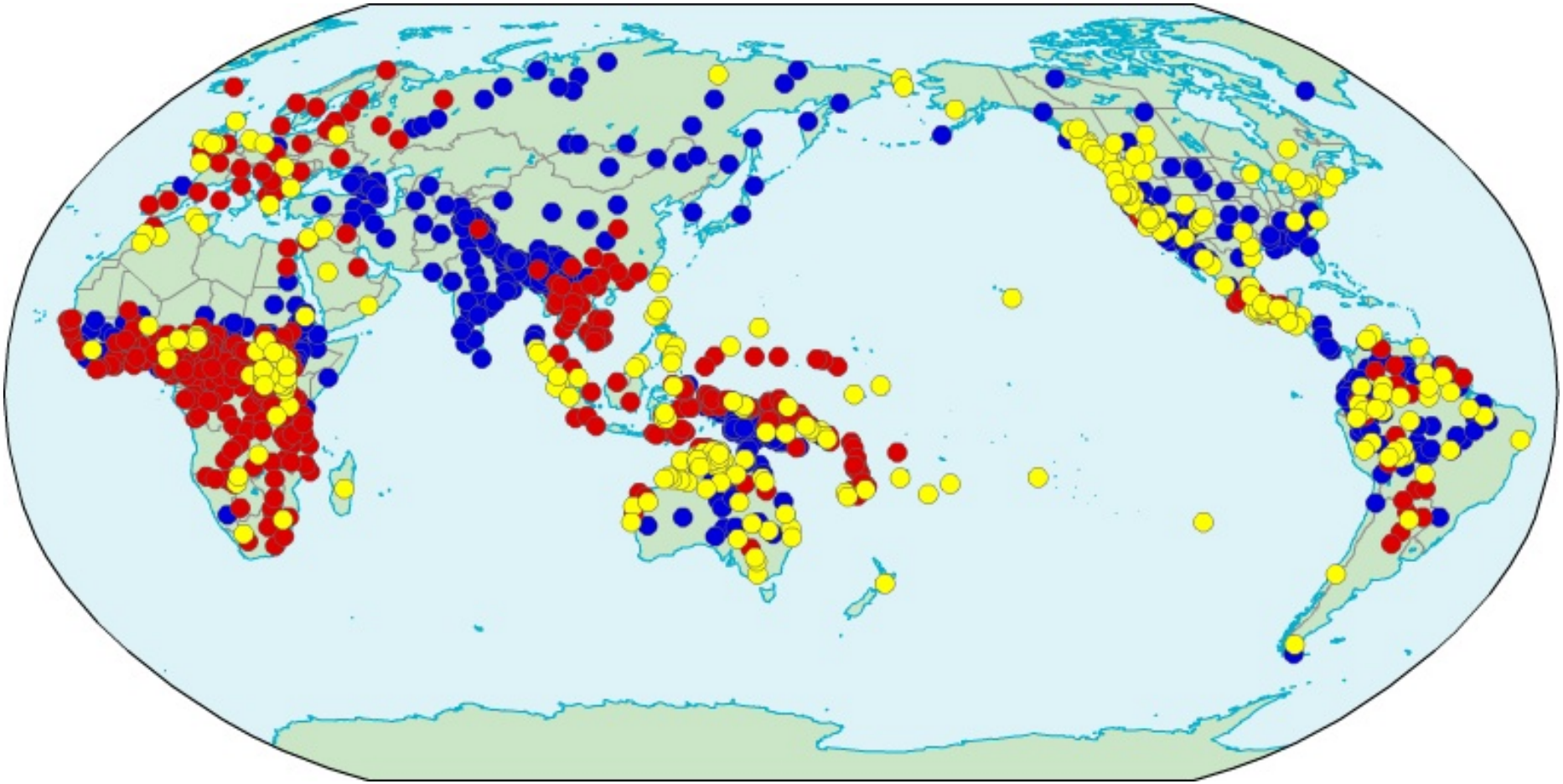


New Guinea and the Languages of the World

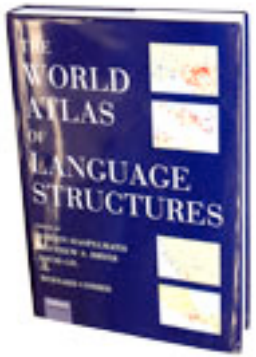
Bernard Comrie *comrie@eva.mpg.de*
Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig
and University of California Santa Barbara

The World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS)

edited by
Martin Haspelmath, Matthew S. Dryer, David Gil, and Bernard Comrie

Interactive Reference Tool by
Hans-Jörg Bibiko

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 695 pages



a five-year project at the Department of Linguistics, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology (MPI-EVA), Leipzig (1999-2004)

Internet version (latest edition 2011)
edited by Matthew S. Dryer and Martin Haspelmath

wals.info

1. What is *WALS*?

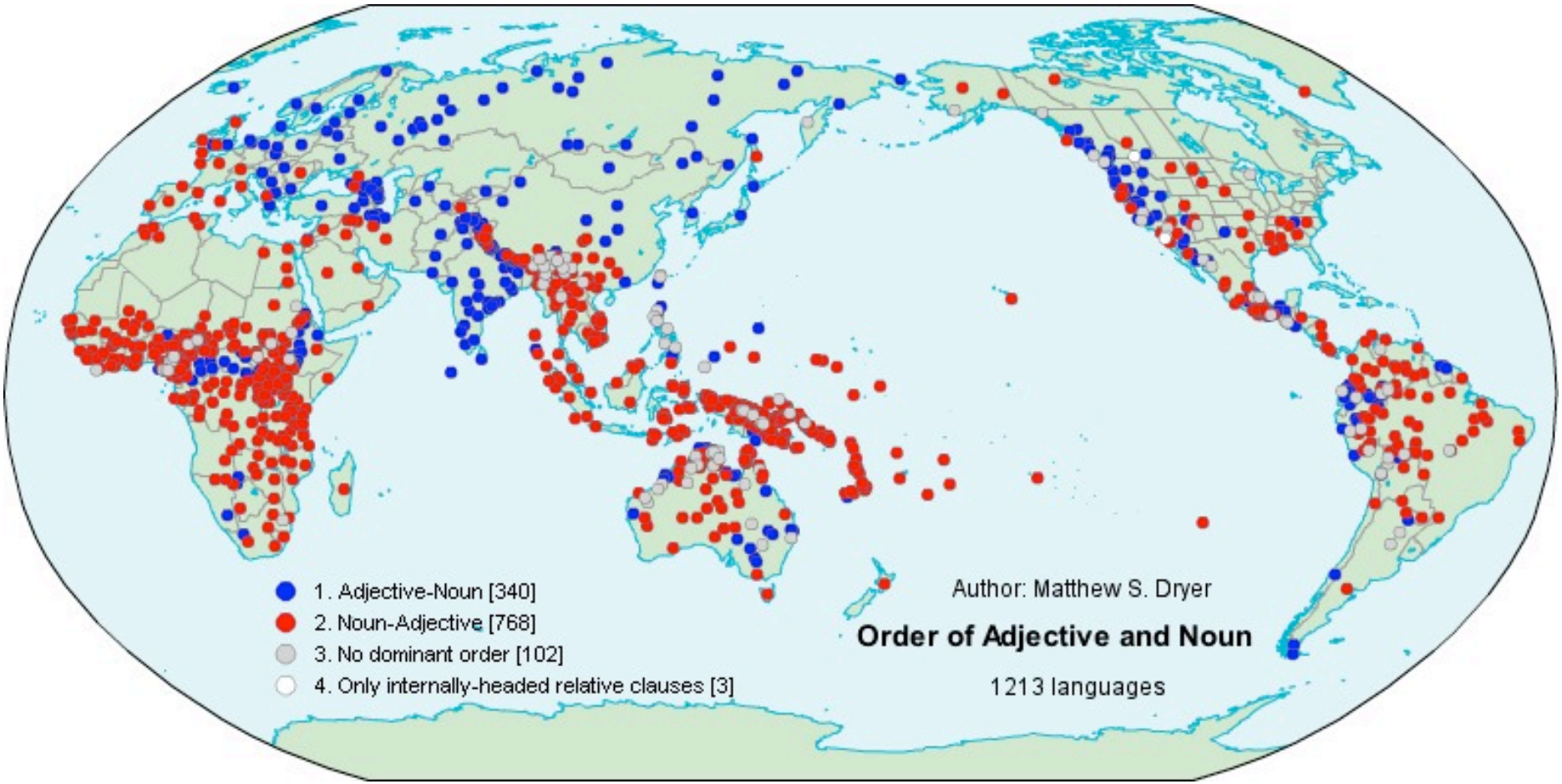
- a book:
an atlas with 142 world maps, showing languages as dots

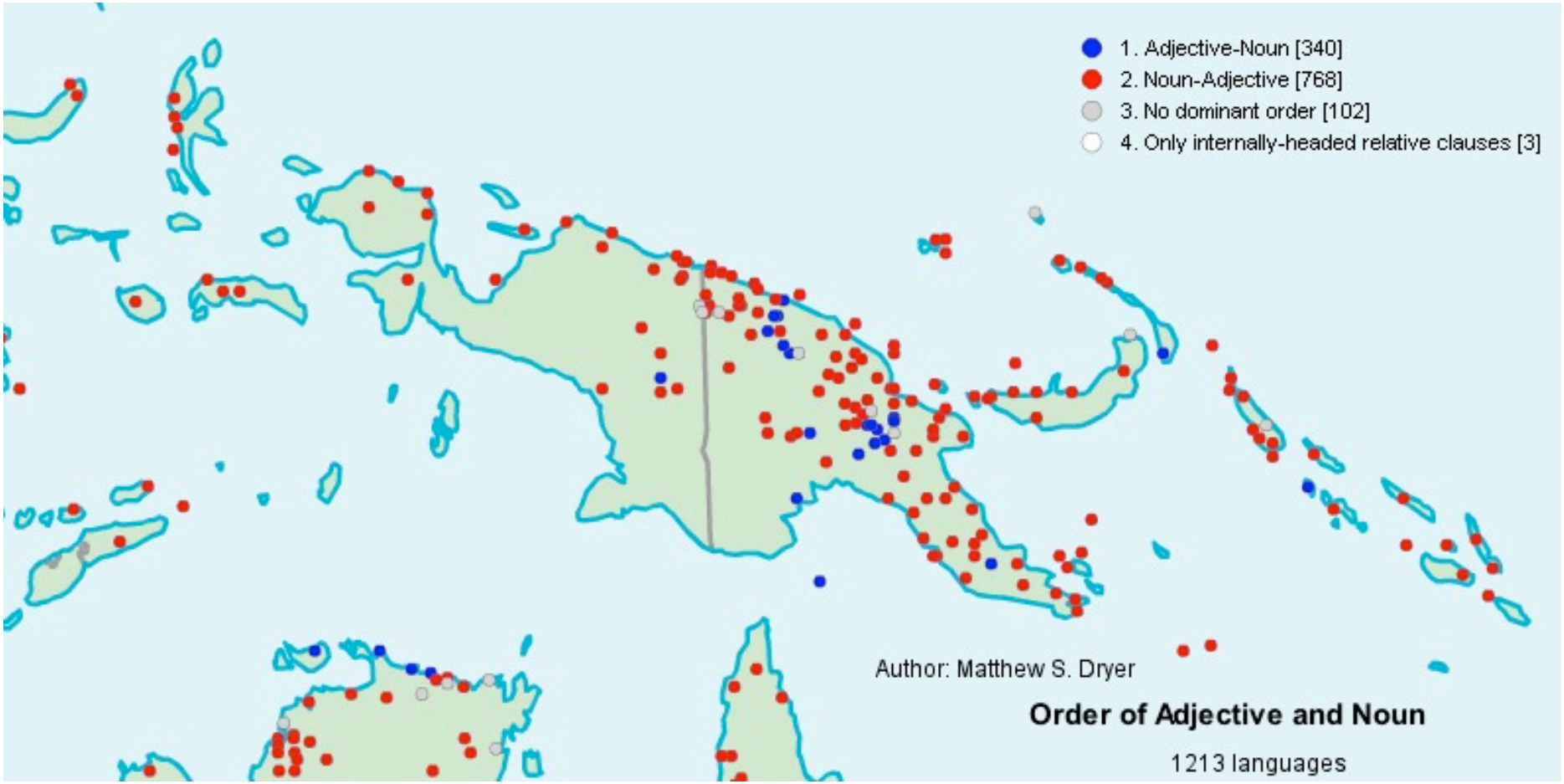
- a database: each map provides information on a different structural linguistic feature

- an interactive electronic database and map-generating tool (on CD-ROM)

- an indispensable reference tool for comparative linguistics and anyone interested in linguistic diversity

- a visualization of what we know about the structural diversity of the world's languages, comprehensible to anyone who can read maps


1. Adjective-Noun [340]
2. Noun-Adjective [768]
3. No dominant order [102]
4. Only internally-headed relative clauses [3]
Author: Matthew S. Dryer
Order of Adjective and Noun
1213 languages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2. How was *WALS* put together?

• each chapter was contributed by a single author (or team of authors)

about 40 authors: 9 MPI-EVA scientists
19 MPI-EVA visiting scientists
12 others

• these authors gathered information about a particular feature from published descriptions of languages from around the world

• the resulting data were sent to the editors, accompanied by a text describing the feature and its values

• the editors checked the quality of the contribution and made sure the contributions conform to the specification of the project

first step: **linguistic fieldwork**

Khumi speakers (Bangladesh),
with MPI-EVA linguist David Peterson

A Mosetén speaker (Bolivia),
working with MPI-EVA linguist Jeanette Sakel

second step: **published descriptions of language structure**

Sakel, Jeanette. 2004. *A grammar of Mosetén*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 504 pp.

third step: **language typology**:
desk linguists ("armchair linguists") read scores or hundreds of grammatical descriptions, classify languages into types, and extract general properties of human language

3. Some statistics (2005 edition)

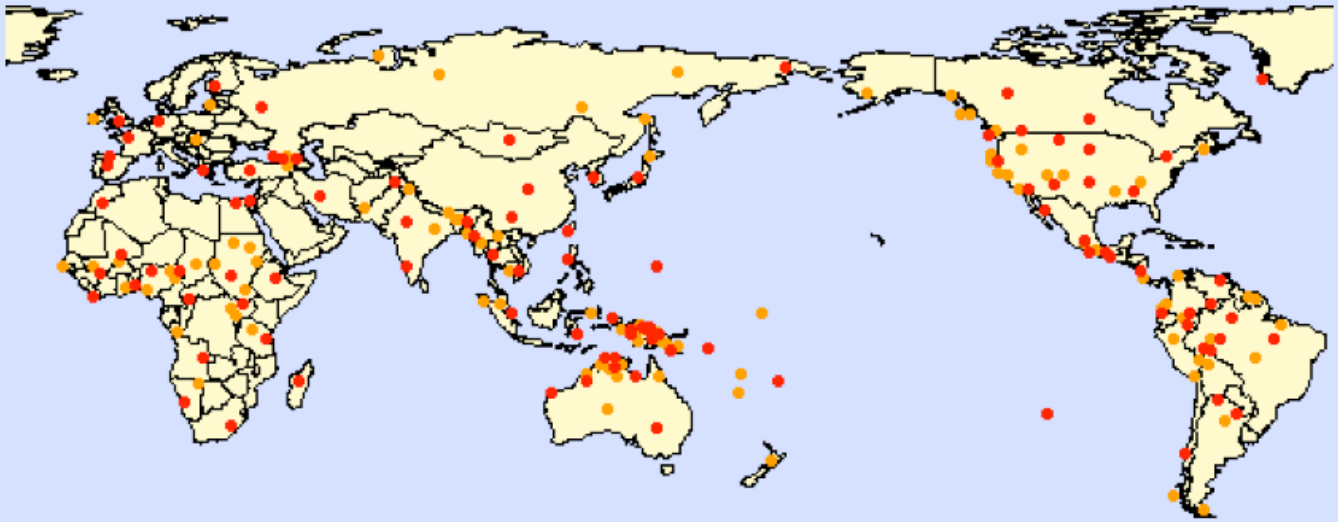
142 features:

Phonology	19
Morphology	10
Nominal Categories	28
Nominal Syntax	7
Verbal Categories	16
Word Order	17
Simple Clauses	24
Complex Sentences	7
Lexicon	10
Others	4

