

Rethinking Cultural Identity and its Drivers in Present-Day Indonesia: A Case Study of the Dayak

Yekti MAUNATI*

When we talk about the identity of a certain ethnic group, we relate it to the elements of culture utilized as markers of identity. However, markers of identity are not fixed but depend on the context. Ethnic groups usually do not make use of all the aspects of their culture or history as markers of their identities and some elements of their culture may be found amongst other groups which can make it difficult to distinguish one group from another (Eller 1999, 9) or, in Kahn's argument, it is in a grey area (Kahn 1995). For example, in the case of the Dayak and Malays in Kalimantan, many so-called Malays share a similar culture to that of the Dayak groups because those Dayaks who convert to Islam are often thereafter considered Malay (Coomans 1987). Thus the criteria by which individuals are nominated Dayak or Malay may shift over time (Maunati 2000) something that occurs until the present day as shown in the matter of the Tidung Dayak. In this paper, I will discuss the construction of Dayak identity and its drivers merely by focusing on the significant images of the Dayak like headhunting, longhouses, and their religion and how those images of the Dayak relate to the Dayak identity in the present-day.¹⁾

* Senior Researcher, Research Center for Regional Resources, The Indonesian Institute of Sciences. yektim@yahoo.com

Cultural identity as constructed

According to many writers, cultural identity is constructed (King 1982; Vickers 1989; Hall 1992; Eriksen 1993; Kipp 1993; Kahn 1993; Kahn 1995; Picard 1997; Wood, 1998; etc.). As King and Wilder argue:

Ethnicity is obviously expressed as a product of the past, evoking common origins, social linkages and shared cultural values and traits like language and religion. However, the historical dimension of identity also demonstrates that rather than identities being fixed, constant and immutable, they frequently change and can be acquired (2003, 198).

For this reason, the more recent academic emphasis has been on viewing identity and identity construction as the result of a dynamic interplay between context (and history) and construct. Eriksen demonstrates some of the processes involved in the historical construction of ethnic identity in the case of Indians who migrated to Mauritius and Trinidad. In each case, the subsequent identity was different and thus works against the notion of an 'essential' form of Indianness (Eriksen 1993, 84-85).

Another example of how cultural identities need to be viewed as constructions is in the way identities may be strengthened when a group is under threat (Eriksen 1993). Hall (1992) in his discussion of the processes of globalization concurs with this argument. He notes the rise of particular or local cultures as a response to processes of globalization that, paradoxically, are seen to usher in cultural homogenization. The interest in larger global or national processes has given rise to a large number of studies directed at 'minorities' or otherwise 'threatened' or 'weak' groups, or 'in situations of rapid social

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change' (Eriksen 1993, 113). King, for instance, notes that the Kajang tend to identify themselves in opposition to the Kayan as a 'defence mechanism against the politically dominant and aggressive Kayan' (1982: 35). This, however, does not mean that dominant groups do not also have problems in 'identity processes and the maintenance of identity' (Eriksen 1993, 113). Globalization has widely affected various ethnic groups, including the dominant groups in some countries.

Where scholars tend to differ is in the degree to which the construction of cultural identity is linked to particular processes (for example, economic, political, nation-state building, etc.) and different historical experiences (such as migration, conflict, civil war, etc.). In reality, such distinctions are not easily separated as in the example of the Hmong from Southeast Asia who have created transnational networks in order to further Hmong socio-economic, political and cultural advancement (Culas, Christian and Michaud 2004).

When we talk about ethnicity, we relate it to culture, but the relation between culture and ethnicity is not fixed. According to Eller 'not all culturally distinct groups are ethnic groups precisely, and (in an odd paradox) not all ethnic groups are culturally distinct groups' (1999, 8). It is in this instance that Eller suggests that ethnicity and culture are not always in an ideal relationship (*ibid.*). He defines ethnicity as the symbolic use of any aspect of culture in order to differentiate one group from other groups. For Eller then, 'ethnicity is consciousness of difference and the subjective salience of that difference' (1999, 9). He further notes that even when ethnicity is associated with, refers to, or evokes 'objectives' or shared cultural or historical markers, it is nonetheless a subjective category (*ibid.*). Ethnic groups usually do not utilize all aspects of their culture or history as markers of their identities. Besides, some elements of their culture may be found amongst other groups which can make it difficult to

distinguish them from others (ibid.). This is exemplified in the previously mentioned case of Malay identity in Kalimantan, where many Malays share the culture of the Dayak groups since Dayak who convert to Islam are often thereafter considered Malay (Coomans 1987). Here is one instance of how the criteria by which individuals are nominated Dayak or Malay may shift over time (Maunati 2000).

The use of certain cultural markers as the basis of group identity is itself subject to change. Eller notes how a group, which earlier chose religion as the marker of identity, may at a later stage choose to emphasize class relations or other cultural elements (1999, 9). An important feature of this discussion of ethnicity is therefore the extent to which the labelling of what constitutes a specific ethnicity is made and remade (Eller 1999, 10). Eller provides an example of the shifting of identity from *black* to *African American* in the United States; a shift that does not change the membership as much as it transforms the marker of ethnicity from that of 'skin colour to ancestral origin in the broadest sense' (1999, 10-11). Likewise, King and Wilder write that to study ethnicity is to deal with the social and cultural processes and aspects that affect similarity and difference, and understand the construction and transformation of social and cultural identities by groupings of people (2003, 196-197). Central to this construction and transformation of social and cultural identity are the terms on which boundaries between groupings are constructed. Barth (1969) argues that the formation of ethnic groups involves social processes of exclusion and incorporation and the selection of social and cultural aspects which are considered relevant to the construction of identity and boundaries.

The apparently arbitrary way in which cultural markers are selected and the importance of context in determining which elements are selected is further evidence of the constructedness of cultural identities. As Eriksen claims '...ideologists always select and reinterpret aspects

of culture and history which fit into the legitimation of a particular power constellation' (1993, 118). Similarly, Winzeler (1997) notes how governments often manipulate cultural identity in order to lessen the unity of powerless groups. Once again, which elements are selected is also negotiable and situational' (1993, 117) – and composed in relation to others: 'Groups and collectivities are always constituted in relation to *others*' (1993, 62).

This negotiable and situational quality of identity markers is clear in the way religious differences have been incorporated into identity formation. Picard points out the way in which Balinese define themselves with reference to a religious identity in opposition to Islam (1997, 186). Dayakness similarly is linked to Christianity and opposed to Islam, the dominant religion in Indonesia. If a Dayak converts to Islam, he is no longer considered Dayak, becoming instead 'Malay' (Coomans 1987). In a similar vein, Winzeler finds that among the Bidayuh Dayak 'usually to become a Muslim is to cease to be a Bidayuh...' (1997, 219). Correspondingly, like Coomans, King points out that when Dayak convert to Islam they become 'Malay' (1982, 27). This process of shifting identity/ethnicity has a long pedigree. As King claims, as early as the 1890s European observers noted that many of the approximately 400 'Malays' in the Putus Sibau and Mandai areas were ethnic Taman (Maloh) who had converted to Islam (King 1982, 38). To pinpoint the boundary between the Malay and the Dayak in certain areas of Kalimantan is not surprisingly somewhat problematic due to this means of shifting from Dayak to Malay. Therefore, the Dayak are not necessarily distinctively different from neighbouring 'ethnic' groups, although they are constructed as such. Similarly, the Bugis in Sabah, Malaysia, have also divided into three categorizations, the Bugis is Malay, the Bugis is Sabahan and the Bugis is Indonesian (Ito Makoto 2002, 28-9). The Bugis Malay are usually descendants of the early migrants and many of them live in the Malaysian Peninsula. Today,

it is hard to distinguish between Bugis Malay and Malay since they have intermarried. This intermingling of cultures is perhaps the order of the day rather than the exception. For as Said argues: 'Partly because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic (Said 1993, xxix).

