PARADOXICAL OUTCOMES OF NATIONAL SCHOOLING IN THE BORDERLAND OF WEST KALIMANTAN, INDONESIA: THE CASE OF THE IBAN

Michael Eilenberg
International Development Studies
University of Roskilde
DK-4000 Roskilde, Denmark
Email: eilen@ruc.dk

Introduction

Marginal populations like the borderland Iban often do not primarily identify with the state in which they live. Identities derived from regional and local associations are usually more significant in people's daily experience. Communities living on either side of a national border, for instance, may have more in common with each other than they do with their own distant state capitals or other regions of their country. Such absence of a sense of strong national belonging is evident among the Kalimantan Iban, influences their relationship with the Indonesian state, and in many ways challenges the nation-state's more homogeneous definition of what makes a nationality distinctive.

This paper brings together facets of national belonging and national schooling within a borderland context with the aim of understanding the often shifting and ambiguous relationship between the border Iban and their nation-state.

Mass-education in Indonesia is of fairly recent origin and has been an important instrument in the nation-building process. In this paper, I will argue that processes of national schooling are often more complex and seldom turn out as intended by national policy-makers. In the area studied national schooling has been only partially successful in creating identification with Indonesia due to certain socio-economic constraints and the local border peoples' long history of cross-border relations.

The data analyzed here is based on field research conducted among Iban border communities in the subdistrict (*kecamatan*) of Batang Lupar, district (*kabupaten*) of Kapuas Hulu in West Kalimantan during eight months between 2002 and 2003, with one month of additional observations in 2005.[1] The primary location of field research was the longhouse community of Rumah Manah and surrounding communities located along the Leboyan River.[2] The longhouse of Rumah Manah is divided into ten nuclear *bilik*-families, which at

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[2] Rumah Manah is a pseudonym. The real name of the community has been changed to preserve the anonymity of the inhabitants. Otherwise, names of places are accurately reported, while the names of all individuals mentioned have been changed.

the time of my field research, consisted of 84 persons, although the number of residents varied considerably throughout the year, and some months the actual population living there was much smaller. There are several reasons for this; first, many residents (especially young men) spent a certain amount of time every year working in Sarawak, Malaysia. The older school children stayed most of the year in boarding schools in the subdistrict capital, Lanjak, only visiting the longhouse on weekends and holidays.

The Borderland

The Iban number over 600,000 in the Malaysian state of Sarawak, where they make up slightly more than a quarter of the state's population, while smaller Iban groups live in Sabah, the Sultanate of Brunei, and along the international border in the Indonesian province of West Kalimantan (cf. Sather 2004:623). About 14,000 Iban live in West Kalimantan. While in Sarawak, the Iban make up the largest single ethnic group, over the border in the province of West Kalimantan, the Iban are a small minority.[3] Being a major group or a minority, as I will show, has certain implications, which shape the groups differently.

A large majority of the Iban in the subdistrict Batang Lupar practice longhouse residence, with the economic foundation based on subsistence agriculture and forestry with its fundamental component being rice farming in hill or swamp swiddens. As a supplement to rice farming, the Iban engage in hunting, fishing, and collect different kinds of forest products. To further supplement the household economy, be able to buy sought-after consumer goods, and pay for children's schooling, people engage in different kinds of wage labor, both locally and across the border in Sarawak.

The expansion of economic development in the Batang Lupar subdistrict has been made difficult by its relative isolation from the rest of the province, a result of poor or non-existent infrastructure. In order to get economic development going, the government began constructing roads connecting the border region (*kawasan perbatasan*) with the rest of the province.[4] The slowly improving infrastructure along with an increase in logging have recently brought about new economic possibilities (Wadley and Eilenberg 2005, 2006). A new road network has cut down on traveling time, both when going to town to sell cash-crops, buy consumer goods, attend school, visit government offices and clinics and when crossing the border to work or visit family in Sarawak.

Borderland Habitus

Transnational borderlands, as the West Kalimantan borderland, generate opportunities for adopting specific socio-economic strategies, which depend on local ability to move between and make use of multiple identities. Living in a borderland between two different nation-states confronts the local border population with a sense of duality. These ambiguous circumstances of border life shape a certain border habitus, which often is in conflict with the

[3] The Iban of West Kalimantan live primarily along the international border in the district of Kapuas Hulu. Locally, within this district, they primarily reside in four subdistricts, with one of these being the subdistrict of Batang Lupar. The Iban in this subdistrict make up the majority of the population constituting more than 50 percent of a total population of 4,724 people (BPS Kabupaten Kapuas Hulu 1999:35).

[4] The lack of good roads connecting the border area with the rest of the province has been described in the national media as the main reason why border communities are less directed towards their own country than neighboring Malaysia (Kompas 2000a, 2000b, 2001a).

national view of being good and loyal citizens. The duality of borderlands is very much apparent among the West Kalimantan Iban studied. Iban identity may be seen as consisting of (at least) two parts: first, being an ethnic Iban and culturally connected to a large Iban population in neighboring Sarawak, Malaysia, and second, being a longtime resident in the border area at the margins of the Indonesian state. Identity is a critically important factor in local Iban perceptions and strategic decisions. For the Iban borderlanders, belonging to a specific ethnicity is the prime identity marker when dealing with other ethnic groups and kin across the border. But when dealing with local government officials, their ethnic affiliation is strategically downplayed and their national identity as Indonesian citizens is strongly emphasized, although local Iban sentiments first and foremost seem to be placed within their own ethnic community and across the border (Eilenberg 2005).

