

CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PORTUGUESE EURASIAN  
COMMUNITY OF THE PORTUGUESE SETTLEMENT, MALACCA.

oleh

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LATIHAN ILMIAH  
BAGI MEMENUHI SEBAHAGIAN  
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## SYNOPSIS

This study is about the Portuguese Eurasian community of the Portuguese Settlement, Malacca. The main purpose of this study is to give a clearer insight into the lives of the Portuguese Eurasians today - ie. to look into the developments that have taken place in this community.

Chapter one deals with the aim or purpose of study, methodology and the problems that were faced and the steps that were taken. Chapter 2 gives a brief history of the Portuguese Eurasians in Malacca and it also traces the developments of this community right up to today. The social and cultural heritage of the Portuguese Eurasians are discussed in Chapter 3. In discussing the social and cultural heritage, the question of 'to what extent can the social and cultural heritage of the Portuguese Eurasians be used as a basis of identity today' is dealt with. Chapter 4 covers the intra- and inter-communal relationships. In the intra-communal relationships, emphasis is given to the solidarity that is prevalent in this community. The relationships of the Portuguese Eurasians in this Settlement with other Portuguese Eurasians in Malacca is also discussed under this section. On the other hand, the discussion of the inter-communal relationships is directed to the question of 'to what extent is this community open to change'. Chapter 5 deals with some of the problems and the changes that have taken place in the community today while Chapter 6, the concluding chapter, discusses on some observations and implications that can be made from my findings .



## SYNOPSIS

Kajian ini adalah mengenai komuniti Portuguese Eurasian yang terdapat di Portuguese Settlement, Melaka. Tujuan utama kajian ini ialah untuk memberi suatu gambaran yang lebih terperinci dan jelas mengenai kehidupan komuniti Portuguese Eurasian ini - iaitu dengan melihat kepada perubahan-perubahan yang telah berlaku di dalam aspek-aspek sosial, ekonomi dan politik komuniti ini.

Bab 1 meliputi tujuan, metode dan masalah-masalah yang dihadapi serta langkah-langkah yang telah diambil untuk mengatasi masalah-masalah ini. Bab 2 meneliti sejarah perkembangan komuniti ini sehingga masa kini sementara Bab 3 adalah mengenai pewarisan sosial dan budaya orang-orang Portuguese Eurasian. Penumpuan didalam bab ini ialah setakat manakah pewarisan sosial dan budaya ini masih dapat digunakan sebagai suatu asas identiti bagi komuniti ini. Bab 4 adalah mengenai perhubungan sosial iaitu perhubungan intra dan inter. Didalam perbincangan mengenai perhubungan intra komuniti, penumpuannya adalah terhadap soalan 'solidarity' yang wujud didalam masyarakat ini. Ianya juga meliputi perhubungan di antara Portuguese Eurasian yang terdapat di Portuguese Settlement dengan lain-lain orang Portuguese Eurasian yang terdapat di Melaka. Didalam sekysen perhubungan inter komuniti pula, perbincangan menumpukan kepada soalan setakat manakah komuniti Portuguese Eurasian ini terbuka kepada perubahan. Bab 5 pula membincangkan beberapa masalah-masalah dan perubahan - perubahan yang telah berlaku didalam komuniti ini dan Bab 6

merupakan bab penutup dimana beberapa pemerhatian dan implikasi telah dibuat mengenai komuniti ini.

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CHIN FOH CHOO.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

In Malaysia's plural society, the Portuguese Eurasians form but one of the minority ethnic groups. Apart from the 3 major ethnic groups - the Malays, Indians and Chinese which collectively account for about 98 per cent of the population, the Portuguese Eurasian community contributes to about 0.2 per cent of the total population and thus is almost negligible. However through the years, this small and marginal community have managed to survive pressures to change and it still continues to maintain certain distinct traits of their community.

#### i) Aims/Purposes

It was out of interest that I took up this study of the Portuguese Eurasians in Malacca. The main purpose of this study is to provide a deeper insight and a better understanding into the lives of these Portuguese Eurasians with special references to the Portuguese Settlement, Malacca - an exclusive area of residence for the Portuguese Eurasians here in Malacca.

On the whole, this study covers the different aspects of their lives ie. the social, economic and political aspects but special emphasis is given to the inter and intra communal relationships of this community (Chapter 4). The social relationships that exist within this community will determine the group solidarity which is very essential

to safeguard their survival and their identity while the relationships of this community with society at large will indicate the extent to which this community is open to changes. These changes would be a result of the internal influences which they encounter within society at large. Thus, the combination of these two factors:-

- i. relationships within their community
  - ii. relationships with society at large
- have been manifested in the present situation of the community.

From the responses of the people in this community towards issues of general interest like education, politics, youth today etc., I hope to analyse the attitudes of the respondents towards contemporary issues in society and also to the changes that have taken place both within the community and in relation to society at large.

Lastly, there is a need to study this minority ethnic group and its relationships to society at large, because in doing so, we become aware of the difficulties and problems faced by minority ethnic groups especially in their attempt to retain their group identity in a plural society.

#### ii) Methodology

Several methods were used in my attempt to collect data. However the main methods employed were ;-

- i) interview
- ii) questionnaire
- and iii) observation



My fieldwork covered a period of about 3 to 4 months during which I visited the Settlement as often as possible with the hope of establishing rapport with residents of this community.

Initial contact with the community was made through the Headman, Mr. Michael Young, who provided me with a detail map of the structure of the Settlement. Together with this was a complete list of names of the household heads. Respondents were selected from this list.

A substantial amount of time was spent paying casual visits to as many respondents as possible in my attempt to establish relationships with the people of this community. During these visits methods used were largely observations and casual or informal interviewing. I also kept in close and frequent contact with two establish members of this community who from time to time fed me with valuable information concerning the latest developments in this community.

My questionnaire were administered during the second stage of my fieldwork. Aside from the collection of background data, my questionnaire also probed the socio-economic and political aspects of the community studied.

The data in my following chapters are inferences made from my interviews with my respondents. For breakdown of sample, refer to Appendix One.



### iii) Problems faced and measures taken

A number of problems were encountered during my fieldwork after which several measures were taken to try to minimise or overcome each respective problem.

The fact that I was unable to carry out my observation to the fullest, limits my data collection in the sense that I was not able to fully participate in the activities of this community. This is because I did not stay in the Settlement during the course of my fieldwork as there was no accomodation available.

Another reason is the fact that I have not been fully accepted into this community. This problem hindered me from trying to probe deeper into the community and it also proved to be a stumbling block in my attempt to foster a stronger rapport with the members of this community.

I did succeed to a certain extent in overcoming this problem by paying daily visits to the community and at the same time establishing and strengthening relationships by interacting with the respondents through casual talks about general and current issues of interest. It is through such interaction that I was able to gain insight into the respondents as they often express their views openly and without much inhibitions. However, such method of interaction was time consuming and therefore it was impossible for me to spend such a long span of time there.



Keeping in close and frequent contact with two established members of the community who provided me with valuable information concerning the latest developments in this community did help in filling up the gaps left in my not being able to participate fulltime in the activities of the community. These two contacts also proved to be a reliable source of information and confirmation as they have always been directly involved in the planning of programmes and projects for this community and have a sound background of the historical developments of this community at least for the past ten years or so.

The lack of response from some of the respondents proved to be discouraging at times. One of the reasons for such attitude is the disillusionment of some of the respondents towards research projects because in the past many researchers had failed to keep their promises to this community. Also, previous researches or projects have not benefitted the community.

Another reason related to the lack of response is the fact that the period of my fieldwork coincided with that of the seventh General elections (22-4-82) . Since a major portion of my questionnaire dwelled on the political aspects, some of my respondents were particularly unwilling to reveal information about their political preferences. Many of them chose to reserve their opinions.



I faced difficulties in trying to overcome both the above problems and the best I could do was to try not to make any promises to the people of this community which I could not fulfil. I kept in constant touch with a number of respondents and visited them whenever possible. In this way, I had to pay a number of visits to a certain respondent before I could administer my questionnaire.

Lastly, my failure to gain access into the archives in the Malacca museum made it difficult for me to obtain more historical information. The reason for the above problem is because formal procedures and documents were required before one could gain permission for entry. These formal procedures and documents involved much red-tape which made the attempt tedious and time-consuming. Therefore I abandoned this plan.

To a large extent, I overcame this problem when I came into contact with Father Pintado who had access to reliable and valuable materials concerning the origin and history of the Portuguese community and who himself have written a number of books concerning them. Besides Father Pintado, there are also other graduation exercises and thesis, which have been carried out concerning the history of the Portuguese in Malacca.



## CHAPTER 2

### The Portuguese Eurasians - Past and Present

#### Introduction

The existence of the Portuguese Eurasian or Luso - Malayan (Pintado: 1957; Pg 8) in Malaysian society is a result of an important event in the history of Malacca. The history of this community dates back to the 16th century but yet there is a need to trace it in order to understand the origins and evolution of this community which is vital in providing us with a better understanding of this minority ethnic group.

#### A. A Brief History

The discovery of the Cape Route by Vasco Da Gama in the 15th century did not only revolutionised the history of the world but also resulted in the emergence of Portugal as one of the major imperialist powers in the world. She became actively engaged in war and colonisation in Morocco, Brazil, East and West Africa, Goa and as far East as China.

Colonisation in Malaya first begun in 1511, when a strong Portuguese squadron under Alfonso D' Albuquerque launched two massive attacks on the Malacca port and finally captured it. On the surface, this premediated attack was to avenge the ill - treatment of a Portuguese mission led by Deigo Lopez de Sequiera to Malacca in 1509. But the seizure of this important port was not motivated by considerations of reprisals alone. These Portuguese invaders had certain well - defined aims in taking Malacca.



Firstly, they had a vague notion of Malacca's position as a great entrepot of South East Asia, handling the much external merchandise of Spice Islands. It was the desire to take part in this lucrative spice trade that had brought the Portuguese into Asian waters and the seizure of Malacca seemed to promise them a stronger grip of this trade. The capture of Malacca also saw the fulfillment of the Portuguese dream in wanting to establish a Portuguese Eastern Empire for they now controlled 3 strategic points of trade that is Ormuz (1507), the entrance of the Persian Gulf, Goa (1510) in India and Malacca (1511), the focal point of trade in Far East.