The markers of cultural identity may originate in a presumed distinctiveness of religion, language and custom. However, overlapping may occur among different ethnic groups. In the grey areas where markers of identities overlap, the existence of cultural difference is particularly problematic (Kahn 1995). Such grey areas and difficulties in delimiting distinct ethnic groups often colour the process of identity formation. King (1982) provides an example of the process of delimiting distinct ethnic groups in Borneo, pointing out that it is complicated and needs to be considered in relation to longstanding processes of assimilation that have occurred between neighbouring ethnic groups (1982, 25). As he finds: '...many people who had been classified as 'Maloh' in the past had, over time, become something else, and the forbears of some people categorized as 'Maloh' in 1972-3 had come from other ethnic groupings' (King 1982, 25).

The above debate on ethnicity and cultural identity is obviously connected to a related set of ideas and the concept of culture itself. As Kahn (1995) and others reason, culture is less organic and bounded than has often been claimed. In the anthropological discussion of cultural difference and the image of a culturally diverse world, Kahn argues that both concepts need to be recognised as cultural constructions. In Kahn's (1995, 129) opinion the voice of the other cannot be separated from the voice of the author and herein lies a second problem: our basic premises and assumptions about cultural alterability and cultural diversity are themselves cultural constructs. According

to Kahn: ‘this language of differentiation is artificial’ (1995, 129). Using the image of a television picture as a metaphor, he writes: ‘the cultural imaginary takes the dots for something more than technique, as though the dots of colour represented reality itself’ (Kahn 1995, 129). In this way, he says, scholars are often guilty of treating as objective fact their artificial (as in constructed) concepts of culture and models of cultural differentiation. For Kahn, this emphasis on the artificiality of our language on cultural difference is important not only as self-critique for anthropologists and others writing on ethnicity and identity, but also because intellectuals have contributed a great deal to the very processes of identity construction that we now seek to analyse. As Kahn (1993) notes, Western scholarship – initially Dutch and later Western-trained scholars – was amongst the first to codify and construct an authorized version of Minangkabau ‘culture’. Similar histories are evident in other parts of Indonesia (Vickers 1989; Picard 1997; Kipp 1993; Rita 1993; and Maunati 2000).

As the above discussion makes clear, while Western sources remain important in the shape and formation of identity constructions – whether on the basis of Western-trained scholarship or the influence of ideas promoted by Western missionaries, for example – the power of Western representations is not the only force in the formation of identity in the contemporary world. There are also a number of powerful constructions and representations that derive from the elite groups. In particular, state agencies, intellectuals, and ruling and elite groups, have added to the complexity of representation and identity formation. Indeed, anthropologists and other observers have noted the role played by the nation-state (Eriksen 1993) and a complex array of ‘authorities’ (Barth 1989) in the representation of ethnic groups across Southeast Asia.

This paper will discuss the construction of Dayak identity by looking only at three fundamental elements associated with the Dayak:

the images of headhunting, longhouses, and religion. These three elements are selected because they are closely linked with the value system of the Dayak.

Headhunting: colonial and anthropological representations

Historically, there have been many different forces operating in the construction and formation of the idea of ‘the Dayak’. To understand the contemporary construction of ‘the Dayak’, one must trace back from the New Order government to the colonial period. Both explorers and scholars during the colonial period shaped the Western construction of the Dayak, which in turn influenced the attitude of the post-independence Indonesian state. Within the rubric of the primitive, Westerners depicted the Dayak as headhunters and hunters and gatherers who lived communally in longhouses. I do not want to suggest that all colonial officers, government officials and European travellers shared a common view of the Dayak. Yet, it is clear that in the majority of Western representations, the Dayak were seen as ‘primitive’ in contrast to these Westerners’ own view of themselves as members of a civilized society. This focus on the ‘exotic’ customs of the Dayak – such as headhunting, the social organization of longhouses, hunting and gathering and Dayak death rituals – have also become the mainstay of much Western Social Science (Hoffman 1986; Freeman 1979; McKinley 1976; Hertz 1960; Koepping n.d.). The New Order government partly adopted the representation of the Dayak as ‘primitive’, labelling the Dayak as *suku terasing* (an ‘isolated’ ethnic group) in need of civilization.

In focusing on such cultural phenomena, these representations have tended to ignore the actual cultural diversity of the indigenous people of Kalimantan. Contrary to the overly homogenised representation of

the Dayak, the island of Borneo consists of more than 400 tribes including the Iban, Kayan, Maloh, Kendayan, Kenyah, Punan, Ngaju and Dusun, each with its own language and customs (King 1993, 29).

In one area of Kalimantan alone Lindblad notes that:

The Dayaks in Southeast Kalimantan may be classified in tribes with different languages and *adat* [customary rules], notably the Ngaju, Ma'anjan and Dusun in the south, the Bulit in the southeastern corner, the Ot Danum in the south, the Kenyah and the Kayan as well as the nomadic Punan in the east and northeast (1988, 2).

Yet despite such differences, many outsider representations conflate these diverse identities into a singular 'Dayak', which fails to recognize the relational aspect of the indigenous people's own identification. For example, as King observes, the 'Dayak' often refer to themselves differently than do outsiders. People may identify themselves with their own tribe, like the Punan, Kayan and Ngaju, in order to differentiate themselves from other tribal groups. He explains that in Borneo this issue needs to be explored more 'since some people would claim to belong to both A and B simultaneously, or A or B situationally' (King 1982, 24). As he says: 'If people identify themselves as belonging to unit A, they are making a statement that in certain respects, they are different from unit B' (1982, 24).

In the case of the Batak, Kipp (1993, 3) reports that non-Batak outsiders identify the Karo - a sub-ethnic group of Batak people - as Batak, however, the Karo identify themselves as Karo.

The term 'Dayak' is most commonly used to refer to 'the non-Muslim, non-Malay natives of the island' (King 1993, 29). There are different explanations as to the etymology of the term. According to Lindblad, the word Dayak is originally from a Kenyah word *daya* which means upriver or interior (1988, 2). King further speculates that Dayak may come from *aja*, a Malay word for native (1993, 30). He also

considers that the word might originally come from the Central Javanese term for ‘inappropriate or improper’ behaviour (King 1993, 30).

A preoccupation with Dayak cultural practices and the ‘classic’ image of the ‘primitive natives’ of Borneo originally derived from the accounts of European travellers from the early nineteenth century. Saunders (1993) notes the influence of early European reports from Borneo on the Western representation of the Dayak as well as the more enduring impact of such writing on popular tourist images. For instance, he mentions that in the nineteenth century some writers - such as Belcher, Keppel, Hugh Low, Frank Marryart - participated in the creation of a ‘Western’ image of the people of Borneo and their colourful life, focusing on headhunting, scheming Malayrajahs, piratical Illanun and long house-dwelling: ‘The earliest travellers were not tourists. Their aims were exploratory, scientific, diplomatic, commercial or religious, but their writings and reports added to European knowledge of Borneo and began to create an image in the European mind’ (Saunders 1993, 21).

He further notes: ‘Most travellers with a scientific purpose did not have such a popular impact. The tourist image of Borneo was completed by the writings of travellers with less serious purpose’ (Saunders 1993, 23).

The most popular image of Borneo has been that of headhunting. Bock’s publication: *The Head-hunters of Borneo* published in English in 1881, contributed significantly to the production of the ‘headhunter’ image (Saunders 1993, 23). The headhunters and ‘wild men’ Dayak have been widely written about and have become the main attraction in East Kalimantan and Borneo as a whole. McKinley claims that: ‘Headhunting is one of those customs which was almost certain to attract a great deal of attention from early Western observers because it

fits so well with the Western world's fantasies regarding the savagery of primitive life' (McKinley 1976, 92).

