

## NEW IDEAS ON THE EARLY HISTORY OF MALAGASY

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The year 1988 will prove a milestone in the study of Malagasy historical linguistics – as was 1951, the year in which Dahl showed that the Malagasy language has its direct roots in the South-East Barito area of South Kalimantan. In 1988 Pierre Simon and Waruno Mahdi each published a book on the linguistic history of Malagasy. Simon focuses on the historical and sociolinguistic conditions under which Malagasy developed, whereas Mahdi draws extra attention to Proto Austronesian linguistics and prehistory, but in general they are both concerned with the same subject. What are the roots of Malagasy? How did it develop into the language it is today? And what were the circumstances which contributed to this development?

In the following pages I give a critical evaluation of Simon and Mahdi's works. For each book I give a summary, in which I try to present the author's opinions, then I proceed with my own criticism. I then conclude the article with a new hypothesis regarding the sociohistorical conditions under which the Malagasy language and people came into being.

### 2. SUMMARY OF SIMON'S BOOK

Simon proposes several periods in the history and reconstruction of Ancient Malagasy. He does so for a period starting in the 2nd century AD and lasting until the arrival of West Europeans in the Indian Ocean. Simon divides the history of the Malagasy language into three main stages: 1) 'Indonesic Proto Malagasy', 2) 'Common Paleo-Malagasy' and 3) the split into Malagasy dialects.

1) **INDONESIC PROTO MALAGASY.** Simon contends that this language was an early offshoot of Proto South-East Barito. In the 2nd century AD, some Proto South-East Barito speakers, conveniently called 'Wejus', moved to the South Kalimantan coast, developed sailing activities across the Java Sea and founded one or possibly several kingdoms on its shores. On Java's north coast the Wejus came in contact with speakers of Malayo-Javanic languages. Through this contact, which must have lasted some 150-200 years, the language of the Wejus underwent a 'phonetic and morphological revolution' and developed into a separate language, 'Indonesic Proto Malagasy'.

2) **COMMON PALEO-MALAGASY.** In the 3rd century AD, according to Simon, the Wejus established relations with the East African coast, and in the four centuries to follow, some of them went over to East Africa. In the 7th century the Weju metropolis lost the hegemony over the Java Sea

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to the maritime empire of Srivijaya, which also continued the trade with East Africa. The Wejus probably founded a trade emporium in the Comoros, and at first they used Madagascar only as a stop-over place on the way to and from the metropolis. In their new home they were soon involved in a situation of diglossia with speakers of one or several coastal Bantu languages. These languages should not be confused with Swahili or with the Swahili-like dialects Ngazija and Nzuani of the Comoros which would influence the development of Malagasy later on.<sup>1</sup> Language contact between Indonesian Proto Malagasy and North-East Coast Bantu gave rise to a pidgin. This pidgin was gradually relexified with vocabulary from Indonesian Proto Malagasy (which was still the language of the Weju metropolis in Southeast Asia) and also with vocabulary from Malayo-Javanic languages for as long as contacts lasted between the colony and its metropolis. Simon labels the relexified creole language which originated in this way 'Common Paleo-Malagasy'. Its structure and vocabulary were predominantly 'Indonesic', but its sound system had undergone a marked North-East Coast Bantu influence, as is most clearly testified in the fricativisation of its non-aspirated stops and the de-aspiration of its aspirated stops.

3) THE DIALECT-SPLIT. Around the 6th century AD, Indonesian Proto Malagasy had ceased to influence Common Paleo-Malagasy, and the latter became subject to a series of dialect splits. The Wejus had their base on the Comoros (and possibly already also in northern Madagascar). Some of them began to move to the south-western part of Madagascar. This gave rise to a south-western dialect ancestral to the present-day dialects of Vezo, Antandroy, Mahafaly and Bara. Through other migrations which followed about a century later, the remaining non-south-western dialect of Indonesian Proto Malagasy developed into a western branch ancestral to the various forms of Sakalava, and a branch ancestral to the northern dialects (Tsimihety and Antankarana) and the eastern dialects (including Merina and Betsileo). South-West Malagasy and North Malagasy are believed to be two extremes of a dialect-chain. The formation of Common Paleo-Malagasy and the spread of Malagasy dialects were a result of the 'Weju-Vazimba civilization wave'; it was followed in the 8th century by a 'Weju-Buki civilization wave' which particularly affected the northern and eastern dialects, providing them with Malay and Proto Swahili vocabulary.

All dialects derive from Common Paleo-Malagasy. In contrast to the opinion often held among scholars dealing with Madagascar, Simon maintains that none of the dialects are developments from other languages, nor does any of them have a significant influx of foreign lexical elements in their 100-item basic wordlist. The measure of archaism of the dialects conforms to the order in which they split off: the south-western dialects are the most archaic, the northern ones the least.

The way the Malagasy dialects reflect Proto Austronesian (or Proto South-East Barito) *\*-li-* and *\*-ti-* has been held diagnostic for a basic genetic dialect division (Dez 1963). Roughly speaking, western and south-western dialects have maintained *li* and *ti*, whereas eastern and northern dialects changed *\*li* into *di* and *\*ti* into *tsi* (Dahl 1988, Dez 1963). However, the present South-East Barito languages in Kalimantan have either *li* and *ti* or *di* and *si* for these phoneme sequences. According to Simon, the changes involving these pairs must therefore be a pre-Common Paleo-Malagasy retention, and they are not critical for a basic genetic division of Malagasy dialects.

In Simon's view, the Weju movement from the Comoros to Madagascar was probably caused by the pressure exerted by Bantu migrations from West Africa to East Africa and the Comoros. (The Comoros are now a mainly Bantu-speaking area.) A scenario in which the Wejus colonised the

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<sup>1</sup>According to Simon, these coastal Bantu languages must have belonged to the central or 'Pangani' branch of North-East Bantu. Swahili, Ngazija and Nzuani belong to the 'Sabaki' branch of North-East Bantu.

