

THE PORTUGUESE CREOLES OF MALACCA

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Abstract. Papia Kristang is spoken by several hundred people, including children, in south-western Malaysia. It was previously thought to be extinct until he found several hundred speakers in Malacca, in Malaysia. On the basis of fieldwork undertaken in Malaysia, and in correspondence with a native speaker, Mr. Nicholas Nunis since then, he has compiled the outline presented here.

Although the Portuguese withdrew from Malaya more than 350 years ago, there still exists today in the town of Malacca (now spelt *Melaka*) a substantial Eurasian population calling itself Portuguese, and speaking a creolized variety of that language. These are the descendants of the early Lusitanian settlers, who from the very beginning intermarried with the local Malays, as well as with the Indians and Chinese¹. Nowadays, bound by common speech, occupation (mainly fishing) and the Catholic faith, the tendency is for the Malacca Creole Portuguese to marry amongst themselves; there are no longer any Creoles of unmixed Portuguese ancestry.

The Eurasian population of Malaysia is estimated to be *ca.* 11,000. Not all of these are Portuguese Eurasians, whose total has not been ascertained; however their present number is probably between 2,500 and 3,000, despite reports that the community became dispersed during the first half of the last century and its language lost².

¹ There was also intermarriage between Dutch seamen and the local Malacca women during the period of Dutch occupation; several Dutch family names survive among the Creoles: van Heusen, van Gezel, Spykerman, etc.

² For example in Marius Valkhoff, *Studies in Portuguese and Creole* (Johannesburg, 1966), p. 71, "Malayan Portuguese on Java... has disappeared in the course of our century, even before World War II, so that it is not impossible that the same fate befell the Creole of Malacca;" Keith Whinnom, 'The Origin of the European-based Creoles and Pidgins', *Orbis*, 14, 509–527 (1965), on p. 514: "the Portuguese contact dialect of Malacca, *malaqueiro*... became extinct in this century," and W. Giese, 'Algunas Notas sobre la Situación del Español y del Portugues en el Extremo Oriente', *Orbis*, 12, 469–475 (1963), on p. 474, "In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Portuguese was widely spoken in India and Southeast Asia. Today it is limited to Macao, Timor, and some parts of India" (trans.). The language is not mentioned at all in C. F. and F. M. Voegelin's survey of the world's pidgins and creoles (in *Anthropological Linguistics*, 6, 39–71 (1964)).

On August 1st 1509 five Portuguese ships landed at Malacca under the command of Admiral Diogo Lopes de Sequeira. This was the first instance of contact between Europeans and the inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula. Initial friendliness on the part of the local population soon gave way to hostility and mistrust – a state of affairs which, due to cruel treatment by the Portuguese, was to remain for the whole period of their occupation of the area. In 1511 the nobleman Alfonso de Albuquerque landed at Malacca with 19 ships, the crew comprised of 800 Portuguese and 600 Indian soldiers. They stayed three months and erected a fort – a fort so well constructed that despite its having been attacked 20 times during a period of over 120 years, not once was it ever taken. At this time, Malacca had a population of some 20,000, of whom about one third were Portuguese or of Portuguese stock. The town welcomed vessels of all nations (excepting Arab ships), and from their base there the Portuguese continued their exploration of the Far East.

In 1580 Portugal became part of the Spanish Empire under Philip II, but despite added naval strength from the Spaniards they were not sufficiently powerful to keep the Dutch, who also had interests in the East and with whom they were now at war, at bay. The Portuguese were defeated in two sea battles (1606 and 1608) in the Straits of Malacca, although at this time the town itself had not yet been taken. In 1635 the Dutch started regular patrols in the Straits, in order to waylay all ships entering and leaving Malacca. In a few years the town had become so weak that it was quite vulnerable to attack; consequently in July, 1640 2,000 Dutch soldiers landed there and starved the Portuguese out. The latter eventually surrendered on December 1st that same year. They were not, however, massacred, but allowed to leave quickly and settle in other Portuguese colonies in the East such as Goa and Diu. Only a handful of Portuguese and Portuguese Eurasians were left in Malacca.

