

# *New Guinea and the Languages of the World*

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# *The World Atlas of Language Structures* (WALS)

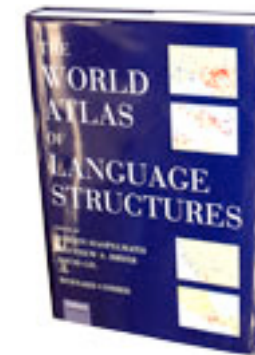
*edited by*

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)



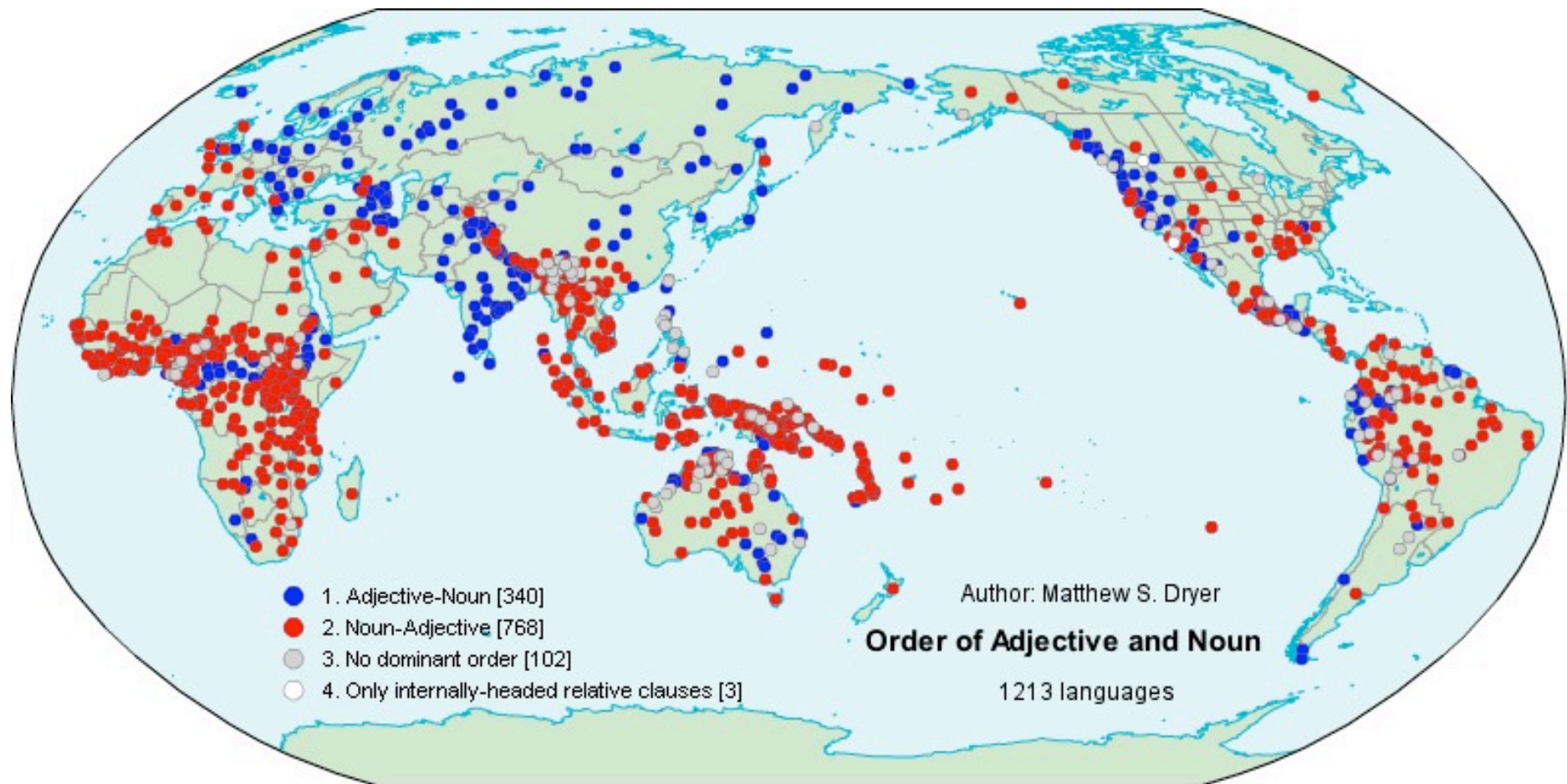
Internet version (latest edition 2011)  
edited by Matthew S. Dryer and Martin Haspelmath

