

## **The Morpheme Structure of Prehistoric Malay: An Internal Reconstruction**

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Linguistic reconstruction is most often carried out by using the comparative method, which compares cognates of at least two related languages. The resulting hypothetical reconstruction is a protolanguage, from which the attested compared languages are said to have developed. Another method is internal reconstruction, which examines data from a single language, and hypothesizes what were the earlier, unrecorded forms from which the attested forms developed. The result of internal reconstruction is not another language (protolanguage), but rather a prehistoric stage of the relevant single language.

This paper attempts to reconstruct the rules and processes which governed the formation of grammatical morphemes in prehistoric Malay. The data consists of modern Malay-Indonesian roots which are not suspected of having been borrowed from other languages. The results show that prehistoric Malay had strict constraints on which phonemes could occur at syllable edges, and which ones could occur adjacent to each other morpheme-internally. Unlike many modern varieties of Malay-Indonesian (like Standard Indonesian or Jakarta Indonesian), which allow complex onsets and codas consisting of up to three consonants, the maximal Prehistoric Malay syllable shape was CVC. Prehistoric Malay sonorants could be syllabic (i.e. serve as syllable peaks), and the distribution of *pepet* (the mid central vowel) had constraints which cast doubt on its phonemic status. This paper discusses well-formedness rules for prehistoric Malay syllables and morphemes, as well as the phonological processes which operated at morpheme-internal syllable junctures.