

## **In search of language contact between Jarawa and Aka-Bea: The languages of South Andaman**

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The paper brings forth a preliminary report on the comparative data available on the extinct language Aka-Bea (H. Man 1923) and the endangered language Jarawa spoken in the south and the central parts of the Andaman Islands. Speakers of Aka-Bea, a south Andaman language of the Great Andamanese family and the speakers of Jarawa, the language of a distinct language family (Abbi 2004, 2009, Blevins 2008, Thangaraja et al 2006) lived adjacent to each other, i.e. in the southern region of the Great Andaman Islands in the past. They both had been hunters and gatherers and never had any contact with each other (Portman 1899). The Jarawas had been known for living in isolation for hundred of years, coming into contact with outside world only recently in 1998. It is then surprising to discover traces of some contact between the two communities in the past. Not a large database but a few examples of lexical similarities between words drawn from the ASJP list as well as from the LWT list exposes for the first time, the possibility of language contact between Aka-Bea and Jarawa in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, a comparison between the current data based on our fieldwork and the available data from the Rosetta project leads us to believe that language has undergone very little sound change. The reasons for this could be ascribed to the isolation of the tribe from any outside contact. We will, also, attempt to demonstrate the problems encountered in studying the sound change as the data recorded by anthropologists in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century invariably miss out on recording retroflex sounds voiced and voiceless, and the aspirated counterpart of the latter, which stand in contrast with non retroflex versions in the Andamanese languages.