Sense of Belonging, Identity and Nationalism Dayak Bidayuh on the Border Indonesia-Malaysia

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Abstract

This study examines the notions of belonging, identity, and nationalism within the Dayak Bidayuh community residing in the Jagoi Babang area, located along the border between Indonesia and Malaysia. The concept of belonging, a fundamental human characteristic closely linked to one's identity, culture, and heritage, plays a vital role in comprehending the dynamics of a community. Despite being part of Indonesia's ethnic groups, the Dayak Bidayuh exhibit a solid attachment to their ancestral lands, demonstrating their feeling of belonging through intense nationalist sentiments as Indonesian citizens and a deeply rooted affection for their homeland. This research aims to uncover the diverse, intricate factors that impact their sense of belonging. The Dayak Bidayuh identity and sense of belonging are profoundly shaped by their beliefs, customs, culture, and the geographical location in which they reside. In addition, we examine the complexities of the Dayak Bidayuh community's sense of belonging near the Indonesia-Malaysia border compared to other regions in Indonesia. This comparative analysis provides valuable insights into the complexities of borderland identities and their implications for the preservation of culture and the viability of development programs. Comprehending these processes is essential for fostering harmony between different cultures, protecting native traditions, and promoting overall progress in border regions.

Keywords: Sense of Belonging, Identity, Nationalism Dayak Bidayuh



Introduction

The convergence of belonging, identity, and nationalism creates an intricate fabric in areas where (Woo, Easthope, & Kyung-Sup, 2020) people live, having shared ethnic connections but varying in terms of national citizenship. This research examines the complex dynamics within the Dayak Bidayuh community in Jagoi Babang, which is located on the border between Indonesia and Malaysia. The enduring impact of colonialism is evident in this area, namely via the decolonization efforts undertaken by the Dutch in Indonesia and the British in Malaysia (Budiawan, 2017; Darmanto, Masduki, & Wiryawan, 2022). These processes have led to the fragmentation of ethnic communities beyond national boundaries. The historical backdrop is essential for comprehending the present difficulties encountered by the Dayak Bidayuh and their deep-rooted attachment to their ancestral territory. Statement of the problem The main focus of the inquiry is the transnational presence of the Dayak Bidayuh population, which is divided between Indonesia and Malaysia as a result of colonial-era border delineations. The divide has presented distinctive difficulties for the group, who, although having a shared ethnic identity, must manage the intricacies of belonging to separate nation-states. The feeling of belonging, identity, and nationalism in Jagoi Babang is therefore shaped by a simultaneous loyalty to both their ethnic history and their national citizenship (Efriani, Hasanah, & Bayuardi, 2020).

Overview of the Dayak Bidayuh Community in Jagoi Babang the Dayak Bidayuh, an indigenous population native to Borneo, have a traditional way of life centred upon agriculture. They reside in tightly-knit communities and have a vibrant cultural heritage with many customs and rituals. The Jagoi Babang group has a long-standing presence in this border region, resulting in a profound attachment to their land. Their geographical affiliation plays a crucial role in shaping their identity, cultivating a profound sense of belonging. The cultural activities of the Dayak Bidayuh, such as the Gawai Dayak celebration and traditional agricultural methods, are not just cultural artefacts but integral aspects of their everyday life that strengthen their shared identity. The colonial history of Borneo, namely the interventions carried out by the Dutch and the British, has had enduring consequences for the Dayak Bidayuh people (Bijl, 2012). The act of arbitrarily delineating colonial borders caused the fragmentation of the Dayak people, resulting in its subjugation to several administrative authorities. Following the achievement of independence, the borders between Indonesia and Malaysia were established as official national boundaries (Sulistyarini, Dewantara, Purnama, & Mirzachaerulsyah, 2021b). Consequently, the Dayak Bidayuh community residing in Jagoi Babang became Indonesian citizens, while their relatives living on the other side of the border became Malaysians. This rift has resulted in a dual identity, where ethnic solidarity is juxtaposed with national disunity.