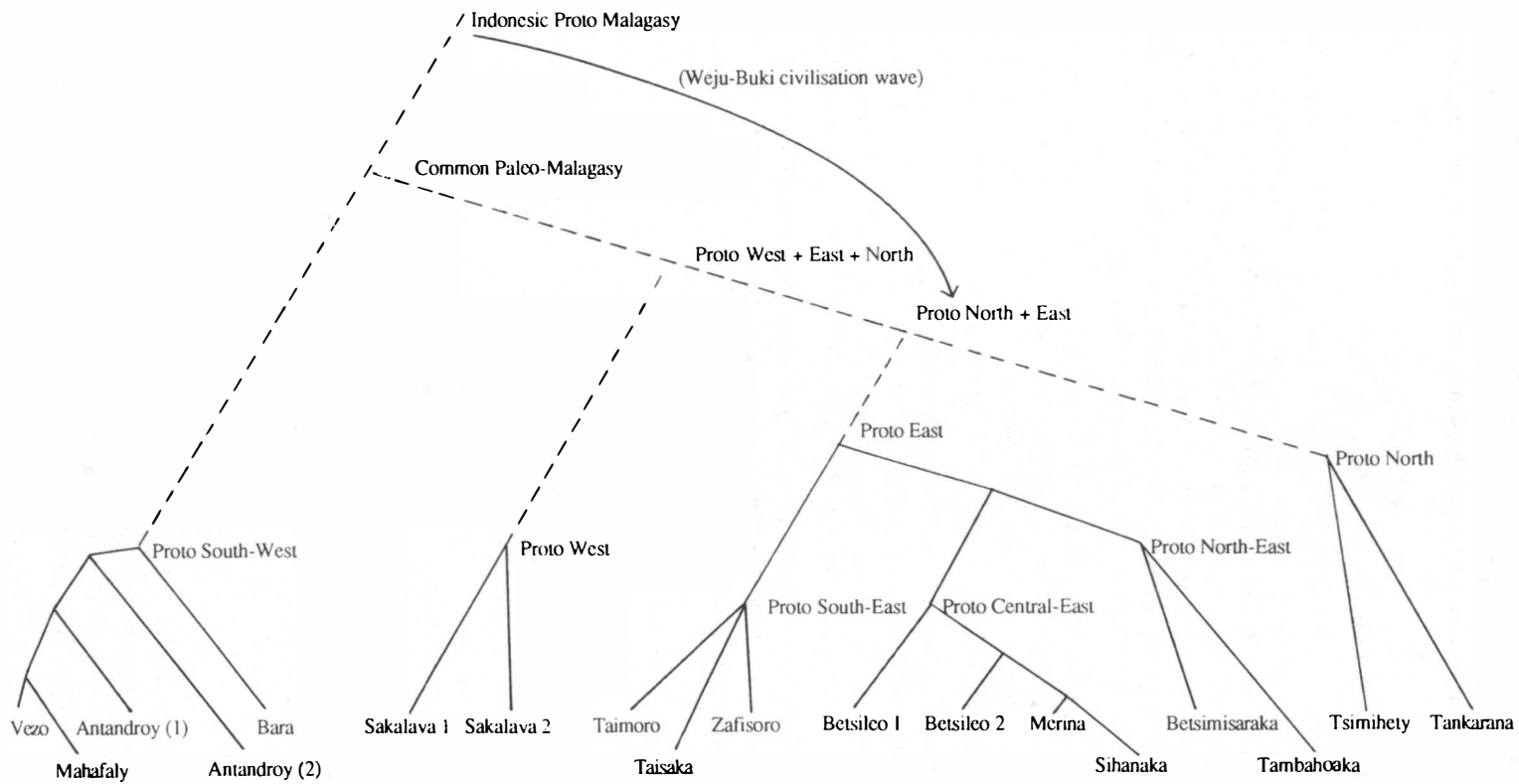


FIGURE 1: SIMON'S CLASSIFICATION OF THE MALAGASY DIALECTS (p.228)

Comoros before they eventually moved into Madagascar would explain among other things why the present-day Malagasy people do not have a collective memory of their Southeast Asian roots: the impact of more recent migrations would have pushed such a memory to the background.

### 3. CRITICISM OF SIMON'S BOOK

Simon's study settles the matter with regard to a number of topics which elsewhere in the literature have given rise to rather confusing and unfounded assumptions. His emphasis on the fact that Malagasy has its direct roots in the South-East Barito isolects is important in the light of the doubts and alternative theories of other scholars dealing with Malagasy history (cf. Hébert 1961; Southall 1975; Vérin 1975; Takaya et al. 1988). Linguistic research has shown that Malagasy is genetically closest to the South-East Barito languages, and a basic acceptance of this conclusion seems to me a *sine qua non* for fruitful further research into the history of Malagasy.

Simon's conclusion that the Malayo-Javanic languages were the vehicular languages for the Sanskrit and other Indian influences on Malagasy is basically correct (in spite of the unwarranted importance which Simon attributes to Madurese, see below). This has important implications for theories asserting direct cultural contacts between Malagasy and Indians (cf. also Adelaar in press a).

Simon's approach to the Malagasy dialect classifications made so far is critical and to the point, allowing for the fact that his findings are based on an insufficient corpus of data (i.e. Dez 1963; Vérin, Kottak and Gorlin 1969). His remark that all Malagasy dialects stem from the same stock language is also relevant in view of some confusing views held by other scholars on this matter.

But one should also recognise the weaknesses in Simon's work. Its leading hypothesis is that the early 'Wejus' developed a pidgin through their contacts with speakers of Bantu languages. It is the present-day Malagasy phonology which allegedly testifies to such a stage, the lexicon of this pidgin having gradually been relexified with vocabulary from authentic 'Weju', and the grammatical structure having remained remarkably archaic (even *vis-à-vis* the South-East Barito languages). But there are in fact no grounds at all for a pidgin or creole theory. The Bantu influence on Malagasy phonology is a straightforward result of continuous and intensive language contact between Malagasy speakers and speakers of Bantu languages. One would expect the strongest evidence for creolisation to be found in morphosyntactical characteristics, but in Malagasy these characteristics point to precisely the contrary: no pidginisation nor creolisation, but maintenance of the original morphological and syntactical system. This system is extremely archaic and in fact much closer to Proto Austronesian than is the structure of most west Indonesian languages, including the South-East Barito ones. The idea of relexification is far-fetched and has little empirical foundation. It seems to have been introduced only to make the creolisation theory fit.

Simon's view of the history of Malagasy depends on a series of hypothetical events. He has his own free interpretation of early Southeast Asian history, and fills out the margins of uncertainty left by Çoedès (1964). He dates the first Indian influence in Indonesia at least a century earlier than Çoedès' (Çoedès 1964:42-44) prudent estimate of the 4th century AD. He calls Funan an 'Indonesian kingdom', in spite of its geographical situation in the Gulf of Siam, and in spite of its name, which rather points to a Khmer origin, if anything (Çoedès 1962:61). He brings Taruma, Srivijaya and Kutei into the picture, and gives them much more historical relief than is warranted by the historical data. Early South-East Barito speakers or 'Wejus' are assumed to have left their homeland and started sailing to both sides of the Java Sea. They allegedly founded one or several

kingdoms, and their language subsequently underwent influence from Malayo-Javanic languages, which included indirect lexical influence from Indian languages. Only afterwards, according to Simon, did some of them sail to East Africa. The problem with this reconstruction of early Malagasy history is that no traces whatsoever remain in Southeast Asia, except for linguistic evidence from the South-East Barito languages and the vague suggestion of a few lines in a South-East Barito language on one of the 7th century Old Malay inscriptions from South Sumatra. There is no written source, oral history or archeological site to use as a foothold, and this is the reality we have to acknowledge if we are looking for the roots of Malagasy language and culture.

Simon's use of the term 'Malayo-Javanic' is confusing as he does not clearly specify to what degree the Malayo-Javanic languages which influenced the 'Weju' can be identified with the present-day Malayo-Javanic languages. Of the Malayo-Javanic languages, (a form of) Madurese is supposed to have influenced 'Weju' the most. Due to an original Sanskrit influence, says Simon, Madurese and the 'Weju' language underwent phonological developments causing the emergence of a series of aspirated voiced stops along with unaspirated voiced stops. It is this aspirated series which eventually developed into the modern Malagasy voiced stops, whereas the unaspirated series developed into the modern Malagasy voiced fricatives.<sup>1</sup> But why posit a hypothetical stage with 'Weju' aspirated stops when the Malagasy situation of several reflexes for the original Proto Austronesian voiced stops has an almost exact parallel in the South-East Barito languages? Retention from South-East Barito is a more realistic explanation than Sanskrit or Madurese influence. Another piece of phonological evidence for Madurese influence (viz. the merger of Proto Austronesian *\*-b* and *\*-p* into Malagasy *-ka*, Madurese *-q*) is based on a mistaken interpretation of Nothofer (1975:117,142). The Madurese are relative late-comers in Indonesian history. There is no evidence of Madurese as an important cultural or trade language until relatively recent times. The earliest inscriptions in Madura stem from the 14th century AD, and they were written in Old Javanese.<sup>2</sup> Evidence for Madurese lexical influence on Malagasy is negligible. The above hypotheses are exemplary of Simon's speculative perspective on the pre-East-African history of Malagasy. It is to be feared that they combine into an almost totally impressionistic theory for which there is hardly any empirical support.

Simon claims that his classification of Austronesian languages is inspired by Blust (1980), but it is hard to recognise any of the latter's ideas in it. It is a rather strange combination of Blust's primary bipartite division of Austronesian languages into Malayo-Polynesian and Taiwanese languages, with a lower-order subgrouping based on Dyen's (1965) lexicostatistical findings. The languages of central and eastern Indonesia and the Oceanic languages are not indicated (except for a separate branch labelled with an unexplained 'PMM + PPM'). The Malayo-Javanic languages and the South-East Barito languages are classified according to Dyen (1965), and amendments to this classification (Nothofer 1985, Hudson 1978<sup>3</sup>) are not taken into account.

Simon's internal classification of East Barito languages is represented in Figure 3 (in section 4). Simon considers the East Barito languages to have grown out of a dialect chain. Samihim, which is spoken relatively close to the south Kalimantan coast, was the southernmost extreme of this chain and bears most resemblance to Malagasy. (For an evaluation of this classification, see p.13. For an

<sup>1</sup>This explanation ignores the fact that the Malagasy fricativisation of stops also affected *\*p* and *\*k* (which became *f/p* and *h/k* respectively), whereas in Madurese the fricativisation was limited to historically voiced stops.

