

## Education in the Border Areas of Malaysian and Indonesian Borneo/Kalimantan

Shigeo NISHIMURA\*

### Abstract

This study is aimed to make clear the dynamics of national education in the border areas of Malaysian and Indonesian Borneo/Kalimantan. By analyzing the activities of primary schools of the area, I extract the vectors of nationalization, localization and internationalization that operate in the primary education.

The vector of nationalization can be understood as a force flowing from the national capital and reaching directly to the border villages. The vector of localization arises in the provincial capital and terminates in the border villages. In the border areas the latter can be considered as a secondary flow of the former from the viewpoint of national education. The relationships that span the national border should be considered in terms of localization across the national border rather than the concept of internationalization.

### Introduction

A border area has two features in terms of its location: it lies at the periphery of its own country and is the closest area to the neighboring country. This gives rise to two features of education in a border area: an inward orientation toward the upbringing of citizens of the home nation, and an outward orientation toward the education in the neighboring country. The contrast between these orientations is more clearly apparent in the border areas than elsewhere.

The stage for the present study is Borneo/Kalimantan, the third largest island in the world, which is divided politically among three countries: Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. The study focused on four primary schools, two in Sabah, Malaysia (O and Q) and two in East Kalimantan, Indonesia (P and R). O and P schools, while separated by the national border, both lie inland in the same natural and social environment of the forest world. Q and R are similarly separated by national borders but both occupy coastal environments in the marine world.

State \ Environment	Forest World	Marine World
Sabah, Malaysia	O Primary School	Q Primary School
East Kalimantan, Indonesia	P Primary School	R Primary School

\* 西村重夫, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University

I visited these four schools in November and December of 1994. Then I conducted my survey again in these areas in November 1997.

By comparison of these four cases, this study aims to extract the vectors of nationalization, localization and internationalization that operate in primary education and, by analyzing their interrelationship, to clarify the dynamics of national education in the border areas.

## I The Four Primary Schools

### 1. O Primary School

O primary school is located to the south of Tenom in the inland area of Sabah, Malaysia, halfway between Tenom and the Indonesian border. The major occupation in the area is agriculture, and there is a large rubber plantation near the school.

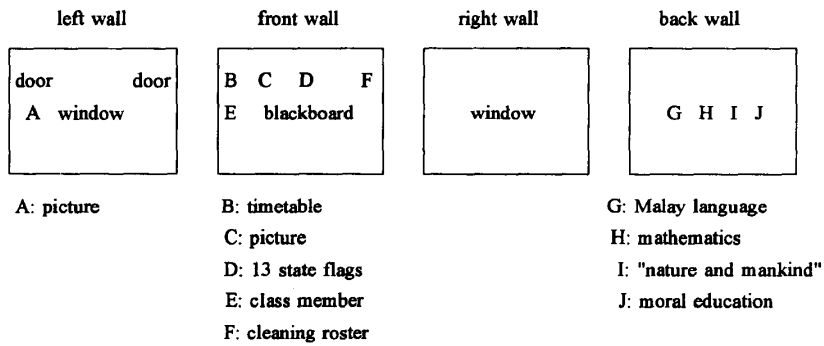
O school was established in 1952 with aid from the World Bank, the original building being thatched with nipa leaves. The student body has now grown to 535 pupils, of whom Murut children form the largest ethnic group, followed by Lendaye, who originate from Indonesia. According to the school statistics, 85 percent of pupils are Bumiputra, including Murut, and 10 percent are Lendaye. Of the remainder, 3 percent are Indonesian and 2 percent are Filipino, most of whose parents came to work on the rubber plantation. About 90 percent of pupils are Christians, while the number of Muslims has increased with the arrival of the Indonesian workers.

