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JAMES BROOKE AND SARAWAK'S ECONOMIC GROWTH

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Abstract

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James Brooke was an important figure who made significant contributions to mining, agriculture and plantations in Sarawak. As Sarawak's first White Raja, he played a crucial role in developing these sectors and opening up new opportunities for economic growth in the region. This paper will expose James Brooke's efforts in advancing the economy in Sarawak based on primary and secondary sources found. The historical analysis that is emphasized is centered on explaining economic history covering the three areas mentioned earlier. The method of analysis used is the historical method by looking at the development of the three sectors within a certain period. Economic history itself is not a history that contradicts political history, but is an inseparable unity. In this region, political dominance is built on the development of local resources.

Keyword: *Economy, Minerals, Agriculture and Plantations*

INTRODUCTION

James Brooke was an main actor in Sarawak's history who made a significant contribution to the economic development of the region. James Brooke was a British adventurer who in 1841 was appointed King of Sarawak by the Sultan of Brunei. Under his leadership, Sarawak experienced major changes in the economic field.

One of James Brooke's greatest contributions was in the trade sector. He tried to increase trade by opening new ports, improving existing port infrastructure, and entering into trade agreements with neighboring countries. In a short time, trade activities in Sarawak grew

rapidly, especially in the trade of commodities such as timber, ivory, resin and pepper. This gave a huge boost to Sarawak's economy and increased the income and prosperity of the local people.

In addition, James Brooke also played a role in developing the agricultural sector in Sarawak. He encouraged the development of oil palm and rubber plantations, which at that time were high-value commodities. By incentivizing farmers and entrepreneurs to develop these agricultural ventures, Sarawak became one of Asia's leading producers of both commodities. This not only created new jobs, but also generated significant export earnings for Sarawak.

Alongside the trade and agriculture sectors, James Brooke also made important contributions to the development of the mining sector in Sarawak. He explored and managed the region's abundant mineral resources, including tin, gold and diamonds. Brooke set up an efficient system of mine management, and this triggered the rapid growth of the mining industry. The high mining production and revenue earned from the sector contributed significantly to Sarawak's economy and cemented its position as one of the region's important economic centers.

RESEARCH METHOD

Based on the results of researchers' searches from various sources and internet media, we found several related studies, namely the first research from Furuoka, Fumitaka with the title Economic development in Sarawak, Malaysia: An overview.(Furuoka, F., 2019) The two books from JH Walker are entitled: Power and Prowess: The origins of Brooke kingship in Sarawak. Based on these two studies, the difference in this research is that this research focuses more on James Brooke's understanding of economic growth.(JH Walker, 2020)

DISCUSSION

From India to Sarawak

Sir James Brooke (born at Secrore, near Benares, India, April 29, 1803) Burrator, Devon, England, June 11, 1868), after an early career that included military service with the British East India Company and participation in the first Anglo-Burmese war (1825), first visited the Eastern Islands in 1834 on an unsuccessful trading trip. With money left by his father, he bought and equipped an armed schooner with the aim of expanding European settlement in the East.

In 1838, he sailed once again to the Indies. Brooke learned in Singapore, founded by Sir Stamford Raffles 20 years earlier, that the chief minister of the sultanate of Brunei, Pengiran Muda Hassim, was at war with some rebellious Iban (Sea Dayak) tribes in Sarawak, which is adjacent to Brunei and technically under Brunei's control.

With Brooke's help, the rebellion was quelled, and he was named king of Sarawak in 1841. In 1846, the sultan of Brunei made the title permanent. Brooke and several British assistants made expeditions into the interior of Sarawak over the next 17 years, partially ending the practice of chieftain-hunting and establishing a secure government. In 1848, he

was knighted. When he left the rule of Sarawak in the hands of his nephew in 1863, he returned to England and succeeded Sir James in 1868.

Economic Urgency

The nineteenth century was an important period in Sarawak's history. It is a region located in the northern part of Borneo Island. In the second half of the century, it was ruled by Brooke kings known as the White Kings. Its economic development was influenced by a number of factors, including trade, agriculture and the exploration of natural resources.

One aspect of the economy that is important to discuss is trade. Almost every developed region in Southeast Asia relies on this sector for its economic development. Sarawak has a strategic geographical position, making it the center of trade between Southeast Asia and China. Some of the commodities traded include agarwood, sandalwood, resin, rattan, and agricultural products such as pepper, rice and rubber.

