

## DIASPORA IMPACT TO INDIGENOUS OF SAMA DILAUT IN SABAH, MALAYSIA

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**Abstract.** Sama Dilaut is sub-ethnicity, and being a social group belong to the Sama-Bajau of Southeast Asia. Their ancestral settlement scattered along the Sulawesi-Sulu Seas in Sabah and Southern Philippines, and the eastern Indonesian archipelago. Due to the formation of the independent nation-state in the region, today they are separated into different citizens that the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia. In Sabah Sama-Bajau, were divided into four social categories, namely diLaut; sea-fisherman; land-agricultural and urban. After Sabah obtained independence status in 1963, all Sama-Bajau social groups, except diLaut social type, being Malaysian nationality. The question is why the Sama Dilaut as the social category of diLaut, was excluded from Malaysian citizen? This paper identifies and discusses the effects of the diaspora to the indigenous status of Sama Dilaut in Sabah. It's found out diaspora factors determined the ability of Sama Dilaut to secure the citizenship. The main consequences of the diaspora factors were i) the failure of mainstream society to understanding diaspora concept of the Sama Dilaut; ii) the mainstream society has been misled Sama Dilaut as illegal immigrants and iii) identity contestation among the social groups of Sama-Bajau. This structural factor has formed the perception among the mainstream society in Malaysia that the Sama Dilaut in Sabah is illegal immigrants or the sea peoples without the country (statelessness).

**Keywords:** *Sama Dilaut, diaspora, social category, ancestor territorial, citizenship, statelessness*

### Introduction

Sama-Bajau is one of the ethnic groups in the maritime society of Southeast Asia. At the same time, they also being the largest population in the society, besides other indigenous ethnic such as Orang Laut in Riau islands, Moken in Myanmar and Thailand seas (Sopher, 1965; Sather, 1998). Therefore, according to Stacey et al. (2018), they represent one of the most widely dispersed indigenous groups in Southeast Asia. Their traditional or ancestor settlements scattered along with the sea-islands eastern Indonesia, Celebes sea-islands east Indonesia, East Kalimantan to North Borneo-Southern Philippines in the archipelago of Sulu (Lapian and Kazufumi, 1996; Sather, 1997). Due to the formation of the nation-state in the region, today they were separated into three different nationalities, namely the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia. As for today, the total population of the Sama-Bajau ethnic in the three nations is an estimated 1.2 million (Saat, 2010; Stacey et al., 2018). In Malaysia, their population is about 450, 279 (Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 2014).

Viewing from a mode of livelihood perspective, indeed maritime society is a kind of social typology, whereas its members always exposed to the contemporary social changes. As a result, today, some of them were successful in upgrading their social

status from the existing one to the other more advanced social categories. Sama-Bajau were enduring long ages throughout three phases of eras, namely Indigenous, Western Colonial and Independent nation-state. Now everywhere in Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, they had moved from the diLaut social category to either one of the three types of social groups as stipulated in *Table 1*.

**Table 1.** Social categorization of the Sama-Bajau.

Social categories	Inhabitants	Mode of livelihood	Social status
diLaut	Sama Dilaut or Bajau Laut	-Two types: i) living in lepa ii) semi sedentary Keep roving within ancestor's territorial of sea island	-statelessness people -not access to any aids and facilities provided by the government -Hard core poor -native people in Sabah -The quality of their psychophysical environmental is undergone the degrading process
Sea-fisherman	Sama-Bajau	-mostly relying on the fishing economic sector -permanently living in the house along the coastal area and islands -settlement status either occupying communal or state land -shifting towards urban social category	-most of them are under relative and hard-core poverty -Malaysia citizen ship -access to every aids and facilities proving by state -Malaysian citizenship
Land agricultural	Sama-Bajau	-mostly relying on faming economic sector, planting paddy -permanently living in the vicinity of the coastal area or riverside -mostly they owned individual land	-some of them are poor -mostly there have individual agricultural lands
Urban	Urbanized Bajau	Same- -Mostly relying on the urban economic sector - mostly live in urban villagers with either squatter or gazette villagers	-Malaysians citizenship concentrate on low income jobs (salaried/business) -poverty incident still high