Teachers number 27, most being men, although the principal is a woman. They belong to various ethnic groups, the majority being Murut, followed by Lendaye and Kadazan, the majority group in Sabah. There are also a Chinese and a Pakistani. Muslims outnumber Christians on the staff, and many of the women teachers wear the Muslim-style *jilbab*. Many of the teachers are young because, according to the principal, this allows more effective use of the limited staff housing.

The school has two buildings. The large one houses 12 classrooms for grades 1 to 4 and the principal's office; the smaller one houses 4 classrooms for grades 5 and 6 and the staff room. There is also a communal study center equipped with books, supplementary educational materials, audiovisual aids, and musical instruments, where pupils can go for private study. With the increase in student number, part of the center is used as a classroom for grade 5.

The arrangement of one of the grade 6 classrooms is shown in Fig. 1. Above the blackboard are displayed the 13 state flags of Malaysia, with that of Sabah in the center. On either side of the blackboard are pasted the lesson timetable and the cleaning roster. On the back wall are display corners for the four main subjects: Malay language, mathematics, "nature and mankind," and moral education.

Desks are arranged in four groups, with boys and girls grouped separately according to achievement. Textbooks are distributed free of charge to pupils. Workbooks are also frequently used, and in many classes the pupils study at their own pace while the teacher circulates checking their work.



g : girl (muslim)                      2                      b : boy (muslim)                      3  
g' : girl (non-muslim) 17                      b' : boy (non-muslim) 12

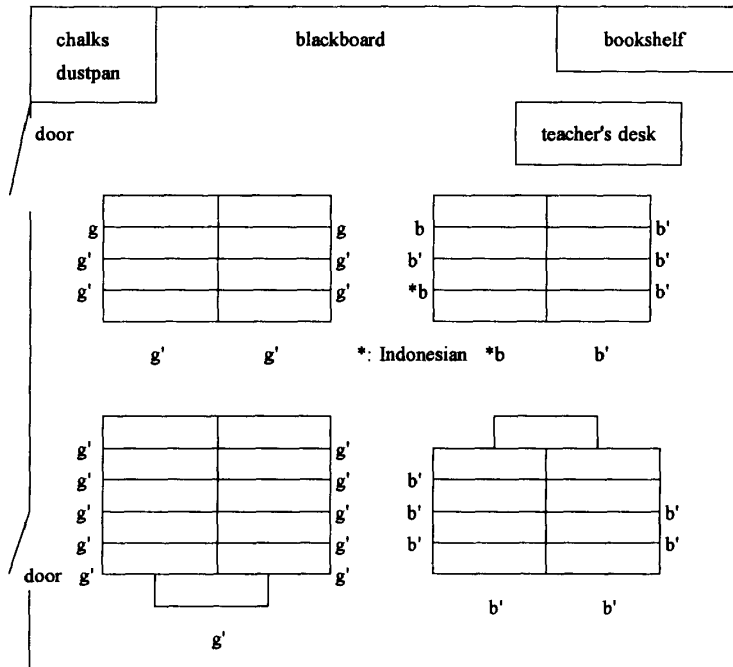


Fig. 1 The Grade 6 Classroom of O Primary School

2. P Primary School

P primary school is located in the northwest of East Kalimantan near the Malaysian states of Sarawak and Sabah. It lies in the midst of green mountains at about 1,000 meters above sea level and is within walking distance of several hours from the national border. The major occupations in the area are agriculture and water buffalo husbandry. Rice and water buffaloes are exported to Sarawak and Sabah.

The school was established by Christian missionaries in 1927. Since then, the village in which it is located has become an educational center. A theological school in this village attracts students even from Malaysia. P primary school has 209 pupils, mostly Lendaye, and

mostly Christian. Some of the pupils whose parents are civil servants or members of the military are Javanese or Bugis, and most of them are Muslim.

The school has 11 teachers, 7 men and 4 women, all of whom are Lendaye and Protestant. Most of them trained in Tanjung Selor, there being no teacher-training school locally.

