

SYNTACTIC CHANGE IN AMBONESE MALAY: THE POSSESSIVE CONSTRUCTION

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Ambonese Malay displays several syntactic structures which are strikingly different from those of other Malay dialects. The two possessive constructions are examined here; they are: NP_1 PS-MK NP_2 and NP_1 NP_2 (where NP_1 =Possessor, NP_2 =Possessed and PS-MK=Possessive Marker).

These constructions are compared to those of standard and bazaar Malay. The development of the Ambonese Malay forms is considered in the light of typological, functional and historical factors.

1 INTRODUCTION

Despite its apparent antiquity and its increasing regional significance (Collins 1980, 1981), the dialect of Malay spoken in Central Maluku, namely Ambonese Malay, has never been the subject of a thorough linguistic investigation. The last hundred years have produced a few wordlists, two short monographs, some published songs and riddles and a few articles on phonology and interlinguistic relationships.¹ Certainly, considering the generally poor level of documentation, description and analysis of Malay dialects in general, the record of research about Ambonese Malay is admittedly better than average. Nonetheless, no one would claim that Ambonese Malay has been adequately studied.

In view of the scarcity of basic research, indeed, of basic data, regarding this dialect, the following notes must be considered preliminary, if not precipitous. However, because Ambonese Malay has been recently cited, usually as an example of "creole" Malay (Prentice 1978, Steinhauer 1980 and To appear), even the incomplete observations made here may be of some help in evaluating the relevance of this creole label. At least, it is hoped that this study might indicate directions for future research about Ambonese Malay, in particular, the syntax of that dialect.

The topic under discussion here is only a very small part of the grammatical system of Ambonese Malay. Still, the possessive construction of this dialect is strikingly different from other dialects of Malay. In the following sections, the nature of that divergence is discussed and an attempt is made to explain the factors most likely involved in this apparent syntactic innovation. In short, an attempt is made to provide an explanation of change within the framework of historical syntax.²

2 THE POSSESSIVE CONSTRUCTION IN AMBONESE MALAY

Ambon and the Maluku Islands are not the homeland of the Malay language; in fact East Sumatra and the Straits of Malacca, the generally accepted geographical center of Malay, are more than 2000 km distant. How and why Malay came to be the mother tongue of hundreds of thousands of people in Central Maluku has been discussed elsewhere, albeit briefly (Collins 1980). In any case, the first Europeans to reach Maluku remarked on the widespread use of Malay in all those islands (Pigafetta 1525, Argensola, 1609). For this reason the Portuguese missionaries chose to use Malay as the language of proselytization - one may note, with considerable success.³ In support of this view, it should be observed that the oldest extant letters written in Malay were written in Ternate, North Maluku (Blagden 1930).⁴ Furthermore, at another level of the Malay speech continuum, we note that the oldest wordlists of Malay collected by traders, explorers and early colonial officials also originate from these islands (Pigafetta 1525, Galvao 1554 (Jacobs 1971)).⁵

Presumably, at this very early period Malay co-existed with many other languages, as both Galvao and Argensola remark. Malay was the language used for international and inter-ethnic communication; other languages were used in other situations. It is difficult to determine when this diglossia situation on Ambon Island changed. At the very least we know that well before 1876 there existed many Ambonese (Christian) villages where Ambonese Malay was the mother tongue (de Clercq 1876).

Ambonese Malay is not the same as the standard Malay of either Indonesia or Malaysia; in fact by one measurement it is the most divergent (Dyen 1965).⁶ One of the striking differences between Ambonese Malay and standard Malay is found

in the possessive construction.

Among the dialects of Malay spoken in East Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula, as well as in most other Malay dialects, the possessive construction is the same. The 'possessor' follows the 'possessed'. There are no morphological markers or any indication other than sequential arrangement.

/rumah ruslan/
house Ruslan

'Ruslan's house'

/təliŋa saya/
ear ls

'My ear'

/təman adi? li/
friend younger sibling Li

'Li's brother's friend'

While the order of adjectives, relative clauses and particles in Ambonese Malay is the same as in peninsular Malay, the possessive construction is the inverse of other Malay dialects; in Ambonese Malay the possessor precedes the possessed.⁷ Most often there is an intervening word, here considered a possessive marker (PS-MK), which in other positions (and, therefore, sometimes in other phonetic shapes), is a verb meaning 'own',

/tes puŋ ruma/
Thys PS-MK house

'Thys's house'

/beta puŋ jari/
ls PS-MK finger

'My finger'

/dia puŋ ana puŋ taman/
3s PS-MK child PS-MK friend

'Her child's friend'

The possessive marker [puŋ] is clearly related to the verb [puna] 'possess, own'. For example,

/dia puna kabon ceŋke/
3s possess garden clove

'He owns a clove grove.'

Indeed the form [puna] occurs obligatorily as the possessive marker in geni-

tive absolute forms and in emphatic possessive constructions. We note an example of the genitive absolute:

1. /sakaraŋ dia tinggal di sapa
now 3s stay at who

puŋ ruma/
PS-MK house

'Whose house is he staying at?'

2. /mohamat puna/
mohamat PS-MK

'Mohamat's.'

