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INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES

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COMMUNICATING WITH THE MALAYS: SOME PRINCIPLES TO OBSERVE

Mohd. Yusof Hussain

Throughout history a number of individuals from diverse cultures have travelled to the Malay – Indonesian archipelago and interacted with the Malays. They included explorers, traders, travellers, sailors and missionaries. They spoke in Malay (*Bahasa Melayu*) and abided by the Malay rules, norms and styles of interpersonal communication. By speaking in Malay and abiding by the rules, norms and styles of Malay interpersonal communication they increased their chances of being trusted and respected by the Malays.

This chapter presents the rules and norms or principles of interpersonal communication of the Malays which they use and expect others to use when communicating with them.

Malay communication styles have been studied by Asmah (1992). Asmah observed that the Malays preferred the "indirect" style of communication. She identified four types of indirectness used by the Malays which are beating about the bush, using imagery, saying the opposite of what one means and using surrogate.

The Malays

Malays form the major racial group in Malaysia. Malays are also found in Sumatra, along the coast of Indonesian Borneo, Brunei, Singapore and Southern Thailand.