



# PROCEEDINGS

the International seminar on  
**BUILDING COLLABORATION  
AND NETWORK IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD**



Doctoral Program of Cultural Studies  
Faculty of Arts, Udayana University

Editors:

Prof. Dr. Phil. I Ketut Ardhana, M.A.  
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Prof. Dr. I Nyoman Darma Putra, M.Litt.  
Prof. Dr. Veysel Bozkurt  
George Mentansan, S.Sos., M.Hum.

September 14<sup>th</sup> 2017, Denpasar - Bali



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**Faculty of Arts-Udayana University**  
**2017**

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## PREFACE

**I**nternational Seminar on “Building Collaboration and Network in A Globalized World”, held by the Postgraduate Program of Cultural Studies, Faculty of Arts-Udayana University in collaboration with the International Federation of Social Science Organizations (IFSSO).

This International Seminar 2017 basically does not end when the event is done. Efforts to disseminate and recommendation from research have been an integral part of research have been an integral part of a research process itself. The results of research should remain open at certain level and be widely publicized.

Publishing the proceedings of “Building Collaboration and Network in A Globalized World” is an effort to disseminate research results. This proceeding book is a collection of research and study of researchers, academics, and doctoral candidates with different background from many fields of science such as politics, public administration, culture, education, arts, and tourism.

As organizer of the seminar, we hope this proceeding book is able to provide information and inspiration for those who are related to the topics of the research. We would also like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to all those who have supported in organizing this International International Seminar. Hopefully this small step can be a stepping stone for next bigger effort.

Denpasar, 14 September 2017

Derinta Entas, S.E.,M.M  
Organizing Committee



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# SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURAL STUDIES IN THE BORDER AREAS OF KALTARA<sup>1</sup>

I Ketut Ardhana  
Udayana University

## Abstract

Border areas are geographic boundaries of political entities, governments, sovereign states, federated states, and other sub-national entities. The borders between one country and another country are established through agreements between political or social entities that control those areas. Attention from the central government is generally lacking in these border regions, which causes the areas to be underdeveloped and marginalized. Therefore, a cultural studies approach can be useful in analyzing certain issues related to the current state of development in border regions in Southeast Asia in general and in the Kalimantan Utara (Kaltara – North Kalimantan) province in particular. It is clear that the migrant peoples in the border regions in Southeast Asia show commonalities such as ethnic identity and a dependence upon each other. However, their citizenship in terms of state sovereignty differs. This is due to the fact that in Southeast Asia, there are two types of border areas: formal or international border areas and cross-border trade areas. Pertinent questions are: firstly, in what ways are the people in border areas dependent upon each other; secondly, why do they live in underdeveloped and marginalized regions; and thirdly, to what extent can a cultural studies theoretical framework be applied to analyze significant issues in the border regions in Southeast Asia in general, and in the Kaltara province in particular? This paper suggests that examining historical and migration processes from the view of cultural studies is a key to a better understanding of border areas.

*Keywords:* borders, border studies, cultural studies, Southeast Asia

## I. Introduction

**B**orders are commonly viewed as 'underdeveloped regions'. The border regions in Southeast Asia in general, and particularly in the Kaltara Province (since 2012 Kalimantan Utara or North Kalimantan, previously East Kalimantan), are not only strategic places for movements of people, commodities and ideas, but are also places for people to settle

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<sup>1</sup> Paper presented for the International Seminar convened by the Postgraduate Program in Cultural Studies, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Udayana University in collaboration with the International Federation of Social Science Organizations at the Prof. Dr. Ida Bagus Mantra Building, Udayana University on 14 September 2017. Editorial assistance by Diane Butler.



and struggle to survive in, regardless of their place of origin or intended destination. Currently, border regions are also known as areas where illegal logging, drug trafficking, human trafficking and other unlawful activities occur. Therefore, borders require more security check points and personnel. One of the primary reasons why border regions are considered as underdeveloped regions is due to the lack of proper infrastructure and skilled workers. In addition, these regions are often populated by marginalized people, most of whom are indigenous such as the Tidung, Bajau, Buginese and Dayak peoples. Yet, there are also migrant peoples from other countries such as Malay, Filipino, Indian and Arabic peoples. For the most part, migrant people from regions in Asia to border regions in Southeast Asia have family ties.

