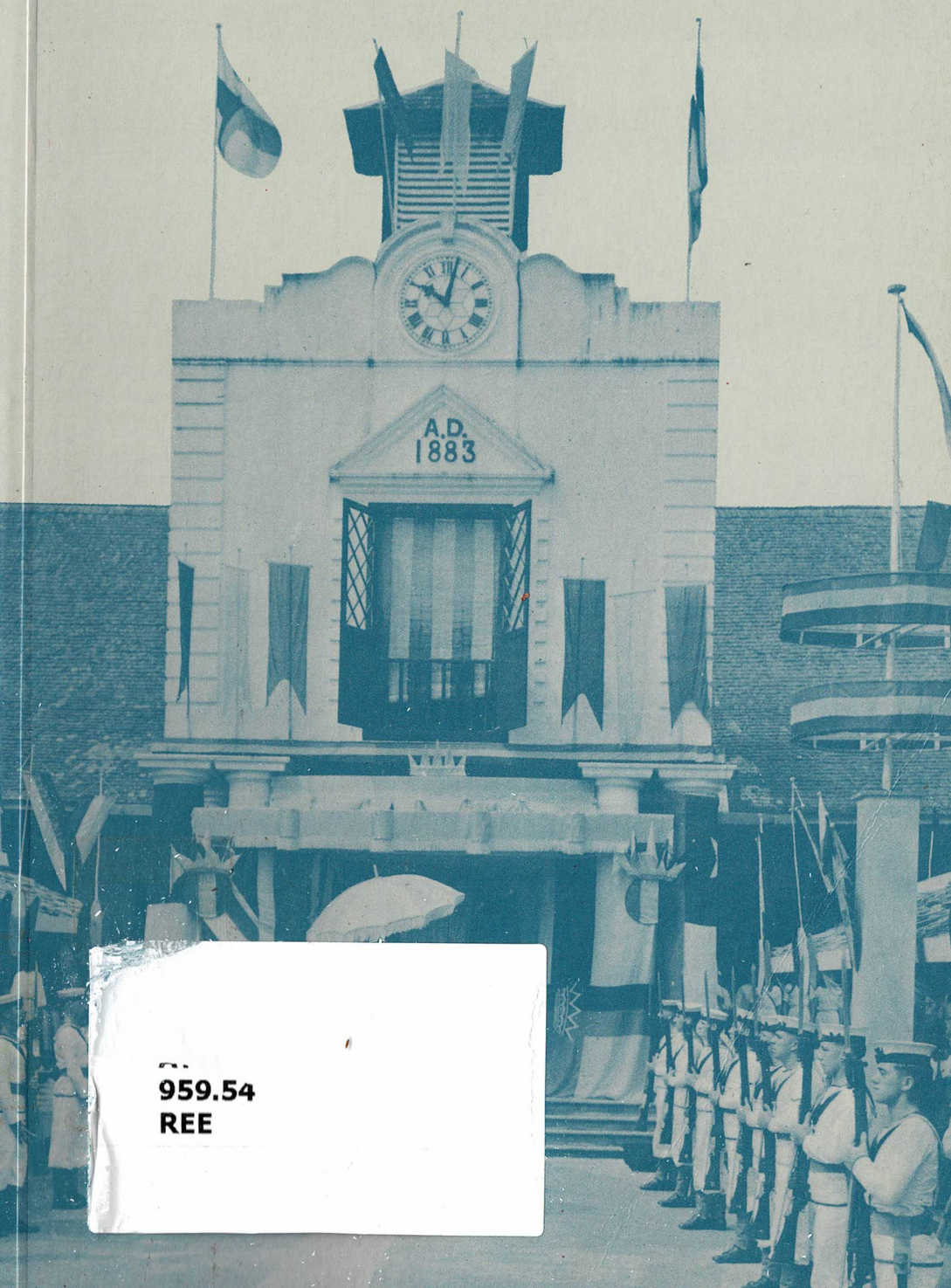


The Name of Brooke

The End of White Rajah Rule in Sarawak

R. H. W. REECE



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In 1946 a century of White Rajah rule came to an end in Sarawak when the Borneo state was ceded to Britain by Vyner Brooke. In fact by the 1930s Brooke rule had probably already passed its prime and there were already signs of political consciousness among the Kuching Malays. However, while nationalist movements in other parts of South-East Asia fought to end European rule, the Malays of Sarawak in the aftermath of the Second World War in 1945 clamoured for the perpetuation of the Brooke Raj. When extremists assassinated the British Governor of Sarawak in 1949, this anti-cession movement collapsed, but a nationalist tradition had been established which would later serve to legitimize the post-colonial leadership. This