In sentences, such as 2, in which the possessed noun of the noun phrase is deleted, only [puna] can stand in the resulting phrase final position. In such genitive absolute constructions, [puŋ] is not acceptable. The form [puna] is also used in emphatic or slow speech. In some idiolects, it is treated as the "more correct" possessive marker; for example

/berti puna maw-maw/
Berti PS-MK desire

'Berti's whims'

/ose puna mulu/
2s PS-MK mouth

'Your mouth'

In summary, then, the functions [puŋ] and [puna] overlap. While [puŋ] only appears as the possessive marker within noun phrases, [puna] may appear as the possessive marker within noun phrases as well as in genitive absolutes; furthermore [puna] is also a verb. In addition to these two possessive markers, there appear to be two more.

In some idiolects, [puŋ] is contracted, at least after the first person singular pronoun *beta*, especially in rapid speech. For example,

/betaŋ skola/
ls+PS-MK school

'My school'

/betaŋ taman/
ls+PS-MK friend

'My friend'

This [-ŋ] appears to be an allomorph of [puŋ].⁸ In fact, one might consider [puna], [puŋ] and [-ŋ] as members of the same morpheme [puna], the possessive marker. The choice of the variant is deter-

mined by phonological environment and style (rapid speech vs. careful, slow speech) in the case of [-ŋ] and partly by syntactic position as well as stylistic considerations in the cases of [puna] and [pun].

There remains, however, another possessive construction in which no possessive marker appears at all. Note the following sentences, transcribed in Ambon city;

3. /doŋ laki pukul katoŋ/
3p man strike 1p

'Their husbands would beat us.'

4. /beta putar se talinaŋ/
1s twist 2s ear

'I'll twist your ear.'

5. /se adi par sapa/
2s sibling for who

'Who is your younger brother?'

In these sentences, the order of the elements in the relevant noun phrase remains the same: possessor possessed; but the possessive marker does not appear. This results in constructions precisely the opposite of standard Malay; that is /se talinaŋ/ (2s, ear) in Ambonese Malay has a structure which is the opposite of /təliŋa saya/ (ear, 1s) in standard Malay.

This poses a problem for historical syntax. How could such a basic syntactic characteristic of Malay be so strikingly different in two, perhaps mutually intelligible, dialects? What factors are involved and what theoretical models can be exploited to explain this apparent syntactic divergence?

3 THE USE OF *puna* IN MALAY

For a clue to the development of this inverted construction we can turn to non-standard Malay in Malaysia and Indonesia, often referred to as "Market Malay" or "Low Malay." In these variants of Malay there is an alternative way to form the possessive: possessor *puna* possessed. Here the lexical item *puna* intervenes between the two noun phrases; the order of the nouns in the possessive construction is the opposite of standard Malay. For example, instead of /rumah saya/ 'my house', we find:

/saya puna rumah/
1s PS-MK house

'My house'

In fact, Rafferty (To appear) considers such a genitive construction one of "the distinctive characteristics of Low Malay." She also suggests that this construction is "likely a reflection of the process of simplification in which the verb 'to own' is used to form the genitive construction." Perhaps her remarks should be expanded. What is this *puna*, which apparently is the same as [pun] or [puna] in Ambonese Malay?

Dempwolff (1941:19) cites a series of sentences in Indonesian. (The translation and parsing are mine.)

- 6 a. *sajalah | empoenja roemah ini*
1s, EMPH, master+3s house, this
b. *roemah ini | sajalah empoenja*
house, this, 1s, EMPH, master+3s
c. *roemah ini | saja poenja*
house, this, 1s, master+3s

All can be translated as 'I am the lord of this house.' However, in each sentence there is a different emphasis or focus, characterized by differences in the order of the sentence elements, intonation and juncture as well as the use of the emphatic particle *-lah*.⁹

Dempwolff notes that *empoe* (/əmpu/), a word that rarely appears in contemporary Malay, means 'master, lord.'¹⁰ This has cognates in many other Austronesian languages (Dempwolff 1938). He suggests that in "Küchen-Malai" the abbreviated form of /əmpu/ plus third person pronoun became a particle connecting attributes with substantives. In contemporary non-standard Malay in this lexical item, /na/, originally a post-posed anaphoric, is no longer detachable; *puna* is viewed as a verb or as a possessive marker. As, for example, in another sentence cited by Dempwolff (1941:19).

saja poenja roemah | ketjil
1s PS-MK house small

'My house is small.'

In contemporary standard Malay, *puna* has been so thoroughly absorbed in the verbal system that it obligatorily undergoes verbal affixation. For example, we note:

/saya məm+puna+i rumah itu/
1s TR+own+LOC house that

'I own that house.'

How and when did *puna*, apparently originally a noun phrase, evolve as a verb?

Although it is not within the scope of

this paper to undertake a survey of the use of *pupa* in Malay texts, it is important to observe what has been said about this form by early Malay grammarians.

As early as 1812 Marsden cites two forms of the possessive. In one "the subject of possession always precedes that which denotes the possession." In the other, possession is indicated by the use of "a pronoun in the possessive form," that is "by annexing the term *punia* 'own' to the pronoun" or noun. He further observes that the most usual form is the sequential one and that the form using *punia* is used "where real possession or property is understood." Marsden's remarks reflect his interpretation of the usage in the Malay texts of the seventeenth century upon which his grammar is chiefly based.¹¹

At a later date Swettenham (1889) notes both forms but insists that the best way to indicate possession is to place the pronoun or noun after the object possessed. He also lists: "Own, to: *punya*; Owner, the: *yang empunya*; Possess, to: *mempunyai*." At about the same time (1881) Maxwell stressed that "the employment of the genitive with *punya* is to be avoided." In the space of seventy-five years from Marsden to Maxwell, */pupa/* seems to have changed from an alternative form used in cases of property possession to an alternative, though less acceptable, form in all cases of possession.

