

Hybrid Language and Identity among the Samsam, Baba Nyonya and Jawi Peranakan Communities in North Peninsular Malaysia

NORIAH MOHAMED

Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia
noriahm@usm.my

Abstract. The essay discusses the identity and language of three groups which are considered to display hybrid characteristics. These three groups are the Samsams, Baba Nyonya and the Jawi Peranakans. They are predominantly found in the northern part of peninsular Malaysia. As a concept, hybrid refers to the nature of a system which forms a cluster of several subsystems or segments that are different from one another. This hybrid concept is used to explain the identity of the three above groups. Even though the language spoken by the three groups display hybrid characteristics, their linguistic classifications indicate the speech systems of both the Samsams and Jawi Peranakans as dialect, whereas the speech system of the Baba Nyonya as creole. The essay also reviews the linguistic classification of speech systems of these three groups.

Keywords and phrases: identity, language, hybrid, Samsam, Baba Nyonya, Jawi Peranakan

Introduction

Geographically, the northern part of Peninsular Malaysia covers Penang, Kedah, Perlis and north Perak (States of Malaysia 2014). From the linguistic viewpoint, Asmah Haji Omar (1983) regards Penang, Kedah, Perlis and north Perak as the north-west area of the Malay dialect, also known as the Kedah Malay dialect region.

The population of the northern region is well known for its diversity; this diversity in turn creates a multilingual population. This language diversity subsequently promote language contacts¹ which not only affected people, creating bilingual individuals or communities but also impacted on the language itself as seen in code-switching, code-mixing and language borrowings among its speakers. So is the formation of hybrid languages.

Hybrid Language

The term "hybrid" illustrates the nature of a system which is made of a combination of subsystems or parts that are different from one another. Hybrid also indicates the inter mixture that exists in a language system. When hybrid is

associated with identity and language, it means both identity and language are mixed.

To the layman, the concept of mixture is to mix or to add to something; the result would be a synthesis² of something which is quite different from the original. In the context of identity and language, a similar phenomenon occurs, although the level or manner of the mixture of two or more entities might differ depending on the identity or language concerned. From the language point, Weinrich (1953) states that when speakers who speak different languages or dialects meet, there occurs a contact of these languages or dialects. The languages in contact would influence each other causing fusion between two or more elements of the language. To the linguist this fusion is termed hybrid.

In north peninsular Malaysia, there are three distinct communities that exhibit hybrid characteristics namely the Samsams,³ Baba Nyonya and Jawi Peranakans. Although they represent hybrid communities, all three show different levels of hybridity which is taken up below.

Hybrid Identities of the Samsams, Baba Nyonya and Jawi Peranakans

The Samsams, Baba Nyonya and Jawi Peranakans are three hybrid communities that involved respectively the fusion of Siamese with Malays (Samsam), Chinese and Malays (Baba Nyonya) and Indians with Malays (Jawi Peranakan). However, as shown below, their hybrid nature is a complex issue.

Samsams

The Samsam community domiciles in the northern part of peninsular Malaysia although their exact locations are quite difficult to determine in a precise manner because of their identity. A survey of the literature indicates distribution in two states, namely Perlis and Kedah including Langkawi as the focal points of this community.

From the identity aspect, there are two views which indicate hybridity for the Samsams. The first view states that this community was the product of inter-marriages between Malays and Siamese; Malays or Chinese with Siamese; or Siamese with descendants of the original residents of Langkasuka or Ligor (Archaimbault 1957, 75). Archaimbault further asserts that the issue of mixed descendants is only a hypothesis and could not be verified until a holistic research about its language, traditions and institution among the Samsams is carried out.

The second view claims the Samsams as Muslim Malays who came from Thailand and settled in the northern part of peninsular Malaysia (Azman Wan Chik 1968). Based on his study of the Samsams in Titi Tinggi of Perlis, Azman claims the Samsams came from Patani (spelled "Petani" by Azman) in south Thailand. He found this particular Samsam community had resided in Titi Tinggi for more than three generations. Azman's view is supported by Zaharah Mahmud (1979, 132) when she states that:

These people were mainly extensions of the Malays inhabiting the Thai states of Chenak, Raman, Tiba, Patani and Setul.

Archaimbault (1957, 75) agrees with the view that the Samsams are Thais who had migrated from Nakhorn Si Thammarat and Songkhla around the 17th century. He claims there were two groups of Samsams—the Siamese Samsams and the Malay Samsams. What Archaimbault (1957, 76) meant is that the Siamese Samsams were Thai citizens who were Buddhist, while the Malay Samsams were Thai citizens who were Muslims.⁴

The Samsams referred to by both Azman and Zaharah were Malay Samsams although they do not give serious attention to Islam. Zaharah (1979, 132) labeled this group as the Siamese-oriented Malays. According to Zaharah:

These were the culturally, though not religiously, Siamese oriented Malays.

This means that from the cultural aspect, the Samsams were Siamese-oriented Malays but less so from the religious (Islam) aspect. Skeat (1953) who discussed the same issue refers to the Siamese-oriented Malays as "Malaysising Siamese", which means a Siamese who had embraced Islam in order to marry a Malay woman but remained spiritually a Siamese even though his descendants would become Muslims (cited in Cheah 1981a: 99). Then there were those Skeat (1953) termed the Malay-oriented Siamese. From this perspective, he describes the Samsams as:

...always Malay who had turned Siamese in everything but their religion, they seldom ever, became Buddhist...⁵ (cited in Cheah 1981a)

For Skeat (1953), whether they were Malaysising Siamese or Samsams, they were less particular about food. They consumed non-halal food such as tortoise and did not patronise the mosque on a frequent basis.

