



## Reproduction of Cultural Identities among Amalgamated Malay and Javanese Families: Enculturation, Negotiation, and Hybrid Identities

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### **Keywords:**

*Amalgamation; Hybrid Identity; Cultural Negotiation; Enculturation; Malay; Javanese.*

#### **How to cite:**

*Syafrini, D., Permata, N.D., Amelia, L., Febriani, E.A., Sapturi, F. (2023). Reproduction of Cultural Identities among Amalgamated Malay and Javanese Families: Enculturation, Negotiation, and Hybrid Identities. ETNOSIA: Jurnal Etnografi Indonesia. 8(1): 1 – 11.*

#### **DOI:**

*10.31947/etnosia.v8i1.25035*

### ABSTRACT

This article discusses how the reproduction of cultural identity in amalgamated families among Malay and Javanese in Tanjung Uma Village, Lubuk Baja District, Batam, Indonesia. The Malay and Javanese are ethnic groups that have different cultural characteristics, so various forms of negotiation are needed in the formation of cultural identity among family members. This is qualitative research with case study method, using observation and in-depth interviews with 15 informants. We use theory of location of culture by Homi K Bhabha and Stuart Hall's cultural identity to explain that cultural identity is not something rigid and standard but can be produced and reproduced. The research show that in amalgamated families of Malay and Javanese, there is a negotiation of cultural identity, making an impact on the formation of a hybrid identity in which the various elements of the two cultures adapt to each other. Hybrid identity is a form of cultural identity reproduction, the result of negotiations between the innate cultures of the two parents, as well as the dominant culture prevailing in the location where the family internalizes itself. This cultural negotiation is also the reason for the survival of Malay and Javanese amalgamated families, in the midst of high divorce rates among other ethnic amalgamation marriage in Tanjung Uma.

## 1. Introduction

The study of cultural identity is an interesting topic in the life of mixed marriage or amalgamation families, this is because a lot of research shows that amalgamation marriages are prone to problems such as the legal status of children (Herni Widanarti, 2019), conflicts and issues of children's cultural identity due to differences in culture and habits brought from the culture of origin of their parents, even in some cases they are

vulnerable to divorce (Monahan, 2010). The problem of amalgamation does not only occur in married couples, but also in children. Several studies reveal that children who come from amalgamated families experience cultural shock since it is difficult to identify their cultural identity. Since each culture has its own rules of the game regarding lineage, such as children who come from mixed marriages of patrilineal and matrilineal ethnicity will experience difficulty in identifying their cultural identity (Hidayati, 2017; Salamah, 2018; Hijjang, 2019).

Although many problems arise as a consequence of amalgamation, several studies reveal that amalgamation also has a positive side such as the creation of multiple identities from the culture of origin of the father and mother. They socialize with a different cultural environment from the culture of their parents. For example, someone who was born with a Javanese mother and a Malay father but grew up in Padang, where the majority are inhabited by the Minangkabau ethnic group. The same case also often occurs in other ethnicities, such as marriages between Batak and Sundanese in Bandung. They may have their own pattern of cultivating cultural values and adaptation in the family so that differences do not become problems (Sonya, 2018), but in the case of other ethnic mixed marriages, it is possible that in the process of intercultural interaction in amalgamated families, one culture dominates another (Saputri et al., 2018). Thus, in a case like this, it is interesting to examine how cultural reproduction occurs in amalgamated families as a form of cross-cultural negotiation and identity construction among family members.

The research was conducted in Tanjung Uma Village, Lubuk Baja District, Batam City. This location was chosen because Tanjung Uma is one of the areas inhabited by various ethnic groups in Indonesia. In 2020, the population of Tanjung Uma Village was recorded at 24,227 people, coming from six different ethnic groups including, 8,501 Malay, 5,775 Javanese, 3,888 Bataknese, 3,874 Minangkabau ethnic people, 1,647 Chinese and 592 Buginese (Kelurahan Tanjung Uma, 2021).