More recently there has been a greater divergence between standard and non-standard Malay with respect to the use of *pupa* in possessives. In the non-standard Malay of Malaysia, for example, the use of *pupa* has been extended even further. It can be used with preposed adjectives.

/kaya pupa oran/
rich PS-MK man

'a rich man' (Wilkinson 1932 (II): 923)

/besar pupa anjing/
big PS-MK dog

'a big dog' (Abdullah 1969:214)

This usage is considered "a literal translation from Chinese" (Abdullah 1969:214), although bilingual Tamils are as likely to use this construction. Even Malays, speaking to non-Malays, have been heard to use it.

While the use of *pupa* has been thus extended in non-standard Malay, contemporary prescriptive grammarians strongly caution against the use of *pupa* in a possessive construction of any kind; its use in an adjectival construction is out of the question. In fact, */pupa/* is to be used only as a verb or as a verb-base liable to affixation. Indeed, with regard to the use of *pupa* in adjectival constructions, Wilkinson notes that "this way of

making genitives and adjectives should be avoided as alien to Malay ideas."

While one can perhaps trace the 'genealogy' of *pupa* as it occurs in non-standard Malay, it is important to note three things. First, the *pupa* construction coexists with the 'preferred' construction based on sequential arrangement only. In fact, in non-standard Malay both forms occur. Second, the *pupa* construction may be expanding its realm and drawing other postposed items to the front, for example, adjectives. Third, when the possessor precedes the possessed, *pupa* must be present. It is never deleted in either the possessive or 'adjectival' constructions.¹² In Ambonese Malay none of these three distinctions occur. In that dialect the *pupa/pun* construction is the only form for expressing the possessive. Adjectival constructions with *pupa* do not occur. Moreover, while the order is inverted as in non-standard Malay, namely possessor-possessed, *punpupa* is often deleted. It is this deletion that is remarkable.

In the earliest available texts of Ambonese Malay,¹³ there are two forms of the possessive construction. Ludeking (1868:196) published two fragments of Ambonese Malay. In one, the form *rumah radja* (house, king) 'village head's house' occurs; in the other we find *anakh laki laki punja ibu bapa* (child, male, PS-MK, mother, father) 'the groom's parents'. Apparently both constructions were in use. Niewenhuizen (1876) published oaths in indigenous languages of Seram; he included translations into Ambonese Malay. In these translations only one type of possessive form occurs, as in *kompania poenja titah* 'the command of the Company' and *dija poenja taman* 'his friend'. Considerably longer and more complex texts were published as appendices to de Clercq's dictionary (1876). In these texts two forms of the possessive occur: possessor *poenja* possessed and possessed possessor. The latter is presumed to be a literary refinement borrowed from "Riau-Malay". In any case the form which occurs most frequently is with *poenja*. There are, however, no cases where *poenja* is deleted. It is important to note here that the fact that deletion does not occur may also reflect the influence of "Riau Malay", which served as the school language of the nineteenth century. These Ambonese texts of 1876 were undoubtedly highly influenced by the standard Malay of that era. Deletion of *pupa* would be unacceptable. Even today educated speakers of Ambonese Malay will deny that *pupa* is ever deleted even in conversation. At any rate, the absence of the deletion process in these texts may not be taken as adequate evidence that the phenomenon did not take place at that period. In fact, in those sixteenth century letters from Ternate, referred to above, Blagden (1930:94) specifically remarks on the inverted order of the possessive construction. He writes:

"the text, contrary to Malay

idiom, but in conformity with the language of Ternate, here puts the possessive before the thing qualified by it."

Steinhauer (1980:356) suggests that this means "that an indigenous Moluccan Malay did not yet exist" at that period. However, it could just as easily mean that the Malay used in Ternate was not the same as modern standard Malay. In the Ternate letters, there were apparently two forms of the possessive: NP₁ NP₂ and NP₂ NP₁, where NP₁ is the possessor and NP₂ is the possessed.

For example:

- (i) *raja portukal*
king Portugal NP₁[NP NP]_{NP₂}
jong dan harta
junk and property

'The King of Portugal's
boats and goods'

- (ii) *anak raja bajahan*
child king Bacan NP₂ NP₁

'The king of Bacan's
daughter'

One might add that structures similar to (i) occur with far greater frequency in these old letters. The prescriptivist view that such constructions are contrary to the 'Malay idiom' should not distract us from the value of these texts which have been passed on to us without the meddling of several generations of scribes.¹⁴

This evidence, however, is ambiguous too because it is not Ambonese Malay and it does not display a *puna* construction. So the problems remains the same; that is it is difficult to determine when *puna* began to be deleted in possessive constructions.

Deletion may have taken place at the earliest stages, when Malay had not yet become the mother tongue of any segments of the indigenous population. At least, the Ternate letters indicate that constructions of "inverted order" did occur in the area during that period. Later when Ambonese Malay began to be published, "prescriptivist" notions may have suppressed the textual occurrence of this construction. Nonetheless, Ambonese Malay, as it is spoken today, indicates that the deletion of *puna* is not a phenomenon restricted to only a part of the speech community. At least in Ambon City it has been recorded in a wide range of idiolects, for example the speech of a

fifty year old woman and that of fourteen year old boys as well as university students. This widespread occurrence of the phenomenon requires an explanation. Although no definite evidence is available, it is assumed Ambonese Malay diverged from other dialects of Malay at a time when *puna* was no longer understood as NP+3s (*əmpu + na*). Apparently the construction developed at a time when speakers of non-standard Malay used *puna* as a marker in constructions in which the possessor preceded the object possessed.¹⁵ How can this development be explained?

