

## Assimilation of Baba and Nyonya in Malaysia

Razaleigh Muhamat Kawangit<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Dakwah and Leadership Studies, National University of Malaysia, Malaysia.

Correspondence: Razaleigh Muhamat Kawangit, Department of Dakwah and Leadership Studies, National University of Malaysia, Malaysia.

Received: December 4, 2014

Accepted: December 19, 2014

Available online: January 27, 2015

doi:10.11114/ijsss.v3i2.651

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11114/ijsss.v3i2.651>

### Abstract

This research set out to explore the exact level of the social aspect of assimilation between Baba and Nyonya and their Malay counterparts in Malaysia. It was sure that assimilation in social aspect is a dilemma which Baba and Nyonya face when they interact with Malays as a dominant ethnic group. It suggests that when the process of interaction, their behavior changes in line with the identity of the Malays. This is because the majority influenced the minority in the Malaysian context. Whilst they are welcomed by their Malay counterparts, it is nevertheless hypothesized that they may not assimilate fully into the Malay community

**Keywords:** Assimilation, Baba and Nyonya, Social, Malays, Malaysia

### 1. Introduction

Malaysia is a typical multi-racial and multi-religious country. It is a prime example of a multi-racial society. One of the outstanding characteristics of its multi-ethnic population today is its highly variegated ethnic mix. The ethnic groups of Malaysia consist mainly of the Malay community, the Chinese community and the Chinese community. (Malaysian Year Book, 1980: 15) Malaysia also has other ethnic groups like the Eurasians and the natives of West Malaysia and East Malaysia. Because of the multi-racial character of the population, it also has a variety of culture, religion, social norms and values. This makes the country a rich field for studying the assimilation of the various ethnic groups. It is important to appreciate the recent level of assimilation in a multi-racial context, such as Malaysia in order to make possible the development of policies that could sustain solidarity within the community. (Abdul Ghafar Don, et.al., 2012:546, retrieved from, <http://www.aensiweb.com/anas/2012/545-548.pdf>) Without this information the country will face a serious, troubled situation, created by the feelings of disaffection between all races.

One of the minority ethnic group in Malaysia is Baba and Nyonya which faced an identity dilemma relating to their ethnicity belonging in the process of assimilation, especially when the process happen being a Baba or Nyonya means to be Malay in Malaysian context. For example, an individual born in a Malay family living in Malaysia would accept herself/himself as 'Malay'. An individual born in a Baba or Nyonya family living in Malaysia, contributing to the economic development of the country might want to be known as Malays to benefit from being a *Bumiputera* or would like to be known as Baba or Nyonya to conform to the family roots or would just like to be known as Chinese for what they are or labeled to be. Pressure from the society and the environment to be accepted by a common factor in a community could strongly trigger 'ethnic switching' or 'identity dilemma'. Nevertheless individual's economic contribution to a country is elicited to the acceptance of the common factor in a community.

Many ethnic minorities not only develop their own ethnicity but also assimilate to the ethnicity of the majority ethnic group in the country. The recognition that there are some similarities or shared characteristics with the majority ethnic group led to some overlapping forms of social identity. (Abdul Ghafar Don, et.al., 2012:550, retrieved from, <http://www.aensiweb.com/anas/2012/549-551.pdf>) This was confirmed by a study by Gleason (1981) where he found that the ethnic minority residents of the US not only develop ethnic identities but also assume some form of American identity as well. (Gleason, P., 198: 483) Judd et.al (1995) further elaborated that those members of ethnic groups who perceive themselves as different from the average American are more likely to develop a greater sense of ethnic identity because of their feelings of being a member of an out-group. Those individuals who are members of an ethnic group perceive their status as separate from the larger, dominant culture, and as a result, spend time exploring and developing their ethnic identities. (Phinney, J.S., 1990:499-514) Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997) found that the ethnic minority individuals develop multiple identities: one representing their own ethnic cultures and the other dominant, national/ethnic ones, being

Americans. (Phinney, J. S. and Devich-Navarro, M. 1997:3-32) Weisskirch (2005) found that Asian Americans and Latinos have the highest levels of ethnic identity and see themselves as not being typical Americans more than other ethnic groups. However, Latinos who report did not be typical Americans have higher levels of ethnic identity. For Asian Americans, the perception of being a typical American made no difference in levels of ethnic identity. (Weisskirch, R. S. 2005:355-366)