From its hybrid identity, the term "Samsam" is also associated with the meaning of the word "samsam" itself. The Samsam informant who was interviewed by Archaimbault (1957, 5) claimed the word "samsam" originated from "tcham-tcham", which in Hokkien Chinese means "mixed" or "merged". The word "sam" in the Thai language also means "mixed" or "merged". From the language and cultural aspects, it is not difficult to associate Samsams with this hybrid identity. Thus, whether Muslim Samsams or Siamese Samsams, the element of mixture in their lives indicate the merger of two cultures or languages, namely Siamese and Malay, or Siamese and other races.

From the hybrid identity (Malay and Siamese) viewpoint, Hortsmann (n.d., 7) discusses the Samsams of Langkawi who hold two identities namely Thailand and Malaysia. In his discussion of a Langkawi Samsam family Hortsmann narrates:

Their daughters and sons move back and forth between Ban Sarai and Langkawi, benefiting from the uncertain, ambiguous space in the sea and the geographical proximity of Langkawi, lying just south of the Thai border.

Even though they still encounter difficulties of obtaining valid identity card from the Malaysian government, they continued with their dual identity. In fact, one of the Langkawi Samsams' most celebrated characteristics is their effort to be "proper" Malays but with emphasis on family connections, emotional ties, language and religion with Thailand, or in other words as Thai. However, in their pursuit for a better standard of living, they intended to obtain Malaysian citizenship and would continue to live in Langkawi as fishermen. It would be a high price to pay for this assimilation process as Hortsmann (n. d., 7) states:

...the younger generation of the Sam Sam in Malaysia, being ashamed of the practices of their ancestors, have abandoned the Thai language.

This would eventually take place for according to Hortsmann (n. d., 7), the young generation of Samsams assume:

The identity of the Samsam integrates elements from the Thai and Malay worlds, playing on the ambiguities between cultural boundaries.

It is possible that the younger generation of Samsams desire a single identity which could represent their trueselves, either as Thai or Malay, but not two conflicting identities.

In conclusion, even though there are different ways to approach the meaning of "Samsam", the hybrid concept in the present discussion is based mainly on Malays, the Samsams as Muslim Malays and their descendants from south Thailand who had migrated to Malaysia. They could be of Siamese origins or the product of inter-marriages with the Malays in Malaysia.

The first definition of "Samsam" is inappropriate to the contemporary Samsams. It gives a negative image of the Samsams as the same as Siamese-oriented Malays culturally, religiously impious, practising non-Islamic activities, embracing Islam in order to marry Malay women and Siamese-oriented Malays who were Muslims or Samsams but were known to be involved in robberies⁶ in rural Kedah in the first quarter of the 20th century.

Baba Nyonya

Straits-Chinese, Straits-born Chinese, Baba Chinese, Baba or Peranakan are some of the terminologies used to refer to the Baba Nyonya. All of them refer to the descendants of the Chinese immigrants who came to the Malay archipelago in the 15th and 16th centuries notably to Malacca (and later Singapore and Penang) (Wikipedia).

The Straits Settlements of Penang, Malacca and Singapore came into existence in 1826 during British colonial rule. The Straits-Chinese, the short form of Straits-born Chinese, were different in meaning from the Straits-born Chinese. The Straits-born Chinese were those who were born in the Straits Settlements; this definition rejected Chinese who were not born in the Straits Settlements and Chinese coming from other Malay states (Khoo 1996, 23–24).

Baba is a term borrowed from India⁷ which is later used honorifically to refer to Chinese males in the Straits Settlements. It is also possible that this word might be derived from the word "father" in the Malay language. Historians consider it as an honorific word which is equivalent to "sir" or "tycoon" (Lee 2008, 162). According to Khoo (1996: 24), the term "nyonya" is not exclusive to the Straits-born Chinese females as this term in its variations such as "nyonyah", "nonya" and "nona",⁸ were also used among the Sumatran, Javanese and Malay unmarried females.

"Peranakan" refers to descendants of Chinese immigrants who were born locally⁹ (in Malaya and Indonesia) or descendants of the marital union of foreigners with locals. This term refers to mixed descendants regardless of their ethnicity. Apart from the Chinese, there are other peranakan communities in Malaysia, namely the Hindu Indian Peranakan (Chetti), Indian Muslim Peranakan (Jawi Peranakan)

and Eurasian Peranakan (Kristang). Therefore, it can be said that a Baba is a peranakan but not all peranakan are Babas.

According to Purcell (1997, 66–67), the Babas were Chinese (Peranakan) who were born in the Straits Settlements; they were not considered as true Chinese. They had Malay mothers or mothers of mixed-breed. According to Khoo (1996), the inter-marriages with Malay women occurred as the initial Chinese immigrants did not bring their women along. Female Chinese only came to Malaya from the middle of the 19th century onwards. In those days, marriage between a Chinese male and a Malay female did not require the Chinese to embrace Islam.

It is also possible that the females whom the Chinese immigrants had married were not Malays but came from the Austronesian stock. According to Abdur-Razzaq Lubis (2001, 3), in the 18th century, Penang became the centre of the slave trade, and slaves from all over the archipelago, including Malays, Batak, Javanese and other races were traded on this island. The most preferred slaves were young males and females from Nias Island of the west coast of Sumatera. Nias females had high market value due to their beauty and fair complexion with the majority of them bought by and married to Chinese traders. It is possible that the offsprings of these marriages had Batak and Nias blood although it would be difficult to detect the genetic linkages. Some descendants of Straits-Chinese or Baba Nyonya were the products of these inter-marriages. At another level the movements of the Peranakan Chinese families from Medan to Penang were made easier by family ties and trade networkings such as the case of Cheong Fatt Tze in Penang and Chong Ah Fie in Medan.

Apart from Austronesian females from Nias, Teoh and Lim (1999, 125) claim that the Peranakan Chinese in Penang might have married Siamese and Burmese females:

Penang as a focal point of commerce in this part of the Malay Archipelago attracted an influx of Chinese businessmen to the colony, particularly from southern Thailand and North Sumatra. The Peranakan Chinese in Penang were thought to have been "descendants of Chinese males marrying or cohabiting with Malays or Siamese or Burmese; the last mentioned, however, appear to be rather rare". It must be stressed that the Peranakan of Penang still have extensive familial ties with these regions.

According to Purcell (1997, 66–67), the Peranakan Chinese children were brought up according to the way of their father (Chinese). This group did not consider themselves as pure Chinese; some of them even refused to identify themselves as Chinese claiming they were whites or British. Yet at the same

time, they complied wholeheartedly with the outlook of a Chinese. In Malacca, for example, the Baba generations practise the Chinese way of life which had adapted Malay and other local elements.

The Baba groups in Malacca, Penang and Singapore are different compared to the other Chinese as they had assimilated the local Malay culture in varying degrees. Ooi's (2004) conclusion below perhaps could be used to identify the Baba Nyonya identity in Penang:

Straits-Chinese were defined as those born or living in the Straits Settlements: a British colonial construct of Penang, Malacca and Singapore constituted in 1826. Straits-Chinese were not considered Baba Nyonya unless they displayed certain Sino-Malay syncretic physical attributes.

In conclusion, Baba Nyonya refers to the Straits-born Chinese and descendants of Chinese immigrants who came to the Malay Archipelago in the 15th and 16th centuries. They were the results of inter-marriages between Chinese immigrants and local females or Malays. This mixed element is crucial in defining Baba Nyonya and to differentiate the Baba Nyonya from other Chinese.

Jawi Peranakan

The term "Peranakan" in the context of the Jawi Peranakan has more or less the same meaning as the Babas. However, the term "Jawi Peranakan" involves the jawi element. "Jawi" in the Malay language is associated with Islam. To the Malays, the expression "masuk jawi" means circumcision which is one of the compulsory requirements when one embraces Islam. "Jawi" also refers to the jawi characters that are used in written Malay in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and south Thailand. Consequently, the meaning of "jawi" is extended to refer to two aspects. First, the term is associated with the language which uses the jawi scripts and from this, the term Jawi language came into vogue. Second, the term "jawi" is also used to refer to followers of religion who use Jawi (Islam) language. Hence the term "masuk jawi" (embracing Islam). Based on these two aspects and because Islam had become identity markers, Muslims from the Malay archipelago (including Malays) are referred to as the Jawi people (Noriah Mohamed 1999, 85–86). When the term "jawi" is combined to the word "peranakan", which means someone who was born locally and has mixed Malay blood (Fujimoto 1988, 41–42), it refers to foreigners who have mixed Malay blood and were Muslims.

This description matches the definition of Jawi Peranakan which refers to Malays who have mixed Arab, Indian, Benggali, Punjabi, Guneratis and Afghan blood

(Zaharah 1972, 201). The term Jawi Peranakan was first used in 1871 in the *Annual Report of the Population Census of the Straits Settlements*. Before 1871, the terms Jawi Bukan, Jawi Pukan or Jawi Pekan were used in Penang to refer to Muslims. These terms not only include Malay of mixed blood (Arabs, Indians, Benggalis, Punjabis, Gujeratis and Afghans), but also Indian Muslims who were born in the Malay peninsula (their parents were Indian Muslims), who had assimilated Malay culture (Khoo Salma, 2002, 44) as well as other Muslims who were not descendants of the local Malay community. This definition which refer to the "Peranakan" element to mean locally born and had mixed Malay blood as suggested by Fujimoto (1988, 41–42) is inaccurate. In subsequent censuses the term "Jawi Pekan" was no longer used (and) was replaced by the term Jawi Peranakan which referred to Malays of Arab, Indian, Benggalis, Punjabi, Gujerati and Afghan descent (Zaharah Mahmud 1972, 201; Vaughan 1857, 137).

In Singapore, the "peranakan" group was known as Jawi Peranakan, while in Malacca they were called "Peranakan Keling" (Khoo Salma 2002, 44). "Keling" refers to Indians who were Muslim or specifically south Indian Muslims who came to the Malay peninsula as early as the 3rd century AD from Kalinga and Telingana (Coromandel Coast) (Noriah 2008, 88; Kamus Dewan 2005, 719–720).

