

Assimilation of the Malay Culture towards the Straights of Chinese Community in the State of Kelantan: Study in Kampung Pasir Parit, Chetok, Pasir Mas, Kelantan

Mohd Zahirwan Halim Zainal Abidin^{1*}, Nurul Fadly Habidin²,
Muhammad Yusri Yusof @ Salleh³, Paiz Hassan⁴, Hamdi
Rahman Mohd Yaacob⁵, Mazlah Yaacob⁶, and Abd Munir
Mohd Noh⁷

^{1*, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7} Academy Of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Perak, Seri Iskandar, 32610, Seri Iskandar, Perak, Malaysia

²Department of Management and Leadership, Faculty of Management and Economics, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, 35900 Tanjung Malim, Perak, Malaysia

^{1*}Corresponding Author: Mohd Zahirwan Halim Zainal Abidin

E-mail: *Mohdz560@perak.uitm.edu.my*

DOI Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v6-i11/2372>

Published Date: 03 November 2016

Abstract

Malaysia, being a multi-cultural country, is well known of its richness in various cultures and customs practiced by different numbers of races. As a result of this integration, a positive interaction between them is perceived, and to some extent, the traditions and cultures of a certain race may be assimilated and practiced by others as a routine in their daily lives. Occasionally, a majorly dominant culture has a much stronger influence towards those of a less dominant one in the context of its practices, culture, customs and religious sensitivities. This study focuses on the influence of the Malay culture, the major ethnic group in Malaysia, towards the minority group of the Straits Chinese community whom are the descendants of the Chinese immigrants, migrated centuries ago. This paper will discuss on the influence of culture and religion towards the Chinese community of Kampung Pasir Parit, Pasir Mas, Kelantan, which includes their lifestyle, culture, architecture, language and mutual respect for the Islamic religion that is embraced by the Malay community around their village.

Keywords: Culture, Community, Malaysia

Introduction

The migration of the Chinese immigrants to Malaysia (Formerly known as Malaya) had occurred centuries ago due to the countries high resource in minerals and various yielding

productions from its fertile soil. The impact of this economical aspect has led the country to become a focus of many nations, including Western Colonialists, whose intents were to reap the richness of these lands. It is to have said that the Chinese community came significantly during the Britannica era of the colonial periods to work and establish decent businesses. However, there are also opinions, claimed by the historians of parrafo that they had arrived at a much earlier extent compared to the britanico. This is proven by the existence of a Chinese settlement, and is well known as the community of the Straits Chinese in the state of Malacca, Pulau Pinang, Kelantan, and Terengganu. In Malacca and Kelantan, the community is commonly known as *Baba and Nyonya*, and *China Kampung* respectively.

Their daily routines have also revealed significant similarities from the Malay culture. This clearly proves that they have resided in Malaysia for a long period, due to their similar ways from the majority of Malays in Malaysia. The results of this social integration, has led to a life of peace and harmony without conflicts and disturbances that could lead to chaos.

Literature Review

The Arrival of the Chinese Community in Tanah Melayu / Malaysia

The arrival of the Chinese community in Malaysia was the result of mass migration from China, which eventually led to the citizenship or permanent residence of these people in Malaysia. Their presence from China to Malaysia, was during the 15th century to the mid-20th century (Orang Cina Malaysia, n.d). A large number of them who migrated, were from the Southeast, mainly from the province of Kwangtung, Kwangsi, and Fukien, and the majority of the migrants came from Kwangtung, and Fukien. The migration of the Chinese people to several countries in Southeast Asia, especially to Malaysia, was due to the high population density, poverty and natural disasters such as floods and droughts in China. Malaysia, due to its identical aspects of geographical grounds and climate of the Southeastern part of China, encouraged the migration of the Chinese people to Malaysia because of its adaptable environment (Victor Purcell, 1997).

According to historians, the Chinese migration into the Malay community was through three phases, which was the glory of the the Melayu Malacca phase, followed by the Kingdom of the Malacca Sultanate era, and the large-scale and systematic migration after the British occupation in Penang and Singapore in the 18th century.

The phase before the Kingdom of Malacca can be seen in the context of economy. This was evident when Malaya became the focus of trades by the Chinese merchants since the 7th century. It has also been said the Chinese have reached Malaya since the first century. Trading relations between the Johor Empire with China and its merchants had resulted to the settlement of merchants in Johor (Sejarah Kedatangan Imigran ke Malaysia, 2009).

