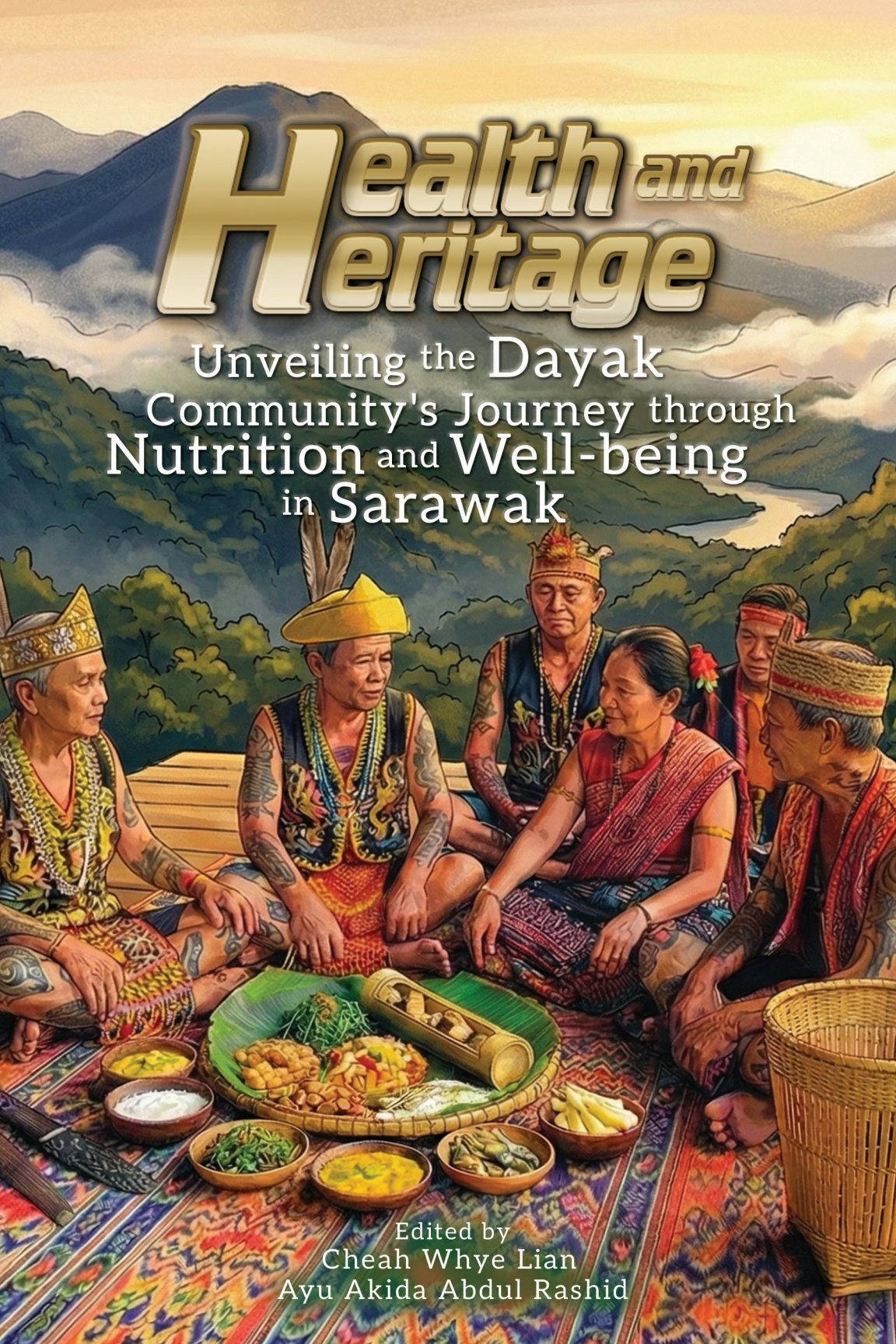
Health and Heritage

Unveiling the Dayak Community's Journey through Nutrition and Well-being in Sarawak



Edited by
Cheah Whye Lian
Ayu Akida Abdul Rashid

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UNIMAS PUBLISHER
2026

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Published in Malaysia by
UNIMAS Publisher,
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak,
94300 Kota Samarahan,
Sarawak, Malaysia.

Printed in Malaysia by

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

National Library of Malaysia

A catalogue record for this book is available from the National Library of Malaysia

ISBN 978-629-7783-28-4

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Preface

In the heart of Sarawak, a narrative unfolds that bridges the past with the present, tradition with modernity, and health with heritage. "Health and Heritage" embarks on an exploratory journey into the lives of the Dayak communities, revealing how their health and nutritional practices are being reshaped in the face of contemporary challenges. This book is a comprehensive compilation of research, stories, and insights divided into five thematic parts, each shedding light on different facets of the Dayak's health and nutritional landscape.

Chapter 1 opens the dialogue on digital health literacy, emphasising its significance among the elderly Dayak, a demographic traditionally secluded from the digital revolution yet increasingly reliant on it for health information and services.

