The Phonology of Tioman Malay and the Reconstruction of Proto-Malay.

James T. Collins
National University of Malaysia

Introduction.
It has been repeatedly demonstrated that careful attention to the phonetic details of even the most remote linguistic varieties can provide information relevant to the reconstruction of the systems of proto-languages. In this brief note, some of the phonetic data collected in a survey of the villages of Tioman Island, off the southeast coast of the Malay peninsula, are presented and partially analyzed.¹ Certain apparent innovations and retentions in this dialect suggest a reappraisal of some parts of the phonology of Proto-Malay, the language immediately ancestral to all the contemporary dialects of Malay. Three phonetic characteristics of Tioman Malay are discussed here: 1) The phonemic status of /ʔ/ and /k/ in final position; 2) The occurrence of central vowels in closed final syllables; and 3) The split of *i and *u in non-final syllables.

1. The phonemic status of /ʔ/ and /k/
In the standard dialects of Malay and in most peninsular dialects of Malay, /k/ in final position occurs only as [ʔ]. The complementary distribution of the allophones of /k/, namely [k] and [ʔ], is well-demonstrated (M.Yunus 1980:59).² Moreover, when the suffixes -an or -i are attached to words ending in glottal stops, [k] reappears.³ For example:
[masa?] 'to cook'
[masakan] 'cooking, cuisine'
[kətɔ?] 'to rap, knock'
[kətɔkan] 'knocking, a knock'
[masɔ?] 'to enter'
[dimasɔki] 'be entered' (Locative patient)

In short, in these dialects of Malay, [k] and [?] do not contrast in final position (except in a few recent loanwords). However, in Tioman Malay, a strongly checked [k'] does appear in final position, for example:

[bAdak'] 'rhinoceros'
[duduk'] 'to sit'
[baVe'k'] 'good, healthy'
[hotak'] 'brain'
[namok'] 'mosquito'
[nAYe'k'] 'to ascend, climb, ride'

Other words, however, occur with a final glottal stop. Note the following examples:

[ma?] 'mother'
[bapa?] 'father'
[buka?] 'to open'
[ess?] 'contents, flesh (animals)'
[etc?] 'that'
[kɛta?] 'we (inclusive)'
In fact, there are a few examples of apparent minimal pairs distinguished only by /k/ and /ʔ/ in final position. For example:

[kəγak̚]  'burnt rice adhering to the interior of the pot'
[kəγaʔ]  'a kind of macaque (Macaca fascicularis?)'

There are also words with final vowels: that is, [ʔ] is not an obligatory phonetic closure. For example, we find:

[matə̂]  'eye'
[tali]  'rope'
[bulu]  'feather'
[tuâ]  'old'
[api]  'fire'
[gutu]  'louse'

Thus, in comparison to standard Malay, in the final position there are four correspondences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SM</th>
<th>TM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>φ</td>
<td>φ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>φ</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Correspondence sets 1-3 suggest fairly clear reconstructions for the phonology of Proto-Malay. For the correspondence of ? : k, *k is reconstructed. In the case of ø : ø, the words are assumed to have ended in vowels. For the correspondence (No. 2) ? : ?, a reconstruction of *? seems appropriate. So far, then, the following examples are relevant:

Proto-Malay

1. *duduk SM dudɔ' , TM dudɔq 'to sit'
2. *ma? SM ma? , TM ma? 'mother'
3. *mata SM mata , TM mata^ 'eye'

The reconstruction of *k and ø in final position, of course, coincides with the generally accepted notion of Proto-Malay. The reconstruction of *?, however, requires some comment. In 1937, Dempwolff noted the occurrence of final [?] in Malay kinship terms; this he considered an exception to the normal reflex of vowel final words. Blust (1979) provided firm evidence for the reconstruction of *q, a vocative marker, in Proto-West Malayo-Polynesian. In the case of those words which are kinship terms, such as [ma?] and [bApə?], the final [?] is a reflex of this vocative marker. That is, historically *? is a grammatical marker now permanently suffixed to kinship terms reconstructed with final vowels.

There remain, however, words displaying the ? : ? correspondence which do not involve kinship terms. Note, for example: