

The Dynamics Of Cultural Communication Through Acculturation In The Context Of Chinese-Dayak-Malay (Tidayu) Inter-Ethnic Marriage In Singkawang – Indonesia

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Abstract

Singkawang, known as the “Hong Kong of Borneo,” is one of the most tolerant cities in Indonesia, where the Chinese ethnic group, with its distinctive cultural values, is the dominant cultural group in the city. With a population originating from diverse cultural backgrounds, interactions through inter-ethnic marriages, especially between Chinese, Dayak, and Malay ethnic groups, produce various dynamics of acculturation. This study aims to analyze the communication dynamics of cultural value acculturation in inter-ethnic marriages involving Chinese, Dayak, or Malay (Tidayu) ethnic groups in Singkawang. Using a phenomenological approach, this study explores the experiences of married Tidayu couples to understand how cultural differences are harmonized, shared

identities are built, and family and social traditions are integrated. Data were obtained through interviews, observations, and literature review. The results of the study show that through inter-ethnic marriages Tidayu, Singkawang society has developed to be more inclusive by accepting each other. In the established dynamics of communication, it is important to maintain customs as part of efforts to adapt and acculturate culture. Communication dynamics cannot be separated from the worldview of the individuals involved. The results of this study are expected to have practical benefits in strengthening unity in the multicultural landscape of Singkawang, especially when facing the challenges of ethnic diversity.

Keyword: Acculturation; Chinese Culture; Marriage; Singkawang.

Introduction

Indonesia is an archipelagic country with diverse social and cultural contexts. Indonesia's uniqueness can be seen from the large number of islands that make up the country, taking sixth place among countries with the largest number of 17,504 islands, Sweden (267,570 islands); Norway (239,057); Finland (178,947); Canada (52,455); and the United States (18,617) (Sadya, 2022). However, compared to other countries, Indonesia has a much higher level of social and cultural diversity, according to the Statistics Indonesia census, with 1,340 ethnic groups living in Indonesia. This was complemented by data from labbineka.kemdikbud.go.id, which found 718 regional languages spread across Indonesia. All of these illustrate the diversity that exists in Indonesia; and also show the differences between Indonesia and other countries.

The high diversity in Indonesia makes it prone to social conflicts. Data from 2018-2019 show that 71 social conflict incidents have been caused by political, economic, social, or cultural problems, and 3,510 villages in Indonesia are vulnerable to social conflict (Pertiwi, 2020). Therefore, through the Ministry of Social Affairs, the government continues to strive to prevent social conflict and maintain peace by fostering an attitude of tolerance, mutual civility, and mutual respect.

One of the regions in Indonesia that has succeeded in creating an attitude of tolerance, mutual civility, and mutual respect, and living harmoniously amidst diversity, is the city of Singkawang in the province of West Kalimantan. Tolerance is a factor that can determine the success of the cultural blending process itself. The process of cultural integration,

according to Varanida (2016), is largely determined by the role of intercultural communication, which can bridge various kinds of diversity. Research by Dewi and Riyanto (2022) regarding assimilation and acculturation of culture in the marriages of transmigrant communities in the Minangkabau region found that the occurrence of Javanese-Minang marriages can positively influence how assimilation and acculturation of cultures can be formed and can influence society, both immigrant and native communities, in social interaction. The population of this city is highly diverse, namely, Chinese, Dayak, and Malay (Tidayu) ethnic groups living side by side peacefully under the leadership of Tjhai Chui Mie, the first mayor of Chinese woman descent in Indonesia. Based on 2020 data obtained from Statistics Indonesia, the population of Singkawang reached 235,064, of whom 72.12% were Buddhists, who were mostly Chinese; 13.82% were Muslims who were Malays; and around 13.61% were Christians (Protestants 7.07% and Catholics 6.54%), most of whom were Dayaks. This diversity is based on a strong tolerance to create harmony and concord with the socio-cultural life of the Singkawang community.

The city, often referred to as the Hong Kong of Borneo, also received an award as the most tolerant city from the Setara Institute in 2018 and 2022 and received the PWI Cultural Award at the National Press Day Commemoration on February 9, 2021 (Annur, 2023). Harmonious relations between formal institutions in Singkawang are created because of the role of religious leaders and adherents of different religions who strive to maintain harmony, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence, regardless of the diversity of cultural and religious backgrounds (Revadila et al., 2022; Saliro, 2019). This city is also often the center of annual Chinese celebrations such as Cap Go Meh, Chinese New Year, Ceng Beng, and the Tatung Parade. This places Chinese culture as the dominant culture, alongside the Dayak and Malay cultures.

