

Experiencing *Ngitemp*: Tradition, Food Sovereignty, and Human-Nature Relations among the Dayak Benawan Indigenous Community in Indonesia

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Abstract

This research employs an autoethnographic approach to examine personal experiences and the broader socio-economic and cultural factors that shape food security within the Dayak Benawan community, located in Sanggau District, West Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. We analysed how the Indigenous Dayak Benawan community conceptualise food sovereignty and what role *Ngitemp* plays as a traditional practice in food sovereignty. For this study, we employed the autoethnographic method to shape local scholarship. The first author's positionality and identity as Dayak Benawan contextualise the local conditions. Interviews and participant observations were used to narrate our experiences. The findings highlight that food security among Dayak Benawan farmers is not merely a matter of production and consumption but is deeply intertwined with cultural traditions, customary knowledge, and ecological stewardship. *Ngitemp* is a traditional practice that embodies the community's sustainable relationship with nature. Through this research experience, I gained profound insight into how Indigenous knowledge and environmental ethics inform agricultural decision-making and resource management. The practice of *Ngitemp* reinforces the belief that food security is more than securing a steady food supply; it is about maintaining a balanced relationship with the land, ensuring its vitality for future generations. The Dayak Benawan's reliance on Indigenous farming methods, communal resource sharing, and spiritual connections to their land demonstrates how cultural heritage plays a vital role in sustaining livelihoods. However, modernisation, land commodification, and agrarian policy shifts pose challenges that threaten these traditional food practices. By weaving personal narratives with ethnographic insights, this study emphasises the inseparability of food security from historical, environmental, and socio-cultural dimensions. It contributes to broader discussions on Indigenous resilience, sustainable agriculture, and the need for policies that recognise and protect local knowledge systems.

Keywords: Dayak Benawan; Indigenous People; *Ngitemp*; Food Security; Human-Nature Relations; Sustainable Agriculture; Qualitative Research; Sustainable Development Goals; Indonesia

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Introduction

Indonesia, renowned for its biodiversity and cultural richness, is home to approximately 70 million Indigenous people (AMAN, 2021). These communities maintain a lifestyle deeply intertwined with their natural surroundings and possess invaluable local knowledge concerning conservation efforts, serving as stewards of much of the world's forests (UNEP, 2017). The Indigenous Dayak communities in West Kalimantan have practised shifting cultivation since the migration of Austronesian people to the region, estimated to have occurred around 200 or 300 BCE (Diamond & Bellwood, 2003). By the early 20th Century, the Dayak economy predominantly relied on upland rice farming, which was their primary livelihood (Yogi, 2018). Among these Indigenous groups is the Dayak Benawan community, predominantly residing in the lush tropical rainforests of Borneo Island, specifically in the Sanggau Regency of West Kalimantan Province, Indonesia.

For centuries, the Dayak Benawan community has adhered to a sustainable lifestyle, relying on traditional agricultural practices such as rice cultivation to sustain themselves and their communities (Niko, 2020; Niko et al., 2024a). Affonso et al. (2024) describe subsistence farming as primarily for family consumption, with any surplus being sold. This reflects Tsing's (1998) analysis of the Meratus people, who have long relied on shifting cultivation as a survival strategy, periodically relocating to new areas.

In the first author's book titled *Perempuan Dayak Benawan: Kedudukan dalam Struktur Publik dan Domestik* (in Bahasa Indonesia), he delved into the identity of the Dayak Benawan tribe and explored the role of women in their social lives (Niko, 2018). Like the Dayak Penan tribe in Sarawak, Malaysia, they confront the encroachment of forests that no longer provide sanctuary for their homes (Tsing, 1998).