Chapter 2 delves into the heart of Dayak culinary tradition, exploring the complex relationship between the consumption of traditional foods, the advent of modern dietary habits, and their collective impact on health outcomes such as obesity and metabolic diseases.

Chapter 3 focuses on the prevalence of specific health conditions within the community, including fatty liver disease, gallstone disease, and cardiovascular risks. It examines how these conditions correlate with nutritional habits and lifestyle choices, offering a critical look at the health challenges facing the Dayak today.

Chapter 4 addresses the critical issues of food security and nutritional status, highlighting the vulnerability of the Dayak elderly and the broader indigenous communities to food insecurity and malnutrition. This section dips into the tactics utilised by these communities to traverse the intricacies of

resource availability, loss, and coping processes through cross-sectional studies and analysis.

Chapter 5 rounds off the discussion by investigating metabolic health markers, specifically adiponectin, and their association with vascular risk factors. This section underscores the importance of understanding metabolic health in the context of community-wide health assessments and interventions.

"Health and Heritage" goes beyond being a mere book; it serves as a call to action and a plea for empathy, urging readers, researchers, and policymakers to recognise and address the unique health and nutritional challenges faced by the Dayak communities in Sarawak. Through this detailed exploration, the book aims to contribute valuable knowledge to the fields of nutrition, public health, and indigenous studies, fostering a deeper understanding of how tradition and modernity coalesce in the realm of health and well-being.

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I must thank myself for managing to complete this book before my retirement. It turns out that writing a book is a bit like running a marathon—except with more backaches from sitting too long and fewer medals. A heartfelt thanks to my co-editor, Ayu Akida, whose motivation and encouragement were pivotal in starting this book project.

To my amazing colleagues and graduate students, thank you for your invaluable contributions to the chapters of this book. Your insights, encouragement, and camaraderie have been instrumental, especially during the challenging phases of my life. Your support has been like a warm cup of teh tarik on a rainy day—comforting and essential.

A heartfelt thank you goes to my wonderful mum, whose unwavering support and years of perseverance have shaped me into the person I am today. Since the passing of my father, she has been the cornerstone of our family, guiding me with her strength and wisdom. Although she may not fully see my achievements as she once did, her influence and love are deeply woven into every page of this book. I dedicate this book to her.

Finally, here's to fulfilling a lifelong dream and proving that it's never too late to write a book. Cheers to ticking this off the bucket list!

谢伟莲

Chapter 3

Nutritional Health and Disease Prevalence

Lifestyle and Nutrition Changes Towards the Health of Liver Among the Dayak Community

Azlan Arif Bolen, Jeffery Stephen, Cheah Whye Lian, Koa Ai Jiun

A Community at a Crossroads: Tradition, Change, and the Battle for Liver Health

Fatty liver disease wasn't a familiar topic to me or to many in Malaysia, especially in Sarawak, where the condition is often overshadowed by other public health concerns. However, it sparked my interest during my Master in Public Health programme. I was drawn to it because it felt like a niche area—one that could make a meaningful contribution to our understanding of health issues in Malaysia. We often hear about the usual suspects, like low physical activity, poor diet, and alcohol consumption, when it comes to lifestyle diseases, but seeing how these factors play out in specific communities, like the Dayak, was an eye-opener.

As I delved deeper into the literature, I found myself repeatedly drawn back to the Dayak community. It was clear that several concerning trends were emerging, and they seemed like red flags that couldn't be ignored. One of the most striking changes was in their eating habits. The Dayak lifestyle was traditionally active, and their diet was rich in natural foods sourced directly from their surroundings—fresh fish, fruits, and vegetables grown right at home. But over time, as deforestation for palm oil plantations, urban migration, and the influx of processed foods altered the landscape, their dietary habits shifted drastically. The once nutrient-rich traditional diet gave way to more processed, unhealthy options, leading to rising obesity rates among the community—a significant risk factor for fatty liver disease.

Alcohol, too, plays a pivotal role in Dayak culture (Gahamat et al., 2023). I still remember the warm hospitality I experienced during community events; it is a sign of respect to

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Cheah Whye Lian is a Professor of Nutrition at the Department of Community Medicine and Public Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. She holds a degree in Nutrition, a Master's in Public Health, and a Ph.D. in Community Nutrition. Cheah's research focuses on nutrition and well-being from childhood to adulthood, specializing in community settings. She is skilled in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research. Her work includes studies among Sarawak's indigenous groups, exploring cultural and health behavior interactions, particularly among the Iban and Bidayuh communities. She has co-established a research cluster on health and well-being under the Institute of Borneo Studies.



Ayu Akida Abdul Rashid is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), and a research fellow at the Malaria Research Centre, UNIMAS. She holds an MD and an MPH, with interests in family, mental, and community health. Ayu co-edited "Health and Heritage: Unveiling the Dayak Community's Journey Through Nutrition and Well-being in Sarawak" with Professor Dr Cheah Whye Lian, whose leadership she greatly appreciates. She thanks all chapter authors for their dedication. Passionate about public health, Ayu believes in teamwork, creativity, and humor. Through research, teaching, and editorial work, she is committed to advancing community well-being and fostering positive change.

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ISBN 978-629-7783-28-4

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