– 2560 different languages
– On average, 398 languages per map (minimum: 35, maximum: 1370)
– Altogether about 58,000 data points
– 6700 bibliographical references

World Atlas of Language Structures

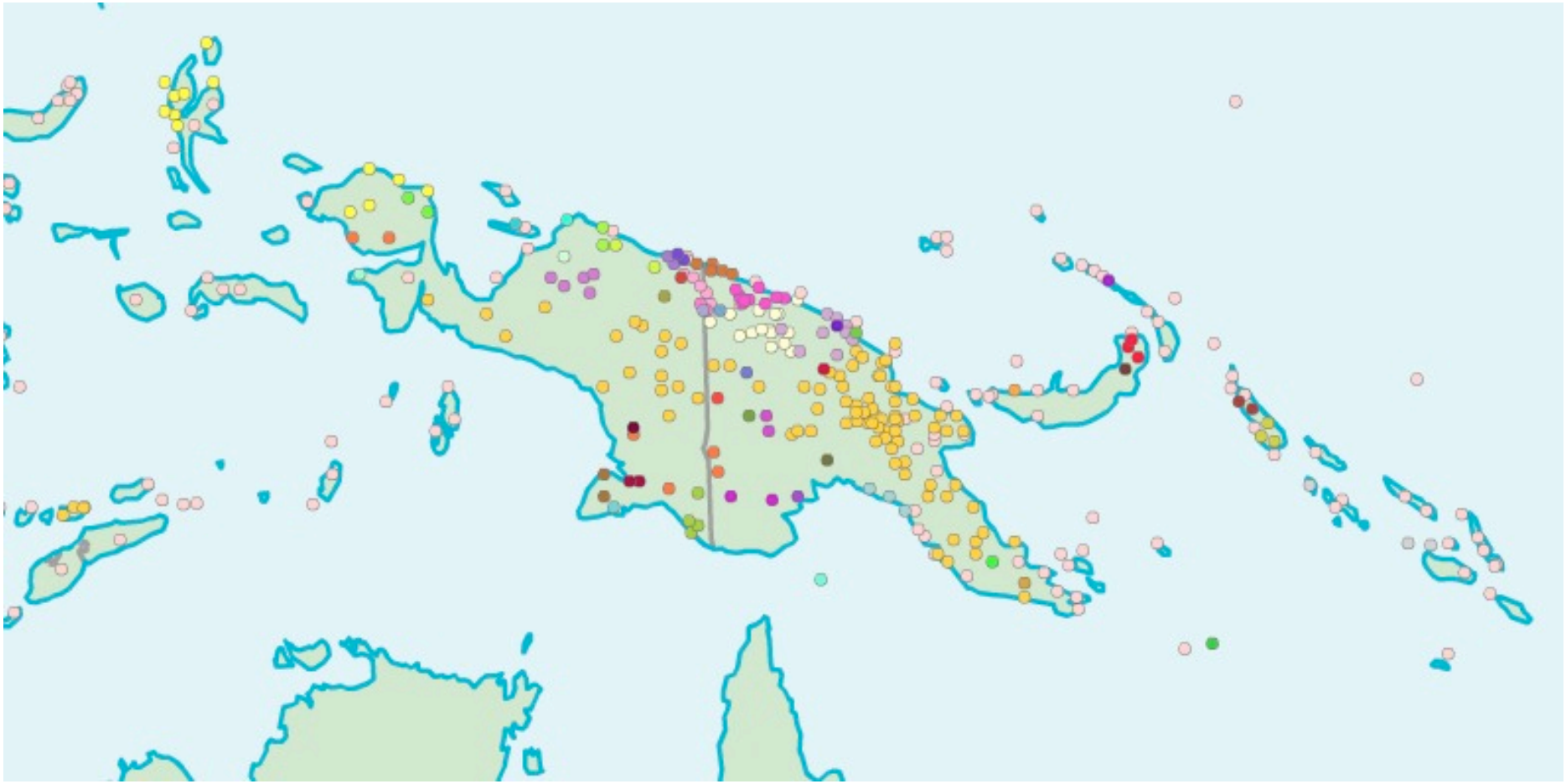
The WALS 100- [•] and 200- [•] Language Samples



4. What to do with *WALS*

4.1. Study the geographical distribution of structural linguistic features

New Guinea linguistic area



Coloring is by language family; the pink-colored dots represent Austronesian languages

Order of Subject, Verb, and Object

SOV (e.g. Japanese)

Taroo	*ga*	*tegami*	*o*	*yon-da.*
Taroo	NOM	letter	ACC	read-PST
S		O		V

'Taroo read the letter.'

SVO (e.g. English)

The	*student*	*bought*	*the*	*book.*
S		V		O

VSO (e.g. Irish [Celtic, Indo-European; Ireland])

Léann	*na*	*sagairt*	*na*	*leabhair.*
read.PRS	the	priest.PL	the	book.PL
V	S		O	

‘The priests are reading the books.’

VOS (e.g. Nias [Austronesian; Sumatra, Indonesia])

I-rino	*vakhe*	*ina-gu.*
3SG.RLS-cook	rice	mother-1SG
V	O	S

‘My mother cooked the rice.’

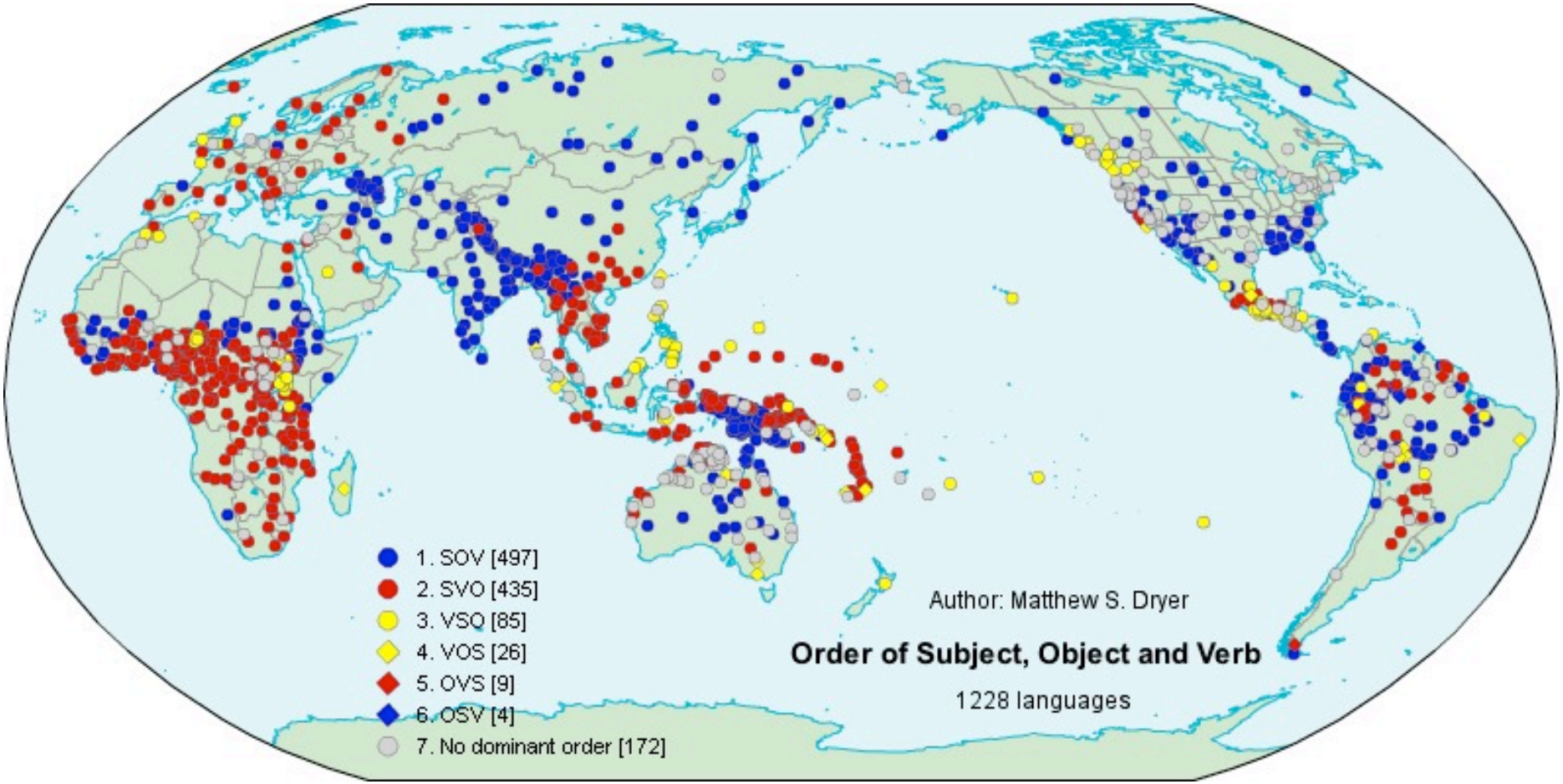
OVS (e.g. Hixkaryana [Cariban; Brazil])

Toto *y-ahosɨ-ye* *kamara.*
man 3>3-grab-REMPST jaguar
O V S
'The jaguar grabbed the man.'

OSV (e.g. Nadëb [Vaupés-Japurá; Brazil])

Awad *kalapéé* *hapɨ́h.*
jaguar child see.IND
O S V
'The child sees the jaguar.'

