

**PENANG HOKKIEN AND PERANAKAN RHYMES :
TEACHING THE YOUNG ON THE CULTURAL
TRADITIONS, VALUES, EARLY DEVELOPMENTAL AND
MUSIC SKILLS**

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
MUSIC EXAMPLES	xiii
ABSTRAK	xvi
ABSTRACT	xix
CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Research Focus	2
1.2 Literature review	4
1.3 Research method	10
1.4 Theoretical Approach	13
1.5 Organization of Chapters	18
CHAPTER 2 : PENANG CHINESE HISTORY AND CULTURE	
2.0 Introduction	20
2.1 History of the Chinese Immigration in Penang	20
2.2 Types of Chinese	22
2.3 Penang Chinese Culture	23

2.3.1 Penang Peranakan Culture	23
2.3.1 Penang Hokkien Culture	27
Summary	32

CHAPTER 3 : INCULCATING CULTURAL AND TRADITIONAL PRACTICES AND VALUES

3.0 Introduction	35
3.1 Cultural and Traditional Practices of the Chinese	35
3.1.1 Celebrations and Festivals	35
3.1.1 (a) Chinese New Year	37
3.1.1 (b) Mooncake or Lantern Festival (Mid-Autumn festival)	44
3.1.2 Cycle of Life	45
3.1.2 (a) <i>Mua guek</i> (Full moon)	45
3.1.2 (b) Wedding	47
3.2 Traditional values and philosophies	49
3.2.1 Upbringing of Penang Chinese	50
3.2.1 (a) Expectations of Good Upbringing	50
3.2.1 (b) Expectations of Responsibilities	52
3.2.1 (c) Relationships between In-Laws	55
3.2.2 Cultural Biasness	56
3.2.2 (a) Family Heir	56
3.2.2 (b) Golden Child	57
3.2.2 (c) Polygamy	59
Summary	60

CHAPTER 4 : PASSING ON THE ELECTIC CULTURE AND VALUES OF THE PERANAKAN CHINESE

4.0 Introduction	61
4.1 Eclectic language in Peranakan Chinese Rhymes	61
4.1.1 Mixture of Cantonese and Baba Malay	62
4.1.2 Mixture of English and Baba Malay	63

4.2 Rhymes borrowed from Malay society in the Baba Malay language	63
4.3 The Baba Malay Idiom of Speech	65
4.4 Eclectic Material culture	69
4.4.1 <i>Chap Goh Meh</i> (The fifteenth night of Chinese New Year) Celebrations	70
4.4.2 local food ingredients – seafood, spices, kuih and fruits	72
4.5 The Artistic Culture	73
4.6 Religious practices and superstitions	74
4.6.1 Prayers for blessing	75
4.6.2 Festive Cycle- Ghost Festival	75
4.6.3 <i>Khi-en s'ng</i> (magic spell)	76
4.7 The Peranakan family values	78
4.8. Cultural Preference	80
Summary	82

CHAPTER 5 : MOVEMENT, RHYMES AND SKILL LEARNING IN NURSERY RHYMES

5.0 Introduction	83
5.1 Rhymes for singing or chanting	84
5.2 Rhymes for rocking	89
5.3 Game rhymes	94
5.4 Action rhymes	107
5.5 Fingerplay	112
Summary	118

CHAPTER 6 : RHYMES AND MUSIC LEARNING

6.0 Introduction	120
6.1 Melody and solfege learning	121
6.2 Rhythm ; steady beat	122
6.3 Rhythm : Rhythmic patterns in Chinese idiom of speech	127
6.3.1 Rhyme with rhythmic pattern of crochet, crochet, minim and metrical accent on the third beat	128
6.3.1.a Sub-phrase of two words/syllables with rhythmic pattern of crochet rest, crochet, minim and metrical accent on the third beat	129
6.3.1b Sub-phrase of three words in four syllables with rhythmic pattern of crochet, two quavers, minim and metrical accent on the third beat	130
6.3.2. Rhyme with mixed rhythmic patterns and metrical accents on third, fourth and fifth beats	131
6.4 Rhythm : Rhythmic Patterns in Malay idiom	133
6.5 tempo concept	135
6.5.1 accelerando	135
6.5.2 fast-slow	137
6.6 Time value	138
6.6.1 Long-short duration	138
6.6.2 Mnemonics; representation of note values	140
6.7 'Question and answer'	141
6.7.1 Antiphonal singing	141
6.7.2 Cue	142
6.8 simple versus irregular meter	143
6.8.1 simple meter	143
6.8.1a two line couplet in 4/4 meter	143
6.8.1.b Four line verse in 4/4 meter	144
6.8.1.c six line verse in 2/4 meter	145
6.8.2 mixed meter	146
6.8.2.a six line verse in 3 /4 meter and 4/4 meter	146
6.8.2.b Six line verse in simple and irregular meter	148
6.8.2.c Two line couplet in simple and irregular meter	149

6.9 Musical phrase	150
6.9.1 Symmetrical and non-symmetrical phrase	150
6.9.2 Musical forms	152
6.9.2.a The repeated chorus form	152
6.9.2.b Verse-chorus-verse form	154
Summary	156

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 impart, sustain and promotion of traditional practices from China	160
7.2 promotion of traditional values and philosophies	161
7.3 adaptation and fusion of other cultures	162
7.4 social expectations and beliefs	163
7.5 the role of early learning	164
7.6 music learning	165
7.7 the future of Penang Chinese rhymes	166
7.8 future studies	166

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDICES

Appendix A European crockery

Appendix B Chinese rhyme – *Tim Leng Geng*

Appendix C Malay rhymes

Appendix D Forms and Rhythmic Patterns

Appendix E Chinese rhyme – *Hoay Kim Chneh*

Appendix F Glossary of Hokkien words

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.4	Kodaly notation system	16
Table 6.1	The relationship between idiom of speech, metrical accent, rhythmic pattern and meter in Penang Chinese rhyme	158
Table 6.2	Summary of rhymes in their forms, meters, types and number of phrases	159

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 5.2.2a ‘Rock to’	90
Figure 5.2.2b ‘Rock fro’	91
Figure 5.3.1a one player’s little finger or last finger hooks the next player’s last finger and so on in a circle and the players shake their hands three times following the rhythmic chant.	95
Figure 5.3.1b & Figure 5.3.1c Hands are tapped three times with the left and right neighbour, holding the hands upright at the next phrase <i>Bom, Bom, Bom</i>	95
Figure 5.3.1d & Figure 5.3.1e Hands are clasped together and brought to the ears, left and right while the head is tilted at <i>Yes Sir, No Sir</i>	95
Figure 5.3.1f & Figure 5.3.1g Hands in rolling motion at <i>One two tali</i> and placed out (to represent water, cup, stone) at <i>zome</i>	96
Figure 5.3.2a Hands rolling fast at <i>one two tali</i>	97
Figure 5.3.2b <i>zome</i>	97
Figure 5.3.3a Zome	98
Figure 5.3.3b One	98
Figure 5.3.3c Zome	98
Figure 5.3.3d Two	98
Figure 5.3.3e Zome	98
Figure 5.3.3f ‘Stone’	99
Figure 5.3.3g ‘Cup’	99
Figure 5.3.3h ‘Water’	99