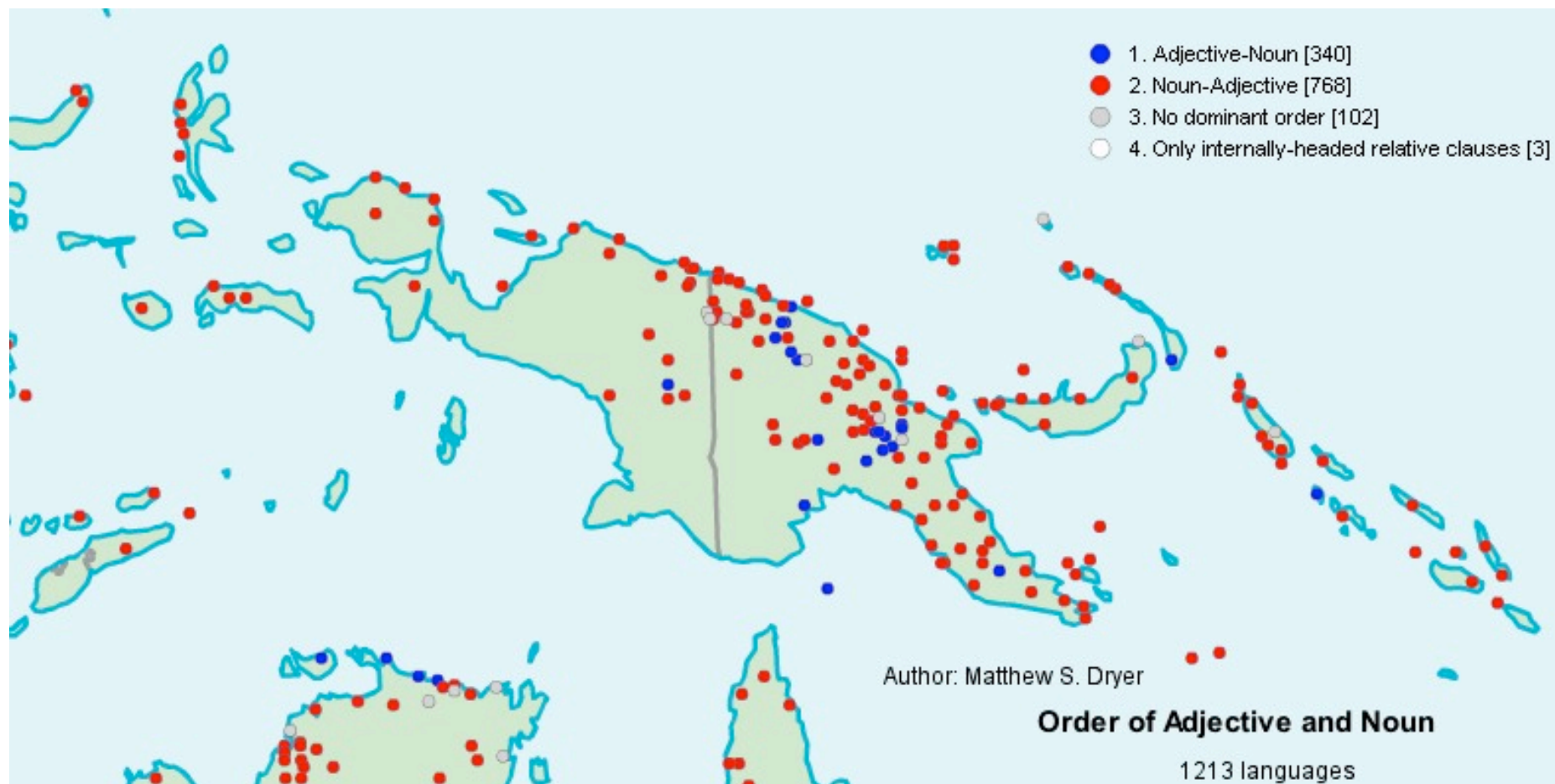
**wals.info**

## 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







## 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:

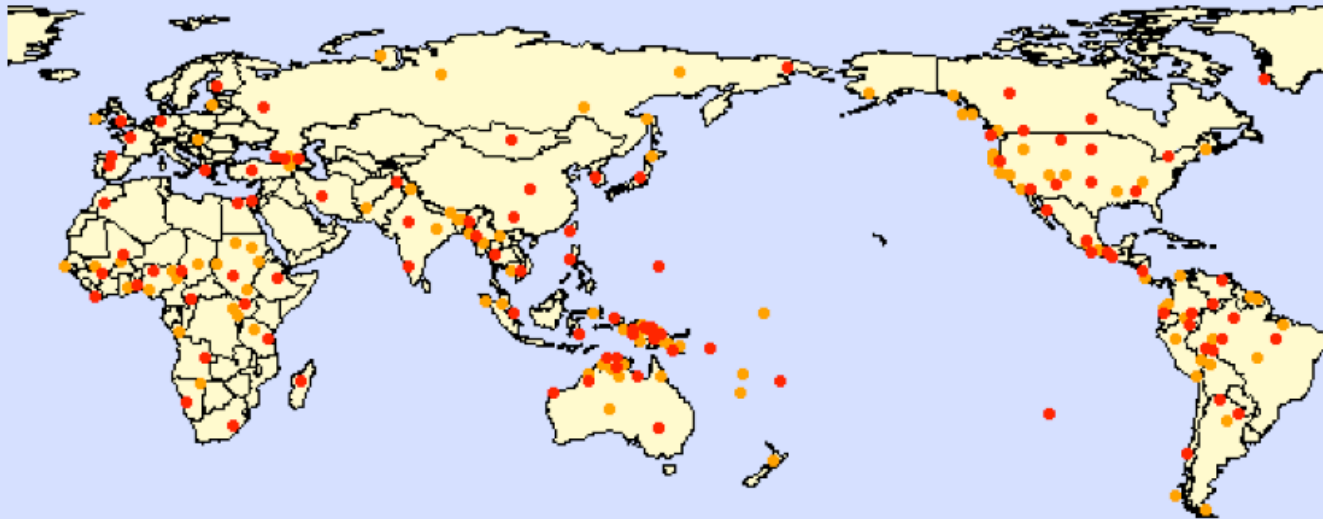
Phonology	19
Morphology	10
Nominal Categories	28
Nominal Syntax	7
Verbal Categories	16
Word Order	17
Simple Clauses	24
Complex Sentences	7
Lexicon	10
Others	4