Source: Saat (2010)

This paper is paid attention to the Sama Dilaut as the inhabitant of diLaut social category in Sabah. Shortly after being proclaimed as an independent state with Malaysian Federation Nation on September 16, 1963, all the social categories of the Sama-Bajau ethnic in Sabah became Malaysian citizen, except the Sama Dilaut, a resident of the boat-houses which is the social category of the diLaut. The main question is, why has the Sama Dilaut been released out of recognition as a Malaysian citizen? This paper attempts to uncover two objectives, first of all, the definition of the diaspora concept of the Sama Dilaut; and second, discuss the consequences of the diaspora's definition to their status as the indigenious/native people belonging to Sabah.

## Materials and Methods

This paper is part of the research findings done in Semporna, Sabah from 2015 to 2018. A sampling of this research was collecting in three locations, namely Kg. Bangau-Bangau; Kg. Labuhan Haji; and Pulau Omdal as demonstrated in *Table 2*. The selection of the areas was because there is the main concentration of the Sama Dilaut's population in Semporna.

*Table 2. Key informant areas.*

Areas	Key informants
Kg Bangau-Bangau	two persons
Kg Labuhan Haji	two persons
Pulau Omdal	two persons
Total	Six persons

The generating of the empirical data of this study is used an interview with two types of key informants: first, the interview with the head of the boat-house household; and second, the interview also was conducted with the permanent settled Sama Dilaut's key informants in Kg. Bangau-Bangau, while focussing on their life history. Besides, the discussion also was done with the key informants of Sama-Bajau inland or Bajau Kubang. An interview is the only method that is the best technic to obtain information from the key informants of the Sama Dilaut, especially those living in boat-houses.

Communication issues with the boat-house informants resulted in lacked some of the required information. However, the data has been top-up with information from the key informants who have lived in the house. They are the Sama Dilaut generation who were born and raised as well as experienced the diLaut mode of livelihood. The discussion of this paper mostly supported by the interpretation of the interview data and secondary sources only.

## Results and Discussion

How many populations of the Sama Dilaut are in Sabah, is still a "mystery", as of today there are no official figures on the Sama Dilaut population. Their population's statistic is useful to many interested parties to understand their real problems in the Malaysian context in Sabah. For example, recently, some stakeholders have to look for Sama Dilaut total population in Sabah, particularly in Eastern the State. There are such as The United Nation Refugee Agency (UNHCR), researchers, and even government agencies such as Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM). Therefore, they

conducted their field study to find out the actual population of the Sama Dilaut in Sabah. ESSCOM, for example, in 2016, conducted a survey of the Sama Dilaut community in the districts of Kunak and Semporna. However, the result was less successful, and it's not because ESSCOM lacked logistics but due to problem of understanding about who exactly Sama Dilaut. The survey results show that the Sama Dilaut population was 26,015. This figure exceeds the estimated population of the Sama Dilaut in Eastern Sabah, whereas most of the illegal immigrants have included in this number.

This research also tried to establish the total population of the Sama Dilaut in Semporna just based on the information gathered through the key informants, besides some field observations. The result illustrated in *Table 3*.

**Table 3.** *Estimated the Numbers of Sama Dilaut Population in Semporna in 2018.*

Village/Island	Number of house/Lepa	Population	Source of livelihood
Labuhan Haji	680 (house)	6,800	1. 85% without valid
	100 (boat-houses)	400	documents=Marine natural
Bangau-Bangau	500 ( House)	6,000	resources
	15(boat-houses)	60	2. 60% with valid
Pulau Omodal	200 ( House)	1,250	document=60%urban
	50 (boat-houses)	200	sectors
			3. 85% without valid
			documents
Total	1. House=1,380	14,710	
	2. House-Boats=165		

The above Table is showing the total population of the Sama Dilaut in Semporna is about 14,710, which 3.26% out of 450,279 total population ethnic of Sama-Bajau in Sabah. In Semporna, their community is about 18.7% out of 78,550 Sama-Bajau (Bajau Kubang) total population. This number covers all three Sama Dilaut categories, namely those living in house-boats; semi-sedentary; and entirely sedentary.