The Iban relationship with the Indonesian state has been changing throughout history. For example, during the Communist insurgency, Iban allegiance to the state was relatively strong as many Iban men cooperated with the Indonesian military, tracking down Chinese Communists along the border (see Lumenta 2001, 2005). Today, on the other hand, during a time of local economic boom (mostly due to illegal logging), such allegiances appear very weak, characterized by distrust and suspicion. This is a result of opposing interests and government interference in the economic and political freedom of the borderlanders. Sometimes this shifting allegiance takes place with both identities simultaneously professed, a paradox that is vividly expressed in the strategic juggling of identities.

Although switching identities when it seems favorable, most inhabitants in Rumah Manah, especially those with little or no national education, are well aware of, and recognize that they have less in common with their fellow Indonesian citizens of the province than their Sarawak kin across the border. Though living within the borders delimiting the Indonesian nation-state, many borderland Iban, as a consequence of labor migration and ethnic affiliation, have more knowledge of the Sarawak state capital, Kuching, than their own distant provincial capital, Pontianak.[5]

The ambiguous and often contradictory relation the Iban hold with their own nation-state is a consequence of what I will call their special borderland habitus (Eilenberg 2005). I mean habitus in the sense of a longtime presence in the borderland and subsequent adjustment to the special circumstances that prevail here, resulting in the acquiring of special abilities — "a feel for the game." These abilities through time have become embodied into social conventions and local practices, following Pierre Bourdieu: "a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby feeling and thinking" (Bourdieu 1990:69–70), that is, dispositions and practices that emphasize flexibility, mobility, and pragmatism. In their striving to accumulate capital (economical, social, cultural, and symbolic), as potential capacity to produce and gain benefits, the Iban attempt to access a variety of fields, and this strategy involves the use of multiple identities. Different identities coexist, with each one becoming important depending on the circumstances.

When talking about a borderland habitus, I am in line with the concept of "border identity," as introduced by Wilson and Donnan (1998). They refer to a "border identity" as the special environment that is created and structured by a borderland. Such an identity is a mixture of many different and often contradictory identities that can change rapidly depending on the political and economic situation. Consequently: "Borders are liminal zones

[5] While it takes several days of arduous travel to reach Pontianak, Kuching can be reached from the border area in about nine hours in an air-conditioned bus.

in which residents, wayfarers and the state are continually contesting their roles and their nature. As a result borders and border people have identities which are shifting and multiple" (Donnan and Wilson 1999:64). I make use of the notion of a borderland habitus here to explain Iban border practices as more than strictly rational economic choices, but as interplays between a historical context, culture, and individual agency and outside government constraints. As such, a borderland habitus is the social reality embedded within the agents.

Despite the ethnic and cultural relations that go beyond the international border, the Sarawak Iban living along the border do not seem to exhibit the same borderland habitus as their Kalimantan cousins. Being a significant component of their state's population, and to some extent enjoying historical and cultural recognition, has meant the Sarawak Iban are generally better integrated into the Malaysian national project than the Kalimantan Iban are in the Indonesian (cf. Postill 1998). When I asked Sarawak Iban relatives visiting Rumah Manah how they identified themselves, they proudly referred to themselves as Malaysians and secondly as Iban, showing a strong national consciousness and a feeling of being part of a larger national entity.

The socioeconomic boundaries that are created and maintained as a result of the current international border have only been strengthened. Seen from the point of view of many Sarawak Iban with whom I spoke, the Kalimantan Iban are the rustic and less developed "them," compared to the modern and developed "us," despite the fact that they share kinship ties. On the opposite side of the border, this view, as mentioned earlier, is shared by a large section of the younger Iban generation who see their Sarawak kin as the prosperous and urban "other" in relation to whom they continually define themselves.

As elaborated by Donna Flynn, having a border identity is one form of shared social identity, appearing under certain circumstances and contexts and crosscut by several other identities, such as that based on regional affiliation, gender, and age (1997:326). The Iban borderlanders are not a homogeneous group, and although a majority of the Iban expressed a strong borderland habitus, life experiences are changing in the borderland, a fact that is especially apparent among the section of the younger generation who has been introduced to national schooling. In the discussion of identity twisting and national belonging, a look at formal education is important, as schooling in Indonesia is commonly known as being one of the major tools in the shaping of national sentiments and good citizens (*warga negara*).

Some Paradoxical Outcomes of National Schooling

In 1973 the Indonesian government initiated a massive national schooling project. They constructed thousands of elementary schools throughout the country in the mid-1990s, and today Indonesia had approximately 30 million students enrolled in elementary schools. Although secondary schooling is still out of reach to a large majority of especially the rural poor population, the school has become a major socializing agent (World Bank 1998:3; Berhman, Deolalikar and Soon 2002:27–28).

In line with this overall government attempt to create national mass schooling, and in order to develop the remote border region and heighten national loyalties, several elementary schools, SD (*Sekolah Dasar*), have been constructed in the past several decades in the subdistrict of Batang Lupar.

In theory, every child in the subdistrict now has the possibility to attend school and receive a formal education, unlike their parent's generation, the members of which had only limited or no formal schooling. In the case of Rumah Manah, only a small handful of persons

older than 35 had more than a few years of schooling. While elementary schools are located within walking distance from most longhouse communities, the two junior high schools, SMP (*Sekolah Menegah Pertama*), in the subdistrict are placed in the two towns, Lanjak and Ukit Ukit.[6] In order for the children from the more remote communities such as Rumah Manah to attend SMP in Lanjak, they have to stay in boarding schools (*asrama*) or with relatives in town.

