

## dPronouns and pronominal prefixes in Alor-Pantar

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### 1. Introduction

Alor-Pantar languages form a closely-related genetic subgroup of approximately 15 languages located approximately 1400 km southwest of Manokwari.

Based on pronominal evidence have been assigned to Ross' (2005) West Trans New Guinea linkage (cf. Ross 2005), though the actual picture may be more complex (cf. Donohue & Schapper 2007). Pronouns supposedly reflect a \*n-, \*Ø/h-, \*g- pattern for first, second, and third persons, respectively.



**Table 1: independent pronouns**

	1	2	3
Abui	na	ʔa	di
Adang	na	a	sa
Klon	nan	aan	gan
Kula	ŋanu	yanu	genga
Nedebang	nang	ang	gang
Teiwa	na'an	ha'an	a'an
Western Pantar	nang	hang	gang

Phonological similarity of pronoun shapes belies substantial variation in the modern structure of pronominal systems.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>(1) Teiwa nominative-accusative</p> <p>a. a heer<br/>3SG climbs<br/>'he climbs up'</p> <p>b. a min<br/>3SG dead<br/>'he is dead'</p> | <p>(2) Nedebang stative-active</p> <p>a. nang apa<br/>1SG.AGT walk<br/>'I am walking'</p> <p>b. na'ing ko'as<br/>1SG.PAT soaking<br/>'I am soaking wet'</p> |
|---|---|

The behavior of pronominal prefixes reflects even more variation. In Adang, pronominal prefixes may reference only the less agentive argument of transitive verb; whereas in Western Pantar pronominal prefixes may reference almost any argument, depending on lexical verb class. In Abui, three distinct pronominal prefixes index different semantic classes of arguments.

Goals of this paper:

- describe patterns of alignment of pronouns and pronominal prefixes in a survey of seven Alor-Pantar languages
- present new data on pronominal prefixes in Western Pantar
- suggest some pathways for the evolution of pronominal alignment in A-P languages

**Table 2: languages included in this survey**

Name	ISO 639-3	location	data source
Abui	abz	central Alor	(Kratochvíl 2007)
Adang	adn	northwest Alor	(Haan 2001)
Klon	kyo	southwest Alor	(Baird to appear)
Kula (Tanglapui)	tpg	east Alor	(Donohue 1996)
Nedebang (Klamu)	nec	east Pantar	(Holton 2004)
Teiwa	twe	east Pantar	(Klamer to appear)
Western Pantar (Lamma)	lev	west Pantar	(Holton 2007a, field notes)

## 2. Pronouns and pronominal prefixes

Both free and bound forms. Some languages have more than one bound form.

**Table 3: First person singular pronouns**

	free		bound			
	actor	undergoer	I	II	III	IV
Abui	na		na-	no-	ne-	
Adang	na	nari	na-	no-	ne-	
Klon	nan (na)	*	n-	no-	ne=	nin=
Kula	ŋanu		ŋa-			
Nedebang	nang	na'ing	na-			
Teiwa	na'an (na)	na'an*	na-			
WP	nang	naing	na-			

\*Teiwa undergoer pronoun differs in third person (*ga'an*). Also, it does not have a short form.

All but Klon and Nedebang distinguish two kinds of third persons: a third person and an “other” third person, i.e., “fourth” person.

Abui, Adang, and Klon languages distinguish multiple case roles in the “object” prefixes.

In many cases noun possessive prefixes are identical or very similar in shape to verbal pronominal prefixes; however, this paper is restricted to a discussion of verbal prefixes.

## 3. Independent pronouns

Both nominative-accusative and stative-active patterns are found. Both patterns may be present in the same language in different pronoun systems.

### 3.1 Two pronouns, nominative-accusative (Teiwa)

Split based on person: subject and objects are only really distinguished in third and fourth person forms. (Note that there is an uncanny similarity of form between the Teiwa third person subject and object pronouns *a'an* and *ga'an* on the one hand, and WP fourth person and third person pronouns *ang* and *gang* on the other.)

