

My tribute to Waruno Mahdi
R. David Zorc

I had crossed paths (definitely not swords) with Waruno for over a decade, starting when I was working in Australia with the School of Australian Linguistics, via the post from 1985. Although my linguistic concentration at that time was on Aboriginal languages, SAL fortunately sponsored and encouraged my continued work on comparative Philippine, such as the *Core Etymological Dictionary of Filipino*. Waruno and I met in person during 7ICAL in Leiden in August 1994 and had several excellent and productive personal exchanges. He even honored me by being my seat-mate on a bus tour of the area. Thereafter, our correspondence continued until around 1997, when a severe illness rendered me incommunicado for several months. Sadly, we have not been in touch since.

I admire and respect him for his being a true polyglot and "multinational". His publications express a true command of an enormous amount of data, gathered from diverse language families. As I have been blessed with a career in five language families (Austronesian - Philippine, Cushitic - Somali & Oromo, Bantu - Rwanda, Rundi & Sotho), Pama-Nyungan (Yolngu-Matha), and Indo-European (Armenian), he has established himself as an Austronesianist, Sinologist, Dravidologist, and Indo-Europeanist. We are indeed soul mates!

In rereading several of his extensive publications, the one that most profoundly affected me was his two-part "Some Austronesian maverick protoforms with culture-historical implications". His tour-de-force analysis of metallurgical terms (forge, blacksmith, iron, gold, silver, copper, brass) and items of trade (clove, millet, sorghum, rice, money) is a masterful study advocating the need for caveats in determining the validity of an etymology. The fact that the Malay spice trade had been operating since 200 BC and that contacts among the peoples and languages of China, India, Khmer, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines are part of the historical record should make comparativists chary about "solid" versus "maverick" etymologies.

One quote here serves as a marvelous indication of Mahdi's precision:

"The reconstruction ^xbari[] 'iron' considered at first to be an authentic protoform (Blust 1972b:#2)¹, may serve as a first illustration of the dangers involved here. Indicating the existence

¹ Currently in the ACD under NOISE., whereas Dempwolff's *besi is identified as a LOAN, and a new PAN-Formosan *Namat is the sole representative in the meaning 'iron', along with PAN-F *diNan and PWMP *karat 'rust'

of reflexes of the protoform in Formosan languages, and relying upon the widespread assumption that the latter were the first to split off from the other An languages, Blust (1977:#C3) regarded it as evidence that the Proto-Austronesians were acquainted with iron. This implied that the Austronesians had discovered iron some two millennia before the metal was employed in the Near East."

I am particularly honored and pleased that he has accepted my reconstruction of a Proto-Philippine (and perhaps Proto-Malayo-Polyneisan) glottal stop (*ʔ) [as distinct from *q], whereas my professor and mentor at Cornell, Dr. John U. Wolff, and my long-time friend and correspondent, Dr. Robert Blust, do not.

The quantity, breadth, and depth of Prof. Mahdi's studies and publications show that he is a serious linguist and scholar, representing a brilliance that must be acknowledged and reckoned with. I am therefore honored to have this opportunity to salute him fondly and honor him sincerely for his many, lasting, and fascinating contributions to our field.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. David Zorc". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

R. David Zorc
Wheaton, Maryland
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