The Dutch held the town until 1795, a period of 155 years. Under them it did not prosper, and by the end of their rule the population had decreased to 15,000.

The British took over in 1795, but the Dutch returned in 1818 in an attempt to re-establish their trade in the area. In 1824 however, a treaty was drawn up between the Dutch and the British whereby Singapore and the Malay Peninsula was to come under British rule, and the island of Riau (earlier spelt Rhio or Rhiow, and also known as Pulau Bintang) was to go to the Dutch. The whole of Malaya remained a British colony until independence – Měrdēka – in 1957 when it was renamed Malaysia.

In English, the Malacca Creoles call their language *Portuguese*; in their own language it is known as *Papia Kristang* (*i.e.* ‘Christian Speech’) or simply *Kristang*, by which name the Creoles also call themselves. In metropolitan Portuguese *Papia Kristang* has been called variously *Malaqueiro*, *Malaquense*, *Malaques* and *Malaquenho*, while in Malay, at least colloquially, it is sometimes

rather disparagingly referred to as *Bahasa Gěragu*³. It survives in two communities in the Malacca area, Trangkérã and the nearby so-called Portuguese Settlement, an area covering several acres fronting the sea, administered by the local Catholic church of St. Peter's, and originally set aside for the Creoles many years ago by the then resident priest Father A. M. Coroado. Creoles still refer to the Settlement as the *Chang di Padri* or *Padri sã-Chang* (i.e. 'Priest's Ground') although its official name is Hilir (in Portuguese, *Ilher*). Papia Kristang also survives to a lesser extent in other Malaysian towns where Creoles have settled. According to Schuchardt, a Creole speaking community was established further north in earlier years on the Kedah coast⁴. There is no evidence of this today.

Although the language is still fairly vigorously alive in Malacca, the tendency is for it to be employed less by those living outside the settlements. Children resulting from out-marriage do not as a rule learn Kristang unless they grow up in Malacca. It has traditionally not been written⁵, and at the present time no use is made of it in education, broadcasting, or the Church⁶.

Papia Kristang has its origins in the early Portuguese lingua franca or "Low Portuguese" which probably originated in the fifteenth century on the West African coast. This trade contact language, itself possibly developing from the earlier Mediterranean Sabir⁷, was carried by Lusitanian seamen to the Near and Far East, and to Central and South America. Modern descendants of the Portuguese lingua franca survive in various parts of the world, more or less influenced structurally and lexically by the coexistent indigenous languages⁸.

The dialect spoken in Malacca belongs to the Malayo-Portuguese subgroup of the Lusoasian (Portuguese lexifier) creoles, and is perhaps the most conservative of its existing members, having been out of contact with metropolitan Portuguese

³ I.e. 'Prawn Language'. Malay *gěragu* or *gěragau* (PK *grágu*) is the name of a type of prawn of which the Creoles are particularly fond. Equally disparaging is the Malay name applied to the population, viz. *Orang Gěragu*, "prawn people." More formally in that language the Creoles are referred to as *Sěrani* "Christians" (< *Nazarene*).

⁴ See Hugo Schuchardt, Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Kreolischen; Romanisch V: Allgemeineres über das Indoportugiesische, *Zeitschrift für Roman. Philolog.* XIII, 476–516, 1889, p. 478.

⁵ Except by isolated individuals, including linguists and Portuguese missionaries. The latter generally employ some modification of Portuguese orthography.

⁶ At the time of writing, sermons are being given in Malacca in Macao Creole Portuguese by a visiting priest from that island. The older variety of Macao Creole is sufficiently similar to Papia Kristang to be intelligible. In contrast, until the government relocated them to other parts of the city, the Creole community in Singapore attended regular mass said in the mother tongue at their own church of St Joseph's.

⁷ See R.W. Thompson, 'A Note on some Possible Affinities between the Creole Dialects of the Old World and those of the New', *Creole Language Studies*, 2, 107–113 (1961).

