

Aslian: Mon-Khmer of the Malay Peninsula.

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Depending from the Southeast Asian mainland like “a long-necked bottle or an Indian club,”¹ the Malay Peninsula lies in tropical splendor, separated from the island of Sumatra by the peaceful tidal waters of the Strait of Malacca. In the geological past, before the sinking of the Sunda Shelf, the west (‘Selangor’) coast of Malaya and the east coast of Sumatra were in fact connected by land—and at an even earlier period the two coastlines must have fit neatly together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle (see Map 1).

* This monograph was originally written in 1982-83, almost twenty years ago now, with the intention of incorporating it into the Mon-Khmer chapter of my long-suffering book, *Languages of Mainland Southeast Asia*. This book, to be published eventually in the *Language Surveys* series (familiarily know as the “green books”) by Cambridge University Press, is still far from completion, but will hopefully appear sometime during the 21st century.

Meanwhile it has become clear that this study of the Aslian branch of Mon-Khmer is far too long and detailed to serve merely as part of a single chapter of a general book on Southeast Asian languages. However, in view of the fact that no other overall treatment of the Aslian languages has appeared in the past 20 years, perhaps the time has come to publish it separately.

Since I am certainly no specialist in Mon-Khmer, I have obviously had to rely on the true masters of the field, especially the works of the two preeminent Aslianists, Gérard Diffloth and Geoffrey Benjamin, both of whom have been kind enough to approve of my attempts to summarize their research. In February 1983, I sent a copy of my manuscript to Benjamin, “with best regards and a request for comments”. Soon afterwards, in April 1983, I was delighted to receive in reply a heavily annotated copy of the MS, blown up onto sheets about 16.5 inches (41.5 cm) wide, with the capacious margins chock-full of comments in red ink, and the notation “Comments enclosed herewith” on the title page! These invaluable notes included some rethinking of Benjamin’s own analyses, as well as updating of bibliographical references, and gentle emendation of points that he felt I could have expressed better.

Virtually all of Geoffrey’s comments have been included as footnotes in the present verion, marked by his initial (GB) and printed in italics for ease of recognition. I feel that these notes add considerably to whatever value this monograph possesses, and I am very grateful for them.

I would also like to thank the Editorial Board of *Mon-Khmer Studies*, especially Aj. Suwilai Premssirat, for accepting this version for publication, and for their patience in awaiting the submission of the manuscript. Finally, I owe a great debt of thanks to three members of the STEDT staff, Robert Bowen, Nina Keefer, and Cynthia Gould, for their skillful computerization of the original typed and longhand manuscript.

¹ Skeat and Bladgen 1906, Vol. I, p. 1.

The relatively calm waters around the peninsula seem never to have presented much of an obstacle to the intrepidity of the seafaring Austronesian peoples, and small colonies of Austronesian speakers must have been settled on the southern tip of the peninsula for thousands of years before the influx of the Malays themselves.^{2/3} The Austronesian people now dominant on the mainland, the Malays, did not start arriving on the peninsular scene in large numbers until quite recent times, perhaps as late as the 12th century A. D., long after they had been influenced by Indian civilization and just as they were undergoing conversion to Islam.^{4/5}

Meanwhile, in the jungles and mountain fastnesses of the peninsula's interior, small communities of non-Austronesian-speaking people were carrying on their lives as they had done for untold millennia, either as nomadic hunter-gatherers or as swidden agriculturalists. Most of these 'aboriginal' or 'autochthonous' groups of people must themselves have filtered down into the peninsula from the north in prehistoric times, probably starting well before the 6th millennium B. C.^{6/7} Miraculously, some of them still

² These early Austronesian groups, loosely called 'aboriginal Malays' by former writers, are sometimes referred to collectively as the 'Jakun tribes.' Their languages were never subjected to scientific study, and they seem now to have been Malayized beyond recognition.

³ GB: *Except for 'Keraboi', I'm not sure the Jakun ever spoke any AN language other than some variety or other of Malay. Aslian was spoken right down into Johor only 100 years ago.*

⁴ Skeat and Blagden II.434. The early Malay migrations seem to have originated, naturally enough, from the coastal districts of Central Sumatra, where the Strait is narrowest. Later, smaller population movements are traceable to the Menangkabau-speaking area of inland Sumatra.

⁵ GB: *This 'migrational' approach of Skeat and Blagden is almost certainly wrong. The Malay culture and (standard) language most likely emerged simultaneously in E. Sumatra, S. Malaya and W. Borneo – precisely where all the 'para-Malay' groups are also to be found today. So the Malays had heterogeneous demographic origins, but all assimilated to essentially the same pattern, which was diffused over the sea routes. See Benjamin 1983.*

⁶ The process of sedentarization was already underway in the South-Central part of the peninsula between 4610-4410 B.C. (Benjamin 1976a, p. 83).

GB: *This is at best an hypothesis for testing against the archaeological evidence—which, I must admit, does seem to fit so far!*

⁷ GB: *There is no need (or evidence) to posit separate origins at that time-depth for the Aslian speakers as people. Both in Benjamin 1983 and in my paper 'On the origins of the Orang Asli', I argue that the archaic population of the peninsula was ancestral in part or whole to both the Orang Asli and the Malays. This has also been argued in socio-historical terms recently by Marie Andrée Couillard in her 'Les Malais et les "Sakae": quelques réflexions sur les rapports sociaux dans la péninsule malaise'.*

survive as distinct ethnolinguistic entities today. These people are now referred to collectively by the Malays as *orang asli* 'original men'.⁸

The racial and linguistic affinities of the *orang asli* have excited the interest of scholars for the last 150 years or so:

'Such is the somewhat pathetic interest which attaches to the languages of these forest-dwellers; and though the study of them is not likely to be of practical use to any living soul, yet, embracing as they do the modes of speech of some of the least developed and most thoroughly wild and uncivilized members of our race, it is perhaps natural that they should form a fascinating subject of inquiry.'⁹

From the beginning it has been recognized that the aboriginal populations of the Malay Peninsula are both racially and linguistically diverse.¹⁰ As far as race was concerned, at least three major groups were distinguished: the Negrito or Semang,¹¹ the Sakai,¹² and the Jakun.¹³ Attempts were made to relate these racial types to various extra-peninsular groups, e.g. the Negritos to the Andaman Islanders and the Sakai to the Dravidians or the Veddas of Ceylon.¹⁴ Yet preoccupied as they were by such questions,¹⁵ these early investigators were well aware of the tremendous complexity and imprecision of

⁸ GB: '*Orang Asli*' is a deliberately modern creation intended to replace the word '*Aborigines*', which someone in the Malaysian government felt was a demeaning term.

⁹ Skeat and Blagden II.384.

¹⁰ 'Situated at the extreme end of a vast continent, these "aboriginal" tribes of the Malay Peninsula represent the *disjecta membra* of several distinct portions of the human race, and their languages are a curious blend of the most strangely amalgamated constituents.' *Ibid.*

¹¹ '... with their woolly hair and round bright eyes, the darkest, the best developed, and at the same time the most markedly nomadic of all the races in the Peninsula.' Skeat and Blagden I.12-13.

¹² '... the lightest, with their often interesting features, reminiscent maybe of their old Dravidian ancestry ... hair of a distinctly wavy character, and their generally somewhat emaciated appearance.' *Ibid.*

¹³ '... with their smooth blue-black hair, a race hard to distinguish, because of its admixture with the other two main stocks.' *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Blagden feels the Sakai are also 'somewhat similar' racially to the Mundas (op. cit., II.466), probably because both groups partake of a common Dravidian or Veddoid strain.

¹⁵ The pervasive evolutionism of late 19th century thought favored the implicit view of the 'wild races' of Malaya as representing lower stages of human development, a sort of missing link between our simian ancestors and the gentlemen of Europe.

the notion of race, and the total lack of congruence between racial ‘type’ and language ‘family’.¹⁶

The first scholar to succeed in providing a linguistic justification for the dichotomy between ‘Semang’ and ‘Sakai’, and to establish by painstaking lexical and structural comparisons the basic genetic affinities of both groups was Wilhelm Schmidt, father of Austroasiatic studies, whose first major work was devoted to this very problem.¹⁷ Wringing the most out of the inadequately recorded comparative material at his disposal, Schmidt concluded that the Semang and Sakai dialects together constituted a linguistic group that definitely belonged with the Mon-Khmer languages, whatever the original racial affiliations of the people might have been in remote prehistoric times. Based on diagnostic vocabulary lists, his classification was tripartite: [A] SEMANG / [B] SAKEI I / [C] SAKEI II.¹⁸

Armed with more abundant data, C.O. Blagden went on to refine and elaborate this scheme: Schmidt’s ‘Sakei I’ became Blagden’s ‘Northern Sakai’, while Schmidt’s ‘Sakei II’ was subdivided into ‘Central’, ‘Southern’ and ‘Eastern’ Sakai (see Map 2).¹⁹ Further

¹⁶ GB: *Those biological anthropologists who still believe in races today would see at most only two ‘races’ in the indigenous population: Negritos (?= ‘Oceanic Negroids’) and Mongoloids (including the Malays and all the other Orang Asli). Some have even recently adduced evidence to suggest that the Negritos too are a local evolutionary branch of the Mongoloids. See B. Bulbeck (1982), M.A. Thesis in Prehistory and Anthropology, Australian National University.*

¹⁷ See Schmidt 1901. A number of previous writers (including Logan 1850, Forbes 1881, Kuhn 1889, Vaughan-Stevens 1891-2, 1893-4 and Blagden 1894, had already pointed out similarities between the aboriginal languages of Malaya and Mon-Khmer (or ‘Mon-Annam’), but in a more-or-less anecdotal and unsystematic way.

¹⁸ Note that Jakun was left out of Schmidt’s classification as not being Austroasiatic at all.

¹⁹ Skeat and Blagden 1906 II.410-411. At first, in his review of Schmidt (1903), Blagden was skeptical that there was any real genetic relationship between the aboriginal languages of the peninsula and Mon-Khmer, ascribing the similarities merely to a Mon-Khmer ‘element’ that had been imposed from without. By 1906, based largely on an analysis of the numerals in the various peninsular languages, he had nuanced his views, coming up with a complicated triple relationship among his subgroups and the rest of Mon-Khmer that involved a combination of genetic and contact factors: (a) the Semang languages he felt were not originally Mon-Khmer at all – the Negritos had lost their (perhaps Andamanese-like) languages under Mon-Khmer influence; (b) the Northern, Central, and Eastern Sakai groups represented an older Mon-Khmer stratum, such that they were relatively distant from Mon and Khmer, rather like such other ‘outlying’ members of the family as Khasi, Palaungic, and Nicobarese; while (c) Southern Sakai reflected a much more recent

clarifications were made by Wilkinson (1915) and Schebesta (1926, 1952).²⁰ Pinnow (1959) follows Schebesta exactly, but introduces for the first time an overall term for the Malayan Austroasiatic languages: the ‘Malakka-Gruppe.’ As Benjamin points out,²¹ however, the term ‘Malacca’ refers properly only to one of the smallest states of Malaysia, where in fact only a single isolated aboriginal language (Mah Meri) is spoken (see Maps 1 and 3).²² Linguists are now agreed that the best name for the group as a whole is the one proposed by Gérard Diffloth - *Aslian*.²³

We may now define ‘Aslian’ as the languages of the *orang asli* of the Malay peninsula (including the immediately related languages of the Negritos of S. Thailand)²⁴ but excluding the Austronesian languages spoken by the *orang asli* of the ‘Jakun’ or ‘aboriginal Malay’ group.

An explosion of fresh fieldwork and modern linguistic and anthropological expertise has been brought to bear on the Aslian languages since the late 1960’s, and a consensus has emerged as to their proper subgrouping and their relationship to the rest of

contact with Mon-Khmer languages to the immediate north of the peninsula (pp. 452-464). This over-elaborate scheme has not been borne out by modern research (see Diffloth 1976a, 1976d, 1979).

²⁰ To Schebesta belongs the credit for introducing the proper ethnonyms for the individual aboriginal groups into standard administrative and academic use. The term ‘Sakai’ is a pejorative Malay exonym for the aborigines, roughly equivalent to the Australian ‘abo’ in stylistic value.

[GB: Schebesta’s terms have, with a few modifications, become the Administratively-used ones; the question of their ‘proper’-ness is more complicated. I have reason to suspect that many Orang Asli only heard these ‘ethnonyms’ for the first time when they were so labeled by Government officers. On Sakai: Marie-Andrée Couillard has shown that this word became derogatory only in the 1800s; earlier, it was used to label certain aborigines and Malays as the commercial or trading partners of Indian and, later, Malay trading-communities-cum-royal-courts. The word is from Sanskrit sakhi ‘friend, companion, comrade’—exactly the meaning sakey has today in Temiar!]

²¹ Benjamin 1976a, p. 43.

²² GB: I have gone back to the old name ‘Besisi’ in my Linguistic Atlas map; however neither it nor any other Austroasiatic language appears to be spoken in Melaka state anymore.

²³ This term seems to have come into general use ever since the First International Austroasiatic Conference, Honolulu (Jan. 1973).

²⁴ See Brandt 1961. Almost nothing is known of the Semang (= N. Aslian) languages of Thailand. (See Tonga and Mos on Map 3.) According to the *Language Map of Thailand* (1977), there are still ‘Sakai-Semang’ groups to be found in parts of Narathiwat, Phattalung, Satun, Songkhla, and Yala Provinces. GB: My language-map shows N. Aslian geographical groups in S. Thailand as follows: ‘Tonga of Trang-Pattalung’; ‘Tonga of Satun’; and the Kensiu and Jehai overflows across the international boundary of Malaysia.

the Austroasiatic family. It is now agreed that the Austroasiatic languages of the Malay peninsula form a unitary group, and that an entity called Proto-Aslian is reconstructible.²⁵ By applying lexicostatistical methods to modern data, Benjamin (1976a) confirms what Diffloth (1975) independently established by diachronic analysis of shared phonological innovations.²⁶ Aslian is to be subdivided into three coordinate subgroups, which presumably all split off from Proto-Aslian at roughly the same time.²⁷ In the recent literature these subgroups have sometimes been designated by the names of particular languages, e.g. ‘Jahaic’ and ‘Semelaic’²⁸ - though purely geographic terms are now more commonly used (Northern Aslian and Southern Aslian, respectively). For the third and largest subgroup, Central Aslian, Diffloth still prefers the name ‘Senoic’, derived from the word for ‘fellow human being’ in its two principal languages, Semai (snʔɔ̃:y) and Temiar (senʔɔ̃y).²⁹ [See Fig. I and Map 3.]

²⁵ GB: *I’m not sure Gérard has finally made up his mind about this. When I talked to him in 1978, he still seemed to think it possible that the three Aslian divisions were each of the same taxonomic level as, say, Monic or Khmeric.*

²⁶ Benjamin’s paper was presented at the Honolulu Conference in 1973, though the *Proceedings* (Jenner et al, eds.) were not published until 1976.

²⁷ At any rate, it has not yet been proven that any two of the subgroups are more closely related to each other than either is to the third, though Benjamin (1976a, pp. 92-93) claims to have data amply confirming Blagden’s suspicions that there are at least two strata of Austroasiatic on the Peninsula.

GB: *Consider this claim dropped; Gérard has persuaded me that my ‘evidence’ can be explained as good ancestral Aslian.*

²⁸ See, e.g. Diffloth’s *Encyclopedia Britannica* article (1974c).

²⁹ The original justification of ‘Senoic’ must have been to obviate the necessity of choosing between ‘Semaic’ and ‘Temiaric’!

According to Benjamin's scenario for the linguistic prehistory of Aslian,^{30/31} the Proto-Aslians were all nomadic hunter-gatherers, and their language was already dialectally differentiated before they entered the Malay Peninsula from the north.³² In the north they undoubtedly encountered a Negrito population already speaking a non-Austroasiatic

Schmidt	Blagden	Diffloth (A)	Benjamin/ Diffloth (B)
Semang	Semang-Pangan	Jahaic	Northern Aslian (Aslien Nord)
Sakei I	Northern Sakai	Senoic	Central Aslian (Aslien Centre)
Sakai II	Central Sakai		
	Eastern Sakai		
	Southern Sakai (Besisi)	Semelaic	Southern Aslian (Aslian Sud)
<p><i>Note: Blagden's Northern and Central Sakai are now both included in Central Aslian, while Blagden's Eastern Sakai overlaps the 'modern' Central and Southern Aslian groups.</i></p>			

Figure I. Names for the subgroups of Aslian

language of their own. The resultant close contact presumably led to the extinction of the (Andamanese-like?) autochthonous language,³³ except insofar as it survives as a sort of substratum in North Aslian.^{34/35} Further down the peninsula, the nomadic way of life

³⁰ Benjamin 1976a, pp. 82-89.

³¹ GB: Readers should be warned that this was intended only as a working hypothesis (see especially 1976a: 81-82); for further discussion see Benjamin 1983. I'd be the first to admit that the glottochronology in my 1976a paper is at best an experiment!

³² Benjamin does not venture a guess as to the dates of this initial Austroasiatic penetration of the peninsula.

³³ 'Autochthonous' seems somehow to be even more *ursprünglich* than 'aboriginal'.

³⁴ All writers have agreed on the lexical distinctiveness of the Negrito (Semang, North Aslian) languages within the larger peninsular groupings.

GB: Gérard does not accept that any divergences lend credence to a non-AA, non-AN substratum in N. Aslian.

