

New Politics in Malaysia

This collection of essays by some of Malaysia's leading social scientists asks whether a "new politics" has emerged in Malaysia. Based on detailed empirical studies of the 1999 General Election and its results, the contributors delve into how the *Reformasi* movement and other developments prior to the election impacted on Malaysian politics at the national, state, and local levels. The editors argue that a "new politics" is in the offing in Malaysia through an ongoing process of contestation involving civil society in non-formal realms. What this sort of new politics portends for the future is elaborated in the book.

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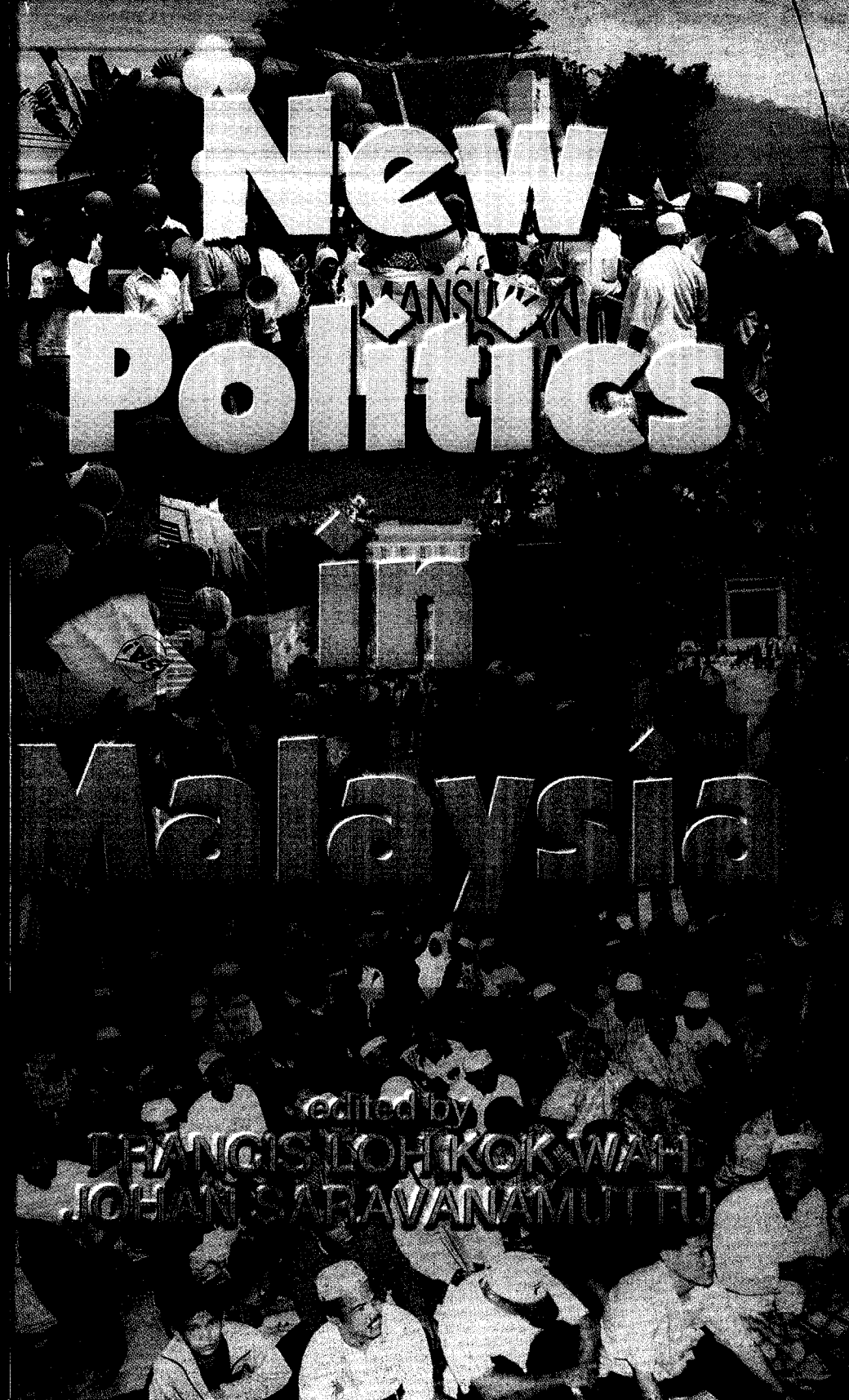
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The Melanau-Malay Schism Erupts Again: Sarawak at the Polls