The settlements of the Chinese community in Malaya during the Malacca Sultanate are more discussed and studied by historians. The arrival of the Chinese people to Malaysia or Malaya could be discussed by the location of settlements established by them after the conquest of Malacca, which was founded on 1400 (Victor Purcell, 1997). The emergence of the first group of Chinese in Malaysia was said to be around the 15th century when Princess Hang Li Poh married the Sultan of Malacca. They also brought together their nobles, followers, and servants from China, in which most of them were Fujian. They later married the locals and formed communities of the Straits Chinese (Orang Cina Malaysia, n.d). In addition, evidence shows that the arrival of the Chinese community was driven mostly by economic factors. Malacca's strategic location and its route between Eastern and Western China had allowed merchants to stop at the port of Malacca, to trade their wares such as silk, golden

threads and fabric, pottery, tableware and much more. In exchange, they obtained from the bargain a set of fruit supplies, tin, lipstick, black pepper, opium and medicinal roots. This relationship on the basis of trade, has allowed the presence of the Chinese people in Malaya to be consistent and continuous (Masyarakat Imigran di Malaysia, 2008). Besides economic factors, the influx of Chinese immigrants are also influenced by factors that drove them away from China such as war, famine, and many more (Faktor-Faktor Kemunculan Masyarakat Majmuk, t.t.). In this era, assimilation and interaction of the indigenous people of Malaya with the Chinese existed harmoniously.

The third phase of the Chinese migration occurred when the British invaded Singapore, Penang and Malacca. The Chinese community began to grow during the 19th-20th century. According to historical records, in 1881 alone, a total of 89,900 Chinese arrived in Penang and Singapore. During this era, a large amount of Chinese came to Malaya, and it was said that their numbers were almost equaled to the total amount of the Malay population. Most of them were from Southern China mainly Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi and Hainan. Their prime focus was to work in the tin mines as workers with the British's support. The main states that these migrants visited were Perak, Selangor and the Straits Settlements (Orang Cina Malaysia, n.d). The abundance of unexploited resources, as a whole, was the main reason they migrated to Malaya. Their migrations were organized by the British, as their good relationship with the Chinese helped facilitate their entries to the country on account of their own personal interests in Malaya. This was seen when the British opened a tin mining site on a large scale, and encouraged a massive influx of Chinese people to carry out their work at the site (Immigrant Society in Malaysia, 2008).

State of Kelantan

Kelantan has an area of 15,020 square kilometers, and 8,942.7 square kilometers of forestation (Bank Data Negeri/ Daerah Malaysia 2003 (January 2004). It is located at the Northeast Peninsular of Malaysia and is bordered by Thailand up North, Perak to the West, Terengganu to the East and Pahang to the South (Mohamed Roslan Abdul Malek, 1998). Kelantan is also bordered by the China Sea along the 78.4 kilometers to the North and branches of the China Sea and Terengganu State at the East (Zain Mohd Salleh, 1985).

The state comprises of 10 colonized regions, namely Kota Bharu, Pasir Mas, Pasir Puteh, Bachok, Machang, Tumpat, Tanah Merah, Kuala Krai, Ulu Kelantan and Gua Musang (Mohd Roslan Ab. Malek 1993). Gua Musang is the largest, with an area of 8,177 square kilometers, while Tumpat, known as the smallest, has an area of 177 square kilometers. Kota Bharu has an area measuring to 394 square kilometers, Pasir Mas 569 square kilometers, Pasir Puteh 424 square kilometers, Machang 525 square kilometers, Tanah Merah 880 square kilometers, Jeli 1,318 square kilometers, and Kuala Krai with 2,277 square kilometers (Buku Tahunan Perangkaan Malaysia, 2003). It also has 63 districts, in which each region is led by a Head representative, and each district is led by a retainer (Ab. Razak Mahmud, 1997).

Arrival of the Chinese in Kelantan

China has a long history of relations with Southeast Asia in the context of trade. With this relation, the early generations of the Chinese were very much influenced by the ways of the local Malays. The local Chinese community of the Chinese immigrants, that uses the Malay dialect in their everyday communication and dress similar to the Malay are known as the Straits Chinese. The Chinese community, which is the second largest population in Malaysia,

have been integrated and assimilated into the tradition and culture of the Malay community (Tan Chee Beng, 1993).

The migration of the Chinese community to Southeast Asia has allowed the establishment of a community here. Most of the Chinese entered Malaya came as early as the 18th century, and as late as the 19th century. Kelantan was one of the earliest trading centers for the Chinese people, apart from other important historical trade centers in Southern Thailand such as Nakhorn Sri Thamarat, Patani and Songkhla district (Winzeler, 1985). These ports are among the oldest in Southeast Asia. The areas in Thailand were traced earlier by the Chinese and foreign traders and eventually built settlements there. Therefore, with the establishment of roads connecting to the Malay Peninsula, they had begun to engage in exploiting economical resources through mining excavations, rattan, and forest based products. The Southeast Asian region is famous for its natural resources such as gold, and tin, which led to the involvement of the Chinese people in mining resources in the state of Kelantan and areas close to Patani (Winzeler, 1985).

