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Affixes, Austronesian and Iconicity in Malay

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Abstract: This is a sequel to the author's paper (1993) on the sociolinguistics of Malay verbal affixation. Explanations are offered for the puzzling differences between the form and meaning of the Malay affixes and those of the broader Austronesian affixal system from which they derive. It is suggested that a degree of phonic iconicity is involved in the encoding of meanings that have both language-internal and social significance. The various verbal prefixes can be analysed both historically and iconically as different combinations of (1) a labial series (*m-*, *b-*, *p-*) indicating 'source orientation' with (2) *-r-* 'iterative' and (3) *(-)/N-* 'process marker'. The full range of forms becomes apparent only if a sufficiently wide range of Malay and Malayic speech-varieties, both ancient and modern, are brought to bear on the discussion. The different meanings and functions associated with the various prefixes are motivated by the different semantic concerns engendered by the social and cultural circumstances peculiar to each of the varieties.



In this paper¹ I would like to present some materials that were left undiscussed in an earlier paper on the historical sociolinguistics of Malay verbal affixation (Benjamin 1993). Here, I say more about the possible history of Malay (both internal and external) and about the evidence for phonic iconicity in its morphological apparatus. I also say something about certain affixes that were not discussed in the earlier paper.

'Low' and 'High' Malay language-varieties

A wide range of present-day language-varieties are covered by the label 'Malay'. Ignoring for the moment such 'para-Malay' dialects as Iban (Asmah 1981) or Duano (Kähler 1946/49), the sociolinguistically 'Low' codes consist of the dialects of the various Aboriginal-Malay groups and the non-aristocratic varieties of the Local-Malay dialects spoken by the Malays proper. But there are also the 'High' codes, consisting of the varieties of Local Malay used by aristocrats (and those addressing them) and the standardised

1. I am grateful to William Foley, Alton Becker and John Wolff for valuable discussions relating to parts of this paper at various times since it was first mooted in the late 1970's. (I must also acknowledge the continuing influence of the seminal paper by Oka and Becker (1974) on the interplay of phonic iconicity with grammar.) Syed Farid Alatas willingly served as a sounding-board for the acceptability of some of the word-forms discussed here. None of these colleagues bears any responsibility for the errors that this paper must surely still contain.

modern national languages known as Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia.² The literary so-called 'Classical Malay' dating from roughly 1400 to 1800 and the 'Old Malay' of the seventh- to thirteenth-century Sumatran and Javan inscriptions do not fit easily into this typology; but they are relevant to the discussion, and I shall accordingly refer to them as well.³ Similar considerations apply to those varieties of Malay spoken and written in Indonesia outside the nuclear ethnic-Malay areas, which often long pre-date the emergence of modern Indonesian.⁴

As discussed at length in my earlier paper (Benjamin 1993), the differences between the many varieties of colloquial and formal Malay are not merely stylistic but grammatical. Several of the disagreements between scholars over points of Malay grammar are the result of differences between the kinds of Malay they have been analysing, for the same surface forms (especially the affixes *me-*, *-N-*, and *ber-*) often sustain different meanings in the different varieties. In my earlier paper, I tried to demonstrate that the external history of the standardised forms of Malay is linked to their internal linguistic organisation: 'external' sociolinguistic factors were found relevant to the understanding of certain problematic features of Malay and Indonesian grammar. I suggested that these factors were compounded of a two-way contrast, (1) as between 'outsider-orientation' and 'insider-orientation' of the speakers towards their immediate situation of discourse and (2) as between 'event-salience' and 'participant-salience' in the semantic and grammatical organisation of their predications. This sociolinguistic approach also allowed me to suggest reasons for the striking differences in semantic orientation between the Malay-type languages and most other languages of the Austronesian family to which it belongs.

The modern 'High' varieties of Malay are characterised by:

- The explicit and obligatory marking of participant structure, agency and transitivity
- A lexicon derived morphologically from a relatively small body of roots by reference to certain general and abstract semantic notions⁵
- A preference for participant-dominated subject-predicate sentence organisation
- Sociocentric modes of expression

2. Hereafter, I shall refer to these speech varieties as Malaysian and Indonesian respectively. By governmental decision, the national languages of Brunei and Singapore (there called *Bahasa Melayu*) have remained practically identical with Malaysian.
3. The terms Old Malay and Classical Malay have long been conventional in the scholarly literature. However, James Collins (1996) has recently proposed a rather different division, into (a) *Early Malay* (from the Srivijayan inscriptions of 682 CE to the literary products of the late sixteenth century) and (b) *Early Modern Malay* (the period of European contact from the fall of Melaka in 1511 to the late eighteenth century). Collins points out (1996: 40) that so-called 'Classical Malay' refers in practice to those exalted styles of writing that deliberately sought to imitate the language of the Malay Annals (the *Sulalatus Salatin* or *Sejarah Melayu*), presumed to have been composed in Johor by Tun Sri Lanang around 1612. This has ever since been maintained as the idealised standard of 'correctness' in formal Malay, even though it is in reality just one of the many authentic varieties of Malay, both social and regional.
4. For example, Malay-language Christian texts were in use in parts of eastern Indonesia as early as 1548, and printed Christian material in Malay began to appear in 1612 (Collins 1996: 26–27, 43)—some time before Malay translations of the *Qur'an* became available.
5. My earlier paper was concerned mostly with morphology, but the argument can also be applied to many features of Malay lexical organisation. I leave that for discussion on a later occasion.

These features betoken the there-and-then-orientated, other-cathected mode of consciousness associated with the authority-based, mediated social relations typical of both the pre-modern trading states and modern nation-states in which the 'High' varieties of Malay have developed. (For further analysis of the role of the state, see Benjamin 1985, 1988 and 1993.)

The formal, 'outsider'-orientated varieties of spoken Malay (such as the so-called *bahasa dagang*—'trading' or 'outsider' speech—of the Riau Islands⁶) share with standardised Malaysian and Indonesian an insistence on the explicit marking of the orientation of the predicate towards its participants (or 'arguments') as part of the grammatical core. A true syntactic subject controls the verb, which (in sentences with a controlling agent, and depending on the subject's role-allocation) may appear marked as active, middle⁷ or passive in voice. There is frequently a morphologically-marked predicate-complement (patient, goal, beneficiary, location, etc.) towards which the action or process referred to by the verb tends. This pattern, familiar to students of standard Indonesian and (to a lesser extent) standard Malaysian, can be summarised as in Figure 1.⁸

		PREDICATE		
		VERB		COMPLEMENT (patient, goal, etc.)
SUBJECT	'causative' <i>per-</i>		<i>-kan</i> 'affected'	
	'active' <i>me-</i>			
	'middle' <i>ber-</i>			
	'passive' <i>di-</i>		<i>-i</i> 'domain'	

Figure 1: Standard-Malay verbal affixes

The 'Low' varieties of modern Malay, on the other hand, are characterised by the following features:

6. This usage of the term *bahasa dagang* is the current one in Riau. But in the late seventeenth century, according to Bowrey (1701: Preface),
the *Malayo* Language spoken on the *Islands*, is somewhat different from the true *Malayo* spoken in the *Malayo* Country [i.e., 'the *Peninsula* ... stretching down to *Johor*'], altho not so much, but to be easily understood by each other. The *Malayo* spoken in the *Islands* is called *basa dagang*, that is to say, the Merchants or Trading Language, and is not so well esteemed as the true *Malayo*.
7. The term 'middle voice' is rarely found in published linguistic studies of Malay, but it is the appropriate term for the functions ascribed to *ber-* in most accounts of the formal language. Winstedt (1927: 81) may well have been the first to apply the term to Malay grammar in English-language accounts, but (as pointed out by Alieva, 1963: 75) it was also used by the Dutch scholar Tendeloo (1897: 121f.; 1901: 156, 197). Currently, the term 'middle' is used mainly by French linguists (following Benveniste 1950)—see, for example, Cartier 1979: 182.
8. Alieva (1963: 76) presents a partially similar diagram as a summary of Tendeloo's views. There, however, *per-* is treated not as a 'causative' but as the aorist-aspect (i.e., perfective) equivalent to the 'middle' affix *ber-*, which is ascribed 'durative' (i.e., imperfective) properties.

- A reduced or covert expression of participant structure, agency and transitivity
- A lexicon consisting of a large number of distinct roots displaying relatively little secondary morphological derivation
- A preference for event-dominated, topic-comment sentence organisation
- Egocentric modes of expression

These features betoken the here-and-now-orientated mode of consciousness associated with those contexts of life in which the wider social world, at least at the moment of speaking, is not accorded much attention.

Colloquial Malay shares with the ‘insider’-orientated varieties of so-called ‘classical’ Malay a tolerance of unorientated, verb-focused utterances (i.e., neither active, passive nor middle in voice): an event is merely associated with some person or entity (the topic) that forms its domain but which does not govern it syntactically. Winstedt (1927: 65) quotes a classical Malay example provided by Blagden (1908: 1204), which illustrates this event-focused approach to the representation of what he (Blagden) calls ‘the mental relation of its ideas’ taken by this kind of Malay:

Di-chium-nya dan di-tangis-nya oleh bonda-nya akan anak-nya.
At-kiss-it and at-weep-it by mother-it towards child-her.

According to Winstedt, Blagden renders this sentence into English as ‘there-was-kissing-and-weeping-over-it by her—by its mother over her child.’⁹ The second part of this sentence, from *oleh* onwards, has the character of an afterthought, despite serving to make explicit the agent-goal relation implied by the events retold in the first part. Syntactically, this second part is no more than a sentence-adjunct (cf. Lyons 1968: 344–345), and it could have been omitted without destroying either the sense or the well-formedness of the sentence.