## 2. Baba and Nyonya Background in Malaysia

Baba means master, in accordance with their social status of the male folk who came to Malaya to conduct trade and business activities. The Baba is rather advanced and rich. The Baba, as a term of address of the wife of the husband in accordance with Chinese culture, that the wife regards her husband as a master. Nyonya or in short, 'Nya' originated from the Hokkien and Teochew dialects when referring to an older Chinese woman. This term of address is interpreted from the Chinese language, meaning female teacher, mother or a young girl. The term of 'Baba' has been widely used by many in Malaysia, Singapore and India. In Malaysia and Singapore, the Chinese community is influenced by the Malay culture, such as the Chinese community will refer to those wearing the "Sarung" as 'Baba'. A Chinese proverb in Hokkien, "*san tai seng ba*", meaning that after three generations in Malaysia or Singapore, a Chinese may be considered as a "Baba". In fact, the Chinese community in Malaysia does not refer to themselves as "Baba and use the term of 'Ba' only when they want to emphasize that they have adapted to the Malaysian culture and are different from of their ancestors. It is also used to criticizing the local Chinese who no longer practice their Baba culture. (Sadaoh Nasution, 1989:147) The Baba and Malay community in Malacca also use the title Baba or Ba to refer to locally born Chinese and many more. The Malay community also used the term to refer to the locally born (a local-born person), referring to the non-Chinese but the Baba is Chinese.

Baba community is the result of marriage between a male Chinese to female Malay. Although there is historical evidence, we should not refer to the biological factors of this intermarriage. Intermarriage between the migrant Chinese and Malay women was important towards the creation of the "*Peranakan*" (straits born) culture. The society in existence now is due to culture and its self identity and due to intermarriage. (Joo Ee Khoo, 1996:87-93) Although in general, the cultural element displayed in the Baba community is Malay in nature, between the males and the females, it is more prominent in the females. The males are still donning the Chinese attire (shirts and pants), however the females (known as Nyonya) prefer donning the Malay attire, (*Sarung, Kebaya* and the brooches). Food cooked by the housewives is similar to Malay food, with lots of chili, such as the use of shrimp paste, which is foreign to the Chinese in China. (Sadaoh Nasution, 1989:138)

Baba community has developed from being the initial communication between the Chinese and the Malays in the state of Malacca, which is the original center of the Baba culture. The relationship between China and Southeast Asia has been for a long time. However, the actual date when the Chinese first settled in the Malay Archipelago is in question. There are records showing the emergence of Chinese settled in the 15th century. In the 17th century, De Eredin has proven that the existence of a Chinese village in Malacca. Local records of the Chinese migrants such as Tay Kap and Li Kap confirmed the existence of a permanent settlement of Chinese migrants in the 17th century. Between 1834 - 1848 the number of newly arrived Chinese increased due to the opening of tin mines in Kesang area. Laborers entered Kesang through Malacca. As to what had happened in other places, new residents in the 19th century began forming triads that were involved in the tin mining industry. With the wealth of mining activities, the secret societies became increasingly influential. The first triad that existed in Malacca was Hai San. Its members include the "*Peranakan*" Chinese (straits born Chinese), Malays, Baweans and Chinese. (Rudolph, Jürgen, 1998:127). *Reconstructing Identities: A Social History of the Babas in Singapore*. Singapore: Ashgate. The Baba culture originated from Malacca but when Penang and Singapore became developed and progressed, many moved to these two states.

The Baba and Nyonya community is a different from the Chinese community, although they consider themselves as Chinese. However, the Baba identity is the result of the acculturation process (acceptance of foreign culture without losing its own). Two characteristics of the Baba culture which is similar to the Malay culture are clothing and food. Many of the Nyonya wore *Kebayas*, brooches and *Sarungs*. This is in the same manner as that of the female Malays. Apart from using chopsticks like the Chinese community, they also practiced the use of hands, which is the practiced of the Malay community. However, the use of hands when eating by the Baba-Nyonya community is only practiced at home as taking of food using hands in the Chinese and Baba Nyonya community is considered to be rude especially during a function. Generally, the Baba Nyonya cooking is similar to the Malay cooking, which is using the basics of Chinese cooking. This is the product of long standing ethnic and cultural links. As such the Baba Nyonya dishes contain new terms in line with the combination of Malay and Chinese cooking. Among the famous dishes are "*embuk-embuk*" – Nyonya dish, "*bubur caca*", grilled fish, tamarind drink, "*nasi kerabu*", "*sambal*" and others.