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Sarawak politics is different from that in peninsular Malaysia due primarily to its unique history, cultural heritage, ethnic make-up, and political developments. Politics is usually parochial in nature where local, rather than national, issues decide the outcome of elections. The 1999 general election was no different; while the Anwar issue made a significant impact in the peninsula, it was not even a minor issue in Sarawak. Interestingly enough, like their counterparts in the peninsula, the Sarawak Malays voted against the ruling coalition. Again, like their counterparts in the peninsula, the swing was not strong enough to dislodge the BN from power. In the Sarawak case, the swing was not even strong enough for the opposition to win a single seat.

The Sarawak BN

The Sarawak BN (SBN) consists of four parties: Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB), Sarawak United Peoples Party (SUPP), Sarawak National

Party (SNAP), and Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS). All these parties are only found in Sarawak.

The PBB dominates the SBN the way UMNO dominates peninsular BN politics. Its leader by tradition becomes the chief minister and it is the largest party in terms of elected representatives. The big split in the PBB before the polls centred on the old rivalries between the Sarawak Malays¹ and the Melanau, a small coastal group.² Since its establishment in 1973, the PBB has been led by Muslim-Melanau; first by Rahman Yakub (1973–81) and his nephew, Taib Mahmud, the current chief minister (since 1981).³ This has created strong resentment among the Malays in the PBB who, like their counterparts in UMNO, believe that only a Malay should be sitting at the top. The first two chief ministers, Stephen Kalong Ningkan and Tawi Sli, were both Ibans, followed by Rahman and Taib. Thus the Malay population in Sarawak feels marginalized; no Malay has ever been chief minister.

In the 1970s, the Malays established Parti Anak Jati Sarawak (PAJAR) to challenge the PBB but it failed miserably (Kawi 1988). In 1987 the Malays decided to back Rahman Yakub and Persatuan Rakyat Malaysia Sarawak (Permas) when Rahman decided to challenge his nephew for his old job (Chin 1997, chap. 8). Again they were unsuccessful. By the early 1990s, a younger generation of Malays decided that the only way they can get the chief ministership was through UMNO. The psychological barrier to UMNO's entry into Eastern Malaysia was broken in 1991 when UMNO moved into Sabah. Sarawak is thus the only state in the federation where UMNO has not been established (Chin 1999a).

Since then, there has been a concerted effort by some Malay political leaders (including some inside the PBB) to bring UMNO to the state. The leaders come mainly from the Persatuan Kebangsaan Melayu Sarawak (PKMS), the oldest Malay nationalist organization in Sarawak and former Malay leaders of the now defunct Permas.⁴ Many Sarawak Malays (and *bumiputera*) have, in fact, joined UMNO although they are categorized as members of UMNO branches outside Sarawak.⁵ To forestall further controversy, Taib revealed that the PBB and UMNO had signed an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) stating that UMNO would not establish a branch in the state.

The seriousness with which Taib views UMNO as a direct challenge

to Melanau political hegemony can be seen in the "Two *abang*" issue. The first *abang* refers to Abang Johari Tun Abang Haji Openg, the most senior Malay minister in Taib's cabinet. Abang Jo (as he is popularly called) was widely seen by the Malay polity as their candidate to be the first Malay chief minister of Sarawak when Taib steps down. He was known to be close to Anwar Ibrahim and was expected to take over the chief ministership once Anwar takes over from Mahathir. When Anwar was sacked by Mahathir, Abang Jo's political fortunes began to change. Abang Jo further irritated Taib when he offered himself as a candidate for the deputy presidency of the PBB in an internal party election in 1998 despite Taib's open endorsement for another candidate, Adenan Satem. Abang Jo eventually won when he polled 373 votes against Adenan's 268, despite open lobbying for Adenan by Taib (*Sarawak Tribune*, 30 August 1998). Although Taib kept Abang Jo in this cabinet, he was moved to the minor Tourism Ministry from the much more powerful Ministry of Industrial Development, and it became an open secret that he was politically "frozen" at his post.⁶

