

CURRENT INTERPRETATIONS OF WESTERN MALAYO-POLYNESIAN LINGUISTIC PREHISTORY

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The definition of the term "Western Malayo-Polynesian" will be based on the subgrouping of Austronesian (AN) languages as proposed by Blust (1977) (Fig. 1). Blust has argued that the Formosan languages (which may form one or more primary subgroups in Taiwan) and Malayo-Polynesian represent the two primary subgroups of Proto-Austronesian (PAN). Malayo-Polynesian has three branches: Western Malayo-Polynesian, Central Malayo-Polynesian and Eastern Malayo-Polynesian. Western Malayo-Polynesian includes the languages of the Philippines and western Indonesia, Palauan, Chamorro, Indochina and Malagasy. Central Malayo-Polynesian includes the AN languages of the Lesser Sundas (beginning with Bimanese of eastern Sumbawa) and of the southern and central Moluccas, the Aru Islands and the Sulu Archipelago. Eastern Malayo-Polynesian includes the languages of south Halmahera and the Pacific.

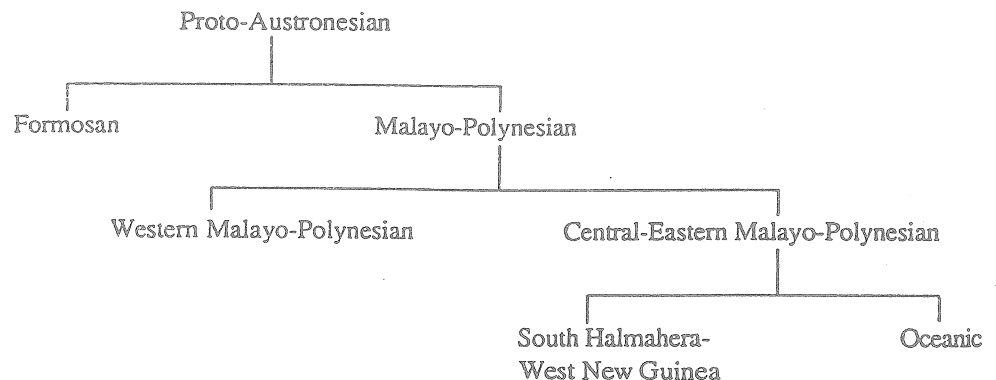


FIGURE 1: PRIMARY SUBGROUPS OF PROTO-AUSTRONESIAN (BLUST 1977)

Reid (1982) has proposed a rather different subgrouping of the highest branches of PAN by suggesting that some languages of the northern Philippines (e.g. Bontok,

Ilokano) cannot be included in the Malayo-Polynesian subgroup. Figure 2 shows Reid's subgrouping proposal.

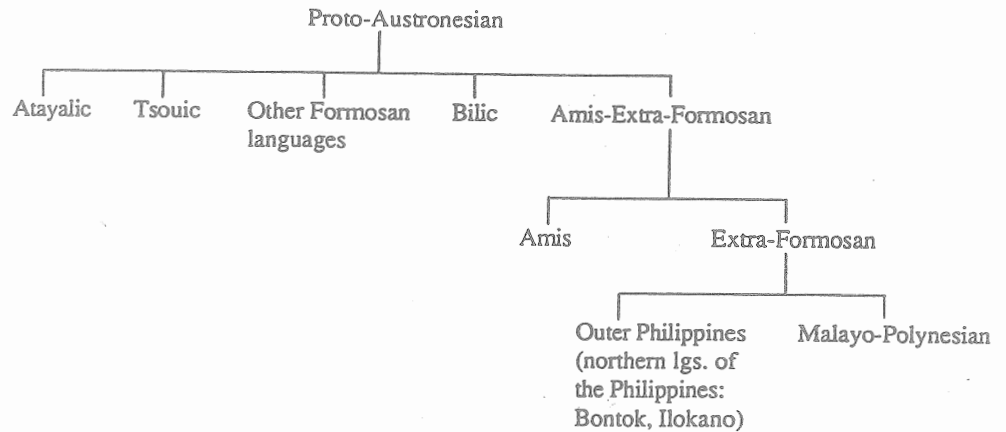


FIGURE 2: PRIMARY SUBGROUPS OF PROTO-AUSTRONESIAN (REID 1982)