Feeling of Inclusion and Personal Identity the Dayak Bidayuh's feeling of belonging is closely intertwined with their land, cultural customs, and historical encounters. Regardless of the geographical boundary, their sense of self remains deeply connected to their ancestral territory, which they view as an essential component of their cultural legacy. This devotion is evident in several manifestations, including the preservation of their language, rituals, and communal activities (Olendo, Dewantara, & Efriani, 2022). Their traditional community longhouses serve not only as living places, but also as emblems of their cultural identity and social system. The Dayak Bidayuh's dual national loyalty enhances their sense of belonging by adding an additional dimension. Although they strongly identify as Indonesian, their cultural and ethnic connections to their Dayak background remain strong. These individuals must constantly navigate their position within Indonesia's national structure while preserving their unique cultural heritage. In order to provide context for the debate, it is crucial to emphasise certain significant statistics and facts regarding the Dayak Bidayuh community in Jagoi Babang: The population distribution of the Dayak Bidayuh in Jagoi Babang is around 15,000, as reported by the local census statistics. A notable proportion of their group also resides in Malaysian Borneo, just across the border. Transnationalism examines how migrant or border communities establish and sustain relationships beyond national borders, creating a shared identity that goes beyond the concept of the nation-state. Identity theory explores how people and communities understand and communicate their identity via cultural, social, and political perspectives. The notion of "borderland identities" is especially pertinent in this context since it encompasses the distinct dynamics of identity in areas where national borders cross with ethnic and cultural continuities. This theoretical framework facilitates comprehension of how the Dayak Bidayuh handles their dual identity and feeling of affiliation. To further explore these matters, this project aims to tackle the following research inquiries:

- How can the Dayak Bidayuh community in Jagoi Babang preserve their feeling of affiliation and distinctiveness given their specific geographic and political position along the border between Indonesia and Malaysia?
- What are the consequences of their transnational life for the preservation of their culture and the integration of their nation?

This research seeks to explore the intricate ways in which the Dayak Bidayuh community maintains a harmonious equilibrium between their ethnic identity and national citizenship. It intends to investigate how this delicate balance impacts their cultural traditions and the unity within their group. The Dayak Bidayuh community in Jagoi Babang provides a distinctive perspective to analyse the intricacies of affiliation, individuality, and patriotism in border areas. Their experiences highlight the long-lasting effects of colonial histories and the continuing difficulties of living beyond national boundaries. Gaining an understanding of individuals' feeling of belonging and identification not only offers valuable insights into their community, but also helps to wider conversations on cultural preservation, national integration, and the complexities of identities in border regions. This study seeks to elucidate the complex interaction between ethnicity, nationality, and cultural legacy in influencing the experiences of the Dayak Bidayuh community in Jagoi Babang.

Method

The study employs an ethnographic methodology that centers on firsthand accounts and viewpoints to comprehend the everyday existence and intricacies of identity, ownership, and nationalism within the Dayak Bidayuh community in Jagoi Babang. This methodology enables researchers to get a profound comprehension of culture, social customs, and community relationships from an interior vantage point (Blasco & Wardle, 2007). This ethnographic research commences with gathering preliminary data on the historical background, cultural practices, and socio-political intricacies of the Dayak Bidayuh group. This stage encompasses the gathering and categorization of written works, as well as the acquisition of preliminary data and individuals who possess specialized knowledge that can offer a comprehensive understanding of the community. In addition, the researchers will reside in Jagoi Babang for a minimum duration of six months to gain firsthand experience of the community's daily existence. Engaging in daily activities, traditional rituals, and community gatherings serves the purpose of fostering trust and establishing strong bonds with members of the community (Cresswel, 2014).

