Dayak Lundayeh: A Report from The Border

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Abstract: In his paper "Dayak Lundayeh: A Report from the Border" Luqman H. Zainuri explores the vulnerabilities and potential of national disintegration coming from indigenous communities in Indonesia. In particular, the paper focuses on one of the communities which has been largely ignored, the Dayak people, who have played an important role in the border between Indonesia and Malaysia in Borneo Island. The Dayak indigenous people which inhabit this highland plateau are known as the Lun Bawang, on the Malaysian side, and the Lun Dayeh (or Lundayeh) in the Indonesian side. Both groups are linguistically and culturally the same. This paper provides information on the general condition of their lives, and on how they position themselves towards Indonesia, emphasizing the particularities of the Dayak Lun Dayeh among other Dayak ethnic groups who live in West and Central Kalimantan. Although separated by a national border, the Lun Bawang of the Kelalan Valley and the Lun Dayeh of the Bawan Valley have similar cultural patterns and kingship ties. The paper recognizes Indonesia as a multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural territory, much like Asia in general, and argues for socio-political integration and peace. The paper is part of report based on an exploratory research conducted in Krayan (also known as Kerayan) sub district, Nunukan North Kalimantan in September 2012, under the Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) program, aimed to promote an understanding of the socio-cultural life of the Dayak tribes and of the degree of autonomy of border communities between Indonesia and Malaysia. The paper also stresses the importance of preserving traditional cultures and their integration by means of education and the development of cultural and creative industries in marginalized ethnic areas.
Luqman H. ZAINURI

Dayak Lundayeh: A Report from the Border

The Dayak is a term used to refer to a number of riverine and hill-dwelling ethnic native groups located in the central and southern part of Borneo. The island is politically divided between Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia, with the central and southern parts, approximately 73% of the territory, being Indonesian. The Indonesian part receives the name of Kalimantan. In the north, the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak make up about 26% of the island. Brunei in the North coast occupies only 1% of the island.

In terms of government, Borneo Island was exposed to different types of cultures and forms of Western colonialism. Archaeological findings in the Sarawak river delta reveal that the area was a thriving centre of trade between India and China from the 6th century until about 1300 (Broek 129-148) The oldest known inscriptions found in East Kalimantan (the part of Borneo Island belonging to Indonesia) appear on seven stone pillars or sacrificial posts called yūpa, found in the area of Kutai. They are written in Sanskrit, early Pallava script dating around the second half of the forth century, and constitute a strong evidence of Hindu influence in Southeast Asia (Bellwood, Fox and Tryon 310; see also Harrison, The Peoples of Sarawak and World Within: A Borneo Story). The Islamic religion entered the island in the tenth century following the arrival of Muslim traders from India and other Asian territories. In the fourteenth century, the island was a vassal state of the Majapahit Empire in Java (Gin Brunei: History, Islam, Society and Contemporary Issues). After the death of the emperor, the Sultan of Brunei declared independence and became an ally of the Chinese Ming Dynastic. But the local indigenous people of the area (particularly the Dayak Lundayeh) often rebelled against Brunei rulers. Thus, the Brunei Sultanate (located in southern Borneo) often requested assistance from other allies, such as the Sulu Sultanate, ceding some territories, later to be reclaimed by The Philippines (see below). Portuguese traders began to arrive in the early 1500s, and Spanish commercial ties were established in the late part of the century. The English began to trade with locations in the Southern part of the Island early in the seventeenth century, and the Dutch came soon after, trying to settle some years later in the early eighteenth century. In 1658 and 1812, the Brunei Sultanate ceded some North locations to the English East India Company, and some years later granted large parts of land in Sarawak to James Brooke (1803-1868), as a way to compensate for his help in suffocating a local rebellion.

Brooke created the Kingdom of Sarawak and established himself and his descendants as Rajahs, ruling for 100 years. Prior to the rule of the White Rajahs, the Dayak tribes seem to have been in a deplorable state; frequently involved in tribal war and excessive alcohol consumption, victim of political manipulation by the Sultanate of Brunei, to the point of being used as a sacrifice to frighten off people who threaten to attack the Brunei capital in the 1860s. The low standard of living had led to severe outbreak of diseases, and the community almost disappeared in the early twentieth century. The northern coastal towns of Sarawak served as administrative centers meant to foster trade. Chinese traders were encouraged by the Brooke government to set up businesses there. They mixed in with the local population. For this reason, it is believed that the Dayak in these areas have ethnic ties with the
Chinese. In 1824, the Anglo-Dutch Treaty established as series of exchange trading ports in order to avoid competition (see Bala "Interethnic Ties; see also Gin Brunei: History, Islam, Society and Contemporary Issues).

