

A Process of Genesis of National Cuisine in Sarawak, Malaysia

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Place of fieldwork: Malaysia

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Key Words: National cuisine, Ethnic cuisine, Identity, Income class, Eating out

● Research background



[Plate 1: Kelabit (one of ethnic groups) restaurant]

cuisine have lacked a discussion about the terms of ethnic diversity—excluding Malay, Chinese, and India—and the dining expenses of the middle class, which are both said to play an important role in the creation of national cuisine.

Food can symbolize one's social class, gender, ethnicity, and even national identity. Although there can be a variety of ethnic and regional cuisine in one country, we can come up with “national cuisine” which is shared by people in the country with a common image.

Many previous works clarify factors of creation of national cuisine during the formation of a nation state; however, Malaysia is still on its journey toward creating a national cuisine. Especially, previous studies about Malaysian

● Research purpose and aim

This research is aimed at clarifying how to create ethnic cuisine and it will be embedded into national cuisine from the case study of Sarawak, Malaysia. Especially, Sarawak is an interesting region for this research, as a Dayak (collective term for natives of Sarawak) cuisine restaurant was established in 2011. It can be said that ethnic cuisine is still on the way of creation in Sarawak.

Additionally, Sarawak has a different ethnic composition from West Malaysia, which previous studies have focused on, and it is expected that this study will present data regarding the recognition of national cuisine at a regional level.



[Plate 2: Kelabit cuisine served as restaurant cuisine]

- Results and achievements by fieldwork



[Plate 3: Food served in Malay food eating place]

This research was conducted from September 2, 2014 to November 9, 2014 in Kuching City in Sarawak, Malaysia. I conducted this research through 2 methods as follows; first is observation at ethnic cuisine restaurants and eateries by working together and second is questionnaire survey about the recognition of national and ethnic cuisine which is targeted on university student in Kuching . Many interesting data and experiences were gathered from these observations at restaurants and eateries. Therefore I intend to describe the

ethnography of the genesis of ethnic cuisine in restaurants, including a comparison of the restaurants and eating places that I observed. Moreover, through the questionnaire survey, I could gain answers not only from Malay, Chinese, and Indian persons, but also from other ethnic groups. This will be a unique aspect of my research data compared with previous studies.

- Implications and impacts on future research

The data I have gained from this research will be reflected in my master's thesis; therefore, it is important to closely consider the methods in order to analyze the data and how I will derive significant discussion from what I have seen and heard during my research.

As a concluding remark, I sincerely appreciate all the people who supported me in Sarawak and the scholarship that provided me a great opportunity to conduct this research.



[Plate 4: Kitchen of Malay food eating place]