

## **Changing The Mindset of The Indigenous Dayak Community in West Kalimantan Towards Indigenous Forests as A Result of Palm Oil Plantations**

**Pitalis Mawardi Baging<sup>1</sup>**  
<sup>1</sup>IKIP PGRI Pontianak, Indonesia

Corresponding author e-mail: [pitalismawardi@ikippgriptk.ac.id](mailto:pitalismawardi@ikippgriptk.ac.id)

Article History: Received on 25 April 2023, Revised on 5 July 2023  
Published on 10 July 2023

**Abstract:** Since the opening of oil palm plantations in 1980 in West Kalimantan, which since 1982 has been managed under the People's Nucleus Plantation (PIR-Bun) pattern, slowly but surely changing the mindset of indigenous Dayak people towards jungle forests or ulayat lands. Its influence is increasingly felt in the behavior and social life of the local community. The Dayak community has experienced a change in their "world view" of the forest. Those who have been friendly with nature since ancient times and uphold traditional principles, now in their lives, on the one hand, are leaving their ancestral traditions and following the trend of oil palm plantations, but on the other hand, their lives are increasingly cornered by the existence of oil palm plantations. The permissive attitude and pragmatism of those in power have resulted in a change in the "world view" of the local community. They no longer respect nature or forests as "sacred lands". Society is also increasingly pragmatic, hedonic and consumptive. Local customs and wisdom in the form of family values, mutual cooperation, loyalty to the community, humility, sincerity, respect for nature and each other are increasingly fading. The jungle forest and "tembawang forest" as customary rights have mostly been just stories.

**Keywords:** Dayak Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Forests, People's Mindset

### **A. Introduction**

Efforts to expand oil palm plantations by burning forests show that economic development through oil palm plantations is still at the conventional development level because it tends to see development in the scope of only one generation and ignores the preservation of the natural environment. Whereas the economic development that should be developed is one that is environmentally sound or environmentally friendly. That is, economic development that is responsible for preserving nature so that future generations can meet their needs (sustainable development) (Boff, 1995).

The Indonesian government's ambition to become the largest palm oil producing country in the world and the success of oil palm plantations in boosting the level of

community welfare in areas where oil palm plantations are developed and managed are not without problems (Kaartinen, 2020). Land clearing and conversion of forest areas for the expansion of oil palm plantations occurred on a widespread basis without prior environmental studies. Even agricultural land and rubber plantations were converted to oil palm plantations. As a result, the phenomenon of environmental damage that causes floods and landslides is inevitable (Kim, 2017). After the trees are cut down, usually forests that are considered less economically valuable are then burned. This phenomenon is interesting to observe with the haze disaster that occurs every year in certain areas in Indonesia (Tanasaldy, 2012). If this phenomenon is not immediately addressed or stopped firmly by the government then Hood's prediction (Baging et al., 2020) is really difficult to deny.

Hood predicts the bad impact of oil palm plantations on the people who live around his area into three points, namely: 1) people are threatened with losing their ancestral land; (2) the community is experiencing economic pressure so that their socio-economic status or position has deteriorated; (3) the occurrence of changes in the environment due to deforestation drastically by destroying and replacing them with new plant species (Tanuwidjaja, 2020) (Asmara et al., 2023). What Hood was worried about is now happening in residential areas and oil palm plantations. Since oil palm plantations were opened in 1982 in West Kalimantan, especially in the districts of Pontianak, Sanggau, Sintang, Sambas, and Ketapang.

The forest area in West Kalimantan has shrunk drastically (Biro Pusat Statistik dan Bappeda, 2022). Now oil palm plantations are spread throughout the districts/cities of West Kalimantan. In short, we find oil palm plantations, owned by companies or privately owned by residents, in almost all areas of West Kalimantan. The belief that oil palm is quite promising for the improvement and improvement of the community's economic life has led to a change in the mindset of the indigenous Dayak people towards forests (Sriwahyuni et al., 2023). Residents who initially opposed the presence of oil palm plantations have now changed their minds and chose to plant oil palm in their area. In fact, not a few members of the community have converted their rubber plantations into oil palm plantations.