One proof of the existence of harmony in diversity can be seen from the existence of social and economic activities between the three dominant ethnic groups carried out together through social institutions, such as: marriage. Inter-ethnic marriages also occur frequently among the three dominant ethnic groups (Tidayu), and the increasing number of mixed marriages that occur encourages the acceleration of the acculturation

process. The acculturation process is considered the glue for the diversity of the Singkawang community. According to Novianty (2017), in the economic sector, a division of labor occurs where the Chinese ethnic group is mostly involved in trading (keeping shops), Dayak ethnic group farming, and the Malay ethnic group working as government employees. This is also the root of strengthening inter-ethnic relations in the Singkawang community, which is based on mutual respect and civility.

In the family context, economic problems are closely related to work and income, which are utilized for the welfare of family members. Inter-ethnic marriages produce several areas where dependency occurs, including identity formation, use of power, resource management, conflict, and autonomy, as well as the level of interaction (Yulianto & Faturachman, 2016). Work or livelihood is not only related to the economic dimension but is also inseparable from the cultural values adopted by inter-ethnic married couples. The livelihood system of each ethnic group is different for the Chinese, Dayak, and Malay, which differ in terms of work character and income. According to Zakso (2012), trading influences the character of the Chinese community, which is shown through hard work, thrift, future-orientation, and respect of ancestors, while the Dayak community has the character of mutual cooperation, religiosity pertaining to the land and surrounding nature, and extraction of natural resources. The Malay community has a character that strongly adheres to the philosophy of “Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah”, namely obedience to the teachings of Islam, as well as upholding dignity in behavior and being obedient as workers. Based on the characteristics possessed by the Tidayu, there are similarities, but there are also differences that can give rise to conflict within the family.

In inter-ethnic marriages, couples from different cultural backgrounds encounter various problems in their interactions (Wijaya, 2022). One of the obstacles that often arises is language barriers and misinterpretation due to a lack of understanding of the culture of their partner. In a study conducted by Wijaya (2022), it was found that in marriages between Chinese Indonesians and Taiwanese, misunderstandings can occur between couples and their families not only due to language barriers, but also because cultural practices such as apprehension and patriarchy, greatly influence the dynamics of

communication in intercultural marriages. The ability to communicate is very important when facing inter-ethnic marriages.

On the other hand, the causes of divorce in inter-ethnic marriages are frequent family quarrels. In the Singkawang community, according to Maulid (2023) and Hiew & Leung (2017), the highest cause of divorce is economic factors, followed by infidelity and domestic violence, and intercultural relationships have historically been uncommon and formed against the wishes of couples' families and communities. Economic factors are the source of quarrels and divorce in the family, because there is no financial transparency and trust regarding income and expenses between husbands and wives. Income is closely related to employment, where the occupation of each ethnic group is different, and this has the potential to cause conflict in inter-ethnic marriages. Communication in inter-ethnic marriages plays an important role, especially in building transparency and mutual trust in family economic management.

As one of the notable examples of successful cultural integration claim is in Singkawang, a city in West Kalimantan often praised for its high level of tolerance and interethnic harmony, home to dominant ethnic groups Tidayu exemplifies how interethnic marriages can serve as a vehicle for acculturation and social cohesion. However, despite this harmonious image, recent statistics indicate a growing number of divorces, many of which involve interethnic couples. From 2020 to 2022, the divorce rate rose steadily, with economic and cultural communication issues cited as major causes (Kurnia, 2022). Based on data from the Singkawang City Religious Court, the number of divorces from 2020 to 2022 has increased, from 320 cases in 2020 to 363 cases in 2021, and in the first quarter of 2022, reaching 117 cases. Among the causes of the increased divorce rate is the economic pressure that has occurred during the pandemic (Kurnia, 2022). Thus, it can be seen that family economic problems play an important role as one of the causes of inter-ethnic divorce in Singkawang.

This contradiction raises critical questions about the real dynamics behind interethnic marriages in Singkawang. While they are often framed as symbols of social unity, these marriages also face communication barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and conflicting worldviews, which can undermine their sustainability. Such dynamics have not been sufficiently examined in existing literature, especially concerning Tidayu

marriages that intersect with local customs, religious values, and distinct cultural philosophies such as Confucianism or adat Dayak.

Previously, there have been several studies that discussed intercultural marriages, especially those related to the Chinese-Dayak-Malay (Tidayu) ethnic group. Research conducted by Yulianto & Lestari (2025) focused on exploring the historical, geopolitical, and socio-cultural aspects related to inter-ethnic marriages in Indonesia. Other research was conducted by Meyer & Waskitho (2021) using critical discourse analysis and focused on how mass media, social media, existing policies and statistics can provide an overview and interpretation of inter-ethnic relations, especially in the marriages of individuals from the Chinese Indonesian tradition and individuals who were born and raised in Indonesia with Javanese Muslims. Irfani (2018), in his research on the pattern of harmony between Malays and Chinese in Singkawang, emphasized that marriage is the basis for inter-ethnic bonding, which is determined by good communication in daily life interactions.