The school is located next to a Protestant church in the center of the village. It has two classroom buildings in an L-shaped arrangement, one for grade 1 to 3 and the other for grades 4 to 6, with a small building housing the principal's office and staff room between them. It is simpler in appearance than the school in Malaysia.

The classrooms are also simpler. The grade 6 classroom shown in Fig. 2 contained, in addition to the Indonesian flag, a timetable, attendance chart, cleaning roster, and an old calendar with a picture of the Virgin Mary. The desks are arranged so that all pupils faced

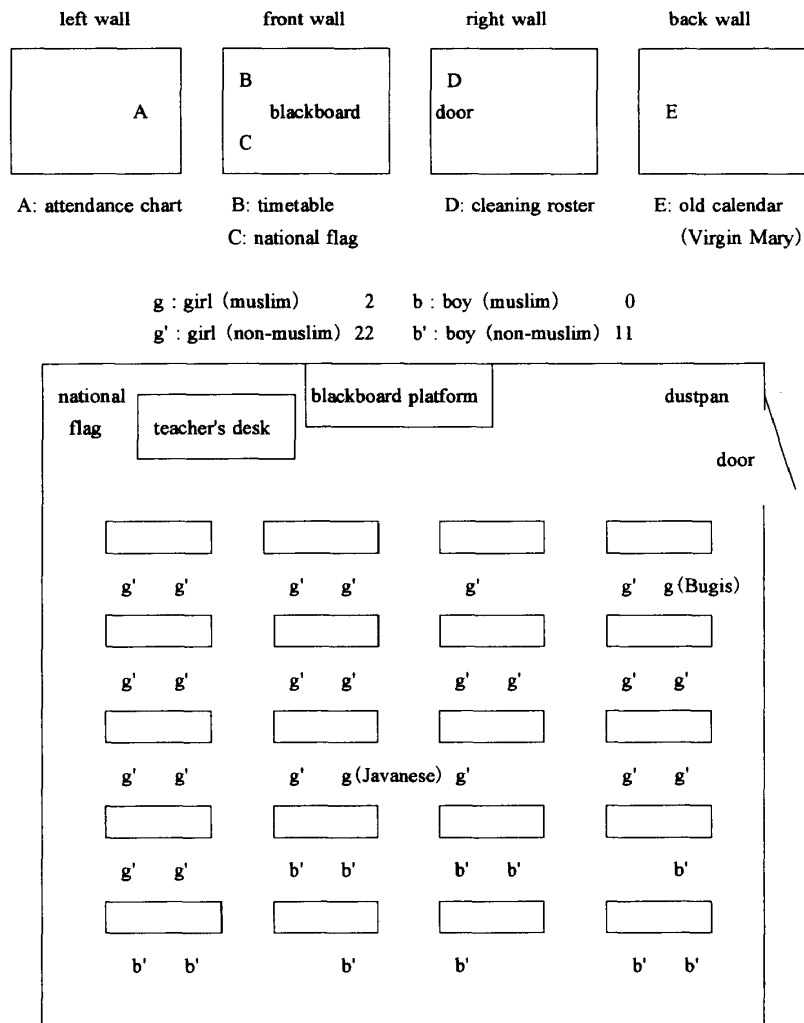


Fig. 2 The Grade 6 Classroom of P Primary School

the teacher's desk, with girls at the front and boys at the back. Except for one Javanese girl and one Bugis girl, all pupils are Lendaye. Only a few pupils have their own textbook for any subject. The general form of lessons is for the teacher to write on the blackboard and the pupils to copy into their notebooks. There is little individualized learning.

### 3. *Q Primary School*

Q primary school is located on the island of Sebatik, which is divided through the center by the border between Malaysia and Indonesia. The school lies half an hour's ride by motorboat from the border. The main occupations in the area are fishery and cacao cultivation.