The second *abang* refers to Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha, another Sarawak Malay minister, serving in the federal cabinet. Taib received information that Abu Bakar was involved with moves to bring the UMNO into Sarawak and immediately orchestrated his ouster from the PBB. He first ensured that Abu Bakar lost his post as deputy president of the PBB. A year later, Taib dropped him as a PBB-BN candidate in the 1999 parliamentary election, effectively ending his political career. Although Abang Abu Bakar complained directly to Prime Minister Mahathir that Taib was discriminating against the Malays in Sarawak, it does not appear that Mahathir intervened in the matter.

The reason for Mahathir's reluctance to overtly establish UMNO in Sarawak appears to be a secret pact made between him and Taib. The pact was revealed by Taib only in early 1997 (*Sarawak Tribune*, 15 February 1997) when UMNO supporters began to openly distribute UMNO membership forms in mosques and *surau* in the Kuching area. UMNO flags also began to appear openly in Petra Jaya, a Malay residential area. Many people began to believe that UMNO intended to establish branches. Although the details of the pact were not revealed to the public, the most important element was that UMNO will not move

into Sarawak as long as Taib and Mahathir are in power. This suggests that UMNO was free to move into Sarawak if either Mahathir or Taib is no longer in power.

The SUPP also faced problems prior to the polls. There was a conflict over the selection of the candidate for the Bandar Kuching seat and, on account of renomination of a discredited incumbent, the possibility that the DAP might win a seat in Sibü.

In Kuching, as far back as 1991, plans were afoot to get rid of the incumbent Song Swee Guan. Song, a popular figure in Kuching, was embroiled in a scandal involving his private financial affairs which threatened to bankrupt him legally.⁷ This was compounded by his frosty relationship with Lily Yong Lee Lee, the SUPP Kuching Branch secretary where Song is chairman. Yong had previously mounted several unsuccessful campaigns to get rid of Song, but each time Song was saved by the party leadership who felt that his popularity was indispensable to retaining the marginal Bandar Kuching seat.⁸ In early 1998, Yong announced internally that the SUPP Kuching Branch would be fielding a new candidate and this set off a mad scramble among the various factions in the branch, all trying to promote their candidate to replace Song. Yong wanted to promote a female candidate (SUPP has never fielded a female candidate), Dr Tan Poh Tip, a medical doctor, who had the support of party leader George Chan Hong Nam. Other female members of the branch, however, objected to Dr Tan, arguing that she was too new (Tan had only joined the SUPP recently) and instead backed Tan Cho Yian, a councillor with the Kuching South City Council. Fearing that a public split in the branch would weaken its chances of retaining the seat, the leadership decided to field Song again. The decision to back Song for one more term was also due to the leadership's worry that the opposition might field Sim Kwang Yang, the popular ex-DAP Member of Parliament (MP) who held the Bandar Kuching seat from 1982 to 1995 before he lost the seat to Song.⁹

In Sibü, the SUPP leadership was worried that the DAP would win a seat. Field surveys undertaken by the SUPP showed that the Sibü Foochow voters would vote "both ways", that is, give one seat each to the DAP and the SUPP. The DAP candidate, Jason Wong Sing Nam, was well liked and was the Sarawak DAP chairman. The incumbent

SUPP MP for Sibü, Robert Lau Hoi Chew, on the other hand, had the reputation as an abrasive person who liked to use coarse language, especially in speeches given in his native Foochow dialect. Many Sibü residents were also unhappy with Lau over his strict enforcement of local council by-laws relating to stray dogs and rearing of poultry in urban areas.¹⁰

SNAP's problem was the Bintulu seat, which it lost to the DAP in the 1995 general election, and the general consensus was that the DAP would retain the seat given the ongoing dispute in the surrounding area. The land dispute involving the local Iban longhouses had already led to several clashes and injuries with land developers. The choice of candidate came down to Tiong King Sing, a businessmen and SNAP treasurer, and Richard Wong, son of party leader James K.M. Wong and SNAP senior vice-president. Tiong was finally selected despite strong opposition from local Bintulu SNAP members, apparently because he was willing to spend huge amounts of money on the campaign. Richard Wong also gave in when his father indicated that he would give way to his son in the next state election.¹¹

The Bidayuh-majority Mas Gading constituency was another problem area. The incumbent was Dr Patau Rubis, a former SNAP vice-president and deputy minister sacked by Taib in 1995. He was alleged to have helped SNAP-linked independents in the 1995 general election (Chin 1996*a*). Patau was popular in the area and was using the Bidayuh ethnic nationalism card and land issues to draw support.

