

# Christian Education Perspective of *Senguyun* Tradition in Dayak Kenyah Bakung Tribe

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## Abstract

*Gotong royong* is an important Indonesian value, meaning working together. This kind of working together is also found in Dayak Kenyah Tribe in Indonesia. One form of working together is *senguyun*. *Senguyun* is a voluntary work group composed of any number of men and youths who feel that they can effectively join forces for mutual benefit. This practice has been implemented by the Dayak Kenyah tribe before christianity entered and continues to be carried out to this day. This article aims to reveal the value of *senguyun* as part of the tribe's local wisdom, and as a way for Christian education for nurturing the faith of church members. The method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative method. Data collection techniques employed are observation, interviews and document analysis. The result of the study shows that *senguyun* is a form of local wisdom that is in accordance with biblical principles and should be regarded as a noble cultural heritage that must continue to be preserved.

Keywords: Christian education, *Senguyun*, voluntary work, Dayak Kenyah, dayak education

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## **Introduction**

One of the cultural values owned by the Indonesian nation is the culture of mutual cooperation, called *gotong royong*. It has become one of the characteristics of Indonesian culture as part of the nation's cultural heritage (Ainiyah et al., 2024). *Gotong royong* constitutes a tradition of cooperation in Indonesian society. It conveys a concept of mutual support that has existed for a long time (Arief & Yuwanto, 2023). As such, it contains local wisdom rooted in Indonesian culture and has developed in the social life of the community for generations. The value of local wisdom not only reflects social harmony, but also contains a deep meaning of solidarity and togetherness that is the foundation of life in society (Hanifa et al., 2024).

*Gotong royong* is a cultural practice that is strongly embedded in Indonesian society, which cannot be separated from other aspects of social life. Research conducted by Arief and Yuwanto (2023) shows that in Indonesia, mutual cooperation is an important group value as helping each other is considered the natural thing to do in daily life. Furthermore, Arief and Yuwanto (2023) stated that the culture of mutual cooperation is not just about cleaning or building something, but it contains deep meaning about helping each other and about harmony in life.

According to Ainiyah et al. (2024) mutual cooperation is part of the identity of the Indonesian nation which values are reflected in the Pancasila, the foundational ideology of the Indonesian state. The principles of Pancasila, summed up as belief in one God, just and civilized humanity, the unity of Indonesia, democracy, and social justice can be realized through the preservation of the cultural practice of *gotong royong* (Ainiyah et al., 2024). The noble values of Pancasila need to be practiced in the life of the nation and state. Research conducted by Ainiyah et al. (2024) shows that through the implementation of the cultural practice of *gotong royong*, the practice of Pancasila values can be internalized in the daily activities of the community .

The practice of mutual cooperation that is characteristic of the Indonesian nation becomes visible in various local traditions. Various ethnicities, races, tribes and religions in the country share a common cultural value, namely the cultural practice of mutual cooperation. While form and name are different for each tribe, the value of *gotong royong*, working together, helping each other, remains a local cultural treasure in various regions. For example, in Central Java it is called

"*sambatan*"; in Bali mutual cooperation is called "*subak*", in Minahasa, North Sulawesi, it is called "*mapalus*" (Arief & Yuwanto, 2023). There are various practices of mutual cooperation in several regions, such as the Sinoman tradition in Java (helping people who organize weddings), the Morakka'bola tradition in South Sulawesi (moving houses), the *Nganggung* tradition in Bangka Regency (delivering food to the mosque during days of celebration), the *Marslalapari* tradition in Mandailing (helping to plant and harvest rice), and the Rambu Solo tradition in Toraja (involving the community in someone's funeral ceremony) (Prinada, 2022).

The same thing also applies to the Dayak tribe. The Dayak tribe, which is one of the largest tribes in Indonesia, has noble local wisdom and a strong sense of community. Dayak is the name used for the indigenous people of the island of Borneo (Anggraini, 2016). The Dayak tribe consists of various sub-tribes, one of which is the Dayak Kenyah tribe. Sedyawati, as quoted by Noviana (2020), mentions that the Kenyah tribe is one of the ethnic groups living in the interior of the island of Kalimantan. This tribe comes from Long Nawang District, Bulungan Regency, East Kalimantan Province, which is around Apo Kayan and in the upper part of the Mahakam River and the Kayan River, flowing through different district areas and emptying into the Sulawesi Sea (Noviana, 2020).