This study attempts to analyze the dynamics of cultural communication through the acculturation process in the context of inter-ethnic marriages between Chinese-Dayak-Malay (Tidayu) in Singkawang, at which this study aims to fill the research gap by analyzing how interethnic married couples in Singkawang manage cultural differences through communication. It seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How do Tidayu couples negotiate cultural values in daily interaction? (2) What role does communication play in the adaptation and conflict resolution process? (3) How do worldviews influence the stability of interethnic marriages? This research is anchored in the framework of intercultural communication and sociocultural integration theories, highlighting communication as a central process in cultural adaptation.

This study is unique because it takes the location of the study in Singkawang, which is the most tolerant multiethnic city in Indonesia, but nevertheless has a high divorce rate. This study also analyzes the communication process that occurs between married couples of different ethnicities, and there are limited studies on communication dynamics in Tidayu marriages.

Research Method

The approach used in this study was qualitative. The qualitative approach is described by Mohajan as “a form of social action that stresses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences to understand the social reality of individuals” (2018, p. 24). Through this approach, researchers can explore and gain a deeper understanding of various issues that develop amid community life, which in this study focuses more on the dynamics of acculturation of Chinese cultural values in marriage in Singkawang City.

The qualitative approach used in this study was supported by the phenomenological method. The phenomenological method is designed to provide an overview of individual life experiences related to a phenomenon or issue that develops during the lives of people who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2016). This method is appropriate for use in this study, which focuses on the experiences of individuals who have been involved in inter-ethnic marriages and experienced the dynamics of cultural acculturation, especially in the Chinese cultural values that occur in Singkawang City.

The data in this study were divided into two types: primary and secondary. The primary data in this study were obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted directly with informants who had been identified using the purposive sampling informant selection technique. Lenaini (2021) explained that through the purposive sampling technique, researchers can determine and ensure the specific identity of the informants selected according to the illustration and objectives of the research, which are also expected to master the problems related to the issue being studied and be able to respond to the case or issue being studied. In this study, the researcher selected four several informants, including C (Key informant and Community Leader), J (Head of Dayak Solako Customary Association), MQ (Head of the Arts and Culture Association Council), and S (Head of Singkawang City Government). This study uses a qualitative approach so that the researcher focuses more on ensuring the depth of the research findings data and not only on the number of informants involved in this study. The researcher also used the anonymity of informants in this study to maintain the confidentiality and privacy rights of informants related to the data and information provided during the research process. The researchers provided detailed explanations to all

informants regarding the potential benefits and risks associated with their participation in the research. The informants, selected by the researchers, gave verbal consent before the interview sessions. In addition to conducting in-depth interviews with several predetermined informants, the researcher also conducted observations or direct observations in the field that were conducted for four days in Singkawang City to observe the dynamics of cultural acculturation and Chinese values that took place in the midst of the Singkawang City community. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained by researchers through various related literature studies and seminars attended by researchers related to Chinese values in Singkawang City.

After the data were collected, they were analyzed using coding techniques. Researchers used open coding techniques to process data from interviews in this study. Open Coding is a technique used by researchers to group and divide research findings into several groups that have similar initial information categories and groups related to the phenomena or problems being studied in the study (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021). Researchers also use this open coding technique thematically. Rofiah & Bungin (2024) explain that the discovery of themes in qualitative research is the core of the data analysis process where researchers succeed in identifying themes that were previously an abstract order and took place before, during, and after the data was collected by researchers. This was intended to help researchers classify and categorize the data found in the field and draw conclusions from the research findings.

To ensure that the data and research findings used are valid, the researcher also uses triangulation techniques. Creswell (2016) states that validity in qualitative research aims to re-check the accuracy of the research results through the stages that have been determined by the researcher. Validity testing in this study was carried out using data source triangulation techniques. Nurfajrani et al (2024) It states that through the data source triangulation technique, researchers can test data originating from several informants involved in the research to then sharpen the data so that it can be trusted by checking the data during the research through several informants or sources involved, so that the findings of the research are data that has been analyzed from several sources conducted by the researcher. The validity of the data from the research findings conducted by the

researcher is also tested using the data source triangulation technique carried out on interview data, field observations, and various literature studies related to the discussion in this study.