The PBDS had a relatively quiet time; all the six incumbents were re-nominated. However, Mahathir refused to accept Sng Chee Hua and he was replaced at the last minute by the party treasurer Joseph Salang anak Gandum. Sng, the incumbent for Julau, was dropped apparently because he was involved in a lawsuit and the Anwar case. An English casino had threatened to sue Sng for gambling debts of more than a million ringgit; Sng was well known as a "recruiter" that is, he arranged and led group gambling trips for rich Malaysians in return for commissions from the casinos.¹² Unfortunately, it appeared that Sng was himself a heavy gambler. He achieved greater notoriety when he was implicated in the Anwar trial. Ummi Hafilda Ali, the key witness who alleged that Anwar had an affair with his political secretary's wife,

had travelled to London together with Sng shortly before Anwar was sacked from the government. Sng's personal assistant, Beginda anak Minda, had testified that Ummi slept with him during the London trip and told him in confidence that there was a high-level political conspiracy to oust Anwar.¹³

Seat allocation was a straightforward affair in the SBN since seats were allocated based on past performance and allocation. In 1999 there was a new constituency, Mambong. Instead of allowing any particular coalition party to claim the seat, Taib cleverly declared that the seat would go to a "direct BN" candidate, James Dawos Mamit. The candidate will only choose which of the SBN parties he will join after the elections. The last time this method was used, the "direct BN" candidate joined the PBB after the elections. In February 2000, Mamit also joined the PBB (*Sarawak Tribune*, 12 February 2000). The final seat allocation was PBB, eleven (including the "direct candidate"); SUPP, seven; SNAP, four, and PBDS, six.

The Opposition

The major opposition parties were the DAP, followed closely by two newcomers: the State Reform Party (STAR) and Parti keADILan.

The DAP came to Sarawak in the late 1970s with Raman Yakub's help. Rahman, the chief minister then, wanted to weaken SUPP's base in the Chinese community by giving the Chinese a choice other than the SUPP (Chin 1996*a*). The party was relatively successful in the parliamentary arena (winning its first parliamentary seat in 1982) but had to wait fourteen years before it was able to win at the state level in 1996.

Prior to the polls, the DAP, like the SUPP, was also embroiled in a deep spat with its members in Kuching. The rift can be traced back to the 1996 state elections when some senior DAP members left the party "temporarily" to run as "Tiger-independents".¹⁴ They moved back into the DAP after the elections, causing a deep rift between those who stayed behind and those aligned to the Tiger group. The DAP members led by Sim Kwang Yang, Ng Kim Ho, Cheng Hui Hong, and Yong Sen Chan wanted disciplinary action taken against these Tiger-independents. After a committee led by peninsular DAP leaders failed to impose the penalty

to the satisfaction of Sim, Ng, and Cheng,¹⁵ they decided to move into keADILan Sarawak. The rift was also compounded by the traditional rivalry between the Sibuhoy and Kuching Hokkiens. After the 1995 defeat of Sim Kwang Yang in Kuching and the subsequent DAP victories in Sibuhoy in the 1996 state elections, leadership of the Sarawak DAP moved from Kuching to Sibuhoy. Sibuhoy had two DAP state assemblymen while Kuching DAP had no elected representatives.

Patau Rubis, founder of the State Reform Party (STAR), initially wanted STAR to contest the 1996 state elections. The party was, unfortunately, not registered in time.¹⁶ Although STAR claimed to be multiracial, it was widely perceived to be a Bidayuh political vehicle. Its core support came from the Bidayuh community in the First Division. It tried unsuccessfully to solicit support from the urban Chinese through some middle-class English-educated Chinese such as Francis Siah, a former editor of the establishment *Sarawak Tribune*, and STAR party secretary-general.¹⁷

Parti keADILan appeared in Sarawak with much fanfare. Its President Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail officiated at the launch, and appointed Yusuf Abdul Rahman, a former Permas candidate as Sarawak liaison chief. Cheng and Ng were appointed as members of the keADILan Sarawak Liaison Committee while Sim was appointed adviser. Hafsa Harun, a former state minister and senior Permas member, was made state keADILan Wanita chief. Right from the start keADILan was in trouble as Yusuf was unpopular with other keADILan Sarawak leaders. He was accused of lacking organizational skills, and being untrustworthy and autocratic. He was accused of changing the names of keADILan candidates after they were agreed upon by the state leadership.¹⁸

The opposition parties came together in a loose alliance called the Sarawak Alternative Front (SAF), modelled on the national Barisan Alternatif. Several meetings were held to allocate constituencies and plot strategies. The sticking point quickly became the Bandar Kuching constituency because both the DAP and keADILan demanded it. The DAP claimed that it was traditionally a DAP seat while keADILan claimed that its candidate, Ng Kim Ho, a former DAP candidate in Kuching, stood the best chance of winning the seat. The DAP candidate, Chong Chieng Jen, was a newcomer and unknown in Kuching. The

DAP offered keADILan a compromise; if Ng gave up his quest for Bandar Kuching and stood in the nearby, also Chinese-majority Stampin constituency, the DAP would let Ng (and keADILan) stand in Padungan in the next state election, which must be held before the end of 2001. Ng refused and insisted that he stood a real chance of getting elected in Bandar Kuching as long as it was a direct fight between him and the SUPP.

After several acrimonious meetings, the DAP prevailed and Ng Kim Ho resigned as state keADILan deputy secretary on the eve of Nomination Day to contest in Bandar Kuching as an independent.

The final tally for opposition candidates was DAP, seven; keADILan, thirteen; STAR, four; and twelve independents.¹⁹ On Nomination Day, the PBB won the Betong constituency unopposed. It was the only parliamentary seat in the general election to be unopposed. The only other seat won by the BN unopposed was a state seat in Johor.

The Campaign and Results

The campaign was relatively similar to previous campaigns. Issues were mostly local with the usual carrot-and-stick approach and voters were told that BN constituencies would get “development” while opposition wards would be left out. The opposition issues centred on dispossession of native land, corruption involving the Chief Minister’s family, and the need for checks and balance. Other than that, there were no state-wide issues and national issues such as the Anwar case. *Reformasi* and a united opposition (BA) made little or no impact on the voters in Sarawak.

In a short campaign period, the opposition was severely disadvantaged. Outside of the urban areas, the opposition did not have enough time to get their message across to the voters. In some of the rural seats, the constituencies are so large that opposition candidates, without the financial resources to hire helicopters, simply do not stand a chance.

In the rural belt, money continued to be a deciding factor, with vote-buying being the norm rather than the exception. Unlike other states in Malaysia, a historic legal judgement had confirmed the prevalence of vote-buying in Sarawak. In March 1997 the Borneo High Court created political history when it declared the election victory of PBDS’s Mong anak Dagang null and void due to vote-buying. The judge

ruled that “vote-buying was so extensive (that) it had affected the election result” in the Bukit Begunan state constituency in the September 1996 Sarawak state election. Although vote-buying is widespread in Malaysia, especially in Sabah and Sarawak, hitherto it had almost been impossible to prove it in a court of law. In this case, however, there was irrefutable proof including photographs showing cash being handed out by BN campaigners to voters in a longhouse just prior to voting day. In the subsequent by-election, Mong Dagang easily won the seat again despite the court verdict. Thus it would appear the rural voters in Sarawak do not see vote-buying as morally or ethically wrong.²⁰

In the Bidayuh seats of Mambong and Mas Gading, and the Dayak seat of Bintulu, vote-buying by the BN was a key deciding factor in the BN victories despite strong challenges from credible opposition candidates. The STAR campaign was leading initially until it ran into financial difficulties towards the end of the campaign while the BN had seemingly unlimited financial resources.