During my field research, I visited and spoke to Iban school children of all class-levels and their teachers from several subdistrict schools.[7] Here it became very clear that the norms and demands the children experienced in school were very different from those back home in the longhouses. Many Iban children experience a kind of symbolic violence, using the words of Bourdieu, when they enter school. Their habitus fits poorly and has little value within the field of national schooling (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977).

Apart from competence in reading and writing, they are introduced to a new world of Indonesian national rhetoric and symbols and the idea of citizenship. One of the major intentions of formal mass-schooling in Indonesia initiated during Suharto's New Order period was (in addition to disseminating factual knowledge) to accentuate a specific national character and ideology among school pupils in the molding of good citizens and, as such, the maintenance of the unity of the nation-state (Fanany and Effendi 1999; Leigh 1991, 1999; Parker 1997, 2002, 2003). According to Barbara Leigh, Indonesian schools: "are sites where minds of the new generation of citizens are being developed" (Leigh 1999:42).[8]

The school curriculum in the subdistrict is a combination of national and local topics.[9] Although the largest part of the curriculum and the matching textbooks are decided upon and produced nationally and as such are shared throughout the country, local governments have some control over part of the curriculum, which is a reflection of efforts to make the education suit the local context (*Kalimantan Review* 2001). In the Batang Lupar subdistrict the schools, for example, taught a few lessons concerning aspects of local traditional culture. However, with only a limited number of such classes in the curriculum, it was obvious that such concerns were still secondary to the overall goal of national integration. These classes largely focused on aspects of local material culture, with only modest teaching in socio-cultural aspects such as local customary law and social organization. During these classes the children spend most of their time making traditional crafts, with the girls making baskets and

[6] The senior high school in Ukit Ukit is mostly attended by ethnic Maloh as a result of the town being a traditional Maloh stronghold, while the Iban usually send their children to Lanjak.

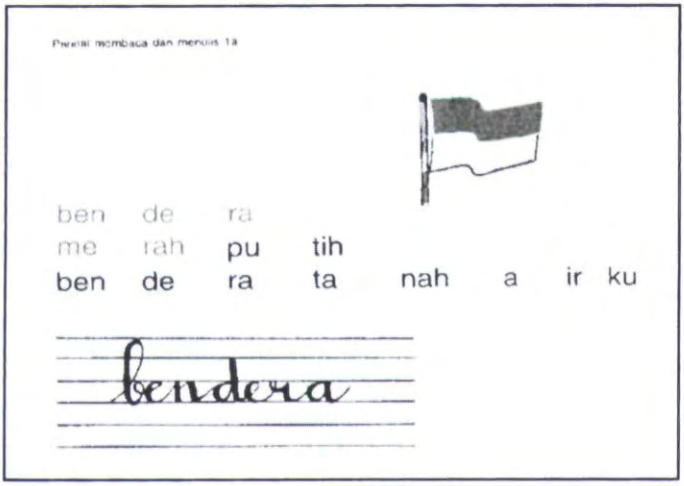
[7] My prime method of investigation in the school setting was informal interviews with teachers and students, supplemented with questionnaires and essays carried out among different age groups in three different schools in the subdistrict.

[8] As mentioned by Lynette Parker, citizenship, especially under Suharto's New Order, was not automatic but something you earn by showing loyalty and good behavior towards the regime (Parker 1992:42–43, 2002:9).

[9] In 1994 the National Education Department introduced a new curriculum that allowed the teaching of courses of 'local content' (*Muatan Local*), which should make up 20 percent of curriculum time. Although the actual implementation of such courses varies from district to district, the major obstacles are low support from government, lack of teachers, and insufficient funding (The World Bank 1998:36).

drawings while the boys make miniature traditional war shields painted with intricate Dayak patterns. These harmless cultural expressions do not question the overall purpose of national schooling, but accentuate Indonesia's Unity in Diversity (see also Acciaioli 1985, Parker 2003: 250–51).

The primary tool used in the process of creating a common national identity of "Indonesianness" is the teaching of the national language (*Bahasa Indonesia*) through which state values and norms are expressed. As such, Bahasa Indonesia has become the language of public, official, and formal discourse. The first language of the Iban children is their mother tongue, Iban (*jako Iban*), and when the children enter the school system they know almost nothing of *Bahasa Indonesia*. This means that the early years of schooling are concentrated on intense language learning. Language textbooks introduce the students to catchwords, symbols, and acronyms associated with the nation and national government policy. For example, national symbols such as the red and white flag of Indonesia (*sang saka merah putih*) often appear in language textbooks along with the golden eagle, Garuda, which is the official seal of the Republic. Acronyms associated with national campaigns such as family planning, KB (*keluarga berencana*), and other health promotions describing appropriate behavior, are also common.