⁸ For a complete survey of these, see the writer's 'A Survey of the World's Pidgin and Creole Languages' (with map), in Dell Hymes (ed.), *The Pidginization and Creolization of Languages* (Cambridge University Press, 1975).

for over three and a half centuries. Despite this, the non-Portuguese derived lexical content of Papia Kristang is comparatively small.

Other dialects belonging to the Malayo-Portuguese group include those of Singapore⁹, Korlai¹⁰, Macao¹¹ and Hong Kong¹². In earlier years similar varieties were spoken in Djakarta, Tugu, Flores, Ceram and other East Indian communities, but today these have given way to Malay or other Indonesian languages. The so-called Malayo-Spanish languages of the Philippines have been shown to be a development from an earlier Malayo-Portuguese contact vernacular¹³.

Less closely related to Papia Kristang are the Creole Portuguese dialects belonging to the Indo-Portuguese group, which were spoken in many towns along both coasts of India, and in Sri Lanka¹⁴. Indo-Portuguese once supported a flourishing literature – mostly of a religious nature – but today its speakers are few. It has nevertheless had considerable influence upon Malacca Creole since not only did it probably contribute to the formation of the Malayo-Portuguese dialects, which were established at a later period, but it has continued to exert a marginal influence upon it up to the present day due to limited social traffic between the two areas.

The orthography employed here is based upon that currently used for Malay, with the exception that Malay e-breve (ĕ) for [ə]¹⁵ is written /ă/. This has the advantage of being a spelling system with which most Papia Kristang speakers are already familiar, and may easily be used since the phonological systems of the two languages are broadly speaking identical.

Papia Kristang has eight vowels, only six of which are contrastive¹⁶. These are /i/, /e/-/ɛ/, /a/, /ɔ/-/o/, /u/ and /ə/. For some speakers there is a certain amount of free variation between /i/ and /e/, and /o/ and /u/. Phonetically, /ə/ is articulated as a

⁹ For specimens of Singapore Creole Portuguese, see Adolfo Coelho, “Os Dialectos Românicos ou Neolatinos na Africa, Asia e América”, *Boletim da Soc. de Geografia de Lisboa*, 2, 129–196 (1880–1), 3, 451–478 (1882) and 6, 705–755 (1886). As in Malacca, this dialect is called *Kristang*.

¹⁰ See J. C. Clements, *The Genesis of a Language: The Formation and Development of Korlai Portuguese*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1996.

¹¹ For an outline of Macao Creole Portuguese, see Graciete Batalha, “Estado Actual do Dialecto Macaense”, *Revista Portuguesa da Filologia*, 9, 177–213, 1959.

¹² See R. W., “O Dialecto Português de Hong Kong”, *Boletim de Filologia*, XIX, 289–293 (1960).

¹³ See Keith Whinnom, *Spanish Contact Vernaculars in the Philippine Islands* (Hong Kong University Press, 1956).

¹⁴ See Dalgado, S.R., *O Dialecto Indo-Português de Ceylão* (Lisbon, 1900) and for Changes since then, Ian Russell Smith, *Sri Lanka Creole Portuguese Phonology*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, 1977.

¹⁵ In recent years the official Bahasa Melayu orthography has done away with the e-breve /ĕ/ symbol, employing only /e/.

¹⁶ There are two words where (e) and (ɛ) are contrastive, viz. *pétu* ([pɛtu]), ‘chest, breast’, and *pétu* ([petu]), ‘near’ (Ptg. *peito* and *perto*).

half-close back vowel with lip spreading, especially in final position; otherwise it is articulated in mid-central position.

The consonants are /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /ch/, /j/, /k/, /g/, /f/, /s/, /z/, /m/, /n/, /ng/, /ny/, /l/, /r/, /w/ and /y/. Plosives are unaspirated in all positions, and /l/, /r/, /t/, /d/ and /n/ tend to be slightly retroflexed, especially by elderly Creoles. As in Malay orthography, Papia Kristang /ng/ represents [ŋ] [ŋg] and [ŋk] being written <ngg> and <ngk> respectively: PK *lúngǎ* ([ˈluŋǎ]), *sáŋgi* ([ˈsaŋi]), ‘moon’, ‘blood’, *ngkǎ* ([ˈŋkǎ]), *nggrátu* ([ŋˈgratu]), ‘not’, ‘ungrateful’.