In Kuching, Song swept to victory when the opposition split their vote: the Chinese opposition vote was split between *ke-tau* Ng²¹ and DAP’s “Chong Jr”.²² Song received 18,239 votes; Ng, 9,859; Chong, 5,913. The general consensus was that if it had been a straight fight between the SUPP and the DAP (especially with Sim Kwang Yang as the DAP candidate), Song might have been defeated.²³

In Sibul where the DAP’s Sing Nam was expected to win, SUPP’s Lau romped home with a 9,142-vote majority. Lau was saved by solid support from the Dayak vote located within the Bandar Sibul constituency. There was also a last minute swing towards Lau when the SUPP used the “Islamic card” against the DAP, namely, DAP’s alliance with PAS in the BA. The SBN’s monopoly over the mainstream media reinforced BN’s message of political stability and continuity.

Before the polls, the BN leadership expected to lose one seat under the best scenario and four seats under the worst.²⁴ The thinking was that the voters would give at least one seat to the opposition — either a Chinese urban seat, a Dayak, or Bidayuh seat. Thus it was a major surprise that the BN swept all twenty-eight seats. In the absence of any weighty issues in the state, the BN’s overwhelming superiority in the “3Ms” — money, machine, and media — delivered the expected results, again.

PBB Supremacy?

On the surface, it would appear that the SBN reigns supreme politically. However, a closer examination suggests that the group deemed most unlikely to go against the BN, the Malay-Muslims in the First Division, actually turned against the SBN.

The three most important Malay-majority constituencies in the First Division are Santubong, Petra Jaya, and Kota Samarahan. PBB's grip on these constituencies could be seen in the 1995 election. Petra Jaya and Kota Samarahan were won unopposed while in Santubong, none of the main opposition parties put up a candidate and the opposition candidate was an independent (Chin 1996*a*). These seats are so safe that Taib has been the Kota Samarahan representative since the 1960s. In previous elections, candidates routinely lose their deposit when they challenged Taib.

Yet in this election, keADILan candidates managed to win more than 40 per cent of the vote in Santubong and Petra Jaya and close to 30 per cent in Kota Samarahan (see Table 12.1). The majority of the keADILan supporters were undoubtedly Sarawak Malays and the issue that ignited them was Malay nationalism. KeADILan called for an end of Melanau domination of Sarawak politics, discrimination of Malay political leaders (that is, Abang Johari and Abang Abu Bakar), and the appointment of a Malay chief minister. In addition, there were allegations

TABLE 12.1
Results of the Malay Constituencies in the First Division

Constituency	BN-PBB		KeADILan		Independent	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Santubong	7,955	56.76	6,060	43.24	n.a.	n.a.
Petra Jaya	11,878	56.87	9,008	43.13	n.a.	n.a.
Kota Samarahan	13,307	70.72	5,092	27.06	417	2.22
Total	33,140	61.69	20,160	37.53	417	0.78

n.a. = Not applicable.

Source: *Star*, 30 November 1999.

of massive corruption by Taib's family members and other Melanau cronies, especially in the area of land acquisition. KeADILan alleged that Malay land was being systematically sold off to politically connected businessmen linked to the Chief Minister. The Chief Minister's family-owned Chaya Mata Sarawak (CMS), one of Sarawak's largest conglomerates, was involved in all the large infrastructure projects in the state.²⁵ Several Melanau businessmen closely aligned with the Chief Minister²⁶ had achieved spectacular growth in the business arena, especially in land and property development, creating resentment that the *bumiputera* preferential policy in Sarawak only benefited the Melanau and not the Malays. KeADILan also benefited from PBB rebel voters who were unhappy with Taib personally. Prior to the election there was a strong rumour that the PBB was on a witchhunt of members who were plotting to bring UMNO into Sarawak, and many PBB Malay members were suspected of treachery. Those aligned with the two *abang* (see above) were marginalized in the party and there is anecdotal evidence that they voted against the PBB in the polls.