Several studies have been conducted on the practice of mutual cooperation carried out by the Dayak Kenyah tribe. Dirhamsyah et al. (2020) state that the Dayak Kenyah tribe carries out mutual cooperation when clearing land and fields for planting and harvesting. Hului and Nanang (2024) distinguish between two kinds of implementation of mutual cooperation by the Dayak Kenyah tribe, namely mutual cooperation (*pekuaq*) and mutual work (*senguyun*). *Gotong royong* is part of the identity of the Dayak Kenyah community. The practice of *pekuaq* is regulated in customary law that involves everyone, while *senguyun* is carried out by a limited number of people based on the shared needs, forming groups to work the fields of group members together (Hului & Nanang, 2024). Thus, *senguyun* is a volunteer working group made up of several people who feel that they can effectively join forces for mutual benefit (Conley, 1973).

*Senguyun* is a cooperative practice carried out by the Dayak Kenyah tribe. In the context of the Dayak Kenyah Oma Lung tribe, this form of cooperation is called *Sequnyeng*. Harming and Krismadayanti (2023) stated that *sequnyeng* is a *gotong royong* activity carried out by the Oma Lung Dayak tribe when they are

doing heavy work. Their research conducted highlights this form of mutual cooperation as a form of cross-cultural communication in the perspective of Acts 4:32-37. In the same vein, our present study will review the practice of *senguyun* from Christian education perspective, with a focus on research in another Dayak Kenyah sub-tribe, namely the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe.

The Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe is another sub-tribe of the Dayak Kenyah tribe. The Dayak Kenyah tribe is one of the oldest and largest tribes in East Kalimantan (Noviana, 2020) and originates comes from the interior of the northern part of the island of Kalimantan, namely the Apo Kayan area (Conley, 1973). The Dayak Kenyah tribe lives scattered across various areas in East Kalimantan and North Kalimantan. One of the villages of the Dayak Kenyah community that has been developed into an area for cultural tourism area is Pampang village, part of the city of Samarinda, East Kalimantan (Noviana, 2020). The Dayak Kenyah tribe that inhabits the village of Pampang is the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe.

The practice of *senguyun* carried out by the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe cannot be separated from the practice of Christian education. Hului and Nanang (2024) point out how, before activities in the field commenced, the community called the pastor to pray over the tools to be used in the work. The practice of *senguyun* as it was carried out before it was exposed to the influence of christianity and is still being carried out today, certainly shares values with the those of Christian education. This is in line with what is stated by Fransiska (2024), a resident of the tourist village of Pampang, who observes that people gather at the church to be prayed for by the pastor before and after the harvest feast.

The practice of *senguyun* has been practiced by the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe has developed in a context in which practitioners believed in ancestral spirits. The practice is still carried out even though they have embraced christianity. Hului and Nanang's (2024) research shows how the practice of *senguyun* is nowadays linked to the issue of mining. A research conducted by Robert and N. (2020) provides a study of *senguyun* reviewed from the perspective of the values of Pancasila, and the research conducted by Robert and Mulyadi (2021) provides a study on the actualization of the second principle of Pancasila in *senguyun*. Yet, no research has been conducted to examine *senguyun* in relation

to the Christian faith. Therefore, this research aims to examine the values in the practice of *senguyun* from Christian education perspective.