Religion was another strong motive in the drive of the Portuguese to establish an empire in the East. They strongly believed that they were chosen by God to bring Christ to the East and the fact that they were the first Christian nation to set foot in the Eastern countries reaffirmed their belief. This was clearly expressed by King Emmanuel in his message to the Zamorin of Calcutta:

"because it was well to believe that Our Lord did not permit this marvellous achievement - our navigation - merely as a means for temporal relations and temporal advantages between us, but also, for spiritual advantages of souls and salvations." (Pintado 1957:51)

The crusading zeal of the Portuguese led to the pursuit of an aggressive policy against all Muslims. Malacca was a centre of Muslim power in the region and the home of a



growing Muslim community. Therefore the capture of Malacca was seen as a great victory for Christainity.

Malacca played a vital role in strengthening the Portuguese empire in the East. It was not only their military stronghold but their most valuable commercial entrepot as well. Tome Pires in his "Summa Orientalis" written in 1515 states:

"Malacca is a city that is made for merchandise, fitter than any other in the world; the end of the monsoons, the beginning of others, and all trade and commerce between the different nations for a thousand leagues on every side, must come to Malacca."

At the same time, Malacca also became the centre for the spread of Christainity and was effective in playing its role due to its status as an important trading port.

#### B. Origins and evolution of the Portuguese Eurasian community

The Portuguese ruled Malacca for a period of 130 years during which policies (economic, social, religious etc.) were implement to ensure the smooth running and continuity of their reign.

In their social policy, the Portuguese promoted mixed marriages largely due to the lack of eligible European females in Malacca. They provided incentives for mixed marriages to encourage Portuguese soldiers to settle permanently. This was a deliberate policy of creating a stable and loyal population in overseas Portuguese colonies that was made imperative by the over pressing problem of



labour shortage in these areas ( Jack-Hinton; 1968: p 13 ). The process of miscegenation was given legal and religious sanctions by both the State and Church ( Jack-Hinton; 1968; Pintado: 1957; p 20 ). With these incentives and reassurances, this policy of mixed marriages became a pursued policy ( Pintado: 1974 ) and the result of such marriages resulted in the creation of a new ethnic community known as the Portuguese Eurasians.

Generally the term Eurasian would encompass anyone "..... of mixed European and Asian descent, whose father or anyone whose progenitors in the male line is of European descent. " ( The Malayan Eurasian Union, Straits Times - 19th. April, 1949 ). He also has to be recognised by the Eurasian community, to the extent of being eligible for membership in any of the Eurasian Associations in Malaya and Singapore.

Members of the Portuguese Eurasian community are therefore a result of mixed European and Asian marriages. They are also the oldest of the Eurasian sub-group in Malaysia ( Allard, 1967 ). This is due to the fact that the Portuguese were the first European to set foot and conquer Malacca. Prior to this, Malacca was ruled by indigenous Malays and its population was cosmopolitan in nature ( Winsteadt; 1962 : p 37 ).

The development of the Portuguese Eurasian community during the reign of the Portuguese was a very slow process. This can largely be attributed to the relatively small number of full-blooded Portuguese soldiers that were stationed



in Malacca. The number averaged at about 200 and it seldom exceeded 600 men ( Jack-Hinton; 1968: p 13,24 ). Of these very few settled down permanently, contrary to popular expectations ( Chan; 1969: p 60). Another reason for this slow process is the reluctance on the part of the local people to marry the Portuguese who were seen as vicious oppressors and corrupters ( Sar Desai; 1968: p 9-13 ).

There is no actual documentation of the actual number of Portuguese Eurasians during the Portuguese period and it is also difficult to ascertain the exact number of descendants of the Malacca Portuguese Eurasians due to the marriages that have taken place between the Portuguese Eurasians and other Eurasians as well as non-Eurasians. It is indeed remarkable that this Eurasian sub-group has managed to survive through the centuries and still remain dominant while others like the Dutch who came 130 years later and remained until 1795 have left no Dutch Eurasian community behind ( Allard, 1964 ).

#### C. The Portuguese Settlement - History and Development

Four kilometres from the heart of the Malacca town lies an exclusive residential area for the Portuguese Eurasians better known as the Portuguese Settlement or ' Kampong Serani ' to the general public or ' Padre Sa Chao ' meaning ' the priest land ' to its inhabitants.



The idea of setting up this Settlement came in response to the difficulties that were being faced by this community during the 1920's. Members of the Portuguese Eurasian community have traditionally been fishermen whose daily living depended on the sea. They were scattered around the vicinity of Praya Lane, Kampung Hilir, Banda Hilir, Tranquerah and Kubu. In areas like Praya Lane and Kampung Hilir, the land was eroded by the sea and the houses collapsed. Due to their poor economic standings, they were not able to construct new houses and their plight was brought to light by Father Peirre Francois to the British Resident Commissioner in Malacca, Mr. Reginald Crichton.

In 1926, the British Government acquired 25 plots of land totalling 28 acres and costing M\$30,000 from Malay owners and amalgamated the lots into one main lot and gave it the title no. 248. This land is today the 'Portuguese Settlement'.

There was initial reluctance among the Portuguese Eurasians to shift into the newly created Portuguese Settlement due to their lack of understanding about this exclusive area which is actually meant to safeguard the existence of the Portuguese Eurasian community. The lack of funds was another contributory factor for this hesitation because houses had to be built at the owners expense.

It was only in 1935 that the first ten families started moving in what is known today as Texeira Road. Another ten houses were built as a pilot project by the British and were constructed and were let out. The total number of such houses



amounted to 66.

The houses built by the Government were spread out in neat rows and each had a little compound. These houses were made of wood and had attap roofs and earthen floor. Each house was made up of a narrow verandah, a sitting room, one bedroom, a kitchen and a tiny bathroom. The bucket system was used and tiolets were originally shared. Water was supplied by stand-pipes found at every street and there was no electricity.

It was only until 1945, ie. after the Second World War that development in this Settlement began to gain its momentum. This resulted from the return of the army volunteers which created a new need for land and houses. With the increase in population, the people requested for a school and this request was met by the Cannosian Order ( made up of Catholic nuns ) in 1949.

Rapid development began at the time of the Regedor, the late Mr. Paul de Silva who served the community for a period of twenty years ie. 1953 - 1973 and the then Secretary Mr. G.B. Lazaroo. Through their efforts and dedication the attap roofs were replaced by zinc and earthen floors cemented with the aid of the government in providing the necessary materials. Electricity and water supply were made available.

Today, there are two distinct sections in the Settlement - ie. the old and the new. The old area is the section where the first residents of the community constructed their homes. Those who are staying in this section are mainly fishermen, manual workers or factory workers with relatively low income.



Most of the houses in the old section still retain their actual structure and size. It is not unusual to find 2 or 3 families in the houses here and this is due to the fact that the married children in the family cannot afford to have a place of their own either due to low economic incomes or family obligations especially if he is the sole breadwinner in the family.

The new section of the Settlement was left quite vacant until about 1965. Most of the houses in this section are very much larger, more comfortable and modern compared to the older ones. Most of the people in this section hold white collar jobs and can be considered the middle class of society.

Other from these private residential houses, there is also the Custom Quarters that were built in 1953 by the Government which can be found in the new section of the Settlement. The construction of such quarters plus the alienation of about one acre of land to the La Salle Brothers ( another religious order ) in 1962 has very much reduced the land for further expansion of the Portuguese Eurasian community.

The narrow roads that separate the rows of houses in the Settlement are named after a few significant people who have in a definite way contributed to the history and development of this community. The main street of this Settlement is the D'Albuquerque Road aptly named after the man who was responsible for the capture of Malacca and which ultimately led to the creation of this community. Sequeira Road enshrines the memory of Deigo Lopez do Sequeira, the Portuguese Admiral



who commanded the first European fleet to Malacca in 1509. Texeira Road honours Jeronimo Texeira , the officer sent ashore by Sequeira to deliver the letter and presents from the king of Portugal to the Malacca Sultan. Ruy de Aronjo who was taken prisoner in Malacca when the Sultan attacked de Sequeira's fleet is also honoured through the sign Aranje Road in the Settlement. Eredia Road pays tribute to Manuel Godinho de Eredia, a famous Portuguese Eurasian writer who wrote the history of Malacca which was published in 1615. Mr. Reginald Crichton, the British Resident Commissioner of Malacca who was responsible for the setting up of the Portuguese Settlement is very much remembered by this community. The Crichton Road is in honour of him. Day Road is also named after a British Resident Commissioner.

#### D. Leadership and Organisation in the Portuguese Settlement

The Portuguese Eurasians in this community have their own local government which is led by the Regedor or the Headman who comes directly under the District Officer. Initially, the Headman was appointed by the Parish Priest but today it is done on a more democratic basis i.e. through an election which is conducted in the presence of the District Officer. The post of the Regedor is basically a permanent position unless the Regedor himself wishes to step-down or retire.

The role of the Regedor is very much similar to that of that of the ' Penghulu's ' in the kampung. He acts as a Liason Officer between the Government and the community. The Headman is also the one who has to settle minor disputes which occur



in the Settlement.

Another recent organisation which developed in 1974 is the Portuguese Settlement Committee. This Committee consists of 11 members. The top four positions ie. the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer together with the seven remaining positions as Committee members are all open to the residents of this community to contest. Elections are held once in two years and the most recent was held on 3rd. January, 1982. Those holding the top 4 positions in the present Committee are :-

Chairman : Michael Banerji

Vice-Chairman : Christie Shepherdson

Secretary : Patrick de Silva

Treasurer : Oswald Fernandez.

The main function of the Portuguese Settlement Committee is to look into the welfare of the community ie. by helping to solve any problems that arise among members of the community or in the community as a whole. At the same time they are the people who are directly involved and responsible for the planning of the different activities or programmes in the community. The main thrust of this Committee is to work towards a better Portuguese Eurasian community.

The annual 'Festa de San Pedro' is a project which comes under the Portuguese Settlement Committee. This Committee sees to the organisation of the festa by delegating out duties to members of this community who would form the organising Committee for the Festa. Together both of these committees



work side by side to ensure the success of the Festa.

Other major programmes/projects that have been carried out by this Committee is the initiation of the fund-raising campaign for the construction of a jetty in the Settlement. The jetty was urgently needed for the fishermen in the Settlement who faced difficulties in returning to shore during the evening due to the increase in the level of mud and silt caused by the land reclamation project. The Committee sensing a strong need to help the affected fishermen, took up the proposal of the construction of a jetty and immediately launched a massive fund-raising campaign where the whole community was involved. The Committee also wrote in to the Federal Government requesting for a grant to help with the construction. Today, the jetty stands as a proud achievement in this community.