The school was established in 1955 on land loaned by the North Borneo Timber Company. At that time it had only 20 pupils and one teacher. With the growth of the company, the student body grew to 880 in 1975. The school building erected around this time is called "the Japanese building," because many Japanese who then worked on the island donated the money for its construction. When the company withdrew from the island in 1985, enrollment fell sharply and currently stands at 290. The majority of pupils are Bugis, followed by Kadazan; and most are Muslim.

The school has 22 teachers, all but one of whom are Muslim. They are mainly Bugis, followed by Kadazan and Bajau. One teacher is from Cocos Island in the Indian Ocean, and another is from Flores, Indonesia, but both have taken Malaysian nationality.

Table 1 shows the timetables for grade 6 and grade 4. Grade 4 follows a new curriculum, revised in 1994, while grade 6 still follows the older, 1983 version. Classes are held in the mornings from 7:00 to 12:20 on Monday to Thursday, finishing an hour earlier on Friday, when mid-day collective worship is obligatory for Muslims.

In the revised curriculum, the subject "nature and mankind" (*Alam dan Manusia*), which had been introduced in 1983, was separated into science and local studies (*Kajian Tempatan*), the latter corresponding to history and geography in the pre-1983 curriculum.

For Muslim pupils, religious education is a compulsory subject, while non-Muslims should take moral education in the same class period. At Q school, where 90 percent of pupils are Muslim, only religious education is offered.

At the Monday morning assembly, the national, state and school flags are raised, the national and state anthems and school songs are sung, together with the song "National Vision of the Year 2020" (*Wawasan 2020*), and one of the pupils leads prayer.

### 4. *R Primary School*

R primary school is located on the "oil island" of Tarakan. Three-quarters of the pupils' parents are occupied in fishery, the remainder in commerce or agriculture. Regular flights connect Tarakan airport with Tawau in Sabah, Malaysia.

The school was established by the Indonesian government in 1976 as a "primary school built by Presidential Instruction" (*SD Inpres*) to implement compulsory education. It has 215 pupils, of whom about 90 percent are Muslim. The major ethnic group is Tidung, followed by

**Table 1** Timetable for Grade 6 and Grade 4 of Q Primary School

## Grade 6 (1983 Revised Curriculum)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7:00- 7:30	Flag C	Math	Physical E	Physical E	Rel/Moral
7:30- 8:00	English	Physical E	Bahasa M	Math	Bahasa M
8:00- 8:30	Bahasa M	N and M	Bahasa M	Rel/Moral	Bahasa M
8:30- 9:00	Bahasa M	N and M	Rel/Moral	English	Music
9:00- 9:30	N and M	English	Math	Skill	Math
9:30-10:00	N and M	English	Math	Skill	English
10:20-10:50	Music	Rel/Moral	English	N and M	Arts
10:50-11:20	Rel/Moral	Rel/Moral	English	N and M	Arts
11:20-11:50	Math	Bahasa M	N and M	Bahasa M	
11:50-12:20	Math	Bahasa M		Bahasa M	

## Grade 4 (1994 Revised Curriculum)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7:00- 7:30	Flag C	Science	Local S	Science	Arts
7:30- 8:00	Local S	Science	Physical E	Rel Moral	Arts
8:00- 8:30	Local S	Bahasa M	Science	English	Physical E
8:30- 9:00	Rel/Moral	Bahasa M	Science	Math	Bahasa M
9:00- 9:30	Math	Rel/Moral	Rel/Moral	Bahasa M	Bahasa M
9:30-10:00	Math	Rel/Moral	Math	Bahasa M	Rel/Moral
10:20-10:50	Bahasa M	Math	Bahasa M	Local S	English
10:50-11:20	Bahasa M	Math	Bahasa M	Music	Math
11:20-11:50	English	English	Math	Skill	
11:50-12:20	English	English	English	Skill	

Bahasa M = Malaysian Language      Flag C = Flag-hoisting Ceremony  
 Local S = Local Studies                  Math = Mathematics  
 N and M = Nature and Mankind      Physical E = Physical Education  
 Rel/Moral = Religious Education or Moral Education

Bugis, while Bajau, Banjar, Kutai and Traja are also represented.