As historical records tell us, previously the ethnic identity of the peoples of Indonesia was only referred to as the Malays; even though there are some 500 ethnic groups such as the Buginese, Madurese, Dayaks, Timorese, Ende and the largest being the Javanese among many others. We might also note that, the Buginese in Tawau, Malaysia originally came from South Sulawesi in Indonesia (see Wiratri, 2010) and that the Buginese are known for their migration to other regions in Indonesia and beyond such as to the Malaysian border areas of Sarawak, Sabah and Tanah Semenanjung (Ardhana, 2011: 12). In contrast, a majority of the Javanese, around 68.06%, reside in their home province, while others have spread out to all the other provinces (Ananta et al., 2015: 137). These and other Indonesian ethnic groups have successfully adapted to local cultural traditions to the extent that they participate in social, cultural, economic and even political circles – which is known as '*budaya tempatan*'. In terms of family ties, while various ethnic groups can communicate and buy and sell their agricultural products in border areas, this trade activity also strengthens their ethnic identities.

As border regions are considered underdeveloped in terms of economic aspects, attention from the governments of Southeast Asian countries is generally lacking. This is particularly the case in countries where historically the concentration was on a central power. A wider view has only emerged since the new winds of democracy, which had already developed in Western nations, began to strongly influence the political dynamics in the Southeast Asia region in general and in Indonesia in particular. We can see this shift, for instance, since 1998 in Russia related to its disintegration issues. Another instance is the Reintegration of Germany process, which unified East Germany and West Germany into one state. Later, Thailand and Indonesia also faced the issues of how to



recover from political changes and strong demands for new policies in the context of reformation.

In looking at the economic gap between western and eastern Indonesia, particularly in relation to cross-border trade between Malaysia and Indonesia, a detailed account about when that traditional trade route began has yet to be written. But, we can assume that cross-border trade has been conducted since the prehistoric era based on the migration patterns of the Austronesian and the Melanesian people. For example, scholars suggest that the Austronesian people migrated mostly in the western areas of the Indonesian archipelago and the Melanesian people migrated mostly in the eastern areas (see Shuhaimi and Abdul Rahman, 2016).

It is also interesting to look at the historical migration process of the Malays, who are well-known for their centuries-long trade routes in the Nusantara region, or what is now called the Indonesian Archipelago. This movement played a major role in the Malay language becoming a 'lingua franca' and in the emergence of the concept of the 'Malay world'. Some historians say that the Malays originated from West Sumatra given their practice of *merantau* – going abroad to seek fortune. But, nowadays, Sumatrans migrate not only to Java, but also mostly overseas such as to mainland Malaysia and to Sarawak and Sabah in eastern Malaysia.

Several challenges have arisen in terms of how local and diasporic communities can survive in border areas. On the one hand, the perspective of governments has changed from viewing their border regions as 'back-yards' to 'front-yards'. However, better infrastructure is needed to ensure the smooth flow of commodities and reduce transaction costs in the border region between Nunukan or the Kaltara Province of Indonesia and Tawau, Malaysia. Alongside this, migrant peoples have a need to strengthen or express their identities in their new habitats. So, the formation of their identity is a crucial issue, which should be investigated from the view of Cultural Studies. This would also contribute to an understanding of similar issues that have arisen in Indonesia in particular, and in Southeast Asia in general.