## **Method**

To achieve the research objectives, the researchers used a qualitative study of literature to understand the phenomenon of *senguyun* cultural practices. Qualitative research is carried out to understand empirical phenomena (Zaluchu, 2020). As Fadli (2021) writes, qualitative research aims to reveal the meaning behind these phenomena and helps us to gain a deep understanding of human and social problems. The qualitative research method of literature study aims to collect information or data by finding sources and building them from various sources (Fadli, 2021). In addition to collecting data through literary sources, the researchers also conducted observations and interviews with people from the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe. One of the researchers is a Dayak Kenyah Bakung who has experienced the practice of *senguyun* himself, thus becoming a research instrument himself. In addition, the researchers conducted interviews with several traditional leaders of the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe in Mekar Baru Village, Busang District, East Kutai Regency, East Kalimantan. Data analysis was carried out by linking the results of literature data collection with the researcher's experience on the practice of *senguyun*. Then the process of implementing *senguyun* was analyzed from the perspective of Christian education. This resulted in conclusion based on the analysis. The results of the analysis are presented descriptively to gain a comprehensive understanding of the practice of *senguyun* from the perspective of Christian education.

## **Results and Discussion**

### *The senguyun Practice of Dayak Kenyah Bakung Tribe*

#### Forms of Voluntary Mutual Cooperation – Reciprocal Work

The tradition of mutual cooperation is a characteristic of the Dayak Kenyah tribe in doing various jobs together (Harming & Krismadayanti, 2023). There are two types of mutual cooperation the Dayak Kenyah tribe has carried out for generations, namely mutual cooperation (*pekuaq*) and mutual work (*senguyun*) (Hului & Nanang, 2024). *Senguyun* is a form of mutual cooperation

carried out by a group of people who join voluntarily who feel that they will be able to work more effectively for the common good (Conley, 1973).

*Senguyun* is a form of joint work that has been carried out for generations. Research conducted by Robert and Mulyadi (2021) shows that *senguyun* is carried out because of the social attachment between people and the closer emotional relationship between them. This is in line with Pejadi's statement that *senguyun* makes people more enthusiastic in completing work because there is interaction and mutual reinforcement (Pejadi, 2025).

When doing *senguyun*, children are also invited to this activity. Through this, children can see how their parents practice this. The principles of cooperation and mutual help are taught to children through this activity. The educational pattern applied in this activity is hands-on practice. Eliasar (2025) stated that when the *senguyun* was done on his parents' farm, the mother taught him the things to do as a host. This pattern of education regarding *senguyun* is still carried out in the context of the family with parents as child educators. Similarly, Boehlke (2013) states that in the context of Jewish religious education, parents are the primary educators of their children. This is where principles of the holy scriptures are communicated as a reality that is practiced in life (Richards, 2001).

#### Implemented in Rotation

The number of members in a *senguyun* group varies depending on the group's agreement. Group members will work together, doing work at each group's place, in turn, until all the work in each group member is completed (Conley, 1973). Pungau (2025a) and Pejadi (2025) state that the number of members in a *senguyun* group can be anywhere from 4 to 40 people, depending on the group's agreement.

One of the researchers, being a Dayak Kenyah Bakung, has carried out *senguyun* activities. Usually, the formation of a *senguyun* group is done with close friends. The process of *senguyun* activities can be described as follows. For example, a group consists of 5 (five) members. On the first day, all group members will help the first member with his/her work. The next day, the work will be carried out in the place of the second member, and so on, until all the members of the group have had their turn. The work at each member's place is usually done during regular working hours, or by mutual agreement. Group

members who are at work will prepare all work needs, transportation facilities, including food and drink for all group members.

The researchers admit that it is possible that the work can be completed by one person in a few days. However, when the work is done together, there is a more enthusiasm for doing the work. And usually the work done for others will be better when compared to the work done by oneself. Each group member will complement the others in completing the work in each member's place. Pungau and Pejadi state that there is a particular spirit in itself when performing *senguyun*. It is the spirit to work together and give one's best when doing *senguyun* at the place of group members. The work atmosphere becomes more pleasant and people do not feel bored (Pejadi, 2025; Pungau, 2025b).