Whereas the Baba-Malay dialect of today differs in fondology as compared to the other Malay dialect and has several

borrowings from the Indonesian and English languages. The Baba dialect has absorbed many Chinese words: "Lai" is not understood by the Malay community. Many Baba and Nyonya do not understand the Malay Language dialect: an example, I – "Goa", You – "Lu". The Baba is similar to the Chinese except for the use of several Malay terms in their daily routine. According to the inheritance system, the surname of the Baba Nyonya family is patrilineal, handed down from one generation to another, that is, husband's surname will be used by his sons, even though settlement patterns are of the Baba Nyonya is matrilocal. In this instance, matrilocal means that usually the Baba would stay with the wife's relatives. If they have the same surname, they may be of the same family or commonly known as "*Culai*". In the 12th century, they married local Malay females and subsequently the sons of the families were known as Baba and the daughters known as Nyonya.

The Baba Nyonya community is fanatic of their belief and religious practice. This community also worship deities found in the belief of Chinese community, such as "Kuan Im Ma", "Kuang Kong" and their ancestors. They also participate in Hindu religious rites as well as paying respect to Malay shrines such as worshipping the graves of Malays who known to have mystical power. Stepping into the marriage world is something natural for everyone. Various preparations need to be arranged and planned so that the wedding will run smoothly. However, every community has their own traditions and customs during a wedding ceremony. The same goes with the Baba and Nyonya community. The Baba and Nyonya community has various interesting and unique traditions and customs during a wedding ceremony. Amongst others, is during its initial stage, personal invitation will be given and the wedding cards will be sent from house to house. Normally, a wedding card given to visitors will be red in color. This is because the red color symbolizes harmony and happiness. The invitation is normally given by a dispatcher known as "*Pak Chindek*". The sending of cards, ceremony is separate and will take some time, taking about six days. All practices mentioned above make Baba and Nyonya a unique ethnic in Malaysia. Their population reached to 30,716 in recent census. Unfortunately, some of Baba and Nyonya are not declaring themselves as Baba or Nyonya because of their own reasons. Sometimes they wants to be Chinese or *Bumiputera*. (Demographic Statistics Division of Malaysia, 2010:82)

### 3. Field Work Methodology

#### 3.1 Theories and Application

Chuah, O. (2001), was used six profiles, which are age group, gender, occupation and educational backgrounds, monthly income group and marital status as a criterion for collecting data in his research related to the integration level of Chinese Muslim after the conversion in the states of Selangor in Malaysia. Moreover, he also used seven criteria's taken from '1971 National Culture Policy of Malaysia' which are *Baju Melayu*, *Nasi Lemak*, *Bersunat*, *Kenduri*, wearing *Songkok*, celebrating *Eid* celebration and *Salam* as a criteria for measuring the level of integration. (Chuah, O., 2001: 57-60) Although the result of Chuah, O. (2001) research which was used *Likert scale* (Latham, Garry P., 2006:15) shows weakly integration degree for those in the low age (below 17 years-old) and those who have lower occupational, educational and monthly income level but the both criteria's for collecting data and measuring the level are very useful. As a result, for this research will use the same criteria's and formats like what Chuah, O. (2001) used in his research and statistics report.

Although the both criteria's which are to collect the data and to measure the participating of Baba and Nyonya on Malays culture followed on what was used by Chuah. O (2001), but the content of every single question in the questionnaire of this research as well as the question format is different. The differences happen because this research has own objectives to be achieved. As a result, the main purpose in following established theories and methodologies is to ensure this research in achieving the goal. Furthermore, it is difficult for researchers to create a new theory to collect the data and to measure the participating, since a new theory is not being proved yet in any research or report. Then, it will affect the finding of the research on the side of validation.

#### 3.2 Survey Questionnaire Methodology

The survey questionnaire is a crucial part in this research to obtain the data and to enable the measurement. Without the correct design, difficulties in measuring the participating can result. Moreover, the research finding also will be affected by poor design. It is important to voice here that the survey questionnaire was chosen in this research to obtain the data and finally to measure the views, because all information will be documented and not just verbal. It is more critical when the usage of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Science Social) needs to be applied. Noticeably, verbal data are difficult to analyze and very hard to conduct through the system (SPSS). This survey questionnaire will write in two languages; English and *Bahasa Malaysia* (the Malay language)

Respondents will be asked in all aspects of Malays culture, especially practiced by Malays. Possibly, the questions will touch their experiences, recent practices, attention and awareness, feeling and willingness on certain issues related to Malays culture and other questions in order to measure their view on such things. The questionnaire will be divided into 2 sections; section 1 covering the criteria for collecting data which are respondents' criteria where includes six criteria based on the hypothesis. This is followed by section 2, which deal with questions includes items for measuring the view

on Malays culture.

