BORDERLAND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION WITHIN A MARKET PLACE OF NARRATIVES: Preliminary Notes on the Batang Kanyau Iban in West Kalimantan

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ABSTRAK

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IDENTITY AND NARRATIVITY IN BORDERLANDS

Borderlands resemble a virtual marketplace where different narratives, such as different state ideologies, ethnicity, language, and religious narratives among others are negotiating, contesting, negating as well as supporting each other. Located at the center area borderland communities who are the actors in coping with these multi-layered marketplaces of narratives, which are often not without its problems. As Horstmann (2002: 16) noted, the hegemonic national cultures of the postcolonial state in Southeast Asia have been a nightmare for ethnic minorities who have been marginalized or folklorised in the space of the nation-state and constructed as inferior races. Far from fading away, the border is a central place, in which land, population and identification is most contested.

Numerous scholars (e.g., Gupta and Ferguson, 2002; Somers and Gibson, 1994) have argued that identity has been responsive, permutable, and is constantly reconstructed or reinvented. This new approach is rooted within the shift from an essentialist approach towards describing the various processes involved in the constructions of cultural identity (see Clifford, 1988: 275). Out of this emerges the concept of narrativity, the context which embeds identities in time and spatial relationships, or in other words, joining narrative to identity introduces time, space and analytic relationality. It is within these temporal and multi-layered narratives that identities are formed; hence narrative identity is processual and relational (Somers and Gibson, 1994: 58-67). These narratives form the building blocks on which people may invent or identify themselves as members of, using Ben Anderson’s classic framing, an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983: 5-6). While the process of identity construction is remarkably complex. By choosing Iban community as case study, this paper will focus on identity as a result of ongoing interactions and encounters with colonial and state powers. Borderlands provide a context in which numerous contesting Colonial and State narratives become more explicit. The discussion of this paper deals with the Kanyau Iban residing in West Kalimantan, who are part of a larger transnational Iban community currently partitioned by the post-colonial Indonesian-Malaysian borderline, and were historically implicated in many contrasting colonial (Brooke, Dutch) and post-colonial state (Malaysia and Indonesia) experiences. Various policies exercised by State powers in relation to local communities in borderlands are treated here as external ‘narratives put into practice’.
KNOWING AND NOT KNOWING THE IBAN: DIFFERENCES IN BROOKE - DUTCH COLONIAL RULE

The difference between Sarawak’s Brooke and Dutch colonial practice, which had created the present-day international territories of Indonesian Kalimantan and Malaysian Sarawak, had largely formed the basis on each successive ruler’s narrative on the Iban and vice versa, as well as the basis for different central-peripheral relationships which Iban communities had to cope with. The most obvious difference is placed in the demographic situation. The first Brooke Rajah had to cope since early on with a predominantly Iban populated territory\(^1\), which enabled his government to have first-hand contact with the Iban. Known for his infamous ‘divide-and-conquer’ style of governance to conquer various communities (including the fragmented Iban themselves), he was also known for his concern to protect and preserve Iban culture, a concern that was also embedded in various policies exercised by successive Brooke rulers.\(^2\) The Brookes exercised a more ‘localized’ form of colonial rule, partly due to its cash-strapped administration, which disabled them to fund a larger presence in remote areas (Wadley, 2001: 638). To complement this administrative weakness, the Brookes had an interest to preserve local customary laws.

The ethnic compartmentalization within Sarawak, largely designed by the Brooke administrations to easily maintain authority over its subjects, also formed the basis for the institutionalization of Iban leadership within the Brooke political system.\(^3\) Although many Iban groups (such as the Saribus, Skrang and Lemanak) became the earliest Brooke allies through their close rapport, the Ulu Ai, Katibas and Balch Iban remained recalcitrant, and had rebelled numerous times against the Brookes for varied reasons until 1918. Still closely related, the Emperan and Batang Kanyau Iban in Dutch Borneo became accomplices of these rebels.

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\(^1\) The first White Rajah of Sarawak, James Brooke, came to power in 1841 when most Iban had already been occupying the Batang Lupar, Skrang, Saribus and Lemanak rivers.

\(^2\) Most notable were the Charles Brooke policies in limiting the settlements of Chinese and Malay traders in Iban territories, prohibiting intermarriages between ethnic groups (Jehan 2000: 139-160), as well the Brooke stance towards the cultivation on rubber (Jawan 1994: 168-169).

\(^3\) Iban warriors who fought alongside the Brooke government in war expeditions were awarded the Malay-borrowed title of Penghulu and given authority to oversee other Iban groups within larger territories beyond their longhouse communities, which has been formalized in 1883 with the following tier: the Rajah, Residents, Native Officers (composed largely of Malay aristocrats) and Penghulu, to maintain order and collect door taxes or papan ronde (see Jawan, 1994: 80-81; Selvira, 1992: 78-79). Only later was a representative system established through the District Councils and the Council Negeris, which was conceived as a preparation step for Sarawak’s future self-governance during the last years of Charles Vyner Brooke’s rule.
In contrast, the Dutch always ruled the relatively independent Iban* in their territories from a distance. As Wadley (2001: 638-639) observed, this is rooted in fact that the Dutch had to administer a larger territory with many different ethnic groups, with numerous Malay Sultanates in between, through a much larger bureaucracy. Frequent rotation of Dutch officials also disabled them to establish close rapport with the Iban themselves, hence the absence of any Dutch administrators’ names immortalized in Iban oral histories.5 The Dutch were pre-occupied since 1854 in restoring order in the Upper Kapuas, mainly to end the unrest caused by numerous raiding of Iban groups from the Ulu Ai and Emperan who often helped rivaling Malay Sultanates fighting each other.6 Other unrest, such as Iban raids against other groups such as the Subai Malays, the Kantu’, as well as raids in the 1880s against the Bukat, Tamin, Aobeng and Kayan communities in the Mendalam, Upper Kapuas and Upper Mahakam (Sellato, 1994: 37; King, 1976: 89, 99) has well established the Iban reputation as fierce and ruthless aggressors. These unrests, known by the Dutch as The Batang Loepar Kwestie (Batang Loepar Question) were also the motives behind the Dutch decision to have boundaries more clearly defined.7 This ‘Batang Loepar Question’ had positioned the Iban in view of both Brooke and Dutch colonial rulers as a serious threat to law and order. To the Brookes, the Iban in the Emperan and Kanyau were accomplices of Ulu Ai Iban rebels. For the Dutch, these Iban became the problematic ‘other’ which posed a threat to other communities around the Kapuas, a reputation that has lived on in other communities until quite recently.8

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* The Iban had largely maintained their independence free from the domination of Malay Sultanates (King, 1976: 100-102).