The swing against the PBB by the Sarawak Malays was not repeated in the 2001 state elections. If we look at the results in the same wards, it is clear that keADILan did not perform as well as it did in 1999. In the two parliamentary constituencies (Santubong and Petra Jaya) where it garnered more than 43 per cent of the votes, it only managed to get 25.05 per cent in 2001 (see Tables 12.2 and 12.3).²⁷

TABLE 12.2
Selected Parliamentary Constituencies
and Their State Equivalents

Parliamentary Constituency	State Constituency
Santubong	3 Pantai Damai
	4 Demak Laut
Petra Jaya	5 Tupong
	6 Satok
	7 Samariang
Kota Samarahan	12 Asajaya
	13 Muara Tuang

TABLE 12.3
Results of Selected Malay State Constituencies
in the 2001 Sarawak State Elections

Constituency	BN-PBB		KeADILan		Independent	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
3 Pantai Damai	6,072	66.66	2,757	30.27	280	3.07
4 Demak Laut	4,974	71.17	1,129	16.15	886	12.68
5 Tupong	7,037	74.25	2,203	23.25	237	2.50
6 Satok	4,830	71.02	1,971	28.98	*	n.a.
7 Samariang	5,460	64.71	2,163	25.63	815	9.66
12 Asajaya	5,068	70.60	707	9.85	1,403	19.55
13 Muara Tuang	11,017	89.38	**	n.a.	1,309	10.62
Total = 60,318	44,458	73.71	10,930	18.12	4,930	8.17

* No independent candidate.

** Did not contest.

n.a. = Not applicable.

Conclusion

In peninsular Malaysia, the UMNO Malay vote collapsed due in large part to the Anwar factor and the *reformasi* campaign, which drove many Malay voters to support the BA, especially PAS. Coincidentally, the PBB Sarawak Malay vote collapsed as well, but for different reasons. The split in the Melanau-Malay Muslim community gave the Sarawak Malay opposition its best showing since PAJAR in the 1970s. KeADILan became the main beneficiary of the Malays' anger at their perceived inferior political status and political and economic marginalization by Taib and the Melanau. The other opposition parties did badly primarily because there was no substantial issue to overcome vote-buying and the government's advantage in the 3Ms. The government also benefited from increasing confidence in the economy's recovery.

The BN's landslide win in Sarawak was to play a crucial role in helping Mahathir maintain the all-important two-thirds BN majority in Parliament. The two-thirds majority allows the government to alter the Federal Constitution at will and is widely seen as a benchmark for BN's electoral performance. The twenty-eight seats from Sarawak constitute 18.9 per cent of BN's 148 seats. Simply put, without the

Sarawak seats, Mahathir would have lost his two-thirds majority. At a broader level, the Sarawak results reinforced the opinion that Sarawak (and Sabah) politics do not work in tandem with peninsular politics. Explanations for voting patterns in peninsular Malaysia cannot be used for what was happening in Sarawak. In almost all cases, local issues decide the outcome of elections.

NOTES

1. Other than adherence to Islam, the Malays in Sarawak always regard themselves as culturally different from the peninsular Malays. See Harrison (1970) and Sanib Said (1985). Unless otherwise noted, the Malays referred to here are the Sarawak Malays.
2. The Malays comprise about 20 per cent of Sarawak's population while the Melanau make up about 5 per cent, thus their combined population is about one-quarter of the state's population.
3. The PBB was formed when two parties merged: the Iban-based Parti Pesaka and the Malay-Melanau-based Parti Bumiputera. Until today, the party is split into the Iban and *bumiputera* wings.
4. Ironically, Rahman Yakub, a Muslim Melanau, was also actively campaigning to bring UMNO into Sarawak. Rahman's actions can best be explained by his knowledge that should UMNO come into Sarawak, the PBB would mostly likely be dissolved and Taib would lose power.
5. The "Sarawak UMNO" leaders claimed that there were 38,000 UMNO members in Sarawak in 1988 (personal communication from one of the "Sarawak UMNO" leaders).
6. Personal communication from a Sarawak minister. The minister added that Abang Jo was kept in the cabinet so that he could be closely watched as he was "more dangerous" outside the cabinet.
7. A bankrupt in Malaysia is barred from holding elected office. Song, who was also Speaker of the Sarawak State Assembly, had several court summons against him served by his creditors. Eight months after the election, in August 2000, Song was declared a bankrupt by the courts after he failed to settle a debt of about RM325,000. The SUPP was forced to cough up the amount to rescind the bankruptcy petition.
8. The Bandar Kuching seat was held by the DAP from 1982 to 1995.
9. In the September 2001 state polls, Yong was chosen to replace Song. Despite strong resistance from other Kuching SUPP branches, Yong managed to win the hotly contested Padungan seat.