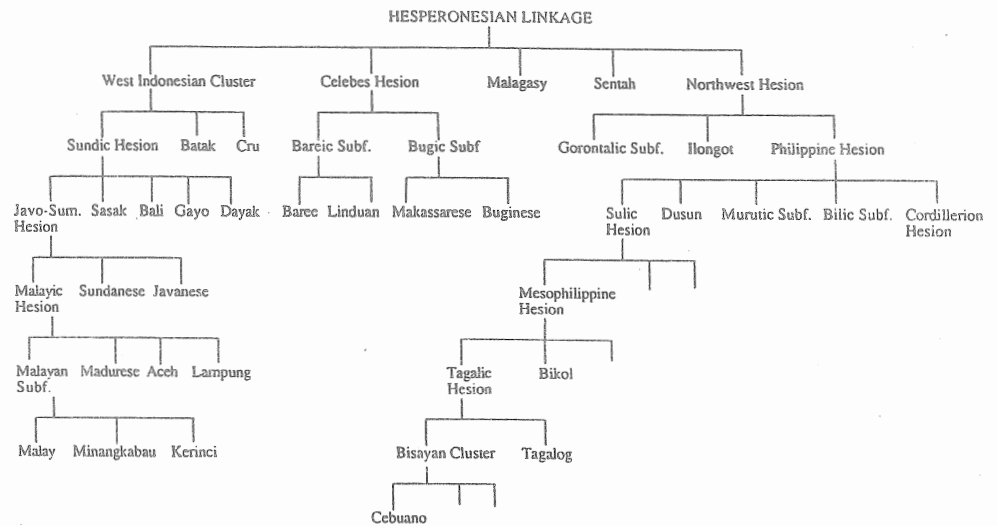


FIGURE 3: SUBGROUPING OF THE HESPERONESIAN LINKAGE (DYEN 1965)

There is no agreement with regard to the relationship of some Philippine languages and of languages such as Paulohi (Seram) and Bimanesse to the languages of Blust's Western Malayo-Polynesian. Dyen (1982) has argued that Paulohi and Bimanesse are more closely related to Western Malayo-Polynesian languages than to other subgroups of PAN.

The only attempt at a large-scale internal classification of the Western Malayo-Polynesian languages was made by Dyen (1965) in his lexicostatistical classification of the AN languages. Parts of the language tree of what Dyen calls the "Hesperonesian Linkage" appear in Figure 3.

In recent times there have been various attempts at lower order subgroup reconstructions within the Western Malayo-Polynesian languages. These lower order reconstructions are indispensable for a better understanding of higher order proto-languages (such as Western Malayo-Polynesian or Malayo-Polynesian), including Proto-Austronesian. It is only since the 1970s that a fair number of them have been made, by linguists such as Blust (Proto-Northern-Sarawak, 1974), Mills (Proto-South-Sulawesi, 1975), Nothofer (Proto-Malayo-Javanic, 1975), Sneddon (Proto-Minahassan, 1978; Proto-Sangiric, 1984) and Adelaar (Proto-Malayo-Javanic, 1985). There have also been various reconstructions on the basis of Philippine subgroups. Some of these subgrouping studies were based on quantitative evidence alone (e.g. Nothofer 1975), others on both quantitative and qualitative evidence (e.g. Sneddon 1984), and still others solely on qualitative evidence (e.g. Adelaar 1985).