4 EXPLANATORY PERSPECTIVES ON THE AMBONESE POSSESSIVE

In a strictly synchronic perspective, interdialectal differences can be explained as differences in the number or ordering of rules. The heuristic value of such concise formulae is not insignificant. The close relationship between Ambonese Malay and standard Malay encourages the application of this explanatory procedure. In this case, if we assume that at one time in Ambonese Malay both possessive constructions (described by Marsden above) co-existed, then we might posit a deep structure similar to the one suggested by Asmah (1973) for the genitive in standard Malay. That is:

saya puna rumah => *rumah saya*
NP₁ V NP₂ NP₂ NP₁

Where NP₁ = Possessor;

NP₂ = Possessed.

In order to derive the possessive form in standard Malay, where NP₂ precedes NP₁, Asmah proposes two rules, one which deletes *puna* and another which inverts the word order. If her position is correct, then we might say that this series of rules was optional in the Ambonese Malay of 1876. Either the deletion-inversion sequence of rules applied, yielding NP₂ NP₁, or the form NP₁ *puna* NP₂, was retained; that is the sequence of rules was not applied. At some later (?) date, while the deletion rule was applied, the optional rule which inverted the order of the NP's was not, thus yielding the surface form: NP₁ NP₂, originally a transitional structure only.

This is a very succinct argument because it explains the difference in Ambonese Malay as a simple omission of one rule. In an earlier paper (1974) I proposed just such a solution. However, there are many objections to this simplistic approach to the problem. First,

it presumes that Asmah's explanation is the simplest explanation of the possessive form in contemporary Malay. She argues that since /*rumah saya*/ 'my house' is interchangeable in meaning with /*rumah yang saya punyai*/ 'house which I own',¹⁶ the deep structure is the same for both: i.e. [*rumah [saya mempunyai rumah]*].

The basis of this argument is not clear. If it is true that the deep structure is as she proposes, then a single application of a rule that deletes the coreferent NP's and another rule that optionally deletes verbs meaning 'possess' might give the same results with one less rule. Furthermore, the supposed deep structure itself is open to serious challenge.

One should not suppose that the simplest description of current linguistic phenomena adequately reflects a grammatical development in the history of a language. While the assumption that the 'genitive' derives from a relative clause containing a verb meaning possess is concise, there is no reason that such a basis be posited for the evolution of the form through history.¹⁷ At least in the case of Ambonese Malay, there appear to be several factors, all perhaps inter-related, which are involved in the loss of *punya*. Among these factors are syntactic typology, semantic content, lexical frequency and interlinguistic influence. In short, there seems to have been a convergence of typological, functional and historical pressures which resulted in the deletion of *punya* in the possessive construction.

In a recent article Alieva (1980) pointed out that the possessive construction of standard Malay (possessed followed by possessor) is parallel to the structure of OVS sentences still found in the language. From the perspective of typology the possessed possessor structure is in line with the OVS structure that was typical of Malay before it "acquired features of a nominative language" (Alieva 1980: 421). The centrality of such OVS structures as characteristic of Malay has been replaced by SVO structures, though OVS sentences still survive in the Malay "passive" and in other patterns.¹⁸

Assuming Alieva's analysis to be correct, by contrast, Ambonese Malay is strictly an SVO language. In this dialect there is no passive construction in which the agent is expressed; that is, unlike standard Malay, there are no remnants of an earlier OVS system. In this respect, the possessive construction NP₁ *punya* NP₂ closely parallels the dominant SVO structure of the dialect.

In standard Malay, the NP₂ NP₁ and NP₁ *punya* NP₂ structures coexist as two competing (?) possessive constructions. Perhaps the NP₂ NP₁ structure persists, not only because of prescriptivist pressure, but also because some OVS structure

are maintained, in particular the "passive". In Ambonese Malay where OVS structures have completely disappeared, the NP₂ NP₁ possessive structure has been lost too. Whereas standard Malay displays a "mixed" syntax, Ambonese Malay has regularized the possessive construction to be consistent with the SVO pattern of that dialect.

It is worth noting that in non-standard Malay spoken in Malaysia, SVO is the only sentence pattern. Precisely in this variant, only the NP₁ *punya* NP₂ possessive construction occurs. While this has been attributed to Chinese influence (Abdullah 1969, Peh 1982 et al.,) one should observe the typological consistency of this parallelism. Whether or not Ambonese Malay and non-standard Malay derive from the same source, a variant of "Low Malay," is not clear. In either case, the structures displayed by these two variants seem to coincide with a regularization of syntax.