The practice of headhunting is a complex form of social behaviour and has attracted a number of different explanations by various writers, both 'explorers' and scholars. For example, the explorer Miller in *Black Borneo* (1946) claims that the practice of headhunting could be explained in terms of the supernatural power the Dayak attach to the human head:

To the Dayak, a dried skull is the most powerful magic in the world. A freshly cut head is potent enough to save an entire kampong from the plague. A seasoned head, properly manipulated, is powerful enough to produce rain, increase the rice yield, warn away evil spirits, and impart knowledge to the tribe's wise men. If it does not it is because its power is fading and a fresher skull is needed. Of course, the more dried heads there are, the greater the power exercised by their combined efforts. A tribe without an ulu, or head, to its name is in no condition to ward off the mandaus and poison darts of a more fortunately equipped neighbour (Miller 1946:121).

To such popular constructions of the headhunting Dayak is added a significant amount of academic literature. For example, McKinley seeks to understand headhunting through the structure and meaning of the relevant rituals, arguing that: '...the ritual treatment of the heads was a community's way of saying to itself: "Those who were once our enemies, hereby become our guardians, our friends, our benefactors."' (McKinley 1976, 95).

McKinley illustrates in detail the ritual of headhunting as a process of transition, whereby enemies become friends by means of their incorporation into the known world. In response to the question as to

why it was the head and not another part of the body which was taken and transformed into a symbol of friendship, he says:

The head is chosen as the most apt symbol for these rites because it contains the face, which, in a manner akin to the social value of personal names, is the most concrete symbol of social personhood. Social personhood, in turn, is the enemy's most human attribute, and is therefore the attribute which must be claimed for one's own community (McKinley 1976, 124).

Freeman's (1979) explanation of this ritual centres on its symbolic meaning. In his study of the Iban, Freeman argues that headhunting is symbolically associated with fertility. The parallels between heads and fertility are central to his discussion of headhunting:

The climax of the remarkable allegory central to the Iban cult of head-hunting which, as it is chanted by bards, is acted out by aspirant head-hunters, is a rite known as *ngelampang*, which literally means "to cut into pieces". In this part of the allegory a graphic description is given of the ritual splitting of a trophy head, or antu pala, by Lang Singalang Burong, the Iban god of war. Lang achieves this feat (which symbolizes the actual beheading of an enemy) with one swift blow of his sword, and from the head which he has split open there pours forth seed which when sown grows into a human crop... (Freeman 1979, 234).

Yet others, such as Koepping, claim that the economic calculations tied up with the practice of headhunting have not been adequately considered. She finds the existing studies tend to emphasize what she calls 'the exotic or macho element' (Koepping n.d., 1). Moreover, she notes the lack of attention given to religious explanations of headhunting that emerged from some of the early European writers, such

as St John (1862), and continue into the present (for example, Metcalf 1982). However Koeping does not elaborate upon this point, choosing instead to focus on economic explanations of headhunting derived from her own investigation of feuds among groups in the Labuk valley between 1870-1910 (Koeping n.d., 1). She writes:

Feuding in this region of Borneo follows the typical pattern, well documented in New Guinea by Brown and others, where adjacent groups fight fiercely over possession of scarce land and more briefly over its resources. It was by no means a free-for-all, for each group had its constant enemies and its customary friends, and while combatants certainly took heads, they were not alone in this, for every continent had its share of head-takers (Koeping n.d, 13).

It is, however, too simplistic to cite economic reasons alone to explain the practice of headhunting. As McKinley (1976) points out, if headhunting is only about fighting with an enemy, why is the head taken at all? Why is not merely killing the enemy sufficient? As argued above, McKinley's answer here is that the head is the symbol of personhood (as it contains the face). Throughout the ritual taking of heads the possibility of transforming the spiritual power of an enemy into a friend is made possible. While there may be indirect economic reasons as well – utilizing the spirit of the dead person to protect the society from famine - headhunting obviously has important cultural content.

There is, I believe, no single analysis that can adequately explain the practices and meanings of headhunting. The complexity is such that it must be analysed from several perspectives which are sensitive to different regional and ethnic variations. Among the Dayak themselves there is a variation in beliefs and mythologies. Indeed, McKinley mentions the different treatment of heads across different tribes

such as of the Land Dayaks, Iban and Kayan (1976, 114-115).

During the 1999 conflict between Dayak, Malay and Madurese, photographs of Dayak carrying Madurese heads were widely distributed through electronic networks and the mass media.²⁾ The association between the Dayak and headhunting was promoted by the mass media, particularly foreign media (for instance, *The Age*, 23 March 1999; and *The Age*, 3 April 1999). A similar image appeared in a previous conflict in early 1997. *Inside Indonesia* (July-September 1997) reported on the reappearance of headhunting amongst the Dayak in response to inter-ethnic conflict. According to this report the Dayak belief in the 'red bowl'³⁾ also re-emerged as symbolic of Dayak solidarity.

Another recent example is that of the case of conflict between Dayak and Bugis in Nunukan, East Kalimantan, in 2007. Many informants told us of a ritual bathing together in the river in a village mostly resided in by Dayak Tidung. Believing that this bestowed spiritual power, the bathers walked in the town to look for Bugis people who dared to challenge them. A Dayak Tidung lady recalled that she was not fully conscious when she walked around the town with others; she did not feel tired or in pain although she walked a long way. The association of the Dayak group with the previous practice of headhunting is still strong though it is in a different mode. Nevertheless,

2) The Dayak (the collective term for the indigenous peoples of Kalimantan) have experienced inter-ethnic conflict. In early 1997 and again in 1999, violent clashes occurred between Dayak and Madurese in West Kalimantan. These conflicts were topics of discussion in Indonesian newspapers. During the conflict of 1997, a large number of people (both Dayak and Madurese) were killed. Estimates vary between the official death toll of 300, to 4,000, according to independent sources (MacDougall 1999). In 1999, the Dayak, together with Malay and Chinese groups, fought the so-called immigrant Madurese; 114 people were killed (MacDougall 1999). According to one Dayak public figure, this latter conflict was originally not between the Dayak and the Madurese, but between the Malays and the Madurese (*Manuntung* 22 March 1999). Despite the fact that there were only a few Dayak involved, the mass media exaggerated the Dayak involvement partly because the Malays involved used Dayak cultural symbols during the fighting.

3) The passing of the 'red bowl' or *mangkok merah* is a binding ritual in preparation for conflict and mass mobilisation (Petebang 1998, 69-77 and Peluso 2000).

the spirit of ancestors often colours the conflict involving the Dayak in Kalimantan. During this tension, the Bugis avoided physical contacts so that at that time a bigger conflict did not occur. According to a Bugis informant, they did not want to have conflicts similar to those that had happened in West and Central Kalimantan between the Dayak and the Madurese. Dayak solidarity as well as the fear of a re-emergence of the headhunting spirit have become the reason for the Bugis to stay away from conflict. In the end, negotiations were successful and the Bugis paid certain fines. The nature of the conflict at the beginning was due to economic reasons, but then it turned out to be ethnic conflict. Marginalisation of the indigenous people like the Dayak could become a potential source of disagreement. The notion of the ancestral practice of headhunting often works as a marker of the Dayak identity, especially when they are under threat.

Another defining characteristic of the Dayak is their practice of living in longhouses with several core families. This has been the focus of many studies (Whittier 1978; Appell 1978; Kedit and Sabang 1993; Zeppel 1993; etc.). The social organization of longhouses is complex. Whittier states that each long house among the Kenyah consists of ten to fifteen apartments (*lamin*) (1978, 99). Moreover, he notes that each longhouse has a name and its own chief who resides in the central *lamin*. He further explains that if a man intends to move to another longhouse, he must have permission from the chief of the previous longhouse. Marriage also affects the choice of longhouse in which men reside. Recent government programs to resettle Dayak typically destroy such 'traditional' social organization as each family in the new settlement is given its own house.