As a result, the expansion of oil palm plantations and the conversion of forests to oil palm plantations is getting out of control. Companies are also increasingly aggressively expanding their plantation areas by buying land owned by residents or sharing the results with an agreed pattern. As a result, the area of timber forests is shrinking. Meanwhile, the area of oil palm plantations is getting wider and dominating the land. This condition clearly affects the lifestyle of shifting cultivation farmers or makes it difficult for residents of rural areas who have relied on forests for generations to fulfill their needs. Apart from having an impact on changing the mindset of the indigenous Dayak people towards forests, the expansion of oil palm plantations also has a significant effect on the order of the values of the life of the indigenous Dayak people. Changes in the order of life values by itself affect people's mindset towards forests and each other in everyday life.

Further implications are changes in patterns of employment relations, patterns of employment and employment opportunities which in turn affect changes in social status, social relations, and patterns of people's daily life. Apart from that, the expansion of the area of oil palm plantations also has an effect on a significant increase in the number of migrants which in itself creates competition in several aspects of life with the local community which has the potential to cause horizontal conflict. Here it appears that the influence of oil palm plantations is socio-cultural and ecological (Luardini et al., 2019).

## **B. Methods**

In this study, research data collection used qualitative research methods. In general, in qualitative research there are the following: first, data is treated as verbal data or as something that can be transposed as verbal data. Second, it is oriented towards understanding meaning both in terms of characteristics, systematic relationships, conceptions, values, rules, and understanding formulation abstractions. Third, prioritizing the direct relationship between the researcher and the thing being studied. Fourth, prioritizing the role of the researcher as a key instrument (Lontaan, 1975).

### **Data Collection Technique**

In this study, the sources and types of data that will be analyzed inductively are: First, the main data sources are the words and actions of people observed or interviewed related to oil palm plantations. In this context, we conducted a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with experienced traditional and community leaders in several West Kalimantan districts as sample research data related to the existence of oil palm plantations. Meanwhile, we conducted interviews to obtain information from several figures who have insight and experience about the local wisdom of the Dayak tribe and about oil palm plantations.

Information obtained through FGDs and interviews was recorded through written notes or through video/audio tape recording. The information to be explored is regarding the shift in mindset of the Dayak tribe towards forests due to oil palm plantations. The recording of the main data sources through FGD, interviews or participant observation is the result of a combined effort of observing, listening and asking questions. All three can be carried out by a qualitative researcher consciously, purposefully, and always aims to obtain the necessary information. second additional data sources are written sources (scientific books and magazines, archives, personal documents, and official documents).

While other descriptive data can be in the form of photos (produced by people and those produced by researchers). Third, the role of researchers as research instruments. The position of the researcher in qualitative research is quite complicated. He is at the same time a planner, executor of data collection, analyst, data interpreter, and in the

end, he becomes the pioneer of his research results. The definition of instrument or research tool here is appropriate because it becomes everything in the entire research process. Fourth, field notes. Notes taken in the field are very different from field notes. The notes are in the form of very shortened doodles, containing key words, phrases, main points of discussion or observations, maybe pictures, sketches, diagrams, and so on. The notes are useful as an intermediary tool between what is seen, heard, felt, smelled, and touched and recorded in the form of "field notes". The sources and types of data above are all useful for this study in order to help researchers to analyze and make a qualitative description of the reasons for changing the mindset of indigenous Dayak people towards forests, which then influence behavior in social interactions (Rochaeti et al., 2023).

### **C. Results And Discussion**

#### **Description of Changes in the Mindset of the Dayak Indigenous People in West Kalimantan towards Indigenous Forests as a Result of Oil Palm Plantations:**

##### *Definition of Tribe Dayaks*

The term Dayak or Daya' is used by residents of the coast of Borneo to refer to or refer to communities or groups of people who generally live in the interior of the island of Borneo: including Brunei, Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak), and Indonesia (West Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, South Kalimantan, and North Kalimantan). Basically, the living culture of the Dayak tribe is classified as 'maritime' or maritime because on average the community is founded in the upper reaches of the river. Even the names of each Dayak sub-tribe are closely related to the name of the river which is an important factor for the daily life of the community. Before the era of infrastructure development in the form of roads, the Dayak tribe relied on large rivers as a means of transportation. It is not surprising that in ancient times various types of boats and water motors were the mainstay of the Dayak tribe and other tribes as a means of transportation between villages or between cities. Now only a small number of Dayak tribes still use these traditional means of transportation (Sulaiman & Munandar, 1998).