<sup>2</sup>viz. the Mandigara inscription in Nganjuk which was made in AD 1320 (Damais 1952:81).

<sup>3</sup>Hudson's views on the internal and external classification of Barito languages are given in Figure 2 (in section 4).

evaluation of Simon's treatment of the history and classification of Bantu languages, I refer the reader to Nurse (to appear).

Simon's views on the history of Malagasy *mi-* (an intransitive verb prefix) show a lack of familiarity with Proto Austronesian morphosyntax. According to Simon, *mi-* does not derive from Proto Austronesian *\*maR-*, but it reflects a Proto Austronesian *\*mi-* (which, he says, (p.97) was an allomorph of *\*-um-*).

Simon uses a terminology pertaining to genetic classification in paleontology in order to refer to comparative linguistic concepts (p.24), which is unnecessary and complicates the reading of his book. Furthermore, his use of terms like 'Weju' or 'Buki', while claimed to be connotationally neutral, is still somewhat tendentious in view of the ill-founded speculations that have been made on the basis of the similarity between the terms 'Vezo' (a seafaring people in Madagascar), 'Bajau' (Indonesian, Malaysian and Philippine 'Sea-Gypsies') and 'Wajo' (a South Sulawesi kingdom), or the terms 'Buki' (a term used by East Africans for Malagasy people) and 'Bugi/Wugi' (the name of an important seafaring people in South Sulawesi).

Simon gives many Malagasy etymologies. Many of these are interesting, but one also has to be wary of a substantial number of ill-founded etymologies. There are, for instance, neither phonological nor semantic grounds for assuming that *manana* 'have, possess' is related to Malay *bər-nama* 'have a name, named; famous, respectful' (p.82); that *boto* 'boy' derives from a Sanskrit *batu* (?) (p. 80); that the terms *Vahoaka* 'the subjects of a state; the people, the public' and *Banjka* (the name of an Indonesian island) are in any way related to Minangkabau *awak* (p.42);<sup>1</sup> that *vazaha* 'foreigner' is related to Javanese *bajag* 'pirate', *adala* 'crazy' to Javanese *âdaran* [sic]<sup>2</sup> 'crazy', or *takalo* 'exchange' to Javanese *tukər* 'exchange' (p.92).

Reading Simon's book is made more difficult by the fact that it has been very poorly edited. It contains an embarrassing number of typographical, orthographical and bibliographical errors, and there are also many mistaken cross-references, as well as errors in the spelling of proper names, toponyms and foreign language data.

The above list of criticisms is by no means exhaustive; it clearly shows that Simon's book should be read with great caution. Simon seems to have had difficulties in integrating the great mass of material involved in his study. The quality of his book would have gained if its scope had been narrowed down, if the subject matter had been treated less speculatively and thought out more profoundly, and if the layout had been given due care.

#### 4. SUMMARY OF MAHDI'S BOOK

The main issues in Mahdi's book are 1) Malagasy morphophonology; 2) migrations of the early Austronesians, classification of Austronesian languages and Proto Austronesian phonology; 3) classification and phonological history of the Barito languages; and 4) the external linguistic influences which caused certain Malagasy word-final changes. Mahdi treats these issues in the main part of his book; in a supplement, he enlarges upon various related cultural-historical and methodological questions.

<sup>1</sup>An assumption which is caused by confusing the connotational and the literal translation of *bahasa awak* (respectively 'the Minangkabau language' and 'our language') – *bahasa* 'language', *awak* 'body' (often used as a personal pronoun).

<sup>2</sup>Possibly meant to be *edan* 'crazy'?

1) MALAGASY MORPHOPHONOLOGY. Mahdi's morphophonemic analysis of Malagasy mainly concerns the processes involved in suffixation. Mahdi posits a number of morphophonemes (vowels as well as consonants) by means of which the affixed form of most lexemes can regularly be derived from their base.

Consonants are categorised according to their possible positions in a lexeme: there are 'defective consonants' (never occurring at the end of a lexeme), 'weak consonants' (occurring at the end of a lexeme but only realised before a suffix) and 'strong consonants' (occurring at the end of a lexeme; when the lexeme is not suffixed, they are realised as *-tr(a)*, *-k(a)* or *-n(a)*).

Mahdi establishes a word pattern with regular stress on the penultimate syllable: where there is a single vowel with irregular stress on the phonemic level, he posits double vowels on the morphophonemic level.

Mahdi shows that some of the irregular derivations which he tries to solve with morphophonemes can be explained as historically regular morphophonemic patterns which later became disrupted. For instance, final *\*t* and *\*r* must at one time have been in complementary distribution: *t* appears before suffixes in lexemes containing *r* (or *dr*);<sup>1</sup> *r* appears before suffixes in other lexemes, except in a few which have *t* either as a reflex of Proto Malagasy *\*-t* or as a result of false analogy.

2) MIGRATIONS OF THE EARLY AUSTRONESIANS, CLASSIFICATION OF AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGES, PROTO AUSTRONESIAN PHONOLOGY. In order to arrive at a phonological history of Malagasy, Mahdi starts out with a delineation of the dissemination and interrelationship of the Austronesian languages. The early Austronesians, says Mahdi, must have left their original homeland on the south-east coast of China along different routes. First a group of East Austronesians left the homeland for Taiwan and then proceeded to the Philippines. From there they dispersed in several directions: Oceania, the Moluccas, Sulawesi and western Indonesia. Outside Oceania and the Moluccas, East Austronesian languages were lost, except for Enggano, spoken on the island of the same name off Sumatra's west coast.

The other Austronesians, or West Austronesians, left the homeland at a much later stage. Some West Austronesians sailed from the south-east coast of China to Taiwan, and from there to the Philippines, Sulawesi and Borneo. Others sailed down along the Chinese coast to Indo-China and further on to Borneo (Sarawak), from where they went inland or travelled on to Sabah, to the Philippines (Luzon), to Sulawesi or further east. Especially in the Philippines and Sulawesi, there was a mixing of West Austronesians who had arrived via these two routes.

Consequently, Mahdi divides the Austronesian languages into an eastern and a western branch. The eastern branch contains the languages of the Moluccas, the Lesser Sundas and Oceania (excluding Chamorro and Palauan but including Enggano and Lovaia<sup>2</sup> spoken in East Timor). The western branch contains all other Austronesian languages, including the Taiwanese languages, some of which form a primary offshoot (Proto Formosan). The languages not originating from Proto Formosan are termed Hesperonesian, and they are in turn divided into East Hesperonesian (containing Chamorro, Palauan and some of the languages of Sulawesi and the Philippines) and West Hesperonesian (with a Sumatra-Java branch and a Borneo branch).

<sup>1</sup>Historically, *+r* and *+dr* were allophones.

<sup>2</sup>Enggano and Lovaia form a primary subgroup within East Austronesian called 'Hartanic' by Mahdi. This term is based on the word for 'human being' in these languages.

The Sumatra-Java branch consists of what Mahdi calls the 'Urangic'<sup>1</sup> languages (Chamic, Achinese, Madurese, Javanese, Sundanese, Malay, Kerinci, Balinese and Rejang), Paleo-Sumatran languages (Batak, Simalur and Lampung) and Sasak. Nias and Mentawai were first included in East Hesperonesian, but in the supplement of his book Mahdi agrees with Nothofer (1986) that these languages together with Simalur and Sichule form a subdivision within the Proto Sumatran group. The Borneo branch consists of a Barito group, a Kayanic group and a North Sarawak group.

Mahdi remarks that this classification is provisional and not yet based on strong arguments: it is an overall impression drawn from linguistic and extra-linguistic factors (pp. 57, 347).

