

7-1-2015

Potential Conflict between the Malay and the Dayak Ethnic Groups in the Hinterland Region of West Kalimantan

Edlin Dahnia Alfath

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/hubsasia>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#), [Business Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Alfath, E. D. (2015). Potential Conflict between the Malay and the Dayak Ethnic Groups in the Hinterland Region of West Kalimantan. *Makara Human Behavior Studies in Asia*, 19(1), 52-62. <https://doi.org/10.7454/mssh.v19i1.3475>

This Original Research Article is brought to you for free and open access by UI Scholars Hub. It has been accepted for inclusion in Makara Human Behavior Studies in Asia by an authorized editor of UI Scholars Hub.

Potential Conflict between the Malay and the Dayak Ethnic Groups in the Hinterland Region of West Kalimantan

Edlin Dahniar Alfath

Anthropology Studies Program, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Brawijaya, Malang 651415, Indonesia

E-mail: edlin@ub.ac.id

Abstract

This research was conducted in two villages in the hinterland region of West Kalimantan. The two villages are separated only by a small stream, and they are inhabited by two different ethnic groups. Seen from the upstream of the river, the left side of the riverbank is where the Dayak lived, while at the right side of the riverbank is where the Malay ethnic resided. The Malay, as Muslims, led their live according to Islamic teaching, while the Dayak is oblivious to their neighbor's Islamic way of life. This in turn had fostered seeds of tensions with a potential for a conflict in the social relation between the two groups. Fortunately, the potential for conflict has not erupted into an open confrontation between them. The objective of this study is to find out the background issues that breed the potency of conflict between these two ethnic groups, the Malay and the Dayak, and why it never erupted into an open confrontation.

Potensi Konflik antara Kelompok Etnis Melayu dan Dayak di Pedalaman Kalimantan Barat

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilakukan pada dua desa di Pedalaman Kalimantan Barat. Kedua desa tersebut hanya dipisahkan oleh sungai kecil, namun dihuni oleh dua kelompok etnis yang berbeda. Jika dilihat dari arah hulu, sepanjang sisi sungai sebelah kiri dihuni oleh kelompok etnis Dayak, sementara sisi sungai sebelah kanan dihuni oleh kelompok etnis Melayu. Kelompok Melayu hidup dengan cara Islam, dan Dayak tidak mengenal hukum Islam. Hal ini memunculkan ketegangan yang berpotensi konflik dalam hubungan sosial kedua kelompok tersebut. Akan tetapi, potensi konflik tersebut tidak pernah berkembang menjadi konflik terbuka. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui permasalahan apa yang melatarbelakangi kemunculan potensi konflik yang terjadi antara kelompok etnis Melayu dan Dayak, dan mengapa potensi konflik tersebut tidak pernah berkembang menjadi konflik terbuka.

Keywords: ethnicity, gawai adat, identity, social relation

Citation:

Alfath, E.D. (2015). Potential conflict between the Malay and the Dayak ethnic groups in the hinterland region of west Kalimantan. *Makara Hubs-Asia*, 19(1): 52-62. DOI: 10.7454/mssh.v19i1.3475

1. Introduction

The Malay and the Dayak ethnic groups discussed in this study are both residing in the hinterland region of West Kalimantan, precisely in the village of Kuala Rosan, the sub-district of Meliau in the District of Sanggau. For the author, it is quite an interesting phenomenon, since the Malay usually took up residence in the coastal area, yet in this specific region they choose to live in the heartland region, which is

predominated by the Dayak ethnic group. At the village of Kuala Rosan, the Malay and the Dayak live side-by-side separated only by a small stream in between. The Malay who are the follower of Islam, lead their live in accordance with the teaching of Islam, while the Dayak are not bound by Islamic rules since they are either following the Christian faith or their own traditional belief. Considering the circumstance, this study was conducted to learn the potential for conflict between the Malay and the Dayak who live side-by-side with

different ethnic identities and religions. In conducting the research, I, the author start from two key questions (1) What is the background for the social tension that may lead to a conflict between the Malay and the Dayak?; (2) Why such a social tension never erupted into an open conflict between these two ethnic groups?

The conflict discussed in this work was a reflection of the “cooperation and competition” theory, which was first proposed by Morton Deutsch (2006). This theory was founded on two basic ideas, i.e. (1) interdependence (or mutual dependence) of the objectives to be achieved by a specific individual or group; (2) the type of action or activity carried out by that particular individual or group who were involved in a conflict. Interdependence became a positive matter when both concerned parties have similar objectives that correlate one to the other. However, if the opposite occurs, then such interdependence became negative. I would attempt to apply Deutsch’s concept to find out the extent of interdependence in the interaction between the Malay and the Dayak.

With regard to the cause of conflict, Turner (1995: 87) said that a conflict might emerge as a result of dissimilarity in cultural values and beliefs, which could lead into alienation of one person or group to another. From that statement, I took the aspect of dissimilarity in belief as the base assumption for the emergence of potential conflict between the Malay and the Dayak ethnic group. The dissimilarity in belief or faith also applies as a determinant in cultural values, wherein cultural value is perceived as the standard of good and bad, right or wrong, and other standardized qualification within a society. Within the context of this study, the term culture refers to a number of different variables found among the Malay and the Dayak ethnic groups.