- (3) Teiwa
- a. i'in g-oqai wei  
4PL.SUBJ 3SG-child bathe  
'they bathed his child'
- b. na gi'in bangan  
1SG 3PL.OBJ ask  
'I ask for them'

In the first and second persons the same pronoun may index A, S, or O macro-roles.

- (4) Teiwa
- a. na'an hamar  
1SG pray  
'I will pray'
- b. ma na'an bangan  
come 1SG ask  
'come ask me'

However, only subject pronouns have short (non-emphatic) forms. Thus, the ability to shorten the pronoun is also diagnostic of the subject relationship for first and second persons. A, S<sub>A</sub> and S<sub>O</sub> are treated identically.

- (5) Teiwa
- a. a gi-regan  
3SG.SUBJ 3PL-ask  
'he asks them'
- b. a heer  
3SG.SUBJ climb  
'he climbs'
- c. a min  
3SG.SUBJ dead  
'he is dead'

### 3.2 Two pronouns, stative-active (Nedebang)

- (6) Nedebang transitives
- |    |                  |    |                  |
|----|------------------|----|------------------|
| a. | nang ga'ing bugi | b. | gang na'ing bugi |
|    | 1sg 3sg hit      |    | 3SG 1SG hit      |
|    | 'I hit him'      |    | 'he hit me'      |

Intransitive verbs "split", with active intransitive verbs employing the same set as the more agent-like argument of a transitive clause, while grammatically stative intransitive verbs employ the same set as the less agent-like argument of the intransitive clauses.

- (7) Nedebang active intransitive verbs
- |           |          |
|-----------|----------|
| nang apa  | 'I walk' |
| nang gia  | 'I go'   |
| nang ba'a | 'I fell' |

(8) Nedebang stative intransitive verbs

na'ing maleca 'I am wet'  
na'ing ko'as 'I am soaking wet'  
na'ing aga 'I am hot'

### 3.3 One pronoun, stative-active (Klon, Abui)

The absence of a second independent pronoun paradigm does not imply a nominative-accusative system. Stative-active patterns can also be found in languages with a single independent pronoun paradigm, such as Klon and Abui. Unlike Teiwa, Klon independent pronoun can only occur with active intransitive verbs, not stative intransitives.

(9) Klon stative intransitives

- a. g-edan (\*gan edan)  
3SG-afraid  
'(he's) scared'
- b. g-biir (\*gan biir)  
3SG-sick  
'(she's) sick'

(10) Klon contrast between stative and active

uruut béq ma, n-edan, na ete hil agai  
deer pig come 1SG.I-scared 1SG tree climb go  
'deer and pig came, I was scared, I climbed a tree'

### 3.4 Development

Two basic patterns of alignment of ind pro in A-P languages: nominative-accusative and stative-active. The stative-active pattern can be achieved either with two distinct pronominal paradigms or with a single paradigm which is restricted to grammatical agents. In Teiwa the nominative-accusative pattern is marginal, reflected only in third person and in a restriction on the admission of reduced pronoun forms for objects. In Adang the accusative paradigm is robust, but may likely reflect a recent innovation. Did these two types of system develop independently, or did one evolve from the other?

Affectedness has been suggested by several authors as playing an important role in constraints on pronoun choice in Alor-Pantar languages (Kratochvíl 2007; Donohue 1997). Affectedness is also cited as a factor conditioning the choice between free and bound pronoun reference (Holton 2007a; Klamer to appear). The use of an undergoer independent in WP indicates a more severe effect than does the form with a pronominal prefix.

(11) nang gaing diti  
1SG.AGT 3SG.PAT stab  
'I stabbed him' (severely)

(12) nang ga-diti  
1SG.AGT 3SG-stab  
'I stabbed him' (superficially)