Some Northern areas of the island were sold to the German businessman Baron von Overbeck, and was later passed on to two British brothers (Alfred and Edward Dent). The Americans also established a temporary colony in Northwestern Borneo, which was later abandoned, while some areas of the Northeastern part (Sandakan Bay) remained under German control. In 1888 the area of Brunei became a British protectorate. In 1885 Spanish presence in the Philippines was reduced under the Madrid Protocol, after which British administration became stronger. On the other side of the border, Dutch control only reached the East Kalimantan interior in the early 1930s (Crain "The Lun Dayeh"). Both sides of the border remained in contact. From archival sources in Sarawak, there is evidence of movement of Kerayan people, goods, and ideas into Sarawak in the early 20th century (see King; Miyazaki; also Bala "Changing Borders and Identities in the Kelabit Highlands"; Harrison "Outside Influences on the Upland Culture of Kelabits of North Central Borneo"). It was nearer and more convenient to travel to Sarawak than to the east coast of Borneo, and this still applies today.

External influences acted as a catalyst for change and increased cross-border interactions. Trade in jungle and farm products such as dammar, rice and buffaloes in return for manufactured goods, notably cloth, was a major economic force at work, followed later by wage labor. The first railway network in the northern part of the island required a labor force which was supported by British administration. A large number of Chinese workers migrated to work on the railway as well as plantations and mines. The Southern part of the island became a Dutch protectorate in 1891.

Missionary activities began in the late 1920s with an Australian-based Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM) operated on the Sarawak side of the border. These activities were extended to East Kalimantan in the mid 1930s as individuals crossed the border influencing others (Southwell 80). These conversions seemed to have reinforced bonds of ethnicity against the background of a Muslim Indonesian majority. There are churches in all the villages, and nowadays also some mosques. The standard of living also improved as the missionaries introduced better healthcare, sanitary system and also proper education system. By the 1940, many Dayak attained a high level of education, particularly in the Malaysian side. Although many complete High School, the majority of the population remain as farmers. Trading and Civil Servants are the next most popular occupations, while there are also many teachers. Among private workers, carpenters, military and policy and contractors are the most common professions nowadays.

During World War II, Japanese forces gained control and occupied most areas of Borneo from 1941–45. Coastal Dayak groups were forced towards the interior in order to escape the Japanese. The highland area of Krayan and Sarawak became centers of undercover resistance under Western colonial supply of goods, medicine, weapons and so on (Crain The Lun Dayeh of Sabah 125). Many Chinese migrants and indigenous people were executed. Malay intellectuals were also killed, and the Sultanate was suspended and replaced by a Japanese council. As mentioned, the Dayak and other indigenous people played a role in guerrilla warfare against the occupying forces, temporarily reviving their headhunting traditions (see König; Linder). With the help of Australian imperial forces, the island was liberated from the Japanese,
and Indonesia became independent on August 17, 1945. After Sarawak became a British crown colony in 1946, and trade continued to draw people from the other side of the border. Some areas were underpopulated, and it was asserted that the small population increase from 1949 to 1957 was due to the movement of people from across the border, with many brides brought across from East Kalimantan.

