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### **Marginalizing and revaluing Papuan Malay: The impact of politics, policy and technology in Indonesia**

by

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**Marginalizing and revaluating Papuan Malay:  
the impact of politics, policy and technology in Indonesia**

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*Abstract*

This paper takes a historical look at the movement and (re)valuation of standard Indonesian a(SI) and Papuan Malay (PM) in Papua. Drawing inspiration from work on language ideologies and using a range of historical texts, signs, media footage, and lived experience I argue that in recent years PM has moved from the peripheries to new, more central domains, such as the media. This revaluation sits in tension with another process (promises of a massification of education in villages) that will facilitate the continued movement of SI into the peripheries, especially social domains formerly inhabited by the voices of PM and regional languages. I start by looking at how PM emerged through contact between Malay speaking people and Papuans before then looking at the role of missionaries in the mid-1800s in marginalizing this emergent variety through its replacement with Standard Malay (SM). I then go on to argue that the implementation of the powerful political decrees by the first Indonesian President Sukarno paved the way for SI to move easily into the Land of Papua in 1969. With Papua under Indonesian control SI began to replace SM, while continuing to place PM in a marginal position. Even after decentralization nothing much changed in terms of language policy as it related to the language of schooling, but ambiguities in a number of government decrees laid open an avenue for the revaluation of PM through its increasing use in the media on the internet.

## **1. Introduction**

This paper considers how Papuan Malay (PM) emerged and how it has been historically marginalized and revalued. I explore a variety of texts, graphics and recordings to examine how they figure in language ideological debates. These debates have to do with the status and role of the Standard Malay (SM), PM, Standard Indonesian (SI), regional languages, and English in a context where these languages are the object of revaluation processes. In section 2 I explore the role of politics, policies and technological advances which have contributed to the revaluing of PM. For centuries, PM was primarily an oral language, but in recent years it has entered other social domains, including the mass media and the internet. In so doing, I highlight the discursive features and strategies employed in politics and policies to define, manage and legitimate PM, SI, English, and regional languages in Papua.

## **2. Trajectory of PM**

PM is a mixture of Papuan languages and Malay. The former refers to Austronesian and Non-Austronesian languages with “a total of 307” (Pusat Bahasa Provinsi Papua dan Papua Barat 2014). The latter relates to the trading Malay used before the Dutch arrival and SM during the Dutch occupation from 1828 to 1962 including the Christian and Catholic missions.

Following this, SI has come to contact with PM since 1969 up to now with between 1,100,000 to 1,200,000 potential speakers (Kluge 2014:6). This contact ultimately produced a creole language (Ashcroft *et al.* 2000:18) that was a product of colonialization and which became used in every interaction, while also becoming an ideological construction (Acheraiou 2011:1).

While the exact origins of PM are unknown, we do know that Malay traders travelled from the islands of Tidore and of Seram for trading purposes since the 14th century (Haga 1884; Rowley 1972; Bosh 1995; van Oldenborgh 1995; Overweel 1995; Goodman 2002; van der

Eng 2004). Following what we know about trade and contact and the formation of pidgin and creole languages (Mufwene 2008), it is likely that regular contact amongst a particular group helped form what was later categorized as PM by Christian missionaries.

The Protestant and Catholic missionaries came in different periods and at different parts of the island. Meteray (2012:31-2) indicates that in 1855 the Christian missionaries, C.W. Ottow and J.G. Geissler, arrived in the northern part of West Papua and began their religious and education mission in Mansinam, Manokwari. Following this, in 1898 Catholic missionary Le Cocq d'Armandville arrived in Fakfak the south western part of West Papua for the similar purpose. Meteray (2012) asserts that the Teacher Training School together with a boarding house built in 1925 by the Protestants was the first nursery of a cross-pollination of various languages and cultures of Papua.