How can dissimilarities in ethnicity and belief lead to a potential conflict as suggested by the concept proposed by Stets and Carter (2011) about applying the identity theory in relation to the *moral self*. In the identity theory, Stets and Carter stated that individual action is carried out based on the prevailing values that bind their identity. An individual will control his perception and action to ensure what he is doing does not go beyond the accepted standard of values set by the individual’s identity. In the end, this control system is related to the aspects on cognition, behavior, and emotion found within that individual moral self. Within the context of village of Kuala Rosan, the view on identity theory can be applied in our study to learn about the behaviors of the two ethnic groups, wherein each of them will lead their lives in accordance with the standard set forth by their respective identity, i.e. the identity pertaining to ethnicity and belief.

With regard to the aspect of ethnicity, Barth (1969) perceived an ethnic identity not as something given, it was seen as a result of complex social process, wherein the symbolical boundaries were continuously rebuild by history and experience. This notion is highly suited to study the phenomenon of ethnic identity in Kuala Rosan. How the Malay ethnic could live in hinterland region, the answer was because basically they were of Dayak origin who decided to convert to Islam. When a Dayak converted to Islam and became a Muslim, he will change his ethnic identity to Malay. Not only switching identity, they will also adopt and speak the Malay language.

As for ethnic identity as perceived by the Malay and the Dayak, wherein ethnic identity will adheres to the religion followed by the person, clearly contradicts the view proposed by the proponent of primordial theory that stated an ethnic identity is obtained from bloodline (heredity). Abdillah (2002), one of the well-known proponent theories on primordialism saw ethnicity as something obtained through birth, he said,

“The term ethnic has turned into a predicate pertaining to the identity of a person or a group. A person or a group who became Javanese, Bugis, Sundanese, British, Dutch or African got this predicate not by design. A person cannot refuse to be an African, or a Madurese, Papuan, or Chinese, and he also cannot ask to be a Javanese, a Batak or Malay or any other. The predicate has become something that is taken for granted from the beginning since birth”. (Abdillah, 2002: 75).

Abdillah’s view is also in line with Friedman’s statement about ethnic identity,

“if ‘cultural identity’ as the generic concept, referring to the attribution of a set of qualities to a given population, then we can say that cultural identity is something experienced and carried by the individual, in the blood, so to say, what is commonly known as ethnicity. It is not practiced but inherent, not achieved but ascribed” (Friedman 1994:29).

Contrary to the aforementioned views, both the Malay and the Dayak see ethnic identity as something that they can decide for themselves, not linked to their birth. They can decide whether they want to be a Dayak or Malay according to the religion they followed. This aspect contributes to the study on the theory about conflict between ethnic groups. The view that (within the context of Kalimantan) a person may change or switch his ethnic identity, hence a conflict between

different ethnic groups is not simply the result of dissimilarities of ethnic identities (i.e. hating a certain ethnic group, ethnocentric, or other things). However, back to the view proposed by Deutsch (2006), a conflict may arise as a result of conflicting interest or objectives.

2. Methods

This study was conducted using the ethnographic method to produce a product in the form of ethnographic work. As stated by Murchison (2010), ethnographic is a type of research that allows its researcher to examine and describe socio-cultural aspect of a society through first hand involvement. Previously, Marzali (in Spradley, 2007) defined ethnographic as an account of an ethnic group, written by an anthropologist based on field research that lasted for several months or even years. Secondly, the definition of ethnographic as provided by Murchison and Marzali was manifested in this research, in which the author has studied by living among the subjects of this study for three (3) months from 1st May 2011 to 31st July 2011. Ethnographic method was picked because through this method, the author may obtain a comprehensive picture of how the community leads their lives, by observing their daily activities, and later seeking the links to the issue being examined.

The study was conducted at the hamlet of Kuala Rosan in the village of Kuala Rosan, the sub-district of Meliau in the District of Sanggau, the Province of West Kalimantan. To the author, the condition and position of the Kuala Rosan village was a great interest. Kuala Rosan is a village in the hinterland region populated entirely by people of Malay ethnic. The location of Kuala Rosan village is side-by-side to the village of Lubuk Piling whose population consisted of Dayak Kancing'k. Hence, even though they are living next to each other, their culture could not be more different. This particular aspect has prompted the author to choose the village of Kuala Rosan as the location for this study.

While observing the daily activities of the community, I made a record of all information obtained. However, to get the answers to the research questions, the author picked a number of informants or "original speaker" (Spradley, 1997:35) to conduct in-depth interviews. Some of the key informants used by the author include, among others, traditional or *adat* figures (both from the Malay and the Dayak), religious figures, *tokeh* (trader or merchant who buy certain commodities and resell them, in this case rubber and palm oil), village caretaker or leader, people who are well versed in the history of Kuala Rosan village, and a number of Dayaks who recently became *mualaf* (recent convert to Islam) and their families. In the author's assumption, these are the people with the most capacity to answer the questions related to the themes of this research. The village

caretaker or the village leader knew everything about village governance and politics, the *adat* or traditional figures and the religious figures were familiar with the aspects related to the different tradition and belief followed by the population of these two villages, the *tokeh*, who practically run the economics in the village of Kuala Rosan, and the *mualaf* who realized that by converting to Islam they would be at odd with regard to their identity with the rest of the Dayak population.

Throughout the three months period of research, the author has conducted interviews with members of the communities from both ethnic groups to collect supporting data. These interviews covered topics such as life history, economic status, family and inheritance system, religion and belief, aspects related to ethnicity, and religious observance. The research period, which coincides with the season of *gawai adat* among the Dayak in Lubuk Piling, brought in a certain benefit for the study. The period before and during the season of *gawai adat* is the time when the tension between the two ethnic groups became more apparent. *Gawai adat* is the annual event celebrated by all Dayak communities throughout Kalimantan as an expression of thanks to God for a great harvest.