This development might be related, too, to the semantic marking of the two noun phrases in the possessive construction. From the material already presented, it is fairly clear that in peninsular Malay *punya* was initially used with relations of real possession, presumably situations where the possessor is animate and the possessed some inanimate object. (See Marsden.) The relationship is one of ownership. In this case it is easy to see how in Ambonese Malay the marker *punya* could be deleted. The relationship between the two nouns remains clear because of the polarity of their animacy markings. As the alternative construction (NP₂ NP₁) disappeared in Ambonese Malay, *punya* deletion could occur, even in cases where both nouns might be inanimate. Similarly, in cases where both nouns might be animate, deletion could occur. The deletion rule spread to constructions where the relationship of NP₁ and NP₂ was no longer necessarily indicated by semantic markings. This was only possible because the construction NP₂ NP₁ was not in use; hence, no confusion could occur.

Although the material available is not unanimous, it appears that at least in some idiolects of non-standard Malay in Malaysia the sporadic deletion of *punya* does occur. Peh (1982:66, 75-76) presents some examples, drawn from taped conversation, in which *punya* has been deleted. For example:

<i>ah tui abang</i>	'Ah Tui's brother',
<i>lu bapak</i>	'your father',
<i>gua bapak</i>	'my father'.

This indicates that, when the NP₂ NP₁ pattern is lost, loss of *punya* can occur as well. Peh suggests that this deletion is restricted to possessive constructions

involving kinship relationships only. This does not seem to be the case in Ambonese Malay. In addition to kinship relationships, we note for example, *se talinaŋ* 'your ear'. Whether the deletion of *pupa* is even more extensive is not clear because of the paucity of material.¹⁹ If its use is limited to possessive constructions involving kinship and body parts, frequency of usage may be a factor.

However, a difference in treatment of kinship and body parts terms compared to other nouns is not unusual in languages of the world. That is to say that, in addition to the frequency factor, a different pattern of classification may be behind the phenomena thus far indicated in Ambonese Malay. If only kinship and body part terms display *pupa* deletion, it may indicate that such nouns are classified differently from other nouns in that dialect. The distinction between alienable and inalienable nouns, while remarkable in Malay, is not infrequent in other Austronesian languages, in particular of languages in the same area in which Ambonese Malay is spoken. The possible relationship between Ambonese Malay and the indigenous languages of Maluku should not be overlooked.²⁰

It has already been noted that sometime before 1876 Ambonese Malay replaced earlier indigenous languages in many villages. This process was not an instantaneous one. It proceeded slowly and, at least recently, village by village. Language replacement has been total in Christian villages. All that remain of the indigenous languages are some ritual incantations and family names (Cooley 1967). Yet one might suppose that some residue of those indigenous languages remains in the kind of Malay spoken there. Indeed, there are a number of lexical items which are neither Malay nor European (Collins 1980, 1981). In addition to these lexical oddities (some of which are traceable as far back as 1521), there may be other less transparent transferrals from indigenous languages to contemporary Ambonese Malay. Of course, what is of interest to us is the possibility of syntactic parallels between Ambonese Malay and these languages.

Because of the lack of material regarding many of the languages of central Maluku, this paper cites data from only one of them, with the insistence that the syntactic systems of the whole group are closely related; in fact, they have been called dialects rather than languages (Dyen 1965, 1978). The language considered is Asilulu, one of the five major "dialects" studied by van Hoëvell in 1877. It is spoken on the northwest coast of the island of Ambon in three villages. Apparently it is also spoken in adjacent parts of Seram; furthermore because of the sailing and trading prowess of the Asilulu people, it has some currency as a minor trading language in west Maluku. At any rate, the total population of the three villages involved is probably less than 8,000. These

villages and their speakers are Muslim. While Christian villages on Ambon lost their indigenous languages through long periods of contact with a clerical and bureaucratic administration that used and propagated Malay, Muslim villages have retained their languages. This is partly due to their rejection and suspicion of Malay as the language used by Christian, European invaders²¹ and partly due to their isolation from the trading centers where Ambonese Malay was the *lingua franca*. Only shortly before the Pacific War were any schools erected in Muslim villages; at that time it was quite common for women and children in Asilulu to be monolingual speakers of Asilulu. Even today it is a rather hazardous and lengthy sea journey to the city of Ambon. For whatever reasons, Asilulu and other Muslim villages have retained their indigenous languages whereas Christian villages, while maintaining cultural and social links to these Muslim villages, gradually adopted Malay as their mother tongue.

Many authors have remarked on the multiple systems of possession in the languages of Oceania (Pawley, 1973; Codrington, 1885). Cowan (1951) has demonstrated the closer typological connection between the Austronesian languages of New Guinea and Maluku in this respect. In Asilulu there are two possessive systems based on the category of nouns involved. These two categories are often classified as alienable and inalienable. The inalienable nouns include body parts, kinship terms and one's name. Other nouns, apparently considered as external to the possessor, are classified as alienable. This difference in classification is reflected in the respective morphological markers of possession which differ especially in position and to some extent in phonetic shape. In addition, the marker changes according to the person of the possessor NP. In both systems NP₁ precedes NP₂.

<u>Alienable</u>		<u>Non-Alienable</u>	
<i>aʔu kuhaka</i>	'my boat'	<i>aʔu uluku</i>	'my head'
<i>ale mubuku</i>	'your book'	<i>ale walimu</i>	'your younger sibling'
<i>ali naluma</i>	'his house'	<i>ali nalani</i>	'his name'
<i>ami matipil</i>	'our (ex.) basket'	<i>ami matuku</i>	'our (ex.) knees'
<i>ite rapikal</i>	'our (in.) plates'	<i>ite mata</i>	'our (in.) eyes'
<i>imi milapun</i>	'your shirts'	<i>imi mimeme</i>	'your uncle'
<i>sini rikata</i>	'their trousers'	<i>sini nilima</i>	'their arms'

(Here underlining is meant to draw attention to the position of the pronoun "copy", the possessive marker).