5 An exception may be made for Father Martina, a Dutch Capucijn missionary, though he was more popular among the Maloh.

6 This has also been the first documented Dutch – Iban contact, when the Dutch attempted to settle the disputes between the rulers of Selimbah, which the Iban backed, and Simatang (Wadley, 2001: 628).

7 Which is probably a move to hold the Charles Brooke government responsible in preventing ‘its’ Ulu Ai Iban subjects from crossing into Dutch territory. A movement forward to solve this problem was to permit Brooke forces, which consisted mainly of Saribas, Sorang, Baring and Undup Iban, to punish the Ulu Ai, who had been disenfranchised towards the Brooke government, and Emperan Iban into Dutch territory, known as the Kedang Expedition of 1886 (Wadley, 2001: 632-636).

8 For example, based on numerous conversations with informants in East Kalimantan, the fierce Iban expedition to the Mahakam in 1885 is until now well remembered by the Aobeng in Long Apari, East Kalimantan. Downriver Kutai communities attribute the Iban with the term Pengasuh Kajum (“Cold blooded Headhunters”) – regardless to the fact that they had never been directly involved in conflict with the Iban. In the Apokayan, the Kenyah still remember Iban attacks on their ludang ricelands in the upper Narwang river in the early 1900s. See also Nationalaal Rijksarchief (ARA) Groote Afdeeling 1947 No. 3079 wherein a widespread panic was reported in Simatang and Sanggau due to unsubsti...
In consolidating its power over the interior, the Dutch attempted to isolate the upriver non-Muslim communities, including the Iban, from Malay influence. Other measures taken after order had been restored, as their common practice throughout the archipelago, was to appoint local leaders to carry out colonial policies for each Adat area. By the 1930s several Iban Temenggungs were appointed for the five main Iban territories (Sungai Utik, Nanga Kantu, Nanga Badau, Lanjak and the upper Embaloh or Batang Kanyau) in addition to other Temenggungs appointed for the Malays, Maloh, Taman and other groups, although the Dutch structure differs in many ways from neighbouring Sarawak.

NARRATIVITY ON BORNEO'S INTERIOR PEOPLES IN THE POST-COLONIAL REALITY

Said (1993: 199) once observed that imperialism and its opponents fought over the same terrain, contested the same history, and therefore depending on the same logic, practices and narrative ideologies the colonial powers left behind. The Indonesian state in 1945 emerged confident with the idea of uniting and subjugating culturally diverse communities into a new fixed national identity. The creation of borders served as, in a Foucaultian terminology, a panoptic on, a surveillance mechanism through which powers of the colonial/post-colonial

aided rumours about an upcoming Iban headhunting raid, ARA Geheim Mailrapport 1947 No. 1160 which reported a rumour about a possible Iban raid from the 'Baran Looper Landen' (Fireman – author), or ARA Geheim Mailrapport 1949 No. 235 in which Ieams were reported about possible Iban looting raids from Sarawak during the rice harvests.

Since 1916, the Dutch were concentrating to control the downriver Malay Sultanates at Selimbao, Sembatau and Simang through their incorporation as Malay States under the Dutch residency to curb further spread of their influence, mainly to hold Islam, to upriver communities who were still free from Malay influence (King, 1976: 102).

A different spelling is used for the Dutch version, where it was spelled according to the Dutch system as Temenggong, which in current Indonesian language is spelled Temenggung.

Based on an interview with the current Kanyau Iban Temenggung (May, 2002). The current Temenggung is the fourth Kanyau Iban Temenggung. The first Temenggung, named Skam was appointed "around by the end of Dutch rule" – thus perhaps in the early 1940s. The second, Temenggung Higar was elected in the mid-1950s. The third Temenggung, Nysmpal, has been appointed by the military in 1967. The informant himself was appointed in 1976.

Based on an interview with the current Kanyau Iban Temenggung (May, 2002), the post as Temenggung in Dutch territories were more similar to the Sarawak positions of the Penghuda – with far less authority than the Temenggungs of Sarawak who were appointed as Paramount Chiefs overlooking the whole Iban community (see also Sutcliffe, 1992: 92). Also, the Dutch have never invented a formal and effective representative body for the Temenggungs as the case of District Councils and Council Negeris in Sarawak.
The new nation-state of Indonesia had inherited many characteristics of the former Dutch-Indies colonial structure since its independence in 1945, exercised through a more powerful and uniform grip. Unlike the colonial government, which did not interfere much with the local adat and did nothing other than attempting to hold its colony as an integrated administrative and economic territory, the new State, especially during Soeharto's regime, had a firmer grip by standardizing the political power structure down to village (desa) levels and had little interest in preserving local adat systems where incompatible with the basic New Order ideology of stability and development. The new government also upheld 'orientalist' (though much from a Javanese, or coastal perspective) views regarding upland communities in Borneo, notably the narrative that Dayak communities were of a more 'primitive' nature compared to, for example, downriver or coastal Malay populations. While the colonial state viewed the Dayaks as a threat to order and security, the post-colonial state viewed Dayak 'backwardness' as a threat to modernization efforts. The Indonesian – Malaysian Confrontation between 1963 to 1966 and the subsequent communist uprising in West Kalimantan from 1967 to 1986 had sowed the seeds of an increasing militaristic approach towards borderland frontiers wherein national loyalty of borderlanders were suspiciously questioned. Therefore the Batang Kamyau Ibans also qualified in every post-colonial category of 'threat': they were the antithesis of modernization, they were borderlanders and they were prone to communist infiltration.