In order to explore the way in which anthropological and more general academic literature, portrays the Dayak and Dayakness, I shall now limit myself to modes of settlement, housing and religion.

Is the longhouse a central element of Dayak identity?

A key feature of Dayak society, according to many anthropological accounts, is to be found in their distinctive residential patterns. Most ethnographies of the Dayak focus in particular on the longhouse, not only as a representative architectural form, but as manifesting a structure of social relations, that is, it is often implied, unique to the Dayak. Geddes, for instance, suggests that the building of longhouses is an indication of the different mode of life of the Land Dayak and compares it with European individualism. However, in this case he believes the mode of Dayak life is its apotheosis of the European (1968, 29).

Lebar notes that among the Kenyah, the longhouse which is commonly constructed parallel to the river, is effectively the same thing as the village (1972, 169). He further reports:

Localized segments of a Kayan subtribe generally occupy village clusters along the banks of a common stream. Among the various Kajang groups, as well as among Kenyahs and occasionally among Kayans, a “subtribe” may consist nowadays of a single village or longhouse. Multilonghouse villages seem to have been more the norm in former times (Lebar 1972, 170).

Whittier also emphasizes that Kenyah longhouses are almost always located along a river or stream (1978, 97). But he states that the Kenyah villages usually contain more than one long-house (1978, 99). To Furness, the location of the longhouse along the riverbank, where the river is the main transport link, was originally a result of the need for quick access to the house by canoe during periods of headhunting (1902).

According to both Geddes and Furness, the main reason for building longhouses was that they provided protection against surprise headhunting raids (Geddes 1968, 30; Furness 1902, 1). Additionally, Geddes claims that it is economical because a longhouse needs less wood, which is hand sawn in the jungle. Besides, if there is a dispute it is possible to gain the middle ground because a few elders and the disputing parties will settle conflicts together informally. In a longhouse the people are together; not isolated, but they are also trained to be independent. Finally, the longhouse facilitates the system of labour cooperation (Geddes 1968, 30-32).

The longhouse came to be viewed as a key to understanding important aspects of Dayak society through the study of its architecture, kinship and social relations. According to Geddes, for example, the Land Dayak of Mentu Tapuh in 1949-1950 had two longhouses, one longhouse over two hundred yards long occupied by two hundred and fifty people (1968, 28). It was raised approximately sixteen feet off the ground. The roof was sago-palm on a section, while the rest was hardwood shingles. It had two verandahs, the front verandah, an uncovered platform used to dry paddy, whilst the inner verandah was used as a social meeting place, a workplace for women, and a corridor for entering each compartment. All residents were responsible for keeping verandahs in a good condition (Geddes 1968, 28-29).

The Kenyah longhouse described by Whittier was slightly different in style because it had only one covered verandah. Although a few longhouses are huge, containing about 65 apartments, generally Kenyah longhouses consist of 10 to 15 apartments (*lamin*), each with a door connected to the verandah. The whole structure is raised around 4 to 6 feet off the ground, but in the past it was much higher in order to guard against headhunting attacks. The Kenyah verandah is also a public space where people can work or have formal meetings (Whittier 1978, 99-102).

According to Lebar, the Kayan longhouse is known for its large size, which may be up to 1,000 feet long with 100 or more doors and housing more than 500 people. ‘Each house, raised on massive ironwood piles, is divided length wise into a public” street” or working area (veranda)’ and family compartments (Lebar 1972, 169). In terms of sleeping location, there is division:

Older boys and bachelors sleep in reserved portions of the veranda; unmarried girls and female slaves in their respective family compartments. Separate rice barns, raised on piles, are located near the house. The doors of the “house-owning group” – the house chief and his immediate relatives – are located in the central part of the structure and constitute a focal point of social and religious activity. In Kayan longhouses, the ritual skulls are hung opposite these doors; the ritual stones of the Kenyah and Kajang peoples are located on the ground outside the longhouse, opposite the house chief’s door (Lebar 1972, 169).

Kinship relations are important in the longhouse. According to Freeman, kinship in the longhouse is bilateral (1960). Among the Kenyah to move from one longhouse to another is unusual and results in conflict (Whittier 1973). If someone intends to do so, he is required to get permission from the village chief (Rousseau 1990). Unlike among the Kenyah, Freeman says, there is frequent movement from one longhouse to another among the Iban (1960, 76).

The longhouse is also important in understanding social relations. Lebar, for instance, looks at the positioning of the chief of the longhouse and other longhouse members in order to understand a wider system of social relations. Many emphasize the existence of a chief of the longhouse (Miller 1946; Lebar 1972, 171; Conley 1973; King 1985; Whittier 1978). Lebar further reports that ‘each longhouse

has a headman or chief, an aristocrat, who, with his near relatives, occupies the compartments in the centre of the structure' (Lebar 1972, 171). Gillow and Dawson also emphasize that among the Kenyah and Kayan the layout of a longhouse indicates the community's hierarchical status. The chief or ruling aristocrat, flanked by other aristocrat families, resides in the centre of the longhouse, while commoners occupy either side of the aristocrat compartments. Slaves traditionally were at the ends of the longhouse which during headhunting periods were the most vulnerable places (1994, 144). Likewise, Miller notes that a longhouse is divided into many compartments in which the chief occupies the central and most ostentatious room. Meanwhile, 'aunts and uncles on either side, cousins farther removed, and distant blood relatives and shirt-tail relations on the ends' (Miller 1946, 40). He further says that people can recognize the chief's apartment easily because his personal apartment roof is about five feet higher than those of his neighbours (1946, 42).

The longhouse is also an important locus of religious activity. Among the Kenyah and Kajang, the longhouse constitutes both a kin group and a common ritual unit (Lebar 1972, 169). The *mamat* ritual (a headhunting feast) is performed in the longhouse by its residents. Furness describes a Dayak longhouse with the skulls hanging in the verandah (1902). Every part of a Dayak's home is important. In terms of belief, before people tackle the entrance pole, they need to follow certain customs and appreciate many omens (Miller 1946). Conley reports that the members of the longhouse carry out collective tasks like farming and performance rituals as a group (1973). During the period of Christianization some people moved to different longhouses in order to live with those of the same religious affiliation (Whittier 1978, 103). However, this changing of longhouse is traditionally uncommon to Kenyahs (Whittier 1973).

As this shows, the longhouse in terms of its architecture, kinship and social relations, came to uniquely signify 'Dayakness'. The longhouse is therefore a key means of marking Dayak identity and has thus become a central focus of anthropological literature on the Dayak. There are, however, some problems in this anthropological picture of Dayak uniqueness both conceptually and in terms of selectivity. First, there is the 'problem' of identifying uniquely Dayak spatial and social patterns posed by the Punan. If we are to accept that the longhouse in some sense defines the essence of Dayakness, then how do we conceptualize the Punan who are widely labelled as Dayak?