Lewis (1954: 11) makes similar comments in her discussion of a colloquial Malay sentence about the preferability of watching a ceremony on television rather than in the flesh:

Dapat tengok semua.
Able see all.

Of this she says,

note ... the omission of a subject pronoun. But it is more likely that, in such a sentence, a Malay has no specific ‘viewer’ in mind. Many Malay ‘sentences’ do not lend themselves to analysis on the lines of European grammatical structure; they consist rather of a sequence of noun-ideas [*sic*] set down side by side, as here, perhaps, ‘There-was-the-possibility of-seeing-all’.

A further example of this way of speaking occurred in the following piece of colloquial-Malay banter, which took place during a late-night pop music programme (7 October 1997) on Malaysia’s TV3 channel:

9. Actually, Blagden’s own account (1908: 1204–1206) of the issues is much less determinate than Winstedt implies, but the differences between the two writers do not greatly affect the argument I am presenting here.

Musician: *Mesti cek doktor.*
 Must check doktor.
 [PASSIVE] [AGENT]

‘You must get checked by the doctor.’

Presenter: *Apa guna cek doktor? Doktor sentiasa sehat!*
 What use check doktor? Doctor always healthy!
 [ACTIVE] [PATIENT]

‘What’s the use of checking the doctor? The doctor’s always healthy!’

This exchange took place during a live phone-in session and appeared to be completely spontaneous. The orientation of the predicate remains unmarked throughout. In her extemporised syntactical pun, the presenter left unaltered the surface forms used by the first speaker, cleverly delaying until the second part of her response any indication of the role-allocation switch she had made. Such a pun could not have worked in more formal Malay, where the role-allocations would have been explicitly marked by the use of extra prepositions, pronouns and verbal affixes.

In this kind of Malay, the verbal affixes—if they occur at all—frequently take on meanings quite different from those typical of the more participant-salient and outsider-orientated varieties. In my earlier paper I discussed *me-*, *-N-* and *ber-* at some length, according briefer treatments to *-kan* ‘affected’ and *ter-* ‘perfect aspect’. (I also attempted to justify the treatment of *me-* and *-N-* as separate affixes, a point I return to below.) Among the functions and meanings of *me-* that appear in non-standard varieties of Malay are: as a connective between verbs in serial-verb constructions and as the indicator of ‘durative’, ‘habitual’ or ‘casual’ *Aktionsart*. Analysis showed that these various meanings could be linked together, and to the more valency-based function of *me-* as the marker of ‘agent’-orientation in the formal varieties of Malay—on the assumption that *me-* had the notion of SUBJECTIVE INVOLVEMENT as its underlying meaning (see below).¹⁰ Moreover, it appeared that there was a high degree of phonic, oral-gesture based, iconicity in the attaching of this meaning to the formative *m*.

(-)*N-* as an autonomous element

The prefix *me-* in its ‘active-voice’ meaning is relatively infrequent in colloquial Malay compared to its usage in formal Malay. But the associated nasal mutation ((-)*N-*) of the initial consonant of the verb-root (as in *tutup* ⇒ *menutup* ‘close’, or *bawa* ⇒ *membawa* ‘bring’),¹¹ which is usually treated as a trivial consequence of *me-*affixation, is very common in colloquial Malay as an independent formative in its own right (as in many other related languages): *tutup* ⇒ *nutup*.¹² The same is true of spoken Indonesian (Lombard

10. Small caps (e.g., SUBJECTIVE) are used in this paper to indicate condensed notional meanings. Articulated conceptual meanings are indicated, in the usual manner, by quotation marks surrounding ordinary letter-forms (e.g., ‘close’). Asterisks are employed, as usual in historical linguistics, to indicate reconstructed proto-forms (such as **maN-*) or non-occurring forms (such as **membaca-mbaca*).

11. *N* is a nasal morphophoneme whose place of articulation varies with that of the immediately following consonant. Thus, it appears variously as *m*, *n*, *ny*[*ɲ*], *ng* [*ŋ*] or zero.

12. For example, a recent account of colloquial Perak Malay devotes five pages to *N-*, while making no mention of *me-* (Zaharani 1991: 80–84).

1977: 118–119), which regularly uses *N*-forms of the verb where the formal has *me-N*-. Indeed, as Asmah has pointed out (1968: 6), spoken Indonesian retains the *N*-prefix even where spoken Malaysian is happy to drop it in favour of the naked root-form. Indonesian grammar here holds to the requirement that verbal class-membership be explicitly marked, while Malaysian—still in close contact with colloquial Malay—is under no such compunction. Further light is thrown on this by Wallace (1976) in a study I have not been able to consult directly but which is cited by Hopper (1979: 228): ‘in the spoken Malay of Jakarta, the nasal prefix which corresponds to the *meng-* of Standard Malay carries somewhat similar meanings of irrealis, continuous, nonsegmented events’. There is evidence that this usage is invading written Indonesian: *Tempo* magazine (11 September 1982, p.3), for example, has *saya ingin nulis kepada ...* ‘I want to write to ...’ instead of the expected ... *menulis ...*. (But here, perhaps, the ‘subjective’ first-person collocation of the verb has provided an especially favourable context for *me*-elision.)

Now, almost all grammarians of Malay and Indonesian treat *me-* and *-N-* as parts of a single prefix (*meN-*) that generates a nasal mutation in the initial consonant of the verb-stem. This single-prefix analysis has been repeated in almost every account, even though it has long been known to students of comparative Austronesian that the *me-* and *-N-* elements have separate origins (see, for example, Brandstetter 1916: 169–172 and Blagden’s footnote to Winstedt 1927: 18).¹³ As a consequence, *N*-prefixed verbs (like *nutup*) are usually treated as resulting from the omission of the initial *me-*. Za’ba, an important authority, writing here for a native Malay-speaking readership, provides an example of this approach:

‘*nengok*, ‘*mbongkok*, ‘*ngayoh*, ‘*ngangkut*: correctly, *mēnengok*, *mēmbongkok*, etc. The *m-* slips away in spoken language... Students will know for themselves when to sound these words according to the spoken pronunciation and when according to the reading pronunciation.’¹⁴

This commonly accepted *me*-dropping analysis is, I believe, applicable to usages in at least some dialects of spoken local-Malay (as, for example, the Kedah peasant speech described by Asmah 1985). On the other hand, the nasal-mutation element *-N-* can usefully be regarded, even for the purposes of synchronic analysis, as a largely autonomous verballity-marker of some kind, the meaning of which differs somewhat from one language-

13. In a recent review, Ross (1995: 69–70) has pointed out that this feature belongs more specifically to the Malayo-Polynesian (i.e., non-Formosan) branch of Austronesian. He reconstructs as Proto-Malayo-Polynesian the ‘verbal derivational prefix **paN-*, and **maN-* (< **p-m-aN-* where **-m-* is the actor pivot infix)’. In view of the evidence presented above and in my discussion of Malay *pe-* and *peN-* in a later section, it might perhaps be more appropriate to reconstruct the Proto-Malayo-Polynesian form as **(ma)(N)-*. This would indicate the continued separability of its constituent parts in many branches of the sub-family.

This raises an interesting question: has the prefix **(ma)(N)-* continued to retain an originally overt componentiality in most of the daughter languages, or has the iconic value of its component parts (discussed below) repeatedly led the speakers of those languages to reinterpret an originally single prefix, **maN-*, as constituting two separable prefixes?

14. The original Malay reads: ‘*nengok*, ‘*mbongkok*, ‘*ngayoh*, ‘*ngangkut*: yang betul-nya, *mēnengok*, *mēmbongkok*, dsb. Tērchichit *mē-nya* dalam chakap mulut... Pēnuntut-pēnuntut boleh-lah tahu sēndiri bila hēndak mēmbunyikan sapērti sēbutan chakap mulut, dan bila hēndak sapērti sēbutan mēmbacha. (Quoted from Lewis 1952: 68; original orthography retained.)

variety to another. (One scholar who has taken this view is Kridalaksana, 1976: 9, in his discussion of colloquial Jakartan Malay.)

As I shall argue later, this view of *-N-* as an autonomous element fits well with what is known of the Austronesian background to Malay affixation, but it also finds concrete support from within present-day standard-Malay morphology. Reduplicated verb-forms such as *menutup-nutup* ‘to close repeatedly’ (from *tutup* ‘to close’) are usually treated as resulting from the partial reduplication of the *me*-prefixed form (*menutup*). But, as Abdullah Hassan has pointed out (1974: 50), this would require the *-N-* element to contravene the general Malay principle that ‘no affixes are repeated when affixed to a reduplicated base’. However, a solution to this is suggested by Hendon’s treatment (1966: 46–47) of verbal reduplication as a prefix. This would allow for the analysis of *menutup-nutup* not as the reduplication of *menutup*, but as the affixation of *me-* to a complex verb stem *nutup-nutup*, the first component of which is itself a reduplicative prefix. In other words, while the *me-* behaves as a typically non-reduplicable prefix, the *N-* element behaves as if it were part of the verb stem, thereby providing evidence that even in modern standard Malay *meN-* consists of two partially autonomous affixes, *me-* and *(-)N-*.¹⁵

It must be admitted that in standard Malay usage (including both Malaysian and Indonesian) *me-* is indeed regularly followed by *-N-*, which would seem to reduce considerably the autonomy I am claiming for the two affixes. But just as *-N-* often occurs without *me-*, there are enough examples from other varieties of Malay of *me-* occurring without *-N-* to support my claim that they are autonomous affixes. In present-day Minangkabau, a Malayic language of West Sumatra, *ma-* is in fact more common than *man-* as a verbal prefix (Moussay 1981: 54); and Banjarese Malay (South Kalimantan) allows *ma-* to be prefixed to a wider range of non-prenasalised verb-stems than does standard Malay (Ras 1968: 10). The (presumably relatively late) restricting of *me-* to *N-* affixed stems in standard Malay can be explained in phonological and semantic terms, as I shall argue shortly.

