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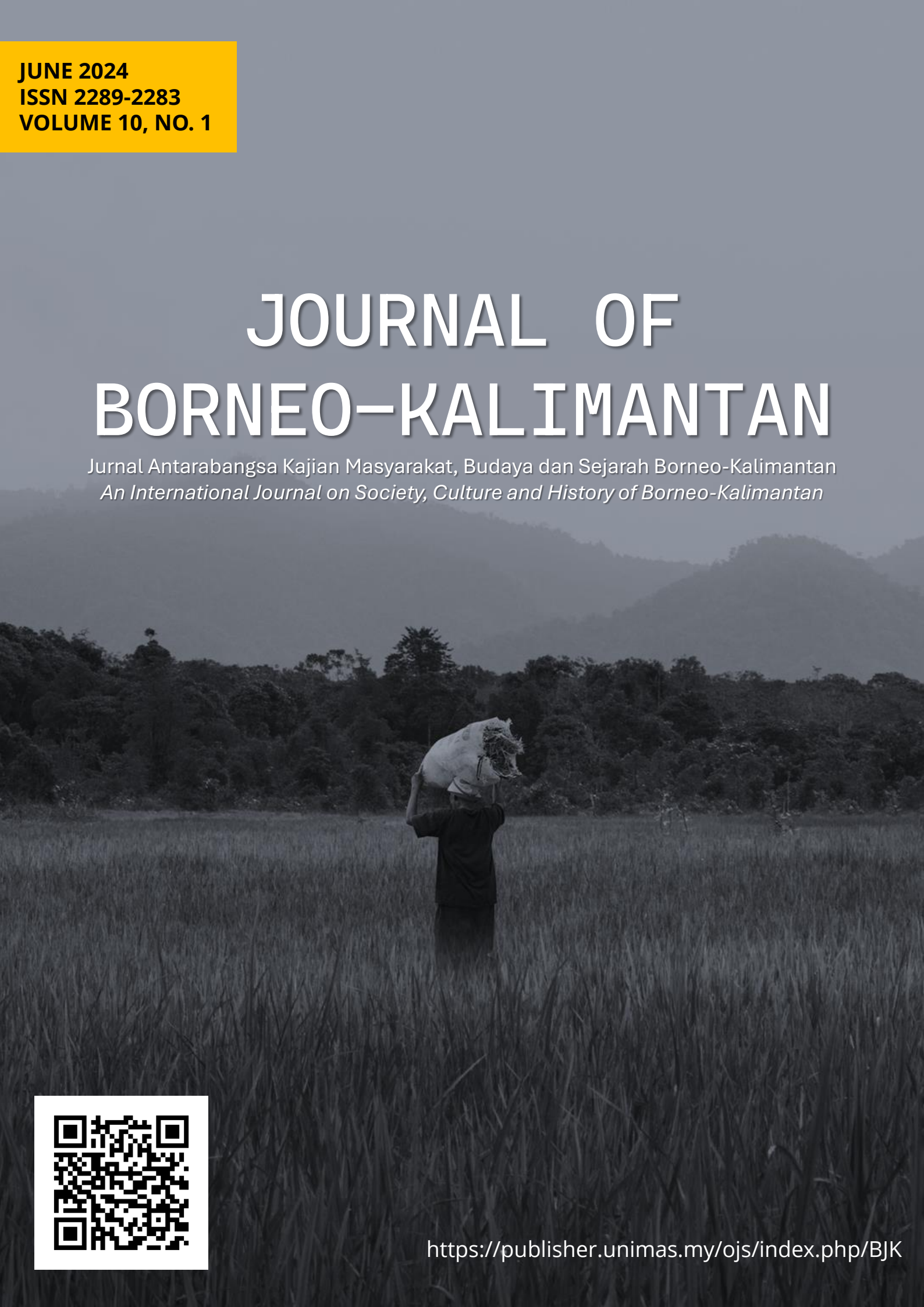

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# Chief Editor
# Journal of Borneo-Kalimantan

**Welcome to Volume 10, Issue 1 of the Journal of Borneo Kalimantan!**

We are excited to invite you to explore some of the scholarly works that delve into diverse aspects of Borneo Island which cover its history, cultural dynamics, and contemporary challenges. Karubi, in his article “The Bidayuh Cultural Identity 'Issues' of the Progeny of Mixed Marriages”, addresses a cultural issue in examining the complexities faced by individuals of mixed heritage within the Bidayuh community.

Meanwhile, Shariman, Mas'ud, Tarmizi, Zen, and Phang offer insights into the impact of computational thinking on educational outcomes across different subject areas in Sarawak in "Assessing the Influence of Computational Thinking Technique on STEM-Based and Non-STEM Based Subjects in Sarawak Schools”, whilst Jayl Langub delves into land rights in "Native Customary Rights Land: Indigenous Perspectives," providing an analysis of indigenous viewpoints on land ownership and usage. Marla Perkins, meanwhile, explores linguistic aspects in "Colors, Sounds, Rivers: Descriptive Terms and Informational Priority In Hobongan," offering an in-depth look at how descriptive terms reflect informational priorities within the Hobongan community.

In this issue, there are two book reviews by Ahi and Masri. Ahi reviews “Parenting on Sexuality by Razitasham Safii”, offering a critical perspective on this important work. In addition, Masri reviews "Countering the Western Canon: Other Ways of Knowing About Journalism and Media by Ahmad Murad Merican,” thus presenting an evaluation of the book's contribution to media and journalism studies.

We believe these contributions have showcase continuous and potential academic inquiry in Borneo Kalimantan context. We express gratitude to all the authors who have continuously shared their expertise and insights with us. We hope that this issue will ignite meaningful dialogue, and inspire everyone to contribute to an inspiring, and sustainable future for Borneo Kalimantan.

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**Journal of Borneo-Kalimantan**

# Native Customary Rights Land: Indigenous Perspectives

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## ABSTRACT

Indigenous perspectives on natives' customary rights to land are often marginalised in the development discourse in Sarawak. This paper argues that it is important for us to understand how indigenous communities claim customary rights to their territorial domain based on their *adat* that existed even before the Brooke administration in the mid-19th century. The state's policies concerning land tenure and resource use systems in Sarawak have dramatically changed since the 100-year Brooke administration, followed by the British colonisation, and the eventual independence of Sarawak within Malaysia in 1963. These changes have directly impacted the different indigenous communities' customary land tenure systems in Sarawak.

*Keywords: Adat, land, rights, territorial domain, Sarawak*

## INTRODUCTION

This paper briefly explains the land tenure and resource use systems among the indigenous communities in Sarawak, particularly pertaining to the creation of their customary rights. Land tenure systems in Sarawak have already been established long before the arrival of the Brookes in the 1840s. Indigenous communities establish this tenure system based on their local customs or *adat* of that river or longhouse localities. Their customs that govern the creation of customary rights over the land and its resources stem from their knowledge of the area, primarily based on the history and different levels of forest fallow. In this paper, I highlight the relationship between *adat* and land tenure, the significance of *pemakai menua* and *pulau,* and lastly, the Penan resource use systems.

## *Adat* and Land Tenure

The *adat*[1] is the guiding principle with regard to rights to establishing a village territorial domain, individual acquisition of land for cultivation, boundary and inheritance. The territorial domain

[1]A. J. N. Richards (1992) defines *adat* as a "way of life, basic values, culture, accepted code of conduct, manners and conventions". Eric Jensen (1974) observes that *adat* involves an indigenous "system of agriculture". The Malaysian Criteria and Indicators for Forest Management Certification [MC&I (2002)] defines *adat* as "native customs which include way of life, basic values, system of belief, code of conduct, manners, conventions and cultural practices according to which indigenous society is ordered".

held by a distinct longhouse is known in Iban as *pemakai menua*[2] and includes farms, gardens, old longhouse sites, fruit groves, cemetery, water and forest within a defined boundary *(garis menua)* (Lembat, 1994). Boundary is an important point of reference when a dispute arises between groups or individuals. The process of creating *pemakai menua* involves the ceremony of *panggul menua.*[3] When the Brookes established a government in Sarawak in 1841 this system of land tenure had long been in existence. During the one hundred years of Brooke rule this system of land tenure was maintained and practiced in the Native Courts.

*Tanah umai* include all lands that are cultivated as farms, gardens, and fruit groves. It also includes land left fallow, widely known in Sarawak as *temuda* (see below). As a general rule the household within the village that first felled the forest secures rights over specific pieces of land. These rights are heritable, passing down from one generation to the next of household members. It is on specific plots of land within the *pemakai menua* that households make their rice farm or cash crop gardens. Individual plots are marked by natural boundaries *(garis umai)* such as streams, watersheds, ridges and permanent landmarks.

*Temuda*[4] refers to farming land left fallow on which there are secondary growths. As a rule, the household that first felled the primary forest secures cultivation rights to the *temuda.* However, when a *temuda* plot is under forest-fallow, any longhouse member is free to take firewood from it, or cut bamboo, cane, or gather shoots, wild fruits, edible leaves, fungi, tuber, or other uncultivated stuffs, without necessarily consulting the members of the household having cultivation rights over the land. There are various classifications of *temuda,* indicating its age[5]. It should be noted that forest-fallow no matter how long it lasts is a form of land management system practiced by the Dayak communities.

Fruit groves are an important aspect of indigenous resource tenure. The best example is *mawang* which in the Bidayuh Bukar-Sadong dialect refers to 1) a fruit garden or orchard and 2) abandoned old settlement sites with various types of fruit trees growing around them (Ridu, 1994).

*Mawang* can be established on a communal or individual land. An individual who plants a fruit tree on a communal land establishes rights to it and those rights are inheritable by his descendants, but rights to the land resides with the community. Members of the community may collect fruits from the tree, but only with permission of the planter or his descendants. Failure to do so will render the person liable to provide *pingasung,* a form of restitution for a breach of the *adat.*

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[2] The same concept is known as *torun tana kupuo* in Bidayuh, *tana' sengayan* in Kayan, *tana' kanan* in Kenyah, *tana' bawang* in Lun Bawang and Kelabit, *tana' pengurip* in Penan etc. In this presentation, Iban terms or terminologies are used; where terms or terminologies from other communities are used, these will be indicated.

[3] *Panggul menua* refers to the ritual ceremony performed to mark the opening of a territory for settlement, farming, and other activities.

[4] Known as *talun* in Kayan Belaga and Western Penan, *jekau* in Kenyah and Eastern Penan, *amug* in Lun Bawang and Kelabit etc.

[5] For example, Adet Kayan-Kenyah 1994 classifies *temuda* as *ba'e* if the secondary growth is one year old, *talun uk* 8-15 years, *talun aya'* 16-25 years, and *talun gang* 25 years and above.

Where an individual plants fruit trees on his own land, he establishes rights over both the trees and land. If at a later stage, there are more than one descendant investing their labour in the maintenance of the *mawang*, each will have equal rights of access to the fruits. If one of the descendants collects and sells the fruits without informing the others, he will lose rights to collect the fruits in the next season. If one of the descendants moves to another village through marriage or migration, he will lose rights to both the fruit trees and land.

*Tembawai* are old longhouse sites which have been abandoned but contain various types of fruit trees. The person who planted the fruit tree on the *tapak bilik* (family apartment lot) and his descendants retain rights to it, but rights to the land are held by the community.

Another important category of land is *pendam,* a designated community cemetery for the longhouse or village. It is located within the *pemakai menua* and is established with appropriate rituals on land held in common by the community concerned. Rules pertaining to a cemetery are clearly explained in the codified *adat* of the different Dayak communities, and the violation of any of the rules is dealt with by the appropriate sections of the *adat.* For instance, there are rules which prohibit the cultivation or development of land designated as cemetery.

*Pulau* (also referred to as *pulau galau* or reserved forest) is an area of primary forest outside the cultivated area, but within the *pemakai menua* of the longhouse. *Pulau* is normally owned by the community. Rights to it reside with the community that owns it. People from other longhouses may hunt, collect wild vegetables and uncultivated foodstuffs or cut bamboo, cane and creepers in the *pulau,* but may not extract timber or climb fruit trees where exclusive rights to these resources rest with the longhouse community that owns it.

*Pulau* can be broadly divided into 1) *pulau papan, pulau ban* and 2) *pulau buah. Pulau papan, pulau ban* provides the longhouse essential items such as timber for house construction and for building boats, jungle vegetables, rattan and other jungle produce. It is a hunting ground for the community as well as an important water catchment.

Within the *pulau papan, pulau ban* area, individuals during the pioneering days had stake their claims over rights to a number of different trees. These included *kayu ban* (timber), especially *teras* or *belian* (ironwood), *engkerebai*, fruits of which are used to produce dyes, *engkabang* and other oil-yielding trees, *tekalong*, bark of which is used to make bark cloth and carrying straps, and *tapang* which provide a place for bees to produce honey.

Claims to trees were created in two ways. Firstly, the first person to find a tree claimed it by clearing the undergrowth around its base. When this act was drawn to public attention, the claimant established exclusive rights over the tree. Such rights are inheritable and passed down to the descendants of the claimant. Secondly, a tree was planted, and the planter established rights to it which are inheritable by his future descendants. All descendants of an original tree finder or planter share rights of harvest of its fruits. These rights extend to their husbands, wives and other household members (see Sather, 1990).

*Pulau buah* is a fruit grove which contains different types of trees, growing wild or planted. Claim to fruit trees are created in similar way as claims to other trees discussed earlier, and rights of inheritance follow the same principle as those of tree tenure.

Fruit trees, as we have noted, are commonly planted in the longhouse precinct, usually behind the planter's apartment. Rights over such fruit trees continue to be recognized in former longhouse sites which serve as community fruit-tree reserves. During the pioneering days, fruit

trees were also planted at the riverside forest corridors and in the *pulau* area. These fruit trees serve not only as evidence of the planter's rights to the trees or plots of land, but also the community rights to a particular area which is next to a neighbouring longhouse or village.

## *Pemakai menua* and *Pulau*

With the introduction of the Sarawak Land Code (Cap. 81) (1999 [1958]), one often used interpretation of what constitutes native customary rights land is confined to cultivated land. According to this interpretation, the first person to fell an area of land before 1958 for the purpose of cultivation secures rights to the land, and it is inheritable by succeeding generations of heirs. The mere act of felling trees and clrearing the land for cultivation secures rights of access and ownership. According to this interpretation, *pemakai menua* and *pulau* do not constitute a customary rights land, since they are not cultivated. *Pemakai menua* and *pulau* are now a matter of intense debate both outside and inside the court of law.

*Pemakai menua* and *pulau* are not cultivated for various reasons. They are preserved for the purpose of hunting and gathering, to provide the much-needed timber for building houses and boats, and to act as an important water catchment. Indigenous peoples are clear on what *pemakai menua* and *pulau* mean. Researchers, scholars, and government officials researched the subjects to understand their significance.

In his Iban Dictionary, Richards (1992) defines *[pemakai] menua* as an "[area] of land held and used by distinct community, [especially] longhouse (RUMAH), [including] house, farms, garden, fruit groves, cemetery, water, and all forest within half a day's journey." In a published report to the government, he describes *pemakai menua* as an area that "includes besides farms and gardens, the water that runs through it and the forest round about it to the extent of half a day's journey" (Richards, 1961).

Ngidang (2005) defines *pemakai menua* as "a territorial domain of a longhouse community where customary rights to land resource was created by pioneering ancestors." He explains territorial domain as "a specific land area, where indigenous peoples carry out their subsistence activities such as hunting and gathering, farming and earning their livelihoods from generation to generation" (Sarawak Land Code, 1999 [1958]).

Lembat's (1994) definition of *pemakai menua* is similar to that of Richards as "an area of land held by a distinct longhouse or village community, and include farms, gardens, fruit groves, cemetery, water and forest within a defined boundary *(garis menua).* With regard to *pulau* it is an island or copse of trees within the *pemakai menua*. It is not cut for cultivation, but reserved as a primary forest by a community to ensure a steady supply of natural resources like rattan and timber as well as to act as water catchment.

Key ideas running through these definitions are indications of ownership and utilization of areas called *pemakai menua* and *pulau.* The Sarawak Land Code (Cap. 81) (1999 [1958]) does not make specific reference to *pemakai menua* and *pulau,* but Section 5 (2) of the same Land Code provides various "methods by which native customary rights may be acquired" as shown below:

(a) the felling of virgin jungle and the occupation of the land thereby cleared;
(b) the planting of land with fruit trees;
(c) the occupation or cultivation of land;
(d) the use of land for a burial ground or shrine;

(e) the use of land of any class for rights of way; or
(f) any other lawful method.

