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Some trade languages of insular South-East Asia and Irian Jaya

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Relevant maps are listed at the end this text.

Tukang Besi

Tukang Besi is an Austronesian language whose home lies in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, on the agriculturally deficient *Tukang Besi* islands. Due to the poor potential for food production on these islands, the *Tukang Besi* people have traditionally looked overseas for an alternative way to make a living. The southern two islands of *Tomea* and *Binongko* have pursued piracy and blacksmithing (*Tukang Besi* is Malay for 'blacksmith'), and are still known as smiths through much of eastern Indonesia. The northernmost island of *Wanci* has pursued trade as its means of generating an outside income, and still has a large network of trade links spanning island southeast Asia. Often mis-identified as *Bugis* or *Bajau* settlements, communities of *Tukang Besi* islanders can be found widely spread throughout the *Maluku* area, *Nusa Tenggara*, coastal regions of *Irian Jaya*, southern *Sulawesi*, *Borneo*, *Sumatra*, *Java* and even *Singapore*. The western settlements are in the main trading posts, and tend to have little or no permanent population, with families staying for a few years and then moving elsewhere. The eastern communities, however, are large-scale settlements of thousands of *Tukang Besi* people, mainly from the southern islands, who grow cash crops of *copra* and *cloves*, and provide a contact with the local indigenous people. This contact is maintained in many areas by means of a pidgin version of the language of the traders who collect these goods.

In the west this pidgin is beginning to fall into disuse from the influence of *Straits Malay*, but is still spoken by many Chinese traders. In many eastern communities it is a strong means of communication.

On the *Tukang Besi* islands themselves the pidgin is easily understandable to speakers of the

original language, and most adult coastal dwellers will speak the pidgin as well, using it for communication with the local *Bajau* communities on *Warci* and *Kaledupa*, or with the sizeable *Cia-Cia* community on *Binongko*. There are probably 75,000 speakers of pidgin *Tukang Besi* whose native tongue is *Tukang Besi*. Western Indonesia probably has another 25,000 speakers, and twice that number again in eastern Indonesia, making a total of 150,000+ speakers of pidgin *Tukang Besi* as a trade language.

Pidgin *Tukang Besi* differs from its parent language in morphology and word order. The Verb-Object-Subject (VOS) order of *Tukang Besi* has changed to Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) in the trade language, conforming to the norms found in the other areal trade languages, *Malay* and *Chinese*. The extensive subject and object affixes on the verbs are absent, and possession marking is reduced to the third person possessive suffix followed by a free pronoun. Most striking is the loss of all case-marking, accomplished in *Tukang Besi* by means of noun-phrase initial articles that function similarly to the better known 'focus' systems found in *Philippine* languages—his is totally dropped in pidgin *Tukang Besi*. Pragmatic roles are indicated by word order alone, the only marked noun phrases being the peripheral ones, which still require prepositions.

An example of the differences between the parent language and the trade language can be seen from the following:

- (1) a. *no-'ita te banka-su na amai*
3R-see CORE ship-my NOM they
b. *amai 'ita banka no isku*
they see ship POSS I
c. *dorang lihat perahu saya*

In the above, (a) represents original *Tukang Besi*, showing VOS order, a third person realis subject prefix on the verb, the first person singular possessive suffix on *bangka*, and the core (CORE) and nominative (NOM) articles marking the noun phrases. The whole sentence means 'They saw my boat.', (b) shows the pidgin version with altered word order and simplified possession, whilst (c) represents Malay, for the sake of comparison.

Aspect is indicated in the trade language by means of independent words, and not the infixes and suffixes found in *Tukang Besi* proper, used with subject prefixes varying for realis and irrealis mood. Compare the following:

- (2) a. *na- [um]ita- 'e*
3IR- see.SF- 3OBJ
- b. *amai hada 'ita ia*
they want see s/he
'They want to see it.'
- (3) a. *no-langke-mo na sanggila*
3R-sail-Perf NOM pirate
- b. *sanggila po'oli/mondo langke*
pirate finish/already sail
'The pirates have sailed away.'