Figure 5.3.4a & Figure 5.3.4b	100
Players put one hand in the middle of the circle and starts to move the hand to and fro	
Figure 5.3.4c While singing the rhyme, the hand moves to and fro at every beat or syllable	100
Figure 5.3.4d While singing the rhyme, the hand moves to and fro at every beat or syllable	100
Figure 5.3.4e At the end of every phrase, the player must decide to place his hand either face up or face down at the last syllable such as ' <i>pong</i> ' in <i>tamong</i> and ah <i>pong</i> , <i>hai</i> and <i>sai</i>	101
Figure 5.3.5a ' <i>Chooi</i> '	102
Figure 5.3.5b ' <i>lor</i> '	102
Figure 5.3.5c ' <i>chooi</i> '	102
Figure 5.3.5d ' <i>peng</i> '	102
Figure 5.3.5e ' <i>peng</i> '	103
All players' feet are put forward. One player chants the rhyme and assigns players by pointing in rotation.	
Figure 5.3.6a All players walk towards the 'wolf'.	104
Figure 5.3.6b All players freeze when wolf turns his head.	105
Figure 5.3.6c Player starts walking towards the 'wolf' again and prepares to touch the wolf when he is unaware.	105
Figure 5.3.6d After touching the wolf, the players run back to starting line while the wolf tries to catch the player	106
Figure 5.3.6e The wolf catches the player and the player becomes the next wolf.	106
Figure 5.4.1a In <i>Jade jade semut</i> , all fingers are cupped together and children use both hands to play. The cupped hands are alternately placed or stacked on top of one other as though in a climbing motion. The hand on top is required to pinch the hand below	108

Figure 5.4.1b Stacking will become faster and faster as the longer the hand holds on, the longer the player has to endure the pain due to pinching	108
Figure 5.4.1c Repeat action on Fig.6.4.1b	109
Figure 5.4.2a hands in walking motion	110
Figure 5.4.2b Hands in walking motion	110
Figure 5.4.2c Hand motion mimicking picking up an orange	110
Figure 5.4.2d Motion mimicking eating an orange	111
Figure 5.4.2e hands in walking motion	111
Figure 5.4.2f hands in walking motion	111
Figure 5.5.1a Open fist	113
Figure 5.5.1b close fist	113
Figure 5.5.1c open palm	114
Figure 5.5.1d close fist	114
Figure 5.5.2a finger poking	115
Figure 5.5.2b finger walking	116
Figure 5.5.2c finger running	116
Figure 5.5.2d tickle under the armpit	116

MUSIC EXAMPLES

Example 4.3.1 The chanting rhythm of <i>Char Chee Kok</i>	66
Example 4.3.2 The chanting rhythm of <i>Cecukur</i>	66
Example 4.3.3 The chanting rhythm of <i>Cuk Cuk Umpi</i>	67
Example 4.3.4 The chanting rhythm of <i>Cuk Cuk Pin</i>	68
Example 4.3.5 <i>Jade-jade semut</i> (Climb climb ant)	69
Example 5.1.1 <i>Chau Mek Kong</i> (grasshopper) shows the rhythmic structure of the chant and the concept of 'call and answer'	85
Example 5.1.2: <i>Chau Mek kong</i> Rhythm of tapping	86
Example 5.1.3 <i>Hoay Kim Chneh</i> Rhythm of tapping	88
Example 5.2.1 <i>Oai nan oai Nan Oai</i> (Grinding)	90
Example 5.2.2 <i>Oai nan oai Nan Oai</i> (Grinding) Rhythm of rocking	91
Example 5.2.3 <i>Eh Lo Eh</i> Rhythm of rocking	92
Example 5.2.4 <i>Oong Ah Oong</i> (Golden child) Rhythm of rocking	93
Example 5.3.1 <i>Ye-ai, ye-ai, ye-ai, bom, bom, bom</i> Rhythm of hand movements	96
Example 5.3.2 <i>Ye-ai, ye-ai, ye-ai, bom, bom, bom</i> Rhythm of hand movements	97
Example 5.3.3 <i>Ye-ai, ye-ai, ye-ai, bom, bom, bom</i> Rhythm of hand movements	97
Example 5.3.4 <i>la la li la tam pong</i> Rhythm of hand movements	101

Example 5.3.5 <i>Chooi lor chooi peng peng</i> Rhythm of counting	103
Example 5.3.6 A E I O U Structure of rhythmic chant and rhythm of walking/running	107
Example 5.4.1 <i>Jade-jade semut</i> Rhythm of hand stacking	109
Example 5.4.2 <i>Hung-hung</i> (walking) Rhythm of hand movements	112
Example 5.5.2 <i>Cuk-cuk Umpin</i> (Poke the palm) Structure of rhythm of chanting or Rhythm of Finger movement	117
Example 5.5.2b <i>Cuk Cuk Umpi (Umpin)</i> Rhythm of finger movements	118
Example 6.1 <i>Jade-jade semut</i>	121
Example 6.2.1 <i>Jade-jade semut</i> Rhythm of hand movements	123
Example 6.2.2 “ <i>hung hung</i> ” Rhythm of hand movement	124
Example 6.2.3 <i>Eh Lo Eh</i> Rhythm of movement	126
Example 6.3.1 The rhythmic pattern of three words/syllables with rhyming words at the third placing (excerpts from <i>Gau Pooi</i>).	128
Example 6.3.1a The rhythmic pattern of two syllables with a rhyming word at the end.	130
Example of 6.3.1b The rhythmic pattern of a four syllables with rhyming word at the end (excerpts from <i>Tim Leng Geng</i> (Throw dragon eyes).	131
Example 6.3.2a dominant rhythmic pattern (crochet, crochet, minim)	132
Example 6.4 <i>Jade-jade semut</i> (Climb climb ants)	134

Example 6.5.1.a <i>Jade-jade semut</i> Rhythmic movement of hand stacking	136
Example 6.5.1.b rhythmic movement of <i>Cuk Cuk Umpi (Umpin)</i>	137
Example 6.5.2 A e, i, o, u,	138
Example 6.6.1 <i>Ye-ai, ye-ai, ye-ai</i>	139
Example 6.6.2 representation of note values in the rhyme <i>Chau Mek Kong</i>	140
Example 6.7.1 <i>Chau Mek Kong</i> (Grasshopper)	142
Example 6.8.1.a <i>Gau Pooi</i>	143
Example 6.8.1.b <i>Keh Poh Chee</i>	144
Example 6.8.1.c : <i>Hung hung</i> (walking)	145
Example 6.8.2.a <i>Chay It</i> (first day)	147
Example 6.8.2.b <i>Teochew Lang</i> (Teochew Society)	148
Example 6.8.2.c <i>Say Boh Chnee</i> (Second Wife)	149
Example 6.9.1.a Phrasing of A E I O U	150
Example 6.9.1b Non-symmetrical phrasing of <i>Say Boh Chnee</i> (Second Wife)	151