Critically reflecting, the first author describes one of his afternoons during his field study as a loss for words to describe the wonderful fragrance of rice in the field he was in. It evoked

memories of his past experiences when he used to accompany his parents to the fields after school as a middle school student. Having spent approximately 14 years studying in the city, he has not engaged in farming activities (despite being a farmer's child). Experiencing *Ngitemp* during his field study placed his positionality amidst two identities, as a researcher and as a Dayak Benawan farmer's child (*Ngitemp* entails the traditional Dayak Benawan method of harvesting rice from the fields (see Figures 1 and 2). It involves the use of *Cuwai* (a traditional tool for cutting rice stalks), *Atong* (a receptacle for rice stalks), and *Guni* (sacks for transporting rice stalks).

The rice harvest season is eagerly anticipated in Indonesia's cultural and agricultural landscape (Patunru et al., 2019; Sutardi et al., 2023). The practice of *Ngitemp* bears witness to the enduring relationship between humans and the land. *Ngitemp*, known by various names in different regions of Indonesia, involves distinct methods, rituals, and tools. This tradition is deeply rooted in Indigenous customs, encompassing the art of rice harvesting and profound interactions between identity, agricultural sustainability, and food security.

Ngitemp entails more than just the physical act of rice harvesting; it also embodies spiritual and social dimensions, fostering a profound sense of connection with the land and its natural abundance. Through *Ngitemp*, the Dayak Benawan community reinforces their cultural identity and maintains a harmonious relationship with their environment, honouring ancient traditions passed down from generation to generation.

It should be noted that while playing an instrumental role in ensuring food security, Indigenous communities grapple with the pressures of globalisation and cultural homogenisation. At the same time, *Ngitemp* emerges as a potent symbol of resistance against the erosion of cultural heritage (Walke et al., 2024). However, the younger generation of Dayak Benawan, who have chosen to work in

urban areas, no longer inherits this *Ngitemp* knowledge.

This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between identity, agricultural sustainability, and food security within the context of the Dayak Benawan Indigenous community in Indonesia. In this study, we sought to formulate key research questions to guide the investigation: How do the Indigenous Dayak Benawan community conceptualise and practice food sovereignty

within the context of rice farming? Additionally, what role does the tradition of *Ngitemp* play in shaping local food practices and perceptions of sovereignty? By elucidating the profound significance of *Ngitemp*, this study contributes to informing policy efforts and advocacy aimed at safeguarding traditional rights, Indigenous knowledge, and the well-being of Indigenous communities to promote sustainable development practices that respect their cultural heritage.



Figures 1 and 2: The First Author Assisting a Woman and a Man of Dayak Benawan in Packing Rice into a Sack

Sources: First Author Documentations

Research Methodology

It should be noted over here that the first author, beyond, being of Dayak Benawan descent, was born and raised within this community. He therefore sought to engage not only as an observer but also to examine how his positionality and identity influenced his perceptions of the research subjects (Niko, 2022). Indeed, his positionality and identity as an insider, provided a deeper perspective on the narratives of his own community. However, the first author's status as a native can also affect

interactions with community members and his interpretations of their local knowledge. Through reflective journaling during fieldwork, he could identify areas of misunderstanding, navigate ethical dilemmas, and develop strategies to mitigate potential cultural conflicts that emerged throughout the research process.

Research Design

This research employs autoethnography as its methodological approach. Autoethnographic writing draws upon the first author's direct experiences (Higgins, 2024; Kristiansen, 2024;

Rouse, 2024; Ryan et al., 2024; Xu & Chia, 2024). The strength of this study lies in the first author's identity as a native Dayak Benawan, making the experience of *Ngitemp* not new or unfamiliar to him. As already stated above, beyond merely being of Dayak Benawan descent, he was born and raised within this community, which positively influences the reception of his presence. All conversations, jokes, and interactions between the first author and the community are not contrived but rather natural, reflecting everyday life. There is no boundary between the researcher and the researched.

A significant aspect of this autoethnographic writing process is the reminder of the importance of 'making a difference' through this research, as exemplified by Zhang (2024), who, as an autoethnographic writer with live experience, explores social distancing, or Belford et al. (2024), who write autoethnographically based on their experiences of online tracing. Furthermore, as a native Dayak Benawan, the first author's autoethnography evokes nostalgia for the traditional community setting, simultaneously recalling memories of his childhood when he was often taken to the fields by his parents.