##### *Indigenous Peoples and Forests custom*

Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Forests are talking about the existence of an anthropological community and their traditional rights that have been passed down from generation to generation. The existence of Indigenous Peoples is important to ensure the continued existence of Indigenous Forests. Without Indigenous Peoples it is certain that Indigenous Forests will be exploited indefinitely until they become extinct (Cramb & McCarthy, 2016).

### ***Public custom***

In this study, the term Dayak Indigenous Peoples is understood as a society that still lives and applies certain Dayak customary traditions (customary law) in the praxis of daily life throughout West Kalimantan. The customary traditions in question are the expectations of the community which are the compass or guidelines for social life, which have been passed down from generation to generation through a long process of internalization so that they become the identity of each member of the community and automatically guide them in behaving, speaking, and behave. The intended expectations can be in the form of orders, prohibitions, recommendations, which must be followed or avoided in the behavior of daily life, both towards the forest and towards each other. In relation to this research, the Dayak Indigenous Community is a community that from the beginning has owned and applied its customary traditions (customary law) to maintain the sustainability of nature and harmony and its relations with fellow community members in their daily lives daily (Potter, 2015).

### ***Indigenous Forest***

To understand the term customary forest, we refer to the formulation of the Forestry Law Number 41 of 1999 concerning Forestry (paragraph 1) that customary forest is a state forest that is within the territory of a customary law community. Meanwhile, according to the Ruling of the Constitutional Court Number 35 of 2012 (paragraph 3) the term customary forest is understood as "forest that is within the territory of customary law communities". Regarding this understanding of customary forest, especially related to the communal rights of indigenous peoples over customary forests, the Minister of Agrarian Affairs/Head of the National Land Agency has issued a technical regulation concerning Guidelines for the Settlement of Indigenous Peoples' Ulayat Rights Issues, namely: Regulation of the Minister of Agrarian Affairs/Head of the National Land Agency No. 5 of 1999. In this regulation (paragraph 1 and paragraph 2) the definition of Ulayat Rights and Ulayat Land is explained as following: (1) Ulayat rights are the authority according to customary law which is owned by certain customary law communities over certain areas which are the living environment of these citizens, for their survival and livelihood, which arises from an outward and inward relationship that has been passed down from generation to generation between said customary law community and which region concerned and (2) Ulayat Land is a plot of land on which there are customary rights from a customary law community certain.

### **Description of Changes in the Mindset of the Dayak Indigenous People in West Kalimantan towards Indigenous Forests as a Result of Oil Palm Plantations:**

In connection with this research, we present the following research results in accordance with the data obtained in the field (District/City of West Kalimantan) and supported by information from informants interviewed or through Focus Group Discussion (FGD), field notes, and direct researcher observations.

### ***Forests are Viewed as Objects of Economic Activities Only***

Since the presence of the People's Nucleus Company (PIR-Bun) in West Kalimantan in 1982, which was engaged in the development and management of oil palm plantations, social change in a broad sense, which then influenced the people's mindset towards forests, was unavoidable. The people's image or traditional beliefs about nature also changed drastically. The existence of forests in a broad sense is threatened. Communities who previously had an "animistic and pantheistic" traditional attitude towards forests so that they tried to protect and pass it on to their children and grandchildren, are now in a situation of change and at the same time uncertainty in attitudes towards forests, except for seeing forests as mere business objects or economic activities. Now traditional views, which are "animistic" or "pantheistic" in nature, are almost hard to find and are even threatened with extinction (Schiller, 2009).