The author had to deal with a number of obstacles during the research because this research was about the social tension between two ethnic groups. Throughout the research, the author took up residence in the village where the Malay live. That fact created its own problem when the author had to interview the Dayak. Initially they were a bit reluctant to talk about their daily lives, because they were uneasy (or embarrassed) because they thought the author would reveal their secrets to the Malay. In a number of interviews, they never gave the same answers for the same questions. It also happened with the Malay. For that reason, the author tried to verify the answer from one informant to another informant to determine the most appropriate answer to the questions.

3. Results and Discussion

In this paper, I have divided the discussion into four points of discussion, i.e. (1) Malay and Dayak: Religious, Ethnic and Language Identity; (2) *Halal* and *Haram* (allowed and prohibited according to Islam); (3) *Gawai Adat*: Pork Party and *Tuak*, and (4) Malay and Dayak: Minority and Majority. The classification was necessary because the potential for conflict was really apparent in the first three points of discussions. Meanwhile, the last point provided a description of the two ethnic groups in a much wider context, i.e. politics in the hinterland region. It was done that way to review if the potential for conflict appear because of ethnic identity itself (described in the first three points of discussions), or whether there was other objective or

interest to achieve by each group (described in the last points of discussions).

Malay and dayak: religious, ethnic and language identity. The study involved two groups with different ethnic identities, namely the Malay and the Dayak. Lontaan (1975), Alqadrie (1990) and Purana (2007) said that the Dayak is the indigenous people of Borneo (Kalimantan). However, currently, the Dayak is not the only ethnic group living in Kalimantan. Current composition of ethnic groups living in West Kalimantan according to Florus (in Setiadi, 2006: 180) consisted of Dayak 41%, Malay 39.57%, Chinese 11.33% and other ethnics 8.10%.

As the two most predominant ethnic groups in West Kalimantan, the Malay and the Dayak, each has their own culture, which differs from the other. The Malay is predominantly living in the coastal regions and lives according to coastal culture, while the Dayak mainly reside in the hinterland region and follow a forest culture. The most obvious difference is about the religion they follow. The Malay is Muslim and the Dayak are following religion other than Islam, including Christian, Catholic and animism.

In this study, the ethnic dissimilarity between the Malay and the Dayak already has its clear demarcation line, physically and culturally. Physically, the village of Kuala Rosan and the village of Lubuk Piling, which are the subject of this study is only separated by a river about eight meters wide and connected by a wooden bridge. Seen from the upstream of the river, the population of Kuala Rosan village would be using the right side of the riverbank to carry out their daily activities, while the population of Lubuk Piling village would be using the left side of the riverbank. Despite the close proximity, the population of the two villages could not be more different culturally; their language, religion and way of life are different. The village of Kuala Rosan is populated by the Malay who follows the Islamic teaching and way of life, while the village of Lubuk Piling is populated by the Dayak who do not follow the rules of Islam; they lead their live in accordance with the customs and traditions of their forefathers.

The Malay in Kuala Rosan is actually Dayak who had converted to Islam and moved to Kuala Rosan. During the research, I met four *mualaf* (people who just converted to Islam) families. The four *mualaf* said that they decided to convert to Islam because they wanted to marry Malay women. They had to convert to Islam, since Islam strictly prohibits a woman to marry a man who is not a Muslim. As for the term *mualaf*, it will stay on the Dayak who became Malay. This is done to differentiate somebody who is a Malay since birth and somebody who used to be a Dayak.

When a Dayak converted to Islam, his ethnic identity as a Dayak will be transformed into a Malay. The transformation is not limited to self-identification; it goes even further to cover behavior patterns and way of life. In their view, ethnic identity is linked to behavior patterns, especially certain behaviors that are governed by religious rules. Becoming a Malay means becoming a Muslim, and it means having a different set of rules to follow than the Dayak who are not Muslim.

The phenomenon of religion conversion, which is then followed by a transformation of ethnic identity not only occurring in Kuala Rosan, it also occurred in other sub-ethnic of the Dayak. This was mentioned in the paper by Chua (2007) who conducted a study on the community of Dayak Bidayuh in Sarawak.

“Most of my informants define an ethnic not by an unchanging genealogical essence (‘being’) or an ‘interiorized identity’ (Tooker 1992:800), but through specific performative attributes, including speech, eating habits, clothing and behavior” (Chua, 2007:269).

As mentioned by Chua, after becoming a Malay, a Dayak would dress like a Malay, would not eat pork or drink *tuak* (traditional fermented alcoholic drink), and speak Malay. Referring back to identity theory, this phenomenon revealed that a Malay would act and behave in accordance with the standardized values set forth by his ethnic identity and religion.

With regard to religion conversion as occurred among the Dayak community in Kuala Rosan, I would like to quote the view proposed by Tockary (2003). Tockary said that among the pre-modern society, religion conversion is seen as an act of renouncing your own religion and betraying your own community, and tension would easily occur (Tockary, 2003:57). The author believes that Tockary’s view is quite useful in examining the transformation of ethnic identity caused by the conversion to Islam by the early population of Kuala Rosan. Alqadrie (2003) said the use of Malay identity after conversion to Islam is due to the alienation process. Furthermore, he wrote, that, “being alienated such as that, they are craving for and seeking new identity, and they found the new identity in the form of Malay ethnicity, and they are accepted fully and as a whole by the Malay ethnic group.” (Alqadrie, 2003:102).