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13 See Questions on Geography (Foucault, 1990: 63-77).
15 Through Law No. 5 1979, the political administration has been standardized up to village level (which is the 2nd administration level in the current political structure). Village councils (LMMD/LKMD) were set up outside the traditional adat systems – and elected village heads had to receive approval from the higher-level structure. The military exercised close supervision on these matters through their formal involvement as Maspika (or Sub-District Councils) members. This law has replaced the former Ketapatan and Swapraja systems inherited from both the Colonial and Sukarno governments.
16 One explicit example of this view can be read in the official 1953 Profile of the Kalimantan Province wherein it was bluntly stated that, for example, that 'Dayak arts were of lesser quality because it portrays exclusively the Dayak personality' (Kementerian Pemerintah, 1953: 352) or that local Dayak agricultural practices are 'unfortunately dependent on bird orms' (1953: 207), hence the need for having Javanese farmers to be transmigrated to the island in order to transfer agricultural knowledge (1953: 164-165), and that the Dayaks still adhered to the 'Law of the Jungle' (Hutang rindor) and were 'savage and fearlessly wild' (1953: 346). This profile was written by a predominantly Malay and Hanjapara government team stationed in Hanjarasim, then the capital of the Kalimantan Province.
Map 1: The Batang Kanyau in West Kalimantan

THE BATANG KANYAU IBAN

The Kanyau Iban look at themselves as members of the extensive Ulu Ai – Emperan – Katibas kinship network, which has its origins in the Ulu Ai area since the early 1800s, specially after the earliest migrations from the Kapuas basin in present-day West Kalimantan. The Kanyau identity derives from their riverine settlements on the upper Kanyau (or, more popularly known by its official Maloh name the Embaloh) watershed. It has been suggested that the label ‘Iban’ has been used among the Iban quite recently, and like many other groups, was contingently constructed as a response in interacting with outsiders (see Wadley, 2000 and King, 2001). The urang Kanyau identity is only used when communicating with other Iban to refer to their river settlement, and is not used as a category to differentiate themselves culturally, linguistically or politically from other Iban groups. When dealing with non-Iban com-

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munities or with the government, they simply identify themselves as ‘Iban’ or ‘Dayak’.

Unlike the wealth of available written material on the Iban in Sarawak, written sources on the Iban in Indonesia is scant, thus attempts to reconstruct Iban histories heavily relies on local sources as well as neighboring oral histories (e.g., King, 1977) in addition to the bulk of untranslated colonial reports and missionary reports.

The origins of the present-day Kanyau Iban, now dispersed into the villages of Sadap, Kelayam, Sangai Utik and Kampung Madang, could only be traced by comparing earlier studies on Iban migration with the remaining oral genealogical histories (nonaw) which is presently at the brink of extinction as older generations disappear, or because they are only remembered in fragments by current generations of 40-60 year olds. Some nonaw (genealogies) collected by Sandin (1994: 151,199) indicated that the earlier settlement of the Batang Kanyau occurred during the first migration movements of Iban groups led by Naga and Sumping from the Ulu Ai. The Kanyau Iban oral history tells that the first settlers of the Kanyau were led by Muban and Macan, and that the river was named after a prominent leader of these early settlers who pioneered the opening of the area. One informant from Sadap, who claims to be a direct offspring from Simpi, the first settled leader and prominent warrior in the Kanyau, tells that the Kanyau was first settled nine generations ago, leading to a conclusion that the Kanyau might have been settled between 1800 and 1820. Subsequent migrations also occurred from the Katibas river in Sarawak back to the Batang Kanyau after the famous Iban rebel Rentap was defeated by Charles Brooke at Bukit Sadok, and subsequent settlement by fleeing supporters of Iban rebels Balang and Unjoo who were fighting Brooke forces in the Katibas, dating back to 1868. The Emperan and Kanyau areas became escape routes for many Ulu Ai Iban driven out from Sarawak by Brooke punitive expeditions.

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16 This probably occurred in the early decades of the 19th century, from the Ulu Ai in Sarawak into the Katibas, which was undertaken through the Kanyau (see also Freeman, 1970: 131-132). Sandin also indicated the close kinship of the Kanyau Iban with the Emperan Iban around the lake areas near Lajak. The Emperan themselves came from the Ulu Ai before the 1830s, and some even moved farther to Pulau Ensaul in the Batang Kanyau where the notable Temenggong Koh was born around 1870. Koh, Koh’s father had run to the Batang Kanyau after Rentap’s defeat at Bukit Sadok in 1861 (Sadie, 1992: 29; Sandin, 1994: 308).

17 Probably Temenggong Simpi Pala, who led earlier migrations from the Batang Ai to the area near Nanga Badau forming the nucleus of the Emperan settlements and subsequent migrations to the Kanyau (Wadley, personal communication).
Map 2. Flows of Iban Migrations to and from the Batang Kanyau

(see also Pringle, 1970: 253). Thus, since early on the Batang Kanyau was inhabited, back and forth, by various waves of settlements originating from the Ulu Ai and later Katibas migrations around 1861 to 1868, in addition to continuous inter-marriages beyond these areas. According to oral history, early settlers from the Katibas mainly occupied the longhouse settlements on the upper Kanyau at Kerangan Labu and Nanga Piang. Other settlements, such as Sungai Matu and Kerangan Bumut20 had mixed inhabitants originating from both the Ulu Ai and the Katibas in Sarawak. Supporters of Balang, which included Jubang, father of the late Temengong Kob, settled at Pulau Enslit (near present-day Sadap). The present day abode of Sadap was established since four generations ago after the Pulau Enslit longhouse had been disbanded in the early 1900s (see also Ngo, 1997: 132), while Kelayam was established much earlier on a small tributary of the Kanyau. In 1958 ten doors from the Sadap longhouse moved permanently into Sarawak and joined Rumah Man in the Upper Katibas. (see also Sarawak Gazette, May 31, 1959) In 1968, a number

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20 Ngo (1997) noted that Madang inhabitants originated from Sungai Hematik, which is probably the prior location before they settled at nearby Kerangan Bumut.
of Kerangan Bunut inhabitants were forcibly moved to join Sadap during the left-wing PARAKU (Pasukan Rakyat Kalimantan Utara – the North Kalimantan Peoples Army) disturbances, while others were resettled at Madang on the traditional boundary with Maloh territory.

The following historical processes reflect various shifting contexts to which the Kanyau Iban had to negotiate their identities.