Briefly there are three pertinent facts to observe. First, the possessor noun always precedes the possessed noun. Second, in

addition to the fact that one of the alienable markers (first person plural inclusive) is \emptyset , in conversation, markers are often deleted, particularly when the relationship is already clear from earlier dialog.²² Third, the postposed markers for inalienable nouns display a phonetic configuration of CV; the final high vowel is usually devoiced or deleted.

These three facts seem to have some relevance to the possessive construction of Ambonese Malay. The fact that the only sequence of nouns in Asilulu possessive constructions is $NP_1 NP_2$ may be related to the choice of NP_1 *puna* NP_2 sequence in Ambonese Malay over the alternative $NP_2 NP_1$ form of many other dialects of Malay. Furthermore, the deletion of the pronominal possessive markers in Asilulu is paralleled by the deletion of *puna* in Ambonese Malay possessive constructions. In addition the deletion of final vowels in Asilulu may have been source of reinterpretation of the possessive construction but not-so fluent speakers of indigenous languages. In other words, at some period of transition a possessive construction marked only by a single surface consonant (i.e. the postposed initial consonant of the pronoun copy) may have been perceived as having no marking because of fading familiarity with vocabulary, phonetics and morphology of the indigenous languages. This reinterpretation could then serve as basis for selecting one possessive form over the other in Malay. For example, *a'u uluk* (ls, head+ls) could have been reanalyzed as (ls, head). This would increase the number of constructions (perceived as) having no possessive marker.

All of these facts taken together suggest that the syntax (and perceived syntax) of the indigenous languages influenced Ambonese Malay. At any rate, the absence of intervening markers, especially in inalienable possessive constructions in Asilulu, seems paralleled by the optional deletion of *puna* in Ambonese Malay.

5 CONCLUSION

For the last one hundred years historical linguistics has insisted that language is a complex system of interrelated parts. Each part must be studied in relation to the whole. To a large extent, this essay has minimized this basic fact and fundamental research strategy. A small part of the grammatical system of Ambonese Malay has been extracted with only occasional reference to other parts of the grammar, even to other syntactic structures. The purpose of this examination, partly out of context, is an attempt

at syntactic reconstruction, that is reconstructing an earlier structure and reconstructing the changes that took place to yield the contemporary structure. As Antilla (1972:362) points out:

Syntactic reconstruction is an evaluation of probabilities (not a calculus with exact numerical values...).

Although this essay has sometimes isolated the possessive construction from the total corpus of Ambonese Malay, it has pursued the integration of this single aspect of language change with other complex, interrelated factors. Syntactic change is viewed as a result of many factors. It has been assumed that the shift of a syntactic construction (*ampu + na*, NP+3s) to a syntactic derivation (*puna*, PS-MK) took place at a time antecedent to the development of Ambonese Malay. In that framework, several possibilities were discussed. A formulaic re-enunciation of the phenomenon in transformational rules has been set aside as inadequate. Rather the interaction of typology and the circumstances of shift of language allegiance have been proposed as factors more salient to explanation. That is, instead of sketching a list of re-ordered rules, change has been discussed as a result of reanalysis and underlying principles of typology.

Some emphasis has been given to the notion that there is some connection between certain syntactic divergences in Ambonese Malay and features of the syntactic systems which it replaced. The observation that there is some parallel development sheds light on at least two of the problems mentioned in this paper. There is an implied explanation of the complete disappearance of $NP_2 NP_1$ construction as well as the optional deletion of the possessive marker in $NP_1 NP_2$ construction.

Nonetheless, this indigenous influence should be seen in the light of general characteristics of syntactic typology as well as widespread observations regarding the phenomenon of changing linguistic allegiance.²³

Clearly, too little is known about the syntax of Ambonese Malay (or for that matter standard Malay), the spread of Malay to the far reaches of the archipelago, and the interchange of "Low Malay" and "High Malay". The material and analysis presented in this brief essay should be generously viewed as a preliminary voyage in such uncharted and perilous seas.

NOTES

1. In the mid-nineteenth century Ambonese Malay found its way into a few short wordlists, for example Ludeking (1868). Later it was

studied at some length in the vocabularies published by de Clercq (1876) and van Hoëvell (1876); de Clercq's book also include some literary texts. Here and there songs (Joest 1892), riddles (Tauern 1928), oaths (Niewenhuizen 1876) and *adat* fragments (Ludeking 1868) appear.

A very recent unpublished study of Ambonese Malay was undertaken in Ambon itself (Tetelepta et al. 1981). There have also been two recent dictionaries published (Manuputty 1972 (?)), Front Pemuda Maluku (1960) and a scholarly etymological study of Portuguese loanwords (Paramita 1972). A short monograph dealing with Ambonese Malay and creolization theory as well as two articles on the relationships of this dialect to other Malay dialects and other Austronesian languages have appeared in Malaysia (Collins 1974, 1980, 1981).

The data referred to in this article were collected during two long sojourns in Ambon (1972-1974; 1977-1979) as well as several short visits. I am grateful to Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia under whose auspices my doctoral research was carried out. Of course, I am deeply indebted to the Ambonese themselves whose friendship, generosity and enthusiasm never failed me; to Bp. Achmad Mahulette, Ny. Fatimah Elly and Ny. A. Holle-Loppies I owe a special word of thanks.