³⁵ There's no real evidence for this view, unless: (1). The [ɸ] and [z] sounds of some N. Aslian dialects (see notes 55 and 84 below) are interpreted this way; and/or (2) there is some truth to Stephen Wurm's and Don Laycock's hunch that there may be links between some Peninsular words and the 'Torricelli-phylum' languages of Papua New Guinea.

gradually gave way to semi-sessile swidden agriculture from about 5000 B.C. By 3000 B.C., Proto-South-Aslian finally separated off from the Central Branch, after a long period of ‘trade’ contact with non-Aslian groups, either aboriginal Malay [‘Jakun’] or immigrants from other Austroasiatic speech communities on the Southeast Asian mainland (Mons or Khmers).³⁶

There is a direct correlation between the way of life of a people and the degree of dialectal differentiation in its languages, as Blagden clearly realized:

‘First comes a stage of merely nomadic hunting and fruit-gathering, during which it would appear that there is comparatively little tendency to development or differentiation of speech among the several fragments of a roaming race. Then the gradual beginnings of agriculture bring with them somewhat less temporary modes of habitation ... This necessarily results in local differentiation of dialects and consequent difficulty of intercourse with other clans or tribes.’³⁷

All observers agree that the languages of the nomadic North Aslians display comparatively little internal diversity, while those of the swiddening Senoics show extreme dialectal diversification.³⁸ The South Aslian peoples are occupationally diverse, including fishermen, swidden farmers, and nomadic foragers, but their languages - which have been under greater pressure from Austronesian than the other branches of Aslian - are still too imperfectly known to determine how dialectally diverse they are.³⁹ At any rate, in the

³⁶ GB: *There is growing linguistic and archaeological evidence of a narrowly Mon presence in north Malaya until ca. 1300 A.D. cf. (1) Tony Diller on Mon loanwords in Southern Thai; (2) Janice Stargardt's excavations at Satingphra in the Isthmus; (3) Mon place names in Kedah, Kelantan. See note 229.*

³⁷ *Op. cit.*, II.470.

³⁸ Diffloth 1977 deals with the historical phonology of no fewer than fifteen Semai dialects. One obvious contributing factor to the great dialectal diversity of Semai is their relatively large population (see below), but even in such ‘microsocieties’ as the Jah Hut tribe (pop. 2013), speakers cultivate individual peculiarities of speech. ‘Such societies and such [individualistic] values, may have been commonplace in the Austroasiatic past’ (Diffloth 1976c).

GB: *Temiar is actually remarkably uniform—even I can understand all its dialects at first hearing; Semai, on the other hand, really is very variable.*

³⁹ It has, however, been reported that two remote Semoq Beri villages, separated from each other by thick jungle and reachable only by riverboat or helicopter, have almost identical dialects (Karim and Ibrahim 1978:18). The ‘outlier’ S. Aslian language, Mah Meri, now confined to pockets on the coast of Selangor and Malacca, was once much more widespread on the lower peninsula under the name of Besis (cf. Blagden 1906:496-7 and Diffloth 1975: 7).

context of Austroasiatic as a whole, the Aslian languages constitute one of the most ramified sub-groups of the Austroasiatic family (along with Bahnaric, Palaungic, and probably Mường), which greatly contributes to its comparative/historical importance (below 1.4).

The population totals for the three subgroups of Aslian are not overwhelmingly large. Figures cited for 1972-3 add up to 1730 for Northern, 27,712 for Central, and 5095 for Southern Aslian.⁴⁰ The individual languages range from Semai (15,506) and Temiar (9929) - both obviously in the Central group - to tiny communities like Mintil (40) and Temoq (100).⁴¹

1.1 Aslian phonology, synchronic and diachronic.

Detailed phonological analyses are so far available only for the major languages of the Senoic group (Semai, Temiar, and Jah Hut), but already enough is known to make it clear that the Aslian languages are typically - one might even say archetypically - Mon-Khmerlike in their sound systems, while at the same time manifesting certain distinctive 'peninsular' features of their own.

An early attempt to characterize the difference in phonological texture between 'Semang' and 'Sakai' is Blagden's picturesque generalization:

The phonetic tendencies of the Semang race have exercised a modifying influence over the Mon-Annam elements which their dialects have absorbed, softening their

⁴⁰ Benjamin 1976a:45-49. Diffloth (1974c) gives slightly different estimates: 2000, 30,000, and 5000, respectively.

⁴¹ GB: *The figures given with my language maps, based on the 1980 census, were: Northern Aslian 2,275; Central Aslian 32,586; Southern Aslian 6,372. These figures are a mixture of estimates (for some North Aslian groups) and minima (because complete census figures hadn't reached me yet. Some details: The 1980 (incomplete) census figures were Semai 18,327 and Temiar 11,593. 'Mintil' is not a census category; 'Temoq' is an ethnic category wrongly counted, rather than a language. I placed it in Semelai on my map, as a dialect with ca. 350 speakers (estimated as such by Peter Laird, 'their' ethnographer).*

primitive consonantal hardness and moulding them into a more vocalic form. The Sakai dialects on the other hand ... have better preserved the characteristic harshness of the Mon-Annam phonology ...⁴²

The only explicit modern account of the ‘basis of articulation’ of an Aslian language tends to confirm Blagden’s observation:

In speaking Temiar ... the overall state of the oral cavity is rather tensed, and the pharynx is contracted (due perhaps to the frequent occurrence of /ŋ/).^{43/44}

But perhaps we should supplement these rather harsh global impressions by looking at the Aslian syllable piece by piece.

(a) Syllable structure.

Aslian words may be *monosyllabic*, *sesquisyllabic*, or *disyllabic*. Monosyllabic forms are either *simple* CV(C) or *complex* CCV(C), a distinction that is relevant to infixation rules (below). Sesquisyllabic⁴⁵ forms consist of a ‘major’ syllable with fully-stressed vowel, preceded by a ‘minor’ syllable with predictable vocalism (e.g. Temiar *ləpud* ‘caudal fin’, Semai *kʔɛ:p* [kɛʔɛ:p] ‘centipede’, *bʔbɛ:t* [buʔbɛ:t] ‘sleeping’).⁴⁶ Truly disyllabic words have non-predictable vowels in their non-final syllables. In these cases, even if the non-final vowel is unstressed (e.g. ‘monitor lizard’ Semai *kǎbuk*, Temiar *kǎbug*, Jah Hut *kǎbok*), neither its presence nor its quality is predictable by any rule. The

⁴² *Op cit.*, II.461.

⁴³ Benjamin 1976b: 139, 1.2.2.3 ‘Articulatory setting’.

⁴⁴ GB: *I wrote this with Beatrice Honikman’s ideas in mind; see her chapter ‘Articulatory Settings’ (pp.73-84) in David Abercrombie, et al, eds. (1964) In Honour of Daniel Jones: papers presented on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, 12 September 1961. London: Longmans.*

⁴⁵ The term ‘sesquisyllabic’ (for forms ‘a syllable and a half’ in length) was coined in Matisoff 1973.

⁴⁶ The predictable vowel is often, but not always schwa, as the Semai examples show. Throughout Senoic (and also in South Aslian) the vowel of a major syllable beginning with a laryngeal (h, ʔ) is usually ‘anticipated’ as a minor vowel if another consonant precedes (‘centipede’). In Semai, when two labial consonants precede the major vowel, an unstressed -u- is automatically inserted (‘sleeping’). In most Temiar dialects, -ɛ- is inserted in front of any consonant which is both preceded and followed by other consonants, e.g. /cbci:b/ [cɛbci:b] (from the root *ci:b* ‘walk’). See Diffloth 1976a:232-4.

Senoic languages have such unpredictable unstressed vowels as /ǎ/, /ĩ/, or /ũ/ in words of this type, a feature which is unusual for MK as a whole, but by no means unheard of.⁴⁷ A subclass of dissyllabic forms are those with a syllabic nasal or liquid between two consonants, as in Jah Hut /sɪmpaʔ/ ‘durian’, /gr̩tɛʔ/ ‘a tick’, /pl̩ʔəŋ/ ‘lukewarm’, where the sonorant may historically represent a now obsolete infix, but which are no longer analyzable synchronically.⁴⁸

Many Aslian dissyllables are morphologically complex, resulting from various reduplications and infixations. Temiar even has phonetic trisyllables in such morphological categories as the simulfactive⁴⁹ causative (*tərakɔw*)^{50/51} and the continuative causative (*təɾɛwkɔw*), or in words with proclitics (*bar-halab* ~ *bəhalab* ‘go downriver’). Dissyllabic compounds with unreduced though unstressed vowels also occur (e.g. Temiar *diŋ-rəb* ‘shelter’).

Another frequent source of dissyllables is loanwords from Malay (e.g. Jah Hut *suraʔ* ‘sing’ < Mal. *suara* ‘voice’, Semai *tibaʔ* ‘arrive’ < Mal. *tiba*), examples of which could be multiplied indefinitely [below 1.5]. Austronesian contact must surely be playing a role in the ‘creeping disyllabism’ which the Aslian languages seem to be showing.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 232. The distinction between sesquisyllables and dissyllables is thus a morphophonemic, not a phonetic one. Minor syllables with unpredictable vowels occur also in Khasi, Katuic, and Nicobarese. Cf. Diffloth 1975:10.

⁴⁸ Diffloth 1976c.

⁴⁹ GB: I don’t use the terms ‘simulfactive’ or ‘continuative’ anymore, having replaced them by ‘middle’ and ‘imperfective’ respectively.

⁵⁰ From the root /kɔw/ ‘call’: Benjamin 1976b: 169.

⁵¹ GB: This is an unfortunate example, as **tərakɔw* doesn’t actually occur! In fact, my ‘new’ verb-morphology paradigm does not have a slot for such a category (see Fig. V, below). There are other words (nouns) with this pattern, though: *kərabɔʔ* ‘[disease name]’, *sənaluh* ‘leaf monkey’. In the revised version of SOTG (Benjamin 1978) I discuss all the *CəraCVC* forms, because they are semantically and culturally highly marked.

While some Aslian languages have open major syllables (e.g. Semoq Beri *tu* ‘breast,’ *cɔ* ‘dog,’ *ti* ‘hand’),^{52/53} others do not permit open syllables in word-final position (Temiar, Jah Hut). As one would expect, the Aslian languages have a large array of consonants that can occur in syllable-final position [below (d)].

(b) Initial consonants.

The initial consonants of Temiar form a typical Aslian system:

p t c k b d j g m n ɲ ŋ w l r y s h ʔ.^{54/55}

It is noteworthy that Aslian did not undergo the devoicing of the old PMK *voiced series of obstruents, and ‘registrogenesis’ seems never to have occurred in this branch of the family. The preglottalized stops */b̥ d̥/ that are set up for PMK apparently merged in Senoic with the simple voiced */b d/.⁵⁶ Sequences of oral and glottal stops in the modern languages are to be analyzed as separate segments on morphophonemic grounds, since they may be split up by infixes (e.g. Semai *ʃʔɔ:y* ‘numerous’ > *ʃɲʔɔ:y* ‘quantity’).

⁵² Nik Safiah and Ton, 1979:26.

⁵³ GB: *My own published versions of the words here are tuh, cɔh, and tēh or thīh. I’m pretty sure that all Aslian languages have only consonants word-finally. [When in doubt, subject the word to copyfixation, whereupon the -h, -ʔ, or -k will be heard clearly in the middle of the word. By this test, as I remark later, some of Asmah’s Kentag Bong forms are true reduplications, not copyfixations.] The same applies throughout to word initials, which are also never vowels in Aslian.*

⁵⁴ Benjamin 1976b: 130.

⁵⁵ GB: *Some eastern dialects of N.Aslian sometimes have [z] and [f] as well, e.g. Batèk Dè’: zeʔ ‘new’ (elsewhere reʔ), Mintil: nəfhawf ‘breathe’ (cf. Menriq nəphɔp). If I remember right, [z] is lamino-alveolar, and [f] is bilabial in these instances.*

⁵⁶ Haudricourt (1965) had proposed the fate of the *preglottalized initials as an important early isogloss separating Mon, Palaungic, Katuic, and Bahnaric on the one hand (where they were maintained as such) from Khmer, Pearic and Khmuic on the other (where they were not, as in Senoic). Diffloth (1976a: 231) questions the criticality of this isogloss, since ‘loss of preglottalization is highly probable as an independent innovation.’

In most Aslian languages, as in Austroasiatic generally, ‘aspirated’ consonants are also to be analyzed as sequences of two phonemes, one of which happens to be **h**. A highly interesting exception is the South Aslian group, which has three full series of obstruents, including unitary voiceless aspirates which contrast with h-clusters: /p^h t^h c^h kh/.⁵⁷ These aspirates correspond regularly within South Aslian, e.g., ‘head’ Mah Meri, Semelai, Semoq Beri /k^hɔy/; ‘hand’ MM, Sl, SB /t^hi:/⁵⁸, but to plain voiceless stops in the rest of Aslian (e.g. ‘be afraid’ Semelai *b^hoŋ*, but Temiar *tuuk*, Batek *?ntuŋ*; ‘burn a field’ Semelai *c^hɔr*, but Semai *cuur*, Jah Hut *cɔr*). The contrast between /C^hV.../ and /ChV.../ is realized phonetically via an anticipatory copy of the vowel that gets inserted before the independently segmental -h-;⁵⁹ thus Semelai /c^hɔŋ/ ‘hill’ vs. Semoq Beri /choŋ/ [cohoŋ] ‘wind’. Compared to the other series of obstruents, these aspirates are quite rare in S. Aslian. Diffloth feels they may derive in part from older clusters of nasal-plus-stop.⁶⁰

Aslian syllable-initial consonant clusters (i.e. the onsets of ‘complex’ roots) are rich and varied. Jah Hut is typical, with no restrictions on non-homorganic stop clusters, where the members do not even have to agree in voicing (e.g. *tkak* ‘palate’, *dkaŋ* ‘bamboo rat’, *bkul* ‘gray’, *bgɔk* ‘goiter’, etc.).⁶¹

Nasals and stops show a variety of phonetic and morphophonemic interrelationships in initial as well as final position [below (d)].

⁵⁷ In this respect, South Aslian is like Pearic.

⁵⁸ GB: I have MM *thɪ?*, Sl *thɪ?* and SB *tēh* (but Temoq *thɪh*); in all cases there is a final consonant. (See 1976a, Vocabulary p. 108). On the other hand, -h after a long vowel is phonetically little more than a prolongation of the vowel, as I remarked for Temiar in OTG (1976b:135); so I suppose one can take one’s choice! – but then where does the -h- come from in copyfixed forms?!

⁵⁹ See notes 46 and 62, and Diffloth 1974b.

⁶⁰ Diffloth 1975:14. Could this then be another instance of ‘rhinoglottophilia’, a relationship between nasality and laryngeal activity?

⁶¹ The predictable phonetic occurrence of schwa between the elements in the cluster serves to protect them from voicing assimilation. Restrictions on initial consonant combinations in Jah Hut fall into a few well-defined categories (e.g. there are no clusters of homorganic stops or of homorganic stop plus nasal, but clusters of nasal plus stop must be homorganic). See the discussion in Diffloth 1976c.

The laryngeal consonants /h ʔ/ are special in that their articulation is independent of their vocalic environment; they may thus be superimposed upon the vowel midway in its articulation, giving the impression of two identical vowels interrupted by the laryngeal (e.g. Jah Hut /jʔaŋ/ ‘bone’ > [jaʔaŋ]; /phɔ̃ʔ/ ‘tree’ > [pɔ̃hɔ̃ʔ]).⁶²

(c) Vowels.

The richness of Aslian vocalic systems is typically Mon-Khmer, with a minimum of three degrees of vowel height (some dialects have four or even five), and frequently contrastive vowel length and/or nasalization as well. Historically, the development of the vowels is quite complex, with many sound-changes that depend on narrowly defined conditioning environments, and tricky morphophonemic alternations resulting from the elaborate infixational morphology (see below 1.2).

A typical Aslian system is displayed by Northern Temiar, which has thirty vocalic nuclei⁶³ (see Fig. II):

ORAL		NASAL	
short	long	short	long
i ɛ u	ī ē ū	ĩ ẽ ʉ	ĩ̃ ē̃ ũ̃
e ə o	ē ǝ ō		
ɛ a ɔ	ē ā ɔ̃	ɛ̃ ă ɔ̃	ē̃ ā̃ ɔ̃̃

Figure II: Temiar Vowels

⁶² Diffloth, *op.cit.* See note 46, above. A similar auditory impression is conveyed by the *ngã* tone of Vietnamese, where the laryngeal ‘creak’ seems to interrupt the vowel halfway through. Analogous ‘echo-vowel’ phenomena occur in the Bodo-Garo branch of Tibeto-Burman.

⁶³ Benjamin 1976b:131. Even richer vowel systems occur in some of the Katuic languages. Benjamin observes that the long/short contrast for Temiar is accompanied by differences in vowel quality, though the oral/nasal contrast is not.

GB: This is true only of some speakers, including the ones I learnt the language from.

The functional load of the nasal/oral contrast is never very high in Aslian languages (not many minimal pairs can be cited). Even in a language where nasalization has phonemic value, there are likely to be environments where the contrast is neutralized, e.g. next to nasal consonants, where all vowels are automatically (but variably) nasalized.⁶⁴ Diffloth notes unpredictable and irregular nasalization in Semai dialects especially on vowels preceded by *h-* or *ʔ-*, and surmises that an old nasal prefix in those words might have nasalized the vowel right through the ‘permeable’ laryngeal, and having thus transferred its substance to another segment, subsequently disappeared.⁶⁵

Of much greater structural significance for the history and comparison of the Aslian languages is the long/short distinction, which must be set up for Proto-Aslian and corresponds regularly to similar distinctions in other branches of Mon-Khmer (Bahnaric, Khmuic, Palaungic):⁶⁶

LONG */aa/

‘tongue’

PSemai ***Intaak**. Temiar **lentaag** / Khmu **ntaak**, Palaung **kar-tā**

‘weave’

PSemai ***taaʔn**, Temiar **taac** / Bahnar **taan**, Khmu **taan**

SHORT */a/

‘eye’

PSemai **mat**, Temiar **mad** / Bahnar **mat**, Khmu **mat**

‘cold fever’

PSemai **dkat**, Temiar **dkad** / Bahnar **tkat**, Khmu **kat**, Palaung **kăt**.

Phonemic vowel length has been retained in Semai, Temiar, and Sabum (all Senoic) [Diffloth 1975:10]; but some Senoic languages have squandered their MK heritage and lost phonemic vowel length completely (e.g. Jah Hut). Contrastive length has been lost by the whole Northern Aslian group, as well as by Semoq Beri (Southern).⁶⁷ It is to be expected that the loss of so vital a contrast as vowel length must have led to complex reorganizations

⁶⁴ This is the case, e.g. in Semai, Temiar, Semoq Beri (Nik Safiah and Ton 1979:25).