fascinating study based on hitherto unpublished documents, detailed research and personal interviews examines the last decade of Brooke rule and explains cogently the 1946 cession with reference not only to British imperial policy in South-East Asia but to dynastic politics and the failure of Brooke rule to adapt to change.

Cover illustration

Sarawak Centenary Day, 24 September 1941. The Rajah, the Ranee and C. D. Le Gros Clark (Chief Secretary) leaving the Government Offices. The Sarawak flag is on the left of the doorway. (Courtesy the late B. C. J. Spurway)

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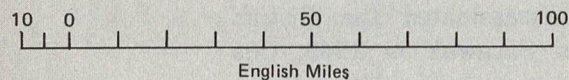
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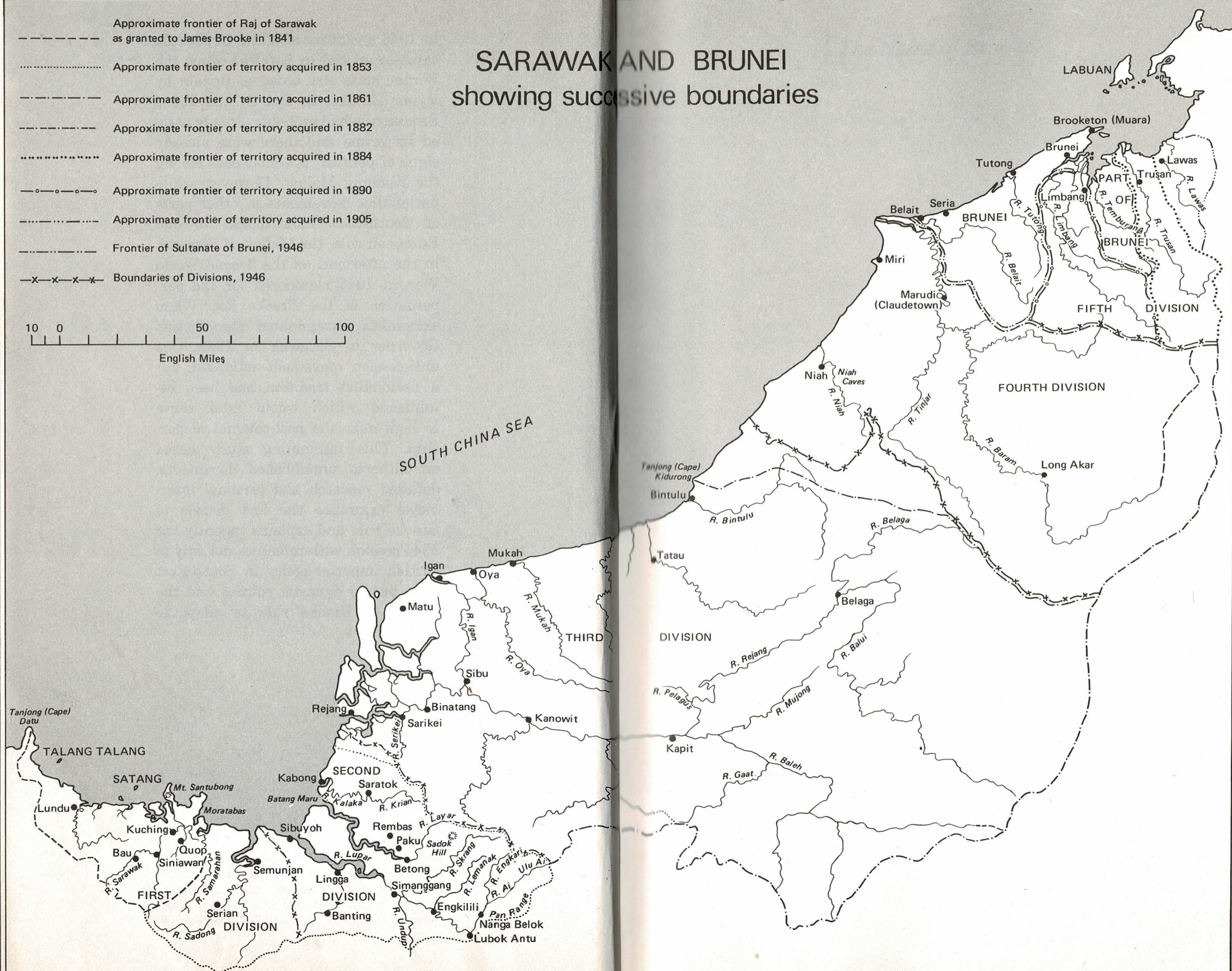
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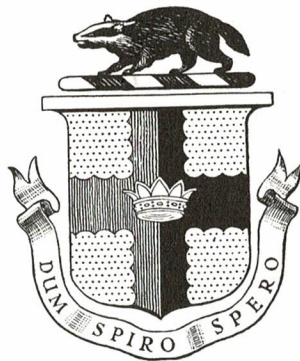
SARAWAK AND BRUNEI
showing successive boundaries