These are some of the issues related to border regions, which can be examined through a Cultural Studies theoretical framework. Firstly, by production-based studies, which look at the process and struggle over the production of cultural artefacts. Secondly, text-based studies which investigate the interpretation of cultural products. And thirdly, studies of lived cultures, which is concerned with how the practices of everyday life are experienced. In many ways the dynamics of the border areas in

Southeast Asia is a very attractive research topic in the field of Cultural Studies, given the critical issues of the gap in economic opportunities, social and political conflicts, and claims over cultural products. At this point, I hope that postgraduate students in Cultural Studies in the Faculty of Cultural Sciences at Udayana University will pay more attention to what is happening in the border regions in the context of post-colonial and postmodern culture, which is a perspective that is quickly growing and strengthening the social sciences and humanities studies in Indonesia in particular and more broadly in Southeast Asia.

## II. Ethnicity and Identity in the Border Regions

In looking at border regions, Southeast Asia consists of eleven countries, namely Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia on the mainland and Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, the Philippines, and Timor Leste in insular Southeast Asia. Like other geographical regions, there are formal or international border areas, such as between Malaysia and Singapore, while others in Southeast Asia are cross-border trade areas. Several of these countries are facing critical issues regarding social and economic conflict in border areas.

Some borders in Southeast Asia are often open and completely unguarded and other borders are partially or fully controlled, and may be crossed legally only at designated border checkpoints and border zones. Particularly at the Thai-Myanmar border, the formal border has been rapidly developing due to the rising numbers of people crossing over to buy low-cost commodities. Thailand, apart from having a dominant ethnic group like some other nations, has a number of minorities such as the Karen, the Meo, the Lahu, the Akha, the Yao, the H'tin, the Lisu, the Lua and the Khamu. Bradley (1983: 46) notes that the markers of their identity entail linguistic distinctiveness, names, social structure and material culture and religious, political and economic differentiations.

At the Cambodia-Thai border, economic reasons seem to also be behind such movements. Ethnic relations are also an important factor at both the Thai-Myanmar and Cambodia-Thai borders because of the long history of movement prior to the development of formal borders. At the Vietnam-Laos border a similar pattern can be found. In a certain way, ethnicity is also important at the Malaysia-Singapore border where, for example, Chinese of Singapore employing Chinese of Johor rather than Indians.



### III. Cultural Studies Approaches to Border Studies

Cultural Studies is a field that has been institutionalized since the 1960s. It addresses new questions and problems of today's world, such as ideology, identity, social class, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, local communities, cultural marker identities, marginalized people, underdeveloped regions, and *adat* (customary) or local communities. Indonesian scholar Budiawan (2015: vi) argues that Cultural Studies mainly discusses cultural claims in relation to political issues. Meanwhile, in Latin America it appears that Cultural Studies is strongly focused on multiculturalism and particularly 'hybridity'. In Asia, Cultural Studies is related to language and social sciences. The traditional theme seems to be less taken up as certain issues are associated with westernization, globalization, and national identity which is autonomous and also relates to the concept of nation-building.

So, Cultural Studies is an innovative interdisciplinary field of research and teaching that investigates the ways in which 'culture' creates and transforms individual experiences, everyday life, social relations and power. Research in the field of Cultural Studies explores culture as it is understood through human expressive and symbolic activities as distinctive ways of life. Drawing from the social sciences and the humanities, Cultural Studies applies methods and theories that aim toward a better understanding of the daily life of local people.

Rather than seeking answers that will hold true for all time, Cultural Studies develops flexible tools that adapt to this rapidly changing world. Cultural life is not only concerned with symbolic communication but, in fact, it is also the domain in which we set collective tasks for ourselves and begin to grapple with them as changing communities. Cultural Studies is devoted to understanding the processes through which societies and the diverse groups within them come to terms with history, community life and the challenges of the future. To sum up, Cultural Studies is an 'inter-discursive space' in which substance and methods are constituted from a collaboration of disciplines around the topic of culture. The field has no fixed boundaries and its strength lies in its openness, which allows it to transform and grow.