Stress is marked by an acute accent in this outline, which would be unnecessary in general use: *kázǎ*, *kazá*, ‘house’, ‘marry’, *lábǎ*, *labá*, ‘wash’, ‘bee’.

The Papia Kristang vocabulary is derived from six main sources: Portuguese, Dutch, Malay, English, Chinese and Indian.

By far the largest proportion of lexical items in the language is traceable to Portuguese, in most cases identifiable with the modern metropolitan language. Many words however derive from either archaic or dialect forms, e.g. PK *arafíng*, *káinyu* (‘conceit’, ‘miserly’), from archaic Portuguese *arafim* and *cainho*; modern Portuguese has *vaidade* and *avaro* – or PK *étika* (‘tuberculosis’), from a dialect variant *hetica* of Standard Ptg. *tisica*.

Often the Papia Kristang items undergo change of meaning: PK *bizáru* for example, means ‘placid’ or ‘becalmed’, while its Ptg. source *bizarro* means ‘elegant’. A number of words have been constructed from morphemes within the language, and differ from their Ptg. equivalent. PK *skribáŋg* (‘clerk’), for example, derives from PK *skribé* (‘write’, Ptg. *escrever*), while for the same item metropolitan Portuguese has *empregado*.

The Dutch contribution to the lexicon amounts to about 30 words, examples of which include PK, *atápǎl* (‘Irish potato’), Du. *aardappel*; *kakús* (‘latrine’), Du. *kakhuis*; *kukís* (‘cake’), Du. *koekjes*; *kalkún* (‘turkey’), Du. *kalkoen*; *klor* (‘colour’), Du. *kleur* (Ptg. *côr*); *doi* (‘money’), Du. *duit* (a farthing), &c.

Malay words are constantly being adopted into the language, usually from the dialectal variety spoken in the State of Melaka. These are occasionally altered to conform with the syllabic structure of the Creole: PK *kálu*, *ka* (‘in’), Mal. *kalau*; *alú* (‘shoo away’), Mal. *halau*; *champurá* (‘mix’), Mal. *champor*; *amóku* (‘berserk’), Mal. *amok*, &c.

As with Malay, the use of English-derived words in Papia Kristang is increasing. These too may become altered phonologically: PK *ropiánu* (‘European’, cf. Ptg. *européu*); *strétu* (‘straight’); *mótoka* (‘motor-car’); *stámu* (‘stomach’, cf. Ptg. *estômago*); *spektá* (‘expect’); *relwe* (‘railway’), &c.

The Chinese contribution is rather smaller. The variety of Chinese from which the items have been mostly adopted appears to be Cantonese, although various others, such as Hakka, Hainanese and Hokkien are spoken in Malacca.

Examples include PK *chocháng* ('a Chinese'), Chin. *tau chang* ('pigtail'); *tong* ('box'), Chin. *t'ong*; *lau* ('prepared food'), Chin. *lao* ('mixed'), &c.

Also fairly scant is the contribution from various Indian languages. From Konkani come *saguáti* and *chádu* ('gift', 'clever', Kon. *saguvat* and *chiadh*), from Hindi are *chítu* and *mbísi* ('ticket, note' – whence also English *chit* or *chitty* – and 'to insult', Hin. *chitti* and *bishi*), and from Malayalam come *patáyǎ* and *mainátu* ('food container', 'laundryman'), Malayalam *pattayam* and *mainattu*.