CENTERING THE MARGINAL: SOME HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE KANYAU IBAN

The Kanyau Iban experienced various shifting political changes and constructed local interpretations out of it, often in contradiction with official state-sanctioned versions of history. From oral histories and accounts collected this far, there are major events that had surfaced recurrently in the Kanyau Iban storytelling, often constituting their retold version of history. The following examples are local histories which were implicated by significant events shaped from the outside that the Kanyau had to deal with and provided context wherein their identities as Ibans were constructed, demarcated and re-emphasized, simply as a reaction towards colonial and subsequent state narratives:

1) Sharing Common Histories and Identities: The Ulu Ai – Kanyau – Katibas Axis

It is still difficult to reconstruct a reliable chronological history of these settlement processes. However, these migration and settlement histories explain why close affinity between the present-day Kanyau Iban and the Ulu Ai and Katibas Iban in Sarawak are still maintained today. Today, most of the Kanyau Iban still maintain or cite close kinship relations with the Ulu’ Ai Iban dating from four to nine generations back, and with their kin in the Katibas area around Kanowit and Song. As a result, many of the Kanyau Iban accounts on history are strongly rooted and opinioned similar to the Ulu Ai and Katibas experiences regarding their encounters with colonial forces.

Many Kanyau Iban identify themselves as being offspring of heroic anti-Brooke ancestors who endlessly challenged Sarawak’s White Rajah Charles Brooke (Raja Bersuk) rule in the past. Here Brooke is portrayed as cruel (jahir), and the fact that Brooke himself relied on a large Iban force is viewed by them as Brooke’s achievement in turning ‘downriver Iban’ into ‘traitors’ (pengkhianat).
There are three historical events, still often retold, in which Brooke is portrayed as the antagonistic enemy:

a) The Perang di Emperan – which refers to the Brooke’s Kedang Expedition to the Emperan in 1868 wherein Saribas, Skrang, Banting and Undup Iban were used to retaliate against the Ulu Ai rebels (see also Wadley, 2001). Many forefathers of the Kanyau Iban were accordingly involved helping their Ulu Ai kin.

b) Perang di Bukit Sadok (The Battle at Bukit Sadok) where informants told about their great-great grandfather’s involvement in helping Rentap attacking ‘Raja Beruk’.

c) The uprising of Balang and Unjop in the Katibas. Some informants claimed that their ancestors helped Unjop in fighting the ‘Raja’ to avenge ‘Raja Balang’s’ death in Sibu. It is interesting to note that Balang himself had been immortalized in various myths, known by almost every Iban in the Batang Kanyau today. Contrary to the ‘official’ story describing Balang’s treachery by conspiring to murder the then Resident J.B. Cruickshank, which resulted in his death sentence in Sibu (Sandin, 1994: 197-198), Balang has been immortalized in the Batang Kanyau as a hero. This can be examined by looking at the following reinvented versions mythologised by the Kanyau Iban: (note the term Raja used)

Version One (1st informant in Sadap):
Raja Balang was killed by Raja Beruk (Brooke) because the latter lost to Balang in a showdown race to Singapore, which accordingly Balang undertook on a floating mat (tikai), and Brooke on a steamship.

Version Two (2nd informant in Sadap):
Raja Balang was killed by Raja Beruk in Sibu because the latter envied Balang’s abilities to fly faster on his mat (tikai terbaik) than Raja Beruk’s plane (hillow).

Version Three (3rd informant in Kelayam):
Raja Balang was killed by Raja Beruk because Balang attempted to kill him. Raja Beruk was very scared of Balang’s supernatural abilities, which included floating in sea on a mat faster than the speed of a boat.

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Sandin’s version might possibly reflect the Saribas Iban perspective.
These stories clearly indicate that, apart from being closely rooted and interconnected with the Ulu Ai and Katibas Iban historical experiences in Sarawak, the reinvention of Balang’s story functions as a contestation of the ‘white man’ version on history. Aside from celebrating their ancestor’s superiority over the urang puteh (‘white men’), these local versions also provide an alternative narrative to the ‘irrelevant’ formal version of history taught in the Indonesian curriculum which hardly exposes events outside the Javanese experience. Thus while Rentap and Balang are now celebrated in the history schoolbooks of Sarawak, Kanyau Iban schoolchildren have to study such unfamiliar Indonesian historical figures from Memoa Jawa or Memoa Sumatra like Prince Diponegoro, Teuku Umar or General Sudirman. The heroism of Balang and Rentap are still passed on through oral means to younger Iban generations.

In addition, affinity with the Ulu Ai Iban is expressed by several informants through claims that they share the same ancestor with the late Temenggong Jugah anak Barieng, Sarawak’s prominent Paramount Chief of the Iban in Sarawak (1955-1981) and Malaysia’s Federal Minister for Sarawak Affairs (1963-74), through ancestral relationships with Melintang, Temenggong Jugah’s grandfather. Another interesting reference often cited is that the Katibas and Bateh Iban is the fact that the late Temenggong Koh anak Jubang, the first Paramount Chief of the Iban in Sarawak (1924-1955), was born in the Kanyau at Pulau Ensait, the original settlement that later moved to Sadap. This also exemplifies how the Kanyau Iban version of history transcends the current imposed borders and its state-sponsored narrative on history, reinforcing the central position of the Kanyau Iban within a larger transnational Iban community, expressed by an informant’s statement that,

"...semua Iban Sarawak datai ori kita dihara'."

("...all the Sarawak Iban originated from us here")

This identity also plays a vital part in the recent adaptation and networking of Kanyau Iban men on labour journeys (bejatai/ bekuali) in neighbouring Sarawak, where it is relatively easy to network themselves with the Ulu Ai and the Katibas Iban. Indonesian Maloh workers are used to identifying themselves as ‘Maloh Kanyau’ to the Iban-dominated labour networks in Sarawak to mark themselves as friendly Iban allies.\(^\text{31}\) Thus it is also perceived that the ‘Kanyau’

\(^{31}\) Interview with a Maloh migrant worker in Penjawau, Kapuas Hulu, June 2002.
identity has a significant importance in Sarawak, unlike their 'notorious' reputation on the West Kalimantan side.

