



REBELLION IN BRUNEI

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...T, IMPERIALISM,
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Harun Abdul Majid

REBELLION IN BRUNEI
*The 1962 Revolt,
Imperialism, Confrontation and Oil*

by
Harun Abdul Majid



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For
Pehin Datu Pekerma Dewa Dato
Paduka Haji Abdul Rahim,
my grandfather,
a close friend to
Sultan Sir Omar Ali Saifuddin
during those turbulent years.

Glossary

Mentri Chief Minister

Besar:

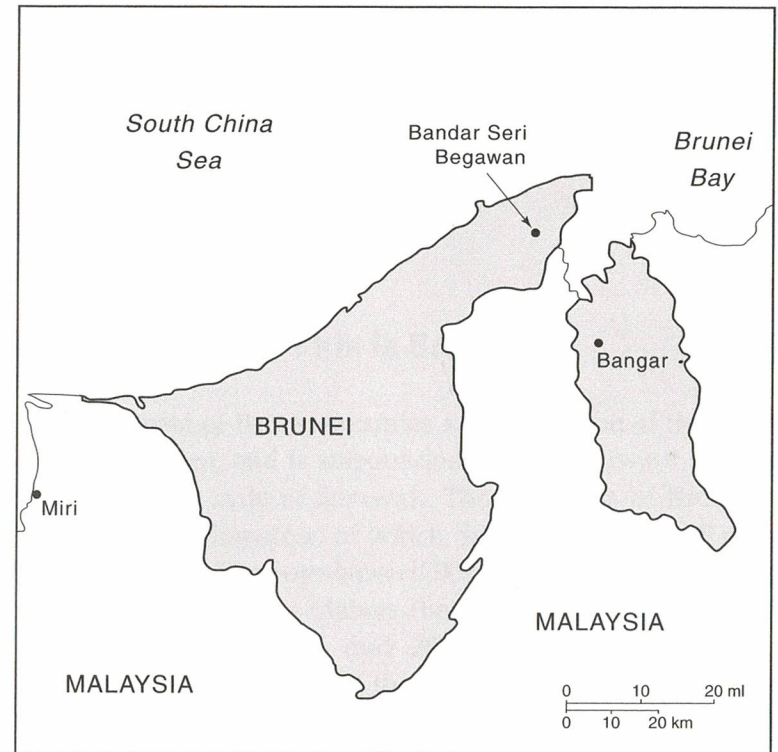
Dato: A title conferred for life by the Sultan for services to government; the equivalent of a British knighthood. There are various classes of Dato and people may be advanced through the ranks. Foreigners can be made a Dato. Major General Walter Walker and Sir Dennis White, the High Commissioner, were made Datos for their contribution to Brunei's survival after the rebellion. The female title is Datin.

Pehin: A life peerage for services to the Sultan and, as with a Dato, there is a hierarchy. The title is open to men and women and can be awarded to foreigners. A Pehin can also be awarded a Datoship.

Pengiran: The title Pengiran is used by men who can trace their bloodline or ancestry back to the royal family; so unlike the other two titles, this is a birthright rather than a conferred honour.

Among quite an extensive list of Pengirans, there are some who are active in government and who can be awarded a Datohship. Some become Cheteri: advisors to the Sultan. Lastly there are Wazirs: Cheteri who are the closest advisors or confidantes to the Sultan and who are usually members of the immediate royal family.

Map of Brunei Darussalam



Brunei has long been associated with massive oil resources and the stability that its wealth can guarantee. But little is known of the revolt of 1962 that might have changed the fortunes of the sultanate and the fate of Southeast Asia.

In theory Brunei is a constitutional sultanate, but in practice it is an absolute monarchy. Since the 1962 rebellion a state of emergency has been in force and the Sultan has ruled by decree. It is a small state in a region dominated by the superpower of China and its size is a significant factor in determining the country's policy towards defence and security – territorially, politically and economically.

This is the first comprehensive history of the Brunei Rebellion, which was the trigger for the Indonesia-Malaysia confrontation of the 1960s and of critical importance in understanding the history of the region. Harun Abdul Majid explores the turmoil throughout Southeast Asia that was the backdrop to the rebellion and analyses how Brunei not only survived but actually emerged from this turbulent period as a stronger and more coherent political state. Among other issues, he asks: how did events affect the position of the Sultan and the people of Brunei? How did the relationship with the United Kingdom evolve? And what happened next?

The revolt of 1962 was a small, armed uprising in support of a Borneo Federation consisting of Brunei, Sarawak and North Borneo. It opposed the Malaysian Federation, which was seen as a buttress of British and Western imperial interest. In a period of great tension between the West and the Communist world, China viewed the rebellion as a national liberation war and it was quickly suppressed by the British Emergency Force. But although the rebellion itself was short-lived, the consequences for the region's international relations within Asia and with the West – especially given Brunei's emergence as a significant oil-producer – were far-reaching.

Harun Abdul Majid carried out his research into the Brunei Rebellion at the Department of War Studies at King's College, London.

The cover shows a patrol by British soldiers around Sierra © Imperial War Museum

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