⁶⁵ Diffloth 1977:485-6. It seems to me that Diffloth’s concept of laryngeal permeability to nasality contributes significantly to an explanation of the phenomenon I have called ‘rhinoglottophilia’. See Matisoff 1975 and note 60 above.

⁶⁶ Diffloth 1979.

in the vocalic systems of the affected languages, as they strove to compensate for the loss by developing new contrasts elsewhere - but these developments cannot yet be studied in detail for Aslian as a whole.⁶⁸

Diphthongization is not so strikingly in evidence in Aslian as in some other branches of Mon-Khmer.^{69/70} Proto-Semai is reconstructed with 10-11 long monophthongal vowels, but only one diphthong, *iə.⁷¹ Diffloth explains the ‘continuous trend to monophthongization in Senoic’ partly on morphological grounds. Senoic infixes are sensitive to the number of initial consonants in a root (below 1.2). Rising diphthongs like [iə] or [uə] are inherently ambiguous, since the glide may be interpreted either as a feature of the initial or of the vowel - i.e. the root may be deemed to have either the structure CCVC or CVC. If the infixation rule is, e.g. ‘insert -m- after the last consonant of the initial’, i.e. C(C)VC > C(C)-m-VC, different outputs are determined by each interpretation. Taking a hypothetical root *kiəp,

(a) k i ə p > k-m-ḷ ə p ; (b) ky ə p > ky-m-ə p.

⁶⁷ GB: *Semoq Beri is so variable that I'd be wary of generalizing, especially as it probably forms part of a dialect continuum with Semelai and Temoq (at least in some areas), which do have 'length'.*

⁶⁸ Incomparably the most detailed and far-reaching diachronic treatment of vowels in Aslian is Diffloth 1977, where the vowel system of Proto-Semai is reconstructed on the basis of data from 15 modern dialects.

⁶⁹ Perhaps this is because Aslian did not develop register distinctions, which can be demonstrated to have promoted the rampant diphthongization in such languages as Mon and Khmer.

⁷⁰ GB: *But note the strongly diphthongising tendency of Mintil, which is otherwise a Batek (N.Aslian) dialect: 'white' Mt biyeik, Semai biyēk; 'tongue' Mt ləntiyk, Batek ləntik; 'breathe' Mendriq nəfhawf, Mendriq nəphəp. Even in loanwords: 'tail' Mt ʔikəih, Malay [iko:] ikur. For examples see my 1976a vocabulary. Central Aslian also had some features of this kind in its history: 'dog' Semai cəʔ coʔ, Temiar cəwaʔ~cəwəʔ; and what about Semai kīd 'bottom; vulva', Temiar kēd 'bottom', but kəyed 'vulva'?*

⁷¹ It is interesting to note that Diffloth (*op. cit.*) reconstructs nearly twice as many long vowels (11 or 12) for Proto-Semai as short vowels (6 or 7), observing that for each long/short pair (e. g. *aa/a) there are many more words that reflect the long proto-vowel than the short one. This contrasts with the symmetrical picture presented in Shorto 1976, where seven long/short pairs (and three diphthongs) are reconstructed for Proto-Mon-Khmer on the basis of data from Old Mon and Old Khmer.

The malaise caused by this uncertainty may well have hastened diphthongal demise in some cases.^{72/73}

Morphological processes may interfere with the environment necessary for a rule to operate. Almost all Semai dialects merged PSemai *a with *ɔ to ɔ in a very specific environment: between labials */p- b- m- w-/ and before velars */-k -ŋ/. Thus, PSemai *maŋ ‘there is’ > mɔŋ; PSemai *ba^gŋ ‘another’s younger sibling’ > bɔ^kŋ. Whenever a proto-infix separated the *a from the initial labial, it blocked the rule, creating a morphophonemic alternation: PSemai *b-n-aŋ ‘one’s own younger sibling’ > mnaŋ (≠ bɔ^kŋ).^{74/75}

(d) Final consonants.

The Aslian languages are well endowed with final consonants. Jah Hut is fairly typical, with no fewer than fifteen consonants that can close a syllable (root- or word-final open syllables do not occur).⁷⁶

⁷² In Jah Hut some diphthongs of the form -yV-, -wV- pattern with respect to morphological processes like reduplication as if they were Cy-V or Cw-V, while others behave like C-yV or C-wV. See Diffloth 1976c.

⁷³ GB: cf. Temiar (Benjamin 1976b:170): *həwai* ‘to emerge’ forms the causative as *terhəwal* instead of **herwal*; the root *həwal* probably < **hat* or **hōl*, for which cf. Temiar *ləwa?* ‘penis’, *cəwa?* ‘dog’ vs. Semai *lō?* and *cō?*.

⁷⁴ Diffloth 1977:480-1.

⁷⁵ GB: These kin terms are almost certainly AN loans: cf. Malay *abaŋ* ‘elder Sb/Co, male’; Batek *habaŋ* ‘Sb/Co-in-law’.

⁷⁶ Diffloth 1976c. Open-syllable Malay words borrowed into Jah Hut receive a final glottal stop in the process: JH *hari?* ‘day’ < Mal. *hari*, JH *sa?lu?* ~ *slamu?* ‘always’ < Mal. *selalu*, etc.

GB: ‘Jakun’ dialects of Malay usually show the same final closure with -ʔ, where ‘standard’ Malay has just the vowel; Jakun speakers used mostly to be S. Aslian speakers.

-p	-t	-c	-k	-ʔ
-m	-n	-ɲ	-ŋ	
	-s			-h
-w	-l	-y	-r	

Archetypically Mon-Khmer is the presence of final palatals /-c -ɲ/, which occur in every branch of Austroasiatic but virtually nowhere else in Southeast Asia.⁷⁷ Final -r -l -s are solidly represented in Aslian, as in Mon-Khmer generally.⁷⁸ The final laryngeals /-h -ʔ/, another general Mon-Khmer feature, are well preserved in Aslian, so there is no question of their engendering tonal or registral effects on the previous vowel, as in Vietnamese. There is, however, a tendency to shorten long vowels before these finals, not only in Aslian⁷⁹ but in Mon-Khmer as a whole.⁸⁰ Benjamin reports that Temiar -h has ‘considerable bilabial friction’ after -u-, thus /tuh/ ‘speak’ is pronounced something like [tuɸ].⁸¹ The same kind of thing happens in some dialects of NE Semai after the diphthong -əu /-əuɸ [əuɸ], and also in Lanoh (Senoic) and Batek (North Aslian).^{82/83} Since bilabial fricatives, especially in final position, are excessively rare in Southeast Asian languages,

⁷⁷ One exception is Written Burmese, which has the rhymes -ac and -añ (mostly from Proto-Tibeto-Burman *-ik and *iŋ), though it seems reasonable to surmise that these developed under Mon influence. Another exception is the Chamic branch of Austronesian - but Chamic has come under massive Mon-Khmer influence.

⁷⁸ These three final consonants are also set up for Proto-Tibeto-Burman (see Benedict 1972:14-17), but they are not well maintained in all branches of the family and occur in relatively few roots. Neither final liquids nor -s occur in Tai at all.

⁷⁹ Diffloth 1977:485.

⁸⁰ Shorto 1976:1060.

⁸¹ Benjamin 1976b:135.

⁸² Diffloth, *op. cit.*:468-9.

⁸³ GB: *The spelling Batek is preferable for this people and their language, since Bateg is the Temiar pronunciation.*

Diffloth is inclined to ascribe them to a pre-Austroasiatic substratum in or near the North Aslian area.⁸⁴

The most interesting aspect of the Aslian final consonants is an interlocking set of complex phenomena involving an interchange between homorganic stops and nasals.

Even the earliest collectors of vocabulary from Aslian languages were struck by peculiar complex final nasal sounds whose onset was the homorganic stop: pm , tn , cn , $^k\eta$. Phonetically, sometimes the nasal component seemed to predominate, but sometimes the occlusive portion was more salient and the collector wrote the stop on the line and the nasal as a superscript: pm , tn , cn , $^k\eta$. Blagden aptly named these sounds ‘disintegrated nasals’,⁸⁵ since they represent a breakdown of ordinary ‘nasal stops’ (where the oral occlusion and the lowering of the velum are simultaneous) into separate buccal and nasal phases (the velum is not raised until the oral occlusion has been phonated). Blagden deplored this ‘careless, slovenly articulation’ and observed that the dirty habit was by no means confined to the aboriginal tribes of the Peninsula but was shared by such insular Austronesian groups as the Dayaks of West Borneo.⁸⁶ These sounds have been reported for all three branches of Aslian, e.g. for Cheq Wong in the Northern group and for Mah Meri in Southern Aslian (Diffloth 1975:7). It is in Senuic (Central Aslian), however, that the most detailed data are available. Diffloth has succeeded in establishing the diachronic stages of the denasalization process, and in fact uses these as the main criterion for subgrouping the languages of Central Aslian.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* A similar sound [ɸ] occurs in Japanese as an allophone of /h/ < (Old Japanese *p) before -u, the only environment where the bilabiality of the proto-phoneme is preserved. It might be stretching things to posit a Japanese substratum in North Aslian, however!

⁸⁵ Skeat and Blagden 1906:772-3.

⁸⁶ The peninsular Austronesians (or ‘Proto-Malays’) seem also to have used this articulation. Some early writers use the spelling Jakudn for ‘Jakun’. We thus seem to be dealing with an ‘Austic’ areal feature, or at any rate with a feature which has diffused from Austronesian into Aslian.

⁸⁷ See Diffloth 1975:10-12. In this same article Diffloth elegantly subgroupes the North Aslian languages on the basis of shared phonological innovations (pp. 2-6).

Senoic languages fall into three main types with respect to final denasalization: (1) Jah Hut is in a class by itself, since final nasals are pronounced ‘normally’: *jɔŋ* ‘foot’, *cɛm* ‘bird’, *tiŋ* ‘hand’. On the other hand, Jah Hut displays a converse phenomenon with respect to final stops. Instead of denasalizing final nasals, Jah Hut ‘decomposes’ final stops into their homorganic nasal plus glottal stop - but only in case a nasalized vowel or nasal consonant occurs earlier in the word:⁸⁸ /ɲɔk/ ‘sit’ [ɲɔŋʔ]; /mat/ ‘eye’ [mãŋʔ]; /ʔisɛc/ ‘spider-hunter (bird)’ [ʔisɛpʔ]. The presence of the glottal stop serves to maintain the contrast with the ordinary final nasals. (2) In most Semai dialects, Proto-Aslian final *nasals have been completely denasalized (*juk* ‘foot’), merging with the reflexes of the old final *stops. In other dialects (especially in the SE), the denasalization is only partial, and we get ‘disintegrated’ nasals (*jugŋ* ‘foot’),⁸⁹ which remain distinct from syllables with original final stops:

<i>PAslian</i>	<i>SE Semai</i>	<i>Other Semai</i>
*ka(a)p	ka(a)p	ka(a)p
*ka(a)m	ka(a)bm	ka(a)p

(3) Sabum and Temiar present the most complex behavior of all. In Sabum, the degree of denasalization is correlated with the length of the preceding vowel: complete after *short vowels, but only partial after *long ones. Even after *short vowels, however, no merger occurs with original final stops, since Sabum has voiced these to /-b -d -j -g/:

⁸⁸ Diffloth 1976c. This ‘decomposition’ or deocclusivization is thus *assimilatory*. In a way this is the mirror image of the denasalization rules which operate elsewhere in Senoic, where the presence of a nasal earlier in the word *blocks* the denasalization (see below). In other words, a nasal feature earlier in the word either favors a following stop’s becoming more like a nasal (Jah Hut) or disfavors a following nasal’s becoming more like a stop (the rest of Senoic).

⁸⁹ Terminology is something of a problem here. ‘Partially denasalized’ is long-winded; Diffloth’s ‘predenasalized’ has too many morphemes in it; ‘decomposed nasals’ have disturbing connotations of cocaine abuse; ‘disintegrated’ does not convey enough phonetic detail. I am inclined to propose the term ‘preocclusivized nasals’. It is sometimes necessary to distinguish between preocclusivization of nasals and post-nasalization of stops (see below).

<i>PAslian</i>	<i>Sabum</i>
<i>*ka(a)p</i>	<i>ka(a)b</i>
<i>*kam</i>	<i>kap</i>
<i>*kaam</i>	<i>kaabm</i>

Diffloth takes this as evidence that the denasalization process in Senoic as a whole must have originated in syllables with short vowels.^{90/91}

The Temiar developments are not affected by vowel length, but like Sabum, a few Temiar dialects have voiced original final *stops.⁹² Final *nasals are completely occlusivized, usually to voiceless stops⁹³ - but in a few dialects where the original *stops did not voice, the final *nasals became voiced stops:⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Since the ethnonym Sabum itself is sometimes spelled 'Sabubm', this must mean that its second vowel was once long.

⁹¹ A somewhat similar interchange between final stops and nasals has been posited by Benedict, who once suggested informally that Proto-TB nasals after long vowels might have become stops in Written Tibetan.

⁹² Voiced final stops are of course typologically quite rare in Southeast Asia. Kentaqbong of the North Aslian group (Asmah 1976) also has a contrast between final voiced and voiceless stops (both of which contrast with its final nasals): e.g. *cəp* 'go', *kaħəb* 'jungle', *kapəŋ* 'to fly'.

⁹³ This happens even to Malay loanwords, e.g. Malay *kambij* 'goat' > Temiar *kambik*. See Benjamin 1976b:148.

GB: The 'loanword' phonology in Temiar, however, cuts across the dialect differences, and should probably be treated as a privileged area of some kind, involving intentional actions by the speakers, as I suggest in OTG. The pseudohistorical discussion on pp. 149-152 of OTG was worked out with the help of John Trim, a leading British phonetician.

⁹⁴ *GB: Actually, roughly one-half of all Temiar speakers follow the one pattern, and one-half the other; this final-occlusive 'flip-flop' cross-cuts the other (non-phonological) dialect differences in Temiar. See OTG, 1976b: 129-130.*

<i>PAslian</i>	<i>Temiar A (most dialects)</i>	<i>Temiar B (South Temiar)</i>	<i>Temiar C⁹⁵</i>
*ka(a)p	ka(a)b	ka(a)p	ka(a)p
*ka(a)m	ka(a)p	ka(a)p	ka(a)b
	NO MERGER 1. *surd > sonant 2. *nasal > surd	MERGER *nasal > surd	NO MERGER *nasal > sonant

(From a purely synchronic point of view, it looks as if Temiar A and C simply ‘flip-flopped’ their two series of final stops!)⁹⁶

To make things even more complicated, modern Temiar does have a full series of final nasals as well. These apparently have several sources, including: (a) words which had a nasal consonant before the vowel, which blocked the final denasalization rule (e.g. *mɔŋ* ‘tooth’); (b) words where an original final stop assimilated to a preceding nasal (e.g. *lanɛŋ* ‘knowledge’ < **lanɛk* [root *lɛk*]; *kɛmnəm* ‘burying’ < **kɛmnəp* [root *kəp*]).^{97/98}

⁹⁵ GB: Unless Gérard has material I don’t know about, I can’t follow this ‘A,B,C’ typology. The following are some ‘real’ data. ‘Lanoh Kobāk (= ‘marsh’ Lanoh) is a Temiar dialect of the Piah and Belum rivers in Perak - ? ‘Northwestern Temiar’ – that I have recent data on; it is otherwise a Northern Temiar dialect. Cf. OTG, 1976b:140.

	Northern Temiar		Southern Temiar
	<i>bɔɔ</i>		<i>bɔɔ</i>
	<i>bɔɔ</i>		<i>bɔɔ</i>
‘wear in belt’ ‘breast’	Lanoh Kobāk	Remainder	
‘house’	<i>dɛŋ</i>	<i>dɛk</i>	<i>dɛg</i>

This *dɛŋ/dɛk* alternation occurs only with long vowel words, but is quite predictable so far as I can see. On the other hand, there are other vowel-length alternations between ‘Lanoh Kobāk’ and ‘Remainder Northern Temiar’ which I haven’t fully characterized yet, e.g.:

	<i>N Temiar</i>	<i>S Temiar</i>	<i>Lanoh Kobāk</i>
‘know’	<i>lɛk</i>	<i>lɛg</i>	<i>lɛk</i>
‘bird’	<i>cɔs</i>	<i>cɔs</i>	<i>cɔs</i>
‘return’	<i>lɔs</i>	<i>lɔs</i>	<i>lɔs</i>

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 143-144. The preceding nasal in most of these cases is an infix. In addition to this *progressive* assimilation’ Temiar also has optional *regressive* nasal assimilation in prefinal closed syllables with nasal final, as in *bɛŋ-dɛk* ~ *mɛŋ-dɛk* ‘space around house’ (*ibid.*, p. 146). To complete this dazzling array of stop/nasal interchanges, Temiar also has optional dissimilation in loanwords from Malay with two non-final nasals, e.g. Malay *nan̩ka* > Tem. *dan̩kə*? ‘jackfruit’, Malay *nama* > Tem. *dam̩əh* ‘name’ (*ibid.*, p.148).

In Benjamin's Northern Temiar dialect, all three series of finals - surds, sonants, and nasals - receive a double oral-plus-nasal articulation, though the phrase-final phonetic realizations are just different enough for them all to remain distinct.⁹⁹

/ -p -t -c -k / [< PAs. *nasals]	[p t c k] 'released nasally, audible as a long voiceless nasal'
/ -b -d -j -g / [< PAs. *surds]	[b d j g] 'nasal release audible as the short voiced homorganic nasal'
/ -m -n -ɲ -ŋ /	[b t c k] 'very short voiced stop with a long voiced homorganic nasal release'

Far from being 'careless, slovenly' articulators, the Temiar are veritable velic virtuosi, capable of distinguishing between post-nasalization and pre-occlusivization!¹⁰⁰

1.2 Aslian morphology and morphophonemics.

The morphological resources of Aslian are among the richest in all of Southeast Asia, unrivalled even in most of the rest of Austroasiatic.¹⁰¹ This may well be, as Diffloth (1975) suggests, because Aslian has largely escaped the monosyllabizing trend which has

Finally, Temiar sequences of nasal + liquid are broken up by an epenthetic homorganic stop /ʔɛnrɔs/ 'kidney' > [ʔɛndrɔs] - something which also happened in the history of French (Lat. *camera* 'room' > Fr. *chambre*), as well as in N. Aslian (cf. the alternate spelling 'Mendriq' for the Menriq language).

GB: This also happens in Malay, even in broadcasting speech, e.g. *lapan[d]ratus* 'eight hundred.'

⁹⁸ GB: a) Some speakers do say **kemnəp** but none says ***lanək** that I know of.

b) There are also final-nasal words in Temiar with neither of these features, e.g. **cən** 'to like, want', **kəm** 'a kind of noose-trap', **ram** 'to sit (of hen on eggs)'; these are all, of course, single morphemes.

⁹⁹ GB: It is only phrase finally that word-final stops and nasals are usually 'released' at all, as is the case in SE Asian languages generally.

¹⁰⁰ The Temiar final sonants are postnasalized (implying that the stop is the most salient feature), while the nasals are preocclusivized (implying the opposite). The final surds are phonetically more nasal than stop, but phonemically and historically more stop than nasal.

¹⁰¹ Only Munda and Nicobarese are comparable.

steadily eaten away at the substance of the syllables of the Southeast Asian mainland to the north of the polysyllabic Austric haven of the Malay Peninsula.

All Aslian languages that have been thoroughly studied are found to make productive use of a wide variety of morphophonemic devices - prefixation, infixation, and reduplication - in often dizzying combination. In addition, most Aslian languages (e.g. Jah Hut) preserve fossilized traces of other morphological patterns that are no longer productive. This would seem to indicate that Aslian conservatively reflects an older stage of Austroasiatic, when morphology was richer.¹⁰²

Functionally, the morphology is put to work both for derivation (e.g. nominalization, causativization) and inflection (e.g. verbal aspect), as well as to signal syntactic relationships (concord between subject and verb). It attains its greatest exuberance in the realm of expressives [below 1.4].

(a) Simple prefixation: $C(C)VC \rightarrow (P)(P) - C(C)VC$.

Jah Hut uses a set of causativizing prefixes containing the elements *p-* and/or *-r-*. See Fig. III:

¹⁰² GB: However, many of the morphological elements could just as well have come from Austronesian sources.

<i>Affixes</i>	<i>Simplex</i>	<i>Causative</i>
p-	cyək ‘sleep’ mna? ‘big’	pcyək ‘put to sleep’ pmna? ‘enlarge’
pr-	bhec ‘be afraid’ ca? ‘eat’	prbhec ‘frighten’ prca? ‘feed’
pn-	ca? ‘eat’ tlas ‘escape’	pɲca? ‘feed; food’ pnlas ‘release’
tr-	hus ‘get loose (clothes)’	trhus ‘undress’
kr-	læy ‘be inside’	krləy ‘put inside’

FIGURE III: Jah Hut Causatives¹⁰³

Synchronically, these affixes are best regarded as unanalyzable prefixes, but evidently several historically distinct affixes are involved here. A *p-* causative is attested throughout Austroasiatic, and in Austronesian as well.¹⁰⁴ The *-r-* element, fossilized in Jah Hut, is to be identified with the productive causative infix *-r-* found in Temiar and Semai¹⁰⁵ [below (b)] - Semai also has causative formations in *pr-* or *br-*;¹⁰⁶ the *-n-* seems to derive from or overlap with the widespread nominalizing infix [below (b)];¹⁰⁷ the *tr-* sequence in *trhus* is closely paralleled by the productive Temiar causative prefix *tər-*;^{108/109} a dental

¹⁰³ See Diffloth 1976c.

¹⁰⁴ Temiar has a non-productive causative prefix *pə-* (*jəɬ* ‘bark’ / *pəjəɬ* ‘go hunting with dogs’) [Benjamin, 1976b:170]. In Kentaqpong (N. Aslian), a causative prefix *pi-* is fully productive: *sa* ‘descend’ / *pisa* ‘cause to descend’; *tæg* ‘sleep’ / *pitæg* ‘put to sleep’; *ci?* ‘eat’ / *pici?* ‘feed’; *ʔilaj* ‘take a bath’ / *pilaj* ‘bathe someone’ [Asmah 1976:955].

¹⁰⁵ GB: This *-r-* is almost certainly the Austronesian ‘replicative, pluralising, indefinite’ element borrowed early into Aslian before it ceased to be productive in Malay—where it is now fossilised.

¹⁰⁶ There is also an interesting Semai causative prefix *kr-* used when the verbal action is performed with a ‘bad intention,’ e.g. *caa?* ‘eat’, *brcaa?* ‘feed’, but *krcaa?* ‘give poison to’ (Diffloth 1976e).

¹⁰⁷ Note the causative/nominalized polysemy of *ppca?*.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

without *-r-* also occurs as a fossil causativizer in Temiar (*lɛk* ‘know’/ *tɛlɛk* ‘teach’; *gɔ̃s* ‘live’/ *tagɔ̃s* ‘hunt for food’), and it looks as if the first element in the Jah Hut (synchronically) non-causative verb *tlas* ‘escape’ derives from this earlier *t-* causative morpheme, though it has somehow lost its original meaning, so that the verb had to be ‘recausativized’ by something else (*pn-*).¹¹⁰

As we can already see, it is sometimes hard to draw a diachronic line between prefixation and infixation, especially when the affix consists of more than one phoneme.¹¹¹ Synchronically prefixes and infixes may work together in the same paradigm; e.g. Benjamin (*ibid.*) considers the prefix *tɛr-* and the infix *-r-* to be allomorphs of the same causative morpheme, conditioned according to whether the root is monosyllabic or sesquisyllabic, respectively.¹¹² In Kentaqjong (North Aslian), the affix *-(?)ə)n-* is used to form the imperfective aspect of verbs. If the root is monosyllabic the affix precedes, like a prefix (*co* ‘speak’/ *ʔanco* ‘is speaking’);¹¹³ otherwise it is infixed to the root (*sapoh* ‘sweep’/ *sənapoh* ‘is sweeping’; *təbaŋ* ‘cut down (trees)’ / *tənbəŋ* ‘is cutting down’).^{114/115} Across languages, the same etymological affix may look like a prefix in one language but like an infix in another. Kentaqjong has a desiderative prefix *maʔ-* (*maʔciʔ* ‘want to eat’, *maʔcəp* ‘want to go’),¹¹⁶ that is cognate to the Temiar morpheme *-m-* ‘desiderative; intent,

¹⁰⁹ GB: *Temiar tɛr-* is, I am convinced, borrowed from Malay *tər-* (which has no significant AN cognates), with an interesting but explainable semantic shift from the Malay ‘adversative, non-controlled passive’ to Temiar ‘controlled causative-permissive’.

¹¹⁰ Similar quirks occur in Tibeto-Burman simplex/causative verb pairs, where ‘phonologically’ causative forms occasionally have non-causative meaning or vice versa.

¹¹¹ A prefix preceded by another prefix looks superficially like an infix, but we should reserve the term ‘infix’ for cases where the affix is inserted into the root itself.

¹¹² GB: Historically, however, I regard the *t* and the *r* elements as both AN loans: in sesquisyllabics the *-r-* was borrowed alone, while in monosyllabics *tɛr-* came in from Malay, which had already combined *t* and *r* as *tɛr-* (not a general AN prefix). My ‘structural’ analysis does indeed work synchronically; but who believes in synchrony?!

¹¹³ GB: There must be a final consonant, probably *-h*; it would show up in the copyfixed form, *ʔcəhcoʔ* / *cəʔcoʔ* / *cəkcok*. Asmah’s *coco* is probably a reduplicate.

¹¹⁴ Asmah 1976: 957-960.

¹¹⁵ GB: I’m not convinced that the KB *-n-* is an aspect marker, rather than a nominaliser (as elsewhere), or just possibly the old AN ‘passive’ marker *-in-* (no longer productive in Malay).

¹¹⁶ Asmah 1976:955-6. This prefix may precede causative *pi-* (above, n. 104) to yield doubly prefixed forms like *maʔpiciʔ* ‘wants to feed’.

purpose; irrealis',^{117/118} though in Temiar this affix is simultaneously bound to a preceding pronominal prefix and the following verbal root: *?i-m-cā?* 'I'd like to eat (it)' (*?i-* '1p', *cā?* 'eat'), so that the desiderative morpheme occurs in a non-initial prefixal slot.

Semai and Temiar have sets of bound pronominal morphemes that are prefixed to verb roots to mark agreement with the subject NP of their clause in number, person, and inclusivity (the subject may be left unexpressed), e.g. Temiar *?i-cīb* 'I go'; *mɔp na-lut* (tooth, it-emerge) 'the tooth has erupted'.^{119/120}

In several Semai dialects, verbs may take any of three modal prefixes (*ha-* 'desiderative', *gu-* 'habitual', or *ka-* 'involuntary'), which come between the personal prefix and the root, e.g. *ke:? ki-gu-ja:p* 'He's always crying' (*ki-* '3p', *ja:p* 'cry').¹²¹ Kentaqpong has an *?u-* prefix to denote the perfective aspect (*?uci?* 'has eaten', *?ucəp* 'has gone'),¹²² and a reflexive prefix *pə-* (*lig* 'extinguish' / *pəlig* '(fire) goes out by itself').¹²³

Among many others which could be cited, we should mention a noun prefix *?i-* that turns up in Jah Hut, Semai and Temiar with a variety of related functions, including

¹¹⁷ Benjamin 1976b:180-182, and 1981:57-66. Temiar also has a preposition *ma-* 'to' (that marks the objects of certain transitive verbs) which Benjamin considers to contain ultimately the same morpheme.

¹¹⁸ GB: *I now sum this up as 'subjective orientation' (SOTG 1982:57f.). Temiar -m-, Kentaqpong ma?-. etc., are, I suspect, related to the m- element in Malay meN-, which is historically ma- + -ŋ-.*

¹¹⁹ Benjamin 1976b:183-184. See below 1.3, "Aslian grammar".

¹²⁰ GB: *I now consider Semai and Temiar to be (in Li and Thompson's terms) 'double-subject' languages :*

<i>mɔp</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>lut</i>
tooth	it	emerge
TOPIC	SUBJECT	VERB

The 'dialectal' cultural outlook has a lot to do with this (just as its absence among the Semang relates to 'single-subject'ness).

¹²¹ Diffloth 1976a:237.

¹²² GB: *Could this -u- not come from Hokkien Chinese -u 'existential', which is used like Malay ada to affirm that something has happened? The Kedah Chinese are mostly Hokkiens. Cf. Chinese-Indonesian:*

<i>sakit</i>	'sick'	→	<i>suakit</i>	'very sick'
<i>panas</i>	'hot'	→	<i>puanas</i>	'very hot'

These 'surpassing' forms are in Ellen Rafferty's Discourse Structures of the Chinese Indonesian of Malang, NUSA, Vol. 12, p. 22 (1982).

¹²³ This contrasts with *pilig* 'cause a fire to go out'. Asmah 1976:957.

‘definite article’, ‘3p possessive’, ‘agent-marker’, and ‘referential prefix with kin terms’.¹²⁴

(b) Simple infixation: $C_i(C_2)VC_f \rightarrow C_i - I - (C_2)VC_f$ ¹²⁵

Infixation is the morphological hallmark of the Austroasiatic languages, and Aslian has developed it to a remarkable degree. The various infixational patterns are sensitive to the syllabic structure of the particular roots to which they are applied. By their very nature, infixes require two things to be ‘inserted between’ – and Aslian seems to prefer sticking infixes between two consonants rather than between a consonant and a vowel.¹²⁶ When the syllable is ‘complex’ (i.e. beginning with C_1C_2), there is no problem – the infix goes between the two consonants: $C_1C_2 \rightarrow C_1 - I - C_2$. When there is only a single C_1 , the infix sometimes comes between it and the vowel ($C_1V \rightarrow C_1 - I - V$); more often, perhaps, the initial is consonantally reinforced in some way, so that the infix is provided with a biconsonantal environment.¹²⁷ Cases where the infix is merely inserted into the root, with no additional perturbations of the root’s structure, we may call ‘simple infixation’.¹²⁸

The most important liquid infix is the causative *-r-*, which is productive both in Semai and Temiar. In Semai, if the root has two initial consonants, the infix ‘simply’

¹²⁴ Diffloth 1976c and Benjamin 1976b:164. Benjamin calls Temiar *ʔi-* a ‘particle’, though he attaches it to its root with a hyphen. The distinction between an affix and a particle is notoriously hard to draw. GB: In 1976b I call it an ‘article’; in SOTG 1981 I call it a ‘role-marking particle’. The hyphen, however, is written for phonological reasons: CV forms cannot be freestanding in Temiar and they have to be written as proclitics if they are not affixes—this *ʔi-* is syntactically not an affix, since it attaches to the following word regardless of that word’s class allocation or of immediate constituency. Word stress is involved in these decisions: see OTG 1976b:141.

¹²⁵ In the formulae of these sections, we use the symbols C_i ‘initial consonant’, C_2 ‘second consonant in the initial cluster’, and C_f ‘final consonant’.

¹²⁶ This is probably why almost all Aslian infixes are syllabic sounds (i.e. potential peaks of sonority): vowels, liquids, or nasals.

¹²⁷ This is accomplished by reduplicating one or more of the root-consonants. See the next section.

¹²⁸ Even ‘simple’ infixation can cause morphophonemic alternations by feeding or bleeding the environments in which certain rules operate. Thus a nasal infix could cause a change of quality in the following vowel, or conversely could separate the preceding consonant from a vowel over which it would have otherwise exerted an influence.

GB: E.g. Temiar *lek* ‘to know’ \rightarrow *lanɛŋ* ‘knowledge’ (but this has an *-a-* infix too).

comes between them: *kʔā:c* ‘be wet’ / *krʔā:c* ‘moisten something’; *sɿɔh* ‘be afraid’ / *sɿɔh* ‘frighten someone’; *tla:s* ‘escape’ / *trla:s* ‘deliver someone.’¹²⁹ With Temiar sesquisyllabic roots like *səlɔb* ‘lie down’, the perfective causative is formed by simple *-r-* infixation between the minor vowel and the following consonant (*sɛrlɔg*).¹³⁰ Jah Hut has an *-l-* infix that occurs in expressives to indicate intensity or great numbers (e.g. *saʔbyɹ* ‘sight of dishevelled hair’, *slaʔbyɹ* ‘long, abundant dishevelled hair’), and which also occurs fossilized in the form *-lʔ-* in names of animals characterized by rapid, jerky movements (*klʔbak* ‘butterfly’, *hlʔdɛʔ* ‘cockroach’, *klʔjɛh* ‘kind of small bird’).^{131/132}

Nasal infixes are found throughout Mon-Khmer, and Aslian has its full share, using them for a variety of inflectional and derivational purposes, notably as nominalizers of verbal roots.

Jah Hut has an agentive nominalizing prefix, *mʔ-* (*lyɛp* ‘plait palm leaves’ / *mlayɛp* ‘one who plaits’; *cyɛk* ‘sleep’ / *mʔcyɛk* ‘one who sleeps [a lot]’; *caʔ* ‘eat’ / *mʔcaʔ* ‘one who eats [too much]’),¹³³ but other Jah Hut nominalizations (action, object, instrument) use prefixed or infixed *(-)n(?)-*, according to the structure of the root: *səh* ‘pound’ / *nʔsəh* ‘act of pounding’, *jkət* ‘tie’ / *jnʔkət* ‘act of tying’, *bilit* ‘wrap’ / *bnilit* ‘act of wrapping’ [action

¹²⁹ Diffloth 1972b:91.

¹³⁰ Benjamin 1976b:169. Benjamin (1981:50) believes this causative *-r-* to be historically related to the North Aslian infix *-r-* that forms the *plural* of animate nouns, and to a similar morpheme in Old Khmer (Jacob 1963, p. 69) - the linking idea being that the Agent of a causative verb makes the Causee *replicate* an action that is already in the Agent’s mind.

GB: Note also Jah Hut *raʔ-* ‘superlative’. The N. Aslian *-r-* ‘human noun plural’ is almost certainly Austronesian. And Old Khmer could well have taken it from Chamic. The Malay prefixes *bɛr-* ‘middle voice’ (< *ma* + *r*) and *pɛr* ‘causative’ (? < *ma* devoiced + *r*) have *r* as a ‘replicative, indefinite’ element contrasting with the *ŋ* of *mɛN-* and *pɛN-*. However, these may have different PAN sources: **-D-* ‘human pluraliser’ versus **-y-* (W.A. Foley, p.c.). Proto-Senoic **-l-* could well be a borrowing from some Western AN reflex of this **-D-*.

¹³¹ Diffloth 1976c. Diffloth hypothesizes a Proto-Senoic infix **-l-* ‘step by step’ that was used to derive expressives from stative verbs.

¹³² GB: Temiar has *lə-* as a non-productive prefix: *bāc* ‘to boast’, *ləbāc*, *ləjbāc* ‘boastful’; *gej* ‘quickly’, *ləgej gej*, *ləjejej gej* ‘frequently’; *ʔas*, *ʔesʔas* ‘(be) filthy’, *laʔas* ‘bad, dirty’.

¹³³ GB: This is so close to ‘source’ or ‘agentive’ *me-* in Malay, that I treat them both, along with Temiar *-m-* and N Aslian *maʔ-* as sharing the same historical and/or iconic sources; see SOTG, 1981: 64-66.

nominalization]; *kʔrɔʔ* ‘to intoxicate fish’ / *knrɔʔ* ‘the root used for intoxicating fish’ [instrumental nominalization]), etc.¹³⁴ Very similar nasal nominalizing infixes are found in Temiar (*cɛr* ‘to pare’ / *cənɛr* ‘knife’; *səluh* ‘shoot’ / *sənəluh* ‘leaf-monkey’ [“that which is shot”]),¹³⁵ and in Semai: *khəl* ‘cough’ / *kɛhəl* ‘act of coughing’; *jʔɔ:y* ‘numerous’ / *jnʔɔ:y* ‘quantity’; *tlɔh* ‘visit’ / *tnlɔh* ‘a visit’; *sma:n* ‘ask’ / *ʔsnma:n* ‘a question’.¹³⁶ This *nasal nominalizing infix* must certainly be reconstructed for Proto-Austroasiatic;¹³⁷ by very early times it had already been semantically specialized in many roots.¹³⁸

(c) Reduplicative infixation: “incopyfixation”.

Of especial interest in Aslian are several interrelated morphological patterns that involve a reduplication of the final consonant of the root. This copy of the Cf is then infixed to the root. As we have noted, Aslian infixes prefer a biconsonantal environment to nestle

¹³⁴ Diffloth observes (1976c) that the same contrast between agentive nominalization in *m* vs. other types of nominalizations in *n* is also found in Nicobarese.

GB: Proto-AN too seems to have had a contrast between (-)*m*- and (-)*n*- in its verb morphology, carrying such contrasting meanings as ‘actor-focus’ and ‘imperfective’/ ‘perfective’. See Dahl 1973: 119.

¹³⁵ Benjamin 1976b:176-7.

¹³⁶ Diffloth 1972b:91. This nominalizer may be applied to a root that has already been causativized by the -*r*- infix: *tlɑ:s* ‘escape’ --> *trlɑ:s* ‘deliver someone’ --> *trnlɑ:s* ‘act of deliverance’. Semai also has a rare infix -*an*- or -*na*- that forms locative nouns: *dəpm* ‘perch (above the ground)’ / *danəm* ‘roosting place’; *crɛ:t* ‘go down a slope’ / *cnarɛ:t* ‘a downward slope’ (Diffloth 1976a:238).

GB: Again, cf. Temiar: **lek** ‘to know’ → **lanɛŋ** ‘knowledge’

cūk ‘to hammer’ → **canūŋ** ‘a hammer’

But I consider these as normalized ‘middles’ in -*a*-: **lek** → **lalek** → [***lanek**] → **lanɛŋ**. Semantically, this makes sense, in that ‘knowing’ and ‘hammering’ both involve a dialectically-linked subject-object pair: ‘the knower/the known’; ‘the hammerer/the hammered with’. These are not unlike body-state or body-move or reciprocal verbs, in that the ‘knowledge’ and the ‘hammer’ are seen as virtual body-parts rather than as external objects. This has helped me solve yet another long-time Temiar mystery: nominalized forms like **lanɛŋ** and **canūŋ** have a lot in common with my ‘deponent verbs’, like ‘sing’ and ‘prop’ discussed in SOTG, 1981:106f. The common semantic theme in all these -*a*- infixed forms, whether or not the ‘nominalising’ -*n*- is also present, is that what one does is at the same time something one undergoes—hence ‘middle’ voice. Note that Gérard’s two examples here also fit this mould: ‘perching’ in birds involves a mechanical—almost involuntary—closure of the claws around the perch; and going downhill is discussed for the Temiar verb *carəh* in just this way in my SOTG, 1981:107. (How clever the Semai are to ascribe these properties, correctly, to a bird’s claw as well!)

¹³⁷ GB: This one, I’ll grant, is ancestrally AA, even if it has properties sufficient to let it merge in places with AN -*in*- or -*ən*- type infixes.

¹³⁸ Cf. Proto-Semai **syɛc* ‘sting’ / **s-m-syɛc* ‘stinging insect’ (elsewhere in Mon-Khmer the meaning of the infixed form has been specialized to ‘ant’) [Diffloth 1977:487].

GB: In Temiar **səmuŋ** means only ‘ant’, though **suj** means ‘to sting’.

in. If the root is complex by nature (i.e. beginning with a two-consonant cluster), there is no problem: the copy of the *C_f* is inserted between them. If the root begins with only one consonant, a number of devices are available to provide a second one (a root-external prefix or infix may be added, and/or the single *C_i* may be reduplicated), so that the copy of the *C_f* will have a biconsonantal place to go.

This ‘reduplicative infixation’¹³⁹ occurs in all three branches of Aslian,¹⁴⁰ with both inflectional and derivational functions (*continuative* or *indeterminate* mode of verbs, action nominalizations, derivation of count nouns from mass nouns, etc.).¹⁴¹

(1) with incopyfix of final alone (roots complex by nature):

$$C_i C_2 V C_f \rightarrow C_i - C_f - C_2 V C_f$$

North Aslian

Kensiw *plɔŋ* ‘sing’ / *pplɔŋ* ‘singing’¹⁴²

glit ‘rub one’s eyes’ / *gtlit* ‘eye-rubbing’

Cheq Wong *hwæc* ‘whistle’ / *hcwæc* ‘whistling’.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Diffloth does not use exactly this term, but speaks of ‘infix reduplication’ (1976a:236). The present subtype he calls ‘infixation with reduplication of final’ or ‘final infixation’. One might also suggest the term *incopyfixation*, which by its very structure illustrates a similar process on the morphemic level: infix(ed) copy → incopyfix.

GB: A stroke of genius! Or, as my wife just put it, ‘highly in-genius’! I shall copy in future.

¹⁴⁰ Diffloth (1976a:234) also calls it ‘the most common morphological process in Senoic’. The following examples are from Diffloth 1975:15. In Kentaqpong the continuative form of the verb is produced not by incopyfixation but by simple reduplication of the root: *ci?ci?* ‘is eating’. Asmah, *op. cit.*, p. 960.

¹⁴¹ GB: I now call the Temiar exponent of this morphological process the ‘imperfective aspect’ in verbs, and ‘plural’ (as before) in adjectives. (In the revised SOTG I shall give an extended discussion of this morphological process in naturalistic-iconic terms.)

¹⁴² GB: From Jehai eastwards in N. Aslian, only *pplɔŋ* occurs for ‘sing’: all my informants rejected the simplex form *plɔŋ* for this word. Given the ‘deponent’ character of ‘sing’ (*gabag*) in Temiar, there may be something here that indicates the semantic value of copyfixation in N. Aslian. For *gabag* as a ‘deponent’ see SOTG, 1981: 108-109.

¹⁴³ GB: All these ‘-ing’ glosses, it seems to me, overdifferentiate the meaning; the semantic differential between the simplex and the copyfixed forms is just a hair’s breadth. Actual usage relates more to foregrounding and backgrounding in discourse, and perhaps to Aktionsart, than to aspect in any straightforward sense. (But is aspect ever straightforward?) Personally, I would restrict ‘(be)-ing’ glosses to

South Aslian

Semelai *jrəm* ‘flow (water)’ / *jmrəm* ‘flowing’

mʔēs ‘sweat’ / *msʔēs* ‘sweating’

Central Aslian (= Senoic)

Temiar *tlāb* ‘cover’ / *tɛblāb* ‘covering’¹⁴⁴ /¹⁴⁵

Semai *krəp* ‘be on the lookout’ / *kprəp* ‘hunt’

slɔ:c ‘winnow’(horizontally) / *sclɔ:c* ‘winnow repeatedly’

cʔu:l ‘swallow the wrong way’ / *clʔu:l* ‘choke’

khɔ:y ‘yawn’ / *kyhɔ:y* [kihɔ:y] ‘be yawning’

ca:w ‘sprinkle’ / *cwca:w* [cuca:w] ‘sprinkling’

Jah Hut *khway* ‘yawn’ / *kyʔway* [kiʔhway] ‘be yawning’

nɔy ‘copulate’ / *nyʔnɔy* [niʔnɔy] ‘be copulating’¹⁴⁶

The antiquity of this process is demonstrated by the large number of Proto-Semai¹⁴⁷ forms containing what look like fossilized incopyfixes: **glpaal* ‘shoulder’ (#36), **lckooc* ‘wild rambutan sp.’ (#44), **sprooʔn* ‘tree with small green berries’ (#45), **krdoor* ‘woman’¹⁴⁸ (#50), **tprɔɔʔn* ‘to fish’ (#89).¹⁴⁹

the ‘progressive’ form of the Temiar verb, in which **bar-/ba-/bə-** is added to the copyfixed verb-stem: see ‘the morpheme **bar-**’ in OTG, 1976: 179-180 [and my revision of your chart in Fig. V, below].

¹⁴⁴ Note the epenthetic vowel introduced to break up the three-consonant cluster.

¹⁴⁵ GB: The rules for this ə → ε change in Temiar are given in OTG, 1976b: 144-145. Also, note that if *Cf* is a voiceless stop, it becomes voiced in southern Temiar and nasalized in Northern Temiar, when copyfixed; the rules for this are in OTG, 1976b: 143.

¹⁴⁶ Jah Hut augments the incopyfix with a glottal stop. Diffloth reports (1976:236) that a few Semai dialects carry this process further, reducing most incopyfixed finals to glottal stop, so that only -ʔ- gets inserted: *prɔ:c* ‘brittle’ → **prɔ:c* → **pʔrɔ:c* [piʔrɔ:c].

¹⁴⁷ GB: But not proto-Senoic, because of forms like Temiar **pēl**.

¹⁴⁸ GB: Cf. The archaic Temiar form **kədɔr**, used only in legends.

Other branches of Mon-Khmer (e.g. Waic, Khmuic, Nicobarese) provide evidence that reduplicative infixation must be posited as a feature of Proto-Mon-Khmer itself.¹⁵⁰

(2) *with root-external infix plus incopyfix:*

In Semai count nouns may be derived from mass nouns by using both a root-external nasal infix and an incopyfix of the final. When the root-initial is simple, the incopyfix precedes the infix:

$$C_i V C_f \rightarrow C_i - C_f - N - V C_f.$$

Thus *te:w* ‘river’ (mass) \rightarrow *twne:w* [tuni:w] ‘id.’ (count).¹⁵¹ When the root-initial is complex, the infix precedes the incopyfix:

$$C_i C_2 V C_f \rightarrow C_i - N - C_f - C_2 V C_f.$$

Thus *sla:y* ‘swidden’ (mass) \rightarrow *snyla:y* [snila:y] ‘id.’ (count).

(3) *with root-external prefix plus incopyfix:*

The ‘gerundive’ or action-nominalized derivative of simple-initialised verbs is formed in all three branches of Aslian by prefixing *n*-¹⁵² and then incopyfixing the final between the prefix and the root-initial:

¹⁴⁹ Diffloth 1977.

¹⁵⁰ Such processes are still apparently productive in Nancowry Nicobarese (Radhakrishnan 1970:149ff). A few Proto-Waic reconstructed roots look like they have fossilized incopyfixes, e.g. **rmhom* ‘heart, mind’ [Diffloth 1980, p. 148]. Delcros’ Khmu dictionary (1966) has forms like *rtjut* ‘horrible’ *lpbaap* ‘immense’.

¹⁵¹ Diffloth 1976a:236. Jah Hut has a simpler process for deriving count nouns, using only the nasal infix: *ktɔʔ* ‘daylight’ / *kntɔʔ* ‘day’ (unit of time) [Diffloth 1976c].

GB: So does Temiar, but not productively: *tɔp* ‘former, past’ \rightarrow (*nār*) *tənm* ‘(two) nights’; *səmaʔ* (Lanoh) ‘human being’, Temiar *senmaʔ* ‘person (in counting only)’.

$$C_i V Cf \rightarrow N - Cf - C_i V Cf.$$

[N. Aslian] Batek *juuk* ‘breathe’ / *nkjuuk* ‘the act of breathing’, Cheq Wong *kac* ‘scratch, claw’ / *nckac* ‘scratching’; [S. Aslian] Mah Meri *du?* ‘run’ / *n?du?* ‘running’, Semelai *kap* ‘bite’ / *npkap* ‘biting’; [Senoic] Jah Hut *ca?* ‘eat’ / *n?ca?* ‘eating’, *həy* ‘wake up’ / *nyhəy* [ni?həy] ‘awakening’; Temiar *kab* ‘bite’ / *nebkab* ‘biting’.¹⁵³

(4) with reduplication of the initial and a root-external infix:

Semai and Temiar both have a verbal infix *-a-*; in Semai it is used (unproductively) to form resultative verbs, while in Temiar it productively marks the ‘*simulfactive aspect*’.^{154/155} In both languages, if the root initial has two consonants, the *-a-* simply goes between them: Semai *slɔ:r* ‘lay flat objects into round container’ / *salɔ:r* ‘be in layers (in round container)’; Temiar *slɔg* [səlɔg] ‘lie down, sleep, marry’ / *salɔg* ‘go straight off to sleep’. If, however, the C_i of the root is simple, it is reduplicated so that the *-a-* can be inserted between the original and its copy:

$$C_i V Cf \rightarrow C_i A C_i V Cf.$$

Thus Semai *cē:s* ‘tear off’ / *cacē:s* ‘be torn off’; Temiar *gəl* ‘sit’ / *gagəl* ‘sit down suddenly’.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² GB: Yes, but the *infix* form is probably more usual: see *csnēēs* (not **nscēēs*) in Fig. IV below. Forms like *nebkab* are characteristic only of Western Perak State, and not (except by ‘immigrants’) in Kelantan. Such prefixed forms are normal in Lanoh, however, and the Perak Temiar usage may relate to that.

¹⁵³ Diffloth 1975:16. Temiar has an alternative gerundial form *kebnab* which results from the application of different rules: first insertion of an *-n-* infix, then incopyfixation of the *Cf* between the C_i and this infix [see (2) above].

GB: This applies in the Temiar of Kelantan state, where it is not an ‘alternative’ so much as the norm.

¹⁵⁴ Diffloth 1976a:238; Benjamin 1976b:168.

¹⁵⁵ GB: I’d much prefer you to drop this usage in favour of ‘middle voice’; my earlier, albeit published, analysis was half-baked, and I’m sticking with ‘middle voice’! The argument for this is in SOTG, 1981: 87f.

¹⁵⁶ GB: Or alternatively ‘to collapse into one’s seat’ (a ‘middle’ meaning explained in SOTG, 1981: 101).

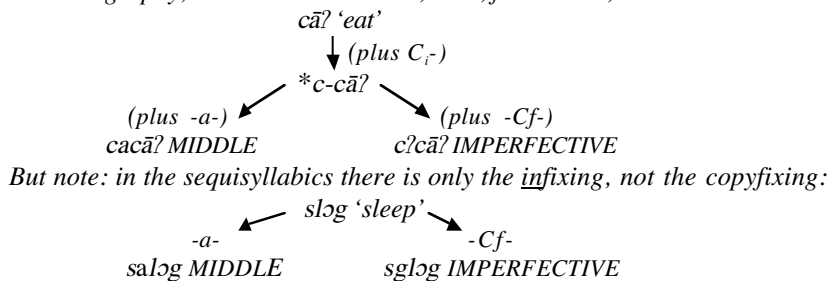
(5) with reduplication of the initial and incopyfixation of the final:

Most intricate of all is the pattern wherein a simple initial is reduplicated to provide an environment for the incopyfixation of the final:¹⁵⁷

$$C_i \text{ V } C_f \rightarrow C_i - C_f - C_i \text{ V } C_f.^{158}$$

In all three branches of Aslian, this pattern is used to derive the ‘continuative’ or ‘progressive’ form of verbs:¹⁵⁹ [N. Aslian] Batek *kwuc* ‘grate’ / *kckwuc* ‘is grating’, *geh* ‘stir coals’ / *ghgeh* ‘is stirring coals’; Cheq Wong *pədn* ‘think’ / *pnpədn*¹⁶⁰ ‘is thinking’; [S. Aslian] Semelai *thəm* ‘pound in a mortar’ / *tmtthəm* ‘is pounding’,¹⁶¹ *kap* ‘bite’ / *kpkap* ‘is biting’; [Senoic] Jah Hut *ca?* ‘eat’ / *c?ca?* ‘is eating’, Semai *laal* ‘stick out one’s tongue’ / *lllaal* [ləlla:l] ‘is sticking out one’s tongue’, Temiar *həh* ‘follow’ / *hhhəh* [həhəh] ‘is following’.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ GB: Yes, good! This analysis does make sense, especially when the epenthetic vowel is omitted from the orthography, as in Gérard’s Semai; then, for Temiar, we will have:



My point is that (although you have just mentioned it above) from a semantic or syntactic angle these are the same processes in both cases, but your readers may not see that clearly enough from your morphology-based discussion.

¹⁵⁸ Superficially it looks as if both the C_i and the C_f are prefixed to the root - but such an analysis would obscure the close relationship between this pattern and the preceding ones.

¹⁵⁹ See Diffloth 1975a, p. 15.

GB: I now use ‘imperfective’ for the copyfixed-only form (cē?ca?), and ‘progressive’ for the additionally **bar**-prefixed form (bē-cē?ca?) in Temiar.

¹⁶⁰ Note that the final disintegrated nasal functions like an ordinary nasal with respect to this rule.

¹⁶¹ There is apparently a constraint in Semelai prohibiting more than one aspirate in a sequence.

¹⁶² The relentless morphological logic of the Aslian languages is demonstrated by the fact that this rule works even when the C_i and C_f are the same (with anaptyctic vowels to smooth the way)!

GB: On the phonetic level Temiar phonological geminates are pronounced ‘single.’ See OTG, 1976b:135.

Fossilized forms in the modern languages reflect this same process (e.g. Jah Hut *tntyɛn* ‘bridge’),¹⁶³ as do similar forms reconstructed for Proto-Semai: **wcwooc* ‘pangolin’,¹⁶⁴ (avoidance name) [< **wooc* to coil’ (#56);¹⁶⁵ **bybuuy* ‘talk while dreaming’ (#80); **jwjɔw* ‘chestnut capped babbling thrush’ (#94).

Similar to this Aslian reduplication of the C_i is the ‘initial copying’ that is such a prominent feature of Khmer morphology.¹⁶⁶

(d) ‘Structural ambiguities’ in Aslian morphology.

It is only to be expected that in morphology of this complexity, problems might arise when different processes accidentally produce the same output. In an elegant little article, Diffloth (1972) discusses two such ‘morphological ambiguities’ in Semai. As we have seen [above (b)], Semai forms causatives by an *-r-* infix, and action-nominalizations by an *-n-* infix: *sɲɔh* ‘be afraid’ / *sɲɔh* ‘frighten someone’; *tlɔh* ‘to visit, / *tnlɔh* ‘a visit’. The Semai indeterminate aspect, on the other hand, is formed by incopyfixing the final: *khɔ:y* ‘yawn’ / *kyhɔ:y* ‘is yawning’ [above, (4)]. Thus whenever the C_i of the root happens to be *-r-* or *-n-*, its incopyfixation is indistinguishable from the root-external *-r-* and *-n-* infixes. We end up with ambiguous forms like the following:

<i>pde:r</i> ‘say something’ ----> <i>prde:r</i>	<div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle; font-size: 3em; line-height: 1;">{</div> <div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle; margin-left: 10px;"> 1. ‘make someone speak’ [CAUSATIVE INFIX] 2. ‘is speaking’ [INDETERMINATE INCOPYFIX] </div>
--	--

¹⁶³ Other examples are given in Diffloth 1976c.

