

* b > -k-: A BERAWAN SOUND CHANGE FOR THE AGES

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ABSTRACT. Berawan, an Austronesian language spoken in northern Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo, is one of several languages in central and western Borneo that have unusually innovative phonologies. Not only are these phonologies rich in number of changes, and the effect they have sometimes had on concealing cognation (e.g. Malay *bəruaŋ* and Long Terawan Berawan *kəbiŋ* ‘the Malayan sun bear: *Ursus malayanus*’ are cognate), but the search for theoretically-supported motivations for some changes leads nowhere. One of these changes in the Long Terawan dialect of Berawan is *b > k in intervocalic position, a change that is abundantly attested, and therefore not in question as a valid transition from an earlier to a later state of the language. A basic question is whether this was a one-step change, or a telescoping of several phonetically more ‘natural’ changes, and while it can be resolved into a two-step change this hardly relieves our sense of theoretical angst, since these changes were *b > g in intervocalic position, followed by intervocalic devoicing of g from two historically distinct sources.