To help in working out the various meanings of *me-* and *(-)N-* in the different varieties of Malay let us look first at the situation in Minangkabau (West Sumatra), where (as we have just seen) the *m-* element can occur independently of the *(-)N-* element. According to Moussay (1981: 54), a Minangkabau verb prefixed with *ma-* alone (cognate with standard-Malay *me-*) carries a ‘transitive’ meaning, while a verb prefixed with *man-* carries an ‘intransitive’ meaning:

mangisi ‘to be full’

maisi ‘to fill (something) up’

15. In standardised varieties of Malay, however, voiced-stop-initial stems do not retain the *-N-* in reduplication: *membaca-baca* (not **membaca-mbaca*) ‘to read repeatedly’. Clearly, voicing too is an element, not just nasalisation; there appears to be some iconic area here where semantics and phonology overlap. On the other hand, several Malay dialects, including some varieties of written classical Malay, have forms like *memawa* ‘to bring’ in place of the ‘standard’ form *membawa*. One such case exists in the Old Malay inscription of Kedukan Bukit (Palembang), which has *mamāwa* ‘to lead’ (Coedès 1930: 34, 75 / 1992: 46, 78). I take this still-extant variation as an indication that the ‘standard’ pattern has become so through a conscious rejecting of some variants in favour of a more restricted range of forms.

ambo mangaja 'I give a lesson' [I *ma-N-teach*]¹⁶
ambo maaaja murik 'I teach a pupil'

Now, in a transitive sentence the verb merely mediates between the subject (as source) and the object (as goal): it is the relation between subject and object, not the verb as such, that is 'in focus' and carries the pragmatic weight of the sentence. In an intransitive sentence, on the other hand, the verb mediates nothing, for the 'source' property of the subject does not proceed beyond the domain of the action or event referred to by the verb. The referent of the verb can then be seen as much more 'in focus' and pragmatically more weighty than it would be in a transitive sentence. It is precisely this 'in-focus' / 'out-of-focus' distinction in the verb that is marked by the presence or absence of *-N-* in Minangkabau.

The same phenomenon is also found in other varieties of Malay and, more widely, in other Austronesian languages. (It may even have been a feature of the ancient Austro-Tai language, the hypothesised ancestor of Proto-Austronesian, according to Benedict, 1975: 146–8.) In the possibly Malayic language known as Duano or Desin Dolaq spoken by the Orang Kuala of Benut (Johor) and across the Straits on Rangsang island in Indonesia, the *N-* prefix seems to indicate that the verb refers to some specific event or process:

Action-referring verbs accompanied by an overtly-expressed object occur only in the unaltered word-stem form ... which, as such, has an originally nominal meaning. However, in simple utterances, negative utterances etc., there appear certain alterations in the initial sounds which are summarisable under the designation of 'prenasalisation'.¹⁷ (Kähler 1946/49: 18.)

Kähler's examples concern the contrast in forms like *telan* ⇒ *nelan* 'gulp down', *goreng* ⇒ *nggoreng* 'roast', and *jarah* ⇒ *nyarah* 'look for'. (I have modified his orthography.) He expressly regards the non-prenasalsed variants as more nominal in character than the prenasalsed variants, which are therefore by implication more verbal.

This optional pre-nasalisation of the verb is also reported for (among others) Iban (where it has two varieties; see Asmah 1981: 47–55) and Ulu Muar Malay (where, according to Hendon, 1966: 52–53, it constitutes a free alternant, *ɔ̃*-, of *mɔ̃*- and *mɔ̃N*-, the local equivalents of standard-Malay *meN*-). The semantics may differ slightly from place to place, but in all instances the prenasalsed forms are used only when the verb is active and when it refers to some definite process or event—which is exactly the way *(-)N-* is used in most varieties of colloquial Malay.

The affix *(-)N-* is, then, best understood as ascribing an indicative or determinate meaning to the verb, employed when the speaker has a PARTICULAR EVENT OR PROCESS in mind.¹⁸ But *(-)N-* also has the effect of marking the verb itself as the weightiest part—the

16. The etymologically closest standard-Malay version of the second pair of sentences would be *hamba mengajar* and *hamba mengajar murid* respectively, both of which contain the complex prefix *me-N-*.

17. The original German reads: Tätigkeitswörter, die ein Objekt als Erläuterung bei sich haben, kommen nur bei der Aufforderungen mit unverändertem Wortstamm vor..., der als solcher ursprünglich nominale Bedeutung hat. In einfachen Aussagen, verneinten Aussagen etc. treten jedoch bestimmte Änderungen im Anlaut auf, die sich unter der Bezeichnung 'Pränasalierung' zusammenfassen lassen.

18. It is admittedly somewhat unusual among languages generally for verbs to be marked for referentiality: definiteness is usually expressed as a property of nouns. But, as with case- and role-marking, most of the

‘pragmatic peak’ (cf. Van Valin and Foley 1980: 338)—of the phrase in which it occurs. If there are no other markers present to indicate where one’s attention is to be focused, such (-)N-affixed phrases are to be understood as being ‘about’ the action or process referred to by the verb, rather than about its consequences or attendant participants.

There is, however, a degree of incompatibility between the ‘in-focus’ and the ‘determinate’ meanings of (-)N-, for it is most often the very presence of some referentially ‘definite’ subject- and/or object-participant that makes the verb ‘determinate’. Prototypical ‘determinate’ actions or processes are, after all, those that proceed from a particular source to a particular goal, especially when the source and goal are themselves of interest—as they are in the more articulated kinds of language associated with outsider-orientated contexts of discourse. Minangkabau appears to acknowledge the possibility of such an inconsistency by dropping the (-)N- in transitive phrases (as we have seen), leaving the *ma-* alone to serve as the ‘source’-focus marker. There may well exist other as-yet uninvestigated varieties of Malay that behave in the same way. But in most other varieties of Malay, including the Malay-based standard languages of Indonesia and Malaysia, the ‘source’-focusing *me-* prefix is found only with (-)N- affixed stems (except when those stems begin with *l-* or *r-*). However, the compound prefix so formed, *meN-*, is notorious for its highly elusive grammatical and semantic properties.¹⁹ The variability it shows in both usage and meaning bears witness, it seems to me, to the semantic tensions at its core, sometimes pulling together and sometimes pulling in opposite directions.

Iconicity and the meaning of *me-*

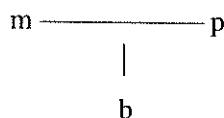
Given that its specific functions are so varied, can it be claimed after all that *me-* has any particular *meaning*? One thing that all examples of *me-* do have in common is the predicative ascribing of an event or process to some particular antecedent or source. I suggest, then, that *me-* carries the notional meaning SOURCE-ORIENTATION. But there is another, closely associated, set of meanings that seems to attach to *me-*: the notions of intent, control, or what Lewis (1952: 183) calls ‘impulse’. I shall use the term SUBJECTIVITY to encapsulate these notions.

There appears to be a degree of direct phonic iconicity in this use of *me-*. Throughout the Austronesian languages a prefixed or infix *m* carries these same SUBJECTIVE meanings—even if most recent writers have chosen to give it a label (‘actor-focus’) that relates to syntactic function rather than meaning. As a sonant issuing from deep within the as-yet-unopened mouth, there could hardly be a speech-sound more suited than [m] to giving direct expression to the feelings one has when about to do something. The deliberate

marking in Austronesian languages is placed on the verb, attesting perhaps to a deep-seated event-domination in these languages. In other language-families, such as Indo-European, Semitic or Austroasiatic, referentiality and case are regularly marked on the nouns, implying perhaps a greater degree of participant-domination than in most Austronesian languages. An alternative explanation would relate to Alieva’s claim (1981) that the ‘possessive’—as opposed to ‘nominative’ and ‘ergative’—syntactical type is (or was once) dominant in the Austronesian languages, in process (‘verbal’) expressions as well as nominal ones.

19. Three centuries ago, Bowrey (1701: no pagination) opined that ‘[*Me, Mem, Men, Meng, Mēnī*] are Expletives frequently set before *Verbs*, and seem to give an Elegancy to the Word, rather than any Addition to its Signification.’ (By *Mēnī*, Bowrey meant *meny-*.) I say more about this early source on Malay grammar in the final section of the paper.

sonance is itself an action, but it is held back by the lips, until ready to be released by opening up to the outside world. In this way, SOURCE and SUBJECTIVITY are directly condensed together in the same symbolic action, but as felt notions rather than thought-of concepts.²⁰ But despite the condensed character of this iconicity, at least three distinct phonic components are present in [m]: *labiality* (from the lip-closure), *voicing* (from the vocal cords), and *nasality* (from the open velic). Now, if for any reason the voicing were cancelled, the nasality would be cancelled with it (since voiceless nasals are not normally found in Malay), and the [m] would become [p]. But if only the nasality were cancelled (with the voicing retained), the [m] would become [b]. This would generate a gradated series of labial sound-gestures opposed to each other in various degrees. If meanings were then calqued iconically upon these sounds, the greatest degree of semantic contrast would attach to the fully-voiced / fully-voiceless contrast of [m] and [p]. The third, less clearly defined element, [b], could then, with its simultaneously less-than-fully-voiced and less-than-fully-voiceless character, serve as a semantic fudge between the polar extremes [m] and [p]:



Now the affixal patterns of practically all Western Austronesian languages (Malay included) retain the *m-/p-* opposition of the proto-language, but Malay is one of the relatively few such languages to have added a *b-* to the array of productive labial-initial prefixes (Brandstetter 1916: 172–173; Mees 1967: 87–89).^{21, 22} Malay thus offers a choice of *me-*, *be-* and *pe-*. In these prefixes the *e* is a wholly-determined ‘inherent’ vowel realised, if at all, as schewa [ə] in Peninsular Malay and the standardised forms of the language, but often as [a], [o] or [u] elsewhere. (Some of the [a] forms are historically more conservative, however.) The written *e-* is often no more than an orthographic habit, as witnessed by such pronunciations as [pəmbrentah] for *pemerintah* ‘government’, where the epenthetic [b] emerges as an unintended consequence of the close transition from the [m] to the [r].²³

20. I have developed this approach to phonic iconicity at greater length elsewhere (Benjamin, in preparation) with regard to Temiar, a Mon-Khmer language of Peninsular Malaysia, which displays a very rich interplay of semantically iconic components. Note that what I am proposing here has more to do with oral *gesture*—a subjective modelling of the world through the shapes and actions of the vocal organs—than with sound (i.e., acoustic) symbolism as usually understood.