Due to this, the Chinese people have lived in Kelantan ever since, as of the same amount residing in Southern and Northern Thailand. Thus, the population of the Chinese community in Kelantan and Southern Thailand are similar, with the majority of them being of Hokkien ethnicity. The Hokkien people, or also known as Hakka, are mostly settled in rural areas of Kelantan and are known as gold miners. Gold mining in the state of Kelantan centered at Pulai, hulu Kelantan, which shows that during the early 19th century, many of the Chinese were concentrated in this area (Winzeler, 1985).

The situation was different for the Chinese people who were situated in downstream Kelantan. Those who settled there, who were also of Hokkien ethnicity, worked as merchants and farmers and had close relationships with the Malays. This had influenced their way of life to an extent not much different compared to the Malays (Winzeler, 1985). According to W.A. Graham, the Hokkien people have long lived in the state of Kelantan as the majority ethnic amongst the Chinese society in Kelantan, along with the Malay community. However, the Singaporean Chinese community of Hailam ethnicity also came to Kelantan and worked as merchants and labourers (Graham, WA 1908 p: 20). The Hokkien community in Kelantan were very influenced by the Malays and Thai cultures, and could be seen amongst them through their fluency in Thai (Tan Chee Beng, 1993).

From an interview conducted, it was said that the ancestors of the Straights-Born Chinese people, entered the State of Kelantan by a boat along the Kelantan River to Pulai, Gua Musang. Those who came from China, resided along the banks of the Kelantan River until Pulai. This can be observed from the settlements of the Straights-Born Chinese along the rails of the Kelantan River. For example in the area of Pasir Mas, the villages of the Chinese people can be seen in Tendong, Kasar, Lemal, Kangkong, Semuba and Pasir Parit (Interview with Owi Boon Teck, 59, resident of Kg. Pasir Parit on 11th of February 2016 at 10 am).

There are opinions stating that the first generation of Chinese people to Malaya, came to Kelantan instead of Malacca. This is due to the statue of Ma Chor Bew located in the temple of Sui Yek Khong in Pulai, Gua Musang. This statue was said to have originated from the Ming Dynasty that ruled China from 1368 until 1644. In Kelantan, around 24 temples are present, and the oldest temple, aged 600 years is located in Kampung Pulai, Gua Musang, while a 300 year old temple is located in Kampung Tokong, Kemubu (Interview with Lee Boon Heng, 72, resident of Kg. Pasir Parit on 11th of February 2016 at 12pm). This is evident, that the arrival of the Chinese into the Malay community actually began in the state of Kelantan, not Melaka (Noor Hammad Wariman, 2006).

Chinese people in Kelantan are divided into two groups, which are the city Chinese, and the village Chinese. This is due to their settlements, hence the village Chinese live in villages, and the city Chinese live in the cities (Winzeler, 1985). In Narathiwat, there are a total of 47 traditional villages inhabited since the first Chinese community, and it has been said that the settlement dates began since 600 years ago, with the majority located on the banks of the river from Kota Bharu to Gua Musang, which is about 180 kilometers. According to the records of the Chinese Peranakan Association of Kelantan, there are nearly 16,000 Chinese community in Kelantan with only about 2,000 of whom have migrated and settled in the city, while the rest of the largely amount remained in the village (Azrul Affandi Sobry, 2011).

Region of Pasir Mas

The district of Pasir Mas is bordered by Kota Bharu to the East and Tumpat to the North. It is also bordered by Thailand to the West and Tanah Merah to the South. Before the colonization of Pasir Mas, the district was part of Kota Bharu. However, after an agreement was reached, Pasir Mas was separated in 1918 and had its own administration under the Department of Land in Pasir Mas (Wikipedia, 2011).

Pasir Mas has a covering area of 577.52 km square. An area of 139 square km is under the governance of the Pasir Mas district council while the covering 438.52 square km is under the administration of the local authorities. Pasir Mas has around 85% area of flat land, while 15% are low and swampy. The entire area of Pasir Mas are partially explored and inhabited by the locals. Most of the lands are rich in agriculture with plantations of rice, rubber, fruit orchards, vegetables and many more (Laman Web Rasmi Pejabat Tanah & Jajahan Pasir Mas, 2015).

Pasir Mas is composed of 10 regions, 48 districts, and 83 Head of districts. The capacity in the area is as shown in Table 1, which determines the distribution of total area and sub-districts in Pasir Mas (See Table 1).