Structurally Papia Kristang exhibits the typically creole feature of extreme morphological reduction. In the verbal system, tense and aspect are marked by the particles *ja* for the past, *logo* (often abbreviated to *lo*) for the future, and *ta* for the non-completive aspect. This last particle has no time reference, and may combine with either *logo* or *ja*. In addition most verbs have an adjectival form derived by the addition of *-du* to the basic verb form. The following few examples will illustrate the function of these particles: *yo lo' kebrá isi pau*, 'I will break this stick'; *isi pau kebrádu*, 'this stick is broken'; *eli ja bai na kázǎ*, 'he went to the house'; *bos ja ta drumí ki-órǎ nu chegá*, 'you were sleeping when we arrived', *ta kai chũǎ*, 'it is raining' (i.e. 'is falling rain'), *ozí-díǎ akáli krénsǎ lo' ta kantá pa' nos-túdu*, 'today that child will be singing for us'. Note that the verb used without particles expresses either present or past action: *yo kumí sǎ kukís*, 'I ate her cake'.

The verb 'to be' in the sense of 'become' is *fiká*: *yo keré fiká méstri-dí-skólǎ*, 'I want to be a teacher'. To be in a place is *teng*: *tántu kachóru teng na rúa*, 'many dogs are in the street'. There is no copula verb, thus *éli ómi*, 'he is a man'.

The passive may be expressed either by employing the adjectival form of the verb with the suffix *-du*, or by using the verb *toká* ('incur, be affected by'), modelled on the Malay *kena*, which has the same meaning and function: *yo lisádu*, 'I am hurt' (from *lisá*, 'to hurt'), *yo toká pangkáda*, 'I was hit'.

Adjectives in Papia Kristang are also verbs, although the reverse is not true. Thus *brángku* means 'white' or 'be white'. Such verbal adjectives may combine with *lógo* and *ja*, but evidently not with *ta*: *nu lo' alégru ki-órǎ nu chegá nalá*, 'we'll be happy when we get there', *yo ja trísti pádi úbi akéli*, 'I was unhappy to hear that'. Vestiges of noun-adjective concord are to be found with a few adjectives, although this is by no means strictly adhered to: *éli ómi bunítu*, 'he is a handsome man', *éli mulé buníta*, 'she is a beautiful woman'. Other verbal adjectives sometimes distinguished in this way are *bélu/bélǎ* ('old'), *prigāsózu/prigāsózǎ* ('lazy'), and *alégru/alégrǎ* ('happy').

Verb serialization is common: *bos keré fiká ríku?* '(do) you want (to) incur rich?', *éli kuré champurá ránchu* 'he run (and) mix-with friend(s)', *yo toká fiká na kázǎ* 'I incur stay in house'.

Negation is expressed by the particle *ngkǎ* for the past and present tenses, and *nádi* for the future tense, in which case *lógo* is not used: *tong ngkǎ ja bomóng*

gráni, ‘the box wasn’t very big’, *yo ngkã gostá isi kándri*, ‘I don’t like this meat’. *bos nádi beng nakí toná*, ‘you won’t come here again’. Certain verbs have a special negative form, e.g. *nté* ([n'te]) ‘not to have,’ not to be’ (from Ptg. *não tem*), which also means ‘without’, and *nggére*, ‘not to want’ (from Ptg. *não quere*). The negative imperative is *nang* (Ptg. *não*), *nang skisé*, ‘don’t forget’.

The indefinite article is *ngwã* ([ɲwə]), which is also the numeral ‘one’. This is sometimes shortened to a nasal that is homorganic with the following initial consonant: *ngwã ómi*, ‘a man’, *ng’kópi*, ‘a cup’, *n’tuála*, ‘a towel’, *m’póku*, ‘a little bit’.

There is no definite article, although the demonstratives *isi* (or *ísti*), ‘this’, and *akéli*, ‘that’ often serve as such. Plurality is indicated where necessary by reduplication, thus *brigãdang-brigãdang teng na sidádi*¹⁷, ‘(many) soliders are in the city’, otherwise it is not indicated morphologically. Reduplication is also a feature of verbs, where it is used to indicate repetitive action, and adjectives, where it is used for emphasis.