21. It is likely that at least some of the few other occurrences of *b-* are loans from Malay. Sasak *bə(r)-*, for example, is reported to indicate ‘intransitive’, ‘durative’, ‘stative’ and ‘reciprocal’ meanings (Clynes 1995: 516)—precisely the range it has across the different registers of Malay.

22. The *p/m* opposition may itself be analysed further, if we accept Wolff’s claim (1973: 72)—here as re-stated by Adelaar (1984: 417)

that PAN **mar-* [i.e., **may-*] (an ancestral form of *ber-*) is to be viewed as a combination of a derivational **pak-* with an inflectional **-um-* (with regular loss of the first syllable where the initial consonant was **b* or **p*). His [Wolff’s] claim is based on evidence from Philippine and Formosan languages, where reflexes of PAN **mar-* are still analysable as deep-structure combinations of reflexes of **pak-* with reflexes of **-um-*.

See also Ross 1995: 70, for a more recent review.

23. For a detailed analysis of schewa-elision in Malay see Farid 1980: 31–38.

In other words, the semantic and iconic weight in these affixes is carried by the consonants alone.

So let us go back to first principles: assuming that the labial component in all these prefixes points iconically to a SOURCE-ORIENTATION meaning, what then is the significance of the voiced/voiceless opposition between *m* and *p*, and of the almost uniquely Malay fudging of this basic Austronesian opposition through the intermediate element *b*? One clue to this is that (as linguists and anthropologists have frequently noted) the absence of a semantic or phonic feature can also be taken to signify the presence of an alternative or opposite feature.

For the cultural reasons already discussed, in Malay a major alternation has been the choice between marking the participant and marking the event, according as the speaker wishes to lend a more articulated or a more condensed mode of expression, respectively, to his sentences. Let us now see how the *p*- and *b*- series of affixes fit with this.

The ‘agent-noun’ prefixes *pe*- and *peN*-

As already noted, the affixation of *-N*- is the precondition for the affixation of *me*- (at least, in current ‘standard’ varieties of Malay): it is *-N*- that marks the root as functioning verbally, and *me*- that joins it predicatively to an agent or source. If, however, the speaker’s attention should now be shifted to the agent itself, thought of as ‘the noun that does V’, then the influence of *-N*- (the verbality marker) recedes, allowing the *me*- component to lose its nasality and become *pe*-. This latter prefix, as *peN*-, is the normal productive affix for forming agent nouns in formal Malay:

tulis ‘to write’
menulis ‘be writing’
penulis ‘one who writes’

While this *peN*- prefix is common in modern Malay, there are also examples of the prefix *pe*-, without the nasal component. In many such cases, *pe*-prefixed forms exist alongside the *peN*-prefixed forms derived from the same stem, but with differences in meaning that serve to indicate the separate semantic weights of the labial and the nasal components. Consider, for example, the difference (here with a further suffix, *-an*) between a ‘topographical map’ (from the semi-official *Atlas Kebangsaan Malaysia*):

peta petempatan
 map *pe*-place-*an*

and a ‘relocation map’

peta penempatan semula
 map *pe-N*-place-*an* again

A relocation map refers to the processual consequences of people’s action, while a topographical map refers merely to non-processual, stative features. Here, the presence or absence of *-N*- is associated with a greater or lesser degree of verbiness in nouns, the basically de-verbal properties of which are already marked by the de-nasalisation of *me*- to *pe*-.

Sometimes the lessened verbiness of the *pe-* derivative lends a 'passive' coloration to the meaning as compared to the more 'active' sense of the equivalent *pen-* derivative. The grammarian Abdullah Hassan (1974: 59–63) does in fact refer to these forms as 'passive nouns'. Among his examples are:

pengasih 'one who is loving'

pekasih 'one who is loved—lover, poet, etc.'

penyakit 'something that makes ill—illness, disease, etc.'

pesakit 'one who is made ill—patient, etc.'

penunjuk 'something that shows—pointer'

petunjuk 'something which is shown—show items, indexes, etc.'

Here, the loss of the EVENT-indicating element *-N-* has allowed the emergence of GOAL- and PATIENT-like meanings that carry a 'passive' colour. (I suggest, though, that this is in no sense a determinate matter. That some Malay-speakers, like Abdullah Hassan, think of this as a 'passive' derivation does not preclude that others should think of it as being more nouny than the somewhat verby *peN-*derivatives.)

The 'causative' prefix *per-*

The derivational chain does not end with *pe-* and *pen-*, for there is also a 'causative' prefix *per-* (as in *perjalan* 'to make something go' < *jalan* 'to go') in which *-r-* has replaced the *-N-*. Conventional grammarians of Malay prefer to treat *pe-*, *pen-* and *per-* as three distinct prefixes, related neither to each other nor to the *me(-N-)* prefix. But, as has long been recognised by students of comparative Austronesian, the *-r-* (as well as the *-N-*) is historically a distinct element from the labial initial (*p-*, *b-* or *m-*). This *r* is widespread in Austronesian languages as an affix adding 'plural', 'iterative' or 'distributive' meanings to verbs or nouns. (Cf. Mees 1967: 118–119, who sees this *-r-* as represented by *d* or *l* in some of the languages.) Kähler (1956: 111, fn.) explicitly analyses the Malay prefix in this way:

The causative *per-*, seen from the viewpoint of comparative linguistics, is composed of the true causative *p(a)* together with **er*, which is also contained in the prefix *ber-*.²⁴

The prefix *per-* thus seems to imply the replication of whatever it is that the agent (*pe-*) is doing or has in mind—which is not a bad way to derive a 'causative' morphology.²⁵ Causative verbs in *per-* can, moreover, be treated as verb-stems in their own right, capable of further affixation. The linkage of a causative verb to an agent can be marked by adding *men-*, as in *memperjalan(kan)* 'to make something go'; or its linkage to a patient can be marked by adding the 'passive' prefix *di-*, as in *diperjalan(kan)* 'to be made to go'.

24. The original German reads: Das Kausative *per-* setzt sich vom sprach-vergleichenden Standpunkt gesehen aus dem eigentlich Kausative *p(a)* und **er*, das auch in dem Zustandpräfix *ber-* enthalten ist, zusammen.

25. This *-r-*, either alone or as part of a prefix, is also used to form causatives in the Peninsular Mon-Khmer language Temiar, in what I suspect is an Austronesian-derived morphology (Benjamin 1976: 168–169, with further discussion in Benjamin *in preparation*).

The compound prefix *memper-* is a modern favourite that has been gaining ground for some time, especially in Indonesia. Roolvinck (1965) gives interesting statistics on this—even though his semantic argumentation for it is unclear. Modern literary verb forms in *(mem)per-* sometimes carry meanings of ‘intensity’ or ‘thoroughness’ rather than simple ‘causativity’, as for example in *memperbuat* ‘to manufacture produce’, which is usually preferred to the simpler *membuat* ‘to make’ in the context of modern industrial activity. But note that when *meN-* and *per-* combine to form *memper-*, the normal morphophonemic rules of standard Malay do not apply: the expected form should be **memer-* (which does indeed occur in some non-standard varieties of Malay). The form *memper-* thus betrays only a partial nasalisation of the *p-*. This is confirmation, from within the substance of the language, that the denasalisation of *me-* to *pe-* carries a strongly iconic value (here, AGENTIVE) for Malay speakers. The denasalisation weighs more heavily than the iconically marked ‘verbality’ carried by the *-N-* affix, the effect of which is less marked before the prefix *per-* than it would be if, say, the *p-* were not a prefix but part of the verb-root. Such is indeed the case with *periksa* $\Rightarrow$ *memeriksa* (not the expected **memperiksa*) ‘to examine’, a word in which the root itself begins with *per*.²⁶

Notes on *ter-*

In my earlier paper (Benjamin 1993: 361–363), I showed that *ter-* acted as the neutraliser of the source-to-goal meaning contained in the other verbal prefixes. It brings together the notions of non-intention, capability and perfective-stative aspect, ‘implying that one’s capabilities are a state that one enters not by intending.’ The history of *ter-* is, unfortunately, rather obscure: it does not occur in the seventh-century Srivijayan inscriptions published by Coedès (1930), although the other affixes (or, rather, their precursors) do occur there; and *ter-* is infrequent in the late sixteenth-century conversations noted by Houtman (Lombard 1970). Of all the Malay affixes, *ter-* is the one for which clear Austronesian cognates are hardest to find. The *-r-* element is not particularly problematic, as we have seen; but the force of the *t-* element has to be guessed at from its fossilised occurrences in such paired words as *tampak* ‘visible’ $\sim$ *nampak* ‘to see’, or *tanjung* ‘headland’ $\sim$ *anjung* ‘projecting porch’.²⁷

Winstedt, who gives these examples (1927: 14), suggests that, like what he presumed to be its cognate in Fijian, the *t-* prefixed verb implies that ‘a thing has become so of itself’, especially when no reference is to be made to ‘the agent by whom the thing has come into the state expressed [by the verb]’. I have been advised by William Foley, however, that this foray of Winstedt’s into Oceanic linguistics was in error. But, whatever the situation in Fijian, this ‘spontaneous’ meaning appears to underlie one of the most frequent uses of *ter-* in modern Malay—to disclaim responsibility for the outcome of one’s actions. On television, for example, announcers frequently sign off (in a show of modesty, I assume) by hoping that their viewers *telah terhibur* ‘have found themselves entertained (in watching

26. From Sanskrit *parīkṣā* ‘investigation’ (Gonda 1952: 203).

27. In at least one variety of Early Modern Malay, *t-* occurs alone without the *-r-* (Bowrey 1701: no pagination); see pp. 23–24 below for further information on this.

the programme)' rather than *telah dihibur* 'have been entertained (by the performers' actions)'.