Therefore, by virtue of Section 5 (2) (f) of Sarawak Land Code (Cap. 81) (1999 [1958]), *pemakai menua* and *pulau* in fact constitute native customary rights land. In the case of Nor Nyawai & Ors v. Borneo Pulp Plantation Sdn Bhd & Ors (2001), the Judge amongst others concluded that "Thus far, the native customary rights of an Iban to do the things associated with the terms *temuda, pulau,* and *pemakai menuoa* have not been abolished. They have survived through those Orders and Ordinances" (Chin, 2001:797).

The natives of Sarawak have rights to land ownership they felled, cultivated or acquired by any other lawful method before 1958. These rights of ownership have not been replaced by user rights given mostly to groups rather than individuals as erroneously believed by certain quarters but are enshrined in the Sarawak Land Code (Cap. 81). The character of proprietary interest of native people in their land is not limited to usufructuary right but right of ownership acquired in law and not based on any document of title. This right is endorsed by two court cases Nor Nyawai & ors v. Borneo Pulp Plantation Sdn Bhd & Ors (2001) and Superintendent of Lands & Surveys, Bintulu v. Nor Nyawai & Ors (2005).

Although the Appeal Court of Malaysia overturned the decision of the High Court of Sabah & Sarawak in favour of the Superintendent of Lands & Surveys, Bintulu, it upheld the lower court decision on native rights of ownership to the land they acquired under customary rights. The relevant parts of the decision of the Appeal Court of Malaysia are quoted from page 571 of the 2005 Current Law Journal (Malanjun et. al., 2005:571):

a. that the common law respects the pre-existence of rights under native laws or customs though such rights may be taken away by clear and unambiguous words in a legislation;

b. that native customary rights do not owe their existence to statutes. They exist long before any legislation and the legislation are only relevant to determine how much of those native customary rights have been extinguished;

c. that the Sarawak Land Code "does not abrogate whatever native customary rights that exist before the passing of that legislation". However, natives are no longer able to claim new territory without a permit under s 10 of that legislation from the Superintendent of Lands & Surveys; and

d. that although the natives may not hold any title to the land and may be termed licensees, such licence "cannot be terminable at will. Theirs are native customary rights which can only be extinguished in accordance with the laws, and this is after payments of compensation".

Rights to a piece of land is lost if it is transferred to another person, for example a sibling, a cousin, or a relative. It can also be lost if the person moves to another village through marriage or migration *(pindah).*[6] If a person *pindah* from the longhouse, rights to his customary land will

[6] Adat Iban (1994) stipulates that a person who moves from one longhouse to another "shall be deprived of all rights to untitled land or any customary land that has not been planted with crops and all such land shall be owned in common by the longhouse."

either go to the community or he can transfer such rights to a sibling, a cousin or a relative who will in turn provide him with *tungkus asi*.[7]

In his *Sarawak Land Law and Adat* report to the colonial government Richards (1961:34) says that "When Government wishes to acquire land, the land must be surrendered by the right holder, and compensation is payable by the Government". Richards (1961:34) is considered the most knowledgeable among the peers of his time on matters pertaining to native customary rights land, and this knowledge encompasses his understanding of the native relationship to the land and feeling for it as shown below:

> The people's view is that they should not claim compensation if the land surrendered is to be put to use for obvious and fairly immediate benefit to themselves and their neighbours. However, they dislike surrendering or being required to surrender land, with or without compensation, when it is to be allocated to people they regard as outsiders. In their view, when land is required for outsiders, either they should be permitted to sell it themselves direct, or Government, who may wish to survey and organize the allocation, should pay them the full market value that they could get by private dealing: they would then receive a price that would be higher where the position of the land and access to it are better, for they also should share in the profit to be had from such accident.

## Penan resource tenure

The Penan are traditionally a nomadic people. Although no more than 400 individuals are still nomadic, the majority of them have only settled down in the 1970s. In most cases, these settled Penan are settled only in name, as a large number still depend on the forest for food and economic activities. Whether nomadic or settled, their relationship with the land is quite different from the other indigenous communities in Sarawak. Traditionally, the Penan do not cut the forest to establish customary rights to the land. Instead, they establish rights to resources within the territory they occupy. To appreciate the Penan relationship with the landscape, it is helpful to look at their nomadic lifestyle and how that relationship with the land is maintained when they settled down.

Nomadic Penan live in lean-tos, they call *lamin*[8]. When they move, new *lamin* are built, and the former *lamin* site is referred to as *la'a*[9]. *La'a* are not forgotten, they are frequently visited, and in the *circular* migration of a nomadic band a new *lamin* may be built at a former site or close to it. It should be noted that the term nomadic is in some ways misleading as their migration over the same territory is *cyclical*, returning to previously harvested areas that have regenerated, in other words, the same resource site may be occupied more than once within the life of an individual.

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[7] *Tungkus asi* (lit. bundle of cook rice) refers to the token provided by the recipient to the person who on account of his moving from the longhouse to another transfers rights of his customary land to the recipient.

[8] *Lamin* refers to any dwelling place; it also refers to a nomadic camp comprising several family huts or lean-tos.

[9] *La'a* (or *laa lamin* in Western Penan) refers to a former site of a *lamin tana'* or nomadic camp. A *lamin* may be occupied from a period of several weeks or months depending on the amount of food resources in the surrounding area. During that occupation Penan would have eaten all sorts of fruits and seeds thrown all over the camp. When these seeds become fruit trees, ownership resides with the group as a community. These trees also help future generations identify former *lamin* sites or *la'a* or *laa lamin* occupied by their ancestors.

Penan refer to the numerous *la'a* scattered across the landscape of their home river system area as their *uban,*[10] marks or footprints. When they refer to *la'a* as *uban,* they are talking about its cultural significance, past events, connections, relationships, and rights within an area and all that it encompasses. Nomadic Penan move within a home territory that could have, for example, river systems, as boundaries. As they migrate each band leaves traces through the *la'a.* Through years of migration, a band would have left numerous *la'a* over the landscape.

Surrounding the *lamin* or *la'a* is what the Penan call *tana' pengurip;*[11] the land that provides the essentials of life, food and other resources that they collect for barter trade or convert into handicrafts for domestic use or for sale. In the *tana'pengurip* Penan stake claim to forest resources such as wild sago, especially *Eugeissona utilis* species, rattan, fruit trees, *ketepe* (a wild rubber), various species of useful trees such as *tajem* trees *(Antiaris toxicara)* that provide poison for their blowpipes, trees to make blowpipes, to build boats, houses (for those who adopted the settled life) and to make coffin. Clusters of wild sago are called *birai uvud and* stands of rattan *birai wai*. These are two of the most important resources that Penan would stake a claim to. In the *la'a* may be found fruit trees growing from seeds that their ancestors ate. Such fruit trees become common property of the group and are inherited by its descendants. Ancestral graves may also be found in the *la'a.* All these serve as evidence of former occupation and of rights to the area and resources therein.

As the *tana' pengurip* was first utilized and taken care of by their ancestors, Eastern Penan sometimes refer to it as *tana' pohoo*[12], or ancestral land, to which they are rightful heirs. Penan say that their *adet* (custom) is different from those of their neighbours, Kayan, Kenyah, Kelabit or Iban. Their neighbours cut the forest for cultivation and create what is known in Sarawak as native customary rights land. However, the Penan create *la'a* in the landscape and stake a claim to resources in areas they refer to as *tana' pengurip* or *tana' pohoo.* When groups of Penan settle down, part of the *tana' pengurip* or *tana' pohoo* is cultivated with food crops such as rice and cassava, sugar cane, fruit trees etc, and the remainder conserved for regeneration of resources such as sago, rattan and fruit trees to complement cultivated crops.

Each group of Eastern Penan refers to specific areas as *okoo bu'un* or place of origin, from the word *okoo*=place, *bu'un*=beginning. *Okoo bu'un* is used in a variety of situations. It is used to assert one's rights to a place one was born in; and one can trace one's ancestral roots to

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[10] When writing about *uban* in the case of Western Penan, Brosius (2001:38) says that: "In its broadest sense, *uban* refers to an empty place left behind by the withdrawal of an onject or being. For instance, pig tracts are referred to as *uban mabui,* young men often speak of former lover as their *uban,* and an empty place in a hut left by someone who is away or has died is referred to as the person's *uban.* In the later case, and in reference to former *lamin* sites or other places where past events occurred, *uban* is an evocative and emotionally laden word." With regard to Eastern Penan, *uban* carries the same meaning as described by Brosius for the Western Penan. However, there are two other meanings of *uban* in Eastern Penan. First, it means "because", for example, *akeu be' omok tai Marudi uban be' pu'un ligit* (I can't go to Marudi because I don't have money). Second, it means "why", as in the following example, *uban ineu' kau be' tai* Marudi? (Why are you not going to Marudi).

[11] *Tana'* =land and forest, and *pengurip,* from the root word *urip*=life. *Tana' pengurip* can be defined as the land that provide food and other essential resources for survival, or foraging area. It conveys the same meaning as that of the Iban *pemakai menua* described earlier by Gerunsin Lembat (1994).

[12] Western Penan refer to this as *Tana'puu* or *tana' asen*.

other places and connect relationships and ties. When Penan speak of *okoo bu'un* they are making a statement about identity, sense of place and belonging.

Earlier on we mentioned that Penan would lay claims all sorts of resources in the *tana' pengurip.* This practice is known in Penan as *molong. Molong* is not only to lay a claim to a resource, but most importantly it means to foster it for the future. For example, when an individual *molong* a wild sago, he will extract the mature tree and conserve the bud for the future. They also rotate their harvest of sago from one clump to another such that it allows for regeneration of a previously harvested clump. Penan emphasize this point by saying that "if we don't *molong* the sago, and allow indiscriminate harvest, we will not have any more sago for the future." *Molong* has two obvious functions: it serves as a monitoring device to account for the quantity of resources in the forest where they exercise stewardship and prevent over-exploitation of resources.

When an individual *molong* a resource, a sago clump or a rattan stand, he places an *oroo* (mark or sign) on it to indicate 'ownership'. Such a mark or sign is known in Penan as *oroo olong* or 'claim sign'. Once an individual *molong* a resource, he is responsible for its upkeep and sustainable management. He also establishes exclusive rights to the resource. These rights are heritable and pass down from one generation to the next of household members. Other members of the community may harvest the resource with permission of the person who *molong* it. *Molong* can be done individually or communally; the basic principle is the same. Penan rights to the land and forest resources are thus established through *molong,* a form of resource tenure similar to the Iban tree tenure system described by Clifford Sather.[13]

The Penan have a word *tawai* that expresses in a particular way their sentiment to the landscape. *Tawai* is an expression of nostalgia, fondness and longing for the landscape, its wholeness and memory of events, important or inconsequential, that took place there, of group activities, of life in general, with food aplenty or not, successful hunt or not, sad times and happy times. *Tawai* binds the group and individuals to the landscape. Penan insist that *tawai* differentiates their relationship with the landscape from the way others relate to the same. For instance, a timber company and its workers do not have *tawai* for the land. Once they get what they want they leave, having no feeling for the place. The Penan feeling for the land is told and retold in *tosok* (oral narratives) to succeeding generations. It is also expressed in *sinui* (Western Penan) and *jajan* (Eastern Penan) sung for entertainment.[14]

[13] See Clifford Sather (1990) where he says that claims to trees are created in two ways. First, the first person to find a tree claims it by clearing the undergrowth around its base. When this act is drawn to public attention, the claimant establishes exclusive rights over the tree. Such rights are heritable and pass down to descendants of the claimant. Second, a tree is planted, and the planter establishes rights to it which is inherited by his future descendants.

[14] *Sinui* is a popular tune sung by the Western Penan of Belaga District and Silat River, Baram District. Singing without instrumentation, the main singer sings an impromptu narrative in poetic rhyme that is accompanied by a form of choral 'harmony'. *Sinui* often expresses feelings of love, happiness, merriment, sadness, loneliness or grief in praise or remembrance of a person, an event or a landscape. The beauty of the sentiment expressed in rhyme and narrative is often equally matched by the vocal style. The incredible skill of the lead singer's improvised storytelling have no match in the modern or western musical world. The Eastern Penan *jajan* is sung by one person and lacks the poetic rhyme and harmony of the Western Penan *sinui.* Like *sinui, jajan* is a vehicle for an individual to express his or her feelings on any topic, including the landscape.

Penan argue that their rights and attachment to the land are more solid than the mere felling of trees to open up land for cultivation to create customary rights land. In their relationship with the landscape, they continue to visit hilltops and depression between and connecting two hills, sites of former nomadic camps *(la'a)* to collect fruits that grew out from former occupations. They also frequent clusters of wild sago, rattan stands and wild fruit orchards which they nurture in the vicinity of campsites. Man-made jungle tracks *(jalan toto)* are maintained with nicely resting places *(lasan)* creating a sense of 'kinship' with the environment.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have outlined how different indigenous communities in Sarawak have established their customary rights to land, its resources, and delineation of their territorial domains (*pemakai menua* or *tana' pengurip* in Penan). As mentioned in this paper, land is not just about its physical features or the resources it contains. Land tenure systems according to their own *adat* governs the core of the indigenous communities' social organisation, political dynamics, economic livelihoods, household management, and even their religious beliefs. This is especially important as knowledge on the local customary rights to land and its resources can adjudicate the potential conflict between the state's land policies and local land governance.

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# The Bidayuh Cultural Identity "Issues" of the Progeny of Mixed Marriages

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## ABSTRACT

The study investigates the complexities surrounding the cultural identity of Bidayuh progeny from mixed marriages. It aims to explore how these individuals navigate their heritage, balancing Bidayuh traditions with influences from other cultural backgrounds. Through qualitative methods, including interviews and participant observations, the research examines the perceived 'issues' related to identity, community acceptance, and cultural continuity. Findings indicate that while mixed heritage progeny often experience identity conflicts and societal pressures, they also contribute to the dynamic evolution of Bidayuh culture. The study highlights the need for inclusive cultural policies that embrace diversity within the community, fostering a more integrated cultural identity.

Keywords: *Bidayuh, Cultural Identity, Heritage, Mixed-Marriage, Progeny*

## INTRODUCTION

The conjugal view defines marriage as the union of a man and a woman who naturally (inherently) fulfill their permanent and exclusive commitment to each other by bearing and raising children together (Girgis, George, & Anderson, 2012). However, the revisionist understanding of marriage maintains that it is the union of two people (whether of the same sex or of opposite sexes) who commit to romantically [loving] and caring for each other, as well as to [sharing] the burdens and benefits of domestic life. It is essentially a union of hearts and minds, enhanced by whatever forms of sexual intimacy both partners find agreeable (ibdi). In any case, culture determines the nature of the marriage individuals enter into. Culture, on the other hand, is not static or invariable; it is in a constant process of evolving. In many instances, culture dictates the communal or societal marital structure—endogamy or exogamy.

According to Wikipedia's most recent version (March 2018), Bidayuh is a collective term for various indigenous people in southern Sarawak. According to the above source, the Bidayuhs are Sarawak's second-largest Dayak ethnic group, after the Iban, and one of the major Dayak tribes in West Kalimantan. Campbell, Chuah, and Ting (2012) paraphrasing the 2009 Department of Statistics Malaysia of Sarawak, the Bidayuh are Sarawak's fourth largest ethnic group, after the Iban, Chinese, and Malay, accounting for 8% of the state's population based on the 2000 census. Based on their geographical locations and dialects, Campbell, Chuah, and Ting (2012) identified four major groups of Bidayuh: the Bau-Jagoi in Bau District, the Biatah in Kuching District, the Bukar-Sadong in the Serian District, and the Salako-Lara in the Lundu District. Within these major groups, there are sub-groups. Conversely, with the advent of industrialization, urbanisation, and migration, exogamy appeared to be a more preferred marriage arrangement, especially in relation to mixed marriages. Indeed, the upward trend of mixed marriages, or intermarriages, is many

decades old. The idea of intermarriage is no doubt exogamous, where one marries out of their own community to another of a completely different culture, customs, traditions, and law. Different kinship systems and kin's roles come with different cultures and communities; hence, when two people marry into different kinship systems, they may or may not clash with one another.

Kinship, according to the 1973 Scheffler work, talks about how kinship and descent describe one's egocentric system of social identity and status in their kinship system or descent system. When a society unites to establish social ties, they recognize their shared ancestry through shared descendants, leading to a somewhat egocentric relationship between them. Therefore, when members of a society marry into another's kinship, the members of that particular kinship in one way or another will treat that person marrying into the kinship as an "outsider." Society only created this rule of descent to identify each member with a specific category of their kin for private or specific purposes.

