the USNO Government. With his blessing, the new party – the Bersatu Rakyat Jelata Sabah or the Racially United Sabah People (BERJAYA) – was formed in 1975, and Stephens was entrusted to lead it (Han, 1979: 379–389). The Kadazandusuns' hope of seeing their leader at the helm of the state once again was dashed after Stephens's sudden demise in an airplane crash off of Sembulan in 1976. Following Stephens' death, Harris Salleh became the President of the BERJAYA and the Chief Minister of Sabah.

The pro-federal Salleh undertook a number of policies that had angered the Kadazandusuns. The Kadazandusuns regarded Harris's action as tantamount to destroying their cultural significance. In defending his action, Salleh said he was 'pressurised' by the Federal Government to promote the "Malay-isation" agenda in Sabah. The Kadazandusuns were unhappy. Pairin, a young Kadazandusun leader in Harris's cabinet, mounted an open challenge. This resulted in Pairin being dismissed from BERJAYA in August 1984. The battle between the two leaders continued after a by-election was announced in December 1984 in Pairin's stronghold in Tambunan. Harris suffered his first major setback when the BERJAYA candidate in Tambunan lost to Pairin. Pairin's popularity grew, and Harris had no choice but to do the unthinkable, which was to call for a snap election.

Harris called for a snap election in 1985 to ensure that the new party, PBS, formed by Pairin, did not have the means to expand its grassroots support; however, PBS won the election. For the Kadazandusuns, Pairin was their new 'champion'. Pairin became the Chief Minister, and the Kadazandusuns returned to their former glory. PBS continued its outstanding electoral performance in the 1986 elections, during which the BERJAYA was completely decimated. PBS ruled Sabah until 1994, when rampant crossovers caused its downfall (Chin 1994: 904–915). PBS became the main opposition party in Sabah until it was re-

admitted into the Barisan Nasional (BN), the Federal ruling party in 2002. Since then, Sabah politics has been controlled by the UMNO, which entered Sabah, again with a strong federal influence, in 1991 (Chin, 1994: 904–915; 1999a: 20–40; and Mohd. Agus, 2006).

KADAZANDUSUN IDENTITY

The word 'Kadazan' was popularised by Donald Stephens who introduced it in 1961 during the formation of the UNKO. Even before that, as the editor of the *Sabah Times*, Stephens used the newspaper to promote the Kadazan language. His close association with the British also made it easy for the Kadazan language to gain recognition. The reason for the introduction of the ethnic label was to unite all the non-Muslim indigenous groups. The word Kadazan was chosen as it was considered 'acceptable' and did not carry any negative connotation, in contrast to the word 'Dusun'. The people in Penampang and Papar preferred the word 'Kadazan' and hated the word 'Dusun' (*Daily Express*, 22 March 2009). Dusun means 'orchard', and those who disliked the word associated it with socio-economic backwardness. The word 'Dusun' was first used by the British colonisers "to describe the majority agricultural population of Borneo's interior". However, a majority of the educated Kadazandusuns preferred to use the word 'Kadazan' to describe their ethnic background. They thought that Kadazan was their original ethnic name and that Dusun was a British-given name (Reid, 1997: 120–136).¹

Stephens, however, later admitted that he made a mistake in introducing the ethnic label Kadazan (*Kinabalu Sunday Times*, 19 February 1967, cited in *Daily Express*, 22 March 2009). Herman Luping, another well-known Kadazandusun leader, concurred with Stephens: "The mistake we made in 1961 was to call everybody Kadazan – that was a mistake. What we should have done is to have the label Kadazan on top and then below this Kadazan, we have Dusun, we have Kuijau. While we have the Kadazan, we should have also allowed Dusun at the same time. Instead, we tried to swallow the pride of some of these people who want to be called Dusun" (*Daily Express*, 22 March 2009).

The introduction of the word Kadazan and Stephens's attempt to use it as an all inclusive approach to describe the indigenous people in Sabah was vehemently opposed from various quarters, especially the Dusun people. The issue of ethnic identity resurfaced following the conflict between Pairin, who headed the Kadazan Cultural Association (KCA), and Mark Koding, the President of the United Sabah Dusun Association (USDA). The KCA insisted on using the term Kadazan as it was "historically correct to do so," while USDA maintained that the term Dusun was more accurate. The conflict over the terms Kadazan and

Dusun originated in the personal rift between Pairin and Koding. Before the 1986 state polls, Koding was sent to meet with the federal leaders to discuss the 'Sabah Formula'.

