

# PRELIMINARY NOTES ON THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF PAPUAN MALAY

C.F. Saragih  
Fakultas Sastra, UNIPA  
[chrisma.fsaragih@gmail.com](mailto:chrisma.fsaragih@gmail.com)

By doing literature studies and interviews, this paper aims at describing how Malay language entered Papuan island and then developed into the so-called Papuan Malay, a variety of Malay mainly spoken in the west to north coast of Papua. Papuan Malay was a pidgin used by west and eastern traders in the north Coast of Papuan Island. This pidgin at the time was probably derived from a monogenetic source, Mollucan (Ambon) Malay, as Papuan people (especially Biak people) had built a tight relationship with Bacanese and Tidorese before European colonial time in south-east Asia. It was some Mollucan (Ambon) Malay lexicals and simple constructions that were used only by few Papuans especially the trade leader, *mananwir mnu* (Biak language). Around 1856-1857, Malay language was firstly taught to Doreri people in Mansinam island, Manokwari by two German missionaries, Ottow and Geissler after learning Malay language for 18 months in Batavia before coming to Papua in 1855. This Malay contributed in development of Papuan Malay (i.e. in some pronominal forms). In the later development some features of Austronesian languages spoken in the north Coast of Papuan Island (i.e. Biak, Wamesa (Wandamen) etc.) also influenced the grammar of Papuan Malay (i.e. verb agreement). This feature distinguishes Papuan Malay from Ambon Malay. In 1900s local missionaries from Ambon, Sangir and Kupang were brought to Papua to teach the Gospel to the Papuans. The missionaries also brought with them their local Malay. That's why today Papuan Malay shares many same characteristics with Ambon, Sangir (Manado) and Kupang Malay (i.e. in some pronominal forms, perfective marker, associative forms etc.). It also seems that the contact with Papuan language speakers in Papua has also brought the influence to Papuan Malay grammar (i.e. in comparative construction). Nowadays local migrants from the outside of Papua (Bugis, Buton, Makassar, Jawa, Bali, Batak etc) working as traders, civil servants or in private company create their own Papuan Malay. They tend to mix Papuan Malay and Indonesian standard forms (i.e. in causative construction).

Today Papuan Malay is a Creole derived from polygenetic source of languages. Many Papuan decedents as well as the offspring of outsiders living in Papua speak Papuan Malay as their native tongue.