Another important incident whereby the effectiveness of this Committee was reflected was in 1979 when the whole Portuguese Eurasian community was threaten by the proposal to construct a Multi-storey block of flats for the Custom Officers in the Settlement. These plans were proposed by the Federal Government. The Portuguese Settlement Committee strongly opposed the proposal as they felt that it would further threaten their survival, and besides, the construction of the present quarters was in itself a greivous mistake. A ' Save the Portuguese Community ' Committee which comprised of a few members of the Portuguese Settlement Committee together with a few other residents were formed. Steps such as



organising seminars, sending protest letters etc. were taken to make the general public aware of their plight. The Portuguese Eurasians were successful in saving their community for the proposal to construct the Multi-storey Flats were shelved.

Most of the projects organised by the Portuguese Settlement Committee have been rather successful and often received good support and response from the members of this community.

The Regedor or headman in the Settlement is an ex-officio in the Portuguese Settlement Committee. Although the Regedor is seldom involved in the direct planning of the various projects, he is always made aware of the developments in the Committee and does not hesitate to contribute whenever he can. The members of the Portuguese Settlement Committee maintain close ties with the Headman.

The Funeral Association is another organisation which exist in the Settlement. Every head of a household is a member of this association and they pay a monthly subscription of \$1.50 . The main aim of the association is to help out the families in their time of need after a death has occurred. A substantial amount would be given to the bereaved family to help cover funeral expenses.

#### E. Present Socioeconomic Status

The socioeconomic status of the residents of this community can largely be determined through their occupational features which can be broadly classified under the blue collar, white collar and labourer/fishermen categories.



The white collar jobs encompass those who are holding professional jobs such as company executives, engineers and magistrates, restaurant owners, chief-clerks, army captains etc. Those who fall into this category are considered the upper class of this community.

The blue collar jobs include low grade clerical ( office-assistants, office boys etc. ), shop assistants , untrained teachers, nurses, hospital assistants etc. . Those who fall into this category are considered the middleclass of this community. On the other hand , those who form the labourer/fishermen category are the poor residents of this community who often have to struggle to make ends meet. School gardeners are also included in this category.

Table 2.1 : Occupational features of the household heads  
in the Portuguese Settlement

Occupational Features	No. of household heads
White collar	25
Blue collar	55
Labourer/Fishermen	29
Total	109

Note : For those who have presently retired, their occupation prior to their retirement was taken into account.

There is a total of 115 listed household heads in the Settlement. 6 of the household heads are widows who are housewives, therefore their occupational features have not been taken into account.

From Table 2.1, 50.5% of the total number of household heads fall into the middle class category; 26.6%, the lower class and 22.9% are the upper class.

It has been noted that only a minority of the residents in the Settlement live in poverty and they are mostly found in the older section of the Settlement.



## CHAPTER 3

### Social and Cultural Heritage

#### Introduction

The hundred and thirty years of Portuguese reign in Malacca did not result in the more emergence of another minority group but one which possessed a strong social and cultural heritage which has always served as the basis of identity for the Portuguese Eurasian community.

This social and cultural heritage which I will now examine in this chapter will cover the following areas:

- A. Language
- B. Religion and religious traditions
- C. Some of the other social traits and practices

In examining the above social and cultural heritage, I will first attempt to define each of the above areas and discuss the changes that have taken place within them over the last 10 - 15 years. Finally, I will attempt to link these three areas to the question of identity of the Portuguese Eurasian community today.

#### A. Language

One interesting feature about the Portuguese Eurasian community is that the members of this community are still speaking a Portuguese dialect known as 'Papia Cristang'. This 'lingua - franca' of the Portuguese Eurasians is a language which had evolved over the years and it is a mixture of elements from sixteenth century Portuguese, English, Dutch

and Malay as well as other languages.

Papia cristang, along with other Portuguese derived creole languages, such as those of Guinea Bissau, was derived from a variety of contacts by the fifteenth century Portuguese. This simplified Portuguese language was used by seamen and settlers on the West African coast. With Portuguese maritime expansion, this language was carried to both the hemispheres. In some cases where European Portuguese were the minority, it became the community language through large scale inter-marriages with the local population.

With time, the Portuguese language in the various parts of the world developed its own characteristics according to the influence of other languages in its environment. Nevertheless, the creole Portuguese languages of the East and West have strong resemblances.

Papia Cristang can therefore be said to be either of European, African and Asian in origin.

Although the Papia Cristang has a limited vocabulary it has helped to enrich our National language by more than 400 words.

Examples of Papia Cristang words absorbed into the Malay Language.

<u>Papia Cristang</u>	<u>Malay</u>	<u>English</u>
Meza	Meja	Table
Garfu	Garpu	Fork
Sepatu	Sepatu	Shoe
Mantega	Mentega	Butter



<u>Papia Cristang</u>	<u>Malay</u>	<u>English</u>
Roda	Roda	Wheel
Escola	Sekolah	School

Examples of words (Malay, English, Dutch) which have absorbed into Papia Cristang.

<u>Malay</u>	<u>Dutch</u>	<u>English</u>
pun (also)	kakus (lavatory)	Pencil
sama (same, equal)	kalkum (turkey)	ruler
bagi (share, divide)	kookis (cake)	brown

Papia Cristang is widely used in daily communication among members of the Portuguese Eurasian community - especially those at the Portuguese Settlement. It is also spoken by the older Portuguese Eurasians residing outside Malacca, particularly in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. However owing to the dispersion of the Portuguese community in these states, there is a lack of communication and thus the language will probably disappear with the older generation.

The general tendency among the younger generation to disregard the language as a medium of communication contributes further to the deterioration of the language. This general tendency is caused by the wider use of English in the homes and schools where English and Malay are the two media of instructions and communications. The deterioration of this language is already evident today and can be seen through the manner in which the pronunciation of certain words are changing. For example, "porta" is now pronounced as "potra", "carangciso" as "can-reso", etc.



The effect of the deterioration of the Papia Cristang language in this community is that it has lost a communicate value - especially where the older and younger generation are concerned. Language has often been a means of transmitting the traditions and values of a community from one generation to the next. The older generation of this community communicate best in their 'lingua - franca' while the younger generation are more fluent with English and Malay. Therefore, with this lack of proper understanding of this language among the younger generation, many of the traditions and values which have once formed a part of their heritage and basis of identity are not fully appreciated and understood by them.

The Papia Cristang have always been a precious part of the heritage for it has helped in giving this community a distinct identity from the other Eurasians who have made English language their 'lingua - franca'. But with the decline in the use of this language in this community, its function of providing a distinct identity for the Portuguese Eurasians is endangered.

However, certain steps are being taken by a small group of concerned residents to curtail the decline of this language. Efforts have been made to document all existing vocabulary as well as those which have already been lost. All idioms, literature and stories are being recorded with the help of the older folks who are familiar with the language. The traditions of this community are also documented before they are lost. Finally, a Papia Cristang dictionary is in the process of production.



This Dictionary is a personal contribution of Mr. Patrick de Silva to his community.

## B. Religion and Religious Traditions

### 1. Religion

Catholicism is perhaps the strongest surviving trait of the whole Portuguese Eurasian community.

The Portuguese did not come to the East solely as traders but also as missionaries. Malacca, after its conquest in 1511, did not only flourish as an important trading port but it also became an important centre for the dissemination of the Christian faith in Asia. Eredia wrote in 1613 that "the Christian population in all the parishes in Malacca amounted to 7,400 persons."

The Dutch who occupied Malacca from 1641-1824 persecuted the Portuguese Eurasians who, despite strong efforts from the Dutch to convert them to the Reformed Church (i.e. the Protestant Church), remained firm in their Catholic faith.

Religion to the Portuguese Eurasians can be considered as a source for the transmission of values of love, charity and concern to the younger generation. The practise of their faith is expressed through devotion, attending Sunday services, the celebrations of the feast days of the Saints, giving special attention to significant dates in the Church calendar such as the season of Lent and Advent.

The devotions to the Holy Rosary is very much alive today. The people of this community are strongly devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary. In every house there is always a shrine of Our Lady. This feeling of deep devotion and love is said to have



been ingrained in them from their ancestors.

Today this devotion of the Holy Rosary is done through 'group recitation' of the rosary or 'Block Rosary' in the Portuguese Settlement where a tridium (three days of prayer) is held in each home. During these three days the statue of "Our Lady of Immaculate Conception" is kept in the home where the rosary recitation is being held. This cycle takes exactly a year to complete.

This practice of 'group recitation' started in 1972 when the church (St. Peter's) granted the request of a few fervent believers in this community that this statue be kept in the Settlement so that daily devotions can be conducted by the whole community. Prior to this, the devotion to the Holy Rosary was done on a daily family basis.

These practices of devotions have the potential of generating the values of the Catholic religion - especially that of love and concern. The group recitation of the Holy Rosary has promoted the element of community prayer in this Settlement and this has to a certain extent helped in strengthening ties among the people of this community through their coming together and the sharing of their common belief. However not everyone in this community attends the daily devotions - this may be due to limited areas where the prayer sessions are being held.

While group recitation have helped in strengthening social ties, it has at the same time affected the practice of family prayer through the particular manner in which this devotion is carried out.

The celebration of the Eucharist plays an important role in the Catholic faith. The Eucharist is the act of a community



coming together to pray as one body of Christ. The mass also acts as one of the means for the promotion of values of the Catholic Religion. For example - in each celebration of the mass, there is a sermon that is usually given by the Priest. Through the sermon the values of love, care and concern manifested by Christ are often brought to light and are then posed as challenges to the believers - i.e. to live up to these values.

## ii) Religious Traditions

Among the Portuguese Eurasian community, several religious traditions are observed though over the years with social changes, some of them have lost its significance. I will now elaborate on a few of these religious traditions.

### a. Christmas

'Natal' or Christmas is by far the grandest celebration of the Portuguese Eurasians especially in the Portuguese Settlement. No effort is spared for the event. The hustle and bustle of preparation usually begins one month before the festival. Both the young and the old are kept occupied with spring cleaning, mending fences, painting and decorating.

The nostalgic strains of carols fills the atmosphere with the Christmas spirit. Cakes and other delicacies are prepared. New curtains and cushion covers are bought or sewn. New clothes and shoes are a must for the family. Christmas trees are cut and decorated with glittering lights.

By 24th December or 'Bespa de Natal' everything must be spic and span.



Housewives would however be still busy with the preparation of dishes for the night's supper and the next day.

Christmas is greeted by attending the Midnight mass or 'Missa de gallo'. This night service usually starts off with the nativity play and the singing of carols until midnight when the mass is celebrated. After mass, greetings are exchanged before proceeding home. Upon arriving home it is a tradition for the children to greet their parents by first kissing their hands and saying 'Bong Natal'. The younger children must similarly greet the older ones after which the family sits at supper.