Certainly, over the years, the issue of inter-ethnic, mixed, or intermarriage[1] in Malaysia has been acclaimed and studied abound (see Tan (1993), Tan et al. (2008), Pue & Sulaiman (2013). The products of these marital unions are identified differently in Malaysia. For example, Pan-Asian (Pacific-Asian/Asian-Americans), Eurasians (European-Asians), Kristang (Portuguese Malaysians), or even local terms such as Mamak (Indian-Malay), Chindians (Chinese-Indians), Baba Nyonya (Chinese-Malay), and so forth, have been created solely due to inter-kinship marriages. Amongst these studies, many examined how intermarriage was studied, the history of intermarriage, the cultural context for the couples marrying exogamous from their families, and so forth, but none (at least to the best of our knowledge) explored the issue of self-identity in relation to the offspring of Bidayuh and Iban, Chinese, or other non-Malayu[2] ethnic groups of Sarawak. For these children, the idea of selflessness and detachment from their own "ethnic identity" brings about an identity crisis. The aim of this study is to critically examine how Bidayuh of mixed-parentage identify ethnically and why they identify as they do.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Graham, as cited in Stewart and Goldfard (2007), criticizes the U.S. Census Bureau's "check on" racial and ethnic classifications, a practice she completely rejects, claiming it serves only to promote "nice demography." She argues that it is a form of discrimination towards those who are born of parents of different "races," and because of such debates on the ticking of one box, the 2000 U.S. Census hence permitted the ticking of multiple racial and ethnic classifications. Within the United States, approximately 17% of marriages occur between spouses of different races and/or ethnicities, while 1 out of every 7 children born identify as multiracial. Research suggests that, compared with monoracial couples, multiracial couples are at increased risk for negative relationship outcomes including divorce or separation. Although little research explores why these disparities exist, one possible reason is heightened conflict caused by greater differences in partners' values and beliefs (Craft, Rowley, & Perry-Jenkins 2022).

From my personal observations and interactions with children of intermarriages, the biggest issue regarding mix-marriages or inter-kinship marriages is not centred around the married couples themselves.

[1] The terms intermarriage, inter-ethnic marriage and mixed marriage are used interchangeably in this study.
[2] The exemption of Bidayuh/Malay couples in this study is based on the understanding that by law (Sharia law to be precise), an individual(s) married to Malay is automatically identified as a Malay-Muslim, and as such, he or she must abide by the norms governing Islamic devotees. Among the non-Malay groups, inter-ethnic marriages are generally much more common than among Malays. However, it also seems that migration is the preferred option for the number of Malaysians who either marry across ethnic lines or acquire foreign spouses while studying or working abroad. This particularly applies to Malay women who are either not particularly religious or who see no reason why their spouses should convert (see Malaysiakin, August 1, 2007).

Instead, it revolves around the difficulties encountered by their children as they navigate the complexities of growing up with two distinct cultural backgrounds. As previously mentioned, state documents or forms frequently include ethnic categories, particularly in the demography section. Consequently, children born from mixed intermarriages often find themselves perplexed as they do not belong entirely to either of the major ethnic groups. Consequently, they are compelled to select the "Others" category. Selecting the "Others" option typically prompts individuals to question their authentic identity. Additionally, it induces a psychological state of identity crisis. In addition, according to Ong (2007 and 2009), the Malaysian government's efforts to bring the country together are hindered by the fact that its politics and policies are based on ethnic divisions, potentially causing rifts among Malaysians. Being born into two separate kinship systems may or may not impact a child's self-identity during their learning process. One's self-culture is an integral aspect of self-identity, and over time, it fosters a feeling of affiliation with a specific community. Based on the information provided, we have formulated the following questions: How do the offspring of Bidayuh engage in social interactions or form marital unions with their parents? What is the reason for their choice to identify racially in the manner that they do?

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

i. To critically assess how people with mixed-parentage identify
ii. To determine factor(s) influence the way children of Bidayuh mixed-parentage identify ethnically.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Children of mixed marriages or intermarriages may face a number of challenges as they navigate their dual cultural and ethnic identities. These challenges can include: Confusion and identity struggles: Children of mixed marriages often have to navigate between different cultural traditions, languages, and values. This can lead to confusion and identity struggles as they try to reconcile their diverse backgrounds. Children of mixed marriages may face discrimination and prejudice from both sides of their heritage. This can be due to stereotypes, a lack of acceptance, or ignorance about their mixed heritage. Cultural disconnection: Children from mixed marriages may feel a sense of disconnection from both sides of their heritage. They may feel like they don't fully belong to or fit in with either culture, which can lead to feelings of isolation and failure to fully embrace their cultural heritage. Another challenge that children from mixed marriages may face is a lack of community support. Often, they struggle to find a sense of community and belonging. They may not have access to communities or support systems that understand and embrace their unique experiences, making it challenging for them to fully explore and celebrate their mixed identity (see Craft, Rowley, & Perry-Jenkins 2022). The 'Marriage Help Services' in Santa Clara, CA, made the following argument:

> Raising multicultural children within a mixed marriage presents its own set of challenges. Nurturing their identity and navigating diverse cultural influences require a delicate balance. Cultural factors can significantly impact marital satisfaction, highlighting the importance of open dialogue and continuous efforts to bridge gaps

Cultural identity is a vast topic that cuts across social science and humanities disciplines, and there are various ways to understand or discuss it. At this juncture, the multiple approaches to identity will be marginal. Yet, it is vital to explore why individuals identify the way they do. According to the 1982 work by V. Gecas, the notion of identity is based on social class and self-esteem. Huntington's (2004) work provides a similar denotation on identity, arguing that social construction shapes an individual's identity. Although this notion is one of his four points, it enlists ideas on how an individual(s) identifies. Others include the nature of grouping, multiple identities, and identity as a product of continuous interaction.

Indeed, Huntingon (2004) highlights that individuals construct their own identities in relation to those of others, and their interactions with others in turn shape their own identities, resulting in an endless cycle of identity formation.

Datler, Wallace, and Spannring (2005), however, questioned the extent to which strong social institutions and classification systems that predate and are independent of any particular individual shape and control people externally. And to what extent do individuals have 'internal control, as creative actors shaping their social world'? Summarising Jamieson, 2002 (p. 519), these writers emphasised the importance of agency as opposed to structure. They observe that people view identity as a subjective achievement of rational individual subjects. The emphasis on the structure contrasts with the view of identity as "a reflection of individual membership in particular social categories or collectivities" (Williams, 2000, p. 55).

Nonetheless, the plural society theory argues that in heterogeneous societies, culture separates groups, with the only common place of interaction being the market. These societies often perceive positive outcomes for one community as negatively affecting another. This is different from a homogenous society where, for example, building a house of worship serves the whole community (see Gryboski 2016). Rockquemore and Brunsma (2008) viewed the issue of identity as a little different from the above schools of thought. Rockquemore and Brunsma (2008) noted that the symbolic interactionist way of looking at mixed heritage identity focuses on validation. Some individuals will find validation for the identities they present to others. Others will not have their initially presented identities validated. These writers observed:

> Identities, as validated self-understandings, depend upon confirmation from others in order to be developed and maintained. Therefore, "biracial" identity as an emergent category of racial identification and classification has the potential to be established, stabilized, and proliferate in the micro interactional sphere, and yet it also may be denied, negated, and further marginalized. (2008, p. 21)

Citing Marx (1976), Gryboski partially disagrees with the above assertions of the plural society theory. He highlights the Marxist perspective, which argues:

> The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life-process in general defines individual identity. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, it is their social being that determines their consciousness (2016:31 cited in Marx 1976 p.3.)

On the other hand, PuruShotaam (2004, cited in Chui Yinn 2018) notes that despite some authors' arguments:

> "ethnic group" is, but, a social ideology where when people say there are of a certain and most commonly single ethnic group, it is mostly untrue due to their heritage as well as environment such as learned and shared values, attitudes, behaviour and the way they see "ethnic" as a membership or as an identity What she says is that the terms of "Us" and "Them" are merely "proof" of cultural difference when in fact, it is just an ideology that was placed upon everyone as an identity and knowing that we belong somewhere or to a certain group or community.

Yinn (2018) acknowledged the PuruShotam argument and added that, when examining the concept of "ethnicity" in Borneo, the ways in which the people identify themselves and how the state identifies them

differ. This is due to the historical circumstances surrounding the origin of their names. Yinn asserts that the government imposed ethnicity on the Borneo people primarily as a means of easy dictation and authority application. In other words, ethnicity served as a political tool to exert control over the people, but over time, people abandoned this concept and began to use it as an identity, despite the fact that everyone is likely a "mixed blood" member of a different "ethnicity."

This article uses the ideas and ideologies of the following theories as a context for understanding cultural identity. These ideologies are primordialism, instrumentalism, and symbolic interactionism. They are theoretical perspectives used to understand and explain the nature of ethnicity, identity, and group dynamics. Each perspective offers a unique lens through which scholars and researchers examine these complex phenomena of cultural identity. These perspectives are not mutually exclusive, and researchers often integrate elements from multiple perspectives to gain a more comprehensive understanding of ethnicity and identity. The specific context and research question at hand influence the choice of perspective. Primarily, the primordialism perspective 5mphasizes the biological and historical factors that create a sense of belonging among a particular group. On the other hand, instrumentalism asserts the malleability of ethnic identities and their strategic manipulation. While symbolic interactionism views ethnicity as a social construct that emerges through interpersonal communication and shared symbols, These differing understandings will be the basis of discussion in the conclusion section of this article.

## METHODOLOGY

One of the three fundamentals of social science research, exploration, ingrains this study (see Babbie, 2010). Sequel to the discussion in the literature review, identity, or how an individual identifies, is a social fact that is constantly entreating for deeper exploration through empirical data and analysis. To achieve a scientific understanding, the researcher employed a specific scientific method. This article utilized qualitative methods with in-depth interviews (and empirical observation) as the main research instrument to carefully collect quality data (Ibid.). Through interviews, we provided our respondents with a platform to freely discuss and express their own ideas about identity. Thus, we provided this research with quality data, details, ideas, and a range of responses. In this research, we chose the qualitative method as the data collection tool because it seeks holistic and largely narrative responses from the respondents. It aims to help researchers better understand the perceptions, motivations, and feelings behind our informants' actions. The qualitative method offered us a more complex textual description of 'human' issues, which often challenge the original beliefs, behaviours, emotions, and 'social' issues (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

To achieve pertinent and variation data, we imposed certain criteria on the selection of the research population. We chose our respondents based on their ability to clearly understand and answer our questions about self-identity and the reasons behind their identification. Respondents' gender, experience, education, religiosity, and rationality are some of the criterion that contributed to their selection. Significantly, we excluded respondents under the age of 16 from this research. This is because people under the age of 16 are more likely to be vague on how to identify. The research population consisted of both male and female Bidayu progeny, but more importantly, offspring of mixed or inter-ethnic marriages of Bidayuh and non-Bidayuh. These include married and unmarried men and women residing in Lundu. This research adapts the non-probability sampling technique. We collected data using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The choice of these two sampling techniques is deliberate. Furthermore, resources and time were available, but the saturation point ultimately determined the sampling sizes. As previously stated, Lundu is the study area for this article. Lundu is a district located in the northwest of Kuching Division of Sarawak, Malaysia, and shares borders with the Indonesian Province of West Kalimantan. Lundu has different ethnic groups of Iban, Bidayuh, Malay Chinese, and Selako settlers, according to the population demography. What is wonderful about Lundu is that, although different ethnic groups settled very close together, there has been no friction between them from the beginning. They seek a better life, and each

person pursued their aim in a way that did not compete with the others (Steinmayer 2014). As a result, this article examines the many characteristics of Lundu—mix marriage. According to this Steinmayer (2014);

> About 5,000 people live in or close to Lundu town. The total population of Lundu district was about 25,000 when figures last became available. People in Lundu make their living in traditional ways, by farming, fishing, planting cocoa, pepper, and rubber, although rubber is less important than it was.

## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Similar to any form of matrimony, mixed marriages possess their own assortment of benefits and drawbacks. It is crucial to acknowledge that the particular advantages and disadvantages might significantly differ based on the individuals and their distinct circumstances. The situation becomes considerably more intricate when considering the offspring of such partnerships. The cultural identity of individuals born from mixed marriages is more complex. An important discovery derived from the field data is the malleability of identity among the offspring of families with mixed marriages. Evidence suggests that cultural identity is not always static and has the potential to be flexible. The results also revealed that the offspring of interracial marriages may experience varying degrees of cultural identity adaptation at different life stages or in different social environments. Individuals may exhibit a stronger inclination towards a particular component of their identity at a given time, and subsequently transition to emphasising a different aspect at a later stage. Accordingly, the respondent simply identified herself as Emma, a female about 24 years old, single, and with a university degree in humanity. She explained:-

> "I am half Chinese and half Bidayuh, my father is Chinese, although I have not seen in him ages, I feel chineses sometimes". I really donno know why", I guess as people always say blood is thicker than water". Emma continues, so,…sometimes I present myself as a Chinese, if I am neigiating something with Chinese, but if visit government office, I am Bidayuh… Whether, am I taking advantage of my identity, I'll say no, I am both …and I may as well enjoy both sides" (Emma 6th June 2023).

However, some respondents view the issue of being born into a mixed marriage as very challenging and sometimes confusing to identify. This is very obvious, as growing up with multiple cultural influences can sometimes lead to identity challenges or confusion. Children of mixed marriages may grapple with questions about where they truly belong or how they fit into both cultures. About half of the respondents in this study have, at one time in their lives, experienced confusion about their identity. Jenny reports that at home, surrounded by my mother's family members, I feel like a Bidayuh. However, as I grow older, people outside my family consistently speak Mandarin to me. When I inform them that I am not Chinese, they often express disbelief and occasionally use obscenity. "Yet, when I speak Bidayuh to some people, they're baffled and ask about where and how I learned to speak Bidayuh." Another respondent says, "It's hard to juggle the two cultures." The people around you don't make it easier. A third respondent shared, "I love being mixed, but I hate having to explain to people that I am a product of a mixed marriage and the comments that follow." And male respondent Alex jokely added, "There is no textbook on how to fit in both. My parents did not help much." He continues:

> Actually, they sometimes created more confusion.for example, I'll be speaking with my mother in English, and if for some reason she became angry, she'll automatically switch to Badayuh in anger. And my father does that too…and both knew I am not good with any of the languages. The botton line, it is very confusing (Ales 6th June 2023).

Growing up with multiple cultural influences can sometimes lead to identity challenges or confusion. Children of mixed marriages may grapple with questions about where they truly belong or how they fit into both cultures. Some respondents echo this concern about where they belong or how they can fit into the two or even one. One of my friends always teased me, according to a respondent. He often joked:

> Which part of your body is on your mother's side, and which is on your father's? My response has always been that I am for both. When he is drunk, the joke can sometimes appear insolent. However, I am aware that he is engaging in meaningless street talk." But I know my younger sister and mom hate my friend for such a comment.

The respondent, along with a few others, expressed concerns regarding societal attitudes towards mixed marriages, which can lead to feelings of isolation or misinterpretation. Indeed, I avoid associating with those who regularly mock my family heritage, regardless of their insistence that it is merely a jest. Consistently elucidating it to them can be challenging. The preceding section indicates that children born to parents of different ethnic backgrounds may encounter external preconceptions and prejudices from individuals who lack comprehension or acceptance of their unique heritage. Frequently, this resulted in seclusion and misinterpretation.

Children may struggle with a sense of identity, feeling torn between the cultural backgrounds of each parent. They may find it challenging to answer questions like "Where are you from?" or "What is your cultural identity?" It's crucial to understand that there is no universal solution for how to describe the cultural identity of people from mixed marriages. Their path to understand and embrace their cultural identity is very unique and personal, impacted by a number of different causes. Support from their families, exposure to both cultures, and individual decisions all help to shape their distinctive cultural identity.

Being a product of a mixed marriage is not excessively perplexing. The cultural identity of individuals born into mixed marriages can be highly diverse, influenced by various aspects such as the cultural backgrounds of their parents, the upbringing environment, and their personal encounters. Certain individuals may possess a strong identification with the cultural backgrounds of both their parents and perceive themselves as bicultural or multicultural. They can actively engage in and commemorate the rituals and traditions of both cultures. Evidence from the field suggests that children born to parents of different ethnic backgrounds frequently develop a consciousness of and admiration for diverse cultures. They may have the opportunity to be exposed to other languages, cuisines, cultures, and customs from both sides of their family. Based on feedback from our participants, discussing 'racial disparities' in Malaysia, especially in Sarawak, can give the impression that these persons lack an understanding of the value of variety. A specific participant expressed, "Being born from parents of different ethnic backgrounds, I consider myself extremely fortunate." I had the opportunity to commemorate both Gawai and Chinese New Year in the same household and calendar year. I have relatives on both sides, and that is aesthetically pleasing and emotionally satisfying. Why do people exhibit such a lack of awareness or understanding when it comes to diversity? Furthermore, one participant confidently stated,

"As a product of mixed marriage, my culture is mixed—I am Chinese and Bidayuh. And for me, that's good. I have varieties to choose from." But more importantly, I am a Sarawakian and a Malaysian. My siblings and I grew up speaking both languages and celebrating both cultures. So, it's good, lah!! Another respondent agreed, saying, "My parents are an open-minded couple." I suppose it's because they're well-educated, or perhaps for other reasons, but they consistently believe that two is better than one. Cultural integration is frequently part of the socialization process in many mixed families. Others may choose to integrate aspects of both cultures into their daily lives, creating a unique cultural identity that reflects a fusion of their parents' backgrounds. They may adapt and combine elements from each culture in a way that feels most authentic to them. However, some individuals may feel a stronger connection to one parent's

culture than the other, leading them to primarily identify with that culture. Factors such as upbringing, exposure, and personal interests can influence this preference.