The formula was a plan devised by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad on the proposal to form a coalition government in Sabah. The proposal aimed for PBS to rule the state with its arch enemies, USNO and BERJAYA. A majority of the PBS Supreme Council members, however, voted against the formula, except for Koding. Koding was later accused of having been instigated by the federal leaders to leave PBS and to form a breakaway party (*Daily Express*, 7 January 1986). Koding was subsequently dismissed from the PBS Government, and he took the Dusun cause with him more seriously. Together with other notable Dusun leaders, such as Kalakau Untol and Kasitah Gadam, he formed a new party called the *Angkatan Keadilan Kemajuan Rakyat Sabah* (AKAR), or the People's Justice and Progressive Front.

The formation of AKAR did not seem to worry Pairin, but he knew that the growing enmity between the Kadazan and Dusun groups could weaken the PBS and his leadership. Pairin came up with an idea to solve the problem: to employ the same approach used by Stephens to group all of the indigenous people in Sabah under one ethnic label. The delegates to the Kadazan Cultural Association Fifth Biennial Delegates Conference on 5 November 1989 unanimously agreed to change the association's name to the Kadazan Dusun Cultural Association (KDCA). Pairin said that the "adoption of the word 'Dusun' into the KCA name heralded a new era for the state's tribal groups" and that it would "remove the impression that the KCA belongs to the Kadazan people only" (*Daily Express*, 6 November 1989 and *Borneo Mail*, 18 August 1989).

The insertion of the word Dusun into KCA's name was one of the 26 amendments passed at the conference. The other significant resolutions were to include 39 other sub-ethnic groups across Sabah and to vest power to the Koisaan (Kadazandusun cultural body) to bestow the *Huguan Siou* (Paramount Leader) title that was held by Pairin. All of the ethnic groups described as Kadazandusun in the KDCA's constitution were Bonggi, Bundu, Dumpas, Gana, Garo, Ida'an, Kadayan, Kimaragang, Kolobuan, Kuijau, Lingkabau, Liwan, Lobu, Sonsogon, Lundayo (Lundayeh), Makiang, Malapi, Mangkaak, Minokok, Murut, Nabai, Paitan, Pingas, Rumanau, Rungus, Sinobu, Sinorupu, Sukang, Sungei, Tatana, Tangara, Tidong, Tindal, Tobilung, Tolinting, Tombonuo, Tuhawon, Tutung, Bisaya and Lotud. The number of sub-ethnic groups described as Kadazandusun was increased to 40 with the inclusion of the Bisaya community in 1995 (*Borneo Mail*, 13 February 1995).

In responding to Pairin's action, Koding said it was a 'cosmetic move' and "politically motivated" and that the USDA would not be affected and would continue to represent the Dusuns in Sabah. He said:

The KCA members have every right to change the name of the association. However, to include Dusun in the name does not necessarily mean that their attitude towards the community has changed. Essentially, the name change is a cosmetic move aimed at trying to appease the Dusun community. However, the sincerity of those responsible for initiating the name change will always be questioned. The name change is also another political move in view of the Ranau by-election. PBS, through the KCA, simply needs Dusun support in Ranau and what better way than to include the word Dusun in the KCA name (*Daily Express*, 7 November 1989).

The conflict between Pairin and Koding remained unresolved even after Koding's passing. Those in the PBS believed that the USDA was used by the Federal Government to topple the PBS. The BERJAYA leaders Harris Salleh and Ayub Aman were accused of being involved in the conspiracy to use the cultural body to weaken the Kadazandusun support in the PBS. Ayub denied the accusation; he said the re-activation of the USDA "was nothing more than an altruistic reason based on the genuine interests of the Dusun community" (*Daily Express*, 22 March 2009). Reid (1997: 120–136) wrote, "there was little doubt that Mark Koding and some other USDA leaders were using the identity issue to advance their own political ambitions, probably encouraged by non-Kadazandusun leaders out to weaken the PBS Government".

The identity issue continued to further divide the Kadazandusuns. Although the KDCA's move to introduce the new ethnic label was welcomed by a significant number of Kadazandusuns, others were insisting that the Kadazans and Dusuns were two distinct people. The move by the KDCA was regarded as an attempt by Pairin to bolster his Kadazandusun support and to weaken the Dusun support in USDA. The debate over the issue was temporarily stopped after the USDA and KDCA agreed to name the Kadazan and Dusun people as Kadazandusun on the 24 January 1995.

However, the debate over the issue re-ignited after the Kadazan Sabah Society (KSS) brought it to the forefront by claiming that there is no such thing as Kadazandusun, stating that one should consider himself or herself either Kadazan or Dusun.