Furthermore, the questionnaire covers up three question formats, which are:

1. Open question format. In this type of question, respondents will be asked, especially about their ages, educational and occupational backgrounds and their monthly income. The advantage of this format is to get the genuine answer from the respondents and then it will easily categorize and analyze their answers. However, the researcher uses this format only in section 1 in the questionnaire.
2. Statements with tick box categories. The respondents need to tick the box that best matches with the answer. This type of format is suitable for general attitude measurement and is easily understood and yet quick to complete. The researcher uses this type of format to get the information's about gender and marital status of the respondents in section 1 of the questionnaire.
3. Rating scales statement. The respondents will be given questions with a rating scale of 1 to 5. The scales 1 and 2 will indicate their convenient and agreement with the question or statement while scale 4 to 5 indicates their inconvenient and disagreement with the question or statement. In the meantime, scale 3 shows a neutral response to the question or statement mentioned. This sort of format is used in sections 2 and appropriate to measure respondents view on Malays culture. Furthermore, this type of format followed the Likert scale which produced by Rensis Likert.

#### **4. Criteria for Collecting Data**

For this research, 600 questionnaires will be distributed to Baba and Nyonya to measure their view and participating in Malays culture. In addition, to ensure the reliability of data collection and to learn about the community will not only depend on numbers of respondents but also for background information about them. The discussion below sets out the criteria of the backgrounds of the Baba and Nyonya determined by the researcher in line with the Chuah, O. (2001) theory.

##### *4.1 Age Group of Baba and Nyonya*

Although the number of Baba and Nyonya shows consistent in all age groups, most of them are between the ages of 25-30. Young Baba and Nyonya are subjected to the education system of Malaysia, where Islamic terms are usually used Malay is a compulsory language in all schools and is the medium of interaction and instruction including at the universities. This young Baba and Nyonya seem to be more opening minded and ready to accept the Malays culture, at least as part of their life in education surrounding.

On the other hand, for the older group, some of whom cannot speak any other language except their 'mother-tongue'. It is hard for them to communicate with others, especially those who came from Malay ethnic. Moreover, having already lived their whole life as a Chinese with Chinese ways and culture, it is of course more difficult for them to accept a new culture (Malays culture) This may be the reason why the 55 years-old and above age group has the lowest number, compared with the other age groups, who have practiced Malays culture.

The researcher will select 600 respondents from various levels of age, groups of Baba and Nyonya. They will fill in the questionnaire and data gathered will represent the community. They will be divided into eight age groups, where each group has an expected number of respondents. 100 of them will represent the age of 15-17 years-old, 60 will represent 18-24 years-old, 100 will represent 25-30 years-old, 60 will represent 31-35 years-old, 60 will represent 36-40 years-old, 100 will represent 41-45 years-old, 60 will represent 46-54 years-old and 60 will represent those Baba and Nyonya from the age of 55 and above.

In order to get the expected number of the age group, researchers will directly ask in the questionnaire about date of birth. These kinds of question are to ensure the exact age of the respondent, because most probably some of the respondents not yet reach into certain age during they answer the question. So, it is vital work to analyze return questionnaire sequentially to get an exact age group of the respondents.

##### *4.2 Gender*

Generally, both male and female, Baba and Nyonya has similar chances to know and practice Malays culture. Asian women as they practice the Chinese traditional way of life as a housewife. They will take responsibility to raise their children according to their customs. Then, they have plenty of time to add their knowledge via various sources such as mass-media, through their daily communication with their local community and through their gathering during certain ceremonies such as weddings. Interaction and integration take place on a social as well as professional and educational level and there are no social barriers. Meanwhile, their husbands have more opportunities to know the Malays culture when in their daily work they communicate with Malays. They are influenced by the Malay way of life.

Furthermore, in recent year, statistics show that females dominate in enrollment to the universities in Malaysia. This enables young Nyonya to communicate and integrate with their Malay counterpart because 60% of the universities'

population must be from *Bumiputeras* (especially Malays). On the other hand, it does not mean that Baba lack chances know Malays culture and to communicate and integrate with the Malays. Often, they inherit their father's work as businessmen. They run big or small business, from a corner shop to a big financial company. Of course, their clients are mostly Malays, which means they need to interact and integrate with Malay Muslims. Based on the situation above, the researcher decided to include similar amounts of both Baba and Nyonya respondents. This will avoid a biased conclusion from the data. Both of them will represent 300 respondents.