Later in his *Malay Grammar*, Winstedt (1927: 86–89) shows how this basic non-agentive meaning leads connotatively to the other meanings of *ter-* (thereby providing an answer to the puzzles engendered by later grammarians' accounts):

(1) The prefix *ter-* denotes the perfected act, the realised condition. (2) It emphasises not a process in which an agent takes part but a result—absolutely complete, sometimes sudden and due not to conscious activity on the part of the subject but to external compulsion or accident ... (3) Seeing that in denoting the perfected act, the derivative in *ter* connotes ability to bring it about, *ter* has come to be used to denote the possible (or more commonly with the help of a negative or an interrogative, the impossible) ... (4) Denoting completion beyond which one cannot go, *ter* derivatives connote the superlative in degree and serve as intensatives. In this connection *ter* is prefixed to nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, as well as verbs.

In some other Austronesian languages a shift from a labial to a dental initial in verbal prefixes carries with it a shift from imperfective to perfective aspect, and this may be relevant to the present discussion. A good example is the Tagalog prefix *mag-* (thought by most scholars to be directly cognate with the Malay *ber-*, discussed shortly), which becomes *nag-* in the perfective. This is very close to the *ber-* ~ *ter-* alternation in Malay (despite the obvious objection that the voiced form **der-* would be a better phonological parallel than *ter-* to the Tagalog prefix *nag-*). The marking of an imperfective/perfective contrast through the replacement of a labial consonant by a dental may, indeed, be very ancient: Dahl (1973: 119) suggests that Proto-Austronesian opposed **mu-/um-* 'imperfective' to **ni-/in-* 'perfective'.

The history of *ber-*

In my earlier study (Benjamin 1993: 371–385) I presented an extended discussion of the wide range of meanings expressed by *ber-* in the various kinds of Malay. In the more participant-orientated varieties, *ber-* served as the verbal marker of middle-voice, reflexive and intransitive meanings. But in the more event-orientated varieties, *ber-* tended to be used for such aspectual and *Aktionsart* meanings as 'aimlessness', 'habitual', 'stative', 'non-punctual'.²⁸ I suggested that the underlying meaning of *ber-*, in all varieties of Malay, was to indicate that the subject of the verb was being thought of as PSYCHOSOCIALLY DIVIDED in some way. In support of this view, I also presented some evidence from the Aslian (Peninsular Mon-Khmer) language Temiar (Benjamin 1976), which has borrowed the *ber-* prefix in two different shapes, presumably at different historical periods: *bar-* ~ *bə-* ~ *ba-*, which makes the verb 'progressive', and *ber-*, which (through the kind of dialectical switch quite common in Temiar culture) makes certain verbs 'causative'. I left the historical

28. Compare this with Collins's remark (1996: 45) on the printed Malay texts that began to appear in the early seventeenth century: 'By today's standards the use of the prefix *ber-* would be considered excessive but that is the impression late 20th century speakers of Malay would have about all Malay texts of this period.'

investigation of *ber-* hanging, however, merely suggesting that ‘the development of the Malay affixes has from the start (say two thousand years ago) been bound up in a High/Low diglossia that had effects on the language that were just as profound in the proto-historic period as they were later to be.’ Let me devote the rest of this paper to elaborating what I had in mind.

The literature on the historical and comparative linguistics of *ber-* is too slender to be convincing. The claim that it is cognate with the prefix *mag-*, common in Philippine and other Austronesian languages, has been made or implied by several authors (e.g. Wolff 1981, Mees 1967: 88, Dahl 1976: 128, Adelaar 1984: 417, Ross 1995: 70). This has usually been based on the following grounds: first, that Malay *r* and Philippine *g* are both descended from Proto-Austronesian **ɣ* (a voiced velar fricative, written as **R* or **G* in some sources) and, second, that *ber-*, represented as *mar-* in the earliest Malay records, shares its initial *be-* (< *ma-*) portion with *mag-*. But, as we shall see, it is by no means certain that the *r* in *ber-* is a reflex of **ɣ*. There are, in fact, good reasons for thinking that it descended from some other Proto-Austronesian phoneme (such as **r*) which also became *r* in Malay. In order to pursue this question, let me first return to my discussion of *b* as a phonic fudge between the iconically contrasting labial prefixes *m-* and *p-*. What was it in the history of Malay that led to the emergence of such an unusual prefix (from the standpoint of comparative Austronesian) as *b-*? An important clue is provided by the co-occurrence possibilities of *me-*, *pe-* and *be-* with the elements *-N-* and *-r-*.

As already noted, the prefix *pe-* co-occurs with both *-N-* and *-r-*, to form the ‘agent, utensil’ nominal prefix *peN-* and the ‘causative’ verbal prefix *per-*. In all recent varieties of Malay, however, *me-* and *be-* display a complementary distribution with respect to *-N-* and *-r-*: *me-* combines only with *-N-* (to form the verbal prefix *meN-*, as discussed earlier), while *be-* combines only with *-r-*, forming *ber-*, the prefix under discussion here. It looks as if whenever there is to be a voiced labial initial (for whatever reason), *-N-* selects *me-*, but *-r-* selects *be-*. What little is known of the early history of Malay fits with this view. The possible cognates of *ber-* in other western Austronesian languages mostly have *m-* not *b-* (as, for example, Batak *mar-*, or—a more doubtful ‘cognate’—Tagalog *mag-*).²⁹ The Old Malay of the seventh-century Srivijayan inscriptions regularly has *mar-* where the later language was to have *bar-* or *ber-*; and there appear to have been one or more transitional phases before the complementarity between *m + N* and *b + r* was finally established. For example an Old Malay inscription from West Java, dating to 942 CE, has both *bar-* and *mar-* in the same text.³⁰ Forms in *mer-* are still retained in some early seventeenth-century

29. Cf. Mees (1967: 87–88): ‘... bentuk *bar* sungguh jarang benar. *Ba* dan *bar* hanya terdapat dalam bahasa Dayak, juga dalam bahasa *Sumbawara* [... the form *bar* is extremely rare. *Ba* and *bar* are only found in Dayak languages and also in *Sumbawara*].’ Winstedt (1913: 13) and Brandstetter (1916: 118) also noted that *b(a)-* (rather than *bar-*) is found in some Austronesian languages outside the Malay dialect-continuum. In some such cases it is reasonable to assume that *ba-* has arisen from the loss of an original *-r-*, such as in Banjarese, a Malayic language, where *ba-* regularly appears instead of Standard Malay *bar-* (Abdul Jebar 1977: 13). But in at least one variety of Early Modern Malay (see the final section of this essay) both *ba-* and *ber-* occurred as independent affixes.

30. This has been interpreted variously as a case of free variation, or of transitional indeterminacy, or of two distinct affixes with separate meanings; see the discussion by Teeuw (1959: 148). In an early paper, Adelaar (1984: 417–418) suggested that both affixes descended from a proto-Malayic **(mb)ar-*; he mentions this suggestion again in his later study of the issue (1992a: 146), but does not discuss it any further.

texts.³¹ And the sizeable number of plant-, animal- and place-names beginning in *bem-*, *ben-* or *beng-* (see Wilkinson 1932: 114–122) suggests that for a while after *mar-* had evolved into *bar-* or *ber-*, the resultant *b-* initial was still felt to be recombinable with *-N-*. (These processes can still be witnessed today in the progressive regularisation of the older ‘dictionary’ form *merbahaya* ‘dangerous’³²—to the now more frequently heard *berbahaya*.)

The conclusion to be drawn, it seems to me, is that the continued nasality of the *me-* affix has been ensured by its retrogressive assimilation to the nasality of the *-N-* affix which follows it.³³ But the substitution of *-r-* for *-N-* must have lessened the pressure, allowing the initial *m-* to undergo denasalisation to *b-*, with the result that the ancestral form *mar-* became first *bar-*, then *ber-*.³⁴ Mees, too, has noted (1967: 88) the extremely complicated relations disclosed by the historical study of these prefixes: ‘... *ma*, *man* dan *ma*+nasal agak tercampur dalam perkembangannya’.³⁵ Compare this statement with Foley (1974: 29): ‘one of the striking features of Malay morphology is the confusion in the usage of morphemes, so that many have a patchquilt of multiple uses’, or with Becker (1979: 249): ‘a major source of the difficulty in describing these affixes has been that discourse strategies have changed rapidly in the past few hundred years of the history of Malay—and with them the semantics of the verb affix systems.’