The Name of Brooke

The End of White Rajah Rule
in Sarawak

R. H. W. REECE



**Sarawak
Literary Society**

(Persatuan Kesusasteraan Sarawak)

1993



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For Lesley and Laura

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56100 Kuala Lumpur.*

I visited parts of Borneo where no European had ever been before, and even in those parts the people came out and mentioned with delight the name of Brooke; in fact, wherever I went, I found his name was a sort of talisman. . . .

Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Cochrane, 1852

Foreword

WHILE I appreciate Bob Reece's invitation to write a Foreword to his book, my qualifications for doing so are not what might be expected.

Born with prospects of rulership which found free rein for six months in the crisis year of 1939; demoted from royal estate and dismissed from government service for alleged misdemeanours; restored to grace and re-employed nine months later; dismissed from government service again within the ensuing six months (and disinherited); restored a second time to grace after three years' military service and elevated to act as head of government with royal title restored; dismissed and disinherited a second time for being unresponsive to British proposals for Sarawak's post-war future; pronounced an 'Undesirable' and banned by the colonial government for sixteen years from Sarawak for responding to and supporting the genesis of Sarawak nationalism—all these stimulating and varied experiences the consequence of little more than three years' direct acquaintance with the life and peoples of a little country (yet as large in size as England) struggling to be born into a new life and era for itself and the world.

If this brief biographical outline strains the credibility of the reader it will nevertheless perhaps serve as a fitting *hors d'oeuvres* to the contents of Bob Reece's book.

Truth needs neither embellishment nor commendation. Personal loyalties and considerations, while they surely have their place, have in all countries been too long held to justify a veil which in political and public affairs is no longer acceptable anywhere in the world.

The author in his thorough and penetrating presentation highlights the period of Sarawak's crisis of transition from one major historical epoch to another, in the context of a still greater and more protracted period of crisis affecting our whole human family—a transition of monumental proportions the scope of which many of us are still finding difficult to grasp as we reach for a higher ethical and social consciousness as the price

and justification for our survival into the twenty-first century.