Data Collection Process and Ethical Considerations

The researchers collected data from the Dayak Benawan community through participatory observation and in-depth conversational interviews. Semi-structured interview techniques were used to explore and gather detailed insights into the *Ngitemp* tradition practised by the community. All conversations were conducted in the native Dayak Benawan language, enabling a deeper understanding of the cultural and contextual nuances. As a native of Dayak Benawan, the first author could interpret the discussions with sensitivity and precision, leveraging his insider perspective to enrich the analysis. In this study, participatory observation focused on the *Ngitemp* activities, which were observed from morning until evening. Adhering to ethical research practices, permission was ensured in advance before documenting any activities or conversations

during the fieldwork. All participants in the *Ngitemp* activity consented to use conversations and images captured during the process. This approach maintained ethical integrity and facilitated trust and openness in our interactions with the community.

Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded following the interactive data analysis framework proposed by Miles & Huberman (1994). The interpretation of findings and conclusion formulation were integrated into the analytical process, facilitating iterative validation by engaging informants to confirm the accuracy and relevance of the emerging insights. Data triangulation was employed across interviews and observational data. This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study while minimising potential biases and enhancing the accuracy of the findings.

Results and Discussion

Food Security in the Peasant Contemporary of Indigenous People of Dayak Benawan

Food security is a crucial aspect of human life, ensuring access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life (Pérez-Escamilla, 2017). In the contemporary world, the issue of food security is particularly pertinent among indigenous peoples, who often rely on traditional farming practices and have unique cultural connections to their food sources.

Indigenous peoples have long maintained intimate relationships with their lands, practising sustainable agriculture and traditional food systems that have sustained their communities for generations (Altieri, 2004; Pretty, 2013; Coté, 2016; Niko et al., 2023). However, these traditional practices are increasingly threatened by various factors, including climate change, environmental degradation, land encroachment, and socio-economic marginalisation.

Climate change poses a significant threat to Indigenous food security, altering weather patterns, increasing the frequency of extreme weather events, and disrupting traditional

agricultural cycles. Indigenous communities, often residing in remote and vulnerable regions, are disproportionately affected by these changes, leading to reduced crop yields, biodiversity loss, and decreased availability of wild foods.

Environmental degradation, driven by deforestation, industrial agriculture, and extractive industries, further exacerbates food insecurity among Indigenous peoples (Dauvergne & Neville, 2010; Grey & Patel, 2015; Olagunju, 2015; Stavi et al., 2021). Land degradation, soil erosion, and water pollution degrade the ecosystems upon which Indigenous food systems depend, diminishing the resilience of traditional agricultural practices and

threatening the availability of culturally significant foods.

Moreover, Indigenous communities frequently face land encroachment and displacement due to large-scale development projects, land grabbing, and conflicts over natural resources (Drbohlav & Hejkrlik, 2017; Feiring, 2013; Fujiwara, 2020; Hak et al., 2018; Moreda, 2017; Nuhidayah et al., 2020; Ratnasari et al., 2020; Rutten et al., 2017; Toumbourou & Dressler, 2024; Urano, 2013). Loss of access to ancestral lands not only undermines Indigenous sovereignty and cultural identity but also disrupts traditional food systems, forcing communities to adapt to unfamiliar environments and livelihoods.



Figures 3 and 4: Dayak Benawan Women Happily doing *Ngitemp* despite their Everyday Challenges

Sources: First Author Documentations

Socio-economic marginalisation compounds the challenges faced by Indigenous peasants of Dayak Benawan, limiting their access to resources, markets, and education. Discriminatory policies, lack of land tenure rights, and unequal distribution of resources perpetuate poverty and food insecurity within

the community, exacerbating existing inequalities and vulnerabilities. Despite these challenges, Indigenous peoples demonstrate remarkable resilience and innovation in adapting to changing circumstances and preserving their food security (Ford et al., 2020; Makondo & Thomas, 2018; Maru et al., 2014). Many

communities are revitalising traditional agricultural practices, reclaiming ancestral lands, and promoting sustainable resource management strategies to enhance food sovereignty and resilience. Figures 3 and 4 demonstrate such resilience, and doing *Ngitemp* with smiles on their faces.

