Where Did the Rejangs Come From?

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1. Introduction

Rejang is an isolated Austronesian language with roughly 200,000 speakers in five major dialect areas occupying the Barisan highlands in the Indonesian provinces of Bengkulu and South Sumatra. Rejang country is surrounded on three sides by various Malay dialects, and its western edge meets the Indonesian (Indian) Ocean. It is not to be confused with another language group with the same name occupying a territory near the mouth of the Rejang River in Sarawak, Malaysia. At one and the same time, however, there may well be a connection. McGinn (1999) raised this question and gave typological evidence. Section 3 of this paper continues along the lines of that quest. At the same time, Section 2 raises a new set of possibilities in search of a subgrouping hypothesis for the Sumatran Rejangs.

Rejang is a fairly well-studied language, at least from the point of view of its historical phonology, thanks in the main to a paper by Robert Blust (1984), which demonstrated that in this language there have been more changes in the vowels than in any other known Austronesian language. McGinn (1997, 1999) added further information, including the claim that pre-Rejang once had same stress pattern as contemporary Malay. In this pattern, the stress falls on the ultimate when the penult is schwa; otherwise on the penult. (In contemporary Rejang stress falls on the ultimate.) The advantage of reconstructing the Malay-type pattern for pre-Rejang is that a number of vocalic changes that had been described as irregular were shown to be regular.

The basis of the present paper is a set of 100+ ordered changes in phonology and morphology linking Rejang and Proto-Austronesian. (See Appendix 1 for a sample of the first 50+ changes.) The central rules in Rejang historical phonology affected unstressed reflexes of PMP *a. The rules

are shown as (31a-c) in Appendix 1, and summarized below.

(31a-c) *a > ə /-V:C__(C[-velar])

This is a composite of three changes affecting unstressed *a word-finally in polysyllables.

31a. The first change affected pre-Rejang diphthongs *aw and *ay (from PMP *aw, *ay, *ey), raising the nuclei to *əw and *əy (reflected as əw, əy in Lebong and Pasisir dialects; in Musi ie, uo; in Kebanagung əe, əo; and in Rawas uy, iw), e.g. *pisaw > Lebong pisəw `knife' and *matay > Lebong matəy `die'.

31b. The second change affected etyma with the shape CV:CaC except when the final -C was a velar; thus *ta:ŋan > ta:ŋən `hand', *surat > su?ət `letter' and *zalan > dalən `road' but *a:nak > a:na? `child' and *da:qan > da:n `branch'.

31c. The third change affected etyma with the shape CV:Ca; thus *bu:ŋa > *bu:ŋə (> *buŋi > buŋəy) `flower' but *təka: > *təka: (> təko) `come'.

Rule 31 is central because it is dependent both for its regularity and its phonetic plausibility upon its interaction with two global patterns reconstructed for early pre-Rejang: the Malay-type stress pattern, and a set of syllable reductions (disyllabic and monosyllabic etyma reflecting PMP trisyllables and disyllables). See McGinn (1999) for discussion.

Of the three changes expressed in (31), change (31b) is the most promising for subgrouping purposes because it is both regular and typologically unusual. (Standard Malay shows virtually a mirror image change, reflecting *-eC as -aC in word-ending syllables: *taneq > Malay tanah; *qutek > Malay otak.) In this paper I shall explore the possibility that the three

factors just mentioned (change 31b, Malay-type stress pattern, set of syllable-reductions) might be useful in determining the position of Rejang in relation to other Austronesian languages. The quest is for a subgrouping hypothesis, hence an `external' interpretation of the historical phonology, which would add to the contribution Rejang has already made to the study of sound change.

The basis of my subgrouping quest is the set of the first 50 changes shown in Appendix 1. These are assumed to represent the earliest changes in Rejang based on their relative ordering. The first six changes (not spelled out) merely identify Rejang as a member of the PMP subgroup. The next changes after PMP are the important ones for my purpose, especially (31b), as already mentioned. After (31a-c), the stress pattern shifted to the contemporary pattern (word-final) and the language began to diverge into the contemporary five major dialects.