The Punan do not live in longhouses but are nomadic forest dwellers⁴⁾ (Hoffman 1952; Lebar 1972; King 1985; Rousseau 1990; Sellato 1994, etc.). The nomadic groups, who live in the forest, do not stay in one place for long periods, but move from one place to another, sheltering in camps in the primary forest, that is, forest which has not been opened up for cultivation (Hoffman 1952). Many scholars have discussed nomadic forest dwellers in terms of resettlement and housing (Hoffman 1952; Lebar 1972; Sellato 1994). Lebar, who divides the nomadic Penan (or Punan) into two groups, eastern and western Penan, states that the local groups usually consist of 15 to 75 people. The Eastern Penan construct their main camp within ready reach of water as a base and storage place for forest products. They build in close clusters high on a ridge. In addition to their main camp, a number of temporary camps are utilized by small groups. The Western Penan people also build main camps, constructing them on level ground near a river. These are usually occupied for up to two years by smaller groups (1972, 178). Lebar further illustrates the type of huts: 'The huts are made of saplings, with roofs consisting of matlike stretches of dried fan-palm leaves sewn together' (Lebar 1972, 178).

⁴⁾ Punan is synonyms with Penan, Poonan, Pennan (Lebar 1972:176). Lebar himself uses the term Penan.

Sellato reports that ‘nomads live farther upstream, in the mountainous highlands; they live in the forest; they have no village, but are constantly moving’ (1994, 15). Similarly to the Western Penan described by Lebar, Hoffman notes that the Punan Batu of Tanjung Palas district, still roam the forest and live in small groups of two to three families. Their camps are ‘in the forest by a stream at the headwaters of a river’ (1952, 21). Several such camps can be found within a day’s walk of each other. The composition of camps in terms of personnel as individuals or whole families, are subject to frequent change (1952, 21-22). The reasons for leaving one camp to join another are especially: conflict, low food supplies, marriage or divorce (Hoffman 1952, 22). The Punan communicate with other Punan in the forest by means of a commonly understood system of signs. For instance, a broken branch indicates that someone is ill or injured (ibid.). Additionally, Arnold states that the nomadic Penan who reside in the Plieran Valley are ‘the most primitive people in Borneo; who live in the jungle in leaf huts and are food-gatherers and hunters’ (1959, 11).

Are the Punan Dayak or not? Sellato believes that traditionally, the Punan’s way of life as nomadic hunter-gatherers differentiated them from the Dayak (1994, 13).⁵⁾ Lebar, however, notes that many Kenyah may have been culturally similar to the Punan before they adopted the Kayan’s socio religious beliefs (Lebar 1972, 176). For example, the Punan people have adopted tattooing, language and dress from neighbouring settled groups like the Kenyah (1972, 177). Additionally, the Kenyah and the Punan are socially inter-related. It is, for example, a very common practice that ‘each nomadic group is under the dominance of the headman of a longhouse’ (Lebar 1972, 177). Various scholars argue

⁵⁾ Sellato divides two ethnic groups of the interior into the Dayak and the Punan. The Dayak constitute the Iban, the Barito group, the Kayan-Kenyah-Modang, the ‘Nulang Arc’ group, the Maloh and the Bidayuh with the Bidayuh previously called the Land Dayak (Sellato 1994, 11-12).

that the Punan area Dayak group (Kennedy 1974; Riwut 1958). This raises the issue of self identification.

Secondly, if the Dayak people are to be distinguished by longhouse living, then what do we make of the fact that, at least today, large numbers of Dayak in fact, live in nuclear family households? Certainly such people continue to identify themselves as Dayak. Many recent studies show that the Dayak tend to live in individual houses (Eghenter 1995; Rousseau 1990). Rousseau argues that as part of its effort to modernize the Dayak, the government has pushed them to live in single-family dwellings (1990). Many Punan Dayak are not nomadic forest dwellers any longer since they have resettled in individual houses, including those who have been resettled by the government, but they remain labelled Dayak. Hoffman (1952) and Sellato (1994) note that the nomads have settled in fixed villages either because of the authorities or their own choice (Hoffman 1952, 21; Sellato 1994:14). Lebar reports that the Malaysian government has also tried to resettle the nomadic Punan in Sarawak. Hoffman further states that the pushing of resettlement had occurred during the colonial period (1952, 21). Sellato himself notices that under the pressure of the authorities many Punan reside in more permanent settlements (1994, 14). In a similar vein, Appell says that the Indonesian government has a project of resettlement of the nomadic or isolated Dayak into permanent housing areas (1985). The isolated Dayak constitute not only the Punan, but also the Kenyah who used to reside in longhouses. Eghenter notes that now the interior people increasingly reside in single dwellings (1995, 47). In Long Mekar, where I did my research, most Dayak live in nuclear family households. The longhouse is used only for ceremonial and tourist purposes. Today, in East Kalimantan, for instance, in general, longhouses are increasingly used for tourist purposes. Of the 92 longhouses 55 are registered with the East Kalimantan Tourism Office. The longhouses are not in a good condition, with only 15 out of

92 in a proper state (Tourism Office, East Kalimantan Province 1995, 14). Moreover, since the 1970s the Dayak living in longhouses have tended to shift into individual houses. Equating Dayakness with longhouse dwelling, therefore, is problematic at least in modern circumstances. It seems that the markers of Dayak identity are fluid and constructed in accordance with a particular historical context.

Indeed, if we accept the criteria for identification of Dayakness proffered by Geddes, Furness, and Miller, then, such people as described above (those living in individual households or forest-dwellers) could not be viewed as Dayak despite the fact that they identify themselves and are widely identified as such. So, this brings us to a crossroads – Is this a case of a loss of tradition or is this a clear example of the process of the fluidity of identity? Not only does this hark back to the discussion on modern construction of ‘tradition’, but the ethnographic evidence also forces us to question the validity of longhouse dwelling as a ‘tradition’. There is some evidence that people live in field huts for periods of time; not always staying in longhouses. Conley reports that Kenyah people prefer to sleep in their longhouse in the village instead of in the field hut, but particular groups, like the Uma Timai Kenyah almost abandon the longhouse and sleep in the fields except on weekends in order to attend church (1973, 25). Sillander notes that the settlement patterns of the Bentian people are various with some villages in existence for a long period, while in upriver areas there is often no village, as people often live in separate houses on their dry fields (1995, 80).

Recently attempts have been made to promote the longhouse among the Dayak but this time, for the sake of tourism. An example is the Eheng longhouse promoted as an authentic longhouse (Turner et al 1997, 810). People do reside there, but they also have their own individual houses. They live in the longhouse for the sake of tourism, in order to be ‘authentic’ Dayak. This also shows, the fluidity of the

content of the category 'Dayak'.

A further difficulty lies in the presumption of homogeneity among the Dayak. There is evidence of significant variation/difference within the group known as the Dayak, to question the validity of such a classification. For example, there are variations in kinship, social organization and residential arrangements among different Dayak groups. As instanced in terms of architecture, there is a different style of verandah between Land Dayak and Kenyah houses (Geddes 1968 for the Land Dayak and Whittier 1978 for the Kenyah). According to Freeman the Iban longhouse constitutes a single community identical with the village and is traditionally autonomous (1960, 69), while among the Kenyah a longhouse is not necessarily identical with a village, since villages characteristically consist of a number of separate longhouses (Whittier 1978).

Finally, while in some ways unique, the Dayak longhouse is not in all cases qualitatively different from residential arrangements among non-Dayak groups in Kalimantan or among other ethnic groups in contemporary Indonesia. For instance, Kahn notes that the Minangkabau traditionally lived in a large house structured on the basis of matrilineal kinship (1980, 49). He further explains that this house is raised above the ground and consists of 'a series of family rooms (*bilek*)' with a single family residing in each *bilek* (1980, 49-50). In addition, one type of house of the Manggarai of eastern Indonesia is traditionally a massive house resided in by many families or the whole village (Waterson 1990, 37-8). Waterson also reports that longhouse dwellings can be found in Mentawai of Indonesia and in the highlands of Vietnam (1990, 144).

Moreover, according to Gillow and Dawson the archetypal style of Dayak longhouse is similar to traditional Chinese bazaar architecture which in turn raises the question whether 'the longhouse is an indigenous type or a product of Chinese influence' (1994, 140).