RIMA HOKKIEN DAN PERANAKAN PULAU PINANG : MENGAJAR KANAK-KANAK TRADISI KEBUDAYAAN, NILAI, KEMAHIRAN DAN PERKEMBANGAN AWALAN KANAK-KANAK DAN MUSIK

ABSTRAK

Apabila seseorang menyebut sahaja tentang rima, rima kanak-kanak seperti 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star atau Baa Baa Black Sheep' akan terlintas di fikiran seseorang itu. Di negeri Pulau Pinang yang terdiri daripada rakyat yang berbilang bangsa, agama dan kebudayaan, rima Hokkien Pulau Pinang terdiri daripada berbagai bentuk. Tesis ini mengkaji rima Hokkien dan Peranakan Pulau Pinang yang terdapat dalam pelbagai bentuk seperti lagu aksi, lagu nyanyian, lagu kerja, lagu dodoi, lagu permainan, lagu 'panggilan dan jawapan', lagu canta dan rima untuk menyampaikan cerita.

Rima Hokkien dan Peranakan ini dicanta untuk menyemai nilai sosial dan budaya, memaklumkan kepada orang ramai tentang pengajaran etnik dan moral dan juga menolong kanak-kanak dalam tumbesaran fizikal, emosi dan fisiologi. Kebanyakan rima dinyanyi dengan tujuan yang spesifik termasuk lagu dodoi untuk mengeratkan pertalian ibu-anak, lagu permainan untuk hiburan atau lagu untuk mengejek seseorang. Rima-rima ini adalah efektif apabila digunakan dengan betul, konteks yang spesifik dan dalam keadaan dimana tujuan asal rima ini dapat dicapai. Contohnya adalah seperti seorang kanak-kanak yang mendengar lagu dodoi nyanyian ibu semasa waktu tidur akan terasa selamat di pangkuan ibunya

Rima Hokkien dan Peranakan juga digunakan untuk mengajar kanak-kanak mengenai hari keramaian dan perayaan orang Cina serta nilai murni kekeluargaan sebagai satu usaha menyalurkan kebudayaan dan tradisi nenek-moyang. Perayaan ini dihuraikan secara panjang lebar dalam rima untuk menggambarkan suasana gembira perayaan. Sebahagian rima yang lain digunakan untuk memberi nasihat atau kritikan yang tidak disenangi, secara tidak langsung kepada masyarakat yang memegang nilai-nilai murni kekeluargaan. Rima yang mengandungi mesej yang (halus) tetapi penting adalah disalurkan dari satu generasi ke generasi lain secara verbal atau melalui tradisi oral. Rima Peranakan adalah lebih spesifik kerana mereka mengkomunikasi kebudayaan dan tradisi yang eklektik seperti bahasa Peranakan, makanan dan sebagainya.

Apabila rima kanak-kanak dicanta berkali-kali, perkembangan awal kanak-kanak dalam muzik dapat dipupuk. Kebiasaannya, rima terdiri daripada tema-tema yang senang difahami agar kanak-kanak dapat menjiwai tema-tema tersebut. Kebanyakan rima-rima ini mengandungi elemen-elemen yang kelakar supaya rima tersebut senang dihadamkan dan diingati. Kanak-kanak yang menghayati cantaan dan pergerakan rima sebagai 'permainan', mempelajari kemahiran perkembangan awal kanak-kanak seperti pergerakan motor, koordinasi mata dengan tangan serta bahasa/dialek. Tambahan, cantaan dan pergerakan juga menyediakan kanak-kanak dalam pembelajaran muzik awalan kanak-kanak terutamanya pembelajaran ritma. Semasa bercanta dan bermain sesuatu rima kanak-kanak, kanak-kanak akan lebih memahami elemen-elemen muzik,

konsep-konsep muzik dan juga memperolehi kemahiran dalam muzik seperti berjalan tepat pada bit dan bit tetap.

PENANG HOKKIEN AND PERANAKAN RHYMES : TEACHING THE YOUNG CULTURAL TRADITIONS, VALUES, EARLY DEVELOPMENTAL SKILLS AND MUSIC

ABSTRACT

When one talks of rhymes, nursery rhymes such as Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star or Baa Baa Black Sheep comes to mind. In Penang, Malaysia where people come from different races, religions and cultures, various types of rhymes exist. This thesis focuses on the Hokkien and Peranakan rhymes of Penang which can be categorized as action songs, songs for singing, work songs, lullabies, singing games, call and response songs, chanting rhymes and story telling rhymes.

Hokkien and Peranakan rhymes are chanted intentionally for cultivating social and cultural values, informing a society about moral upbringing as well as to help children grow physically, emotionally and psychologically. These intentions can be found in a lullaby for child-mother bonding, a game for having fun, or a song for teasing/entertainment. These rhymes will be effective when they are used in the correct manner, specific context and in a setting for which they are originally intended for. For instance, a child listening to a lullaby being sung by his or her mother who is preparing the child to go to sleep in the bedroom will feel his/her mother's warmth and feel emotionally safe.

Hokkien and Peranakan rhymes are also used to teach Chinese festivals, celebrations and family values as part of imparting culture and traditions of their forefathers. Festivals and celebrations are elaborated in rhymes to illustrate the joy of the festivities while some of the rhymes are used to give advice or

exemplify indirect criticism in a society that practices strong family values. Rhymes containing these subtle yet crucial messages are verbally passed from generation to generation as an oral tradition. The Peranakan rhymes are more specific as they mainly communicate the eclectic culture and traditions of Penang Peranakan such as the different Peranakan language, food, and others.

When nursery rhymes are recited repeatedly, early developmental learning and music learning can be nurtured. Normally, the rhymes constitute of local themes that were easy to comprehend so that the young can relate to them. Most of these rhymes contain funny elements so that they can be easily digested and remembered. The children who perceive the recitation and movement of a rhyme as 'play', learn developmental skills such as motor skills, hand and eye coordination as well as language/dialect. In addition, the recitation and movements prepare the child in music learning especially rhythm learning. While chanting and playing certain nursery rhymes, children will understand musical elements and musical concepts and can even acquire music skills such as stepping in time and steady beat.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Rhymes are forms of poetry or folksong which are found in all parts of the world. In the state of Penang where the Hokkien dialect is predominant, Hokkien rhymes are found in abundance. Other Chinese rhymes use the Hokkien, Teochew and Cantonese dialects. A large portion of the Hokkien rhymes is linked to the traditional values of the Chinese, including the Baba and Nyonya¹ of Penang.

The origin of the Chinese rhymes in Malaysia is vague. Except for the Baba and Nyonya-influenced rhymes that were created after the Chinese settled in the Straits Settlements, the origin of other Chinese rhymes is unknown.