Possession is indicated in three ways, firstly by employing the genitival link *-sã* in post-nominal or post-pronominal position, *yo-sã kázã*, ‘my house’, *kázã-sã janélã*, ‘the window of the house’, secondly in a way more similar to Portuguese, with *di* (‘of’), *chapéu di Juáng*, ‘John’s hat’, *Chang di Pádri* ‘the Priest’s ground’, and thirdly by following the noun by the possessor with no link word, as in Malay and in some varieties of West African Creole Portuguese: *kázã yo*, ‘my house’, *mai-pai Liándru*, ‘Leander’s parents’, The demonstratives *isi* and *akéli* may also follow the noun, although they more usually precede it.

The pronouns are *yo* (‘I’, ‘me’), *bos* or *bo* (‘you’), *éli* or *el* (‘he’, ‘him’, ‘she’, ‘her’, ‘it’), *nos* or *nu* (‘we’, ‘us’), and *olotú*, *elótru* or *eli-túdu* (‘they’, ‘them’).

In recent years more local, as well as academic, attention has been paid to the Malacca Creoles and their language. Various publications, especially of a religious variety, have appeared, and a grammar and a dictionary have also been published¹⁸.

There are useful websites at <http://www.joanmarbeck.net.htm> and at <http://www.malaccacom.net/malaccaportuguese/home.htm>. The language boasts of a rich folklore, and represents a true mirror of Malaysian history. Its lexical contribution to Malay too, has been considerable; at least one source lists nearly 500 Malay words of Portuguese origin¹⁹.

¹⁷ Following Malay practice, such reduplicated forms could be written as the single form followed by a subscripted numeral ‘2’, thus: *brigãdang₂*, ‘soldiers’.

¹⁸ S. R. Dalgado, *Glosário Luso-asiático*, 2 vols, Coimbra, 1919–21.

¹⁹ Alan Baxter, *A Grammar of Kristang (Malacca Creole Portuguese)*. Canberra: Pacific linguistics 1988 and Alan Baxter & Patrick de Silva, *A Dictionary of Kristang (Malacca Creole Portuguese)-English*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, 2004.

At the present time, there are sufficient numbers of speakers to ensure that, if steps are taken, the language may not become extinct for some generations to come. Such steps would initially necessitate the establishment of parochial schools – at least at primary level such as already exist for other language groups such as the Tamils and Chinese, to promote literacy in the Creole as well as providing the regular Malaysian educational curriculum.

To provide some idea of the present state of the language, the following passages are given, with interlinear word-for-word translation and a free translation following.

- (1) The first selection, the beginning of a fairly long folktale, was collected by the writer in Malacca. The title, which is in Malay, means “H’m! I know!”:

Hem! Aku tahu!

Ngwã díã teng ngwã krénsã. Ísi krénsã bomóng prigãsózu.

One day is one child. This child very lazy.

Ngkã bai skólã. Éli-sã mai mandã kwéli (= ku éli) bai skólã,
Not go school. His mother send (to) him go school,

el nggére. Éli kuré champurã rãnchu, bai nalã-nali, nádã

he not-want. He run mix friends, go there-here, nothing

sibrísu nté. Éli-sã mai falã kwéli, ‘kãntu bos ngkã bai

work not-have. His mother say to-him, ‘if you not go

skólã, yo lo’ fazé kukís mpóku bendé. Ell-sã mai ja fazé

school, I (fut.) make cake few sell’. His mother (past) make

síngku góreng písang mazãnti, falã kwéli bai bendé.

five fried banana at first, say to-him go sell.

Eli ja tomã ísi síngku góreng písang, éli ja bai.

He (past) take these five fried banana, he (past) go.