¹⁶⁴ GB: In Temiar **wejwōj** is the normal word for ‘pangolin’; the animal itself is fenced in with taboos, however!

¹⁶⁵ Diffloth 1977.

¹⁶⁶ See Jenner 1969, pp. 63 ff.

čdo:n ‘lean again:st.’ ----> čndo:n	{ <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ‘the act of leaning’ [NOMINALIZING INFIX] 2. ‘is leaning against’ [INDETERMINATE INCOPYFIX]¹⁶⁷
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Context will disambiguate such forms - much as context enables us to distinguish between English participles and gerunds in *-ing*.

(e) *Exploitation of affixational patterns in paradigms.*

The various morphological devices cooperate and interact in Aslian inflectional paradigms, as illustrated in Figs. IV and V:

¹⁶⁷ GB: I'm not convinced that these particular couplets are as semantically different as this formal analysis would suggest. For a 'traditional' Semai speaker, 'speaking' would almost necessarily be a 'making-to-speak' of one's interlocutors. And 'leaning' is almost necessarily also a 'being-leant', as befits the 'perfective/patientive' coloration of the *-n-* infix; for relevant discussion see my notes on *kalēk* to 'prop' in SOTG, 1981: 107-108.

I make these remarks because Temiar, being so like Semai, 'should' have such ambiguities too, but it seems not to. Maybe the Semai examples only occur in verbs capable of dialectically 'middle-voice' or 'reciprocal' interpretations, in which case the morphological feature may be secondary calques on the semantics—and hence not really 'ambiguous' at all.

Figure 4: Morphology of a Semai verbal paradigm

	<i>Root Type</i>	<i>Simple</i>	<i>Complex</i>	<i>Sesquisyllabic</i>
Grammatical Category	<i>Structural Formula</i> <i>Example:</i>	$C_i V C_f$ <i>cẽ:s</i> ‘tear off’	$C_i C_2 V C_f$ <i>tlɔh</i> ‘visit’	$C_i V C_2 V C_f$ <i>kalɔ:ʔ</i> ‘tame, stupid’
Indeterminate	<i>Formula</i> <i>Processes</i> <i>Example:</i>	$C_i-C_f-C_i V C_f$ reduplication of initial; incopyfixation of final <i>cscẽ:s</i>	$C_i-C_f-C_2 V C_f$ incopyfixation of final <i>thlɔh</i>	$b-C_i V C_2 V C_f$ prefixation of <i>b</i> <i>bkalɔ:ʔ</i>
Causative	<i>Formula</i> <i>Processes</i> <i>Example:</i>	$\left. \begin{matrix} \text{pr-} \\ \text{br-} \\ \text{p-} \end{matrix} \right\} C_i V C_f$ prefixation <i>pcẽ:s</i>	$C_i -r- C_2 V C_f$ infixation of <i>-r-</i> <i>trlɔh</i>	$p-C_i V C_2 V C_f$ prefixation of <i>p-</i> <i>pkalɔ:ʔ</i>
Nominalization	<i>Formula</i> <i>Processes</i> <i>Example:</i>	$C_i-C_f-n-V C_f$ infixation of <i>-n-</i> ; incopyfixation of final <i>csnẽ:s</i>	$C_i-n-C_2 V C_f$ infixation of <i>-n-</i> <i>tnlɔh</i>	$C_i-n-V C_2 V C_f$ infixation of <i>-n-</i> <i>knalɔ:ʔ</i>

Figure IV: Morphology of a Semai verbal paradigm¹⁶⁸¹⁶⁸ Adapted from Diffloth 1976a: 240

<i>Root Type</i>	<i>Aspect</i> <i>Voice</i>	<i>Perfective</i>	<i>Imperfective</i>	<i>Progressive</i>	<i>Verbal Noun</i> ¹⁶⁹
SIMPLE C _i V C _f <i>kōw</i> ‘call’	<i>Middle</i> (<i>valency decreasing</i>)	<i>kakōw</i> reduplication of C _i ; infixation of -a-	-----	<i>bə-kakōw</i> prefixation of bə-	<i>kənakōw</i> infixation of -n-
	<i>Base/Simplex</i>	<i>kōw</i>	<i>kəwkōw</i> reduplication of C _i ; incopyfixation of C _f ; vowel epenthesis	<i>bə-kəwkōw</i>	<i>kəwnōw</i> incopyfixation of C _f ; infixation of -n- ~ <i>nəwkōw</i> prefixation of n-; incopyfixation of C _f
	<i>Causative</i> (<i>valency increasing</i>)	<i>terkōw</i> prefixation of ter-	<i>tərkōw</i> incopyfixation of C _f	<i>ba-tərkōw</i>	<i>tərenkōw</i> infixation of -n-
SESQUI-SYLLABIC <i>səlog</i> ‘lie down’	<i>Middle</i> (<i>valency decreasing</i>)	<i>salog</i> infixation of -a- (with deletion of minor vowel)	-----	<i>bə-salog</i> prefixation of bə-	<i>sənalog</i> infixation of -n-; infixation of -a-
	<i>Base/Simplex</i>	<i>səlog</i>	<i>səglōg</i> incopyfixation of C _f	<i>bə-səglōg</i>	<i>sənlōg</i> infixation of -n-
	<i>Causative</i> (<i>valency increasing</i>)	<i>sərlōg</i> infixation of -r-	<i>səreglōg</i>	<i>ba-səreglōg</i>	<i>sərenlōg</i>

Fig. V Morphology of a Temiar verbal paradigm.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ GB: Alternative verbal noun forms are (non-productively) associated with some other verb roots, equivalent to *kənōw, *kanōw, kənəwkōw, *sənəglōg~nəgsəlog.

¹⁷⁰ This chart represents a radical revision of the scheme presented in Benjamin 1976b: 169, which I had originally adapted for this paper. The current version is based on the handwritten emendations Benjamin made to p. 33 of my 1983 manuscript. Note that the unstressed vowel in the sesquisyllabic forms is sometimes realized as [ə] and sometimes as [ɛ]. Benjamin accompanied his revised chart with the following comments:

GB: Some advantages of the ‘new’ paradigm:

1. It reflects much deeper thought on my part than the earlier version.

1.3 Aslian grammar

Although relatively little has yet been published in the field of Aslian grammar, recent work by Benjamin and Diffloth on Central Aslian (=Senoic) languages (Temiar, Jah Hut, and Semai) have afforded us tantalizing glimpses of the riches that still await description. Aslian syntax is presumably conservative with respect to Austroasiatic as a whole, though Malay influence is apparent in some details of the grammar (e.g. the use of numeral classifiers, below 1.5).¹⁷¹

2. It links voice (diathesis) very clearly to valency-increase and valency-reduction in a way that makes sense of the iconicity and the semantics I claim for -r- and -a- in my SOTG; that is, the ‘middle’ is a kind of anti-causative.

3. It doesn’t generate hypothetical but non-existing forms like *tərakɔw, since the impossibility is inherent in the very framework of the paradigm.

4. The non-conjunction of ‘imperfective’ and ‘middle’ is marked by a hole in the framework; the morphological forms would presumably be *kəwakɔw and *səgalɔg but like *tərakɔw and *səralɔg these are not part of the verb-paradigm, even if parallel forms can be found in nouns and expressives. (In SOTG 1981: 89, I suspect that the ‘perfective/imperfective’ distinction may well be neutralised in the middle voice. This possibility could be indicated on the chart by placing kakɔw and salɔg further to the right and removing the dash.)

5. It shows where the bar- forms fit paradigmatically.

6. It obviates the use of ‘simulfactive’ (which most people confuse with ‘semelfactive’ anyway!).

7. It fits well with your ‘process’ analyses.

Problems

1. I can’t decide whether or not to use the hyphen in the bar- forms; bar- can also occur with nouns, and behaves like a clitic, not a prefix.

2. I can’t think of a good term to replace the lame ‘base’ in the ‘voice’ series. I tried ‘active’ but it raises all sorts of problems.

3. I’m happy with ‘progressive’; but later research on discourse grammar may lead me to change ‘perfective’ and imperfective’ – they’re not too far off the mark as analytical terms, however.

¹⁷¹ GB: I think that at least the following Temiar morphological elements are Austronesian, or even Malay, in origin: -m- ‘subjective orientation’; -a- ‘middle voice’; bar- ‘progressive’; ma- ‘to; object orientation’; tər-, -r- ‘causative’; and perhaps -n- ‘nominal’ and ʔ- ‘actor role-marker’. I argue this in detail in the revised version of SOTG.

(a) *Basic and permuted word order*

Senoic sentences seem to fall into two basic types: *process* (or active) and stative.

In stative sentences the predicate (i.e. the stative verb or ‘adjective’) comes first:

[1] Mənū? | ʔəh (big, it) ‘It’s big.’ [OTG 27]¹⁷²
 VP NP_{subj}

[2] Mna? | kəy mǎh (big, head, your) ‘Your head is big.’ [JH 13]
 VP NP_{subj}

Process sentences normally have the subject first, with the object and all other complements following the verb:

[3] Cwə? | yəh-mʔməs (dog, 3p,¹⁷³ growl) ‘The dog growls.’ [JH 14]
 NP_{subj} P_{Pfx} V

[4] ʔihāh | na? cip cwəm kyey
 NP_{subj} Aux_v V_h NP_{obj}
 (I, INTENT, go, dig, tuber) ‘I’m going [somewhere] to dig up tubers.’ [*ibid.*]

[5] Babō? na? | na-gelgəl
 N_h Det P_{Pfx} V
 NP_{subj}

¹⁷² Diagrammatic conventions used in this section: solid vertical lines separate NP and VP; dotted vertical lines separate verb and object; angled vertical lines show permuted constituents; double solid verticals separate clauses.

¹⁷³ These pronominal prefixes or proclitics, which mark the verb to agree with the NP_{subj} in person and number, do not occur on stative verbs in Jah Hut or Temiar.

GB: See OTG, 1976b:160 for discussion of this important point. Asmah Haji Omar (1976) observes that adjectives do not take the five verbal affixes she discusses for Kentaqbong. I think you have to distinguish ‘stative verbs’ from ‘adjectives’ in Temiar, unless you are calling some of my statives ‘process’ verbs instead. Stativised verbs like *gelgəl* ‘seated’ can take the pronominal ‘subject’ deictics; but adjectives like *mənū?* (plural: *məʔnū?*) ‘big’ cannot.

(woman, that, 3p, sit) ‘That woman is sitting down.’ [SOTG 1981:20]

[6] Tatā? doh | na-cā? | kəbō?
 N Det P_{Pfx} V NP_{obj}
 NP_{subj}

(old man, this, 3p, eat, fruit) ‘The old man is eating fruit.’ [*ibid.*]

In keeping with this basic SVO order, Senoic languages are prepositional; in Jah Hut all complements but the direct object require a preposition:

[7] ?ihāh | na? cəp | rap tuy han bulus
 NP_{subj} Aux V N_{obj} Det Prep Obj
 (I, INTENT, stab, boar, that, with, spear) ‘I’ll stab that boar with a spear.’ [JH 16]

Relative clauses and similar verbal modifiers of nouns¹⁷⁴ follow their head-noun,

[8] ?idəh | plə? [kəm bə?-ca?]
 NP_{subj} N_h Aux P_{Pfx} V
 (this, fruit, can, 1p-pl., eat) ‘This is a fruit which we can eat.’ [JH 19],¹⁷⁵

as do possessives (cf. [2] *kəy māh* ‘your head’), demonstratives (cf. [5] *babō? nā?* ‘that woman’) and attributive nouns (*jah cina?* ‘a Chinese’ [“person China”] JH 13).

¹⁷⁴ In Temiar verbs in relative clauses are in the imperfective form: *dēk kēlkəl* [N_h + V_{cont}] ‘a collapsing house’, *sej mējmej* [N_h + V_{cont}] ‘excellent meat’, *sen?əy* [cə?cā? kəbō?] [N_h + (V_{cont} + Obj)] ‘a person eating fruit’.

GH: Subject-relativisations are verbal, being virtually stative verbs-cum-adjectives, and are in the ‘imperfective’ copyfixed form, but object-relativisations are in the nominalised verbal-noun form, being virtually possessives: *babāh pē?lu? yeh* ‘the man who hit me’ vs. *babāh pēnlu? yeh* ‘the man whom I hit’ (man, hit, me).

¹⁷⁵ In positive ‘equational’ sentences like this one (“NP₁ [is] an NP₂”) no copula is expressed, but Jah Hut does use a negative copula (“NP₁ is-not an NP₂”):

 ?ihāh ?iwəŋ jah cina?
 NP₁ NEG-COP NP₂
 ‘I am not a Chinese.’

This seems to be cognate to a Semoq Beri verb *wen* which expresses a *negative desiderative* ‘not want’ - what one might call a *nolitive*: *?əpsec cəgəh ?əp-wen* (meat, tough, I, NOLITIVE), ‘I don’t want tough meat.’ See Nik Safiah and Ton, p. 30.

GB: In the published version of Nik Safiah and Ton this sentence is misprinted as *ənsec cəgəh ?əp*, with the *wen* missing but with the *?əp* correct!

The negative morpheme precedes the verb, though the personal prefix may intervene before the verb root:

- [9] *ʔe-loʔ tɔʔ ha-rɛjɾec sej məjməj naʔ*
 why Neg P_{px} V N_h V_{cont} Det
 NP_{obj}
 (why, NEG, 2p-eat, meat, excellent, that)
 ‘Why didn’t you eat that excellent meat?’ [OTG 167]

- [10] *tapiʔ hət yəh-dlɛh kay ʔihāh rɔʔ*
 Conj Neg P_{px} V Prep Obj Prt
 (but, NEG, 3p, look, at, me, EMPH) ‘But he didn’t look at me.’ [JH 26]

Adjectives may also be negated (*tɔʔ mənūʔ* ‘not big’ [OTG 167]), and if negatability is to be taken as criterial for verbhood in Aslian (as it is throughout East and Southeast Asia), adjectives must be considered a subclass of verb. Semoq Beri (S. Aslian) shows a morphophonemic relationship between its pre-verbal negative *beh* (*heʔ* | *beh jruh* ‘He is not tall’) and its sentence-final yes/no question particle *bəh* (*bəteʔ təʔ* | *gəhɛt bəh* ‘Is that papaya sweet?’),¹⁷⁶ which is very reminiscent of Thai *māj* ‘not’ [pre-verbal] ≠ *mǎy* ‘yes/no question’ [sentence-final]. In Kentaqpong (N. Aslian) the negative morphemes *bəyaʔ* and *yin* come before the verb they negate, but they may also occur as full verbs in their own right with the meaning ‘not have, lack’ (*jɛʔ* | *bəyaʔ kətɛh* NP(subj) - V - NP(obj) ‘I don’t have any rubber’).¹⁷⁷ Negated verbs like *bəyaʔ kəs* ‘not hit’ thus look as if they were originally serial-verb constructions.

Multi-verb constructions do not seem to be particularly highly developed in Aslian,¹⁷⁸ and seem restricted to two-verb strings, with the first verb often a verb of motion

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* Jah Hut also has this particle: *gmac bəh pləʔ nin* (tasty, QST, fruit, that) ‘Is that fruit good to eat?’ In this sentence the subject NP has been permuted to post-verbal position.

¹⁷⁷ Asmah, *op. cit.*, pp. 963-965. Asmah does not distinguish semantically or syntactically between *bəyaʔ* and *yin*. *bəyaʔ* looks to be cognate to Semoq Beri *beh* ≠ *bəh*. Cf. Also Batek and Mendriq *bəraʔ* ‘not.’

¹⁷⁸ In the sense that they are, e.g. in the Lolo-Burmese branch of TB.

to which the second stands in a ‘purposive’ relationship: Jah Hut *cip cwɔm* ‘go to dig up’ (above [4]), Kentaqpong *sa dʒɛl* ‘go down to sell’, *dɔh dɛŋ* ‘come to see’. In other types of two-verb sequences the second verb may express *manner* (Kb. *kapəŋ mənɲə?* ‘fly high’), *reason* (Kb. *kəbis kələmot* ‘die hungry’) or *result* (JH *bəs ʔɛ? laju?* ‘throw far’).¹⁷⁹

Permutations of NP’s are rather freely permitted in Senoic, though this frequently entails the use of special case-marking particles (or prepositions that serve syntactic as well as semantic functions [OTG 1976b:164]) to ‘keep the continuity of reference clear’. In Temiar, when a NP is shifted to the opposite side of its VP (i.e. when the subject or agent is post-verbal, or when a definite object is pre-verbal) it is frequently marked by *cə-* (for subjects of intransitive or stative verbs), *ʔi-* (for agents of transitive verbs), or *ha-* (for objects of transitive verbs).¹⁸⁰

- [11] na-gɛgəl ca-babō? na?
 P_{Pfx} V_{cont} Prt N_h Det
 VP_{intrans} NP_{subj}
 (3p, sitting, PERMUTED STATANT, woman, that)
 ‘That woman is sitting down.’ [SOTG 8]

- [12] na-cā? kəbō? ʔi-tatā? doh
 P_{Pfx} V_{trans} NP_{obj} Prt N_h Det
 VP NP_{subj}
 (3p, eat, fruit, PERMUTED AGENT, old man, this)
 ‘This old man ate the fruit.’ [*ibid.*]

¹⁷⁹ Here the sequence is mediated by the ‘prospective’ particle *ʔɛ?*. See Asmah *op. cit.*, p. 962; JH, pp. 25-26.