### ***Sociological Change and Threats Ecological***

The presence of oil palm plantations brings about social change in a broad sense and its consequences for culture (Sambo & Purwadi, 2016). Workers in oil palm plantations who come or come from various regions, as described above, automatically bring about a change in perspective towards the forest, others, and the value system of life. Differences in habits, customs, habits, and levels of education characterize relations and interactions in the workplace. Such a situation has the potential to change the "mind-set" of the Dayak tribe in West Kalimantan in general towards forests, each other, and customs. Those who have long viewed forests as a source of life and livelihood in various aspects so that their sustainability must be maintained have now changed drastically. Now in general, the Dayak tribe views customary forests (jungle forests including *tembawang*) as limited to their economic value. This change in perspective is really troubling because forests are increasingly being stripped due to exploitation and illegal logging as a consequence of business activities. So, besides being successful in shifting traditional beliefs and views of the Dayak tribe towards forests, oil palm plantations are also one of the reasons behind all the phenomena of ecological and social change in the broadest sense which have implications for changing patterns of thought and action towards forests (Sambo & Purwadi, 2016).

### ***Society Becomes Pragmatic, Consumeristic, and Mental hedonistic***

Most of the people give up their land or customary rights for the sake of temporary economic benefits, without thinking long about the fate of their children and grandchildren in the future. The profit-sharing system enticed by oil palm plantation companies has made them able to forget the advice and advice of their ancestors to maintain customary rights. There is an impression that they are struck by instant thoughts and want to get rich quickly themselves so that they hand over their agricultural land or rubber plantations or forests of their ancestral customary rights to

be managed by plantations with a profit-sharing system, the pattern or mechanism for sharing which is sometimes difficult to understand and accept common sense, but it is agreed nonetheless. inhabitant. In fact, the guarantee for the smooth running of the management system and profit sharing offered by the company is unclear and in fact many are not in accordance with the initial agreement. Communities who have already surrendered their land are becoming more easily controlled and their lives are increasingly squeezed by the interests of the plantation company. They are powerless to assert their rights again. Some rural people who are innocent and simple are deceived and deceived by the company by luring them that they will get a quite fantastic and large profit share without having to work hard. People who lack knowledge, have little ecological awareness, and have irregular incomes are so vulnerable to being deceived, are reluctant to work hard, and want to get rich quickly are one of the reasons why they without thinking critically hand over their land to oil palm plantation companies. Besides that, lifestyle is also an important factor behind the handover of land to the company. That is for example seen when they really crave or look forward to profit sharing every month from the company. They don't think long that maybe there is an ulterior motive behind the profit-sharing offer, which is neatly wrapped up in a rule that is consciously agreed upon by both parties, especially residents who are still innocent and straight-minded. it (Sambo & Purwadi, 2016).

### *Conflict Horizontal*

It is not uncommon for land disputes to occur between oil palm plantation companies and residents. There are customary lands that were taken by oil palm plantation companies simply because village officials misinterpreted or interpreted the term customary land. Traditionally, every Dayak community has customary land that must be protected. What is referred to as customary land is land that belongs to the community of indigenous peoples. Another term is customary rights. Included in customary lands are jungle forests which are joint rights of the Dayak customary community. In addition, customary land also includes "tembawang", namely forests on which there are fruit trees that have been owned for generations because they are the inheritance of the ancestors. In relation to oil palm plantations, potential conflicts usually arise when customary forests are not respected or managed by companies without regard to local customary laws. It could be that this happened because the company already had a permit from the local government, but it could also be because the local government and village officials misinterpreted the meaning of customary forest or did not know the meaning of customary forest or did not want to know for economic reasons wrapped in a pragmatic and stylish attitude. hedonistic and consumerist life. That is for example what Mr. Amrazi Zakso revealed at a glance by referring to one of several other cases in the West Kalimantan area, namely the case in Jagoi Babang, Bengkayang Regency (Sambo & Purwadi, 2016).

### *Crisis Ecology*

The ecological crisis due to oil palm plantations raises complex issues. Clean water

sources are decreasing, forests are becoming homogeneous, thousands of plant and animal species are disappearing that we will never know again, and of course our next generations will never see them because they have become extinct forever. Not only species such as mammals or various types of birds are threatened with extinction forever, but also various types of fungi, lichens, worms, insects, reptiles, as well as various kinds of micro-organisms needed by our ecosystem are also becoming extinct. Rivers that are filled up cause the extinction of certain types of fish and aquatic biota. It is truly worthy of regret for all of humanity because the benefits derived from oil palm plantations are not comparable to the losses shared by all local, national and international communities. Recovery from forest damage takes a very long time and costs beyond the economic or financial benefits that only a few people enjoy. Humans bear higher and heavier costs and impacts due to damage to nature caused by the selfishness and greed of a few people than to enjoy the benefits and economic benefits in a sustainable manner. The victims who suffer the most are the poor who are trapped by the performance of a handful of rich people driven by their selfishness. We should regret together with economic activities that have resulted in drastic and merciless ecological damage this (Sambo & Purwadi, 2016) Purwadi, 2016).

### *The Crisis "World View" of the Dayak Tribe*

In ancient times, the Dayak tribe thought of all spirits or spirits. They believe that rocks, trees, and all things in the forest have spirits or are the dwelling places of spirits and ancestral spirits. They believe that there are other rulers besides Ponompa Potara, Jubata (the name for God, Allah). They believe that certain forests, rivers, rocks, trees have a sacred dimension because they have a spirit or become a place for them to live spirits. The sacred perspective of the Dayak tribe on the forest is usually associated with myths. For example, the myth about a water ruler called nabau or gana, who is believed to inhabit a certain depth in a river. Myths about forest rulers in the mountains and jungles in certain areas, called Domamang, Kamang, Bunyi' (a kind of ghost that resembles a human), etc. These rulers are of course spirits who are believed by the Dayak tribe to live in certain mountains, rocks in certain areas, certain trees, certain ponds in large and small rivers. At present, the existence of Dayak culture is threatened with extinction. Expansion of oil palm plantations, the existence of local mines owned by local people who are managed without being friendly and respectful of the environment are the beginning of the destruction of the local wisdom of the Dayak tribe. They are now having difficulty reviving the traditional beliefs of their ancestors because plantations, mining followed by changes in mindset and lifestyle have crushed the sacred objects of their ancestors. Trees, rocks and rivers in certain forests and mountains have been damaged and polluted by exploitative actions, their existence has even been terminated or evicted with the approval of community leaders and some customary administrators who basically do not understand the essence of adat. Apart from that, the irresponsible behavior of today's young generation has also exacerbated the situation. They don't just deliberately neglect auxiliary tools in ritual ceremonies such as pontok/pantak, but make it a business object and sell it to collectors of goods antique. Now the existence of ponto'/pantak has disappeared, I

don't know where and were. With the disappearance of ritual tools, contamination of sacred objects, and the extinction of most of the " *axis mundi*" domains of the Dayak tribe, the essence of ethnic identity is threatened with being unclear, eroded and buried by irresponsible behavior. Thus, most of the Dayak tribes today are actually experiencing a worldview *crisis*. Their lives do not adhere to ancestral culture on the one hand, and are not serious about pursuing their religious beliefs on the other hand. Because if they are serious about religion, they will certainly know and understand that nature is part of the divine footprint, God's sublime creation, which is sufficient to meet basic human needs but certainly not fit to accommodate human greed and desires without boundaries (Sambo & Purwadi, 2016),

#### **D. Conclusion**

The success of oil palm plantations in improving the community's economy deserves attention from economic considerations. But what we also need to realize, reflect on and consider carefully is the social and ecological impact that is difficult to prevent. Socially, there has been a change in people's mindset and actions towards the forest, which leads to ecological problems in the form of an ecological crisis. On the other hand, this change in thinking paradigm changes their daily life behavior and social interactions. Customary arrangements, customary law and local wisdom are increasingly loose in influence and are no longer seen and used as a compass of life or even if they are upheld and implemented then their essence and motivation have a pragmatic face and are loaded with economic considerations that only benefit interested parties.

The phenomenon that is evident today is that what was previously seen and believed to be taboo and sacred is immediately seen as outdated by the younger generation and a handful of older groups whose thoughts are contaminated by the climate of capitalism manifested in oil palm plantations, which suppresses their lives. A further impact of this reality is disorientation of social attitudes and behavior, which can trigger horizontal conflicts on a small to large scale, both among residents themselves and between residents and the oil palm plantation companies. Now the expansion of oil palm plantations has penetrated into the interior areas of Kalimantan and especially in the interior of West Kalimantan, grinding away everything that was guarded and "taboo" by our ancestors in ancient times. Profits from oil palm plantations are clearly not enough to finance the losses incurred as a direct consequence of ecological, sociocultural, and changes in people's "world view".