For the phonology of Proto Austronesian, Mahdi eliminates *\*r*, *\*z*, *\*c* and *\*T*, reduces the number of 'laryngeals' to three (viz. *\*S*, *\*q* and *\*H*), and reduces *\*w* and *\*y* to allophones of *\*u* and *\*i* respectively. *\*d* and *\*D* are redefined, and so are *\*Z* and *\*ɲ* (which also occur in word-final position). The Proto Austronesian phoneme inventory which the author thus reconstructs contains the following members: *\*a*, *\*ə*, *\*i*, *\*u*, *\*B* (cf. Prentice 1974; Nothofer 1975), *\*n*, *\*l*, *\*d*, *\*D*, *\*Z*, *\*t*, *\*k*, *\*m*, *\*ŋ*, *\*p*, *\*ʔ* and, with preglottalised articulation, *\*b* (Mahdi supplement p.407), *\*C*, *\*j*, *\*q*, *\*R*, *\*L* (Tsuchida 1976), *\*N* and *\*ŋ* (occurring only in *\*Cuqelaŋ* 'bone'). The reinterpretation of *\*w* and *\*y* as high vowels strongly affects the structure of the (basically disyllabic) Proto Austronesian morph. Special attention is paid to cognate sets with a problematic penultimate high vowel, e.g. Malay *hiduŋ*, Malagasy *uruna* 'nose'; Malay *tidur*, Javanese *туру*, Malagasy *ma-turi* 'sleep'; Malay *ekor* (with vowel-lowering), Old Javanese *ikū*, Maanyan *ukuy* 'tail'. Proto Austronesian etyma on the basis of these forms, usually reconstructed as *\*q[ui]juŋ*, *\*[tC](ui)DuR* and *\*[ui]kuR* respectively, are now reconstructed as *\*(qi-)[S]əjuŋ*, *\*[tC]ə-SiDuR* and *\*(i-)[ə]kuR* respectively. Concerning the latter reconstructions, the different vowels found in their reflexes in present-day Austronesian languages are accounted for either by loss of *\*ə* or by loss of *\*i* with assimilation of *\*ə* to the following *\*u*.

3) CLASSIFICATION AND PHONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF BARITO LANGUAGES. In Chapter 3 Mahdi traces the phonological changes from Proto Austronesian via Proto Barito, Proto East Barito and Proto South-East Barito, to Malagasy. (A résumé of these changes is given in the table below.) Mahdi recalculates Hudson's (1967) lexicostatistical East Barito classification. He arrives at a different classification of the East Barito languages, with Malagasy as a separate South-East Barito branch on an equal distance to the other members of the South-East Barito subgroup.<sup>2</sup> This can be seen from a comparison of Figures 2 and 4 below. His classification of Malagasy dialects is based on lexicostatistical data collected by Vérin, Kottak and Gorlin (1969) and does not differ significantly from theirs.

<sup>1</sup>A term based on the word for 'human being' in the languages pertaining to this group.

<sup>2</sup>It should be recalled that Dahl (1977:125) already pointed out that Malagasy is closest to the South-East Barito languages as a group, rather than to Maanyan in particular.



TABLE 1: THE SOUND CHANGES FROM PROTO AUSTRONESIAN TO MALAGASY (MERINA)

Proto Austronesian	Proto Barito	Proto East Barito	Proto South-East Barito	Proto Malagasy	Malagasy
<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>
<i>-a[S/H?]</i> #	<i>ə</i>	<i>ə</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>-y</i>
<i>ə</i>	<i>ə</i>	<i>ə</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>e; i</i> in last syllable
<i>i</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>iV-</i> , <i>-ViV-</i> }	<i>i</i>	<i>∅</i>	<i>∅</i>	<i>∅</i>	<i>∅</i>
<i>-ai</i>	<i>-ay</i>	<i>-ɛy</i>	<i>-ɛy</i>	<i>-ey</i>	<i>-y/ez<sup>(a)</sup></i>
<i>-aqi</i>	<i>-a?i</i>	<i>-a?i</i>	<i>-a?i</i>	<i>-ai</i>	<i>-ay</i>
<i>-əi</i>	<i>-əy</i> }	<i>-ɛy</i>	<i>-ɛy</i>	<i>-ey</i>	<i>-y/ez<sup>(a)</sup></i>
<i>-əHi</i>	<i>-əi</i> }				
<i>u</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>u</i>
<i>uV-</i> , <i>-VuV</i> }	<i>u</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>-au</i>	<i>-aw</i>	<i>-aw</i>	<i>-aw</i> }	<i>-uw</i>	<i>-u/uv<sup>(a)</sup></i>
<i>-əuq</i>	<i>-əu?</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i> }		
<i>b/B</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>w (b)</i>	<i>v (b)</i>
<i>C/t/T</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>t, -C<sup>(b)</sup></i>	<i>t, ts (/_i), -tra<sup>(c)</sup></i>
<i>g</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>h, -k</i>	<i>h, -ka</i>
<i>k</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>h, -k</i>	<i>h, -ka</i>
<i>p</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>
<i>R</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>∅, -y</i>	<i>∅, -y</i>	<i>∅, -y</i>
<i>S/H?</i>	<i>∅</i>	<i>∅</i>	<i>∅</i>	<i>∅</i>	<i>∅</i>
<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>			<i>s, h</i>	<i>s<sup>(d)</sup>, ∅</i>
<i>q</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>∅</i>	<i>∅</i>
<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>
<i>n/N</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>ɲ/N</i>	<i>ɲ</i>	<i>ɲ</i>	<i>ɲ</i>	<i>ɲ</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>ɲ</i>	<i>ɲ</i>	<i>ɲ</i>	<i>ɲ</i>	<i>ɲ</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>l/L</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>l, d (/_i)</i>
<i>-l/-L</i>	<i>-l</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>-n</i>	<i>-∅, -n</i>	<i>-∅, -na</i>
<i>d/D/j</i>	<i>D</i> }	<i>D</i>	<i>r-, -r-, -t</i>	<i>r-, -r-, -C</i>	<i>r-, -r-, -tra<sup>(c)</sup></i>
<i>Z</i>	<i>z</i> }				

- (a) /ez/ and /uv/ appear on morpheme boundaries.
- (b) Proto Malagasy \*-C 'was probably a preglottalised or implosive voiceless palatal stop' (Mahdi p.175).
- (c) *ts* preceding *i* reflects Proto Austronesian \**t*, \**T* or \**C*; *tr* preceding final *ã* reflects Proto Austronesian \**t*, \**-C*, \**-j* or \**-d*. When occurring in other positions, *tr* and *ts* are not inherited.
- (d) *s* usually occurs in loanwords, but in a few cases it seems to reflect Proto Austronesian \**s*.

4) THE EXTERNAL LINGUISTIC INFLUENCES CAUSING MALAGASY WORD-FINAL CHANGES. Dahl (1954, 1988) attributes the reduction of final consonants and the acquisition of final voiceless vowels in Malagasy to a substratum from the Swahili-like dialects of the Comoros. According to Mahdi, however, they are the result of an East Austronesian substratum, as the changes in word-final position in Malagasy agree much more closely with those in East Austronesian languages than with those in Bantu languages. He contends that this East Austronesian substratum could have affected Malagasy in two possible ways. One way is through direct contact, East Austronesians settled mainly in the Pacific Ocean but they may also have gone in a westerly direction, without leaving much trace of their migration. The dispersion of certain east Asian plants in large parts of Africa stems from an earlier date than the colonisation of Madagascar and the development of Malagasy. These plants could have been introduced by East Austronesians, whose language and culture was lost after the arrival of South-East Barito-speaking West Austronesians in East Africa, but whose language left a substratum causing the reduction of final consonants.

Another possibility is that this substratum entered Malagasy indirectly, that is, as the working of an areal feature which originated in Sulawesi, and which was in turn the result of an East Austronesian substratum in these regions. The Malagasy reduction of final consonants bears much resemblance to the history of word-final consonants in South Sulawesi languages as traced by Mills (1975). According to Mills, original final stops in South Sulawesi languages first acquired a preglottalised and unreleased pronunciation, and were later reduced to glottal stops. The first stop to undergo this chain of changes was  $*-p$ , followed by  $*-t$ , and finally  $*-k$ . In an intermediate stage  $*-p$  had already become  $+^{-}?$ , but  $*-t$  still had a preglottalised and unreleased pronunciation (used by an older generation) along with a realisation reduced to glottal stop (used by a younger generation). In this stage, glottal stops originating from  $*-p$  were sometimes confused with glottal stops still alternating with  $+^{-}t$ , which caused some erroneous back-formations in suffixed forms. (In suffixed forms,  $*-p$ ,  $*-t$  and  $*-k$  were maintained as intervocalic consonants.) The Proto South Sulawesi nasals ( $*-m$ ,  $*-n$ ,  $*-ŋ$ ) were preglottalised before they subsequently merged to  $-ŋ$ .