Examining multiethnic societies in the border areas in Southeast Asia in general and in Indonesia in particular is a fitting starting point from the view of Cultural Studies, as border regions are areas where the movement of people, commodities and information is on a high scale. Looking at popular culture or 'pop culture', as a reflection of the cultural

meaning systems and cultural practices employed by the majority classes in a society, linked with the daily life of the local people is also a relevant topic. Particularly in this paper, the context of the border areas will be analyzed from literary studies, sociology, communications studies, history, cultural anthropology, and economics.

Here, I would like to discuss to what extent ethnicity and identity as a field of research can be carried out in the border regions between Indonesia and Malaysia. In the Kaltara Province (since 2012 North Kalimantan, previously East Kalimantan), the indigenous Dayak and Bajau peoples live on the border of Indonesia, Malaysia and also the Philippines. Both the Chinese and the Dayak people who live in the border area of Malaysia, are called Malaysian, and if in the border area of Indonesia are called 'Indon', which is an abbreviation for Indonesian. The 'Indon' label is also used in the cross-border trade areas in the mainland of Borneo (Kalimantan) as well as the islands between Nunukan, Indonesia and Tawau, Malaysia. These two Dayak communities actually come from the same ethnic group. However, due to the historical dynamics in the context of the emergence of the nations of Indonesia and Malaysia, they are different (Ardhana, Langub, and Chew, 2004: 144-179).

The economic situation is cited as the main reason why the people in border regions are dependent upon each other. However, at the Malaysia-Singapore border the inter-ethnic relationship is not significant as trade is formal and on a large scale. Meanwhile, in Kudat, East Malaysia, which is quite near to the Kaltara Province, the Bajau people have maintained trade relations with the Bajau of the Indonesia archipelago and the Bajau in the Philippines. Collective memory about their common ancestry has long been rooted in their histories. As King and Wilder in I Ketut Ardhana and Yekti Maunati (2008: 13) note:

Ethnicity is obviously expressed as a product of the past, evoking common origins, social linkages, and shared cultural values and traits like language and religion. However, the historical dimension of identity also demonstrates that rather than identities being fixed, constant and immutable, they frequently change and can be acquired.

However, nowadays in the border regions of Sarawak; Sabah, East Malaysia and Kaltara for instance, when a *pilihan raya* (general election) is held, some local people in Sarawak and Sabah ask the people who live in the Indonesian border area to cross over to support their political



interests. In another case, to strengthen their ethnicity and identity, ethnic groups in Sabah and the Tidung have attempted to integrate their communities by mutually acknowledging Ulu Padas, which is believed to be the original habitat of their ancestors to the present generation. In this way, peoples from different nations have tried to unite based on the belief that they share a common ethnicity and cultural identity. As we know, it is widely argued that cultural identity is constructed, or to further quote King and Wilder (op. cit.):

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It can thus be said, that ethnic linkage plays a major role in the border regions (Ardhana, 2008b).

#### **IV. Towards the Development of Cultural Studies in the Border Regions**

The roots of the modern era in Southeast Asia can be traced to around the sixteenth century (circa CE 1500) characterized by the end of the Hindu Javanese kingdoms, the emergence of Islamisation, and the arrival of Europeans. As the Islamisation process increased, the role of two major ethnic groups – the Malay people and the Javanese – strengthened in trade activities in the Indonesian archipelago. The spreading of Islam also led to dispersion of the Malay language, which later developed into the Indonesian language as a 'lingua franca' among the many ethnic groups. In other words, the period of Islamisation was parallel to the modernization and globalization processes in the regions as ethnic groups followed the spice trade routes, which had been established particularly during the Portuguese and the Dutch colonial era in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, (see Ardhana, 2016).