Table 1

Distribution of capacity by district and sub-district of Pasir Mas

NO	REGION	NO.DISTRICT	NO. HEAD OF DISTRICT	AREA (k.p.m)	% AREA
1.	Alor Pasir	4	6	38.56	6.68
2.	Kubang Gadong	8	13	55.86	9.67
3.	Rantau Panjang	4	6	93.37	16.16
4.	Gual Periok	3	9	118.74	20.56
5.	Kangkong	5	10	108.80	18.84
6.	Chetok	3	6	45.79	7.93
7.	Bunut Susu	9	11	38.43	6.65
8.	Kubang Sepat	5	9	21.71	3.76
9.	Pasir Mas	3	7	23.71	4.11

10.	Kuala Lemal	4	6	32.55	5.64
-----	-------------	---	---	-------	------

(Source: Laman Web Rasmi Pejabat Tanah dan Jajahan Pasir Mas, 2011)

Based on the census report on 2007, the total population of Pasir Mas is 197,100. Pasir Mas is the second most populated colony after Kota Bharu.

Background of Kg. Pasir Parit, Chetok, Pasir Mas, Kelantan

Kampung Pasir Parit is located in the region of Chetok in the colonized region of Pasir Mas, Kelantan. It is situated in the middle of the Pasir Mas-Tanah Merah road and near the borders of the region Pasir Mas and Tanah Merah, known as Bukit Panau. This village is surrounded by other Malay settlements such as Kg. Chelok, Kg. Galok, Kg. Jabo, Kg. Bechah Kelubi and Kg. Kubang Gendang. The village has two leaders who represent two different political parties of the Barisan Nasional and PAS. This village is located along the banks of the Kelantan River, with the population of the Chinese Straights community or known by the local Malays as Chinese Villagers (*Cina Kampung*). Most of its inhabitants are descendants of the Hokkien Chinese society. The majority of its residents work as farmers and part of them work as merchants and traders in the retail business, construction workers and mechanics. The atmosphere of this village is similar to the Malay settlements. It has many orchards and cultivated areas of vegetable crops, especially near the river banks. The village also has a temple for religious ceremonies of the Chinese people, known as "gedung" by the local Malay community. The Chinese people here also have a good and close relationship with the surrounding communities nearby.

Assimilation and acculturation are two terms that are used in the context of ethnic relations. Both terms are related to the development of the Straits Chinese community in Kelantan, particularly in the aspect of their daily lives. It is clear that assimilation happened a lot more in the customs and practices of the Straits Chinese here, especially in Kampung Pasir Parit, Pasir Mas, Kelantan which is the basis of the observation and interview of this study.

Assimilation

Assimilation can be defined as a process of combining the different cultures of the communities in order to form a new culture and identity. It can lead to two possible consequences. Firstly, the assimilated community will begin to transform into a new community with its original culture and original identity faded away. Secondly, the assimilated community will be practicing a new culture resulted from the mixture of both the community and the origin. The process of assimilation occurs when the minority community adopt the culture of the majority community and the majority community have accepted the minority community into the society (Thukiman & Rahman, 2009).

Assimilation also occurs when there is a clash between two or more cultures which lead to the culture of the minority to be absorbed into the culture of the dominant. The effect of assimilation can also be observed in the lessening of the gap which diminishes the obstacles for the communities to communicate and associate with each other. Finally, the dominant community's culture will influence and be applied by the minority community and made the culture theirs. The process of combination and evolution happened gradually which eventually changed the manifestation and the life patterns of the minority community as a whole (Kang Choo Bee, 2001).

According to Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, assimilation is a process of combination and unification between culturally different ethnic groups. It shapes a community of ethnic groups that share similarities in terms of culture and identity. Complete assimilation displays the loss

of differences in identity and culture. The process of assimilation occurs when there is widespread interaction between members of different ethnic groups in a long period time. The effects of assimilations are proven when the minority ethnic groups are willing to replace their former identity in favour of the identity of the majority. For example, the assimilation of the Malays in Thailand and the assimilation of the Javanese, Straits Chinese and Baba and Nyonya communities in Malaysia. Nonetheless, the assimilation mentioned happened mostly in the aspects of culture without involving religion and belief (Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, 2007).

Acculturation

According to Tan Yao Sua, Straits Chinese are a group of Chinese sub-ethnics created by the acculturation and social interaction with the Malay community. Based on Marger, acculturation in the context of the Straits community refers to the acceptance of that community towards the culture and lifestyle of the Malay community as the majority and dominant community (Tan Yao Sua, 2011). The impact of acculturation results in the Straits Chinese applying the Malay identity caused by the acceptance of a few Malay cultural practices in their daily lives. Nevertheless, their lives are not assimilated into the society of the Malay community. This can be observed by the way of them practising existing Chinese customs such as ancestral worship and celebrating Chinese festivals such as Chinese New Year.