The local people, both Malays and Dayaks, work as farmers, forest encroachers and mineral miners. They have a vision of life that cannot be separated from the surrounding environment. Those who live in the hills or inland, will open agricultural land and occasionally look for forest products. Those who lived in the rivers or coastal areas would look for fish or other marine animals, which were valuable in the market.

Local trade was aided by the presence of Chinese, Arab and Indian traders. They formed an active community and were instrumental in expanding Sarawak's trade network overseas. In some cases, Chinese traders also acted as mediators between Sarawak and the international market.(Kaur, 1995)

Apart from trade, agriculture was also an important economic sector. Locals developed an agricultural system centered around rice paddies and vegetable gardens. Many families in Sarawak rely on subsistence farming, which means they produce enough food for their own needs. However, there are also groups of people involved in commercial agriculture, such as pepper and rubber.

Natural resource exploration was also an important factor in Sarawak's economy during this era. The region was rich in natural resources, including ironwood, tin and coal. Ironwood, which is a strong and durable type of wood, became one of Sarawak's main export commodities. Demand for ironwood increased in the nineteenth century, especially from Europe and the United States.(Smythies, 1963)

Throughout the century, Sarawak's economy underwent several changes. At the beginning of the century, the dominant economic power was in the hands of Chinese traders, but as time passed, British and American economic influence increased. British and US companies began to invest in Sarawak's mining and forestry sectors.

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Overall, the economic situation in Sarawak in the 19th century was characterized by active trade, subsistence and commercial agriculture, and exploration of natural resources. These factors had a major impact on the growth and development of the region. This economic situation formed the foundation for Sarawak's economic development in the following centuries.(Nicholas Tarling, 1970)

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were an important period in the history of Southeast Asia, when Western countries such as Britain, the Netherlands, France and Spain began to expand and colonize the region. The objectives of Western colonialism in Southeast Asia varied widely, but generally included economic, political and strategic factors.

One of the main goals of Western colonialism in Southeast Asia was to secure abundant economic resources. The region was known for its natural wealth, including crops such as spices, timber, tin ore, rubber and other agricultural products. Western countries sought to control the production and trade of these commodities to gain huge economic benefits.

In addition, Western colonialism also aimed to expand their markets. They sought access to Southeast Asia's fertile and potential markets. By controlling the region, Western countries could secure their supply of goods and open up new opportunities for trade and investment. This helped strengthen their economies at the national level.

Furthermore, political objectives were also an important factor in Western colonialism in Southeast Asia. Western countries vied to expand their territories as a form of global political prestige and influence. The possession of colonies was considered a symbol of power and dominance, which allowed them to expand their political influence and strengthen their position among world powers.(Leigh R. Wright, 1972)

Strategic factors also played a role in the goals of Western colonialism. Southeast Asia had a strategic geographical position, as an important trade route between India, China and the rest of Asia. Colonial rule in the region allowed Western countries to control and

influence trade traffic, maritime routes and other strategic routes. This gave Western countries military and security advantages in safeguarding their interests in the region.

Overall, the goals of Western colonialism in Southeast Asia included economic gain, political influence and strategic factors. Although there were differences among the colonial powers in their approach, this expansion and colonization had a significant long-term impact on the history, culture and social development of Southeast Asia.

Some Improvements

Brooke made a number of efforts to improve economic installations in Sarawak so that it could catch up with surrounding areas. The establishment of specialized political-administrative units connected the region to the international community and integrated it into the global trading system. Sarawak's existence was ultimately supported by British power. Law, order, currency, taxation, land, trade and other aspects of governance were all overseen by institutional structures acquired through war or treaty. (James Brooke, 1942) The exploitation of the three main resources - forest products, land and minerals - and their activities in trade in the region were at the core of the economic justification for the acquisition of these territories.

The Kalimantan region acquired many of the fundamental characteristics of the economy in the late 19th century. Wage labour, institutionalised bureaucracy, infrastructure, and a government geared towards material progress, including commercialised agricultural and mineral production, became vital subjects of continuity. The main components of this export economy-capital, entrepreneurship, and wage labor-came from outside and were concentrated in productive regions. In fact, foreign involvement was relatively limited in the hinterland. Nevertheless, natives began to participate in the country's productive system in the mid of XXth century, and the prior is the socializing of rubber.

Mineral resources were one of the early installations realized by Brooke as a source of revenue for his kingdom, in addition to optimizing agricultural production, primarily plant-based food sources.