- 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

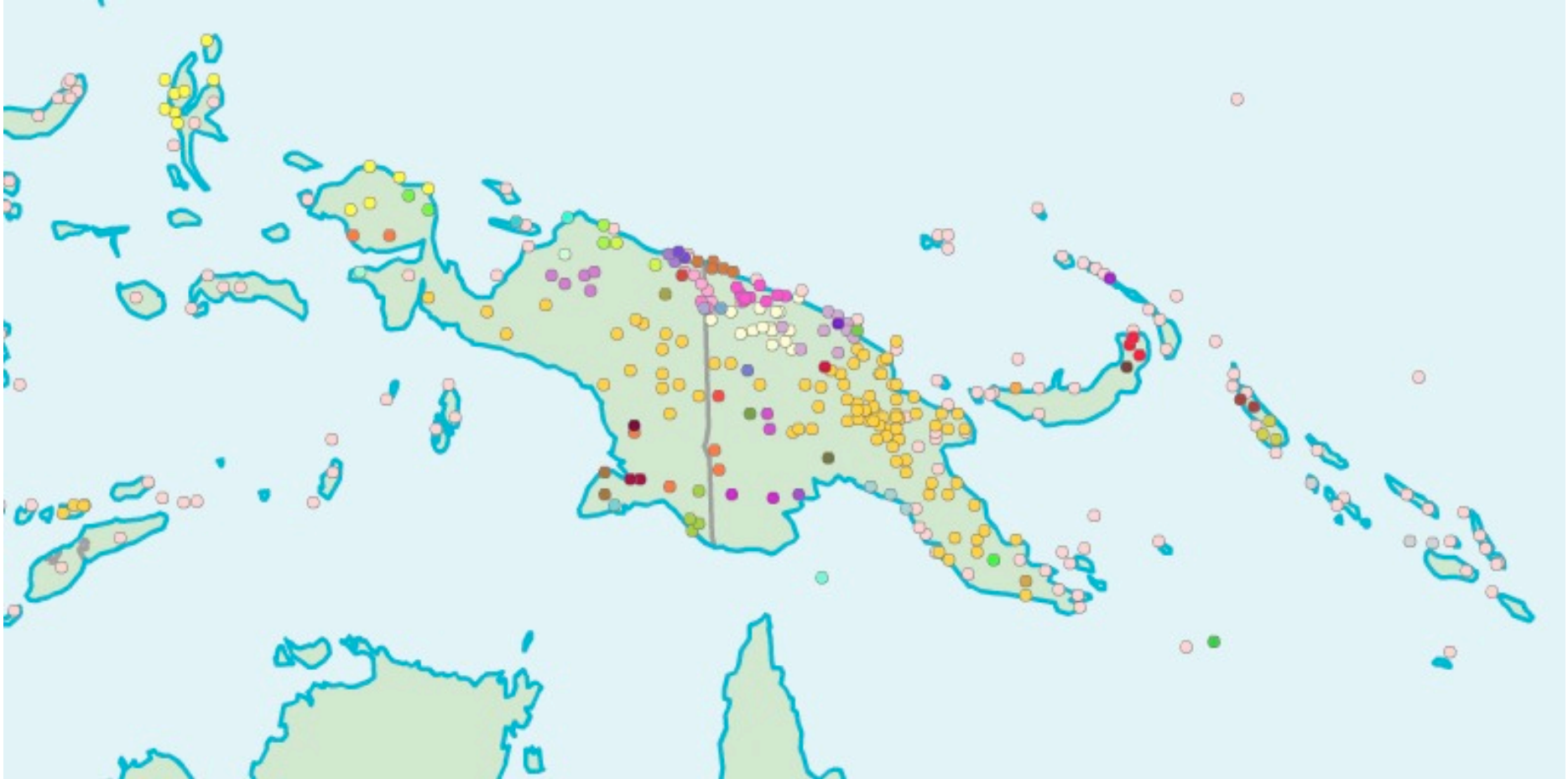


## **4. What to do with *WALS***

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.’