In Malagasy, the Proto South-East Barito final consonants underwent a number of developments which are to a certain extent parallel to those in the South Sulawesi languages. According to Mahdi, all final consonants underwent temporary preglottalisation. In the end, the final nasals of most (but not all) Malagasy dialects merged as  $+^{-}ŋ$ , which yielded Merina  $-n$ , Sakalava  $-ŋ$ . Proto South-East Barito  $*-p$  and  $*-k$  first became Proto Malagasy  $+^{-}p$  and  $+^{-}k$ , and then merged in  $+^{-}K$ , which finally became  $+^{-}K$ . ( $K$  is the symbol for a historical (final)  $*k$  which remained  $k$  in modern Malagasy.) Proto South-East Barito  $*-t$  did not at first participate in this change, but at the stage where  $*-p$  and  $*-k$  had become  $+^{-}K$ ,  $*-t$  had two realisations which were in free variation:  $+^{-}t$  and  $+^{-}K$ . In this stage, some forms with invariable  $+^{-}K$  originating from  $*-p$  and  $*-k$  became confused with  $+^{-}K$  alternating with  $+^{-}t$ . In a following stage  $+^{-}t$  and its alternant  $+^{-}K$  became palatalised ( $+^{-}y^?t$ ) and finally resulted in  $-tr(a)$  (or its dialectal variants). Proto Austronesian  $*-s$ , which according to Mahdi only occurred in loanwords, was preglottalised at a certain stage before being lost in word-final position, and at this stage it must sometimes have been confused with  $+^{-}t$ . Borrowed  $+^{-}r$  was preglottalised and acquired a retroflex realisation before it merged with  $*-t$  as Mahdi's  $+^{-}C$ . Proto South-East Barito  $*-ay$  (from Proto Austronesian  $*-aR$  or in loanwords) became  $+^{-}a^?y > +^{-}ay^? > +^{-}e^? > +^{-}e$ , and Proto South-East Barito  $*-aw$  became  $+^{-}a^?w > +^{-}ow^? > +^{-}u^? > +^{-}u$  (before they underwent separate realisations in the different dialects).

In the *supplement*, Mahdi treats the following topics. On the basis of the diversity and distribution of terms for metals, rice, water-buffalo, door and various types of houses, he finds additional support for his theory on Austronesian migrations and on the classification of Austronesian languages. He discusses some problems related to the random application of the argument of exclusively shared innovations, and he concludes that lexicostatistics is a more reliable tool in historical linguistics. He re-evaluates some of the Proto Austronesian phonemes.

Mahdi sees some possible new evidence for the validity of his estimated date of the Malagasy migration to East Africa in Frobenius' (1931) theory that the East African technique of iron working (in German 'simply' termed *kolbengebläseverwendenden Eisenmetallurgie*) is of Indonesian origin. Carbon dating of the Mabveni site pertaining to the Gokomere culture (the oldest iron-using culture in Zimbabwe) points to a date  $1770 \pm 120$  years BP<sup>1</sup> at the latest (Robinson 1966). According to Mahdi, this correlates well with the estimated date for the first dialect-split in Malagasy ( $1939 \pm 227$  BP), which must have followed shortly after the arrival of the first South-East Barito speakers in East Africa.

## 5. CRITICISM OF MAHDI'S BOOK

Mahdi's morphophonological approach leads to a coherent and systematic description of Malagasy, and represents a great improvement on the existing descriptions. He has found an elegant solution to the problem of irregular stress patterns. He is also able to lay bare the historical conditions which caused the emergence of irregular consonants before affixes. His introduction of morphophonemes is a serious effort to establish a system of regular derivations. It nevertheless leaves us with a small category of irregular 'quasi-suppletive' derivations; it is hard to tell what the trade-off will be between a simple morphological analysis with a great number of exceptions, and a more complicated model along morphophonological lines which has the advantage of leaving only a handful of exceptions.

Mahdi's classification of Austronesian languages is quite unconventional. He prefers an east-west division to the Taiwanese-Malayo-Polynesian one found in most other classifications (except for that of Dyen 1965). The phonological history of Austronesian languages, however, seems to favour a primary split-off of Taiwanese languages followed only later by a split-off of Mahdi's East Austronesian languages (which roughly coincide with Blust's (1988:16) Central-Eastern Malayo-Polynesian languages. Mahdi's primary east-west division is probably a consequence of his view that East Austronesians left the homeland first and travelled to the Philippines, Indonesia and Oceania, providing the conditions for an East Austronesian substratum in the West Austronesian area. Both this view and his idea of two West Austronesian migration routes seem to reconcile the pre-war idea of a migration route via Indo-China to Indonesia and further east with the nowadays more fashionable idea of an overseas route from the south-east China coast to Taiwan and further to the Philippines, Indonesia and the Pacific.<sup>2</sup> As far as the 'Indochinese' route is concerned, it can also be argued that the migration of speakers of Austronesian to mainland Southeast Asia was a relatively late one which started out from the Indonesian islands (more particularly, from West Borneo; cf. Adelaar 1985:239; Bellwood 1985:124).

<sup>1</sup>BP = Before Present, which is meant to be 1950.

<sup>2</sup>In Mahdi's interpretation, however, the migration via Indo-China was an overseas one (along the Indo-Chinese coast) and not overland.

The provisional and impressionistic character of Mahdi's classification is not really warranted in view of the number of already existing (often better argued) classifications and in view of the available language data that he could have used to check some of his rather unusual subgroupings. These subgroupings are sometimes unconvincing. For example, Mahdi places Rejang in his group of Urangic languages, while its phonological and morphological history sets it quite apart from the other languages of this group.<sup>1</sup> The reader would also be interested to know the arguments for giving Sasak an independent position vis-à-vis the Urangic languages<sup>2</sup> and for classifying Lampung with Paleo-Sumatran.<sup>3</sup> The classification of Enggano and Lovaia in the high order Hartanic group is so unconventional a hypothesis that it should have been supported with more than the casual formulation of one common phonological retention in a footnote. There is no evidence for dividing the Bornean languages into Kayan-Punan, Barito languages and North Sarawak languages. Hudson (1978) divides the Bornean languages into ten independent subgroupings. In his classification the languages of the Barito area belong to three different subgroupings: East Barito, West Barito and Barito-Mahakam. Embaloh, Taman and Kalis are closely related to the South Sulawesi languages (von Kessel 1850:167; Hudson 1978:20).<sup>4</sup>

Mahdi's reconstruction of Proto Austronesian phonology also differs in many respects from other Proto Austronesian phonologies. His elimination of a number of laryngeals and other doubtful phonemes is refreshing. On the other hand, it is hard to see why he should introduce *\*N* which appears only in the etymon *\*CuqəlaN* 'bone'. His Proto Austronesian palatal consonants in word-final position have to be rejected. Mahdi reconstructs *\*ɲ* only once, in *\*/Ctjəɲ/* 'swallow', by combining Dempwolff's (1938) Proto Austronesian *\*təɲ* 'swallow' with Proto Oceanic *\*topol* 'swallow' (Blust 1978) and Kiput (Borneo) *tɲən* 'swallow', in the last two cases with an alleged metathesis (Proto Austronesian *\*ə* became Proto Oceanic *\*o*; Kiput *-n* comes from Proto Austronesian *\*/ILɲN/*). He argues that 'it seems unusual to reconstruct *\*ɲ* in final position, but this sound occurs in final position in several Indo-Chinese languages (including Khmer), and since a proto-language is just another language, nothing pertaining to language can be unnatural to it' (p.416). Mahdi's *\*ɲ* should be based on evidence from within the Austronesian language family, where such evidence is hard to find. The combination of *\*/Ctjəɲ/*, *\*topol* and *tɲən* is rather far-fetched evidence for *\*ɲ*. Mahdi reconstructs *\*-Z* for Dempwolff's *\*-d*, but hardly any Austronesian daughter language has a palatal reflex for this proto-phoneme.

Mahdi's interpretation of *\*w* and *\*y* as allophones of high vowels could be right, but even so one should emphasise their distinct phonetic quality by maintaining different symbols for them. To treat them as identical to *\*i* and *\*u* seriously affects the otherwise disyllabic canonical shape of most (Proto) Austronesian morphemes.<sup>5</sup>

Mahdi's introduction of Proto Austronesian preglottalised consonants is based on alleged earlier contact (if not common inheritance) between Austronesian and Austro-Asiatic, Daic and Miao-Yao. Here again, he adduces his main evidence from outside the Austronesian language family.