2) The Masa Jipun and Indonesian Independence

The Japanese occupation from 1941 to 1945 is largely remembered by informants as the 'period without salt' (musul garam nadai), general lack of basic commodities (such as clothing, sugar) and the disruption of the lucrative rubber-tapping income. There is a general dislike among the Kanyau Iban towards the Japanese. This dislike is also due to flying rumours from neighbouring Sarawak where it has been rumoured that the Japanese had burned many downriver Iban longhouses, despite the fact that they rarely experienced any direct contact with the Japanese army stationed at Semitau in the Kapuas. Older generations remember that Malays represented the Japanese rule in the area, similar to the Malay-dominated Domang structures under Dutch rule, though these were military recruits.22 An informant remembered that his father was asked to join Romusha workers in the Kapuas, which some men refused because they heard stories about the bad treatment Javanese Romusha workers received were they were forcibly mobilized to work in Labuan and the oil fields in Miri.24 Stories on the Japanese occupation also confirm the close Ulu Ai – Batang Kanyau–Katibas relationship identity as many men from the Batang Kanyau actively participated in helping the Ulu Ai, Katibas, Rejang and Baleh Iban in raiding Japanese military outposts at Sibu, Engkilili, Lubok Antu, Song and Kapit in 1945.25 As evidence, some Japanese heads and Samurai swords, were brought back home to the Kanyau where they were put for display.

After the Japanese surrender, attempts made by the Dutch NICA (Netherlands-Indies Civil Administration) to regain hold of its former colonial territories was met with resistance by Malay groups who aligned themselves with the

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22 The Japanese had formed local militias, such as the PETA (Pembela Tanah Air) and the Heiko, to assist the Japanese war efforts in Southeast Asia. Large PETA militias, largely consisting of local male populations such as the Javanese and Malay, were formed throughout the archipelago as well as the Malaya peninsula.

24 Wadley also found a similar story from the Emparan Iban in Lanjak who were asked by the Japanese forces to accompany them to mine saltpeter to make gunpowder in the Ulu Baram at the southern bank of the Kapuas from which they received poor pay and had to endure poor work conditions, hence the view that the Japanese were mean (Wadley, personal communication, 2002).

25 See also Harrison (1986: 272-273) and Roche (1998: 204-217).
new-proclaimed Indonesian Republic led by Sukarno. However, there was a
general stance among the Dayak communities, including the Iban, to reject
Malay domination in both governance and trade. Another rejection to come
under Malay-dominated governance was rooted in the fact that local Dayak
communities strongly resisted Japanese occupation, a stance not shared with
the Malays. This account fits with Kanyau Iban informants who claim that
they were fighting alone against the Japanese occupation without any help
from the Malays. Thus while the Malays were earlier giving support for the
new Indonesian Republic, the Iban were more concerned to free themselves
from Malay domination, regardless of whether it were to come under Dutch or
Sukarno’s rule.

This sequence of events seems to resurrect longstanding differences between
the Malays and the Iban (later ‘Dayak’) which dates back to efforts by Malay
Sultanates around the Kapuas to convert upriver communities to Islam which
many avoided. This also later provided the basis for their identification of the
Indonesian state with Malay-ness.

Significant events retold about the 1950s were related with Catholicism and
education. The post-war years also prompted many Iban from the area to
start their *bejalan* journeys to British-controlled Sarawak and Brunei, from
which some Kanyau Iban men worked at the oil refineries in Miri and Seria.
Others went to Kapit to register themselves with the Sarawak Rangers to fight
communism during the Malayan Emergency in the late 1950s.

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20 See ARA Gehem Mailrappo 1946 No. 1954. It is reported in this Mailrappo that the formation
of the Persatuan Dajak, a Dayak union established in October 1946 for the development of independent
economic connections and away from reliance on Chinese and Malays.
21 See ARA Gehem Mailrappo 1946 No. 1688 which reported a meeting held in Sunggau on 10 October
1946 in which the Dayaks expressed their aspirations for self-governance independent from Malay
domination, where it is viewed that the latter have mistreated the Dayaka as subordinates ‘for cen-
trum’.
22 The Catholic Church in Benua Martimas was established more earlier around the early 1920s. This was
after the Capucijnen missionaries failed to convert the Emperor Iban at Lanjak and closed down their
mission in the early 1920s (Wadley, personal communication). In the Embaloh, the missionaries had
more success with the Mahan community, and the first mission church was built south from Penjaruan,
which later became known as Benua Martimas.
23 In Kelayars, for instance, the first and only Iban child attended the school in 1952, followed later by a
small number of children in the mid-1950s from the longhouses at Matu and Kerangan Bamut. How-
ever, the distances involved prevented them from even concluding primary education. In addition,
parents were still reluctant to send their children to school as they saw the results as being inapplicable
in daily life. Only by the late 1960s was education largely campaigned upon the Iban by the New Order
government.
3) Negotiating the Konfrontasi, Perang Paraku and Masok Agama

Sukarno’s Confrontation with the newly established Malaysian Federation in September 1963 had been the first direct contact between the Kanyau Iban and an coerced post-independence state narrative reinforcing the existence of the border. Aware of possibilities that the Confrontation will lead them into war with their fellow Iban kin in Sarawak, most Kanyau Iban had chosen to stay away by not involving themselves with the so-called “conflict between Sukarno and Temenggong Jugah” 36, the latter who was still perceived as their close kin. They also knew that many of their Katibas kin were assisting British Gurkha troops incursions, based in the bazaar town of Seng on the Katibas confluence, to the Tekelan and Piang rivers in the upper Kanyau within Indonesian territory. Those who had served in Malaya faced another dilemma, as they now had to fight their old comrades in the Sarawak Rangers. There was a heavy presence of communist guerilla forces, consisting mainly of Chinese from Landak, Kuching, Sibu37 and Javanese Pemuda Rakjat volunteers along with their ABRI (Indonesian Armed Forces) trainers living in the longhouse of Kerangan Bunut and Sadap, who occasionally went on incursions into Sarawak from the upper Kanyau.38 One informant remembers that the communist volunteers, known as the PARAKU39 wore similar uniforms like the regular troops. The Iban were asked to provide rice, extra lodging in their longhouses, additional canoes (perahu) for transportation and numerous upriver land patches where the

