Book Reviews


Languages of the Eastern Bird’s Head (LEBH) is an interesting, though challenging book to review. It does not fit the mold of many edited volumes these days. It is a book that is too rarely seen: no “last words” (except for the last chapter—more on this later), no exhaustive studies, but solid material to make a typologist delight, data to make a formalist ponder, and comparison both synchronic and diachronic to make anyone interested in the languages of New Guinea sit up.

The volume consists of five parts: the introduction, by R, detailing some broad comparative issues concerning the Eastern Bird’s Head languages, both sociolinguistic and typological; the central chapters, in which we find grammatical sketches of Mpur (by Cecilia Odé), Meyah (by Gilles Gravelle), and Sough (by R); a salvage sketch of Borai by R; and a lexical overview of the area. The content, then, focuses on the languages of the Eastern Bird’s Head (not, as the back cover states [or implies] all of the peninsula: “This book is the first detailed introduction to languages of the Bird’s Head peninsula of Indonesia, [sic] Irian Jaya”). I shall (approximately) appropriate the division of labor on the back cover to represent the division of labor in this review: coverage of the sketches, but more attention paid to the documentary aspects of the presentations, and of the introduction.

To review a book, the bulk of which is a collection of sketch grammars, I must examine the point of a sketch description. This is not trivial: who is a sketch grammar intended for? There has, thankfully, been a flood of sketch grammars on the market in the last decade, so we might have some idea of what a sketch grammar is; but not such a good idea about why it is. This question is addressed in the next section. I then devote considerably more space to a summary and critique of the argumentation and conclusions in R’s introduction. There follow highlights of some constructions of particular theoretical interest that are described in the book, and in the conclusion I summarize the historical argumentation.

The point of a sketch grammar. We might illustrate the two opposing positions in a hypothetical discussion of theory, linguistics, and sketch grammars. On the one hand we have work such as Klamer’s (1998) description of Kambera. This is not a comprehensive description of the grammar of the language, covering all the major aspects of the syntax, but it does go into considerable detail on selected topics, to an extent that is rare in most comprehensive grammars. It is this attention to detail that makes it all the more valuable for (nondescriptivism) phonologists and syntacticians, in a way that many more comprehensive grammars are not. Many of the questions that formal theory-inclined linguists, but not necessarily run-of-the-mill typologists, would want to raise have been
explicitly addressed, meaning not only that the material the formalists might wish to learn is readily accessible, but that it has been gathered at all. For such a formalist, a sketch grammar holds little of use: because the material is, by definition, a sketch, meaning that it gives a broad outline and not a detailed character study, it is almost negligent of the author to include too much detail on any one topic, in an effort to cover them all.

On the other hand, for that same run-of-the-mill typologist even a sketch description is better than none: no matter that we cannot know all details of the affixal combinations possible on a verb, it is valuable to know that the verb is prefixing. No matter what the details of causative plus applicative combinations (or bans on such combinations), it is valuable to know that the language has a causative, and an applicative. This is good justification for a sketch of a previously un- or under-described language. (It is also, perhaps, an argument against publishing sketch-sized materials on languages for which there already exists a more comprehensive grammar. Fortunately, this is not an issue with which I need to become embroiled in this review.)

It is difficult to review a grammatical sketch—the work is not intended to be exhaustive, complete, or in-depth, and so many of the usual evaluative criteria—exhaustiveness, completeness, and depth—cannot be applied. I am glad that they have been included in the book, and that the book presents them in such a clear fashion. I am in favor of “preliminary reports” being published, because in many cases busy lives mean that at best the more complete, exhaustive write-up will take years to appear, let alone the more exhaustive investigation. (At worst, it won’t appear at all. Many languages of the Sepik region of New Guinea had been documented in sketch grammar-size by Don Laycock, who died before publishing more than a fraction of them.) Honing a problem over decades is a simple matter for those who work on national languages, or with speakers in the comfort of their own office, but it is quite another matter for linguists working on less accessible languages. Especially in these cases we must welcome any material, no matter how scanty, through which to assess the linguistic situation.