Three Examples of Lower Order Reconstructions

An interesting discussion has developed regarding the classification of languages which belong to Dyen's Javo-Sumatra Hesion. Nothofer (1975) reconstructed Proto-Malayo-Javanic on the basis of Dyen's lexicostatistical results which indicated the relationship between Malay, Sundanese, Javanese and Madurese shown in Fig. 4.

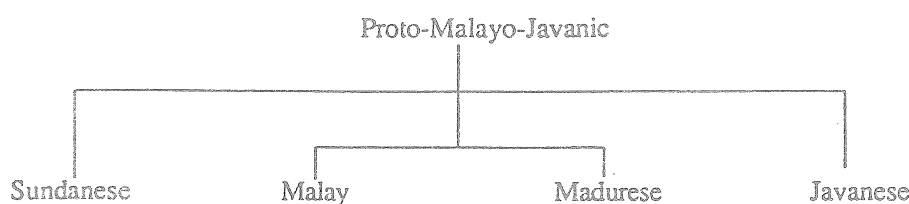


FIGURE 4: TREE-CONFIGURATION OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MALAY, SUNDANESE, JAVANESE AND MADURESE (NOTHOFFER 1975)

In his criticism of Nothofer's use of Dyen's classification, Blust (1981) proposed the "Malayic" subgroup shown in Fig. 5. This subgrouping excludes Javanese and Madurese from the subgroup which contains Malay and Sundanese. Furthermore, the "Malayic" subgroup includes a number of languages which were not considered by Nothofer, such as Iban, Selako and Embaloh.

Blust considered that the replacement of the PMP forms **piu* "seven", **walu* "eight" and **siwa* "nine" by forms cognate to Standard Malay *tujuh*, *delapan* and *sembilan* was critical for the subgrouping of these languages. He also considered the metathesis of vowels in reflexes of PMP **ma-quDip* "to live" as a critical phonological innovation within the Malayic group.

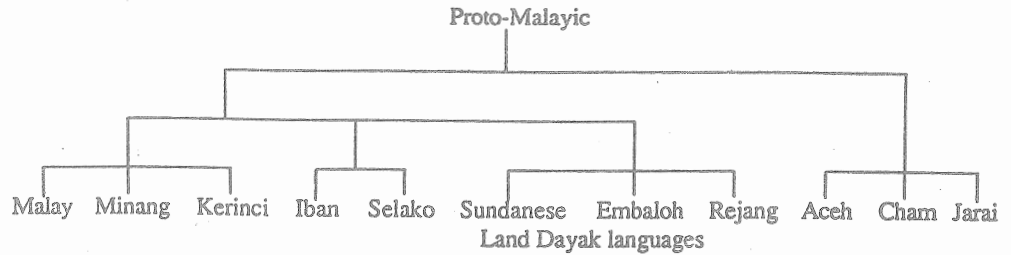


FIGURE 5: TREE CONFIGURATION OF THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE LANGUAGES OF THE "MALAYIC" SUBGROUP (BLUST 1981)

Nothofer (1985) and Adelaar (forthcoming) have noticed that the evidence of these numerals is too small a basis for a subgrouping hypothesis. The forms for "seven", "eight" and "nine" can all be treated as borrowings from Malay. Furthermore, the metathesis of vowels in reflexes of PMP **ma-quDip* also occurs in languages which are non-Malayic, such as Sasak.

Besides rejecting Blust's hypothesis, Nothofer (1985) has also presented qualitative evidence in support of his original grouping together of Malay, Sundanese, Javanese and Madurese. The internal subgrouping of the Malayo-Javanic languages dealt with in this study is shown in Fig. 6.

