

The Origin of the Manam Verbal Subject Marker System

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September 29, 1983

One feature often encountered in Oceanic languages is a set of subject markers (short pronouns) in the verb phrase which indicate the person and number of the subject, together with, in some languages, information about the tense or mood of the verb.

Manam (1) uses two sets of portmanteau subject/mood prefixes, one set for realis mood and one for irrealis mood.

The Manam data in Capell (1976:27) are incomplete, listing only one set of markers (2). The only morpheme common to both sets of prefixes is the 1st person plural inclusive *ta*, which is found almost universally in Oceanic languages. The Manam prefixes are set out in Table 1.

	1sq	2sq	3sq	1inc	1exc	2pl	3pl
Irrealis	m-	go-	nga-	ta-	ga-	kama-	da-
Realis	u-	ku-	i-	ta-	ki-	ka-	di-

Table 1. Manam subject/mood prefixes.

As far as I know, no other Austronesian language has two complete sets of verbal subject markers. Some languages, such as Kara (Schlie, personal communication) in New Ireland, have subject markers with different functions only in a limited number of persons. Kara has 1 '3rd singular

irrealis/imperfect' and a '3rd singular perfect', but only one marker for each of the other persons. Miniafia (Wakefield, 12) has two forms for 2nd singular and 2nd and 3rd plural (Miniafia's forms are not cognate with Manam's forms).

Many languages add a morpheme to a "basic" set of subject markers to change the mood or tense. Tigak of New Ireland (Beaumont, 73), for example, adds a to the present tense forms to mark past tense, with some resulting phonological changes.

1st singular	nak (present)	naka (past)
3rd singular	qi (present)	qa (past)
3rd plural	rik (present)	rika (past)
etc.		

Table 2. Tigak subject/tense system.

In still other languages, such as Halia (Allen, 65) on Bougainville Island, the persons are less differentiated in some tenses than in others. For past tense Halia has u (1st and 2nd singular), i (3rd plural and 1st plural inclusive), and e (3rd singular); but for non-past e serves for all persons.

Since I could find no other Oceanic languages with dual complete sets of subject markers, such as Manam has, I began to look for possible explanations for the development of the Manam sets.

John Lynch, in his article, "Oral/nasal alternation and realis/irrealis," provides what seemed to be, at first glance, an explanation. Lynch (p. 96) gives evidence for a Proto-Oceanic (POC) *na (future marker) and POC *ma (future subjunctive marker). He shows how many Austronesian languages have a switch between oral and nasal grade, in the initial consonants of verbs, indicating a change between realis and irrealis aspects. Lynch explains that this oral/nasal distinction with such a function most likely developed from the marker *na or *ma fusing with the verb in these languages.

This explanation seemed possible for the development of the Manam irrealis set from the realis set. Consider:

	REALIS	IRREALIS
1st singular	u-	m-
3rd singular	i-	nga-
1st plural exc	ki-	ga-
2nd plural	ka-	kana-
3rd plural	di-	da-

Table 3. Manam realis vs. irrealis.

The forms for 1st and 3rd singular and 2nd plural contain a nasal in the irrealis mood; 3rd singular and 2nd and 3rd plural contain a vowel shift to a, which could be accounted for by fusion with the particle *ma. However, the forms for 2nd singular do not fit this analysis (ku 'realis', ga 'irrealis').

Also, Manam has adverbials that co-occur with the irrealis prefixes, such as, *ma* for distant future and *kana* for intention, that could be reflexes of the POC **na* or **ma* that Lynch speaks of. The POC forms **ma* (future irrealis) and **na* (future) were posited by Milke (1968:155,159) and **na* (future) is listed as well in Grace (1969).

Thus, the changes in Manam from oral to nasal consonant (1st and 2nd singular and 2nd plural), voiceless to voiced consonant (1st plural exclusive and 2nd singular), and high-front vowel *i* to low-mid *a* (3rd singular and plural) seem significant. However, as no one change explains all forms, and in addition, the POC future markers are retained in other forms, it seemed wise to look further for a more satisfying explanation of the double pronoun system.

Capell (1969:26) states that there are two types of subject marker systems in Austronesian languages in Oceania. One he referred to as the **na/*la* series and the other the **i/*si* series (these being the characteristic markers for 3rd person singular and plural in each system). Capell states that the **na/*la* series is used in languages of Western Indonesian (Austronesian) and derivatives of it exist in Eastern Oceanic languages. The **i/*si* series is found in the Austronesian languages of the New Guinea area. These two systems are evident in both Capell's study (1969:54) of common subject markers of New Guinea

Austronesian (NGA) languages and in Pawley's reconstruction (1972:37) of subject markers for Proto-Eastern Oceanic (PEO).

	1sg	2sg	3sg	1inc	1exc	2pl	3pl
NGA	*ya,a	*(k)u	*i,e	*ta	*ma	*(k)wa	*si,se
PEO	*(n)ku	*ko,o	*na	*(n)ta	*k,mami	*m(i)u	*da

Table 4. Reconstructed person marker sets for New Guinea Austronesian and Proto-Eastern Oceanic.

Pawley's reconstructions for PEO closely resemble Capell's *na/*la series.

A. Eastern Oceanic subject markers.

A sample list of Eastern Oceanic languages with subject markers corresponding to this *na/*la series is given in Table 5 (3). These languages are found in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga.

In this list the 3rd plural form retains a throughout with consonants changing between n, l, and r. 2nd singular forms are consistently ko or o except for Samoan and Tongan (although the long pronoun forms are 'oe for Samoan and koe for Tongan (Grace 1959:42)). For the other persons and numbers the forms in this sample list vary considerably with not nearly the consistency found in 2nd singular and 3rd plural.

B. New Guinea area subject markers.

Table 6 (3) contains a list of subject markers from languages of the New Guinea area, which correspond to the *i/*si series. These languages are all located in Papua New Guinea except the first three which are along the north coast of Irian Jaya. I have arranged the languages geographically, from west to east along the north coast of New Guinea. Windesi is located in western Irian Java and Halia in northwest Bougainville island. Except for one small group of languages between Kairiru and Manam Islands on the north coast of Papua New Guinea (to be discussed below), there is surprising uniformity in the subject markers used by these languages.

As in the Eastern Oceanic sample shown above, the 3rd person plural marker is very similar throughout the New Guinea area. The vowels are all fronted; i and e are the only ones that occur. Only 5 languages in this list have e. Two of them, Windesi and Miniafia, use an i to e switch to mark a semantic difference (human vs. non-human and realis vs. irrealis respectively). Motu and Aroma, both from the Central Province of Papua New Guinea, share e in both 3rd person singular and plural.

The consonants that appear are: d, r (ʀ), t, s, h and ʃ, listed roughly in order of frequency of occurrence in my

data as well as a possible historical development: from d to h to loss of consonant. Aroma has g in 3rd plural but its presence in all plural forms indicates its function as a plural marker.

In the 3rd singular forms the New Guinea area languages show a very close relationship as well. All languages have forms of i or e except Lamogai of New Ireland (David Brunn, personal communication). Six languages have e forms. In one of these, Bola (Bosco, 33), e alternates with i. Kara of New Ireland (Schlie, personal communication) has i (irrealis/imperfective) alternating with a (perfective). In general, in the New Guinea area a front unrounded vowel, either high or mid, marks 3rd singular.

For 2nd person singular u or ku is common throughout the New Guinea area. Although there are some variants, languages with u or ku occur throughout the geographic area. Five of eight variants contain the vowel o. Two of these occur with a nasal consonant, which is a possible explanation for the drop from high-back to mid-back vowel. The vowel common to 2nd singular in languages of Eastern Oceania is also o, but in New Guinea area the o variants can usually be explained as independent developments from u.

In 1st person singular the subject markers are quite consistently a or y(a) (as Connell, 1960:54, has stated).

These forms, again, are found in all parts of the New Guinea area with little variation.

The 1st person plural inclusive form *ta* is nearly universal throughout Oceania. In the New Guinea sample here, of those languages that do have a distinction between inclusive and exclusive in 1st plural, only two languages vary from forms resembling *ta*. Aroma also varies, with *ga*, but the *g* seems to be the plural morpheme in Aroma. Patep is the only other language without either *a* or *t* in the form; it has a velar fricative consonant like the 1st singular form.

The universality of the *ta* form here seems to reflect the significance of the cultural value of 'groupness'. All activities are done in relation to the group as a whole with little room for individualists. It is no wonder that the form expressing this unity is so constant.