In the past, only the port of Malacca was well known due to the volume of trade activities between the Malaysian and Indonesian regions in the sixteenth century in comparison to, for instance, border areas in the Pacific region. In that period, the Portuguese played a major role in trading between Malacca and the Spice Islands. So, the border regions between Malaysia and Singapore already experienced strong dynamics in the context of local, national and international trade. This also affected the dynamics of the local people in trading. It is thus understandable that

in this era there is a marked difference between the trade relationship in the Straits of Malacca, namely formal and international trade between Indonesia and Singapore in the Southeast Asia region and traditional cross-border trade between Indonesia and Malaysia in the Pacific region (Ardhana, 2008b).

To gain a better understanding of the dynamics of cross-border trade in these regions, I will focus particularly on the border areas of Malaysia and Indonesia. It is significant to note that though the globalization process has rapidly influenced the so-called 'third world', in fact, traditional local cross-border trade has continued in the rest of the world. Legal trade has not had much influence on the local activities of traditional cross-border trade. Nowadays, this is apparent in cross-border trade between Malaysia and Indonesia, particularly in the border areas of Nunukan, Long Bawan and Bakelalan Tawau. For example, Nunukan is a trading site for local people such as the Buginese and the Dayak from the Indonesian side and the Malays, the Dayak and the Chinese from the Malaysian side.

Analysis through a Cultural Studies framework points to certain issues related to the border regions that are important and useful to look at, such as the presence of different ethnic groups, traditions, languages and political perspectives. The condition of people living in underdeveloped and marginalized border regions is at times ignored by the central governments of Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur. To bring these border areas to the level of well organized areas in the western region of Indonesia, more attention should be paid to cultural, economic and political development. Given that, during the New Order Regime, border areas were basically ignored; the question arises of how to shift the paradigm from western development to eastern development – that is to say, from a Malacca economic center to an Asia Pacific region economy.

Since the Reformation Era, after the fall of New Order regime in 1998 when the central government in Jakarta ruled Indonesia via centralized and authoritarian policies, new winds of change have spread. Particularly in this period, under the leadership of President Joko Widodo, some new ideas and policies have emerged about how to lessen the economic gap between western and eastern Indonesia. For instance, the plan to develop 'Sea Toll Routes' and implementation of some regulations for building new and higher quality infrastructure in Kalimantan and Papua as well as other parts of the eastern regions. There is even an idea to move the capital city of Indonesia from Jakarta to Palangkaraya in Central Kalimantan or another region. At least, there is an idea to move the nation's capital



from the densely populated province of Java to a lesser developed area in the archipelago. The greatest challenge is to have a strong commitment and leadership to implement strong policies for development that will foster balanced and harmonious economic development for Indonesian regions as a whole.

## V. Conclusion

Border regions in Southeast Asia are mostly arranged in terms of cross-border trade, not free trade zones, with the exception of the border areas between Singapore and Malaysia. For instance, the movement of people and commodities in Southeast Asia regions that are closely linked with the Kaltara Province can be seen in Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan, Semporna, Lahat Datu, Tawau, Kota Marudu, Kunak and other *bandar* such as Kudat, which is as the closest gateway to Malaysia and the Philippines.

The indigenous communities in border areas such as the Bajau community in Mengkabong and on Pulau Banggi in the Kudat region and also the Tidung people perceive that trade contacts between the two countries have existed long before the emergence of modern nation-states in Southeast Asia. Even today, they sell their products back and forth via traditional trade or barter systems. Border region exchanges can transpire because these peoples share a common ancestry with the Bajau and some live side by side in Malaysia and the Philippines. These patterns in border areas also bring to light the influence of foreign workers such as Filipinos and Indonesians on the economy and social and political environment in Malaysia. So, border areas should be set up as centers of growth that can serve as producers of essential trade commodities as well as centers of economic transactions for the surrounding areas.

Rapid globalization along with the trans-local and trans-national movements of many different ethnic groups has transformed societies in border regions from being primarily monoculture areas to being multicultural societies. Today, the management of multicultural societies in border areas is more complex than ever before.

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