THE MALAY ELEMENT IN MELANESIAN PIDGIN

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Mi laik askim olsem: hamas tok bilong tok ples Malay ol i bin pulim i kam insait long Tok Pisin pinis? Orait mi bin kaunim sampela buk ol i lainim Tok Pisin long en na mi bin lukim sampela tok i olsem hap tok Malay tasol. Mi laik makim dispela tok na yupela ken lukim na tingim gut. Nau sampela hap tok Malay i stap insait Tok Pisin. Tasol ating bihain ol manmeri ol i pulim sampela moa Tok Inglis i kam insait Tok Pisin na ol i lusim sampela hap Tok Malay. Em tasol.

In the history of Melanesian Pidgin as it is spoken in Papua New Guinea, when we refer to 'Malay' contacts in the past, the term 'Malay' is not clearly defined: it may refer to people who were ethnically Malays—who spoke Malay daily as their mother tongue—or to people who came from an area of what is now Indonesia, but west of Irian Jaya (formerly West Irian), and who spoke a form or dialect of Malay as their second language for the purpose of trade (including slave-trade) or evangelisation—both Islamic and Christian. Rowley (1972: 53) gives data on these early contacts which start from as early as the fourteenth century A.D. and are still made much later, in the nineteenth century, when trading posts were established along New Guinea's north coast by 'Malays' who were probably people inhabiting the eastern part of Indonesia, i.e., Ceramese, Ternatans, and other 'Malay' adventurers. The latter seem to have gone as far as the coasts of eastern New Guinea and the islands of the Bismarck archipelago long before the nineteenth century. Chinese traders travelled along the routes these 'Malays' had followed (Rowley 1972; 54-57).

Dutch control since 1828 over the Western half of the island, which was then named Dutch New Guinea, further intensified the use of Malay in that area, where Malay had become the established lingua franca, particularly in the coastal districts, where Malay instead of Dutch had become propagated in education, mission work, and trade. In this connection, native mission workers from the christianised areas of Eastern Indonesia, i.e., the Moluccas, who spoke a dialect of Malay so-called 'Ambonese Malay', became engaged in further baptising the native population of Dutch New Guinea. With the take-over of Dutch New Guinea by the Indonesians in 1963 Bahasa Indonesia became legalised as the official state language, and its popular use in that area has been on the increase ever since.

As for the influence of Malay on the languages spoken in the eastern half of New Guinea island, no historic records are available; judging from what has been retained in current Melanesian Pidgin, this influence must be considered minimal. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to find out what had been transferred from Malay. Whether Malay structure
or certain features of it had also become part of Melanesian Pidgin syntax needs also to be investigated. Since Melanesian Pidgin structure is derived from the structure(s) of Melanesian languages spoken in Papua New Guinea, such a comparative research requires the knowledge of both Malay and Melanesian linguistics. For the purpose of this discussion I prefer to limit myself to the Malay lexicon which has become part of Melanesian Pidgin. [Editors note: In the discussion which follows I have included citations for Melanesian Pidgin words and their English glosses only where these are taken from some work other than that of Mihalic (1971).]

Some Data

In the current Melanesian Pidgin (hereafter referred to as MP) dictionaries, words marked as of Malay origin represent a minor part of their vocabularies. Professor Hall (1943: 9) has stated that "only 12% of the vocabulary is of non-English origin: 10% is derived from non-European (Melanesian, Polynesian, Malay, etc.), 1% is derived from German, and a scattering of words are from Romance and other sources". Dialectal variations both in Malay and in Melanesian Pidgin have enhanced diversification of adopted words, e.g., MP kasang from Malay kacang 'peanut' (Arachis hypogea) reportedly occurs commonly as kansang in the Morobe District of Papua New Guinea; the Malay watercress kang-kung (Ipomoea reptans) described as "a vine which grows in water holes and whose leaves are used as greens" occurs either as kango or kanggo or as kangko (Murphy 1966: 73). I have been informed that in the Rabaul area the names "kangkong" or "kangkung" are more prevalent. It is interesting to note that MP kongkong is glossed as the species Xanthosoma sagittifolium and commonly named 'taro kongkong' or 'Singapore taro'.