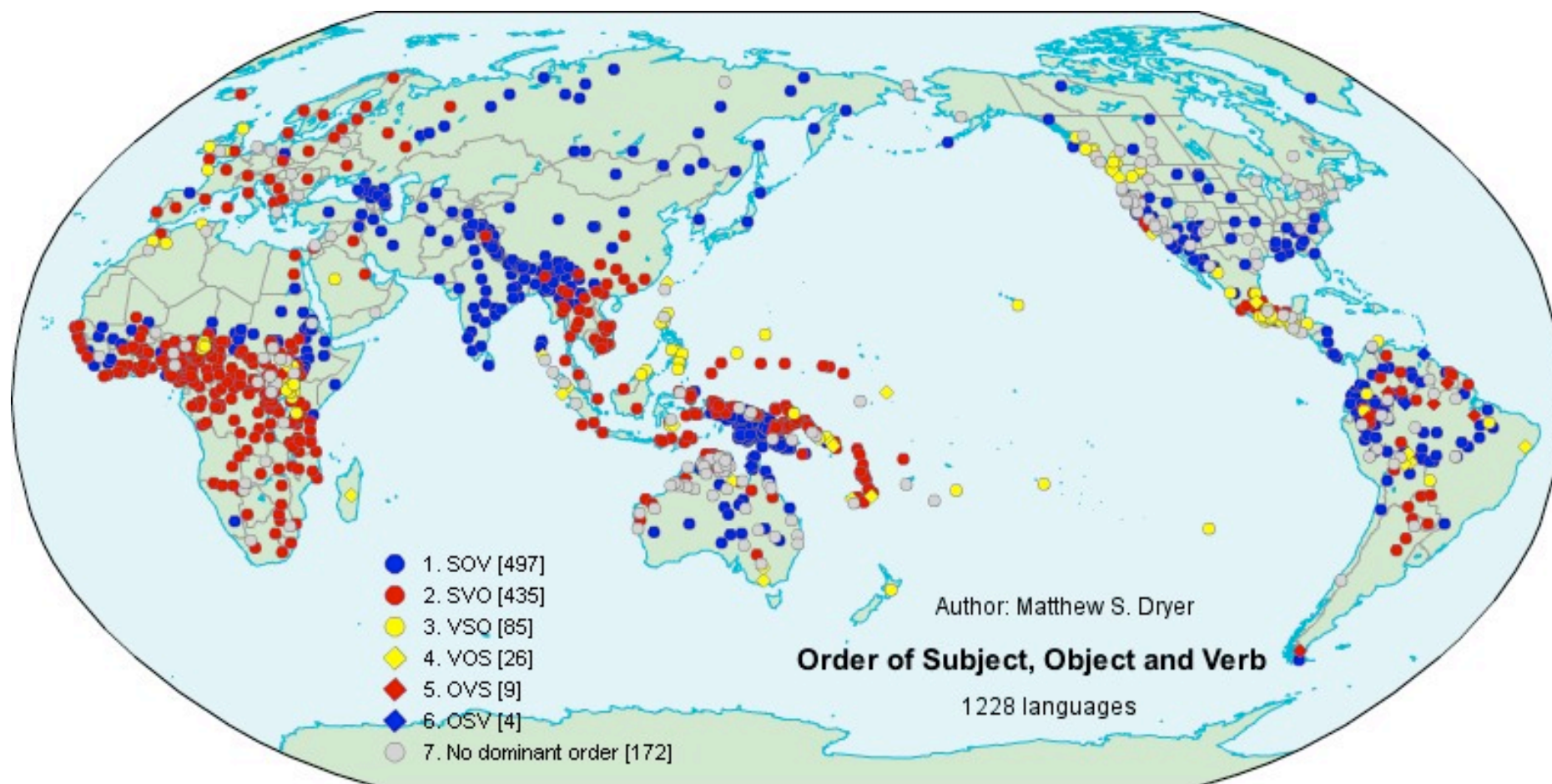
OVS (e.g. Hixkaryana [Cariban; Brazil])

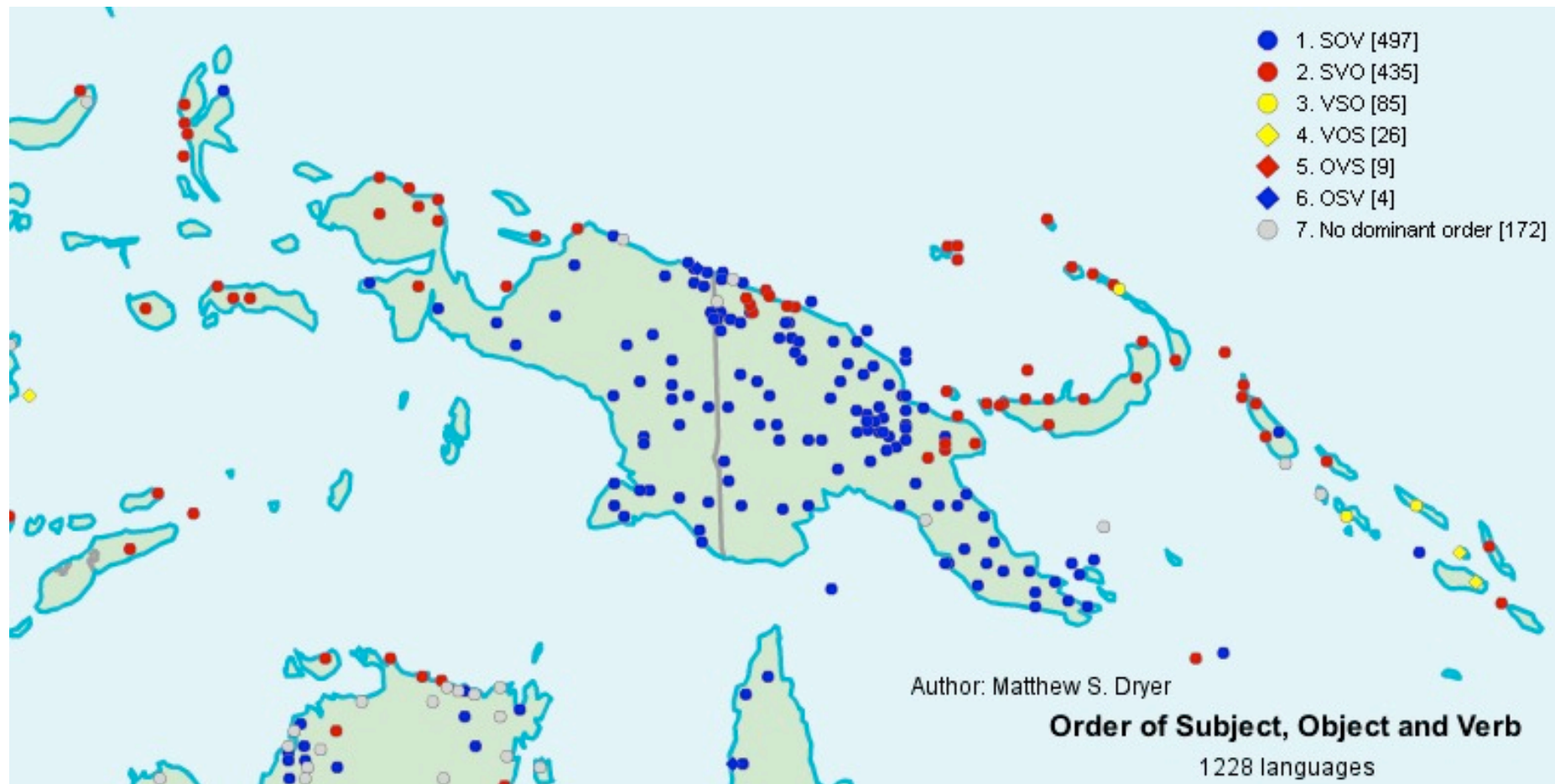
*Toto y-ahosi-ye kamara.*  
man 3>3-grab-REMPST jaguar  
O V S  
'The jaguar grabbed the man.'