The diverse range of cultural experiences can provide a unique perspective from which to observe the world. Individuals with diverse ethnic backgrounds may possess enhanced abilities to overcome cultural barriers and possess a deeper understanding of nuanced cultural distinctions. Many children of mixed marriages have access to a wide range of cultural holidays and events, which may be both educational and enjoyable. Language plays a crucial role in shaping both culture and identity. Certain individuals possess the ability to communicate in multiple languages, including those spoken by their parents, while others may only be proficient in one language to the extent of comprehending another. Certain individuals may actively engage in investigating and researching the diverse cultural origins they possess in order to gain a deeper understanding of both aspects of their heritage.

## CONCLUSION

When collecting data in the field, the researcher identified three prominent identification theories. Those concepts are primordialism, instrumentalism, and symbolic interactionism. Primordialism suggests that an individual's innate features and emotions strongly influence the formation of social identities such as ethnicity, nationality, or religion. Individuals inherently and instinctively develop deep connections to their specific social groups as a result of common historical events, cultural legacy, and biological influences. Primordialism suggests that these identities are inherent, old, and resistant to alteration. Fenton (2010) states that anthropologists who adopt a primordialist approach, like Geertz, are not referring to biological connections but rather to social connections. Fenton (2010) argues that a distorted representation of 'primordial' attachments, often used as a weak argument, has rendered the debate unproductive. Gryboski (2016, p. 84) also supports this viewpoint. The significance of this point remains unrecognized or unclear. However, during the process of gathering data, around five participants expressed that, despite having parents from different cultural backgrounds, they felt a more profound cultural affinity towards the Bidayuh culture due to their upbringing as Bidayuhs. This was unequivocally exemplified by the respondents' upbringing with a single mother of Bidayuh ethnicity.

According to them, their father left the family when they were merely toddlers. Thus, their close ties to their maternal family shaped their identity. Yet, for one major reason, there were six respondents who vehemently identified with their father side of the family. They do not want to be viewed as the product of an ‘unfathered child’. According to one respondent, “I adore my mother, but I don’t want society to think she had me as a result of an extramarital affair or moonlighting with my father." In this sense, members' perceptions of society influence their respective cultural identities. Conversely, instrumentalism argues that social identities can be changed and influenced by strategic manipulation. This viewpoint suggests that individuals and groups strategically utilise their identities to attain particular objectives, such as acquiring political influence, economic benefits, or social acknowledgment. Put simply, people can utilise their identities as instruments to promote their own or group objectives. Although it is not evident whether a significant number of respondents deliberately employ their identities to accomplish particular objectives, several responses indicate otherwise.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that both viewpoints are not contradictory, and in numerous instances, a blend of both fundamental and instrumental influences can impact the development of one's identity. Academics frequently discuss the degree to which each viewpoint truly represents the intricacies of identity dynamics. The understanding of identity can be influenced by the unique situation and the identities being studied. The data from the field strongly supports the second option. In addition, the long-standing connections and affiliations between the Badayuh and other ethnic groups have led to the development of symbolic interactionism to some extent. In summary, symbolic interactionism emphasises the ever-changing nature of human interaction and the significance of symbols and meanings in influencing

our perception of ourselves, society, and culture. It has shaped people's comprehension of how individuals traverse social environments and build their sense of self.

Indeed, the results revealed that a significant number of participants in the study held the belief that the most effective method of identification is not aligning oneself with the racial backgrounds of their parents, but rather embracing a 'multiracial' identity. As per one participant:

> Each person has multiple facets to their heritage, which can include things like ethnicity, nationality, religion, language, and more. These different facets contribute to a person's overall identity. However, in different situations, certain aspects of their heritage might become more prominent or important to them.

Factors such as personal experiences, relationships, the environment, and societal expectations can influence this emphasis on different parts of heritage. It's a way for individuals to navigate their identity in a complex and diverse world, adapting to various situations while staying true to their authentic selves. For example, this respondent states that because of his light skin complexion, people often identify him as Chinese. Although he does not consider this to be a problem, it does become an issue when he makes claims to inheritance such as belonging to a "native land." In such a matter, he identified himself as Bidayuh.

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**Journal of Borneo-Kalimantan**

# Assessing the Influence of Computational Thinking Technique on STEM Based and Non-STEM Based Subjects in Sarawak Schools

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## ABSTRACT

Computational thinking (CT) has gained prominence as an essential skillset in the digital age. This study investigates the influence of integrating CT techniques into both STEM and non-STEM subjects in schools across Sarawak, Malaysia. A mixed methods approach combined surveys of 426 students and 79 teachers with interviews of 5 teachers and 8 students. Results indicate CT integration enhanced problem-solving skills, logical reasoning, and critical thinking. Over 50% of teachers reported improved student performance in STEM and non-STEM subjects with CT techniques. Interviews highlighted benefits like increased engagement, but also challenges faced regarding teacher training, resources, and curriculum integration. Recommendations include focused teacher professional development, ensuring equitable access to technology, tailored curriculum approaches, and cultural sensitivity. This study provides insights into the multifaceted impacts of CT integration in the Sarawak education context. The blended findings underscore the potential of CT to develop relevant 21st century skills, but also highlight the need for systemic support for effective implementation. This research contributes to strategic efforts to nurture computational literacy and harness the power of CT across all subject areas within the region's schools.

*Keywords: Computational Thinking and Computer Science, STEM, Non-STEM, education, integration*

## INTRODUCTION

Starting from 2017, the Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology (FCSIT) at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) officially became the MyDigital Maker Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Center (MYDM), recognized by the Malaysian Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC). Since then, MYDM has been dedicated to improving digital skills, especially in computational thinking (CT) and computer science (CTCS). MYDM's work includes various activities. They offer a special certification program for teachers, organize exciting events focusing on digital creativity, programming, and robotics for students, and act as a hub for Digital Making in East Malaysia's Sarawak region.

From 2017 to 2020, around 309 teachers from 246 different schools took part in MYDM's CTCS Teaching certificate program. These schools included places like SM Sains Kuching, SMK Siburan, SMK Pusa, and many more, covering a wide area from Kuching to Lawas. The program's core is a 40-hour in-person training, followed by two assignments to test teachers' skills in applying CT and

programming. This leads to official recognition of their teaching abilities, aligned with the new ICT Standard Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Schools, which started in 2017 for certain grades.

In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement, the integration of CT techniques into educational contexts has gained prominence as a transformative approach to learning. Computational thinking, as described by Smith (2020) involves a structured problem-solving methodology that draws from algorithmic thinking, pattern recognition, abstraction, and decomposition. Beyond its conventional association with computer science, CT holds the potential to enhance cognitive skills applicable across various domains, whether in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) or non-STEM based subjects. As education evolves to prepare students for the complexities of the digital age, the impact of CT techniques on both STEM-based and non-STEM-based subjects within schools in Sarawak warrants thorough examination. This paper seeks to unravel the multifaceted influence ofCT techniques on learning outcomes, engagement levels, and the broader educational landscape in Sarawak. As the region endeavours to position itself as an educational pioneer, understanding the implications of integrating CT techniques stands as a critical effort in shaping effective pedagogical practices and fostering innovative problem-solving abilities among students.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of CT and computer science (CS) techniques into the education has gained traction in response to the accelerating pace of technological advancement (Wing, 2006). CT involves a structured approach to solving problems, utilizing algorithmic thinking, pattern recognition, abstraction, and decomposition. Beyond the association with computer science itself, CT offers potential benefits for cognitive skill enhancement across diverse domains (Barr & Stephenson, 2011). As the education landscape adapts to the demands of this digital age, investigating the impact of CT techniques on both STEM and non-STEM subjects in Sarawak's schools is necessary. CT skills can be valuable and effective in various contexts and not limited to the scope of programming alone. CT fosters logical reasoning, problem-solving capabilities, and systematic approaches to challenges (Bundy, 2007). Such skills align with the educational goals of critical dan creative thinking skill known as *Kemahiran Berfikir Aras Tinggi* (KBAT) among students. Furthermore, incorporating CT into STEM subjects has shown promise. It promotes inquiry-based learning, enhances students' computational literacy, and encourages deeper understanding of scientific concepts (Resnick et al., 2014). The transdisciplinary nature of CT affords opportunities to bridge STEM disciplines and enhance cross-domain problem-solving.

On the other hand, for the non-STEM subjects that often regarded as distinct from technology also can benefit from CT integration. By engaging students in coding activities, CT can enrich their understanding of non-technical concepts (Grover & Pea, 2013). The "coding to learn" approach facilitates abstraction and decomposition, aiding concept comprehension. CT can also foster engagement among students, as coding projects provide a tangible context for learning. This pedagogical approach aligns with constructivist theories, emphasizing hands-on learning for knowledge construction (Papert, 1980).

Teacher professional development emerges as a crucial factor in successful CT integration. Effective pedagogical implementation requires educators to possess CT skills and understand its potential applications (Voogt et al., 2015). Professional development initiatives, as explored in Smith's (2021) research in the 'Journal of Educational Innovation,' have the potential to equip educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to craft lessons infused with CT, tailored to various subject areas. Moreover, curricular alignment is essential. Collaboration between curriculum maker, policy maker and educators ensure that CT activities harmonize with learning objectives, fostering a coherent educational experience. Assessing the impact of CT integration necessitates appropriate evaluation methods. Performance-based assessments, self-assessment tools, and rubrics designed for problem-solving processes are being explored (Brennan & Resnick, 2012). These evaluative mechanisms are designed to gauge not only students' proficiency in CT but also their capacity to transfer acquired the skills and their broader learning outcomes. Nevertheless, the development of comprehensive assessment

mechanisms capable of encompassing the diverse dimensions inherent to CT remains a daunting challenge.

In the context of Sarawak, where education plays a important role in shaping the region's socio-economic development, integrating CT techniques carries significance. The digital landscape is reshaping societal demands, underscoring the need for students to possess relevant skills. CT integration aligns with Malaysia's national aspirations, propelling Sarawak towards technological advancement and innovation (MyDigital, 2020). Investigating the impact of CT techniques in Sarawak's education system is not only timely but crucial for understanding its potential to reshape learning outcomes and foster future-ready citizens.

In conclusion, the integration of CT techniques into education represents a dynamic response to the evolving technological landscape. CT holds the promise of enhancing cognitive skills, fostering problem-solving abilities, and bridging disciplinary boundaries. By investigating the impact of CT techniques on STEM and non-STEM subjects within Sarawak's schools, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders can gain insights into its transformative potential for education in the region. As Sarawak positions itself as a hub of innovation, understanding the multifaceted implications of CT integration is important in preparing students for the challenges and opportunities of the digital era.

## METHODOLOGY

This research aims to investigate how the integration of CT techniques influences student engagement levels, which encompass their active participation, motivation, and enthusiasm for learning. Additionally, we aim to examine the broader educational landscape in Sarawak, considering factors such as curriculum integration, teacher professional development, equity and inclusion, economic and workforce development, and the engagement of various stakeholders in promoting CT into education. To achieve this, a mixed-methods approach is employed, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. By utilizing a mixed-methods design, this paper comprehensively investigates how CT techniques impact learning outcomes and engagement in Sarawak's education system. Considering this, we have formulated an initial study by conducting a survey involving 426 students and 79 teachers across Sarawak.

This is then followed by in-depth interviews with selected teachers who have agreed to participate. The selection of these teachers is from among the MYDM participants themselves. We also conduct interviews with students chosen by these teachers. Due to limitations in terms of location and time, we agreed to conduct virtual interviews with 5 different teachers and 8 students from selected districts and classes.

## FINDING

The conducted survey revealed that more than half of the teachers indicated that the implementation of CT techniques in both STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and non-STEM subjects effectively contributes to enhancing student performance. This is evidenced by the findings presented in Figure 1.

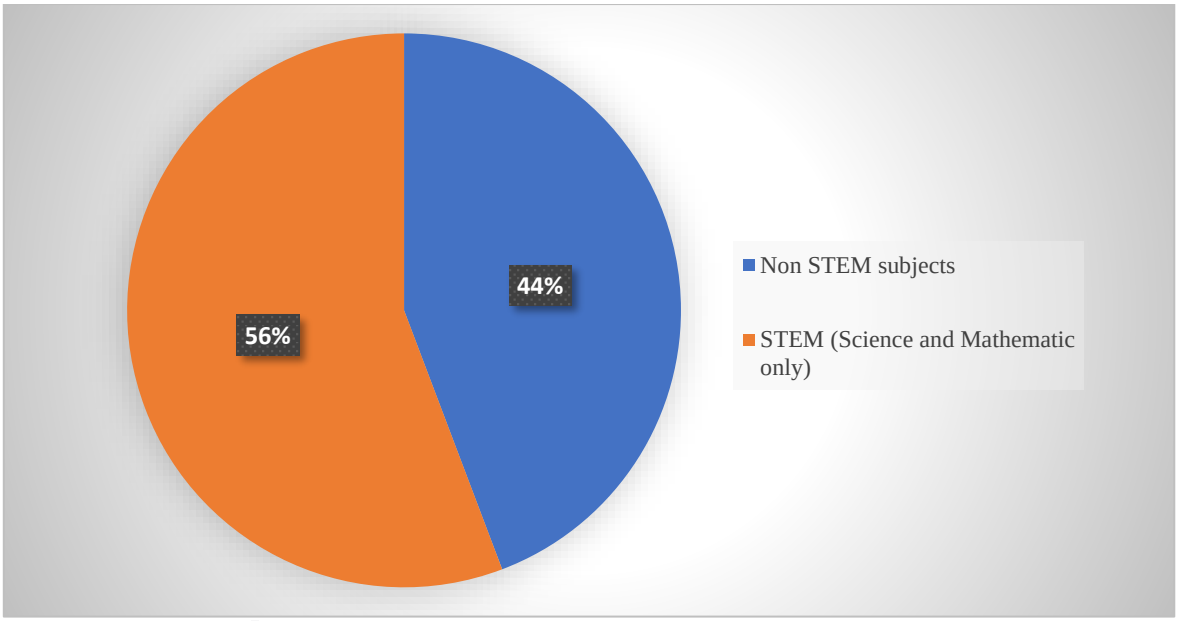


*Figure 1: The total number of students taking STEM and Non-STEM subjects*

These findings are corroborated by the results of our conducted interviews, where teachers affirmed that the implementation of CT techniques leads to an enhancement in students' problem-solving skills and fosters the development of their creative and critical thinking abilities. Teacher 2 expressed, "Allowing them to take initiative with simple instructions aids in their comprehension compared to traditional instructional methods where we simply deliver information, leaving us uncertain about their level of understanding."

Furthermore, teachers emphasized how exposure to CT in both STEM and non-STEM subjects improves students' problem-solving abilities. Teacher 4 emphasized that CT techniques greatly assist teachers in ensuring student comprehension. She continued, "When comparing CT techniques to conventional ones, students often lose interest when presented with lengthy, self-directed tasks. However, if they are guided to collaborate in groups, they can effectively tackle problems through discussions among themselves. I am convinced that CT techniques also contribute to a more precise understanding". This is further substantiated by the results of our survey in Figure 2, which found that 57% of teachers agree that student performance improves with the implementation of CT techniques.