2. Bedayuh (Land Dayak)

I assume that Rejang has no close relatives in Sumatra. In McGinn (1999) and in my SEALS X paper, I presented some data linking Rejang typologically with a set of Bornean languages, especially the Melanau dialects in Sarawak, one of which is called `Rejang' (see below). During the discussion that followed my paper, Christopher Court pointed out that the "Bedayuh" languages spoken in the Serian District of Sarawak regularly show -əC reflecting PMP last-syllable *-aC except before velars, therefore satisfying the general description of Rejang change (31b). I have since read a brief account of Bedayuh phonology in Court (1967a), which does indeed suggest a resemblance to the Rejang rule. More on this below. In addition, there is a small bit of onomastic evidence pointing in the same direction. Three Sarawak place names in the Bedayuh district correspond suggestively with the names of villages in the Lebong dialect area of Rejang (Sumatra): Sarawak's "Serian" (pronunciation unknown) corresponds with Lebong's "Sien" [siən]; Batu Lintang (pronunciation

unknown) corresponds with Lebong's Butaw Litang [butaw litaŋ]; and Tapuh (pronunciation unknown) corresponds with Lebong's Topos [topos] (spelled Tapus on standard maps). On the strength of these threads of evidence, I now intend to explore the Bedayuh languages around Serian (as well as the Melanau group around the Rejang River) during my field trip to Sarawak in December 2000. Unfortunately, what linguistic information I have found through library research about the Bedayuh languages in general (see bibliography) does not suggest any close connection with Sumatran Rejang. The exception to this statement is the data provided by Court (1967a) mentioned above; moreover, Robert Blust (personal communication) has send me a wordlist for the Tapuh dialect provided to him by Donald Topping which corroborates Court's comment with respect to the existence of at least one Bedayuh dialect showing second-syllable schwas reflecting *a except before velars, e.g. beside Tapuh təŋətn `hand', suʔət `letter', berəs `husked rice' and jərətn `road' (cf. PMP *taŋan `hand', *surat `letter', *beRas `husked rice' and *zalan `road') one finds əmaŋ `father', ləmak, `fat', turakŋ `bone', anak `child', and deyaʔ `blood' (cf. PMP *tuqelaN `bone', *anak `child', and *dalaq (*-q = velar) `blood'). Finally, an interesting phonetic similarity is the feature of pre-stopped final nasals reported for both Rejang and Tapuh-Bedayuh; thus, beside Tapuh bulətn `moon' one finds the `pausal forms' of Rejang (e.g. bulən [buləd**n**] `moon' reported in the literature (Voorhoeve 1955, McGinn 1982).

These data sets provide prima facie justification for investigating a possible genetic link between the Sumatran Rejangs and the speakers of Bedayuh-Tapuh. Thus a major goal of my upcoming field trip is to collect data from Tapuh and other dialects of the Serian district, and to reconstruct pre- (or Proto-) Bedayuh for purposes of comparison with pre-Rejang.

3. Mukah Melanau.

Pre-Rejang and contemporary Malay share the same stress pattern (McGinn 1997); and both share with Melanau a number of other typological similarities which might turn out to be actually shared innovations. Since the immediate ancestor of Malay is known to derive from western Borneo (Adelaar 1992), it is thus reasonable to look in that direction in search of a homeland for Rejang. I have speculated in print (McGinn 1999) that all three languages might be part of a subgroup. However, as I also pointed out in that paper, there are alternative explanations for the similarities one finds. In fact, most of them can be accounted for either as shared retentions from PMP (changes 1-11 in Appendix 1) or as independent inventions involving typologically similar languages (changes 12-30 in Appendix 1). Nonetheless, the changes (besides the reconstructed Malay-type stress) that seem most promising as a possible link between Rejang and the Melanau group is the set that I have labeled `Blust's Law' in McGinn (1999). Although these changes have occurred independently in many languages in Borneo, Sumatra and Java (Adelaar, personal communication), it is remarkable that they occurred in the same order in Malay and Mukah Melanau (Blust 1997). If it is accepted (as I have claimed) that they also applied in the same order in Rejang, that would be a beginning toward establishing a subgroup including pre-Rejang, pre-Melanau and Proto-Malay in a subgroup. To establish such a claim it will be necessary to reconstruct pre- Melanau alongside pre-Rejang and Adelaar's (1992) Proto-Malay. This becomes the second goal of field work in Sarawak.