Other names from the Malay flora that have been incorporated into MP in this way are: MP mambu 'bamboo, flute, pipe', derived from Malay bambu (species of Bambusa); MP rotan from Malay rotan 'rattan' (Calamus sp.); MP yati from Malay jati 'teakwood' (Tectona grandis); MP yambo from Malay yambi 'guava' (Psidium guajava) with two other 'Malay apple' species referred to as laulau or lolo (Yambosa gomata) and ai'ai (Yambosa malaccensis); MP mango via English from Malay mangga (Magnifera indica); and MP kopi most likely from English, with its Malay equivalent kopi 'coffee' MP sayur (Malay sayur) vegetables;² MP kapok (Malay kapok) 'kapok' (Ceiba pentandra) or 'cotton'; MP lombo (Malay lombok) 'red pepper' (Capsicum annuum) or 'capsicum'.

Direct transfer from Malay without semantic change occurs in the following cases: MP bliong (Malay bliong, beliong or beliung) 'hatchet' and MP klambu (Malay klambu or kelambu) 'mosquito net'.

A semantic change occurs in the following cases: Malay atap 'roof', occurs in MP as 'sagopalm fronds used for roofing' and in the Gazelle Peninsula (hereafter referred to as Gaz.) as 'kunai grass thatch'; Malay tiang 'pole', means in MP also 'a crotch' or 'a fork post used in building'; binatang a generic term in Malay for all animals, occurs in MP as 'bug, insect' and 'all small animals and creeping things except snakes', e.g., binatang bilong saka 'sago grub worm' and binatang bilong wokim umben 'spider' (Murphy 1966: 119); Malay pahit 'bitter' occurs in MP as pait 'bitter' but also as 'to have a sharp taste, to have a disagreeable taste, poisonous', e.g., marasini pait 'the medicine is bitter' (see also pait 'bitter, hot' (Healey n.d.: 228), e.g., i pait 'hot' (as curry)
or 'something of sharp, sour taste' (Steinbauer 1969: 136); Malay mandor 'foreman, over-seer', occurs in MP also as 'spokesman, leader'; and Malay krani 'clerk', occurs in MP as 'a Malay trader' or 'a storekeeper' or as 'a Malay' (Murphy 1966: 77). An interesting case of semantic change occurs in MP tandok (Malay 'horn'-of cows, goats, deer, etc.), but in MP somehow must have been associated with English 'horn (trumpet)' and acquired the meaning of 'the signal for beginning and/or ending work for meals, for school or church'.

There are instances in which a MP word is not readily detectable as a Melanesian pidginisation of a Malay word, e.g., MP amamas meaning 'joy, gladness, delight, honour, to be proud of, in a good sense (as opposed to hembak), praise, to be happy, to rejoice about something, to boast, to flirt, to attract attention'. Amamas can also occur as hamamas (Healey n.d.: 130) in which case the initial h is often dropped (Steinbauer 1969: 68) a common feature also in 'bazaar Malay' as it is spoken as a trade vernacular. This word could be thought of as being a pidginisation of Malay hormat or ormat 'honour'. Other instances are the following: MP kanda 'cane, rattan, a species of Calamus' which is the Gazelle word for 'rattan' could as well be derived from Malay gada 'stick or club', through phonological adjustment of /g/ → /k/ and the prenasalisation of the /d/; MP kaskas 'scabies', with its Malay cognate kadas 'scabies'; MP kambang 'lime, slaked lime chewed with betelnut, a gourd in which lime is carried for betelnut chewing' has its cognate in Malay gamping 'lime';3 MP kalang 'earring, the long feather of a bird, the goldlip shell' could be derived from Malay kalang 'circle, cylindrically shaped', (Poerwadarminta 1959: 289), otherwise kalang is referred to as a Gazelle word; MP barit or baret 'stream, small river, ditch, furrow, rut, groove, wrinkle, corrugation' cognate with Malay parit 'ditch', while baret occurs in Malay as 'laceration' (Echols and Shadily n.d.: 37), while an apparent variation MP parut (Murphy 1966: 86) occurs as 'valley, drain, water race, gully, canal'; MP panggal 'coco-leaf, sago-leaf', are apparent derivations from Malay pangkal 'the beginning, the base, the starting point (of growth)', (Wojowasito and Poerwadarminta 1967: 162).