<sup>1</sup>cf. Blust (1984:423), and also Aichele's presentation of sound changes in Rejang (Aichele 1984).

<sup>2</sup>Sasak is usually considered to be closely related to Balinese; see among others Esser (1939).

<sup>3</sup>Although Mahdi does not refer to van der Tuuk (1872) explicitly, his classification of Lampung must be based on this source. Mahdi does not discuss other classifications of Lampung, which are admittedly very preliminary. Dyen (1965) on the basis of lexicostatistics classifies it as an independent branch of the Javo-Sumatran hesion (the other branches being Sundanese, Javanese and the Malayic hesion). Nothofer (1985:298), on the basis of a number of exclusively shared lexical innovations, classified it in a subgroup including Malay, Iban, Madurese and possibly Sundanese, but in Nothofer (1988:58) he retracts this.

<sup>4</sup>See Adelaar (in press b) for a more detailed argumentation for this subgrouping hypothesis.

<sup>5</sup>See also Dahl (1981) for a discussion between Dahl and Blust on this matter.

The question with most evaluations of Proto Austronesian phonology over the last three decades is not so much whether they are right or wrong, but rather whether the matter has been approached from the right angle. We have in fact come to the limit of what we are able to discover about Proto Austronesian phonology, and it is doubtful whether any significant progress can be made before more insight is gained into the more recent history of the Austronesian languages (including insight into lower-order reconstructions, lower-order classifications and the effects of borrowing).<sup>1</sup>

Both Simon and Mahdi reinterpret Hudson's (1967) data and try to improve his classification of the East Barito languages (cf. Figures 2-4) but they reach different conclusions. Simon, who believes that the South-East Barito languages once formed a dialect chain, considers Paku as a South-East Barito language with influence from Central-East Barito, while Mahdi sees it as an isolated member within the Central-East and South-East Barito group which has undergone much influence from South-East Barito (Maanyan). Here again, one feels that classification efforts remain futile if based only on Hudson's material. Neither author considers Hudson's (1978:22) later classification separating East Barito, West Barito and Tunjung with Ampanang into three independent subgroups.

Mahdi's treatment of the phonological changes that have taken place between Proto Austronesian and Malagasy (summarised in the table in section 3) is accurate and detailed. I have only a few remarks to add.

Proto Austronesian *\*R* became Malagasy  $\emptyset$  or *z* and Mahdi shows that, in the basic lexicon, the ratio of the number of  $\emptyset$  reflexes to other reflexes increases. It became  $\emptyset$  in four cases out of 200, and it became *z* or *s* in only two cases; one of which is *vesatra* 'heavy', allegedly derived from Proto Austronesian *\*bəRqa(tC)* 'heavy'. But there are very few Malagasy forms showing *s* for *\*R*, and *vesatra* is a loanword deriving from Malay *bəsar* 'big, great'.<sup>2</sup> With the elimination of *vesatra* as a reflex of *\*bəRqa(tC)*, Mahdi's regular change of *\*R* to Malagasy  $\emptyset$  stands out even more clearly.

According to Mahdi, Proto Austronesian *\*d*, *\*D* and *\*j* merged into Proto Barito *\*D*. A more accurate reconstruction would be that Proto Austronesian *\*d*, *\*D* and *\*j* became Proto Barito *\*D-*, *\*-r-* and *\*-D-*, as all Barito languages reflect *r* for Mahdi's *\*-D-*. Proto Barito *\*D* and *\*Z* merge as *r* in South-East Barito languages. Mahdi sees regressive assimilation of *\*D/\*Z* to *l* in forms like Malagasy *lela* 'tongue', *lalana* 'road, way' and *lalina* 'deep' (corresponding to Maanyan *lela*, *lalan* and *lalem* and reflecting Proto Austronesian *\*Zilaq*, *\*Zalan* and *\*Daləm*). But the actual development was a regular change of *\*D/\*Z* to *+r* followed by regressive assimilation of *+r* to *l* (see Dahl 1951:72).

<sup>1</sup> Mahdi himself is certainly not to blame for the fact that too little work has been done on reconstruction at subgroup levels, as he devotes much serious attention to the study of intermediate stages between Proto Austronesian and present-day Malagasy.

<sup>2</sup> According to Dempwolff (1938), *vesatra* and *basar* are both reflexes of Proto Malayo-Polynesian *\*bəsar*. In Adelaar (1989:19, n.25) I show that *vesatra* is a Malay loanword.

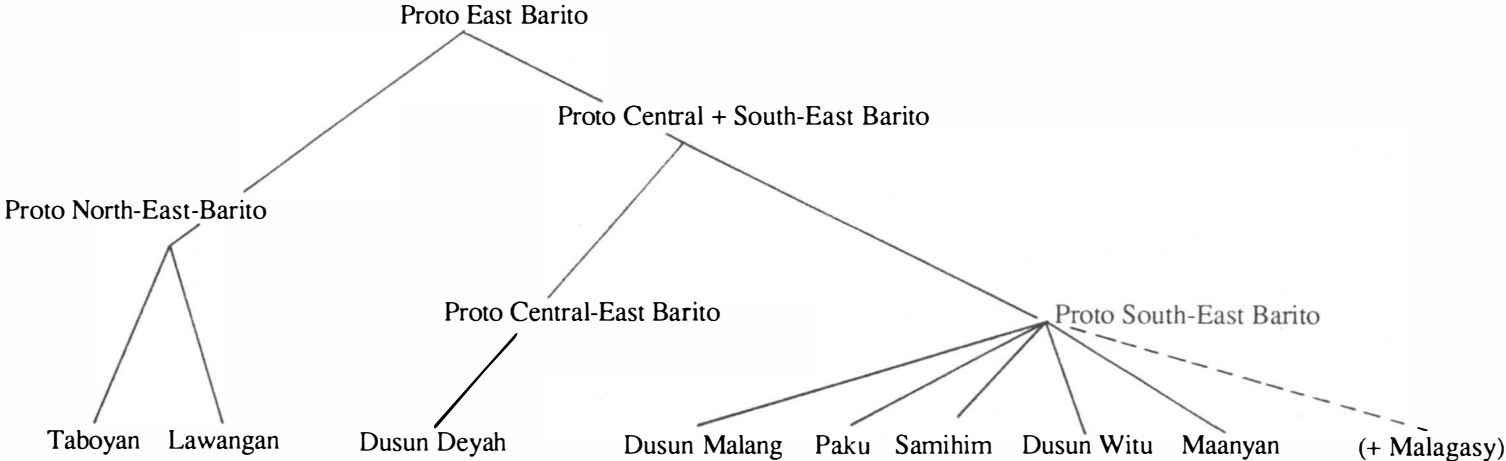
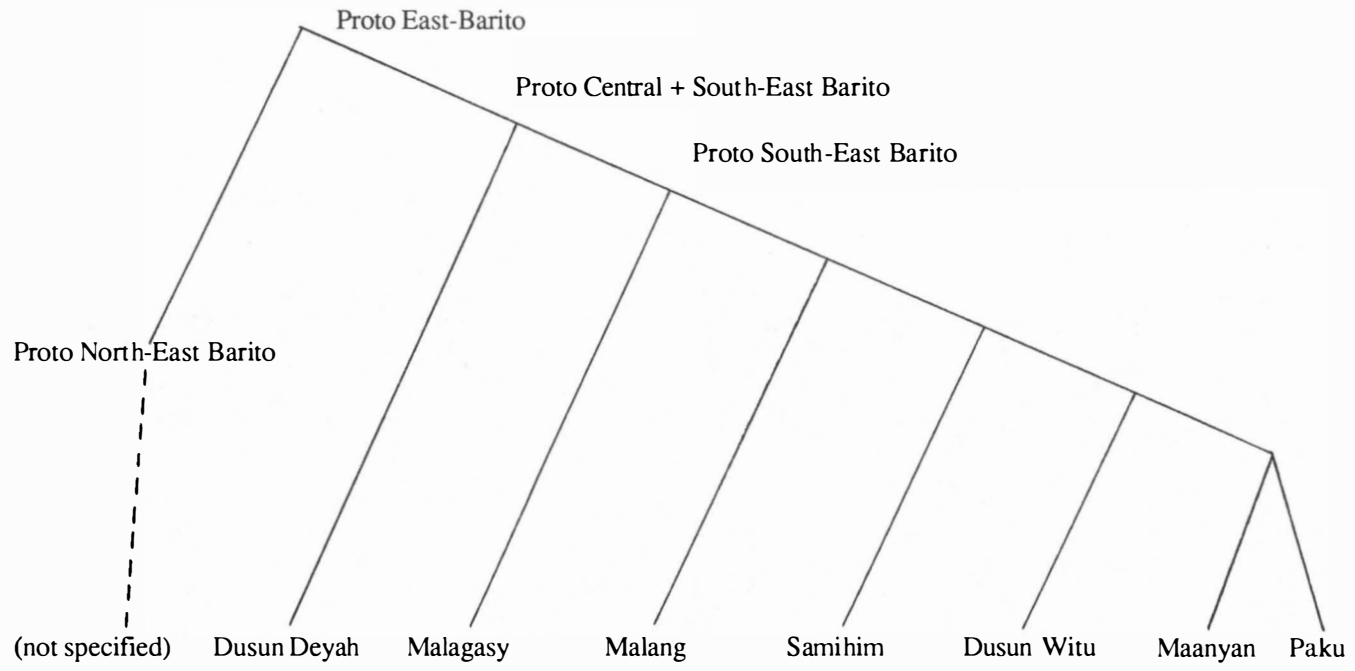