Changes in the community's "world view" can be seen in the phenomenon of forest desacralization. They no longer experience or perceive certain mountains, trees, rivers or forests as "trails of the Divine". The result of this desacralization of forests is exploitative actions against nature which then cause ecological damage. Now the phenomenon of desacralization of nature is increasingly uncontrollable, for example in the form of expansion of oil palm plantations. The presence of oil palm plantations in general and widely has caused more losses, especially regarding the drastic change

in people's mindset towards forests in the form of waning of appreciation and commitment to local wisdom regarding the existence of forests. The government and the community must sit together to reconsider the possibility of limiting or even closing the opportunity to develop oil palm plantations whose permits have expired, and seriously design efforts to overcome the ecological and social losses that have been caused and are sure to threaten the continuation of the front of humans and the environment. If not, then the future together is at stake. In that context, decisions for every economic development plan and business activity that are based on natural resource management must have a vision of local wisdom, in favor of environmental friendliness for the future of the people in Indonesia and surrounding.

## Reference

- Asmara, J., Saputro, G. E., & Prakoso, L. Y. (2023). Reserve Components as a Non-Military Defense Strategy to Support Defense Economic. *Journal of Social Work and Science Education*, 4(2)
- Baging, P. M., Kamarudin, M. K. A., & Rachmadtullah, R. (2020). Change of Mindset of Dayak Indigenous Peoples In West Borneo Towards Indigenous Forests As A Management of Oil Palm Plantations and Oil Palm Plantations Wastes. *Journal of Wastes and Biomass Management*, 1(2), 18–22.
- Biro Pusat Statistik dan Bappeda. (2022). West Kalimantan in Figures, BPS, Pontianak. 1988; 1999; 1990.
- Boff, L. (1995). *Ecology & liberation: A new paradigm / Leonardo Boff; translated from the Italian by John Cumming*. Orbis.
- Cramb, R., & McCarthy, J. F. (2016). *The Oil Palm Complex: Smallholders, Agribusiness and the State in Indonesia and Malaysia*. NUS Press.
- Kaartinen, T. (2020). Frontier-Making and Salvage Landscapes in West Kalimantan (Indonesia). *Paideuma: Mitteilungen Zur Kulturkunde*, 66, 235–252.
- Kim, E. (2017). *Unmuting voices: Dayak women's narratives on structural and gendered injustice in oil palm expansion in West Kalimantan, Indonesia* [Global Campus].
- Lontaan, J. U. (1975). *History of customary law and customs of West Kalimantan*. Pemda Tingkat I.
- Luardini, M. A., Asi, N., & Garner, M. (2019). Ecolinguistics of ethno-medicinal plants of the Dayak Ngaju community. *Language Sciences*, 74, 77–84.
- Potter, L. (2015). *Managing oil palm landscapes: A seven-country survey of the modern palm oil industry in Southeast Asia, Latin America and West Africa*. CIFOR.
- Rochaeti, N., Hafidh Prasetyo, M., & Cahya Susila Wibawa, K. (2023). Restorative Justice in The Customary Jurisdiction of The Dayak Tribe Communities of West Kalimantan. *Kusian Law Jurnal*, 11(3).
- Sambo, B., & Purwadi, Y. S. (2016). Changes in the Mindset of the Dayak Indigenous People in Sanggau Regency towards Indigenous Forests as a Result of Oil Palm Plantations. *Research Report - Humanities and Social Science*.
- Schiller, A. (2009). On the Catholic Church and indigenous identities: Notes from Indonesian Borneo: Culture and Religion. *Culture and Religion An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 10(3).

- Sriwahyuni, E., Rahmadoni, J., Istikomah, I., Onia, S. I., Mustamin, A. A. bin, Khatimah, H., & Asvio, N. (2023). Implementation of the Entrepreneurship Program in Preparing Students Become Entrepreneurs. *Journal of Social Work and Science Education*, 4(1).
- Sulaiman, & Munandar. (1998). *Description: The dynamics of a transitional society*.
- Tanasaldy, T. (2012). *Regime change and ethnic politics in Indonesia; Dayak politics of West Kalimantan*. Brill.
- Tanuwidjaja, F. (2020). *A guide to palm oil in Indonesia: Institutions and their effects on independent smallholder farmers* [Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology].