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PART 2.16.

POSSIBLE WIDER CONNECTIONS OF PAPUAN LANGUAGES

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## 2.16.1. POSSIBLE WIDER CONNECTIONS OF PAPUAN LANGUAGES: SOUTH-EAST ASIA

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This paper is based on two brief remarks in Laycock (1973) - remarks I never expected to be called on to justify, and which will hardly be justified in this article. The remarks are:

Some of the features of Torricelli Phylum languages also tend to suggest a possible connection with the aboriginal languages (Senoi, Semang) of the Malaysian area; but a great deal more data is required before such a hypothesis can be adequately tested. (1973:7).

It may not be too far-fetched to try to find a South-East Asian origin for speakers of Sko Phylum languages. Firstly, they use large seagoing canoes - tacking canoes, whereas the rest of Melanesia uses the reversing canoe only. Secondly, they speak a language that is highly tonal, with complex verb morphology, and extremely heterorganic consonant clusters - features duplicated in Burmese. Perhaps it would be going too far, however, to attempt to associate this group directly with the Dongson [bronzes] found not too far from Sko villages at Lake Sentani (Van Heekeren (1958); de Bruijn (1959)). (1973:57).

The second remark is easily disposed of; there is nothing to add to the information given there, except that it is now clear that the speakers of Sko Phylum languages have no known linguistic relatives anywhere else in the New Guinea area, or even beyond. Typologically, the languages are odd for the New Guinea area, but a great deal of the lexicon appears to consist of loanwords from Trans-New Guinea Phylum languages, with considerable phonological distortion. The mention of Burmese should not, of course, be taken as a serious suggestion of a link between Burmic languages and Sko Phylum languages; nevertheless, it remains true that the typological features of Sko Phylum languages are duplicated in no closer region.

The first statement cannot be dismissed so readily, though it would be totally false to assert that there is any real evidence which would link Torricelli Phylum languages of Papua New Guinea with the so-called

'aboriginal' languages of the Malay peninsula; rather, there are a handful of typological resemblances which would make the suggestion worth following up - preferably by someone with extensive lexical materials on the Senoi/Semang languages.

Data on the Torricelli Phylum languages, for the purposes of this paper, is taken from the 50 words in 27 Torricelli Phylum languages in Laycock (1968) - supplemented, where necessary, by unpublished field-notes. However, reliable data on Senoi and Semang languages are hard to find, and modern data, and information on grammar, almost impossible. I have used Skeat and Blagden (1906) as the major source of the lexicon of both Semang and Senoi (which for the purposes of this paper, are not usually differentiated from each other); Carey's grammar (1961) of Temiar (a Senoi language) is useful for basic morphology, and a few facts can be gleaned from Asmah Haji Omar's tantalisingly brief grammatical notes (1963) on a Semang language. I have hesitated to use the Senoi (Sakai of Batang-Padang) material of Tauern (1914), as the grammatical statements are so patently wrong; he misses, for example, the subject-prefixes (treating them as arbitrary variations in the verb!), and his statements about the 'primitiveness' of Senoi also do not inspire confidence.<sup>2</sup> Ethnographic data, tribal classifications, and some scattered lexical items can be found in Schebesta (1927:Semang), Noone (1936:Senoi), Dentan (1968:Senoi), and Lebar and others (1964:Senoi and Semang), but again the major source is Skeat and Blagden (1906), who give an extensive bibliography. I have not bothered with works prior to the twentieth century.

Grammatically, both the Senoi/Semang language group and the Torricelli language group are characterised by the marking of subject in verbs by prefix; in world terms, this may not be an unusual feature, but it is striking in the New Guinea area, where it is found only in Austronesian languages of the area, in languages of the Sko Phylum, in languages of the Torricelli Phylum, and in languages of the Bird's Head area of Irian Jaya (mainly languages of the West Papuan Phylum). In Torricelli Phylum languages, the prefixes are remarkably stable from one end of the phylum to the other; a list of the major forms in 17 languages is given by Laycock (1968:40). Table I below is adapted from this, giving the most characteristic forms for comparison with those of a Senoi language (Temiar: Carey 1961). Torricelli forms are given in the order of their frequency of occurrence throughout the phylum; the less common forms are placed in square brackets.

