

Possessive constructions in
Ambel:
An areal and historical perspective

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29 May 2014

The project:

- Aim: to document and describe the Ambel language
- Using naturalistic and elicited data
- Data collected in Ambel-speaking villages in early 2014
- These results are preliminary...
 - ...but this is the first full systematic study of Ambel.

Today's talk:

1. Language background
2. Demonstrate the typologically complex system of possessive morphology in Ambel
 - Person/number marking
 - Alienability
3. Discussion:
 - Ambel possessive constructions an areal context;
 - Other factors contributing to the development of the Ambel possessive construction.

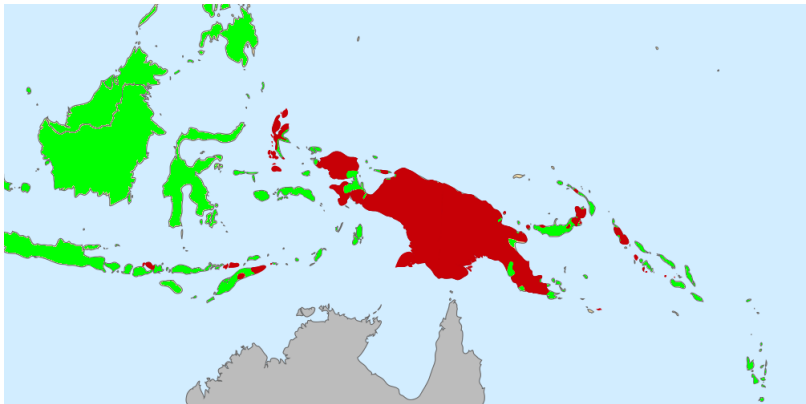
Language background



Language background

- Around 1000 speakers
- Genetically Austronesian (South Halmahera-West New Guinea, Raja Ampat)...
- ...but heavy influence from the non-Austronesian, Papuan languages of the area.

Language background



Possessive constructions in Ambel

- How a possessive relationship is marked in Ambel depends on two factors:
 1. The PERSON and NUMBER of the possessor;
 2. Whether the possessed noun is ALIENABLE or INALIENABLE.

Person/number marking in possessive constructions

- Four-way person distinction with non-singular possessor:

Person/number	Form	Translation
1PL.INC	tanin boki	'our cat (including you)'
1PL.EX	amanin boki	'our cat (not including you)'
2PL	manin boki	'your (PL) cat'
3PL	lanin boki	'their cat'

Person/number marking in possessive constructions

- Four-way number distinction:

Person/number	Form	Translation
2SG	nima boki	'your cat'
2PL	manin boki	'your (PL) cat'
2DU	moumanin boki	'you two's cat'
2TR	matumanin boki	'you three's cat'

Indirect possessive marking

- (1) *yene naka boki pa*
 1SG POSS.1SG cat DEM
 'my cat'
- (2) *Otera ne boki pa*
 Wolter POSS.3SG cat DEM
 'Wolter's cat'

Possessive paradigms in Ambel: *boki* 'cat'

- SINGULAR:

	number	SG	
person			
	1	naka	boki
	2	nima	boki
	3	ne	boki

Possessive paradigms in Ambel: *boki* 'cat'

- NON-SINGULAR:

number \ person	DU	TR	PL
1.INC	tuta-'ni-n boki	tu'ta-ni-n boki	ta-ni-n boki
1.EXC	oma-ni-n boki	atuma-ni-n boki	ama-ni-n boki
2	mouma-ni-n boki	matuma-ni-n boki	ma-ni-n boki
3	ula-ni-n boki	atula-ni-n boki	la-ni-n boki

INALIENABLE vs. ALIENABLE nouns

- In some languages, a semantic distinction is made between INALIENABLE nouns and ALIENABLE nouns.
- INALIENABLE nouns: a possessive relationship is intrinsic to the meaning.
 - The possessive relationship cannot easily be conceived of as being terminated.
 - Terms for body parts and kin relationships (e.g. 'hand', 'nose', 'mother', 'son'); perhaps some culturally important items.

INALIENABLE vs. ALIENABLE nouns

- ALIENABLE nouns: a possessive relationship is not intrinsic to the meaning.
 - A possessive relationship can easily be conceived of as terminating, e.g. 'money', 'cat', 'bottle'.
- The semantic distinction between ALIENABLE and INALIENABLE nouns is mirrored in the morphology.

INALIENABLE vs. ALIENABLE nouns in Ambel

- SINGULAR:

Person/number	ALIENABLE ('cat')	INALIENABLE ('nose')
1SG	naka boki	su-k
2SG	nima boki	su-m
3SG	ne boki	su-∅

INALIENABLE vs. ALIENABLE nouns in Ambel

- DUAL:

Person/number	ALIENABLE ('cat')	INALIENABLE ('nose')
1DU.INC	tuta-'ni-n boki	tu-'su-n-i
1DU.EXC	oma-ni- n boki	um-su- n-i
2DU	mouma-ni- n boki	mum-su- n-i
3DU	ula-ni- n boki	u-su- n-i

INALIENABLE vs. ALIENABLE nouns in Ambel

- TRIAL:

Person/number	ALIENABLE ('cat')	INALIENABLE ('nose')
1TR.INC	tu'ta-ni-n boki	'tu-su-n-i
1TR.EXC	atuma-ni-n boki	atum-su-n-i
2TR	matuma-ni-n boki	matum-su-n-i
3TR	atula-ni-n boki	atu-su-n-i