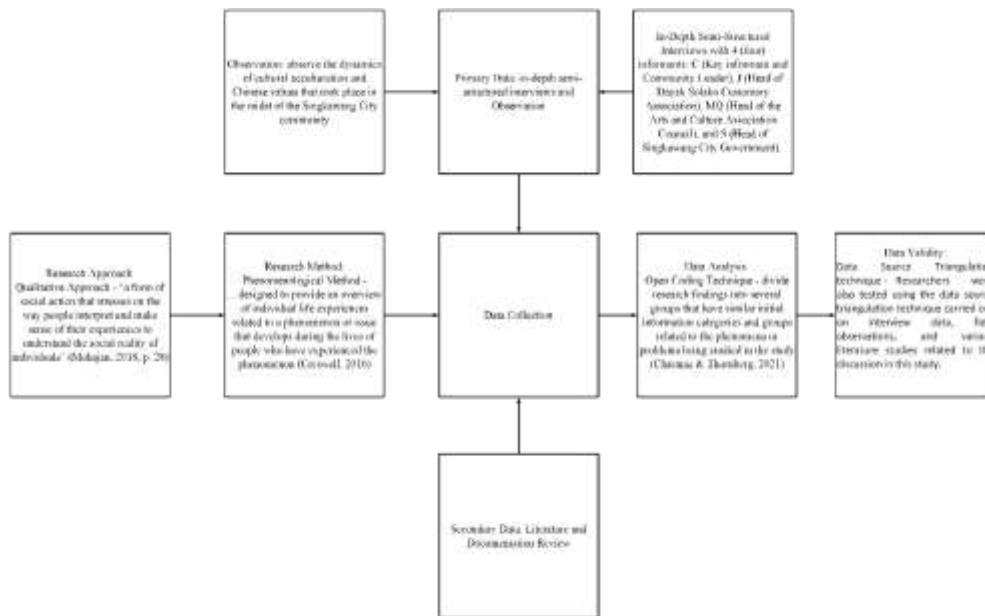


Figure 1. Research Framework (Source: Researchers)

Results and Discussion

1. *The process of acculturation as a basis for social and cultural life In Singkawang*

The Dayak people, as the indigenous population of Kalimantan, have a high level of tolerance, and are very open to immigrant groups, resulting in the dominance of the three largest ethnic groups: Chinese, Malay, and Dayak. In addition to these three groups, the city of Singkawang is inhabited by people of various ethnic groups. This was clarified by Mulyadi Qamal (MQ), chair of the Singkawang Arts and Culture Council Association who stated that:

“... In total, the Singkawang community consists of 18 ethnicities, and at the suggestion of the Tourism Office, since 2011, the Arts and Culture Council Association was established, one of whose functions is to maintain harmony and tolerance between ethnic groups...”.

The existence of this assembly is helpful in maintaining harmony in the Singkawang community.

One of the efforts to create harmony is through cultural blending without eliminating the host culture, known as acculturation. Referring to Liebkind (2003, p. 387), acculturation is defined as “changes over time in beliefs, emotions, attitudes, values, behavior, identification patterns, of persons in first-hand contact with persons representing another culture”. It is seen that the blending that occurs in the acculturation process is not only related to feelings but also influences changes in attitudes, feelings, and behavior. This process is clearly seen in the Singkawang community, especially in three dominant tribes: Chinese, Dayak, and Malay (Tidayu).

Communication through language plays an important role, especially in delivering messages to create an understanding of interactions. Malay, as a regional language similar to Indonesian, is used as the language of instruction for the Singkawang community. However, in carrying out their daily activities, the Tidayu tribe has the skill to master three languages: Chinese, Dayak, and Malay. This was clearly conveyed by Christian (C), a community leader from the Chinese ethnic group, who said:

“... The language typically spoken here is Malay; however, because there is an interest in transacting or communicating related to trade that is dominated by ethnic Chinese, many people can speak Chinese. Likewise, ethnic Chinese who are interested in government needs must also be able to speak Indonesian or Malay. Meanwhile, the Dayak ethnic group, because of their close association with ethnic Malays and Chinese, is also slowly starting to become skilled in using Chinese and Indonesian...”.

Thus, the skill of using the three languages can be a tool to prevent misunderstandings and also be the basis for creating harmony between ethnicities. The communication process in inter-ethnic marriages has been shown to overcome various cultural differences in the intercultural communication process, have the same amount of conflict as monocultural marriages, but require extra patience because of the basic differences in perspective in responding to conflict, and require a longer adaptation time so that culture can assimilate with each other's culture, where the interaction between couples of Bugis and Javanese ethnicities in Poleang District can be carried out dynamically when uniting two different cultural

elements in building a family (Amalia et al., 2022; Budyanto et al, 2022). Acculturation not only occurs in the context of using language as a means of communication, but is also related to other cultural contexts, such as the Cap Go Meh cultural celebration. The Cap Go Meh celebration, which is part of Chinese culture in Singkawang City, involves various ethnic groups. This is also expressed by C, as a Chinese community figure:

“... The Cap Go Meh celebration in Singkawang was originally a Chinese cultural festival. However, in its development, it became a cultural acculturation involving various ethnic groups in the arts, such as the: Dayak, Malay, and other ethnic groups, usually in the form of dance parades. This celebration was also an icon for the development of all associations in Singkawang City. Thus, all ethnic groups were embraced to display cultural attractions on the 15th day after the Chinese New Year...”.