2. Efforts to study the development of syntax necessarily, if not explicitly, infer the setting aside of the Saussurean dichotimization of linguistic reality. Givón (1979: 237) pointed out that:

If the linguist strives to understand why the structure of language is the way it is, then... the diachronic rise of that structure as well as the communicative principles which govern it become enormously germane.

In this brief article standard Malay, non-standard Malay and Ambonese Malay are compared in order to contribute in a small way to the development of theory of linguistic change. Ideally diachronic syntax involves comparison of contemporary languages and adequate reference to documentary evidence (Bynon 1982). Although some effort is made here to integrate observations based on extant texts with the synchronic details of usage, this effort is clearly a preliminary one.

3. Wessels (1934:44) notes that in 1545 Francis Xavier implemented this language policy in Ambon. His decision to use Malay in missionary activities was maintained throughout Maluku. For example, we read that in 1588 friars on Bacan island were preaching and thriving in Malay (Wessel 1929:140).
4. Blagden (1930) is very critical of spelling and grammatical "errors" in these letters, as if the standards of twentieth century prescriptivists were the measure of a lan-

guage written four hundred years earlier.

5. Of course, there has been some debate about the geographical origin of Pigafetta's word-list (Blagden 1931, Gonda 1938, Bausani 1960). But the provenience of Galvao's vocabulary (Jacobs 1971) seems clear enough.
6. The fact that it is the *most* divergent of the dialects studied by Dyen probably reflects the small number of Malay dialects he considered rather than "eccentricity" in Ambonese Malay.
7. Certainly in some idiolects the standard possessive construction of Indonesian occurs. Because that construction is usually found in the speech of the elite, it is considered a case of borrowed syntax. Admittedly, however, only a quantitative analysis of speech variation can shed light on this phenomenon. It should be noted, though, that some phrases, especially those involving postposed anaphora, *na*, appear to be borrowed intact, that is as lexical items rather than phrases resulting from a borrowed morphological process. For example, *pokoknya* 'basically', occurs frequently in many speech styles. Although its use is widespread, the coexistence of Ambonese reanalyses of it (i.e. *akan pun poko* (3s, PS-MK, base) suggests that it is a loanword not fully integrated into the dialect. Note the occurrence of;

[*akan pun satu*]
3s, PS-MK, one

'one of them' (compared to *satunya*);

[*akan pun panjang*]
3s, PS-MK, long

'its length' (compared to *panjangnya*).

Some details on the evolution of [*akan*] can be found in Collins (1980) and elsewhere.

8. Because of its extremely restricted distribution and its close phonetic similarity to [*pun*], [*-ŋ*] in Ambonese Malay is not considered a reflex of **ŋ*, the ligature discussed by Foley (1976).
9. Refer to Hopper (1981 and elsewhere) as well as Rafferty, (1983), on the use of *-lah* in Malay.
10. *Kamus Dewan* (Iskandar 1970) cites *empu* with the notation "sl" i.e. ancient literary style. There are two archaic meanings:
 1. master
 2. a craftsman (in particular one who makes *keris*).

In a verbal form *mengempukan* means 'rule over'. Still in use are *empu jari*: 'thumb' and *engku empuan*: 'the title of the king's ranking spouse.' The archaic retention of *punya* as a noun apparently occurs in the quasi-legal phrase still used in Malaysia, *tuan punya kedai* 'shop proprietor.' It

appears that a form of *pu* is found in the inscription of Kedukan Bukit (Sumatra) dated 683 AD. In that form (*dapunta*) it is used as an honorific, meaning lord. This usage is quite common in inscriptions (Jan Wisseman, personal communication). Considering these facts, Becker and Wirasno's unlikely suggestion (1976, trans. 1978) that *punya* is "literally" *pun* (topic marker) + *nya* (ligature) must be rejected as a serious lapse into "scholarly" folk etymology.

11. Slightly earlier Parkinson (1797:329) recorded the use of the *punya* construction in the Malay of Batavia. He presents the paradigm:

Loo poonya *Vous*, plur. (An error for *votre*);
Gooa poonya *Mon*, ou *ma*;
Deea poonya *Son*, *sa*, *ses*

The Malay dialogues presented by de Houtman two hundred years before Parkinson's voyage (Lombard 1970) most frequently display *poenja* with the meaning of 'lord', although in some cases it could be inconclusively argued that *poenja* is a possessive marker not a noun phrase (for example, *tang'an*, *poenja glang mas*, 'golden bracelets', literally (?) 'golden bangles of the arm'). Such latter examples are few; the prevailing pattern is the familiar possessed possessor construction. But in the "*woord-boek*" appended to the dialogues, *poenja* is defined as *toebehooren*, *eyghen* and *toerekenen* all of which suggest that *poenja* was a possessive marker. If so, de Houtman's description of polite mercantile Malay may have paralleled the situation described much later by Marsden. However the lack of consistency between the use of *poenja* in de Houtman's dialogues and its meaning as he interpreted it in the wordlist leaves us in doubt regarding its actual syntactic function at that time.