#### 4.3 Occupational Background

Occupation is an important criterion to show that the Baba and Nyonya are influenced by the Malays culture and unconsciously communicate and integrate with Malays daily. Furthermore, some of them work as government servants where Islamic teaching is used for rules and regulations formally or informally. For example, they practice 'government servant dress code' where the code was derived from Islamic and Malays dress code. In addition, some of them are involved with the jobs of the Malays, such as being the *Muballigh* or Islamic preacher at Islamic preaching organizations.

As mentioned before, although they run big or small businesses their clients are mostly Malays. They need to know what Malays need as Muslims. For example, when they run a grocery shop, they ensure that *halāl* meats and foods are supplied to them, if not they would lose their Malay clients. Similarly, when they run a finance company, they need to guarantee that they are not involved with *riba* which is forbidden by Islām.

However, it is too early to come to a conclusion about Malays culture participating without specific data. Although Baba and Nyonya and Malays know each other through their daily communication, the level of Baba and Nyonya participating in Malays culture is unknown. The level will be affected for those Baba and Nyonya (the respondents) whose work is 'Chinese based'. For example, Chinese in Malaysia is commonly known for their herb shops. Chinese herb shops have spread out everywhere, especially in big city in Malaysia. Those (respondent) who works in this area typically lack knowledge about Malays culture and they do not obviously communicate with the Malays to the same extent as others may.

On the other hand, it is too difficult to list all the respondents' occupations because they may be involved with the several different types of employment. Sometimes, as businessmen, they may run more than one type of business and that will affect the data analysis. To solve the problem and to represent their types of work, the criteria will list employment according to the following: 'general workers' such as all kinds of laborers, housewives, and the unemployed, 'semi-skilled workers' (who work without certain formal training certificates) such as clerks, salesmen, businessman, supervisors and so on, 'skilled workers' (who work with certain formal training certificates) such as teachers, policemen, technicians and artists and finally, 'professional workers' (who have and used a degree or equivalent as a qualification to practice jobs) such as students, executive officers, bank officers, lawyers, doctors, lecturers and others. Each occupation group will have 150 expected respondents. Furthermore, by generals the occupational background mentioned above will guarantee the respondents to answer the question. This is because some of the respondents may try to hide their working; since the job probably is not permitted by Islam like waiters serving an alcohol drink. They have to continue the job for a temporary period before they find a new suitable job.

#### 4.4 Educational Background

There are two types of schools run in Malaysia, government and private schools. Government school refers to any school which is operated using Malay as the language medium and fully financially supported by the government. Meanwhile, private schools will use one language medium from three major language groups represented by ethnic groups which are Tamil (for Chinese), Chinese (usually they use the '*Cantonese*' dialect for the Chinese), and Arabic (sometimes called *Madrassa* school taken from the use of Arabic as language medium and this type of school is attended by Muslim children especially from Malays). Furthermore, the private schools generate their own money from fees and other sources.

The government enforces the Malay language subject in both government schools or 'National-School' and private schools or 'National-type School' and 'Religious School'. The subject needs to be taught at least 5 hours a week (from 5 school days, Monday to Friday). Furthermore, the government regulation of school periods for the children must be followed. The compulsory periods are 'Primary School' which is 6 years schooling for children from 7 years-old until 12 years-old and 'Secondary School' which is 5 years of schooling to children from 13 years-old to 17 years-old.

After 11 years of schooling, the children have a choice based on their examination results (in such a period mentioned, they will be tested three times, firstly when they reach 12 years-old, secondly when they are 15 years-old and finally at 17 years-old). At 17 years-old, they can leave school or continue their education and enter College or in Malaysia sometimes called 'Institute' or 'Pre-University Classes' for two years more. After that, they will go to universities in

Malaysia or abroad for their further studies. Unfortunately, there are some parents who stop their children's schooling after 'Primary School' or 'Secondary School' for reasons such as poverty or a desire to have children continue their family business (especially those who have family businesses).