FIGURE 2: HUDSON (1967:34)



N.B. According to Simon, Samihim, Dusun Witu, Maanyan and Paku are members of a dialect chain.

FIGURE 3: SIMON (p.55)

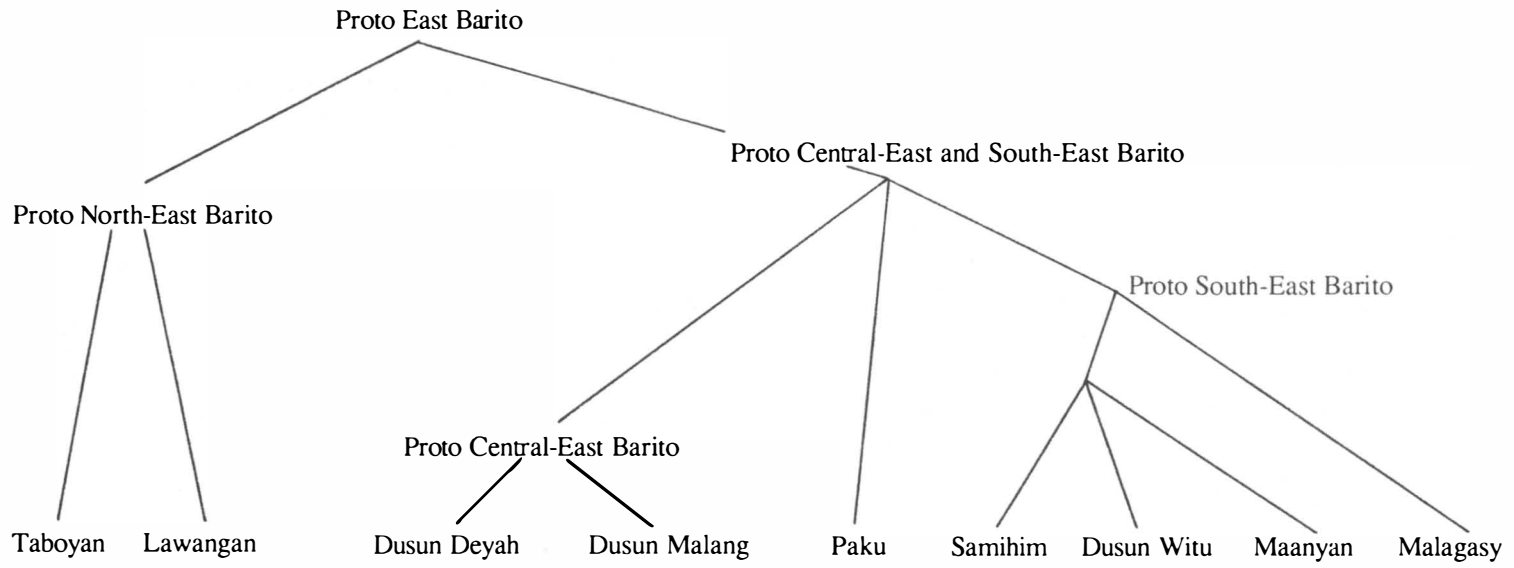


FIGURE 4: MAHDI (p.120-121)



Mahdi presents two alternative explanations for the development of word-final vocalism in Malagasy. His proposal of an East Austronesian substratum is a rather daring hypothesis based on his general idea of East Austronesian wanderings in a south-westerly direction. In a way, it is a variation on the rather persistent theory of Melanesian elements in the Malagasy language (Codrington 1882; Razafintsalama 1928-9; Hébert 1961; Southall 1975). The changes involved are from a general phonological point of view so widespread that it is not necessary to seek to explain them by a substratum theory or as an areal feature emanating from the South Sulawesi languages. Moreover, predominantly or exclusively vocalic endings are common in Bantu languages. Malagasy phonology has much in common with the phonologies of Comoran languages, and influence from the latter must have caused the development of vocalic endings (Dahl 1954; 1988). The Malagasy changes in word-final position are not shared by other South-East Barito languages. They may well resemble the word-final changes in South Sulawesi languages, but they are different.

According to Mills (1975), South Sulawesi final stops were preglottalised, and then merged in the following sequence:  $+?p > ?$ ;  $+?t > ?$ ;  $+?k > ?$ . For the merger of Malagasy final consonants, there is phonetically no reason to assume preglottalisation as a necessary intermediate stage. The +grave final stops  $+p$  and  $+k$  merged to  $-k(a)$ , but (+acute)  $+t$  became  $-tr(a)$ . There are no traces of an alleged palatalisation of  $+?t$  before it became  $-tr(a)$  (such as an expected raising of the preceding vowel, as in the development of  $+t$  in Mandar (South Sulawesi) and in Minangkabau). It is likely that the merger of  $+t$  and  $+r$  had already started on the South-East Barito level (and not only in Malagasy). An indication of this is the co-existence of the Maanyan forms *butIt* 'a few' and *wusi* 'grain'. Both forms reflect Proto Austronesian *\*butiR* 'grain; cyst, wart' (Wolff 1974:99), but whereas *wusi* is inherited and shows the regular sound-changes from Proto Austronesian to Maanyan,<sup>1</sup> *butIt* must be a loanword deriving from the Malay reflex *butir* 'grain, particle, numeral coefficient for small granular objects...'. The final *r* of the donor language (Malay) became  $-t$  in Maanyan.

Mahdi criticises the importance attributed to exclusively shared innovations as a method for determining genetic closeness, because they may be the result of substrata, adstrata and areal features rather than common inheritance, and because the use of too small a set of such innovations leads to random results. Although I appreciate Mahdi's suspicion of exclusively shared innovations, I strongly disagree with his preference for lexicostatistics. This method does not account for the fact that the rate of lexical replacement – whether due to borrowing or to other factors – differs from one language to another. Nor does it provide criteria for determining the nature of similarity between certain lexemes in different languages. Similarity may be due to coincidence, to sound-symbolism or to historical relationship; historical relationship may again be due to borrowing or to common inheritance. For a subgrouping argument, of course, only similarity due to common inheritance is relevant. Lexicostatistics, however, makes indiscriminate use of any similarity, and this method has led to so many scientifically verifiable errors that it cannot be accepted either for language classification or for measuring time depth. To remove the obvious uncertainties involved in this technique requires the acquisition of so much concomitant information on the lexical items in question that the qualitative evidence collected in this way would bypass the use of lexicostatistics. However, Mahdi uses it to determine when the first Malagasy dialect split took place. He correlates the resulting date with the period of the Gokomere culture and its metallurgic practices.