No dominant order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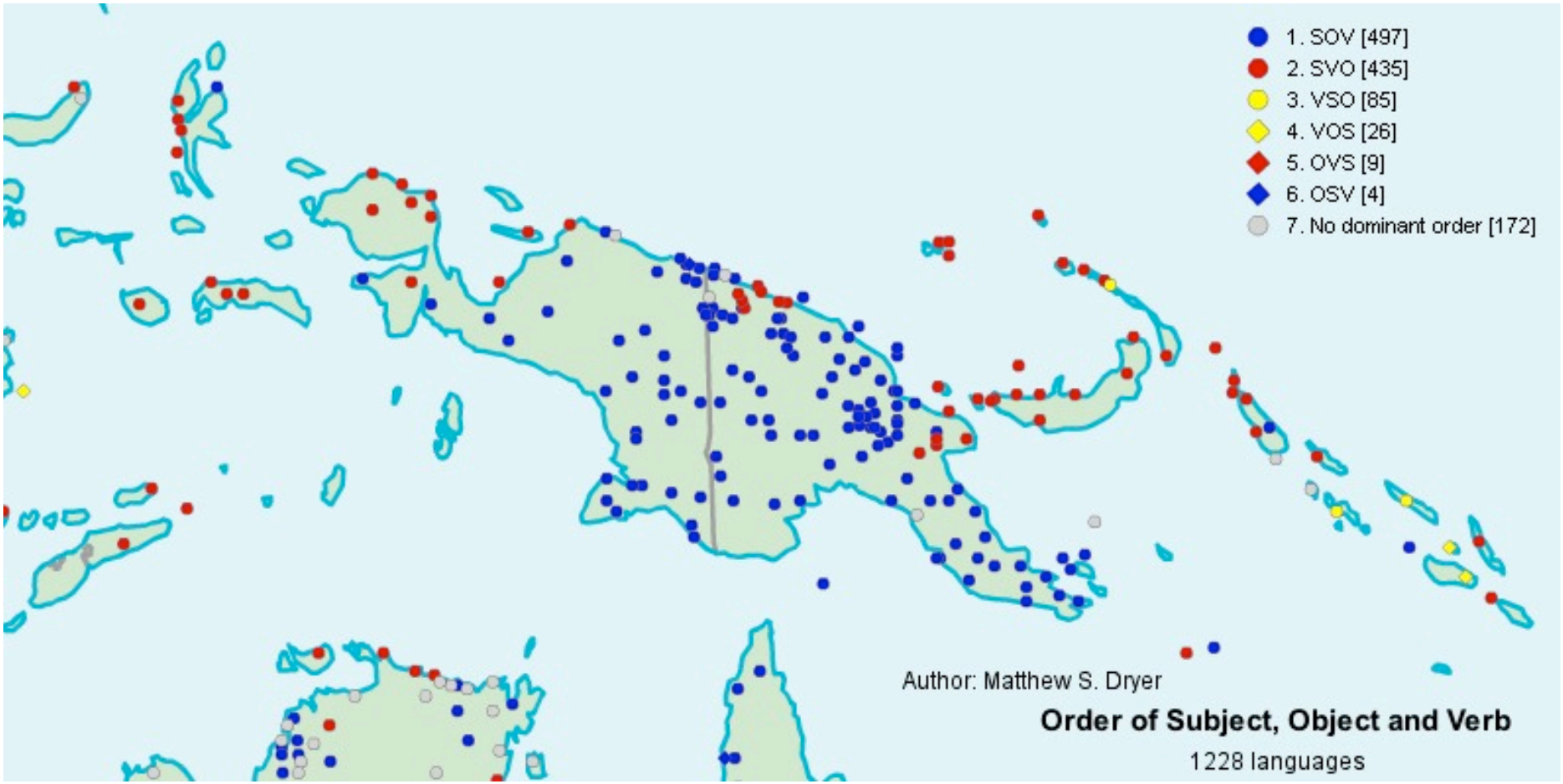
3. VSO [85]
4. VOS [26]
5. OVS [9]
6. OSV [4]
7. No dominant order [172]
Author: Matthew S. Dryer
Order of Subject, Object and Verb
1228 languages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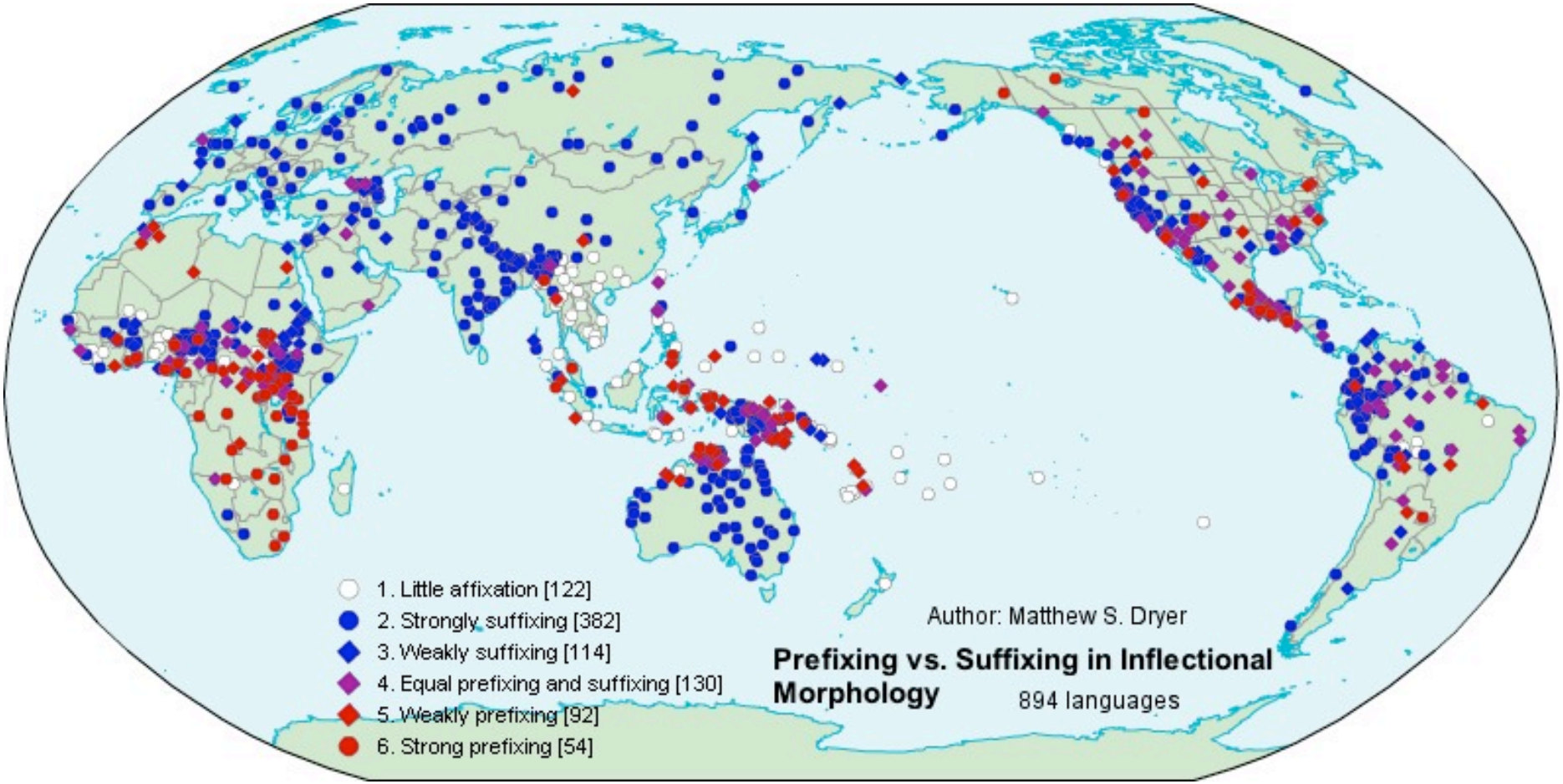
1. Little affixation [122]
2. Strongly suffixing [382]
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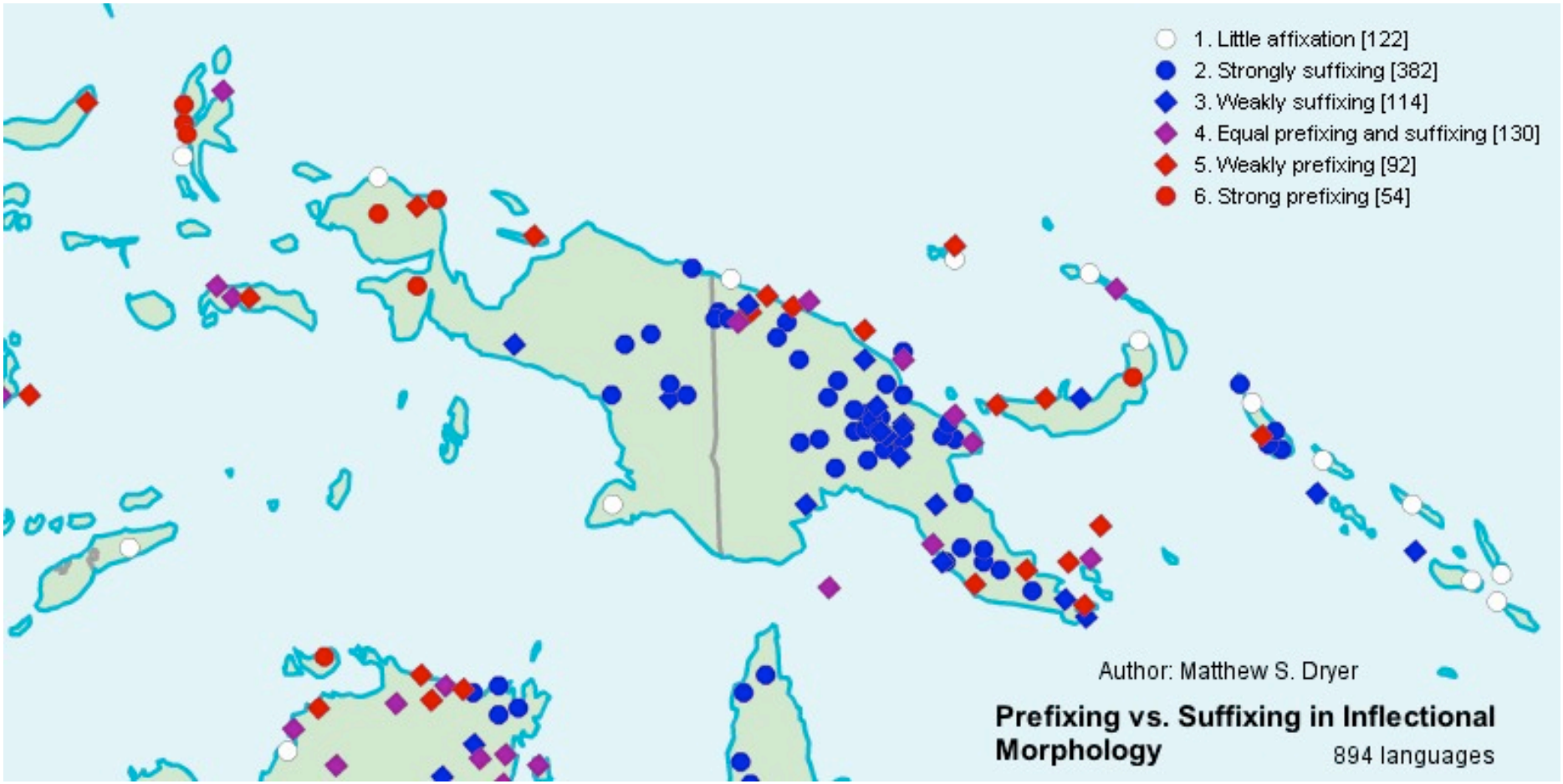
Prefixing vs. Suffixing in Inflectional Morphology
894 languages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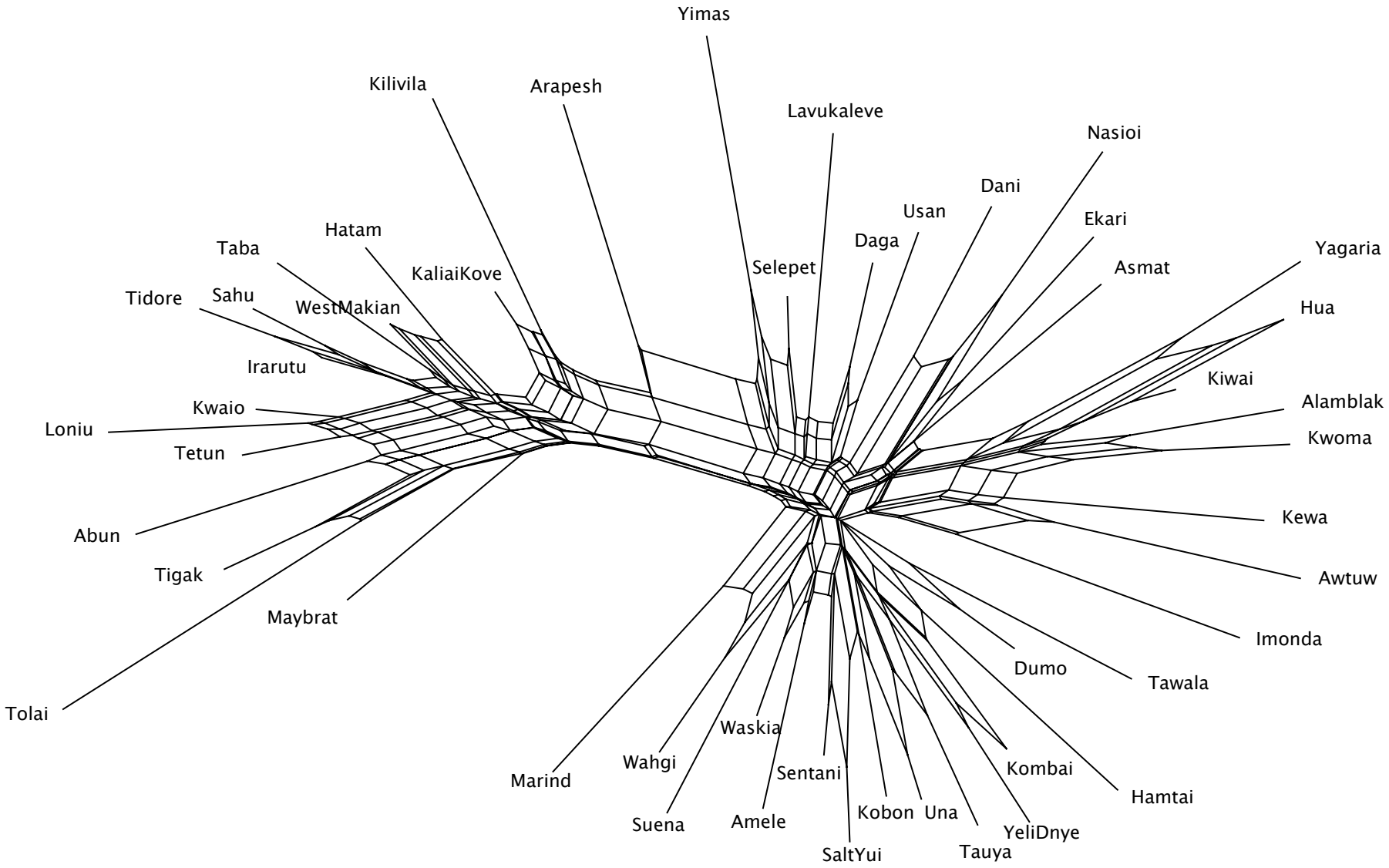
Comrie, Bernard & Michael Cysouw. 2012. New Guinea through the eyes of WALS. *Language and Linguistics in Melanesia* 30: 65–94.

http://www.langlxmelanesia.com/LLM%2030%20New%20Guinea%20through%20the%20eyes%20of%20WALS.pdf

NeighborNet


Yimas
Kilivila
Arapesh
Lavukaleve
Nasioi
Dani
Usan
Ekari
Daga
Hatam
Taba
Selepet
Asmat
Yagaria
KaliaiKove
Tidore
Sahu
WestMakian
Hua
Irarutu
Kiwai
Alamblak
Kwaio
Loniu
Kwoma
Tetun
Kewa
Abun
Awtuw
Tigak
Imonda
Maybrat
Dumo
Tawala
Tolai
Waskia
Wahgi
Kombai
Marind
Sentani
Hamtai
Kobon
Una
Suena
Amele
YeliDnye
SaltYui
Tauya

Two major groupings
with Arapesh (Torricelli family) occupying a somewhat intermediate position

1. (left-hand side of NeighborNet)

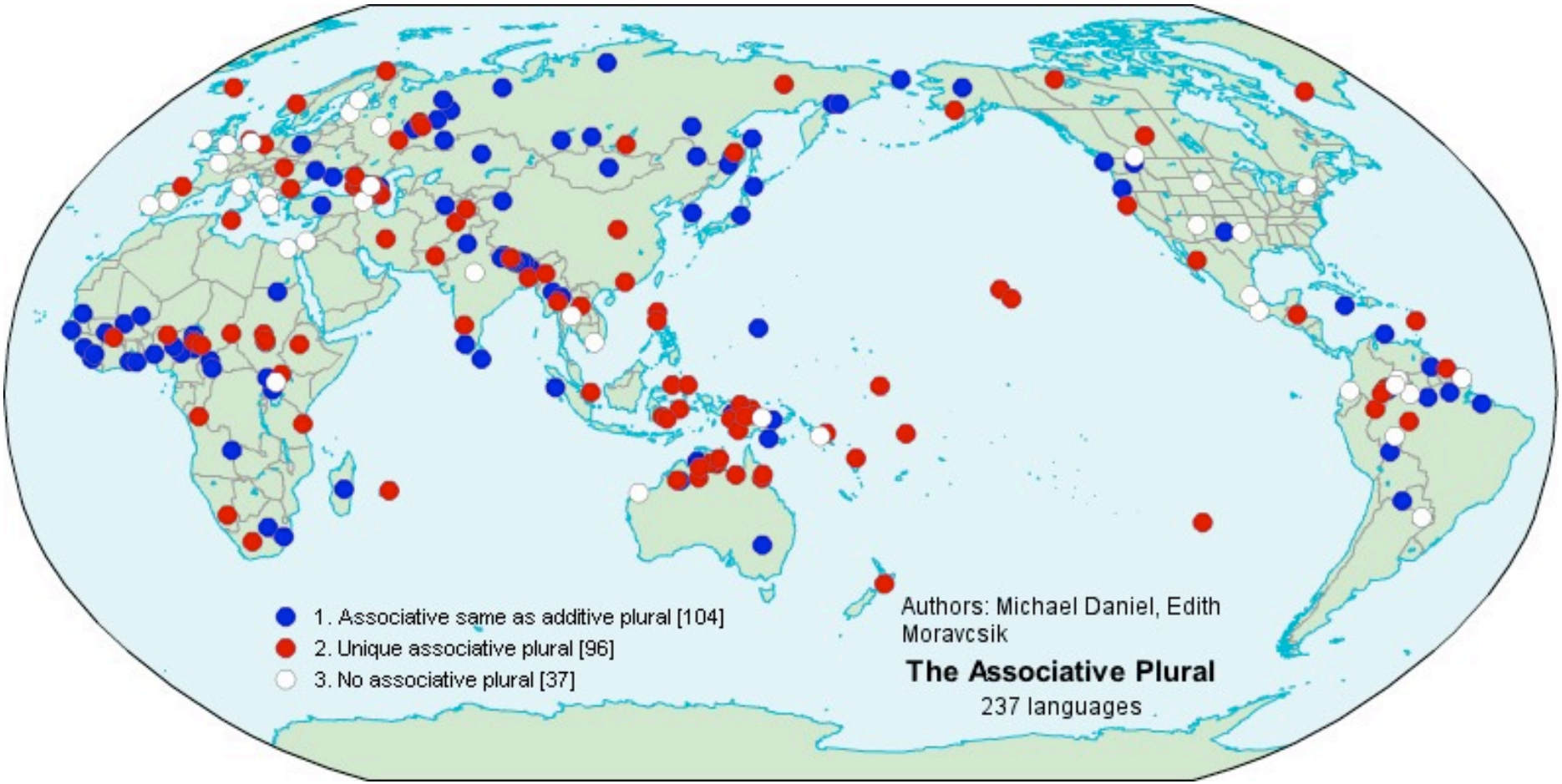
Austronesian family (except Tawala)
West Papuan family

2. (right-hand side of NeighborNet)

Other Papuan families (except perhaps Arapesh)
Tawala (Austronesian family)

Associative Plural

Taroo-tati Japanese
Taroo-PL
'Taroo and his group'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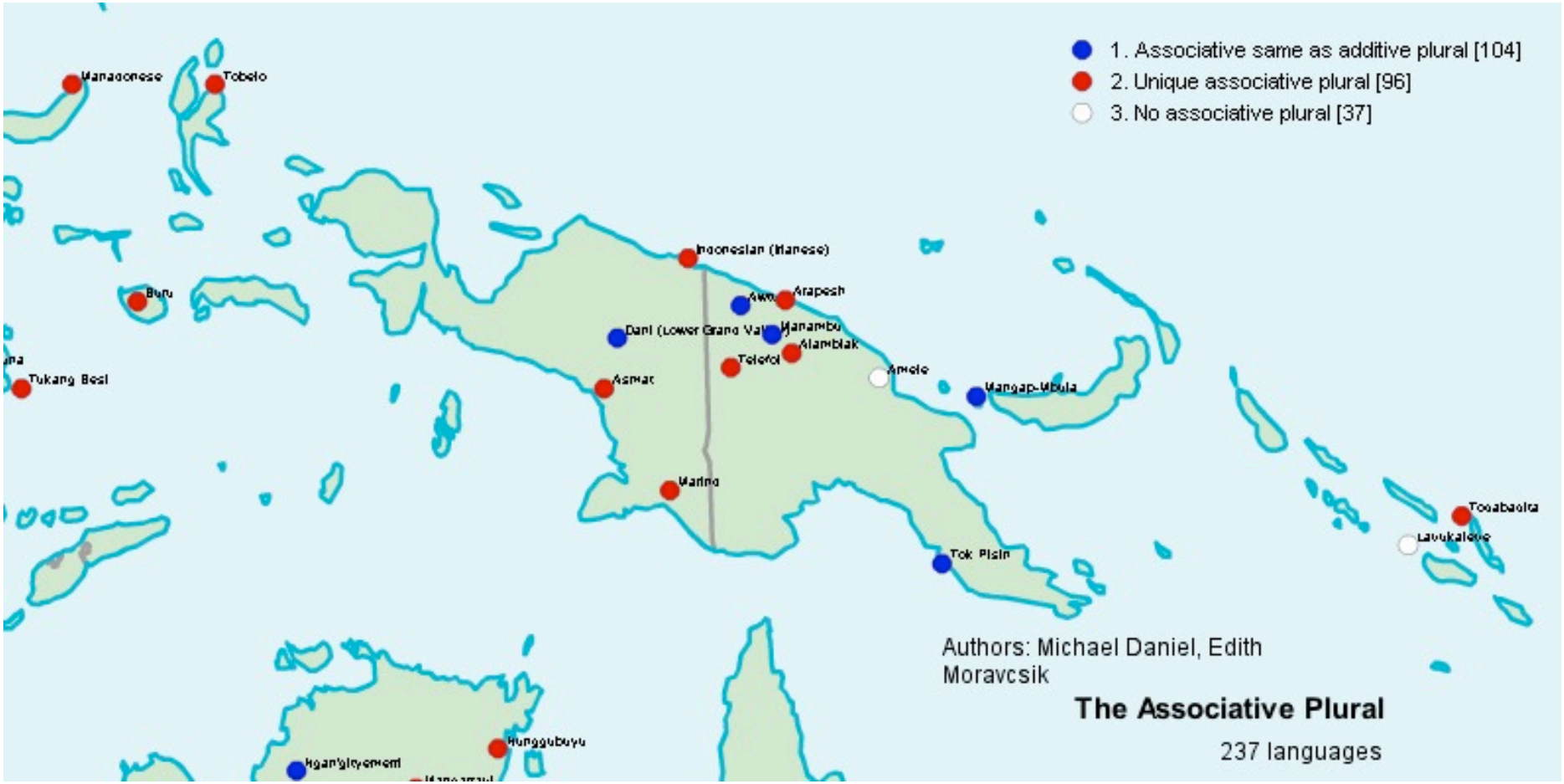
Authors: Michael Daniel, Edith Moravcsik
The Associative Plural
237 languages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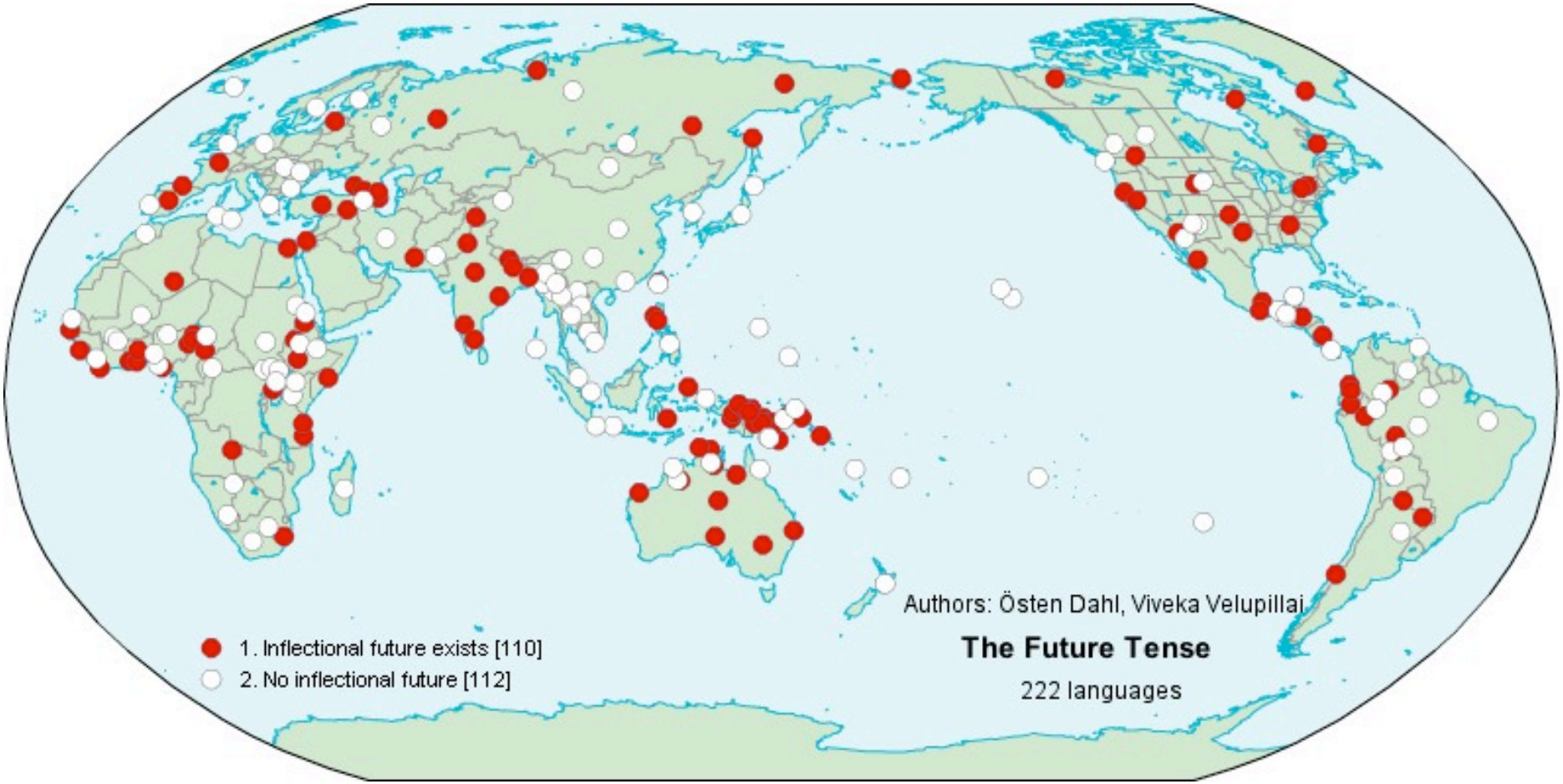
Manadonese
Tobelo
Buru
Tukang Besi
Indonesian (Manese)
Awa
Arapesh
Dani (Lower Grand Va
Manambu
Alamblak
Telefol
Asmat
Amele
Mangap-Mbula
Marind
Tok Pisin
Tolabaolaa
Lavukaleve
Hunggubuyu
Authors: Michael Daniel, Edith Moravcsik
The Associative Plural
237 languages

Inflectional Future

Latin *amabo* ‘I will love’, from *amare* ‘to love’


1. Inflectional future exists [110]
2. No inflectional future [112]
Authors: Östen Dahl, Viveka Velupillai
The Future Tense
222 languages

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Buli (in Indonesia)
Maybrat
Nimboran
Imonda
Arapesh
Yessan-Mayo
Dani (Lower Grand V
Alamblak
Asmat
Tukang Besi
Amele
Bongu
Kewa
Yagaria
Ono
Suena
Tok Pisin
Daga
Tangga
Balning
Nakanai
Halia
Lavukaleve
Tiwi
Maung
Mangarrayi
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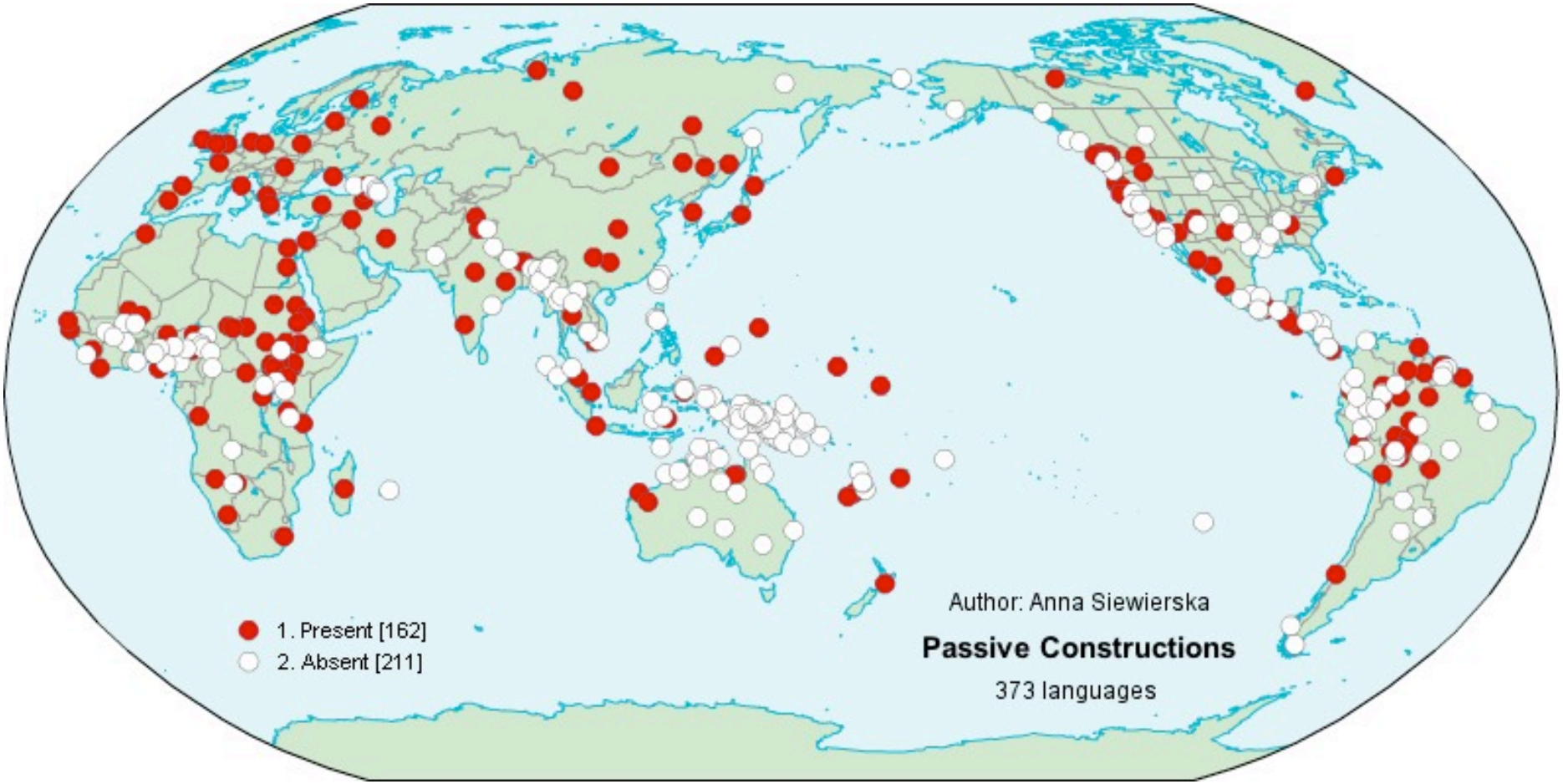
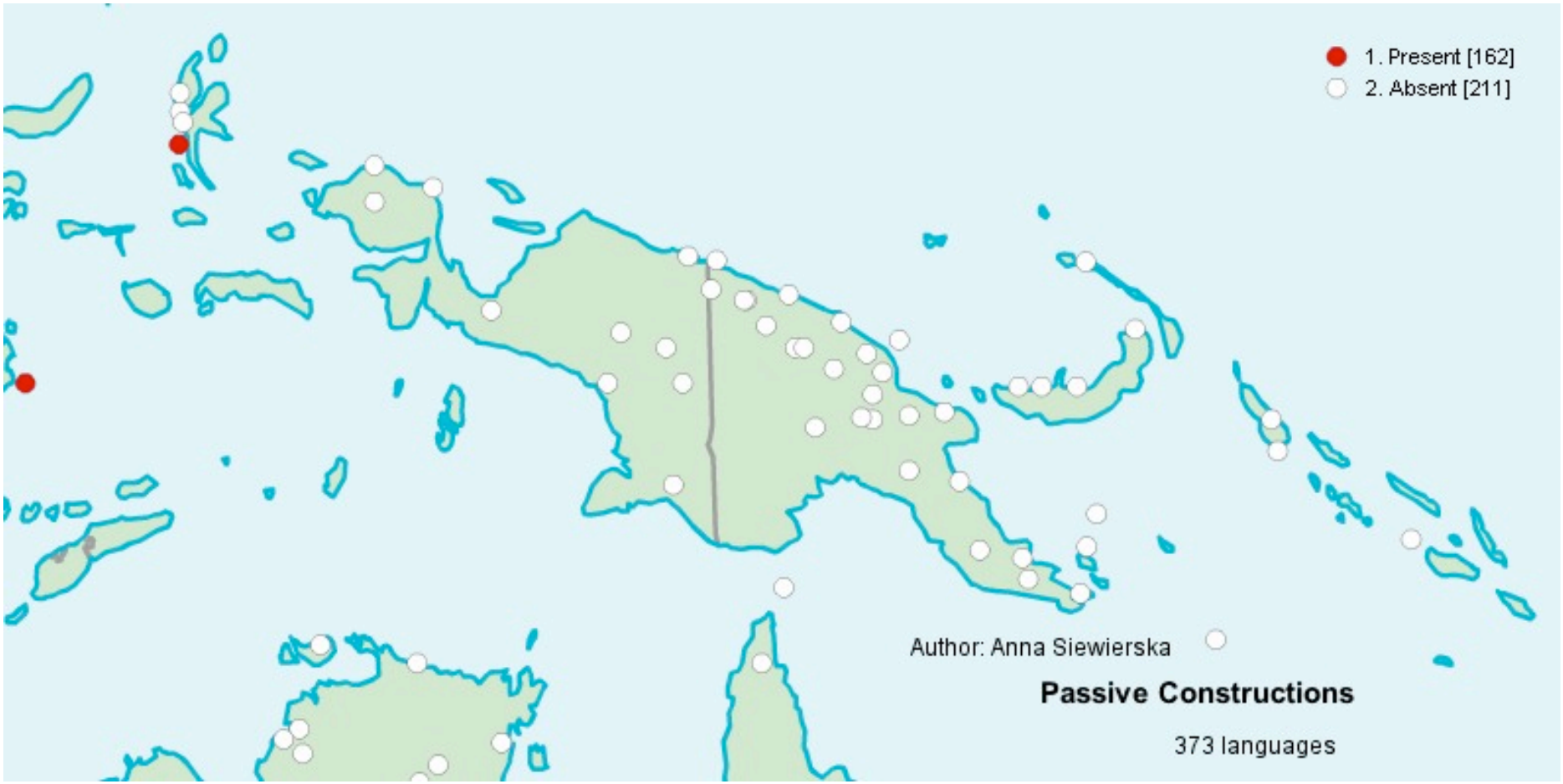

1. Present [162]
2. Absent [211]
Author: Anna Siewierska
Passive Constructions
373 languages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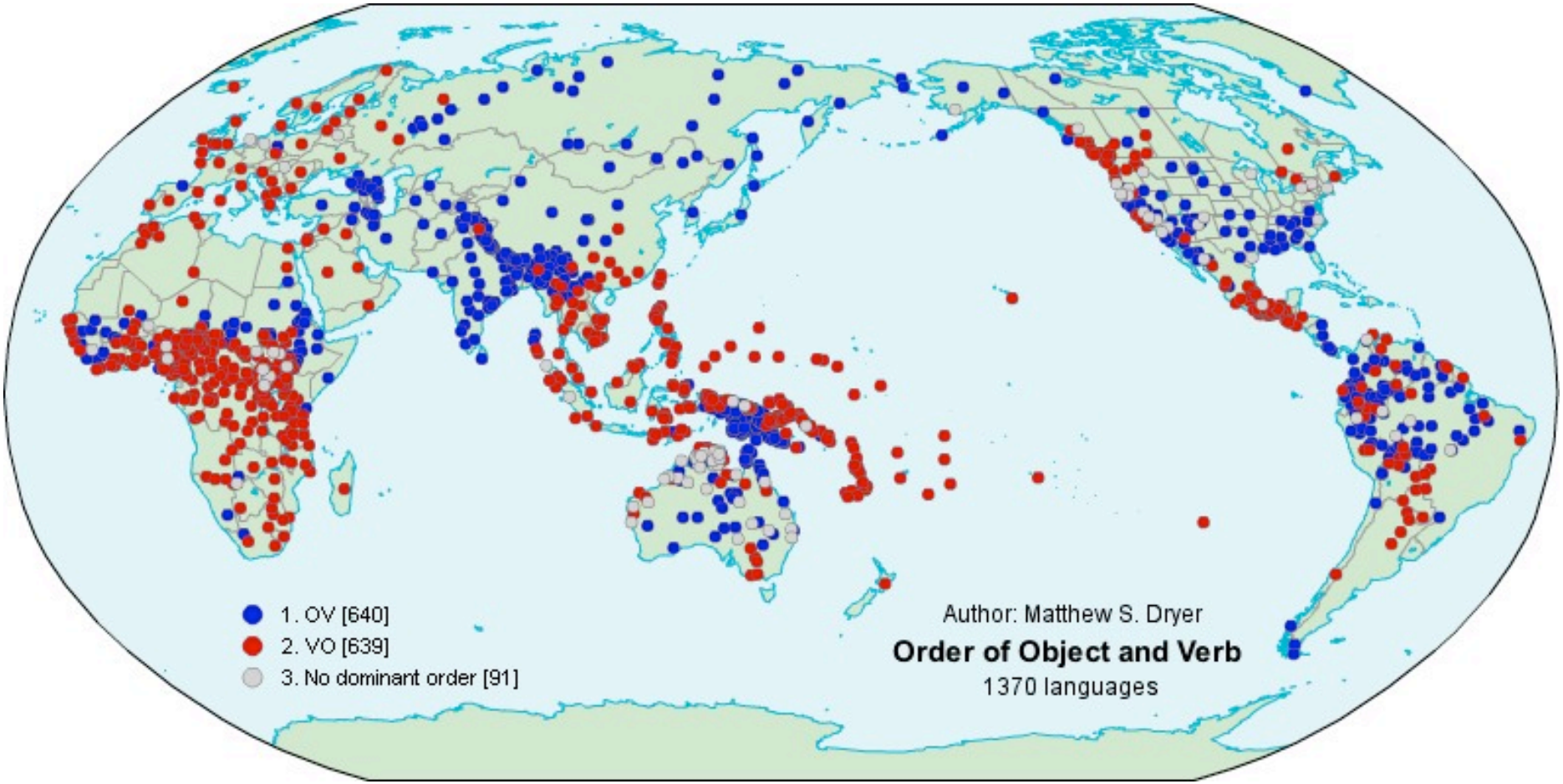
Passive Constructions
373 languages

4.2. Study correlations between different features

Head-final	*Head-initial*	
O<u>V</u>	<u>V</u>O	verb phrase
Np<u>Po</u>	<u>Pr</u>Np	adpositional phrase
Gen<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>Gen	noun phrase
Adj<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>Adj	noun phrase


1. OV [640]
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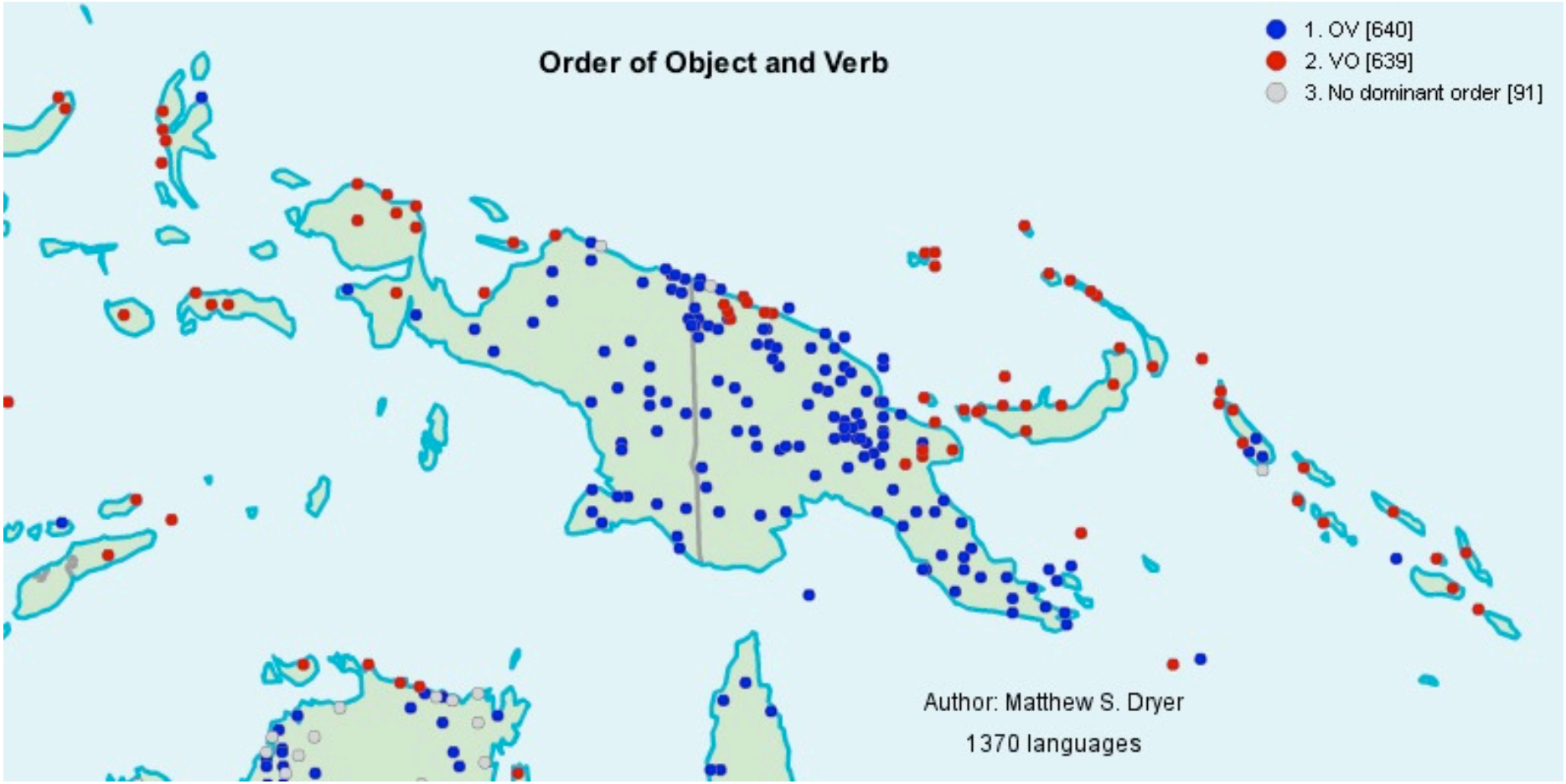
Author: Matthew S. Dryer
Order of Object and Verb
1370 languages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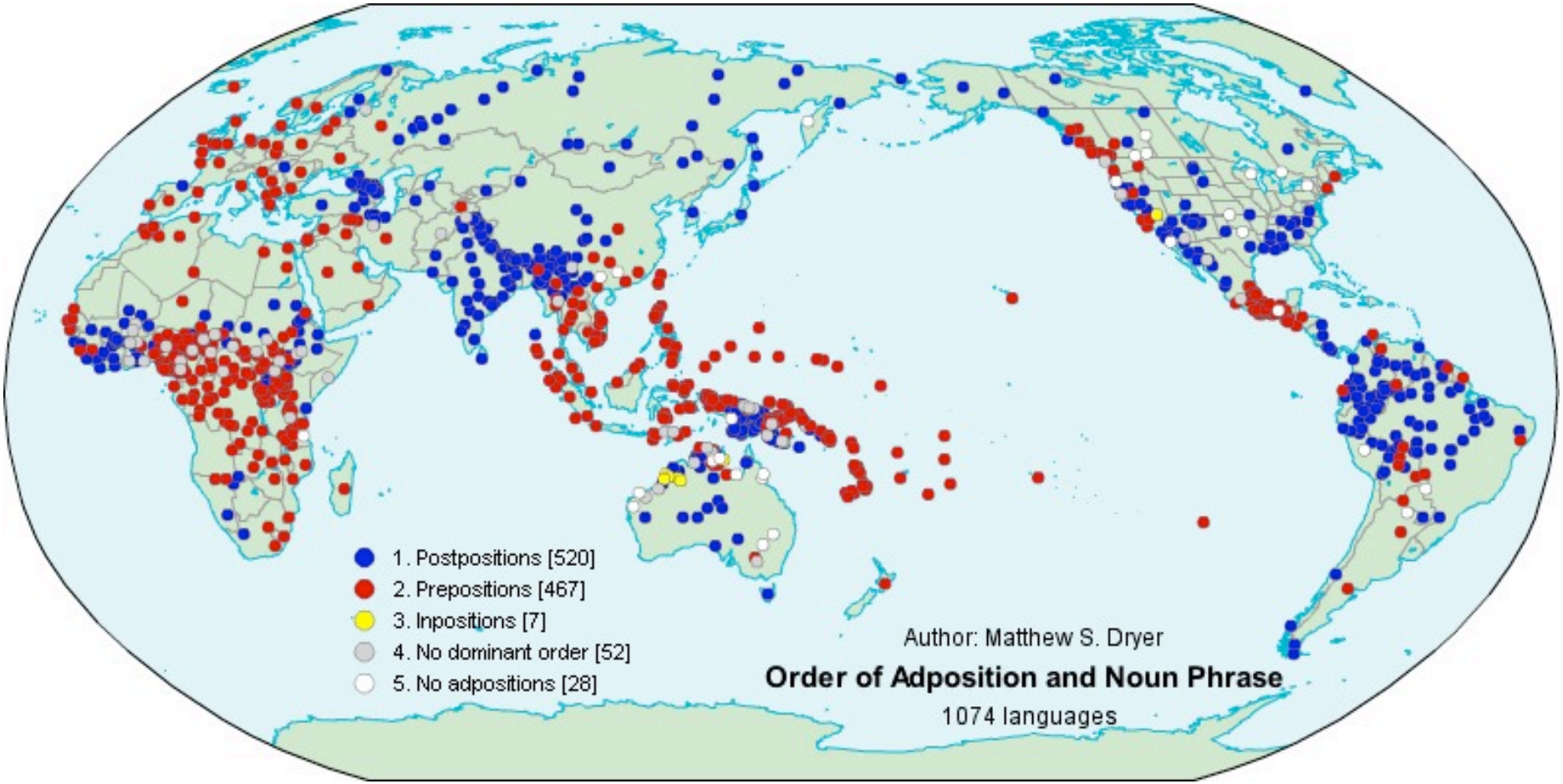
1. Postpositions [520]
2. Prepositions [467]
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4. No dominant order [52]
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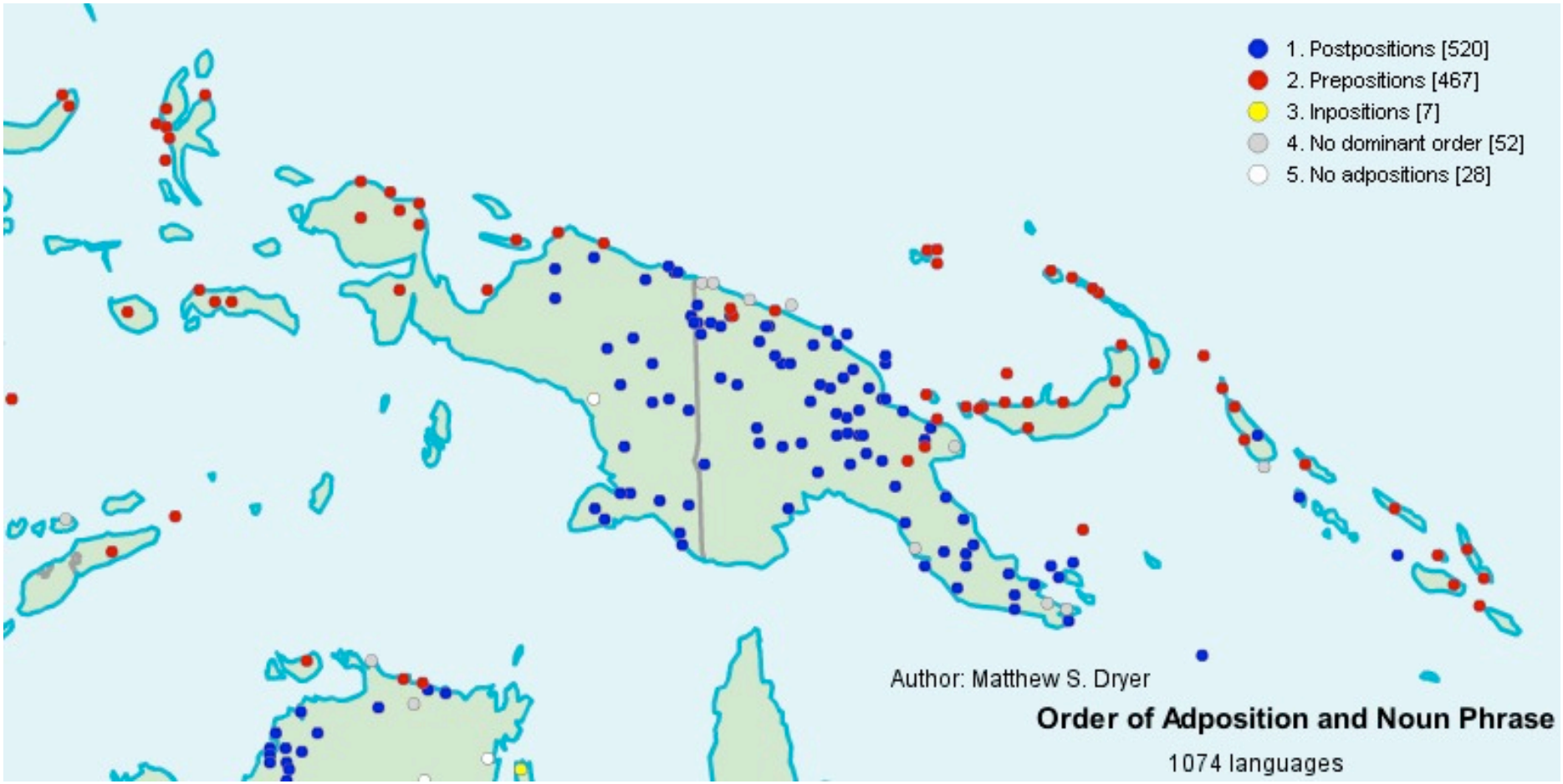
Author: Matthew S. Dryer
Order of Adposition and Noun Phrase