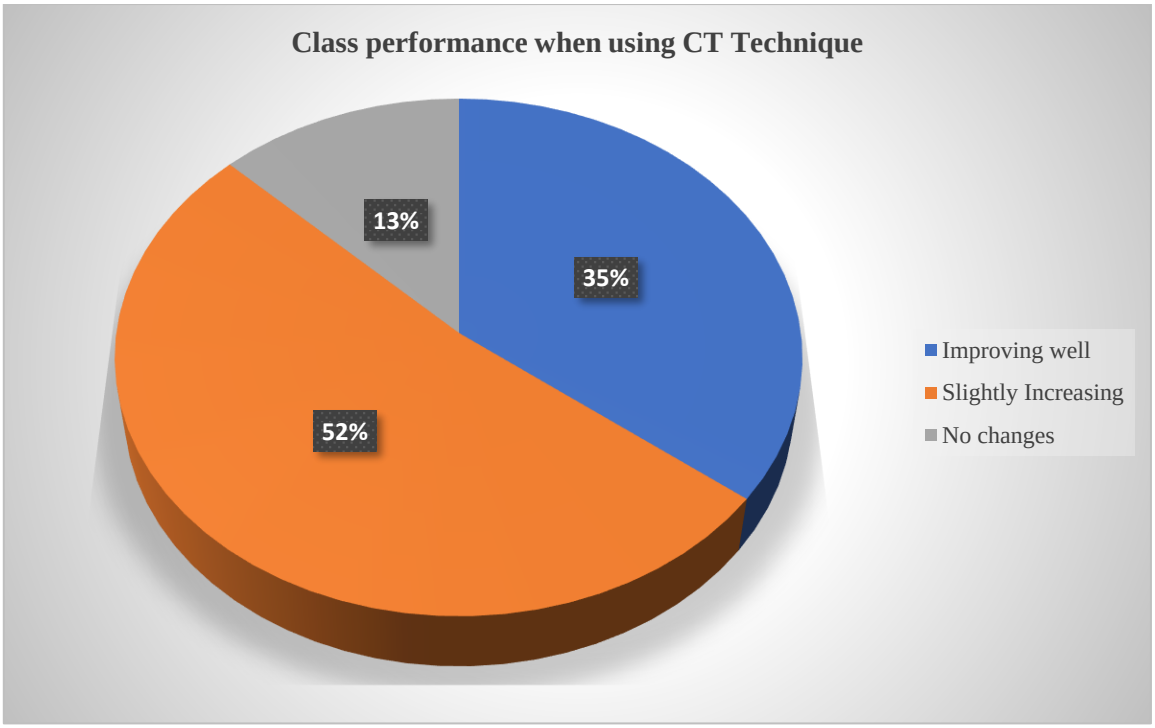


*Figure 2: Class performance when using CT Technique*

Teacher 3 also added, "Students learn a systematic approach to resolving complex problems, analyzing data, and generating effective solutions." All five teachers totally agree on the effectiveness of teaching and learning delivery to students with the integration of CT techniques. They are all in consensus that algorithms represent the most effective and comprehensible technique, regardless of the students' level.

Teacher 1, 2, and 5 support that the utilization of computational techniques results in increased enjoyment of STEM subject learning sessions among students. Conversely, in non-STEM subjects, CT techniques assist teachers in simplifying instructions for their students. Teacher 3 provides an example, stating, "For instance, when teaching Sirah, I guide students to identify key content to make it easier for them to remember and recall important dates in Islamic history." This illustrates how Teacher 3 indirectly employs decomposition techniques in teaching a non-STEM subject, ultimately enhancing student comprehension.

Teacher 4 lends support to the use of CT techniques in Physical Education (PJK), where students not only learn how to independently solve problems but also cultivate leadership skills. Students are empowered to select peers to lead their group, while other members collaborate to successfully complete specific tasks or sports projects.

The merging of CT into the curriculum has demonstrated a significant enhancement in students' creative and critical thinking skills, enabling them to approach intricate problems with innovative solutions. For instance, Teacher 4 emphasizes that employing the algorithm technique results in students becoming more meticulous problem solvers, as seen in sports activities during physical education where they carefully strategize their actions from the outset to secure victory. In addition, Teacher 2 assigned an unplugged task to students, requiring them to collaborate in pairs. This task was designed to deepen their understanding of abstraction techniques, as it necessitated that students grasp essential details before accurately conveying the information their partner had provided.

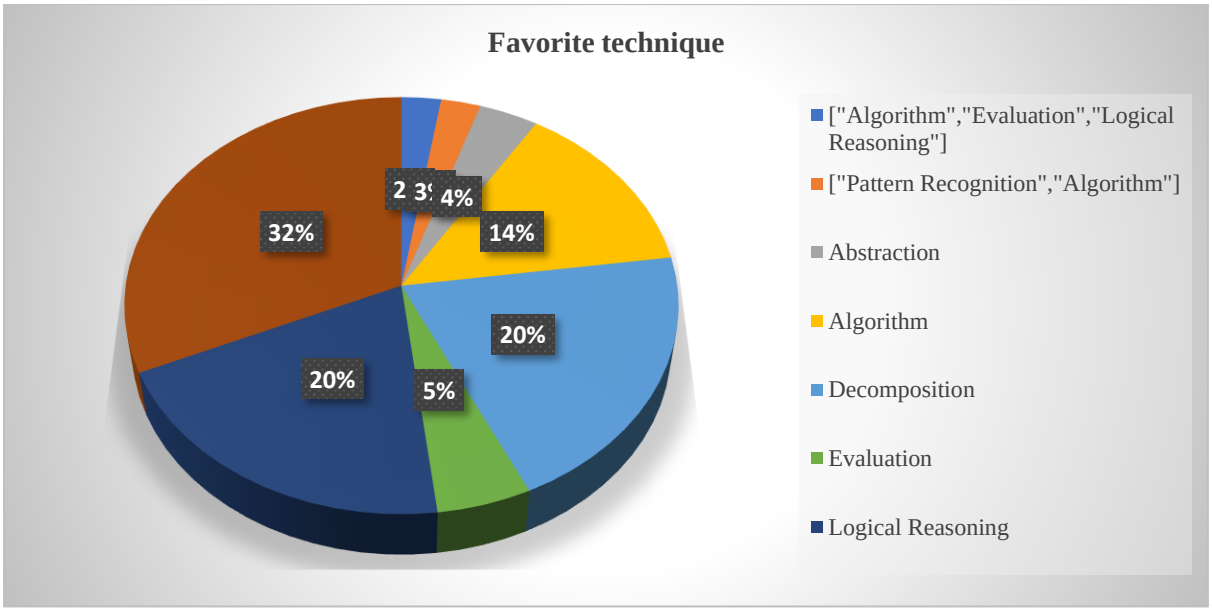


*Figure 3: Most favourite CT technique among the teachers*

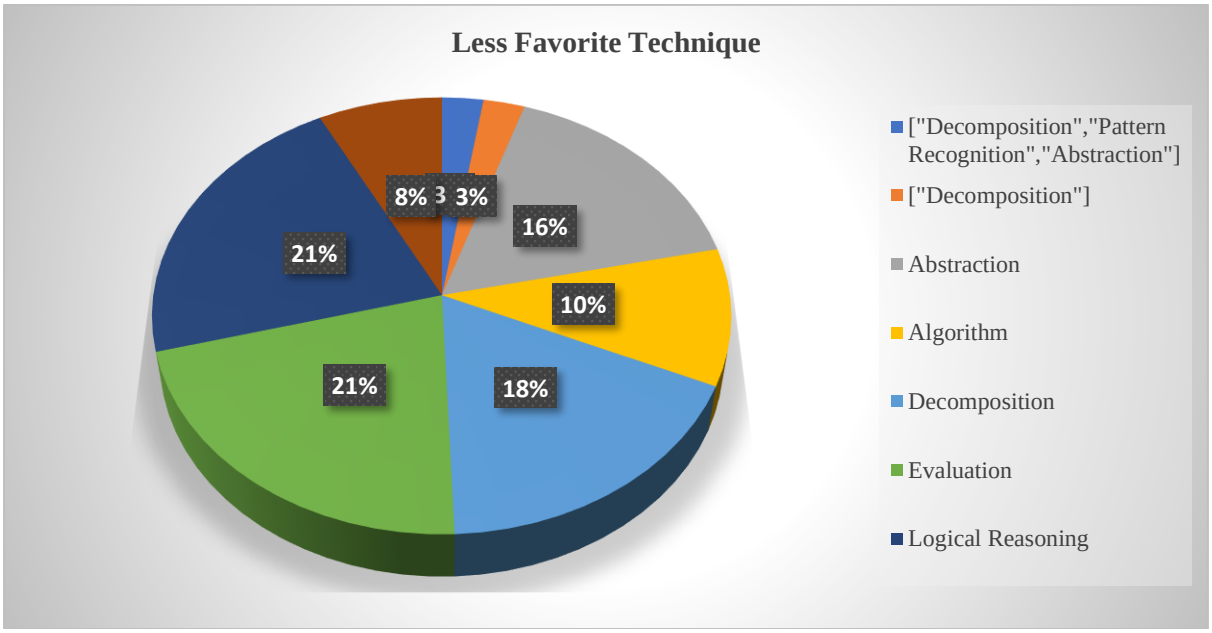


*Figure 4: Less favourite CT technique among the teacher*

Comparing the favoured technique category in Figure 3, it is evident that three options which are pattern recognition, logical reasoning, and decomposition. These three techniques exhibit minor differences and emerge as the favoured choices among the teachers. Notably, 32% of teachers select pattern recognition, while a marginal divergence of 12% is observed among teachers choosing decomposition and logical reasoning, with both accounting for 20% each. In contrast, techniques less favoured in Figure 4 by the teachers see a substantial majority agreeing that evaluation and logical reasoning are the least preferred methods. Although logical reasoning is present in both the favored and less favored technique options, this is attributed to varying groups of teachers. Through interview findings, it becomes evident that a substantial portion of educators share the perspective that the implementation of computational techniques with students is primarily contingent on the individual attributes of the students themselves.

Integrating CT into the existing curriculum poses challenges for some teachers. All of 5 teachers agreed they face difficulties in finding suitable ways to seamlessly incorporate this concept into various

subjects (both STEM and non-STEM). Based on our survey in Figure 5, it was found that teachers believe that CT techniques are easy to apply in STEM subjects. This might be because the perception of the use of the term "computational" itself contributes to the connection with STEM subjects.

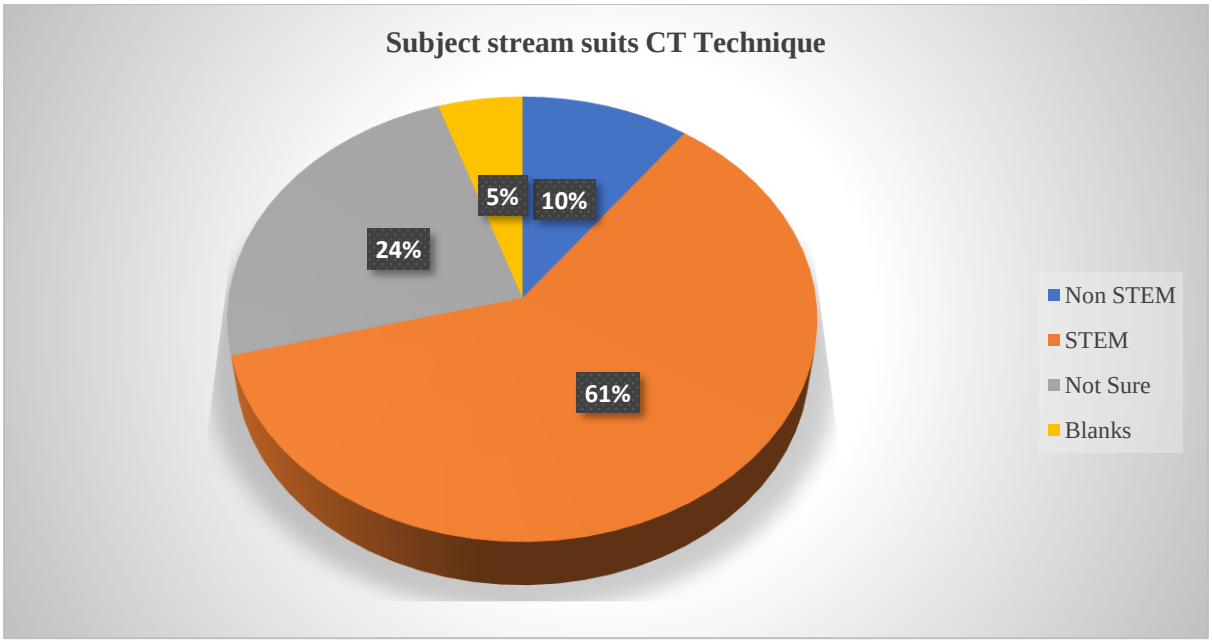


*Figure 5: Subject stream suits CT technique*

However, during interviews, all five teachers agreed that computational techniques are beneficial for teaching both STEM and non-STEM subjects. However, it is not denied that external challenges faced by teachers in implementing this techniques exist due to environmental factors. According to Teacher 1, the problems faced by teachers in rural areas are related to the students' and families' acceptance patterns regarding the importance of the education system. Many families in Teacher 1's area still emphasize non-formal education, which becomes a significant factor in students' struggles to comprehend certain subjects, even when teachers try to apply CT techniques to facilitate understanding. Furthermore, Teacher 1 finds that the primary issue for rural students is their very weak mastery of the 3Ms (*Membaca, Menulis, dan Mengira*). This low level of mastery makes it difficult for teachers to implement CT techniques because most of these techniques often require students to be proficient in problem-solving either individually or in groups. On the other hand, Teacher 3 feels that some students have extremely weak mastery levels and require intervention with conventional teaching methods. Additionally, language barrier is also a big issue for students and teacher to cooperate easily with each other. They must use all their own skills and knowledge by applying the techniques ofCT but without understanding the task given due to language barrier it will be hard for them to know if CT techniques are useful.

Upon analysing the survey results in Figure 2, it becomes evident that a significant majority of educators share the compromise that CT techniques contribute to their instructional methodologies. Moreover, from the interviews further underscore that teachers perceive CT techniques to be exceptionally advantageous for pedagogical approaches across both STEM and non-STEM subjects. The teachers express that CT techniques are highly beneficial, and they hold the hope that these techniques will streamline the teaching and learning process more effectively. Teacher 1 and teacher 2 is a STEM teacher, while Teacher 4 is a non-STEM based teacher. From the perspectives of these educators, the subjects taught through the application of CT techniques can encourage confidence in students and transform the learning experience into an engaging and captivating journey. By immersing of CT technique in class, the student not only exhibited enthusiasm in the learning process, which also showing their proactive approach to pursue deeper towards curriculum. Student 1 was very interested in making and building her own robot that makes her to participated into broad competition along with her partner, student 2. Teacher 1 asserts that with the implementation of CTCS, student involvement is

comprehensive. For example, during group work presentations, every student participates in presenting their work, ensuring that no student is left out. The application of this collaborative approach also has a significant impact on students in rural areas compared to conventional teaching methods (e.g., "chalk and talk"). Teacher 4 also observes cooperation among students in Physical Education. When given individual tasks, students can easily accomplish them. Both Teacher 1 and Teacher 4 agree that student involvement should be comprehensive, and they should not be divided based on their mastery level in the subject. This approach helps students collaborate and assist their peers in understanding the lessons. Teacher 1 further states that active participation, to the point of qualifying students to represent the school, is one of the motivating factors for students. This is achieved through teaching techniques in CTCS that enable students in rural areas to comprehend the production process.

## DISCUSSION

The discussion of this research revolves around the complex balance between the potential benefits of integrating Computational Thinking and Computer Science (CTCS) techniques into education and the challenges that educators face in implementing these techniques. The research findings brighten the multifaceted nature of this issue, shedding light on both the positive outcomes and the obstacles that impact the successful application of CTCS techniques.

The positive aspects emphasize the potential of CTCS techniques to enhance students' problem-solving skills, logical reasoning, and critical thinking abilities. The research reflects the agreement among teachers that exposure to CTCS contributes significantly to students' problem-solving skills. The systematic approach inherent in CTCS equips students with valuable skills in tackling complex problems, data analysis, and deriving effective solutions. These findings align with the broader educational paradigm emphasizing the importance of nurturing adaptable and analytical thinkers in an increasingly digital world. The 21st-century skills framework (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2019) underscores the significance of problem-solving, critical thinking, and technological literacy in preparing students for the future.

This compliance allows CTCS techniques to transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries, challenging the historical association with STEM subjects. Integrating CTCS techniques into non-STEM subjects creates interactive, dynamic learning experiences that promote problem-solving and critical thinking, breaking down silos between different subject areas (Grover & Pea, 2013). The holistic cognitive development observed as a result of this cross-disciplinary application empowers students with skills ranging from data analysis, algorithmic thinking, and computational problem-solving in STEM subjects to creative problem-solving, critical thinking, and logical reasoning in non-STEM subjects, aligning perfectly with the demands of the 21st century (Krumm & Black, 2017).

Moreover, this integration mitigates concerns related to the monotony of learning experiences. By infusing interactive and problem-based learning methods across the curriculum, educators stimulate students' curiosity, motivating them to explore diverse subject areas and instilling a passion for lifelong learning (Vorderstrasse et al., 2017).