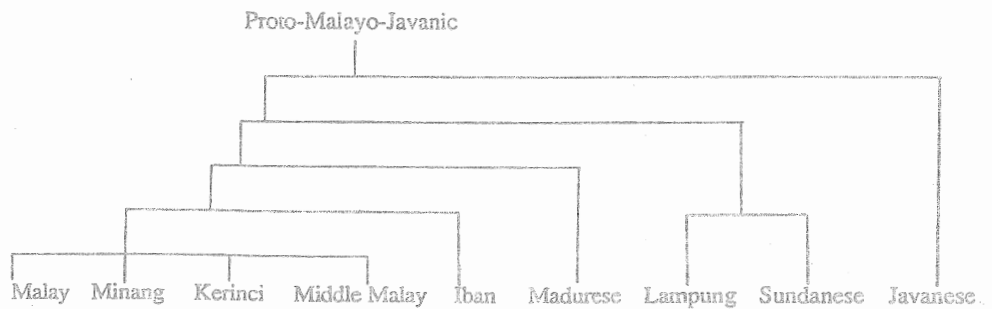


FIGURE 6: TREE-CONFIGURATION OF THE MALAYO-JAVANIC LANGUAGES (NOTHOFFER 1985)

Nothofer (1988), in his criticism of Adelaar's reconstruction of Proto-Malayic (Adelaar 1985), which is argued to have Standard Malay, Jakarta Malay, Minangkabau, Banjar Hulu, Seraway and Iban as its daughter languages but not Embaloh and Rejang, has suggested the language tree given in Fig. 7. Embaloh and Rejang, which were not dealt with in Nothofer (1985), are here subgrouped with Malay. Lampung is no longer treated as a language of this subgroup.

Already in Nothofer (1985) it was asked why there should be no agreement regarding the subgrouping of these languages. According to Nothofer (1985):

The answer is that we are faced with serious and possibly insurmountable problems which have their origin in two closely related historical developments. 1) These languages and other languages of western Indonesia such as Sasak and Balinese have identical reflexes for many of the most frequently occurring PAN phonemes... The result of this is the existence of an abundant number of comparable cases which are ambiguous as to whether they are cognates or borrowings. 2) Both Malay and Javanese have heavily influenced most other languages of western Indonesia, including languages such as Balinese, Sasak, Makassarese, Buginese or Batak and Ngaju-Dayak.

In a later section of the paper we will discuss in more detail the consequences of this extensive borrowing from Malay and Javanese.

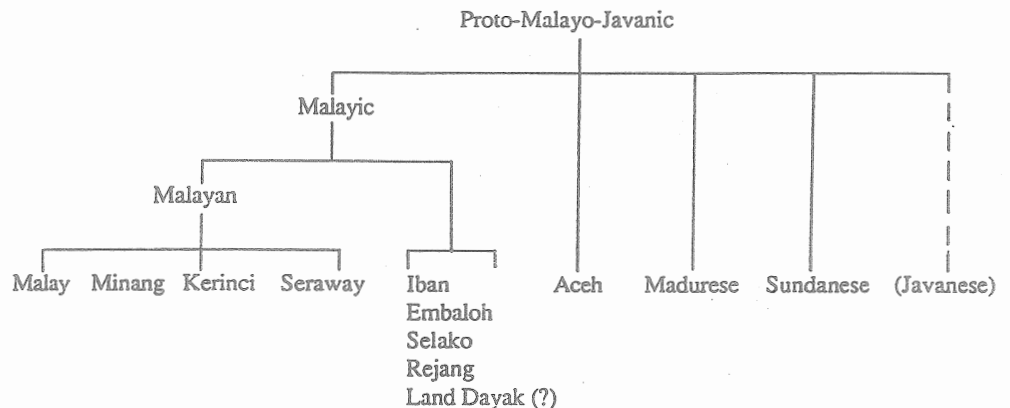


FIGURE 7: TREE-CONFIGURATION OF THE MALAYO-JAVANIC LANGUAGES (NOTHOFER 1988)

The second example of a lower order reconstruction appears to be less complicated. According to Sneddon (1984), the closest relatives of the Sangiric languages (i.e. Sangir, Sangil, Talaud, Bantik, Rantahan) appear to be the Minahassan group (Tontemboan, Tonsawang, Tombulu, Tonsea, Tondano). Both language groups are assumed to be descendants of Proto-Philippine (if Proto-Philippine existed as a legitimate meso-language).