The formation of Jawi Peranakan community in Penang started with marital union of Arab, Indian, Benggali, Punjabi, Gujerati and Afghan males with local Malay females. In fact, this kind of intermarriages had taken place much earlier in Kedah, Malacca and Perak. The formation of this community started with inter-marriages between Indian Muslim males with females from Malay aristocratic families (Sandhu 1969, 179). In fact, there were several local traditions that connected descendants of the Malay royalty¹⁰ with Alexander the Great in India (Andaya and Andaya 1983, 38). Descendants of the Perak royalty were said to have blood ties with Alexander the Great (Morgan 1948, 17). Similarly, the first Singapore ruler Sang Nila Utama and the first ruler of Malacca were said to have a blood ties with Alexander the Great (Wilkinson 1942, 13). Tun Ali bin Mani Purindam, a prominent leader of Malacca and accorded the title Seri Nara Diraja served as Chief of the treasury. He was a Jawi Peranakan descendant with Indian Muslim blood. Similarly, Bendahara Tun Mutahir came from a Tamil Malay family or Jawi Peranakan (Muhammad Yusoff Hashim 1989, 320).

Significant changes in the formation of the Jawi Peranakan community took place in Penang. Inter-marriages between Indian Muslim males and local Malay females not only occurred among the aristocrats, but were also prevalent among non-aristocratic Malays. The opening of Penang in 1786 and its expansion into a trading port had resulted in significant arrivals of Jawi Peranakan from Kedah. Others claimed this had occurred much earlier in the 17th century (Ragayah

Eusoff 1997, 29–30). The diffusion between this community and the Indian Muslim community had resulted in inter-marriages and the formation of the Jawi Peranakan.

The formation of the Penang Jawi Peranakan community took place in stages. The first stage occurred following the arrivals of traders, travellers and weapon suppliers. These groups had resided in Penang before the arrival of Francis Light. There are claims that Indian traders were already in Penang in the 1770s (Omar Yusoff 2005, 124). Some of them were Jawi Pekan (Sandhu 1969, 172, 179). The formation of this community started when Kapitan Keling married a local Malay woman. His first wife was said to have come from Batu Uban in Penang; he had stayed in that locality since 1736 (Omar 2005, 140). This practice was then followed by other Indian Muslim traders.

The second stage took place after the arrivals of labourers who worked in agricultural estates under the British government. This stage occurred around 1787 or earlier (Sandhu 1969, 47). In early 1786, there were around one hundred Indian labourers in Penang. They were sent by the British government. Most of them worked in European-owned estates and some of them worked with the colonial authority. Later, more and more Indians from south India were sent to Penang to work in newly opened estates including pepper plantations in 1790, sugar cane plantations in 1830, coffee plantations in 1870 and rubber plantations after 1877 (Sandhu 1969, 50, 249). Many of these labourers had married local Malay women. According to Sandhu (1969, 177):

A similar tendency could also be detected among other classes of immigrants, especially with the expansion of government works and commercial agriculture in the nineteenth century. Some of these migrants, like their predecessors, took local brides from amongst the Malay and slave populations.

The third stage took place after the arrival of Indian prisoners who were sent by the British government to Penang around 1788, when Penang was made a penal station for those serving seven or more years. The first group arrived in 1789. More than three quarters of them had been given life sentences. These prisoners had committed a variety of crimes such as murder, robbery, political crimes and others. They came from various districts in India and consisted of various ethnicities. Eyeno Deen Sheikdar and Mohamed Heiant were the first two Indian Muslim prisoners who were sent to Penang in March 1790 (Sandhu 1969, 87).

After 1789, more and more prisoners were sent to Penang. In 1810, there were 1,300 of them on the island. By 1824 their number had increased to 1,462. When the British government could no longer provide home passage for these prisoners

after completing their prison term, the number of prisoners sent to Penang was reduced. In 1865, there were only 801 prisoners sent to Penang with 73 of them females (Turnbull 1970, 90). Starting in 1860, there were more prisoners who had stayed back upon the completion of their sentences. They preferred to stay in Penang as they were already familiar with the island (McNair 1899, 144). Most of them had married their former fellow prisoners, other Indians or the Malays. This led to the increase of the Indian community and Jawi Pekan (Sandhu 1969, 134). As for employment, they were involved as cattle herders, grocers and labourers while a few even worked with the British government (McNair 1899, 144). Blythe (1971, 130) states that the formation of the Jawi Pekan community occurred around 1857 under the "ticket of leave" system. According to this system, only prisoners who had shown good behaviour were permitted to work with the British government or other Europeans. They were paid a handsome salary.

Thus, it is evident that Indians especially the Tamils had played a big role in the formation of the Jawi Peranakans in Penang although the community also encompassed Arabs, Benggalis, Punjabis, Gujeratis and Afghans Muslims who had married local Malay women. In terms of identity, they differed from the Indian Muslims.

In the context of Penang, most of the Jawi Peranakan community identified themselves as Malays. Apart from their "migration" which was approved by the Malays who accepted them as Malays, the Jawi Peranakan community voluntarily wanted to become Malays. Today, the culture of the Jawi Peranakan community have absorbed the values and norms of the Malays including language, marriage traditions, food, diet and many others.

In conclusion, even though the three hybrid communities discussed above are "Malay"-centric in its broadest sense and their identities show some form of fusion, the Malay-centricity could be either strong or weak since religion was also used as the basis for group identities. For example, the Baba community tends to be Chinese as they are Buddhists, while the Samsam and Jawi Peranakan tend to be Malays because of Islam which is their common religion.

Language Hybrid among the Samsams, Baba Nyonya and Jawi Peranakans

The speech system of the Samsam, Baba Nyonya and Jawi Peranakan communities manifests the mixed speech system of Siamese, Chinese and Indian with the Malay language. Linguistically, the speech system of Samsam and Jawi Peranakan are classified as dialects while that of the Baba Nyonya is accorded a creole status. Whether dialect or creole it is not easy to define the hybrid concept for these three speech systems as evident from the following discussion.

Samsam Malay: Language or Dialect?

Like the ethnic identity of the Samsam, its language is also mixed. Le Roux (1998, 239) highlights this aspect as follows:

The Samsam, as they are described in the ethnographic literature, are particularly characterised by their language (a pidgin formed by a Mon-Khmer and Siamese vocabulary, together with an Austronesian grammatical structure) and by the use of a stone hurling bow that has a wooden handlecarved in the form of a dove.

Archaimbault (1957, 75) further corroborates this view in his description of the Samsam language which is appended below:

If one turns one's attention from outside informers to the people themselves, one discovers that the expression Sam Sam is for them a vague collective term which they voluntarily define as Sam Sam Siam or Sam Sam Melayu or Sam Sam Masok Islam. In affording an explanation, religion thus provides a distinction. On the one hand, there are the Buddhist Sam Sam and on the other the Muslim, but however this may be, it would be a mistake to establish an absolute distinction between the two groups, for the expression Sam Sam Siam stands equally for the language of all the Sam Sam whatever their religion may be.

As discussed earlier, the meaning of Samsam involves many races, not just Siamese and Malays. This means Siam or Thai language is the first language, while other languages had an influence on this Thai language which brought about the pidgin nature of the Samsam language.

Pidgin is identified as the language used in the context of human encounters who came from different background, race or descent, especially at the market or business centres. In Malaysia, *bahasa Melayu pasar* or bazaar Malay is an example of pidgin (Noriah 2003, 58). In this case, Crawford (1967, 28–29) is more focussed when he asserts:

By Samsams, are meant people of the Siamese race who have adopted the Mohammedan religion, and who speak a language which is a mixed jargon of the languages of the two people; a matter which, in the opinion of the latter, brings some reproach with it. The following is a specimen: *Saya na pai naik keh bun gunung*, "I want to ascend the mountain" in which the first word

is Malay, the two next Siamese, the fourth Malay, the fifth and sixth Siamese, and the seventh or last Malay again.

The example given by Crawford (1967) illustrates the Samsam language as a type of Malay dialect which is mixed with Thai language. The research carried out by Azman Wan Chik (1968) also indicates the Samsam language as a type of Malay language or more accurately, a type of Malay language which is grouped under the Patani Malay dialect. From the linguistic point of view, the Malay language is the superstratum while the Thai language, the substratum. This is due to the fact that speakers of the Samsam language are not Malays but Thais. As Thais they speak the Thai language as their first language.

In relation to the view that the Malay dialect is the second language to the Samsam people, Wikipedia reviews the issue in the following:

Yawi or Pattani Malay is a dialect of the Malay language spoken in the southernmost provinces of Thailand along the border with Malaysia. It is the primary spoken language of the Thai Malay ethnic group, but is also a common second language amongst ethnic Thai, Muslim and non-Muslim, and the samsam, a mostly Thai-speaking population of mixed Malay and Thai ancestry.

In short, the Yawi language (or Jawi) or Pattani Malay is the second language for the Samsam speakers. This means the Pattani Malay dialect is the language that had influenced the Thai language that resulted in the dialect to be the "Samsam language". According to Le Roux (1998, 232), Jawi is used to refer to the identity of the Muslim Patani Malays when they claim "*kito jadi ore Jawi, ore Isle*" (We are Patani Malays, we are Muslims). The Patani Malays claim the language they use is *baso Jawi*, while the Thais or Sino-Thais term it as *phasa Jawi* (Jawi language). The Jawi language is similar to the Kelantanese Malay dialect but phonologically quite different (Asmah 1979).

In describing the Malay dialect of Baling in Kedah, Shuib Ismail (1971) classifies it into three speech variations, namely the Kedah dialect (DK), Petani dialect (DP) and Samsam dialect (DS). According to Shuib (1971, 5):

While the DS (the Samsam dialect) or more popularly known as 'Pelet Siam' (Siamese dialect) is a form of speech associated with a small group of Malay speakers whose first language was Thai.

Asmah (1979, 6) agrees with Shuib's viewpoints (1971) when she asserts that:

The term "Samsam" is however misleading when used as a nomenclature for one of the semiotic systems of Kedah. When Samsam is used to refer to a person or a group of persons, it denotes a person or group of persons of Malay ethnic origin and Muslim in religion but whose first language is Thai. Corollary to this, the Thai dialect spoken by these people, is the "Samsam language". To these Samsam people, Malay is a second language and the variety they speak, as said earlier, exhibits a marked influence from Thai.

If we make use of the Malay dialect as the basis to explain the Samsam's speech system, this Malay dialect cannot be referred to as the Samsam language for two reasons. First, this Malay dialect is the Samsam's second language, their first language is Thai. For the Samsam community this language is just a Malay dialect. Second, the words "dialect" and "language" are two different entities in the field of sociolinguistic. Hence the term Samsam Malay dialect is more accurate in its usage than Samsam Malay language.

As indicated by Azman (1968), the Samsam Malay dialect is a form of Malay dialect which is mixed with the Thai language. The Siamese accent is still audible when they speak the Malay language. However, the present generation might not be able to speak Thais while the Thai accent had been reduced considerably among the Samsams (Sohaimi Abdul Aziz 2009, 57).

To conclude, the Samsam language is a type of Malay dialect which is categorized under the subdialect of Patani Malay. This dialect exhibits the influence of the Thai language, specifically from the lexical aspect.

Baba Nyonya Language: Malay Creole or Chinese Hokkien Dialect?