However, alongside the promise of Computational Thinking and Computer Science (CTCS) techniques in education, this research brings to the forefront the significant challenges educators face when integrating these methods. One particularly prominent challenge is the insufficient training of teachers in computer science concepts, especially for educators not specializing in this domain. The study underscores the vital role of comprehensive teacher training programs in equipping educators with the necessary knowledge and pedagogical skills to effectively incorporate CTCS techniques into their teaching practices (Dennen, 2019).

Furthermore, the research underscores the critical importance of equitable access to technological resources. The limitations in technological infrastructure, often leading to disparities in resource availability, hinder the seamless application of CTCS techniques in various educational settings. To fully harness the potential of these methods and ensure a level playing field, investments in

technological infrastructure are deemed essential, allowing all students to access the required tools and resources (Warschauer, 2019).

The language barrier emerges as another significant challenge. The diverse linguistic background of students necessitates innovative strategies to ensure that CTCS techniques are understood and embraced by all learners. Language disparities may slow down students' understanding of concepts and instructions, particularly in regions with multicultural or multilingual student populations (Cummins, 2020) .This highlights the need for culturally sensitive and contextually relevant approaches to ensure effective learning outcomes.

## RECOMMENDATION

Based on the research findings, a comprehensive set of recommendations can be formulated to enhance the effective integration of Computational Thinking and Computer Science (CTCS) techniques into Sarawak's education system. First, there is a pressing need for focused efforts in teacher training and professional development programs, ensuring that educators are well-equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to proficiently implement CTCS techniques in their teaching methodologies.

Furthermore, it is imperative to establish equitable access to technology and digital resources among all students and schools, bridging the digital divide and ensuring that every learner has equal opportunities to engage with CTCS concepts. A tailored approach to curriculum integration should be adopted, accommodating the unique needs and requirements of both STEM and non-STEM subjects, while also considering the developmental stages and capabilities of the students.

Nevertheless, the promotion of collaborative learning environments is paramount, as this not only encourages peer interaction and knowledge-sharing but also aligns with the collaborative problem-solving skills that CTCS techniques aim to cultivate. Deep appreciation of cultural sensitivity and active community engagement should be at the forefront of CTCS implementation efforts, acknowledging local values and perspectives while actively involving the community in shaping the educational landscape. These recommendations collectively form a robust framework for the successful integration of CTCS techniques in Sarawak's education system, fostering a more innovative and inclusive learning environment.

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**Journal of Borneo-Kalimantan**

UNIMAS
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# Colors, Sounds, Rivers: Descriptive Terms and Informational Priority in Hobongan

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## ABSTRACT

In this report on color, other sensory, and navigational descriptors in Hobongan, an Austronesian language spoken by approximately two thousand people on the island of Borneo, I provide the available expressions and note that the expressions are rarely used. The study is theoretically backed by Nexus Theory (Perkins, 2019), a linguistic approach to analyzing elements of language in context. The expressions are thus given analyses within contexts in which they occur in various kinds of narrative discourses: narratives that the Hobongan created orally or in writing, narratives whose content was borrowed but that are now a common part of Hobongan interaction through narrative, and narratives that have been translated. The three types of narratives reveal uses of color and other descriptive information. Color expressions are rarely used in any type of narrative, but other descriptive information occurs more frequently, including information about locational and navigational information. These patterns of description correlate with the predominantly oral nature of Hobongan at this time (Ong, 2003) and with the use of locational and navigational information to organize narrative discourses (Perkins, 2017). I therefore hypothesize that descriptive expressions, including color expressions, can be indicators of linguistic-cultural priorities.

## INTRODUCTION

The Hobongan are a group of approximately two thousand people on the island of Borneo, mostly in the Indonesian province of Kalimantan Barat. The Hobongan have traditionally used oral narratives to speak about their experiences and have been engaging in a translation task for several decades, and they have recently begun to write narratives, as well. In their narrative discourses, they use descriptive information in ways that correlate closely with their predominantly oral culture and with their known discourse-informational priorities of organizing narratives through spatial information (locational and navigational). Descriptors provide a glimpse of Hobongan informational priorities through the differences between availability of expressions and commonness of use of those expressions.

## METHOD AND APPROACHES

### *Community-Based Language Research*

This report is based on ongoing field research that I am conducting among the Hobongan, during field visits made in 2012-2015, and 2019. When conducting field research, I use the principles of Community-Based Language Research (Czaykowska-Higgins 2009). According to the principles of CBLR, linguistic research is conducted on a language, in this case Hobongan; for a language community: some benefit must accrue to the community, such as assistance with materials needed to gain minority rights, and more specifically to some of the narratives used for this study, the encouragement to write down their narratives

for their own uses; with a language community: the linguist is an active participant, not an external observer (Dimendaal, 2001); and by the language community, with the linguist facilitating: the Hobongan speakers are the experts on their language, and they determine how their language and language materials are used.[1] Active participation affords a great deal of material that is not stereotypically associated with linguistic research but that is important to the Hobongan for various reasons.

***Nexus Theory***

In order to be responsible and as thorough as possible with a language description, the linguist has to make decisions about what to do with the kinds of information that arise through active participation. Traditionally, a great deal of contextual information is eliminated during the process of creating linguistic descriptions, with sound systems, morphology, and syntax being the entire content of language description until relatively recently, when broader categories of information have been more often included, including sociolinguistic information and various exemplars of discourses (see Perkins, 2017, for a comparison). To date, there remains a gap between the theories that are available to work with subsections of linguistic information, such as syntactic theories (e.g., the Minimalist Program, Chomsky, 1995) and phonological theories (e.g., Optimality Theory, Prince and Smolensky, 1993), and the theories that are available to guide language description, such as expansions of subsection theories or Dixon's Basic Linguistic Theory (2010), which addresses the needs of descriptive field linguistics (Dryer, 2006).

To address the gap and systematize my approach, I have begun to work toward such a theory, and I am calling it Nexus Theory to emphasize the importance of intersections between and among various types (e.g., syntax and semantics) and levels of linguistic information (e.g., individual sounds or entire narrative discourses). There are well-known theories and active research being conducted in some of these intersections, such as the syntax-semantics interface, but there remains no systematic approach that addresses additional intersections, as well as the relationships between these intersections and the approaches that linguists take when conducting field research (such as CBLR). Because this theory has only been addressed in an invited talk (Perkins, 2019), I include a brief outline of the approach here. In general, the approach needs to work between a theory of linguistic description and more specific theoretical approaches to more specific sub-areas of linguistics. It needs to work cross-linguistically in order to address phenomena that might be rare but available and in order to facilitate relevant cross-linguistic comparisons. It needs to include various kinds of linguistic context, including social context, language-in-use, and other intra-language phenomena. It cannot background or underestimate oral language because many of the languages that have yet to be described remain primarily oral. It needs to account for different purposes, rather than assuming or presuming shared purposes.

The approach has a great deal in common with other major approaches to discourse analysis and linguistic pragmatics, because discourse and linguistic pragmatics, by their nature, incorporate much of

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[1]I wish to thank all of the Hobongan who have participated in my linguistic research. They have been generous with their time and expertise and have answered many questions and introduced many more. They are ideal linguistic partners. They have given consent for the use of the material that have have provided for written analyses, but they reserve the right to present themselves in images. For those who are interested, the following is a link to content that they made available via a government program to document minority populations. Although most of the clothing is traditional for ceremonies, the song was composed and written for this video and is about modern ideas; the dances are also traditional, but traditionally performed only by women. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7X1gVMxNqT8. Link active as of January, 2022. I would also like to thank Rachel Searcy, a missionary and friend who works among the Hobongan to facilitate a translation of the Bible. She has provided access to her language materials, including sections of completed translation, and many other types of support during my field visits. Her cultural and language expertise have been indispensable.

the contextual information that Nexus Theory requires. However, many theories of discourse assume shared intentions, the linguistic equivalent of the literary- theoretical Intentional Fallacy (Wimsatt and Beardsley, 1946), such as cooperation (Grice 1975, 1978, 1989; Levinson 1983; Evans 2015); relevance (Sperber and Wilson 2002); constructing rationality (Habermas 1981/1984, 1981/1987); face management (Culpeper 2011). Any of these purposes can occur and be prioritized by various languages or language users, but the purpose must be part of the information to be described, in order to be relevant cross-linguistically and to account for varying purposes within languages. Other theories provide labels that background the analytical work that needs to be done in order to apply labels (e.g., Halliday 2014). Or theories make assumptions that are already known not to apply cross-linguistically, for instance, Longacre 1968, and Labov and Waletzky 1967, both of which treat narrative as temporal sequence or personal orientation, respectively, and therefore fail to be relevant to Hobongan, which prioritizes navigational information to organize narrative and other types of discourses.

Avoiding the difficulties that have been noted points toward some options for moving forward, including examining what unit of language is the most basic in language. For the purposes of Nexus Theory, I take discourses to be the fundamental units, rather than sentences, which is traditional in linguistics. Using larger units of language as fundamental is becoming more available in the field, however, with Pascual (2014) using conversational turns as fundamental. Again, however, what counts as a fundamental unit needs to be part of the description, rather than an assumption, and what counts as a discourse can vary, and does vary, across languages. In Nexus Theory, a unit of language is taken to be a discourse if native speakers of a language accept a unit of language as a discourse, and vice versa. Within those units of language, information is the understood content of a concept, again defined within a language and according to what is acceptable to or provided by native speakers. Part of the goal of Nexus Theory is to generate linguistic descriptions that native speakers would recognize as being about the language that they speak.

Nexus Theory makes two main theoretical claims. The first is that there are two main types of information that can be compared and contrasted, with results described: information that is provided directly via the words, sounds, and structures that are used; and information that is provided indirectly in order to maintain coherence and cohesion but that is not stated or written. The kinds of information that needs to be stated or inferred can vary cross-linguistically and again must be part of the language description. Another claim is that, in narrative contexts, as are common in oral languages, a narrative discourse must include temporal, spatial, character, and causal information, broadly defined as required in the language being examined and ranked according to linguistic and cultural principles available in the language under consideration. Narrative discourses that lack one or more of the types of information can be taken to be either defective examples of narrative discourses or not narrative discourses at all. Maintaining focus on language-specific approaches to the units of the language and the information that those units provide can make cross-linguistic comparisons difficult because different languages manage information differently. However, with the information and patterns being described, linguists can compare and contrast what language speakers are actually doing, rather than assuming that cooperation or relevance, for example, look the same across the world's languages or are used the same ways across languages and speakers.

Some research questions that Nexus Theory relies on are as follows: What makes this (for some value of 'this') make sense?; What information, stated or implied, is required to in order to make this make sense?; How is the required information used by native speakers, by scholars, by others, to make this make sense?; In what ways do different uses by different speakers affect the senses assigned or argued for? In conducting a Nexus Theory-based examination of a language or aspect of language, the researcher begins with units of discourse that are accepted as such by the native speakers, and subunits of the language are delineated and analyzed based on their uses within discourses. As an example, in Hobongan, a unit of language is a discourse if it includes information about location and navigation, even

if the discourse is otherwise topically not related to spatial information, such as in philosophical discourses. Sentence divisions within these discourses can be tricky to analyze, and different speakers/writers divide sentences differently. Nevertheless, each sentence contains a subject and at least an implied verb. Hobongan speakers mostly agree on what morphological elements are free or bound, with some variation for terms invented on an ad hoc basis. They largely agree about the phonemes of their language, with a few complications with regard to r/d/l. They also understand how interaction plays into the construction of an oral discourse and the ways in which aspects of their sound system, for example, can play into making a discourse more or less interesting to an audience. They cannot always provide a how-to guide for making discourse better/worse by their own standards, but they consistently recognize better and worse discourses and can correct perceived problems in worse discourses, which makes the elements that they are recognizing available to observers. Examination of information available within discourses continues across subsections of linguistic information as needed to account for the variations that the language allows according to acceptance by native speakers.

### *Hobongan Language and Culture*

Hobongan is a relatively small minority language, spoken by a couple of thousand people. The language is currently stable, being spoken by the three generations of people recognized by the Hobongan (children, people with children, and people who have grandchildren). It is an Austronesian language, of the Müller-Schwaner Punan group (Hammerström, et al. 2021; Lewis et al. 2021[2]). The Hobongan live in five main villages along the upper Kapuas River, which is in Kalimantan Barat, and there are smaller groups and individuals who live outside of those villages and who sometimes cross into Kalimantan Timor. Many Hobongan continue to be primarily hunter-gatherers and semi-nomadic, engaging in cultivation of rice and some gardening, and sources of protein and additional vegetables being collected in the forest. There is minimal education available in Hobongan, a religion course developed by the missionary being the exception. Education is otherwise in the majority language of Bahasa Indonesian. Only kindergarten through sixth grade are available in a few villages. If people desire additional education, they must travel into the town of Putussibau. Access to electricity and cellular telephones is increasing the Hobongan's access to the majority language and culture of Indonesia, as well as with other languages and cultures beyond Indonesia.

Typologically, Hobongan is exceptional mainly in regard to information in discourse, in which Hobongan emphasizes spatial information, specifically information regarding locations and navigations over information about characters or temporal information such as duration or sequence. Syntactically, the language is predominantly SVO, with adjectival verbs. Morphologically, the language is predominantly analytic. Phonemically, Hobongan has five main vowels that can be lengthened or combined in almost any combination and has seventeen phonemic consonants that are distributed by place and manner of articulation in typologically expected ways.

## SCOPE AND LIMITATION

In this report, I have attempted to be thorough with the available and relevant descriptive inventory in the language. However, I have not been comprehensive, and determining what counts as 'descriptive' in a language can present some difficulties. Hobongan has two main ways to instantiate descriptors: verbal descriptors, which means that information that would be conveyed by adjectives in, for example, English,

[2]In the typological catalogues that are available from Ethonologue and Glottolog, the official language abbreviation is HOV, rather than the expected HOB. The phonemic 'b', which is phonetically realized as a bilabial fricative when spoken intervocalically, was miscategorized during an initial language survey in the 1960s, and efforts to correct the error have not been successful. Glottolog has begun referring to the language as 'Hobongan' rather than 'Hovongan', although the abbreviation remains 'hovo'.

is presented by verbs in Hobongan ('to-be-green', rather than 'green'); and serial nouns, in which the noun or nouns that function as descriptors follow the noun being described.

| Ho | kobo | ture | ho | mongala | iq | moq | mongala | darom. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3rd.sg | die | because | 3rd.sg | very | to-be-small | and | very | to-be-cold |

1. Verbal Descriptors (from Tikun)
'Because she died, she was very shrunken and very cold.'

2. Serial Noun Descriptors (from Kejadian: Genesis 8:21)

| Porajo | Yahue | a | moq | maraq | bun | pua | na |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Then | Jehovah | CONJ | and | smell(V) | smell(N) | sacrifice | EMPH |

| tonutung | moq | ho | sajaq | pahajoq | sangan | Anya. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| to-be-burned | and | 3rd.sg | EMPH | comfort | throat | 3rd.sg |

'Then God smelled the scent of the burnt sacrifice and He was very pleased with it.'[3]

It is possible to think of any noun or nominal as a descriptor, but I have attempted to avoid expanding the category of descriptors to include all nouns, in order to continue to be thorough while keeping the scope of the project doable within the length of an essay. However, in a few instances, such as olfaction, sensory descriptors only exist as serial nouns, and in those cases, I have made an exception in order to be thorough with the semantic domain under investigation. Verbal descriptors are a relatively common phenomenon in the world's languages, including in widely spoken languages such as Mandarin. Despite being readily available, when presenting a report in English about descriptors in a verbal-descriptor language, decisions must be made about which verbs are more adjectival and which verbs are more verbal. I have chosen to work between syntax and semantics. Verbal descriptors are such if they function as verbs syntactically and contain semantic information that is primarily descriptive. For some terms, the semantic content requires a judgment call, with descriptive information being available in but secondary to verbal information. This kind of flux between and around semantic content in the lexicon and syntactic instantiation is typical of many Austronesian languages. Theoretical work continues, and there are many ways to address these fluctuations. For the purposes of this analysis, and following Sawaki (2016), I assume that lexical items as elements of a cognitive lexicon are not strictly any lexical category until they are instantiated in use, at which point, the syntactic rules of the language determine their lexical categories

***Narratives Included***

Analyses in this report are based on four narrative discourses, or collections of narrative discourses. The material was selected to provide an overview of what is available in the language: selections that are initially oral or written, Hobongan or translation or borrowing, recent or older. All of the texts were provided by native speakers of Hobongan through various processes. The first collection of narratives ("Tikun" (Stories)) was written by Hobongan high school students. They had learned to read in Hobongan

[3]EMPH (emphatic) markers direct attention to the syntactic unit that follows the marker.

and to read and write in Bahasa Indonesian, and the written narratives were elicited during a 2019 recent field visit in order to collect written materials to describe Hobongan writing before they were given a variety of prescriptive rules for how to write their language. Each student contributed several narratives. The narratives were collected and published and given to the students, who have shared their work with family and friends. The collection is also now used for literacy training among the Hobongan. The collection contains 7,395 words. The second narrative ("Lelang") is a single oral narrative collected by missionaries in the 1980s, from a speaker who was elderly at the time. The language in this narrative is among the diachronically oldest available in Hobongan. It is a narrative about travel and is relatively long for a transcribed narrative at 1,817 words.