The Chinese rhymes are meant for the old as well as the young. They are used with specific intentions such as to teach the young about their culture, moral upbringing, traditional values and the way of life.

Rhymes can also facilitate learning among the young since they provide fun and entertainment. Specific rhymes are recited during specific occasions as they have themes and sub-themes that are associated with intentions and purposes.

¹ The Baba and Nyonya or Peranakan are descendants of early Chinese settlers in the 18th century. These immigrants are of Hokkien descent and came from the Fukien province of China. To a certain extent they have adopted and assimilated to the culture and the way of life of the local Malays.

1.1 Research Focus

This research focuses on an analysis of Penang Hokkien and Baba Nyonya rhymes which play important functions such as the education of cultural traditions, values, music elements and skills among the young. This study analyses the texts, the rhyming and musical structures, the rhythmic patterns and the movements associated with rhymes of the Penang Hokkien and Baba Nyonya communities. The text analysis looks specifically at rhymes with different themes and messages.

What do the Penang Chinese rhymes portray and in what ways do they function in educating the young? This study shows that many Penang Hokkien rhymes educate the younger generation Chinese about culture and tradition. For instance, rhymes with Chinese New Year themes emphasize the importance of cultural and traditional practices such as family reunion and gathering. There are also rhymes with celebration functions which educate the young about the origins and significance of Chinese festivals or practices, which in turn encourage the continuity of Chinese customs and traditions.

Traditional moral practices that are widely accepted over time have become values and customs that are found in Penang Chinese rhymes. Rhymes that portray high family values such as fulfilling filial duties to parents are common and are passed on from one generation to another.

The Penang Chinese rhymes also educate the Chinese about the culture of the Penang Peranakan which is distinct and eclectic. The analysis further looks at how the rhymes have been localized in the Penang Baba Nyonya

community. Baba and Nyonya rhymes show a mixture of Malay and Chinese culture in the areas of language², material culture and artistic culture. In terms of language, there are rhymes which mix Malay and Hokkien, Malay and English and Malay and Cantonese. Many rhymes also portray the eclectic food of the Baba and Nyonya as well as the syncretic religious practices, beliefs, customs and social structure of a baba nyonya family. The practice of the dutiful daughter-in-law and 'status awareness' due to matrilineal residence in the past are examples of distinct Peranakan family values, which are shown in Peranakan rhymes.

Nursery rhymes which are chanted by the young or which accompany rocking movements, actions, fingerplay and games also assist in early childhood music learning as well as early learning. The texts, movements and 'play' elements contain information for early learning such as learning of order and orientation, gross and fine motor skills, language, concepts of space and time, social skills, music and many more. From chanting and singing, children can learn a language/dialect and also how to play a specific game or act out an action rhyme. From movement of the rhymes, children become aware of space and flow. Through body language, physical stimulation and touch, a child's emotional, social and psychological needs such as bonding, attachment, trust, love and security are fulfilled. Nursery rhymes also assist in the learning of customs and social values.

Additionally, I shall analyze the musical structures and forms of nursery rhymes which are sung to children, including babies. The movements accompanying rhymes such as clapping, tapping, leg rocking, running, and

² With the exception of Penang Baba and Nyonya whose mother tongue is the Penang Hokkien, the other Baba and Nyonya elsewhere have adopted a patois of the Malay language.

finger and hand movements are then related to the forms. The study elaborates on the rhythmic elements of the chants such as the steady beat, meter, rhythm and rhythmic patterns showing the differences and the distinctive qualities of each form. In some cases, the rhymes have their own unique characteristics.

The analysis on musical structures of nursery rhymes and movements is further related to early music learning. This exploration illustrates how the singing or chanting of rhymes combined with movement can enhance music learning, especially the learning of rhythmic elements such as steady beat, meter and rhythmic patterns and musical concepts such as musical forms, concept of fast-slow, getting faster and so on. The exploration includes analyzing movements such as the walking movement used to represent steady beats in crochets. However, the analysis of the melody of rhymes is kept to a minimum because of the melodic limitations of the rhymes.

1.2 Literature review

The literature review is based on four important aspects:

- i) the historical background of the Chinese in Malaysia,
- ii) cultural development of Chinese including the cultural history of the Baba Nyonya, and;
- iii) Chinese performing arts and
- iv) early music learning and pedagogy.

The article “Historical Background” by Yen Ching–Hwang in the book entitled *The Chinese in Malaysia*, (Lee Kam Hing and Tan Chee-Beng, 2000: 1-31) gives a history of Chinese immigration, covering three patterns of settlement and growth from the period of the Malacca Sultanate to the eve of the Second World War. His discussions include the development of the various Chinese communities, and the social organizations which provide support to the early immigrants. The writer focused on economic and political activities and the social and economic changes of the Chinese community. The writer cited nationalistic sentiments and growing ‘westernization’ and ‘baba-ization’ as reasons for growth of different cultural identities among the Chinese.

The next article “Socio-cultural Diversities and Identities” by Tan Chee Beng in *The Chinese in Malaysia*, (Lee and Tan, 2000: 37-70) gives a comprehensive and detailed explanation about the identities of each dialect group. He focuses on the Hokkien, Hakka, Cantonese, Teochew, Hockchiu, Kwongsai, Henghua, Hockchia including the Shanghainese and Tianjin people of Sabah. In terms of acculturation, he says that inter-ethnic interaction and the adaptation of Chinese to the social environment have resulted in diverse Chinese cultures. The different groups of Baba or ‘acculturated’ Chinese discussed are the Malay-speaking Baba of Malacca, the Peranakan Chinese of Kelantan who have their version of Hokkien, Kelantan Malay and also Thai and the Peranakan of Trengganu who speak fluent Trengganu Malay. From the perspective of education, there are the Chinese-educated, English-educated, and an emerging third group comprising the Malay-educated Chinese. The educational background influences the choice of religious preference between the Buddhist Theravada tradition for the English and Malay-educated, and the

Buddhist Mahayana tradition for the Chinese-educated. The writer showed that the Chinese in Malaysia are social-culturally heterogeneous in terms of dialect groups, educational background, literacy, religion and religious traditions.

The article “The Chinese Performing Arts and Cultural Activities” by Tan Sooi Beng in the book entitled *The Chinese in Malaysia*, (Lee and Tan, 2000) traces the development of cultural forms such as *bangsawan* (Malay song drama) and Baba plays which are favoured by the Straits Chinese. Other forms include the Chinese operas and puppet theatres which are favoured by the Chinese immigrants who came in the late nineteenth century. The writer explains that these traditional forms declined during the Emergency and in the post-independence period. However, since the late 1970s, there has been a revival. The liberalization of government policies in the 1990s has led the Chinese performing arts to reach professional levels.