The southern part of Borneo Island joined in Independence, but other areas remained under Dutch control. Chinese migrants in these areas wanted to integrate their districts as an overseas province of China, while the British also wanted to maintain their presence in the northern part of the island and sought to integrate those parts under the federation of Malaysian territories. The Philippines opposed the proposed federation, claiming the eastern part of North Borneo (today the Malaysian state of Sabah) as part of its territory as a former possession of the Sultanate of Sulu, now under Philippine republican administration. In the past these territories had been granted to the British. Finally, the Brunei People's Party wanted to unify the island and integrate Borneo into Indonesia. A commission was established to find out the desires of indigenous populations in the disputed territories. It was agreed that Sarawak and North Borneo would become part of the Malaysian Federation on 16 Sept. 1963. While the Japanese Occupation may have given borderland communities a common cause and a feeling of togetherness, in 1963 confrontation caused much distress, as national identities came to the fore, resulting in differences which affected border communities by conferring notions of citizenship between Malaysians and Indonesians. Throughout centuries, Dayak people did not think in terms of the state, and the flow of people, goods, and ideas across the border had continued despite local differences. Although a Cross Border Agreement was signed on 26 May 1967 allowed individuals living in border communities to visit, trade, and work for one another, at times, changing political situations sought to restrict cross-border mobility and personal contact in a number of ways (see Haris).

The Dayak indigenous people inhabiting this disputed highland plateau are known as the Lun Bawang, on the Malaysian side, and the Lun Dayeh (or Lundayeh) in the Indonesian side. Both groups are linguistically and culturally the same. This paper provides information on the general condition of their lives, and on how they posit themselves towards Indonesia, emphasizing the particularities of the Dayak Lun Dayeh among other Dayak ethnic groups who live in West and Central Kalimantan. The report is based on an exploratory research conducted in Krayan (Kerayan) sub district, Nunukan North Kalimantan in September 2012, under the Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) program. RRA is commonly described as a set of guidelines to help people work in a structured but flexible way in rural communities, and a set of tools to aid interaction with those communities. The Krayan (Kerayan) district is located on the west side, bordering the states of Sabah and Sarawak, both part of the Malaysian Federation. Krayan consists of 65 villages with an estimated population of around 7000 people in 2016. The largest town is Long Bawan. One of the defining characteristics of these highlands are their relative isolation from the rest of Borneo. This is reflected in human settlement, agriculture, and economy (Padoch "Agricultural Practices of the Kerayan Lun Dayeh") Isolation was caused in the past by the absence of navigable rivers, compounded by the highland terrain.

Although separated by a national border, the Lun Bawang of the Kelalan Valley and the Lun Dayeh of the Bawan Valley have similar patterns of nuclear family organization and local leadership. The basic
The social unit in both groups is the household (uang ruma' literally 'flesh of the house'; Crain The Lun Dayeh of Sabah 189). The average number of people per family is 4-5. The uang ruma' is the unit of education and farming production. Siblings and cousins build their houses next to each other in order to collaborate more closely. They are monogamous, and marriage is now possible with people from other ethnic group, although in the past, the preference was for marriage within the same group and area. Both the Lun Bawang in Ba'Kelalan and the Lun Dayeh in Kerayan have relatives at the other side of the border.

Before the Dayak lived in longhouses, detached dwellings are preferred. The households that form the village are bound together by a number of relationships: kin networks, farm work groups, church congregations, and village development committees. Each village has its own headman (Adat), a position created by consensus among the adult population. He receives a very small honorarium from the government, arbitrates minor disputes, coordinates community activities and acts as an intermediary between the village and the government. He also chairs the village development committee, assisted by a secretary, treasurer and members. Above the headman is the regional chief, or penghulu, who regulates the seven villages and presides the higher courts of the district. He is paid a monthly salary, and like a civil servant, he cannot take part in local politics. His appointment is for five years. There are six government agencies including the Upriver Agency, a primary school, a health sub-center, an agriculture sub-office, a civil aviation office, and an auxiliary police station. The church is another important institutions in each village. The pastor receives a monthly allowance determined by the villagers, and donations of rice and other food items. Sub district Government of Krayan/Kerayan (Camat or Kecamatan) and a special Military Force for territorial Border (Pasukan Pengamanan Perbatasan/Paspamtas) from infantry battalion 433 of Command of Strategic Reserved Army. At a superficial level, there exists communication between these institutions but no clear institutionalized coordination, particularly in aspects related to territorial border security. Adat and Pastoral, which represent civil society seem to be separated with from the Paspamtas and Camat, which represent the state. Thus, the nature of relations between state and society in Krayan resembles islands separated one to another by the sea (Crain The Lun Dayeh of Sabah 77-112; see also Langub).