Based on the discussion above, educational background plays an important role to Baba and Nyonya to know the Malays culture. Although they only learn the Malay language through their schooling, Malays and Islām are synonymous, which means in Malaysia all Malays are Muslim, those who studied Malay will study Islām as well and indirectly they studied Malays culture. Moreover, many words in the Malay language are adopted from Arabic. So, Baba and Nyonya have an opportunity to interact and integrate with the Malays in all periods of education, whether in 'Primary' or 'Secondary' school or in 'College/Institute/Pre-university Classes' or in the university itself. Starting from that point, the researcher decided to categorize educational background based on such periods of schooling and expected to get the same amount of respondents in all categories which is, 150 respondents. In conclusion, this type of criteria is not trying to discriminate the respondent through the educational background. The main purpose is to get their opinion with different background of study, since it well known the different background has a different way of thinking.

#### 4.5 Monthly Income

Generally, through the monthly income several circumstances will appear to relate to the view of Baba and Nyonya about Malays culture, such as:

1. Those that are in the Upper income group have more purchasing power. Therefore, they will spend a lot of money to get everything appropriate to their status of income, such as services. Usually, the monthly expenditure will include the service of '*Pembantu Rumah*' (housemaid) which is a group of employees, dominated by Malay women. Some of them keep up to three maids in their house with different role, such as a 'cleaner' or as 'nursemaid' and others. Furthermore, they spend a lot of money on education by inviting teachers to give some tuition to their children in several subjects like mathematics and statistics, science and Malay language. Usually, the teachers come from the Malay ethnic group since, based on Malaysian Ministry of Education statistics, 90% of trained teachers are Malays. Therefore, those who are included in this income group have a huge opportunity to know Malays culture.
2. The expenditure of the Middle income group basically will be based on how much they earn monthly or in other words, they need to budget to meet their daily need. Despite the expenditure of this group not same as the Upper income group, they have similar opportunities to know the Malays culture because most of this group are government employees. As mentioned before, the situation and the condition for all government servants are inherited from Malay customs and have an Islamic basis. On the other hand, even if they are not working as government officers, they will at least be meeting the Malay community, as their clients when they work as a businessman, run a shop or provide a service such as salesmen and technicians. According to the Malaysian Ministry of Laborers other than government servants, skilled and semi-skilled workers such as salesmen and technicians are included in the Middle income group.
3. Lower income group in Malaysia includes those who earn less than RM 1000.00 per-month. Although this group seems as if they do not have a prospect to interact and integrate with the Malays which obviously practice Malays culture, based on their level of income, most of them are villagers. It is a usual phenomenon in modern Malaysia that a village has multi ethnic residents. It means that they are exposed to a variety of traditions as well as the Malay and Islamic way of life.

Consequently, the main purpose of evaluating view of Baba and Nyonya on Malays culture base on monthly income is to get the best result which group source is mostly participating in the culture. Then, it will be supported to other criteria's to bring the concrete conclusion. In order to get the data, the researcher will divide Baba and Nyonya income into three categories which are Upper, Middle and Lower income groups with certain values of earning. The expected respondents are 600 made up to 200 respondents from each group.

It is important to be voiced here, the purpose to categorize the respondents into the monthly income basis is to know their different experiences. The researcher tries to avoid any other purposes such as to use the information gathered to be released to another party and finally will reveal the information for the purpose of prejudicing especially among the multi-ethnic condition in Malaysia.

#### 4.6 Marital Status

Marital status was included in this measurement based on hypothesis derived from the observation that Baba and Nyonya usually have children who will influence them through their Malay schooling. On the other hand, there is a lot of factors to consider which could disprove the hypothesis. For example, from the point of view of freedom, those who are single in general have more time to interact with Malays who practiced Malays culture compared with those who are married, who may have less free time because of their family schedules. Moreover, most of the Baba and Nyonya

involved in ‘Malay oriented education’ is single (they are between the ages of 18 and 23 years-old or at the beginning of the ‘Pre-University Classes’ period until they finish their study at certain universities at home or abroad).

Although, this research cannot deal with all the complex factors influencing, it does attempt to objectively measure these factors or in other words it finally involves with subjective matters. As a result, researcher wishes to focus on married and single status of Baba and Nyonya and examine which group predominantly participating in Malays culture. Thus, in order to get the data, the researcher divided respondents into ‘single’ and ‘married’ status and expected 300 respondents for each status.

### 5. Respondents’ Demography, Instrument Reliability and Research Finding

Obviously, the table of respondents’ demography can be reviewed at Table 1. Meanwhile, reliability in this research means consistency, or the degree to which an instrument will give similar results for the same individuals at different times. The best quotation to explain the instrument reliability in research is through the definition the term given by Joppe (2000). She defined the reliability as “... *the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable*” ( Joppe. M., 2000:14).