Page from a Schoolbook

Apart from Bahasa Indonesia language lessons, especially the history lessons, SEJ (*Sejarah*), the geography lessons, GEO (*Geografi*), and the Morals of Pancasila lessons, PMP (*Pendidikan Moral Pancasila*), attempt to create a feeling of national consciousness among the children by the "wrapping of students in an inescapable net of ideology that [is] not easily penetrated, tested or resisted" (Parker 2002:16). In the history lessons, the children learn about the historic process that led to the creation of the Indonesian nation and about places of importance which played a large role in this process. For example, the importance of the Asia-Africa conference in Bandung in the 1950s was continually emphasized in lessons, while major regional historical processes, such as the rise and fall of the Dayak Unity Parti

in the 1940–1960s, the *Konfrontasi* period in the 1960s and the 1970s Communist insurgency in the border area were missing. In general, the students knew very little of the historical development of their own province.

In geography lessons, maps were often used to show students the territorial borders of the nation-state and were as such a tool to envision a "deep horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 1991:7) with other very different members of the nation about whom they knew very little, an understanding in line with Benedict Anderson's idea of creating an "imagined community." Actually, the only decorations in many classrooms were national symbols and large maps with thick lines and colors marking the national territory. On several occasions during GEO classes, I witnessed how students were asked to point out on the map the borderline separating Indonesia from Malaysia.

Geography Class

Finally, during PMP classes, when reciting the five principles of the national ideology, *Pancasila*; 1) Monotheism — belief in one God (*Ketuhanan*), 2) Humanism (*kemanusiaan*), 3) The unity of Indonesia-nationalism (*kebangsaan*), 4) Democracy through representative government (*kerakyatan*), 5) Social justice for all Indonesian people (*keadilan social*), the students receive the overall guide to correct action, action that leads to a unified notion of the nation-state (*kesatuan negara*) as expressed in the national slogan of 'Unity in Diversity' (*bhinneka tunggal ika*). Such slogans are widely found on government buildings, etc. On one of my first days at school (SD), I heard one teacher inform his students that the most important thing in school is to become a modern Indonesian citizen, which is useful for the homeland (*menjadi warga negara Indonesia modern... dan berguna bagi nusa dan bangsa*).

For example, each Monday morning the students from all classes lined up in front of school, where a student read the five principles and preamble of the constitution to the entire assembly, after which all the students sang the national anthem and finished off by saluting the headmaster.

Focusing on formal schooling in Bali, the anthropologist Lynette Parker has pointed out how the material taught in Indonesian schools, especially at the primary level, has more of a moral character than an intellectual one (Parker 2002).[10] This observation fits very well with my own observations in the Batang Lupar subdistrict. The teaching was closely structured around the content of the textbooks, which was memorized through constant repetition. There were no critical discussions of textbook content. Every subject had one correct answer and for Iban children, schooling was all about learning the "right" answers. What it means to be a good citizen was conveyed in the school textbooks and not up for discussion. The world of schooling is black and white for the students; no shades of grey are tolerated (Leigh 1999:38). The students were measured by their ability to remember and repeat what was written in the textbooks and as such they learned the boundary between correct and incorrect behavior. An example is the multiple choice questions below in the written semester test for sixth grade (SD) in the subject named "Pancasila and Citizenship Education," PPKn (*Pendidikan Pancasila dan kewarganegaraan*) in the Kapuas Hulu District 2002/2003:

Selected questions from the PPKn test:

In the attempt to create a clean environment [*linkungan bersih*], we may not:
a. clean up the ditch
b. throw away waste
c. pile up garbage
d. plant flowers in the yard

Indonesian [*bahasa Indonesia*] is the national language whose purpose is:
a. to be studied in school
b. unify the Indonesian nation
c. the necessity of a nation

In order to create 'unity in diversity' [*binneka tunggal ika*] the Indonesian nation must:
a. possess soldiers
b. work together with other nations
c. master a knowledge of science
d. raise unity

The duty of the student as an Indonesian citizen [*warga negara*] is:
a. to study for nine years
b. to obtain military training

[10] The World Bank presents evidence that a majority of students lack general competency in numbers, reading, and reasoning skills after finishing basic schooling in Indonesia (World Bank 1998:23).

c. to know (Indonesian) history
d. to study political science

If inhabitants in a certain area of Indonesia experience a natural disaster, who has an obligation [*berkewajiban*] to give assistance?:
a. just the government
b. just rich people
c. the whole Indonesian people
d. government and rich people

Very few students had any difficulty in answering the questions asked in the test although not all are straightforward or clear (see also Parker 2002:4). The "right" answers were all to be found in the textbooks and had been repeatedly pointed out by the teachers during classes so it was not remarkable that despite the ambiguous nature of the questions, all students seemed to give the same memorized answers. The rationale behind this teaching method is that of the "banking method," where teachers make a deposit in the students' heads, which can be withdrawn later during exams. This is a teaching approach which by and large discourages critical thinking as the answers are decided beforehand (Ruth-Heffelbower 2002:226).

During my school visits I, among other things, asked students at both the SD and the SMP levels through essay-writing to describe what it means to be Indonesian and Iban. Some of the answers I received are translated below:

> Jenny, thirteen-year-old girl (SMP, 2002): I will be a diligent and serious student. Because the school is important. In school we learn modern science (*ilmu pengetahuan modern*) and receive a wide knowledge. We shall learn good things such as to keep our homes and surroundings clean and learn about health (*kesehatan*). The school creates sensible and useful (*beguna*) children, who benefit and advance (*maju*) the society (*masyarakat*). If the school thinks it is a good idea, I will study and major in science and technology and become a useful person for my parents and society.

