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SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE: TRENDS AMONG THE DAYAKS IN SARAWAK**Robert Jacob Ridu****INTRODUCTION**

Numerous studies and articles have been written by scholars and others, who have better claim to scholarship, about social and cultural change among the various indigenous communities in Sarawak, that a short article such as this is just another thesis adding to the mountain of others. However, this paper attempts to highlight certain aspects of this change, within the context of the general tendency of social and cultural trends, in a short and concise manner, if such a thing is possible, without being sketchy or superfluous.

Dr. Daniel Chew, in his paper on "Social and Cultural Trends in Sarawak", earlier at this symposium, has very ably and succinctly presented us with the social and cultural dimensions confronting Sarawak people as a whole as we proceed towards the national objectives envisioned by Vision 2020. This National Vision is, itself, a crystallization of the goals to be achieved by Malaysian society within the context of the new world order, the accelerating economic development, population and human resource dynamics within the Pacific Rim countries (Naisbitt and Aburdene, 1990), (Ogawa, N. and others, 1993) and the dimensions of the transnational and newer forces for change bearing down upon our world as we prepare for the twenty-first century (Kennedy, P., 1993).

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The most important influence on a nation's responsiveness to change is probably its social attitudes, religious beliefs and culture. Cultural obstacles to change are common in all societies, for the obvious reason that an impending transformation threatens existing habits, ways of life, beliefs and social prejudices. But it is fair to assume, however, that most peoples of the world, *if they so choose and if they benefit*, can respond positively to the challenge of change. This applies to traditional societies: Traditional culture is dynamic, is always undergoing change, and as a result is not inimical to the process of development *per se* (Dove, M.R., 1988).

Economic change and technological development, like wars or sporting competitions, are usually not beneficial to all. Progress, welcomed by optimistic voices from the Enlightenment period to our present age, benefits those groups, societies or nations that are able to take advantage of the newer methods and science, just as it damages others that are less prepared technologically, culturally, and politically to respond to change.