The ethnic diversity that inhabits Tanjung Uma is a factor causing the high amalgamation rate in this area. Today, there are 80 couples who practice this marriage. Amalgamated marriages occur between Malays and Javanese, Malay and Chinese, Bataknese and Javanese, Malay and Minangkabau, Bataknese and Chinese, Javanese and Buginese, and Minangkabau and Bataknese (Kelurahan Tanjung Uma, 2021). Of all the amalgamation cases in Tanjung Uma, it is interesting to study the Malay and Javanese since besides have highest number, the amalgamation of these two ethnics is recorded as the most lasting marriage with no case of divorce. This means that the amalgamation of Malay and Javanese in Tanjung Uma proves that amalgamation does not always have a negative impact, but instead, it becomes a medium that unites different ethnicities and provides space for the unification of two cultures as a result of negotiations and adjustments.

In amalgamated families, the cultivation of cultural values in family members is certainly different from families who marry with same ethnicity. In amalgamated family, there there are two enculturation process of carrying out family life, especially the children. It could be that one ethnicity becomes more dominant, or even both. It is even possible for the mixing of various cultural elements to occur which forms a new identity

as a consequence of the meeting of two different cultural identities in one family. Based on these problems, this article will discuss more deeply the reproduction of cultural identity in amalgamated families, especially the Malay and Javanese in Tanjung Uma, as well as the dominant factors that determine this identity.

The issue of cultural identity is often the cause of conflict in society due to the failure of adaptation and the acceptance of each other's differences. However, different things are found in the life of the several people of Tanjung Uma. Amalgamation becomes a medium that unites ethnic diversity, thereby contributing to the creation of social harmony in a multi-ethnic society. This research has a high value of novelty and originality while previous research was limited to discussing the factors that influence the occurrence of amalgamation (Ade, 2015) the survival of the amalgamated family (Permata & Syafrini, 2022), the harmony (Ahmad, 2019; Alicia Steffi, 2017), religious identity (Rahmatina & Hidayat, 2021), the problems among the couples (Hidayati, 2017; Salamah, 2018) and the identity changes as an impact of the amalgamation (Sari, 2019; Veronica, 2017; Ismail, 2019). However, research that specifically examines the reproduction of cultural identities in amalgamated families forming new identities as a form of adaptation and interaction of two different cultural identities is still rare. Therefore, this research fills the lacuna of previous research and contributes to scientific developments, especially studies related to relations between the ethnicities.

## **2. Method**

This is qualitative research with a case study type. We used purposive sampling, in which informants were taken based on the criteria set by the author, with a total of 15 informants: husband and wife of Malay and Javanese in an amalgamation marriage, children from that family, community leaders from the Malay and Javanese living in Tanjung Uma Village. We also observed how family life within the amalgamated Malay and Javanese families Tanjung Uma Village. We observed how the construction of the child's identity occurs, either as a form of resistance or negotiation. We also used in-depth interviews conducted for 45 minutes to 90 minutes to obtain information on the formation of the identity of children from families with amalgamated marriages.

We used the interactive analysis model in data analysis process through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. In the first stage, the data that has been collected through interviews, observation, and documentation, is processed through the process of data selection, coding, simplification, and data transformation. Furthermore, the data is organized into a collection of information that is categorized and synthesized, then presented in the form of a narrative supported by pictures, tables, and charts. Based on the process of data reduction and data presentation, data verification and conclusions were then carried out which involved the researcher's interpretation of the meaning of the data presented. (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

## **3. Result and discussion**

### **• *Tanjung Uma: The Multiethnic Community and Amalgamation***

Tanjung Uma is one of the old villages in Batam City, which was originally inhabited by Malays who came from the Riau Lingga Royal Family. Along with the development of

Batam as an industrial city and the high demand for labor, Tanjung Uma is also experiencing development. Tanjung Uma is one of the areas occupied by workers from various regions and ethnicities in Indonesia, making it as a multiethnic city. It is one of the multi-ethnic areas in Batam with heterogeneous community characteristics, various ethnicities, religions, and groups. This village is inhabited by several ethnic groups, including Malay, Bataknese, Javanese, Minangkabaunese, Chinese, and Buginese (Dinas Kebudayaan Provinsi Riau, 2017).