Subsequent to their conversion to Islam, a Dayak will also adopt and use the Malay language. To the people of Kuala Rosan and Lubuk Piling, a language is more than a medium for communication it is also part of one’s identity. In this regard, a language will reveal the ethnic identity of its speaker, as well as his religion. Using

language more as an identity than merely for communication was shown by a Malay family who remained in the village of Lubuk Piling even though they were already converted to Islam. That Malay family continues to use Malay language in their day-to-day communication. The same thing also occurs when a Malay is communicating with a Dayak, who by the way is using the Dayak language when communicating with a Malay. Using two different languages during a conversation between a Malay and a Dayak is a common occurrence in Kuala Rosan.

From the interviews, it can be discerned that the Malay in Kuala Rosan felt that they are more modern than the Dayak. This may be the result of the similarities between the Malay language and the Indonesian language (Bahasa Indonesia) used in television programs, which by the way are the only form of entertainment available for them in the evening. Television is identical to Jakarta, and Jakarta is a luxury, something distant and unreachable for the people in the hinterland region. Everybody in Kuala Rosan would like to be the people from Jakarta they saw on television. They are buying motorcycles similar to the one advertised on television, albeit Chinese made, they are naming their children after the characters on *sinetron* (television drama) they saw on TV. It is no wonder that the names of the children of Kuala Rosan and Lubuk Piling would remind us to the characters on television dramas that were popular before the birth of that child. It is the same with the Malay language, which is spoken with pride by the Malay (formerly) Dayak in Kuala Rosan. Nevertheless, when a Malay felt they are superior by speaking the Malay language, the Dayak also feel that since they are living in the hinterland region, the language of Dayak should be the predominant language. Despite the similarities between Bahasa Indonesia and the Malay language, truth of the matter, the Malay language is only a minority in the hinterland region.

When examining the phenomenon of language use, I tend to go along with Faruk's thought that rejected the notion that language is only use as tool for communication and as a neutral expression (Faruk, 2001:16). For Faruk, language may influence or be influenced by culture, and even identical with culture. Faruk also said that since the Malay language is influenced by Arabic, therefore, the use of Malay language is placing more emphasis on the Kuala Rosan's identity as people of Malay descent and follower of Islam.

Moreover, discussing the aspect of language in the study of social conflict is crucial. This point was proposed by Mabry (2010) in the article entitled "Language and Conflict". Mabry said that the relationship between language and conflict is parallel

with the relationship between ethnicity and conflict. Therefore, by examining the use of language as an identity as occurred between the Malay and the Dayak, it could be discerned that the potential for conflict has emerged in the interaction between the two ethnics. This could be observed from the feeling of superiority of each ethnic with regard to the use of their respective language.

Halal and Haram (allowed and prohibited, according Islam). In addition to language, there is another aspect that differentiate the Malay and the Dayak, namely in the food consumed by each ethnic. Pork meat as the most important component in the *gawai adat* celebration just happens to be most prohibited for all Muslim (also for the Malay in Kuala Rosan). Forget about consuming the meat, even for only touching the meat, a Muslim must wash the body part that touches the meat seven times, and once with dirt. The same method for washing is also used when a Muslim touches a dog, whereas, there are many pigs and dogs around Lubuk Piling.

Islamic rules about *najis* (filth according to Islam) with regard to pigs and dogs had in turn prevented the Malay from Kuala Rosan from interacting freely with the Dayak in Lubuk Piling. They would not go to Lubuk Piling unless it was absolutely necessary. If they had to go to Lubuk Piling, they would prefer to sit at the porch. Because of the perception held by the Malay that dogs were running around freely around Dayak's houses, therefore, those houses are dirty. The Malay also refused to eat and drink anything served by their hosts the Dayak because cooking utensils used to prepare the food and drink may have been used to cook pork and dog meat, and have not been washed seven times.

Islam provides a specific rules regarding the type of food to be consumed and it is outlined in Al Quran. In addition to pork, all animals slaughtered without saying the name of Allah is considered *haram* for consumption by all Muslim. These rules are strictly adhered to by the Malay ethnic in Kuala Rosan. A Malay will always reject food from a Dayak, even though they are related. Not only the inherent concept of *najis* attached to dogs and pigs, a Malay will still reject food from a Dayak, even though the meat may be acceptable for consumption by a Muslim, nevertheless, the Dayak did not say the name of Allah when they slaughter the animal.

Issues pertaining to *halal* food or *haram* clearly create a strong demarcation line between the Malay and the Dayak in Kuala Rosan. With regard to the prohibition on consuming meat slaughtered without saying the name of Allah, Head of Adat of the Dayak Kancing'k once told the author, "even if we did not slaughter it, the chicken is still dead". To the author, that statement was

an expression of offense felt by the Dayak toward Islamic rules, which seemed to prohibit a Malay from consuming food prepared by a Dayak.

It is also worth noting that there other animals declared haram for consumption by Muslims. These include, among others, animal with claws, sharp nails, animals that eat *najis* object, mouse/ rats, scorpion, crow, eagle or falcon, wild dogs, snake, house lizard/ gecko, ants, bees, *hud-hud* bird (hoopoe or *Lat. Upupa epops*), *shurad* bird (Shrike or *Lat. Lanius collurio*), and frog.

These rules had created an obstacles for the Kuala Rosan's Malay living in the hinterland region and trying to get meat. It is different for the Dayak since they can eat anything they can hunt in the forest, including snake, ape, *labi-labi* (fresh water turtle), civet and many others. Meanwhile, the Malay in Kuala Rosan can only consume salted fish and egg, which they can store for a long time, because in Kuala Rosan there is no electricity, hence no refrigeration.