Knowing that the identity issue has done more harm than good to the Kadazandusun community, the Kadazandusun leaders appear to be supportive of

the idea as a solution to the issue once and for all. UPKO President Bernard Dompok said "it is time for the Kadazandusun to move on" (*Daily Express*, 22 March 2009). He believed that the way forward to solve the issue is to let everyone agree on what they want to call themselves: "Let the people decide what they want. Call what you like; you can call yourself a Dusun, you can call yourself a Kadazan because it's never-ending." For PBRIS President Joseph Kurup, the issue should not have arisen inasmuch as the Kadazans and Dusuns (including the Muruts) share a common culture (*Daily Express*, 22 March 2009). Another key Kadazandusun leader, Jeffrey Kitingan, Pairin's brother, offered a different opinion. He supported the resolution made in 1989 that used the term Kadazandusun to describe the 40 indigenous ethnic groups in Sabah. For Jeffrey, the resolution was a 'good idea' and 'should be supported', as it was meant to unite the Kadazandusuns 'psychologically and mentally.' The resolution was made to ensure that no one would fight "over who is Kadazan and who is Dusun anymore." In essence, the word Kadazandusun was meant 'to pacify everybody'; to solve the problem, the KDCA can push for the official recognition of the name Kadazandusun (*Daily Express*, 22 March 2009).

Perception Towards the Identity Issue

The majority, at more than 80%, of the respondents identified themselves as 'Dusun' while a minority of the respondent identified as Kadazandusun (8%), Kadazan (2.5%) and Kadazandusun-Murut (1.5%) (Table 2). This shows that most of the respondents, a large number of whom came from the districts of Ranau and Tambunan, wanted to retain their 'regional' identity instead of using the ethnic label introduced by the KDCA. This also re-affirms the contention that those who come from rural areas prefer to call themselves as 'Dusun' instead of either 'Kadazan' or 'Kadazandusun'. A majority of the respondents (85.5%) also believed that the identity issue has been used by certain quarters to pursue their political agenda (Table 3). Nearly everyone (82.9%) wanted the identity issue to be resolved. More than half (67.0%) agreed that the on-going debate on the issue is no more than a waste of time.

The decision of the KDCA to use the ethnic label Kadazandusun, while controversial, is considered to be an important milestone in the evolution of the Kadazandusun identity. One respondent seemed to be supportive of the idea to use a single ethnic label to unite all of the indigenous ethnic groups in Sabah. Most (80.5%) of the respondents perceived that the decision should be regarded as a point of departure to solve the identity problem (Table 4). However, 79.7% perceived that the KDCA's decision was politically motivated. Furthermore, 73.2% thought that the decision was wrong because the 40 ethnic groups labelled as Kadazandusun came from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. A case in point is the Lundayeh people, which are included in the KDCA's definition of

Kadazandusun. The Lundayehs in Sabah share cultural and linguistic traits with the Lunbawangs and Kelabits in Sarawak. Their culture and language are glaringly different from either the Dusuns or Kadazans. According to Semion Lalung, the former President of the Sabah Lundayeh Cultural Association, the decision to include the Lundayeh into the Kadazandusun ethnic label "was never discussed and never agreed upon" (Interview, 28 May 2009).

Table 2: Ethnic identity

Ethnic identity	Percentage (%)
Kadazan	2.5
Dusun	86.4
Kadazandusun	8.1
Kadazandusun-Murut	1.5
Others	1.5
Total	100

Source: Field survey, 2009.

Table 3: Perception of the current debate on Kazandusun identity

	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
It is used by certain parties to pursue their hidden political agenda	3.5	11.0	52.0	33.5
The issue has to be solved once and for all	1.0	16.2	55.1	27.8
The on-going debate on the issue is a waste of time	8.1	24.9	50.8	16.2

Note: SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree
Source: Field survey, 2009.

Table 4: Perception of the ethnic label "Kadazandusun" introduced by KDCA in 1989

	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
It should be regarded as a point of departure to everyone	4.5	15	51	29.5
It has to be reviewed as the decision was political	2	15.7	58.4	23.9
The decision was wrong as the Dusuns and Kadazans are ethnically, culturally and linguistically different	7.1	19.7	40.9	32.3
The decision was politically motivated	7.6	12.7	54.8	24.9

Note: SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree
Source: Field survey, 2009.

CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

The first Kadazandusun association was the Society of Kadazans. It was registered as an association on the 24 August 1953. The association "was purely a cultural association with the objective of looking after the Kadazan culture, its language and also economic—the raising of the standard of living of the Kadazan people" (Luping, 1994: 85). The Society of Kadazans evolved to become the first political party of the Kadazandusuns, the United National Kadazan Organisation (UNKO), in 1961. UNKO later changed its name to the United Pasok-Momogun Kadazan Organisation (UPKO) in 1964 after merging with the predominantly Murut-based Pasok Momogun, led by Sundang.