In the essay entitled “From Syncretism to the Development of Parallel Cultures: Chinese-Malay Interaction in Malaysia” in the book *Music- Cultures in Contact* edited by Margaret Kartomi and Stephen Blum, (Tan, 1994), Tan Sooi Beng points out that the Chinese-Malay musical interaction in Malaya during the pre-colonial and colonial periods was towards adaptation and syncretism. The writer cited social and economic gains as the reasons for cultural changes. The writer also explained that today’s parallel divergent cultures have developed due to the rise of ethnic consciousness and government policies.

In relation to the research focus on early music learning, books that focus on pedagogy are explored to compare different pedagogical approaches and concepts that are used for music learning. The literature review on early childhood philosophers include the musical learning theory of Edwin E Gordon,

the basic ideas of Orff-Schulwerk, Dalcroze's Eurythmics and Kodaly's approach to music learning.

The book, *Learning Sequences in Music, Skill, Content, and Patterns; A Music Learning Theory* written by Edwin E. Gordon (1997 edition), comprises two main parts. Part one explains the theoretical basis of audiation³ and music learning theory. In doing so, it also covers skill learning sequence; tonal and rhythmic solfege; tonal content learning sequence; rhythmic content learning sequence; pattern learning sequence; and combining skill and content learning sequences. Part Two discusses the Practical Applications of the theory and explains how audiation skill is acquired, and how music learning theory can be applied to the sequential process of music instruction. The preparatory audiation section consists of three types of audiation namely acculturation, imitation and assimilation and their stages. Preparatory audiation is related to my research and is further explained in the area of steady beat and rhythm learning in chapter six.

Discovering Orff, a Curriculum for Music teachers by Jane Frazee and Kent Kreuter (1987) describes the basic ideas of Orff-Schulwerk. Part One of the book states the method which comprises the Orff Media, the Orff Pedagogy and the Orff Theory. It states how the elements must be interwoven to give musical competency. Part Two is about Orff-Schulwerk in practice and explains the sequence of skills and concepts for Grade One to Five in elementary school. The Orff Media mainly the speech, movement, dance⁴ and the two elements of Orff Pedagogy which are imitation and exploration are identified in

³ Audiation takes place when we hear and comprehend music for which the sound is no longer or may have never been physically present (Gordon, 1997: 11)

⁴ I have adapted 'play' as in the context of dance as playing is represented in some form of body movements or even finger/hand movements.

my findings in the Hokkien and Peranakan rhymes. The Orff media and pedagogy and their relation to the Orff Theory are explained in Chapter six.

The chapter on 'International Curriculum Developments' in the book entitled *Introduction to Music Education* by Charles R. Hoffer (1993: 114-132) discusses the similarities and differences of three important early childhood music philosophers such as Jacques-Dalcroze, Carl Orff and Zoltan Kodaly. Besides giving a brief background and development on the philosophers, there are also discussions on the characteristics of the three approaches.

Patricia Shehan Campbell's study on informal music education of American children in the book entitled '*Songs in Their Heads: Music and Its Meaning in children's lives*' (1998: vii) describes how music learning is transmitted in their social settings. She describes how 'musical plays' integrate the children in culture and express their ethnicities. The first section discusses her participant-observer role. She has observed and described that children use music when they 'play outdoor', enact stories with their toys, vent emotions, socialize and entertain themselves. The second section emphasizes the children's ideas on music such as the music that goes on in their head, the music they sing, their feelings towards music, the type of instruments they play music in school or at home and their families' influences on them. The findings are based on a set of Campbell's 'questions for the conversations' with children ranging from age four to twelve years of age. Section three summarizes the children's thoughts about music, their musical practices and the distinctive features of children's music. Shehan Campbell recommends that these views should apply in future music education at the last section of the book.

I could only find one booklet on rhymes in Penang. The booklet entitled *Hokkien Rhymes and Ditties 'Down Memory Lane'* by Raymond Kwok (July 2004) translates Hokkien rhymes to English. The compilation offers no more than an insight to Penang Hokkien rhymes. Some rhymes in the booklet contain brief explanations by the author as well as illustrations. However this booklet is not an indepth analysis of Chinese rhymes.

My study is different from the works above as I am looking at Chinese rhymes from the perspective of music, learning and ethnomusicology. I am most influenced by the article *From Syncretism to Parallel Culture* by Tan Sooi Beng and have adapted her ideas. Tan Sooi Beng's essay investigated the cultural and musical interaction between the Chinese and Malays during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. The writer also points out that Chinese held on to traditional symbols and emblems of ethnicity such as festivals, Chinese opera and Chinese orchestra music as they (the Chinese) felt threatened by national cultural policies which were introduced in the 1970s. Likewise, I have also related rhymes to traditional Chinese culture as well as cultural changes that have occurred among the Penang Chinese. By investigating syncretism in Penang Hokkien and Baba Nyonya rhymes, I am also looking at the various ways in which Chinese identities are reflected in these rhymes.

I have adapted Orff's basic ideas of using speech to analyze the music structure in rhymes. The analysis includes forms and their rhyming patterns, meters and rhythmic patterns. I have also adapted Orff's, Kodaly's and Dalcroze's idea of using speech, dance and movement to explain musical elements in nursery rhymes and how movement can be related to music for early music learning.

1.3 Research method

This research was conducted through literature survey, interviews, and participant-observation. I also participated in early childhood music programs especially those from the Muzikgarten (USA) program. I joined workshops such as Music Circle I, Family Music for Babies, Family Music for Toddlers, Cycle of Seasons, and Music Maker at the Keyboard. I also took part in the Laban based workshop, "Creative Movement for Young Children". Participation in teacher training for early childhood music programs provided me with good observation skills in children's needs. The different programs by Musikgarten offered modules of the different stages of child development and music learning. I learnt about these stages of child development including physical, emotional, social and musical development and related them to my findings. Participation in the music workshops also sharpened my analytical skills towards recognizing musical elements that are useful for music education.

My research started with literature survey and fieldwork. Literature survey was conducted in the University Sains Malaysia library, Penang State Library and Penang Heritage Trust. The literature survey was done so as to gather background knowledge of the subjects that were relevant to my research.

Rhymes were collected through interviews with different people including grandmothers who sing to their grandchildren. My main informant for Hokkien and Baba Nyonya rhymes is Madam Quah Chooi Lean, a Hokkien descendant and a Straits Chinese. Madam Quah is an English-educated fifty-eight-year old grandmother, a Penangite who lives in Pulau Tikus. She learnt rhymes from

her elders. Madam Quah, a modern nyonya, was influenced by the environment of 'Baba-ization' during her childhood years and especially after she married. According to her, when she was a child, the Peranakan performing arts such as *dondang sayang*, *joget* and *ronggeng* were performed in celebrations such as weddings and birthdays. Madam Quah also collected Nyonya ware, Shanghainese mother-of-pearl furniture and Nyonya beaded shoes. Madam Quah explained that in the past, the Nyonya had little formal education but were good at embroidery work and Nyonya cooking. She added that Nyonya culture such as culinary art, embroidery work and Nyonya dressing are dying traits.

