

**BORDERS OF KINSHIP AND ETHNICITY:
CROSS-BORDER RELATIONS BETWEEN THE KELALAN VALLEY, SARAWAK,
AND THE BAWAN VALLEY, EAST KALIMANTAN**

I Ketut Ardhana
Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (LIPI)

Jayl Langub
*Institute of East Asian Studies (IEAS)
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak*

Daniel Chew
Sarawak Development Institute (SDI)

**I
Introduction**

The paper that follows is an ethnographic study of the socio-cultural and economic links that connect people inhabiting a contiguous highland region of Sarawak, Malaysia, and East Kalimantan, Indonesia. These people, while living in two different countries, share a common border and are bound to one another by ties of ethnicity, language, kinship, religion, and economics.

Border communities organize themselves not only within the confines of national boundaries but also around social ties and interactions that cross these boundaries. This is particularly true of the study area where the national border was drawn in a way that ignored the natural and social divisions recognized by local people and which, today, remains porous to movements of people and goods. However, notwithstanding the artificial nature of this border, it is now necessary for borderland communities to organize their lives around it. The border has thus become an arena where diverse interests and actors play out their roles (Koji 2003:1). Moreover, national citizenship is now one of the identities, in addition to kinship and culture, that must be negotiated (Bala 2002:114).

This study focuses on two themes. Firstly, as a borderland study, it examines the various links that join people living in two different sovereign nations divided by a political border. The border is also a place where other interests converge, including those of the state, and where outsiders come to trade and work. Secondly, the study will analyze the role of local actors, institutions, and interests in a borderland environment where ethnicity and