

Title: Which socio/ethno- linguistic practices survive the processes of 'modernization' in Borneo societies?

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This seminar presentation attempts to develop a topic which I addressed in 2013 at the Bidayuh Cultural Symposium in Kuching, organised by the Dayak Bidayuh National Association. I was invited to speak on the topic of 'Sustaining and Preserving Bidayuh Cultural Identity in the Global Perspective', and agreed to address this, from a linguistic as opposed to an anthropological perspective.

In this talk I listed a few Bidayuh cultural practices known to me which have survived and persist within the community to this day, in spite of the pressures of modernization and globalization and the moves away from traditional ("pagan") religious beliefs and practices. Among these are the use of teknonyms to refer to family members (Lindell 2008: 52-53); the practice of *pai ping* (Chua 2009: 344) when a guest has to leave a house without taking food and drink; various *pantang* (taboos) concerning entering the forest and referring to animals by name. These and other practices are found not only among the Bidayuh community, but across many Borneo communities, with variations.

More recent events and debates following the earthquake in Sabah, which caused tragic loss of life among those ascending and descending Mount Kinabalu, have acted as a stimulus towards further consideration of what sociocultural and (socio)linguistic practices (*adat*) are maintained by Borneo communities in the (post)modern world. The Kadazandusun *sogit* (customary compensation) concept attracted worldwide attention, following suggestions of a causal link between the earthquake and the actions of a group of Europeans who removed their clothes near the summit of the mountain which is sacred to the Kadazandusun people. Again, customs similar to *sogit* are found across a number of Borneo societies.

In the seminar I argue a need for exploration of the connections between the languages and identities of Borneo communities in terms of maintenance, shift and loss, and address the specific research question: which practices are maintained, and which have been lost, as a consequence of 'modernization'?

Presenter's biodata and photo:

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