Here we have grammar sketches of Mpur, Meyah, and Sough. I shall not attempt to critique these sketches in detail, because the function of a sketch is at least as much to make the readers wonder what lurks around the corner in the language, and make them want to commission more work on the language. All the sketches provide basic data on the language they describe, easily accessible to a typologically oriented linguist. All the sketches include textual material, which is a nice addition to a possibly “bare-bones” sketch. One clear lack in these sketches is a detailed phonetic description of the sounds of the language. To my mind the authors rush too quickly to a generalized, standard typographic representation, without adequately describing the peculiarities of the phonemes. If the purpose of a grammatical sketch is both to document as well as describe, then this is clearly a failure to document. It would have been nice to have a basic wordlist, or list of lexical information in semantic categories such as is found in the final description in the book, on Mansim. Admittedly, there is some lexical material in the first chapter by R, providing pan-EBH glossaries for some 200 lexical items, but because the terms listed involve a great degree of semantic latitude, some lexical material in the individual chapters would have been useful for historical linguists working in the area (admittedly, this is not a large audience).
More seriously, for a documentary work, we might well wonder why, in the Mpur
sketch, there is no marking of tone, or, minimally, of pitch, beyond one small part of
the phonology section? Without this information, the sketch is useless for anyone interest-
ing in a phonological typology of pitch/tone. Similar comments apply to Meyah: if
there is some suprasegmental feature involved that is distinctive, then it should be
marked, regardless of whether or not it is present in the orthography, throughout the
sketch (or, alternatively, pitch could be annotated in an attached wordlist; but wordlists
are not included with each chapter).

R’s own Mansim sketch presents what will most likely be the only documentation of
the language that will appear. Mansim is only a short falter away from being extinct, and
is hardly known linguistically beyond its name. The use of sketchy materials recorded
over a hundred years ago as the sole documentation of a language is not as satisfying as
even a couple of hours’ data collected by a linguist acquainted with IPA conventions.
The clearly presented and not over-analyzed data in this chapter are far from conclusive,
but are certainly most welcome. The material shows a minimal interference from the
linguist collecting the material, a point that is essential in this sort of “last minute” docu-
mentary report. Too many languages are known from materials collected in sometimes
almost hostile interviews between linguists and their informants, to the extent that what
is reported does not closely reflect what the informants said. R reports all code-switch-
ings, hesitations, and performance errors, allowing anyone interested in the ways lan-
guages decay and die to find a valuable source of material on just these processes. The
only comment I have for this admirably compact and contentful sketch is on the wordlist at the end: why is there no reversal for the lexicon? An English-Mansim finder-
list would have made the vocabulary so much more easy to search.

Returning to the “why” of sketch grammars, is it acceptable to publish a sketch of a
language without giving all the details their descriptive due? In part, this question is
answered by editors and reviewers, and those who cite in surveys, areal studies, and
theoretical works. What these people will accept is, de facto, acceptable, and so sketches such as those in LEBH do reveal enough competence to merit publication.

**Typology and historical linguistics.** Apart from the grammar sketches, we have
R’s introduction to the volume, which serves, unsurprisingly, to introduce the book.
This could never be quite as trivial as it sounds: what is the basis for unifying three
descriptions of (north and) east Bird’s Head languages together into one volume? Uni-
fying themes for linguistic volumes are usually either formal similarity (volumes on
grammaticalization, phonology, A’-movement, for instance), genetic (Niger-Congo
languages, Slavic languages), or else macro-areal (North American, The World). How
can we justify a micro-areal study such as this one? It is to this point that R applies
himself, pointing out the typological peculiarities that are, despite the uncertain linguis-
tic history of the region, spread through the region delimited by the languages that are
the foci of the different chapters of the book. The introduction is, then, essentially an
introduction to a typological-structural volume, dealing with languages that, in addi-
tion to their geographic proximity, share a range of typological (and structural) traits. I
introduce this evidence in the discussion that follows.
R also uses the introduction to advance some research in addition to the grammatical sketches: the sections within the introduction are titled “Links throughout the Bird’s Head,” “The genetic relationship between Meyah and Sough,” “Evidence for eastern Bird’s Head grouping and contact,” “Historical origins,” “Inter-ethnolinguistic marriages,” and “The nature of eastern Bird’s Head languages,” and the appendix includes the short wordlists that are sorely missed elsewhere, except in the Mansim sketch. I address two main questions in this review: the nature of different kinds of evidence in historical argumentation (and the kinds of results that they can produce), and the typological nature of the “Austronesian–Papuan divide” in New Guinea, focusing on the Papuan side of things. Along the way I highlight some of the more interesting claims that R raises.