#### Involves Fieldwork and Other Heavy Work

Some jobs are done together. Conley (1973) provides examples of jobs such as making boats, building houses or work related to planting rice in the field. Based on the experience of researchers, work related to rice plants in the field involves a lot of work that is quite heavy. This includes clearing forests to be used as fields, cutting down trees, burning large and small woods, planting rice, weeding grass and harvesting. As Hului and Nanang (2024) remark, the cycle or stages in the work of the Dayak Kenyah people's fields consist of land inspection, determination of land area or area, cleaning of equipment and tools for cultivation, plowing, logging, land burning, planting seeds, weeding, harvesting and the implementation of thanksgiving ceremonies.

Robert and N.'s (2020) research shows that *senguyun* have a positive impact on communities in their livelihoods, in the construction of housing, in meeting health or education costs, in togetherness in events such as funerals, weddings and thanksgiving, and togetherness in financing events. The principle of mutual cooperation or cooperation in doing great things is a value carried out in this *senguyun* practice. A demanding job can feel light when done together with a commitment to helping each other.

#### It Has Been The Original Culture of the Community Before The Entry of Christianity

It is a common feature among Dayak people to join forces in farming activities that are carried out once a year (Fera et al., 2024). Based on the

customary law of the Dayak Kenyah tribe, togetherness in opening the fields is observed to anticipate and prevent pests (Subiakto & Bakrie, 2015). Conley (1973) mentions that farming, especially planting in the morning, is difficult, dangerous and dirty work. In general, the size of the field for Dayak Kenyah depends on how much land they can clear (Conley, 1973). Thus, it can be concluded that the farming work carried out by the Dayak Kenyah requires hard work and to be able to get good results, cooperation is needed to be able to complete the work.

The practice of *senguyun* is an indigenous cultural practice that has been practiced by the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe from before the embrace of christianity (Pungau, 2025b). Besides emphasizing cooperation and mutual help, another reason to perform *senguyun* is to ensure that the time to plant rice is carried out by the community at the same time. The same planting time and harvest time will help in preventing pests to occur. Thus everyone who opens the field will strive to complete the work of planting rice on time.

*Senguyun* is a cultural practice carried out by the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe to this day. In the pre-Christian era, *senguyun* activities were carried out in connection to their original beliefs. Pejadi (2025) states that before they embraced christianity, they had already practiced *senguyun*. After christianity became their religion, they continued to practice *senguyun*. Pelipan (2025) states that the Dayak Kenyah Bakung continue to carry out *senguyun* activities because the practice does not contradict the truth of God's Word.

### *Senguyun* and Its Relationship to Christian Education

*Senguyun* is a practice of togetherness. This togetherness is an expression of the cultural values and attitudes the Dayak Kenyah (Conley, 1973). Research conducted by Harming and Krismadayanti (2023) shows that the value of togetherness is built by the Oma Lung tribe through the practice of *sequnyeng* mutual cooperation. The values in the practice of the *senguyun* culture do not contradict the values of the Christian faith.

The *senguyun* practice has integrated values of the Christian faith in the life of the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe. The Bible's teachings on cooperation, brotherly love and mutual help are reflected in the practice of *senguyun*. This practice can be seen as a manifestation of the brotherly love taught by the Lord Jesus Christ.

The practice of *senguyun* is in accordance with Bible verses such as those found in Galatians 6:2 which reads: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (ESV) and in Philippians 2:4 which states "Let each one of you not look only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (ESV). The values emphasized in these verses are in harmony with the spirit of cooperation and mutual help which is the core of the practice of *senguyun*.

The practice of *senguyun* has undergone integration with the values of the Christian faith. The church has become actively involved in this practice, especially in praying at the beginning and end of the *senguyun* activities. This happens in Pampang Village. Fransiska (2024) states that when holding *senguyun* activities, activities such as community service, building houses, field work, or any other activity, these will be started with a joint prayer at the church.

There are also people who call the priest to bless the work tools that will be used in *senguyun* activities so that all activities will run well and safely (Hului & Nanang, 2024). Then there are also those who do not call the pastor but pray themselves over all the work tools and plant seeds to be planted. Pungau explains that they prayed to the Lord Jesus to bless what they were going to do (Pungau, 2025a). The prayer to bless all the tools of work in the practice of *Ssenguyun* can be understood as an acknowledgment that God is the source of all things, including the tools to be used in the work, which must be used according to God's will and for God's glory. This is in accordance with the biblical principle of Colossians 3:23 "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men" (ESV). The practice of *senguyun* that is carried out reflects the attempt to glorify God in work through the expression of love and solidarity between others.