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

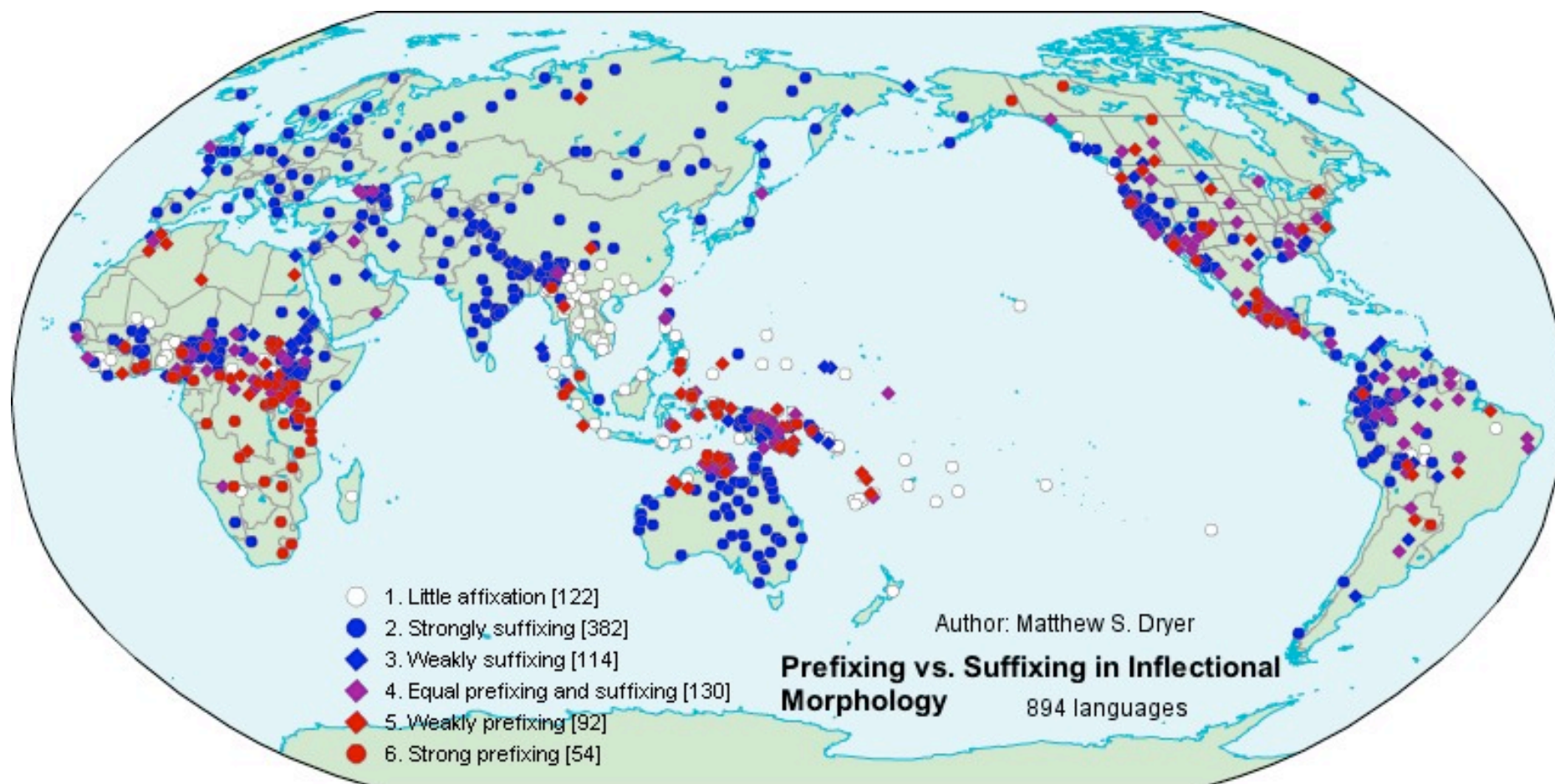
*Awad kalapéé hapúh.*  
jaguar child see.IND  
O S V  
'The child sees the jaguar.'

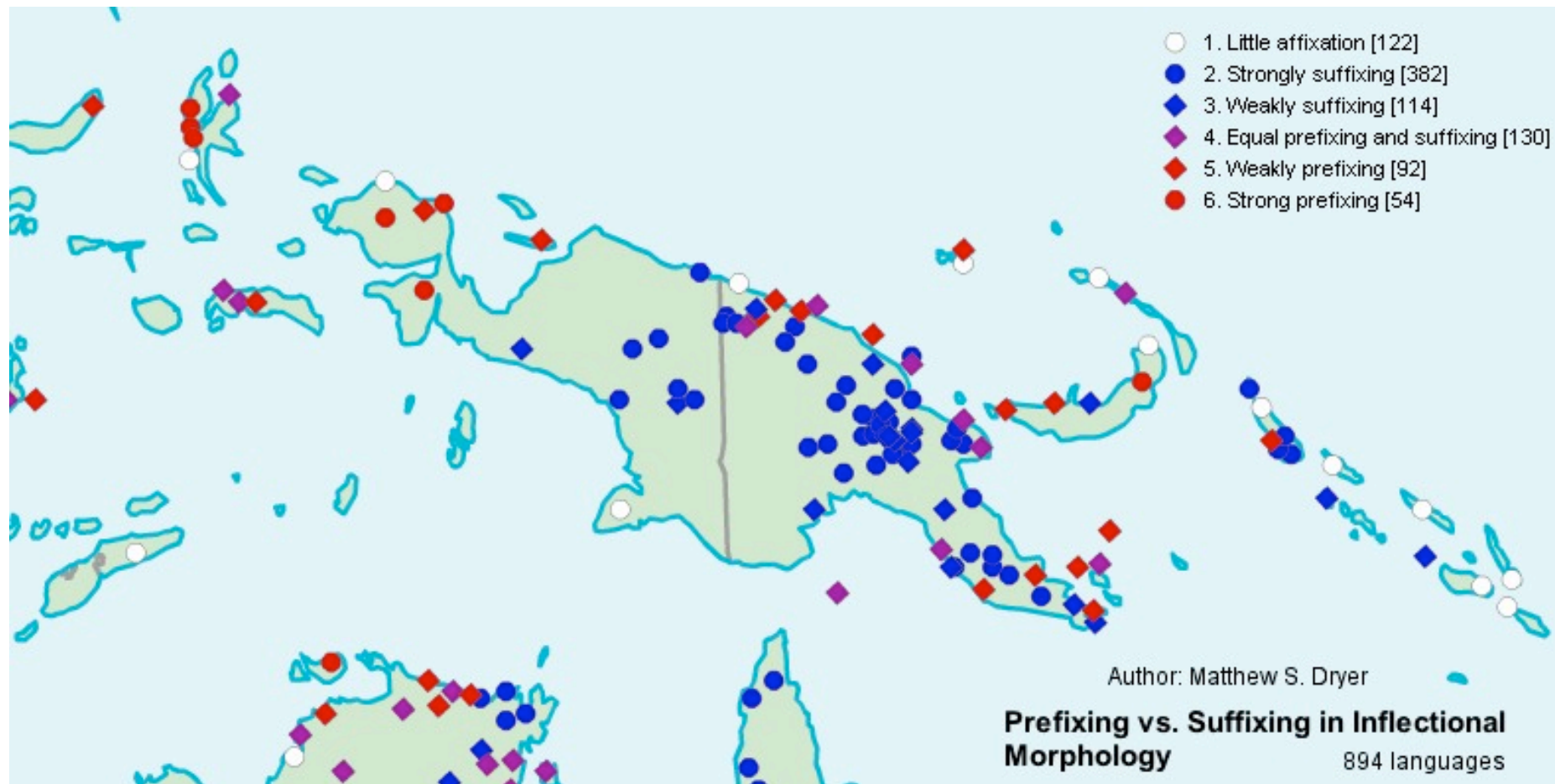
No dominant order









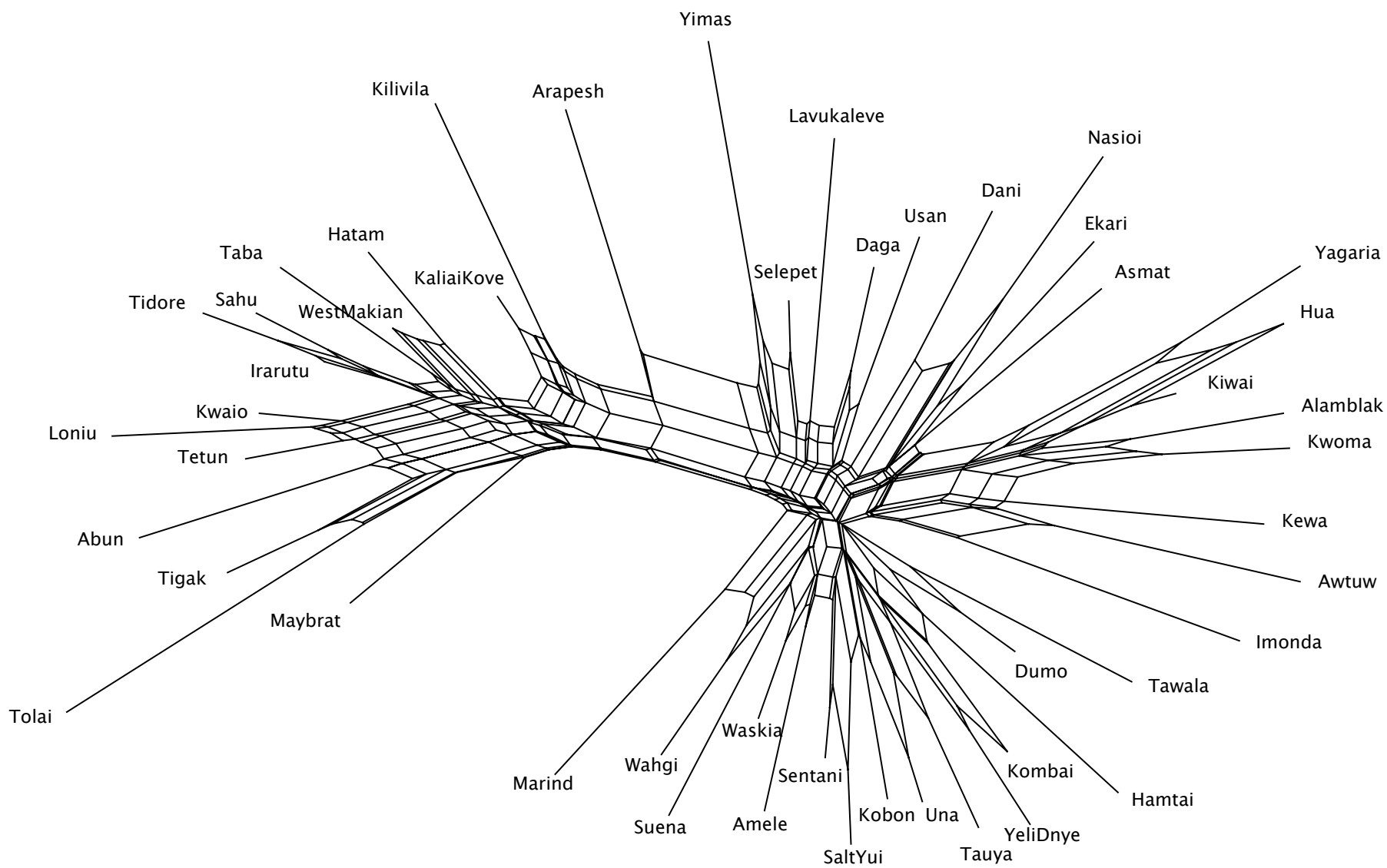




Comrie, Bernard & Michael Cysouw. 2012. New Guinea through the eyes of WALS. *Language and Linguistics in Melanesia* 30: 65–94.

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

NeighborNet



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)

