

Unpacking areal features  
on and around the Bird's Head

OR:

How I learned to stop worrying and love the *Sprachbund*

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A celebration of David Gil linguistics

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# Unpacking areal features around the Bird's Head

1. On the notion 'linguistic area'
2. The language situation around the Bird's Head
3. Areal features on and around the Bird's Head
4. Conclusions

## On the notion 'linguistic area'

- ▶ “*Sprachbund* situations are notoriously messy” (Thomason and Kaufman 1988: 95)
- ▶ Lack of consensus on the necessary and sufficient conditions to define a linguistic area (Dahl 2001; Stolz 2002; Campbell 2006):
  - ▶ What is the minimum number of languages?
  - ▶ How genetically diverse should the languages be?
  - ▶ What is the minimum number of shared similarities?
  - ▶ What should the nature of the shared similarities be?
  - ▶ To what extent should features of the area be restricted to the area?

## On the notion 'linguistic area'

- ▶ “...the reason [for our lack of understanding about linguistic areas]... is because there is no meaningful distinction between borrowing and areal linguistics” (Campbell 2006: 1)
  - ▶ Cut-off point for minimum number of features, languages, language families, etc is arbitrary
  - ▶ **What happened?**
- ▶ Katz (1975: 16):
  - “One can speak of a Sprachbund if:
    - (a) at a given time
    - (b) a continuous geographical region, that
    - (c) is intersected by at least one language boundary,
    - (d) is encompassed by at least one isogloss.”

## On the notion 'linguistic area'

- ▶ Can a particular area be characterised as a linguistic area? – **X**
- ▶ Relative **strength** vs. **weakness** of a linguistic area? – ✓
  - ▶ Stronger linguistic area =
    - ▶ More languages
    - ▶ Greater genetic diversity
    - ▶ More borrowed features
    - ▶ More typologically unusual features
  - ▶ Weaker linguistic area =
    - ▶ Fewer languages
    - ▶ Little genetic diversity
    - ▶ Fewer borrowed features
    - ▶ Less typologically unusual features

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On the notion 'linguistic area'

○○○

The language situation

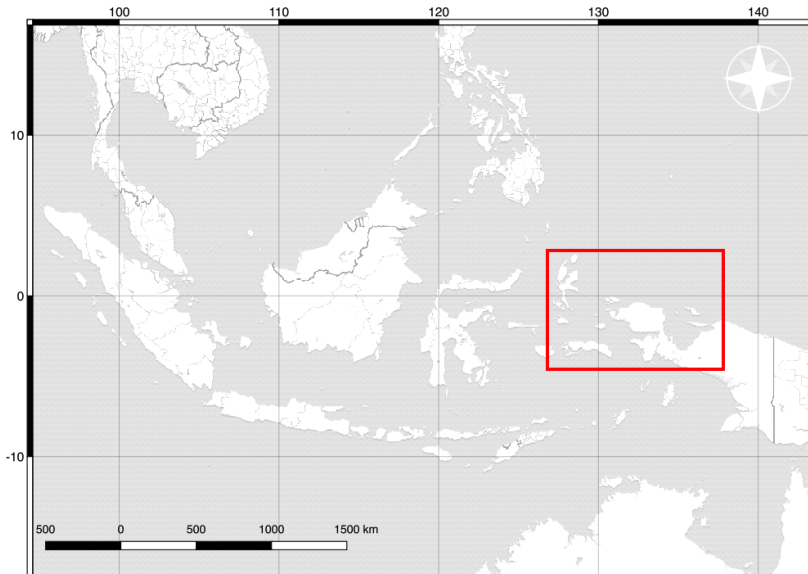
●○○

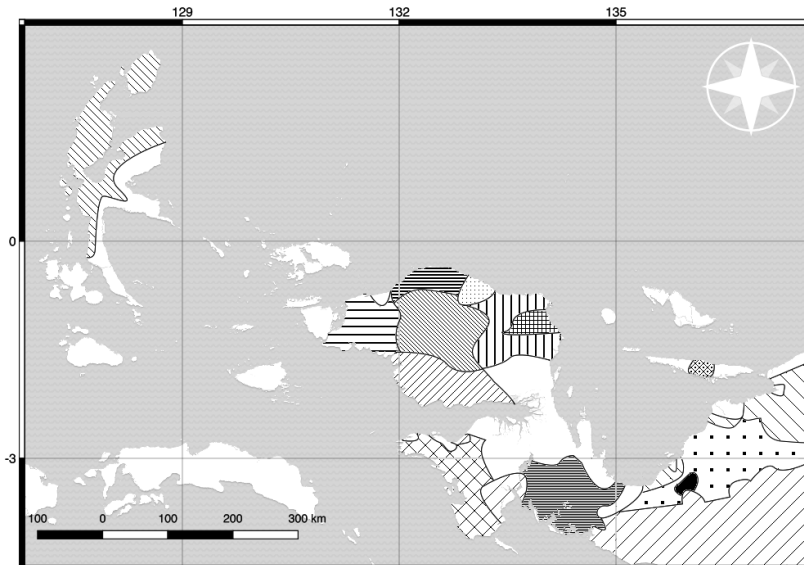
Areal features

○○○  
○○○  
○○○

Conclusions

○







## Local linguistic areas

- ▶ The **Bird's Head** Sprachbund (Reesink 1998)
- ▶ The **East Nusantara** linguistic area (Klamer et al. 2008)
- ▶ The **Wallacea** linguistic area (Schapper 2015)
- ▶ The **Mekong-Mamberamo** macro-area (Gil 2015)

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## Areal features on and around the Bird's Head

1. Semantically conditioned differential marking in inalienable possessive constructions
2. 'until' > postpositive intensifier
3. 'good' > habitual marker

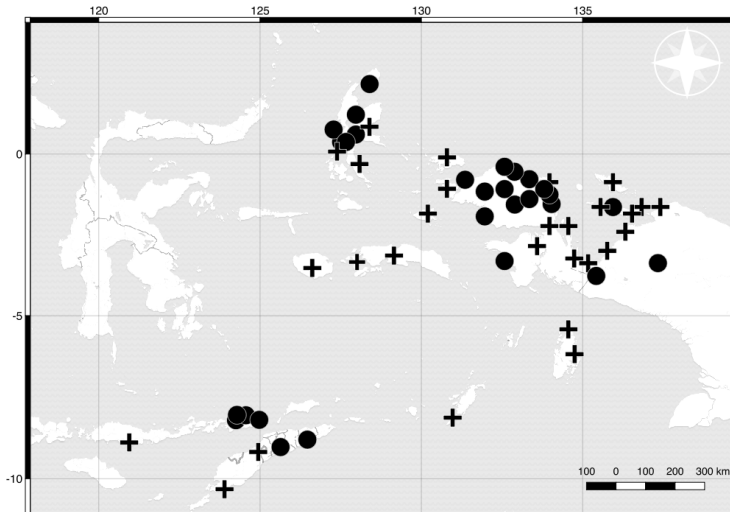
On the notion 'linguistic area'  
○○○

The language situation  
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Areal features  
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Conclusions  
○

## Areal features on and around the Bird's Head



## Differential inalienable marking

(1) **Ambai** (AN, SHWNG; Silzer 1983: 88)

a. **ina-na**  
mother-3SG

'his/her mother'

b. **awe-n**  
foot-3SG

'his/her foot'

(2) **Hatam** (PAP, Hatam-Mansim; Reesink 1999: 48-9)

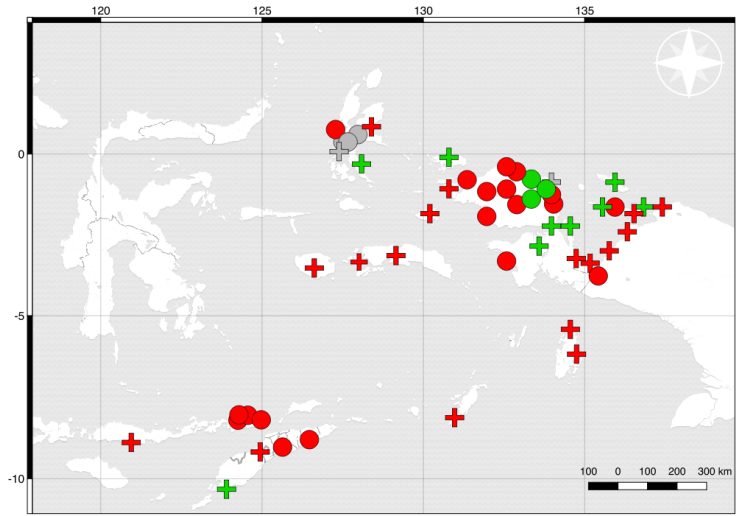
a. **niT-mem**  
3SG-mother

'his/her mother'

b. **ni-bou**  
3SG-head

'his/her head'

# Differential inalienable marking



## Differential inalienable marking

### ► Summary:

Internal coverage?	11/40 (27.5%)
Cross-cuts genetic boundaries?	3/12 (25%)
Typologically unusual?	✓✓✓

### ► **What happened?**

- Papuan > SHWNG

## 'until' > postpositive intensifier

### (3) Ternate (PAP, NHalm; Hayami-Allen 2001: 77)

- a. Coba ngana hohi romoi **sado** nyag boi  
 try 2SG count one **till** ten one

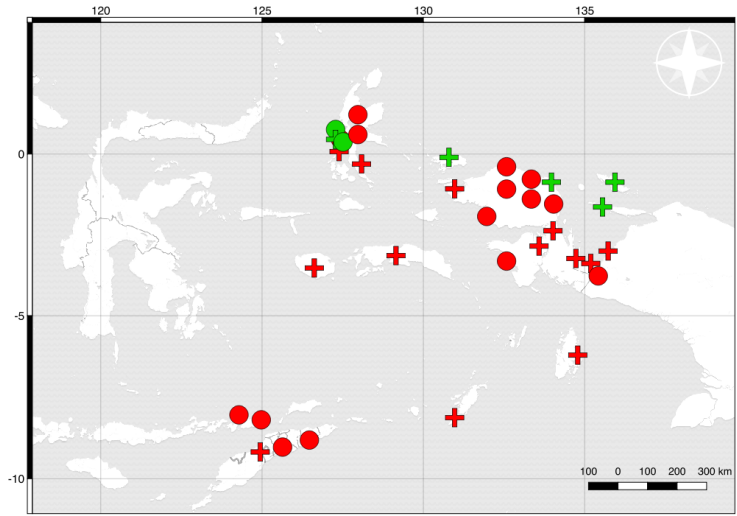
'Try counting one through ten.'

- b. Rehe cum **sado**  
 flesh hurt **till**

'(My) muscle hurts very much.'



# 'until' > postpositive intensifier



## 'until' > postpositive intensifier

### ▶ Summary:

Internal coverage?	7/25 (28%)
Cross-cut genetic boundaries?	2/8 (25%)
Typologically unusual?	✓✓✓

### ▶ **What happened?**

- ▶ Tidore/Ternate (N Halmahera) > SHWNG

## 'good' > habitual marker

(4) **Ma<sup>1</sup>ya** (AN, SHWNG; van der Leeden n.d.)

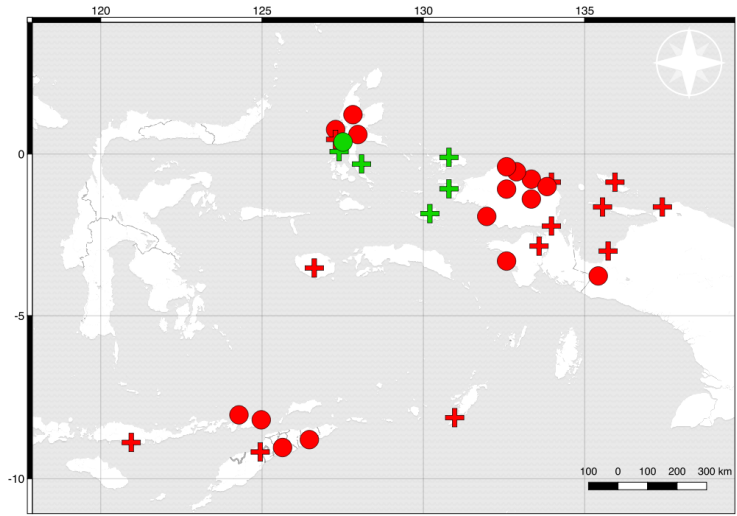
a. pi<sup>3</sup>n    gia    na-'fi<sup>3</sup>    'dele<sup>3</sup>  
 woman that 3SG-**good** very

'That woman is very beautiful.'

b. maga<sup>1</sup>na<sup>12</sup>n    gia    'ny-ene<sup>3</sup>f    na-sa<sup>1</sup>dere<sup>3</sup>    'fi<sup>3</sup>  
 child            that 3SG-sleep 3SG-be.restless **good**

'That child has the habit of sleeping restlessly.'

# 'good' > habitual marker



## 'good' > habitual marker

### ► Summary:

Internal coverage?	6/26 (23.1%)
Cross-cut genetic boundaries?	2/10 (20%)
Typologically unusual?	✓✓✓

### ► **What happened?**

- Tidore (N Halmahera) > SHWNG

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## Conclusions

- ▶ Differences in distribution of the features across the area =
  - ▶ different strata of contact
  - ▶ from different source languages
  - ▶ at different times
  - ▶ using different mechanisms
- ▶ Relative strength/weakness of the area:
  - ▶ Just based on these three features, not too strong
  - ▶ But what about other features?
    - ▶ Tone
    - ▶ Prepositive 'so' > postpositive 'since'
    - ▶ eeeH
    - ▶ etc...

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# Thank you!