Among the factors of acculturation among the Straits Chinese is that they have been living as a minority group in areas which are predominantly Malay. They practise and embrace Malay culture to integrate the Chinese community with the Malay community. According to Martin Merge, the acceptance of the dominant culture will lead to social benefits for the minorities to be accepted as part of the bigger community. Van den Berghe also explained that the minorities will receive benefits by learning and applying the dominant lifestyle as it will be easier for them to be accepted by the dominant community. James A. Bank opined that the dominant group in the community will be more successful in ensuring the other groups are able to apply the local culture with the help of consistent ethnic interactions (Tan Yao Sua, 2011). Based on the research by Tan Yao Sua (2011), there are three factors of acculturation which have caused the Straits Chinese to apply the Malay culture – the geography, education and relations with the Malay community. From the aspect of geography, they are surrounded by the Malay community due to the lack of transportation to allow them to interact more with the Chinese community based in towns. They also underwent the same educational system with the Malays and formed close relations with each other. With these factors, the Straits Chinese are able to apply and adopt the Malay culture in terms of their dialects, houses that feature Malay designs and outfits and cuisine of everyday life (Tan Yao Sua, 2011).

The lifestyle of the Straits Chinese in Kampung Pasir Parit, Pasir Mas, Kelantan, showed that the community has adopted their Malay counterpart's lifestyle in their daily lives. However, there are still a few practices that still remain in the community which are religion and language. The community here are Buddhist and speak in the bilingual language of Hokkien and Kelantanese dialects.

Language and Writing

The Straights of Chinese community in Kampung Pasir Parit is known to use the Malay language with the Kelantanese dialect as their first language. They use this dialect in their

daily conversations, thus has prompted the younger generations of the community to be less proficient in their native language. This assimilation is the result of a close relationship within the Straights of Chinese community. This uniqueness is the main distinguishing feature of the Straights of Chinese community in the Malay Peninsular. When asked regarding the purpose of the Chinese writings on the walls of their temples and homes, respondents stated that they didn't understand the meanings and just hired a writer, as a symbol of their Chinese Society (Interview with Owi Chu Eng, 83, resident of Kg. Pasir Parit on 11th of Februari 2016 at 11am).

According to the respondents of the interview, most of the older generations of the Straights of Chinese community in Kelantan are able to master the text of Jawi in terms of writing or reading. The older generations are able to read the local newspapers in Jawi such as *Utusan Melayu* and *Pengasuh* published by the Islamic Religious State Council of Kelantan. Jawi is deeply entrenched in this community and can be seen by commercial signboards in the region of Pasir Mas, and Kelantan in particular, which are mostly in Jawi. However, the fluency of Jawi amongst the younger generations of the Straights of Chinese community is few, and only a small amount are able to master the Jawi scriptures. This may be due to the widespread use of Latin alphabets compared to the Jawi script (Interview with Owi Chu Eng, 83, resident of Kg. Pasir Parit on 11th of Februari 2016 at 11am).

Apart from the Malay language, they are also able to speak Hokkien and Siam. Most of the former generations use the language of Siam as their spoken language. However today, they are accustomed to three different languages namely the Kelantanese dialect of Malay, Hokkien and Siam (Interview with Owi Boon Teck, 59, resident of Kg. Pasir Parit on 11th of February 2016 at 10 am).

Clothes

The Straights Chinese community has also accepted the Malay culture in their context of clothing. According to the respondents' interview, the Straights of Chinese community wore clothes similar to the local Malays especially during work and at home, for example by wearing a *sarong* for men or *berkemban* for women. Women also covered their heads with a cloth when they travelled back home or when visiting neighbours. It was said that long ago, the men of this community wore *semutars* and *kain batik* while working at the fields or while going out fishing, similar to the Malay community of Kelantan. Such clothing is still worn by older generations of the Straights of Chinese community. As for the women, they could be seen wearing the *batik* while doing chores at home. Despite this, nowadays, the younger generations of the community can no longer be seen wearing such attires due to passing of time and such changes can also be seen towards the local Malays in Kelantan (Interview with Owi Chu Eng, 83, resident of Kg. Pasir Parit on 11th of Februari 2016 at 11am).

Food

From the interview conducted, the Straights of Chinese community has also learnt to accept the Malay culture in the aspects of diet. They have allowed the Kelantanese Malay cuisines to be part of their daily food. Their skills in preparing the common Malay dishes, allowed them to have breakfast, lunch, dinner and breaking fasts with the neighbours around which were mostly Malays. They also often visited and enjoyed meals during the festive seasons whether celebrated by the Malays or the Straights of Chinese. Among the many Kelantanese cuisines of this community, their common dishes are chicken, duck and fish curry, fried meat, *kerabu* rice, salad and boiled fish. *Budu* is also a very synonymous appetizer for the Malay community in Kelantan and also for the Straights of Chinese. According to the respondents, the community does not practice the use of chopsticks while eating, and instead use their fingers to eat as practiced by the Malays. They will also ask the Malays to cook food during large

feasts (Interview with Lee Boon Heng, 72, resident of Kg. Pasir Parit on 11th of Februari 2016 at 12pm).

