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SOME ASPECTS OF THE SOCIAL CUSTOMS OF THE BIDAYUH OF SARAWAK**Leo Mario Noeb**

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I shall touch on the customs that governs the lives of the Bidayuh people in their day-to-day interaction with those around them. That is, the social customs which regulate the interpersonal relationship of the people relating to correct behaviours at home and public places.

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FUNCTION OF SOCIAL CUSTOMS

One of the main functions of social customs in the Bidayuh Society is to regulate the behaviours of the individual both in private and public. Customs act as guide for the people in their daily lives. The authority of customs to dictate what a person can do or cannot do in certain circumstances is only recognised in as long as the people agreed that "such is the custom". This means, customs are likely to change and they get modified as people's ways of life and ways of thinking change due to their mixing and interacting with other races. Therefore it is not surprising to find that certain customs which are strictly practised by the rural folks have either been modified or relaxed among the Bidayuh in the urban areas.

As such the customs which I am going to touch on are those which are still practised in the Bidayuh traditional society, in the longhouses or in the villages. There the customs are still observed strictly by both members of the longhouse or village and visitors. As much of their customs is believed to have religious significance, it is believed that any breach of the custom may result in supernatural sanction which threatens not just the individual concerned but also the whole community. In this way, the customs exercise great influence on the actions of young and old. My intention in discharging these customs is for the benefit of those who are non-Bidayuh, for those who may wish to visit Bidayuh villages or longhouses or for those who wish to interact generally with the Bidayuh people in their traditional environment.