Minerals Exploration

The mining industry was a small locus in Sabah before the Second World War, but was a significant contributor to Sarawak's export earnings. The expansion of large-scale Western businesses, alongside small-scale Chinese businesses in both states, is frequently interpreted as evidence of an economy that is "dualistic". This is evident in certain facets of the mining industry, where Western interests are prioritized over Chinese ones.

In terms of technology, the panning and extraction of mining materials used both Chinese and indigenous methods, while Western interests still centered on importing modern extraction techniques. The latter also had better access to the trading economy of Singapore and the West at large.

Gold, mercury, antimony, coal and petroleum are five minerals found in the bowels of Sarawak. Although mercury mining boomed in the 1870s, antimony remained the most

important mineral product until the mid-1880s. In the last two decades of the 19th century, coal rose to prominence. Gold, which had been mined at least since the beginning of the century, became the most important mineral export at the turn of the century. In the third decade of the 20th century, petroleum mining took the place of antimony mining.(Gertrude Le Grand Jacob, 1876)

James Brooke started out by trying to control all of Sarawak's mineral resources. The Chinese miners who had been mining gold near Pangkalan Tebang in Northern Sarawak near the border with Indonesia since the early 19th century were his main rivals.. As Governor of Labuan, he kept Western interests out of Bintulu and secured exclusive rights to mine coal along the North West coast of Borneo. Later, he moved to Bau and pioneered the production of gold and antimony through the *kongsi*, or business partnership.

Brooke was initially reluctant to disturb the Chinese miners who had established mining settlements in the area with markets, shops, and roads. The businesses traded with Sambas in Borneo rather than Kuching, Sarawak's capital, and enjoyed political autonomy. For small-scale mining, they had labor and profit-sharing arrangements that were ideal.

Brooke did his due diligence and began to question the existence of the above Chinese kongsi. Brooke imposed a "tax" on the opium they purchased, as this commodity was a government monopoly. The tax took the form of a payment to the miners each year of 60 gold denarii based on population. In the other time, he discovered later that the Chinese were involved in opium smuggling due to the fact that the Chinese population was growing at a slower rate than the amount of opium consumed. He increased the "tax," which the Chinese people opposed, which led to the Chinese rebellion in 1857.(Craig A. Lockard, 1978)

There were many reasons why the above rebellion occurred. First, the failure of the Chinese-owned mining industry in Sarawak faced the threat of bankruptcy. Secondly, Brooke's political position was getting stronger. Third, the Borneo Company, a Western company, took over the exploitation of minerals in the state. Later, the Borneo Company became the most powerful monopoly organization in Sarawak.

James Brooke and his ally, Henry Wise, had previously proposed the Eastern Archipelago Company as a private company to develop Sarawak's resources before the Borneo Company was established. For some reason, James later parted ways with Wise. The plan failed and this made Brooke wary of the big money coming to Sarawak. He changed his mind and granted mining and trading concessions to the Borneo Company, which operated on a scale and in a way that was rarely at odds with his own ideas, on the advice of a close associate. He believed that Western capital and entrepreneurship with connections to London were the only options for the successful exploitation of Sarawak's mineral resources, which required significant initial investment and specialized knowledge.(Gertrude Le Grand Jacob, 1876)

The Borneo Company was incorporated in London in 1856 with a capital of £600,000. The company was authorized to process mines, ores, veins or seams of all kinds of minerals in Borneo and to barter or sell the produce. As the Chinese mined the island's gold resources, the Borneo Company made a number of adjustments with them at the start of its operations. Gold was initially excluded from The Borneo Company's monopoly on mineral exploitation, but it continued to purchase mineral products from Chinese mines.(Mark C. Cleary, 1996) The company expanded its operations to include gold mining after the earlier Chinese uprising, bringing the Bau mining area directly under the political control of Kuching.

Afterwards, the leaders of the reformed Chinese conglomerate who returned to Bau began to collaborate with James Brooke and the Borneo Company. The largest and last of the Chinese syndicates was later acquired by the Borneo Company in 1884. In 1898, the company introduced a new cyanide-based gold extraction method.