The thesis that R advances is essentially that the EBH languages are members of the West Papuan phylum, though exactly what this means is often hard to discern, because R hedges his conclusions at every turn, and relies on some reasoning that is not entirely clear.¹ Some examples of this hedging include: “This might be something like *de(T)” (5), “Perhaps the Bird’s Head *de(T) is related to the ubiquitous Trans New Guinea (TNG) form *nV- …” (5), “… could be more than chance similarities …” (5), “… may be more than accidental …” (5), “… some evidence is presented which may suggest that the languages of the eastern Bird’s Head are not totally unrelated to [the languages of the West Papuan phylum] …” (2). The second of these quotes includes what might be R’s extended hypothesis, implying that the West Papuan phylum includes the EBH languages as part of its scope. Yet we also find suggestions that the EBH languages might be related to the Trans New Guinea (TNG) languages of the central highlands. Although R (characteristically) hedges this claim (“this is, of course, not more than speculation”), he presents additional arguments, suggesting that Pawley’s (1995, 1998) reconstruction *niman for louse, reported to be a particularly stable etymon, might be related to EBH Sough, Hatam *men, Meyah *mej, Mpur *im, and that the widespread TNG form *nok ‘water’ (Pawley 1995, 1998; R cites *ok and *mek) might be related to EBH Sough -ulu, Hatam *nei, Meyah *mei. (The pan–New Guinea distribution of two tuber words, *m[aelo] and *siefP, is described by R as “evidence for contact” and so cannot be taken as evidence for a genetic relationship.) R concludes that “some lexical similarities are due to contact, but some others may be indicative of a distant genetic relationship, both within the Bird’s Head and with Papuan languages outside this area.”

Meyah and Sough. Section three presents evidence for a close genetic link between Meyah (and its dialect Moskona) and Sough. The evidence presented concerns verbal structure, nominal structure, and lexicon. The verbal data are: the presence of an instrumental prefix, the form of which is not cognate between the two languages, but which is closer to the verb root than any aspecral inflection in both languages; the presence of noncognate verbal prefixes with different meanings in one or both of the two languages, *en-, *N-, and *em-; the possibility of pronominal enclisis in both languages; and the presence of an apparently cognate reciprocal suffix, -im in Sough and -una in Meyah. Of these data, only the reciprocal suffix supports a genetic relationship.

¹. Partly this is a copy-editing issue; there seem to be a lot of extraneous commas, and the vacillation in conclusions is distracting.
Nominally the evidence is more convincing. R presents an interesting explanation for the fact that the overwhelming majority of Meyah alienable nouns start with *m*, tracing it to an old third person prefix, still found productively in Sough (the explanation for the material in (16) below, and what R terms a *Vf* formative, is not clear). A fossilized plural morpheme -*ir*, found only on human nouns in Sough but on all animate nouns in Meyah, is cognate across the two languages.

Lexically a strong set of cognates establish sound correspondences between the two languages: Meyah s: Sough h; MEY f: SGB h; MEY k: SGB h/c; MEY j: SGB d. The set of “(almost) identical” basic vocabulary items do not support these sound correspondences. This suggests either that they have been resistant to sound change in Sough, not unlikely given the level of intergroup marriage and contact that pertains in the Bird’s Head, as R documents in section 6, or that they are borrowed or shared lexical items in the area (section 4.8 presents more lexical correspondences that R ascribes to contact, rather than cognacy).

The argumentation for the link between Meyah and Sough is thus most compelling where it follows the traditional techniques of comparative linguistics: the lexical items that show regular sound correspondences, and the bound morphemes that are evidently cognate in both form and function. It is surprising that R does not mention the pronominal prefixes, cited on page 4, which are apparently cognate between the two languages; I shall return to this below.²

The eastern Bird’s Head. Extending beyond Meyah and Sough, R proposes a genetic link between these languages and Mpur and Hatam (and Mansim). The basis for this proposal is morphological. We find the same cognate reciprocal marker that was discussed for Meyah and Sough, but which also occurs as *-en* in Mpur, and *yam* in Hatam. The presence of a “connective clitic” *bi* in Hatam and Sough, a “nominalizing” affix *k* with a range of plausibly related functions in all four languages, and a morpheme *s(V)* “locative” in the same four, add to the evidence. An instrumental prefix is found in Hatam, structurally similar to those discussed earlier, though not cognate (the forms are: Meyah *er-,* Sough *a-,* Hatam *bi-). R also raises the question of borrowing, and we are reintroduced to some hedging. The nominalizing morpheme “is an argument for a genetic relation,” but “the possibility of diffusion cannot be ruled out.” A verbalizing prefix *(e)be-* is said to be found in the languages concerned, but also some Austronesian languages of Cenderawasih Bay to the east of the Bird’s Head, and in Abun in the northwest of the Bird’s Head. R proposes that the morpheme had its origins in the EBH languages, spread to the Austronesian language Biak (an important trade language in the region), and then to the West Papuan language Abun. The reasoning behind this chain is not clear; the social conditions that R describes do not seem conducive to borrowing from EBH languages to the dominant Biak.³ Surely it is simpler to assume that Biak was the donor language; this would explain its restriction in Meyah to loanwords. It would also match the

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² To be fair, Reesink (1998) has already presented other apparent cognate sets ranging across the Bird’s Head, where he also presented most of the material in this section.