3. Concluding Remarks

Highly innovative phonologies often correlate positively with long-distance migrations (Blust 1991; Ross 1991), whereas dialect uniformity within an area suggests a relatively short period of occupation (Sapir 1916, 1949). Rejang's high number of phonological innovations (especially in the vowels and diphthongs) is not matched by a

corresponding high degree of dialect diversity. On a modified Swadesh 200 wordlist of basic vocabulary, the Lebong, Pasisir, and Musi dialects shared around 95% cognates among themselves, compared with around 87% shared cognates with the Kebanagung dialect, and around 79% with the Rawas dialect. These measures suggest that a migration resulting in loss of contact with the homeland may have occurred in fairly recent times, perhaps as little as 1000-1,500 years ago. If so, it is reasonable to hope that an extra-Sumatran point of origin (homeland) will eventually be found using linguistic reconstruction techniques, and that the results will add to our growing body of knowledge about the movement of Austronesian settlers through the large islands of Southeast Asia (Bellwood 1995).

Appendix 1: EARLIEST 50+ CHANGES

CHANGES	pre-REJANG	MUKAH	MALAY
1-6 PAn > PMP (6 changes)	YES	YES	YES
7. PENULT STRESS EXCEPT *ə YES (All affixes unstressed)	(reconstructed)	MAYBE	YES
Morphological Changes in Western Indonesia			
8. Lost of INSTR prefix *hi-	YES	YES	YES
9. Loss of GOAL suffix* -en	YES	YES	YES
10. Reanalysis of *-in- as Passive	YES	YES	YES
11. Retention of infixes *-um- , *-in-	YES	YES	NO
`BLUST'S LAW' SET (BL)			
12. Prepenultimate *a > ə	YES	YES	YES
13. Schwa Syncope (SS)	YES	YES	YES
14. Consonant Reduction (CR)	YES	YES	YES
15. Prepenultimate *i > ə	YES	YES	YES
16. Prepenultimate *u > ə	YES	YES	YES
`BLUST'S LAW' AND MORPHOLOGY			
17. *maŋ- > məŋ- ; *maR- bə(r)-	YES	YES	YES
18. Ablaut: -u-, -i- become infixes	NO	YES	NO
19. *-um- > -əm- and *-in- > -ən-	YES	YES	NO
20. *b-, *p- > zero in Trans. verbs	YES	YES	NO
BACK TO PHONOLOGY			
21. Final *-q > ʔ	YES	YES	NO (-h)
22. Initial *q- > zero	YES	YES	NO (h-)
23. *-q- > zero between like vowels	YES	NO (ʔ)	NO (-h-)
24a. *e- > zero in trisyllables	YES	YES	NO
24b. *e- > zero ATB (*epat > pat)	YES	YES	NO

CHANGES	pre-REJANG	MUKAH	MALAY
25. *-eR- > zero in trisyllables	YES	YES(dian)	NO
26. *-əV- > V (*buhək > buk)	YES	YES	YES
27. Derived diphthong: *-aqi > *ay	YES	YES	n.d.
28. *Z- > d- (*dalən)	YES	NOBlust	NO
	YESAnon		
29. *z- > j- (*zaRi > jiʔey)	YES	n.d.	YES
30. *-Z- , -z- merge as -j-	YES	YES	YES
31a. *a Raising: *-ay, *aw > əy, əw	YES	NO	NO
b. *a>ə/V:C__C[-velarl]#	YES	NO	NO
c. *a>ə/V:C__#	YES	NO	NO
32. *u-Lowering (*niuR > *nioR)	YES	NO(ñuh)	NO
33. *-R- > -l- except/C[-cor]V_VC	YES	NO	NO
34. *R, *r merge as > h ATB	YES	NO	NO
35. *w- > b- (*balət)	YES	NO	NO
36. V-Coal. *ai > e (pet, pat)	YES	NO	NO
37. *-j > -g (*quləj > *quləg)	YES	NO	NO
	NO(Rawas)		
38. *-j- > -g- (*pəgu: > pəgew)	YES	NO	NO
39. *-j- > zero (*pa:ay > pay)	YES	NO	NO
40. STRESS SHIFT TO ULTIMATE	YES	YES	NO
		(Blust p.c.)	
		NO (Blust 1988)	

41-49. Vowel changes conditioned by word-final stress pattern:

Gloss	PMP	late pre-Rej	Rejang (Lebong)
broom	*sapu	*supu:	supa:w
rope	*tali	*tili:	tila:y
brain	*qutək	*uto:k	oto:ʔ
tooth	*ipən	*ipe:n	epe:n
chicken	*manuk	*monu:k	mono:ʔ
sky	*laŋit	*leŋi:t	leŋe:t

50. (affected forms systematically escaped change 31c):

*-a: > -o: /-əC_# e.g. *təka > təko `come'
*lema > lemo `five'
*depa > depo `fathom'

51. (secondary changes after 31c had applied):

*ə: > i: > əy / __# e.g. *mata > *matə > *mati: > matay `eye'
*buŋa > *buŋə > buŋi > buŋay `flower'
(Keb.)