Words whose Malay cognates are easier to detect are the following: MP tangir 'tuna' (Cybium) has a cognate in Malay tenggiri or tengiri (op. cit.: 240) and Poerwadarminta 1959: 786) with the same meaning; MP kurita 'octopus' or wurita, (Murphy 1966: 140) finds a cognate in Gaz. urita and Malay gurita 'octopus' (Echols and Shadily n.d.: 135).

Transfer via European languages has occurred, e.g., in MP nanas (Murphy 1966: 52) via German ananas 'pineapple' (Ananas sativas) from Malay nanas or nenas (Echols and Shadily n.d.: 254) MP nanas occurs also as nanis (Murphy 1966: 84) which suggests that this could be a direct transfer from Malay rather than via German. From English or maybe via Dutch, e.g., kakatu (Malay kakatua) 'cockatoo, parrot', while in Dutch it occurs as kakatoe or kakatoe 'a parrot species from the Australian area with a strong beak' (Koenen and Endepols 1956: 482). Similar to Malay, the derived meaning of kakatu is in MP 'pincers, a multigrip or a shifting spanner, the vulva', and in Dutch 'big pliers' (Koenen and Endepols 1956: 483). Another word is MP karabay (Hall 1943: 102) or karabu (Murphy 1966: 73) 'waterbuffalo' from Malay kerbau 'water-buffalo' (Bubalus caffer) or in Dutch as karbouw (Koenen and Endepols 1956: 494).
There are words in MP which could have been introduced either from Malay or from one of the Austronesian languages spoken in Papua New Guinea, i.e., MP talinga an 'edible mushroom' (the shape of which can be associated with the shape of an ear) with cognates in Malay telinga and in Tolai (Gaz.) talinga 'ear'; MP susu 'milk, breast, udder, nipple', also 'the ear of a bag or sack' with cognates in Malay susu 'milk, udder, breast, nipple', and in Tolai susu 'milk'; MP mal 'genital string, loincloth' (Murphy 1966: 80) with cognates in Tolai mal 'clothes', Polynesian malo 'loin garment', (Walsh and Biggs 1966: 58), Malay malu 'ashamed'; MP matmat 'graveyard' with cognates in Tolai (Gaz.) mat 'to die', Polynesian mate 'to die' and Malay mati 'to die, dead'; MP tuptup 'cover, lid' presumably from Tolai tuba 'to cover' with a Malay cognate tutup 'cover, lid, to cover, closed'; MP limbur 'to amuse oneself, also a walk, a stroll, an outing, a hike, to take a walk, to go on an outing, to stroll leisurely, to move slowly...as of clouds, birds, animals, etc.' also 'leave, holiday, day off, recreation, to spend a day off', with cognates in Malay libur 'holiday, being idle', and in Tolai libur 'to play, to amuse oneself'; MP mumu 'earthen oven' from Polynesian umu or imu 'earth-oven', with sumur 'hole in the ground, artesian well', as a cognate in Malay.

In certain cases the Malay origin of the word is doubtful, i.e., MP arere 'edge, border, side, boundary, limit, alongside, along, to wait for, to lie in wait for, to lie in ambush for' has no apparent cognate in Malay. The same holds for MP kuskus 'clerk, secretary, book-keeper, tree-kangaroo, cuscus'; and MP manki 'boy, uninitiated boy, school boy, errand boy, male servant' (Mihalic 1971: 130 with the note "introduced by Malay traders", sic!), 'a male native child, native youth' (Murphy 1966: 81), monkey (Steinbauer 1969: 114).

Conclusion

The above mentioned data give us the range in which Malay vocabulary has been incorporated into Melanesian Pidgin. A number of loanwords represent plant names while the remaining can be distributed over several categories ranging from objects or utensils for daily use, e.g., 'mosquito net, roof, hatchet', to social functions, e.g., 'foreman, clerk, trader'.