The Singkawang government also plays an important role in supporting every effort to maintain ethnic harmony. Sumastro (S), acting as Mayor of Singkawang, also emphasized that:

“... The city government also has a responsibility to maintain this harmony, and we always communicate regularly with the leaders of ethnic groups. I am of Javanese ethnicity but also have family members through marriage who are of Chinese ethnicity...”.

The city government also has a responsibility to maintain this harmony, and we always communicate regularly with the leaders of ethnic groups. I am of Javanese ethnicity, but also have family members through marriage who are of Chinese ethnicity.

In the context of culture, the Chinese ethnic group appears to be more dominant compared to other ethnic groups due to their ability to invite participation and involvement from different ethnic groups through various cultural celebrations. This makes the process of acculturation of the Chinese ethnic group faster and easier than other ethnic groups. In addition, one of the strengths of the Chinese ethnic group in terms of culture is also seen in the use of the Chinese language, which is very dominant not only in economic and cultural activities but also in social activities. It is indeed apparent that the dominance of the Chinese ethnic

group occurs because of the ability of this ethnic group to manage relationships with other ethnic groups.

2. *Intercultural marriages as a process of assimilation to strengthen social integrity in Singkawang society*

Intercultural marriages have become common in Singkawang society. Interestingly, intercultural marriages also involve religions. This was also acknowledged by MQ, the chairman of the Arts and Culture Association, who said that:

“... My wife is from the Dayak tribe and is also Catholic and our marriage is still harmonious because we respect these differences.” Marriages that occur between different cultures can result not only in acculturation but also in assimilation...”.

Assimilation that occurs in intercultural marriages can eliminate the original culture of the couple and even potentially produce a new culture that emerges in the next generation. Berry (1990) provides an understanding of assimilation: (I) if someone has left their original culture and chosen to be bound by the host culture; or (II) there is encouragement from the dominant society to ask someone to change their total identity. Thus, the process of intercultural marriage is no longer a mixture of cultural identities but can also be a fusion of cultures that will produce a new identity. However, relationships in marriages based on diversity cannot experience both of the above processes, either acculturation or assimilation, which will give rise to conflict in the form of divorce.

Divorce in intercultural marriages is greatly influenced by the understanding of the cultural differences that exist in diverse societies. Until now, divorce in the Singkawang community has been dominated by family economic and cultural factors. Jerry (J), a Dayak Salako chief, shared his experiences by explaining the following:

“... Marriage in the Dayak tribe must be validated not only through religion but also through customs, especially if the man is from the Dayak tribe and the woman is from another tribe. Thus, both candidates must go through a customary and religious process, in which most Dayaks are Christians. Therefore, a customary process is necessary...”.

From this statement, it can be seen that the customary process is compulsory, regardless of religious background. This has the potential to cause divorce if the cultural values in Dayak marriage customs cannot be understood, as stated by J, who added:

“... I got married and divorced without my children. My ex-wife is a Malay Muslim. I feel that my wife found it difficult to adjust to our customs and religion, and this often became a source of problems. Indeed, in intermarriages, most Dayaks marry Chinese because they are easier to adjust...”.

Thus, the process of assimilation through marriage is not easy, even though it is bound by customs and religion, because of the difficulty of integrating different values.

The obstacles that occur in the assimilation process in inter-ethnic marriages in Singkawang are due to differences in customs and religion, where the Dayak tribe highly values both these factors. Glazer (1993) provides several reasons that could be obstacles to the assimilation process, namely: (I) excessive pride in one's own culture; (II) a closed attitude towards a difference; and (III) lack of knowledge and understanding of other cultures. These three factors arise because of feelings of resistance to change and have the potential to cause conflicts. These three reasons provide important value and could be one of the causes of divorce in inter-ethnic marriages in Singkawang.

One of the efforts that is considered able to reduce differences, especially related to customs and religion in interethnic marriages, is openness and maturity in responding to differences, which requires good intercultural communication. Samovar et al. (2017) emphasized intercultural communication as a transactional and symbolic process that involves giving meaning to people who are culturally different. Thus, the transactional process is important for creating openness and understanding differences. The transactional process emphasizes the mutual relationship between the two cultures, so that acculturation can be created. In inter-ethnic marriages with different cultures, the transactional communication process can give rise to openness and comfort in building relationships.