Indigenous food sovereignty movements advocate for Indigenous peoples' right to control their food systems, protect their lands, and preserve their cultural heritage (Claeys, 2012; Edelman et al., 2014; Grey & Patel, 2015). By reclaiming traditional knowledge, promoting agroecological practices, and revitalising Indigenous food traditions, these movements empower communities to assert their rights and address the root causes of food insecurity.

While Indigenous communities face significant obstacles to maintaining their traditional food systems, they also possess valuable knowledge, resilience, and cultural practices that offer pathways to sustainable food security (Widianingsih et al., 2022). By recognising and supporting Indigenous food sovereignty, promoting equitable policies, and fostering collaborative partnerships, we can work towards a future where all people, including Indigenous communities, have access to nutritious, culturally appropriate, and resilient food systems.

Experiencing *Ngitemp*: Closer to the Universe in its Entirety

Shifting cultivation, or *ladang berpindah*, has long been a cornerstone of the Dayak community's agricultural practices, deeply intertwined with their cultural identity and environmental stewardship (Ariyadi et al., 2022; Mathilda et al., 2021; Niko et al., 2024b; Nurleni, 2021). This system, rooted in generations of Indigenous knowledge, allows the Dayak people to adapt to the natural cycles of the forest and maintain soil fertility through rotational farming. Unlike monocultural agricultural systems, the *ladang berpindah* supports diverse crops and integrates sustainable methods that align with their belief in living harmoniously with nature. Such practices not only ensure food security for the community but also reflect their autonomy

over local food systems, embodying a form of food sovereignty that prioritises self-reliance and ecological balance.

The role of *ladang* in food sovereignty extends beyond subsistence, serving as a medium through which the Dayak community exercise control over their agricultural resources and traditional food systems. The Dayak preserve biodiversity and sustain their cultural heritage by cultivating upland rice as a staple crop alongside other food plants. This self-sufficiency, however, is increasingly challenged by external pressures such as land privatisation, deforestation, and the expansion of industrial agriculture, which threaten both the practice of *ladang* and the community's sovereignty over their food production. Despite these challenges, the Dayak continue to assert their rights to land and resources, reaffirming the importance of *ladang* as a vital component of their identity and their resilience in maintaining food sovereignty.

Ngitemp, the traditional rice harvesting practice of the Dayak Benawan community, represents a crucial annual agricultural activity that has been passed down through generations. This labour-intensive process signifies the culmination of months of dedicated effort, beginning with land preparation and cultivation and ending with the ripening of rice grains under the nurturing sunlight. It reflects the community's agricultural expertise but also their deep connection to the land and the rhythms of nature.

As the sun reaches its zenith around noon, casting a golden hue over the expansive rice fields, farmers gather their tools and prepare for the day's work. They are dressed in full attire, wearing shirts and long pants, and equipped with tools such as *cuwai* (rice stalk cutters), *atong* (containers for rice), *guni* (rice receptacles), and *seroyongk* (head coverings). Each community member plays a vital role in the harvest, fostering a sense of unity and cooperation that transcends generations—old and young working together in mutual assistance.

"Panai keh pak dosen Ngitemp beh. Jak dah kemabuk aboh angat!"(Can a lecturer really do *Ngitemp*? You might

faint!) (Conversation with Dayak Benawan men)

The first author's identity as a lecturer becomes the subject of jokes and banter among the elders who have known him since he was born in this village. Those who are aware of his identity as a lecturer do not perceive him as such, but rather as the child of Mr. Adel and Mrs. Lelen (his

parents). They call him Kumbang (his nickname in the village), as every child born in the village is given a nickname for daily use (not their real name). This identity brought him closer to the farmers of the Dayak Benawan Indigenous community in its entirety. Thus, the experience of *Ngitemp* further solidifies his bond with his community.