Data gathering is conducted using participatory observations, in-depth interviews, focused group discussions (FGDs), and visual documentation. The observations are categorized into structured and unstructured formats to accurately document the intricacies of social interactions and cultural customs. Conducting in-depth interviews involves employing a versatile interview guide to facilitate thorough research of the issue, based on the responses provided by the informant. The interview mostly addressed topics such as ethnic identity, ownership, transnational experiences, and perspectives on nationalism. Community-based focused group conversations are conducted with many demographic groups, including youth, women, and native elders. These discussions employ facilitation approaches that promote active engagement and gather a wide range of opinions. Visual documentation entails capturing photographs and films of significant events such as Gawai Dayak festivities, community gatherings, and daily routines. This visual material serves as a contextual reference to enhance data interpretation (Fetterman, 2010).

Ensuring ethical practices in ethnographic research is crucial (Miles, M.B, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). Before conducting interviews or observations, researchers are required to seek written agreement from all participants. This consent should include a comprehensive explanation of the research objectives, the methodologies to be employed, and the intended use of the collected data. Maintaining participant anonymity through the use of pseudonyms and ensuring the secure storage of data is of utmost importance. Researchers are obligated to uphold the privacy of individuals and refrain from revealing confidential information without explicit consent. Furthermore, researchers make efforts to guarantee that the outcomes of the research are advantageous to the community by actively engaging them in the research process and incorporating them in the decision-making process about the release of the findings. study reflectivity is a crucial factor that requires researchers to be conscious of their position and influence within the community, and how these factors can impact the data they gather. Additionally, researchers must engage in critical reflection on the study process to recognize and address any growing prejudice or assumptions. Through the utilization of an ethnographic technique, this research aims to delve further into the experiences and viewpoints of the Dayak Bidayuh community. By doing so, it aims to gain a comprehensive knowledge of their identity and their sense of ownership within the specific context of the Indonesian-Malaysia border. This technique is anticipated to offer significant insights into how these communities manage their dual identities and safeguard their cultural legacy in various national contexts.

Result and Discussion

Maintaining Identity and Sense of Belonging

That morning of July 2023, thin fog covered the Jagoi Babang hills as the sun began to shine on the east horizon. We leave the simple wooden house where we have lived for the last few months. Here, in the heart of Kalimantan, we live our daily lives with the people of Dayak Bidayuh, who have inhabited this area for centuries. These communities live on the border between Indonesia and Malaysia, facing unique geographical and political challenges while maintaining their strong sense of ownership and identity. Through observation and in-person experience, we try to understand how they maintain attachment to their ancestral land and culture. Life in Jagoi Babang begins at dawn. We wake up every morning with the chicken whistling and see the activity of the citizens starting to get busy preparing for that day. The fragrance of fresh coffee and the burning wood smoke encircled the morning air. Families gather for breakfast and share stories and plans for the day in the middle of a meal. Here, the daily routine is about running activities and strengthening a sense of fellowship and attachment to their culture.

Every morning, we joined the families who hosted us in carrying out their daily rituals. They always start the day with prayers to the spirits of their ancestors, a tradition rooted in the Dayak Bidayuh culture. This prayer is a form of honor and a way to connect them with the land and history they visit. We are beginning to realize that this ritual is essential to their identity, reflecting a strong sense of possession of ancestral lands. For the people of Dayak Bidayuh, land is a source of livelihood and a symbol of identity and cultural heritage. We often go to the fields with the farmers, watching them work with respect for nature. They use traditional farming methods inherited from generation to generation, ensuring the soil remains fertile and productive. The border that separates Indonesia and Malaysia maybe just a line on the map, but for the Dayak Bidayuh community, it is a reality to face every day. Although administratively separate, they see this land as one unity inseparable from their identity. The challenges faced, such as the differences in legal systems, education, and economic policies between the two countries, still needed to diminish their attachment to ancestral lands. Instead, it strengthens their determination to preserve and preserve their cultural heritage.