I feel especially indebted to Bob Reece for giving me this opportunity to take an integrated look at what may at one time have been seen and experienced as a series of largely disconnected happenings, the significance of which may only now, in retrospect, be fully appreciated. Such is the gift of a true historian.

I wish to take this opportunity to record my profound thankfulness for the privilege of my heartwarming, albeit relatively brief, association with Sarawak and her peoples. Many suffered emotionally, psychologically, and economically during the five years of the cession controversy. Whatever the choices made of policies, aims, and loyalties, may each give recognition that the other throughout the confusion of those years acted as he believed to be right. It was a growing experience for us all and let us hope that by now time has healed all the scars.

Looking to the future, Sarawak and her peoples, along with the rest of us, have their own uniquely important role to play for the future of human unity. None of us can afford to be unmindful of the need to sustain and strengthen the ultimate vision enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations of a global civilization based upon mutual respect between all peoples and values of love, compassion, and a sense of the true brotherhood of man.

Whatever set-backs may be experienced in our efforts to see this vision democratically fulfilled, it is only by holding the vision clearly and steadily before us that we shall be enabled to emerge triumphantly from the turmoil, strife, and conflict of our time and find true meaning for our human existence.

ANTHONY BROOKE

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Acknowledgements

FIRST and foremost among the people who assisted me was the late Margaret Noble. The collection of Brooke family and other Sarawak material which she arranged to have deposited at Rhodes House proved invaluable. She also made it possible for me to meet a number of other *orang dahulu* and her conversation and tireless correspondence helped to maintain my momentum as well as providing a wealth of information. Her excellent portraits of Vyner and Bertram Brooke and her genealogy of the Brooke family are reproduced with permission. I am grateful, too, to Lord Tanlaw and the Sarawak Foundation for permission to use Rhodes House material. Mr Anthony Brooke was most co-operative in interviews and correspondence and I very much appreciate his concern that the whole story should be told. At the same time, he displayed remarkable forbearance when commenting on the more provocative sections of my draft. Mrs K. M. Brooke was also extremely kind and helpful, letting me see some very useful material. I regret that the limits of my study have not allowed full justice to be done to her marathon tour of Sarawak in 1947. Other *orang dahulu* who greatly assisted me were Anne Bryant, Mrs Madeleine Daubeney, Mr Bill Banks, Mr A. J. N. Richards, Mr E. H. Elam, Sir Dennis White, Assistant Bishop Peter Howes, and the late Mr B. J. C. Spurway. I also benefited from the information given to me through correspondence by Mr K. H. Digby, Mr J. L. Noakes, Mrs Margaret Bowyer and Mr C. Pitt Hardacre. Mrs Evelyn Hussey was most helpful about the Rajah and G. T. M. MacBryan and the papers which she made available to me were a magnificent windfall. I am grateful, too, to Mrs Hilary Waddington for allowing me to see her brother's papers and to Mr Jack MacBryan, Mrs Eva MacBryan and Mrs Frances Benn for further information about G. T. M. MacBryan. Lady Gammans was kind enough to let me use her late husband's papers, now deposited at Rhodes House. I also received valuable assistance from a number of *orang bahru*, principally Sir Thomas Eastick, Mr J. R. Black, Professor