Phonologically, pidgin *Tukang Besi* differs from its parent in that the imploded stops /b/ and /d/ become /b/ and /d/, and the bilabial fricative that in standard *Tukang Besi* varies between [β], [ɸ] and [ɸ] becomes [w] in the pidgin. For some speakers V₁?V₁ and V₁V₁ sequences reduce to V₁:

- (4) (individual words)
- a. *ngaa ro'o mohii pe'esa- tee te'e*
name leaf left self tea water
- b. *nga ro mohi pesa te te*

This affects the placement of the stress, which is usually penultimate. In both languages, high vowels tend to desyllabify in pre-stressed syllables, but this is more noticeable in the pidgin.

- (5) a. *Te iaku pe'esa-su*
CORE I self-my
[- - - - -]
- b. *Yaku pesa*
I self
'I, alone.'
[- - -]

There are three intonational levels in 5a, but only two in 5b.

The location of large concentrations of speakers of pidgin *Tukang Besi* is shown on the accompanying map.

Tukang Besi pre-pidgin at Fakfak, Irian Jaya

In the vicinity of Fakfak (and possibly other areas as well) there is a pre-pidgin version of *Tukang Besi* spoken, by people who are not yet at the pidgin level but have learnt a few words. The words first learned are typically the numbers, directions, and words associated with trade – *mohali* 'expensive', *leama* 'good', *balu* 'buy', *sawi* 'travel', etc. This pre-pidgin is in use by the mini-bus drivers that ply the streets, and some mountain people who come down to the coast to sell firewood.

Pidgin and trade languages in Fakfak and the Onin Peninsula, Irian Jaya (pre-contact)

There have been two main languages used for communication across ethnic lines in the Onin peninsula, one Austronesian and the other non-Austronesian (Papuan). The Austronesian Onin, originally spoken on the north-west coast of the peninsula, has come to be the trade language often spoken by speakers of Sekar, Erokwanas, Bedoanas, Arguni, Uruangnirin (all Austronesian), Iha, Bahám and Karas (non-Austronesian). It is used along the coast, and often is understood passively, but not actively spoken. Its use as a second language is greatest around the north coast east of its homeland, in the vicinity of Kokas, where the great number of indigenous languages has led to the need for a

common language in the form of a simplified Onin. Along the south coast its strongest use is in areas contiguous to the settlements of Onin speakers, to the east of Fakfak. The origins of Onin itself are said to be in a mixture of the Kei languages and Iha (Coenen 1954), but short of positing massive and regular relexification along the lines of the other Austronesian languages of the area, this appears unlikely.

The non-Austronesian (Papuan) Iha, the second trade language used in the area, is spoken in a simplified version, and understood passively by the Austronesian speakers around Kokas Bay to some degree, but it is the area around Fakfak that sees Austronesian speakers learning a simplified, trade version of Iha. This trade Iha diverges from the original language in having no trace of the complicated tense system that is present in Iha, all verbs taking the irrealis inflection, and not using the accusative set of pronouns, the plain set being used instead. The word order remains SOV, however. Bahám and Karas speakers, already speaking closely related non-Austronesian languages of their own, learn the language more fully, and when speaking Iha do employ the full range of tenses.

Tor trade language, Irian Jaya (pre-contact)

In the Tor River region on the north coast of Irian Jaya, east of Sarmi, the Berik language was used by speakers of the other related Tor languages as a trade language when two groups met, and was still a viable trade language in 1961 when Oosterwal did his field work.

Ekari, Wissel lakes area, Irian Jaya (pre-contact)

A pidgin version of Ekari in the Wissel Lakes area is reported as having been in use to facilitate trade along the trade routes running down to the coast from the Enarotali area (Voorhoeve, personal communication).