One of the most vivid expressions of Dayak Bidayuh's identity is the Gawai Dayak festival, which is celebrated after the harvest season. The community gathered to honor the spirits, thank them for the harvest, and pray for prosperity in the coming year. This festival is a celebration full of color, sound, and taste. Traditional dances, music, and rituals are performed with a high spirit. During the Gawai Dayak festival, we witnessed how cultural practices strengthen community bonds. The elders are essential in transmitting knowledge and tradition to the younger generation. The children learn the dance, the song, and the meaning of various rituals. This process ensures that cultural knowledge continues to live and thrive. The festival is also an occasion for the people of Dayak Bidayuh to affirm their uniqueness amid increasing external influence. We spent much time with the villagers, listening to their stories and learning about their oral traditions. Often conveyed in the Bidauh language, these stories are rich in lessons about life, nature, and the cosmos. These stories are entertainment and a way to impart cultural values and knowledge to the younger generation. The effort to preserve these languages is a conscious act of preserving their cultural identity amidst a rapidly changing world.

Living in the border territory means the people of Bidayuh in Jagoi Babang must constantly negotiate their identity within the framework of two states. This transnational existence brings opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, proximity to Malaysia provides economic opportunities through cross-border trade and jobs. On the other hand, they have to navigate different legal and administrative systems. The Dayak Bidayuh community has developed a strategy to face this challenge. They maintain a strong bond of friendship on both sides of the border, which provides a network of support when needed. These bonds are family and cultural because they share rituals, festivals, and traditional knowledge with their relatives across borders. These transnational networks help them maintain their cultural identity and sense of ownership despite being separated by political boundaries.

Education plays a vital role in shaping the future of Dayak Bidayuh society. In Jagoi Babang, schools teach Indonesian national curricula, but there are increasing efforts to integrate local knowledge and cultural practices into the education system. Community leaders and educators work together to develop curricula that reflect the cultural heritage of Dayak

Bidayuh. We visited local schools during our stay and observed how teachers integrated traditional stories, dances, and agricultural practices into their lessons. This approach makes education more relevant to student life and strengthens their cultural identity. Seeing children proudly telling traditional stories and dancing customary dances is delightful. Integrating local cultures into education is a powerful tool for their ownership and cultural uniqueness. Despite the challenges of transnational existence, the Dayak Bidayuh community in Jagoi Babang is committed to preserving its cultural heritage. Their sense of possession is closely linked to their land, language, and traditions. They navigate the complexity of living on the border with resilience and creativity.

Community initiatives play an essential role in this process. Local leaders fight for policies that recognize and support their unique cultural identity. They also work to create economic opportunities that enable communities to thrive while remaining faithful to their traditions. For example, initiatives to promote eco-environment and traditional crop cultivation help create a sustainable future for communities. When we finished our research at Jagoi Babang, we were impressed by the resilience and strength of the Dayak Bidayuh community. Their ability to maintain their ownership and cultural uniqueness amid geographical and political challenges is evidence of their deep attachment to their land and culture. Living with them has given us a profound appreciation of the importance of cultural practices, languages, and communities in shaping identities.

The Dayak Bidayuh community in Jagoi Babang is a living example of how communities can preserve their cultural heritage and thrive in a changing world. Their story is one of resilience, adaptation, and a sense of possession that transcends political boundaries. They ensure this rich cultural heritage is passed on to future generations through everyday practices, festivals, and education. This experience enriches our understanding of Dayak Bidayuh and provides valuable insights into the dynamics of identity and sense of ownership in border communities.

After going through the penalty journey in Jagoi Babang, we discovered that the Dayak Bidayuh community not only lives daily but also celebrates and preserves its cultural heritage enthusiastically. Daily rituals like prayer to the spirits of ancestors and farming activities inherited from time to time become impressive sights. Every morning, they start the day with respect for their ancestral land. This practice is about physical existence in the place and spiritual and emotional communion with the natural environment they love so deeply. Participation in rituals and festivals became the core of their lives. We are fascinated by the spirit and excitement accompanying the *Gawai* Dayak festival, where the entire community gathers to celebrate the harvest and honor the spirits of their ancestors. Traditional dances carried out enthusiastically by young people are tangible proof of how cultural practices in the Jagoi Babang are a legacy and a living and thriving part of their daily lives.