Another cultural association, the Kadazan Cultural Association (KCA) was formed in 1963. Its main aim is to safeguard the traditional culture of the Kadazandusun people. As mentioned, the KCA changed its name to the Kadazan Dusun Cultural Association (KDCA) as a means to appease the challenge mounted by the Dusun people led by Mark Koding. Pairin was appointed President of the KCA in 1976. He turned the cultural association into "a popular organisation with branches in each locality, and had a particular role in running the annual harvest festival" (Reid, 1997: 120–136). Before accepting the presidency of the KCA, Chief Minister Harris Salleh asked Pairin to head the multi-ethnic Sabah Cultural Association, but Pairin declined because he was more eager to mobilise grassroots support through the KCA (Reid, 1997: 20–136). A rival to the KDCA is the USDA. The formation of USDA in 1967 was due to the dissatisfaction of the Dusun leaders who disagreed with the KCA over the term 'Kadazan.' The main function of USDA is to safeguard the cultural uniqueness of the Dusun people.

The USDA is now led by Kalakau Untol, one of the key leaders who joined Mark Koding to form AKAR in 1989. Since Koding's demise, Kalakau has been seen as the 'standard-bearer' for the Dusun political survival. He was called a 'Dusun warrior' by the opposition leader, Anwar Ibrahim, who witnessed Kalakau's departure from BN to Pakatan Rakyat (PR)² on 28 February 2010. The response to preserve the Kadazan identity was strong, as evident in the establishment of the Kadazan Society of Sabah (KKS) on 19 May 2006. Its founding members are Sylvester Disimon and Marcel Leiking. The main objective of the KSS, among others, is "to preserve, to maintain and to uphold the dignity of the Kadazan race as an indigenous ethnic in Sabah, and KADAZAN is the accurate description of its name as a race (Kadazansocietysabah)." The KSS is one of the main opponents of the KDCA's move to introduce the ethnic label Kadazandusun.

Beside cultural associations, the PBS is the largest Kadazandusun-based political party in the Sabah state assembly. It was formed in 1985 by Pairin and other

Kadazandusun leaders disgruntled by the high-handedness of the BERJAYA Government. As the President of PBS, Pairin has enjoyed overwhelming Kadazandusun support since the party's inception. The party has won the successive state elections in 1985, 1986, 1990 and 1994. In all of these elections, the PBS managed to win almost all of its Kadazandusun seats. At the early stage of its formation, PBS enjoyed a strong Chinese and Muslim support. However, it began to lose the Chinese and Muslim support from the mid-1990s onwards after the divide-and-rule policy encouraged by the Mahathir Administration. By imposing the Peninsula political dichotomy in Sabah, Mahathir hoped to see the strong multi-racial support in PBS weakened. Vatikiotis (1994: 18) wrote, "BN's strategy had turned on wooing different ethnic components away from PBS and funnelling them into ethnically exclusive component parties." For instance, the formation of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in 1989, the Sabah Progressive party (SAPP) in 1994 and the entry of the Peninsula-based Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) in 1992 had divided the Chinese support in the PBS. The PBS's Muslim supporters also began to abandon the party after the coming of the UMNO into Sabah in 1990.

PBS continued to face greater setbacks after two of its founding members, Bernard Dompok and Joseph Kurup, left the party at the height of the political crisis in 1994 and established UPKO in the same year. Subsequently, UPKO has become the second largest Kadazandusun-based party in the state assembly. Dompok was among the Kadazandusun leaders who went to see Mahathir, who was 'devising' a plan to topple the PBS Government in 1994. Having narrowly won the 1994 elections with just 25 seats, the BN needed just three seats to force the PBS to give up power. The spate of resignations resulted in the collapse of the PBS government. Dompok was among the key Kadazandusun leaders who abandoned the PBS. He formed a new party, the Parti Demokratik Sabah (PDS). The PDS was re-named the United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun Organisation (UPKO) in an attempt to 'resurrect' the old UPKO formed by Stephens in 1964.

In an attempt to secure the Kadazandusun support, Dompok said that PBS was different from the UPKO because the PBS was a multi-racial party and that it could not claim to represent the Kadazandusuns (Interview, 19 October 2007). For PBS supporters, the new UPKO was aptly mocked as the *Untuk Pemimpin Kalah Organisasi* (For Defeated Leaders Organisation) (*New Straits Times*, 19 September 1999). They also claimed that the name change was an act of desperation.