One day, a resident managed to get a deer. When he arrived at home, the news about the deer was already spread throughout the village. Many of the locals went to the hunter's house to buy the deer's meat. The hunter's wife. The deer's meat was sold for Rp. 40,000 per kilograms, while the total weight of the female deer was approximately 15 kilograms. When people were queuing at the hunter's house to buy the meat, in another place another villager told the author, "In the past, we don't have to buy wild games such as that, everybody would be invited to eat, before it rot. Nowadays, hunting has become an occupation, a means to earn money". The statement was an expression of frustration of the difficulty to find a *halal* animal in the forest. The rarity of *halal* meat had prompted many hunters to sell their catch.

The Malay community is using crops found around their village in their daily diets. During a big event, they cut palm tree and cook the heart of the tree (*umbut*). While collecting rubber sap in the forest, the Malay also searching for any edible forest products. Even though it is a rarity, some of them also brought home rubber leaves and cooked them. All of these because the Malay are finding it difficult to find *halal* meat to eat, meanwhile, they are not familiar with farming and fisheries system, and the nearest market where they could buy meat is quite far around 7 hours of travel through the river.

The circumstance surrounding the Malay who sees animal fat as an expensive and rare food is quite the opposite with the Dayak who are not the follower of Islam. The Dayak are not bound by any rules about what animal to consume. They could eat anything they found in the forest. If they could not find an animal in

the forest, they would catch and eat anything found around their houses such as squirrel, snake, lizard, ape, dog or cat.

The Dayak eating habits who eat any animal they could find, had created its own stereotype and rumors among the Malay community. The most often repeated rumors I heard were that the Dayak is the party responsible for the disappearance of wild games in the forest. At a glance, it seemed to make sense, since the Dayak could eat anything, unlike the Malay who has a smaller choice of animal to eat. A Malay informant said that quite a number of unique animal had become extinct. One of them is the *ingkar* (an animal who could turn its head 180 degree), bear, *ruwai* (a large bird with a beautiful feathers), orangutan believed to be able to summon the trees to get closer, and many others. The Malay suspects that these animals became extinct because they were caught and eaten by the Dayak.

The Dayak eventually heard the rumors that they were the reasons for the disappearance of animal in the forest. They told the author that they were not responsible for the animal disappearance, it happened because of the deforestation caused by the expansion of the palm oil plantation. This program has changed the overall appearance of forest in Kalimantan. Animals were losing their habitats and their food, it was exacerbated by the fact that the community living in and around the forest was becoming more dependent on the forest and its products, they continue to hunt even though the animal are getting scarce.

It was no secret that among the community in Kuala Rosan and Lubuk Piling that the best hunter among them was a 50 years old Malay man. He told the author that he could sell two rucksack full of golden deer and deer heads in two years. The hunter claimed that he never return "empty handed". If he could not an animal he could eat (a *halal* animal) he would shoot any animal that crossed his path, even though it was a *haram* animal. The hunter would sell his catch to the Dayak if the animal was a *haram* animal according to Islam; however, to maintain his conformity as a Malay who would not eat a *haram* animal, he would not accept money for the *haram* animal he caught, he would only accept batteries for flashlight, diesel fuel, and other goods for his daily needs, other than food. For him to receive money or food was the same as eating the haram animal.

The accusation made by the Malay that the Dayak has extinguished all of the wild games in the forest is obviously not true. From the perspective of the Malay, namely the difficulty to obtain meat, which is the opposite of the Dayak, we may conclude that the accusation was an expression of envy on the part of the Malay against the Dayak. Within this context, issues

pertaining to food may turn into a potential for conflict, beginning from throwing blame at each other, not face to face, only through rumors. Head of *Adat* Dayak community once told the author that being a Dayak means a person must be willing to sit and eat together, in other word, eat the same food consume by other Dayaks. In this discussion, the author was referring back to the view proposed by Tockary (2003) that regard religious conversion among pre-modern society as a form of betrayal toward one's own community, moreover, Alqadrie (1990) who saw the alienation experiencing by a Dayak after conversion to Islam is pushing them to seek new identity, and they found it in the Malay. The author concludes that the betrayal toward one's own community as stated by Tockary and the alienation as proposed by Alqadrie are stemmed from food.

Gawai adat of the dayak: a party of pork meat and tuak. Each year the Dayak community throughout Borneo (in Indonesia and Malaysia) held a traditional ceremony known as *gawai*. The author is quoting Alqadrie's work that described the event, "the *gawai* party is held following the rice harvest and functions as a festival and thanksgiving to the creator for the crops" (Alqadrie, 1990:97). The explanation matches the *gawai adat* held each year by the Dayak community in Lubuk Piling. Part of this harvest celebration, or the core of this *gawai adat* is a ritual called *engkata*. This ritual will be carried out by three *adat* figures who will read prayer and incantation in front a large earthenware jug filled with *tuak*, and took the jug house to house of family who planted rice. The three-*adat* figures continue to recite the incantation and drinking the *tuak*. The incantation is actually a Dayak Kancing'k folklore about the origin of rice. Since they continue to drink while telling the story, eventually the three *adat* figures got drunk and the story they told become more unclear. The story is becoming more confusing as the three *adat* figures continue to tell the story in loud voices, becoming more drunk at the same time.

After telling the story, the three *adat* figures who at this time are completely drunk, will "feed" the working tools used by the house owner for one year. These tools include machete, homemade rifle, basket, cooking utensils and knife to collect rubber. The so called food consisted of *keribang* (a type of truffle), flour cake, *lemang* and of course, *tuak*, and all them are placed on top of the tools. It is a form of expression of gratitude to the tools that helped the house owner in his works for the whole year. They believe if the person is feeling exhausted, the tools will feel the same. If the person is full, then the tools will also feel the same. They believe if the tools are not fed, they will get angry and bring bad luck to the owner.