37 Since a large portion of the Chinese Communists consisted of girls, they were also known locally as the ‘Perakan Army’.
38 One distinct incursion well remembered by some informants was the 62-strong raiding expedition to Kapit in early 1964, from which only 9 men, mainly the local scouts, returned alive. The rest were probably either killed or detained in Sarawak.
39 The PARAKU (Paskuk Rakjat Kalimantan Utara – or the Northern Kalimantan People’s Army, affiliated with the PGRS – Paskuk Gerilya Rakjat Sarawak/the Sarawak People’s Guerilla Forces, both part of a transnational Communist insurgency under the North Kalimantan Communist Party) were during the Konfrontasi in 1963 supported by President Sukarno’s left-wing government to undermine Sabah and Sarawak joining the perceived British-sponsored Malaysian Federation. However, when right-wing President Soeharto took power in 1966, the PGRS and PARAKU forces were hunted down, and counter-insurgency attacks were focused on PARAKU’s last stronghold in the Upper Kanyau river from 1968 to 1972, resulting numerous Datang Kanyau Iban being accused as communist supporters. See also Fujio, (2000). Prominent ABRI figures involved in the counter-insurgency operations on the Upper Kanyau, remembered by the Iban, was Yogie S. Menter (later Commander of the Kopassus Special Forces, Governor of West Java and later Minister of Interior in the 1990’s), Basofi Soeharman (later Governor of East Java in the early 1990’s) and Asgar Asovin (the former Governor of West Kalimantan).
communist troops could plant cassava and hill rice to bring supply lines closer to the border.

Indo-Malay relations improved at the end of the Konfrontasi in August 1966. In relation to this, Temenggong Jugah played a significant symbolic part on behalf of Sarawak, had major impacts on the Kanyau Iban livelihoods. Communist volunteers who had fought side-by-side ABRI troops were hunted overnight, and many villagers were threatened by new ABRI commanders who were accusing them of having supported the communists. The Kanyau Iban were confused in having to change sides again and were unable to distinguish communists from regular troops. They indiscriminately kept on supplying the PARAKU communists with rice and shelter, and therefore anti-communist ABRI commanders began beating some villagers at Kerangan Bunut. Anti-communist indoctrination sessions during exhausting longhouse meetings in Sadap started shortly afterwards.

Map 3. The Batang Kanyau during the PARAKU insurgency and counter offensives
To the new ABRI troops, the Sarawak borderlands represented a dangerous frontier where the communist re-established their bases. The communist insurgency until 1990 was the main reason why the established tradition of Iban border crossing through the Upper Kanyau had to be banned. New fresh anti-communist ABRI troops were stationed in early 1967 from the North Sumatra-based Bukit Barisan Military Command, better known by the Kanyau Iban as ‘Batalyon Infanteri 327’. One of their orders was the dismantlement of the Kerangan Bunut longhouse, and forced movement of its inhabitants to present-day Kampung Madang. The Kerangan Bunut longhouse, as remembered, was mortared by the military without giving the people time to salvage their pigs and chickens. The New Order regime’s new security approach towards borderlands was thus since 1967 firmly in place.

The post-PARAKU events marked the beginning of close military and government intervention in local affairs. The first move was to appoint a Temenggung, which would be co-operative in the anti-communist campaign. Understandably, an Iban anti-communist volunteer was appointed for the position. In addition, the military also created the new title of Panglima Perang as the Temenggung’s tandem in fighting communism. A local Iban WANRA (civil security volunteer) member was appointed, and given an honorary military rank as Assistant-First Lieutenant (Polru — Pembantu Letnan Satu). Despite longhouse communities being allowed to nominate, the right to a final decision to appoint a Temenggung was ever since exclusively the prerogative of the government’s MUSPIKA council. The military also succeeded in discrediting Sukarno, who himself was never that popular among the Iban, and in this regard the communist forces are locally remembered as “helped by Sukarno” (dibantu Sukarno).

Besides ordering the elimination of communist guerrillas up to the uppermost reaches of the Kanyau, many Christian and Catholic soldiers, especially of Javanese and Sumatran Batak origin, began aggressively campaigning Christianity among the Iban, embedded with messages that it was compulsory to choose a state religion as proof that they were not communists and associated with the PARAKU. These soldiers were ordering the Iban to dispose all

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14 MUSPIKA (Masyarakat Pembinaan Kecamatan), or Sub-District Council, which consists of the local Sub-District Head (Camat), Secretary (SekCamat), Head of the local police (Kapolsek) and the Local Military Commander (DanRamil). From all the four successive Kanyau Temenggungs, only the second was fully elected by longhouse communities in the early 1950s, when there was a virtual vacuum of government presence in the area.
perceived pagan (kafir) beliefs, including all the adat petanuan (traditional rituals related to the agricultural cycle). In addition, many Javanese Catholic soldiers began nominal mass conversions of the Kanyaku inhabitants. According to one informant, the PARAKU events enabled them to identify themselves with the same anti-communist stance (which was in fact part of the anti-Sukarno / Indonesian campaign) Temenggong Jugah had been campaigning during the Kompresinsi. The conversions into Christianity also brought them 'equal' (sama) with their Sarawak kin who had been converted earlier. In this regard he added,

"Temenggong Jugah juga sudah merti cantok."
("Temenggong Jugah had already given us example.")

The new Christian conversions actually provided the Iban a new identity to differentiate themselves more further from the Islam-dominated Malay community. One Iban informant gave the following reason why he chose Christianity:


("I cannot choose to convert to Islam because I have Dayak flesh. We have been eating wild boar for ages. How can I possibly embrace that religion? We also traditionally drink rice-wine. Not to feel macho, but just to stimulate me to carry out heavy work, like felling trees on the ladang.")