³ Similarly, the fact that both Sough and Hatam speakers were enslaved, and later released on Ternate and Tidore, is not a convincing piece of evidence for the amount of cross-group mixing in traditional EBH society.
same decision that R makes with respect to the presence of a b in the 2SG pronominal forms earlier, where he suggests that it has been borrowed from Austronesian languages.4

R starts section 2 with tables of pronominal forms, and mentions that attempts to group the languages of the Bird’s Head together on lexical grounds have not been successful, citing Voorhoeve’s (1989) figures for lexical similarity in the area that are in the 3–8 percent range, and noting that only Meyah–Sougb shows a higher level of lexical similarity. But, of course, it is the regular sound correspondences, not the presence of a number of (near) identical lexical items in an area in which contact has played an extensive role, that determines the likelihood of genetic relationship, using just the methodology that appears in section 3. Given that one of R’s contentions is that relationships in the Bird’s Head are more extensive than Voorhoeve hypothesized, it is strange that he does not discuss the very similar pronominal evidence.

**Pronominal evidence in historical linguistics.** I examine here just the bound pronominal forms that R presents, on the assumption that bound morphemes are more resistant to borrowing than free morphemes, and that bound pronominal material is more likely to represent an older stage of the language, given the well-attested pathway of cliticization and reanalysis of pronouns (which appears to be ongoing in the case of object pronouns in Meyah). This material is presented in table 1.

How reliable is this material in establishing a genetic relationship? Nichols (1996) offers a methodology for determining the possibility of chance resemblances in a finite set of morphemes, such as a set of pronouns or body-part terms,5 and we can illustrate it with a comparison of the Tehit and Moi bound pronouns. These consist of a single segment;

### Table 1. Bird’s Head Agreement Prefixes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tehit</th>
<th>Moi</th>
<th>Maybrat</th>
<th>Mpur</th>
<th>Meyah</th>
<th>Sougb</th>
<th>Hatam</th>
<th>Mansim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>t-</td>
<td>t-</td>
<td>t-</td>
<td>(i)n-</td>
<td>d-</td>
<td>d-</td>
<td>d-</td>
<td>d-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>n-</td>
<td>n-</td>
<td>n-</td>
<td>(a)n-</td>
<td>b-</td>
<td>b-</td>
<td>a-</td>
<td>n- / mb-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG.M</td>
<td>w- (/ o-)</td>
<td>w- / p-</td>
<td>y-</td>
<td>a-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG.F</td>
<td>m-</td>
<td>m-</td>
<td>m-</td>
<td>n-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1DU.EXCL</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>aam-</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>o-</td>
<td>ma-</td>
<td>na-</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1DU.INCL</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>aaw-</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>o-</td>
<td>na-</td>
<td>am(a)-</td>
<td>s-</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2DU</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>aan-</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>n-</td>
<td>ge-</td>
<td>ya-</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>k-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3DU</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>aan-/aay-</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>do-</td>
<td>ge-</td>
<td>la-</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>k-</td>
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<td>1PL.EXCL</td>
<td>m- / p-</td>
<td>m-</td>
<td>p-</td>
<td>e-</td>
<td>me-</td>
<td>ma-</td>
<td>n-</td>
<td>µ-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL.INCL</td>
<td>p- / f-</td>
<td>w- / p-</td>
<td>p-</td>
<td>e-</td>
<td>mi-</td>
<td>m-</td>
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<td>µ-</td>
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<td>n-</td>
<td>n-</td>
<td>i-</td>
<td>y-</td>
<td>j-</td>
<td>s-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>y- (/i-)</td>
<td>y- / n- (/w- / l-)</td>
<td>m-</td>
<td>de-</td>
<td>ri-</td>
<td>l-</td>
<td>i- (/ si-)</td>
<td>s-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1. o- and i- are given as variants in Hesse (1983).
2. Reesink lists go-, but Gravelle lists this morpheme as ge-; Reesink lists y-, but Gravelle lists i-.
3. Reesink’s table has been supplemented from Stokhof and Flassy (1985).
4. si- comes from my own field notes.