Why, then, did *-r-* and *-N-* come to be syntagmatic alternants in the slot between the prefix *ma-* and the verb to which it was joined? The answer to this question rests, of course, in the semantic contrast between *man-* and *mar-*, which is not too hard to characterise. We have in fact already met the very same contrast in discussing the differences between the prefixes *peN-* ‘agent-noun’ and *per-* ‘causative’. Earlier, I identified the *-N-* as the indicative and determinate marker of the notions EVENT or PROCESS. This identifies it as a possible Malay reflex of such Austronesian elements as the *ŋ* ‘definitiser’ in Old Javanese (Oka and

31. A passing comment of Winstedt’s (1927: 13) suggests that certain usages of *me-* in some early Malay texts of the ‘classical’ kind can also be understood as expressing the ‘habitual’ meaning found in some present-day peasant speech-varieties (cf. Benjamin 1993: 367–368), rather than the more expected ‘actor-focus’ meaning:

It is quite possible that substantival forms like *měntua* [*me-N-old*], *měrlimau* [*me-r-citrus*] are abbreviations of *orang měntua* [person *me-N-old*], *buah měrlimau* [fruit *me-r-citrus*]: in the Bodleian *Sēri Rama* (early seventeenth century) *rumah mērdērma* [house *me-r-alms*] occurs for ‘almshouse’.

Note that in some of these archaic forms, *me-* occurs with *-r-*, rather than with *-N-*. I shall return to this point.

32. That is *marabahaya*, compounded of Sanskrit *mara* ‘imminent danger’ and *bhaya* ‘danger of all kinds’ (Gonda 1952: 60).

33. Another example of such retrogressive assimilation in Malay is provided by *menantu* ‘child’s spouse’ (from *bantu* ‘to aid’ + *-in-* ‘passive’).

34. Adelaar (1992a: 162–163) too accepts this as a possibility on phonological grounds, but he does not make any appeal to iconicity as an added factor, as I do here.

A similar change may have overtaken the ‘passive’ prefix, which was *ni-* in the Srivijayan inscriptions but is now *di-* (cf. Teeuw 1959: 141). Such an hypothesis would assume, of course, that modern *di-* is the historical descendent of *ni-*, a view that does not accord well with the commonly expressed view that *di-* is a devolved third-personal pronoun, or even a derivative of the locative preposition *di*. Adelaar (1992a: 162) presents the issues in a nutshell; lack of time and space precludes any further exploration here.

35. ‘*ma-*, *man-* and *ma*+nasal have become somewhat mixed together in their development.’

Becker 1974: 244), the ligature in many Philippine languages, the *ng* of the Malay relative pronoun *yang*, and the Proto-Austronesian ‘emphatic’ nasal substitution *ŋ*- that according to Dahl (1976: 128) became the *-N-* of the western Austronesian languages.³⁶ The *-r-* was earlier identified with an Austronesian affix that adds ‘plural’, ‘iterative’ or ‘distributive’ meanings to verbs, but I can find little discussion of this in the recent literature. I am therefore not able to sort out the historical problems raised by the claims of several earlier writers, such as Dempwolff, Mees and Kähler, that there is an identifiable element, consisting of a prefixed or infix liquid consonant (that is, *l* or *r*), occurring widely in western Austronesian languages with ‘replicative’ meanings. To make matters more complicated, there are also claims that the *r* in *ber-* is derived from an article or pronominal *r*, cognate perhaps with *ro* ‘who’ in some Philippine languages and maybe with *r-* ‘he’ in Bugis (see Winstedt 1927: 89; Blagden’s footnote on pages 15, 18 of Winstedt 1927; Brandstetter 1916: 172). Sometimes, *-r-* even occurs alone as a productive verbal affix: Hughes (1995: 646), for example, shows that in the Dobel language of the Aru islands, Indonesia, *-r-* indicates (a) object deletion and (b) co-referential subject, as well as some lexical uses. These verbal functions correspond nicely to the ‘middle-voice’ senses of Malay *ber-*. Malay itself retains many examples of *(-)r-* and *(-)l-* as non-productive affixes, almost always with a ‘distributive’ or ‘pluralising’ meaning (cf. Winstedt 1927: 16–17); and if the verb stem already contains an *r*, the productive prefix *ber-* usually dissimilates to *bel-* (e.g., *belajar* ‘to study’). Taken together, these data suggest that the ancestral proto-phoneme in question is more likely to be an apical flap, corresponding to the **r* of Dahl (1973) and to the proto-phonemes written **l* and **d* by Dempwolff. (The latter has usually been written **D* by later researchers, including Wolff.) The proto-phoneme **ɣ* (presumably a velar fricative) would therefore seem to be a less likely source for the *-r* in *ber-* than is often supposed.³⁷

Thus, if the combination *voiced-labial* + *N* (i.e., *man-* > *men-*) means ‘SUBJECTIVITY + DETERMINATE EVENT’, the combination *voiced-labial* + *r* (i.e., *mar-* > *bar-* > *ber-*) means ‘SUBJECTIVITY + plural/iterative/distributive’. The latter combination corresponds so closely to the ‘PSYCHOSOCIALLY-DIVIDED SUBJECT’ meaning argued for in my earlier paper (Benjamin 1993: 375, 383) that we may conclude that modern-Malay *ber-* is a predicative affix compounded of the well-established Austronesian element *ma-* ‘predicator’/‘actor-orientation’ and *r* (whatever its source and original meaning). But since the *r* of *ber-* (from earlier *mar-*) developed within Malay in syntagmatic opposition to the ‘determinate’ *-N-* of *men-* (from earlier *man-*), we may provisionally ascribe the meaning ‘indeterminate’ to *r* in this context, on the understanding that the various ‘replicative’

36. In a discussion with me in 1993, John Wolff thought that this identification of Malay *-N-* with the Philippine ligature was unlikely to withstand examination. For further discussion of ‘ligature’ *ŋ* in Malay and its relatives, see Adelaar 1994: 1–8.

37. John Wolff told me that this claim could well be correct, as the attribution of the ‘iterative’ *r* formative to Proto-Austronesian **ɣ* has not been satisfactorily demonstrated. On the other hand, Wolff (1974) has himself published a strong argument against the reconstruction of both **r* and **D* in Proto-Austronesian, preferring to treat most such cases as reflexes of **D* alone. Although this proposal has so far not found general acceptance amongst Austronesianists, it would mean that the ‘iterative’ *(-)r-* under discussion here should be seen as a reflex of Proto-Austronesian **D*, rather than either **ɣ* or **r*.

meanings belong here too. (*Ber-* still carries the meaning ‘indeterminate’ in many event-salient varieties of Malay; cf. Benjamin 1993: 380–383.)

This approach provides the rationale for an iconic interpretation of the denasalisation of *mar-* to *bar-* and *ber-* in later Malay. As I argued earlier, the nasality of the *m* in *meN-* betokens the ‘subjective’ and ‘source’ properties of a controlling agent. But in ‘middle-voice’ *ber-*-prefixed verbs the grammatical subject refers to a participant that is as much acted *upon* as acting, or which participates in *someone else’s* activities, or which is characterised by some *stative* rather than active quality. The ‘subjectivity’ and ‘source’ properties of the grammatical subject are correspondingly reduced, without being entirely extinguished: this is symbolised in the partial but non-complete devoicing of *m* to *b*.

What of the remaining *ma-* element? This prefix is not so problematical. It is so widespread in Austronesian that Dahl (1976: 119) reconstructed it for Proto-Austronesian:

ma- [forms] words signifying a quality, ‘adjectives’. In Formosan and Philippine languages it is often a quality which is the result of an action. In this case it has the same topic as a goal-focus verb. I therefore also adopt *ma-* (prefix and meaning of the form) as PAN.

It seems quite likely, then, that Malay *ber-* is not a simple cognate of the *mag-* prefix found widely in western Austronesian languages, even though such an identification might appear obvious at first glance. From the semantic point of view there is, in fact, not much commonality between these two series of prefixes: one version of Tagalog *mag-*, for example, carries the meaning ‘actor-focus, controlling, transitive’, which would make it equivalent to Malay *meN-*, not *ber-*. The only noticeable area of semantic overlap between *mag-* and *ber-* is that they are both used in reciprocal and reflexive expressions.³⁸

***Ber-* and *meN-* as within-Malay creations**

My interpretation of these data is that the prefix *ber-* was not received fully preformed (i.e., as a cognate of Philippine-type *mag-*) into the earliest Malay as part of its Austronesian heritage, but was synthesised independently in early or pre-Malay out of the elements *ma-* (> *ba-*) and *-r-*, which were already available in the languages of the general area in which Malay emerged. The fossilised, non-productive *(-)l-* and *(-)r-*-containing words mentioned above are so like the productive infixal plural forms in *-(a)r-* found in Sundanese and (presumably as Austronesian borrowings) in the Northern Aslian languages of the Malay Peninsula³⁹ that it is quite reasonable to assume that *-r-* and *-l-* were productive in the earliest Malay too. Moreover, given the relative autonomy between *me-* and *-N-* which is observable even in modern Malay, as noted earlier, a parallel separable analysis may well apply to the prefix *meN-* as well.

38. The issue is actually more complicated than this. John Wolff has pointed out to me that there is more than one kind of *mag-* in Tagalog: (a) ‘active’ and (b) ‘middle, reflexive’. That is to say, Tagalog *mag-* covers some of the same semantic territory as both *meN-* and *ber-* in Malay. This could be evidence that Tagalog *mag-* and Malay *ber-* are indeed linked in some way, perhaps secondarily. On the ‘adjectival’ *ma-* in Tagalog, see Wolff 1993: 231–232.