Malay is the largest ethnic group inhabiting Tanjung Uma with 8,501 people, following Javanese with 5,775 people, Bataknese 3,888 people, Minangkabaunese 3,874 people, Chinese 1,647 people, and Buginese 592 people (Kelurahan Tanjung Uma, 2021). Not only various ethnicities, but also religious differences are part of their lives. In Tanjung Uma the population is Muslim, Christian, Confucian, Hindu, and Buddhist. Based on data from the Central Bureau of Statistics for the city of Batam, the religious adherents in this village are quite diverse, including Islam (82.73%), Buddhism (9.91%), Christianity (7.26% with 4.18% Protestants and 3.08% Catholics 3), 0.09% Confucianism and Hinduism 0.01% (BPS Kota Batam, 2020). However, even though there are different ethnicities and religions, this is not an obstacle for them to establish brotherly relations, so that conflicts over ethnicity rarely occur in this area. They live with a high sense of tolerance and solidarity.

In 2021, it was found that there were 80 couples who practice this marriages/ amalgamation in Tanjung Uma. Among them are amalgamated marriage couples of Malay and Javanese ethnic groups 14 couples, Malays and Chinese (13 couples), Bataknese and Javanese (12 couples), Malay and Minangkabaunese (12 ouples), Bataknese and Chinese (11 couples), Javanese and Buginese (10 couples), Minangkabau and Bataknese (8 couples) (Kelurahan Tanjung Uma, 2021).

The data above shows that the majority of amalgamations are carried out by the Malay and Javanese ethnic groups. Interestingly, the amalgamations between these two ethnic groups can maintain the integrity of their families without divorce. This condition is inversely proportional to the amalgamation carried out between other ethnicities (besides the Malay and Javanese ethnicities) which are prone to conflicts that lead to divorce.

Based on previous research, it was revealed that the occurrence of divorce was caused by each partner having different cultural backgrounds, such as values, customs, beliefs, traditions, lifestyles, and behavior of each individual. However, in amalgamated marriages among the Malay and Javanese ethnic groups were able to maintain their marriage because of their adaptability and respect for the cultural differences of the partners, as well as having relatively the same perceptions about marriage stemming from their cultural and religious ideologies. What is also interesting is that these two ethnicities have a high tolerance for respecting the values and cultural elements of their partners, which can be seen from their daily activities as well as in internalizing cultural values in their family members. This attitude, then, contributes to the reproduction of cultural identity among their family members.

- *Enculturation and the Process of Forming Cultural Identity in Malay and Javanese Ethnic Amalgamation Families*

Identity concerns issues of similarities and differences, about personal and social aspects, similarities with a number of people, and what differentiates them from others (Barker, 2000), as well as characteristics or signs, identity attached to a person or group of people that describes their characteristics (Maulani, 2007). Meanwhile, cultural identity concerns the characteristics of a culture owned by a group of people whose boundaries are known when compared to the characteristics of other people's cultures.

Dacey and Kenny (1997) argue that cultural identity is a part of personal concept coming from knowledge and feeling of certain cultural groups. The awareness about cultural identity rises from a process of values and norms learning within the self. The process of long-life learning of this cultural value is called enculturation (Kim & Alamilla, 2017). It makes an individual aware about their cultural identity (Weinreich, 2009).

This is an interesting topic to discuss, the process of long-life learning among the amalgamation family of the Malay and Javanese in Tanjung Uma. Since both ethnic groups have different character and tradition, negotiation and cross-cultural understanding become ways to avoid conflict in the family. Both ethnic groups do not cross the line by forcing other to adapt their own cultural values. Instead, both receive, complete, and adapt each other by letting cultural interaction go naturally. It is because even though they have differences, they also have similarities, making it easier to adapt each other.

The easy process of adaptation and mutual acceptance that occurs between Javanese and Malay ethnic groups in Tanjung Uma is not without reason. This is motivated by several similarities that exist between the two ethnic groups such as religion/belief, marriage vision, and habits. One of the most prominent similarities is the determination of lineage. Both adhere to a patrilineal system, so that the lineage of children is based on their father's lineage. If the father is Javanese, then the child's lineage is also Javanese, but if the father is Malay, then the child is also Malay. On that basis, the issue of lineage, as a form of child identity, is not a problem in Javanese and Malay mixed marriage families.