The third is a collection of narratives about "Hamun Hamang" (Hamang's Father), a stereotypically stupid main character who takes figurative expressions literally. The content of these stories was borrowed, the Hobongan lacking fiction of their own (Perkins, 2019), but the stories have become popular, and many people tell and retell the stories, making amendments as they prefer for their audiences. Some of the Hamun Hamang stories have been collected and printed, and are now used in literacy training in Hobongan. The collection contains 1,541 words. The fourth narrative discourse is the translation of Genesis ("Kejadian"), completed by a Hobongan committee that works on translation with the missionary. Genesis was likely a collection of oral narratives that were later written down (Niditch, 1996), now translated from a written form by a group of primarily oral individuals into written form. The text is by far the longest at 67,466 words.

## DESCRIPTIVE EXPRESSIONS IN NARRATIVE DISCOURSES

In this section, I present the descriptive terms that provide information about various sensory experiences. Color terms are perhaps primarily visual, although one might imagine that a person who is blind could be able to distinguish via palpation between darker/lighter colors on a sunny day because the different colors would absorb different amounts of solar radiation, resulting in temperature differences. There are visual terms beyond colors, of course, many of which are included here. I also include descriptors for other sensory information, including proprioception.

### Color and Other Visual Descriptors

#### *Colors and Patterns*

Taking Berlin and Kay (1969) as a starting point for determining what is a basic color term in the language, it appears that Hobongan might have been a language that initially had a word for relatively darker colors and a word for relatively lighter colors: cora-ora and nyahang, respectively. Hobongan speakers have been in contact with other groups over the centuries, possibly millennia, and have acquired terms from other languages. Unfortunately, records do not exist for the Hobongan past, but some inferences about acquiring color terms are possible given other evidence: the additional colors terms look like acquisitions in part because the patterns in the acquisitions do not fit any particular typological pattern for color terms and in part because some of these words are close cognates with other color terms in languages in the region.

There are more specific color terms at this point: *moqotom* (black); *pute* (white); *mosiq* (red: also includes irritation or inflammation, such as chapped or sunburned skin); *ijo* (blue/green/purple); *tobori* (red/orange); *lihining* (clear). Note the lack of a term specifically to designate yellow. There are terms for yellow flowers and fruits that can be extended as needed, but at this point, those items are used in ad hoc instances rather than generally across the observable color category. *Lihining* (clear) is a non-canonical color term, but it appears to be making the leap from its original use to describe water quality (as opposed to *koot*, muddy) to refer more broadly to some pastel colors in the blue/green family, such as the color of

some non-Hobongan's eyes. At this point, it is the preferred term to describe blue or grey eyes, not *ijo*, which refers to deeper and darker hues. *Lihining* can still describe clear water and transparent objects, so it is not a Berlin-and-Kay color, but it does contribute both to the description of the language as it is currently used and to the literature critiquing some of Berlin-and-Kay's underlying assumptions about patterns (e.g., Levinson, 2000, for the Yeli Dnye language spoken on New Guinea). In the texts, color terms are rarely used. In Tikun, *ijo* appears once, and *tobori* appears once. In Lelang and Hamun Hamang, there are no instances of color terms. In Kejadian, there are 11 instances of color terms: *pute* (2), *tobori* (8), *tobori-bori* (1; the reduplication in this instance is a way to intensify the descriptor: "very red"). It should be noted that this greater use of color terms is necessitated mostly by the narratives about Esau, who is repeatedly described as "red" in the English sources used for the translation.

*Lihining* does appear three times in Kejadian, but not as a color term as such. In two cases, the term appears to refer to a transparent object, and in another, there is a metaphorical use referring to someone's speech. Whether the Hobongan would interpret transparency as a color option in the two instances available in that text is an area for future research. Hobongan has additional descriptors that apply to visual information, including to information that is (mostly) visual, such as patterns: *pak* (describes blocks of color), *burit*, (speckled, as of a chicken), *peat* (speckled, as of a chicken; I am unsure of the distinction between *burit* and *peat*), *teret* (striped or lined), *bocangkulak* (wavy, of a design), *bopak-pak* (splotchy), *pahabong* (striped like a rainbow). In the narrative discourses used for analysis and comparison, *teret* occurs 14 times in Kejadian (describing Joseph's coat of many colors), and *pak* occurs once in Tikun. The pattern descriptors do not appear in Lelang or Hamun Hamang. For frequency of occurrence, the patterns terms also behave like color terms, occurring infrequently or not at all in Hobongan-originating narrative discourses, and being used more frequently when necessary to accommodate the differing informational priorities of a translated narrative discourse.

There are also some questions as to why Joseph's coat of many colors might have received *teret* (striped) as the preferred descriptor. It is possible that some of the other pattern descriptors remain limited in use to chickens, for example, but it is also possible that the missionary working with the Hobongan could have nudged them in the *teret* direction: most images of Joseph's coat in North American Christianity portray the cloak as striped (a quick Google image search for "Joseph's coat of many colors bible" resulted in 12/162 unique images being entirely striped; to be generous, I included designs that were not entirely striped as being other designs). The portrayal of Joseph's cloak as striped is therefore strongly available in North American Christianity, and that translation could have resulted from that availability, rather than from the text itself, which emphasizes the many colors more than any particular arrangement of the colors. It is also possible that those Hobongan who have been influenced by Bahasa Indonesian Christian materials might have seen striped portrayals of Joseph's cloak, which often follow other majority-style portrayals and interpretations. This remains an area for future research.

These pattern terms behave syntactically like color terms, in that they are verbal descriptors. The Hobongan themselves appear not to distinguish color from pattern in any consistent way. If asked about a chicken's color, for example, felicitous responses can and do include information about the chicken's pattern. In other words, the surface appearance is the surface appearance, and making and using categories for various types of surface appearances is not currently part of the Hobongan interaction with the world.

***Other Visual Information***

Additional visual descriptors exist, but many of them indicate information that can be acquired by palpation, such as descriptors for size, shape, texture, making them possible descriptors in the haptic domain or overlapping between visual and haptic. Determining whether these terms are primarily haptic or visual for Hobongan speakers remains a possibility for future research. For this analysis, I group them

with visual information for convenience and because exclusively haptic terms are rare in Hobongan, making it unlikely that the following terms comprise a category that otherwise is not detailed in Hobongan: *daru* (long horizontally); *iq* (small in general, can be used for quiet sounds); *ngorumit* (small in size); *hiuq* (big in general and can also describe loud sounds); *ngolokepeng* (flat and rectangular); *uso/tuso* (long and thin), *ngorosopukoi* (long and narrow[4]); *noloco* (oblong); *nyipi* (thin); *nyiq* (fat, of an animal); *nyaqung* (fat, of a person); *cutang* (tall, of a person or tree standing); *dibuq* (short in length or height); *peran* (large); *tami* (narrow, sitting with knees up); *siban* (narrow); *toloe ko* (long and pointy); *tolocong* (long and somewhat narrow); *lokopok* (attractive). Adding all of the additional possible visual descriptors to the analysis does increase the occurrences of visual descriptors in the narratives. Tikun includes *daru* (4), *iq* (6), *hiuq* (3), and *nyaqung* (1), for 14 visual descriptors that are not color terms, 16 with color terms included. Lelang again includes none of the visual descriptors. Hamung Hamang includes *daru* (1), *cutang* (3), *hiuq* (2), and *toloe ko* (1). Kejadian contains the most visual descriptors by instances and by tokens: *daru* (9), *iq* (9), *tuso* (1), *ngorumit* (9), *nyiq* (2), *tolocong* (2), *cutang* (11), *dibuq* (1), *hiuq* (62). Colors are not notably important in Hobongan usage. Visual information is also not often described. Given that Hobongan remains a primarily oral language, transitioning toward more literacy, and that the translation (Kejadian) started out as a collection of oral discourses, it is possible that auditory information is described more frequently.

***Sound Expressions***

Very few sonic descriptors exist in Hobongan. Most terms are used as nouns or transitive verbs. Like many Austronesian languages, Hobongan has some flexibility across lexical categories, with nouns available for use as descriptors. However, in order to compare across categories, I have limited the inventory here to the terms that are specifically used as descriptors: *moqotek* (loud, harsh, of sound); *tomokabep* (crunchy, of a sound); *tokeng* (high-pitched, of a sound). From the visual section, both *iq* (small, quiet), and *hiuq* (big, loud) can be used to describe sounds, not just sizes. In the texts used for this analysis, none of the dedicated sound descriptors occur, and neither of the magnitude terms are applied to sounds.

The paucity of descriptors should not be taken to indicate a lack of interest in auditory phenomena. Instead, auditory information is given in nominal and verbal forms, and Hobongan has a sizable lexical inventory that designates various sounds, including onomatopoeic terms and standardized sounds that people make under certain circumstances, such as *akai* (ouch). Basically, the Hobongan make sounds and name sounds, and they have some verbs to indicate the making of various sounds. Linguistically in Hobongan, sounds are concrete and active phenomena, more than experiences to be described. Reduplication also supports the importance of auditory information in Hobongan. At this point, reduplication is productive in Hobongan only for intensification and for imitating iterative sounds, and the available elements for reduplication are most flexible in the auditory domain and include syllables and continuants, such as *sererererereq* (the sound of something bumping along, with *re* repeated at will to indicate each bump), *totototokan* (an echo, with *to* repeated at will to indicate the number of echoes), and *terrrrr* (the sound of thunder, with the trill extended at will to indicate the duration or volume of the thunder).

***More Sensory Expressions***

In order to compare inventories consistently, I include here some additional sensory descriptors.

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[4]*Ngorosopukoi* and *uso/tuso* appear to be semantically synonymous. There could be some historical distinction in syntax and morphology because Hobongan commonly forms verbs from nouns by nasalizing the initial sound of the noun. The possible noun form for a long-and-thin-thing is no longer in active use, making the morphological possibility a hypothesis only.

***Surfaces (textures)***

Hobongan has a relatively rich inventory of descriptors for textures. These could be thought of as the truly haptic portion of the lexicon, although many textures are also visible: *corihop* (slippery); *mukum* (smooth, dull); *mama* (level/flat, of a brass gong); *nasap* (smooth, of boards); *tokosam* (smooth, of water); *bocangkelok* (wavy); *kuluk* (knotted, of hair); *botojung* (bumpy, lumpy); *rono* (calm/smooth, of water). In this category, there are a couple of descriptor-verbs that are formed morphologically from nouns by replacing the initial consonant with the nasal of the same place of articulation: *ngosop* (rough-hewn, from *kosop*, a rough-hewn thing); *ngololupak* (wavy, from hypothesized form *kololupak,* which I have not encountered in use)

In Hobongan, the texture inventory is often connected with specific materials or objects. There is not just smooth, but smooth wood or water or gong. With descriptors so closely tied to items or materials in the Hobongan world, it would not be surprising if these descriptors were infrequently used in borrowed or translated texts, and that is in fact the case. There is 1 instance of *corihop* in all of Kejadian and no instances of texture descriptors in Hamun Hamang. In Tikun there is one instance of *mama*, and in Lelang, one instance of *nasap*. Even in original Hobongan texts, then, there are not many uses of texture descriptors, but given the relative lengths of the texts involved, there is more description of texture in the Hobongan texts than in borrowed or translated texts.

***Substances (weights/hefts)***

Weights and hefts could also be considered haptic, and to some extent visual, but I have separated them here because of a different dimensionality. Textures are perceivable based on surfaces (roughly two-dimensional), but weights and hefts require a more three-dimensional experience with the items having weight or heft. As with surfaces, substances are often linked to specific materials or things: *bahat* (heavy); *nyiqun* (light in weight); *dahom* (deep, of water); *tohoceng* (very tight); *mohop* (thick, of hair). In the texts, there is one instance of *dahom* in Tikun, no substance-descriptors in Lelang and Hamun Hamang, and five descriptors in Kejadian: two *dahom*, one *bahat*, two *nyiqun*. These kinds of three-dimensional substances appear to parallel one another across the various types of texts, perhaps because of the generic nature of the terms used. Water is crucial to life, and heavy or light objects can be encountered by anyone.

***Scents***

Scents are only described in phrases with the noun *bun* (a smell). In these phrases, the descriptors are nouns and follow the noun that they modify. I have included these terms here because they syntactically modify a noun and because they fit the overall examination of sensory descriptors, but they are quite different from the verbal descriptors that are included elsewhere. There are no verbal descriptors for scents: *bun hango* (smell of smoke); *bun tut* (smell of fart); *bun ukot* (smell of pig). The noun *bun* is used five times in Kejadian, but not co-occurring with the descriptors. There are no instances of the noun in the other texts, and no descriptors for scents in any of the narratives.

***Tastes***

Tastes perform grammatically more like the other parts of the sensory inventory, with verbal descriptors: *loqong* (delicious); *miqilu* (acidic, sour); *moqomi* (sweet); *mi* (sweet, a regional variant); *paqip* (bitter); *comi-omi* (salty). The reduplicated form *comi-omi* is based on the noun for the flavor of salt, *omi*. In Hobongan, the fundamental concept for flavor is about salt, and the term has been extended to cover any flavor or taste, as well. Tastes show up more in Kejadian than do other sensory terms: six instances of *loqong* and one instance of *moqomi*. No tastes appear in the other narratives. Once again, sensory descriptors are not a major component of Hobongan description in use.

***Other***

The items in this category are perhaps not traditionally considered sensory, but I have grouped them here because proprioception is now recognized as a sense, because neurological feelings are body-based, and because these descriptors perform in use as do other sensory descriptors: *jang jangon* (dizzy; lexicalized reduplication from *jangon*: confused); *sopo-po* (exhausted); *nuro* (sleepy).

None of these descriptors are used in the selected narratives.

***Descriptors for Water and Terrain***

Rather than focusing on sensory descriptors, Hobongan has an extensive lexicon of descriptors for river-based terrain, which is important to navigation, the domain that Hobongan narrative discourse is organized around. In general, there appears to be a relative backgrounding of subjective sensory experience and more foregrounding of descriptors for the aspects of the Hobongan world that they focus on linguistically and use on a daily basis: *acaq* (steep); *amap* (gently sloped); *dahom* (deep, of water); *dipa* (to be across river from); *dirin* (narrow, of a creek); *lohaq* (cleared, of trail or land); *moong* (dammed or blocked as of a waterway); *moqoco* (distant); *neqe* (shallow, of river); *ngolaha/ngosaq* (to be bare of trees); *nohucung* (modifier: steep; nominal: waterfall); *nunyung* (of land, to be narrowing between two rivers or creeks); *takang* (receding, of water); *tosulon* (level, of ground or location); *uut* (to be in an upriver direction); *baqen* (to be in a downriver direction); *nogagaq* (to be stuck on a rock or gravel bar, from the nominal form *togagaq*); *poriu* (having islands); *kohot* (of a landslide); *ngulong* (still or quiet, of water); *nocariq* (to be small, of a stream of water; from the nominal form *tocariq*); *koot* (muddy; the semantic contraster with *lihining*, clear).

The descriptors related to navigable areas are used relatively frequently in the selected narrative discourses, except for Lelang, which is the oldest narrative discourse, and the one that was spoken by a fully monolingual, elderly Hobongan speaker. There are few descriptors of any kind in Lelang. In that narrative, there are primarily nominal and verbal lexical items, with all of the usual discourse markers, focal markers, and conjunctions that Hobongan requires. In other words, the style of that narrative discourse is noticeably different from the styles of the other narratives. Whether that is a diachronic phenomenon, an idiolect phenomenon, a sociolinguistic phenomenon, or a mix of factors remains to be explored. The navigational descriptors appear throughout the other narrative discourses. In Tikun, *anon* appears once, *dipa* appears twice, *lohaq* appears ten times, *moqoco* appears twice, *uut* appears three times, and *koot* appears twice, for a total of twenty. That can be compared with sixteen total sensory descriptors in Tikun.