On Christmas morning, the family must pay their respects to their nearest kin. On this auspicious day, friends of other religions would make an effort to visit them. Everyone keeps an open house during this Christmas season. Visitors are served cakes, food and drinks while children are sometimes given money.

Christmas is also the time for family reunions. Members of the family working in different parts of the world will make an effort to be home for Christmas. It is also the time for merry making, exchanging presents and a time to forgive and forget.

The manner in which Christmas is celebrated has not undergone much change. The rich celebrate it on a larger scale while the poor on a modest scale. But whatever scale it may be, the spirit of merriment is always present.

#### b. Festa de San Pedro (Feast of St. Peter)

The most popular and unique celebration of the Portuguese Eurasian community is the Festa de San Pedro - The Patron Saint



of the fishermen. This 'festa' is one of the many traditions which is always celebrated with much reverence and grandeur.

The feast has its origins from the Portuguese era in Malacca and is of very much significance to the Portuguese Eurasians who had traditionally been fishermen. This tradition has survived over the last four and a half centuries.

This festa is usually celebrated on the 29th of June each year. It was previously, held in the vicinity of the Assumption chapel many years ago. At that time, it was quite a simple affair with the fishermen's boat lined up at the rear of the chapel. These boats were blessed after the celebration of a special mass. Aside from the blessing of the boat was also a Branyo ( a traditional dance). Past celebrations were held on a modest scale and were known only to the local Portuguese Eurasian population and practically unheard of outside Malacca.

Since the late sixties, this celebration has assumed a new magnitude - one that is celebrated with pomp and ceremony.

The Festa de San Pedro is now usually celebrated for 3 days - either from the 27th - 29th of June or 28th - 30th June. The theme of these celebrations is basically a religious one. However, a new social dimension has been added on to the celebrations of this feast. This social dimension covers the night's entertainment consisting of talent time, comedy sketches, dances and other stage performances which serves as the 'crowd - puller'. Apart from these stage performances, several other events are arranged for the daytime. The central event of which



is the boat decoration competition which is held on the actual day - 29th June. The boats are usually decorated with flags, buntings, biblical quotations on scroll and lighted candles. They are then blessed after the traditional mass. A panel consisting of non - residents are the judges of this competition. Attractive prizes are often awarded to the winners.

A Food and Fun fair adds further attraction to this Festa. The Food Fair is usually organised by the families of the fishermen and they pay a nominal fee to cover the lighting cost. As for the Fun Fair, the committee in charge of this Festa, would lease these stalls to outside firms or companies. Through the leasing of these stalls, the committee is able to raise funds to cover the expenditures of the Festa. It has been estimated that the cost of organising a Festa amounts to M \$5,0 0.

Even though through the years there have been a severe decrease in the number of fishermen in the Settlement, the Festa do San Pedro continues to be popularly celebrated. In fact, it is celebrated on a larger scale.

However, the boat Decoration Competition which once drew a large number of participants seemed to have lost its attraction. One of the reasons given for this decrease in participation is that many of the residents in this community are no longer fishermen and therefore they do not own any boats. Another reason is that the majority of those who are fishermen find it a little too taxing to spend their hard earned money on frivolous decorations for their boats just for this Festa even though each



entry is given a subsidy of M\$10/- for the decorations.

Commercialisation of the Festa is a feature that have slowly been developed over the recent years. There has been a gradual increase in the number of commercial firms participating in the three days Festa each year. The leasing out of stalls which had the original objectives of raising funds to cover the expenditure incurred during the organisation of the Festa have been manipulated by these commercial firms into profit - making ventures.

The Festa de San Pedro is still an important feast for the Portuguese Eurasians for though the number of fishermen have decreased , many of them still cherish the memories of the struggles of their ancestors who had traditionally been fishermen. This feast is also of religious significance to the Portuguese Eurasians because it honours one of the significant figures in their Catholic belief - St. Peter.

#### c. Intrudu

Intrudu is celebrated on the Sunday preceding Ash Wednesday. Intrudu signifies the last day of merriment before the commencement of Lent beginning on Ash Wednesday and ending at Easter.

On this day, the Portuguese Eurasians would celebrate by going about dressed in fancy attire and splashing water at whoever they meet. Even those at home are not spared. In the afternoon the men would dress as ladies and vice-versa and would go from house to house selling cookies or cakes. These cakes are usually sold at a higher price but the people of this

community would still give their full support.

The highlight of the celebration is during the night when 'the moving branyo' is held. This is the time when they pay visits to other Portuguese Eurasians areas. They would dress up in fanciful clothes and follow the branyo dancers who are led by a group of musicians. They would be dancing, singing and drinking all along the way.

Today, Intrudu is one of the religious traditions which has completely lost its significance in this community and is only remembered and treasured by the older folks.

#### d. Death belief and funeral practices.

Many Portuguese Eurasians believe that when a person is on the verge of death, Saint Bartholomew will come and visit the dying to lead his soul to heaven. It is said that anyone who happens to stand in the doorway during his visit will be pushed aside. For this reason, people are not allowed to stand in the doorway of a dying person's house. It is also believed that the soul of the deceased makes a last visit to his family on the eighth day of his death and touches his wife/husband or one of his/her favourites. It is also said that the atmosphere becomes chilly when the soul enters the house.

As soon as death occurs the corpse is washed and dressed in the best suit available. The feet are covered with stockings and tied together with a ribbon. If the deceased is a woman she is dressed in a long white garment called 'mortala'. When a fisherman dies he is usually dressed in green pyjamas.



the corpse is then laid on the table in the sitting room for 24 hours so that the relatives and friends can pay their last respects.

It is customary for the Portuguese Eurasians to keep night vigils. Tea, biscuits and cakes are often served to those who come to pay their last respects. Those keeping vigil are usually given a supper of rice porridge. If the deceased is a bachelor or a spinster, cake and wine are served just before the cortege leaves the house.

It was and still is to a lesser extent, the practice for the cortege to be borne to Church for the last rites before proceeding to the cemetery for burial. If the deceased is unmarried, only bachelors are allowed to become the pall-bearers. After the burial, brandy is offered to these pall - bearers as a token of appreciation. Prayers for the death are offered for eight days at the house of the deceased. On the eighth day the bereaved family visits the grave to light candles and pray.

The period of mourning for members of the immediate family is one year. Throughout this period, the female dress completely in black armhands. Jewelleries are not worn and parties are avoided. Marriage and engagement plans are put off till the mourning period is over. Even Christmas is not celebrated nor will greetings be extended to relatives or friends.

### iii) Relationship of religion and religious traditions to the question of identity.

The ability of the Portuguese Eurasian community to establish their identity through their religion and religious traditions,



have been eroded by the social changes in the last 10 - 15 years. For example the Intrudu which was celebrated because of the coming of Lent is no longer celebrated today. This shows that the religious significance of this tradition has been lost.

Festa de San Pedro is a more significant example. The fact that majority of the settlers are no longer fishermen means that the feast can no longer be celebrated and appreciated the way it used to be.

However, Catholicism still holds much significance for the identification of the Portuguese Eurasians because people that embrace other religions particularly the Islamic faith ( even though they are very rare ) are often ridiculed and shunned. Religion by itself can no longer be used as an exclusive means for establishing ethnic identity. This is because the Catholic faith is also shared by believers of other races particularly the Chinese and Indians.

#### C. Some of the other social traits and practices

There are a few other social traits and practices of this heritage that can be viewed upon as an impressive part of the culture of this community. The social traits and practices are manifested through the local cultural dances and songs of this community. This part of the culture have evolved through the blending of the artistic culture of the indigenous people with the exotic culture of Portugal. For example the song 'Jingklie Nona' has always been linked with the Portuguese



Eurasians in Malacca while the ' keroncong ' originated from the Cristang ( Portuguese Eurasians ) living in Java, Indonesia who were once from Malacca. I will now discuss two important practices of this aspect of culture.

#### 1. Mata Cantiga

Mata Cantiga is a traditional part of weddings, parties and other celebrations. Mata Cantiga is the singing of rhyming verses by a duo, usually a man and a woman. It is sung in turns, one verse at a time. Each verse must be responded by a counter verse by the opponent. The Mata Cantiga ends when there is no more response or counter verse.

The Mata Cantiga is an interesting and witty form of entertainment. It calls for quick-thinking from the participants and at the same time the response which is usually amusing captures the attention of the audiences.

Today, the Mata Cantiga is no longer a traditional part of social gatherings and it somehow seemed to have lost its significance. Even if this activity was part of a social gathering, it would be mainly participated by the older folks. This is partly due to the inability of the younger generation to communicate fluently in Cristang. Therefore activities at social gatherings have taken other forms of expressions particularly that of the Western culture such as disco dancing.

#### ii. Branyo

The Branyo is a folk dance equivalent to that of the Malay Ronggeng and is a traditional part of birthday parties, weddings,

engagements and other celebrations. Much of the fun from this traditional form of entertainment is derived from singers whose clever extempore verse-compositions make the Branyo a classic example of their talent and inherent love for music and singing.

Today, these lively and impressive Portuguese dances are <sup>only</sup> no longer appreciated by this community but also by the general public. They are often performed at public entertainment shows, functions, Government garden parties and Festas in the State and Federation.

There is a Portuguese dance troupe that exist in the community today under the supervision of Mr. Noel Felix. This dance troupe consists of interested youths in the Settlement who are keen on developing their talents in this area. This dance troupe has also their own band of musicians and each dance that is performed tells a story.

The Mata Cantiga and Branyo are two interesting forms of entertainment which have been inherited from their ancestors four and a half centuries ago. The Mata Cantiga which was once a popular and important part of their cultural entertainment have now ceased to reflect any significance to the present generation of this community. Instead it has been replaced with the more modern forms of entertainment. With the fading of entertainment, a feature of the Portuguese Eurasian cultural identity is lost. On the other hand, the Branyo which has survived due to the interest and initiative of the dance troupe instructor is still able to retain its identity as part of the



social and cultural heritage through its music, lyrics, dance steps and costume.

### Conclusion

It is evident that there is definitely a close link between the social and cultural heritage of the Portuguese Eurasian community and the question of identity. This social and cultural heritage have contributed significantly towards the specific identity of the Portuguese Eurasian community as exemplified by how the language, their religion and religious traditions and cultural entertainment makes the Portuguese Eurasian community stand out in its uniqueness and specificity.

However some of the changes and developments that have taken place within the social and cultural heritage of the Portuguese Eurasians have gradually eroded the distinct identity of the Portuguese Eurasian community. Today several social and cultural practices no longer hold as much significance as it did before. The gap is evident especially between the older and younger generations and this perhaps is the best exemplified in the reduced use of the Cristang dialect.