Javanese and Malay have different cultural elements in language, food, values, norms, traditions, arts, and habits. These differences become a challenge for couples in passing on their respective cultural values to their children. Without dominating each other, the two cultural elements are still introduced to children, so that the children will understand the good values and traditions that exist in both of their parent's culture. One of the participants, Salim, states that:

*"We never force our children to be Javanese or Malay only. Obviously, they are the second generation. They are Javanese and they are also Malay even though their bloodline comes from their father. We still instill the habits that we have as their parents, without forcing them to choose one. Javanese and Malay have good values that they must understand and practice (Interview, 18 June 2022)"*

The same thing is also revealed by Jumiaty, that:

*"Instilling values takes place naturally, what is clear is that we still apply the two habits that exist in our respective cultures at home. Our children are Javanese and Malay, even though there are many different customs, but both are equally good. What will have the most influence later, it depends on the acceptance of the child (Interview, 22 June 2022)*

This intercultural adjustment can be seen from the parents who teach the values and norms that apply in the local community (Malay-Javanese) to their children. This norm is taught to facilitate interaction and be accepted in their environment so as to merge differences. Norms that are taught such as: always greet people, be polite in dress, do not make noise while eating, maintain a sitting posture, must respect parents, and do not laugh excessively. This norm is a Javanese value that is still being applied today, so if someone does the opposite, there will be difficulties to be accepted in their environment. In addition, children from families of amalgamated marriages of Malay and Javanese ethnicity also still require their children to carry out the traditions which are intended to respect their ancestors. It is hoped that their children will know and understand, and they will do the same. Alwi, son of Neti and Noval, states:

*"I just follow my mother and father every day at Tanjung Uma. My parents also teach both Malay and Javanese culture. The Javanese is smooth and polite, so is the Malay culture taught by my mother. We live in a Malay environment, we often participate in Malay activities, but if there are Javanese traditional activities, we still participate" (Interview, 6 May 2022)*

The same thing was also expressed by Azizah, Ernawati's daughter, who was conveyed in the interview as follows:

*"Actually, being in these two cultural mixtures, in my opinion, is better. My parents are Javanese and Malay, so our family and I learn more and understand each difference from the customs and habits that my parents taught me" (Interview, 5 May 2022)*

From the expressions of the informants above, it can be seen that in families of amalgamated marriages, there will be a blend of the two cultures which are internalized to their children as a result of the interaction of parents who come from different ethnic groups in this case (Malay and Javanese). Being influenced by each other in terms of cultural elements, especially daily habits taught by parents to children, is a form of knowledge exchange which will eventually form a hybrid cultural identity for children between indigenous Malay culture as the culture of the local community in Tanjung Uma, and Javanese culture as the migrant culture.

In response to this, Deriawati, a Malay, and her husband, a Javanese, apply Malay-Javanese norms to children due to interactions with the community, for example, bowing when they pass in front of older people and not stepping over food. Devina, daughter of Deriawati, states that:

*"My mother and father taught Javanese and Malay as well as taught the polite and the friendly habits of the Javanese and Malays. But because there are many Malays in Tanjung Uma, we often participate in Malay activities. If there are Javanese cultural activities, my family and I will also participate" (Interview, 6 May 2022)*

Based on the statements above, it can be seen that parents of amalgamated marriages of Malay and Javanese ethnic groups will indirectly provide an understanding of differences and will internalize the norms of Malay and Javanese through the process of enculturation, so that their children understand the various habits of both parents, neither feels dominating nor dominated by forcing their children to follow the cultural identity of their parents. So that in the process, children identify themselves that they are Javanese and also Malay. It is during this phase that mixed Javanese and Malay identities occurred which became the characteristic of children living in amalgamated families. This mixed identity is then referred to by Homi K. Bhabha as a hybrid identity, the result of the adjustment of two different cultures due to adaptation and interaction processes (Bhabha, 1994a). Furthermore, according to Bhabha, the formation of a hybrid culture is common in societies that grow in diversity, as a form of mutual acceptance and adjustment. This is because culture as an identity is flexible and can be modified according to the needs and environmental conditions of a community (Bhabha, 1994b). This is also in accordance with the expression of Stuart Hall (1990) and Crish Barker (2000), that cultural identity is a construction since it is not permanent. Its formation is a process that never ends and will continue throughout space and time.