Joseph Kurup, who abandoned the PBS, was also hoping to maintain his political fortune by agreeing to be part of Mahathir's plan to solve the political imbroglio in Sabah. He also formed a new party, the Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS). Compared to the PBS and the UPKO, the Kadazandusun political support for the

PBRS is rather weak. Apart from a handful of Kadazandusun members who supported its cause, the PBRS also had a considerable number of Murut supporters who followed their key leader, Kadoh Agundong, into the party.

The formation of the three Kadazandusun-based parties had divided the Kadazandusun political elites and weakened their bargaining power. Although the calls for unity have grown louder and stronger, the three key Kadazandusun leaders appear to be somewhat unenthusiastic about it. The reason is more personal than technical. The PBS called the UPKO "to walk hand in hand with Pairin for the betterment of the Kadazandusun-Murut community" (*Daily Express*, 25 May 2004). The UPKO, however, insisted that if there was a plan to unite the Kadazandusuns, it must be through an appropriate platform. It proposed the UPKO to be the platform because it was a 'pure' Kadazandusun party, unlike the multi-racial PBS.

The first attempt to unite the Kadazandusun-based parties occurred on the 26 November 2001, during which UPKO and PBRS leaders proposed the idea to form a single Kadazandusun party. However, PBS leaders said they were not ready to merge with the UPKO and the PBRS because the PBS was not a communal but a multi-racial party (*New Straits Times*, 21 November 2001). They also blamed the UPKO for causing the Kadazandusuns to split. Although the UPKO said that its formation was agreed upon by PBS leaders, including Pairin, the PBS said the consensus to form the UPKO (then PDS) was superseded by the resolution achieved in the meeting on 1 March 1994, during which PBS members were asked to remain faithful to the party (*New Straits Times*, 27 May 2007). Some in UPKO were also against the merger plan. They regarded the UPKO's 1999 state and parliamentary electoral victories as a strong indication for Kadazandusun support. For Pairin, if there was any plan to unite the Kadazandusuns, it should begin with 'intense soul-searching' on the part of those who left the PBS in 1994 (*Daily Express*, 25 May 2004). The merger supporters went ahead with the plan and introduced an ad hoc Kadazandusun entity called 'UPKO BERSATU' with Dompok appointed as president and Kurup as his deputy. However, the entity was never officially established.

Perceptions of Cultural Unity and 'Disunity'

The study shows that more than 78.4% of the respondents agreed with the contention that the Kadazandusuns are only united during cultural festivals. The unity among the Kadazandusuns can be forged through such gatherings; however, politically speaking, the Kadazandusuns are deeply disunited (Table 5). Whereas 62.8% think that, politically, the Kadazandusuns are deeply disunited, 62.0% suppose that disunity only exists among the Kadazandusun political leaders, and 70.0% believe that the Kadazandusuns are more united at the

grassroots level. To solve the disunity problem among the Kadazandusun leaders, most (82.4%) of the respondents think the three Kadazandusun-based parties (PBS, UPKO and PBRs) should merge to become one party. In terms of leadership, the majority (87.3%) believe that Pairin should play the leading role in uniting the Kadazandusun people. As one respondent puts it, all of the Kadazandusun leaders "must cooperate and support the Huguang Siou in the effort to unite the Kadazandusun community."

Table 5: Perception of the state of unity among the Kadazandusuns

	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
The Kadazandusuns appear to be united only during cultural festivals	5	16.6	42.7	35.7
Politically, the Kadazandusuns are deeply disunited	5.5	32.7	44.2	17.6
Disunity only happens among the Kadazandusun political leaders	3.1	34.9	45.6	16.4
The Kadazandusuns at the grassroots level are more united	6.1	23.9	54.3	15.7
The problem of disunity can be solved if the three major Kadazandusun-based parties merge to become one party	1.5	16.1	56.3	26.1
Pairin should play the leading role in uniting the Kadazandusuns	0.5	12.1	44.4	42.9

Note: SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree
Source: Field survey, 2009.

The majority (74.0%) of the respondents shared a common agreement that the Kadazandusun leaders should be blamed for causing the Kadazandusun to split (Table 6). One respondent accused the Kadazandusun leaders of being selfish. If anything, a majority of the respondents (86.4%) believed that the 'attitude' shown by some Kadazandusun leaders who want to see a separate identity for the Kadazan and Dusun people has further compounded the problem. While the problem of disunity is caused by the internal rifts among the Kadazandusun political elites, 82.5% of the respondents believed that the role of 'outside players' is also instrumental in causing the Kadazandusun to split. These outside players, apart from wanting to see a split in the Kadazandusun support, are also aiming to reduce the political significance of the Kadazandusun in Sabah. One respondent blamed the Federal Government's policy of encouraging the formation of offshoot Kadazandusun parties for causing the Kadazandusun to divide (Chin, 1994).