Figure 5: The Warm Atmosphere of Ngitemp amidst the Scorching Heat of the Sun
Source: First Author Documentation

Exploring the cultural significance of *Ngitemp* within the Dayak Benawan community has made the first author realise how everyday activities like this contribute to strengthening group identity. Those of us who participate in *Ngitemp* are not just from two or five families but from an entire village comprising over 30 families. This bustling atmosphere reinforces the value of group solidarity in the tradition of mutual assistance.

We also brought along all the equipment. They were surprised to see us, especially the first author, who was joining the *Ngitemp* in the field. Besides being a long-time community member who has not returned home to the village in a while, the first author has also not participated in agricultural activities with the community for a long time.

"Ngani gik ko galak mayan to umek, beh! Barem ko jak." (Why do you want to go to the field? You'll get your skin dark later)"

They joked about me, suggesting that tasks exposed to the sun are unsuitable for city dwellers. For the first author, *Ngitemp* is a nostalgic journey and reflects his identity as a native Dayak Benawan. The *Ngitemp* process involves meticulously orchestrated steps, beginning with cutting rice stalks using a *Cuwai* (traditional rice stalk cutter). Farmers navigate the lush yellowing fields with skilled hands, swiftly separating the stalks from the rice plants with trained precision.

The rhythmic sound of *Cuwai* cutting through the air resonates in harmony with one another. Occasionally, laughter echoes as someone cracks a joke. The scorching heat leaves everyone

thirsty, prompting them to take turns heading to the ditch (field edge), where fresh water is provided. Despite the physical exhaustion, there

is a sense of satisfaction as the gradual fruits of their labour unfold before them (see Figures 5 and 6).



Figure 6: The Warm Atmosphere of Ngitemp amidst the Scorching Heat of the Sun
Source: First Author Documentation

As the day begins to fade into twilight, around 4 p.m., the harvested rice is gathered into neat bundles in gunny sacks and then transported to the field owner's house. Men carry sacks filled with rice, while women carry containers filled with rice. With tiredness accompanied by satisfied smiles, the farmers gather to drink coffee and enjoy *kebeng* bread provided by the field owner at his home. Together, they celebrate a successful harvest, expressing gratitude to the land and elements that have provided them with abundance and nourishment.

The late afternoon air, filled with the scent of freshly harvested rice fields, promises sustainability and prosperity for the community. For the Dayak Benawan community, *Ngitemp* is not merely about rice harvesting, but also a sacred ritual connecting them to the land and honouring ancestral traditions passed down

through generations. The rituals and ceremonies associated with *Ngitemp* serve as vessels of traditional knowledge passed orally from generation to generation. Through participation in *Ngitemp*, all involved community members are not only taught the intricacies of rice cultivation but also instilled with a profound appreciation for the cultural heritage that forms their identity. In this way, *Ngitemp* becomes a dynamic conduit for the transmission of traditional knowledge and values, ensuring the continuity of Dayak Benawan culture amidst the pressures of external elements brought in by the process of modernisation.

Through experiencing *Ngitemp*, we gained a profound appreciation for human reverence for nature for the abundant rice harvest it bestows. We also felt the strong bond between humans and the land that sustains them. A sense of contentment and joy envelops everyone during

the rice harvest. Among them, they say, “[w]e must be happy when harvesting rice so that the rice also enters our homes happily.”

The Illusion of Food Security in the Lives of Indigenous Farmers

Food self-sufficiency within the Dayak Benawan community signifies their ability to sustain their local livelihood system through generations. *Ngitemp* is indicative of this community’s well-preserved sustainable livelihood. By maintaining control over their food production through traditional methods, the Dayak Benawan people mitigate risks associated with dependence on external food sources, thereby safeguarding their food security in an increasingly unstable world.