There has been certain myths invented surrounding Temenggong Jugah's Christian belief. One informant in Sadap told the story that Temenggong Jugah was persuaded by Tunku Abdul Rahman to convert to Islam if he wanted to

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18 The earliest conversions were targeted on the local Iban volunteers who joined the military anti-communist WANRA militia. WANRA, an abbreviation of Seruan Perlawanan Rakyat, is the embryo of the present-day HANTR (Seruan Pertahanan Sipil – or Civil Defense) organization.
become the leader of Sarawak in the new Malaysian Federation. Jugah resisted, resulting his appointment as merely a federal minister.\footnote{As Tham (2000: 333) observed, the appointment of Jugah as Federal Minister for Sarawak Affairs instead of the higher rank of Chief Minister of Sarawak which went to Stephen Kalong Ningkan had more to do with Tunku Abdul Rahman’s reluctance regarding Jugah’s illiteracy.}

The fact that much of the local government’s administrative structure is dominated by Malays (and other Muslims) also makes the impression to the local Iban that ‘Indonesia’ is in itself inherently Islamic. One informant in Sadap even drew a comparison with Malaysia:

“Meskipun Malaysia katanya negara Islam, tapi kita orang Iban ulah bebas di Sarawak.”

(“Though Malaysia is an Islamic state, we Iban feel free in Sarawak.”)

When asked further about the meaning of this statement, this informant claimed that it was common for Iban men to roam freely not insulted in Sarawak’s urban centers, and compared it to his experience suffering insults from fellow Malay workers on his pantang (traditional tattoos). He was hired along with two other men from Madang in 1976 by a Taiwanese logging contractor to undertake survey close to Nanga Pinoh at the Malay dominated south bank of the Kapuas. Malay co-workers were uneasy with their presence, and nearby villagers refused to give lodging to these men, until somebody came up to them and said that they should cover their intimidating throat tattoos. For the rest of their assignment they had to cover their throats with scarves. Hence, many men from Sadap and Madang in the 1970s only tattooed the usually hidden parts of their bodies, such as the Engkabang Rava, Buang Terang and the Ketum Dayang on their backs and sides, the Kala Pah on their upper legs and avoiding tattoos on forearms and throats. There was awareness that ‘Indonesians’ in general viewed tattoos as kafir (pagan). In other words, Iban identity symbols were disapproved in Indonesia. His following statement summarizes his knowledge on how ‘Indonesians’ perceive Dayaks:

“Kita ini dianggap orang biadab, makan orang, makan semut, makan babi, punya pantang...dan begintah kami didebut sebagai orang ‘ulu oleh mereka’”

(“ We are perceived as savages, man-eaters, ant-eaters, pork-eaters, wearing tattoos...and that is why they call us ‘upriver people’ ”)
There were also problems regarding hosting visiting government officials who often refused to sleep in the longhouse because of the wandering pigs and dogs. Many informants are aware that many other basic aspects of Iban culture, such as food and general longhouse life were generally incompatible with the dominant Malay culture.


The Indonesian government launched extensive campaigns since the 1970s through the District Health Department to discourage the Iban from longhouse life due to safety and hygienic reasons.37 One informant thinks that it is probably because the government officials were simply Muslims who ‘did not like the idea having humans sharing the same roof with dogs and pigs’. In the mid-1990s there were aggressive campaigns launched by the State BP7 agency (the Pancasila State Ideology Implementation Steering Committee) discouraging citizens from adhering to traditional animistic beliefs 38, a move which, for example, also discouraged a Masang (traditional healer) from openly admitting his skills to outsiders.

The government also became increasingly concerned with the increased illegal trade and orientation of upriver communities with Sarawak. In response, the government built the Jalan Lintas Utara road connecting Putussibau, the District’s administrative center, to Nanga Badau at the border in order to divert orientation away from Sarawak and also for security reasons.39 Contrarily, the road only increased the intensity of commodity and human movements into Sarawak as it had been for years40.

37 Although these aggressive campaigns have subsided since 1997 when the government began to realize the potential of developing tourism in the area.
38 The BP7 campaign poster, designed in 1995, did openly draw a red cross on a picture depicting traditional communities (in resembling Dayak costumes) practising animist ceremonies.
39 The current Temenggung explained that threats from the communist PARAKU forces, although officially being declared as being wiped out in Indonesia by 1968, were still real in 1986. Though several ex-PARAKU Chinese communists came down from the Teliay river on the upper Kanyau to surrender in 1986, the communist insurgency was still ongoing in Sarawak until 1990. For the government’s motives behind the road’s construction, see Wadley (1998: 81-83).
40 Even the Kanyau Ibans, as well the other areas around the Emparan, prefer to follow the Malaysian time standard (GMT+8 during summer) rather than Western Indonesian Standard Time (WIB, which is GMT+7). The author has witnessed the ambiguity of the last New Year’s Eve celebrations, where in front of guests from Jakarta, one biak purposefully adjusted the time back to WIB standard time. However, other biak persisted in celebrating the event according to the Malaysian time standard.
In addition to increasing interaction among transnational Iban families, the road also prompted new conflicts regarding land tenure – an issue in which the government has always been perceived as the main undermining force to the Iban adat laws. In this regard, the government itself is considered by some Iban as an intrusive alien newcomer from a ‘remote distance’, as expressed by the view that:

"Pemerintah itu sendiri pendatang dimaks."  
("The government is in itself a newcomer here.")

This remark is related to their dislike towards the government’s one-sided decision in 1997 to demarcate the upper Kanyau area as part of the Betung Kerihun National Park, which consists of many temudun lands (fallow land plots) inherited from former generations. Land issues have always been an important and sensitive matter for the Iban as ownership of a plot of land for rice cultivation is essential for any nuclear family’s survival. The above statement refers back to their history, putting forward the earliest migration from the Kapaas. Thus it emphasizes that the Iban adat confirming their land ownership by evidence of temudun plots, is much more older than the State agrarian laws.44 The naming process of the Park was also a concern for some Iban informants. The Forestry Department had initially named it Bentuang Karimun National Park, referring Bentuang as the name of a mountain on the upper Tekelai river. The Iban were displeased because locally it is known as Gunung Betung, and more displeased because it is located in their traditional Iban territory. It is again a case of the government neglecting local history. One informant blamed the Park authorities for only employing Javanese, Malay and Maloh staff and for never having consulted with the Iban communities.

Another tale made the decision to compromise the celebration at 23:30 PM WIB standard time, while shouting "Panjang Umar Sarawak, Panjang Umar Indonesia!". Accordingly, this time arrangement was to keep them fully compatible with their Malaysian kin, as well as arguing that Malaysian standard time was more in line with the movements of the sun – an important time-gauge for hunting and fishing activities.