Table 6: Perception of the causes for the problem of disunity among the Kadazandusuns

	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Kadazandusun political leaders to be blamed; they cause the Kadazandusuns to split	3.0	23.0	46.5	27.5
The attitude shown by Kadazandusuns leaders who want to see a separate identity for the Dusuns and Kadazans	1.0	12.6	63.3	23.1
Role of 'outside players' who want to see the Kadazandusuns split and their political influence reduced	3.0	14.5	45.5	37.0

Note: SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree
 Source: Field survey, 2009.

THE HUGUAN SIOU INSTITUTION

The Huguan Siou leadership institution is deeply rooted in the Kadazandusun past history (Luping, 1994: 83–89). The origin of the Huguan Siou is still unknown. The traditional Huguan Siou is believed to possess extraordinary power and is regarded as a warrior by the Kadazandusun people. No one knows for sure who this Huguan Siou is; however, it has been generally held that the first traditional Huguan Siou originated from the village of Guensing in the Penampang District (Luping, 2009). The Huguan Siou was forgotten until its significance was brought to everyone's attention by the Kadazandusun elites.

The first 'modern' Huguan Siou was Donald Stephens. Stephens was proclaimed Huguan Siou in 1960 by the Kadazan elders for his role in fighting for the Kadazan rights during the colonial rule (Luping, 1984: 83–89). Stephens's status as Huguan Siou became official after it was recognised by the UNKO's Central Executive Committee in 1964. The resolution to confer Stephens with the title of Huguan Siou reads:

"Be it resolved that in recognition of the fact that Donald Stephens organised and formed the first political party in Sabah, the UNKO of which he is president; the fact that he played the leading role in achieving independence for Sabah; and the fact of his leadership in the Sabah Alliance Party, that he be conferred upon the title 'Huguan Siou,' meaning great leader and that the government and other political parties be so advised" (Luping, 1984: 86).

After Stephens' demise, the Huguan Siou title was conferred on Pairin in 1984. Pairin's new status as Huguan Siou coincided with his re-election as President of the KCA. At first, Pairin was reluctant to accept the title because he considered

James Ongkili—another well-known Kadazandusun leader—to be more suitable. Ongkili, however, suggested that the title be given to Harris Salleh in his capacity as Chief Minister. The suggestion did not go well with some Kadazandusuns for two reasons: first, Harris was not a Kadazandusun, and second, he was abhorred for his role in reducing the Kadazandusun cultural significance (Interview with Yunuf Marinking³, 24 November 2006). The leadership vacuum created after Stephens' demise forced Pairin to accept the title. For Pairin, it was his 'social obligation' to do so to "defend the Kadazandusun culture, rights, identity and dignity" (*Bernama*, 6 July 2003).

The Huguan Siou title gave Pairin a unique position in his community as he came to be regarded as the "acknowledged leader of the Kadazandusun" Luping (1994: 333). It also enhanced Pairin's popularity among the Kadazandusuns. As Pairin was the first law graduate in his community, his elevation as Huguan Siou had lifted his image as a new role model for the younger Kadazandusuns. As someone who has done so much for his community, Pairin is also regarded as a "priest, for his staunch principles and intrinsic goodness" (Suhaini, 2009: 26). Although Pairin is no longer as aggressive as when he formed PBS in 1985, some Kadazandusuns still support him for his elevated status as Huguan Siou. There are also people who began to question Pairin's sincerity after abandoning his 'opposition cause' to join BN in 2002. However, his dramatic ascension to politics and his previous role as a staunch defender of state and Kadazandusun rights have surpassed the people's expectations of him. One supporter of Pairin, who wanted to be known as 'Tigian', defended Pairin, saying that he is still fighting for the 'Kadazandusun issues', especially those related to "religion, illegal immigrants and imbalanced opportunities in the private and public arenas" (*Daily Express*, 24 May 2009).

The Huguan Siou institution remains an important component in the political change of the Kadazandusuns. During the ceremony to celebrate Pairin's 25th anniversary as Huguan Siou, he appealed to the people to accept the Huguan Siou institution as it "had encouraged the Kadazandusun people to be together, in keeping with the social fabric of society at large" (*Daily Express*, 23 August 2009). Although speculations are many as to who will replace Pairin when he retires, he seems to be sending a signal that he is not going to quit anytime soon. Pairin is willing to defend his presidency of PBS if there is a challenger to oust him (*Sunday Star*, 23 August 2009). However, so far, no one dares to accept the challenge. Even his second-in-command, Maximus Ongkili, is unwilling to challenge Pairin openly. As observed by Suhaini (2009: 26), "Maximus pledges to remain a loyal number two until Pairin hands over the baton to any one of the talented leaders".