With regard to the plant names, certain plants such as coffee were new to Papua New Guinea (Ryan 1972(1): 192), but since Papua New Guinea and Indonesia share more or less the same climate, many plants would be found in both areas. It seems reasonable to assume that many of the objects and plants whose Pidgin names appear to be of Malay origin were originally referred to by their diverse local names, and acquired their Malay names only when they were drawn into the sphere of early barter or trade with the Malays. In a sense, Malay served as a unifying factor in the inter-tribal language relations, which is precisely the role English has fulfilled in the formation of Melanesian Pidgin.

No linguistic colony of Malay has ever been created in the area of Papua New Guinea (something that did happen in Eastern Indonesia). This is due to the fact that in the area of Papua New Guinea contacts between Malay speakers and the indigenous population were limited to irregular visits; there is no evidence of permanent settlement. In contrast with British, Australian and German involvement in the administration of Papua New Guinea, the early control of 'Malay' sultans over a few coastal
areas in the northern part of the island was merely tributary. This did not need a bureaucratic system of foreign officers stationed in the subject areas.

To explain the phonological change in Malay loanwords one may hypothesise that the 'Malays' who introduced Malay words into Melanesian Pidgin spoke dialects of Malay or their respective regional languages and probably introduced words already in their dialectal form, e.g., lombo (Malay lombok) 'chilli pepper'; MP sayor (Malay sayur) 'vegetable(s)'. In several Malay dialects /o/ and /u/ in a number of Malay words are phonemically non-distinctive.

With relevance to evangelisation, it is noteworthy that whereas Melanesian Pidgin has incorporated religious words, even from Fijian, e.g., lotu 'worship' and talatale 'Protestant' which were brought into Papua New Guinea by Fijian evangelists, no trace can be found of Islamic vocabulary in Melanesian Pidgin, despite the fact that early 'Malays' who came from Ternate, Tidore and Bachan Islands were Moslems. In an isolated case such as in MP yakabor! 'an exclamation of surprise' one could suggest the pidginisation of Ya, Allahu Akbar! 'Oh, Allah is Great!' often expressed by Moslems also as an exclamation of surprise.

In daily usage the MP words derived from Malay rank competitively with their equivalents derived from English or the respective local tongues, depending upon the locality where MP is spoken. Examples are: kasang or pinat or galip (Gaz.);

- 'pineapple' ananas or painap; 'pipe' mambu or paip; 'cover' tuptup or karamap; 'hatchet' biong or tamok or plangis; 'water-buffalo' karabau or bitk; 'cotton' kapok or katen; 'holiday' limbur or holide; (Steinbauer 1969: 66) 'mosquito net' klambu or taunam. We may assume that in New Ireland, for instance, where taunam is a local word, this word will be preferably if not exclusively used instead of klambu. "Melanesian Pidgin is not a stable language and has a natural indecision in the placing of the words", (Murphy 1966: ii). This statement holds for its lexicon as well as the further coinage of new vocabulary. English as the main supplier of lexical terms will influence MP most in its future development. There is a definite correlation between the spread of MP and English through schooling and the modern public means of communication (Oliver 1973: 188). With its increasing orientation toward English, it is probable that words derived from Malay which so far have been retained in MP will in due course be replaced by English derivates, and ultimately will become archaic. Even local words may ultimately have to give way to English substitutes. Thus, an account of this anglicisation of MP which seems unavoidable. Before long a standard form of Melanesian Pidgin which at present contains many local variations, may become reality.

Notes

1 According to another text MP kongkong can be used to mean 'Chinaman' or 'Malayan' (Murphy 1966: 76). 'A Malay' or 'an Indonesian' occurs also as Malai (Steinbauer 1969: 110).

2 Note: deviating from its meaning in Malay, sayor is glossed as 'greens (esp. hibiscus)'; (Hall 1943: 115).

3 In Tinata, a dialect in the Gazelle Peninsula, 'lime' is listed as kabag (Waterhouse 1939: 37).

Galip 'the Tahitian chestnut' (*Canarium polyphyllum*) is not identical to 'peanut' which is otherwise indicated with *galip bilong giraun* (ground-galip) (Murphy 1966: 67).

References