The school has 10 teachers, of whom all but one are women. They also belong to various ethnic groups, including Tidung, Bugis, Dayak, Banjar, Kutai, Javanese and Toraja.

Table 2 shows the timetables for grades 6 and 4. As in Malaysia, grade 6 still uses an older version, revised in 1984. Classes are held in the morning six days a week running from 7:30 to 12:50 on Monday to Thursday, and finishing earlier on Friday and Saturday.

Moral education in Indonesia is called "Pancasila moral education" in grade 6, while in the revised curriculum it is termed "Pancasila and civic education," although its goals and contents are changed little. Religious education at R school is offered only in Islam, and non-Muslim children are free to leave the classroom during these lessons. In the grade 6 class, 26 pupils are Muslim, 3 are Protestant and 1 is Catholic.

Local studies (Muatan Lokal) was newly introduced for grade 4 in the 1994 curriculum revision. The content of the course is at the discretion of the local authority or the school. At R school, the pupils have a free period because the teachers have not received a syllabus for the

**Table 2** Timetable for Grade 6 and Grade 4 of R Primary School

Grade 6 (1984 Revised Curriculum)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
7:30- 8:10	Flag C	Physical E	Math	Bahasa I	Math	Domestic
8:10- 8:50	Math	Physical E	Math	Bahasa I	Math	Domestic
8:50- 9:30	Math	Arts	Arts	Social S	Bahasa I	
9:50-10:30	Religion	Bahasa I	Science	Science	Bahasa I	
10:30-11:10	Arts	Bahasa I	Science	Science	Physical E	
11:30-12:10	Social S	Religion	Bahasa I	P Moral		
12:10-12:50	Social S	Religion	Bahasa I	P Moral		

Grade 4 (1994 Revised Curriculum)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
7:30- 8:10	Flag C	Math	Math	Math	Bahasa I	Math
8:10- 8:50	Bahasa I	Math	Math	Math	Bahasa I	Math
8:50- 9:30	Bahasa I	Bahasa I	Science	Religion	Science	Bahasa I
9:50-10:30	Science	Bahasa I	Science	Religion	Science	Bahasa I
10:30-11:10	Science	P Civic	Social S	Social S	Local S	Physical E
11:30-12:10	Social S	P Civic	Social S	Special S		Physical E
12:10-12:50	Social S	Local S	Local S	Special S		Local S

Bahasa I = Indonesian Language

Flag C = Flag-hoisting Ceremony

Math = Mathematics

P Civic = Pancasila and Civic Education

Religion = Religious Education

Special S = Special Skill

Domestic = Domestic Science

Local S = Local Studies

Physical E = Physical Education

P Moral = Pancasila Moral Education

Social S = Social Studies

new subject.

Saturday lessons for the older children (grade 4 to 6) are mostly allotted to Pramuka activities (equivalent to Boy Scout and Girl Scout activities). At R school, former pupils now in the third year of the local secondary school come to instruct the primary pupils in activities including raising the national flag.

## II Vectors of Primary Education

### 1. *Vectors of Nationalization*

One vector of nationalization that is visually apparent is the school uniform. Even in the border areas, or perhaps because of their location in the border areas, primary school children all wear the same uniforms as children in the rest of the country. In Malaysia, boys wear blue shorts and white shirts, and girls wear blue jumper-skirts and white blouses. In Indonesia, boys wear red shorts and white shirts, and girls wear red skirts and white blouses, the colors of the Indonesian flag.

Objects displayed on classroom walls are another vector of nationalization. At O and Q schools, the national and state flags and maps of Malaysia and Sabah state were in evidence in

the classrooms. At P and R schools, these were replaced by the Garuda Pancasila (the emblem of the Republic of Indonesia), the national flag, portraits of President Suharto, and maps of Indonesia and East Kalimantan. In both countries, the "nation" was strongly in evidence in the classrooms and school buildings.