Perception of the Huguan Siou Leadership Institution

The Huguan Siou institution is an important component in the political change of the Kadazandusuns. Although it has its roots in the traditional culture of the Kadazandusun, it has been used by the Kadazandusun elites to consolidate their political support. For some Kadazandusuns, the Huguan Siou leadership institution is still relevant. Data from Table 7 show that most of the respondents (81.4%) perceived that the Huguan Siou signifies strength of and unity among the Kadazandusun people, while 85.5% believed that the role of the Huguan Siou is crucial in ensuring the Kadazandusuns' political survival. For some Kadazandusuns, Pairin has successfully laid down a strong political and cultural foundation for the Kadazandusun community through his role as Huguan Siou and President of the KDCA. Slightly more than half of the respondents (66.3%) believed that Pairin is the only capable leader to hold the Huguan Siou title, as opposed to only 2.0% who strongly disagree with his capability.

Table 7: Perception of the role played by the Huguan Siou Leadership Institution

	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
The Huguan Siou plays an important role in the political survival of the Kadazandusuns	2.5	12.0	53.5	32.0
The Huguan Siou signifies strength of and unity among the Kadazandusuns	0.5	18.2	56.1	25.3
Pairin is the only capable leader to hold the Huguan Siou title	2.0	31.7	38.7	27.6
The Huguan Siou has gradually lost its cultural significance	5.0	36.0	46.5	12.5
The Huguan Siou institution has been used for political purposes	13.6	15.6	38.7	32.2

Note: SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree
 Source: Field survey, 2009.

However, slightly more than half (59.0%) believed that the Huguan Siou tradition has gradually lost its cultural significance. One respondent said that, as Huguan Siou, Pairin must not participate in political activities. 'He' should relinquish his political post and become an advisor to the Kadazandusun-based parties. As Huguan Siou, another respondent added, Pairin should give more focus on uniting the Kadazandusun community. At the outset, if the Huguan Siou institution is not politicised, it could become "the sole unifying factor for the Kadazandusun" (Interview with Semion Lalung,⁴ 28 May, 2005).

Even though Pairin is still considered as an important figure in the Kadazandusun community, his status as Huguan Siou is heavily influenced by his role as President of the PBS. Most of the respondents (70.9%) believed that the Huguan

Siou institution has been used for political purposes. Some of the Kadazandusuns interviewed said that it is time for Pairin to 'pass the baton' to someone else. One respondent said that Pairin should resign and give the opportunity to a younger leader to lead the struggle to defend state rights and to bring more development in Tambunan. As a leader, this respondent said, Pairin had failed to even develop Tambunan, which is still lagging behind in terms of infrastructural facilities. His effort at developing Tambunan as a tourist destination is also 'useless' because Tambunan does not have proper hotels and commercial banks. This respondent added that as a leader, Pairin has failed to influence the Federal Government to honour the Malaysian Agreement 1963, particularly the 'Twenty-Point'⁵ issue. Another respondent concurred. He said Pairin is no longer serious in defending state and Kadazandusun rights. After re-joining the BN, Pairin "had sold the state out" by allowing the influx of Peninsular Malaysians into Sabah. In short, Pairin is 'no longer relevant'.

CONCLUSION

The line between ethnic identity and racial label remains blurred in Sabah. Sabahans remain parochial and are comfortable being identified with their distinct ethnic identity. As the survey in our paper shows, the Dusuns who live in Tambunan and Ranau preferred to be identified as a Dusun. This confirms the contention that the ethnic label Dusun originates in the rural areas and is ethnically distinct from Kadazan. Our survey, however, does not claim to represent the view of Kadazandusuns in Sabah because it is still at the exploratory stage and rather inconclusive. It does, however, tell us about the sentiment of the Kadazandusun people when it comes to their ethnic identity.

Our preliminary findings show that the identity issue has been heavily politicised to serve the interests of political leaders. The ethnic label 'Kadazandusun' is clearly a political invention of the Kadazandusun elites. The attempt by some Kadazandusun leaders to use a 'one-size-fits all' approach to solve the problem of ethnic nomenclature is also unsuccessful due to their ignorance of the cultural complexity of the indigenous people in Sabah. Instead of allowing the ethnic groups to determine their own ethnic name, political opportunists use the identity issue to serve their own interest.

As we have seen, Stephens and some Kadazandusun leaders have admitted that they made a mistake in introducing the name 'Kadazan' to describe the indigenous people in Sabah. The identity issue did not fade away, even after Stephens' demise. It continued after the word Kadazan was given more prominence than Dusun. Pairin, the new 'Kadazandusun champion', conceived the idea to solve the problem by introducing a new ethnic label, 'Kadazandusun'. By inserting the

word Dusun, Pairin hoped to quell the dissatisfaction of the Dusun people. However, because only the word Kadazan is capitalised and not Dusun, the Dusun people felt that the Kadazans were superior to them.

The issue was further compounded when Pairin's heir, Mark Koding (a Dusun), challenged the former openly over the identity issue. He said the Dusun people were discriminated against and that Pairin's decision to combine the Kadazan and Dusun into Kadazandusun was merely a ploy to gain sympathy from the Dusun people. Although Koding had denied that the USDA was being used to weaken the Dusun support for the PBS, those in the PBS believed that Koding played an important role in persuading the Dusun people to abandon the PBS and to support his new party, the AKAR. The majority of the respondents surveyed in the study believed that the identity issue is politicised and that it is time the issue is solved once and for all. They also wanted the KDCA to review its decision to introduce the ethnic label 'Kadazandusun'.

The identity issue not only affects the Kadazandusuns emotionally and psychologically but also results in the socio-economic marginalisation of the Kadazandusun community. According to Stephen (2000: 1–22), "the change of ethnic labels in the case of the Kadazandusun is a worrying and confusing practise with social and psychological effects for the ethnic identity of the Kadazandusun". This happens because the Kadazandusun political elites have used much of their effort, time and energy to deal with a 'trivial' issue. The identity issue will continue to rear its ugly head as more Kadazandusun key figures and associations appear to manipulate it. Two cases in point are the Kadazan Sabah Society (KSS) and the Dusun Sabah Society (DSS).

There are currently two influential Kadazandusun associations, namely the KDCA and USDA. These cultural associations play an important role in uniting the Kadazandusuns. A majority of the respondents surveyed believed that the grassroots Kadazandusuns are more united. They seemed to agree with the contention that the problem of disunity among the Kadazandusun people is caused by the lack of unity among the political elites. The only way to solve the problem of disunity, the respondents seemed to suggest, is to let Pairin play the leading role either in his capacity as Huguang Siou or President of the KDCA. As in the case of identity, the role of cultural associations will remain crucial in the political changes among the Kadazandusuns. They will continue to be manipulated to serve the interests of certain individuals. The KDCA has not had any rival since the USDA's 'inactivity' after Koding's demise. However, it came to everyone's attention when its president, Kalakau Untol, publicly announced his departure from the BN to the opposition. Kalakau, the new emerging 'Dusun champion' is set to play a new leading role in consolidating the Dusun support. Overall, as the biggest Kadazandusun cultural association in Sabah, the KDCA

appears to be merely a body responsible for organising the annual gathering of the Kadazandusun people that does not address more pressing issues affecting the indigenous group, such as native customary land.

Politically, as we have seen, the Kadazandusuns remain deeply divided. Their political support is disproportionately divided among the PBS, PBDS and UPKO, with the PBS commanding the majority of the support. However, compared to the PBS and PBDS, the UPKO has been aggressive in voicing the Kadazandusun sentiment. The PBS has no choice but to keep its status low to ensure its survival and has been rather cautious in releasing statements that may be hurtful to its 'dominant' partner in Sabah, the UMNO. The PBDS, due to its size, is politically voiceless and exists due to the indebtedness of the BN to the PBDS president, Joseph Kurup (Chin and Puyok, 2010: 219–235; Puyok, 2011).

In terms of the Huguan Siou as a leadership institution, Pairin's role is still relevant. However, Pairin is facing increasing pressure to relinquish his post as President of the PBS so that he can increase his effort on uniting the Kadazandusuns. The institutionalisation of the Huguan Siou title has legitimised Pairin's position as the most prominent figure in the Kadazandusun society. As Pairin has not received any direct challenge, he will be set to use his Huguan Siou title to consolidate his Kadazandusun support in the PBS.

NOTES

1. For more discussion on the origin of the Kadazan people, see Ongkili, F. James (2000) and Tunggolou, F. Richard (1999).
2. Pakatan Rakyat (PR) is a loose opposition coalition formed in 2008 and led by the former deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim. It comprises the following three key opposition parties: the Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS).
3. Former PBS Member of Parliament for Tuaran, Sabah.
4. Former President of the Sabah Lundayeh Association.
5. The Twenty-Point is a safeguard pursued by Sabah leaders before Sabah's incorporation into the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. The safeguard includes matters related to religion, language, constitution, head of federation, name of federation, immigration, right of secession, borneonisation, status of British officers in Sabah, citizenship, tariff and finance, special position of indigenous races, state government, transitional period, education, constitutional safeguards, representation in the federal parliament, name of head of state, name of state and land, forest and government.

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