

A closer examination of the lexical material of Enggano since the 19th century

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Enggano is an endangered language spoken on Enggano Island, Indonesia. While it has been classified as a non-Austronesian (AN) language by some scholars (Blench [2014]; Capell 1982:6), convincing evidence that Enggano is an AN language with unusual sound changes and morphological features has been produced by Nothofer (1986a), Edwards (2015), and Smith (2017). Within AN, Enggano is currently tentatively classified as a descendant of Proto-Malayo-Polynesian (PMP). For different proposals, see Dyen (1965:28), Nothofer (1986a:95-107, 1994:394), Mahdi (1988:59-61), Edwards (2015:81-82), and Smith (2017:455-459).

Despite the disputed classification of Enggano and its “aberrant” phonological and lexical nature, Enggano has preserved many inflectional and derivational affixes that are either inherited from PMP, or innovative but shared with other languages of western Indonesia. This includes free and genitive personal pronouns (Edwards 2015:71), inflectional and derivational affixes like *bu-* ‘infinitive’, *di-* ‘passive’, *aH-* ‘antipassive’ (all inherited from PMP), the applicative suffix *-a’a* (cognates in western Indonesia), and the actor focus prefix *ki-* (cognate to Nias/Mentawai *si-* and to the relativizer *si* in Simalur/Batak). This morphological conservatism has not been affected by the significant phonological and lexical changes that have occurred over the last 150 years since Enggano was first documented, and that have made contemporary Enggano appear even more “aberrant” than in its earlier recorded stages.

We are in the fortunate situation of having access to Enggano material starting as early as the mid-19th century. Through a careful analysis of over a dozen wordlists and a closer examination of the historical data exemplified below along with novel reconstructions, we are now able to explain what makes Enggano appear so different from other AN languages. Consider example (1), which shows the translation for ‘evening, night’ in various wordlists from 1855 to 2011. In the earliest lists from the mid-19th century, ‘night’ was translated as ‘the world is dark’ (1c), which is only partially reflected by (1a) *ilopo* ‘the world’ and (1b) *kolilopo* ‘the world is’. In the late 19th century lists, the concept ‘night’ is expressed by verbal lexemes (1c-g), which surfaces again in the 1980s lists (1i, j). Some data from the 1980s (1h, j) shows the use of a noun which can be traced back to PMP **bərɣi* (cf. Edwards 2015:97). Other recent data (1k, l) seems to reflect an augmentation of the verb ‘become night’. It is worth noting that the data in (1a-l) is drawn from different dialects of Enggano.

- (1) (a) **ilopo** ‘the world ...’ (Boewang 1854) / (b) **kolilopo** ‘the world is ...’ (v. Rosenberg 1855, southern dial.) / (c) **kapohpoh-loppoh, ko-assaij-loppoh** ‘the world is dark’ (Walland 1864, northern dial.) / (d) **koahjě** ‘become night’ (Helfrich & Pieters 1891, Kèfoe dial.) / (e) **coahia** ‘id.’ (Modigliani 1894, southern dial.) / (f) **kafō** ‘id.’, **koahjě** ‘id.’ (v.d. Noord 1987 [1895]) / (g) **koahie(j)a** ‘become night’ (Helfrich 1916), (h) **pōō** ‘night’ (Capell 1982) / (i) **ko’ʔa(e)ç** (Nothofer [1986b]) / (j) **ēpō** ‘the night’, **koʔaixa** (Kähler 1987, Kioyo dial.) ‘become night’ / (k) **karpo’aā** ‘night (?< koʔaixa + ēpō)’ (Kasim et al. 1987, Malakoni dial.) / (l) **karkoʔoaix** ‘id.’ (Yoder 2011, Meok dial.)

We hypothesize that the low number of retention rate of AN vocabulary in Enggano (Edwards 2015:75-76 calculates 21%) also results from a taboo in the past when an important person died (cf. Kähler 1975:v). One such example is ‘stone’, exemplified in (2). Early lists (2a-b) reflect PMP **batu* (cf. MP **b* > Enggano /p/, MP **t* > Enggano /k/), while anything post-1855 (2c-j) seems to be a replacement for a taboo word. The etymology of *ʔea* is not known.

- (2) (a) **bakoe bakoe** (B. 1855), (b) **pakoe pakoe** (vR. 1855) // (c) **ééah** (W. 1864), (d) **èèjak²** (H&P 1891), (e) **eea** (M. 1894), (f) **èèja(k)** (vdN. 1895), (g) **e-ʔea** (K. 1987), (h) **iEa** (K. et al. 1987b) / (i) **eyə**, (ʔ) **ε** (N. [1986]) / (j) **ʔe** (Y. 2011)

In our talk, we elaborate on further taboo words as well as on errors in the wordlists. This allows us to interpret the historical data of Enggano from a new point of view to further narrow down the exact relationship between Enggano and the other AN languages.

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