The forms for 1st person plural exclusive and 2nd person plural do not reflect the uniformity evident in the other persons and numbers.

C. Comparison of Eastern Oceanic and New Guinea markers.

In comparing the two sets of data from Eastern Oceania

and the New Guinea area there are some strikingly consistent differences.

1. 3rd Plural. The contrast between 3rd person plural markers is the most clear--these forms are most uniform in both of the geographical areas. In New Guinea the form is an alveolar consonant (except for h) plus high or mid front vowel (di, si, ri, Capell's *si, *se). In Eastern Oceania the form is an alveolar consonant and a low mid vowel (e.g., la, ra, PEO *da). The contrast in the vowel is clear cut between the two groups.

2. 3rd Singular. The 3rd singular forms are not uniform within Eastern Oceania, but they are uniform within New Guinea with a high front vowel predominant (as in New Guinea 3rd plural as well). The uniformity within New Guinea sets the two groups apart from each other, even though Eastern Oceania is not internally consistent.

3. 2nd Singular. The 2nd singular forms are uniform within both groups of languages. New Guinea (k)u or w and Eastern Oceanic ko or go are quite close phonetically; both contain a velar consonant and the only difference in the vowels is between high-back and mid-back. It is, however, striking that the two forms have remained quite uniform within each area. Since the forms ku and ko are so

phonetically similar, the consistent difference between the two groups is especially interesting.

4. 1st Singular. The contrast between first singular forms is not as striking. But generally, New Guinea has *a*, *ia* or *ya*, and Eastern Oceania has *ou* or *au*. New Guinea in general tends to be more internally uniform (as in 3rd singular) than does Eastern Oceania.

5. 1st Plural Inclusive. These forms, as stated earlier, are quite uniform throughout Oceania.

6. 1st Plural Exclusive and 2nd Plural. These forms vary considerably within each group and the differences between the groups are not as clear. It seems clear that the forms are related throughout Oceania, however. These relationships also emphasize the cultural value of 'groupness' (c.f. section 3, discussion of 1st plural inclusive).

D. New Guinea area unity.

A number of scholars have tried to demonstrate that the New Guinea area languages make up a single major grouping within Oceania (a discussion of this research is in Pawley, 1978). The data I have shown here, especially the subject marker forms for 2nd singular and 3rd plural, clearly show a

distinction between New Guinea area languages as opposed to Eastern Oceanic languages.

The subject marker systems in New Guinea languages, at least, do provide evidence of a unity between most of the Austronesian languages from Western Irian Java (Windesi) along the coast of New Guinea to SE Papua (Motu, Wedau) and throughout the islands of New Britain (Maleu), New Ireland (Mandak) to Bougainville (Halia). The clear uniformity of all the forms, except for 1st plural exclusive and 2nd plural, is impressive. While a discussion of these sets of grammatical markers alone is not enough to clear up the longstanding debate on the New Guinea Oceanic Hypothesis (Pawley's term, 1978:100), it is evidence supporting the hypothesis.

E. Eastern Oceanic subject markers in New Guinea.

There is one small group of languages that does not fit the general New Guinea pattern. My data include three languages, all spoken in the Schouten Island chain on the north coast of Papua New Guinea. These languages, Manam (personal study), Wogeo (Capell 1976:27) and Kairiru (Wivell 1981:95), have verbal subject markers which differ from the rest of the New Guinea forms. No data are available for other languages within the Schouten group. Manam has two sets of subject markers, one of which corresponds to the

markers of the other New Guinea languages and one which does not. This other set is very similar to the set of subject markers for Kairiru, spoken just west of Manam on the north coast of PNG. Wogeo, which lies between Kairiru and Manam, has singular markers which resemble those of the rest of the New Guinea area, but plural markers which resemble those of Manam and Kairiru (see Table 7). The question arises: Do these markers represent an innovation unique to these languages?

	1sg	2sg	3sg	1inc	1exc	2pl	3pl
NGA	*ya,a	*(k)u	*i,e	*ta	*ma	*(k)wa	*si,se
Manam REAL	u-	ku-	i-	ta-	ki-	ka-	di-
Manam IRR	m-	go-	nga-		ta-	ga-	kama-
Wogeo	o-	u-	e-	ta-	ta-	ka-	da-
Kairiru	wu-	go-	a-	ta-	ta-	ga-	rra-
PEO	*(n)ku	*ko,o	*na	*(n)ta	*k,mami	*m(i)u	*da

Table 7. Comparison of Manam, Wogeo and Kairiru with proto forms.