1074 languages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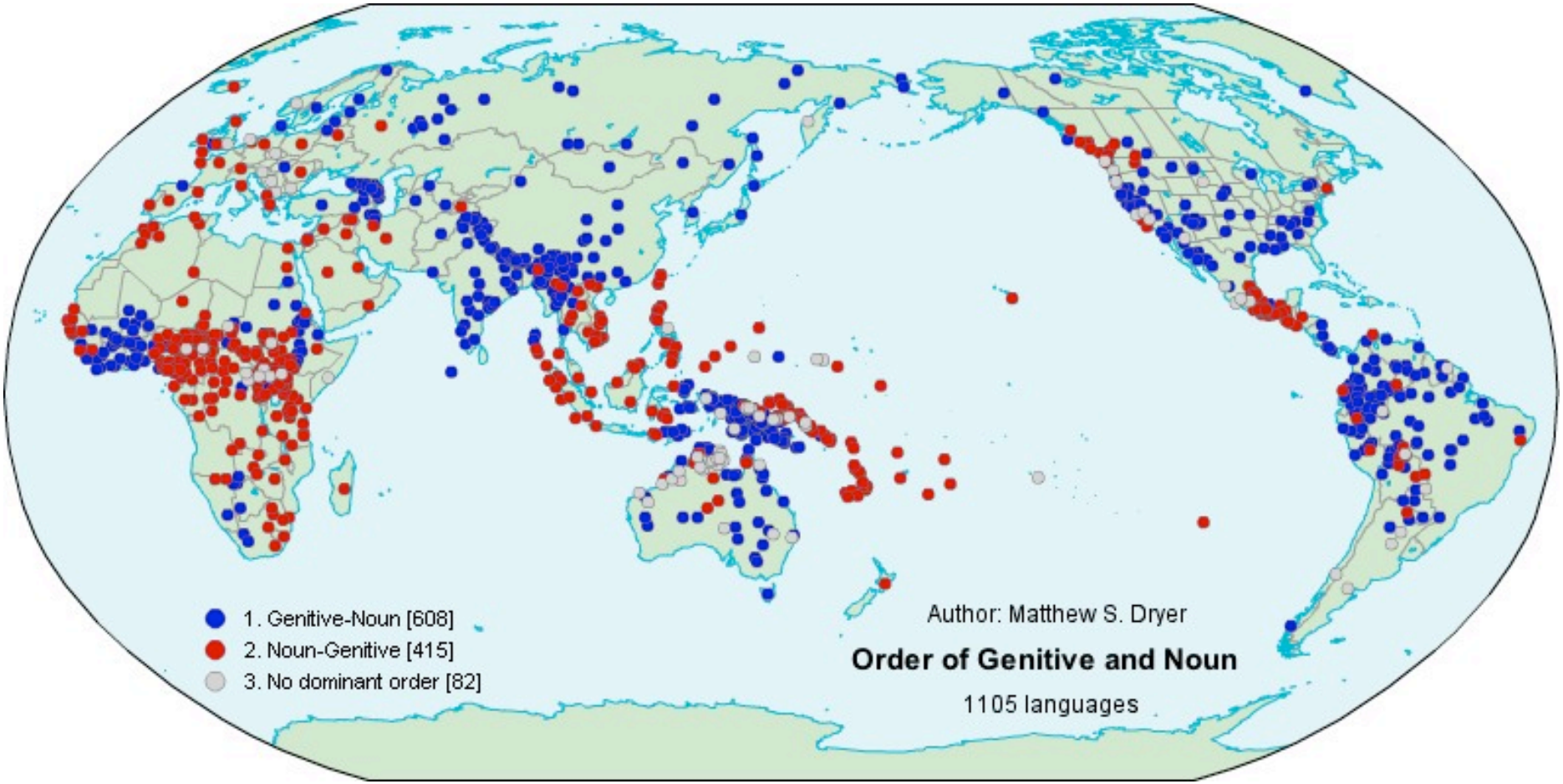
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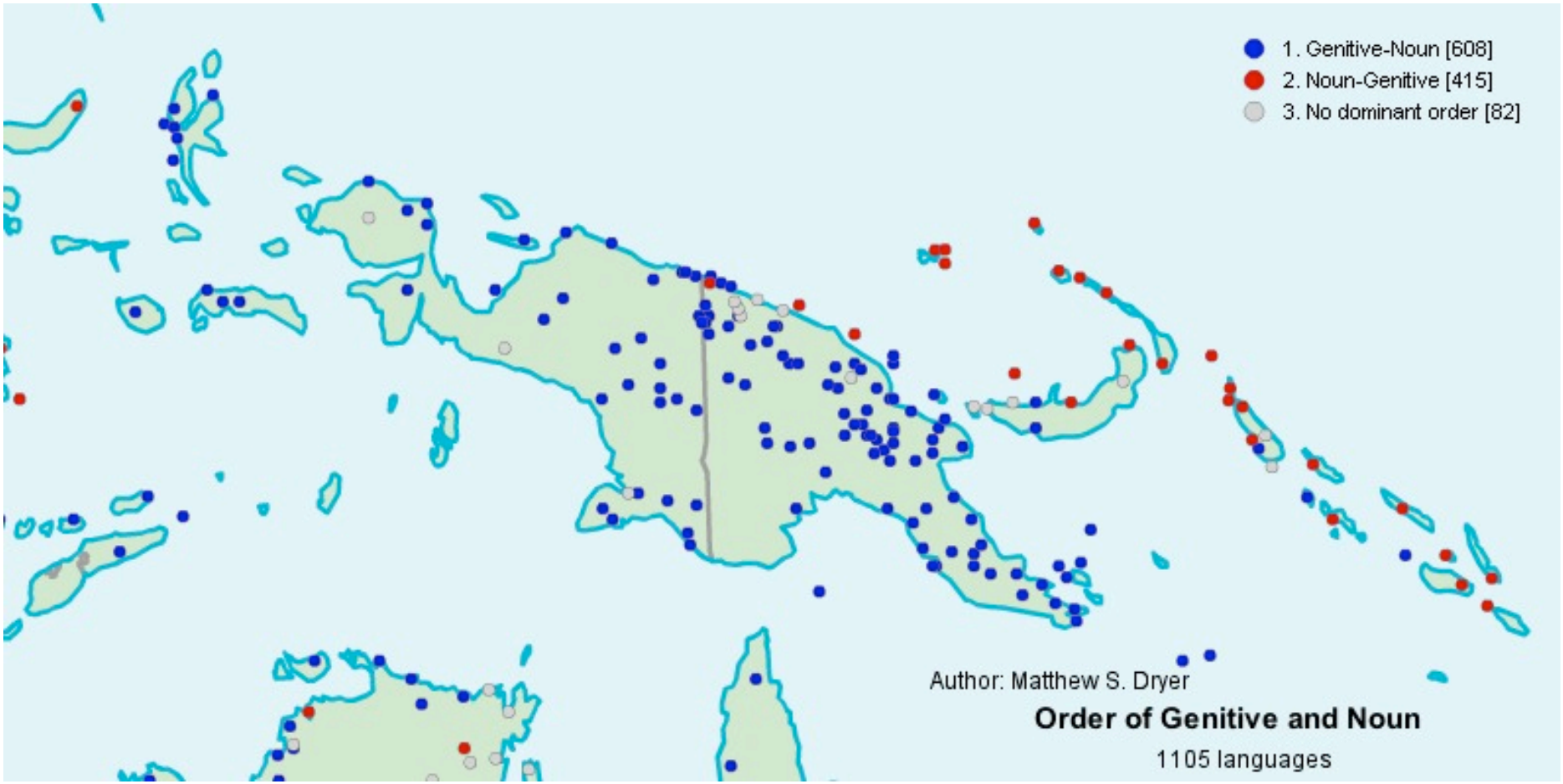
Order of Genitive and Noun
1105 languages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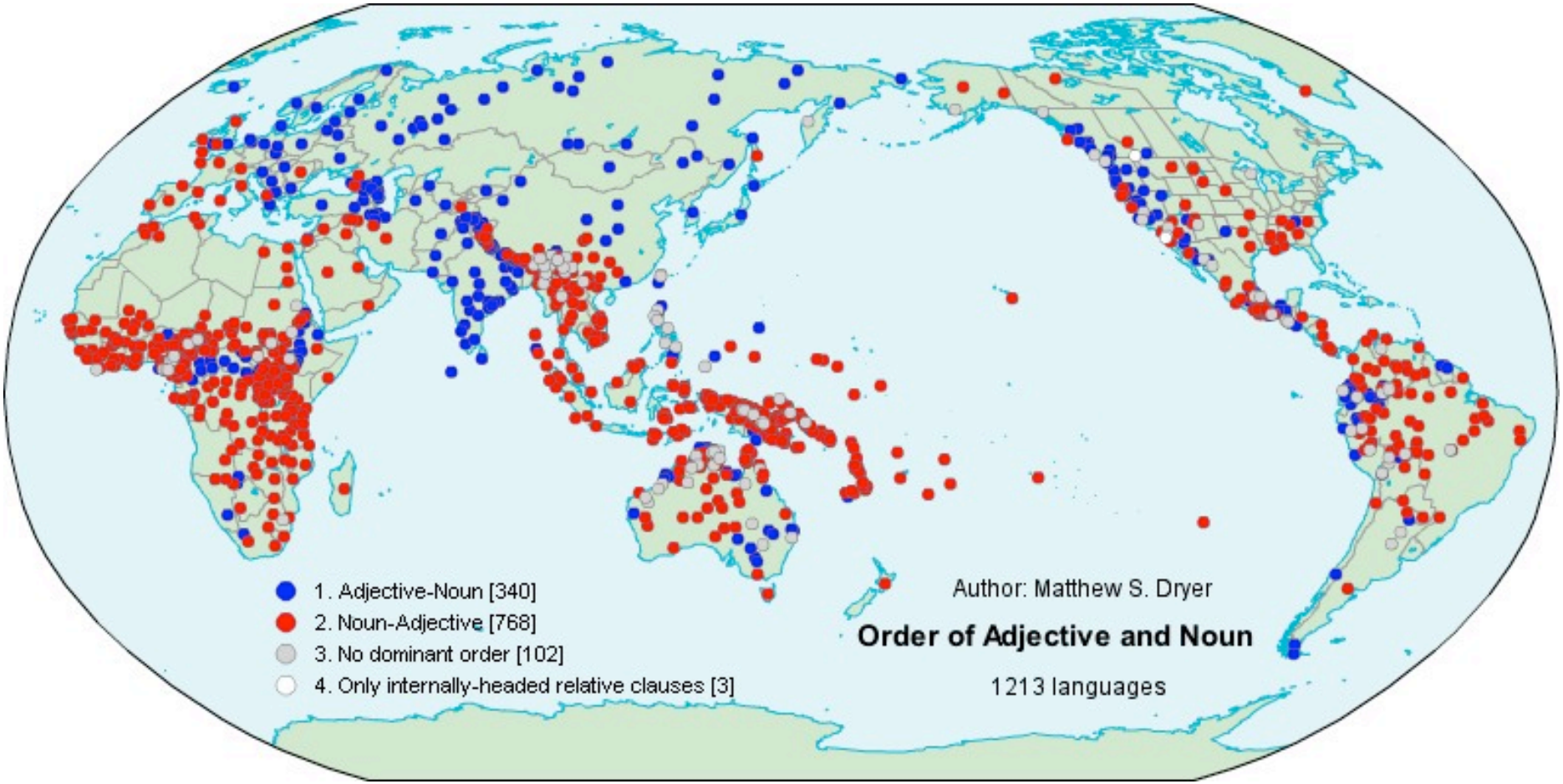
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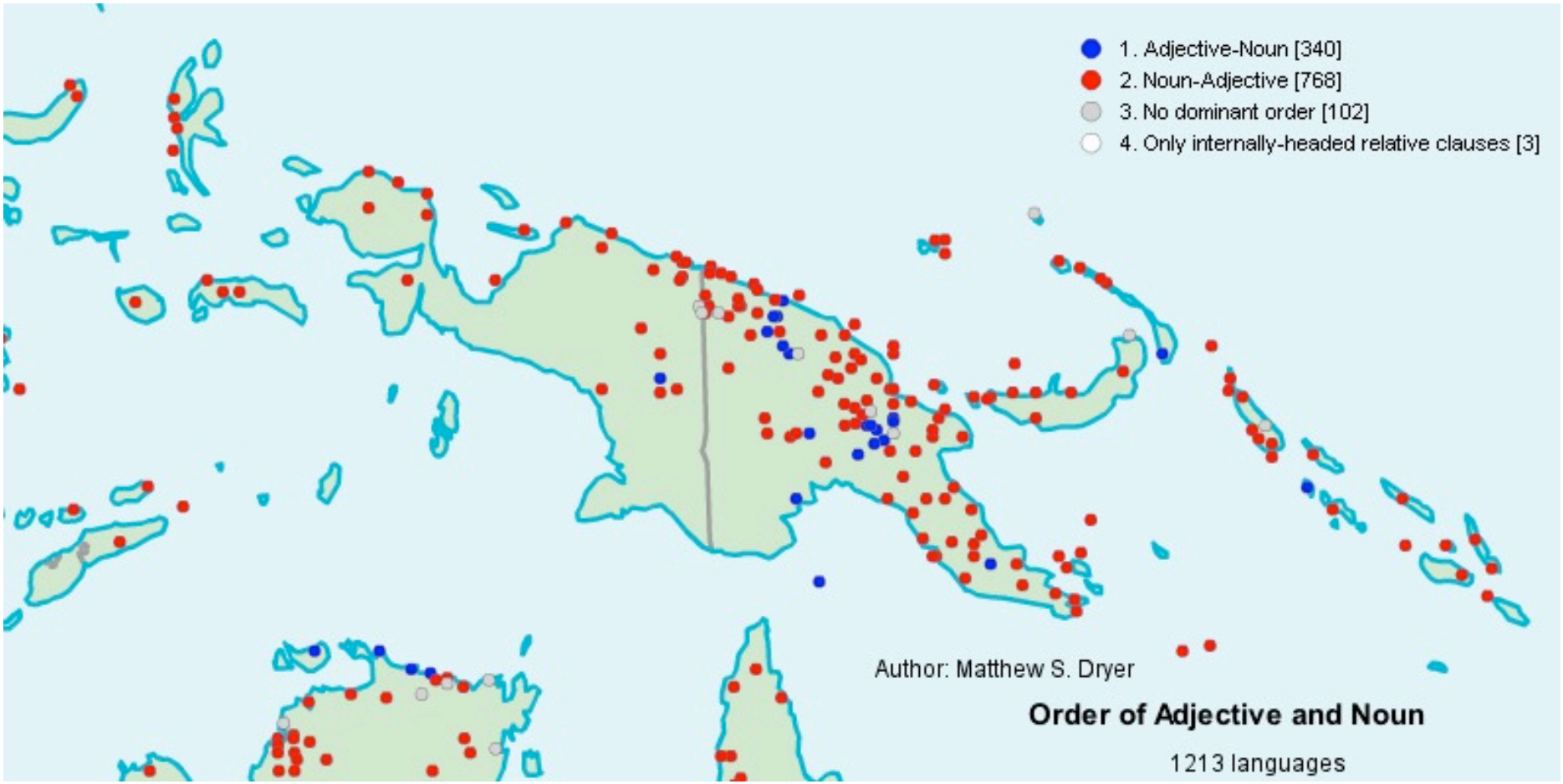
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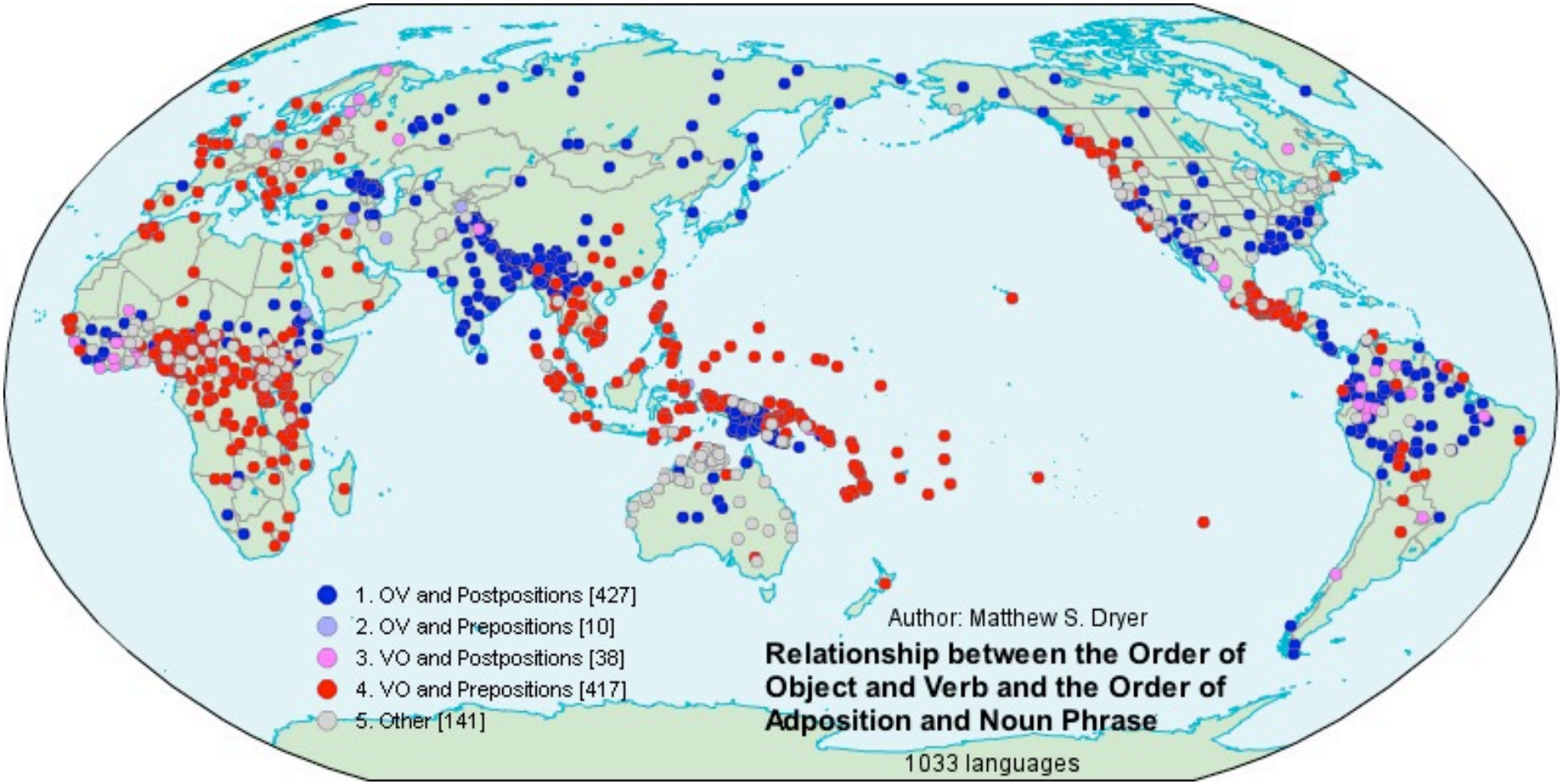
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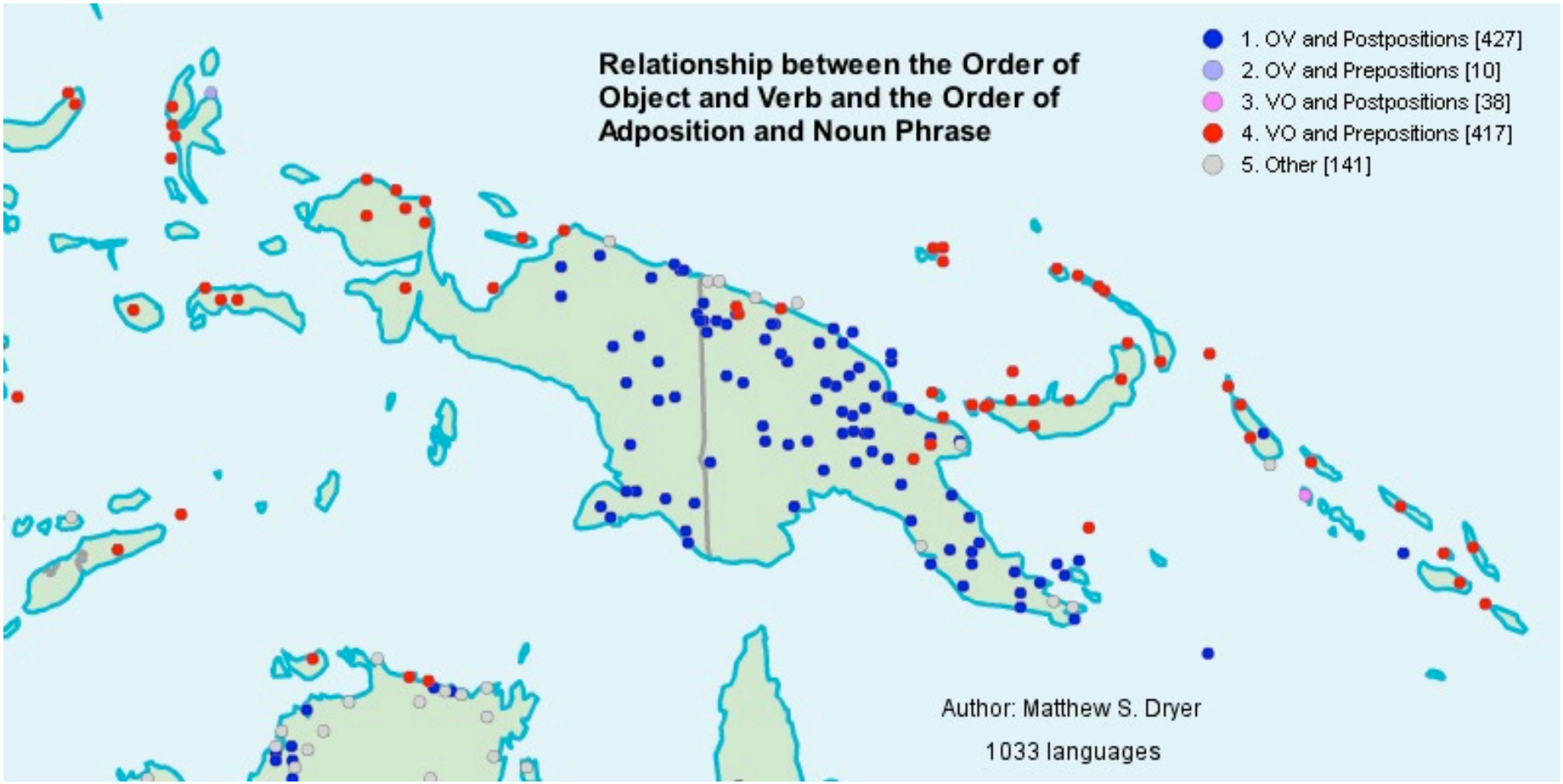
Relationship between the Order of Object and Verb and the Order of Adposition and Noun Phrase
1033 languages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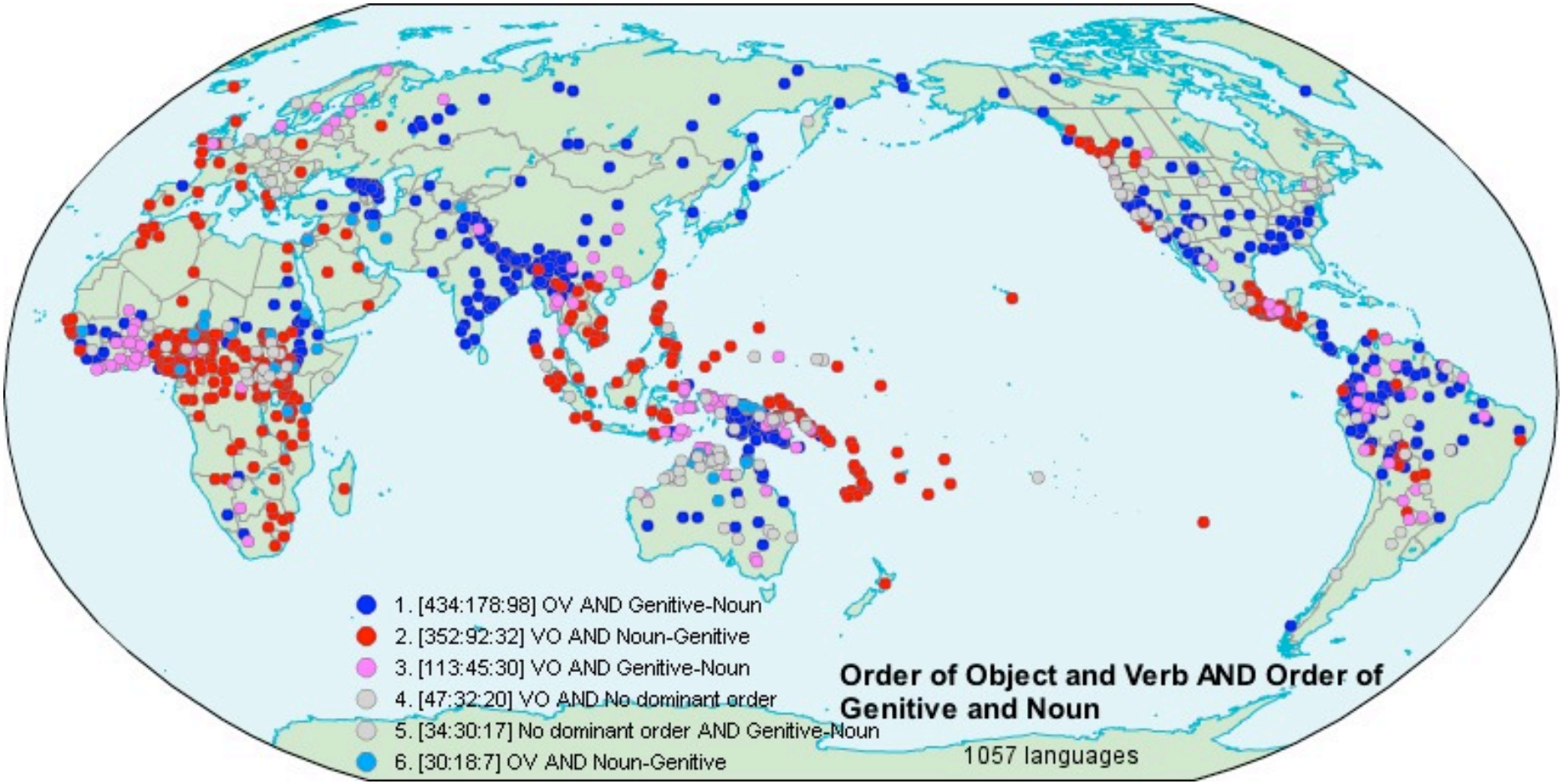
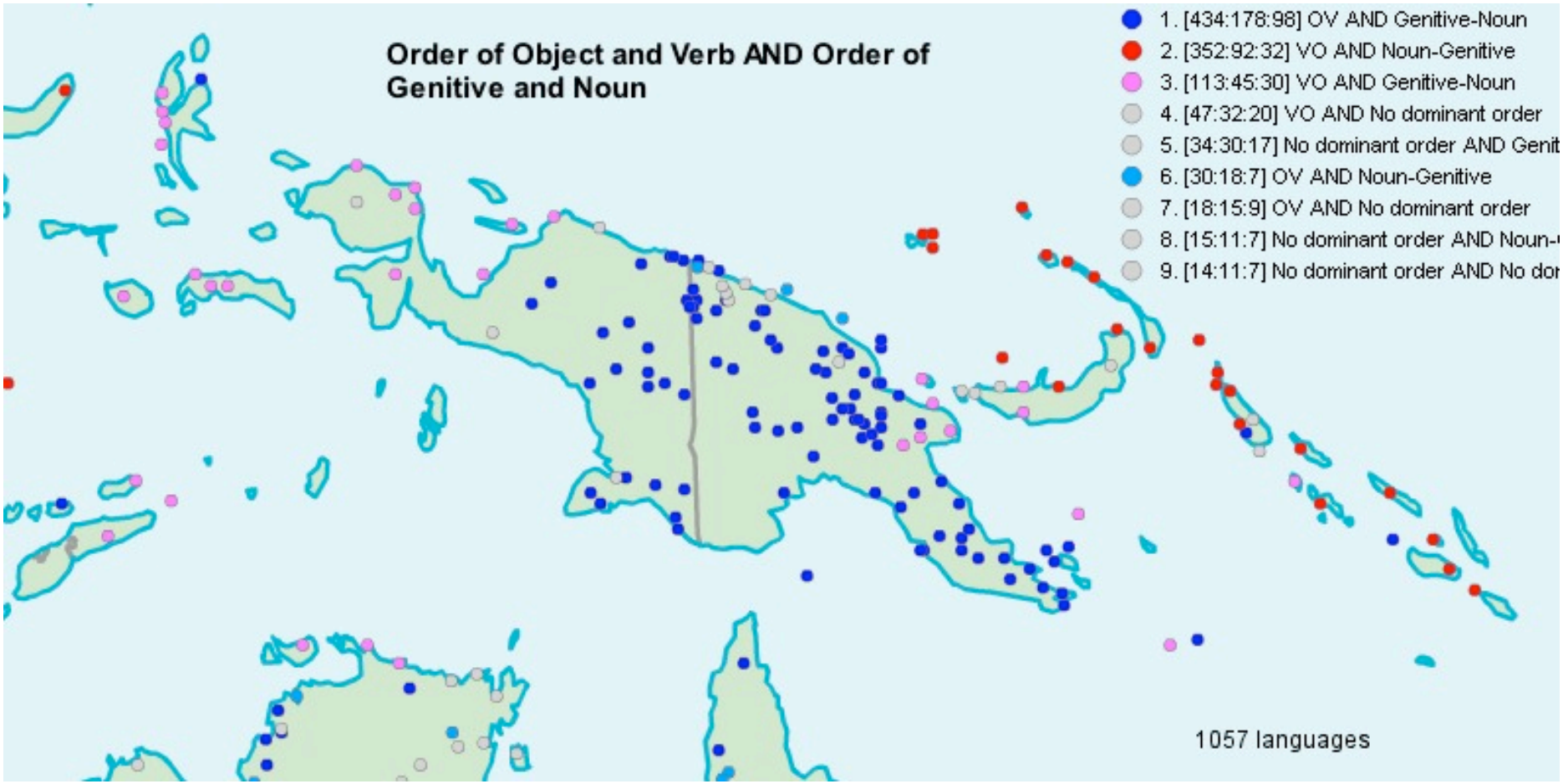