W. E. H. Stanner, Alastair and Hedda Morrison, Elaine McKay, Mr Robert Nicholl, Mr R. H. Morris and Mr E. C. G. Barrett. Mr C. W. Dawson, Chief Secretary of Sarawak, 1946–50, kindly allowed me to read his diary for the early part of 1946 and this work would be much the poorer without it. The Librarian at Rhodes House, Mr F. E. Leese, was kind enough to let me work in his basement and I am greatly indebted to the former Archivist, Miss Patience Empson, and her friendly colleagues for their tireless assistance with the Sarawak material. In London, Mrs Brenda Hough of the SPG archives was most obliging and in Canberra, Mr G. McEwen at the War Memorial and Mrs Joy Wheatley at Archives did their best to help me. The chance recovery and preservation of Anthony Brooke's papers, which I saw in 1978, was entirely due to the splendid initiative of Mr J. Tolson and the co-operation of Mr J. Wickens. To the many people in Sarawak who gave so much of their time and hospitality, I must express my deep appreciation and hope that there will be an opportunity of conveying it personally. I am particularly indebted to Tan Sri Haji Su'at Tahir, Tuan Haji Mohd. Ma'amon bin Nor, Sumping Bayang, and Haji Yusuf Heaton. I wish to thank my thesis supervisor, Tony Reid, for his patient guidance and Dr Rob Pascoe and Dr Jim Warren who commented on some chapters of the book. I am also indebted to Professor Nicholas Tarling for his encouragement and early advice. K. C. Jong, C. P. Tang, Nuara Khir, and B. B. Dzulkifli assisted with the translations and I am grateful to my former colleague Akira Oki and to Mr S. Suzuki for a correspondence from which I benefited greatly. I also wish to thank Elinor Parker and my friends at 'Stony Creek' for their moral support. My basic research was made possible by the award of an Australian National University Research Scholarship and Murdoch University made it possible for me to visit England in 1978 to collect more material. The manuscript was typed by Annette Ritchie, Lianne Blackwell, and Kate Faraday. Kath Brown and Murray Austen-Smith re-drafted the genealogical table. Finally, I would like to thank those people who, together with the Sarawak Museum and the Imperial War Museum, gave me access to their photographic collections and permission to reproduce particular photographs.

Murdoch University
October 1980

R. H. W. REECE

Preface

WHEN I undertook my research on Sarawak history in 1974 I hoped to make the anti-cession movement of 1946–51 the focus of my study. However, investigations showed that the history of the various anti-cession groups was sparsely documented. While I located some material on the Sarawak Dayak Association's origins, no trace could be found of the records of the Malay National Union and the Barisan Pemuda Sarawak. One of the immediate consequences of the murder of Governor Duncan Stewart at Sibu in December 1949 was the confiscation of many documents by the police and the destruction of others by people who wished to remove all traces of their connections with the anti-cessionists.

By the time I began to examine the splendid collection of material deposited at Rhodes House, Oxford, by members of the Brooke family, the late Mrs Margaret Noble, and a number of former Sarawak officers, I was convinced that it was just as important to explain how cession came about. While a good deal had been written about the first two Rajahs, the end of Brooke rule had been passed over by historians. The Rhodes House material, together with the Colonial Office and War Office records and personal interviews, provided a sound basis for reconstructing the story. The Rhodes House collection also contained a number of letters from members of the Malay National Union and the Sarawak Dayak Association during 1946 and early 1947. I have used these in the last chapter which describes the first phase of the anti-cession movement in the Kuching area. The shape of the book has been influenced by my belief that the cession should be seen both as the product of factors arising from Brooke rule and British imperialism and as the well-spring of Sarawak's political development. I hope that what I have written will help to provide a starting-point for studies of the anti-cession movement itself, which must be regarded as the first expression of Sarawak nationalism.

Apart from the anticipated unavailability of key Colonial Office files for 1945 and 1946, perhaps the most disappointing gap in the archival

material is the paucity of records for Sarawak during the inter-war period, the Japanese occupation, and for Vyner Brooke himself. Unlike his father and great-uncle, the third Rajah does not seem to have been a prolific writer; if he was, pathetically little of his writing has survived. Consequently, I have had to conjecture about his personality and his motivations and I am by no means confident of the picture which emerges. There is much more material available on Anthony Brooke and I was fortunate enough to have several interviews with him in London in 1974 and 1975. A long-forgotten hoard of his papers also came to light during my visit to London in June 1978.

The first task of this book is to explain why Brooke rule ended and to describe the way in which it came about. To do this it has been necessary to explore a number of themes: the Brooke tradition; the question of the succession; the nature of Brooke rule in the 1930s; and the policy of the British government (or rather, the Colonial Office) towards Sarawak. The Japanese occupation has also been treated as a catalyst of change. The second task is to examine the cession and its impact, paying particular attention to the anti-cession movement as the watershed of modern political organization in Sarawak. Readers should note that early Brooke history, which has been rehearsed in detail by many writers, is dealt with only cursorily here.