Inter-ethnic marriages that occur in Singkawang occur based on all forms of differences that exist in society. It must be admitted that one of

the bases that binds the marriage is the transactional process, especially in terms of income. The Chinese ethnic group appears to play a more dominant role in this marriage because of its economic ability through trading activities. Therefore, inter-ethnic marriages involving the Chinese ethnic group are relatively more sustainable compared to marriages involving other ethnic groups.

3. *Dynamics in Marriage Due to Differences in Worldview*

The harmonious and peaceful life between ethnic groups in Singkawang is based on the history of the city, which was a transit city for the Hakka subgroup, who sought their fortune in the Bengkayang gold mines. These gold miners brought their families from mainland China and left them in Singkawang because Bengkayang was farther away. The Hakka are known to have a high work ethic, a principle that has been embedded in every individual of the Hakka and is part of their culture in mainland China, which was brought to Singkawang. This principle is based on the Confucian worldview. The increasing number of immigrants from mainland China eventually made them a community in the city, and this hard work ethic was also preserved in their community environment. This is confirmed by the statement of informant AM, who is also an academic in Singkawang:

“... The Hakka are hard workers, and this is also related to the history of the founding of the city of Singkawang itself, Singkawang was actually not the primary destination....their objective was Bengkayang, because in Bengkayang there were many gold mines, so, those who bring their families, because the gold mine is far away, they have to wait in Singkawang, so the gold mine workers, when they rest on Saturdays and Sundays, they go home to Singkawang... that's where the Hakka comes from and is predominant, predominant in Singkawang, that's where the gold mine workers come from and until now they have formed their own community...”.

Because a worldview endures in the minds of individuals, it was brought by Hakka immigrants to Indonesia when they settled in Singkawang. The form of an individual interpreting reality and events, including the image of oneself in and how oneself relates to the world around him/her, is known as the worldview (Bailey & Peoples, 2011).

Therefore, the principle of hard work based on the Confucian worldview persisted, even after settling in Singkawang and forming a community in this new area.

This persistent worldview is often the trigger for problems in inter-ethnic marriages or conflicts between ethnic groups, if there is no effort to adapt, accept, and learn the worldviews of other ethnic communities. The Chinese ethnic community in Singkawang learns to accept and adapt, one of which relates to the chosen field of work. They are aware of the discrimination in Indonesia against ethnic Chinese, which has an impact on their field of work. One informant, C, who works as a civil servant, explained the following:

“... In Singkawang, out of more than 3000 civil servants, only three were Chinese. Here, most Chinese do not enter the bureaucracy. It is thought that it is difficult to join the civil service, because of the consequences of discrimination during the New Order era...”.

The statement shows that there is an understanding among the Chinese community that employment as a civil servant is not open to Chinese people. This is because of the worldview that has been instilled so far about discrimination that has endured for so long.

The effort to learn and accept the worldview of a partner is a part of a process known as cultural acculturation. Acculturation does not eliminate the original culture from which a person comes, because he will process and become a part of what he accepts, causing changes in himself (Koentjaraningrat, 2009; Kim, 2001). This can be seen in informant C, in terms of the profession as a State Civil Apparatus (ASN), in which informant C is indeed rare among the Chinese community, he said:

“... As ASN, we have working hours, but with our basic background as Chinese, we still have the talent for business; we keep a business outside of our work as bureaucrats...”.

However, this informant also does not leave a characteristic of the Chinese community, which is known to be good at trading or conducting business. The worldview underlying the Chinese community in

Singkawang is largely based on the Confucian school of thought that follows Confucius' philosophy.

Confucianism has played an important role in shaping the culture of mainland China for centuries. Confucianism as a worldview provides the basis for political aspirations, ideology, and traditions as well as a way of life for mainland Chinese people that they brought with them when they migrated to various corners of the world, including Indonesia. Confucianism has a profound influence on the sociopolitical system and values in East Asia and Southeast Asia, including the way they communicate (Xiao & Chen, 2009). Some cultural experts even explain that the economic success of East Asian and Southeast Asian countries is partly based on the Confucian worldview and the emphasis of this worldview on values about the future, hard work, achievement, education, appreciation, simplicity, cooperation, and social harmony (Harrison, 2000). This was conveyed by informant C:

“... because of the association, because we try to be a part of them. Finally, we can accept it well. Same as me, because in Singkawang the acculturation has been going well for a long time, so it's just a matter of making adjustments...”.

A high commitment to social harmony also applies to the relationship between the Chinese people and the Dayak tribe in Singkawang. Moreover, since these three dominant ethnic groups in Singkawang have similar cultural values in common as a collectivistic culture that prioritizes harmony within the extended family, the matters are becoming more complex, not only in the context of work but also in marriage. This is reflected by informant C's statement, which said:

“... The Dayak people are actually very open to anyone, but they have a very strong culture; for example, one cannot settle in their village complex, and they have territorial rights, the customary land is still valid here, anyone who comes here, if they respect Dayak's cultural customs, they consider that the newcomers are part of them...”.

The institution of marriage is indeed a gateway to preserving social harmony, as in the case of inter-ethnic marriages in Singkawang. A series

of customs that must be followed, as conveyed by Informant J, are explained as follows:

“... A mixed marriage involving a Dayak and an outsider is subject to customs. It is mandatory. So, if the Dayak man proposes, there is a process, as I told you. From the woman’s perspective, this is not called a dowry...”.

But the process of legalizing mixed marriage in Singkawang is sometimes muddled between traditional customs according to the ethnic groups’ requirements, legal validation from the state, and religious institutions. Ideally, these three processes should be done by the prospective bride and groom in order to be legalized as a married couple, but in reality, sometimes they have to skip one of the processes, as informant J said :

“... So, after the traditional ceremony according to the customs, we went straight to church, since Dayak people mostly are Christian or Catholic. ... But sometimes some couples forget their customs, or the other way around, other couples place the traditional custom more important than the state or religion ceremony, so they prefer to skip one of the processes...”

A situation like this certainly needs to be understood and will not be easily accepted by the extended families of the two prospective brides and grooms. In a larger community, understanding must be built intentionally among people from different ethnic groups. Therefore, the idea of harmonizing the dialogue between the three ethnic groups, Tionghoa, Dayak, and Melayu (Tidayu), is done continuously by forming a council of arts and culture (*Majelis Seni Budaya*) consisting of 17 ethnic groups.

Through culture, it is hoped that it will become a bridge to open discussions about bridging existing differences of opinion and values, as well as emphasizing harmony down to the smallest level, namely between families in different communities. Involvement in traditional celebrations of other ethnic groups, regular meetings with other ethnic groups, formally and informally, became the key to building understanding. Informant AM, who happened to be the former leader of the council, confirmed this strategy by stating:

“... invite the assembly to come, ethnic groups leaders as well, to have monthly meetings, and the meeting can be anywhere... in the café and other places. I can also establish relationships with parents to celebrate Christmas because we respect each other...”.

The celebrations that exist in each community in Singkawang are also maintained; for example, the Chinese New Year celebration, which is celebrated on a large scale in the city. For example, Chinese citizens who celebrate it are not only Buddhists but also Christianized Chinese. The Chinese New Year celebrates spring. It has nothing to do with religion, because people think that those who celebrate Chinese New Year must be from the Buddhist or Confucian side; for us Catholics, we also celebrate in church.

On the occasion of Cap Go Meh, it is also an opportunity to show the concern and social harmony that the Dayak and Malay communities are trying to maintain. These two communities are also large, similar to the Chinese community in Singkawang. Informant MQ, the head of the South Sulawesi family harmony association in the city, stated that they also participated in the celebrations. MQ said, “Indeed, we have been participating in activities such as Cap Go Meh, and if there are activities from other ethnic groups, this is tolerance.” Neuliep (2015) explained that society accepts and creates symbols from its environment based on related cultural experiences. As part of the Malay community that embraces Islam, the Informant MQ demonstrated the practice of an Islamic worldview that emphasizes the social conduct of its adherents, as stated by Richter et al. (2005). Islam provides a clear worldview related to *hablul minannas*, namely, the concept of maintaining good relations with fellow human beings, regardless of their religious background (Sitoresmi, 2023). Incidents such as the one in Sambas that occurred several years earlier could also be prevented in Singkawang because of the awareness of maintaining harmony in society, as conveyed by the informant MQ. MQ said:

“... At that time, when it occurred in Sambas, we were not influenced by other people; for example, many people were also called to the police so

that it would not spread to Singkawang. We from the Singkawang community did not want this to occur here...”

Efforts to maintain social harmony in Singkawang can be carried out by community groups because of the shared awareness based on their respective worldviews. Values that exist in different worldviews but emphasize the same aspect, namely social harmony, can be a link in a plural society anywhere (Widayati, 2019). Awareness of the need to maintain peace and harmony between community groups is a social capital for the Singkawang community, which has three large communities. This social capital is manifested through marriages between community members from different ethnic communities as well as through participation in various celebrations from each existing community. This social capital enables Singkawang to ward off negative influences from the outside that threaten the harmony of its society.