Generally, most of the Sama Dilaut in Sabah are without any official documents such as birth certificate, Malaysian identity card or any other relevant material. Nevertheless, there are also among those who already have a Malaysian citizenship certificate. The group is the generation of the Sama Dilaut who has settled in the land in Kampung Bangau-Banagu, before Sabah's Independence Day on September 16, 1963. Besides, some of the Sama Dilaut in Kg. Labuhan Haji and Pulau Omodal those were mix-married with the Land Bajau (Bajau Kubang) also already became Malaysian citizen. The Sama Dilaut who moved to the ground in established permanent houses during the era of Sabah independent is holding the status of people without official documents. Hence, they are dubbed as people without the country.

### ***The diaspora concept of Sama Dilaut***

The Sama Dilaut belong to the ethnic group of, and social category of Sama-Bajau in Southeast Asian. In Sabah now they have broken into three social groups distinguished by modes livelihood, namely diLaut; semi-sedentary; and permanently living in the land house. The first social group is relying on natural marine resources. The second social group who lived in a simple house built on the shallow coral reef (tebba), they are dependent on marine resources. Finally, the third-social group is Malaysian citizens, the

generations of the Sama Dilaut settled in Kg. Bangau-Bangau since 1958 and few of them found in Kg. Labuhan Haji as well as in Pulau Omdal.

In general, diaspora is about the place of original any group of people prior they occupied the current location or country (Ember et al., 2004). Briefly, diaspora is refereeing to the place of origin from where inhabitants of the particular area or country, before their existing in the site or state that currently they occupied. Every single ethnic of inhabitants in any country in the world must have their diaspora. To show their identity that makes the difference with others, hence they keep coupling their ethnic with their place of origin. Thus, the diaspora is being the core of ethnic or sub-ethnic identity in a particular country. Diaspora always used to identify whether an ethnic is belong to native people of the country they occupied or they were immigrants. Based on such diaspora function, hence this paper defined diaspora as the original place of any ethnic in a particular country. The heritage area they descending from their forefathers for hundreds of years.

In the context of the Sama Dilaut community in Sabah, diaspora is referring to, as a region belongs to their ancestor that they occupied currently. They have been held the area as an inheritance from their ancestors since before the European colonization. The study found that ancestral territory of the Sama Dilaut can be understanding from two essential characteristics, namely physical and movement aspects.

The physical characteristics of the Sama Dilaut's ancestral territory are as following:

First;

The hereditary region of Sama Dilaut has changed through three periods began from the native era, until the seventh-century; the age of European colonization, seventh-century until twenty-century and the era of the independent nations, since twenty-century. In the period of indigenou, their ancestral territories extended across the Sulu-Celebes island of Philippines-Malaysia-Indonesia. After formed the colonial state boundary, however, the Sama Dilaut descendant's region was separated into three countries namely Indonesia, British North Borneo Chartered Company (BNBCC) and the Philippines. Despite this, while under European colonial authority, their freedom to maneuverer around in the hereditary territory is unaffected.

Second;

However, after the formation of an independent nation-state in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, the existence of descendent territory not just affected but even their socio-economic wellbeing also has begun to transform. For example, as the result of the independent nation-state formations, the Sama Dilaut has become "people without the country" in its ancestor sea-lands in the Philippines and Malaysia due to excluded from obtained national identification. As the consequences, they have marginalized from the mainstream livelihood of their countries. More than that, their rights to the economic resources of their ancestral territory has denied directly or indirectly. Its happen through various the state development projects and policies such as in terms of conservation sea-islands area for the marine national parks; national security measures; international maritime border security activities; state agencies economic development activities as well as the private companies economic activities.

Third;

Everywhere within the Sama Dilaut's hereditary region, their villages are located in the selected bays. The Sama Dilaut villages called "labuhan" (anchorage); this unique concept is one of the characteristics of their livelihood mode. All the labuhan they inherited from their ancestor. The labuhan usually are located in areas that are safe from strong winds and waves. In certain seasons, the labuhan will accommodate many of the Sama Dilaut family boat-houses. They come from various places in the heritage region, having ventured into sea products. Among the functions of the labuhan areas is the site to be gathered to carry out some socio-cultural ceremonies such as a wedding, religious rituals, to manage the burial of family members, to repair or overhaul of boat-houses (lepa) and others socio-cultural activities.

Fourth,

The descent territory of the Sama Dilaut is abundant with various types of marine life. The ancestor region of Sama Dilaut are covered by the "Tebba", and each of the tebba has their name. Tebba is a heritage coral reef area that stores all marine life treasures. By using local knowledge, they manage and explore the tebba resources wisely. Meaning to say, Tebba is one of the source treasures of Sama Dilaut's tribal region, which serves as a "supermarket", from where they find out food and sea produces for cash.

### ***Characteristics of the Sama Dilaut movement***

In terms of sea-island mobility, the group's respective lepa were continuing to voyage within their ancestor region, including the cross-border movement of the Malaysia-Philippines international waters. They doing the lepa movement is merely guided by the "pre-existing factor", mainly the hereditary region that belongs to their ancestors. Therefore, in manage the sailing, the Sama Dilaut are not as tightly bound by the "post-existing factors" like the international borders laws of Malaysia-Philippines. Nevertheless, recently the pressure of post existing factors have increased so that their lives have become more difficult.

First;

After the era of independence, the Sama Dilaut lepa groups were still pursuing the cross-border movement of Malaysia-Philippines in the coastal-islands of Celebes-Sulu seas. It seems that the Malaysian and the Philippines maritime securities just "let them go" with their activities. They deserve such manoeuvre freedom is because the two-countries maritime security authorities have known and understood that the tribals are the Sama Dilaut. The latter sailed just within their traditional territory. The authorities have also realized that they are free from criminal activities as they move together with their family members in the pity lepa. Therefore, the Sama Dilaut is the sea people, do not pose a national security threat to the respective countries. They do not know about the development of the external world, without primary academic education and do not know anything about the laws of the nations.

Second;

Despite this, two political developments have affected the freedom of Sama Dilaut to cross-border movement of Malaysia-Philippines. First, the Civil war happened in the southern Philippines in 1972. Because of wanting to save themselves from the dangers of this civil war, then there has been an extraordinary movement. Sama Dilaut group's

boat-houses, being passed away from its descendants' territory in the Sulu Islands, heading to ancestral land in Sabah's eastern archipelago, especially Semporna. After all most of the boat-houses family finally settled in their ancestral region in Sabah eastern archipelago, especially in Semporna.

The Second political development was the intrusion of the Sulu militant 11 February 2013 in Kg. Tanduo, Lahad Datu. Following the incident, hence the Malaysian government has established an Eastern Sabah Security and Safety Zone (ESSZONE) were its legal enforcement discharge by Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM) (Sebastian, 2019). As the Sama Dilaut tribal area has become an operational area of organized criminal activity across the Malaysia-Philippines border, it has become ESSCOM's primary operating area (Saat and Shah, 2019).

Third;

The Sama Dilaut families movement saw it like "wandered" without direction, but in fact, it is not randomly. First, they wandered only within the territory of his descendants. Second, this movement occurs between the labuhan, Tebba, islands and urban such as Semporna town, Lahad Datu town, Tawau and Kudat town. Tebba is a source of acquiring revenue; the city is the place of marketing revenue and securing the supply of food; Island, the site of the burial site, getting freshwater, wood for cooking, and making boats. Labuhan is their villages, the place to organize various socio-cultural ritual and celebrations.

This paper implied that some elements characterized the nature of the ancestor land or traditional territorial that currently inherited by the Sama Dilaut. The first described elements are a movement of lepa are motivated by the resources of coral-reef that covering large area through the island of Sulu-Celebes seas to the eastern sea of Indonesia. The second described elements are they explore the coral reef and island treasury that were discovered by their forefather, by using their indigenous knowledge. The third described elements are all three traditional or ancestor territorial finally became the customary native right on sea-islands (NCRs-i) of the Sama Dilaut. Unlike Native Customary Right on land (NCR) inland native peoples, the Sama Dilaut NCRs-i has not constituted in Sabah Land law ordinance. Still, it has formed in their social-cultural order and rest in their realm of consciousness that guided them in exploration the ancestor land resources.

Therefore, socio-cultural historically, the sea-islands of the Celebes-Sulu seas of Semporna Malaysia, indeed belong to the Sama Dilaut ancestor land. This fact endorsed by many scholars in Bajau studies, such as Lapien and Kazufumi (1996), Sather (1997) Salleh (2004) and Pallesen (1985) who agreed on some socio-cultural facts. Among others the facts are (1) the Sama Dilaut is a family member of Sama-Bajau ethnics, who generally divided into two main groups based on the mode of livelihood. First, sea-island livelihood mode basis that refereeing to the sub-ethnic of Sama Dilaut or Bajau Laut. Second, land livelihood mode that belongs to the land Sama-Bajau such as land Bajau in West coast of Sabah. Second, they existed as the inhabitants of Sabah's Celebes-Sulu sea-islands before 700 years or in the 8th century.

Besides that, local key informants in Semporna also assumed that the Sama Dilaut is a part of a land Bajau or Bajau Kubang family. Key informant A says that "... They are our brethren too, the Sama language, natives, only they live in the sea, and we live on the land.... ". The Key informant B. They are the natives of Sabah if, in other places such as elsewhere in America and the Peninsula, they assisted by the government... so it

isn't we who else can help them... ". Key informant C from the Sama Dilaut sub-ethnic, of view "... if asked from where we originally, well there was a story from my Mum that we originally from "Johor"... In this Semporna, we do not know since when we live in, but to my feeling it since our ancestors..., Semporna is our land of originating.... ".

British North Borneo Chartered Company (BNBCC) and later the British colonials, then later on adopted by the Sabah government, by using the term "native" people of Sabah. BNBBCCA has defined Native to three categories based on their relationship with the Sabah. That is, first of all, is "persons whose parents are members of the indigenous "tribes" of Sabah. Following types is a person deemed to be a native if one of his or her parents or ancestors belong to an indigenous ethnic "tribe" of Sabah; and third, persons who may claim to be natives (Mahap, 2013).

Based on the concept of the Sama Dilaut's diaspora characteristics, therefore, they indeed fall under the first category of indigenous or Native ethnic groups of Sabah. According to Salleh (2004) in Malaysia, the people so-called as indigenous people can divide into two groups, first, the "centre indigenous"; and second, the "peripheral indigenous". The centre indigenous is the Native people who have been in the life of mainstream society and enjoying all the national facilities and aids, such as citizenship and socio-economic status. On the opposite, is the peripheral indigenous tribal whose in the position of total social dislocation such as in terms of citizenship, settlements, socio-cultural and political.

Thus this paper argues that in Malaysia, the tribal with indigenous status is not necessarily become citizenship. However, the negative consequences of indigenous people without having a citizenship status are very severe. The Sama Dilaut indeed fell under the category of indigenous people without having a citizenship that they are experiencing in Sabah since the independence era.

### *The diaspora consequences*

The failure of the State to identify the concept of the Sama Dilaut diaspora has caused public confusion over the Sama Dilaut in Sabah. Does the question arise whether they are Sabahan or illegal immigrants? This question has finally shaped the mainstream society perception to the Status of Sama Dilaut citizenship that they are considered illegal immigrants without a country. Moreover, now Malaysian society in Sabah has treated them as Philippines illegal immigrant. As the results, the Sama Dilaut in Sabah has been classified as the "statelessness people" by united nations high commissioner (UNHCR) and the Status likely is accepted by the Malaysian Government in Sabah. However, the Country is not a signatory to a convention to stateless populations (DHRRA Malaysia, 2014). "Statelessness people" is a person or a group of people who are not considered nationals by Malaysia.

The Status as people without the Country is the biggest misfortune to the current and future livelihood and wellbeing of the Sama Dilaut. It has a chain of the broader socio-political and economic impact on their present and future lives. Indeed the basis of Sama Dilaut livelihood is extremely dissimilar with the illegal immigrants, for instance, the Sama Dilaut population is whether permanently or semi-permanently living in lepa or boat-houses and relying on the sea natural resources of the coastal and islands. On the other side, salaried jobs in construction as well as informal sectors.

In fact, according to the information given by the key informants that the Sama Dilaut identity is also a resting place by some illegal immigrants from the Philippines. They impersonate to be Sama Dilaut and conduct economic activities in the area of



Semporna Islands. Given no access to the formal sector jobs, thus they are concentrated on the informal sector such as rearing seaweed, fishing. In fact, according to several key informants, many illegal immigrants are involved in illicit economic activities such as the use of explosive materials, poisoning fishes, turtle catching and smuggling activities and sale of consumables. A some of the caught criminals pleaded as Sama Dilaut. There were also cases; the Sama Dilaut was caught up by police for taking a wage from criminals to carry out illegal work without their knowledge.

The image of Sama Dilaut as people without the Country has mistaken reinterpret as illegal immigrants, as well as the reason why the security authorities in ESSZONE suspicious they are involved with cross-border-organized criminal activities. It just because of the location of their ancestral territory located within the area of Malaysia-Philippines International boundary. This problem was further adding by the concentration of the residents, especially the illegal immigrants in the areas of Sama Dilaut. Therefore, one of the significant impacts being stateless people that Sama Dilaut lost control over their NCR's-i in eastern of Sabah, particularly in Celebes sea of Semporna. Consequently, they access to the natural resources have limited by the State on the name of development such as conservation areas as marine parks (Brunt, 2012) and economic growth like resort areas and eco-tourism sports on and under the sea. Because of such fact, the Sama Dilaut those relying on the natural resources of the sea and islands every day basic needs for subsistence consumptions and the cash are thus in the State of very depressing.

The difficulties of living due to various structural barriers made some of the Sama Dilaut members unable to continue their life at sea-islands. As a result nowadays, some of them were gradually landed in an urban area of Sabah, in particular in the municipal of Lahad Datu, Semporna, Kunak and Tawau. Due to they have carried out the image of people without the country or statelessness people, have no primary education and have a vast social distance with people in the city, then they don't access to formal jobs. As a choice, they venture into the informal sectors such as running pity traders dried seafood and charity seekers. The same plight also was experiencing by the Sama Dilaut in the Philippines.

In contrast, due to lost control on ancestor land on sea-island, some of them were dislocation. They finally landed on the city as hopeless persons with stateless stigma, in the urban area, and most of them have to beggars (Tampalas, 2016). In Sabah the mainstream people, including some lawmakers, assumed that the Sama Dilaut is just people of the sea; therefore, they are not allow landed in an urban setting. Otherwise, they will handicap the public image, particularly to the tourist's eyes.