The third example of a lower order reconstruction is Mills' reconstruction of Proto-South-Sulawesi (Mills 1975). He admitted that any attempt to subgroup the South Sulawesi languages on the basis of the material available to him would be highly speculative and tentative. Mills presented two family trees for the South Sulawesi languages (Fig. 8), one based on lexicostatistical evidence and the other on qualitative evidence (i.e. phonological and morphological innovations).

The three examples above show that in recent years scholars have mainly dealt with languages which seem linguistically and geographically close, although earlier works on the classification of Western Malayo-Polynesian languages had indicated closer

relationships among languages which were geographically rather remote from each other. Nothofer (forthcoming) and Adelaar (forthcoming) independently rediscovered these studies in their works on the Barrier Island languages west of Sumatra and on the Tamanic languages of Borneo respectively.

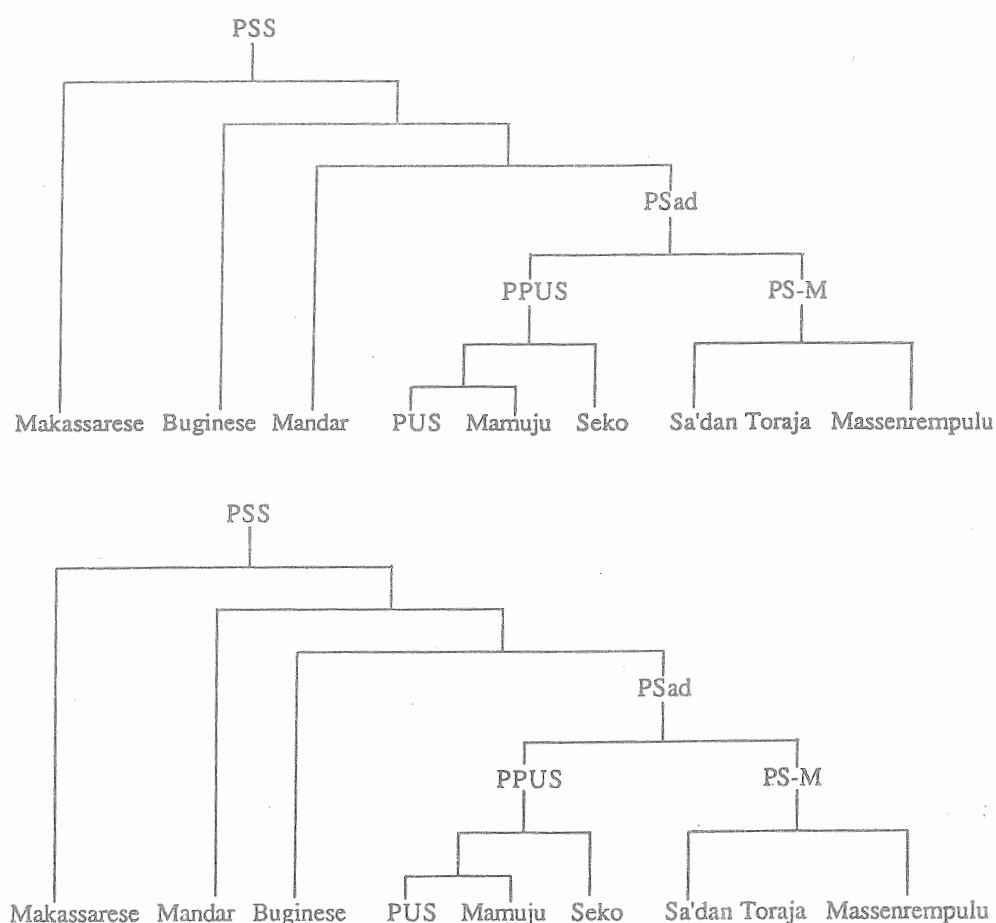


FIGURE 8: FAMILY TREES OF SOUTH SULAWESI LANGUAGES (MILLS 1975)
 Top, on lexicostatistical evidence; bottom, on qualitative evidence