Food security is critical to human life, ensuring access to an adequate and nutritious food supply. In the contemporary world, food security issues are particularly relevant among Indigenous communities, who often rely on traditional agricultural practices and have unique cultural connections to their food sources (Das et al., 2024). Indigenous communities have long maintained an intimate relationship with their land, practising sustainable agriculture and traditional food systems that have sustained their communities for centuries (Ranglet, 2022).

However, these traditional practices are increasingly threatened by various factors, including climate change, environmental degradation, land grabbing, and socio-economic marginalisation. Government policies that sideline Indigenous communities further exacerbate their ability to maintain the traditional practices that are their livelihood source. In Kalimantan, the dispossession of Indigenous Dayak land rights has occurred as powerful actors, particularly the government, have treated the land as if it were unclaimed territory (Maunati, 2004).

Furthermore, Climate change poses a significant threat to the food security of Indigenous communities. Shifts in weather patterns and increased frequency of extreme natural disasters disrupt traditional agricultural cycles.

Indigenous communities living in remote and vulnerable areas are disproportionately affected by this. Consequently, there is a decline in crop yields, biodiversity loss, and reduced availability of wild foods in the forests.

Environmental degradation, triggered by deforestation, industrial agriculture, and extractive industries, further exacerbates food insecurity among Indigenous communities. For example, the extractive palm oil industry in West Kalimantan damages the water ecosystem that forms the basis of the food system for Indigenous communities (Toumbourou et al., 2022). This situation diminishes the resilience of traditional agricultural practices and threatens the availability of culturally significant food. Unpredictable floods make it difficult for them to determine the timing of planting.

“Banjer kekeh nong. Tahun 2023 mino, aja belana ka’ ha nen ngaik pade nge. Sekit-sekit keh ujan da lansong banjer, kuna ko yak muwat umek” (Floods occur all the time, Nong (a term of endearment for a Dayak Benawan child—the participant addressed the first author as his grandchild).

Last year, in 2023, no one in this village could harvest rice. Even a little rain causes immediate flooding; how can we farm it?) (Conversation with Dayak Benawan women)

Additionally, Indigenous communities often face land grabbing and displacement due to large-scale development projects. Land grabbing and conflicts over natural resources frequently occur in Kalimantan regions, sacrificing Indigenous communities. Losing access to ancestral land not only undermines the sovereignty of Indigenous communities but also erodes cultural identity and disrupts traditional food systems. In the current situation, Indigenous communities are forced to adapt to unfamiliar environments and livelihoods.

Subsequently, socio-economic marginalisation exacerbates the challenges faced by Indigenous farmers by limiting their access to resources, markets, and education. Moreover, discriminatory policies, lack of land ownership

rights, and unequal resource distribution perpetuate poverty and food insecurity within

Indigenous communities, worsening existing inequalities and vulnerabilities.



Figures 7 and 8: The First Author and the Dayak Benawan Farmer Doing *Ngitemp*
Source: First Author Documentations

Indonesia has a tumultuous history marked by colonialism, conflicts, and geopolitical rivalries (Jones, 2010). These historical factors have contributed to the displacement of small communities and the creation of vulnerable populations. According to data from AMAN (2023), 687 individuals from Indigenous communities have been criminalised in the past 10 years (from 2014 to 2023).

Despite facing challenges, the Dayak Benawan Indigenous community demonstrates remarkable resilience and innovation in adapting to changing circumstances and maintaining their food security. The Dayak Indigenous communities in Kalimantan as a whole practice traditional farming methods (Mulyoutami et al.,

2009; Murhaini & Achmadi, 2021). While Figures 7 and 8 further demonstrate the act of doing *Ngitemp* along with the researcher, the first author, Figure 9, demonstrates post-*Ngitemp*, that women usually manage the next processing stage. Although their journey is fraught with difficulties, many Indigenous communities in Indonesia have been accused of forest burning as they clear land through slash-and-burn agriculture—known locally as Dayak Benawan as *nyocol* (Niko, 2023). They strive tirelessly to reclaim ancestral land and promote sustainable resource management strategies to enhance their community's food sovereignty.