In the school curriculum, the foremost vector of nationalization is moral education. In Malaysia, this subject was introduced in 1983 and is taken by non-Muslim pupils during the periods when the Muslims are taking religious (namely, Islamic) education. In this sense, it serves as an effective vector of nationalization only when moral education is taught in conjunction with religious education. At O school, where there were few Muslim pupils, both moral and religious education were taught; but at Q school, where there were few non-Muslims, moral education was not offered.

In Indonesia, all pupils receive instruction in Pancasila moral education or Pancasila and civic education. Pancasila refers to the five founding principles of independent Indonesia. These are: 1) belief in the One and Only God, 2) just and civilized humanity, 3) the unity of Indonesia, 4) democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives, and 5) social justice for all the Indonesian people. Indonesia encompasses a variety of ethnic groups, religions, cultures and societies, and in order to integrate these into one nation-state, it is deemed important for all the Indonesian people to uphold the spirit of Pancasila. In the 1994 curriculum revision, Pancasila and civic education was introduced in place of Pancasila moral education. But while the name of the new subject appeared on the timetables for grades 1 and 4, the new curriculum was not actually being implemented.

Other effective vectors of nationalization include subjects such as national language (Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia), history and geography, and school activities such as assembly and Pramuka.

## *2. Vectors of Localization*

While the orientation toward national unity through the vectors of nationalization is readily apparent in primary education, the orientation of education to respond to local needs based on local history and culture, namely, vectors of localization, are far from clear. Nevertheless, it is notable that in the curriculum revisions of 1994, the subject of "local studies" was newly introduced in both Malaysia and Indonesia in the same year.

In Malaysia, the new subject is called *Kajian Tempatan*, having been split off from *Alam dan Manusia* ("nature and mankind"). It covers local geography and history.

In Indonesia, the new "local studies" is called *Muatan Lokal*. This is the first sign of the "local development" under the Suharto regime, which had been oriented exclusively to the "centralization" of the educational curriculum, and with local authorities now empowered to decide the syllabus for this subject, local studies could become a key vector of localization. In the case of East Kalimantan, plans are being considered to include local arts, handicrafts such as rattan work, traditional sports and local language. However, the local language under



consideration at the provincial level is Kutai language, which is used in the central part of the province but not in the areas of P and R schools, where Lendaye and Bugis are the main languages spoken. Hence, it is important to decide the substance of local studies at the village or school level. When I visited P and R schools, the children were given free time during local studies lessons, even though the subject appeared on the timetable. Thus, while this vector of localization can now be found in the system, it remains to be seen what substance it will have.

In addition to the revised curriculum, vectors of localization can also be found in the "hidden curriculum" of the school culture and children's games.

### 3. *Vectors of Internationalization*

In the border villages, vectors of internationalization are apparent on both sides. One is the movement of people. It is not uncommon for children to transfer from a school in Malaysia to one in Indonesia, or vice versa. O school in Malaysia has been an influx of pupils from East Kalimantan and, in addition to Lendaye, has a number of Indonesian nationals on its roll. R school has a number of Bugis pupils who came to Tarakan from Sulawesi by way of Sabah, and their school records have been forwarded by the Sabah Department of Education to their new principal. These show details of the pupils' scholastic achievements, personality, interests and concerns.

Internationalization is also apparent in the exchange of goods. For example, many of the notebooks used by pupils at P school are made in Malaysia and have the Rukunegara (five national principles of Malaysia) printed on the back cover. In the shops in the village where P school is located, Malaysian currency is more widely used than the Indonesian rupiah. Since this village lies within a few hours' trek of the border, trade with Malaysia is common, and the majority of goods in the village shops are imported from Malaysia.

