

# *Squib*

## **Maranao and Madurese Revisited: A Follow-up**

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This squib briefly compares relevant portions of the phonology of Maranao, as described by Lobel and Riwarung (2009), with that of Madurese, as described by Cohn (1993), pointing out the striking similarities between these two languages, and the implications thereof.

This brief contribution presents a comparison of the phonologies of Maranao and Madurese, both of which have a noteworthy interaction between the vowels and certain consonants.<sup>1</sup>

Lobel and Riwarung (2009) presented a revised analysis of the synchronic phonology of the Maranao language and its historical source. The most noteworthy feature of this phoneme system is the four “heavy” consonants /p’ t’ k’ s’/—aspirated to varying degrees, depending on the particular C and which V follows it—which obligatorily trigger the tensing and raising of the following vowel.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the voiced stops /b d g/ optionally cause the tensing and raising of the following vowel.

Writing entirely in the field, the authors were unaware that a very similar situation had also been described for Madurese (Cohn 1993, Cohn and Lockwood 1994, Cohn and Ham 1998).<sup>3</sup> Like the Maranao situation, the aspirated stops of Madurese /p<sup>h</sup> t<sup>h</sup> k<sup>h</sup> / trigger the tensing and raising of the following vowel. The main difference between the two languages is that the voiced stops of Madurese also obligatorily have this tensing and raising effect on the vowels, while those of Maranao only optionally have this effect. This may be due to the different historical sources of the various sets of consonants in these two languages. The Madurese aspirated consonants themselves derive from earlier voiced

1. Thanks are due to Robert Blust, John Ohala, and Patricia Donegan for the discussions that prompted the writing of this squib; to Labi Hadji Sarip Riwarung and the Riwarung family; to Paladan Badron; and to the families of Aleem Abdulmajeed D. Ansano, Senator Ahmad Domocao “Domie” Alonto, and Shaiekh Abdul Azis Guroalim Saromantang. This squib is dedicated to the memory of Batua A. Macaraya (died February 26, 2010), whose lexicographic work constitutes a large part of our knowledge about the Maranao language, and is largely responsible for introducing the Maranao language to the outside world.
2. Historically relevant but synchronically unanalyzable is the fact that the heavy consonants derive from what in Proto-Danao were homorganic voiced-voiceless clusters \*bp, \*dt, \*gk, \*ds.
3. It is worth noting that neither of the reviewers, nor any of the other linguists who were consulted in the writing of Lobel and Riwarung (2009), commented on the similarity of the Maranao consonant-vowel interaction to that of Madurese. The authors therefore remained unaware of the relevance of Cohn’s work on Madurese to their work until after the publication of their paper.

consonants. The heavy consonants of Maranao, however, derive from clusters in which the first member was \*b, \*d, or \*g, thus providing us a clear connection between clusters \*bp, \*dt, \*gk, and \*ds, whose first member was a voiced stop, and the singleton \*b, \*d, and \*g, which only optionally trigger the same effect on the vowel as the clusters to which they could belong. (Much more minor differences between Maranao and Madurese include the obvious difference between the consonant inventories of the two languages, as illustrated in tables 1 and 2, and the differences in the analyses of the vowel phonemes and their allophones, as illustrated in table 3.)

Cohn (1993) considers three possible factors that might explain the interaction between the consonants and vowels of Madurese—tense/lax, Advanced Tongue Root, and register—ruling out the first two, and indicating problems with the third. Among these problems is that “the primary difference in the vowel alternations of Madurese seems to be one

**TABLE 1. MARANAO CONSONANT PHONEMES**

		BILABIAL	DENTAL	ALVEOLAR	PALATAL	VELAR	GLOTTAL
STOPS	VOICELESS	p	t			k	ʔ
	HEAVY	pʰ	tʰ			kʰ	
	VOICED	b		d		g	
FRICATIVES				s			
	HEAVY			sʰ			
NASALS		m		n		ŋ	
FLAP				r			
SEMIVOWELS		w			y		
LATERAL APPROXIMANT				l			