My second source is Madam Teh Ah Hong, a first generation Teochew . Madam Teh, a retired teacher who lives in Mount Erskine, Penang learned Teochew rhymes from her mother. Madam Teh is also English-educated and speaks more Hokkien dialect and the English language. She explains that this is due to the environment in Penang where Hokkien predominates.

Ethnomusicologist Mantle Hood (1960:58) stated that an ethnomusicologist should be 'bimusical', that is be able to perform the music of his own culture as well as the music that he is researching. Nettl (1964:64) further wrote that the end result that is important is not the physical record but the ability and knowledge of a researcher in understanding a musical culture that he is researching.

During the visits to the informants, the role of observer-participant was tried out to fully understand the music and the deeper meaning of the practice of the rhymes. As a participant, I learned singing and chanting the rhymes and the physical movements that accompany each different rhyme from both the

informants, Madam Quah and Madam Teh. As a local Hokkien descendant, I have been singing the Hokkien rhymes as some of the rhymes were taught to me as a child. Learning the other dialect rhymes such as the Teochew and Cantonese rhymes took more effort. Although the rhymes do not sound strange altogether, the diction of the dialects had to be accurate.

Video and audio recordings were made to compare similar rhymes, which carry different lines and meanings. After the rhymes were collected, they were categorized to help decide the scope of study. This decision was initially a difficult task as the sample size was about 74 rhymes with different themes, messages, intentions and dialects. Thus, a general survey was conducted by comparing rhymes collected against a little booklet of rhymes called *Hokkien Rhymes and Ditties* by Raymond Kwok. The rhymes from the booklet which I found interesting and were in my scope of study were also added to my list. Lastly, the most common themes, messages and intentions were grouped together as they represent the interest of the people in the given society. For this study, I shall be focusing on the Hokkien and Baba Nyonya rhymes. Some Teochew and Cantonese rhymes will be compared.

Subsequent visits to the informants were to reconfirm the accuracy of diction, singing and movements that accompanied certain rhymes and the translation of the rhymes. The technique of unstructured interviews by Hood (1960:228) was used. The interviews allowed the informants to express freely their views regarding the usage of rhymes, customs and beliefs, taboos, cultural practices, traditions and the social history of Penang Chinese.

Samples of rhyme chanting with movements were documented through video recording, audio recording and photography for analyses. The video and audio recordings were made on the 24 October 2002 for the first informant with a sample size of 10 rhymes, 14 rhymes on the 8 November and 14 November 2002 for the second informant with a sampling size of 7. The information given by the informants were analyzed and further compared with existing literature so as to understand and validate the content and thematic values of some rhymes. The examples of rhymes in the audio recording and the movements in the video are used as samples for music analysis and notation.

1.4 Theoretical approach

My approach is anthropological in nature. This study focuses on the understanding of music as human behavior and that music is related to other aspects of culture such as social organization, economics, political structure, religion, dance and drama. This study also looks at the distinction between the uses and functions of music to understand deeper the meaning of music. Merriam says that 'when we speak of the uses of music, we are referring to the ways which music is employed in human society whereas functions refer to reasons for its employment and serve a broader purpose' (Merriam 1964: 210). In Penang Chinese rhymes, a specific group of rhymes can be used to advise the society on proper behaviour but the rhymes can actually serve a broader and more important function such as maintaining Chinese cultural identity.

Merriam's writing on the fourth function of music which is the function of communication has had a profound influence in shaping the direction of this theses. He has stated that "Music is not a universal language, but rather it is shaped in terms of the culture of which it is a part of. In the song texts it employs, it communicates direct information to those who understand the language in which it is couched. It conveys emotion or something similar to emotion, to those who understand its idiom (1964:223)". In relationship to this statement, the Penang Chinese rhymes can communicate direct information about the content. But the information can also be further analyzed to understand in depth the behavior of the people who have created or shaped the Penang Chinese rhymes.

Messages in rhymes do not only communicate information and impart knowledge, they are forms of 'self-expression' to those who understand the language. They express one's liking towards a particular type of food and describe the weather, a beautiful girl or a feeling that needs to be conveyed to others. For example, the rhyme titled '*Balitong*' (spiral shellfish) describes a favorite nyonya dish; '*Thnee or-or*' the dark weather; and '*Or kim, or kim*' the dark-skinned beauty.

Nursery rhymes of the Penang Chinese are good examples of rhymes which convey emotions in a unique way. They are recited with body movements to evoke the feeling of safety and contentment in babies. They inculcate interest for rhymes through play among older children. They create a unique situation for early learning as they communicate messages that adults want to teach and impart to children. At the same time, Dalcroze's Kinesthetic philosophy states that eurhythmics or movements such as walking and running

can be used to represent note value (Hoffer, 1993:116), thus imparting music learning.

Merriam also stated that 'it is in the song's text that the behaviour of man and its relationship with music can be understood. If music is shaped by the culture from which it derived, the music will then in turn shape and influence the society of that particular culture'(1964: 187). In this context, the song texts can tell us a great deal about the society. Rhymes portray the perception of the people, their views and the world that they live in. Cultural values are expressed, shaped, cultivated, refined and passed on. For example, the rhyme *eh loh eh* is used by the Chinese community to tell of a son's responsibility towards his father and family. When further analyzed, the rhyme plays an important function to inculcate the cultural value of filial piety in children. In other words, the norms, values and expectations that are important to a society are conveyed through rhyme messages and by doing so, the younger generation can and will be able to accept the 'teachings' of the elders.

Some rhymes carry hidden and explicit messages such as moral or cultural values that might be sensitive to be addressed directly to the younger generation. For instance, the subject of proper manners and behaviour is usually not discussed openly with a westernized daughter or son-in-law. Instead rhymes such as *Chow wa knia sai* (Daughter, son-in-law) are used for this purpose.

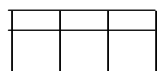
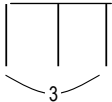





The musical analyses for this research are based on the systematic approach of Nettl (1964: 135). The systematic approach allows for all possible elements such as the form, the meter, the melody, the rhyming patterns and the rhythm to be discussed thoroughly. I am using this approach to analyze the

musical structure in detail. This approach will also be used to analyze the rhythmic elements of locomotive movements, body movements, upper torso movements, hand gestures and finger plays.

I will be using the stick notation⁵ (Table 1.4) to transcribe the note values because the majority of Penang Chinese rhymes do not show melody and harmony but rhythmic patterns and structures. Examples of the note values can be found in Katinka Scipiades Daniel's, Kodaly's Approach Workbook 1,2 and 3. The stick notation is chosen for this research as it has its many advantages. First, it is a type of musical shorthand that is easy and quick to read and write. Secondly, one does not need manuscript papers to write stick notation. The notation can also be easily converted to staff notation at a later stage.

Table 1.4

The stick notation

	4 semiquavers/sixteenth notes
	A triplet in quavers/eighth notes
	2 quavers/eighth notes
	1 crochet/quarter note
	1 crochet/quarter rest
	1 minim/half note
	1 minim/half rest

⁵ The stick notation is a trademark of the Kodaly method. The stick notation is often used in analysis and very early writing in the Kodaly method.