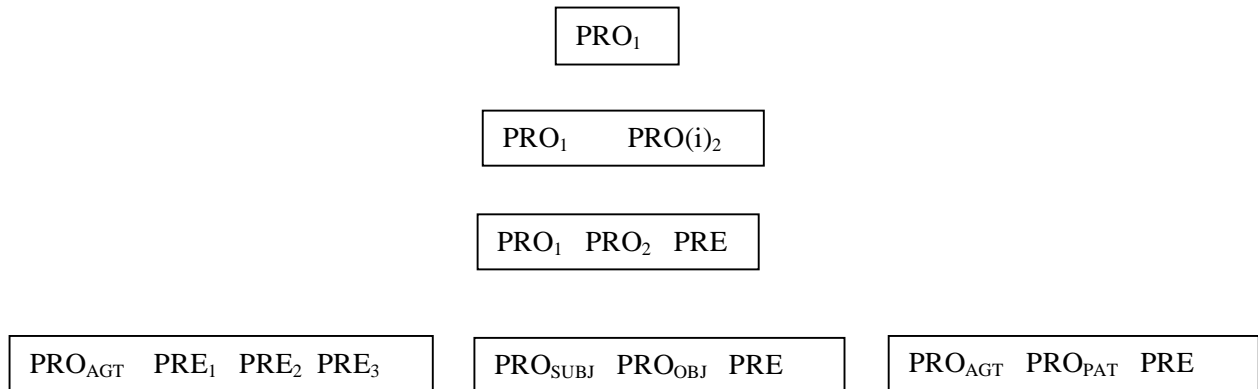
Similar *i* which distinguishes alienable and inalienable possession (cf. Donohue & Schapper 2007)

(13) *nai-bla* 'my house' (alienable)  
*na-ttang* 'my hand' (inalienable)

Circumstantial evidence suggest an original stative-active system, with the nominative-accusative system (as in Teiwa) being a later innovation.

- a marker of semantic affectedness would seem likely to create a pronoun paradigm which indexed semantic undergoers. More affected referents tend to be non-actors, less agent-like, and thus more like an undergoer. Second,
- no easy way to explain the genesis of the stative-active system if the affected pronouns (those with *i*) were originally restricted to indexing only O arguments
- reverse situation has been attested North Halmahera, where internal evidence shows nominative-accusative systems have recently evolved from stative-active systems through a reanalysis in which all intransitive verbs come to be treated alike (Holton 2007b).

**Figure 1: Development of independent pronouns in Alor-Pantar**



Adang is a bit different: accusative pronouns are derived via a synchronically segmentable suffix *-ri*. Moreover, there are several instances in which the accusative pronouns fail to look like object markers. For example, accusative pronouns are used in focus constructions where WP uses genitive pronouns instead.

(14) Adang focus with accusative pronoun

- a. i-ri so sam don  
 2PL-ACC FOC go shopping  
 ‘you are the ones going shopping’ / ‘it is you who are going shopping’
- b. ni-ri ho mol lol  
 1EXC-ACC DEF river climb/along  
 ‘as for us, we walk along rivers’

(15) WP focus constructions with genitive pronoun

- na'ai na-raung  
 1SG.GEN 1SG-climb  
 ‘I am the one who will climb’ / ‘it is me who will climb’

Adang accusative may be a separate innovation.

## 4. Bound pronouns

### 4.1 Verb classes

Three classes of verb, based on ability to occur with bound pronominal prefix

- verbs which cannot occur with a prefix
- verbs which require a prefix
- verbs which may optionally occur with a prefix (sometimes altering argument structure)

The distribution of these three classes varies across the languages.

## 4.2 Types of pronominal prefix systems

### 4.2.1 Single argument indexed (Nedebang, Teiwa)

Single prefix indexing the less agent-like argument of a transitive clause (O).

(16) Nedebang

nang hafi ga-fini  
1SG fish 3SG-catch  
'I caught a fish'

but prefix not obligatory (or even possible) for all verbs

(17) Teiwa

ha'an meja ga-fat ari'  
2SG table 3SG.POSS-leg break  
'you broke the table leg'

### 4.2.2 Case-marking (Klon, Abui)

Multiple pronoun forms (with vowel ablaut) distinguishing object case roles

(18) Abui case-marking

- a. he-maama Simon ha-fanga  
3SG-father S. 3SG.I-say.CNT  
'his father orders Simon' ("patient" case)
- b.. a ho-fangi re naha?  
2SG 3SG.II-say.CPL or NEG  
'did you scold him or not?' ("recipient" case)
- c. e na he-tafaa he-fangi  
before 1SG 3SG.POSS-drum 3SG.III-say.CPL  
'I named their drums before' ("locative" case)

Not all Abui verbs can inflect for all three prefix forms: most can take just the Set I and either a Set II or III prefix (Kratochvíl, pers. comm.). Lexical semantic restrictions block some potential forms, such as the use of Set II forms with inanimates (with some exceptions). Indeed, the distinctions are highly lexicalized, deriving essentially three different lexical items in (18).