Table 1. Respondents’ Demography

Data gath.	Criteria background	Number of data gathered	Percentage
1. Age	15-17 years-old	120	20
	18-24 years-old	60	10
	25-30 years-old	80	13
	31-35 years-old	60	10
	36-40 years-old	60	10
	41-45 years-old	110	18
	46-54 years-old	70	12
	55 years-old and above	40	7
Total		600	100
2. Gender	Male	300	50
	Female	300	50
Total		600	100
3. Occupational background	General workers	150	25
	Semi-skilled workers	150	25
	Skilled workers	150	25
	Professional workers	150	25
Total		600	100
4. Educational background	Primary school	150	25
	Secondary school	150	25
	College/Institute/Pre-University Classes	150	25
	University	150	25
Total		600	100
5. Monthly income	Upper income group (RM 5,000.00 and above)	200	Approximately 33.3
	Middle income group (From RM 1, 000.00 to RM 4,000.00)	200	Approximately 33.3
	Lower income group (RM 200.00 to RM 900.00)	200	Approximately 33.3
Total		600	100
6. Marital status	Single	300	50
	Married (including single parent and widow)	300	50
Total		600	100

Source: returned questionnaires

Indication: Data gath: Data gathered, Resp.Cri: Respondent’s Criteria

However, the researcher cannot be sure of unchanging elements in extraneous influences, such as something that might

cause an attitude transformation among the respondents. This could lead to a difference in the responses provided. In spite of this, any attitude change that can be considered as unexpected cannot be counted as a cause of an unreliable instrument. Following on what Joppe (2000) illustrated in reliability analysis by using the alpha ( $\alpha$ ) method, she concluded that an alpha ( $\alpha$ ) score of 0.6000 and above has a good reliability. (Joppe. M., 2000:23). The result of reliability testing of this research, after using the same method of testing as Joppe (2000) is shown in the following table, which is Table 2. The result shows that each of the instruments (questions) has alpha 0.9000 and above or alpha 0.9990 in percentage. It means the instruments or the questions used in this research are reliable and can be validly applied in the questionnaire.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis Results

Item/question number	Item/question total correlation	Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) analysis result
Q7	0.9724	0.9990
Q8	0.9710	0.9990
Q9	0.9640	0.9990
Q10	0.9891	0.9989
Q11	0.9862	0.9990
Q12	0.9909	0.9989
Q13	0.9886	0.9989
Q14	0.9916	0.9989
Q15	0.9913	0.9989
Q16	0.9643	0.9990
Q17	0.9892	0.9989
Q18	0.9891	0.9989
Q19	0.9922	0.9989
Q20	0.9922	0.9990
Q21	0.9925	0.9990
Q22	0.9874	0.9991
Q23	0.9897	0.9990
Q24	0.9744	0.9989
Q25	0.9239	0.9989
Q26	0.9642	0.9990
Q27	0.9891	0.9990
Q28	0.9899	0.9989
Q29	0.9917	0.9990
Q30	0.9876	0.9989
Q31	0.9834	0.9989
Q32	0.9886	0.9989
Q33	0.9657	0.9990
Q34	0.9872	0.9990
Q35	0.9921	0.9990
Q36	0.9929	0.9989
Q37	0.9901	0.9998
Q38	0.9936	0.9989
Q39	0.9932	0.9989
Q40	0.9907	0.9989

Source: Reliability analysis through SPSS

The word 'level' in this research can be interpreted as certain numbers within the measurement which allows one to conclude that assimilation is at the high or low levels. Apparently, the usual formula used to get the levels is by looking at the 'Median'(Y) value score, comparing it with the 'Mean'(X) value score; if the 'Median' (Y) value score is higher than the 'Mean' (X) value score ( $Y > X$ ), it means one can come to the conclusion that the level of assimilation at the high level. On the other hand, if the  $Y < X$ , this means the degree is at the low level. (Joppe. M., 2000:23) The testing and analysis of the level are summarized through Table 3.

Table 3. Testing and Analyzing Results of the Assimilation Level

		SOCIAL Assimilation
Respondents	Valid	600
	Missing	0
Mean (X)		2.8441
Median (Y)		2.6667
Mode		1.00
Std. Deviation		1.3782
Variance		1.8994
Range		4.00
Minimum		1.00
Maximum		5.00
Sum		1706.44
Percentiles	25	1.6944
	50	2.6667
	75	4.0000

Source: Testing and analysing through SPSS

Clearly, derived from Table 3 above, the (Y) value score less than the (X) value score ( $Y (2.6667) < X (2.8883)$ ). This leads to the conclusion that the level of social assimilation of Baba and Nyonya is at the low level. The exact numbers and percentages relating to this low level can be obtained from the Table 4.