At the moment, the number of people who planted rice in Lubuk Piling is less than ten families. It means that the number of families who participated in *gawai adat* as a post-harvest ritual is getting smaller. It is also caused by the shift in economic system, from a subsystem to market economics. If in the past, they farmed by applying the slash and burn method, nowadays, most of their field are permanently planted with rubber plants. By planting rubber plants, the community could easily earn good income. All they have to do is go to the forest, cut the trees, dry the rubber, sell them and earn money to buy rice and other necessities. Nevertheless, the small number of participants does not diminish the enthusiasm of the Lubuk Piling community to participate in *gawai adat* ceremony. They continue to hold the *gawai* each year, without the *engkata* and to see the *gawai* simply as an annual celebration.

Unlike the Malay who abhorred it, pork is the type of meat that must available during the celebration of *gawai*. It was stated by Alqadrie (1999:97) and Chua (2007:268) who observed the celebration of *gawai adat* in other Dayak communities and confirmed that the obligation to prepare pork meat is not only applied to the Dayak in Lubuk Piling but also to other Dayak communities throughout Borneo. In Lubuk Piling, during the *gawai*, each family throughout the village will slaughter a pig and serve it as meals. Each family will slaughter a pig at almost the same time, i.e. around 6 o'clock in the morning on the day of the *gawai*. After slaughtering the pig, almost all of the Lubuk Piling would go to the River Buayan to clean and file the meat.

The noise of pigs being slaughtered by the Dayak in Lubuk Piling could be heard in Kuala Rosan where the Malay live. The Malay then knew that momentarily the Dayak would go to the River Buayan (the same river used by the Malay) to wash the pork meat. Therefore, from the moment they heard the noise of the pigs being slaughtered, the Malay do not use the river, they choose to go a bit farther to the River Rosan to carry out any activities that use water. By using the water from the River Rosan, the Malay feels safe because the water is not contaminated by the filth from the washed pork meats in Buayan River. They do not take into account that water in a river flows, and according to Islamic rules, flowing water is a clean water.

With regard to pork meat, the principal of the local elementary school in Kuala Rosan and Lubuk Piling (the school is located in Lubuk Piling) is a Malay woman. She is a *mualaf*, she is a convert to Islam. Previously, the school principal was a Dayak Engkodan. The principal decided that school is out during the *gawai adat* celebration in Lubuk Piling. The principal claimed that she became dizzy and nauseous when she smells the barbequed pork meat cooked by the Dayak in

Lubuk Piling. Therefore, the author asked her, a few years back before she converted to Islam, did she participate in the *gawai adat* and consume pork meat? She admitted that she indeed participate in the *gawai adat* and consume pork; however, after she repented and converted to Islam, she felt dizzy and nauseous by the smell of pork meat. The author find it interesting that the school is closed on the grounds that the Malay (through the school principal) could not stand the smell of pork meat being cooked by the Dayak celebrating the *gawai adat*.

In addition to pork, there is another staple item that must be available during the *gawai adat*, namely *tuak*. *Tuak* is an alcoholic drink made from fermented rice. Just like pork, *tuak* is main the staple in many Dayak rituals and celebrations. Specifically during the *gawai adat*, wherein each household must prepare a jug filled with *tuak*, and anybody could drink it. For the Malay, *tuak* is one of the prohibited drink or haram that should be avoided due to its intoxicating nature, not only because *tuak* is made and prepared by the Dayak.

The culmination of *gawai adat* occurred at night time. The diesel generators will be on throughout the night, since there is no electricity. A number of houses will use the occasion during the *gawai adat* to hold ceremony celebrating what has happened to them in the last year. This may include birth of a child, adoption of a child, renovation of a family cemetery, engagement and marriage. The ceremony will be carried out by the *adat* figures or community figures from various villages and by different sub-ethnic of the Dayak who take turn visiting each house. Outside, the *gawai adat* will be getting more festive with the people coming from all over. The village of Lubuk Piling will festooned with temporary tents. These tents are built by the people who will use the occasion of the *gawai adat* to sell all kinds of delicacies and snacks, *arak* (another form of alcoholic drink), beer, carbonated drinks (soda) and many more. Moreover, another character of the *gawai adat* is the gambling counter of *kolok-kolok*, *kokok-kolok* is a form of local gambling using dice and pictures. The merchants who sell their goods and the *kolok-kolok* bookies are coming from other regions, and they always come during *gawai adat* celebration in any village.

Even though the *gawai adat* is the Dayak's annual event, the festivity is not only enjoyed by the Dayak, the Malay also enjoyed it. At night, a throng of Malay from Kuala Rosan also coming to participate in the festivity of *gawai adat* in Lubuk Piling. The Malay usually go to the *warung* or café to have a drink, alcoholic drink packed by factories and try their luck at *kolok-kolok*. According Islam, consuming alcoholic drink and gambling are both prohibited (*haram*) just like consuming pork meat, which is also prohibited. When I asked one them, he replied that it was different since it

was made in a factory, while *tuak* is "belonged to the Dayak". Therefore, curiously, a Malay thinks that he can consume alcoholic drink made in a factory, since it does not violate their preconceived notion that a Malay will not drink made and prepared by a Dayak.