39. For further information on Aslian see Benjamin 1996 and *in press*.

These features make Malay (especially in its outsider-orientated varieties) different from most other western Austronesian languages in certain striking ways. With just a few exceptions, such as Foley (1974) in his aptly entitled paper ‘Whatever happened to Malay?’ and Alieva’s essays on the subject (1978, 1981, 1983), Austronesian comparatists have done little more than to note the differences, leaving any explanation unattempted. In the most general (and therefore none too refined) terms, Malay differs from its immediate neighbours the Batak languages, and from most of the languages of Borneo and the Philippines, in preferring Subject–Verb–Object (SVO) to Verb–Subject–Object (VSO) as its basic—but not sole—word order. It also organises its predications on a participant-governed grammatical axis, concerned with the active/passive and transitive/intransitive distinctions, rather than on the basis of various orientations (‘focus’) of the verb towards a grammatically somewhat peripheral topic.⁴⁰ Alieva (1978: 327, 1983: 38) has summed up these differences under the rubrics ‘nominative/analytical’ (the Malay type) and ‘accusative/synthetic’ (the Tagalog type). In addition to Malay, the nominative/analytical type would include such languages as Chamic (i.e., ‘Mainland’ Austronesian), Javanese and Bugis, implying that areal (*Sprachbund*) factors have had a role in the story alongside the factors specific to each individual language.

On the basis of his reconstruction of the verb-inflection ‘focus’ morphemes, Dahl (1976: 117–121) tentatively reconstructed the accusative/synthetic pattern as having characterised Proto-Austronesian. Among the most widespread of the ‘old’ Austronesian morphemes are the verb-infixes **(u)m-* ‘actor focus’ and **-in-* ‘perfective aspect’ (which almost always merges with ‘goal focus’ or ‘passive’). These reappear in so many Austronesian languages as prefixes that Dahl (1976: 119) felt constrained to reconstruct the ancestral affixes as couplets, respectively **mu-/um-* and **ni-/in-*.⁴¹ He also reconstructed as Proto-Austronesian the prefix *pa-* ‘causative’, and, as already mentioned, *ma-* ‘predicator’, ‘stative’, ‘adjectival (i.e., quality that is the result of an action)’. Now, all of these affixes are present as productive elements in some or other of the languages geographically close to Malay, as well as in some Malay and possibly-Malayic dialects (such as Duano)—with the important exception that *mu-* (with that vocalism) seems to have been lost or, more likely, merged with *ma-*.

What, then, did happen to Malay? The data on Old Malay are still sparse—which should urge caution. But the fact that the material we have derives mostly from (mainly seventh-century) inscriptions has gone some way to help locate it sociolinguistically as belonging to the High end of any diglossic continuum that may have existed (Coedès 1930; de Casparis 1956; Damais 1968). Furthermore, since the Srivijayan inscriptions relate to the political adventures of an expansive and largely sea-linked empire that emerged as a response to inter-regional trade, they were probably composed within much the same framework of societal consciousness as was later to characterise the immediately pre-modern Malay states. In discussing this mode of consciousness in my earlier paper (Benjamin 1993: 359–

40. The latter pattern, following Foley and van Valin 1984, is nowadays often referred to as a ‘pivot’-based system; see, e.g., Ross 1995: 64.

41. Although Dahl does not say so, the original vowel ([ə]?) may well have been reshaped by partial assimilation to the neighbouring consonant: the labial [m] rounding it to [u], and the dental [n] raising it to [i]. If so, we can ignore the vowels and further reduce his proto-forms to just **m-/m-* and **n-/n-*.

360), I pointed out that it displayed a special interest in TRANSITIVITY (between agent and goal) as the key feature to be emphasised in picturing the social world. Grammatically, this interest is encoded in the largely optional markers that (as prefixes) link the subject to the verb and (as suffixes) the verb to the object. Clearly, the SVO word-order of (formal) Malay is intimately bound up with this pattern of grammatical organisation. The Subject–prefix–Verb–suffix–Object pattern lays more emphasis on the question of *who* acted on *whom* or *what* than on the question of what *happened*, i.e., on the salience of participants rather than of events. Sociologically, this corresponds to an historic shift in the character of social relations, from many-stranded to single-stranded. This, as Gellner has argued (1988: 43–49), exerts a profound effect on the way in which people use their languages. The alternative Austronesian mode of grammatical organisation—to treat the predicate as ‘the nucleus of the clause with both actor and goal as in some sense marginal or lateral to it’ (Dahl 1976: 118, citing Pike)—is, of course, the one that most authors have taken as the typical Austronesian pattern from which Malay (along with some other languages) has diverged. This mode would seem to fit more ‘naturally’ with the sort of sentence-organisation that differentiates semantically between various ways of looking at the event itself, i.e., with the appropriately-affixed verb coming first and the various participants following it as mere sentence-adjuncts of some kind.⁴²

In fact, this opposition is far from absolute: all western Austronesian languages contain examples of both tendencies. The differences rest not in the absolute presence or absence of the two polar types of grammatical organisation, but in their relatively dominant or subsidiary character in any particular variety of a particular language at a particular point in time. This is probably the reason for the reconstructability at the Proto-Austronesian level of alternative prefixal and infixal forms of the most common verbal affixes, as just noted. The prefixal forms *mu-*, *ni-*, etc.) were probably more frequent in SVO, participant-salient sentences, as in some Formosan languages today (Ferrell 1972), while the infixal forms (*-um-*, *-in-*) were on the contrary probably more frequent in event-salient sentences, which were more likely to follow the VSO pattern.

These syntactic differences are usually accompanied by differences in the meanings of some of the affixes, according as they are infixed or prefixed: *-um-* and *-in-* usually encode ‘permanent-state’ aspectual meanings, while Old Malay *m(u)-* (as *man-* and *mar-*) and *ni-* usually mark ‘temporary-process’ meanings, as in actions and other dynamic changes of state. In other words, the infixes tend to be used for ‘verb-internal’, aspectual meanings while the prefixes tend to be used for ‘verb-external’, participant-related meanings. I must emphasise that these are tendencies, not absolute distinctions. As I showed in my earlier paper (Benjamin 1993), the prefixes in the event-salient varieties of (recent) Malay can be charged quite effectively with ‘verb-internal’, *Aktionsart*-like meanings. But there is obviously reason to suspect that these may, in some sense, be historically secondary usages that came into being as Malay—with a morphological apparatus first developed in a sociolinguistically High context—became the language of hinterland populations too (cf. Benjamin 1993: 352–353).

42. For examples, see Ross (1995: 64–65) on Atayal (Formosa) and Tryon (1995a: 35–36) on Palawan (southern Philippines).

If these suggestions bear any significant resemblance to what happened (say) 1500 to 2000 years ago as the Malay dialect-continuum was taking shape,⁴³ then one would not expect to find in the inscriptional texts many examples, if any, of the second of the two patterns ('event-salient') just discussed. Direct evidence of its existence in Malay at that time is therefore unlikely to be forthcoming. One would expect, on the contrary, that the language of the Old Malay inscriptions would be organised in a way recognisably similar to that of classical and modern 'outsider-orientated' Malay. And that turns out to be the case. Morphologically, this corresponds to the absence of the infixes *-um-* and *-in-* from the inscriptional language; instead, we find *ma-* (combined, as discussed above, with *N* or *r*) and *ni-*. The following lines from the Telaga Batu (Palembang) inscription of *ca.* 686 CE exemplify these usages:⁴⁴

... <i>mañujāri</i>	<i>kāmu</i>	<i>drohaka</i>	<i>vañun</i>	<i>dyāku</i>	<i>mālun</i>	<i>āda</i>	<i>di kāmu</i>
... <i>mañ-</i> +tell	you	traitor	plot	LOC+me	[before?]	exist	LOC+you
<i>tida ya</i>	<i>marpāddah</i>	<i>dyāku</i>	...	<i>nivunuh</i>	<i>kāmu</i>	<i>sumpah.</i>	
not it [?]	<i>mar-</i> report	LOC+me	...	<i>ni-</i> +kill	you	curse.	

'... if someone tells you that traitors are plotting against me and some of you fail to report it to me ... you will be killed by the curse.'

I am suggesting, then, that the peculiar history of the Malay prefixes *meN-* and *ber-* relates to significant changes in the early period, perhaps 2000 years ago, consequent on the formation of outward-looking, sea-linked, socially stratified kingdoms. These changes included an emphasis, at the sociolinguistically High end of the scale, on the development of a mostly prefixal, participant-referring, predicative morphological apparatus within a mostly SVO word-order. Later, as this morphological pattern spread, along with the Malay language itself, into the erstwhile tribal populations of Borneo, Sumatra and the Peninsula, it came to be used in a much 'Lower' manner, with mostly *Aktionsart*-like meanings, as already described.

It should be noted that within the nuclear Malay-speaking area, the consonant written as *r* is not usually sounded when it occurs as the first element of what would otherwise be a consonant-cluster. This has the consequence that the prefix written *ber-* (and so analysed by me up to this point) is usually pronounced [bə] in ordinary local-Malay speech. There are also examples of the omission of *r* from *ber-* in the earlier written language (cf. Zaini-Lajoubert 1983: 107). This makes it possible that modern *be-* (without *-r*) is the descendent in part of the old 'stative' adjectival prefix *ma-*, mentioned earlier. If this is true, the modern descendants of *mar-* and *ma-* will have become homophonous in speech ([bə]) in such a manner as to preclude any easy disentanglement of their history. The fact that they

43. On current evidence, this would have been in the region subtended by western Borneo, eastern Sumatra and the southernmost parts of the Malay Peninsula (see, e.g., Adelaar 1992a: 206–207, Collins 1996: 3–5, Bellwood 1997: 119–124). There are no good ethnological, archaeological or linguistic reasons to support the older view, still maintained by a few writers, that Malay or its ancestors emerged in northern mainland Southeast Asia.

44. The translation given here is based on that of Adelaar (1992: 394–395). This differs in certain important respects from the earlier reading of de Casparis (1956: 33, 38), being based on newer linguistic information.

such a manner as to preclude any easy disentanglement of their history. The fact that they have usually been merged, as *ber-*, in the written language only makes matters more complicated.