Quite apart from the reliability of the date for a dialect split arrived at by Mahdi, Frobenius' (1931) theory of an Indonesian origin of East African metallurgy is also problematic. Research into the

<sup>1</sup> As a rule, Proto Austronesian *\*b*, *\*ti* and *\*R* became Maanyan *w*, *si* and  $\emptyset$  respectively.

development of metal-working in Southeast Asia is not very well advanced, and there is little reason to assume a different situation for East Africa. The origin and nature of early Southeast Asian metallurgy is vague. Frobenius is an exponent of the diffusionistic approach to culture which was so typical of his time. It requires renewed and more comprehensive research along structural lines in order to be acceptable.

Notwithstanding my criticisms, I consider Mahdi's book a major contribution to Austronesian and Malagasy comparative linguistics. It covers a wide range of topics, and the author is not afraid to take a stand on many salient issues concerning Austronesian linguistics. He also tries to relate these to prehistorical and archeological data. One does not have to agree with Mahdi in order to appreciate the erudition and the originality with which his book is written. His conclusions are sometimes speculative and controversial, but his work is a serious endeavour to solve a number of problems which have hitherto been underestimated in Austronesian comparative linguistics. His ideas will certainly induce the reader to re-evaluate a number of basic assumptions underlying the study of the history of Austronesian languages.

## 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Considering the present state of information on the history of the Malagasy people and language, there are no grounds for making hypotheses about South Sulawesi, East Austronesian or Madurese influences, substrata or adstrata. Malay, Javanese and some local Barito languages are the only Austronesian languages that can be shown to have had an important influence on early Malagasy (Dahl 1977; Adelaar 1989). (The fact that Malagasy borrowed much from these languages is recognised by both Simon and Mahdi.) In order to obtain more insight into the roots of Malagasy and the influences it has undergone, fieldwork on both sides of the Indian Ocean is the most urgent requirement. More grammatical, lexical and dialect geographical data should be collected on the various South-East Barito languages and on the Malagasy dialects. Moreover, the influence of African languages should be studied, including the influence from Makua (the language of an area in Mozambique from which many slaves were taken to Madagascar). It may also have to include influence from Cushitic and Khoisan languages. In addition, Malagasy societies should be compared with traditional Indonesian societies, not only in the Barito area but elsewhere as well. What should be compared are societies as whole complexes, that is to say, societies as transformations of the same basic Austronesian pattern, and not just isolated aspects of social life. If these requirements are not met, further research will become pointless.

The idea that Malagasy grew out of a pidgin is untenable, unless, of course, one abandons the conventional definitions of pidgins and creoles and redefines pidginisation in a way which includes more ordinary manifestations of contact-induced language change. In one respect, however, I believe that the available data allow us to frame a hypothesis (be it very tentative and speculative) as regards the social setting in which the migration(s) took place. The hypothesis runs as follows. The Malays played a prominent maritime role in Southeast Asian history. As early as the time of Srivijaya (7th to 13th century AD) they were active seafarers who established contacts with many other Indonesian peoples to the east and with peoples living on the Indian Ocean coasts to the west. They founded the

city of Banjarmasin<sup>1</sup> on the South Kalimantan coast, in a location bordering on the South-East Barito area. Their language had already had an impact on the South-East Barito languages before the early Malagasy left South Kalimantan (Adelaar 1989). Malay loanwords in Malagasy include a fair number of maritime terms. They also include, among other things, terms for parts of the body and terms referring to elements of material culture (such as writing and metallurgy). All Malagasy words of Sanskrit origin must have been borrowed indirectly via Malay and Javanese, since Malagasy has almost no Sanskrit words not found in these two languages.<sup>2</sup> In view of the considerable temporal and geographical separation of Malagasy from the other Indonesian languages, Malay and Javanese influence must have been considerable at the time of the migration. There is, on the other hand, hardly any evidence of Malagasy influence on Malay or Javanese.<sup>3</sup> On the western side, Malays established contacts with Sri Lanka, where they probably left a settlement in the 13th century (Coedès 1964:336).

In the light of the mercantile and maritime activities of the Malays, it is worthwhile to consider the possibility that it was they – and not South-East Barito speakers – who established contacts with East Africa. The Malays were enterprising and they had a good deal of the expertise and extrovert orientation needed for expeditions to East Africa. On the other hand, the inhabitants of the East Barito area apparently lacked these characteristics, or at least, they lack them now, and there is no trace or indication of a great South-East Barito expansion or maritime past. The Malagasy have not left any trace in Southeast Asia, and today the peoples of the South-East Barito area are dependent on the city of Banjarmasin for contacts with the outside world. There is no reason to suppose that things were fundamentally different in the past.

As a model to integrate all the indications and bits of evidence about the Southeast Asian roots of the Malagasy people, I propose a scenario in which the Malay had established contacts with east Africa and Madagascar, to which they transported South-East Barito speakers as slaves, workers or crew. It is quite possible that not all these slaves, workers or crew were from the South-East Barito area. South-East Barito speakers may have formed a majority among them, or, more likely, they may have been the first group to be transplanted to Madagascar. As such, they may have created a nuclear community, or rather, several nuclear communities, which were able gradually to assimilate large numbers of individuals from other Indonesian (and East African) ethnic groups. In this way, the communities may have taken on foreign cultural traits without losing their original language. They were initially ruled by an ethnically and linguistically Malay caste, but at some point in time this caste lost its own identity and merged with the rest of early Malagasy society. The migrations to Madagascar must have taken place in the Srivijaya period, most probably early on, around the 7th century AD (Adelaar 1989:34).

The above scenario has the attraction of clarifying a number of seemingly contradictory factors. It explains why Malagasy has so many loanwords showing assimilation to the more prominent Malay and Javanese civilisations. It is in agreement with the historical facts about Malay and Javanese hegemony in insular Southeast Asia. It explains why the early Malagasy left no traces in Southeast

<sup>1</sup>According to Cense (1928:1) Banjarmasin was founded around AD 1349 at the earliest.

<sup>2</sup>The only exception is Merina Malagasy *sakarivo*/Sakalava Malagasy *sakaviro* 'ginger' which derives from Sanskrit *çṛṅgavera* (Dahl 1951:98).

<sup>3</sup>Although the fact that scholars have not found such loanwords may be due to their orientation, and possibly also to the historical linguistic difficulties involved in recognising them.

Asia and why, on the basis of social and material anthropological comparison, the contemporary Malagasy societies cannot be related to South-East Barito societies in the same neat way as can their speech. The latter is apparently the reason why many non-linguists are still reluctant to accept Dahl's claim that Malagasy is a South-East Barito language. The hypothesis fits in well with the fact that Bornean traditional societies – and the societies of the South-East Barito area are no exception to this – are typically those of interior people, and they have very seldom developed maritime sailing skills.<sup>1</sup> The Malagasy terms *olona* 'human being, man, person' and *sakaiza* 'friend' have Malay correspondences with meanings suggesting a different social status of South-East Barito speakers vis-à-vis speakers of Malay. Compare Malay *ulun* 'slave; servant; person; this person, I' (used in Malayo-Javanic tales) and *sakai* 'subject, dependent. Of peoples in contr[ast] to the running race...' (Wilkinson 1959); *sakai* is also used to refer to groups of Orang Asli, the Austro-Asiatic peoples of the interior of the Malay Peninsula.

The above hypothesis admittedly does not solve all the problems. The assumption that the first Malagasy migrants were Malay subordinates may be queried in the light of a few lines on the 7th century Old Malay inscriptions in a language which is seemingly an early form of Malagasy. If it really is a form of Malagasy (a plausible assumption which, however, cannot be ascertained on the basis of the little text provided by the inscriptions) it is unclear why it would have been used there, if it were the language of a group of (in all likelihood illiterate) subordinates. Other hypotheses may fit more easily with such circumstances.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, any hypothesis will have to take into account that the early Malagasy migrants had already been strongly marked by the influence of a 'higher' Hindu-Malay/Hindu-Javanese culture, and that Malay was the donor language of a number of important nautical terms in Malagasy.

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<sup>1</sup>A notable exception are the Ibans, but they developed their seafaring skills in very recent times.

<sup>2</sup>An alternative hypothesis suggested to me by Hein Steinhauer is that South-East Barito speakers originally living on the Kalimantan coast might have been compelled to migrate to new (unpopulated?) areas through the expansionist pressure of the newly established Hindu-Malay kingdoms of Kutei and Banjarmasin.

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