¹⁸⁰ GB: *The fundamental difference is: cə- marks non-controlling subject, while ʔi- marks controlling subject. Thus, in contrast to [11], consider: na-gɛlgəl ʔi-babō? na? ‘that woman is sitting herself down’—action, not state. The contrast is not one of transitivity-relations; see SOTG, 1981:25.*

- [13] ha-kəbḥ? na-cā? | ?i-tatā? doh
 Prt NP_{obj} P_{px} V Prt N_h Det
 (PERMUTED DEFINITE OBJECT,¹⁸¹ fruit, 3p, eat, PERMUTED AGENT, old man, this)
 ‘This old man ate the fruit; It was the fruit that the old man ate.’ [*ibid.*]

In Jah Hut, the predicate of an equational sentence may be shifted to the front of its subject, provided it is followed by a ‘predicate clitic’ like *məh* :

- [14] təl cnu?ɔŋ jah məh dɔh
 N N_h(deverb) N_{attr} CLITIC Det
 NP₂ NP₁
 (trace, making-fire, people’s, PERMUTED NP, this)
 ‘These are traces of people making fire.’ [JH 13]

Any Jah Hut complement may in fact be permuted to pre-verbal position, as in [15] and [16], where a locative and an object NP are fronted, respectively:

- [15] na? dɔh məh ?imāh kr?di?
 Prep N CLITIC NP_{subj} VP
 NP_{loc}
 (at, here, PERMUTED NP, you, stay)
 ‘You’ll stay here, won’t you?’ [JH 23]

- [16] cyək nin dah yəh-ca?
 NP_{obj} Aux P_{px} V
 VP
 (banana, that, already, he, eat)
 ‘He already ate that banana.’ [*ibid.*]

¹⁸¹ If the preposed object is not marked by *ha-* (*kəbḥ? na-ca? ?i-tatā? doh*) it is interpreted as indefinite (‘The old man ate some fruit’) [Benjamin *SOTG*, 1981:27]. Benjamin in fact called these particles ‘somewhat like definite articles’ in *OTG*, 1976b:164.

‘Is that fruit good to eat?’ [JH 21]

Comparing, e.g. [16] and [20], we see that neither the object of a transitive sentence (*cyək nin* ‘that banana’) nor the subject of an intransitive directionless one (*plə? nin* ‘that fruit’) receives any case-marker when permuted. These facts lead Diffloth to call Jah Hut an ‘ergative’ language of a new type.¹⁸⁶

Whether or not the much-stretched notion of ergativity is really meaningful in the Senoic context,¹⁸⁷ Diffloth’s subtle analysis points up the crucial importance of directionality in Aslian grammar.

(b) *Deixis, directionality, and voice.*

Senoic languages set much store by deictic precision. This manifests itself in their elaborate pronominal systems, which make inclusive/exclusive and dual/plural distinctions, and take the trouble to reflect the person and number of the subject by a prefixal concord-pronoun on the verb. Locative deixis pays careful attention to the relative position (both horizontal and vertical) of speaker and hearer,¹⁸⁸ even when this seems quite irrelevant to the message:

¹⁸⁶ The original title of Diffloth 1976c was in fact “Jah Hut, an ergative Mon-Khmer language”. Note that there is no question of Temiar’s being ‘ergative’, even by this definition, since permuted objects receive a different marker (*ha-*) from permuted subjects, whether the latter are agentive (*?i-*) or not (*cə-*). See above.

¹⁸⁷ Diffloth seems to regard the particle *na?* as underlyingly present in agentive NP’s, and ‘lost only if the Agent is in pre-verbal position’ (p. 23). But since it is the pre-verbal position which is normal for Agents, this seems a bit backwards. Could it not be argued that when an animate subject is permuted out of pre-verbal position it *acquires* a special marker to make sure it does not get misinterpreted as an object, i.e. ‘to keep the continuity of reference clear’? An inanimate NP like ‘that banana’ would never be misinterpreted as an agent even when permuted to pre-verbal position, so it requires no marking.

¹⁸⁸ Jah Hut makes a five-way distinction: *dəh* ‘this here, near speaker’ / *nin* ‘that there, near addressee, or not too far from speaker’ / *tuy* ‘that out there, far from both speaker and addressee’ / *teh* ‘that up, higher than speaker’ / *reh* ‘that down, lower than speaker’ [JH 19]. These correspond exactly to the ‘spatial demonstratives’ of Lahu: *chò, ô, cô, nô, mô* (Matisoff 1973:51).

GB: Temiar also has *nin*, in both the temporal and locational deictic series (OTG, 1976b:161); but Malay also has *nin, inin* ‘this’, at least in the spoken language.

- [21] (Temiar) yē? doh | ?i-m-?og ma-hā? na?
 Pron LOC P_{Pfx}-Prt-V Prep-pron LOC
 (I, here, 1p, INTENT, give, to, you, there)
 ‘I here will give it to you there’
 (i.e. ‘I’ll give it to you’).¹⁸⁹

On the clause level, Jah Hut often marks the end of a dependent clause by a ‘deictic pronoun’ whose sole function seems to be to mark the inter-clausal boundary:¹⁹⁰

- [22] bila? j?jæt ?inin || yəh dyəh pr?du?
 Conj V CLAUSE NP VP
 PRONOUN
 Cl₁ Cl₂
 (when, startled, THAT, he, just-now, run) ‘
 ‘When he is startled, he runs away.’ [JH 25]

Of all the deictic oppositions (this/that, here/there, up/down, etc.), the one with the most pervasive ramifications throughout the grammars of these languages is what Benjamin calls ‘in/out’ - not only on the concrete locative level but especially on the more abstract level of self-oriented (inner-directed) vs. other-oriented (outer-directed).¹⁹¹ These notions have been explored independently in two impressive papers by Diffloth (1974a) and Benjamin (1981).

¹⁸⁹ OTG, p. 24. ‘It is good Temiar to use demonstratives freely in this way whenever possible ... especially with pronouns.’ Temiar *doh* ‘this here’ as well as *teh* ‘up there’ and *reh* ‘down there’ are obviously cognate to the corresponding JH spatial demonstratives (previous note).

¹⁹⁰ This is somewhat reminiscent of the ‘resumptive’ use of the clause-final demonstratives *níi* ‘this’ and *nán* ‘that’ in Thai.

¹⁹¹ Benjamin 1979 has demonstrated the fundamental importance of the inner/outer distinction in Temiar cosmology and world-view.

GB: More strictly, I argued that Temiar (and Semai) culture has both ‘in/out’ and ‘up/down’ fixations, Semang culture has just the ‘up/down’ one, and Malay (also Jah Hut, by implication) has just the ‘in/out’ one. I still hold to this view over 10 years later, after going into these questions in much greater depth.

In “Body moves in Semai and French” (1974a), Diffloth explains certain syntactic peculiarities in the behavior of Semai sentences referring to bodily movements (e.g. ‘I spread my toes’; I closed my eyes’). While the subjects of ordinary Semai transitive sentences may be freely permuted to post-verbal position, where they must be marked by the preposition *la-* [22 a-c],¹⁹² the subjects of structurally identical looking ‘body move’ sentences do not tolerate such paraphrases [23 a, b]:

[23a] $\begin{array}{c} \text{?ep} \mid \text{?n-ca:?} \vdots \text{tley} \text{ ?ajeh} \\ \text{N}_{\text{subj}} \quad \text{P}_{\text{Pfx}} \text{ V} \quad \text{N}_{\text{obj}} \quad \text{Det} \\ (1, 1\text{p}, \text{eat}, \text{banana}, \text{that}) \\ \text{‘I ate that banana.’} \end{array}$

[23b] $\begin{array}{c} \text{?n-ca:?} \int \text{la-?ep} \vdots \text{tley} \text{ ?ajeh} \\ \text{[permuted subject / verb]} \end{array}$

[23c] $\begin{array}{c} \text{tley} \text{ ?ajeh} \int \text{?n-ca:?} \int \text{la-?ep} \\ \text{[permuted subject / verb as well as permuted verb / object]} \end{array}$

However,

[24a] $\begin{array}{c} \text{sapɛ:t} \text{ ?adeh} \mid \text{ki-ŋɔ:p} \text{ ?i-ku:y} \\ \text{NP}_{\text{subj}} \quad \text{P}_{\text{Pfx}} \text{ V} \quad \text{NP}_{\text{obj}} \\ (\text{child}, \text{this}, 3\text{p}, \text{nod}, \text{his}, \text{head}) \\ \text{‘This child nodded his head.’} \end{array}$

[24b] $\begin{array}{c} *?i-ku:y \text{ ki-ŋɔ:p} \int \text{la-sapɛ:t} \text{ ?adeh.}^{193} \end{array}$

Semai body-move sentences are thus inner-directed, involving the ‘personal sphere, of the speaker’¹⁹⁴ - the subject is in the same location as the process.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Semai *la-* is thus closely analogous to the Jah Hut particle *na?*- discussed above, which also marks a *permuted agent*.

¹⁹³ This last sentence could only be given a far-fetched interpretation: ‘The child took his head in his hands and shook it, producing a nod.’

¹⁹⁴ Cf. C. Bally (1926). Diffloth draws persuasive analogies between Semai body-movement sentences and such French inner-directed locutions as *Il ferme les yeux* or *On lui a fouillé les poches*, where the definite article (rather than possessive pronouns) indicates a kind of inalienable possession.

¹⁹⁵ GB: A detailed section on the syntax and semantics of body-moves and body or mental states is given in the revised version of SOTG (1981). The surface features are very different from Semai, but the same

Benjamin's paper (1978) "Self and Other in Temiar grammar" persuasively argues that Temiar is

‘pervaded by a phonetically marked distinction between self and other which underlies the lexicon of person (pronouns, demonstratives, proper nouns, and common nouns), the morphology of verb inflection, and the phonetic shapes of the particles marking case, discourse structure, and modality’ (p.1).

The phonological shapes of the Temiar pronouns, demonstratives, case and discourse particles (for showing permuted constituents), and person/number verb-prefixes offer solid support to Benjamin's contention that all these areas of the grammar are profoundly interrelated.¹⁹⁶ Benjamin goes even further, and attempts a minute correlation of the self/other dichotomy with the phonetic articulation of the sounds used to express it: ‘subjective self-reference’ is marked by functors pronounced with a ‘more closed mouth position’ (e.g. the vowel **-i-** and ‘front’ consonants like **m- y- c- r-**), while ‘objective other-reference’ is marked by the open vowel **-a-** and ‘back’ consonants like **h-** and **ʔ-**. The preposition **ma-** ‘to’ that marks highly focused goal-hood (e.g. *ʔi-pəlu? ma-hā?* ‘I hit you’) contains both an ‘inner’ sound **m-** and an ‘outer’ **-a**, but this is because it marks ‘the transition from subjectivity to objectivity’ (1981:66f.); the causative infix **-r-** is related to the notion of plurality or replication [see above], since ‘the Agent causes the Patient to replicate the action that is already in the Agent’s subjectivity’ - and Benjamin speculates that [r] may have been chosen to represent this idea because of the inherently repetitive nature of a trill (pp. 49-51).¹⁹⁷

underlying preoccupations are there. In Temiar, just who or what ‘has’ or ‘aches’ a headache is a deeply religious question, so some of this linguistic discussion will reappear in my book Temiar Religion.

¹⁹⁶ Thus the markers for permuted-agent (*ʔi-*) and permuted-object (*ha-*) are identical to the clitic pronominal forms *ʔi-* ‘I’ and *ha-* ‘you’; the demonstrative *na?* ‘there near you’ (e.g. *babō? na?* ‘that woman’ is the same etymon as the 3rd person verb prefix *na-* (*na-gəlgəl* ‘he is sitting’), etc.

¹⁹⁷ Diffloth (1976b:262) had made a very similar suggestion with respect to Semai expressives: ‘/r/ “feels” interrupted and plural.’

Admittedly some of this is hard to swallow for linguists imbued with a healthy skepticism toward sound-symbolic fantasies. But Aslian does have a startling propensity for intricate and self-conscious sound symbolism,¹⁹⁸ and there is undoubtedly more than a grain of truth in Benjamin's analysis.¹⁹⁹

Any languages so preoccupied with notions of inner- vs. outer-directedness might be expected to have developed voice as an overt grammatical category. Aslian does indeed have constructions which look more like passives than what one is used to finding in Southeast Asian languages.²⁰⁰

Not every permuted sentence where the object appears in subject position is to be interpreted as a passive, however. In a Jah Hut sentence like [24] the object comes first, but if the verb has a personal prefix it always agrees with the agent (no matter where it is in the sentence), not with the preposed object:

- [25] cyək nin dah | hāh-ca? na? ?ihāh
 NP_{obj} P_{Pfx}-V NP_{subj}
 (banana, that, completive, eat, AGENT, I)
 'I already ate the banana.'
 (not *'The banana was already eaten by me').

Kentaqpong does seem to have a true passive construction.²⁰¹ The underlying object appears first, followed by a marker *ʔab* which introduces the underlying agent and the verb (the agent may optionally be omitted).²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ See the discussion of *expressives*, below 1.4.

¹⁹⁹ This does not preclude one's taking it with a grain of salt!

²⁰⁰ GB: *My realigning of Temiar grammar in SOTG (1981) takes 'voice' very seriously: cf. the section on 'middle and causative as a semantic axis', which relates valences and voice directly to cultural concerns about 'in' and 'out.'*

²⁰¹ There is no way of testing this by checking the behavior of personal prefixes on the verb, since Kentaqpong does not have any.

- [26] manuk | ʔab (jɛʔ) kidik
 (chicken, PASSIVE, I, kill)
 ‘The chicken was killed (by me).’

ʔab may also occur by itself as a full verb, meaning ‘get; have fall on one (as rain)’.²⁰³

Semai has a non-productive ‘resultative’ infix *-a-* which turns transitive, agentive verbs [27a] into intransitive agentless ones [27b]:^{204/205}

- [27a] ʔabat ʔajeh | ʔη-ha-cē:s | la-ʔɛɲ²⁰⁶
 NP_{obj} P_{Pfx}-Aux-V NP_{subj}
 (cloth, this, 1p, DESIDERATIVE, tear, PERMUTED AGENT, I)
 ‘I shall tear this cloth.’

- [27b] ʔabat ʔajeh | la- (bi-)cacē:s
 Aux V_{result}
 (cloth, this, COMPLETIVE, (it), tear-RESULT)
 ‘This cloth is already torn.’²⁰⁷

²⁰² GB: There is something of this kind in Schebesta 1928, the earliest Aslian grammar of any worth; see especially pp. 820-1, where the operative word is not **ʔab** but **ke-** ‘by’. But Schebesta’s discussion is very tentative, and not convincing.

²⁰³ Asmah, pp. 965-7. This is reminiscent of the passive construction in a language like Thai, which also uses a grammaticalized verb (*thùuk* ‘reach; hit the mark’) to passivize an active sentence. The Thai construction is always ‘adversative’, however, which is not necessarily the case in Kentaqpong.

²⁰⁴ See above 1.2(c) (4) and Diffloth 1976a:238-9.

²⁰⁵ GB: Only Temiar and Lanoh had a productive *-a-* form of the verb.

²⁰⁶ Note that the permuted agent takes the preposition *la-*, above (b).

²⁰⁷ The *la-* here occurs pre-verbally with the aspectual meaning ‘completive’, and is synchronically (though probably not historically) a distinct morpheme from the homophonous pre-nominal particle *la-* ‘permuted agent’.

GB: A connection with Malay *lah*, especially as it functioned in the ‘classical’ *pun...lah* construction, is probable. In Temiar this ‘emphatic’ *lah* can become proclitic to a pronoun:

ʔi-cīb lah, yē? ↔ ʔi-cīb la-yē?
 I-go lah, I I-go la-I

Benjamin has since renamed this category the ‘middle voice’, since the verbal action is viewed reflexively, as if folded back upon itself.²⁰⁹ This category then stands in paradigmatic opposition to the *causative* voice, which is outer-directed.

1.4 Aslian lexicon and semantics.

No comprehensive dictionary of an Aslian language has yet been published,²¹⁰ though it is already clear that their lexicons are extraordinarily rich. In the case of languages like English or Japanese, lexical wealth is largely due to a receptivity to borrowings from other languages. While the Aslian languages have indeed borrowed from each other²¹¹ and from Malay or other Austronesian languages,²¹² their lexical richness seems to flow mostly from internal sources.

The Austroasiatic languages have a penchant for encoding semantically complex ideas into unanalyzable, monomorphemic lexemes, e.g. N.W. Semai *slɔ:r* ‘to lay flat objects into a round container, as banana leaves in a back-basket’ [Diffloth 1976a:238]; Temiar *rɔ̃p* ‘to tickle fish’ [OTG 1976b:135]; Semai *thā?* ‘to make fun of elders sexually’ [Diffloth 1976e]; Semai *klknare:l* ‘stiffly vibrating, as an arrow or knife after embedding itself into a piece of wood, or the walk of a tall skinny old man, or an erect penis’ [Diffloth 1976b:257], etc.²¹³ Such lexical specificity makes for a proliferation of vocabulary. This

²⁰⁹ French translations of [29-31] would contain reflexive verbs: ‘*Le fruit s’est fendu*’; ‘*La porte s’est fermée brusquement*’; ‘*L’animal s’est fait attraper*.’

²¹⁰ Diffloth has an extensive Semai dictionary in preparation. But as he modestly puts it, ‘L’étude du vocabulaire mon-khmer n’a pas encore commencé’ (1975:17).

²¹¹ According to Benjamin (1976a:74-6), the three subgroups of Aslian display different patterns of intra-subgroup borrowing which correlate with their different lifestyles. The nomadic N. Aslians have many intra-group loans and a high cognacy rate; the semi-sedentary Senoics also have many intra-group loans, but a low cognacy rate; while the S. Aslians, isolated and sessile, have no intra-group loans and a low cognacy rate. Between subgroups, Senoic seems to have influenced N. Aslian (rather than *vice versa*), e.g. Jah Hut and Temiar have had strong lexical impact on Cheq Wong and Jahai, respectively. The sociological and ethnological aspects of this are extensively discussed in Benjamin 1983.

²¹² See below 1.5.