Currently, the land of the Dayak Benawan people is becoming increasingly scarce and is being

converted into oil palm plantations. The agricultural fields traditionally cultivated by the Dayak Benawan are now rarely found on the hills (called *deret*). The loss of land, once managed with deep local wisdom, has significantly altered their way of life. The encroachment of oil palm plantations on these lands has not only reduced the space available for farming but also led to

the erosion of agricultural practices that were once integral to their cultural identity. This transformation poses new challenges for the Dayak Benawan community, which must adapt to a way of life increasingly shaped by industrialisation and the sustainable exploitation of natural resources.



Figure 9: After *Ngitemp*, Woman is Usually Responsible for Managing the Next Stage of Processing.

Source: First Author Documentation

Climate change significantly challenges the Dayak Benawan community in maintaining their livelihoods. Unstable weather patterns, such as irregular rainfall and decreasing forest cover, make the Dayak Benawan region vulnerable to flooding. Approximately four families have flooded fields, putting their harvests at risk of failure. This situation disrupts the traditional agricultural cycle and results in the failure of their farmland.

“Mek impong da beburan-buran banjer. Da telem buah pade kanak ka’ umek”
(*Mek Impong* (the location name for farming) has been flooded for months. Our rice crops in the fields have long

been submerged in water) (Conversation with Pesirah Adat Dayak Benawan)

The Indigenous food sovereignty movement is inseparable from their struggle to control their own food systems, protect their land, and preserve their cultural heritage. By recycling traditional knowledge, promoting agroecological practices, and revitalising Indigenous food traditions, these movements empower communities to assert their rights and address the root causes of food insecurity.

In the contemporary landscape, where rapid urbanisation and modernisation pose significant challenges to traditional lifestyles, Indigenous communities face major barriers in maintaining

their traditional food systems (Fajarwati & Masruri, 2019; Shafiee et al., 2024). However, the Dayak Benawan community also possesses valuable knowledge, resilience, and cultural practices that offer a pathway to sustainable

food security. *Ngitemp* practices positively affect food security among the Dayak Benawan Indigenous community. Figure 10 demonstrates such a picture, where the community gathers to engage in *Nganos* after a successful *Ngitemp*.



Figure 10. *Nganos*, after *Ngitemp*.The Farmers Enjoy *Nganos* (eating and chatting with each other)

Source: First Author Documentation

Conclusion

This study reflects firsthand experiences in witnessing the longstanding tradition of the Dayak Benawan Indigenous community in safeguarding their livelihoods. The Dayak Benawan community maintains a deeply rooted cultural connection with the land and its surrounding natural resources. Traditional farming has been an integral part of their daily lives, serving not only as a means of livelihood but also as an expression of culture and collective identity. Experiencing *Ngitemp*, was a deep connection to the land, where every step seemed to resonate with the community's shared history and practices.

Dayak Benawan farmers face difficulties in planning planting and harvesting times, as well as in dealing with increased pest and disease attacks due to climate change. Therefore, *Ngitemp* has become highly sacred as it is not enjoyed yearly. The uncertain agricultural cycle has gradually eroded the local knowledge of Dayak Benawan in traditional farming. Ongoing climate change, deforestation due to land conversion to oil palm plantations, and persistent socio-economic instability threaten their future food security.

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Conflict of Interest

We declare that we do not have any conflict of interest. Consent from participants in the interview was obtained directly during fieldwork. We also declare that we did not use AI tools to generate the text of this research.

Author Contribution Statement

Nikodemus Niko conducted the fieldwork, developed the methodology, critically analysed the results and developed the discussion, reviewed final draft, and conducted the final editing. Dr. Syarifah Ema Rahmaniah contributed to conceptualisation, editing, and ethics approval. Dr. Ira Patriani contributed to developing literature review. Nurlaili Khikmawati and Desca Thea Purnama contributed to developing discussion and conclusion.

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