The Dayak have their own dialects, customs, laws and culture, and for a long time, other Indonesian people have held a negative image of them. In many stories, those of Dayak ethnicities are described as living deep in the jungle of Kalimantan, the Indonesian part of the island of Borneo. They are portrayed as isolated, lazy and lacking in education. They are also considered less friendly along with other bad attributes, all of which refer to a perceived backwardness. This negative image has set in people's mind since the early 2000s, when conflicts broke out in the area of Sambas, West Kalimantan, and spread to central and south Kalimantan soon after. Mass media propaganda placed a huge emphasis on Dayak's cruelty towards migrants of Madurese origin coming to their territories. Madurese or Orang/Suku Madura are the third largest ethnic group by population. They are originally from the island of Madura, off the northeastern coast of Java and were involved in large scale transmigration programs undertaken by the Dutch colonial administration as well as Indonesian authorities after independence in 1945. Major programs took place in 1900 and 1950 and Madurese migrant resettlements created conflicts with Dayak communities who, as I have indicated, are wary of strangers and see them as threat to their traditional
lifestyle. In the late 1990s thousands of people were killed in these fights, with the Sambas conflict (1999) and Sampit conflict (2001) resulting in large scale massacres of Madurese. During this period, Indonesian government took a very limited role in mediation. As a result of this situation, many Madurese chose to relocate back to Madura Island or in Java, and the exodus of Madurese resettlement became stabilized. However, the conflict has remained in the minds of people with a very negative image, somewhat exaggerated by the media, of the Dayak ethnic, particularly of their cruelty and sadism (see König; Linder).

Who were the Dayak tribes and how have they evolved? An important problem is the lack of supporting data for scientific research on the indigeneity of the inhabitants of Kalimantan. For this reason, analysis on the subject tends to be speculative. There exists general agreement, however, that acknowledges the Dayak among the largest and oldest inhabitants in the area (Riwut 231). This agreement is mostly based on their ethnic differences. Physically, the Dayak people tend to be yellowish or reddish in skin, similar to Chinese people, while the other ethnic groups in the Kalimantan and in Indonesia in general are brownish, like the Malay for instance. All these tribes live along the river line deep in the jungle, and they identify themselves as the indigenous people of Kalimantan. However, there are other groups such as Banjar, Tidung, Berau, Paser and Malay who also claim themselves to be indigenous. Therefore, the most widespread belief is that the Dayak might have come from South China.

Dayak activities and migrations were often reported in colonial accounts and reports. In particular, there are stories referring to the ferocity and aggressivity of the Iban or the Sea Dayak in the South China Sea during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when Western trade pursuits were under way. The Sea Dayak were often pirates who preyed on maritime shipping in the waters between Singapore and Hong Kong. The Dutch Colonial government in eastern and southern Borneo (Kalimantan) even reported of a traditional headhunting and cannibalistic culture by the Dayaks (see Smith). This practice ended in 1874 when the tribes gathered for peace resolution and held what is known as the Tumbang Anoi Agreement in Damang Batu, Central Kalimantan, the seat of eh Kahayan Dayak. The headhunting practice resurfaced on several occasions: in the mid 1940s against Japanese occupation, and in 1960s against Chinese immigrants accused of spreading communism in the area, and finally in the 1990s against Madurese migrants during the explosion of the Sampit conflict mentioned above (see Braithwaite, Braithwaite, Cookson, and Dunn).

According to Mikhail Coomans, the Dayak may have been part of an exodus from Yunnan, a province which now borders the Tibet Autonomous Region and the countries of Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar (Coomans 3). From Yunnan the groups may have migrated in two different ways. One group took the Southern path through Indochina, down to Malaysian peninsula as far as Kalimantan. The other group seems to have taken a Northern part through Hainan, Taiwan, and the Philippines before reaching Kalimantan. Those who came through the South mostly populated West and Central Kalimantan; those from the North settled in North and East Kalimantan.

There are at least seven different ethnic subdivision belonging to the Dayak, according to their respective native languages: Ngaju, Apo Kayan (including another group called Orang Ulu and smaller
groups in Malaysia, Iban (also called Hiban, they are Sea Dayak), Bidayuh (Land Dayak), Ot Danum, Punan and Murut. There are also hundreds of sub-ethnic groups which together may agglutinate some 405 different communities with a similar Dayak culture, while maintaining their specificities. These include differences in housing, utensils (such bags, swords, etc.) forms of land cultivation and particular types of ritual and dancing. Dayak languages belong to the Malayo-Polynesian trunk and share characteristics with other neighboring groups. Nowadays, most Dayak are bilingual and speak their native language as well as Malay or Indonesian, depending on the area.