The Borneo Company took over gold mining in Sarawak with its unparalleled innovation, vast capital, and sincere relationship with the Brooke family. Prior to 1895, the company paid no royalties on gold in accordance with the terms of its prospecting rights from 1879. A five percent annual royalty has been collected since 1896. From 1899 to 1921, Bau Mine and Bidi Mine produced a total of 983,255 ounces of gold. These mines were worth \$25,995 and paid out \$1,466,462 in royalties. They were responsible for 81% of the gold that was produced in Sarawak between the years 1865 and 1954. Over a period of twenty-two years, this was accomplished. After most of the mines it had acquired had been extracted and were no longer considered profitable, the Borneo Company only gave up its monopoly over minerals in Sarawak in 1921. (Amarjit Kaur, 1998)

The Brooke government imposed stricter conditions on Chinese miners when the gold mining industry was revived in the 1930s. Chinese migrants had freedom of movement and the opportunity to establish trade networks based on kinship, despite these restrictions. They also had to sign mining leases and pay a royalty of 10%, but they didn't get exclusive exploration licenses.

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The Borneo Company held the most significant mineral monopolies for antimony and cinnabar. The majority of antimony in Sarawak is found in areas where mines also contain gold, such as in Jambusan and Buso and in the cinnabar mines of Tegora, Gading and Gambang. The last two places, the soil also contains mercury sulfide. While the cinnabar/silver was abandoned in the late nineteenth century, the antimony problem was largely resolved by the early twentieth century. The Borneo Company made a lot of money from its operations. In the case of antimony, the company exported \$1,905,031 worth of metal from 1870 to 1916. Between 1870 and 1899, the Borneo Company exported quicksilver worth \$159,966.9 in addition to cinnabar. The Brooke family received annual royalties of £1000, or approximately \$8000, for cinnabar and £2000, or approximately \$16,000, for antimony in exchange for these concessions. Sarawak also rose to prominence as a major exporter of quicksilver and antimony to the European market during the period under consideration. (Kaur, 1995)

Agriculture

Despite the fact that only a small portion of land is dedicated to sedentary cultivation, the agrarian livelihood of Sarawakians is agriculture. Paddy farming on dry hills or by clearing bush land is widely practiced amongst the indigenous groups. Since the introduction of rubber, the industry has undergone both quantitative and qualitative shifts.

Wet and dryland rice farming and other food crops for local consumption, as well as cash crop production (primarily rubber sago, pepper, and tobacco), (Monica Janowski, 1991) are the two primary types of agricultural activities in terms of production. Rubber, in particular, is a big draw for both indigenous and foreign developers, capitalists and non-capitalists alike. Capital inputs and hired labor—at first sharecroppers but increasingly hired workers—grew steadily from the smallest holdings upward, along with a shift toward plantation-style finance, management, and production practices.

Plantation agriculture's structure, development, and impact on indigenous peoples' farming practices are very similar in Sarawak and Sabah. The availability of labor, population migration, and property rights are all affected by this. Due to the significance of land and land use issues in the agricultural sector, it is essential to provide an overview of land tenure systems and land regulations prior to focusing on agricultural production.

Although the traditional land tenure systems of the people of Sabah and Sarawak are very different, they share many characteristics that can be considered variations on a theme. In the past, despite the fact that the Sultan of Brunei had supreme sovereign rights over land, indigenous communities owned communal land, and community communal land stretched far beyond the actual agricultural areas. These vast areas had swamps and virgin forests that could be used for hunting, gathering forest products, and reserves for future swamp sites.

Natural features, such as ridges and rivers, usually mark community land. Individual families of longhouse communities establish utilization rights over the land they open for gardens within the land held by the community. Rights to these plots are retained by the individuals, not only during the planting phase but also during subsequent planting periods.

These rights can also be passed down from generation to generation because individual plots can only be created with the collective consent of the community. People who leave the community lose their right to farm on the land. As a result, even when families and individuals moved around, communally held territories kept the indigenous community together.

With the establishment of the Brooke government, control over land became a major concern solely for commercial reasons. In order to quickly assert its sovereignty over all of its respective territories, his government took swift action. To attract outside investment and distribute land to European planters and Chinese colonists, who were expected to ensure economic development in the territories, it was necessary to establish a market for land.

The government had to legally define, socialize and sell land so that agricultural businesses could operate on the basis of local laws. The prevalence of two characteristics, namely shifting agriculture and customary land rights systems, exacerbates the land problem. In the first scenario, the concept of private ownership is assumed to be non-existent, with some exceptions due to communal ownership of most land use rights. (Amarjit Kaur, 1998)

In the second scenario, the widespread practice of shifting cultivation makes it very difficult for the two elements to define which land is uncultivated and which is not, especially since it includes land that is cultivated on a seasonal basis. The issue of who owns certain valuable plants and trees is also raised. As a result, land laws had to take into account the above-mentioned factors and allow for the sale and alienation of state land.