- ***Hybrid Identity: Negotiation and Reproduction of Cultural Identity in Amalgamated Families***

Basically, cultural identity is considered to be personal as well as social and marks that determine the similarities or differences from other people. It also can be interpreted through tastes, attitudes, beliefs, clothing, and lifestyles which are the result of social construction (Barker, 2000). In a plural society, structural inequality usually occurs when the identity of one group is salient than other groups. When the dominant groups are more able to present themselves while minority groups are only seen as complementary objects, conflicts often occur due to identity issues in multiethnic societies. Thus, this identity conflict is prone to be experienced by families with different ethnic marriages, which can lead to the collapse of family survival. However, the survival of different ethnic families can be created when two different cultures can understand each other, even negotiations and mutual adjustments can occur which lead to the occurrence of mixed identities.

This negotiation and mutual adjustment also happened to the amalgamation family in the Tanjung Uma Village. Identity construction occurs naturally without any coercion from either parent. However, cultural identity that refers to lineage still follows the patrilineal system, as outlined by the Javanese and Malay ethnic groups. Meanwhile, knowledge about the values and cultural elements of both parents is internalized alternately to family members, so that family members understand and apply the various customs of each culture that exist in their family. This intercultural enculturation process results in the use of more than one cultural element as a marker for the formation of a hybrid identity.

The formation of a hybrid identity is also a consequence of mixed marriage families of Malay and Javanese in Tanjung Uma. The enculturation of values and habits from the culture of both parents causes children to understand and apply the customs of the two cultures, and to identify themselves as Malay-Javanese. The unification of various

cultural elements has become a consequence of mixed marriages, resulting in various mixed cultural elements.

The mixing of cultural identities in Tanjung Uma can be seen in several cultural elements in people's lives such as the use of language, art, and the implementation of various traditions in marriage as well as birth and death ceremonies. The language they use is a mixed language of Javanese and Malay although more often use Malay. In a wedding ceremony, in general, Malay and Javanese amalgamation families adopt traditions from their parents (even though Malay customs are emphasized) some Javanese traditions are still not abandoned, such as the *marewang* tradition, the activity of helping each other in various family events and doing public work/service (*tolong menolong* and *gotong royong*). This mixing of cultural elements is expressed by Ernawati, that:

*“Here, we apply various traditions that have been mixed between Malay and Javanese. The language used is a mixture of both, although mostly Malay, and also the custom. Java, as part of our children's ancestral blood, we do not just leave it. Some activities from Java are still used, so our family is ‘Jawa rasa Melayu’ (a Javanese family that feels Malay), and a Malay that has Javanese nuances (Interview, 5 May 2022)*

The mixing of cultural elements in Tanjung Uma is also revealed from the information provided by Deriawati:

*“In Tanjung Uma, there are actually a lot of mixed traditions, because there are many ethnics here. In Javanese-Malay families, usually, when there is a celebration, they wear both. Even though most of them use Malay customs. People here respect all cultures (Interview, 6 May 2022)*

The mixing of Malay cultural elements is a form of cultural reproduction that occurs as a result of adaptation and negotiation between two different cultures. This happens because of the existence of power relations between the Malay community as indigenous people who had previously occupied the Tanjung Uma Village and the Javanese community as migrants in the Tanjung Uma Village.

However, even though mixing occurs in some cultural elements, due to the enculturation of knowledge and habits of both parents, the interesting findings in this study indicate that in the process, there is still one dominant culture that has a greater influence on children's identity. In Tanjung Uma, the dominant culture comes from the Malay. This is revealed by several informants, such as Sarah and Manuang:

*“We both apply Javanese and Malay customs to our children, but what is absorbed by them is Malay. Everyday children speak Malay. Likewise for family activities, we use more Malay culture even though one of us is Javanese. This is because we have lived in Tanjung Uma for a long time, which is indeed a Malay culture, so we have just followed it” (Interview, 29 April 2022)*

Based on the results of the interviews, it can be seen that the dominance of Malay culture in the family is more because Malay is the majority culture of the people of Tanjung Uma, so that their children are more influenced by local culture. The same thing is also expressed by Sahar, husband of Jumiati:

*“Even though my wife and I are from different cultures, I am Javanese and my wife is*

*Malay. However, the one who teaches the most of things is my wife, so the children just follow the Malay culture. Here, the majority of people is Malay, so the habits that are widely used are Malays, so I have to adapt" (Interview, 24 April 2022)*

Jumiati and Sahar apply Malay culture in their family because according to them, Malay culture is more influential in their environment than Javanese culture. This is not a problem in their family because they are already in the Malay environment. The same thing is also expressed by Ernawati, a Javanese and her husband, Salim, a Malay.