INALIENABLE vs. ALIENABLE nouns in Ambel

- PLURAL:

Person/number	ALIENABLE ('cat')	INALIENABLE ('nose')
1PL.INC	ta-ni-n boki	su- n-i
1PL.EXC	ama-ni-n boki	am-su-n-i
2PL	ma-ni-n boki	mim-su-n-i
3PL	la-ni-n boki	su- n-i

The linguistic area of Eastern Nusantara

- Klamer (2002); Klamer et al. (2008); Reesink (1998)



The linguistic area of Eastern Nusantara

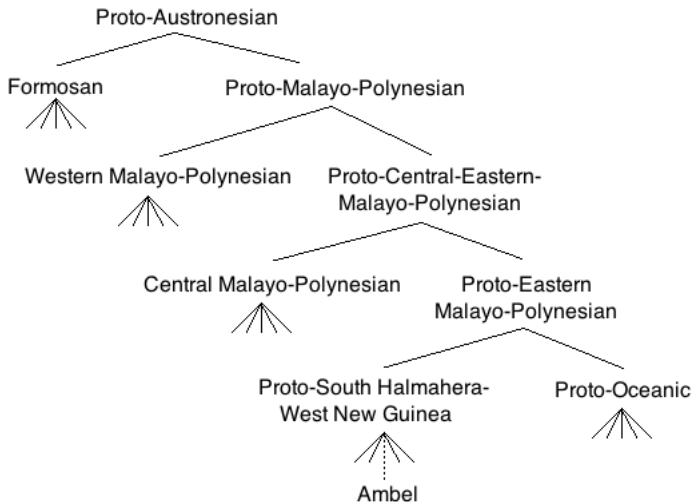
- Characterised by:
 - SVO word order, prepositions
 - Sentence-final negation and sentence-final aspect markers
 - **Morphological distinction between alienable and inalienable nouns ✓**
 - **Inclusive/exclusive distinction in 1st person non-singular ✓**
 - **'Papuan'-type person/number marking ✓**

The origin of the Ambel possessive constructions

- Diffusion, yes, but...
- **Inheritance** has also played a role.

The origin of the Ambel possessive constructions

- The INCLUSIVE/EXCLUSIVE distinction:
Proto-Austronesian.



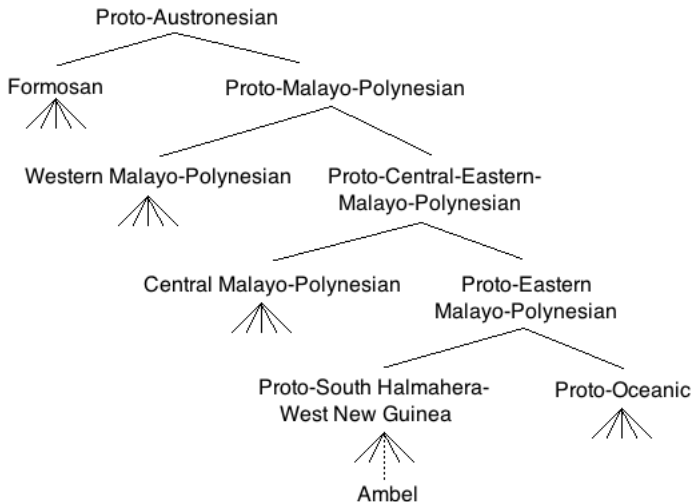
The origin of the Ambel possessive constructions

- The ALIENABLE/INALIENABLE distinction:

not Proto-Austronesian.

BUT:

- This distinction is found throughout SHWNG languages, and its sister branch, Oceanic.
- The distinction can therefore be reconstructed to Proto-Eastern Malayo-Polynesian.



The origin of the Ambel possessive constructions

- The person/number agreement is unusually complex compared with other Raja Ampat languages.
 - Is Ambel more conservative than the other Raja Ampat languages for which we have data (Ma'ya and Matbat)?
 - Possibly.
 - Or is this the result of influence from a now-extinct Papuan substrate? (cf. Remijsen, 2001: 104).
 - Difficult to say without more data from Raja Ampat languages.

Conclusions

- Ambel is of considerable interest:
 - Nearly all person/number combinations attested in natural language are expressed in possessive constructions:
 - Four-way person distinction in non-singular numbers (1.INC, 1.EXC, 2, 3)
 - Four-way number distinction (singular, dual, trial, plural)
 - Morphological distinction between ALIENABLE and INALIENABLE nouns

Conclusions

- These new data from Ambel provide further support for the hypothesis of a linguistic area in Eastern Nusantara.
- The possessive constructions attested in Ambel today are the result of a complex interaction of diffusion, inheritance, and possible influence from a Papuan substrate.

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With thanks to...

- The University of Edinburgh for its generous financial support;
- The Center for Endangered Languages Documentation at the Universitas Negeri Papua, Manokwari;
- Dr Bert Remijsen and Xavier Bach for comments on an earlier version of this presentation;
- The people of Kapadiri, Waigeo, for their warm hospitality, patience, and enthusiasm. Special thanks are due to Wolter Gaman, Bpk Martinus Wakaf, Bpk Matius Kein, Ibu Mina Kein, and Bpk Melkianus Wakaf.