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4. The fact that d- 1SG and b- 2SG forms are found across north-central New Guinea from the Skou family west (for example, l’saka [Donohue and San Roque 2004], Sentani [Cowan 1965], Burmeso [Donohue 2001]) weakens the attraction of this hypothesis.
5. Rosenfelder (2002) presents an algorithm for determining the odds of chance resemblances appearing between two languages with open sets of items.
Nichols takes the chance of a given consonant being used in a given position in a set of pronouns to be approximately 20 percent, because pronominal consonants always constitute a small subset of the total number of consonants in a language (and are remarkably stable cross-linguistically). Taking the set of pronominal prefixes in the western Bird’s Head area to be *t-, *n-, *w-, *m-, *p-, *n-, and *y- (from Voorhoeve 1989, and inspection of the Tehit and Moi columns of table 1), we find the chance that a randomly chosen language will reflect all of these consonants to be 1/390,625. Given that there are approximately 6,000 languages in the world, we would predict that there should be 1/65 languages with this set. Taking $p \leq .05$ as an acceptable level of chance, we can declare the coincidence in the forms of the pronominal prefixes found in Tehit and Moi to be significant and not likely to be due to chance. Comparing Moi and Maybrat, on the other hand, there are only six matches (unless we can establish a regular *w > y sound change accounting for the 35G.M form). This yields a chance relationship of 1/15,625, which multiplied by 6,000 (languages) gives the level of probability of chance resemblance at 0.38. This is not statistically significant, and so on the basis of the pronominal evidence alone we could not conclude that there is a relationship between Maybrat and Moi (or Tehit). When we compare the eastern languages with those in the west, the possibility of chance resemblances becomes even greater. (For instance, comparing the bound pronouns of Meyah and Moi we find $p = .400$, not a significant result.) Thus, despite R’s claim that the pronominals provide evidence for a relationship, the resemblances we find could equally be due to chance. I find them to be suggestive supporting evidence, but not convincing on their own.

The inclusive/exclusive distinction. While discussing pronouns, we should also mention the discussion of the b 2SG forms, as well as the presence of inclusive/exclusive forms and dual forms in certain EBH languages. R writes of Meyah and Sough, which have a bilabial for 2SG, that we should suppose the bilabial pronominal form is there due to Austronesian contact because “it is precisely these languages [that have] a clear opposition between inclusive and exclusive for 1PL, and that . . . have a quite regularly formed dual.” This statement seems totally unfounded. Firstly, in addition to Meyah and Sough we also find inclusive/exclusive distinctions in Tehit and, in the bound prefixes, Hatam. Secondly, the duals are not obviously regularly formed: the dual and plural forms in Meyah are shown in (1) with both free and bound pronominals, and the Sough forms are in (2). Examining the Meyah forms first, we could posit a first person dual formative -gif, which takes its inclusive/exclusive specification from the pronominal prefixes for the first person forms. But this putative formative is not found elsewhere, and so calling it “regular” is a stretch. If we accept the forms in R’s table, the “regularity” is even worse: the only correspondence we can find is the quality of the first vowel in memef and memef, which might be signalling duality. But a is not uniquely associated with dual number in this pronominal system. In Sough we could make a stronger case for a marking dual, appearing in second and third persons transparently, and arguably in a correspondence between 1DU.INCL and 1PL.EXCL; the correspondences between the first person plural free forms and the bound forms makes it likely that the free forms have switched functions in the past. But to claim that both languages display “a quite regularly formed dual” is misleading.
A language with regularly formed dual forms can easily be found in the Austronesian languages of Cenderawasih Bay that R (perhaps) posits as sources for this feature. (3) presents the pronouns of Ansus, the dominant language of western Yapen. Here it is clear that there is a completely regular dual formative -ru (du following a nasal), as well as a completely regular trial formative toru.† These forms are transparently and regularly related to the numerals, ko-du ‘two’ and ko-toru ‘three’.‡

The presence of an inclusive/exclusive distinction in at least some pronominal forms is taken to be evidence for Austronesian influence on the languages, on the assumption that having an inclusive/exclusive is not characteristic of “Papuan” languages. This is a strange myth to propagate. In Nichols’s database of grammatical features, fully 26 percent of languages in the New Guinea area are listed as showing an inclusive/exclusive opposition (only one of those languages is Austronesian, out of a sample of 23; if we excluded Tawala, we would still have 22 percent showing an inclusive/exclusive opposition).

Taking a second sample, in Foley’s (1986) survey of Papuan languages, section 4.2 gives pronominal systems of eight TNG languages, one Trans-Fly language, one Lower Sepik-Ramu language, and one from the Nimboran family. Of the four families represented, the languages of one (Nimboran) show an inclusive/exclusive opposition (see also Donohue and Smith 1998 for further documentation of this opposition in Map [Kwansu] from this same family). Here, then, fully 25 percent of the families sampled show an inclusive/exclusive opposition. Citing data from further afield, we find that an inclusive/exclusive opposition is common in the non-TNG languages of North-Central New Guinea: the non-

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1. | SG | DU | PL |
---|---|---|---|
1EXCL | didif | magif / memef† | di- |
1INCL | nagif | mimif | na- |
2 | bua | goga | iwa | bi- | ge-/go-‡ i- / yi-‡ |
3 | ofa | goga | rua | ge-/go-‡ ri- |

† R lists memef, while Gravelle’s chapter lists magif.
‡ Reesink lists go-, but Gravelle lists this morpheme as ge-; Reesink lists yi-, but Gravelle lists i-. No explanation is given for these discrepancies.

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2. | SG | DU | PL |
---|---|---|---|
1EXCL | dani | nanan | emen |
1INCL | aman | maman | aman |
2 | bani | yani | yeni | b- | ya- |
3 | eni | lani | leni | la- |

3. | SG | DU | TR | PL |
---|---|---|---|---|
1EXCL | yau | andu | antoru | ama |
1INCL | taru | totoru | tata |
2 | au | maru | mitoru | mia |
3 | i | asaru | itoru | ya |

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⁶ There is arguably a plural formative in -at(1), although the final t is erratic in the Ansus free pronominal forms; it is more apparent in the more conservative Wandamen, where the plural pronouns are amat, tata, miat, siat (Anceaux 1961).
⁷ The numerals for ‘two’ in Meyah and Soughb are egeka and hwai, respectively.
Austronesian languages of Yapen Island and the Skou family languages are coastal examples of families with such an opposition, and in the interior Elseng (Morwap), Molof, and One (western Torricelli) are languages I am familiar with that show such an opposition. In One, the distinction is firmly entrenched in the structure of the pronouns, as can be seen by examining the inclusive–exclusive forms, especially in the duals, in (4) (Crowther 2001). Here it is clear that in the nonsingular forms we are dealing with a series of formatives; while for most of the nonsingular pronouns the vowel is a simple i, we find first person inclusive and exclusive forms are regularly differentiated by the presence of a rounded vowel, o or u, in the exclusive forms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>SG</th>
<th>DU</th>
<th>PL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i</td>
<td>f-u-m-pla</td>
<td>mo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1INCL</td>
<td>f-i-m-pla</td>
<td>m-i-ne</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>yine</td>
<td>p-i-m-pla</td>
<td>p-i-ne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>wo</td>
<td>n-u-m-pla</td>
<td>n-i-ne</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It seems more than coincidence that this vowel corresponds to the rounded o/u found in the third person nonplural forms, given that a first person inclusive pronoun is semantically a combination of first and second persons, while an exclusive pronoun is a combination of first and third persons. The formal facts of pronominal formatives in One mirror these semantic facts.

The attribution of grammatical features: Austronesian versus “Papuan.”

In addition to intimating that the EBH languages, and by extension other languages of the West Papuan phylum to which R links them (see below), might be related to other (TNG?) Papuan languages, R also suggests that he is open to the notion that they might be Austronesian (“I will not try to state what the ‘basic nature’ of the EBH languages is in terms of whether they are ‘originally AN or Papuan’”), and constructs a straw-man argument against their being creole languages. As is clear from the preceding discussion, R invokes a distinction between Papuan and Austronesian language “types,” citing Foley (1998) as a source of typical Papuan features. Now R himself states that this list of features is diagnostic of an (essentially central and eastern highlands) TNG type, not of non-Austronesian New Guinea as a whole. Given this, it is not clear why these features are being used in a discussion of EBH languages. If R is not proposing to attempt to define them as TNG languages, then the exercise seems condemned to futility by R’s own statements on the usefulness of the label “Papuan.” R specifically addresses the following grammatical traits in the quest for understanding the “Austronesian content” of the EBH languages (I omit features that do not distinguish Austronesian and Papuan languages, or features that are clearly intended to be used as points of comparison between EBH languages and Cenderawasih Bay Austronesian languages).

8. An older 8wine ‘3SG’ is no longer used in nongenitive functions.
9. Nimpla is accepted as an alternative to numpla ‘3DU’. This is probably a sign of paradigmatic leveling at work, mirroring the consistent i in the plural forms.
10. Foley listed eight phonological features, eight morphological features, and six syntactic features characteristic of “Papuan” languages. While it is true that many central New Guinea languages match these features well, and most Austonesian languages in the area do not, we can easily find counterexamples in both directions.
(5) “AUSTRONESIAN” FEATURES

Noun-Genitive order
SVO order
inclusive/exclusive distinction
weakly developed inflectional morphology

“PAPUAN” FEATURES

presence of gender
switch reference systems
experiential verbs / uncontrolled states
(lack of double object construction)

Genitive-Noun order
(SOV order)

Gender systems are found in many Papuan languages of west and north New Guinea, and are generally common across the region. Switch reference systems are certainly a feature of a large range of (mainly highlands) TNG languages, but are certainly not a feature of Papuan languages generally, being absent from most Skou languages, Sepik languages, Torricelli languages, Trans-Fly languages, Lakes Plains languages, Sentani or Nimboran languages, and so on, including many of the southern TNG languages. Experiential constructions are found in Austronesian languages in this area, as well as in Papuan languages. R acknowledges this point, and (6) and (7) present additional examples from Ambai, found in eastern Yapen Island in Cenderawasih Bay. In (6) we can see ‘have a headache’ expressed with the subject being ‘my head’ and the verb marked for a third person singular subject; the predicate ‘be dizzy’ can be marked as either third person singular subject, or it can agree with the experiencer (which for first person is unmarked in this instance). (8) presents a similar example from the Malay of Singapore and Malaysia; see also Donohue (2004) for more documentation of experiential constructions in western Indonesia.

(6) Ramindena fa nu-hu kamiai d-amirai=fa.
  yesterday poss-1sg head 3sg-hurt=seq
  ‘Yesterday I had a headache.’

(7) ure-hu  iriaiyai ~ ure-hu s-iriaiyai
  eye-1sg dizzy eye-1sg 3sg-dizzy
  ‘I’m dizzy.’

(8) Saya kena demam.
  1sg be.affected fever
  ‘I have a fever.’

The position of the genitive characterizes eastern Indonesia as a region, not the Austronesian/non-Austronesian divide, as noted by Brandes (1884). The SOV generalization is valid only if we are referring to TNG languages; most Torricelli languages show SVO order, with little or no evidence of Austronesian contact, for instance. It is at least as plausible to assume that the local SVO order originated with a non-Austronesian linguistic community and spread to the Austronesians. Possibly SVO spread to the western Bird’s Head languages from the EBH languages. The left-headed order of elements in the NP (that R notes) supports this hypothesis, as phrasal order usually changes more slowly than clausal order.
R argues that some of the structural features of the variety of Malay spoken in the area can be traced to structures found in the local languages. Specifically, he cites the Genitive-POSS-Noun construction and the structure of a clause headed by *kasi* ‘give’, shown in (9) and (10) (glosses follow R).

(9) sa-pu-anak
    1SG-POSS-child
    ‘my child’

(10) Saya kasi satu pisang sama dia.
    I give one banana to him/her
    ‘I gave him/her a banana.’

It is certainly true that these are representative structures of the kind of Malay spoken informally in Irian Jaya. The fact, though, that identical structures are found in informal Malay at the western edge of its range means that we cannot attribute their appearance in Irian Jaya to local language influence. Whatever influenced Malay, it was not necessarily the EBH languages. A much more likely scenario is that Malay already had this structure when it arrived at the EBH.

**Grammatical licensing: The instrumental prefixes.** The instrumental prefixes mentioned earlier are particularly interesting, and deserve further elaboration. They are found when there is an instrument involved in the predicate, one that is overtly specified in the clause, but the instrumental prefix alone is not enough to license the instrument. This is quite different from a “standard” applicative, such as those found in Tukang Besi (Austronesian, Sulawesi). Compare (11), from Gravelle’s Meyah sketch, and (12–14), from Tukang Besi. In the latter, there are three ways to include an instrument in a clause: either an applicative, a preposition, or (less commonly) a serial verb construction may be used. In Meyah and other EBH languages, there is no adpositional option. As can be seen from (11), a serial verb construction is used to introduce the instrument, ‘arrow’, as the object of ‘use’, but the main verb still requires the ‘applicative’.  

(11) Ri-era mocongg ri-er-oudis rua.
    3PL-use arrow 3PL-INSTR-pierce them
    ‘They pierced them with arrows.’

(12) No-tu’o-ako te baliu te kau.
    3R-chop-APPL CORE axe CORE tree
    ‘He chopped the tree with an axe.’

(13) No-tu’o te kau kene baliu.
    3R-chop CORE tree INSTR axe
    ‘He chopped the tree with an axe.’

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11. In Singaporean Malay, *Aku kasi satu pisang sama dia* is perfectly normal, without any influence from EBH languages. *Aku punya anak* for ‘my child’ is equally grammatical, though impolite, for (9).

12. Similar, though not identical, behavior for applicatives has been reported in Amharic, where the presence of an applicative on the verb does not license the instrumental to appear without an adposition, just as the “applicative” in Meyah still requires a ‘use’ verb to introduce the instrument.
(14) No-tu’o te kau (no-)pake (te) baliu.
3R-chop core tree 3R-use core axe
‘He used an axe to chop the tree.’

The EBH instrumental construction is reminiscent of certain “functional agreement” constructions, in which serialization requires functional identity between two instances of the one participant. In Meyah we could say that ‘arrow’ is introduced as the object of ‘use’, but can only appear in the same clause as ‘pierce’ if it is the object of that verb as well. In other words, the grammatical function borne by ‘arrow’ must be the same for both verbs. In Tukang Besi we find a parallel in transitive verb + quantifier constructions, where the grammatical function of the argument ‘mango’ must be the same for both predicates. Because it is the object of ‘eat’, ‘many’ must be causativized (being derived to pakoru ‘cause to be many’) so that it can be the object of the second element in the serial verb construction as well as the first. Failing to causativize the second element results in a different reading of the clause, as shown in (16).

(15) No-manga-pa-koru te po’o.
3R-eat-caus-many core mango
‘They ate a lot of mangoes.’

(16) No-manga-koru te po’o.
3R-eat-many core mango
‘A lot of them ate mangoes.’

Similar behavior is found in Tariana from South America, shown in the example with subject-functional agreement in (17) (see Andrews 1997, Andrews and Manning 1999 for an analysis). In (17) we can see that ‘she’ as the subject of ‘order’ must be morphologically coded as the subject of ‘bathe’, because of constraints on functional agreement. Data from the EBH languages can make an important contribution to our understanding of these semantically implausible, but syntactically explainable, constructions.

3PL-OBJ 3SG.F.order 3SG.F-bathe 3SG.F-stay-ANT
‘She used to order them to bathe.’
‘She ordered them to usually bathe.’

Conclusions. I wrote earlier that I believe that it is not only justifiable, but also necessary, for “incomplete” works such as the sketches in LEBH to be published and disseminated. By describing such sketches as incomplete, it should not be thought that I intend the term as a reproof, but rather as a welcome opening gambit for (hopefully fruitful) debate on the issues that such a volume raises, both in the sketches and in the introductory materials. LEBH is a very welcome addition to our knowledge of the Bird’s Head languages, lacking only some more extensive wordlists to be fully representative of the languages it reports on.

Some more extensive editing would have helped the readability greatly, especially in the introduction, but more widely relevant is the issue of typological argumentation. If anything, the argumentation in this volume has shown the futility of using a small set of grammatical features in isolation to determine the genetic affiliations of a group of
languages. R is most convincing when he sticks to comparative-method style sound correspondences; his hedgings imply that he fails to convince even himself when it comes to argumentation based on lone typological features, in an area that is, by R’s own careful documentation of the facts, rife with intergroup contact and linguistic diffusion. In the end, the evidence that R proposes for genetic links in the Bird’s Head area is the following, when we remove those pieces that are easily attributable to borrowing or diffusion, mainly according to R’s judgment.

Meyah and Sougb linked: regular sound changes
cognate reciprocal marker
m- alienable noun / third person possessive prefix
(animate plural in -ir)

EBH languages as related: cognate reciprocal marker

All Bird’s Head as a group: 2SG, 1PL, and 2PL pronominal forms cognate
cognate gender opposition in 3SG.M and 3SG.F

Clearly the evidence for the Bird’s Head as a whole being a related group is not compelling, even if all five pronominal forms were perfectly cognate, which they are not (see table 1), and this would lead to no less than a p = 1.92 chance that this is due to chance, which is nowhere near the requirements of p ≤ 0.05 that is taken as statistically significant. This is not to say that these data make it impossible that the languages are genetically related, but the pronominal evidence alone is not enough to support this conclusion.

The evidence linking the EBH languages in a single genetic unit is tempting, but not compelling. The Meyah and Sougb 1SG, 2SG, 3SG, 1DU.EXCL, 1DU.INCL, 1PL.EXCL, 1PL.INCL, 2PL, and 3PL forms match; this yields p = 0.08, which combined with a cognate reciprocal marker, and the suspicious nominal affix k and locative s(V) makes a convincing case for relatedness. The pronominal evidence linking Hatam or Mpur is much less convincing, leaving only the morphology; given that this region shows evidence for large-scale linguistic contact, this is not adequate.

We have seen that the traditional methods provide the convincing arguments for genetic relatedness. Extending away from these, it is possible to use alternative methodologies, such as the comparison of pronominal forms, if and only if we take care to ensure that our conclusions are tempered by consideration of the possibility of chance resemblance. Similarly, in an area that we claim to have been strongly affected by language contact to the point of extensive calquing and metatypy, the presence of near-identical morphemes (free or bound) is suspicious, and can be supporting, but not primary, evidence for a relationship.

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REFERENCES