In order to shield the local population from the full force of European capitalist expansion, supporters of the Brooke government emphasized that Brooke did not encourage widespread cultivation of export crops. This is not supported by history. As was mentioned earlier, Brooke claimed ownership of Sarawak's mineral resources. As a result, his initial plans did not include much land-based production.

Indigenous people were able to claim ownership of land despite Brooke's assertion of sovereignty over all of it thanks to customary law and land use rights. The state's first significant piece of legislation was the Code of Laws, which was introduced in 1842. Native customary law was unaffected by this legislation because settler races were only permitted to establish themselves on land that was not already occupied by native groups. (James Brooke, 1942)

Later laws were enacted to ensure strict government control over native lands. In 1863, Brooke enacted the first law regulating land use. In it, he claimed private ownership of the entire territory, reserved state mineral rights, and provided road and riverbank reserves. The government owned all "waste" and "vacant" land, which could be leased to others. As a result, indigenous peoples have limited access to land and can no longer assert their rights to land outside the territories they own. At the same time, the Brooke government established property rights over land and allowed others to lease it.

The need to maintain political control and the belief that shifting cultivation is inefficient and causes deforestation (as in Sabah). Both played a role in efforts to control internal migration and shifting cultivation. The Land Ordinance of 1875 was the first attempt to ban shifting cultivation by imposing fines on cleared but abandoned land. This was mainly due to Charles Brooke's insistence that hills should be reserved for virgin forest "with a view to encouraging other cultures in the future". (Amarjit Kaur, 1998)

The Fruit Tree Planting Policy of 1899, which prevented natives from "migrating," came after the preceding order. This order made it possible to sign 99-year leases for agricultural land or buy land. In order to facilitate the phased survey and title registration, a land settlement order was issued in 1933. The Land Register and the Land Settlement order allowed Brooke's state to make compulsory acquisition of indigenous land through notification and abolish indigenous customary rights, separating native areas from mixed zones with Chinese "non-indigenous farms" and other "non-indigenous farms" restricted to mixed zones. (Toh et al., 2023)

Indigenous rights to land are technically rights to use or lease state land, despite their recognition. This law significantly undermined the ability of indigenous peoples to resist land expropriation during the rubber boom and especially after World War II, when pressure on inland land increased.

Under land laws, governments typically disregard rights to fallow farmland and hunting territories. Only when commercial rubber cultivation, exogenous market signals, and initiatives taken by indigenous, Chinese, and European planters increased, did the land laws fully affect the indigenous economy and society. (Kaur, 1995)

Consequently, in order to guarantee property rights, the land tenure system in Sarawak was largely based on a system that required ownership to be recorded in the Land Register. All of the land in this system is reserved for the State, particularly for the cultivation of food crops, and it enables indigenous people to acquire ownership of the land with native title. In Sarawak, non-indigenous people can also own land in the "mixed zone" category. (Toh Ming

Liang, Tan Liat Choon, Tan Wee Vern, Muhamad Uznir bin Ujang, Thoo Ai Chin □ et al., 2019)

Individuals and companies can lease state land, with rental fees based on ownership type. This makes it possible to alienate land on a large scope for export. Although natives could not legally own land, many Chinese bought land through their native spouses or businesses that received lifetime grants. This made land more accessible for Chinese settlement and Western investment. codification of land rights became a top priority. To the extent that it does not conflict with their goal of attracting foreign capital, the Sarawak Government wants to prevent the sale or lease of most customary land to foreigners. Nonetheless, the establishment of a land market is an important first step in a larger "development" scheme.(Kaur, 1995)

Food Crops

A clear distinction has been made by James Brooke's government between cash crops and food crops in most discussions of the peasant sector in Southeast Asia, with cash crops produced for household consumption and food crops for sale. The main food crop is rice. There are two methods of rice cultivation, namely field rice and sawah rice, also known as wet rice cultivation, which is usually grown using the shifting cultivation system.(George Rodney Mundy, 1848)

Most paddy development is bound to the deltas and banks of the principal streams in Sarawak. To control water supply, enormous and thick blocks and extremely durable bunds are seldom utilized. Most of wet rice development is finished by the Chinese and Malays. Slope rice, as in Sabah, is for the most part developed by Dayaks in the inside. Long brambles are utilized to develop it on steep slopes with inclines frequently surpassing 45 degrees. In the wake of consuming the woodland, the normal practice is to disperse the seeds. Culturing is still for the most part finished the hard way, however in certain areas, the utilization of bulls or bison to furrow the land is found. Brooke takes a stab at Sarawak rice to address nearby issues, yet additionally arrive at global business sectors.