> Adus, twelve-year-old boy (SD, 2002): We Iban still farm swiddens in the hills (*ladang*) and use simple tools, such as the *kapak* and *beliong*. Having cultivated the land in one place, we move to another place to be able to survive. Working in the fields is hard work, but this is our tradition (*tradisi*). Modern Indonesians do not move their fields, because they are more sophisticated (*canggih*) and modern, they have a better technology. I want progress (*perkembangan*) so we do not lag behind (*ketinggalan*). I want to create improvements (*kemajuan*) in the area where I live. I will develop (*membangun*) our society so it will rise to the national level (*tingkat nasional*).

The answers received in the school setting had a tendency to convey morals learned through the rhetoric of good citizens copied from the textbooks. The children seemed to write what they expected to be the correct answers, and deliberately downplayed their Iban

identity.

Another explicit aim of schooling I will discuss here is development (*pembangunan*). Indications of an equation between good citizenship, modernity, and development were constantly expressed in everyday teaching (see also Leigh 1999:44). Concepts such as 'progress' (*kemajuan*) and 'modern knowledge' (*pengetahuan modern*) were emphasized as the ultimate goals of a good citizen. Textbooks were full of pictures of the so-called modern Indonesian lifestyle, such as the middle-class family with a maximum of two children, living in single houses, having their supper sitting around a table, using a WC, etc., teachings which were very distant from the homelife experience of the students. There were, of course, no pictures of longhouse living in the textbooks and, although it is not expressed explicitly, communal longhouse living implicitly becomes inferior, because it does not mirror the image of a modern Indonesian citizen. I often heard teachers encourage their students to go home and enlighten their parents, and tell them what they had learned in school and try to get them to follow the informed instructions.

Drawing Illustrating an Iban Youth's Idea of Modern Indonesia

The enculturation into good citizens was not only limited to processes of moral learning. The children were also influenced physically. The following note from my field diary shows the contrast between the two different worlds of Iban children.

> 10 October 2002 (journey to school): Having walked for nearly two hours and getting close to school, the children take a rest at a small stream and start their usual ritual. The girls and boys disappear behind the scrub, from which they appear a moment later all dressed in red and white school uniforms (wearing the colors of the nation). The home clothes and bush-knives (*duku*) are packed in their backpacks, and the whole group go down

> to the river where they wash the dust off their faces and do their hair. From one moment to the next all children, with whom I a few hours ago left the longhouse, have changed from dirty Iban children, with knives hanging from their sides to clean, identical, Indonesian schoolchildren.
>
> 5 November 2002 (morning assembly): The students are gathering on the grass area in front of the school. When it turns eight o'clock the school headmaster (*kepala sekolah*) arrives on his scooter, succeeded by the three other teachers on their bikes. One of the senior students rings the bell and commands the rest of the students to line up in front of the flag pole, with the red and white (*merah-putih*) flag fluttering in the breeze. Each student raises his or her right arm so it rests on the shoulder of the person in front of them in order to make straight ranks. All four teachers come out of the teachers' room and are greeted by the students. The students are asked to straighten their clothes and enter the classroom.

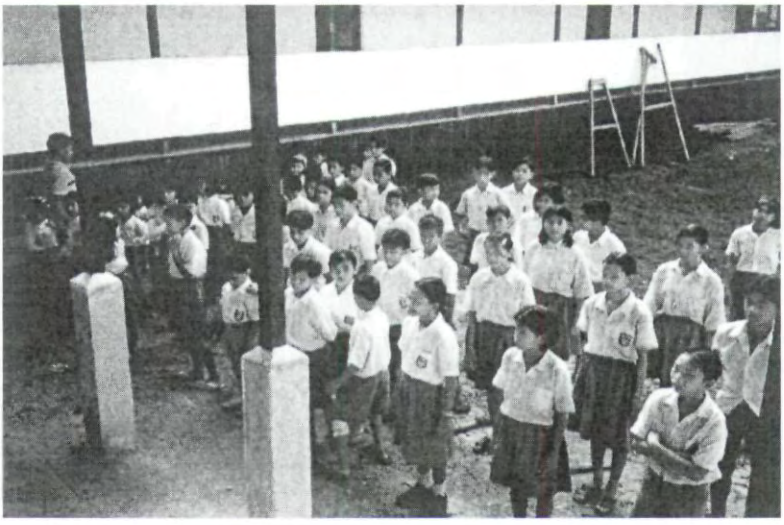
There is a very clear demarcation between school space and non-school space. When the children enter the school area they are in no doubt that this is Indonesian "territory," with the national flag in the middle of the schoolyard and posters on classroom walls portraying national symbols and mottos, etc.

Earlier, I mentioned how the students during the school essay-writing largely conveyed a national rhetoric as preferred by their teachers. Later, I had the children answer the same questions once more, although this time back home in the longhouse. Now the answers were more ambiguous in character and largely colored by the home milieu and their own life experience.

> Natilia, fourteen-year-old girl (SMP, 2002): Iban life (*idup Iban*) and culture is not very known in Indonesia, we are not so strong (*nadai kuat*) here. While in Malaysia Iban culture is well-known and the Iban have greater influence, there life is good (*idup jamai*). Indonesia is a poor country (*negara miskin*), many people compete and look for a better livelihood. There are many problems (*maioh masalah*), many strangers (*nadai kaban*) and bad people (*urang jai*).[11]

[11] When the children in public discussed matters relating to school or the nation, Indonesian was used, but in everyday discussions Iban was used. When the two domains came together in a discussion, the children (and adults) had a tendency to switch back and forth between languages or to mix them Such switching between languages is just another reflection of their dual identity.

