

## Malay/Indonesian Dialect Geography and the Sources of Sri Lankan Malay

David Gil

Sri Lankan Malay is obviously an offshoot of the Malay language spoken in Southeast Asia. But it is equally clear that the Southeast Asian source of Sri Lanka Malay is not some version of what is now referred to as Standard Malay/Indonesian but rather one or more of the myriad diverse colloquial varieties of Malay/Indonesian spoken throughout the archipelago. Unfortunately, most of these colloquial varieties remain understudied, and this gap in our knowledge is even more acute when it comes to the various koinés and contact varieties of Malay/Indonesian which, on sociolinguistic grounds, are the most likely to have played a role in the development of Sri Lankan Malay. As a result, our understanding of the Malay component in the lexicon and structure of Sri Lankan Malay remains biased towards the standard varieties of Malay/Indonesian. This paper attempts to rectify this bias by situating Sri Lankan Malay within the context of Malay/Indonesian dialect geography.

The first part of this paper presents some preliminary results from an ongoing dialect survey mapping over 300 linguistic features as found in several dozen koinés and contact varieties of colloquial Malay and Indonesian spoken throughout the archipelago. The major finding is that rather than a binary split corresponding to the political border between Malaysia and Indonesia, many linguistic features support the existence of a tripartite division between Northwestern, Southwestern and Eastern varieties, centered respectively around three geographical focal points: Malaka, Java and Maluku.

The second part of this paper shows how Sri Lankan Malay fits into this tripartite scheme. In general, Sri Lankan Malay tends to bear the closest resemblance to Eastern varieties of Malay/Indonesian: among the specifically Eastern features of Sri Lankan Malay are (a) the presence of final *[k]* in the word *[bodok]* 'stupid'; (b) the word *kakkàrlath* 'cockroach'; (c) the presence of the (original) involuntary prefix in the word *thàrthaava* 'laugh'; and (d) use of existential *ada* to mark the progressive. However, Sri Lankan Malay also exhibits a smaller number of features whose provenance is specifically Southwestern, including (a) the word *kuuping* 'ear'; and (b) the presence of the (original) agent marking prefix *N-* in the word *nangis* 'cry'. The results of this study provide empirical support for the view whereby Sri Lankan Malay has its roots in Eastern varieties of Malay/Indonesian, but, on its way out to the Indian Ocean, picked up various additional linguistic features characteristic of the Java region.