However, behind the delight of the festivals and daily activities, we also witnessed how strong their attachment to their ancestral land was. An attachment is an emotional connection to a place that can form an individual's and a group's identity (Du, Li, & Hao, 2018). For the people of Dayak Bidayuh, land is a source of livelihood and a reflection of their rich cultural identity. The traditional farming practices that they wisely preserve not only meet the needs of life but also serve to instill spiritual bonds with the land and its environment (Du et al., 2018).

We also found that the Bidayuh Dayak community in Jagoi Babang lives in a unique transnational context. They live on the border between Indonesia and Malaysia geographically and cross administrative and cultural boundaries daily (Fatmawati & Dewantara, 2022). Transnationalism explains that migration and cross-border interaction can affect one's cultural identity and practices (Martono, Dewantara, Efriani, & Prasetiyo, 2022). For the people of Dayak Bidayuh, the affinity network that crosses borders is an integral part of their lives. They maintain close ties with relatives in Malaysia, sharing rituals, stories, and shared cultural values. It strengthens their transnational identity and provides essential social support in dealing with the economic and administrative challenges unique to border communities. Education also plays an essential role in preserving and developing the cultural identity of the Dayak Bidayuh community. In multicultural education theory, it is crucial to integrate local knowledge and cultural practice into the formal curriculum. in Jagoi Babang, we saw how local schools collaborated with community leaders to integrate traditional stories, customary dances, and agricultural practices into daily learning. This step not only strengthens the cultural identity of the younger generation but also ensures that this rich cultural heritage remains alive and relevant in the era of globalization. Thus, Dayak Bidayuh in Jagoi Babang managed to maintain their sense of ownership and identity amid the challenges of geography, politics, and globalization. Through well-integrated cultural practices, deep emotional attachment to ancestral lands, and intelligent adaptation to transnational realities, they demonstrate the resilience and richness of cultural identities to be respected and preserved for future generations.

Consequences of Dayak Bidayuh Transnationalism on Culture and National Integration

Among the traditional wooden houses, we could hear their mother tongue mixed with the fragrance of fresh coffee burned in the kitchen. That is where the daily routine begins, with the preparation to trade in the market just a short distance from here. However, the market that is the momentum of our economy is in Indonesia rather than in Serikin, Malaysia. The Serikin Market, with all its crowds and cultural diversity, has become an essential part of our daily lives. Every Friday, we prepare to cross the border. Despite strict rules limiting the number of purchases and use of cross-border routes, we feel lucky to be involved in transboundary trade that brings economic blessings to our community. Indonesian commodities, such as traditional fabrics, handicrafts, and specialty food, are always on the market, not only because of their competitive prices but also because of the cultural values they symbolize.

Our transnational lives are about making a living and keeping our cultural heritage alive and sustainable. Although separated by administrative boundaries, we still celebrate Gawai Dayak and other holidays with the same spirit, though under different Malaysian skies. It is the essence of how national integration for us is limited to the country and the appreciation and respect for our deep cultural roots. However, there is no life without challenges. We know the complexity of the laws and regulations governing our presence on this border. Lack of legal protection for informal traders like us is often a problem, but the spirit to survive and thrive continues to burn our spirit. We also realize that our existence here is about taking and giving. This cross-border relationship benefits us economically and encourages mutual understanding and cooperation between two countries with rich histories and cultures.

In all of this complexity, the relevance of the research question is emitted clearly. How does our transnational life affect the preservation of culture and the integration of nations? The answer can be seen in every cloth we sell at the Serikin Market, in every voice of Gawai singing on the river, and in every cheerful laugh among cross-border merchants. They are living proof that nations can be integrated through the appreciation of cultural diversity and openness to diversity. As we look at their daily life in Jagoi, there is a unique jargon called "garuda in my chest," symbolizing our loyalty to Indonesia, while "Kuching in my stomach" shows how closely connected we are with Malaysia. Both are part of our inseparable identity, reminding us that in the middle of physical boundaries, a cultural bridge connects and enriches our lives as a Dayak Bidayuh community.