Obviously, residential patterns are not as distinctive as has been assumed in much of the literature. Nevertheless, Dayak, like the Kenyah, often consider a longhouse (*lamin*) as central to their culture.

In my research village, Long Mekar in East Kalimantan, there was held a Cultural and Youth Festival, instead of the ‘*upacara adat putung pusa*’ (or *utung usa* – traditional wedding ceremony) that had been previously planned and interestingly, the whole festival process is closely linked with the reconstruction of ‘tradition’.

Preparations for the Cultural and Youth Festival began a long time before the event. This included extending the *lamin* (longhouse) and decorating the village. For several days prior to the festival, Long Mekar, a quiet village, was a hive of activity. A new gate was erected in front of the *lamin* and decorated with carved hornbills, wooden curlicues and other adornments. New shops and coffee shops appeared and the villagers came to the *lamin* to get together on the last weekend before the festival. Many young girls and boys brought their dancing accessories including *beluko* (traditional decorated hats) and *besunung* (traditional clothes of sheep/goat skin) for boys and *beluko letto* (traditional decorated hats) and necklaces for girls in order to be ready for singing and dancing practice.

The occasion was used by the elders as an opportunity to give advice to the audience. ‘Pak Pelajan, for instance, told people that they should be ready to receive important guests, such as the Governor and the Regency head (*Bupati*). Pak Pebit emphasised the importance of harmony that must be achieved by Long Mekar society and warned against bad habits such as gambling and the consumption of alcohol and drugs. He warned that if people were caught they would be fined according to customary law, that is, in case of drunkenness the person would be fined Rp 50,000 (equivalent to US\$ 5). He repeatedly emphasized the importance of social unity to achieve a strong and developed society. The people, he said, should put on a new face (*wajah*

baru) and adopt new attitudes that are kind and sympathetic, all of which would result in Long Mekar becoming famous due to its culture, customs, habits, and attitudes. Fighting among villagers should be avoided, instead they should attempt to establish a life of harmony. This is a clear example of the way identities are recreated through emphasis on cultural uniqueness and desirability. People, including elders, function as agents in the reshaping of Dayak identity. Villagers are not merely passive victims, but are active agents in the construction of their cultural identity.

The customary chief always emphasizes unity and respect for ancient customs. He is one of only a few people who understand Kenyah 'tradition', who can sing 'traditional' songs (such as songs to accompany the dead spirits) and perform traditional Kenyah dances. At meetings or gatherings elders often give speeches emphasizing the importance of preserving 'tradition' since the village is a showcase for Dayak culture. Searching for authenticity is also part of this process. The past history of Apo Kayan often becomes the primary source of this search.

The Cultural and Youth Festival was attended by Dayak Kenyah people from all over East Kalimantan. At night, there was a welcoming ceremony and a religious service in the *lamin* which was full of young people. A villager who was in charge of safety at the festival, stood in front of the *lamin* looking out for young people drinking alcohol, taking drugs or gambling which would undermine the village image as the locus of traditional culture. In the early evening youngsters sang *Indonesia Raya* (Greater Indonesia), *Pemuda-pemudi* (Young man and young woman), and a religious song. Then Kenyah public figures came to the *lamin* and sat in front of the podium whereupon a group of Long Mekar girls performed a Kenyah dance while singing a traditional song. After the ceremony, there was another meeting of the committee and customary chiefs. The committee members, mostly elite

Dayak living outside the village, stayed at the *lamin* to hold a meeting to discuss the grand opening by the Deputy Governor. They arranged a wooden carving of a hornbill, a brass gong and roof decorations. In many ways, the elite Dayak seemed to dominate the representation of 'Dayakness' throughout the festival.

At approximately 9.00 a.m., contingents from all over East Kalimantan came to the *lamin*. Each contingent wore a particular uniform. The uniforms of the Long Mekar villagers differed according to gender and age: young girls wore purple blazers and black skirts; older men wore yellow batik shirts and dark trousers; others wore various traditional dance costumes based on their roles in the ceremony.

Many young boys from Long Mekar wore traditional dance clothes because they took part in the gala dancing of the opening ceremony. Ramel, a son of 'Pak Dangai, also wore dance clothes because he had the special role of bringing traditional artefacts to the Deputy Governor to open the ceremony. Many Long Mekar women wore the traditional dance clothes, *taa*, *beluko letto*, and beaded necklaces. Peping wore special clothes because she had the honour of carrying the gong hammer (*pumukul gong*) on a tray which she handed to the Deputy Governor to formally open the ceremony when the time came.

The formal opening of the festival started at about 10.00 a.m. Speeches were made by the chair and other members of the committees. They noted the financial supporters, such as 'Pak Haji Tamrin who is non-Dayak but always supports the Dayak. In return, he was given a Dayak title (*gelar*) in the opening ceremony. The program included speeches, songs and dances. The Deputy Governor of East Kalimantan gave a speech. Beforehand, the public figures of the village sang a Kenyah song while bringing 'pure water' in a decorated bamboo container for the Deputy Governor. Songs which reminded the audience of Apo Kayan traditions were also sung. The Deputy Governor emphasized his gratitude for being given the opportunity to

open the ceremony and was very glad to meet many Kenyah customary chiefs. He congratulated them on being able to hold a cultural meeting and reminded customary chiefs not to get trapped in political discussions.

After delivering his speech, the Deputy Governor opened the festival by hitting a gong followed by an explanation of the meaning of the gong and other objects used in this ceremony by a public figure of the village. This public figure and four other old men of Long Mekar, wore complete traditional outfits, *besunung* (decorated animal skin clothes), *beluko* (hats), *mandau* (swords), *cawat* (loincloths), *perisai* (shields), and necklaces of animal teeth. At the beginning they sat in chairs in front of the customary chiefs. Their *beluko* were decorated with hornbill feathers. This ritual is said to be instructive for youngsters to understand their ‘tradition’. Older villagers relearned the ritual and practised it several times before the event. According to these older villagers, the event strengthened their appreciation of being Dayak, possessing a valuable culture.

The decoration of the *lamin*, the position of the VIPs and the different groups symbolize Dayak ‘tradition’. There was a miniature of a *lamin* roof carved in each corner and the centre. The hornbill bird as the symbol of Kenyah life was the motif of the carving.

Honorary membership was also bestowed at this opening ceremony — ‘Pak Haji Tamrin was given the Dayak Kenyah title (*dinobatkan*) and a new name, *Racun Pemberani* (brave poison). This process of becoming Kenyah Dayak resulted from his generous financial support of the Dayak, especially the Kenyah Dayak. He donated 10 million (equivalent to US\$ 1,000) to this festival. The symbol of becoming Kenyah Dayak is receiving a *beluko* (traditional hat), a *mandau* (sword) and *rompi taa* (traditional dance clothes). Two VIPs were also incorporated as Dayak, symbolized by their acceptance of *beluko* and *mandau*.

The dances performed by Long Mekar people included *tari persatuan*, *tari pamungtawai*, *tari perang*, *tari hudog*. *Tari persatuan* symbolizes unity of the Kenyah consisting of many sub-tribes, while *tari hudog* is traditionally a ritual for rice cultivation to scare away the insects. Several older women, covered by decorated beaded masks and *beluko* decorated with bird feathers on their heads performed it. They wore imitation elongated earlobes made of material and real earrings. Male dancers wore loincloths (*cawat*), swords (*mandau*) at their waists, shields (*perisai*) on their left-hand sides, bird feather decorated *beluko* and *besunung* made of goats' skins decorated with bird feathers on the back and animal teeth on the front. They bound their legs with special material and wore bracelets on their upper arms.

