

Morphosyntactic simplification in Tengger Javanese

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Tengger Javanese is a small dialect of Javanese spoken in the isolated highland region in and around the Bromo-Semeru-Tengger National Park in East Java. For centuries the Tengger generally adhered to traditional Hindu-Javanese syncretic religious and cultural practices, and until recently remained relatively isolated from the Muslim Javanese populations in the lowlands. The past 50 years, however, have seen increasing contact with the lowland Javanese, and with that pressure on the Tengger, both internal and external, to conform with both lowland religious and linguistic norms. A survey of Tengger villages conducted in the 70's showed 50 villages, with a total population of roughly 50,000, self-identified as Tengger, all following the traditional Hindu-Javanese ways. When I conducted my fieldwork in 2003-4, that number had fallen to roughly 20 villages, with a total population of no more than 20,000. In this paper, I describe the diachronic development of verbal morphology in Tengger, which has undergone significant simplification both from the attested patterns of Middle Javanese, and shows signs of further reduction within the past 30 years.

Based on a comparison with a brief grammatical sketch of Tengger done by Smith-Hefner (1978), it is clear that in the past 30 years or so, a number of salient verbal markers have undergone significant reduction in some cases (the propositive prefix), and complete loss in others (the intransitive marker *mer-* and the first and second person passive constructions). These developments are the result of contact between Tengger Javanese and surrounding lowland dialects, demonstrated by the pattern in Malang Javanese, for example.

Proto-Malayo-Polynesian had a basic verbal system of four voices, (or two under some analyses) with various derivational affixes were used to mark different semantic relationships between the verb and the subject (Wolff 1973, Ross 2004). In many languages of western Indonesia, this was reduced to a system of two voices, and various verbal suffixes were innovated to compensate for this reduction. Most Javanese dialects followed this pattern, and subsequently developed a full paradigm of verbal suffixes based on mood, voice, and applicative suffix, i.e. neutral, benefactive or locative. This pattern is attested variously in Old and Middle Javanese, and in the modern dialects of Central Java. It is unclear whether the Tengger dialect ever underwent this change. In modern Tengger, there are only three verbal affixes attested. Based on evidence from a number of other Javanese dialects, I argue that the elaborated paradigm was an innovation that took place in some Central Javanese dialects, but that Tengger (and other dialects) simply continued to reduce and simplify the PMP patterns.

			Central Javanese	Tengger
neutral	indicative	active/passive	∅	∅
	subjunctive	active	-a / /	-a /a/
	subjunctive	passive	-en /əɲ/	-en /əɲ/, -a
benefactive	indicative	active/passive	-ake	-na
	subjunctive	active/passive	-na /n /	-na
locative	indicative	Active/passive	-i	-i
	Subjunctive	active/passive	-ana / n /	-i

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