**TABLE 2. MADURESE CONSONANT PHONEMES**  
(adapted from Cohn 1993)

		BILABIAL	DENTAL	RETROFLEX	PALATAL	VELAR	GLOTTAL
STOPS	VOICELESS	p	ɬ	ʈ	c	k	ʔ
	ASPIRATED	pʰ	ɬʰ	ʈʰ	cʰ	kʰ	
	VOICED	b	ɖ	ɖ	j	g	
FRICATIVES							(h)
NASALS		m	n			ŋ	
FLAP			r				
SEMIVOWELS		(w)			y		
LATERAL APPROXIMANT			l				

**TABLE 3. THE COMPLEMENTARY VOWEL SETS OF MARANAO AND MADURESE**

MARANAO		MADURESE†	
[-high] 'lax'	[+high] 'tense'	[-high] 'lax'	[+high] 'tense'
ɪ	i	ɛ	i
ə	i	ə	i
o	u	ɔ	u
a	ɤ	a	ɤ

† Following Cohn (1993).

of vowel height, without concomitant pitch and voice quality differences as observed in many register systems” (Cohn 1993:119). For this same reason, Lobel and Riwarung (2009) did not present register as a possible explanation for the Maranao system. Indeed, the presence of only one defining feature seems at first to fall short of the traditional understanding of “two registers with their associated features” as summarized by Gregerson (1976:323), yet a closer look at the eight Mon-Khmer register languages that he later describes (328–29) reveals striking differences between those languages’ register systems. Edmondson and Gregerson (1993) also describe Western Cham as a register language, in spite of the fact that little more than vowel height definitively distinguishes the vowels of each register. Likewise, Huffman (1976), in his analysis of fifteen Mon-Khmer languages, finds five that he considers to be true register languages, yet those five are as different from one another as they are similar. Cohn and Lockwood (1994) themselves later state that differences in F1 and F0 values between the two sets of Madurese vowels are “consistent with a register interpretation” (81), a departure from Cohn’s (1993) earlier reservations about labeling the Madurese system as “register.”

The phonetic analysis of Maranao has yet to be completed, but if the results are similar to those Cohn and Lockwood (1994) achieved with Madurese, then a register analysis may also be applicable to Maranao. Yet whether or not this turns out to be the case, it is certainly striking that such similar systems developed in both Maranao and Madurese, which are separated by more than 2,000 kilometers. While it might be argued that the Madurese register system developed under the influence of Javanese, or even some once-influential mainland language such as Cham, Khmer, or Mon, the same can hardly be possible for Maranao. First of all, such a system did not develop in its sister languages Iranun or Maguindanaon, nor in languages that have been in contact with Maranao, such as Subanen, Talaandig/Higaonon, or Western Bukidnon Manobo. Secondly, Maranao—literally “people of the lake”—is largely a landlocked language, especially in comparison to other languages in the area, such as Iranun, Maguindanaon, and the Subanen languages. As such, it is virtually impossible that the register-like system of Maranao could have developed as the result of contact with some external languages. Instead, we must consider internal forces that could have caused the development of such a system in these languages. To this effect, Edmondson and Gregerson (1993:72) raise a similar question for Western Cham: “The historical question of the genesis of such prosodic systems as that found in [Western Cham] is also an important one. Is it merely a loan phenomenon from nearby Mon-Khmer languages? If so, how does one account for strikingly similar patterns as far east as Javanese and Madurese?”

It is noteworthy that another somewhat similar phenomenon is also found with an equally discontinuous distribution, namely, Low Vowel Fronting (Blust, Lobel, and Robinson 2010). This phenomenon—found in languages in northern Sarawak (Blust 2000) and along the Pacific coast of Luzon (Blust 2000:306–7, Robinson and Lobel 2010)—likewise involves voiced stops that trigger a shift in the following vowel, although in this case, it is only the vowel /a/ that is affected, and the shift is best characterized as fronting (\*a > /e/ or /i/), although raising is usually also involved.

What could the implication be for the distribution of such different yet partly similar consonant-vowel interactions, in such widely separated areas, and cutting across sub-

group boundaries and even language family boundaries? Certainly, innovations such as these that lack any apparent phonetic motivation cannot be written off in each and every case as the result of language contact. Instead, perhaps it is time to consider a suggestion by Edmondson and Gregerson (1993:72): “. . . they may rather constitute reflexes of a prosodically richer Austronesian antecedent than is traditionally assumed. Contemporary tonality effects thus raise the question whether and to what degree these features may represent retentions rather than bizarre innovations in the daughter languages.”

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