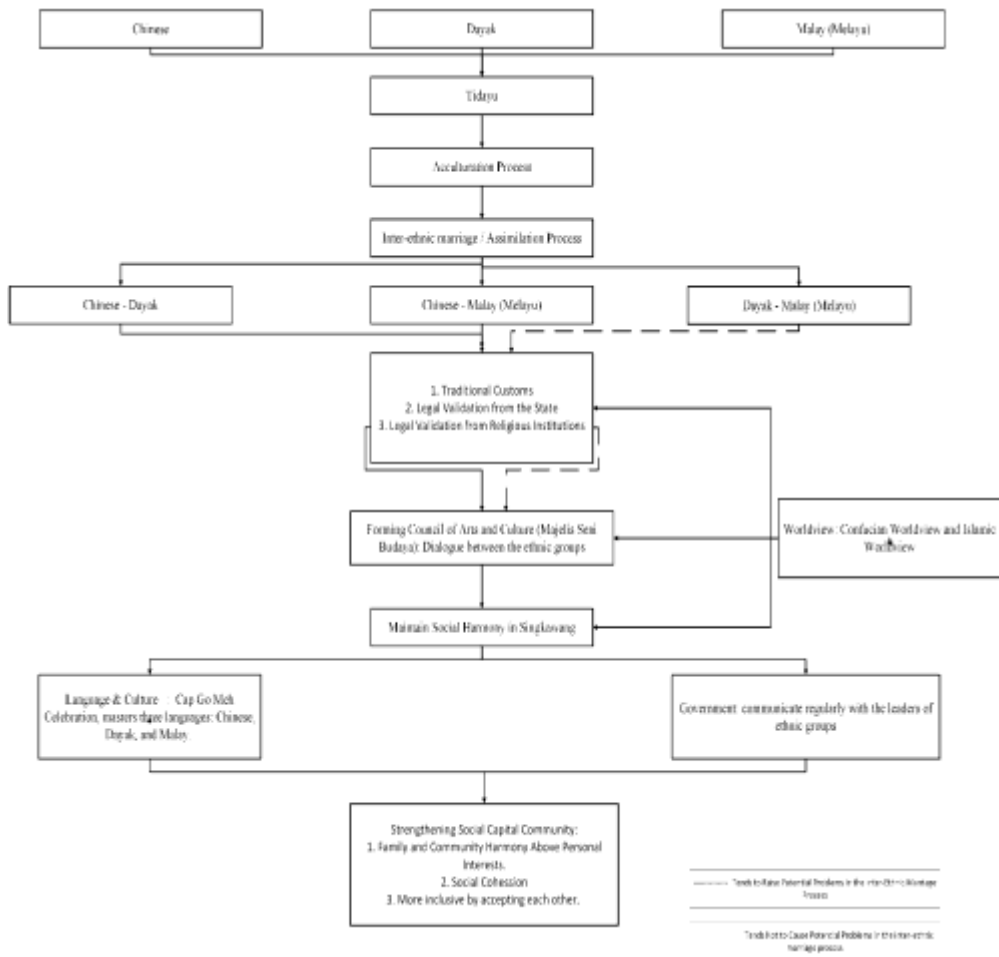


Figure 2. Research Findings Model of the Dynamics of Cultural Communication Through Acculturation in TIDAYU Inter-ethnic Marriage (source: Researchers)

Conclusion

Inter-ethnic marriages reflect a broad social system and (social) process, as demonstrated by the Singkawang community. Marriages between the Dayak, Chinese, Malay, and Dayak tribes show how society evolved and became more inclusive by accepting each other. The people in the city see the importance of maintaining customs as part of efforts to adapt and acculturate culture by accepting existing differences in customs and maintaining their sustainability in wedding ceremonies.

This persistent worldview is often the trigger for problems in inter-ethnic marriages or conflicts between ethnic groups, if there is no effort to adapt, accept, and learn the worldviews of other ethnic communities. Moreover, since these three dominant ethnic groups in Singkawang have similar cultural values in common as a collectivistic culture that prioritizes harmony within the extended family, the matters are becoming more complex, not only in the context of work but also in marriage. Therefore, the idea of harmonizing the dialogue between the three ethnic groups, Tionghoa, Dayak, and Melayu (Tidayu), is done continuously by forming a council of arts and culture (Majelis Seni Budaya) consisting of 17 ethnic groups.

Inter-ethnic marriages that have been carried out by the Singkawang community, coupled with marriages between the Dayak and Chinese or Malay and Dayak tribes, show how society has evolved and become more inclusive by accepting each other. The Singkawang community should preserve and maintain this strong social capital. Efforts to maintain social harmony in Singkawang can be carried out by community groups because of the shared awareness based on their respective worldviews. This social capital enables Singkawang to ward off negative influences from the outside that threaten the harmony of its society.

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