The arrivals of the Chinese to the Malay archipelago had significantly affected the Malay language. This is due to the fact that this community had produced a type of creole Malay language called Baba Malay Creole.

A creole language is a type of language that had developed from a pidgin language. Both types of languages are hybrids, and exhibit the mixture of two languages (especially vocabulary and structure). As mentioned earlier, the pidgin language is considered a hybrid language which is unstable, while the creole language is a stable hybrid language. A creole language has its regular speakers who assigned this language as their native language (Noriah 2003, 58).

Whether a language could be denoted pidgin or creole, the classification is based on language dominance. Baba Nyonya Malay creole is called as such because the

Malay language is the dominant language, while Portuguese creole (Papia Kristang) is also denoted a creole because it is based on 16th century Portuguese language. In these creole languages the dominant language is termed as the superstratum. Superstratum means the language spoken by the dominant group was influenced by the speakers of the substratum language. This happened when speaking the dominant language, the substratum speaker brought in the element of sound into the dominant language (Noriah 2009, 22–23). In the Baba Malay creole of Malacca and Singapore, the Chinese language element (substratum) had influenced the Malay language.

The Baba Malay creole in Malacca and Singapore are language variations of Malay as the substratum or the dominant language is Malay. However, it is not easy for the Malays to understand this language. According to Shellabear (1913), the difference between Malay creole and Malay were due to the following:

- (1) There are Chinese words which are not understood by the Malays
- (2) As Baba cannot pronounce Malay words accurately, in certain occasions, they change the pronunciation until it is not recognisable among the Malays
- (3) Chinese proverbs are used extensively
- (4) The sentence formations are different from that of the Malay language

Although the Baba creole language in Malacca and Singapore is considered a Malay creole, the Baba creole in Penang is considered as non-Malay creole. Instead the Penang Hokkien dialect is significantly influenced by the Malay language. In relation to this, the website *Penang Heritage City* (n.d., 1) records the following:

Baba and Nyonya culture in Penang is pretty different from the ones in Malacca (Melaka), Medan, Singapore or Kota Bharu. If there is a group of Nyonyas and Babas in Melaka who speak exclusively Malay, their counterparts in Penang speak mixture of Hokkien, Malay and English.

Teoh and Lim (1999, 132) were in agreement with the above statement when they affirmed that:

However, there are today very few Baba Malay speakers among the Penang Peranakan; instead, there is predominance of Baba Hokkien of Penang speakers among the Penang Peranakan; and as proven by this study, Baba Hokkien of Penang is essentially a Hokkien dialect with some Malay elements.

The Baba creole in Penang is not a variety of the Malay language since one has to put it (to) careful scrutiny to understand its conversational meanings. This also happened to the Kelantan Chinese Peranakan as studied by Teo (2003). The Chinese Peranakan in Kelantan appears to be a variation of the Hokkien dialect interwoven with the Kelantan Malay dialect and Thai language.¹¹ The Penang Baba creole is dissimilar to the Malacca Baba creole as in the latter the influence of the Malay language is much stronger. The situation is further complicated by the limited vocabulary of the Penang Baba creole resulting in duplicity of meanings.

In the Baba creole language of Penang, the Malay word is taken from a different category. As an example, the first and second person pronouns are Chinese, namely *goa* for "me" and *lu* for "you", whilst the third person pronoun uses the Malay word *dia*. Other Malay words that appear in this language are those that refer to the human body such as *bak ketiak* (armpit), *batang* (male genitalia), thigh and others; things such as *bakuli* (marble), *mesegate* (mosque), *senduk* (milk or ladle) and others; food such as *lumpa* (spices), *kueh kapek* (clamp cake), *roti jala* (roti jala) and others (Teoh and Lim 1999).

In terms of sentence structure, there is a tendency to use the Chinese syntax. The following are some simple sentences of Penang Baba creole language¹² with their equivalents in English:

- (1) *Ee suka lai sembang.*
He likes to come here and gossip.
- (2) *Keliap-keliap, ee naik angin.*
Slightly provoked, he gets angry.
- (3) *Gua tan ee sampai gua k'ee geram.*
I waited for him till I got angry.
- (4) *Oo-wa! kinajeet, ee pasang kuat.*
Wow, today he dresses stylishly!

In conclusion, the Baba language of Penang is a kind of Chinese dialect (Hokkien) which exhibits the influence of the Malay language, specifically its lexical variation. However, the passage of time had almost obliterated this language due to the ascendancy of the Hokkien dialect. The situation is also affected by the fact that the Baba Nyonya community is still trying to find their own identity which encouraged them to revert to their native language and culture.

Jawi Peranakan Malay Dialect

The daily spoken language of the Jawi Peranakan community in Penang is the Penang Malay dialect (PMD).¹³ PMD is not only used in the social domain (*front stage*), but also in the household. The use of this Malay dialect is due to the cultural contact brought about by inter-marriages between Indian Muslims and local Malay women. PMD which is spoken by this community varies with other Jawi Peranakan groups. For Tamil-based Jawi Peranakan the influence of Tamil tend to be strong in their PMD, while for the Arab-based Peranakan there is a significant influence of Arabic.

