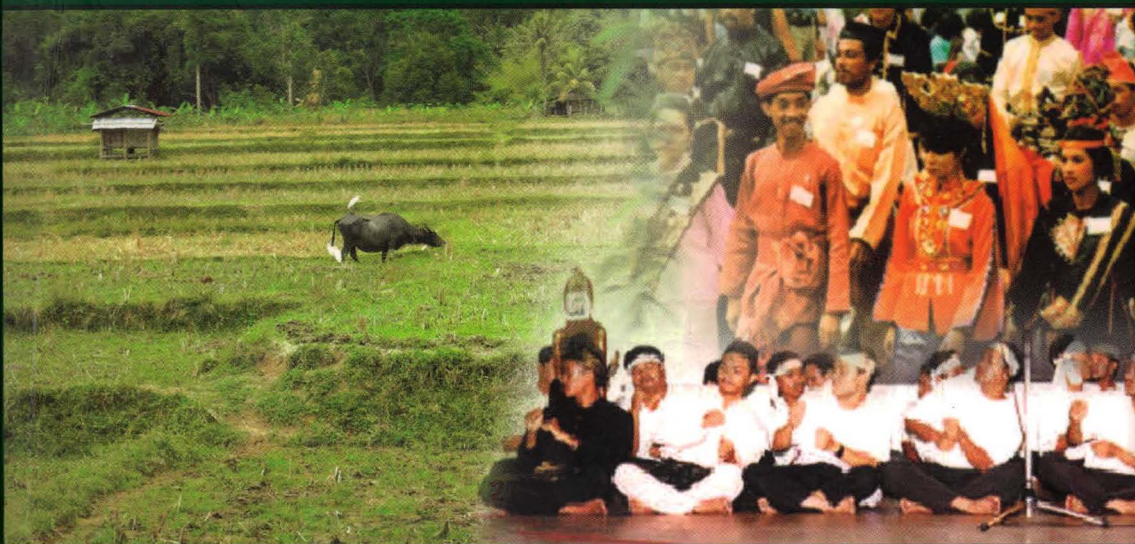


Malaysia and Islam in the Global Context: Psychological, Social and Cultural Perspectives



Compilers
Rosnah Ismail
Uichol Kim



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Chapter 7

Political Culture and Democracy

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Abstract

This chapter aims to introduce political culture as a necessary feature of Malaysian political analysis. By acknowledging the contentious nature of political culture and democracy in political science literature, this chapter aims for political culture to be integrated into the study of Malaysian political development. It attempts to identify and explain the sources of Malaysian political culture. These include her colonial legacy under British rule that introduced ethnic bargaining; consociational political leadership and socio-economic interests and changes; corresponding policy formulations and institutional socialisation; and Islam. This chapter also explores salient issues in Malaysia's nation-building process that corresponds to communal politics as a descriptive device in relation to values, interests and institutions. It also aims to explain how Malaysia's political culture directly affects her democracy and electoral practices, and how the relationship between the two is facilitating change and producing social forces for Malaysia's sustainable political development and an evolving political culture. The primacy of Islam as political identity is also emphasised.

Introduction

Political culture refers to a distinctive form and patterned of political philosophy that consists of beliefs and assumptions of ordinary people on how governmental, political and economic life should be carried out. Political cultures create a framework for political change and are unique to nation-states and other groups. Political cultures differs from political ideology in that people can disagree on an ideology, but still share a common political culture. Political culture is relatively stable over time and is reproduced by political socialisation. Culture cultivates and sustains institutions that socialise subsequent generations. Culture influences political and social outcomes, especially the quality of democracy, governance, and economic performance. The relationship between rationality and culture is also complementary, with the former being a preference implementation device and the latter as a preference formation device (Crothers and Lockhart 2000).