Iban Schoolchildren Journeying to School



School Assembly

It is my experience that the opinions expressed at home often contradicted the message learned in school. At home, the children are told that people across the border are family and relatives (*kaban*), while in school they are taught that the border is the line dividing two different states and peoples. As such, national schooling attempts to produce boundaries between "us" Indonesian citizens and "them" non-citizens (Malaysians). In the schools, certain notions about the world are reproduced, but simultaneously the children engage in new social relations and obtain new knowledge.

Portions of the morals learned in school are, of course, internalized in the minds of the children, but, as indicated above, Iban school children do not passively internalize the nationalist rhetoric learned in school. They interpret the messages according to their own life experiences and adopt and reject them accordingly. While the attempt to accentuate a sense of national consciousness in replacement of a regional Iban borderland habitus as the overall marker of belonging has been less successful, the students have generally, and with great enthusiasm, internalized the modernity message of school, especially the more materialistic part of acquiring modern consumer goods in order to make life more comfortable and acquire symbolic capital. Furthermore, there was a distinctly pronounced desire among many of my young informants sometime in the future to try out town life and single-house living (*ka tinggal di pasar, ka tinggal rumah sendiri*) in exchange for communal longhouse living, as in school they have learned that longhouses are dirty backward places out of touch with clean modern living. To move from the longhouse into town was not just seen as a movement in geographical space, but also a movement in time, from tradition to modernity. Ironically, more often than not the location of this modern urban utopia imagined by my young informants was said to be situated in the big cities across the border in Malaysia (Eilenberg 2003:56).

During my stay in Rumah Manah, I witnessed several cases of older children crossing the border accompanied by adults, be it one-day shopping trips to the Lubok Antu bazaar, short-term social visits with relatives, or to take part in weddings or funerals; the occasions were many. Each time, the children came home with new "amazing" stories about life over there, pestering their parents to obtain modern consumer goods such as TVs, VCD-players, etc. The influence from Sarawak and especially their Iban kin is omnipresent and takes yet another form with the recent introduction of TV sets and VCD-players in local longhouses. The most popular entertainment by far was watching VCD's "Made in Sarawak" (Sibu), bought across the border in Lubok Antu or at the local logging company, containing everything from modern Iban pop (*lagu Iban*) and karaoke music to documentary films of Iban rituals (*gawa*) and folklore songs (*pantun*). Children and youths prefer the music videos displaying well-dressed, modern, young Iban pop idols moving around in urban surroundings, singing of love and riches. Here the young spectators become active participants by singing along and doing imitative dancing, and for a short moment getting the feeling of joining these young Sarawak Ibans in their success.

Seeing life in modern longhouses with all thinkable conveniences and the overall higher living standard of their Iban age-mates, local notions of Sarawak as a 'land of honey' (*negara madu*) were further strengthened and their own lives were thrown into relief. The dualism of modern versus traditional was often used by the young generation when comparing the two

Iban groups. Being modern was associated with the positive connotations of development and progress, while the term 'traditional' (*tradisi*) was associated with the past (*masa dulu*) and being poor and backward.

Schooling among the Iban in the subdistrict of Batang Lupar is not as straightforward as local and central government would like it to be. The government wishes to emphasize schooling and create good citizens and development, but because of economical, socio-cultural circumstances only a few Iban children seem to stay long enough in the school system to receive a higher education and a strong national consciousness. This is especially true for Iban children from communities situated in close proximity to the border. Iban communities closer to or within the subdistrict capital, Lanjak, generally have a higher level of schooling.[12]

This apparent paradox of national schooling in promoting good citizens among the Iban is twofold. First, the economic crisis starting in the late 1990s put a brake on government development plans in the subdistrict, and especially the quality of schooling was hit hard as the economic support received per student was cut down, and teachers' salaries likewise (*Jakarta Post* 2002). As elsewhere in Indonesia, the subdistrict schools consequently had to cope with pared-down budgets, meaning that the physical context of the schools was rundown, lacking up-to-date textbooks and other everyday necessities (*Kalimantan Review* 2002).[13] The teachers' low salaries furthermore had an effect on their motivation and incentive for good teaching.[14] All teachers with whom I spoke had to take up jobs on the side, working the rice fields or selling food and cakes to their students during school breaks, etc. Such constraints slowed down the effectiveness in disseminating the nationalistic message of schooling. This was especially apparent in the many small and remote rural primary schools, which were chronically undermanned (cf., *Equator Online* 2006; *Pontianak Post* 2006). The poor working conditions of the teachers, for example, affected the effectiveness of national language learning at the SD level.[15]

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[12] A small Iban elite in Lanjak has managed to send their children to school in the provincial and national capital. During field research I met several young Iban men home on holiday from attending vocational school or university in Jakarta.

[13] Even prior to the economic crisis school resources were inadequate. As elsewhere in Indonesia, schools rely on various parental fees to fund a large portion of their non-salary costs. This means that schools in poor communities are less able to afford such costs than schools in rich communities (see World Bank 1998).

[14] A primary school teacher in the subdistrict earned an average of 600,000 Rp. a month in 2002, equivalent to about 70 US$ at the time.