For lack of data, the argument of this section has necessarily been rather hypothetical. But further evidence on this issue came to light just as I was about to print what I thought would be the finished version of this essay.

A (re-)discovery, (1997) 1701

I have been arguing that the modern standard-Malay verbal prefixes *men-* and *ber-* represent just two of the several possible affixes that could be formed from various combinations of the elements discussed earlier. These are: (1) *-N-* ‘process marker’, (2) the labial ‘source orientation’ series (2a) *ma-* ~ *me-*, (2b) its descendants *ba-* and *be-*, and (2c) *pe-* (all possibly derived from PAN **m-/*-um-* ‘stative, adjectival’), and (3) *-r-* ‘iterative’ (perhaps derived from PAN **D*). In partial proof of this claim, I showed that several other possible combinations (*N-*, *ma-*, *mer-*, *ben-*, *r-*, *-r-*, *pe-*, *per-*, *pen-*) appear as affixes, both productive and non-productive, in one or other variety of Malay.

However, there is a gap in this list. My argument would obviously be strengthened if there existed varieties of Malay in which *ber-* contrasted *regularly* with *be-* alone. To my knowledge, this has not been reported formally for any current variety of Malay, but Thomas Bowrey (1701: no pagination) shows unambiguously that *both* of these affixes occurred in the spoken Peninsular Malay of the late seventeenth century. Bowrey’s *Dictionary* presents a detailed and careful account of the Malay that the author himself had been speaking until 1688:

... by Nineteen Years continuance in *East-India* wholly spent in Navigation and Trading in most places of these countries, and much of the time in the *Malayo* Countries, *Sumatra*, *Borneo*, *Bantam*, *Batavia*, and other parts of *Java*, by my Conversation and Trading with the Inhabitants of which places, I did Furnish my self with so much of the *Malayo* Language as did enable me to Negociate my Affairs, and Converse with these people without the assistance of a Prevaricating Interpreter, as they commonly are.

With one exception, Bowrey’s important account has remained unnoticed by scholars working on the history of Malay—perhaps because it has yet to be re-printed in a modern edition. I did not know of this source myself until I had already completed the rest of this paper, but it turns out to have a direct bearing on the arguments presented in the previous section.⁴⁵

45. I first saw mention of Bowrey’s *Dictionary* in James Collins’s recent monograph (1966) on the history of Malay, where it is correctly judged to be of very high quality. The *Dictionary* employs the Roman script throughout, thus giving a closer guide to pronunciation than in most of the dictionaries that followed it over the next two centuries, which employed the Arabo-Malay (*Jawi*) script. Fortunately, I was able to consult an original print in the Rare Books collection of the Central Library, National University of Singapore. A microfiched copy of the book has since been made by that Library’s Reprographic Department, which is now more easily available to scholars in the region. The book’s several hundred pages are unpaginated, however, making reference rather difficult.

Following the dictionary section proper, Bowrey provides several pages of ‘Grammar rules for the Malayo language’. As the extracts below show, he treats *ber-* as the marker of perfect aspect (‘Preter-tense’) or passive voice, and then goes on to contrast it with another prefix, *ba-*, to which he ascribes a ‘Present-tense’ participial function.⁴⁶ Bowrey’s translations suggest that *ba-* possessed a ‘continuative’ or ‘durative’ meaning—such as *ber-* still possesses in most varieties of spoken Malay. (As suggested in the previous section, these modern usages (often pronounced [bə]) may well be the descendants of *ba-* (< *ma-*) ‘stative, adjectival’.)

Thus, the Verb in the Active Voice is only exprest: In the Passive, the Signification is intimated as such by the Particle [*ber*] or [*ta*] as for Example,

Āko caffee, I Love. In the Passive Voice, *Āko sooda ber caffee*, I am Loved.
Āko ājar, I Teach. *Āko sooda ber ājar*, I am Taught.

Participles

By placing the Participle [*ba*] before and Verb, it becomes a Participle of the Present-tense, as

Bācha, to Read. *Ba bācha*, Reading.
Dungar, to Hear. *Ba dungar*, Hearing.
Kēna, to Apply. *Ba kēna*, Applying.

The Particle [*ber*] or [*ta*] plac’d before the Verb, turns it into a Participle of the Preter-tense, as

Kēra, to Think. *Ber kēra* or *Tā kēra*, Thought, Did think.
Killip, to Bind as a book. *Berkillip* or *Ta killip*, Bound as a book.
Coompool, to Gather. *Ber coompool* or *Ta coompool*, Gathered.

And here observe that all passive verbs (just as in the English) are made up of Participles of the Preter-tense, as thus.

Āko sooda Ta Poocool, is, I am beaten, equal with
Āko sooda Berpoocool, I am beaten.

From: Bowrey 1701

Here, Bowrey clearly distinguishes *ba-* from *bar-* as separate prefixes with different meanings and grammatical functions. Later, he makes this quite explicit:

Participle of the Present-tense: *Ba Poocool*, Beating
 Preter-tense: *Berpoocool*, Beaten.

Is Bowrey’s report reliable? I think the answer must be ‘yes’. First, the many hundreds of dictionary pages and the substantial sample conversations that follow them are presented with very great care. Second, despite Bowrey’s use of a very ‘English’ orthography, his transcription of Malay pronunciation is full: he fails only to notate syllable-final *h*.

46. In modern spelling, the words employed in Bowrey’s account would appear as *aku*, *sudah*, *kasih*, *ajar*, *pukul*, *baca*, *dengar*, *kena*, *kira*, *kilip* and *kumpul*.

Third, *r* was fully articulated in all positions in all varieties of English until the middle of the eighteenth century (Barber: 328–330), almost a century after Bowrey was at work. We must therefore assume that Bowrey himself always sounded his *r*'s when speaking English, even after a vowel, and that he wrote *r* only when it represented a fully pronounced [r] or [ɣ] in the seventeenth-century Malay he was describing. Conversely, the absence of *r* in his transcription must be assumed to correspond to its absence in the pronunciation.

Fourth, Bowrey writes *ta-* throughout, where today we would write *ter-* (*ta coompool*, for example, not **tercoompool*). This is consistent with the careful distinction he draws between *ba-* and *ber-*.⁴⁷ Finally, although he sometimes joins *ber-* to the following stem and sometimes writes it as a separate word, he consistently writes *ba* (and *ta*) as a separate word.

As Bowrey makes clear, the variety of Malay he was describing was widely employed throughout the Peninsula and the Islands as the major trading language of the period. It is therefore reasonable to regard it as dominated by 'outsider-orientated' and 'participant-salient' usages (though not exclusively so, for he also reports it as the language used among the Peninsular Malays themselves). As with the Old Malay inscriptions discussed earlier, this sociolinguistic profile is consistent with the almost exclusively prefixal character of the morphology. Earlier, I suggested that prefixal morphology would (other things being equal) normally be associated with the participant-salience that characterises language usage in the more single-stranded social circumstances. But other varieties of Malay were spoken—and still are spoken—in peasant and tribal communities where many-strandedness is the norm. Here, we might expect to find a higher proportion of insider-orientated and event-salient usages, coupled with the continued retention of the older infixal morphology. Let me close, then, by providing some concrete evidence as to what might have become of the infixes *-(u)m-* and *-in-*, now forgotten in most varieties of Malay—coupled with a plea for further research.

Although *-(u)m-* and *-in-* occur fossilised in many current Malay words (such as *gemuruh* 'thundering' from *guruh* 'thunder' or *menantu* 'child-in-law' from *bantu* 'help') they are no longer productive. Kähler (1946–49: 28), however, reports *-(u)m-* as still productive (alongside *me-*) in Duano, the afore-mentioned possibly-Malayic language spoken by a seafaring group (known in Malaysia as the Orang Kuala) whose settlements are found on the west coast of Johor and on some of the islands off the Sumatran east coast:

Kaen ko yad kali bēmēli ikin?
 Why you many time buy+*-m-* fish?
 'Why have you bought so much fish?'

Kähler (1946–49: 20) also gives an example of *-in-* as a passive formative in Duano, though he seems to think this no longer productive:

Djadi mbangan kalo bēsoa' tjelah kinin kēmbangan.
 Now crocodile if meet monkey eat +*-in-* kē+crocodile.
 'If a crocodile meets a monkey, the monkey is eaten by the crocodile.'

47. It also raises questions about the history of modern *ter-*. This too, as remarked earlier, is far from settled.

The Duano language is situated right along the middle stretches of the sea-lanes exploited by the early Malay kingdoms I have been discussing. Kähler's account of Duano (1946) shows that, although this is a Malay-like language, it has not been absorbed into the local-Malay dialect-continuum; the people's way of life has allowed them to hold themselves apart from the larger sociopolitical trends. Yet, given their location and the generally Malayic character of their language, it is not too far-fetched to suggest that we have here a distant echo of the kind of linguistic matrix out of which Malay proper began to emerge around two millennia ago. So few of the 'tribal' Austronesian languages of Sumatra and the Peninsular south have yet been studied in any detail that it is quite possible that Duano is not the only language still spoken that may retain such fascinating archaic features right in the midst of the nuclear Malay-speaking area.⁴⁸



[For references, see next page]

48. As an indication, consider this: In the mid-1980's, on the offshore Singaporean island of Pulau Seking (then inhabited by descendants of the indigenous Orang Selat people), I recorded a visitor from a neighbouring Indonesian island using such pronunciations as [mɔgɔt] for the more usual *pungut* or *(me)nungut* 'to gather'. This is reminiscent of the kinds of phonological processes that occur in the languages spoken by the Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia, both Mon-Khmer and Malayic.

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