From 1948 to 1961, the Dutch government collaborated with the Protestant and Catholic education to promote SM as a language of instruction (Kijne 1954). SM was compulsorily used in teaching-learning process, while the Dutch language was only taught as a subject at high schools. PM served as a bridging language between SM, Dutch, and local vernaculars. However, the crucial role of PM and indigenous languages were recognized by the headmaster of the Protestant school in Miei, which I have translated as follows:

At schools it is mandatory to teach standard Malay as a common language.

The conferences decided that the outside regions, like Biak and Wondama, should use standard Malay at church as well, as long as it can be translated by the interpreter. And, of course, the native speaker teachers may use their own languages if they work in their own regions, and also may use the common standard Malay, and *the Moluccas Malay* [PM] which has been well-known in the coastal regions (Kijne, 1954 emphasis added).

Kijne's statement suggests that PM and SM were increasingly common in a number of social domains. Meteray (2012) points out that the 13 years-old students from different regions came together to study at this school in July each year. During this schooling period, SM was obligatory in classroom activities while SM and PM were used together when doing agricultural and carpenter work during their leisure time. Meteray adds that Kijne's well-designed SM teaching materials embedded local indigenous knowledge and culture so these materials were not only used by the Protestant schools in the North but also the Catholic's in the South.

### **3. Political decrees and decentralization policies in Indonesia**

This section examines how Indonesia fits into the situation in Papua. The Japanese occupied Indonesia in 1942 and their surrender on the 15th of August 1945 paved the way for two Indonesian elites, Soekarno and Hatta, to proclaim Indonesia's independence on the 17th of August 1945 (Vickers 2005). This proclamation was later accompanied by a constitution which among other things repeated a well-known ideology about nation-states (Hobsbawm 1992), namely that they are one territory and one people with one language. Indonesia's proclamation of independence did not hinder the Dutch's return to Indonesia in 1946 where they resumed their administration and education activities. Meteray (2012) reveals that from 1946 to 1961 the Papuan politicians formed eight political parties to prepare a new independence nation-state of West Papua (see also Alua 2000/2006; Antoh 2007). At the same time, ex-Indonesian political prisoners living in West Papua encouraged some Papuan leaders to join Indonesia.

Meteray (2012) follows Yoman (2010), Antoh (2007), Ramandey (2007), and Alua (2000/2006), to note that the Papuan parliament was formed on April 5, 1961 and on

December 1, 1961 West Papua declared a newly-born nation with an anthem *Hai Tanahku Papua* (Hey my land of Papua), a flag (the morning star), and a motto (one people, one soul), but no named national language (though the proclamation was in PM). The lack of a mention of a national language is an important point because its absence did not fit common perceptions of a nation-state found not only in Indonesian but in other parts of the world. On December 19, 1961 Indonesian President Sukarno declared war against the Dutch in Papua and formed a special military commando called “Tri Komando Rakyat” [the People Triple Commands] with the well-known acronym TRIKORA under the command of General Suharto. In this declaration TRIKORA was seen as necessary to defend Indonesia’s independence and to frustrate the Netherlands attempts to build a puppet nation. In doing so, they did not recognize Papua’s earlier claims to independence, perhaps in part due to that lack of a language of the nation state.

This decree raised tensions between the Netherlands and Indonesia from the end of 1961 to late of 1962. On October 1, 1962 the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) arrived in West Papua. On December 31, 1962 the Dutch flag was pulled down and the Indonesian flag was raised beside the United Nations flag. On May 1, 1963 UNTEA handed over the administration of West Papua to Indonesia in order to manage a referendum called the Act of Free Choice in 1969. The outcome, though to this day hotly contested with claims of interference by US capital interests, was the incorporation of Papua as West Papua into Indonesia. Among other things, what stand out with the Papuan claim to independence and the subsequent annexation by Indonesia is marginalization of PM.