In conclusion, therefore I would say that over time, the changes and development within the social and cultural heritage have somewhat affected the specific identity of the Portuguese Eurasian community as well.



## CHAPTER 4

### Intra- and Inter-Communal Relationships

#### Introduction

The Portuguese Eurasian is a minority ethnic group in Malaysia. Being an ethnic group, it possesses certain common elements such as language, religion and other cultural traits through which members of this community are able to identify with. However the existence of a common language, religion and other cultural traits are not sufficient to ensure a sense of belonging to this community. To a large extent, this 'sense of belonging' will be determined by the types and strength of social relationships that exist within the community. The types and strength of relationships that exist in this community will further reflect upon the existing group solidarity which is essential to safeguard the survival and identity of this minority ethnic group.

Being a minority ethnic group in a plural society which is largely dominated by the three major ethnic groups - the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians - there is a need to study the attitudes and the social relationships of this community with society at large - ie. How do the Portuguese Eurasians perceive themselves vis-a-vis others?. The types of relationship that exist can largely be influenced by the level of ethnic consciousness which is present among members of this community. This will then indicate the extent to which this community is open to changes. These changes will be a result of the external influences which they will encounter through their process of



interaction with society at large.

In this chapter, the two aspects of relationships which I will discuss are :-

- I) The intra-communal relationships which deals with the relationships within the community. I would also study the relationships between the Portuguese Eurasians in the Portuguese Settlement and other Portuguese Eurasians in the other parts of Malacca particularly those in Praya Lane. Relationships between the former members of this community ( ie. those who are now living outside the Settlement ) and the community in the Portuguese Settlement will also be dealt with in this section.
- II) Inter communal relationships - which deals with the social relationships of this community with other ethnic group members in Malacca.

This chapter is largely based on my findings during the course of my fieldwork in the Portuguese Settlement, Malacca. A major portion of my fieldwork was focused on this aspect of social relationships which is largely reflected through the attitudes of the respondents towards issues such as education, politics, kinship etc.. Data on these aspects have been obtained through informal interviews and the use of a questionnaire.



## I) Intra-Communal Relationships

In order to cover various intra-communal relationships, I will divide my study into three different aspects :-

- a) Relationships within a family
- b) Relationships with neighbours
- c) Relationships within the community on the whole

The second part deals with the relationships of this community with the other Portuguese Eurasians and with those who have left the Settlement as mentioned earlier in the Introduction.

### a) Relationships within a family

The family is seen as one of the basic units of social institution in this community. A typical Portuguese Eurasian family is usually made up of parents and children living together in a household. However, there are households which have more than a family - ie. joint or extended families or a number of families ( having no kinship ties ) living together in a house. These types of households are usually found in the older part of the Settlement.

In a typical Portuguese family, the father is often seen as the head of the household, the breadwinner, the disciplinarian for serious misconducts and the one who makes all the important decisions concerning family matters. The mother is the one who spends most of her time caring for her family - by cooking, cleaning, washing etc. . Together, the parents play an important role in the upbringing of their children and it is this role that characterises the types of relationships that exist within the family.



From a young age, the children are taught to love and respect one another - especially their elders. They are also required to follow certain norms of family conduct such as obeying their parents, helping out with the housework, being punctual for meals etc. . Any form of misconduct will be reprimanded. In more severe cases, parents will not hesitate to use the cane.

Children are often encouraged to share their problems with their parents. However, there is a greater tendency for children to communicate and confide better with their mother. For most children, their relationship with their mother provides opportunities for spontaneous expressions. This is probably due to the fact that mothers are able to spend more time with their children and is seen as the more approachable and understanding person compared to the father who is often seen as the disciplinarian.

As children grow older, less restrictions are imposed on them and more freedom of choice is given to the adult - sometimes to the extent that parents leave the individual to live his own life. However, sometimes the parents do advise their children on certain matters but the ultimate decision lies with the children. For example where education is concerned, the parents would encourage their children to study hard by helping them out with their school-work or sending them for tuition classes. However, the decision as to whether or not the individual should continue his studies if he fails to pass the government exams ( ie. S.B.P., S.P.M., S.T.P.) is left entirely to the individual to decide.



The working children of a family help their parents by contributing towards household expenses and helping out with household chores whenever they are at home. Those working outside Malacca usually make an effort to be home at least once a month to spend some time with their families. While those working overseas, would try to be home at least for Christmas.

As for the married children, there are some who stay back in this Settlement ( i.e. either with their parents or in-laws ). Those who set up homes away from this Settlement but in other areas of Malacca often pay visits to their parents. While those staying out of Malacca would visit their parents on special occasions such as anniversaries, Christmas, Easter, Festa de San Pedro or during long weekends.

The types of relationships that exist within the Portuguese Eurasian family is a strong and close one which is based on mutual love and respect for one another. The family is seen as a stable unit on whom the individual can depend on for love, support and comfort. Although at times there are conflicts within the family but measures are always taken to ensure that these conflicts are resolved and that the family remains as a closely knitted one.

However as a result of recent changes in the larger society the acceleration of the modernization process, new influences like the new consumer culture, keeping up with fashion trends and greater influences by the peer group of the younger generation, may seemingly contribute to the gradual disintegration of the close family unit.



b) Relationships with neighbours

As it is typical in Malaysian society in general, the Portuguese Eurasian community as a whole also value good and friendly relationship with their neighbours.

Generally the co-operation among neighbours is good. In a typical situation for example, whenever an emergency arises within a particular family, the neighbours would not be just mere spectators, but would offer their help in whatever ways possible. Such thoughtful concern is very comforting and as a whole help to unite the people staying within a neighbourhood. Sometimes neighbours have kinship ties and this further strengthens the bond of understanding among them.

Children from the same neighbourhood often play together in the evenings, the elders would either pay a visit to their neighbours or they would just sit at their verandahs and spend the evening chit-chatting away. Another common practice among the neighbours is the 'exchange of food' with one another - ie. whenever something special is made for tea such as cookies, cakes etc., the family would send some to their neighbours. This same gesture will then be returned by the neighbour sometime in the future.

However at times, there are quarrels among their neighbours during which ties are strained. As a consequence, the children are not allowed to play with one another. This however does not happen often but whenever it does, the effect is only temporary.

The generally good relationships among neighbours is further reflected in the Portuguese Eurasian community as a



whole and will be further discussed in the next section.

c) Relationships within the community as a whole

The relatively small and 'closed' community of about 1,100 people in the Portuguese Settlement enables them to maintain friendly relationships with one another.

However the depth <sup>and</sup> strength of these relationships varies from those that are merely superficial in nature to those that are strong. A number of factors such as kinship, distance, time etc. play an important role in determining the strength of these relationships.

Relationships have an important role in determining the 'sense of belonging' to the community. This 'sense of belonging' will further determine the 'group solidarity' or 'esprit de corp' that exist.

In order to achieve such group solidarity, values such as commitment and responsibility etc must be present within the relationships. Members of the community should therefore be aware of the developments that take place and should not hesitate to work or act for its betterment and progress.

Several specific incidents that have taken place within the community will help to bring out the types of relationships that exist among the Portuguese Eurasians.

1) In 1979, the Federal Government proposed to build a Multi - storey block of flats for Custom Officers at the Portuguese Settlement - i.e. in place of the existing



customs quaters. These plans were met with fierce protest from the residents of the settlement who felt that the constrution of the existing custom quarters in the settlement in 1953 was in itself a greivous mistake. This is because of the fact that the 28 acres of land in the settlement was originally meant for the sole occupation of the Portuguese Eurasians - i.e. a place where they could be preserved for future generations (Pintado 1974, Pg 36). Therefore with the above proposed constrution, the Portuguese Eurasians felt that it would further threaten their survival, culture, heritage and community. Moreover, the community itself was in urgent need of land to accomodate its growing population.

On August 2nd 1979, a community meeting was held in the settlement - at the Sacred Heart Convent (Secondary) school hall - during which a 'Save the Portuguese Community Committee' (SPCC) was unanimously endorsed. The Committee which comprised a few members from the Portuguese Settlement Committee plus a few other residents, had the full support of the whole settlement and were given the full power to undertake any steps, formulate any policy and implement any decisions which in their opinions were vital in order to prevent the constrution of the proposed Multi - Storey Flats.

Letters of protest and petitions were sent by SPCC to the Prime Minister and Chief Minister of Malacca. Souvenier books containing information on the community were printed, solidarity dinners and seminars were



organised in the settlement to highlight the plights of this community to the general public.

Due to the effective measures taken by the SPCC and which were supported by the whole community, the proposal was shelved.

The above incident still remains fresh in the minds of many members of this community who treasured the community spirit which was evidently present throughout this stressful period. It is one of the distinct occasions whereby the community came, stood and fought together as a whole unit for their survival.

ii) The newly constructed jetty in the settlement is a manifestations of the community effort to help the fishermen in the settlement who were finding it increasingly difficult to go out to sea due to the high level of mud silt caused by the land reclamation project.

The jetty was first proposed by a few fishermen to the Portuguese Settlement Committee. Seeing an important need for it, the Committee decided to take it up as a community project. A fund-raising campaign was launched and the whole community was actively involved in it. Most of the funds collected came from friends and well-wishers.

The Portuguese settlement Committee also wrote in to the Federal government requesting for a grant. While waiting for it to be approved, members of the community continued with their campaign.

Since there was an urgent need for the jetty, a loan



had to be made while waiting for the grant because the total amount that was collected through the fund - raising campaign was insufficient.

The construction of the jetty was completed in September/October 1981, but the grant was only promised on November 13th 1981 when the Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Musa Hitam visited the settlement.

The working together of this community in helping to raise funds went a long way in making the project as a success. Today, the jetty stands out as one of the proud achievements of this community.

iii) The Portuguese Settlement Committee plays a central role in the running of activities and projects in the community and in safe guarding the welfare of the people.

Residents of this community can play an important role in determining the types of leadership in this Committee by

(i) fulfilling their duties as responsible members by coming out to vote for their leaders during their biannual election (Residents who are 18 years old and above are eligible to vote)

(ii) willingness to stand as candidates for the elections especially if they have the capability and potential to serve and contribute to the community.

During the recent elections which was held on 3rd January 1982, an estimated 35% of the eligible votes turned out to cast their votes. Although the above percentage is relatively low but compared to the previous elections whereby only 15% -



20% turned out, this percentage is considered as satisfactory. The various reasons given for the poor turnout is because of the assumption and indifferent attitude that is prevalent among members of the community - i.e. they 'sort - of - know' who are going to win the elections so it does not make any difference whether or not they vote because ultimately they will also be voting the winner.

However, it has been noted that there has been an increase in the percentage of voters in previous elections and this can be seen as a possible sign that more members of the community are taking on a more responsible role.