Sarawak poples were to a great extent independent in their food needs before Brooke's organization.(John H. Walker, 1998) The district needed to increment rice imports because of expanded Chinese work movement into the country to work in the mining business. By empowering Chinese migration and agrarian colonization into the Lower Rajang area, Charles Brooke looked to cure what is happening.

Additionally, many Chinese settlers and natives were required to cultivate food crops on the same land when they began planting rubber. Despite this, Sarawak continued to rely heavily on imports of food. During the First World War, rice shortages prompted public authorities to collaborate with the Chinese (Fochow) to boost rice production. However, the Chinese and Dayaks only used rice when rubber prices were low, and when they were high, they quickly switched back to rubber. This trend has been explained by soil, topography, and economic constraints.

Moreover, rice can be obtained at a lower cost elsewhere. Even though Brooke advocated for the cultivation of rice, he did not make any efforts to improve the condition of the paddy fields by implementing traditional rice cultivation techniques or installing drainage and/or irrigation systems.

Sarawak imported about 34,000 tons of rice per year, or 60% of its needs before the Second World War. In 1953, an estimated 500,000 hectares of hill or dry rice land and up to 2,000,000 hectares of swamp rice were under cultivation.

Sago is the most significant of all food crops. It altogether affects the pay of individuals in Sarawak, particularly those related with the Melanau people group. The locales of Mukah, Oya and Dalat are the most intensely planted with sago. Melanau individuals exchanged sago and timberland items trade for salt, iron, copper and stone before Brooke's rule.

The sago trade's revenue came from representatives of the Sultan of Brunei stationed at the mouths of major rivers, particularly the Oya and Mukah. The establishment of Singapore as an international market in the 1850s brought about a fundamental change in the sago trade. Sago was previously exported in the form of baked biscuits as a food ingredient.

As one of its raw materials, the expanding textile industry in Europe and the United States required processed sago. Chinese traders set up a sago processing plant in Kuching, and Kuching Malay traders brought some raw sago from Mukah and Oya that had been shipped to Singapore to be processed there. The Borneo Organization laid out sago handling plants, and started to control the sago exchange after James Brooke assumed control over the sago-developing regions in 1861, because of the developing significance of sago and rivalry among bunches competing for control of the exchange. (Cox & Metcalfe, 1998)

The Borneo Company effectively overtook the Malay and Chinese middlemen who had established the sago trade due to its monopoly on sago marketing. In order to plant sago trees and supply its factories, where sago flour was refined for export to the British market, it offered financial assistance to independent processing families.

James Brooke and The Borneo Company shared the same objective: to control the export of sago, maintain control over its price, and profit from its sale. As a first step, the business and Chinese mill owners relocated their mills from Kuching to the Oya and Mukah rivers.

Despite the fact that they introduced new technology that reduced the number of workers employed in the production of raw flour, the Borneo Company gradually withdrew from the production of flour and concentrated on the export of processed flour purchased from Chinese mills. By 1900, it was known that Chinese middlemen controlled the retail market for sago and almost had complete control over the purchase, refinement, and export of wet sago starch.

In an effort to regulate Chinese trading practices, the Brooke government imposed standardized weights and measures and required the Chinese to live in central market settlements. (Henry Keppel and James Brooke, 1853)

As a result of the massive expansion of sago cultivation, Sarawak rose to prominence as a major exporter of sago starch. By the end of the 1880s, Sarawak had produced more than half of the world's sago starch. Its primary markets were the United States and Europe. These exports increased from 8700 tons in 1887 to 14,330 tons in 1897, and they continued to do so. The Melanau people almost abandoned their previous subsistence or semi-subsistence economy by 1900 and switched to one export commodity, sago, and ten years later, exports reached 20,400 tons. Sarawak exported approximately 20,000 tons of sago starch annually

from 1935 to 1940, despite the fact that rubber eventually overtook sago as the state's primary agricultural export. (Kaur, 1995)

CLOSING

Sarawak was unique in that it was socially and culturally close to the indigenous people, yet managed by Whites. James Brooke was an anomaly in colonial history in Southeast Asia, as his position as King of Sarawak was equal to that of other Malay kings. In strengthening his position, he maximized the potential of local natural resources as land for profit. The fields of mineral exploration and plantations became the space Brooke explored to realize his economic dreams. This was not easy, given that there were a number of problems that had to be resolved, including bringing in experienced personnel such as administrators who were members of the Borneo Company.

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