

# Aji: one language from twelve

A brief description of an interesting Malay dialect in South Sumatra

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“We speak twelve languages, all mixed together” is what one will hear when inquiring about the speech of the Aji (Haji) people of South Sumatra. What linguist could ignore a tease as seductive as that? However, a search for published or unpublished linguistic research on Aji reveals nothing more than a name on a dialect list or a mark on a map. This paper is a simple description of the Aji speech variety, intended to address a hole in our collective knowledge base. Aji is interesting because of its heavy borrowings, the pattern of borrowings, and the presence of Malay phonological and lexical archaisms, all of which are briefly presented in the paper. At the heart of the paper is a series of arguments which attempt to demonstrate that Aji, in spite of intense influence from surrounding Lampungic dialects, is genetically of Malay stock.