[15] The remoteness of some upriver primary schools also meant that teachers who did not live on the school premises often had problems reaching the schools because of rain and floods. As a consequence, teaching became very irregular. During the rainy season of 2002, the children from Rumah Manah who attended a nearby SD were taught on average two or three times a week with teaching time amounting to only two hours a day. The rest of the weekdays, the teacher never appeared. In 2004 a new school was build in the longhouse vicinity, but during my last visit in June 2005 this school was still inoperative as there was

Most teachers on SD level in the study area speak Iban fluently, either as a result of longtime residence in the area, or because they are themselves Iban. Using Iban language in teaching is permitted in the first years of schooling (grades one to three) so as to help promote *Bahasa Indonesia*, but from then on, all verbal communication should in theory be carried out in the national language. In practice, a dilemma arises as there are too few teachers and not enough time for each student, so the teachers have a tendency to keep on using Iban instead of *Bahasa Indonesia* when communicating with the pupils throughout primary school in order to ease their work pressure. The result is that many Iban students have mastered *Bahasa Indonesia* very poorly by the time they leave primary school, and this has consequences for their future schooling.[16]

Second, although most parents in Rumah Manah generally recognize the value of education, contemporary local practical considerations and lack of national consciousness often hamper such intentions. Some parents expect their children to take an active part in the household economy (see *Pontianak Post* 2003), meaning that some children do not go to school regularly, and in this way fall behind and often have to repeat a class or two. Experiencing the subsequent humiliation and pity from fellow students and teachers, such pupils often enter into a cycle of truancy, and many leave school altogether. Iban egalitarian principles of individualism and self-determination also play a part, which is reflected in the choice of parents to some degree to allow older children to make their own decisions. I saw how two boys after finishing SD decided not to continue in SMP (despite it being compulsory by law). In these cases, little was done by the parents to motivate the boys to continue schooling, and teachers had no energy to pursue the matter. As one father told me when I asked why no action was taken; "He [his son] can always become a rice farmer (*urang bumai*) like me and take up work in Sarawak if he needs money." The same father furthermore expressed the view that he already had one child attending junior high school, and one was enough, considering the expenses involved[17] The expenses connected to sending one's children to school are high considering local living standards. Schooling is generally a major consumer of parental income, meaning that many families put their money on one child at the expense of his or her siblings.[18] Schooling for many Iban (parents) is part of a

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no teacher available as a consequence of the general teacher shortage in the district.

[16] A World Bank working paper further indicates that West Kalimantan, compared to neighboring provinces in general, does quite badly in terms of poverty and education outcomes (Lanjouw 2001:14– 15).

[17] The headmaster of the same SD mentioned earlier told me that when school fees had to be paid, fathers complained of the high expenses, while during a cockfight they easily gambled away cash worth several months of school fees in one day, indicating that some parents (fathers), although apparently in possession of the cash needed, prioritize other things higher than schooling.

[18] From 2002–2003, the monthly school fee for SMP level in the Batang Lupar subdistrict was 10.000 Rp, not counting the much higher expenses for food, boarding, uniforms, pencils, etc. The expenses were even higher for parents sending their children to SMA in Putussibau. The expenses for board at boarding schools alone amounted to approximately 700.000 Rp

future-oriented economic strategy of the family. Several parents told me that sending children to school first and foremost was a means that could be used strategically as cultural capital to raise their standard of living sometime in the future (in a formerly agricultural and logging economy) and so concentrating on sending one child to school was enough.

Longtime experience of living in the ever-shifting borderland has shown the Iban the importance of making use of opportunities as they appear. For some parents to downplay the current necessity of schooling is largely a consequence of the current economic opportunities. As such, I noticed a connection between Iban school truancy and the economic boom in the borderland. Having joined the students from Rumah Manah in school on a regular basis for more than two months, I, for example, experienced how one of my school companions, a twelve-year-old boy named Benjamin, one day told me, with pride in his voice, that he was not able to go to school with me for awhile, because he was to join his father and cousins upriver, building a new logging camp for a logging company. Benjamin confided the following to me: "My father works cutting down trees (*pekerjaan ayah menebang kayu*) in order to fulfill the needs of our family (*kebutuhan keluarga kami*)." And as he expressed later on, now he, too, was given the opportunity to show his worth (*mandang ka diri*), and make his own decisions (*ngering ka diri*), earning some money for the family (*makai gaji*). All of which are important Iban virtues in a male prestige milieu that stresses competition, bravery, courage, and wealth (see Mashman 1991). The local symbolic capital inherent in such acts of independence is in this instance greater than the cultural capital of schooling. Benjamin's father put it to me as follows:

> School is important, but when there is finally work, everybody wants to make some cash. Also the young people, so they can afford buying the things they want. If they want to work, they work. They can go to school later. Maybe the (timber) company is gone next year, and it will be difficult to earn cash again, it is difficult without cash. Everything costs money now; TV, VCD, gas, noodles, clothes...also school and the doctor.

The headmaster of a local SD expressed the dilemma as follows:

> If there is a (timber) company in the area, they (Iban students) will go out and chase money. Chasing money is one of their principles (*principnya*). When there is a lot of money in the area, they will try to earn a lot. They do not attend school as long as they can earn a good salary. Maybe 25 percent think school is more important. Why attend school when you can earn money to buy motorbikes, buy anything? This is an Iban principle. If there is plenty of money, they say, why go to school? If there are four children in a *bilik*, one will go to school while the rest will stay home in the longhouse.

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annually.