### ***The Values of Christian Education Embodied in Senguyun***

The following are the values of Christian education that are manifested in the practice of *senguyun*.

#### **Value of Love – Group Members Help Each Other and Do Their Best for Their Friends**

The value of love practiced by one member towards another can be developed through the practice of *senguyun*. This can be seen from the desire to do your best when doing work at a friend's place. Based on the researchers's

experience, there is a desire or urge to do one's best when doing work for a friend. And vice versa, for local members, it will provide the best that can be given to be enjoyed with the *senguyun* group. Love between one member and another can be built. Harming and Krismadayanti (2023) describe that living together can prevent disputes because of mutual understanding and to learn not to be selfish. As the apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 2:4, everyone should look out for the interests of others. In the practice of *senguyun*, each group member is willing to follow the practice based on the attitude of prioritizing the public interest over personal interests (Robert & Mulyadi, 2021). Robert and Mulyani (2021) state that the *senguyun* activity is a collective statement of love for others to realize a harmonious and prosperous life.

#### Value of Fellowship - To Strengthen Each Other, Advise and Serve in Togetherness

The value of fellowship is very real in the practice of *senguyun*. In this fellowship, each member strengthens one another, advises one another and serves one another in togetherness. The traditional leaders of Mekar Baru village state that they felt more happy to complete the heavy work with *senguyun* because in practicing togetherness they could tell each other's stories and strengthen each other (Pejadi, 2025; Pungau, 2025b). The heavy work done will feel light when done together. There is a particular spirit when working together on heavy work.

In the context of the church, fellowship is one of the goals of the church. Selan (2022) argues that Christian fellowship is described as a place where each fellowship member helps each other, strengthens each other, advises each other and serves each other. The practice of *senguyun* carried out by the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe can be seen to reflect these characteristics of Christian fellowship. Members of the *senguyun* group can help each other to complete the heavy work that each group member must complete. At the same time, they can also strengthen and advise each other when work is done together. Interaction takes place while working or while resting.

Based on the experience and observations of researchers, the members of the group in *senguyun* usually consist of people who are close friends. Then, this group will work together for their friends. The closeness that already exists

makes them able to comfortably share each other's stories or struggles. It is on this occasion that they can strengthen each other and comfort each other.

All Christians are described as the body of Christ. As it is written in 1 Corinthians 12:7: "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (ESV). Each limb has its own duties and functions. This can be seen in the practice of *senguyun*, where each member of the group complements each other. In *senguyun*'s practice, each person will attempt to do the best version of what can be done.

Selan (2022) states that every Christian and believer in Christ is a member of the body of Christ and Christ is the Head. Each limb has its own duties and functions where the responsibility of each member is to encourage and stimulate the growth of the body. Close fellowship in Christ can build up and make the church stronger in God. The pattern of life of the early church can be used as an example in living the life of God's children who are in fellowship together.

In living together as believers, the Apostle Paul asked the people in Philippi to put their minds on Christ. Philippians 2:4 states that believers should not only look out for their own interests, but also for the interests of others. In the practice of *senguyun*, each member of the group strives to do the best for the other members of the group. In the fellowship of believers, the attitude of being considerate of the interests of others will create a favorable atmosphere for the growth of faith in trust. Thus, there is a strengthening of the faith and character of the members of the congregation.

### ***The Meaning and Function of Senguyun Culture in the Context of Christian Education***

The practice of *senguyun* has a meaning and function in the context of Christian education. Some of them are as follows:

#### **Living Faith Education Media**

In the learning process, learning media is needed so that the message conveyed by the teacher can be understood properly and correctly by students (Sanjaya, 2012). In the context of Christian education, *senguyun* can be used as a medium for living faith education. Based on the personal experience of the researcher and experienced by Eliasar (2025), through the practice of *senguyun* children are taught about the values of biblical truth that are directly practiced.