*"Culture really influences the individual form of children, so I agreed with my husband to introduce our two cultures so that our children know about cultural diversity as well. But because we have been in Tanjung Uma for a long time and there are mostly Malay people and have participated in cultural activities here, so most of the Malay cultural customs have been ingrained in our family" (Interview on 5 May 2022)*

Based on the information provided by the informants above, it is clear that Malay culture is the dominant culture in Tanjung Uma. Thus, the Javanese becomes migrants, who adapt to the culture of the local population, even though in the family, the two cultural elements are imparted in a balanced way to their family members. Children absorb more and more cultural elements from the Malay as the majority ethnic of the inhabitants of Tanjung Uma. These findings indicate that the neighborhood determines the construction of a child's cultural identity from amalgamated marriages of Malay and Javanese ethnicities. From the results of interviews with informants, it is explained that when the majority of the population is the Malay, they have to adapt to the environment continuously, so that they become part of the majority community.

This process of adjustment and adaptation to the local culture is what causes hybrid identities to occur in Javanese and Malay amalgamated families. Although it does not completely give birth to something completely new, it shows the application of elements from two or more different cultures, the result of individual interactions, and the adjustments to these two or more cultural elements (Sari, 2019). Mixed identity occurs due to the flexion of different identity categories that are formed through a contestation in which identities are negotiated with each other (Jacobson et al., 1997).

Regarding hybrid culture, Bhaba (1994) in his study reveals that it has become a demand for a minority group to adapt to the majority culture, one way is to produce a new identity that has been adapted to the local culture (Ghandi, 2001). This is a form of existence for indigenous culture and negotiation with local culture which will eventually give birth to a hybrid culture as a result of a natural construction to give birth to a 'new agency' for the culture supported by minority groups. Hybrid identity is proof that cultural identity is not standard and rigid, but it can be produced and reproduced according to the needs and conditions of the actors (Foscarini, 2018; Hall, 1990; Jacobson et al., 1997; Stebbins, 2002).

#### **4. Conclusion**

Amalgamation is a consequence of the diversity of the people in Tanjung Uma. Many studies have shown that amalgamation can result in identity conflicts among family members. However, the findings of this study indicate that in amalgamated families of

Malay and Javanese, intercultural negotiations occur that have impacts on the formation of hybrid identities in which various elements in the two cultures adjust to each other. Hybrid identity is cultural identity reproduction, the result of negotiations between the innate cultures of the two parents as well as the dominant culture prevailing in the location where the family internalizes itself. This cultural negotiation is also the cause of the survival of Malay and Javanese amalgamated families in the midst of high divorce rates among other ethnic amalgamation marriage in Tanjung Uma.

This research is limited to the discussion of the reproduction of cultural identity in the Javanese and Malay communities. We would argue that identity negotiations occur, which refer to the realization of inter-ethnic social integration. However, it is possible that different results will occur in amalgamations between other ethnicities, such as Bataknese and Minangkabaunese, Chinese and Malay, Buginese and Minangkabaunese, as well as Malay and Bataknese. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct research on the construction of identity in inter-ethnic amalgamated families who have different cultures and religions, such as Malay and Chinese or Minangkabaunese and Bataknese, or Buginese and Bataknese. This is interesting, because inter-ethnic, cross-cultural, and inter-religious, have their own dynamics in the formation of identity within the family.

**Acknowledgment:** The authors would like to thank Institute for Research and Community Service Universitas Negeri Padang (LPPM-UNP) for supporting the research on which this article is based.

**Conflicts of Interest:** I declare no conflict of interest. The founding sponsors had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript, and in the decision to publish the results.

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