

# Ambel: An areal perspective

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8th Austronesian and Papuan  
Languages and Linguistics conference

SOAS, 14 May 2016

# Ambel: An areal perspective

1. Areal linguistics in east Indonesia
2. Ambel: Background
3. Ambel: Data
  - Alienability distinction
  - Lexical tone
  - Neuter gender
4. Discussion
5. References

# Ambel: An areal perspective

## 1. Areal linguistics in east Indonesia

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Alienability distinction

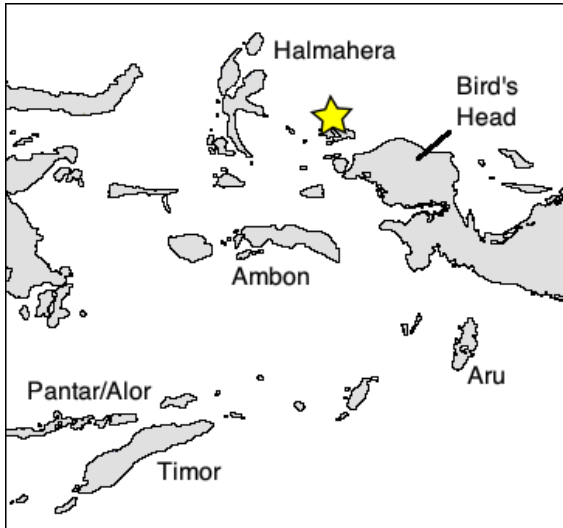
Lexical tone

Neuter gender

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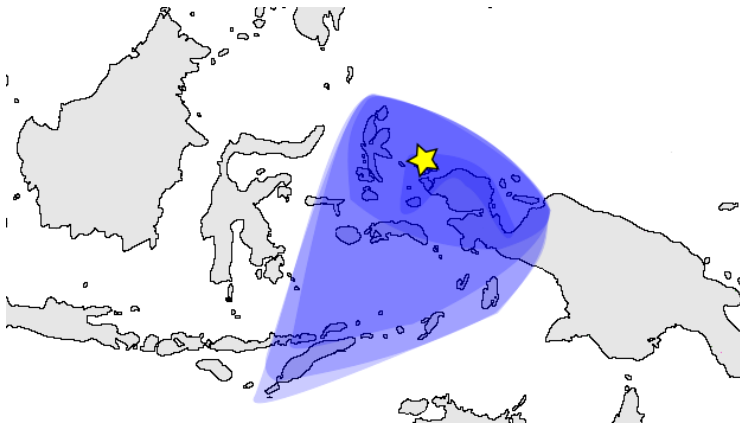
## Areal linguistics in east Indonesia



## Areal linguistics in east Indonesia

- ▶ Voorhoeve (1987), Reesink (1998)
- ▶ Klamer et al. (2008); Klamer and Ewing (2010): The **East Nusantara** linguistic area
- ▶ Schapper (2015): The **Wallacea** linguistic area
- ▶ Gil (2015): The **Mekong-Mamberamo** linguistic area

## Areal linguistics in east Indonesia: East Nusantara (Klamer et al. 2008)

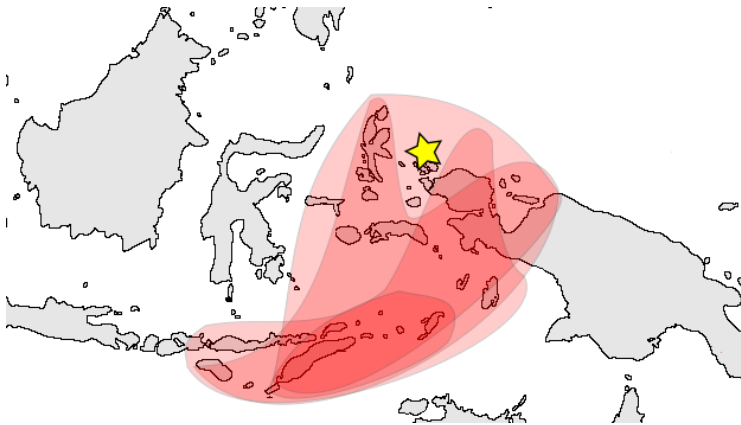


Adapted from Klamer et al. (2008)

## Areal linguistics in east Indonesia: East Nusantara (Klamer et al. 2008)

Feature	Presence in Ambel
1. SVO	✓
2. Inclusive/Exclusive distinction	✓
3. Alienability distinction	✓
4. PossR-PossD order	✓
5. Clause-final NEG	✓
6. Lexical tone	✓

## Areal linguistics in east Indonesia: Wallacea (Schapper 2015)



From Schapper (2015)



## Areal linguistics in east Indonesia: Wallacea (Schapper 2015)

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Presence in Ambel</b>
1. Semantic alignment	✓
2. Neuter gender	✓
3. *muku 'banana'	X
4. Synchronic metathesis	X

# Areal linguistics in east Indonesia: Summary

Feature	Presence in Ambel
East Nusantara (Klamer et al. 2008):	
1. SVO	✓
2. Inclusive/Exclusive distinction	✓
3. <b>Alienability distinction</b>	✓
4. PossR-PossD order	✓
5. Clause-final NEG	✓
6. <b>Lexical tone</b>	✓
Wallacea (Schapper 2015):	
1. Semantic alignment	✓
2. <b>Neuter gender</b>	✓
3. *muku 'banana'	X
4. Synchronic metathesis	X

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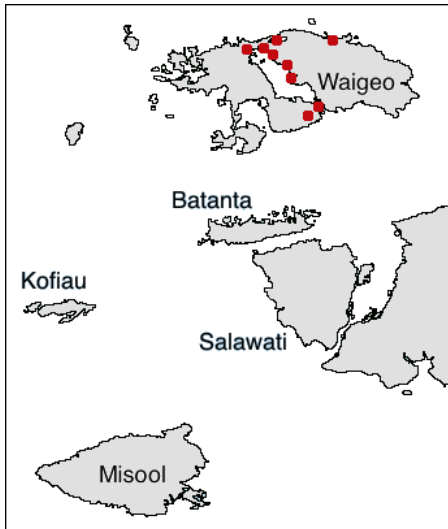
Lexical tone

Neuter gender

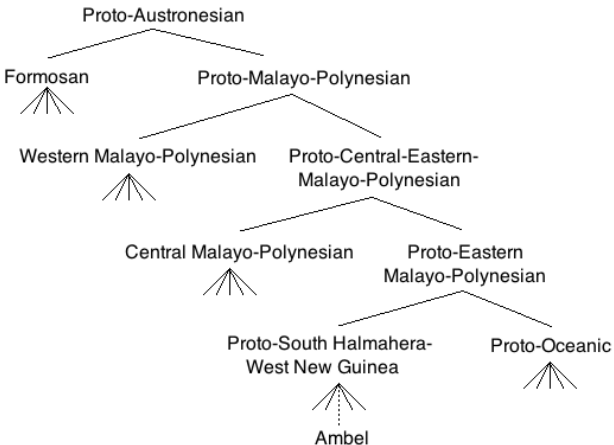
4. Discussion

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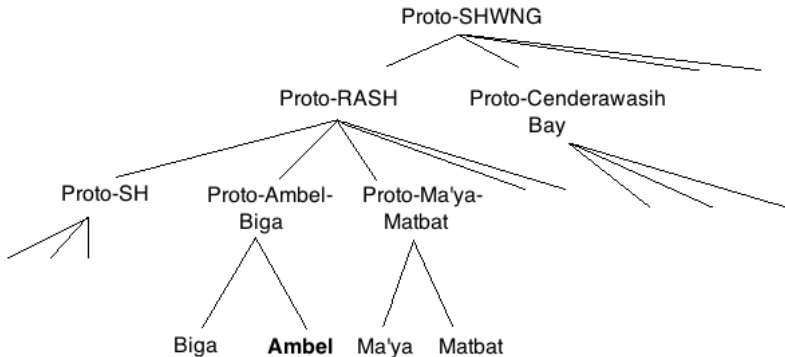
## Ambel: Language background



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## Ambel: Language background



Adapted from Kamholz (2014: 141)

## Ambel: Language background

### ▶ Phonology:

- ▶ 15 consonants: /p t k b d g f s h m n l r y w/
- ▶ 5 vowels: /i e a o u/
- ▶ Lexical tone

### ▶ Morphology:

- ▶ Largely analytic
- ▶ Obligatory subject agreement on verbal predicates (inclusive/exclusive, four numbers, animacy distinction)
- ▶ Possessive morphology (inclusive/exclusive, four numbers, animacy distinction)

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## 1. Alienable/inalienable distinction

- ▶ There is a formal distinction between alienable and inalienable possession:

(1) Alienable possession:

ni-k wán ne  
POSS-1SG canoe DEM

‘my canoe’

(2) Inalienable possession:

kái-k ne  
head-1SG DEM

‘my head’

- ▶ Formal distinction:

- ▶ **Inalienable:** Person/number/animacy of possessor marked with prefixes and suffixes directly on possessed noun
- ▶ **Alienable:** Person/number/animacy of possessor marked with prefixes and suffixes on prenominal possessive particle *na* or *ni*

# 1. Alienable/inalienable distinction

- ▶ Semantic distinction:
  - ▶ **Inalienable:**
    - ▶ Most part/whole relationships (including most body part terms)
    - ▶ Five kin terms ('mother', 'father', 'in-law', 'grandparent/grandchild', 'same-sex sibling')
    - ▶ Some associative relationships (e.g. 'shadow', 'name', 'footprint')
    - ▶ All orientation and location relationships
  - ▶ **Alienable:**
    - ▶ All other types of possessive relationships

# 1. Alienable/inalienable distinction

- ▶ Present in many (but not all) Papuan languages; not typically associated with non-EMP AN languages
  - ▶ Alienability distinction in many AN languages spoken on and around New Guinea thought to have diffused from Papuan languages (Klamer et al. 2008; Ross 2001: 122)
- ▶ At what point did the alienability distinction enter the history of Amel?
  - ▶ Alienability has been reconstructed to Proto-SHWNG (van den Berg 2009) and Proto-Oceanic (Lynch et al. 2002: 76)
  - ▶ It looks quite likely that we can reconstruct the distinction to Proto-EMP (cf. van den Berg 2009: 353–355)

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## 2. Lexical Tone

- ▶ Two-way, privative tonal contrast: /H/ vs. /Ø/ (Arnold in prep.)
  - ▶ Domain of specification is the syllable; TBU is the mora
  - ▶ /H/ is culminative but not obligatory
  - ▶ Minimal pairs:

/H/		/Ø/	
tún	‘moon’	tun	‘thorn’
súp	‘bathe.1SG’	sup	‘repeat.1SG’
y-ún	‘1SG-pick.up’	y-un	‘1SG-know’

## 2. Lexical Tone

- ▶ Tone not generally associated with AN languages
  - ▶ Ambel is only the 19th AN language described as tonal (out of c.1200)
  - ▶ Two other AN languages spoken in RA are tonal: Ma'ya (Remijsen 2001) and Matbat (Remijsen 2007)
- ▶ Tone weakly linked to Papuan languages (Foley 2000: 368)
  - ▶ No extant tonal Papuan language in RA
  - ▶ Several tonal Papuan languages on the BH (e.g. Mpur, Odé 2002; Abun, Berry and Berry 1999)

## 2. Lexical Tone

- ▶ At what point did tone enter the history of Amel?:
  - ▶ Remijsen (2001: 102–104): Tone developed in RA as the result of contact with a now-extinct tonal Papuan substrate
    - ▶ This is based on the complexities of the tone systems of Ma'ya and Matbat: Such complex systems do not typically occur as the result of spontaneous tonogenesis
  - ▶ Preliminary evidence from comparing monosyllabic cognates in Ma'ya, Matbat, and Amel suggests there may be tonal correspondences between the three languages (Arnold 2015)
  - ▶ A possible scenario: Tone developed in a common ancestor to Ma'ya, Matbat, and Amel as the result of diffusion from a now-extinct Papuan substrate, and was then inherited down

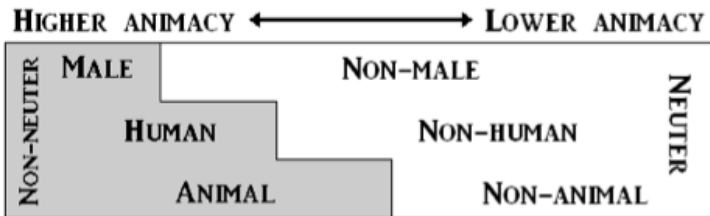


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### 3. Neuter Gender

- ▶ A gender distinction is present in many Austronesian and Papuan languages of the region
- ▶ Nouns are typically categorised in a binary system, which Schapper (2010) characterises as a contrast between ‘neuter’ and ‘nonneuter’ gender



### 3. Neuter Gender

- ▶ All nouns in Amel are classified according to whether they are animate or inanimate
  - ▶ Largely drawn along semantic lines: humans and other animals are considered animate, and almost everything else is considered inanimate.
  - ▶ Exceptions: *láynta* ‘sun’, *tún* ‘moon’, *kálo* ‘star’ are animate
- ▶ Coding:
  - ▶ Verbal subject agreement
  - ▶ Alienable and inalienable possessive paradigms
  - ▶ Pronouns

### 3. Neuter Gender

► Subject agreement:

	Stative verb subject agreement -lál 'big, large'		Dynamic verb subject agreement -katarán 'land'	
	ANIMATE	INANIMATE	ANIMATE	INANIMATE
3SG	na-lál	aN=lál	na-katarán	aN=na-katarán
3DU	ula-lál	si-lál	ula-katarán	si-katarán
3PC	atúla-lál		atúla-katarán	
3PL	la-lál		la-katarán	

### 3. Neuter Gender

- Pronominal system:

	Pronouns	
	ANIMATE	INANIMATE
3SG	ia	an=a
3DU	ua	a=si
3PC	atúa	
3PL	sia	

### 3. Neuter Gender

- ▶ At what point did the animacy distinction enter the history of Amel?
  - ▶ Schapper (2015: 30): Although many AN languages of the region have this noun class system, the systems are all very divergent, suggesting that they were not inherited from a common ancestor

### 3. Neuter Gender

- ▶ Comparing other nearby pronominal systems:

	Ambel	Ma'ya	Biak
3SG.AN	<b>ia</b>	<b>ia</b>	<b>i</b>
3SG.INAN	<b>an=a</b>	<b>ana</b>	
3PL.AN	<b>sia</b>	<b>si(a)/</b>	<b>si</b>
3NONSG.INAN	<b>a=si</b>	<b>hafat(a)</b>	<b>na</b>

### 3. Neuter Gender

- ▶ Comparing other nearby subject agreement systems:

	Ambel	Ma'ya	Biak
3SG.AN	<b>n(a)-</b>	ny-	i-
3SG.INAN	<b>aN=(n(a)-)</b>		
3PL.AN	<b>l(a)-</b>	w-	<b>si-</b>
3NONSG.INAN	<b>si-</b>		<b>na-</b>



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## Discussion

► Summary:

- Alienability:**
- (1) Diffused from Papuan language(s) into Proto-EMP
  - (2) Inherited into present-day Ambel
- Lexical tone:**
- (1) Diffused from Papuan language(s) into a common ancestor to Ma'ya, Matbat, and Ambel?
  - (2) Inherited into present-day Ambel?

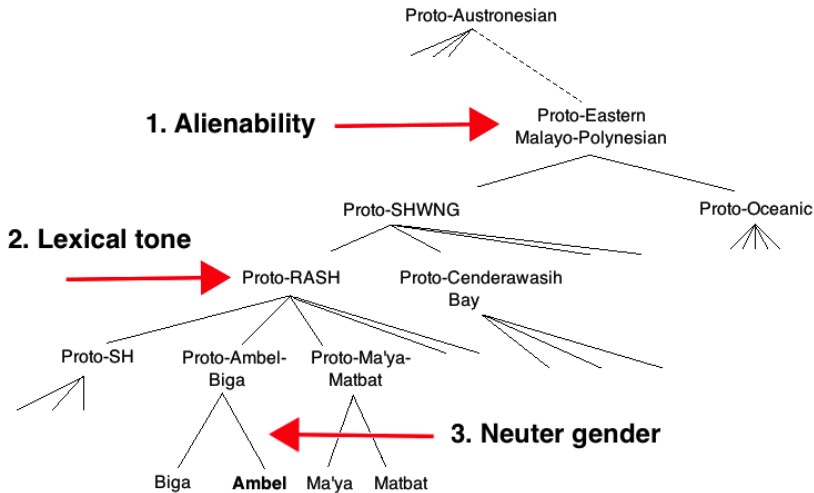
## Discussion

► Summary:

**Neuter  
gender:**

- (1) Distinction diffused from Papuan languages into Ma'ya and Biak
- (2) Distinction in 3SG pronouns diffused from Ma'ya into Ambel, or inherited from a common ancestor
- (3) Distinction in 3PL pronouns and subject agreement diffused from Biak into Ambel
- (4) Distinction in 3SG subject agreement innovated by analogy with pronominal system

# Discussion



## Discussion

- ▶ The data presented here show that Ambel has several typically Papuan features
  - ▶ These features occur in Ambel (ultimately) as the result of contact with Papuan languages
  - ▶ Direct contact: Alienability distinction, lexical tone?
  - ▶ Indirect contact: Neuter gender
- ▶ The presence of these features in Ambel supports the hypothesis that the region has long been an area of prolonged and intense contact
  - ▶ Further research may enable us to begin to untangle the nature and relative timescale of contact between AN and Papuan languages, as well as (potentially) some of the features of any substrate languages

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## References I

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With thanks to...



- ▶ All the Ambel people I have met and worked with so far, for their hospitality, patience, and enthusiasm. Special thanks are due to Wolter Gaman, Alfred Gaman, Darius Wakaf, Yubel Kein, Konstantina Wakaf, and my teachers, Martinus Wakaf, Korneles Fiay, and Matius Kein;
- ▶ All the staff at the Center for Endangered Languages Documentation (Universitas Papua, Manokwari), especially Yusuf Sawaki and Jeanete Lekeneny;
- ▶ Bert Remijssen, Caroline Heycock, and Rob Truswell for discussions relating to this presentation;
- ▶ The AHRC, the British Academy, the University of Edinburgh, and the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Documentation Programme, for their generous financial support.