As indicated, this paper focuses on a Dayak community known as Lun Dayeh in Kerayan language, which inhabits the Krayan highlands and Bawan valley of North-East Kalimantan, isolated from other Dayak communities by the difficult geography of a highland plateau surrounded by mountains and river rapids. The term Lun Dayeh translates as 'upriver people'. In all Lun communities there exist the tradition to use the name of the river (i.e. Lun Adang, or Lun Kemeloh, referring to the Adang and Kemeloh rivers). The etymology of Lun (sometimes 'long') shares roots with other terms that refer to rice cultivation, which is their main activity. They cultivate rice on hill (lati’ tana’ luun) and at paddy fields (lati’ ba). Around 5,884 inhabitants of Krayan are farmers and only small number of them that is around 232 people are peasants (Eghenter, Sellato, and Devung; Padoch A Study of a Bornean System of Intensive Agriculture as a Model for Development).

Many of the Lun Dayeh food products derive from rice, including rice wine, similar to China. It is possible that these people may have migrated along the North path (Yunan-Hainan-Taiwan-The Philippines-Kalimantan), as mentioned above. Some Lun Dayeh members have mentioned that 'Lun' in their language means 'cape', a strange word bearing in mind that they community lives in the jungle highland area and not by the sea. Thus, it has been speculated that the group may have initially occupied a coastal area, transformed over thousands of years by geological accidents.

Close to the territorial area between Indonesia and Malaysia there is salt well location known as 'Twin Well' because some people refer to it as 'Male Well' and others as 'Female Well'. As the legend goes, an imaginary line between the two wells would trace the route of a salty river running underneath the surface. These wells have been exploited for salt by the Lun communities in north-east Kalimantan and the contiguous highland region of Sarawak in Malaysia. While living in two different countries, Lun groups in these areas are bound to each other by ties of ethnicity, language, kinship, religion, as well as economic activities. Indeed, the Lun Dayeh are linguistically and culturally like the Lun Bawang, at the other side of the border. Researchers have found many similarities between them (see Sellato 12; Crain "The Lun Dayeh" 160). During the colonial period, the groups were often known as 'Murut', although this term is no longer in used so as not to confuse them with the groups in Sabah which receive this name and have no cultural or linguistic ties with the Lun Dayeh or the Lun Bawang.

The Dayak community who lives in Ba’Kalalan, Sarawak are from the same ethnic group as those living in Krayan/Kerayan, that is, the Dayak Lun Dayeh. Because Dayak culture hold strong family ties which have been kept alive in spite of migrations, Dayak on both sides of the border perceive of themselves as brothers no matter their different citizenship, Indonesian or Malaysian. Problems that arise come from the different interest that appear in social interaction. However, the existence of such
strong ties means that have similar ways of approaching conflict resolution and that they try to keep traditional values and revitalize them among the members of the community. Such values involve a strong social cohesiveness and social harmony, although they are not worried about incoming foreigners to their world. The population data in Krayan Sub District shows heterogeneity and social dynamics. For example, in the last few years, the number of populations of Krayan Sub District was between 15.000 and 16.000. Dayak Lun Dayeh are the largest group with over 14.000 individuals. There are also people from other ethnic groups.

As indicated above, one of the defining characteristics of the highland plateau is its isolation, a consequence of the absence of navigable rivers and the surrounding mountains, between 1000 and 1300 meters above sea level. The closest distance from Long Bawan, the capital city of Kecamatan (Krayan/ Kerayan) to the city of Nunukan is 55 minutes by small airplane (300-400 KM/hour). The flight from Long Bawan to such closest cities as Malinau, Nunukan and Tarakan is served by two small airplanes of Sussie Air and Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF), a company which serves commercial flight. All these flights get subsidized by the provincial government. The only land road access from this area is to Sarawak, Malaysia. There are two ways to follow. One is to Sarawak through Long Bawan – Long Midan to Ba’ Kelalan, the closest village in Sarawak or another route from Long Bawan – through the village of Lembudut.