Architecture

The Straights of Chinese community also applied the concept of houses similar to Malay architectures. Among the basic features of their architectures were the house porches and the curved roof. According to the respondents, the distinguishing feature between the Malay houses and Straights of Chinese houses were the slightly curved roofs. Other features are similar to the Malay houses. These similarities can be seen at the house porch. In the past, the community has made the porch as a place to welcome temporary guests for a brief rest before bringing them inside. When asked to the respondents about this, they claimed to have also practiced this custom in the cultures of the Straights of Chinese. This culture still remains until now. Besides that, the patterns of wood and bamboo on the walls of the old Chinese houses are similar to the local Malays. According to the respondents, the houses of the Straights Chinese, in the past, were built mainly by Malay carpenters that were done collectively with the local communities. The structures were built without the usage of nails (Interview with Lee Boon Heng, 72, resident of Kg. Pasir Parit on 11th of Februari 2016 at 12pm).

Agriculture

Agricultural activity amongst the community of the Straights of Chinese in Kampung Pasir Parit is by growing rice, tobacco, vegetables and fruit orchards such as durian and duku. In one of the houses of Kampung Pasir Parit, a granary (called Baloh Paddy in Kelantanese dialect) is present, used to store grains in the past. According to the respondents, in the past, every home of the Straights of Chinese in this area has a granary since most of them were farmers. Apart from that, there were also plowing equipment's, swings, and chains made of wood and placed under the tree shades similar to the daily tools used by the Malays in Kelantan. During that time, in a visited house, there was also a betel tree, synonymous in the medical fields of the Malays. Respondents stated that the Straights of Chinese also used the betel for medical purposes as practiced by the Malays of Kelantan (Owi Boon Teck, 59, resident of Kg. Pasir Parit on 11th of February 2016 at 10 am).

Hobbies, Games, and Leisure

The Straights of Chinese also enjoyed the same form of entertainment with the Malay community in Kelantan. Among the interesting activities were the shadow puppets (*wayang kulit*). The village itself had a special puppet stage made specifically for the local community to enjoy. For the people of Kelantan, the name *Eyo Hock Seng* was not foreign to them. He was among the few greatest puppet masters from Kampung Pasir Parit with a Straights Chinese heritage. The Palace of Culture (*Istana Budaya*) has recognized his efforts by placing his biography in the Culture Portal of the Official Palace (Istana Budaya, 2011).

Eyo Hock Seng was commonly known by the locals as Mr. Chu Tok Dalang or Shafie To Dalang (Siti Haliza Yusop 2015). He was born on the 3rd of May 1955 and started shadow puppet performances since the year 1979. Originally he was a follower or disciple of Dalang Dollah Baju Merah and Dalang Mamat Epong Bukit Panau. Due to his interest in the art and technique of perdalangan Dollah Baju Merah, Eyo Hock Seng finally made himself a disciple of the famous puppeteer. From his puppet shows, Eyo Hock Seng has had 12 stories that were always performed. Among them were the histories of Seri Rama, Raden Lakjuna, and stories

of Hanuman Kebatu, Bayang Gerna, Perbu Anum and Canang Kelenang. He established Sri Campuran Wayang Kulit group on 1977 and involved in many programme organized under Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia and ASWARA. He awarded Tokoh Orang Hidup 2012 from Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia for his contributions in spreading wayang kulit as part of malay heritage (Siti Haliza Yusop, 2015).

Apart from the shadow puppets, they also enjoyed hobbies and leisure such as kite flying, top spinning, sepak raga, cockfights, kept pet birds (especially turtle doves and zebra doves) and were interested in *Dikir Barat*. This uniqueness of the Straights Chinese community allowed them to interact and engage with the surrounding communities, with the majority of them being Malay. According to the respondents, all of the hobbies and leisure enjoyed were played together with the Malays without any signs of prejudice nor barriers (Owi Boon Teck, 2016).

Influence and Sensitivity of the Straights of Chinese Community towards the Islamic Religion

The Practice of Islam

The Straights of Chinese community lived within the surrounding society of Malays who were Muslims. From the research conducted, they had a great amount of respect for the practice of Islam amongst the Malay population. During celebrations of the Chinese people such as Chinese New Year, they would provide refreshments in a small box with mandarin oranges for the Malay guests. They were also aware of the Muslim prayer times and pronounced prayers such as Zohor, Asar, Maghrib and Friday prayers. In sports events with the Malays, such as football, they would immediately stop once hearing the Azan being reverbed.

