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HISTORICAL APPROACH ON CULTURAL INTERACTION: OUR EXPERIENCE IN BROAD PERSPECTIVE

Romie Sigan Daniel

INTRODUCTION

Culture is a term that is often loosely used in our multiracial society. There are many definitions of culture. The classic definition of culture was provided by Edward Burnett Tylor, who defined "culture - is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by men as a member of society." This paper attempts to present a historical perspective of the various communities interactions.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE

Culture is unique to human beings. Culture is what distinguishes the human race from other living things. Human interactions with the wider world makes cultural creation not only possible, but necessary for our survival. As human beings, we socialise and learn the culture of the group into which we are born. We acquire the skills and way of life in accordance with our culture for our survival.

Culture in a society evolves with time. There is a need for culture to be grouped into coherent units because culture is a social product. People working and living together shape their experience collectively. Therefore, some acceptable rules are needed for communication and cooperation to take place in a society. People who have grown up together, speaking similar language and engaged in activities usually tend to understand each other better. As such members of a society who share a common culture would interpret the world from their own rules and perspective (ethnocentrism).

Sarawakians live in a plural society comprising people of various ethnic groups. Through the interactions of all the ethnic groups, they learned each others' cultures and coexist with understanding, tolerance and accommodation. In Sarawak, the "culture" that has evolved is unique and represent a blend of cultures of the various ethnic groups living in Sarawak.

POPULATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF ETHNIC GROUPS

The indigenous people of Sarawak comprises three major groups with distinct ethno-geographical boundaries namely the coastal groups, the lowland groups and upland groups.