### 4.2.3 Multiple arguments indexed (Western Pantar, Kula)

In WP multiple argument referencing is possible with certain verbs. The general pattern is for the first (leftmost) prefix to index the A argument and the second prefix to index the O argument.

(19) WP

- a. na-ga-llang na-ga-niaka ta  
1SG-3SG-look.for 1SG-3SG-see before  
'I'll take a look first'
- b. ke'e pi-ga-usar  
fish 1PL-3SG-catch  
'we're catching fish'
- c. tabaku na-uddang ma na-ga-nia  
tobacco 1SG-buy come 1SG-3SG-give  
'I bought tobacco for him'

However, these verbs are somewhat special in that they belong to the class of verb which must occur with an obligatory pronominal prefix indexing the O argument. Given the layered nature of Alor-

Pantar morphology, the leftmost pronominal prefix affixes to a stem which is already inflected for P, resulting in the observed A-O prefix order. With verbs which are not obligatorily inflected, other orders are possible. The verb *asang* ‘say, tell’ may occur with zero, one, or two prefixes. In the following example, the first token occurs with one prefix indexing the O argument; the second token occurs with two prefixes in the “reversed” order O-A.

- (20) nang ana ha-asang kauwa ing gob ana dinni ta ha-na-asang  
 1SG.AGT day 2SG-say NEG if thus day how.many before 2SG-1SG-say  
 ‘if I don’t tell you now, then how many days [will it be] before I tell you?’

and with third person argument

- (21) nang wee ga-na-tiaring  
 1SG.AGT fishpond 3SG-1SG-close  
 ‘I guard the fishpond’

An example with two third persons.

- (22) wee ga-i-tiaring  
 fishpond 3SG-4PL-close  
 ‘they are guarding the fishpond’

same root with a single prefix,

- (23) nang wee ga-tiaring  
 1SG.AGT fishpond 3SG-close  
 ‘I guard the fishpond’

or with no prefix

- (24) weya tiaring sakka  
 door close strong  
 ‘close the door tightly’

Some resemblance to Kula inverse system (Donohue 1996); however, the Kula system differs in several important respects. Most significantly, in Kula the class of “transitive affective verbs” has an inverse marker *na* which indicates inverse (“reversed”) roles. The inflection of non-affective Kula verbs resembles that found in WP, with both arguments marked on the verb.

- (25) Kula non-affective verbs

- a. η-ya-dia  
 1SG-2SG-see  
 ‘I see you’  
 b. ya-η-dia [yendia]  
 2SG-1SG-see  
 ‘you see me’

However, the transitive affected verbs are handled somewhat differently. First, there are some vowel changes in the prefix paradigm.

- (26) η-e-baba  
 1SG-2SG-hit  
 ‘I hit you’

Second, third persons are overtly marked with *ya-*. However, only one third person may be marked on the verb.

- (27) ya-baba  
 3SG-hit  
 ‘he hit him’

And most crucially, the marking of arguments follows an inverse system, so the arguments which are out of line with the animacy hierarchy require an inverse marker *na-*.

(28) Kula inverse

- |    |  |    |  |
|----|--|----|--|
| a. | Ø-ŋa-na-baba<br>3SG-1SG-INV-hit<br>'he hit me' | b. | ye-ŋa-na-baba<br>2SG-1SG-INV-hit<br>'you hit me' |
|----|--|----|--|

The order of arguments still remains the same: actor precedes undergoer.

### 4.3 Grammatical relations?

Like the free pronouns, the bound pronouns may also exhibit grammatical alignment, preferentially indexing some types of arguments but not others. This is more clearly the case in some languages and less clear in other languages.

