

On the Position of Tapan within the Malayic Family

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At present, research into the Malayic language family has not produced any well-established internal subgroupings. In part, this is due to objective reasons: Malayic languages have been the scene of extensive language contact and horizontal transmission of linguistic features, which make it difficult to establish a single tree structure for the entirety of the family. In addition, though, the absence of any agreed-upon subgroups is probably also due to insufficient scholarship in this particular domain. However, even a cursory inspection of the data suggests the existence of several plausible albeit rather shallow subgroups, islands of tree structure, as it were, within a sea of dialects and languages less amenable to cladistic analysis. One obvious example of such a subgroup is provided by the various dialects of Minangkabau.

This paper focuses on one particular language variety at the margins of the Minangkabau speaking area, namely *Tapan*, spoken in the eponymous town situated on the southern coast of West Sumatra province near the border with Bengkulu province. The coastal region straddling the boundary between these two provinces is one of considerable linguistic diversity, mostly still undescribed. The present study draws upon data compiled by the Padang Field Station of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, including a corpus of naturalistic speech data from Tapan, plus large lexical databases from Tapan, neighboring language varieties including Surantiah Minangkabau to the north, Muko-Muko to the south, and the Sungai Penuh and Rawang dialects of Kerinci to the east, plus other Malayic languages further afield.

This paper attempts to position Tapan within the Malayic language family. Application of the Automated Similarity Judgment Program developed at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology points towards the following two conclusions: (a) Tapan groups most closely with Muko-Muko, forming a low-level subgroup, *Lunangic*; and (b) together, Lunangic and Minangkabau form a somewhat higher subgroup, *Minangic*. This classification is then shown to be supported by various shared innovations, both lexical and phonological. Among the phonological innovations, Lunangic is characterized by the rise of word-final excrescent η after high vowels, and the loss of nasal consonants before unvoiced stops; Minangic by an array of word-final coda changes including $V[hi]\eta > V[hi]a\eta$, $us > uih$, $at > e\eta$, $as > eh$, and $is > ih$; and Minangkabau by further word-final coda changes including $V[hi]\eta > V[hi]a\eta$, $ut > ui\eta$, $up > ui\eta$, and $it > i\eta$.