In Hamun Hamang, there are two uses of *lohaq*. That can be compared with seven uses of visual descriptors. Although the Hamun Hamang narratives are now accepted and used and told among the Hobongan, there remain some differences between the ways in which information is prioritized. Because these narratives were borrowed, they are not primarily about navigation, and visual information occurs more frequently. In Kejadian, *dahom* is used twice, *dipa* is used three times, *lohaq* is used 26 times, *moqoco* is used 13 times, *uut* is used seventeen times, and *nogagaq* is used three times, for a total of 64 uses of navigational descriptors. That can be compared with 133 instances of sensory descriptors, the vast majority of which are visual descriptors. Kejadian prioritizes visual information beyond what would be expected in a Hobongan-originating narrative discourse.

## DISCUSSION

In the Hobongan narrative discourses examined, descriptors for the world-of-interaction are more commonly used than descriptors of personal sensory experience. Nevertheless, Hobongan has a culturally relevant set of sensory descriptors, including color terms.

Color terms were important enough, or notable enough in the languages in contact with Hobongan, for the Hobongan to acquire more beyond the two that appear to be original. However, although available, they are not frequently used in Hobongan-originated narratives, but are used more often in a translated set of narratives. I have also suggested that Hobongan is in the process of creating at least one color term via semantic extension: *lihining* (clear), which used to apply primarily to water but can now be used to describe blue or gray eye coloring. *Lihining* as a color term has not yet appeared in written, transcribed, or translated narrative discourses, which is to be expected for a relatively new use.

Other visual descriptors are used relatively more frequently, perhaps because color is a subset of the range of visual information that is available to sensation and perception. Non-visual sensory descriptors are used even less frequently. Of particular note, given that Hobongan remains a primarily oral language, is that there are very few descriptors for sounds, and some of those that exist (*iq*: small; *hiuq*: big) intersect with other possible sensory domains: those two terms in particular could be visual or tactile, and also refer to relatively quiet or loud sounds. In Hobongan, terms to refer to sounds are verbal or nominal, rather than descriptive, making them core items both syntactically and semantically in the Hobongan lexicon and free of many of the fluctuations that affect other types of terms and concepts in the language.

Few taste descriptors are available, with a term referring to salty taste (*omi*) being basic and extended to combine with other terms to refer to other tastes. Hobongan includes ways to describe many of the major recognized tastes, including bitter, tart, and sweet tastes. There might be a reference for umami, but as that is relatively recently recognized taste (in the English-speaking world), and whether or not there is a way to describe that taste is an area for additional research. Smells are unique in the language in that there are no verbal descriptors but only serial nouns to refer to smells. Describing smells therefore requires phrasal constructions, rather than standing on their own as single-term descriptors.

Perhaps expectedly, proprioceptive information is rare both in available descriptors and in use.

## CONCLUSIONS

Use of the available inventory of descriptors in Hobongan aligns with the pragmatics of Hobongan information use and management, in life as well as in narrative discourse. In the oldest narrative in the set used for analysis (Lelang), very little description occurs. Information is organized around navigation and location, which are treated as concrete activities and places. In more recent narrative discourses written by Hobongan speakers (Tikun), description is rare but included, and location and navigation remain the focus, with extensive use of concrete actions and places. In narratives whose content is borrowed (Hamun Hamang), there is little description, but also little focus on location and navigation, marking these discourses and fundamentally different Hobongan-originated narratives. In a translated set of narratives (Kejadian), much more description is included, along with some locational and navigational information that is required for discourses to be discourse. However, the use of visual and taste information marks this set of narratives as significantly different from Hobongan-originating narratives.

The Hobongan-originating narratives aligned in the past and continue to align in current use with certain oral language characteristics, notably that those narratives are close to the Hobongan "lifeworld", as Ong (2003, p. 42) terms it. When people live closely with the world in which they speak and think and interact, description, and the abstraction that description relies on, are less necessary. The most important information is kept concrete and active in the Hobongan-originated narratives, in contrast with the description and abstraction that is more common in a translated set of narratives. Hobongan descriptors are often closely linked with materials or items, such as gongs or chickens. Those kinds of descriptors that are available continue to reinforce closeness to the lifeworld. The materials themselves dictate the descriptors that can be applied, limiting those descriptors' applicability to information from outside the

Hobongan world, such as with the borrowed and translated narratives. In addition, the two Hobongan-originated narratives show what is possibly a shift toward literacy. Lelang was provided by an elderly, monolingual, exclusively oral speaker and includes little description. Tikun was provided by high school students who had learned to read and write in Bahasa Indonesian and who have had significant exposure to Bahasa Indonesian through their schooling. There are more descriptors in Tikun than in Lelang. All of the narratives remain focused on locational and navigational information, but the kinds of metaphorical distance from the lifeworld that literacy, and the literal distance that attendance at schools in town and away from the oral culture, afford are beginning to be evidenced in the narratives that Hobongan writers have produced. Hobongan descriptors provide an overview of where the language is on the orality-literacy cline. They also provide indicators of what information is more significant to them in their interactions with the Hobongan world, and information about what categories are more or less important to their thinking about that world.

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**Journal of Borneo-Kalimantan**

# Parenting on Sexuality by Razitasham Safii

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## INTRODUCTION

This literature work explores into the way parents convey knowledge and guidance on matters of sexuality to their children in a manner that is approachable and aligned with contemporary societal paradigms. The details about sexual and reproductive health among adolescents presented a complex challenge, wherein the dynamic between parents and their children plays a pivotal role in effectively communicating such information, thereby enabling their children to make well-informed decisions. This book authored by Professor Dr. Razitasham Safii, a knowledgeable academic and esteemed expert in public health, particularly in the domain of family health within Sarawak, this book derives from her tenure as a lecturer at the Department of Community Medicine and Public Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Dr. Razitasham's significant contributions to the public health knowledge, specifically relating to family health in the Sarawak region, highlight the complexity of knowledge included in this publication. Comprehensive in its scope, this book precisely addresses variety issues of children's and adolescent's sexual and reproductive health (SRH), delineated across ten chapters that mention various relevant issues. This book functioning as a beacon for parental guidance not only explains effective strategies for addressing contemporary sexual topics with children and teenagers, but also extends actionable insights aimed at safeguarding their child's dignity and self-respect.

In the first chapter, titled "Why Sexuality", the discussion centres on the essential nature of engaging children in conversations about sexuality. Within the modern setting, there persists a prevailing hesitancy among parents to raise this subject matter, considering it is a taboo within familial or societal discourse. The usual predominant perception in the public domain views about "sex" as unsuitable, sensitive, and loaded with controversy, advancing misconceptions and misinterpretations due to its taboo nature. This chapter features the basis that adolescents often navigate their sexual novelty through experiential learning, which characterised by a process of trial and error. Furthermore, this chapter illustrates diverse themes including the anatomical and physiological aspects of male and female reproductive organs, reveals the complexities of sexual and reproductive health, explores the biological process that associated with sexual actions, and anticipates the connection of religion, morality, knowledge, and practices promoting self-respect. Notably, the chapter comprehensively addresses

gender identity, encompassing the roles, personalities, and responsibilities linked to masculinity and femininity. Additionally, an emphasis is placed on clarifying complex challenges concerning adolescent sexuality, particularly prevalent issues like underage rage, teenage pregnancy, occurrence of abandoned babies, the insidious nature of child grooming, and the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV. These societal incidents further compound parental hesitation, prompting a heightened unease regarding the optimal approach to educating their children on matters of sexuality as they navigate the phase of adolescence.

The subsequent chapter within this publication examines into the discourse of "Sexuality at Birth", dedicating its focus to explaining the biological foundations of gender differentiation. This chapter meticulously navigates through the details of biology of the sexes, unravelling the complexities of chromosomes, dispelling antiquated myths prevalent in historical narratives, and explicating the implications arising from abnormalities such as the presence of fewer or additional chromosomes. In essence, this chapter constitutes a detailed description on human biology, offering important insights for parents to equip themselves with fundamental knowledge in guiding their children through the basic of SRH.

The third chapter of this book delves into the sophisticated topic of "Gender Development", placing major importance on the socio-psychological evolution of a child. This section thoroughly examines the behavioural patterns showed by children during their childhood, probing the extent to which gender influences the shaping of their personalities, preferences, and conduct. It analyses the societal constructs surrounding what is deemed normal or unusual in terms of gender-related attributes and actions. Moreover, this chapter illustrates upon the diverse methodologies employed in childbirth, aiming to fill parents with an awareness of the variety of approaches available. This discourse seeks to highlight the intrinsic value and sanctity of each birth, symbolising life itself. Additionally, this chapter distinguished the concepts of sex and gender, explaining that sex describes biological characteristics such as male and female, while gender pertains to a socially constructed belief system dictating attire, acts, and behaves based on their biological attributes. Furthermore, this segment explores into contemporary issues which covers gender dysphoria and matters concerning LGBT which shows an emerging trend that necessitate parental awareness and preparedness in addressing such behavioural tendencies among their children. Therefore, it highlights the necessary measures for parents to acquire such knowledge to facilitate the holistic development of their children, nurturing their mental and physical well-being.

The subsequent chapter outlines "Puberty Changes", explaining the physical and psychological transformations experienced by teenagers during developmental stage. It provides guidance for parents on supporting their adolescent children during puberty. This book serves as a preparatory guide for parents, equipping them to talk to their children's inquiries about puberty in the future. The following chapters give further details about adolescent growth which the first one is "Early Adolescent Sexuality" marks the period of rapid growth between ages 10 to 14, "Middle Adolescent Sexuality", signifies the noticeable physical changes associated with puberty, and "Late Adolescent Sexuality", signifies a phase where children gain autonomy from family control and shaping their self-identity before entering adulthood. Each phase involves diverse strategies for parents in understanding, educating, and nurturing positive SRH information among their children.

In this book, there is a pivotal chapter for parental guidance regarding the education of their adolescent children on matters pertaining to sexuality and comprehensive care of their SRH. This chapter mentioned about the sexual cycle and emphasising to mitigate occurrences of premarital sexual activity. Considering the significance of sex within the context of marriage, sexual activity contributes

to individual's mental and physical wellbeing. This section encompasses the mechanisms underlying the sexual cycle and defines the roles and responsibilities of parents in preventing occurrences of premarital sexual intercourse among adolescents. Moreover, an additional chapter dedicated to "Safe Touch" is a worth mentioning inclusion within this book. This section highlights the cruciality for parents to determine and convey the understanding that every physical interaction involves an emotional sense, distinguishing between what constitutes a positive, nurturing touch and a potentially harmful or inappropriate one.

In summary, this book serves a parental guide in delivering knowledge on sexuality and fostering responsible management of SRH. Its primary purpose is to enhance the dignity of children while empowering them to make informed health decisions for themselves and future generations. The author emphasises the important role of parents in providing sex education, highlighting that this instruction is not just limited to schools but also be effectively conveyed within the family setting, depending upon parents acquired appropriate knowledge. Additionally, community involvement is important in circulating self-care information, particularly concerning sexuality and SRH especially among adolescents. Despite societal taboos surrounding the discussion of sex and sexuality, the book advocates that through education and appropriate communication, a morally and physically-sound future generation can be nurtured.

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**Journal of Borneo-Kalimantan**

# Countering the Western Canon: Other Ways of Knowing About Journalism and Media by Ahmad Murad Merican

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## INTRODUCTION

This book, by itself, is a small proposition to rethink our know-how about Journalism and the Media. It challenges the current knowledge paradigm especially in Malaysian syllabi and schools of journalism, communication, and media studies away from Euro-American perspectives towards local knowledge based on tradition and perennial values, emphasizing upon Islam and Malay cultural norms and settings within Malaysia and to some extent Indonesia. The problem is that the local schools did little to assess present Journalism – as taught and practiced by universities and professionals – and take for granted that it is a modern phenomenon that only began in the 19th century colonial Malaya. As such, Journalism is an import resultant from the modernizing forces made possible by British (and Dutch) printing press nomenclatures and 'standard' practices.

Somehow, this wholesale importation is unexamined and distorted the local's understanding of themselves when the engage in journalism and the media to appeal to the biases of Euro-American views about their 'colonial subjects' and 'colored peoples' views. The locals unassumingly adopted these views to understand socio-political phenomena of their own communities, resulting in journalistic narratives that perpetuate Western-centric views stamped by the locals' own unconscious approval of their own lesser standings in literacy, literary culture, and history of civilization. While there are critiques from within the locals, they are insufficient because they are still within this Western-centric paradigm. By not addressing the sufficiency and legitimacy of local knowledge and primarily asserting theoretical constructs and Western knowledge paradigm, these critiques inevitably created an echo chamber that further strengthened the status-quo Western knowledge and cornered the local narratives. Prof. Murad contended that it is time for local Journalism as knowledge paradigm to expand its project beyond the Western constructs without denying their relevant contributions to construct a local form of sociological and civilizational field of Journalism that begins in syllabus of journalism and media education.

The most critical point this book contends is the absence of questioning how an abstract about the Malay World was formed within Media Studies. The lack of critical analysis about how the Malays view themselves and Others isolates the more general cosmology that does not account finer voices and

reflection beyond accepted 'Media Studies.' Thus, Ahmad Murad introduces some ways to engage in reflecting this ignored dimension by appealing to certain longstanding activities and terms such as pekerjaan kalam, pantun, kaba, and budi, to open worldviews not only of the Malay World, but also from it, so such views could engage in essential philosophies surrounding the Media.

This book can also be viewed as a lengthy process of thought evolution, though not complete and strictly chronological, Ahmad Murad as scholar of intellectual history and Media Studies himself. He is a prolific author who engages in many fields. However, in most of his other titles, he engages in specific topics. For instance, his most recently published The Avatar of 1786: Decolonizing the Penang Story (USM, 2023) specifically discusses about Penang, but not much elaborating on conceptual and thought processes of the author himself; we are left guessing his conceptual standpoint and presumptions based on grounded analyses he made in other book. This book relieves us from that – it quite clearly spells to a good degree the philosophical worldview Ahmad Murad holds, which is Traditionalist and non-Western centric (though not denying its contributions), which sets to question the crisis of modern knowledge based on Sophia perennis, the perennial Wisdom, the relevance of religion (Islam in his particular case), and propagates such Wisdom to be inculcated in Media Studies.

Thus, we are led to a vastly different approach to understand the Media as body of knowledge. Ahmad Murad problematizes a number of well-known definitions such as 'communication' and 'identity' and then re-conceptualizes them to expose the limits of 'institutionalized' definitions of those terms. In Chapter 2: Prophets, Philosophers and Scholars: The Identity of Communication and the Communication of Identity, he interposed these as Personality of Imperialism on the one hand, and image and misrepresentation in another to underscore unexamined Colonial narratives that influence the mindset of visibly de-formed and biased identities of the Colonized subjects (in this case, the Malays) which obscured meaningful exposition of communicative identities based on the notions of bangsa, perjuangan, semangat, Raja and Kerajaan in favor uncritical acceptance of feudal and budaya popular.
The rest of the chapters follow similar rhythm – they are conceptual re-expositions of the media and journalism grounded by specific Malay experiences and exposures. They are not exactly fluid in a sense that one would engage a thematic or plot-based books. It is more fruitful to think them as a collection of reflective and critical thought done over the years providing a quaint Sapiential perspective which in itself rare in studying a heavily structured and institutionalized modern-mainstream media. I find the writings more philosophical than journalistic – these are not easy chapters to digest. This book is not 'an Introduction to Media Studies' as a common undergraduate textbook would have it. It is on one hand an exposition of decolonial perspective, and the other a treatise to re-appraise media and journalistic studies of and about the Malay World as intellectual corpus and civilization. The concepts and definitions – though are 'mundane' terms – are not mechanistically defined to abide by mainstream dictionary definitions and the mediascape.

I only wish this book to be edited further so its flow improves into a more thematic discussion to ease understanding for the unacquainted in media and journalism studies. The ideas are sometimes repetitive and sometimes out of place and disconnected from a particular chapter. This could result in confusion and even reduce the efficacy of arguments raised from each chapter that is supposed to Beautifully support one another in a logic and coherence that could be more easily followed by a general audience, by undergraduate students.

This book is not about the Malays only or Malay-centrism from the viewpoint of cult or political ideology. Rather, this book is about an attempt to expose a media cosmology based on a media cosmology viewed from the experience and knowledge corpuses of the Malay. It is also a surprising and wonderful exposition of Perennial Philosophy in media studies at large by accounting Traditional

perspectives of the Sacred from words and literary cultures of the Malays as reflected in their practices, but somehow obscured by the shadows of modernism even about their own account and self-description in the media.

For Borneo studies, this book is potentially valuable in a number of ways. First, this book carries a conception and definition of Tradition that could bring the relevance of the Sacred to the center of discussion about 'Us' when it comes to imagining the common baseline of Borneo communities. This baseline could be the Sacred that underlies the various Borneo cultures and beliefs. This book, despite referring mostly to Peninsular Malay and Indonesian experiences, exposes the necessary groundwork.

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