1. [434:178:98] OV AND Genitive-Noun
2. [352:92:32] VO AND Noun-Genitive
3. [113:45:30] VO AND Genitive-Noun
4. [47:32:20] VO AND No dominant order
5. [34:30:17] No dominant order AND Genitive-Noun
6. [30:18:7] OV AND Noun-Genitive
Order of Object and Verb AND Order of Genitive and Noun
1057 languages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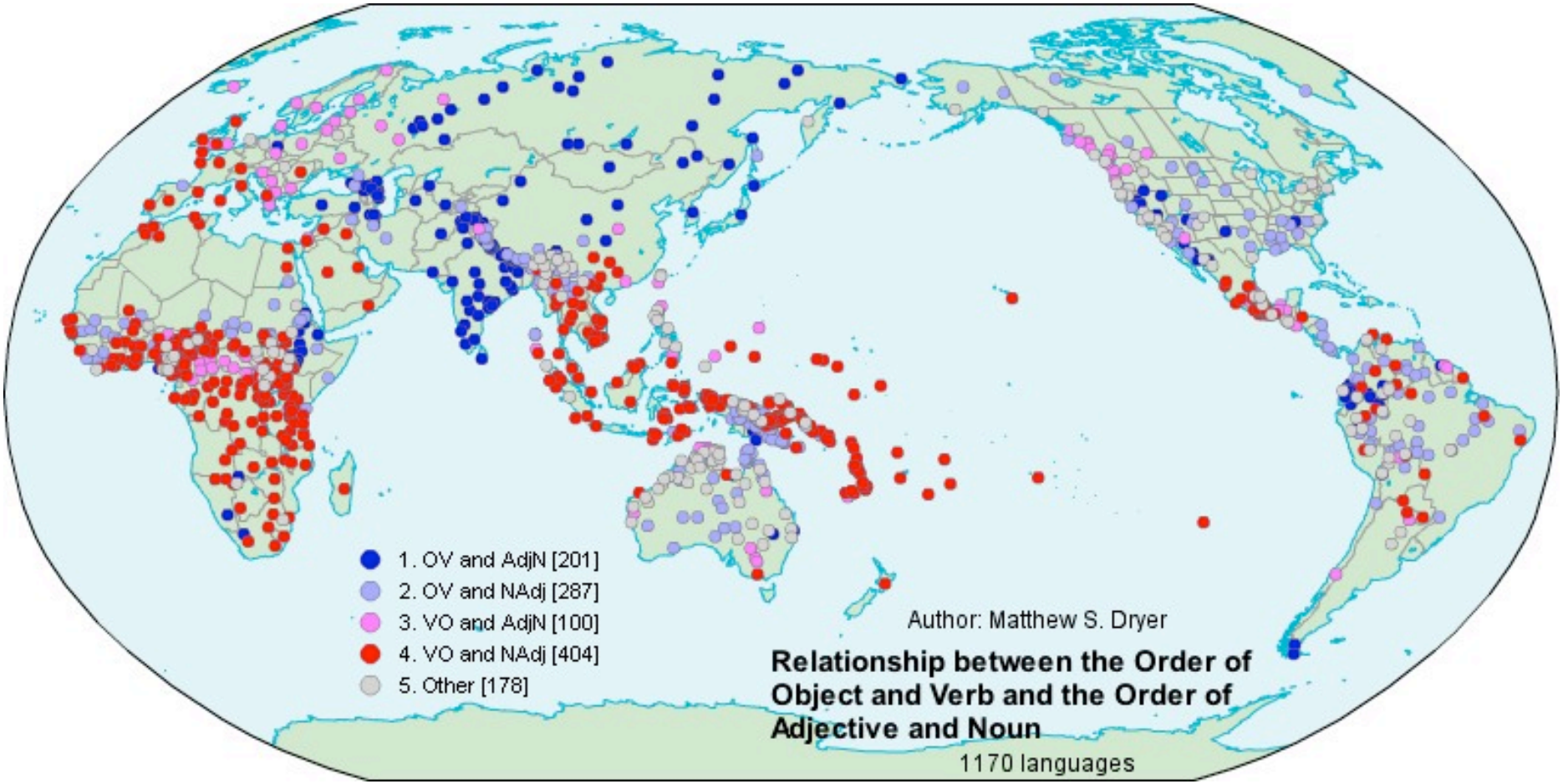
7. [18:15:9] OV AND No dominant order
8. [15:11:7] No dominant order AND Noun-
9. [14:11:7] No dominant order AND No dor
1057 languages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Relationship between the Order of Object and Verb and the Order of Adjective and Noun
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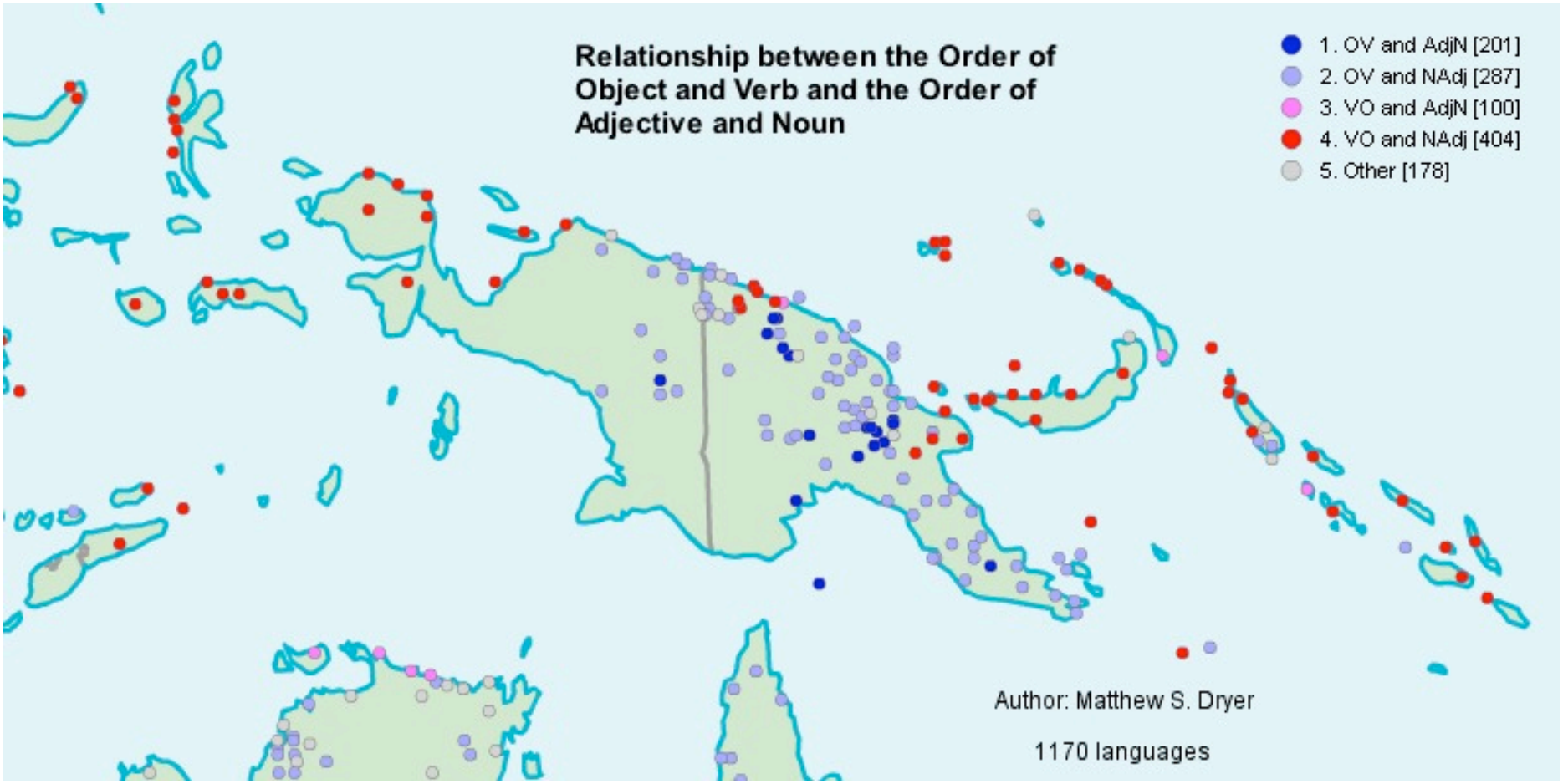
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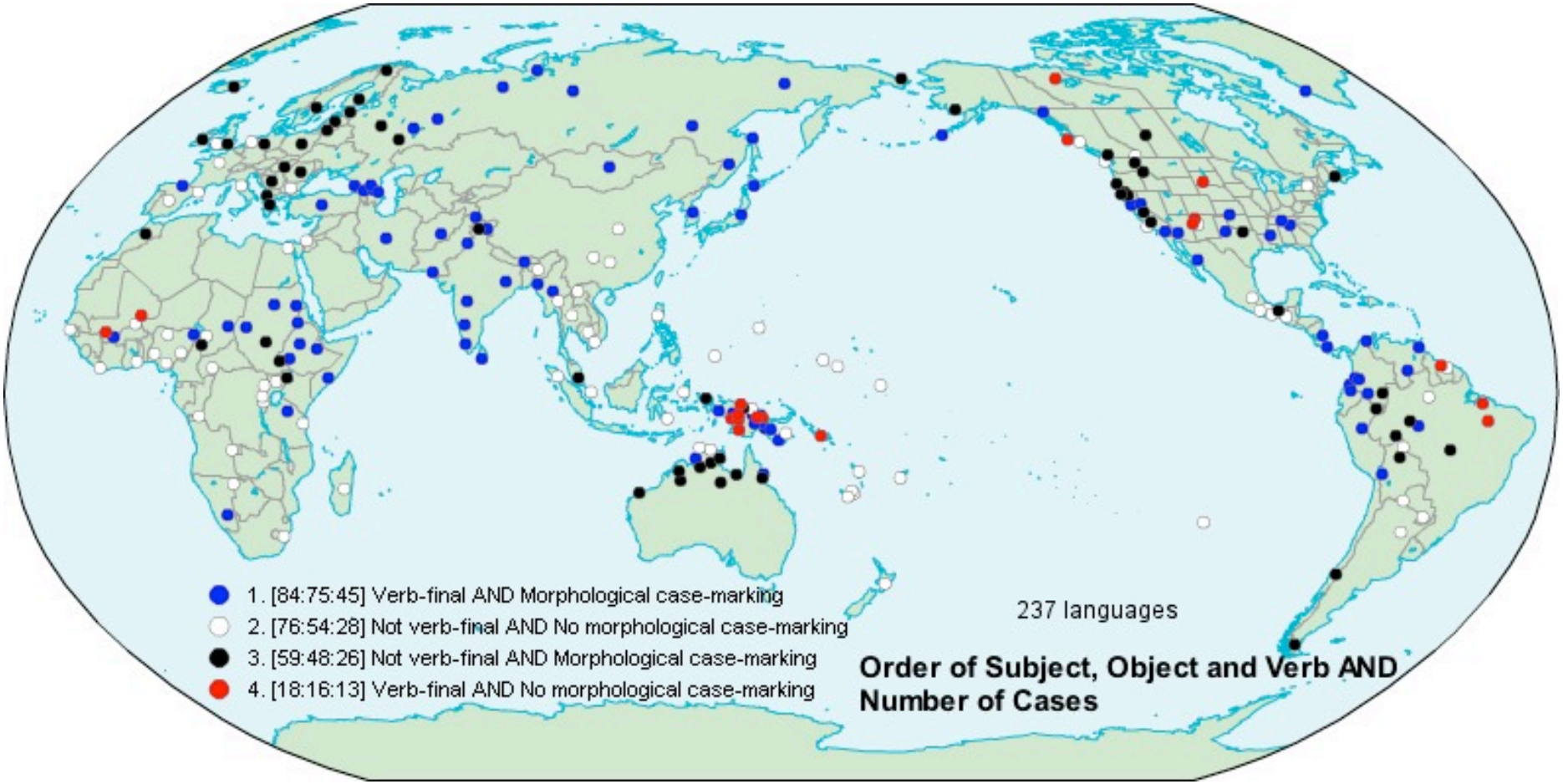
2. OV and NAdj [287]
3. VO and AdjN [100]
4. VO and NAdj [404]
5. Other [178]
Author: Matthew S. Dryer
1170 languages