Table 7 shows the relation between the subject markers of Manam, Kairiru and Wogeo to both the New Guinea area and the Eastern Oceanic languages. Capell's reconstruction of NGA and Pawley's reconstruction of Proto-Eastern Oceanic are repeated here for comparison. NGA represents Capell's *i/*si series, while PEO represents his *na/*la series. The close similarity between Manam irrealis subject markers, the markers of Kairiru and Wogeo (plural), and the reconstructed markers of Eastern Oceania would indicate that they are all historically cognate. Capell (1976:27) mentions that wogeo

seems to correspond to Eastern Oceanic. An independent parallel development of the markers in three New Guinea languages seems extremely unlikely.

This paper has demonstrated that the Manam realis set of subject marker verbal prefixes is cognate with subject markers in other New Guinea area Austronesian languages, while the Manam irrealis set of markers is cognate with those of Eastern Oceanic languages. One possible conclusion is that Manam Island (and other islands nearby) was settled by two migrations of Austronesian peoples speaking two different daughter languages of Proto-Oceanic.

Besides Manam, Wogeo and Kairiru, a few other languages in New Guinea seem to show in a limited way a relationship to both the **na/*la* and the **i/*si* subject marker systems. For instance, Kara of New Ireland (c.f. Table 6) marks third person singular with *i* for irrealis/imperfect and *a* for perfective. Sobei on the north coast of Irian Java (Sterner 1975:138) has forms *eo* and *a* for 3rd person singular (realis and irrealis respectively) and *ri* and *a* for 3rd plural (realis and irrealis).

Thus, although Manam seems to be the only language using two completely different sets of pronouns (which correspond to the **i/*si* and **na/*la* sets) to mark the realis/irrealis aspect distinction, several other languages

show a change from *i* to *a* in third person singular and plural, which marks some sort of tense or aspect change. This suggests that perhaps this distinction of *i* vs. *a* was active at an earlier stage of Oceanic, possibly marking realis vs. irrealis or a similar temporal or aspectual distinction.

Grace (1969) joins the two sets of markers in Proto-Oceanic, positing the forms **ia* for 3rd singular and **sida* for 3rd plural. However, there do not seem to be any present day languages with reflexes of Grace's proto forms. If the *i* and *a* pronoun sets were once a single proto morpheme, one would expect to find some evidence in support of this fact. Instead, we find several languages with consistent semantic distinctions between the two forms. This suggests two proto sets of markers, one following the **i*/**si* series and the other following the **na*/**la* series, with an aspectual difference in meaning between the sets.

NOTES

1. The Manam language is spoken by the 7000 people of Manam Island, an active volcano about 5 km off the north coast of Papua New Guinea. It is a member of the Schouten group of islands. Manam Island is 26 miles in circumference, with 14 villages distributed around its periphery. The language is in the Eastern group of Seoi coast Austronesian languages, according to Laycock (n. 400). My wife and I have spent six months in language study on Manam. A detailed account of Manam grammar may be found in Lichtenberk (1980).

2. Capell lists only one set of subject markers for Manam, which includes most of the forms from the realis set. The form *ta*, which serves for 'line realis and irrealis', is omitted; Capell lists *ga* for 'line'; *ga* is really the form for 'lexo irrealis'.

3. Sources for Tables 5 and 6 are as follows.

1. Codrington: 112-114, 174, 175
2. Grace 1959: 42
3. Capell 1971: 27
4. Capell 1976: 26
5. L. D'Jernes. 1983. Unpublished SIL survey.
6. Wivell: 95
7. Capell 1976: 27
8. Blewett: personal research
9. Dempwolff: 10
10. L. D'Jernes. 1983. Unpublished SIL survey.
11. Wakefield: 12
12. Lithgow: 463, 467, 517-519
13. Lister-Turner and Clark: 11
14. Graig: 112
15. Franklin: 8, 9
16. Cowen: 48
17. Allen: 65
18. Haywood: 12
19. Bosco: 33
20. Lee: 18

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