Cenderawasih Bay, Irian Jaya (pre-contact)

The Biak language is used as a trade language over much of Cenderawasih (formerly Geelvinck) Bay, as well as along the north coast of the Bird's

Head and into eastern Maluku, on the islands of Waigeo and Misool.

Damul (Uhunduni)

Damul in the western part of the Irian Jaya Highlands is the trade language used between the western Nduga and the Damul along the eastern edge of the Damul area.

Momuna (Somahai)

Momuna, on the middle Eilanden River, south of the highlands, is reported as being a second language for contact purposes used by the Dani living in areas bordering on them to the north.

Wano

Wano is spoken by approximately 1,500 speakers in the western part of the highlands area south of Dem, and is used as a trade language by speakers of various Lakes Plain languages in the areas north of this area to the Van Daalen river, in total approximately 2,500 second-language speakers.

Kowiai (Koiwai, Kaiwai)

Kowiai has a small population of native speakers, but is used widely along the south coast of Irian Jaya in the coastal areas between Arguni bay in the west and Etna bay in the east. The number of speakers of Kowiai as a trade language is not known, but the area includes speakers of the Iria, Asienara, Irarutu, Mairasa, Semimi and Kamoro languages.

Demisa

Demisa is spoken by a small population in two villages in Waropen Bawah district, and one other village inland on the Wono river, but is used as the lingua franca in much of the eastern side of Cenderawasih (Geelvinck) bay, and by many nomadic groups in the interior.

Isirawa

Isirawa is used as a trade language inland from the Sarmi coast, northern Irian Jaya, by speakers of many Kwerba languages in their dealings with each other and with the Austronesian Sobei speakers on the coast.

Fayu

The trade language for a large stretch of the Rouffaer river in the northern and western portions of the western Lakes Plains is *Fayu*.

Moi (pre-contact)

There have been unconfirmed reports that the *Moi* language in the western part of the Bird's Head of Irian Jaya was formerly used as a trade language by the Moraid, Karon Pantai and Brat speakers living close to the *Moi* area.

Police Dani (post-contact)

In the Dani languages area in the central and eastern parts of the highlands areas of Irian Jaya, a simplified version of Dani, probably containing mainly Grand Valley Dani and perhaps also some Western Dani (North Balim) elements, has been in use as a lingua franca used predominantly by the police force.

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Relevant maps

Tukang Besi as lingua franca. Compiled by Mark Donohue. Map 77.

Pre-colonial contact languages of Irian Jaya. Compiled by Mark Donohue. Map 78.

Further contact languages of Irian Jaya. Compiled by Mark Donohue. Map 79.

Notes of the use of Geser as a trade language in eastern Indonesia

Mark Donohue

The relevant map is listed at the end of this text.

Geser is the language of the eastern end of Seram and the chain of islands extending to the southeast from there, including the trading centres of Geser and Gorom. The islands are very poor agriculturally, and so rely on the Geser population on Seram for their staple food supply of sago.

Whilst the Geser people do not conduct much long-distance trade these days, historically they have been involved in trade routes running from the Bomberai peninsula in the east, down to the Banda islands, which were the centre of Dutch commerce in eastern Indonesia. Other traders continued the trade runs to Ambon, Ternate and other ports in the west from Banda, and the Geser trade routes did not. There is reason to believe that the Geser also traded down south to the Kei

islands to their southeast, gathering sago there which they brought to Banda. From the Bomberai peninsula, slaves were procured and transported to Banda for use in the plantations there, or reshipment to points further west.

The Geser were not a particularly wide-ranging trading people, and these days do not venture very far from their homelands. Nevertheless, there is a reasonably extensive use of Geser as a trade language by people trading *into* the area; the island of Geser remains a centre of trade and commerce, largely conducted by outsiders who use Geser as a nexus for small trade to other areas. The total number of speakers of Geser as a trade language is not known.

Relevant map

Tukang Besi as lingua franca. Compiled by Mark Donohue. Map 77.