The transnational life of the people of Dayak Bidayuh in Jagoi Babang significantly impacts the preservation of their culture and the nation's integration. In this context, the relevance of the research question is widespread, highlighting how their life experience on the border between Indonesia and Malaysia affects economic and social life and forms a rich and complex cultural narrative. The people of Dayak Bidayuh in Jagoi Babang, Bengkayang district, West Kalimantan, live where their daily activities are closely linked to the country's borders. The Serikin market in Malaysia, a significant hub of cross-border trade and interaction, is becoming essential in their economic life. Despite being bound by transboundary rules restricting their activities, such as maximum purchases of 600 ringgit per month and limited use of cross-border postal services, these communities can still maintain cultural survival (Eilenberg & Wadley, 2009).

One of the striking aspects is how transactions in the Serikin Market are economically profitable and enrich cultural exchanges between the two countries. Indonesian merchandise, such as customary clothes, handicrafts, and exceptional food, is a significant attraction for Malaysian shopping visitors. This has a positive economic impact on local traders and promotes the preservation of the cultural heritage of Dayak Bidayuh through acceptance and appreciation from the Malaysian community. Transnational life also affects the national integration of the Dayak Bidayuh community with two different states. Despite living in Indonesia, many have families or siblings in Malaysia, making cross-border intercourse an integral part of their lives. It creates a unique social dynamic in which political boundaries, cultural heritage, and cross-border social networks define national identity. However, the challenge must be addressed. Transnational life also raises tensions in terms of legality and social integration. Indonesian traders in the Serikin Market must operate without a formal work permit, raising questions about economic justice and legal protection for informal migrant workers in the region. Nevertheless, their existence also indicates an effort to preserve traditions and cultures, even in a dynamic and tightly bounded context (Sulistyarini, Dewantara, Purnama, & Mirzachaerulsyah, 2021a).

The relevance of the research questions in this narrative lies in a deep understanding of how transnational life affects the identity and cultural preservation of the Dayak Bidayuh community. Despite the pressure of economic and legal factors, their pride in Indonesian culture and national identity remains strong. It shows that national integration is limited to administrative territories and the ability to preserve cultural values and traditions in a diverse and transnational environment. The transnational life of the Dayak Bidayuh community in Jagoi Babang offers a rich view of the border's cultural complexity and national identity. They are struggling to survive economically and preserve their cultural heritage in an era of constantly changing globalization. (Dewantara, Efriani, & Sulistyarini, 2020).

Conclusion

The transnational life of the Dayak Bidayuh community in Jagoi Babang, West Kalimantan, highlights the complex dynamics between cultural preservation and national integration. Living on the border between Indonesia and Malaysia, they are engaged in intense economic activity in the Serikin Market, Malaysia. Despite the constraints and legality challenges, these communities managed to preserve their rich cultural identity. This cross-border interaction enables a continuous cultural exchange, enriching the traditions and rituals of the Dayak Bidayuh. Festivals like Gawai Dayak become important moments to strengthen their cultural identity despite being in different neighborhoods. Their presence on the market also has a significant economic impact on both Indonesian traders and Malaysian locals. On the other hand, this transnational life also requires careful navigation of both countries' legal and administrative regulations. These challenges often make it difficult to access better services and opportunities. However, cross-border solidarity and solid social networks helped them overcome these obstacles.

The national integration of Dayak Bidayuh communities is not only limited to administrative boundaries but also covers their cultural values and heritage. Their loyalty to Indonesia remains strong, even though interactions with Malaysia heavily influence their daily lives. They show that national identity can be built by appreciating cultural diversity and cross-border cooperation. Overall, the transnational life of the Dayak Bidayuh community in Jagoi Babang offers essential insights into how border communities can play a vital role in preserving culture and national integration. By preserving and adapting their traditions in a transnational context, they preserve valuable cultural heritage and promote harmony and understanding between the two nations.

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