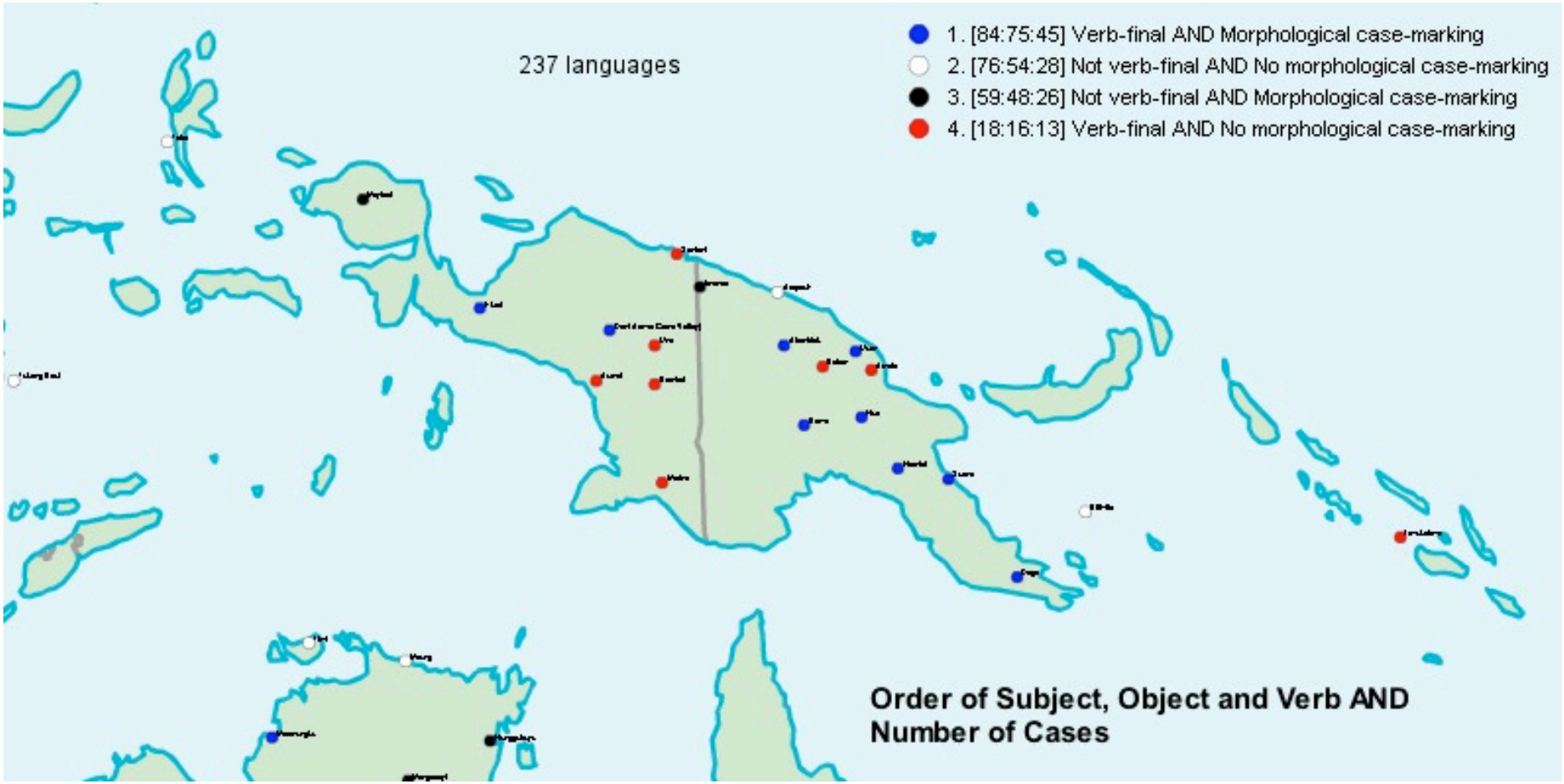
SOV and Case system

Greenberg, Joseph H. 1966 [1963]. Some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements, in J.H. Greenberg (ed.), *Universals of language*, 2 ed. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 73–113.

41. If in a language the verb follows both the nominal subject and nominal object as the dominant order, the language almost always has a case system.

nöbö dib hön pai-ön-a. Haruai
man big pig hit-FUT(3SG)-DECL
'the big man will kill the pig.'


1. [84:75:45] Verb-final AND Morphological case-marking
2. [76:54:28] Not verb-final AND No morphological case-marking
3. [59:48:26] Not verb-final AND Morphological case-marking
4. [18:16:13] Verb-final AND No morphological case-marking
237 languages
Order of Subject, Object and Verb AND Number of Cases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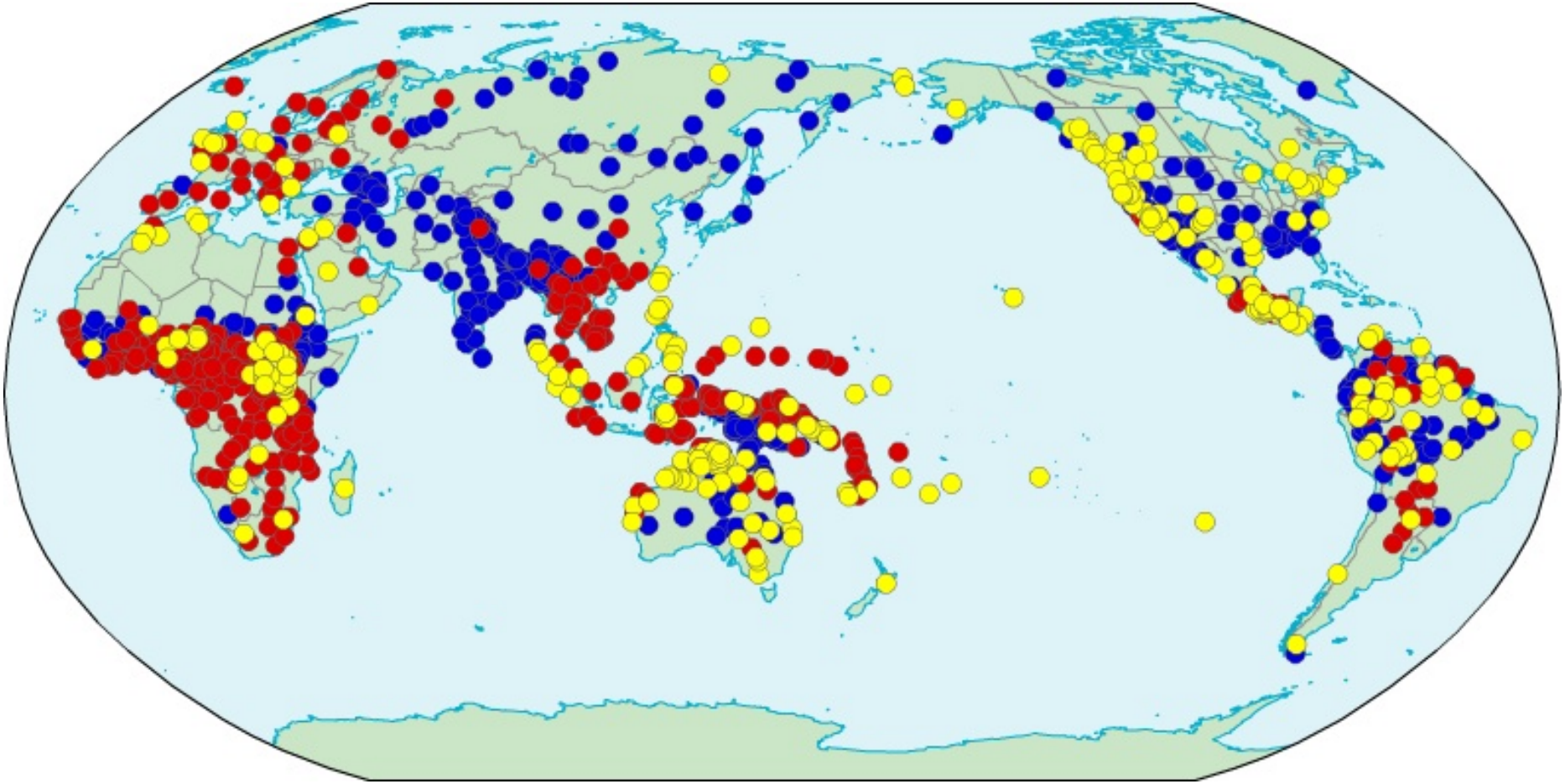
Order of Subject, Object and Verb AND
Number of Cases

	Worldwide sample	New Guinea area sample
Number of languages	237	22
Verb-final without case	18	8
Percentage	7.6%	36.4%



New Guinea and the Languages of the World

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and University of California Santa Barbara