During the *gawai adat*, some Dayak will open their houses and welcome any visitor to their house, even a total stranger. It is worth noting that the visitors who come to the houses of Lubuk Piling residents during the *gawai adat* are almost entirely from other villages. They do not receive their own neighbors, because all of them are busy welcoming stranger into their houses. Each visitor will be warmly welcomed and served food and drink, consisted of pork meat and *tuak*. Therefore, even though the Malay is coming to the village of Lubuk Piling during the *gawai adat*, they do not go the houses of Lubuk Piling residents like any other visitors from outside the village. However, the Malay men are busy drinking and gambling until early in the morning.

Commenting on the annually held *gawai adat*, Malay women told the author that, "*The Dayak like to party, they spend what they earned in one year in a single night. Unlike us, for Idhul Fitri we only prepare cookies*". However, these stereotypes are not always true. Most of the Dayak have been preparing for the *gawai adat* throughout the year to reduce the cost. For instance, they have been raising pigs for a whole year, until they are ready to be slaughtered during the *gawai adat*. The Dayak also planted their own glutinous rice for making the *tuak* and *lemang* at the *gawai adat*.

What we have seen here contradicts the study made by Utomo (2012) about the conflict in Sampang, which the author quoted as follows, "*When the women interacted to meet their domestic needs, their focus is not on the identity but on ways to meet their domestic needs*", (Utomo, 2012:129). Furthermore, Utomo also stated that he concurred with the view expressed by Sen (1999) that women play the role as *agent of peace*. This is clearly contradict with what is occurring in Kuala Rosan during *gawai adat*, wherein the Malay women are spreading rumors that the Dayak are wasting what they earned in a year for a day of festivity. These women are comparing the *gawai* with the celebration of Idhul Fitri, where they only served simple dishes. This may be related to the domain of domestic, in which the women are in charge.

Gawai adat may be the culmination of social tension between the Malay and the Dayak. This may be discerned from a number of key points, i.e. (1) the school is out during the festivity, since the school principal could not stand the smell of barbequed pork, not as a form of respect toward the celebration of *gawai adat*; (2) The Malay are abandoning the river because the Dayak are using the river to clean pork meat; (3)

The Malay are coming to Lubuk Piling to gamble and drink, but they did not go the Dayak houses; and (4) Spreading rumors that the Dayak are using their hard earned income in a year for one day party, wherein the Malay women see themselves as the better persons and more wise since their Idul Fitri celebration only requires simple preparation.

Of the four points, the author concluded that the Malay are doing things that may be upsetting to the Dayak, not because of any religious reasons, but simply to show off their identity.

Malay and dayak: minority and majority. As the majority, the Dayak dominates the village of Kuala Rosan, which consisted of five hamlets, i.e. the hamlet of Kuala Rosan (same name as the village), the hamlet of Lubuk Piling, the hamlet of Batu Laut, the hamlet of Sungai Kerumai and the hamlet of Sebude. Of the five hamlets, only the hamlet of Kuala Rosan is populated by the Malay ethnic group. Mile the other four hamlets are populated by Dayak Kancng'k. Village government is also staffed by the Dayak, except for the position of KAUR KESRA, which is held by a Malay. Previously the position of village secretary was held by a Malay, nonetheless, he was later fired because he did not have a junior high school diploma.

The uneven number between the Malay and the Dayak is one of the reason that a Malay never wins the election for village head. The total number of Malay residents in Kuala Rosan is 359 people, while the total number of Dayak in the village of Kuala Rosan is 2423 people. Whereas the position of village head is obviously quite strategic in the hinterland region of Kalimantan. A village head is the person in contact with the palm oil plantation, which by the way is the new mover for economic activities in the hinterland region of Kalimantan, including Kuala Rosan. Having this relationship means an access to information pertaining to the opening of new plantation field, and the amount of distributed assistance from the palm oil mill to local community. Case in point, the son of the former village head, is currently attending a university in Jakarta on a scholarship provided by a palm oil mill P.T Bintang Harapan Desa.

In addition to palm oil mills, a village head is also the first person to receive information from the government at sub-district level, district, and provincial government or even from the central government. The hinterland region of Kalimantan, including the border regions are continuously monitored by the central government with regard to economic development programs for the regions. From the perspective of the environment, the hinterland region of Kalimantan is always interested to a number of parties interested in issues pertaining to the environment and conservation. A village head is once

again is the first party contacted when a party is preparing to launch any form of activity in the hinterland region of Kalimantan.

This is where the position of the Malay ethnic becomes difficult. On one hand, within the context of Indonesia, the Dayak is a minority, nonetheless, in a smaller scale in the village of Kuala Rosan, the Dayak is the majority and the Malay is the minority. The Malay would like to separate themselves from the dominance of the Dayak, because they do not have access to government institutions. If we go back to the theory of interdependence as proposed by Deutsch (2006) on cooperation and competition, then this study clearly reveals that without a correlation between the objectives and interests with regard to both parties, has turned the relationship into a negative, meaning it has a potential for conflict.

Both the Malay and the Dayak relied that the relationship between them has a potency for conflict. However, they are also convinced that this potency for conflict will not erupt into an open confrontation. This conviction was expressed to the author by the two parties. In their view, the blood ties among them will prevent an open confrontation. Furthermore, they are also holding a principle that says, "*ibarat pisang, kami masih satu tandan*" (*just like bananas, we are still in one cluster*"). However, the author thinks that it is not main reason, because if the Malay really considers the Dayak as their close relatives, they will not put so much restriction in their relationship.