10. Lau was the Chairman (mayor) of the Sibuan Municipal Council. Many Sibuan residents keep a small number of poultry behind their houses for personal consumption, and this has led to problems for neighbours.
11. In the September 2001 state election, Richard easily won his father's seat in Limbang.
12. *Star*, 11 July 2000.
13. A confidential source inside PBDS told this writer that Sng's downfall was also caused by his uneasy relationship with James Masing, the PBDS senior vice-president. Sng had used money politics to "control" several PBDS MPs and state assemblymen and posed a threat to Masing's ascendancy. See Chin (1996b). Sng later was to play a major part in Masing's defeat in internal PBDS elections in July 2000. On a lighter note, Beginda tried to exploit his notoriety by standing as a keADILan candidate in Kapit. Needless to say, he lost his deposit.
14. All these independents used the Tiger as their electoral symbol.
15. Cheng said the DAP lost its principles when it failed to impose strict discipline on errant members. This, he said, will set a bad precedent. Personal communication.
16. According to Patau, he and his immediate circle went through many names before deciding on Parti Reformasi Negeri (PRN) or State Reform Party Sarawak. Patau wanted the word *Reformasi* in his party's name because he wanted to reform the political system in Malaysia. The English acronym "STAR" came from the first three letters of "STate Reform" was used instead of "SRP" because "SRP" could easily be confused with the government school examination. One interesting thing about the registration exercise was the Registrar of Societies's insistence that the word "Sarawak" be included in the title of the party. Patau did not want to include the word because he did not want the party to be seen as an exclusively Sarawak party. However, the Registrar insisted on adding the word "Sarawak", thereby "restricting the potential growth of STAR outside Sarawak". Personal communication with Dr Patau Rubis.
17. Francis Siah was sacked as the editor of *Sarawak Tribune* for printing too many stories and photographs of opposition leaders. According to Siah, the decision to sack him came directly from Taib.
18. Yusuf was appointed State Liaison Chief because he was the first to fly out to Kuala Lumpur to see Wan Azizah about bringing keADILan to Sarawak. His follow-up visits and enthusiasm impressed Wan Azizah (personal communication from a senior keADILan member). After the general election, a motion of no-confidence was passed against Yusuf by the Sarawak keADILan Liaison Committee over his handling of the election. Although initially reluctant to step down, Yusuf was ultimately removed.
19. STAR was to have fielded seven candidates but several potential candidates disappeared on Nomination Day (*Star*, 18 November 1999).

20. There exists a widely held view that vote-buying in Malaysia is a form of wealth redistribution among the rural poor. Some rural peasants take the attitude that they can only get something from the "YB" once every five years and hence it might as well be cash and materials.
21. *Ke-tau* means "rooster head" in the Hokkien dialect. Ng used the chicken as his electoral symbol.
22. Chong Chieng Jen was often referred to as "Chong Jr.", alluding to the fact that his father, Chong Siew Chiang, was one of the founding members of Sarawak DAP. His father stood half a dozen times for the DAP, all unsuccessfully.
23. Post-election interviews with the SUPP, DAP, and other knowledgeable persons. Moreover, Song had also defeated Ng on previous occasions. See Chin (1996c).
24. Personal communication from a senior BN executive.
25. For Taib's critics CMS is said to refer to "Chief Minister and Sons" and "Con Man of Sarawak".
26. The prime examples of such Melanau businessmen are Effendi Norwawi and Wahab Haji Dolah. Both became multi-millionaires overnight during Taib's term as chief minister. They were later recruited into the PBB. Norwawi is now Federal Minister of Agriculture while Wahab is a State Assistant Minister.
27. The reasons for keADILan's failure in 2001 lies outside the scope of this paper. Suffice to say that it was a combination of bad political strategy, the 11 September terrorist attack in the United States, threats by the BN, strong campaigning by the Malay BN leaders, and opposition vote-splitting caused by Abang Abu Bakar.