Information is also exchanged internationally. Teachers at P and R schools are conversant with the Malaysian educational situation, particularly teachers' salary and employment conditions. Teachers at R school know that textbooks, school uniforms and milk are provided free in Malaysia. The principal of R school had visited Malaysia to take part in a Boy Scout and Girl Scout jamboree. The principal of P school visits relatives in Sarawak every few years.

Vectors of internationalization can also be found in the education systems and school curricula. Malaysia and Indonesia cooperated in the introduction of moral education in the 1970s and 1980s and in the simultaneous introduction of local studies in 1984. In this case, internationalization took the form of exchange between the respective departments of education.

## III The Dynamics of National Education

Fig. 3 shows a schematic diagram of the relationship of the vectors of nationalization, localization and internationalization. The vector of nationalization (line x) can be understood as a force flowing from the national capitals of Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta and reaching directly

to the border villages of their respective countries. The vector of localization (line y) arises in the provincial capitals of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, and Samarinda, East Kalimantan, and similarly terminates in the respective border villages.

If the national and provincial capitals are joined by a strong vector, then the vectors x and y will link together in the border villages. No conflict will arise between the vectors of nationalization and localization, and the latter can be considered as a secondary flow of the former. In the case of local studies, for example, if these are not only oriented towards the state or provincial capitals but also tend to draw the border areas towards the national capital, then they will come to be regarded as an important element of national, rather than local, education. The curriculum revisions currently in progress in the name of regional devolution or decentralization are in fact being carried forward in such a way that no conflict arises with the centralization of authority.

Finally, what are the lines running across the border and joining O and P schools and Q and R schools? These could be considered as vectors paralleling the vector of internationalization (line z), between Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta, but it appears better to

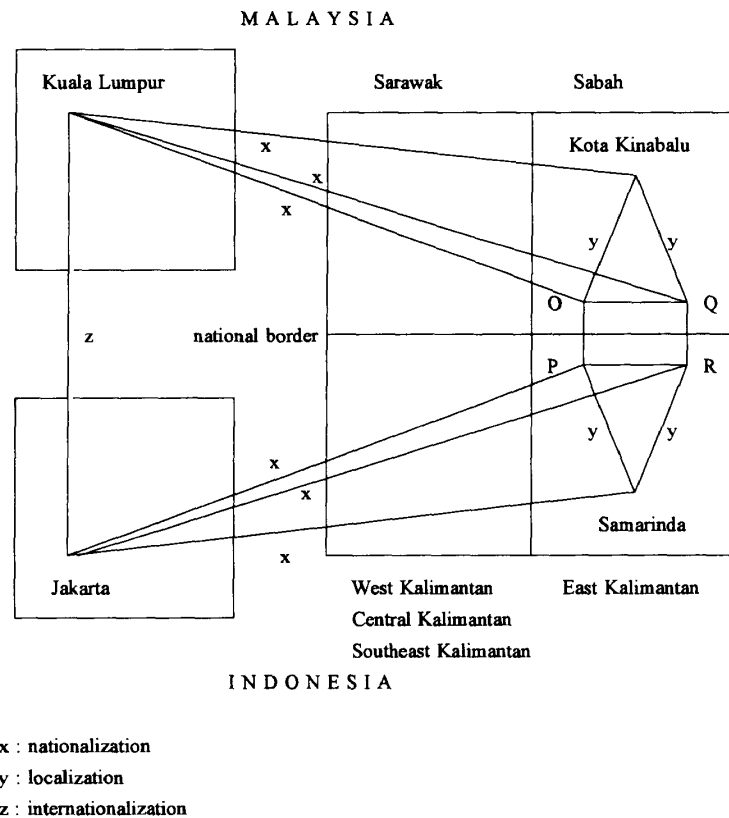


Fig. 3 Schematic Diagram

consider them in connection with the vector of localization. In other words, these relationships that span the national border should be considered in terms of localization across the national border rather than the concept of internationalization. It is thus necessary to reexamine the situation in terms of such new concepts as interlocalization, intralocalization, and transnationalization.

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