A concept proposed by Scott (2000) seemed to be more appropriate in analyzing the phenomenon of social interaction between the Malay and the Dayak. Scott (2000) said that a minority will always confront the majority albeit not openly. They will carry out their resistance covertly, namely a less than frontal resistance, without alliance, and not in the form of open confrontation. Because deep down a minority knows that in an open confrontation, they will be defeated.

4. Conclusions

This study yielded three key points. First of all, that ethnic identity is not always obtained through birth, as proposed by the proponent of the theory on primordialism; identity is something that continuously being rebuild from the experience of the individual concerned, just like the view proposed by the constructivist theory. In this study, the identity of Malay is attained when a person decided to convert to Islam. The transformation of identity had to be done, because they could no longer use their previous identity as a Dayak, wherein a Dayak must be willing to sit and eat together. A Malay cannot do this, they are bound by the rules that govern the halal or haram of the food they eat.

Whereas, pigs and tuak are two key items that always present in Dayak community.

Secondly, with regard to the interdependence theory, the potential conflict that emerges from the social interaction between the Malay and Dayak ethnic groups is caused by the dissimilarities of interests and objectives. The study revealed that in one hand the Malay felt dominated by the Dayak in village politics. The Malay, as the minority was never involved in village governance. This is the actual key factor that pushes the potential for conflict. The Malay is using religious identity as the demarcation line that separates them from the Dayak. Whereas they did strictly following the prohibition outlined by Islam, they still gambled and drink alcoholic drinks, even though they did not pork or drink *tuak* (traditional fermented alcoholic drink), which they identify as Dayak's customs.

Third, the social tension with its potential for conflict never develops into a physical conflict or an open conflict. The social tension between these two groups stops at spreading rumors, not talking to each other and maintaining distance. This is closely linked to the awareness among the Malay about their marginalized position and the fact they are outnumbered by the Dayak. They are fully aware of what would happen if they physically attacked the Dayak or rising openly against the dominance of the Dayak. The Malay would surely lose in such a fight. Furthermore, the Malay still needs the Dayak, because until now, the Dayak is the party in charge of village governance. The Dayak also maintains a good relation with the palm oil plantations where the people from Kuala Rosan sell their crops, they also maintain a good relation with government officials at higher level.

This study is still limited to the root issues and background that promote the social tension with its potential for conflict. Further studies are obviously necessary to develop the strategy and solution for the issues to diminish the potential conflict even further and preventing it from becoming an open confrontation. Moreover, further studies may also be necessary to find out about the latest conditions with regard to the two groups, considering that Kalimantan is a region that continuously exposed to social changes as well as environmental changes due to the expansion of palm oil plantations that transformed the live in the hinterland region.

References

Abdillah, S.U. (2002). *Politik identitas etnis pergulatan tanda tanpa identitas*. Magelang: Indonesiatara.

Alqadrie, S.I. (1990). *Ethnicity and social change in Dyaknese society of West Kalimantan, Indonesia*. Disertasi doktoral, University of Kentucky, Kentucky.

Alqadrie, S.I. (2003). Faktor penyebab konflik etnis, identitas, dan kesadaran etnis, serta indikasi ke arah proses disintegrasi di Kalimantan Barat. Dalam *Konflik komunal di Indonesia saat ini*. Jakarta, Indonesian-Netherlands Cooperation in Islamic Studies bekerja sama dengan Pusat Bahasa dan Budaya Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta.

Barth, F. (1969). *Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of culture difference*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.

Chua, L. (2007). Fixity and Flux: Bidayuh (Dis)engagements with the Malaysian ethnic system. *Ethnos*, 72(2), 262-288.

Deutsch, M. (2006). Cooperation and competition. Dalam Deutsch M., et al. (ed) *The handbook of conflict resolution theory and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint.

Faruk. (2001). Menyingkap dan membangun multi-kulturalisme. Dalam Sumartana (ed). *Pluralisme, konflik, dan pendidikan agama di Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Interfidei. 16-17.

Lontaan., JU. (1975). *Sejarah hukum adat dan adat istiadat Kalimantan Barat*. Pemerintah Daerah Tingkat I Kalimantan Barat.

Purana, B.H. (1999). *Konflik Antarkomunitas Etnis di Sambas: Suatu Tinjauan Sosial Budaya*. Pontianak: Romeo Grafika.

Scott, J.C. (2000). *Senjatanya orang-orang yang kalah*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.

Mabry, T.J. (2011). Language and conflict. *International Political Science Review*, 32(2), 189-207.

Setiadi. (2006). Kultur konflik dan kekerasan Etnis: Fenomena etnomigrasi etnis Madura di Kalimantan Barat. Dalam Ahimsa H (ed). *Esei-esei antropologi: Teori, metodologi dan etnografi*. Yogyakarta: Kepel Press.

Stets, Jan E., & Charter, M.J. (2011). The moral self: applying identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 74(2), 192-215

Suseno, F.M. (2001). Pluralisme agama, dialog, dan konflik di Indonesia. Dalam Sumartana (ed). *Pluralisme, Konflik, dan Pendidikan Agama di Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Interfidei. 71-72.

Tockary, R. (2003). Catatan singkat tentang konflik etnis-agama di Indonesia. Dalam *Konflik Komunal di Indonesia saat ini*. Jakarta, Indonesian-Netherlands Cooperation in Islamic Studies bekerja sama dengan Pusat Bahasa dan Budaya Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta.

Turner, J. (2005). *Sociology*. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall

Utomo, H.K. (2012). Persamaan, perbedaan, dan feminisme: Studi kasus konflik Sampang-Madura. *Makara Sosial Humaniora*, 16(2), 123-134.