Other examples whereby community spirit is exemplified are 'Festa de San Pedro', Christmas, marriages etc. During these occasions the whole community will be involved in helping to make them a success - example whenever a member of the community gets married, the whole settlement will be invited to the wedding and usually the elders will render their services to help in the organisation of the wedding.

It is quite evident that there is a strong group solidarity in the community. So far, most of the projects organised by the Portuguese Settlement Committee have received positive responses from the members of this community and have been successful. However it is only on occasions which threaten to affect the lives of this community that group solidarity is best seen (at other times it is not so evident).

The greater sense of solidarity as exhibited by recent responses seems to be the indirect result of the possible



threats to the community. This external threat highlighted by issues of the building of the customs Quarters is one such issue that calls for the individuals in the country to act as a group in order to safeguard their rights. It would also be correct to suggest that with the implementation of the New Economic Policy and the three major racial groups calling for unity among its ranks, the un-represented minority group have reason to feel insecure. Since they have no one to champion their causes, they as a community have to take on this new responsibility to act as a group.

iii) Relationships between ex-settlers and the present community.

There are 3 main reasons why members of this Portuguese Eurasian community here leave the settlement. They are

- i) marriage
- ii) lack of accomodation
- iii) socio - economic

In most cases, all three reasons are inter-related.

There is a great tendency that when members of this community (especially the females) marries someone outside the settlement, the newly wedded couple will live either with their in - laws or in other areas. Those who are financially stable would either rent a room or a house outside the settlement as accomodation in the settlement is scarce due to the limited land and the already congested homes. Those who cannot afford to rent a room will usually stay with their parents until they can afford to have a place of their own.

The ex - settlers still maintain friendly relationships



with members of the present community. They pay frequent visits to the settlement to see their parents, relatives and friends. Whenever there are any community festivals such as 'Festa de San Pedro' or project, they would contribute by giving support - i.e. either by participating or giving a small contribution. During the 'Save the Portuguese Community' project, they showed their support by attending the various seminars and solidarity dinners that were held.

On occasions such as weddings or Christmas, invitations will be extended to the ex - settlers. To them, these social gatherings are often seen as a means by which they can keep up with the latest developments in the settlement.

On the whole, though the ex - settlers no longer reside in the settlement, they continue to manifest a sense of belonging to this Portuguese Eurasian community.

iv) Relationships between the settlers and other Portuguese Eurasians in Malacca.

While a major portion of the Portuguese Eurasian community is concentrated in the Portuguese Settlement, the rest can be found in several other areas such as Ujong Pasir, Banda Hilir, Bukit Baru, Praya Lane and Tranquerah. However except for those of Banda Hilir and Praya Lane, the Portuguese Eurasians in all the other areas are scattered about in Praya Lane and Banda Hilir, small concentrations of Portuguese Eurasians are found in certain parts of these areas.

Praya Lane which is situated along Jalan Banda Hilir is about 1.6 km from the Portuguese settlement. Before the formation of the Portuguese settlement, Praya Lane was often



considered as the residential area for the Portuguese Eurasians. Today, although it has lost its significance as an exclusive Portuguese Eurasian area, it still remains as one of the strongholds of the Portuguese Eurasian in Malacca and is often considered as the second settlement of this community. It is estimated that there are about 60 Portuguese Eurasian households in this area.

It has been noted that although both the Portuguese Eurasian communities - i.e. in the Portuguese settlement and Praya Lane - share common social - cultural practices and identity, conflict exists between them. Although this conflict is not evidently portrayed, it has been reflected through certain incidents and through the attitudes of these people towards each other.

For those in the Portuguese settlement, many feel that those in the Praya Lane have been unjust and prejudiced in their outlook of their community - i.e. those in Praya Lane feel that they are a better class Portuguese Eurasians compared to those in the Portuguese Settlement. It is believed that the basis for such class sentiments dates back to the early years after the formation of Portuguese Settlement.

The Portuguese settlement which was set up in 1930 was initially meant to help accommodate 'the fishermen and the poor of Portuguese descent and at the same time, to get them together in a place, where they can preserve their identity' (Pintado, 1974, pg 37). A majority of the early settlers came from Praya Lane as the sea was eroding most of the land and



houses in that area. Due to their poor economic standing, many of them had no choice but to move into the newly formed settlement. Therefore those who shifted into the settlement were from the poorer section of the community and the settlement was seen as a residential area for the poor. This resulted in the emergence of class sentiments - i.e. between those in Praya Lane (higher class) and in the Portuguese settlement (lower class). Through the years, these sentiments were further strengthened when the early settlers of the settlement failed to better their socio-economic standings. The reasons for their failure were low income due to the lack of modern fishing boats and gears, large families, lack of education etc. Many of them had to struggle to make ends meet. Many a time they had to depend on charity or church organisations for help so much so that they were often looked upon as lazy.

Although, it had been true that the settlers were once the poorer class, this can no longer hold today because many of the members of the Portuguese Eurasian community in the settlement fall into the middle - class category (See Chapter 2)

Another factor which contributed to the worsening of relationships between the two communities, was related to politics. Much of the disagreement between those of Praya Lane and those of settlement centered around the Banda Hilir state assemblyman, Mr. Bernard Santa Maria, a Portuguese Eurasian from Praya Lane and a member of the Democratic Action Party (D.A.P.). Though Mr. Santa Maria had the support of the Portuguese Eurasians in the settlement, there had been much



discontent about the way he fulfilled his role as a state assemblyman. He seldom visited his constituents in the settlement and had not contributed much to the development of the community. Further there were some who felt that he tended more to the needs of those in Praya Lane - example in early 1962 a ceremony was held in the 'Malacca Portuguese Development Centre which is situated in the Portuguese settlement. This ceremony was for the presentation of subsidies to the Portuguese Eurasian fishermen who were affected by the land reclamation. However, only the fishermen from Praya Lane were given the subsidy. The Portuguese Eurasians in the settlement who were also affected by the land reclamation did not receive any subsidy and this really angered them and the fact that the presentation ceremony was held in the settlement further aggravated the situation.

The Portuguese Development Centre which also serves as a Fishermen's co-operative is one of his 'contributions' of Mr. Santa Maria to the settlement, has been fully appreciated as belonging to the community rather it has often been referred to as 'Mr. Santa Maria's office or building.' The centre is seldom used for any community function and to many of the settlers it has little significance.

Today the conflict and rivalry between the two groups are not so obvious and have to a great extent been toned down. In fact this feeling of resentment and enmity between the two communities is more commonly found among the elders of the community because they were the people who went through the experiences of the relationship mentioned above.



However efforts have been made by both the communities to bring about a better understanding among themselves.

'Festa de San Pedro' serves as one of the ways through which both the communities can come together as one, as this feast is of great significance to all Portuguese Eurasians. During the celebrations of this feast which are held in the vicinity of the Portuguese Settlement, those in Praya Lane will go to the Settlement to join in the celebrations and give their support.

Another means through which this conflict has been somewhat alleviated is through marriages. Marriage among the Portuguese Eurasians in the settlement and those in Praya Lane have been quite common and this has helped to bring about further understanding among members of both the communities.

One instance whereby both the communities merged as one was during the 'Save the Portuguese Community' campaign. During this crisis - i.e. when the whole Portuguese Eurasian community was threatened - all differences and personal grudges were pushed aside and together with the rest of Portuguese Eurasian community fought for their survival.

This crisis did help to a certain extent in bringing about closer and friendlier relationships between both the communities.

The conflict and the enmity between those of Praya Lane and those of the settlement pertains more to the elderly folks of both communities and as such this feature is no longer an outstanding one.



## II. Inter communal Relationships.

Living amidst a plural society, the Portuguese Eurasians come into frequent contact with people of other races - particularly the Malays, Chinese and Indians - through their daily dealings. The types of social relationships that exist between this community in the settlement with society at large can be viewed from 3 different perspectives:-

i) Relationships between the Portuguese Eurasians and their working colleagues and casual friends.

ii) Relationships between the Portuguese Eurasians and the Malay custom officers whose quarters form part of the premises in the settlement.

iii) Relationships between the Portuguese Eurasians and the Chinese coffee-stall and sundry shop owners from whom the community buys their daily provisions.

Towards the end of this section, I will discuss the question of ethnic identity consciousness - i.e. the extent to which this consciousness is present among the Portuguese Eurasians in their process of interaction with society at large. I will also discuss the extent to which this community is open to changes. As stated in the Introduction, these changes would be a result of the external influences which they encountered in this process of interaction.

1) Relationships between the Portuguese Eurasians and their working colleagues and casual friends.

The vast majority of the members of this community are employed outside the settlement and as such come into contact with the members of the other races during the course of



their work. Although much of the interaction is work related but at the same time they have been able in the course of time to foster friendships with many of their working colleagues. The majority of the working respondents have indicated that they have a number of close friends from among the other races with whom they have been able to relate at a personal level.

This friendship and contact with outside colleagues is not merely limited to working hours but a great majority of them spend part of their leisure hours in the company of these friends. Among the common activities would be casual visits to their homes, having recreation and games together or even going to the pub for a drink. These common activities are indications of the willingness of the respondents to make conscious choices to interact with the members of the other racial communities.

Furthermore, besides these working colleagues, a majority of the Portuguese Eurasians also maintain their contact with a few of their former class - mates and casual friends from among the members of other races, by visits to their homes. On occasions such as Christmas, Festa de San Pedro, birthdays and weddings, invitations are often extended to friends of other races. This openness to the other communities is also reflected in practice among the Portuguese Eurasians to visit their friends on festive occasions such as Hari Raya, Chinese New Year and Deepavali. (This may be interpreted as an indicator of their superficial interaction with members of other races.)



Such occasions serve to renew friendships and are signs of the willingness to keep in contact with the larger Malaysian community. It is also interesting to note that in the past marriages were limited to partners of similar ethnic origins but recent trends show that there have been an increase in marriages with those of other racial groups, namely the Chinese and Indians. This phenomenon seems to indicate that the increase in the degree of interaction with members from the outside community and a gradual assimilation of the Portuguese Eurasians community by the others.

ii) Relationships between the Portuguese Eurasians and the Malay Custom Officers.

Although the construction of the customs quarters in the settlement in 1953 angered the community at that time, there is no feeling of enmity or resentment towards the occupants of the quarters now.

In fact, having lived in the settlement for the last 19 years, the Malay custom officers and their families have been accepted as part of the community. They come directly under the Regedor of the settlement. When they encounter problems they often refer them to Mr. Michael Young, the headman of the settlement.