In the area of early music learning, I am influenced by early childhood music educators such as E. Jacque Dalcroze, Zoltan Kodaly and Carl Orff. All three philosophers strongly encouraged singing in the mother-tongue and the use of local folksongs in music education (Hoffer, 1993: 115-128).

Dalcroze's Eurhythmic⁶ approach will be explored to explain rhythmic movements that can be used for learning. Orff's approach that adheres to development of rhythmic understanding through chant, will be also be explored. Carl Orff also states that music learning should not be focused on music alone, but music must be related to movement, dance and speech (Frazee and Kreuter, 1987:14). In relation to the hypotheses that each functional form of nursery rhymes is different and unique in its own sense, movements can be represented in note value to show how they complement the rhymes. Kodaly's approach of using the musical contents such as a rhythmic or tonal pattern deriving from a song will also be discussed.

Gordon's music learning theory in the area of preparatory audiation is also employed to explain how music learning happened in the fields of rhythm and musical concepts. Gordon lists the preparatory audiation section as consisting of three types of audiation namely acculturation, imitation and assimilation. Gordon (1997: 237) states that during 'acculturation', a child goes through stages of absorption, random and purposeful response. In other words, a child engages with little consciousness what he hears and collects, then moves and babbles in response, but without relation to the sound of the environment. Later he only tries to relate movement and babble to the sounds of music in the environment.

⁶ Dalcroze's Eurhythmics means 'good flow rhythm'. The term is used to represent physical response or movements to music such as walking, running and jumping. For example, 'walking' represents a series of crochet or quarter notes and 'running', quavers/eighth notes.

During the 'imitation' stage, he sheds his egocentricity meaning that he recognizes that the babblings and movements do not match. He then 'breaks the code', which means he imitates the tonal and rhythm patterns with the sounds of music in the environment with some precision. Recognizing the lack of coordination between singing and breathing and between chanting and muscular movement, he coordinates his singing and chanting with breathing and movement.

1.5 Organization of Chapters

The first chapter contains the Introduction, the research focus, the literature survey, the theoretical approaches and the organization of the thesis.

The second chapter describes the background of the Penang Chinese. It traces the historical background of the Chinese immigrants and the distinct Penang Baba Nyonya society in Penang. It explains how Penang Chinese have been localized politically, socially and culturally.

In the third chapter, I analyze the rhymes which portray the cultural practices and traditions and rhymes which help to preserve the diverse cultural identities of the local Chinese. The theme and message of each rhyme is discussed in relation to the function. This chapter shows that the practice of local Penang Hokkien is part of retaining, sharing and continuing a cultural past from China.

The fourth chapter analyzes and describes the eclectic culture of the Penang Baba through their rhymes. It describes and discusses the cultural

aspects, beliefs, traditional customs, social structures, behaviour, economic activities, traditional celebrations, occasions and games. The analyzed rhymes show a Chinese culture which has acculturated itself with Malay, Western and Chinese elements.

The fifth chapter looks at the rhyming structure of a selected group of rhymes and the different basic musical structures. It further discusses the musical elements that can be taught; the form, meter, rhyming patterns.

In the sixth chapter, I analyze the forms and functions of nursery rhymes such as rhymes for chanting, rhymes for rocking, game rhymes, action rhymes and fingerplay. The meter and the rhythmic pattern associated with each type are discussed. The movement of each type of rhyme which is rhythmical is further analyzed and described with pictorial examples. The movement is then related to the forms and the functions of the rhymes. The chapter analyzes further how musical structure and movements can be combined to benefit music learning. Rhythm learning is the focus of this discussion as the Penang Hokkien and Baba Nyonya rhymes emphasize this aspect. It also describes the learning of musical skills that are associated with certain rhymes.

The seventh chapter is my conclusion of this research.

Chapter 2

Penang Chinese History and Culture

2.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at the history of Chinese immigration to Malaysia. As background to the thesis, I shall discuss the two main types of Chinese in Penang mainly the acculturated Peranakan and the Hokkien community. Similarities and differences in their cultural activities, celebrations, performances and religion will be highlighted.

2.1 History of the Chinese immigration to Penang

The Chinese first arrived in Malacca in the fifteenth century. Malacca's position as a thriving entrepot attracted Chinese traders who then chose to remain in Malacca to conduct their business. This small Chinese community comprised the first Chinese immigrants to Malaya.

It was in the nineteenth century that a large number of Chinese migrated to Malaya. Push factors such as poverty, overpopulation, natural calamities and local politics in China, and pull factors such as job opportunities in Malaya were the main reasons for the tremendous increase in the number of Chinese immigrants to Malaya (Yen, 2000:1). The Chinese immigrants were attracted by the possibility of achieving a better future compared to remaining in China.

In particular, Chinese immigrants were drawn to Penang because of trade and agriculture. The Chinese traders played important roles as middlemen in the distribution of European manufactured products and the collection of South-

East Asian produce for export to Europe. As an example, these traders would import textiles, machinery and consumer goods⁷ from European countries and export spices, gambier and tin from South-East Asia (Khoo Salmah, 2006 : 11). The founding of Penang as a free port by the British in 1786 further encouraged Chinese traders to settle on the island.

Apart from the usual trading activities, the Chinese in Penang were engaged in commercial agriculture. Chinese rural agricultural settlement developed in response to the demand for cash crops, such as pepper and gambier. Joint ventures between European and Chinese enterprises to plant pepper encouraged settlement (Yen. 2000:8).

The Chinese of Penang are predominantly of Hokkien descent. Their ancestors originated from the regions of Zhangzhou and Quanzhou and spoke the Hokkien dialect (Tan Chee Beng, 2000:39). The five great clans of Penang in the 19th century included the Khoo, Cheah, Yeoh, Lim and Tan clans. They set up *Kongsis*⁸ or Chinese Guilds' hailed from Fujian province and were Hokkien speaking immigrants (Khoo, 1996: 29). Other Chinese dialect groups in Penang include the Teochew, Cantonese, Hainanese, Hakka and Hockchew.

⁷An example of consumer goods from the West would include their crockery sets; plates, bowls, saucers. Appendix A shows pictures of 'Penang scenes' in plates, made in Germany but imported by British American traders. According to my main informant, these western wares were collected just as were the shanghai and batik wares during Colonial period.