I have tried to do full justice to the events and personalities which I have described in the belief that the reader will be led to his own conclusions. If there are distortions, I hope that these are due largely to the relative availability of evidence and not to any unreasonable bias. It may not be inappropriate to quote Bertram Brooke's retrospective view of the whole cession affair:

I know that if I had been an unprejudiced onlooker called upon to give a detailed commentary on the final stage, my verdict would have been a harsh one, embracing H.M.G. [His Majesty's Government] and all the present Brooke generation, including myself, for the stupidity which led to the suddenly enforced change of status of subject peoples amounting to a breach of trust.

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Sarawak and Brunei, showing successive Boundaries (After S. Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, Cambridge University Press)

front endpaper

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back endpaper

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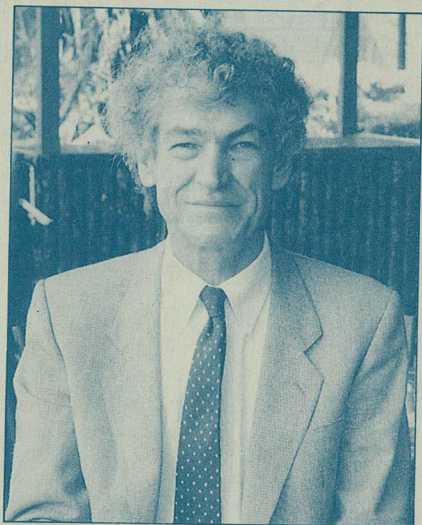
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Abbreviations

AIB	Allied Intelligence Bureau
AWM	Australian War Memorial
BBCAU	British Borneo Civil Affairs Unit
BMA(BB)	British Military Administration (British Borneo)
BPM	Barisan Pemuda Sarawak
CA	Commonwealth Archives
CO	Colonial Office
FEER	<i>Far Eastern Economic Review</i>
Hansard	British Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons
IMTFE	International Military Tribunal, Far East
JMBRAS	<i>Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
MCS	Malayan Civil Service
ML	Mitchell Library
MNU	Malay National Union
PPM	Pergerakan Pemuda Melayu
SDA	Sarawak Dayak Association
SEAC	South-East Asia Command
SG	<i>Sarawak Gazette</i>
SGG	<i>Sarawak Government Gazette</i>
SMJ	<i>Sarawak Museum Journal</i>
SPG	Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts
SRD	Services Reconnaissance Department
ST	<i>Sarawak Tribune</i>
SWPA	South-West Pacific Area
WO	War Office



Dr. Bob Reece is Associate Professor in History at Murdoch University, Western Australia. He first came to Sarawak as correspondent for the *Far Eastern Economic Review* in 1969 and subsequently wrote his doctorate at the Australian National University on the cession of Sarawak to the British Crown in 1946. Published in 1982 as *The Name of Brooke* but long since out of print, this book pro-

vides the only detailed scholarly study of the end of White Rajah rule in Sarawak and of the indigenous political movement dedicated to its restoration. It is based on an exhaustive study of official and private records of the period, supplemented by interviews with many of the main actors in the piece. Dr. Reece has published widely on Sarawak history, contributing lengthy introductions to Oxford in Asia reprints of such nineteenth century classics as Hugh Low's *Sarawak*, Henry Keppel's *Expedition to Borneo of H.M.S. Dido*, Charles Brooke's *Ten Years in Sarawak* and Harriette McDougall's *Sketches of Our Life in Sarawak*. He has also written a number of historical entries for the *Encyclopaedia of Iban Studies* and is currently working on a biography of Datu Bandar Abang Haji Mustapha (1906 - 1964) which will be published by the Sarawak Literary Society in September 1993.



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