They also show respect to the Holy month of Ramadan, which is the fasting month for Muslims by avoiding eating in public areas that could cause dissatisfaction towards the Malay community. From the interviews conducted, they also have had fast breaking or iftar together by preparing fast breaking ceremonies and also by inviting the Malay community to their houses during the month of Ramadan. In terms of food, they are aware of the halal and haram, for example the drinks that can and cannot be taken by the Malays.

They also have respect towards many Islamic celebrations such as Eid, and Eid al-Adha by visiting the homes of their neighbors and fellow Muslims. From the interview conducted, they have viewed the Malays as their own family and treat Malays well as if they eat and sleep together (Interview with Owi Boon Teck, 59, resident of Kg. Pasir Parit on 11th of February 2016 at 10 am).

If a feast was held, they would invite the Malay communities to their village. They would provide halal based foods such as beef and chicken that was slaughtered by the Muslims around the village (Interview with Owi Chu Eng, 83, resident of Kg. Pasir Parit on 11th of Februari 2016 at 11am).

For those doing business, they would avoid selling haram products such as alcohol and pork meat in their grocery stores. They are also aware, if a Malay muslim stops to buy groceries on his journey to the mosque, and the seller is the wife or daughter, they would place the money and change on the table to avoid direct contact with the hands, that could cancel the ablution of the Muslim man.

Entertainment of the Straights Chinese community

The Straights of Chinese people have their own culture, including in the context of entertainment. Commonly in a year, they would perform a “*Menora / Chinese Opera*” or “*Mak Yong of China*” and a shadow puppet performance in front of the worshipping temple in the village, commonly known as “*Gedung*” by the surrounding Malay community. A special stage is set in front of the temple, used to showcase the Chinese culture and heritage, which was not suitable to be seen by the Muslim community. From the reviewed survey, there were signs placed on the stage stating “The celebration is for Non-Muslims only”. This indicates the level of sensitivity towards the religion of Islam was very high, and they understood what was allowed and forbidden in the practices of the Islamic religion. However, there were also a number of people within the Malay community who were unconcerned about this matter, and insisted on watching the cultural performances.

Influence of Islam in the lives of the Straights Chinese

The Chinese people were influenced with the practices of Islam in many aspects. For example, the Malay community would hold prayers before moving into a new house (the Kelantanese called it “*naik rumah*”) or before opening a new business premise, in order for God’s blessings and protection from all calamities and hardships. According to Owi Boon Teck, the Straights of Chinese community would also call for the Malays to hold prayers before opening their own business warehouse (Interview with Owi Boon Teck, 59, resident of Kg. Pasir Parit on 11th of February 2016 at 10 am). This is because the Straights of Chinese communities are usually involved in big businesses and open warehouses, particularly of construction equipment (hardwares).

In addition, Owi Chu Eng could also read and write in Jawi and also was able to read the Al-Quran (Interview with Owi Chu Eng, 83, resident of Kg. Pasir Parit on 11th of Februari 2016 at 11am). This is possible because the Jawi letters were derived from the Arabic language, which is also the letters in the Al-Quran scriptures. However, this skill is slowly fading in the younger generations today. He added that his late father was a village healer, and to his uniqueness, before starting to treat, his late father would begin by reading the word “*Bismilllah*”. This is usually practiced by the healer or *pawang Melayu* in traditional Malay medicine due to the influence of Islam into the study of Malay medicine.

There are also a few of the Straights of Chinese people who chose to communicate and practice the words used by the Malay Muslims. There are those who greet the *salam* when visiting their Malay neighbors and use the phrase “*Allahu Akbar*” in their daily conversations. This is the result of influence by the Malay community that socializes and lived together with the Chinese people. However it is commonly practiced amongst the elderly people only, and is no longer seen amongst the younger generations today.

In addition, the Straights of Chinese people were also called over nicknames, similarly to the Islamic names, given by the Malays. Among the names used were *Mamat* and *Awang*. These names were not only used by the Malays but also used among the Straights of Chinese community in Kelantan themselves (Owi Boon Teck, 2016).

Conclusion

From the surveys conducted, it appeared that the Chinese people who came to Malaya, especially to Kelantan, have had a positive interaction among the community that led to the influence of the Malay culture into their everyday lives. This can be seen from their daily practices similar to the Malay communities in various contexts such as communication,

clothing, economy and culture. They also are able to live harmoniously within the Malay community without any discrimination in the context of ethnicity with different descendants and religion. They are also able to tolerate and respect religious sensitivities towards the Malay-Muslims who have become neighbors to them.