The Portuguese Eurasians here maintain friendly relationships with the Malay customs officers. However because of the locality of the custom quarters and the inability to converse well in the Malay language, actual interaction with this Malay community is somewhat limited. Moreover, the Malay custom officers and their families have a tendency to



be closer among themselves.

During Christmas, the Malay community in the settlement would visit a few of the Portuguese Eurasians (especially those staying nearby the quarters and those whom they are familiar with). Some members of the Portuguese Eurasian community send cakes to some of the Malay families here. Usually, this gesture of goodwill will be returned during the Hari Raya Puasa.

Besides these casual and informal patterns of relationships between the members of these two communities there does not seem to exist any formal links between them. In fact they are two distinct communities, each wishing to maintain their own closed circle of interaction but at the same time not exclusively. The personal interaction may also be limited since, the children of the members of the two communities go to different schools, play in different playgrounds and are not in frequent contact with each other. The older members of the Portuguese Eurasian community although friendly with those near their residence, do not have any organised activities together. The Malay custom officers although living within the geographically defined Portuguese Settlement, cannot be considered officially part of the community since they have no representatives on the Portuguese Settlement Committee. This last factor does not seem to have in anyway affected the cordial relationships between members of these two communities.



iii) Relationships between the Portuguese Eurasians and the Chinese coffee - stall and Sundry shop owners.

There is a small Chinese coffee-shop situated at the entrance of Texeira Road which has existed for the last twenty years or so in the settlement. Besides being the place where one would go for a cheap cup of tea and some food, it has also served as a meeting place for members of this community - especially those who spend most of their evenings playing Chinese chess there.

All through the years, the owner of this coffee-stall has enjoyed close and strong relationships with most of the residents and finds that members of this community are friendly and easy to get along with.

As for the Chinese sundry shop which caters for all their daily needs, <sup>the owner</sup> also enjoys the same type of relationships with that of the coffee-stall owner. Most of the Portuguese Eurasians buy their daily provisions on a credit basis and settle their accounts at the end of each month. In all her dealings with this community, there have not been any major problems and on the whole finds the Portuguese Eurasians a friendly community.

As for the patterns of interaction with other racial group members outside the settlement, there seems to be no outstanding characteristics. It has already been pointed out that most of the interaction is due to social mobility, change of residence from an exclusive Portuguese Eurasian community to a multi-racial residential area and also due to new contacts with working colleagues, of other races.



## Conclusion

To determine the degree of ethnic consciousness among the members of the Portuguese Eurasian community one would have to consider both the Intra communal patterns of relationships and inter communal trends.

Although the intra-community analysis has indicated a strong bond of kinship and a certain consciousness of their ethnic origins, the inter-community analysis shows the openness of the Portuguese Eurasian community to the external socializing forces of the other racial communities. The homogeneity of the Portuguese Eurasian community and their minority status resulting in their need to maintain a common identity would seem to be factors that could deter them from more external relationships but conversely, it seems to have made them more open to the others. This may be attributed basically to the various forces of modernization in society today and the values that accompany this process. These ideas seem to have had a greater impact on the Portuguese Eurasian community, as a result of their "Euro-Asian" culture, which makes them more susceptible to western values and ideas, tending to discard more readily traditional Asian values and practices. Their Western religion, Christianity, seems to be a contributing factor since it makes them more receptive to the above values and trends.

Basically, considered a friendly community, individual members of this community find no difficulty in associating with members of other racial groups, especially those from similar socio-economic status and background. This is



especially true of those that had the opportunity to move out of the settlement. New jobs outside and higher economic status have put them more in contact with those of similar occupations, income and interests. As a result, there has been more integration with these members of other races. Within the community itself, due to geographical isolation and the limited avenues for interaction with other racial groups among the low income groups like fishermen and manual labourers there has not been the same degree of association with members of the other racial groups from similar socio-economic status.



## CHAPTER 5

### Present changes and problems in the Portuguese Settlement.

Thus far in the earlier chapters much has been described about the people present in the Portuguese Settlement, their social-cultural heritage and their relationships among one another and with others. As with any community that is trying to develop and progress, the Portuguese Eurasian community has experienced and is still experiencing many changes and problems. This chapter will elucidate some of the changes and problems that affect the settlers of the Portuguese Settlement today. Changes often bring about problems, at the same time response to problems could bring about change, this inter changeable cause and effect relationship between changes and problems will become clearer in this chapter. Suffice it is to say that changes may have both positive and negative effects and problems basically negative in nature could in the long run indirectly bring about positive effects.

The problems facing the community will be discussed as follows.

#### 1. Land Reclamation.

In 1974, the Malacca State Government launched a massive land reclamation project which was to cover the coastal margins of Jalan Banda Hilir and the Portuguese Settlement. This reclaimed land would stretch 1,500 yards into the sea. A total area of 160 acres of land was to be reclaimed and the State Government proposed to develop it into a housing and commercial centre with the intention of providing more job opportunities for the people of this town.



Today, this land reclamation process is still going on. It has yet to reach the coast margins of the Portuguese Settlement but ever since the project started it has affected the lives of the fishermen in this Portuguese Eurasian Community.

8% of the total working population in the settlement are full-time fishermen who employ simple techniques of fishing such as 'set-lines' or 'rawai', hand-lines, shrimping net or 'sungkor', as well as butterfly nets or 'langgai'. The fishermen are generally too poor to afford more sophisticated methods and therefore limit themselves to inshore fishing.

The dumping of soil into the shallower in-shore areas has resulted in a deeper coastal margin and this has made it difficult for the 'butterfly net' or 'langgai' to be used. Incidentally, the use of the butterfly net was one of the most commonly employed method (66.5% of the fishermen). Another common method which has also been affected is the use of 'shrimping nets' or 'sungkor' which is used in waist deep water for scooping shrimps. These small prawns known as 'gragoa' to the local fishermen is used in the making of 'chin-char-lok'.

Today, both these methods can no longer be effectively and extensively used as the water level is too high. This has reduced the income of the fishermen considerably.

This land reclamation project has also resulted in the increase in the level of mud and silt in the sea and this makes it difficult for the fishermen to wade back to shore



during the evenings. The rise in the level of mud and silt has also forced the fishermen to go out further into the sea and this makes it more dangerous for them. Although this problem has to a great extent been overcome by the construction of the jetty in September 1961, the rise in the level of mud has definitely affected the fishermen's catch.

For the fishermen who own their own boats, the land reclamation will pose a problem to them because they will now have to park their boats further away from their homes and this increases their fear that their boats will be stolen.

For the fishermen whose sole source of livelihood depends on fishing, this land reclamation adds on to their poverty. Not only has it affected the catch but it has also forced some fishermen to seek for other jobs or go into early retirement.

ii) The increasing gap between the rich and poor Portuguese Eurasians.

The Portuguese Eurasian community in the settlement can be divided into two classes - the well-to-do Portuguese Eurasians who are found mostly in the new section of this settlement and the poor Portuguese Eurasians - mostly in the older section. Those who fall into the rich bracket are having the blue or white collar jobs and whose house structures are more modern. For the poorer class they are mostly made up of fishermen, who were the earlier settlers of this community. Many of these fishermen live in very poor housing conditions.



The gap between the two class is becoming more evident as the rich is progressing while the poor have not progressed- in fact many have become poorer. This <sup>is</sup> partly due to the opportunities that are available to the two classes ie. the rich are able to make use of these opportunities because they have the means - for example education.

The rich often have no problem in putting their children through school. The poor on the other hand are often too poverty-stricken that they have difficulty in making ends meet. In fact, the living conditions of the poor are often not conducive for children to study.

Though both classes are able to see the value in education, the rich has a clear advantage over the poor. This problem if not look into will result in a further rift between the two classes in the community.

### iii) High Level Education.

The lack of high level education is one of the major problems faced by this community. Based on a socio-economic survey carried out in the settlement, it was discovered that a large majority of the Portuguese Eurasian children reach up to only Form 3 level (this is especially true among the poor Portuguese Eurasians). Very few jobs are available for drop-outs and in the face of stiff competition from people of other ethnic groups, the chances for securing employment are very limited among these Portuguese Eurasian school leavers.

This poverty is added on to the already high rate of poverty among the people of this class.



iv) Social - cultural heritage.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, some social cultural traits of this community is slowly being eroded and that most of the social cultural traits have lost its significance and can no longer be fully appreciated especially by the younger generation.

There is a general feeling of fear among the older generation of this community that this social - cultural heritage which they now possess will gradually be diminished if the younger generation are not able to see its importance and relevance to their lives - especially as a basis of identity. If this is the case, then the future generations of the Portuguese Eurasian community will not possess a definite culture.

The Christang dialect is a case in point of a heritage that is being threatened. As it is, the dialect is seldom used by the younger generation who converse more fluently in the English and the Malay Language.

For the older folks, this Cristang dialect is one of the most precious heritage and they value it because it helps to provide a strong basis of identity and is unique.

Although steps have been taken to document this dialect especially when it is not appreciated.

The traditional dances or 'Branyo' is another aspect of the Portuguese Eurasian cultural heritage which might fade into obscurity if there is no one to succeed the current instructor of the present dance troupe, Mr. Noel Felix.



The sole reason for the survival of this dance troupe is due to the initiative of Mr. Felix who took great pains to get these troupe organised and spent much of his time teaching them the different dancing steps. He also saw to the promotion of these cultural traits in various parts of the country especially at various cultural shows.

Until today, there is no potential member of this Portuguese Eurasian community that has showed strong interest in wanting to continue with this traditional dance.

v. The lack of accomodation.

The limited land area of the Portuguese Settlement and the increasing population of the Portuguese community has resulted in the problem of lack of accomodation.

A number of families living together in a small cubicle is quite a common phenomenon among the Portuguese Eurasians especially in the older section of the settlement. This is very much related to their economic standings. Many of the Portuguese Eurasians in the older section of the settlement form the poorer economic standings, they cannot afford to rent a room or a house outside the settlement. Therefore many of them continue to stay with their parents after their marriage.

Such over crowding together with the lack of basic housing facilities makes the situation in this part of the settlement comparable to that of the slum areas. The lack of accomodation has also forced many of the members of this community to move out of the settlement - i.e. to set up



new homes in other areas of Malacca.

The inability of the Settlement to cope with its ever increasing population hinders its progress.

## II Some changes in the community today

As a community becomes a more developed and modern entity it undergoes changes in its internal structure. This is normally a result of internal pressures particularly the economic and political changes that takes place outside the sub-cultural world. The Portuguese Eurasians are also subjected to these changes. What can be observed today is a slow process of disintegration from within the Portuguese Eurasian community. The community integrity have been tested by new values, new economic demands and others that necessitates considerable amount of sub-cultural adaptation.