Eli ja sai di kãzã, ja bai bendé. Ja bai túdu bãndã;

He (past) leave house, (past) go sell. (past) go all place,

nggégng nggére komprã. Eli lo’ bai útu bãndã, ja ngkõnta

nobody not-want buy. He (fut.) go other place, (past) meet

ngwã bélu, básu di álbi. Ísi bélu falã kwéli, ‘bos keng

one old man, under tree. This old man say to-him, ‘you who

ta bendé, beng nakí la’. El ngkã falã nádã. Bélu falã tonã,

selling, come here lah’. He not say nothing. Old man say again,

‘beng, yo olã’. Éli olã ta bendé síngku góreng písang. Ísi

‘come, I see’. He see selling five fried banana. This

bélu falã kwéli, ‘bos keré fikã ríku ka’. Éli falã ki-sórti

old man say to-him, ‘you want be rich?’ He say how

fikã ríku. Ísi bélu falã ‘bos ubí, yo ki ta falã ku bo, bos

be rich. This old man say ‘you hear, I who speaking to you, you

keré fiká riku'. Ísi krénsã falá 'keré'. Bong. Éli ja
want be rich'. This child say 'want'. Good. He (past)
 kumí ngwã góreng písang. Kabá kumí, ísi bélu falá kwéli,
eat one fried banana. Finish eat. This old man say to-him,
 'bos úndi ta bai, bo nang skisé; falá "hem! aku tahu". Ísi
'you where going, you don't forget; say "hm! I know".
 krénsã falá bong. Ja kabá kumí ngwã, ja bai. Ja bai, éli
This child say good. (Past) finish eat one, (past) go. (past) go, he
 ta bai na kamínyu: hem! aku tahu. Kabá el olá nté jénti komprá,
going in street: hm! I know. Finish he see not-are people buy,
 ja bai kázã. Éli-sã mai falá kwéli, 'ai, famílã, ki
(past) go house. His mother say to-him, 'Ah, young man, what
 nóbes?'. Éli falá kwéli-sã mai, 'hem! aku tahu'. Éli-sã mai
news?' He say to-his mother, 'Hm, I know'. His mother
 ta olá, pidí 'ki palábrã akéli, 'hem, aku tahu?'
looking, ask 'what word those, "hem, aku tahu? :
 Mai éli chomá kwéli 'da yo olá kwántu góreng písang fiká.
His mother shout at him 'let me see how many fried banana are'.
 Falá kwéli t'ngwã (= teng ngwã) sejá.
Say to her is one only.

Free translation: 'One day there was a child; this child was very lazy, and wouldn't go to school. His mother would send him to school, but he'd refuse. Instead, he would go and play with his friends, and go here and there, but wouldn't do any work. His mother told him 'If you won't go to school, then I'll make some cakes for you to sell'. So at first she made five banana fritters, and told him to go and sell them, He took these five fritters, and went; he left the house to go and sell them. He went everywhere; nobody wanted to buy. He went on, and met an old man, under a tree. The old man said to him 'you there, with things to sell; come here'. The boy said nothing. Again the old man said 'come, let me see'. He saw that he was selling five banana fritters. The old man asked him, 'do you want to become rich?' The boy asked 'how do you mean, become rich?' The old man said 'listen, you who I'm speaking to, do you want to become rich', The boy said that he wanted to. All right. He ate one of his fritters, and when he'd finished, the old man said to him 'wherever you go, don't forget to say "hem, aku tahu".' The boy said all right. He ate another banana fritter, and went. He went to the street, and kept saying 'hem, aku tahu'. When he saw that nobody was buying, he went home. His mother said 'Ah, son, what's new?', but he merely replied 'hem, aku tahu'. His mother stared at him, and asked 'what sort of words are these, "hem aku tahu"?' She shouted at him 'let me see how many fritters are left!', and he replied that there remained only one.

(2) The second selection includes several verses from a popular song:

1
 Pasá-la nónã-sã pórtã,
 Nónã na jánelã ribã,
 Di ki nónã pulá na chang,
 Pulá bábã-sã brásu.
*Passing the young lady's door,
 Lady at the upstairs window,
 From which lady jumps to the ground,
 Jumps into boyfriend's arms.*

2
 Ka bábã-la teng kunténdi,
 Ai! nónã-la teng mas kunténdi;
 Kálu-la lo' bai lónzi,
 Nádi kazá ng'útu jénti.
*If boyfriend is contented,
 Ah! Lady is yet more contented;
 If she goes far away,
 She will not marry another.*

3
 Na séu-la ki plantá strélã,
 Na jáding ki plantá flor;
 Sidádi-la ki plantá géra,
 Kórsang plantá amór.
*In the sky, which plants stars,
 In the garden, which plants flowers;
 The town, which plants war,
 The heart plants love.*

4
 Pasá-la nónã-sã pórtã,
 Nónã-la mpé na janélã;
 bábã-la tirá chapéu,
 Nónã-la pinchá anélã.
*Passing the young lady's door,
 Lady standing at the window;
 Boyfriend takes off (his) hat,
 Lady throws down a ring.*

3) The third selection includes some Papia Kristang proverbs:

Águ kaládu teng tántu lagrátu

'Still waters hold many alligators'
 Kuspí na séu, kai na róstu
'If you spit into the air, it will fall back on your face'
 Kal chang ngkã chupá águ?
'What ground doesn't absorb water?'
 Ólu gráni, trípã kánínu
'Big eyes, small belly'

- (4) The last example of contemporary Papia Kristang is in the form of part of a letter received by the writer from Mr. Nicholas C. Nunis²⁰ of Malacca. Mr. Nunis is a keen scholar of his language, and represents one of a growing number of young Malaccan Creoles concerned with the spread of literacy within the community.

Yo-sã káru kambrádu. Yo pidí pedráng káuzi yo ngkã skribé ku bos akéli diã
My dear friend. I ask pardon because I not write to you that day I
 yo ja achá bos-sã kátrã. Bos keré sabé ki-fói yo ngkã skribé? Yo ja toká
 duénsã *I (past) get your letter. You want know why I not write? I (past) incur*
sickness maláriã ku dos mínggu yo toká fiká na kázã, drumí sejá, ngkã fazé
sibrisu. malaria with two weeks I incur stay in house, sleep only, not do work.
 Agórã yo ja teng tántu bong, ku yo podí skribé ku bos. Mútu mersé pádi bos-
 sã *Now I (past) have very well, and I can write to you. Many thanks for your*
 kátrã. **Bo** sabé ki yo gostá les éli, káuzi agóra yo gostá skribé nos-sã Pápia
 Kristang. *You know that I like read it, because now I like write our Papia*
 Kristang. *Here in Ipoh, people Christian few, but in Malacca have many*
 jénti-jénti Kristang kwéli-túdu chádu pápia isi línggu. *Jénti Makáu*
people-people Christian and-they-all clever speak this language. People Macao
 papiá nos-sã Pápia Kristang sámã ku yo-sã. *Na Máláka agórã teng ngwã pádri*
speak our Papia Kristang same with mine. In Malacca now is one priest
 keng ja beng dalí Makáu. *Éli, ki-órã éli rezá na grézã, papiá Kristang ku the*
who (past) come from Macao. He, when he pray in church, speak Kristang with
the congregation; tapí nalá na Máláka nté tántu jénti Makáu.
congregation; but there in Malacca not-have many people Macao.

Free translation: 'My dear friend, I ask pardon for not having written to you on the day I got your letter. Do you want to know why I didn't write? I have had malaria for the past two weeks, and had to stay at home, doing nothing but sleep, and not going to work. Now I am very well, and am able to write to you.'

²⁰ Other informants deserving credit are Mr. and Mrs. E. Lazaroo and Mr. E. Spykerman, all in middle age and resident in Ipoh, Mrs. Rosil de Costa, aged 66 (who provided the song and proverbs) and Mr. Eric de Silva, aged 45 (who provided the story), both of Hilir, Malacca.

Many thanks for your letter. You know that I enjoyed reading it, because now I like to write in our Papia Kristang. Here in Ipoh, Creoles are few, but in Malacca there are many Creole people, and they are all clever (enough) to speak this language. Macao people speak our Papia Kristang the same as I (do). There is now in Malacca a priest who came from Macao. When he prays in church, he speaks Kristang to the congregation; but there aren't many Macao people in Malacca.