Boehlke (2013) writes that in the context of Jewish religious education, the educational curriculum is daily life. Similarly, *senguyun* is the daily life practice of the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe community which contains a life lesson for the children of the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe. Parents can teach the principles of Biblical truth using a living educational medium, namely the practice of *senguyun*.

The role of parents as the main educators of the Christian faith is also applied in this *senguyun* practice. As Pazmino (2016) writes parents are the main educators who determine what influence their children will have. Parents play an important role in passing on life values to children. Children will accompany their parents in carrying out the practice of *senguyun*, especially when they are in the *senguyun* area. Through the example set by parents, children can learn the values of the Christian faith in real life.

#### Preservation of Local Wisdom in Harmony with Biblical Principles

Local wisdom is part of the cultural heritage of a region that needs to be preserved. Local wisdom is the wealth of the nation's cultural heritage. As stated by Aggraini (2016), Indonesia has many original values that are sourced from local wisdom that can be developed in character education. *Senguyun* is a form of local wisdom of the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe that can be developed in character education.

In the context of Christian education, local wisdom that is in accordance with biblical principles needs to be maintained or preserved. Anthony (2012), in his book *Foundations of Ministry: An Introduction to Christian Education For A New Generation*, states that the Bible encourages intercultural relationships. Modernization and the influence of technology cause the millennial generation to tend to abandon ancestral traditions. The inheritance of ancestral cultural values, especially those in accordance with biblical truth, is necessary so that the cultural heritage is preserved. Character education in the context of Christian education can teach values in *senguyun* practice.

#### Implication

The practice of *senguyun* carried out by the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe does not contradict the values of biblical truth. The practice of *senguyun* implements values that must be developed in the life of every believer. Local

cultural values that are consistent with biblical truth need to be developed and taught in the practice of Christian education in the family, church and school. One of the goals of Christian education is education that aims to instill the values of the Christian faith in the lives of students. The students were taught about the values of biblical truth that must be obtained. *Senguyun* values that are in accordance with biblical truth can be taught in the cultural context of the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe. The values of love and fellowship in the teaching curriculum can be explained by including the concept of *senguyun* practice. This can be done in the context of Christian education in the church as well as in the context of Christian education in school.

Implementation in the context of the church can be done through debriefing or coaching parents in conveying biblical truth with the example of the application of *senguyun*. Learning materials about the meaning of *senguyun* culture reviewed from biblical truths can be delivered in sermons or in Bible understanding group discussions. Implementation in the school context can be done by directly practicing *senguyun* activities in community service activities, cleaning class rooms or other activities. The value of cooperation and mutual help can be integrated in each learning process.

### **Recommendations for Advanced Research**

The cultural practice of the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe is a local cultural treasure. This research has provided a study of the practice of *senguyun* culture in the context of Christian education. This research only discusses the extent to which the practice of *senguyun* is carried out and the values contained in the practice. Meanwhile, the discussion about the paradigm of the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe that causes the emergence of values like this has been left aside. Research on the practice of implementing the *senguyun* culture needs to be further developed, especially regarding the worldview of the Dayak Kenyah tribe which affects the *senguyun* culture.

### **Conclusion**

The practice of *senguyun* in the Dayak Kenyah Bakung tribe is a tangible manifestation of the culture of mutual cooperation which contains strong values of solidarity, cooperation, and mutual help. *Senguyun* is not only a social tradition, but also a means of direct education for children in learning the values

of togetherness and social responsibility. The implementation of *senguyun*, which is carried out in rotation and involves heavy work such as cultivating fields, shows the collective commitment of the community in maintaining harmonious social relations. The integration of Christian values in this practice, such as joint prayer, enriches the meaning of *senguyun* culture and strengthens the faith and character of community members. Thus, *senguyun* is a local wisdom that is in line with the principles of Christian education and must continue to be preserved as a cultural heritage that supports the development of the character and religious life of the Dayak Kenyah Bakung community.

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