This flexible attitude towards schooling among some students the headmaster attributed to the Iban way of living and a general lack discipline and ignorance among Iban parents: "*orang tua tidak tau disiplin, tidak mengerti.*"

As discussed above it is not enough to teach good citizenship and national belonging if the local conditions are not capable of delivering the advantages of citizenship and fail to live up to the rewards of modernism promised. Schooling as a form of cultural capital is only recognized locally among the Iban in so far as it can be transformed into economic capital and prestige.[19] The children who do not continue their school career after finishing SD or SMP usually return to their respective communities and quickly readjust to the pace of longhouse living. They become subsistence rice farmers, seek employment in Sarawak or in the logging industry. Only a minority of Iban students in the subdistrict reach senior high school level, SMA (*Sekolah Menegah Atas*), and even fewer continue to university or vocational school. The few who do, end up being more "Indonesian" than their siblings, as a result of attending boarding school in faraway towns such as Putussibau, Sintang, or Pontianak,[20] in towards the national center and far from their natal communities, social networks and familiar borderland. But also out of this group of educated young Iban, many return home after finishing their education. These are disillusioned and disappointed by the lack of work opportunities, and having to compete with fellow citizens who are often better traveled in Indonesian bureaucracy. Meanwhile, knowing their (less-schooled) age-mates return home from Sarawak loaded with prestigious goods and plenty of Malaysian *ringgit*, enjoying the prestige that comes with such endeavors, many end up returning home to their natal communities or district where they, by birth, are equipped with a strong social network. Although this pull from two directions among young Ibans creates a feeling of alienation and dislocation from their natal communities and culture for some, a majority still see themselves as being Iban borderlanders. Despite government intentions of creating loyal Indonesian citizens through national schooling by producing; "an implicit, taken-for-granted, shared national habitus" (Foster 1991:237), the outcome is only partly successful in the borderland. As described above, several factors seem to circumvent such efforts; poor economic conditions in school, a local boom economy and the presence of an overall borderland habitus.

Occasionally news reports touching upon the issue of national loyalty among the West Kalimantan borderland population have appeared in the national press, expressed in headlines such as: "*Masyarakat Perbatasan Kalimantan-Sarawak Terasing di Negerinya Sendiri*" (communities living along the Kalimantan-Sarawak border are isolated within their own country) (*Kompas* 2000a, my translation). More often than not, the Iban population is presented as a vivid case of this borderland dilemma. Such a depiction accentuates isolation,

[19] According to Bourdieu, cultural capital exists, among other things, in an objectified state, in the form of cultural goods, and in an institutionalized state, as, for example, in an academic education obtained through formal schooling (Bourdieu 1986:245).

[20] Many Iban families are split in their orientation with some members knowing almost nothing about the Indonesian political and economic system while others are becoming alienated from Iban longhouse living as a consequence of schooling.

underdevelopment and cross-border ethnicity as the main reasons for cross-border solidarity and subsequent lack of national consciousness (*Pontianak Post* 2005b). The borderlanders are at times seen as a national security threat because of their strong cross-border ties. Even fears of local Iban separatism have been expressed as a possible future outcome of such special borderland circumstances (see *Kompas* 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c).

As such, the existence of a borderland habitus in many ways comes to contradict the rationale behind the idea of national citizenship, and the paradoxes of schooling have further accentuated the strategy of identity-switching. While the parental generation only has a very limited knowledge of things "Indonesian," be it politics, history, or overall national culture, and consequently never is fully integrated into the Indonesian national project, the new generation has an increasing knowledge of both worlds. As the borderland becomes gradually more connected to the rest of the province, a schooled identity and the cultural capital obtained through this will become increasingly important in future negotiations with the state, especially in a time when the provincial and national government are showing a growing interest in developing the West Kalimantan borderland as part of an overall economic strategy for the province (Pemerintah Kalbar 2005). The newly introduced government development plan for the border area has as its main goal the creation of large oil palm plantations (*kebunan sawit*), that are to run along the entire length of the Kalimantan-Malaysian border. Besides creating jobs for local borderlanders, the government expects to move unemployed workers from densely populated provinces of Indonesia into the sparsely populated border area as part of a large transmigration project (*Jakarta Post* 2005a; *Pontianak Post* 2005a; *Suara Karya* 2005). In connection with the execution of this master plan, the government is planning to open 2000 kilometers of road along the entire Kalimantan border and establish several permanent military control posts with military battalions to secure peace in the border area and protect the country against external threats and cross-border criminality (*Kompas* 2005d; *Equator Online* 2005a; *Jakarta Post* 2005b).

For long, underdevelopment and bad infrastructure along the border with Malaysia, together with the rise in cross-border logging, have been seen as a national security problem. In the view of national and provincial government, development and national security are seen as being tightly connected. By equalizing unequal economic relations between people living on each side of the border, the government expects borderland inhabitants to become more national-minded.[21] As the Indonesian president recently announced, such large-scale plantation projects along the border will help to nurture a sense of nationhood and of being Indonesian among borderland people (*The Wall Street Journal* 2005).

For now, however, the choice of national identity in the Iban case seems to be more a strategic matter than an overriding sympathy for, and sense of belonging to, a common Indonesian nation-state project. The Iban are pragmatic individuals who seek opportunities wherever they may appear which more often than not means crossing the border, and as it has been for a long time, the notion of the nation-state has been of little local relevance for them.

[21] Currently the per capita income in West Kalimantan is approximately 400 US$ a year, while across the border in Sarawak, Malaysia, the yearly income reaches 4,000 US$ (Media Indonesia 2005).

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