One significant change is that old values have been discarded in place of newer ones which are more adaptable to the changing social circumstances and basically this has resulted in a conflict of interest between the younger and older generation of the Portuguese Eurasians. These conflict of interest play an important role in this community which is undergoing transmission.

The younger people in the Settlement are more attuned to simpler views and practical approaches towards life. Their taste towards higher and better social values and the willingness to be in the mode and trends of this present younger generation leave them with very limited choice but to earn their own money.



The people are also slowly changing their attitude towards life in the settlement and are looking outwardly in the quest for a better life - especially where job opportunities are concerned. Fishing no longer provides ample opportunities for economic dependency, in terms of food and monetary returns to feed the family. Today, many of the Portuguese Eurasians have to seek jobs outside the settlement which provide a more stable source of income.

The general political attitudes of this community have also undergone change and this can be seen through the recent general elections held in April 1982.

Since the 1969 general elections until the recent elections, the Portuguese Settlement has often been considered as one of the strongholds of the Democratic Action Party (D.A.P). The candidate from this party and who was also the State Assemblyman for Banda Hilir (Banda Hilir, Ujong Pasir and Portuguese Settlement form one constituency) for the last three terms was Mr. Benard Santa Maria, a Portuguese Eurasian from Praya Lane.

Although the Portuguese Eurasians form only about 8% of the total number of voters in this community, it has often been believed that the success of Mr. Bernard Santa Maria in the past three terms is largely due to the Portuguese Eurasian voters. The extent to which this statement is true is largely debatable.

However, it cannot be denied in the 1969 and 1974 elections, a majority of the Portuguese Eurasians were firm supporters of Mr. Santa Maria and one of the main indications



for such support is that the settlement was made the central base of the party and the area was heavily decorated with the D.A.P. banners and rockets. Another is that many members of the Portuguese Eurasian community can be seen busily campaigning for this party.

This political trait was slowly undergoing change when the people of this community began to realise that Mr. Santa Maria had not been contributing much towards the development of this community and that he was often not available to tend to the needs of this community. Instead, many of the residents sought help from Mr. Gan Boon Leong (the Barisan Nasional candidate who contested and lost to Mr. Santa Maria in the past three terms), who was always available and ready to help this community in whatever ways possible. Mr. Gan often kept in constant contact with the Portuguese Eurasian community and has helped a number of youths in the settlement to seek employment. He has also been contributing to community projects such as Festa do San Pedro and towards the construction of the jetty.

In the recent April 1962 elections a change in political attitudes is conceived when the settlement is no longer used as a D.A.P. centre but instead the Barisan Nasional party. Residents in this community were openly campaigning for Mr. Gan Boon Leong and the banners that line the streets of this settlement symbolises that of the Barisan Nasional.

Although Mr. Lim Kit Siang, the Secretary General of the D.A.P. contested against Mr. Gan Boon Long in place of



Mr. Santa Maria in the recent elections, the D.A.P. lost its state seat of Banda Hilir. Mr. Gan won by a majority of 3,063 votes.

The victory of Mr. Gan signifies that the majority of the voters (especially the Portuguese Eurasians) no longer have confidence in the opposition party - i.e. D.A.P. and this is largely based on their past experiences with Mr. Santa Maria.

In November 1981, the Federal Government promised a grant of M\$173,000 for the future improvement of the facilities in the settlement. The breakdown of the figures is as follows:-

\$60,000 for the drainage system.

\$100,000 for a new community hall.

\$10,000 for another two restaurants which is supposed to help better the socio economic status of the Portuguese Eurasians

\$3,000 for the construction of the jetty.

The drainage system has already been completed and plans for both the restaurants and community hall have been drawn and is awaiting for approval.

With this government aid, the conditions of living in this community will definitely be upgraded.



## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to look into the patterns of social relationships ( ie. the intra- and inter-communal relationships ) by relating it to the question of the ethnic consciousness of the Portuguese Eurasians in the Portuguese Settlement today. This study has brought to light certain specific trends in the Portuguese Eurasian community that may be relevant in understanding better the patterns of relationship within the Malaysian society. The conclusion drawn from this study is as follows :-

- i) there is a definite process of gradual erosion in the social and cultural traits of the Portuguese Eurasian community caused by the social changes. As such, identification through the social and cultural heritage has been considerably weakened.
- ii) Although the intra-communal analysis still indicates a strong bond of kinship and a certain amount of consciousness of their ethnic origins, the inter-communal analysis shows the openness of the Portuguese Eurasians to the external socializing forces of the other racial communities
- iii) As a community that is trying to develop and progress, the Portuguese Eurasians are constantly experiencing changes and problems as a result of this process.



The relevance of this study would not be limited to just a Portuguese Eurasian community but also to the larger Malaysian society. Any sociological research that has as its main purpose the promotion of national well-being, has to take into consideration how it can benefit the growth of the nation to greater national consciousness and unity. As such I can make the following implications and observations for the rest of Malaysian society, its trends in the political, economic and social facets as well as to the other racial and ethnic communities.

The assimilation and integration of the Portuguese community into the mainstreams of the Malaysian society is an obvious phenomenon which is taking place in the Portuguese Settlement today. This assimilation process can be reflected through the increase in the number of inter-marriages among the Portuguese Eurasians with the members of the dominant ethnic groups such as the Chinese and the Indians which have ultimately resulted in the further weakening of their social-cultural traits. For example, the replacement of their lingua-franca with Bahasa Malaysia and English.

The social and occupational mobility is a contributing factor to this process of assimilation whereby due to changes in occupational structure the Portuguese Eurasians are being exposed to other values and ideas in society. The larger majority of the Portuguese Eurasians who have jobs outside



the Settlement come into constant contact with people from other racial origins. Through their process of interaction they are constantly influenced by outside values and this would ultimately bring about a change in their attitude i.e. to be able to see things in a wider perspective. Such attitudes help to hasten this process of assimilation and integration with other members of society.

The social and cultural heritage of the Portuguese Eurasians is in itself a manifestation of the assimilation and integration process that have taken place in this community. The Portuguese Eurasians share a few similar cultural traits with that of the Malay culture. For example the Branyo is very much associated with the Ronggeng while the Mata Cantiga is similar to that of the Dondang Sayang. Today, many attempts have been made to localise the Branyo by modifying the dance movements, the music, the lyrics etc. to suit the local situations. This is a conscious effort by the Portuguese Eurasian community to 'Malaysianise' their culture.

Where religion is concerned, the assimilation process in this aspect is seen through the integration of this community with the larger Christian community whereby no longer do all the Portuguese Eurasians in this Settlement share an exclusive parish. In the past, the Portuguese Eurasians used to attend church services at the St. Peter's Church which employs the services of a number of priests from Macau and which is supposedly to act as the link between the Portuguese Eurasians and their



motherland Portugal. Today, although there are still foreign ( Portuguese ) priests in St. Peter's, this criterion no longer holds much importance for the Portuguese Eurasians of whom many are now parishioners of the St. Francis Xavier Church and where the composition of the different racial groups ( ie. the Chinese and the Indians ) is more balanced.

The gradual disintegration of the Portuguese Eurasian community has been basically the result of changes at the national level. This slow process of changes in the pattern of relationships within the community and with members of the other racial groups seem inevitable in a community like Malaysia. If maintaining ethnic identity and consciousness means the isolation from other communities, this would go contrary to the national aspirations of creating a generally integrated nation. The tide of society is such that it is difficult for minorities to maintain their complete identity.

The change in political attitudes seems to be an implication of the ' unconscious ' loss of common identity as a result of political options. In the past the Portuguese Eurasians have often looked upon Mr. Bernard Santa Maria, a person of the same ethnic origins to champion their course. But time has clearly shown that Mr. Santa Maria have not been effective in looking into the well-being of this community. Therefore, the trust and confidence of the Portuguese Eurasians have been transferred to Mr. Gan Boon Leong , a member of the Barisan



Nasional, who had been constantly contributing to the community despite losing to Mr. Santa Maria for the last 3 terms. However, it must be admitted that to a certain extent this change of political attitude in the 1982 elections have been enhanced through the allocation of funds by the Federal Government for the further development of this community. Whether or not this allocation of funds was part of the government's vote-buying strategy or whether it was given out of genuine interest towards the development of the community, it came at the correct time to tip the balance and to reassure the community that the government would be more capable of responding to their needs through the election of their representatives.

However on the whole the change of political attitude can be seen as an unconscious loss of common identity because no longer can this Portuguese Eurasian community look upon a person of their ethnic origin for leadership.

The " openness to change " is another important feature among the Portuguese Eurasians. Compared to the more dominant groups - example the Chinese and the Indians - the Portuguese Eurasians have taken change in a very positive manner. Despite their minority status, the Portuguese Eurasians have not been afraid or hesitant in changing their values and attitudes such as towards politics, marriage, occupation, education etc. so as to progress and be more integrated with the Malaysian



society. Unlike the Chinese and the Indians who have always been trying to seek unity at the intra-ethnic level, the Portuguese Eurasians have not politicized their ethnic identity.

The increasing gap between the rich and the poor Portuguese Eurasians in the Settlement is another feature which has very unconsciously been developed throughout the years. The root cause of such a phenomenon is in fact due to the developments that have taken place in this Portuguese Eurasian community. This strategy of development - ie. of increasing social mobility, new development projects, education opportunities etc. - seem to be able only to eliminate the problems of a limited number of people in the community. Better employment, better standards of living and housing and development of the modern sector such as economic opportunities and government jobs seem to have contributed to creating a new problem of increasingly economic and social disparity between the members of the Portuguese community.

Therefore the belief that it is easier to totally eliminate the problems of a minority group have proven otherwise. What more at the national level of bringing national unity along non-racial and non-religious lines among the different races and within ethnic groups. This itself has been reflected through the relationships within the Portuguese Eurasian community - ie. between the different socio-economic groups.



For example, the fishermen in the Settlement finds it easier to communicate with people of similar socio-economic standings though they are of different races than the other Portuguese Eurasians who form the upper class of this community. Therefore, what more of the situation in the national context whereby people are only able to identify with those of similar socio-economic status. This has resulted in a very subtle growth of disparity between the different socio-economic groups and if no effective efforts are being made to bridge this gap between the different classes, then the hopes and aspirations of creating national unity among the different races can never be realised.

This feature of the Portuguese Eurasian community can be seen as a reflection of trends that is also prevalent among the other races - ie. a certain portion of them being able to improve their life while others have remained in the same situation. This raises the question of whether the New Economic Policy in its efforts to eradicate poverty and restructure society has in fact de-emphasised poverty elimination and increase income and wealth disparity.



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