Adelaar (forthcoming) refers to works by von Kessel (1850) and Hudson (1978). Hudson, for example, divided the languages of Borneo into seven "endo-Bornean" groups (primary sub-groups that do not have a particular affinity to languages outside Borneo) and three "exo-Bornean" groups (primary subgroups which do have a close affinity to some languages outside Borneo). Endo-Bornean groups are West Barito, Barito-Mahakam, Rejang-Baram, Kenyah-Kayan, Apo-Duat and Land Dayak. Exo-Bornean languages are Malayic-Dayak, Idahan and Tamanic. Embaloh, a Tamanic language, was

considered as exo-Bornean because it was stated to have striking similarities with Buginese.

Adelaar has presented convincing qualitative evidence consisting of exclusively shared innovations on the levels of phonology, lexicon and morphosyntax in support of a close relationship between the Tamanic and South Sulawesi languages. At the same time he has been rather successful in rejecting Nothofer's hypothesis of a closer relationship between Malay and Embaloh (see above), although he still has to explain five of Nothofer's innovations as probably being the result of borrowing between Embaloh and Iban. Adelaar does not put forth any hypothesis regarding the historical reasons (e.g. migrations, earlier contacts) for this linguistic affinity.

In a paper published in 1986, Nothofer studied the position of the languages of the Barrier Islands (Simalur, Sichule, Nias, Mentawai, and Enggano) in the Austronesian language family. It was shown that strong qualitative evidence can be adduced in support of a Barrier Island-Batak-Gayo subgroup, and that this subgroup probably contains all the Barrier Island languages including Enggano. Thus, Enggano appears to be a Western Malayo-Polynesian language, like the neighbouring island languages. This conclusion is contrary to that of earlier commentators. Dyen (1965) classified Enggano as a primary branch of his "Malayo-Polynesian Linkage", Mahdi (1988) treated the Barrier Island languages as belonging to his "East Austronesian" group, and Capell (1982) argued that

Enggano is not an Austronesian language from the point of view of its vocabulary and its grammar... Enggano is structurally *sui generis*: ... it does not have Melanesian traits as for example Mentawai...Enggano is a remnant of these pre-Indonesian languages, which indeed has Indonesian borrowings, but remains non-Austronesian.

In the same paper, Nothofer (1986) referred to earlier studies on the Barrier Island languages by the German scholars Kaehler (n.d., probably written at the end of the 1930s) and Willms (1955). In the introduction to his unpublished *Grammatik der Simalursprache*, Kaehler wrote that the

Simalur vocabulary contains such a clearly recognisable Celebes-Philippine substratum that a formerly close contact between Simalur and this northern language group is certain...Simalur shares the possession of a linguistic substratum *originating* [Nothofer italics] from the northern language group of Indonesia with other dialects on the islands on the west coast of Sumatra (Sichule, Nias, Mentawai, Enggano).

In his analysis of Mentawai, Willms (1955) compiled lists of what he treated as borrowings from languages of Celebes and Sumatra. He furthermore has a list of so-called Mentawai borrowings from Nias and Simalur. Nothofer (1986) commented on the works of these linguists as follows:

Neither Kaehler nor Willms considers the possibility that the words which Barrier Island languages seem to share exclusively with each other, with Sumatran or with

Sulawesi-Philippine languages might reflect an etymon of their respective last proto-language. There can be no doubt that particularly in the case of words which seem to be shared exclusively by a Barrier Island language and neighbouring Barrier Island languages or by a Barrier Island language and Sumatran languages there in fact exists a borrowing relationship. This is a more difficult argument in the case of the many words listed by Kaehler and Willms which appear to be shared exclusively by Barrier Island and Sulawesi-Philippine languages.