44 However, when confronted with the neighboring Maloh during recent land disputes, the Temenggung, for instance, shifted his arguments in line with the State narrative. This occurred during an inter-adat meeting organized by the Park management in November 2001, where accordingly the Maloh claimed the area of present-day Kelayarn as traditional Maloh territory. The Iban Temenggung replied by saying that ‘adat laws are questionable because they are unwritten, and that it was the obligation of every Indonesian citizen to adhere to formal state laws, which guaranteed equal rights for every citizen’.
5) Reformasi and Reclaiming Identities

The most controversial decision made by outsiders was in 1982 when the Embaloh Hulu Camat (Sub-District Administrator) named Simbolon, of Sumatran Batak origin, regrouped Sadap, Madang and Kelayam into a single village administrative unit and named it Toba village after the great lake in North Sumatra. The Camat also regrouped other Iban and Maloh settlements, such as Sungai Utik, Mungguk and Nanga Awin in the similar move, and naming them officially according to places in his Batak homeland, such as Pulau Manak, Rantau Prapat and Saujung Giling Manik. None of the Iban knew the origin of these names at that time, but could only accept the Camat’s argument to take it as a ‘souvenir’ (‘hadiah kenang-kenangan’) to remember him and that the Dayaks in the area ‘should be proud of this honour’. It demonstrated again an obvious example of rulers seeing remote territories as a terra incognita and local communities as people without histories. After the 1998 Reformasi, the village leaders, with support from Jacobus Frans Layang, the Bupati (District Administrator) of Maloh-Iban descent, insisted to rename the villages back to their local names, thus Toba was changed back to Benua Sadap. As one informant reasoned within their own Iban perspective on land ownership:

"Kami takut kalau nanti sewaktu-waktu anak Camat tersebut merantau ke sini, dia akan menganggap wilayah desa ini sebagai milik bansa Batak."

("We are afraid that, should someday the children of the Camat come to this area, they might as well claim these village lands as Batak property.")

The Reformasi, for the Iban, also marked the start of a political willingness on part of the government to acknowledge adat (customary) rights of the Upper Kapuas communities, though it has still been marked by differences in relating to the subject. With the absence of any adat organization for the Iban in West Kalimantan, the Temenggung still looks for reference from the Sarawak Iban Adat Conferences held regularly in Sarawak. When the Temenggung intended to attend the last Sarawak Iban Cultural Seminar in Bintulu in 1998, he asked the district government whether it could provide him with a small allowance for the journey (uang jalan), which the government said it could not provide as

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Which was showed by steps taken from the government (in this case represented by the Forestry Ministry) to renegotiate national park boundaries, incorporating Adat rules and sanctions in natural resource management and accommodating Adat representatives in District development planning.

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it was 'outside the country'. Not losing hope, he turned for help to contacts at the Kuching-based Tun Jugah Foundation, which provided his allowances. As the Temenggung remarks:

"Pemerintah sudah mengangkat saya menjadi Temenggung untuk mengurus adat, tapi mereka malah belum terlalu peduli. Mereka mengusulkan supaya di Kalimantan Barat ada semacam Dewan Adat di Pontianak. Tapi bagi kami lebih baik bila dipusatkan di Badau supaya juga mudah berhubungan dengan Sarawak. Adat Iban itu tidak bisa dipisah oleh Negara karena kita sudah menyatu sebelum Negara itu ada."

("The government has appointed me as Temenggung to take care of adat affairs, but they don't seem to be very concerned yet. They had proposed the establishment of an Adat Council in Pontianak. But for us it would be better to have it in Badau near the border to make it easier for us to maintain contact with Sarawak. Adat Iban can not be separated by states because we were already united before the states were formed.")

Thus the Indonesian State could not accept the fact that the adat Iban was transnational in nature.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Seen from historical processes, it can be indicated that there is a contingent process linking the narrative identity construction of the Kanyau Iban with various historical events. The colonial era had sowed Center – Peripheral relationships which formed the basis of Indonesia’s modern state rule. The resulting ethnic stereotyping and ongoing negotiations between local versus national identities all provide the setting in which the Kanyau Iban had negotiated their identities. For example, the post-PARAKU events did not result a total incorporation into the ‘Indonesian’ identity as hoped by the State. But contrarily, the introduction of Christianity as an anti-communist propaganda “backfired” provided the Kanyau Iban an identity that demarcate themselves further from their perceived Malay-Islam domination within the Indonesian state.

The idealistic narrative of Indonesia as an imagined community which is in itself built on certain narrative versions constructed on history becomes weaker, irrelevant and ‘devaluated’ when it reached peripheral border areas. In the

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border areas, local narratives on history or experiences are markedly different. It is difficult for the Kanyau Iban to identify themselves with this imagined version of an 'Indonesian community' wherein they are imagined as inferior, 'backward', 'upriver' and subordinate members under coastal, Malay, Javanese and Batak domination, where their land ownership is vaguely recognized and their history is deemed invisible. By maintaining their 'Iban' identity, which is built on the dominant local and Sarawakian narratives on history, they are able to imagine themselves as an important center of a larger transnational Iban community, as the rightful and undisputed owners of their lands, and as a community with a rich history. The emergence of a general Dayak identity consciousness in Kalimantan may have been closely interlinked with such local processes of identification. Thus while there is no doubt that the Kanyau Iban accept their status as Indonesian subjects, it is a compromising result accepted through contest and negotiation.

It should also be noted that the State itself is in no way monolithic. The dissemination of State ideologies and narratives are subject to re-interpretations, re-readings as well as situational execution among its agents of power. The Reformasi events opened-up spaces for negotiations between State agents and the Iban community on Adat matters, although this is undertaken without a significant shift of discursive formations regarding narratives of the Indonesian Nation-State project. Borderlands remain constructed as fixed, dead and devaluated spaces by nation-states.

This paper calls for continuing examination on the emergence of borderland identities in a post-colonial Southeast Asian context. While showing that borderland identities are in constant dispute, contradiction, but perpetually in negotiation with nation-state projects of nationalism, this paper also calls for future efforts to place local and marginalized people as active actors in history and social changes, to scrutinize the continuing devaluing characteristics of nation-state projects and to examine borderlands as an important stage of interaction between nation-states and its constructed constituencies.

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