Table 4. Testing and Analysing Results of the Numbers and Percentages of Social Assimilation

(Y) value score level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	118	19.7	19.7	19.7
1.11	2	.3	.3	20.0
1.44	1	.2	.2	20.2
1.67	29	4.8	4.8	25.0
1.78	10	1.7	1.7	26.7
1.89	23	3.8	3.8	30.5
2.00	52	8.7	8.7	39.2
2.11	5	.8	.8	40.0
2.33	2	.3	.3	40.3
2.44	11	1.8	1.8	42.2
2.56	2	.3	.3	42.5
2.67	56	9.3	9.3	51.8
2.78	22	3.7	3.7	55.5
2.89	29	4.8	4.8	60.3
3.00	1	.2	.2	60.5
3.11	5	.8	.8	61.3
3.22	15	2.5	2.5	63.8
3.33	3	.5	.5	64.3
3.44	1	.2	.2	64.5
3.56	2	.3	.3	64.8
3.67	8	1.3	1.3	66.2
3.78	7	1.2	1.2	67.3
3.89	1	.2	.2	67.5
4.00	76	12.7	12.7	80.2
4.11	3	.5	.5	80.7
4.22	8	1.3	1.3	82.0
4.33	1	.2	.2	82.2
4.44	1	.2	.2	82.3
4.56	11	1.8	1.8	84.2
4.67	1	.2	.2	84.3
4.78	2	.3	.3	84.7
4.89	5	.8	.8	85.5
5.00	87	14.5	14.5	100.0
Total	600	100.0	100.0	

Source: Testing and analysing through SPSS

Noticeably, the (Y) value score of social assimilation of Baba and Nyonya is 2.6667 and it was close to 2.67 from the (Y) value score level at Table 3. Commonly, the close value from the score level can be used to conclude the precise

percentage of the certain level (in this case, the percentage of social assimilation of Baba and Nyonya). Therefore, from the cumulative percentage of the 2.67 (Y) score level is 51.8%. It means, 51.8% of the 600 respondents of Baba and Nyonya, or 311 of them, are not assimilating socially with the Malays.

### References

- Abdul, G. D. et.al. (2012). *Da'wah Through Social Services Method: The Experience of the Department of Da'wah and Leadership Studies, National University of Malaysia. Advances in Natural and Applied Sciences*, 6(4), 545-548, 2012. <http://www.aensiweb.com/anas/2012/545-548.pdf>
- Abdul, G. D. et.al. (2012). Enhancing Life Quality of Aboriginal People in Malaysia and its Relationship with Cultural Tourism. *Advances in Natural and Applied Sciences*, 6(4), 549-551. <http://www.aensiweb.com/anas/2012/549-551.pdf>
- Chuah, O. (2001). *Chinese Muslim in Malaysia*. Petaling Jaya: International Islamic University of Malaysia.
- Demographic Statistics Division of Malaysia. (2010). *Demographic Transition in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Demographic Statistics Division of Malaysia.
- Gleason, P. (1981). *Americans all: World War II and the Shaping of American Identity, The Review of Politic*, 43(4). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0034670500051068>
- Joo, E. K. (1996). *The Straits Chinese: a cultural history*. Pepin Press
- Joppe, M. (2000). *The Research Process*. <http://www.ryerson.ca/~mjoppe/rp.htm>.
- Latham, G. P. (2006). *Work Motivation: History, Theory and Practice*. Sage Publication Inc..
- Phinney, J. S. (1990). *Ethnic Identity in Adolescents and Adults*, *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(3). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.108.3.499>
- Phinney, J. S., & Devich-Navarro, M. (1997). *Variations in Bicultural Identification Among African American and Mexican American Adolescents, Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 7(1). [http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327795jra0701\\_2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327795jra0701_2)
- Rudolph, J. (1998). *Reconstructing Identities: A Social History of the Babas in Singapore*. Singapore: Ashgate.
- Sadaoh, N. (1989). *Kamus Umum Lengkap: Inggris-Indonesia Indonesia-Inggris*. University of California: 1989
- Weisskirch, R. S. (2005). *Ethnic and Perceptions of Being a "Typical American" in Relationship to Ethnic Identity Development, International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/).