⁸ Chinese guilds set up by immigrants for mutual benefit such as preserving the ancestral tablets of ancestors and worshipping deities. A *Kongsi* has many functions such as dispensing cash, educational aid and daily living to poor and aged clansmen and others. Other functions of a *Kongsi* can be found in *The Straits Chinese, A cultural History* (Khoo, 1996 : 29)

2.2 Types of Chinese

According to Chinese scholar Tan Chee Beng (2000:48), there are two categories of Chinese in Malaysia, the acculturated 'Peranakan Chinese' and the 'Pure Chinese'⁹. Peranakan Chinese, Baba or Straits Chinese are the terms used to refer to Chinese who speak a patois of Malay (such as the Baba in Malacca) and Chinese in other parts of Malaysia, who have acculturated to the Malay culture. Women are known as Nyonya and the elderly Nyonya are known as Bibik. In Penang, the Peranakan were descendants of the Babas of Malacca, the Chinese Peranakan of Sumatra and Chinese of Thai descent (Tan Chee Beng, 2000:50). Some intermarriage with the indigenous Malay people did occur but this was the exception rather than the norm. Peranakan men usually took brides from within the local Peranakan community. Peranakan families also commonly imported brides from China.¹⁰

According to Tan Chee Beng (2000:48), the 'Pure Chinese' refers to Chinese who are less influenced by the Malays or other regional cultures. They often write and speak Mandarin (Tan, 2000:56). In Penang, Hokkien culture and dialect predominate among non-Peranakan. Penang Chinese culture is therefore not homogenous portraying the different degrees of acculturation to local culture.

⁹ Term used by Tan Chee Beng (2000:48)

¹⁰ If a Chinese man took a Malay bride, he usually became assimilated into the Malay community and converted to Islam.

2.3 Penang Chinese Culture

2.3.1 Penang Peranakan Culture

The Penang Peranakan culture is eclectic, combining Chinese, Malay and other elements. Unlike the Peranakan of Malacca who speak 'Baba Malay', the Peranakan of Penang spoke 'Baba Hokkien'. The Hokkien dialect was the dominant language of early Chinese Penang settlers and other Chinese dialects like Cantonese Teochew and Hakka, were secondary. There were many reasons why Baba Hokkien rather than Baba Malay was spoken by the Penang Peranakan. Being a port settlement, Penang was influenced by the influx of Chinese immigrants who came in the early nineteenth century who were less influenced by the Malays (John R Clammer, 1980:8). Furthermore, Tan Chee Beng (2000:50) says that the Babas who had migrated from Malacca and settled in Penang had less contact with Malacca, which is why 'Baba Malay'¹¹ was not used extensively in Penang. British rule during the colonial period caused the Penang Peranakan to become very Anglicized and had also influenced their preference for the English language. During the colonial period, the main language adopted by the Peranakan was English while the 'Baba Hokkien' was also widely spoken.

The Peranakan of Penang still speak 'Baba Hokkien'¹² which is the Penang Hokkien that is being used today. 'Baba Hokkien' incorporates some

¹¹ Baba Malay is a patois of the Malay language. The forms of address expressing relationship are from the Hokkien dialect with the exception of some Malay words that are adopted. The language used many Chinese words which are not found in the Malay vocabulary (Khoo, 1996:109-110).

¹² As explained by Khoo Joo Ee (1996:112), the Baba Hokkien has a closer resemblance 'Tang Min' which means Hokkien with certain special features and influence from northern Chinese

Malay, English and other Chinese dialect words when sentences are formed. However, some words in Hokkien such as the use of *gua/wa* for 'I' and *kamchek* for 'no appetite' are borrowed from Baba Malay. The Penang Hokkien (otherwise known as the Northern Malaysian Hokkien) has a stronger Malay language influence and the style of pronunciation is somewhat Thai when compared to the Southern Malaysian Hokkien which has a stronger Teochew influence (Tan Chee Beng, 2000:46). Words borrowed from Malay society include *batu* (stone), *sabun* (soap), *buah ketiak* (armpit) (Tan, 2000: 46). Tan writes that the Penang Hokkien is actually an 'acculturated Hokkien' and may be considered a product of Malay and Thai influences on Chinese culture.

In the area of material culture, the Peranakan have combined elements from the Chinese as well as other cultures. The Peranakan Nyonya were influenced by Malay dressing¹³. In the early twentieth century, the Nyonya wore the *baju panjang*, which is a long tunic worn over a sarong and fastened with brooches (*kerosang*¹⁴) along with a pair of beaded shoes or *manik* shoes. By the 1920's the Nyonya started wearing the *sarong kebaya* which became the present day traditional dress of the nyonyas (Khoo, 1996:210). Baba men used to wear the traditional costume from China but switched to Western styled attire such as European leather shoes, waist coat with brass buttons and bow ties.

According to Julie Wong (2006:7), in the 1920s and 30s, the wealthy Peranakan had special ceramics known as Nyonya ware made for them.

speakers during the Tang period. Khoo also added that Penang Hokkien (which has assimilated many Malay words) is less related to standard Amoy used by the Sinkhek. Sinkhek refers to the Chinese immigrant in the early nineteenth century.

¹³ Pictures of Nyonya attire and jewellery can be found in the book entitled *Nyonya Flavours, a complete guide to Penang Straits Chinese Cuisine* (Julie Wong, 2006:7).

¹⁴ *Kerosang* is a three piece brooch-like jewellery and *sanggul* is a hair-style tied in a bun which uses a specific *sanggul* hairpin.

Nyonya ware such as the *Shanghai* and the 'blue and white *batik*' ware were of Chinese influence. These ceramics were used on special occasions, events and festivals according to Chinese calendar.

The Peranakan also favoured the Mother-of-Pearl furniture imported from China as the furniture showed off their status. Besides Nyonya ware, European crockery were also imported. (Julie Wong, 2006: 14). According to my main informant Madam Quah, the European crockery, which were decorated with gold trimmings, carried themes such as the 'English royalty' and 'Penang scenery'.¹⁵ See Appendix A for examples of European crockery.

Penang Nyonya dishes are examples of early fusion food.¹⁶ They make use of the abundant spices found in Malaysia. The influence of Southern Thailand has brought about hot and sour food and the technique of making spicy salads known as *kerabu*. Examples of famous *kerabu* are *kerabu kay khar* (chicken feet salad) and *kerabu hai thay* (jellyfish salad). Nyonya cuisine also includes Malay curries such as *gulai asam* (sour curry), *gulai lemak* (coconut milk curry), *gulai hu-thau* (sour fish head curry) and *Pulut*¹⁷/*Perut Ikan* (a hot, sour soup based dish with vegetables).

Malay influence has also brought about the abundant use of coconut milk in Nyonya cooking and the Nyonya *kuih*. *Kuih* are local cakes or desserts which are usually sweet. The Traditional Nyonya dishes and *kuih* are usually displayed during festivals and special occasions. For instance *angku* (red bean

¹⁵ See Khoo Joo Ee (1996:208-214) for details of the Peranakan's Malay style of clothings that changed with the fashion of the time.

¹⁶ The Peranakan were the first to adopt the Western ways. *Inchi Kabin* which is a Hainanese inspired fried Chicken is served with Worchester sauce and Mayonnaise. (Julie Wong, 2006: 7)

¹⁷ *Pulut* is the peranakan pronunciation for 'Perut' in 'Baba Hokkien'. The dish is called fish stomach. However in the present day cooking the fish stomach is no longer the main ingredient in the dish.