In Adang, Teiwa, and Nede bang object prefixes can only index the O argument, thus defining a nominative-accusative system. (There are some interesting complications, to be discussed below.) In these languages pronominal reference to an argument of an intransitive verb is accomplished with an independent pronoun rather than a prefix,

(29) Adang

- |                  |       |         |
|------------------|-------|---------|
| supi             | bad   | *sa-bad |
| 3PL              | happy |         |
| 'they are happy' |       |         |

(30) Nede bang

- |    |  |         |    |   |         |
|----|--|---------|----|---|---------|
| a. | ga'ing aga<br>3SG.PAT hot<br>'he is hot' | *ga-aga | b. | gang apa<br>3SG.AGT walk<br>'he is walking' | *ga-apa |
|----|--|---------|----|---|---------|

In contrast, Kl on and Abui permit arguments of stative intransitive verbs to indexed via pronominal prefixes as well, thus defining a stative-active system. Arguments of active intransitive verbs cannot be index via a prefix.

(31) Abui

a.	no-lili 1SG.II-hot 'I am hot'	b.	na lole 1SG walk.IMPF 'I am walking'	*na/no/ne-lole
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Crucially, the distinction between active and stative verbs is a grammatical one rather than a semantic one. Kl on permits more semantically active verb to be indexed with prefixes than does Abui.

(32) Kl on

- |    |  |               |  |
|----|--|---------------|--|
| a. | ge-wet<br>3SG.IV-urinate<br>'she urinates' | b.            | ge-kaak<br>3SG.IV-itchy<br>'she's itchy' |
| c. | ga lam<br>3SG walk<br>'she is walking'     | *ga/ge/go-lam |  |

Kula and WP present yet a different picture of alignment. As we have seen, the Kula system can be described as an inverse system based on animacy. However, only a certain subclass of "transitive affective verbs" participate in this system. Among the remaining verbs the alignment pattern is as follows:

**Table 4: Alignment of prefixes with non-affective verbs in Kula (Donohue 1996)**

	S	A	O
1SG	ŋa-	ŋa-	ŋa-
1PL	i-	ŋa-	ŋa-
2	ya-	ya-	ya-
3	ya-	∅-	∅-

As noted by Donohue, the pattern described by the table above is difficult to characterize in terms of traditional notions of alignment, such as nominative-accusative, ergative-absolutive, or stative-active. Similar problems arise in WP, where pronominal prefixes can seemingly reference any macro-role.

(33) WP

- a. **na**-golang  
1SG-return  
'I am returning [home]' (S)
- b. bu meta **na**-na  
areca betel 1SG-eat  
'I eat (chew) areca nut and betel vine' (A)
- c. gang **na**-niaka  
3SG.AGT 1SG-see  
'she saw me' (O)

The existence of WP forms as in (20)ff. with two prefixes ordered A-O or O-A presents even further complications. Lacking an overt inverse marking it is difficult to which argument is indexed by which prefix. Rather, prefix order is lexicalized, with some verbs using A-O while others use O-A. When only one argument of a transitive verb is marked with a prefix it will usually be O, but A is also possible, as in (34).

- (34) ber ye na-asang ba halopi  
word one 1SG-say thus listen  
'I speak one word so listen'

Thus, if we were to make a chart like Table 4 for WP we would have to list the same morpheme for S, A, and O for each of the persons. There is no regular pattern of prefix alignment across all verbs, but rather several different lexical sub-patterns.

(35) WP affixation patterns

na-ti'ang	S	'I sleep'
ga-ti'ang	O	'put him to sleep'
na-diti	O	'stab me'
ga-diti	O	'stab him'
X na-uddang	A	'I buy X'
na-niaka	O	'see me'
ga-niaka	O	'see him'
na-ga-niaka	A-O	'I see him'
ga-na-niaka	A-O	'he sees me'
na-asang	S, O	'I speak', 'tell me'
ga-asang	O	'tell him'
ga-na-asang	O-A	'I tell him'
na-ga-asang	A-O	'he tells me'

In fact, WP and Kula are perhaps not completely unusual. Interesting exceptions to the rule restricting prefixes to O arguments. In Adang certain active intransitive verbs must be indexed via a pronominal prefix.