These political moves also ultimately facilitated the mobility of SI from the centre to a newly formed periphery helping to further marginalize PM. SI replaced SM as the language of schooling because it was promoted as the only national language in West Papua. In addition, all Papuan-based teaching materials developed in SM were replaced with SI

materials. Typically, Jakarta-based authors wrote the textbooks without considering the cultural aspects of Papuans so the students found difficulties understanding some of these materials and at the same time the use of SI as the language of instruction produced some language difficulties for students. This situation made most Papuan teachers more determined that PM should be used in classroom activities regardless of the state-sponsored slogan “Gunakanlah Bahasa Indonesia Yang Baik dan Benar” [Please Use Good and Correct Indonesian]. This situation continued until regime change in 1998 and until intervention by Indonesia’s fourth president, Abdurrahman Wahid or Gus Dur as he was locally known.

Determined to ease the unstable political situation in West Papua, Gus Dur reconciled with Papuans through three historical manoeuvres in 2000. These manoeuvres included changing the provincial name of “Irian Jaya” [victorious hot land] into “Papua” [black and curly], providing two million rupiah for the Second Papuan Congress in November 2000, and allowing the Papuans to raise their Morning Star flag on December 1, 2000 in Jayapura (Jakarta Post November 15, 2006). In the congress PM was promoted as a language of communication among Papuans (Ramandey 2005:86). In the following year, Indonesia’s fifth president, Megawati Soekarnoputri, issued the Special Autonomy Law (2001/21), and indicated that this was a way forward for solving political problems in Papua, which included a continued separatist movement (Antoh 2007:187; Yoman 2010:32).

In Article 58 of the Special Autonomy Law SI was named as the national language and SI and English were recommended as the languages of instruction at all levels of education, while regional languages were stated as optional languages of instruction. Within this article there was not mention of PM which helped to continue to marginalize it. This marginalization was also assisted with recourse to the widely held nation-state ideology that often equated a territory with a language and a people (e.g. Indonesia and Indonesians, France and French,

England and English) because while there was now a recognized territory with a flag, its national language continued to be Indonesian.

Although the special autonomy law was issued in 2001, it was not successfully implemented because of continued political conflict between Jakarta and West Papua (MRP report 2013). In 2010 Papuans staged a rally and symbolically returned the Special Autonomy Law to the government arguing that it had failed due to the lack of political will from the central government (Jakarta Post June 19, 2010). This rejection also indirectly points to a failure in implementing Article 58. Indeed, my own experiences of how this pseudo language policy was implemented suggest that there was little implementation in schools throughout West Papua.

As a response, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) formed “Unit Percepatan Pembangunan Papua dan Papua Barat – UP4B” [Unit of Acceleration of Development in Papua and Papua Barat – UP4B] in 2011 (Jakarta Post October 30, 2011) to elevate the Papuans’ welfare and education situation, which were mostly under the national poverty line and below defined education standards (Jakarta Post January 12, 2012). A presidential regulation (2011/65) that was issued as part of these efforts (especially Articles 3 and 6) highlighted the need to increase the availability of teachers and facilities, especially in the peripheries of two of the three newly formed provinces of Papua and West Papua.

Language did not appear to be seen as an important issue in this reinvigorated approach to education in the peripheries and these initiatives were abandoned after the Indonesian Institute of Sciences researcher, Chayo Pamungkas, advised the new president-elect Joko Widodo, to disband the UP4B unit. The reasons given was that activists and analysts had deemed the unit a failure, especially in the area of promoting fruitful and peaceful dialogues between the central government in Jakarta and Papua (Jakarta Post Sept 8, 2014). It is also the case that during his election campaign for president, Joko Widodo promised to promote

education, health, and human rights, and to allow foreign government humanitarian organizations, journalists, and NGOs to come to West Papua, reversing some of the policies of the previous SBY government (Jakarta Post June 6, 2014; The Diplomat August 19, 2014). In the domain of local Papuan politics, Papuan Malay was also not gaining any ground. In the Third Papuan Congress, conducted from 17-19 October 2011, for example, attendees declared a self-government and called their new nation the Federal Republic of West Papua (Jakarta Post October 18, 2011, October 21 and 23, 2011 and March 17, 2012). Unlike the second congress, PM was not recommended as their preferred national language (Kluge 2014).

In sum, in the domain of political discourse PM had little social value from 1969 to present with SI continuing to be ideologized as the language of Papua and a language that was to reach the peripheries of Papuan society. English also seemed to be gained social value through the suggestions that international agencies would have unrestricted access to Papua. In other social domains, however, the trajectory of PM was quite different and the same decentralization laws that had resulted in Papua being granted special autonomy and the continued deference to SI in political discourses, gave more leeway to PM, as discussed below.

#### **4. Papuan Malay in other social domains**

In this section I focus on other domains of the Papuan linguistic landscape, especially after the fall of the Soeharto regime in 1998. I will pay particular attention to broadcasting legislations and the use of PM in YouTube, television, film and signage. After the main decentralization laws came into effect in 2001 other decentralization policies also began to appear. The 2002 law (no. 32) about broadcasting, especially Articles 37 and 38 stipulate the following:

Article 37: The main language in implementing broadcasting programs must be good and correct Indonesian Language.

Article 38: (1) Local language can be used in implementing local-load broadcasting programs, when necessary, to support certain program items.

(Author's translation)

In 2004 another law (Law 32) about Regional Governance was produced. Chapter I, Article 1 (points 5 and 6) describe the rights, authorities, and responsibilities of the regional government:

Article 1

5. Regional autonomy is the rights, authorities, and responsibilities of the autonomy region to arrange and manage its own governance and *local people affairs* according to the regulations of the law.

6. Autonomy region, then called region, is a legal-based community unit with the regional boundaries which has the authority to arrange and manage the governance and local community affairs according to its own initiative based upon *the people's aspiration* within the system of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

(Author's translation, emphasis added)

In effect this law increased the value of PM in the Special Autonomy Law and Broadcasting Law through the phrases *local people affairs* and *the people's aspiration* which

in effect implicitly invited the use of PM in schooling, radio and television broadcasting. The film law introduced in 2009 (Law 33, Articles 1 and 3) further reinforced this invitation as can be seen below:

Article 1, 3: National culture is all systems of values, thoughts, norms, acts, and creativities of the people of Indonesia throughout the archipelago being practiced through their lives as part of community, nation, and state.

Article 3, e. to flourish and conserve the national culture values;

Article 3, f. to make the national culture known by the international world;

(Author's translation)

A number of radio and television broadcasters took up this invitation, including Program Pro 1 National Radio of Jayapura and TopTV which broadcast news in PM and programmed the stand-up comedy “Kapala cuci mayat” [The head washes the body] where much of the dialogue was in PM. Interestingly, the minister for telecommunications, Yusuf Iskandar, visited Jayapura in 2008, watched TopTV and proceeded to demonstrate some familiarity with PM, as in the following comment made on July 25:

[...] . Interestingly, the terms *pace-mace* (folks) are used almost at the beginning of each sentence without a pause as if the news reader is having a dialogue with his/her listeners and not just informing an event. [...]. Besides, other words such as “paetua” (SI: bapak; English: Sir, Mr), “su” (SI: sudah; English: already), “dong” (SI: mereka; English: they), “tong” (SI: kita; English: we), “bilang” (SI: mengatakan; English: say), and so forth are also

used. TOP TV has begun a step to globalize, represent the word “pembangunan” [development], that is, develop the people of Jayapura and Papua [...]. (Author’s translation)

Source: <http://yiskandar.wordpress.com/2008/07/28/banyak-pace-mace-di-top-tv/>

There were also four films produced during this period that represented the use of PM in various contexts including the films *Denias* (a person’s name) released in 2006, *Melody Kota Rusa* (The Melody of Deer City) released in 2010, *Di Timur Matahari* (To the west of the sun) released in 2012, and *Cinta dari Wamena* (Love from Wamena) released in 2013. In addition, government institutions used PM fragments in their public signage. Figure 1 is a billboard with a request from the Governor and Vice Governor of Papua to involve people in one of their programs. Note the use of PM form *kitong* (we) instead of the SI form *kita* and *rame-rame* (together) instead of the SI form *bersama-sama*. Similarly, in figure 2 the Mayor of Jayapura and famous Papuan soccer players are encouraging everyone to have an electronic identity card. The second personal pronoun of PM *ko* (you in singular) is used instead of the SI form *kamu* or *anda*. And, the expression of *KO TRA KOSONG* [lit. you not empty] (You are somebody) is used instead of *Anda tidak kosong* in the SI form. Lastly, the request *Ayo...! Urus tempo* [lit. come...! manage tempo] (Come and get one as quick as you can) means *Ayo...! Mengurus secepatnya* in the SI form.

Figure 1



(Photo by Izak Morin on 20/04/2015)

Figure 2



(Photo by Izak Morin on 20/04/2015)

Boas (and others):

- 1 Kalau **ko** Punya KTP-Elektronik      If **you** own an electronic ID card
- 2 **Ko tra kosong**      **You are somebody**
- 3 Ayo...! **Urus tempo**      Come [and] **get one as quick as you can**

In figure 3 the traffic police department of the Provincial Police (POLDA) places this reminder using PM in a busy street close to the traffic lights to remind drivers to obey the traffic law. Instead of using the SI form *Kalau lampu merah sudah menyala mohon saudara berhenti* they prefer using the PM form *Kalo lampu merah, pace mace stop kah...!!!* [lit. if light red, male female stop please] (If the red light is on please make a stop).

*Figure 3*



*(Photo by Izak Morin on 20/04/2015)*

Figure 4



Kini ... <b>Kitorang</b> Bisa bayar	Now... <b>we</b> can pay the electricity
Tagihan Listrik disini	bill here.

Other public sites through which PM is widely spread include electronic media, such as website and YouTube that can be noticed in Figure 4 and Figure 5 respectively. Figure 4 is an advertisement in website of Bank Papua ([www.bankpapua.com](http://www.bankpapua.com)) to encourage people to pay their electrical bill at this bank. Note the use of PM form *kitorang* (we) instead of the IS form *kita*. Meanwhile, figure five is the hip hop Papua for Jokowi-JK during their presidential campaign was published on June 29, 2014 on Youtube and watched by 26,000 viewers (Latest accessed on May 1, 2015). It is a mixture of PM, SI, and English suggesting that those three languages are now moving around the Land of Papua. Below is the transcript of PM fragments used in this song.

*Figure 5*



[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-kMGZNuOSoQ&feature=player\\_detailpage](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-kMGZNuOSoQ&feature=player_detailpage)

Pace-pace, mace-mace

Folks

Ipar-ipar dan famili dong semua

All in-laws and relatives

Mari kitong pilih Jokowi-JK

Let us vote for Jokowi-JK

In the Soeharto era PM was far more marginal and during the subsequent period of decentralization then it became revalued as something that can be displayed in public media and something that can be seen all over the places. Such displays, particularly the video, would not be happened during the New Order era.

## **5 Conclusion**

PM emerged initially as a trade language and its social value increased with the arrival of missionaries who used it in their missions. While it had some social value during the late stages of the Dutch colonial period and indeed until 1969, this value decreased as Papua was incorporated into the Indonesian state. Form 1969 until around 2010, SI ideologically replaced PM in its former domains (e.g. schooling), especially in political discourses of the Jakartan and Papuan elite. Even so, the decentralization laws that came into force in 2001 and

a number of subsequent laws relating to regional governance and film making helped engender a climate where PM gained more social value. Fragments of PM could regularly be found in the domains of television, radio, film and signage. While in everyday village contexts local languages continue to be used the continued push for equity and in some case independence for Papua has helped to further increase the social value of PM, especially as it is seen as a language of the state.

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