The *hudog* dance was originally performed only at certain times in relation to rice cultivation and it was taboo to perform it at any other time. However, now people perform it at any time they are ordered to. The process of the commodification of Dayak dances that used to be for religious purposes is quite common in the context of tourism in order to promote Dayak culture.

As all the dancers performed the last dance, the guests formed a circle. This is a tradition to farewell guests. According to villagers, this farewell dance is unique to the Dayak, indicating friendship between hosts and guests. At night, there was a singing competition of Kenyah songs.

The description of the festival clearly demonstrates that it was an important locus for the relearning of tradition. The older villagers and middle-aged people who knew something about their traditional culture were actively involved in teaching the youngsters about it. The modification of 'tradition' which is mostly undertaken in order to make the festival more attractive to visitors was also often evident. The processes of learning and re-learning 'their tradition' have in fact strengthened the sense of Dayakness and even formed a new identity:

that of possession of a unique and great tradition. As many villagers claim, their culture is special and that is why the government selects the Dayak out of many ethnic groups in East Kalimantan to be the central focus for the promotion of tourism.

Another important feature is that it was during this cultural festival in the longhouse of Long Mekar, that Lembaga adat Kenyah (Kenyah customary law) was discussed, to be soon implemented in Kenyah society.

A similar cultural festival was held in Krayan, East Kalimantan, in 2006, called *Pemung Erau Pengerani*. This kind of cultural festival used to be performed in the longhouse, but since this area has no longhouse, it was performed in a field in front of the village office. In this cultural festival, there were many activities, including:

This Cultural Festival (*Earu*) was to preserve the traditions that have almost gone and been forgotten by Lun Dayeh people, especially the young. The anxiety of the older generation that they will lose their traditions due to modernization and glottalization that flow to even remote areas like in the area of Lun Dayeh in the heart of Borneo, is strong. According to a public figure in Long Bawan, since 1932, Lun Dayeh cultures have partly disappeared due to the coming of Christianity introduced by American missionaries.

Indeed, in both cases (Kenyah and Lun Dayeh) the need to strengthen their identities is partly due to the rapid flow of other groups into their areas. The festivals were also an opportunity to express their cultural identity when previously, especially during the New Order government period, national identity was the priority.

Religion: From Animism to Christianity

Religion is a key feature in anthropological accounts of the Dayak, such as that the Dayak are often defined as the non-Muslim residents of Borneo. In the past, they were almost always those who practised animist religion (Conley 1973; Lebar 1972; Geddes 1968; etc.), whilst after the mass conversion to Christianity, the Dayak were usually equated with Christianity. A Muslim in Kalimantan, it is generally thought, cannot be a Dayak as well.

The key ceremony in animist religion is said to be the ritual of headhunting so the image of the Dayak has been closely linked with this ritual. To understand the Borneo animist religion is to acknowledge that it is characterized by specific supernatural beliefs, practitioners, rituals and head feasts. Conley, for instance, notes that ‘the religion of all pre-Christian Kenyah is called *adet tepun*, *tepun* meaning ancestors’ (1973, xviii). According to Conley the Kenyah believe in three kinds of spirits (*bali*), good, bad, and unpredictable (1973, 52). *Bungan Malan PeSelung Luan* is an example of a good spirit which the Kenyah generally address during their rituals. Each individual and longhouse has a guardian spirit, *bali utung* for people and *bali uma* for the longhouse. Rice also has its own good spirit, *bali uman*, whilst *bali kamat* and *bali suen* provide courage and skill to people, especially in headhunting (Conley 1973, 53-5). Death, sickness, and unpleasant feelings like jealousy and doubt are classified as being caused by bad spirits (Conley 1973, 55), and unpredictable or capricious spirits can be seen in several *bali*. For instance, ‘*bali pelaki* is the spirit that dwells in the hawk, *burung elang*’ (1973, 56). Conley states that if the hawk flies from left to right, it is good, and *vice versa* (1973, 56). Another unpredictable spirit is *bali Engkau*, the spirit of lightning: ‘It is said that when lightning strikes a tree it is *Engkau* biting the tree and *batu tulai*, large, spherical stones, are his teeth which

then fall to the ground' (Conley 1973, 56-7). Conley claims that only chiefs and prestigious leaders are not anxious about *bali Engkau* because they are able to develop a harmonious relationship with him to enlarge their supernatural power (1973, 57).

Schiller states that southern Bornean people, like Ngaju Dayak, engage in Kaharingan religious practices involving 'the propitiation of supernatural tutelaries' (1996, 412). She explains:

...most prayers and obligations are directed at "mid-range" supernatural beings including the village guardian (*patahu*) or to other upperworld beings known generally as *sangiang*, some lay adherents and all religious functionaries espouse belief in a high god with male and female aspects (1996, 412).

As for religious practitioners, Lebar states that the Kenyah-Kayan-Kajang recognise shamans, called *dayong*, who can be either men or women, and who gain their status through apprenticeship. Practitioners go into trance in order to transmit 'spirit language' (Lebar 1972, 171).

The purpose of ritual for Dayak groups was to ensure continuity from one generation to the next. Conley notes that the Kenyah perform a large number of rituals, each with its specific purpose, including rituals of *mamat* (head feast), birth, naming the child, building a longhouse, death and burial, and a long journey (1973).

Headhunting is particularly important to the image of the Dayak and can be associated with religion. Both Kenyahs and Kayans practised headhunting in the past and apart from the Iban the Kenyah are reported to have been the most notorious headhunters in Borneo (Lebar 1972, 171). Lebar notes that:

Among Kenyahs, headhunting was necessary in connection with *mamat*, head feasts, which terminated mourning periods and accompanied initiation into a graded system of statuses, *suhan*, for warriors. Successful headhunters were entitled to wear a panther tooth in the ear, a hornbill feather headdress, and a tattoo of special design.... Headhunting raids were conducted by small parties of 10 to 20 men, operating by stealth and surprise. Much attention was paid to omens, especially birds. Following their use in *mamat* ceremonies, the heads were hung on the longhouse veranda, opposite the living quarters of the house chief (Lebar 1972, 171).

Like the Kenyah, the Iban also performed a headhunting ritual, known as *gawai*. The festival was not only religious, but also involved feasting, drinking and merrymaking (Lebar 1972, 84).

Among the Kaharingan on the other hand, rituals of death ‘culminating with rites of exhumation and the reinternment of remains in ossuaries (*sandung*), usually alongside the bones of cognatic kinsmen’ were most important (Schiller 1996, 412). Schiller further reports that *tiwah*, the culmination of the mortuary cycle, aims to ‘reunite the deceased and the ancestors in an “upperworld” village’ (1996, 412).

Apart from head feasts, according to Lebar, agricultural rituals are also important for Kenyah-Kayan-Kajang groups (1972, 172). Conley notes, there are particular cycles, especially of planting and harvesting, during which the Kenyah perform rituals (1973). Similarly, the Maloh also hold ceremonies at harvest time which traditionally take place in the main longhouse (King 1985, 163). King explains that this ceremony is ‘to thank the deities and spirits for the harvest’ and is organised by ‘the aristocratic headman who presented offerings and delivered prayers’ (1985, 163).

Freeman notes that the Iban of the Baleh region were formally pagan

and their customs and way of life was little influenced by outsiders (1960, 66). Ritual incorporation, he writes, is the responsibility of the inhabitants of the longhouse (Freeman 1960, 69-70). For ritual purposes then the longhouse community is a conditional corporate group (Freeman 1960:70). Lebar emphasizes that to the Iban, the central ritual cultivation of rice makes them distinctive (1972, 183). Among the Maloh rice itself is the most important thing to be given in offering to supernatural beings (King 1985, 154).