If we interpret these as reflections of etyma of an earlier common proto-language which is not PAN, one might indeed argue that these two language groups have an exclusively shared history. Although a close examination of the lists compiled by the two German scholars shows that in a considerable number of cases either the forms or the meanings are too different to allow a treatment as cognates or there exist cognates in non-Barrier Island and non-Sulawesi-Philippine languages, there remain some interesting comparisons which could be treated as lending support to such an argument.

In a paper which Nothofer presented in Canberra (Nothofer, forthcoming), he pursued the hypothesis of a possibly closer relationship among the languages mentioned above. He presented a total of about 60 etyma whose reflexes apparently only occur in the Barrier Island languages, the Batak languages, Gayo, Sulawesi and Philippine languages as well as in some Bornean languages. Furthermore, he listed about 20 Proto-Malayo-Polynesian or Proto-Austronesian etyma whose reflexes show a geographical distribution which very much resembles that of the reflexes of these 60 etyma.

How can we interpret these data? Two alternative explanations can be suggested. The first is that Western Austronesia, i.e. the Philippines, Sulawesi, Borneo, Java-Bali-Lombok-Sumbawa, Sumatra and the Barrier Islands, used to form a rather homogeneous linguistic area in which languages of Pre- or Paleo-Western Malayo-Polynesian origin were spoken. At some later time languages of Western Malayo-Polynesian origin intruded into this area and replaced the languages of Pre- or Palaeo-Western Malayo-Polynesian origin in all but the peripheral and more isolated areas. The latter were heavily influenced by the "new" languages, but retained part of their original vocabularies. The relic areas are, in particular, the islands west of Sumatra, the Batak-Gayo area, and parts of Borneo, Sulawesi and the Philippines. We could call this hypothesis the *substratum hypothesis*, which assumes two separate migrations into Western Austronesia, both of which probably originated in the Philippines and/or Sulawesi.

A similar interpretation of the linguistic situation in Western Austronesia was suggested by Zorc in a personal communication (1984). He commented on Nothofer (1986) by writing:

I...would like to pursue the idea that there may be an east-west Hesperonesian outlier (relic area) into which the Malayo-Iban languages *pushed* [Nothofer italics]. The number of possible innovations shared by the languages you treated

and those of the Philippines certainly gives some ground to the hypothesis that there was once a linguistic area, "Batakic-Philippinic", into which another Austronesian family *intruded* [Nothofer italics] (Zorc. pers. comm.)

The second hypothesis which can be put forward in order to explain the linguistic situation in Western Austronesia might be called the *borrowing hypothesis*. Languages of the Malayo-Javanic type, which belong to the Western Malayo-Polynesian stock just as all other languages of Western Austronesia, may have extensively influenced most of their surrounding languages. Particularly heavy borrowing must have occurred between the so-called Malayic languages, in particular Malay, and other Western Austronesian languages. But also, Javanese must have been one of the main donor languages. As mentioned above, it is often difficult to distinguish between inherited and borrowed material in Western Austronesia since many languages have identical reflexes of PAN phonemes. Much of the material which is taken to be cognate might be due to early borrowing which underwent the regular sound changes that took place in the languages influenced by Malay and/or Javanese. Such borrowings would no longer be recognizable. An example of this is given in Nothofer (1985):

It might be posited that some of the Madurese morphemes with final *q* as the regular reflex of PAN **p*, **t* and **k* are not cognates but borrowings, since these words may have been borrowed from Malay or Javanese at a time before PAN **p*, **t* and **k* became Mad. *-q*.

It is important to note that this borrowing must have occurred well before the times of the Sriwijaya, Mataram or Majapahit kingdoms. It probably occurred in the first centuries A.D. This hypothesis might be interpreted as arguing for the existence of Malayo-Javanic hegemonies well before the times of Sriwijaya, Mataram, and Majapahit.

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