From the survey, it was also found that their entire way of life were as of the Malays, in exception to their religion and beliefs. For the elderly, they still maintained their ancestral entities by the Malay way of life completely, however the younger generations today, have prominently changed and no longer practice this heritable way of life. They only practice a part of this culture by observing their parents. This is because they are comfortable with the modern way of life today in comparison to the traditional ways.

For the sake of Malaysia's cultural heritage, it is extremely important that the Straights of Chinese heritage be preserved through the establishment of the Kelantanese Straights of Chinese Association, by making sure that constant activities are being conducted and that their culture as well as their way of life be sustainable and not lost from the changes in the depths of time.

References

- Ab. Razak Mahmud (1997), *Pelajaran Tatarakyat Negeri Kelantan (1)*, Kota Bharu: Sofi's Friend & Book Dealer.
- Azrul Affandi Sobry (2011), Misteri Etnik: 'Ambo Cino Kelate', Berita Harian. Retrieved on 4 October 2011 from <http://www.bharian.com.my>
- Bank Data Negeri/Daerah Malaysia 2003* (Januari 2004), Putrajaya: Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia.
- Buku Tahunan Perangkaan Malaysia 2003*, (2003), Putrajaya: Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia.
- Faktor-faktor kemunculan masyarakat majmuk dan perkembangannya di Tanah Melayu sebelum Perang Dunia Kedua (t.t.) Retrieved on 15 November 2011 from <http://zanas.wordpress.com/pembinaan-bangsa-dan-negara-malaysia-yang-berdaulat/faktor-faktor-kemunculan-masyarakat-majmuk-dan-perkembangannya-di-tanah-melayu-sebelum-perang-dunia-kedua/>
- Graham, W.A. (1908), *Kelantan : A State of the Malay Peninsula*. Glasgow : James Maclehose and Sons.
- Istana Budaya (2011). Retrieved on 1 November 2011 from <http://www.istanabudaya.gov.my/web/guest/wkk>
- Kang Choo Bee (2001), *Pengalihan Kod dan Percampuran Kod Dalam Komuniti Cina Peranakan Kelantan*. Tesis Sarjana Fakulti Bahasa dan Linguistik Universiti Malaya Kuala Lumpur.
- Kassim Thukiman & Hamidah Abd. Rahman (2009), *Hubungan Etnik Di Malaysia : Perspektif Teori dan Praktik*. Skudai : Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.
- Laman Web Rasmi Pejabat Tanah dan Jajahan Pasir Mas (2011). Retrieved on 15 November 2011 from <http://ptjpm.kelantan.gov.my>
- Masyarakat Imigran di Malaysia (t.t.) Retrieved on 15 November 2011 from <http://zanas>.
- Mohamed Roslan Abdul Malek (1998), *Kesan Sejarah Dan Tempat-Tempat Menarik Negeri Kelantan Darul Naim*, Petaling Jaya: Oscar Book International
- Mohd Roselan Ab. Malek (1993), *Salasilah Nama Tempat Negeri Kelantan Darul Naim*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Prisma Sdn.Bhd.
- Mohd Zain Salleh (1985), *Negeri Kelantan Selayang Pandang: Fokus Negeri Kelantan*, Kota Bharu: Pejabat Setiausaha Kerajaan Kelantan (April 1985)

- Noor Hammad Wariman (2006). Cina Peranakan Kelantan Kian Pupus Dek Arus Pemodenan, Retrieved on 6 November 2011 from http://www.bernama.com/bernama/state_news/bm/news.php?id=222153&cat=tm
- Robert L. Winzeler (1985), *Ethnic Relations in Kelantan*. Singapore : Oxford University Press
- Shamsul Amri Baharuddin (2007), *Modul Hubungan Etnik*. Shah Alam : UPENA UiTM
- Siti Haliza Yusop (2015), "Pak Cu Tok Dalang Cina", *Berita Harian* (1 September 2015), Kuala Lumpur : New Straits Times Press
- Tan Chee Beng (1993), *Chinese Peranakan Heritage In Malaysia and Singapore*. KL : Penerbit Fajar Bakti.
- Tan Yao Sua (2011), "Akulturasi Peranakan Cina di Tirok, Terengganu" dalam *Jurnal Terjemahan Alam dan Tamadun Melayu 2:2*. Bangi : ATMA Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
- Victor Purcell (terjemahan Nik Hasnaa Nik Mahmood) (1997), *Orang-Orang Cina di Tanah Melayu*. Skudai : Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.
- Wikipedia (2011) retrieved on 15 November 2011 from http://ms.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jajahan_Pasir_Mas/wordpress.com/tirai-kemerdekaan-negara/masyarakat-imigran-di-malaysia/