TABLE I: SUBJECT PREFIXES IN TEMIAR (SENOI), AND IN TORRICELLI PHYLUM LANGUAGES

	Temiar	Torricelli Phylum
Sg. 1	i-	k-, Ø-, m- [kw-, x-, y-]
2	ha-	Ø-, k-, y- [ñ-, x-, y-, t-]
3m. }	na-	n- [l-, r-, w-]
3f. }		w- [p-, n-, l-, kw-]
Du. linc.	a- }	w- [f-, p-, kw-, m-]
lexc.	ya- }	
2	kaqa-	y- [f-, p-, w-]
3m. }	we-	p-, y-, m- [l-, h-, n-, t-]
3f. }		p-, y-, l- [m-, n-]
Pl. linc.	ä- }	m- [p-, f-]
lexc.	ki- }	
2	nyob-	y- [f-, p-, w-]
3m. }	un- }	p-, y-, l-, m- [h-, n-, t-]
3f. }		

It is immediately apparent that the prefixed forms in the two groups of languages bear little resemblance to each other (except perhaps in the singular), and that the categories do not coincide; Temiar distinguishes inclusive/exclusive in first person dual and plural, but no gender in third person pronouns, whereas the reverse is the case in Torricelli Phylum languages (though here the gender distinctions are maintained in non-singular numbers in only a few languages). I cannot find clear-cut data on the Semang categories, but they appear similar. It is possible, of course, that the differences in expressed categories could have come about by influence from other languages - in the Senoi/Semang case, probably from Malay.

Lexical resemblances between the two groups of languages are slight, as must necessarily be the case, given the time-depth that would have to be assumed if they are related. Table II gives some of the more striking lexical resemblances; as nothing is claimed on the basis of these resemblances, however, it was not thought necessary to identify the individual languages, which can be found from the sources of the vocabulary items (Laycock 1968 and Skeat and Blagden 1906).

TABLE II: SUGGESTIVE LEXICAL RESEMBLANCES BETWEEN TORRICELLI  
PHYLUM LANGUAGES AND SENOI/SEMANG LANGUAGES

English	Torricelli Phylum languages	Senoi/Semang languages
<i>man</i>	mana, maŋko, metene, monol, metfaine, mitik, məsin, masin, matei, maikən, makenti, məsəmiyen, məsən, matan, mukun, masən, mohon, mik	mah, məndi, mənik, hame, mi, semiah, mai
<i>child</i>	kan, kata, kat, kanəf	kohan, kuad, kě-nun, ken, kon
<i>father</i>	aya, aiye, ayi	ai, ē
<i>mother</i>	ama, ema; mukei, miye, mai, mikan, meŋ, me; na'ai, nəki, nuka	ame, ameng; mekn, mak; nak, na'
<i>you</i>	po, pei	bo
<i>tongue</i>	life, kəlep, yalip, wulaf	lě-peh, lě-pes, l'ipes
<i>day/sun</i>	kepli, epli, wupli, kwipli, kwapli, wupli	bri, matbri
<i>water</i>	tepe, tipe, tēpal, tipal, səpən, himpel, hipel, bər	tom, betiu, tiu, teu
<i>ground</i>	tef, tau, taf, takulu, tī, tax, sau, tap, sap, syap, hap, hapa	tek, tai, teh, tei, teik
<i>stone</i>	ta:ma, tumala, to:mu, talmanəf	tě-muh, tě-mu, tmu, gmu
<i>two</i>	wiŋkes, wiŋe, wiyem, wiyum, wikat, wiyem, wilal, wiye, fiyə, piya, piyak, piyami, wiyeu, bium	uii, bī, be, beh, bie

In Table II, only forms having a wide distribution in each group have been taken; some more striking, but necessarily more suspect, resemblances could have been quoted if the less common words had been used.

There is little that can be concluded from Table II; there are a few good resemblances in basic vocabulary between the groups as a whole, but these would almost certainly sink to a chance level if any two individual

languages were compared. There is the further problem that the Senoi/Semang languages are now firmly classified as Austro-Asiatic, and thereby related to Mon-Khmer languages, as documented by Schmidt (1901) over seventy years ago. It seems, a priori, unlikely that Torricelli Phylum languages could be related to Mon-Khmer languages; a relationship with Senoi/Semang would have to be with the pre-Austro-Asiatic and Austro-nesian. Further, some of the Senoi/Semang items in Table II have good cognates in Mon and Khmer.

If the linguistic data is something much less than conclusive, we cannot make much of evidence from other fields. Racially, the Semang 'Negritos' could - in the absence of solid genetic evidence either way - conceivably be related to the short-statured Torricelli Papuans,<sup>4</sup> but the Senoi, in at least Skeat and Blagden's account (1906) appear racially very different. On the other hand, the inhabitants of the Torricelli Ranges in New Guinea - or at least those who speak languages belonging to the Torricelli Phylum - share one very striking cultural trait with the Senoi peoples: their aversion to warfare. This trait is stressed in Dentan's (1968) study of the Senoi Semai as 'a nonviolent people' of Malaya', and is evident also in Fortune's (1939) account of what little warfare is recorded for the Arapesh (a Torricelli-phylum people). My own observations, especially in the western Torricelli (Lumi) area, support a view of Torricelli-phylum peoples (whose main form of defence is sorcery) as being non-aggressive, and as having an exaggerated retreat ('shame') reaction to aggressive criticism; compare also what Schebesta (1927:21) was told by a man who had 'forty years of experience' with the Semang:

"Above all, don't be too abrupt with them", he repeated again and again. "They can't stand a gruff word and sense evil in every unfriendly gesture".

Such subjective impressions are of little value, and are set down here only for what they may be worth; but it seems unlikely that such a culture-trait could in any case have perpetuated itself for whatever time-depth would be necessary to permit a relationship (5,000 years, or 100,000 years?), in the face of cultural influences from many different sources.

In view of all the preceding, it would be extremely foolhardy to attempt to assert a relationship between the languages of the Torricelli Phylum on the one hand, and the Senoi/Semang languages on the other. The postulating of such widespread linguistic relationships is currently in disrepute, largely owing to the abuses of the nineteenth-century linguists, who were not averse to claiming Semitic origins for New Hebridean languages, or Dravidian origins for Australian Aboriginal

languages. Nevertheless, I feel it is desirable that linguists should be aware of the possibility of linguistic relationships extending beyond their own immediate area, and should conscientiously set down any clues they have that point in any not totally impossible direction. On this basis, I have tried to detail in this paper the basis of my remarks in Laycock (1973). No more is claimed.

N O T E S

1. The original note has 'pottery', an unfortunate *lapsus calami* not picked up in the proofreading.
2. For example: 'Der niedrigen Kultur der Sakai entsprechend, ist die Sprache sehr primitiv.' And further: 'Die Sakai-Sprache besitzt nur Wörter, die man im Wald gebrauchen kann, alle anderen sind dem Malaiischen entlehnt, z.B. Eisen etc., und Konjunktionen, die in der ursprünglichen Sprache nicht nötig waren, da man nur in Einzelsätzen sprach und auch heute noch spricht...' Also somewhat amusing are his instructions on imitating Senoi voice-quality: 'Um die Stimme der Sakai nachzuahmen, streckt man beim Sprechen am besten den Kopf etwas vor und macht den Mund nicht weit auf, dagegen wird die Mundhöhle soweit als möglich gemacht.'
3. 'It is certain that the Semang dialects were not originally members of the Mon-Annam family' (Skeat and Blagden 1906:462).
4. Skeat and Blagden (1906:27) rightly pour cold water on Miklukho-Maklaï's belief that the 'Orang Semang' and 'Orang Sakai' ('Senoi') are 'pur sang Melanesians'; in any case, Miklukho-Maklaï was probably thinking more of the Austronesians within the Melanesian area than of the 'Papuan'.

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