Establishing of ESSZONE under ESSCOM enforcement that has started in 2013 indeed was creating more difficulties to the livelihood of the Sama Dilaut. One of its severe impacts that ESSCOM is suspicious the Sama Dilaut as having collaborated with trans-national organized crime (T-NOC) to running criminal activities such as smuggling. These problems likely were created negative perceptions by the State towards the Sama Dilaut, which will reduce their chances to recognized as Malaysian citizenship seems to be shrinking. As the Sama Dilaut continue to inherit their Status of the native without a country, the path for immigrants as well as illegal immigrants, to obtain Malaysian citizenship in Sabah is expansive.

Being classified as "statelessness people of Sabah" indeed is a "massive disaster" against the plight of Sama Dilaut in the State because it results in the decline of their right to any development aids and facility provided by the State and Federal government

of Malaysia. The nature of statelessness people in Semporna can be broken down into three types: first, created stateless, second, illegal immigrants stateless, and third inheritance stateless (Saat and Shah, 2019). The former one was undergoing by some inland native people's generations of Malaysian, which the problem is more on temporary technical issues. It's because of the childbirth were unable to be registered due to some reasons such as the parent's ignorance's or they live in remote rural areas that facing transportation difficulty with the urban centre. The second type of stateless is referring to the undocumented generations of illegal immigrants that were born in Sabah. The heritage stateless which involved the Sama Dilaut is unique but ridiculous because being statelessness people were in the inherited Status that they descend from their forefathers. It is different in comparisons with the concepts of stateless that currently belong to inland native people in Sabah and Sarawak whereas, they can solve the problem by application of the late registration act under the ordinance of Malaysia register department.

## Conclusion

It appears that life experience of Sama-Bajau ethnic groups in Indonesia compared to those in Malaysia (Sabah) and in the Philippines are demonstrated some differences. After Indonesia achieved independence, all ethnic Sama-Bajau or in the Country well-known as Suku Bajo, became citizens. In contrast, in Sabah Malaysia and the Philippines, after the independence era, the sub-ethnic of Sama Dilaut has become a native without a country. The last moment for the Sama Dilaut in Malaysia (Sabah) have an opportunity to become nationality is before 1963. The fundamental factor of the Sama Dilaut became the native without a country is the failure of mainstream society to understand the nature of the diaspora concept of the Sama Dilaut. It's also has led to the formation of the wrong perception among mainstream Malaysian society that Sama Dilaut is an illegal immigrant in Sabah. Finally, today it has resulted in many other issues that severely affected wellbeing as well as the future of Sama Dilaut as native people of Sabah. Nevertheless, such general negative perception has been remained questionable by some of the maritime law officials enforcement in the international marine border of Malaysia-Philippines. Their belief that Sama Dilaut indeed is the Native peoples in the Eastern Waters of Sabah and the Southern Philippines made them gentle and tolerant to their maneuverer a cross the Malaysian-Philippines maritime borders in Sulu-Celebes Seas.

Generally, the concept of the Sama Dilaut diaspora is similar to that of indigenous ethnic groups on land such as Penan, Dayak and Orang Ulu in Sarawak (Phua, 2009), as well as the Orang Asli in the Malaysia Peninsular. The only thing that distinguishes among them is that the NCR land Sama Dilaut is the sea-coastal-island-based source of marine resources. For example, if natives in the land roam for food sources, it is in their NCR land. Sama Dilaut also doing the same activities on the NCRs-i, exploring sources from coral reefs. As for today, the main issue that mainstream society in Malaysia was so confused with the diaspora concept of Sama Dilaut, in particular, their mode of livelihood which resulted in negative perception in many matters such as assumed them as illegal immigrants which more serious.

Despite, they are people without a country or statelessness people, but they are not the same as other statelessness. Among the three types of statelessness peoples mentioned above, Sama Dilaut fell under the category of inherited stateless people with

indigenous peoples' Status. Without a country of descent, the situation that they inherited from their ancestors. The Sama Dilaut hardships as indigenous peoples without a country that, much worse than that of indigenous peoples as the Penans in Sarawak or Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia, because they enjoy all State development aid.

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