²¹³ ‘Expressives’ like this may be analyzable into some sort of smaller unit, though these are not ‘morphemes’ in the normal sense, but rather something like ‘phonesthemes.’ See below.

contrasts strikingly with the lexical strategy of a language family like Tibeto-Burman, where relatively few roots are arranged in myriad collocations with each other to form compounds which are more specific in meaning than their constituents (e.g. Lahu *nâʔ-šī* ‘bullet’, *ǵû-tu-šī* ‘navel’, *í-šī* ‘fruit’, *mêʔ-šī* ‘eye’, *vâ-šī* ‘hailstone’ etc. < *šī* ‘round object’). Compounding does exist in Aslian, though it does not seem to play the crucial role in the creation of vocabulary.²¹⁴ Often a phonologically changed or reduced variant appears in the combining form, e.g. Semai *mat* ‘eye’ + *kmu:r* ‘caterpillar’ > *mat-mu:r* ‘larva’ [Diffloth 1976:244] Tem. *dēk* ‘house’ > *diŋ-* in *diŋ-yēw* ‘guardhouse’, *kāʔ* ‘fish’ > *ka-* in *ka-hōʔ* ‘tortoise’ (“fish-shell”), etc. [OTG 1976b:157].²¹⁵

As one might expect, lexical elaboration is particularly great in areas which reflect the interaction of the Aslians with their natural environment (plant and animal nomenclature, swidden agriculture terminology,²¹⁶ verbs referring to the manipulation of objects, etc.). In the case of animal names, the proliferation of vocabulary reaches staggering proportions through the use of circumlocutory synonyms. In Semai every animal has a ‘real’ name (*muh brnɔɔr* < *bɔɔr* ‘good, real, true, beautiful’), but this is only uttered in storytelling or at the very moment of the kill in hunting. Otherwise, one uses an epithet chosen from either of two classes of names: when contemplating violence toward the animal (e.g. before or during a hunt) a ‘secret’ or ‘unknown’ name (*muh krndey* < *kdey* ‘not to know’) is used; in situations where it is an animal that has done violence to a human (e.g. when it damages a crop, escapes from a trap, etc.), it is referred to by a ‘mocking’ name (*muh cnacuuʔ* < *cuuʔ* ‘mock, insult’). These classes are open, and new

²¹⁴ Diffloth observes (p.c. 1976) that [verb + verb] compounds do not exist at all in Semai, except in special vocabulary like taboo-names for animals, e.g. *yar-pooy* ‘mouse-deer’ (lit. “run-blow,” because it is supposed to panic and run when the wind blows). Another important reason why compounding does not have to be resorted to as much in Aslian as in TB is the much richer derivational and inflectional morphology of Aslian.

²¹⁵ Similar reduced combining forms appear elsewhere in Austroasiatic, e.g. in Khasi, and notably in Sora (Munda).

²¹⁶ This terminology has been preserved only in Senoic, where the people continue the swiddening tradition that dates from before the time the Aslians came down into the Malay Peninsula - but has been lost among the nomadic N. Aslians and the riverine S. Aslians [Diffloth 1975:10].

epithets are constantly being coined based on the animal's habits or appearance, legends or customs surrounding it, metaphors for it, folk etymologies or puns on its name, etc.²¹⁷ At the basis of these circumlocutions is a belief in the power of names to wreak violence if used inappropriately (either by design or by accident),²¹⁸ and the necessity to minimize this danger by observance of taboos against direct naming.²¹⁹

Perhaps the greatest single sweller of the Aslian vocabulary is the class of words Diffloth calls *expressives*.²²⁰ These words exist throughout Austroasiatic, though they have largely escaped notice in prestige languages like Khmer, Mon and Vietnamese. Their formation is a fully productive process only in nonliterate societies, where expressives constitute a third major form-class comparable in magnitude to nouns and verbs.

Expressives are words which describe sounds, visual phenomena, bodily sensations, emotions, smells, tastes, etc. with minute precision and specificity. They tend to occur sentence-initially, and are only loosely connected syntactically to the rest of their sentences, rather like interjections or sentence-adverbs. They are characterized by special morphophonemic patterns, and make extensive use of sound symbolism. Unlike the classes of nouns and verbs, which are 'lexically discrete' (Diffloth's term), expressives are lexically non-discrete, in that they are subject to a virtually unlimited number of semantic nuancings that are conveyed by small changes in their pronunciation.²²¹ Thus in Semai

²¹⁷ In the fascinating lecture on which this discussion is based (Kyoto 1976), Diffloth analyzed eleven *muh krndey* and eleven *muh cnacuuu?* for the little animal we call 'bear cat' or 'binturong' (*Arctictis binturong*), though even this was presented as just a small sample.

GB: Benjamin (1968) has a discussion of this in relation to human beings as well, coupled with the practice of deliberate neologising to generate absolutely distinctive autonymic personal names.

²¹⁸ Semai has such verbs as *sladiik*, 'choke on food because someone has mentioned one's name', and *dijnkuur* '(1) beat severely (2) mention someone's name too much'.

²¹⁹ The importance of avoidance-language was recognized early on both for Aslian and Malay (see Skeat and Blagden II.414-31); it seems to be a deep-seated Austric areal feature.

²²⁰ See especially Diffloth 1976b ("Expressives in Semai"), but also JH (MS, pp. 11-12, 33-4) for Jah Hut and OTG 1976b:177-178 for Temiar.

²²¹ This 'iconicity' makes expressives remotely analogous to the dance-language of bees, where incremental changes in the speed and orientation of the bee's body as it dances are directly correlated with the direction and distance of the honey whose existence it is announcing to the rest of the hive.

various noises and movements of flapping wings, thrashing fish, small pieces of cloth, running children, thrown objects, etc. are depicted by an open set of morphophonemically related expressives like *parparpar*, *perperper*, *krkper*, *knapperper*, *krkpēr*, *knapērpēr*, *grgper*, *ḡnapperper*, *purpurpur*, *krkpur*, *knapurpur*, etc. [Diffloth 1976f:260-1].²²² Every morphological device in the book (except suffixation) is used to create these words - reduplication, prefixation, infixation, incopyfixation, ablaut, voicing, nasalization - individually and in combination.²²³

The sound symbolism that Benjamin found to be so pervasive in Temiar grammar [see SOTG] is even more obviously present in the expressive realm. Cases like Semai *pḡpralɔ:ḡ* ‘large and non-numerously spherical (like a big smooth bald head)’ versus *pḡprilɔ:ḡ* ‘small and numerously spherical (like polka dots)’ illustrate universal tendencies of sound symbolism;²²⁴ other sound-meaning correlations seem to be more arbitrary and specifically Aslian (-*m*- ‘massiveness’, -*ḡ*- ‘movement or energy’, -*ru*- ‘unevenness’). Diffloth notes that trilled -*r*- is used to indicate ‘simultaneous or interrupted plurality’ (as of bushy animals popping up in several places at once), and confirms Benjamin’s notion (above) that this has to do with the inherently repetitive and interrupted nature of a trill. A morphological process itself may stand in an iconic relationship to the sort of meaning it conveys: Semai ‘retriplication’²²⁵ of roots (like *kūckūckūc* ‘sound of swallowing liquid; gurgling’ carries the meaning ‘repetition at intervals of time’.

²²² These are all related in turn to a group of real nouns and verbs, including *kper* ‘flap wings’, *kiper* ~ *kaper* ‘shake (small) clothes’, *kipur* ‘shake (large) clothes’, *grpar* ‘mountain imperial pigeon’, *grpər* ‘small bats’. Many expressives, however, bear no morphophonemic relationship to any independently existing nominal or verbal root.

²²³ We should also mention ‘antiphonic reduplication’ like *klcwūc-klcwēc* ‘irregular flapping circular movements (e.g. of a tortoise’s feet when struggling to escape)’ [*ibid.*, p. 254]. Benjamin refers to all these processes collectively as ‘reduplicative play’ [OTG 1976b:177].

²²⁴ The world over, the open vowel -*a*- is associated with larger size and the close vowel -*i*- with smaller size.

²²⁵ This is Matisoff’s term.

1.5 Aslian and Malay.

Aslian has been in contact with Austronesian languages for millennia, at first with the ‘aboriginal Malay’ or ‘Jakun’ languages - about which almost nothing is known - and, much more recently, with Malay itself [see above].²²⁶ In earlier times, when there was less prestige difference between the Austronesian and Austroasiatic speakers, the influence must have been bidirectional.²²⁷ Faint traces of early Aslian impact on Austronesian can be found in place-names like the potamonym *Sungai Chěnděriang* (< Proto-Semai **cnriəʔŋ*),²²⁸ phytonyms like *jias* (< Proto-Semai **jiəs* ‘kind of fruit tree’ [*Artocarpus* sp.]),²²⁹ or arcane specialized vocabulary like the jargon of Malay elephant-drivers in Kedah and Perak, which has been found to contain a few words of Mon-Khmer origin.^{230/231}

Since the mid-14th century, the Aslians have been subject to increasing pressure from the Islamicized Austronesian population. In the northern and central regions the Aslian response was the classic Mon-Khmer strategy of withdrawal to jungle fastnesses; in the south of the peninsula, assimilation, intermarriage, and language loss must have been the fate of most Aslian speakers.²³² This process has only accelerated over the past couple of

²²⁶ GB: *I strongly suspect that, with the exception of ‘Kenaboi’, all so-called ‘Jakun’ languages are just Malay patois which extend over into Riau and Sumatra; there may well have been some non-Malay Austronesian too, but on the coasts, I would guess, rather than in the interior: Moken, etc., and perhaps Chamic, may be evidence for this. All presently known ‘Jakun’ speech is just Malay dialect—unless there are some groups hiding a distinct language away for domestic use only.*

²²⁷ For the moment we are leaving aside the question whether the Austronesian and Austroasiatic families are genetically related in the first place.

²²⁸ Diffloth 1977a:476 (n. 8).

²²⁹ *Ibid.* GB: Cf. also other Austroasiatic loans in Malay, including animal names like **ketan** ‘crab’ (vs. Indonesian **kepiting**), **kuang** ‘argus pheasant’, and **helang** ‘eagle’.

²³⁰ Blagden, *op. cit.*, II.469. Blagden takes this as evidence that the northern Malays acquired the art of elephant training from the aborigines.

GB: *This is almost certainly evidence that the northern ‘Malays’ were Mons until the second period of Srivijayanisation of the Isthmus around 1300-1400 A.D. Janice Stargardt’s excavations in Satingphra strongly support this view. See note 36.*

²³¹ GB: *There are narrowly-Mon words and place-names in Aslian country. Endicott’s Batek live on the Lebir river (Mon: ‘ocean, river’) not far from mount Setong (Mon: ‘river’). Investigation will turn up lots more, I’m sure. But narrowly-Mon words are more likely to be secondary loans than ancestral vocabulary.*

²³² ‘Quite likely, many present-day speakers of Austronesian languages like Temuan, Belandas, and Jakun are descendants of Aslianophones.’ Diffloth, 1976c. See also Benjamin 1983, which presents hard data on this shift.

hundred years.²³³ The present-day Mah Meri, now confined to tiny enclaves on the Selangor and Malacca coast, are the descendants of the Besis, a South Aslian group that occupied a much bigger swath of territory as recently as Blagden's time [see Map II].

The lexical influence of Malay on Aslian has been very considerable,²³⁴ though in the most viable languages, Semai and Temiar, a certain stubborn ethnic pride has offered resistance.²³⁵ In these languages Malay loanwords are often thoroughly assimilated to Mon-Khmer morphological patterns (e.g. Semai *tiba:ʔ* 'arrive' [< Malay *tiba* ~ *tibaʔ*] has the regularly formed derivatives *btiba:ʔ* [indeterminate], *ptiba:ʔ* [causative], *tniba:ʔ* [nominalization]), though sometimes they are stamped unmistakably as foreign by special phonological treatment.²³⁶

There are strata of Malay loans in Aslian languages at all time depths, ranging from loans so early that they preserve archaic features of Malay pronunciation (e.g. Jah Hut *tihang* 'house-pole', now pronounced *tiang* in Malay itself),²³⁷ to very recent ones that are ultimately from English (e.g. Semai *stīt* 'sling' < Malay *lastik* < Eng. *elastic*).²³⁸

²³³ British colonial policy toward the Aslians seems to have been somewhat more enlightened and paternalistic than that of the *laissez-faire* Dutch (1641-1795) and Portuguese (1511-1641) who preceded them on the Peninsula, though this may ironically have led to the speedup of the assimilation process by making a certain 'upward', or at least 'horizontal' mobility possible.

GB: It's very important to keep in mind that until about 1800 most of the people outside the Malay courts and District Chiefs' forts were what would now be considered 'Aborigines'. A very large proportion of the 'Malay' community consists of Aborigines whose consciousness shifted in the 19th century.

²³⁴ 'At the present day [1906] ... Malay loanwords constitute a large part of the language spoken by the wild tribes.' Blagden, *op. cit.*, II.435. The 'Aslian Comparative Vocabulary' in Benjamin 1976a: 101-23) indicates Malay loanwords, which several languages use even for such basic items as FISH, MOON, SKY, STONE.

²³⁵ Diffloth speaks of the Semai '*morgue libertaire et individualiste*' (1975:11).

²³⁶ E.g. Malay words with two non-final nasals optionally have the first one dissimilated to a stop when borrowed into Temiar, even though Temiar phonology does permit words to contain several nasal consonants in succession (see n. 97). Benjamin (1976b:147) attributes such phenomena to the desire of the Temiar to keep the distinction between Malay and indigenous culture elements well marked.

²³⁷ Diffloth, 1976c. See also Blagden II.432 ff. *GB: How about Temiar **səlahid** 'flashlight', **sətaʔwus** 'resthouse', and **pəl** 'field-assistant'?*

²³⁸ *GB: There are 'pre-Malay' words too, like the common **kəbus**-type forms for 'dead' or **bulus** for 'spear', found in Borneo and Taiwan but not Malay. Also, note the non-Malay but Austronesian kin-terms in my SSM (Benjamin, 1983).*

Malay grammatical influence on Aslian seems less pervasive, though it is certainly much in evidence. Most dramatic perhaps are the Aslian numerals, which are all Malay loanwords above ‘two’ or ‘three’ (except in Cheq Wong which has a Mon-Khmer numeral for ‘four’, and a few South Aslian languages - Semelai, Temoq, Semoq Beri - which have almost complete sets of Mon-Khmer numerals).²³⁹ Of greater structural significance is the borrowing of the numeral-plus-classifier construction from Malay, as in Semoq Beri (*mar bataŋ rəkɔʔ* ‘two + Clf + cigarette’, *mui ikur kawaw* ‘one + Clf + bird’)²⁴⁰ and Jah Hut (*nar del syēʔ* ‘two + Clf for three-dimensional objects + house’).^{241/242}

Verbal auxiliaries have been freely borrowed from Malay, though they seem well-integrated into the structure of the native VP (e.g. Jah Hut *dah* ‘perfective’ < Mal. *sudah* [Diffloth 1976c]; Temiar *boleh* ‘can’ [OTG 35]; Semoq Beri *gaʔ* - *naʔ* ‘completive’ < Mal. *hendak*, and *təŋah* ‘incompletive’ [Nik Safiah and Ton 1979:29]). A couple of Malay affixes have also been borrowed,²⁴³ notably the prefix *běr-* which derives verbs from nominal roots: Jah Hut *cεʔ* ‘louse’ > *brceʔ* ‘delouse someone’, *sək* ‘rotan’ > *brsək* ‘look for rotan’, Temiar *dēk* ‘house’ > *bar- dēk* ‘have a house’, *nεʔ* ‘three’ > *bar-nεʔ* ‘being three’, *yāj* ‘noise’ > *bar-yāj* ‘make a noise’ [OTG 36- 37].²⁴⁴

²³⁹ This fact confirmed the suspicions of colonial administrators that the aborigines were hopelessly primitive, since they ‘couldn’t count above three without help’. For a detailed etymological study of the surviving Mon-Khmer numerals in Aslian, see Diffloth 1976d.

²⁴⁰ Nik Safiah and Ton 1979:28.

²⁴¹ Diffloth 1976c. With Jah Hut numerals whose last digit is greater than two (and thus of Malay origin) the classifier is also borrowed from Malay, thus *nar kntɔʔ* ‘two days’ but *tiga hariʔ* ‘three days’. This is somewhat reminiscent of Japanese, where the borrowed Chinese set of numerals must be used with classifiers (which are also from Chinese) thus *hitotsu* ‘one’ (native Japanese) versus *ichi-mai* ‘one flat-object’ (both morphemes < Chinese).

²⁴² GB: I’m suspicious of these examples: the informants were probably asked the Semoq Beri for ‘dua batang rokok’ and ‘se ikur burung’, and then translated them word-for-word.

²⁴³ Not that the Aslian languages, with all their morphological resources, really need them! GB: But much in these resources is Austronesian, and often Malay in origin.

²⁴⁴ GB: In Temiar *bar-* also forms the ‘progressive’ aspect of verbs. Note that Temiar has *bar-*, not the *běr-* it would have if borrowed from Modern Malay *běr-* (cf. Temiar *tər-* from Malay *těr-*). Old Malay did have *bar-* (< *mar-*); and some dialects still have it, with an additional ‘progressive’ meaning lost in Standard Malay but present in Temiar *bar-*. As I remarked earlier, there is a lot of Malayoid morphology in Aslian; I am currently using this material to triangulate in on the history of Malay morphology as well as that of Aslian.

Relatively superficial though conspicuous syntactic borrowings from Malay include the use of the high-frequency emphatic filler-morpheme *lah* in Temiar [SOTG 1981:68-9];²⁴⁵ and the optional use of the Malay marker *yaŋ* between a head noun and a relative clause in Jah Hut and Temiar [Diffloth 1976c].

To venture beyond these surface phenomena to consider such profound questions as the relationship between Austronesian focus-marking and the Aslian preoccupation with ‘directionality’,^{246/247} one would have to undertake a serious study of the ‘Austrie’ linguistic area, which is well beyond the scope of this study. At any rate, much of the importance of Aslian in the context of the whole Austroasiatic family lies precisely in the fact that such outside influence as it has been exposed to is from Austronesian, a language family typologically very different from the monosyllabic, ‘tone prone’ languages of the Southeast Asian mainland.

²⁴⁵ Often as untranslatable as e.g. German *doch*.

²⁴⁶ See above 1.3(b), and SOTG 1981:64-66, 74-76.

²⁴⁷ GB: I now, since SOTG 1981, call this aspect of language ‘participant orientation’. It works well for AN too, except that there it is usually the verb that is marked for orientation, while in Aslian it is the noun- and pronoun-participants that are so marked.

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