For the early Jawi Peranakan generation who were Indian Muslims,¹⁴ although Tamil is their native language, most of them spoke Malay¹⁵ and English. After the fourth generation, the Tamil language is no longer used by this community.¹⁶ The language has no longer any bearing on their daily life as affirmed by Yusoff Azmi Merican:¹⁷

To the Peranakan old timers, I mean the first to the fifth generations, they could speak Tamil. I still remember, my grandmother who could speak Tamil. Coming to my father (Hashim Yahya Merican of the fifth generation), he still could speak a little Tamil but when to me (and my generation), I just could not comprehend Tamil as we were never taught the language.¹⁸

The use of PMD among Jawi Peranakans illustrates clearly the influence of the Tamil language. Rosmaliza Hassim (2002, 47–60) has examined the influence of the Tamil language on kinship terms of address¹⁹ among the Penang Jawi Peranakan community. These include *atta* and *ba* for father; *tok atta*, *tok ba*, *dada*, *tok caca*, *appa*, *nana*, *radhak*, *mama*, *atta* and *nana marikan* for grandfather; *nani*, *mamak* and *nana* for grandmother; *aci*, *na*, and *akka* for sister; *nana*, *ane*, and *anen* for brother; *tambi* for little brother; *khala*, *caci*, *perima*, and *cenimma* for maternal and paternal aunt; *caca*, *mamu*, and *mamak* for maternal uncle; *periatta*, *cinatta*, *caca*, *mamu*, *mamak* and *nana* for paternal uncle; *marzhi*, *ma'ci*, *maini*, *aci* for sister-in-law; *macan*, *maca* and *nana* for brother-in-law; and many more.

As the Jawi Peranakans are of mixed-blood, the language they use tend to be influenced by Tamil. This influence might be strong for the early generations of Jawi Peranakan, but it is waning for later generations. One of the causes for the influence of the Tamil language is the contacts between PMD and the Tamil language.

In conclusion, eventhough the three hybrid groups discussed are "Malay" based in its broad sense and their language system illustrates some form of fusion but the speech system of these groups is dissimilar.

Among the Samsam, eventhough the Malay dialect is a second language, this language is used as a main speech system. The Samsam Malay dialect is influenced by the Thai language and by right this would led to the formation of the Malay Samsam creole. Significantly this did not take place as the Samsams were originally Muslim Siamese or Thai Malays. The Malay dialect spoken by the Samsams is still Malay in its structural form, but heavily influenced by the Thai language from the lexical aspect.

As for the Penang Baba community, their language system is Chinese Hokkien as this language, especially in Penang, has a strong Hokkien structure and only a small number of the Malay lexicals are still maintained.

The case of the Jawi Peranakan is similar to the Samsams. Due to both Islamic religion and the interest of this community to assimilate into the Malay community, the Malay Penang dialect is used as the native language; the dialect also illustrates the influence of other languages. As this discussion revolves around Indian Muslims, the influence of the Tamil language is found in the Malay dialect used by the Jawi Peranakan.

Conclusion

Although the identity and language for the Samsams, Baba Nyonya and Jawi Peranakans illustrate some form of fusion, this fusion was watered down in subsequent years. All three groups indicate their desire to be known either as Malay or Chinese. While the Baba Nyonya have become more Chinese the Samsams and Jawi Peranakans have become more Malay.

The reversion to the original or dominant group also exhibits a transition towards the use of language among the three groups. The language system used is slanting towards the original group (Hokkien for Baba) or dominant group (the use of Malay language among the Samsam and Jawi Peranakan).

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Notes

1. The contact of language is a situation when different languages come together. According to Weinreich (1953: 1), "...two or more language will be said to be in contact if they are used alternately by the same person or community".
2. In biological terms, hybrid means the offsprings (animal or plant) resulting from the combination of two different types of seed, while in computer terms it means characteristic of the system which had formed due to a combination of several different technologies (Kamus Dewan 2005: 530–531).
3. There are variations in the spelling for Samsams, including Sam Sam, Sam sam and Sam-sam. Samsam will be used throughout in this essay.
4. This is evident from his discussion of the term monk, which is *sami* in Siamese Samsam and *imam* in Malay Samsam. Differences are also observed with regards the term "Malay language" which is used to refer to Malay Samsam while "Bangkok Siam language" is used for Siamese Samsam during the conversion of incantation which was read by Malay or Buddhist shaman (Archaimbault 1957, 76).
5. Yet, there are also cases which happened conversely. For example, in his writings about Salleh Tui, Tunku Abdul Rahman (1978) recounts that there was a man who converted from Islam to Buddhism in the 1930s because he was married to a Buddhist woman (cited in Cheah 1981b: 3).
6. The names associated with Samsam such as Salleh Tui, Nayan and Din Prum conveyed popular images of robbers while others labelled them as modern day Robin Hood (Cheah 1988).
7. In northern India which used the Hindustani language that is influenced by the Persian, the term Baba is a honorific word used by the wife to call their husband (Khoo 1996, 24).
8. This issue is agreed by Soesono (1981) when he states, "The word nyonya (also commonly misspelled nonya) is a Javanese loan honorific word from Dutch nona (grandma) meaning: foreign married madam. Because Javanese at the time had a tendency to address all foreign women (and perhaps those who appeared foreign) as nyonya, they used that term for Straits-Chinese women, too, and it was gradually associated more exclusively with them". Likewise, Baba Peter (n. d., 1) states that, "The term nona, or nonha, is known throughout the lands of old Portuguese world and even in Mozambique (Portuguese Africa) and in Macau, where it was a term for a Eurasian, or a young native girl married to a European or something like that. It may be connected to the Portuguese 'Dona' or in Spanish 'Dona' (pronounced 'donya'), meaning lady".
9. In other words, they are considered to be local people based on birth (native by birth).