The colourful rituals associated with animist belief, are clearly an important part of the image of Dayak distinctiveness. However, today most Dayak have converted to Christianity, largely because the Indonesian government only formally recognizes six faiths, namely Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. The government does not consider that the indigenous belief system constitutes a proper religion (Schiller 1996, 410). Only Kaharingan Hinduism has been formally recognised by the government since 1980 (Weinstock 1981; Schiller 1996, 409).

Christianity, then, is in fact the defining characteristic of the Dayak today. Dayak who convert to Christianity are still identified as Dayak, but those who become Muslim cease to be Dayak. Lebar notes that ‘Christianity first became effective among the Kenyahs of Dutch Borneo about 1935 and, since World War II, has spread rapidly among Kenyahs and Kayans of Sarawak’ (1972, 169). Among the Kelabitic Murut, a synonym of Lun Daye,⁶⁾ Christianity had weakened the indigenous religion in the years before World War II (Lebar 1972, 162). Lebar also notes the disappearance of elements of headhunting due to Christianization:

Since the abolition of headhunting early in this century, use has been made of old heads or of various substitutes; the spread of

⁶⁾ In East Kalimantan Lun Daye is one of the Dayak groups.

Christianity since World War II has meant the abridgement or abolishment altogether of head feasts in much of the area (Lebar 1972, 171).

Whittier notes that in Long Nawang the Kenyah are still Kenyah in the sense that they still follow the Kenyah customs and traditions, but they do not follow the religious aspects of *adat* (custom) since they are no longer pagan (1978, 118). Schiller points out that in the past Ngaju who converted to world religions, like Christianity were expected not to participate in *tiwah*. Yet, Schiller finds that once in a while Christians hold death rituals on behalf of their parents or grandparents by modifying certain elements, for example, by substituting water for blood anointments (1996, 415).

This association between Dayak and Christian identity is a recent phenomenon in addition to the image of ‘old’ Borneo religion.

Obviously, there are some problems with identifying the Dayak with either animism or Christianity because it raises the problem of the identity of those Dayak who have converted to Islam. Ave and King (1986) report that the majority of Malays in Kalimantan were originally Dayak converts to Islam. Similarly, Sellato (1989) claims that approximately 90 percent of Malays, were originally Dayak, who converted to Islam. Coomans also says that many Kutai believe that they are descended from Tunjung Dayak, although Kutai culture has been influenced by many different cultures, including the *Deutero*-Malay, Indian, Javanese and Buginese. Here it is religious affiliation not culture that distinguishes them (Coomans 1987, 4). Coomans writes that Muslim converts among the Dayak are called ‘*Halo*’ (1987, 4). Sellato (1989) notes that the term Dayak is an insulting appellation used by coastal people and Muslims to refer to hill people and non-Muslims.

The boundary between Dayak and Malay is therefore not very sharp, and the determination of Dayakness is subject to change (for example, in the past, Dayak who wanted to assume a position in the government bureaucracy had to convert to Islam thereby becoming 'Malay'). The use of the term 'ethnic' in this situation of religious differentiation is therefore misleading since some 'Malays' belong to the same cultural group as the Dayak. Equally, there are many Christians in Kalimantan who do not identify as Dayak, but as Ambonese or Batak. The situation is further complicated by the existence of Kaharingan Hinduism, supposedly distinctively Dayak, yet with significant parallels with Balinese Hinduism. As Schiller notes 'prior to praying, the congregation is sometimes reminded to fold their hands in the ritual posture adopted by Balinese Hindu worshippers' (1996, 414).

Religion in Indonesia remains an important marker of identity. But this system of religious identification is clearly a construction, in the sense that emphasizing religious differences ignores social, political and cultural continuities across different religious communities. Sillander for example, argues that religious affiliation is a crucial part of the Dayak identity (1995, 86). However, on its own, it cannot mark Dayak off from non-Dayak.

Based on my studies in East Kalimantan, the use of religion, Christianity today, is often clear for certain groups, but not for other groups, like the Dayak Tidung who are now adherents of Islam, but still consider themselves Dayak. However, this is also fluid. For example, at the beginning of the establishment of Dayak organization in East Kalimantan, the Tidung did not join this organization because they are Muslim; it was only after the 'Reform Era' that the Tidung joined an organization that seems to be strong in empowering the Dayak, especially in relation to political and economic participation. Many Dayak could become heads of regencies or get high ranked positions

in the local governments both at provincial and regency levels. Political and economic benefits could be the reason behind the participation of the Tidung in the Dayak organization. Being Muslim, in this case, seems to be insignificant in being identified as Dayak. It is clear that identity is constructed and depends on context and situation. Religion could be a marker of identity in certain situations, but it may not be used in different situations. Other elements could be used for the selection of the markers of identity, like sharing traditions. Unlike of the Tidung, the Lun Dayeh association with Christianity is very strong in their identification.

Having discussed the image of Dayak ranging from headhunting, longhouse inhabitation, to their animist belief and Christianity, it is clear that Dayak identity is constructed and the markers of identity could be taken from any of the elements of their reformulated traditions.

Key Words : Dayak Identity, Construction, Headhunting, Longhouse, Religion.

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<국문초록>

현대 인도네시아의 문화정체성과 그 동인(動因)에 대한 재고찰: 다약인 연구사례를 중심으로

옛띠 마우나띠

인도네시아 종교연구센터 책임연구원

yektim@yahoo.com

문화정체성은 실로 구성적 성격을 지닌 개념으로, 문화정체성의 구성은 상황(그리고 역사)과 상념 사이에서 발생하는 역동적인 상호작용의 결과에서 비롯된다. “다약인”이라는 개념의 형성 및 구성에 있어서도 서로 다른 다양한 힘이 작용해왔다. 식민 지배기에 탐험가들과 학자들은 서구적 방식으로 “다약인”의 구성을 구체화시켰고, 이것은 해방 이후 인도네시아 국가의 향방에 순차적으로 영향을 끼쳤다. 다약인 정체성의 구성과 그 동인에 관한 논의는 머리사냥, 긴 형태의 가옥들, 종교 등과 같이 다약인을 그려내는 특정한 이미지에 다만 집중하고, 다약을 그려내는 이러한 이미지들이 오늘날 다약인 정체성과 어떠한 연관성을 지니는가에 관한 논의이다. 과거 머리사냥 풍습에 관해서도 다약인에게 있어서 머리사냥의 의미와 관례를 충분히 설명할 수 있는 분석이 현재 전무하다. 다약인 사회의 또 다른 주요 특징은 독특한 주거양식에서 찾을 수 있다. 주거양식은 대부분의 문헌에서 추정해온 것처럼 독특한 것이 아니라 오늘날에 이르기까지 다약인은 깬야인처럼 종종 연립가옥(라민)을 그들의 중심문화로 여긴다. 깔리만탄 동부에 위치한 롱메카에서 문화와 청년축제가 개최되었는데 이 축제의 전체 진행은 자문화의 재건과 밀접하게 연관되어 있다. 2006년에 그라얀에서 개최된 이와 유사한 한 문화축제는 페몽 에라우 펜제라니(Pemung Erau Pengerani)라고 불린다. 종교 역시 다약인의 인류학적 설명에 있어서 주요 특징으로, 다약인은 보르네오에 거주하는 비(非)무슬림교도들로 정의된다. 과거에는 거의 대부분의 사람들이 정령신앙을 숭배했으나, 다약인들 사이에서 기독교로의 대규모

개종이 일어나면서 다약인은 기독교도와 일반적으로 동일시되었다. 깔리만탄 지역의 무슬림은 다약인이 될 수 없다는 게 일반적인 생각이다. 실로 다약인이 된다는 것은 수많은 힘들의 집합체로부터 그 구성이 이루어진다는 것을 의미한다.

주제어 : 다약인 정체성, 구성, 머리사냥, 연립가옥, 종교.