The most visible manifestation of change at the border is in the mode of transportation. Traditionally, the only way to reach these communities was by foot, taking around two weeks to the nearest Indonesian town (see Hansen). In 2003, a Brunei contractor constructed a rudimentary mud trail between Long Bawan (Indonesia) and Ba’Kelalan (Malaysia), it allowed vehicles to go all the way from Lawas right up to Long Bawan. However, the land road is is very dry and dusty in the hot months (April to September), and wet and muddy, especially in the Indonesian side, during the monsoon months (October to March). Thus, it is only suitable for four-wheel drive vehicles and motorbikes. The condition of the road is so bad with bumps and slippery patches, that it can be dangerous. However, transportation is easier for residents of Ba Kelalan, and they have become the supplier for the Bawan Valley of essential goods such as manufactured food, building materials, and fuel. In other words, Indonesian people in Long Bawan are very much dependent upon Malaysia. An important source of conflict is the complaint that Ba’Kelalan traders set the price of goods which the Kerayan Lun Dayeh come to buy, and that they are also depending on the Malaysian side for their rice sales.

It is estimated that 90 per cent of the trade goods at Long Bawan come from across the border. For instance, although buffaloes are used to graze the ground, no machinery is used for cultivating ‘bario rice’, which has been recognized for its quality and taste and has acquired great demands in lowland towns and cities. Thus, human labor is in high demand during the harvest and rice cultivation and trade involve cross-border communication, with farming on one side depending much on labor from the other side. For instance, observation to the village life shows that Long Bawan village and surrounding areas is facing the social phenomenon of population ageing. Young people in the area have left their villages looking for better job conditions in Java. This has had an important effect on the local life, with an average population of fifty or sixty who are no longer capable of working in the rice fields. The Indonesian
community needs to turn to its Malaysian counterparts in order to get workers for their rice fields and other hard jobs. Besides, many commodities come from Malaysia.

To make matters worse, the difficult road connecting the two countries is crossed by a small river 6-7 meter wide. There used to be a small bridge constructed by traders from Lawas City. This was perceived as preventing traders at the other side of the border from expanding, so the bridge was demolished to stop traders from Lawas City running business. A second smaller bridge was built in a narrower area of the river, but it was also demolished. During several years, the difficult state of the road made it accessible only to cattle. Gates on village roads were put up to claim land ownership and to prevent wandering animals from going into paddy fields where they can cause damage to crops. Individuals passing through gates were expected to close them after they had passed through. Tensions arose because of the spread of rumors about people on the Malaysian side were accused of forgetting to close the gate. This negligent act caused some animals to cross and damage plants. The access was closed, and the community headman of the Dayak Lundayek tried to mediate in the conflict, requesting that the gate should be reopen. The negotiation was successful with the imposition of compensation to the other side. It was agreed that the Ba'Kalalan community would guard the gate and a small retribution (toll) was to be paid by people crossing and also by vehicles. This situation caused gangs to appear on the sides of the gate wanting to collect this 'retribution'. Subsequently, an immigration post under the control of the Malaysian government was set up on the road, and now, those who wish to cross the border to shop in Malaysia have to pay an unofficial big fee at the check point. These aspects show the level of dependence of the Krayan (Kerayan) community on the Malaysian side, all of which complicate border relationships.

The tollgates episodes offer an idea of the degree of autonomy of border communities between Indonesia and Malaysia. However, it also poses problems to economic development in this area. While there are many ethnic and cultural ties between the two sides, the increasing volume of trade and the interdependency for rice harvesting might create additional conflicts as well as security concerns. There is also the fact of geographical isolation and difficult access to these communities, and the absence of cohesiveness and full coordination among the different powers in Dayak society, as indicated above.

Although the Dayak communities in Kalimantan are bound by the sentiment of kinship with those groups at the other side of the border, their national identities remain fluid. Expressions such as "our hearts are in Indonesia, but our stomachs in Malaysia," meaning that they depend on the Malaysian side to survive, highlighting the supremacy of the neighboring community. These issues bring to the fore both the ambiguity of their sense of belonging as well as the artificiality of national and political constructs as well as the possible dangers to national integrity, defense and security. Thus, this paper has tried to point out the importance of understanding and taking into consideration these communities.

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