12. But see Peh's (1982) remarks in Section 3.
13. There is even earlier evidence of Ambonese Malay, spoken not on Ambon but in New Guinea. In 1737, during a voyage to Salawati (Leupe 1875:271), the following sentence was recorded:

"*Salamat Compania beta mauw matti per Compania maski ieni Orang bilang sama Radja Tidore.*"

Lexical items such as *beta*, *per* and *maski*, phonetic shift of /ə/ to *a* in *salamat* and *maski* as well as the order *ieni Orang* suggest that this is Ambonese Malay spoken by a clan head on Salawati in the early part of the eighteenth century.

14. In this respect, Edwards and Blagden's (1930) study of the oldest wordlist of Malay, dating from the fifteenth century, suffers by comparison. If the Ternate letters were

spared the grammatical fervor of the scribes of the Malay courts, the words, (purportedly) collected in fifteenth century Malacca, were at the mercy of the clerks in Chinese courts. Several hands are apparent in the extant manuscripts. Note, for example, the three transcriptions of *sungai* ('river'), namely *sung ho*, *sung yen* and *su ai*. So, the occurrence of forms (1930:746) such as *su la la chê* (*surat raja*) 'the king's letter' and *chê la la che* (*tera raja*) 'the king's seal', which display the standard possessed possessor form, are contradicted by other forms (1930:719), for example:

ku lu pui (*guruh bunyi*) 'sound of thunder';
ku chên pui (*kucing bunyi*) 'cat's call';
an yin pui (*angin bunyi*) 'sound of wind'; and
ha li têng chia (*hari tengah*) 'midday'.

These seem to display possessor possessed order, although even that is not clear because *pui* could mean *berbunyi* (Middle-Verb+ 'sound') 'make a noise'.

15. Sarawak Malay (Bhaludin 1983) displays an apparently related form [*əmpun*], which is often glossed as 'possess'; but in fact, it seems to be a reflexive intensifier. For example,

[*kame?* (*diyi*) *əmpun* *pəygi*]
 ls self self(?) go
 'I myself went.'

In this sentence [*diyi*] can be deleted. In this use, however, it can be interpreted as a genitive marker. For example:

i. [*yumah ya* *yumah sapa*]
 house that house who

'Whose house is that?'

ii. [*kame?* *əmpun*]
 ls self

'Mine' ('My personal').

It is easy to see how such a sentence could be reanalyzed as a genitive absolute. It is interesting that Ling Roth (1896 II:X) records Iban *ěmpu*, *ngěmpu* 'to own; owner'. The relationship between the Iban and Sarawak Malay forms as well as their overall connections with the pattern of possessive constructions in many dialects of Malay remains unclear.

16. She adds that the underlying form of /*rumah saya*/ may include a verb meaning 'possess', that is, "*punya*, *mempunyai*, *ada*." Some authors (Mader, for one) have argued for an entirely different interpretation of *ada*

which rather precludes Asmah's analysis. Also it remains to be seen that there is no difference between *punya* and *mempunyai*.

17. Ebert (1976:VIII-IX) discusses several fundamental problems in describing historical change in the model of transformational grammar. In particular, he repeats Andersen's (1973) charge of explaining "pseudo-connections".

18. It should be noted that Greenberg (1966:76) considers OVS as a very rare construction. Indeed, it is more common to consider Proto-Austronesia a VSO language. (See Rafferty (1983)).

19. There is an indication that *puna* may be deleted in cases of real possession; note examples in Collins (1974). But the most recent data collected in Ambon is not conclusive.

20. It is with some reluctance that I make the suggestion that there may exist a relationship between a contemporary language and distantly related languages. The term "substratomanic" (Hall 1974) seems reserved for people who make such a claim. In general, it is probably correct to say that language changes must be explained as changes from within; one must find the internal resources of a language which account for change. I hope that this has been demonstrated in the preceding paragraphs. There are perhaps reasons why Malay is more susceptible to certain kinds of change. These are related to absence of copula, declension, gender and conjugation. The internal factors are there and change took place. The point is what, if any, impetus or support can be attributed to other sources.

One major reason for rejecting explanations which involve influence from other (replaced) languages is that in most cases no one can determine just what those replaced languages were like. Oddities are dismissed as influence from unrecorded languages with no evidence. Izzo (1972) and others have demonstrated the inadequacy of that tactic with regard to substrata in European languages. This very valid objection, however, does not apply to the situation in central Maluku. Although it is true that the language of each Christian village has been completely replaced by Ambonese Malay and that no substantial traces remain of those villages' languages, in fact, those extinct languages were dialectal variations of languages currently spoken throughout the area (Collins To appear). The fragments of the extinct languages which do persist verify this assumption. The extinct languages have close relatives that are alive and well.

21. In connection with this, Teeuw (1979:6-7) citing Hooyk as, notes that, by the latter part of the nineteenth century,

"in broad sections of the population Malay was seen and accepted more and

more as the 'bahasa Belanda,' the 'Dutch language', meaning the language typical of the foreign Government, and of the foreigner identified with it."

22. For example;

i.a. /ale mukata painosok/
2s PS-MK+pants dirty

'Your pants are dirty.'

i.b. /taha a'u kata masasat/
no 1s Ø+pants clean

'No, my pants are clean.'

In the reply (i.b) the expected marker, *ku-*, is deleted. In the following sentence (ii), the second person inclusive plural unexpectedly takes no possessive marker.

ii. ite panawali ite pukalawan
lp (in) clean, lp (in) Ø + clove.

'Let's weed our clove (groves).'

23. For example, Lehmann (1976:123) observes that "... it seems clear that the conditions favoring syntactic borrowing may differ from those favoring lexical borrowing."

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