52. *ə: > o: / əC__C[+dorsal]

e.g. *dəŋə:R > *dəŋo:R > təŋoa `hear'
*pəgəŋ > *pəgoŋ > goŋ `hold'

Appendix 2:

DIAGNOSTIC ITEMS IN SEARCH OF A SUBGROUPING HYPOTHESIS

A. Diagnostic items linking Rejang and Malay (taken from Blust 1981, 1982, 1992).

1. Metathesized reflex of PMP *quDip `alive'. Rejang: idup `alive'
2. Innovated numerals `SEVEN', `EIGHT' and `NINE'. Rejang: tojoaʔ, dəlapən, səmbilən. Cf. also Malayic (Adelaar 1992) and Proto-Chamic (Thurgood 1999:37)

B. Diagnostic items representing changes affecting Rejang but not Malay.

Group I - Metathesis affecting two words.

Gloss	PMP	Pre-Rejang	Rejang	Malay
wood	*kaSiw	*kiaw	kiəw	kayu
dove	*punay	*panuy	ponoy	punai
(cf. fire	*qapuy	*apuy	opoy	api)

Group II - Regular change, e.g. *-aC > -əC in unstressed syllables except before velars (*quDaŋ > udaŋ). Note reconstructed penultimate stress (McGinn 1997).

Gloss	PMP	Pre-Rejang	Rejang	Malay
round	*bulat	*bu:lat > *bu:lət	bulə:t	bu:lat
smoke	*hasap	*a:sap > *a:səp	asə:p	a:sap
rain	*quZan	*u:jan > *u:jən	ujə:n	hu:jan
hand	*taŋan	*ta:ŋan > *ta:ŋən	taŋə:n	ta:ŋan
road	*zalan	*da:lan > *da:lən	dalə:n	ja:lan

Group III - Irregular Rejang reflexes of PMP segments.

Gloss	PMP	Pre-Rejang	Rejang	irreg. change	Malay
hear	*dengeR	*təŋoR	təŋoa	*d- > t-	dəngar
egg	*qateluR	*tənoR	tənoa	*-l- > -n-	təlur
break	*pataq	*patiq	patia?	*a > i	patah
bone	*tuqelaN	*təlaN	təlan	*u > ə	tulang
five	*lima	*ləma	ləmo	*i > ə	lima
claw	*silun	*sələn	sələn	*i > ə	(cakar)

Group IV - Analogical change: Loss of *b- and *p- in transitive verbs

Gloss	PMP	Rejang	Malay
kill	*bunuq	unua?, m-unua?, n-unua?	bunuh
hold	*pegeng	gong, mə-gong, nə-gong	pəgaŋ
give	*beRey	ləy, mə-ləy, nə-ləy	bəri
choose	*piliq	elea?, m-elea?, n-elea?	pilih
borrow	*pinzem	inyəm, m-inyəm, n-inyəm	pinjam

C. LEXICAL INNOVATIONS

Gloss	Rejang	Pre-Rej.	Malay
heavy	bənək	*bənəg	bərat
lightning	səmitoa (Keb.)	*səmituR	kilat
to stab	tujəah (Keb.)	*tujaq	tikam
ear	ti?u?	*tiruk	təliŋa
wild pig	jaoa?	*jauq	babi hutan
ashamed	sele?	*selek	malu
sit	təmot	*təmot	duduk
door	baŋ	*baŋ	pintu

cf. Proto-Chamic ***ɓaŋ*** `door;hole' poss. borr. fr. MK (Thurgood 1999:312)

D. FUNCTION WORDS

Gloss	Rejang	Malay
not	coa	tidak
not a	iso	bukan
not ye t	ati	bəlum
Don't!	daŋ (Musi dialect)	jaŋan
	jibəaʔ (Lebong dialect)	
to	may	ke
at	naʔ	di
there	di	sana
here	pio	sini

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