10. In Malay society, the notion of royal descendants is rooted from Hindu tradition. When Islam became associated with traditional Malay government, the new religion also provided local rulers with an aura of invincibility known as *daulat* or sovereign (see also Noriah 1999, 21–35).
11. For example, /*kalu t^hi leng sing ku: ghaso k^hua*/ means literally "If sky cold body feel cold" or it means "If the weather is warm, then I feel a little better". *Kalu* (if) and *ghaso* (taste) is a word in Kelantan Malay dialect and *t^hi* (weather) and *k^hua* (cold) is a Thai word (Teo 2003, 89).
12. The examples are taken from *Malay echoes, Raymond Kwok examines the Baba's past links* (n. d.).
13. This paper will not discuss the PMD. Discussion of this matter can be referred to the discussion of Malay dialects in the northern area. Noriah (2008, 77–92) had discussed in general this dialectical variation.
14. Early generation means the first to the third generation.
15. The existence of Tamil translators had been narrated by Peter Floris in the 17th century. He said when the first E.I.C. ships arrived in Pattani in 1612 some people went on board, among them the Chatti or Chetti (money lenders) to translate the King's letter into the Malusia language (Malay); and after a discussion about opening the letter, it was agreed that they should open it, and, after having translated and received several souvenirs, they returned to the beach (Gallop 1994, 28).
16. This is due not only to the fact that they are just not taught in this language, but because their native language is Malay and the primary education system was carried out in Malay. Hence, the present-day Jawi Peranakan have little understanding of the Tamil language or none at all.
17. Interviews with informant on 18 September 2000. He was the sixth generation subsequent to Hashim Yahya Merican. He is also the source of reference for the Jawi Peranakan in Penang.
18. Translated from the Malay version: "*Bagi orang lama Jawi Peranakan dulu ni, maksud saya generasi pertama sampai generasi kelima, depa ni memang boleh cakap Tamil. Saya masih ingat, nenek saya juga tau cakap Tamil. Mai kat bapa saya (generasi kelima kepada Hashim Yahya Merican), dia boleh cakap Tamil sikit-sikit, tak banyaklah, mai kat saya, langsung saya tak tau cakap Tamil, sebab kami tak diajaq cakap Tamil*".
19. Comparison of the use of kinship term which was used by Indian Muslims, Jawi Peranakan and Malay is shown in Appendix.

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Appendix

Comparison of kinship terms of Indians Muslim, Jawi Peranakans and Malays

Kinship	Kinship terms		
	Indian Muslim	Jawi Peranakan	Malays
Waris (asal daripada bahasa Tamil)	Waris	Anak Beranak	Anak Beranak
Ibu	Amma	Ma	Mak
Bapa	Vappa/Ba	Ba/Atta	Chik/Ayah
Adik lelaki bapa	Chinapa	Mamak	Pak Teh
Adik lelaki ibu	Mama	Mamak	Pak Chu
Abang lelaki bapa	Periapa	Mamak	Wak
Abang lelaki ibu	Periamama	Mamak	Pak Chu
Adik perempuan bapa	Mami	Mami	Mak Chu
Adik perempuan ibu	Chinnama	Mami	Mak Chu
Kakak kepada bapa	Periama	Mami	Mak Chu
Kakak kepada ibu	Periama	Mami	Mak Chu
Abang/abang sepupu	Ananmahen	Bai	Abang
Adik/adik sepupu (lelaki)	Tambimahen	Bai	Dik
Kakak/kakak sepupu	Marni	Aci	Kak
Adik/adik sepupu (perempuan)	Ponnu	Aci	Dik
Anak perempuan	Magel	Anak	Anak

Anak lelaki	Mahen	Anak	Anak
Cucu lelaki	Perepillai	Cucu	Cucu
Cucu perempuan	Perepillai	Cucu	Cucu
Datuk lelaki	Nana/Pettappa	Chacha	Tok Wan
Datuk perempuan	Nani/Pettamma	Chachi	Tok
Adik lelaki datuk lelaki	Petappa	Mamu	Tok Wan
Abang datuk lelaki	Petappa	Mamu	Tok Wan
Adik perempuan datuk lelaki	Petemma	Chachi	Tok
Kakak datuk lelaki	Petemma	Chachi	Tok
Adik lelaki datuk perempuan	Petappa	Chacha	Tok Wan
Abang datuk perempuan	Petappa	Chacha	Tok Wan
Adik perempuan datuk perempuan	Petemma	Chachi	Tok
Kakak datuk perempuan	Petemma	Chachi	Tok
Nenek lelaki	Petappa	Bai Chacha	Nenek
Nenek perempuan	Petemma	Bai Chachi	Nenek
Ibu mertua	Mamiare	Mami	Ibu
Bapa mertua	Mamanare	Mamu	Bapa
Suami saudara perempuan (ipar lelaki)	Machan	Machan	Abang
Suami ibu saudara (sebelah bapa & ibu)	Mama	Mamak	Pak Cik
Menantu lelaki	Maremahen	Mempelai	Anak Menantu
Menantu perempuan	Maremagel	Ponu	Anak Menantu
Isteri saudara lelaki (ipar perempuan)	Marni	Maini	Kakak/adik
Isteri bapa saudara tua, sebelah bapa	Periamma	Maini	Mak Cik
Isteri bapa saudara muda, sebelah bapa	Chaci	Maini	Mak Cik
Isteri bapa saudara tua/muda, sebelah ibu	Mami	Maini	Mak Cik