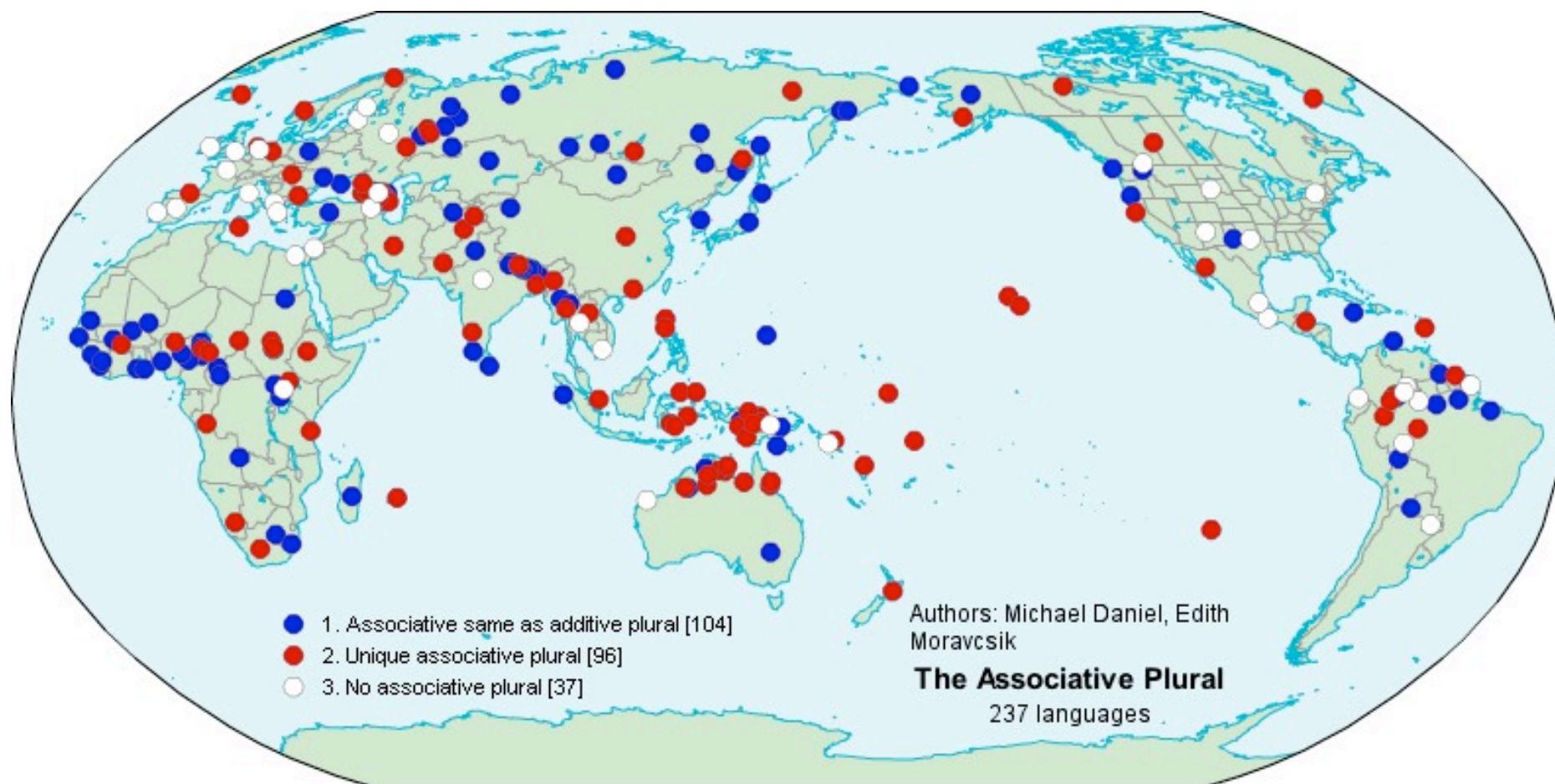
## Associative Plural

*Taroo-tati*

Taroo-PL

‘Taroo and his group’

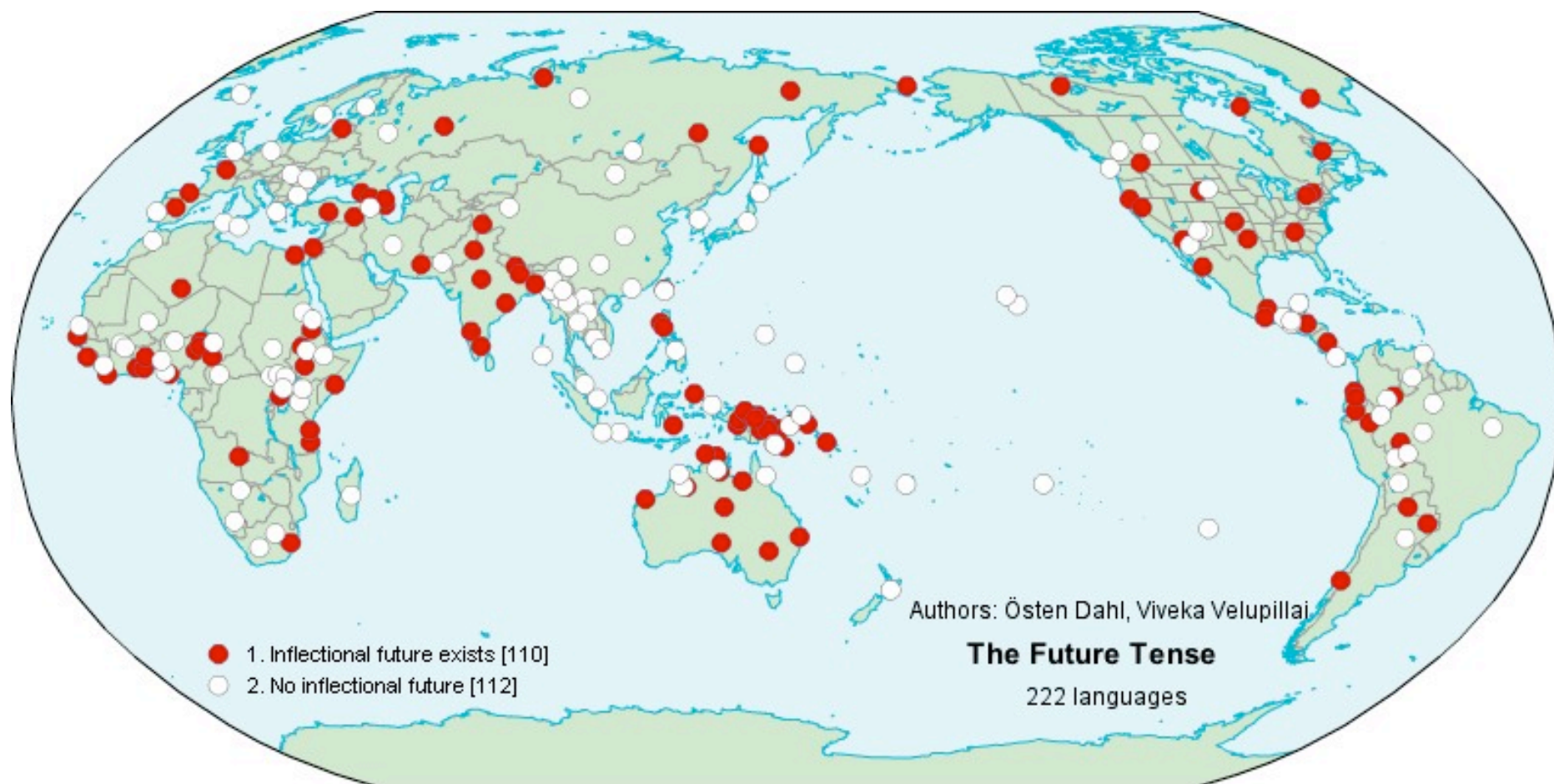
Japanese





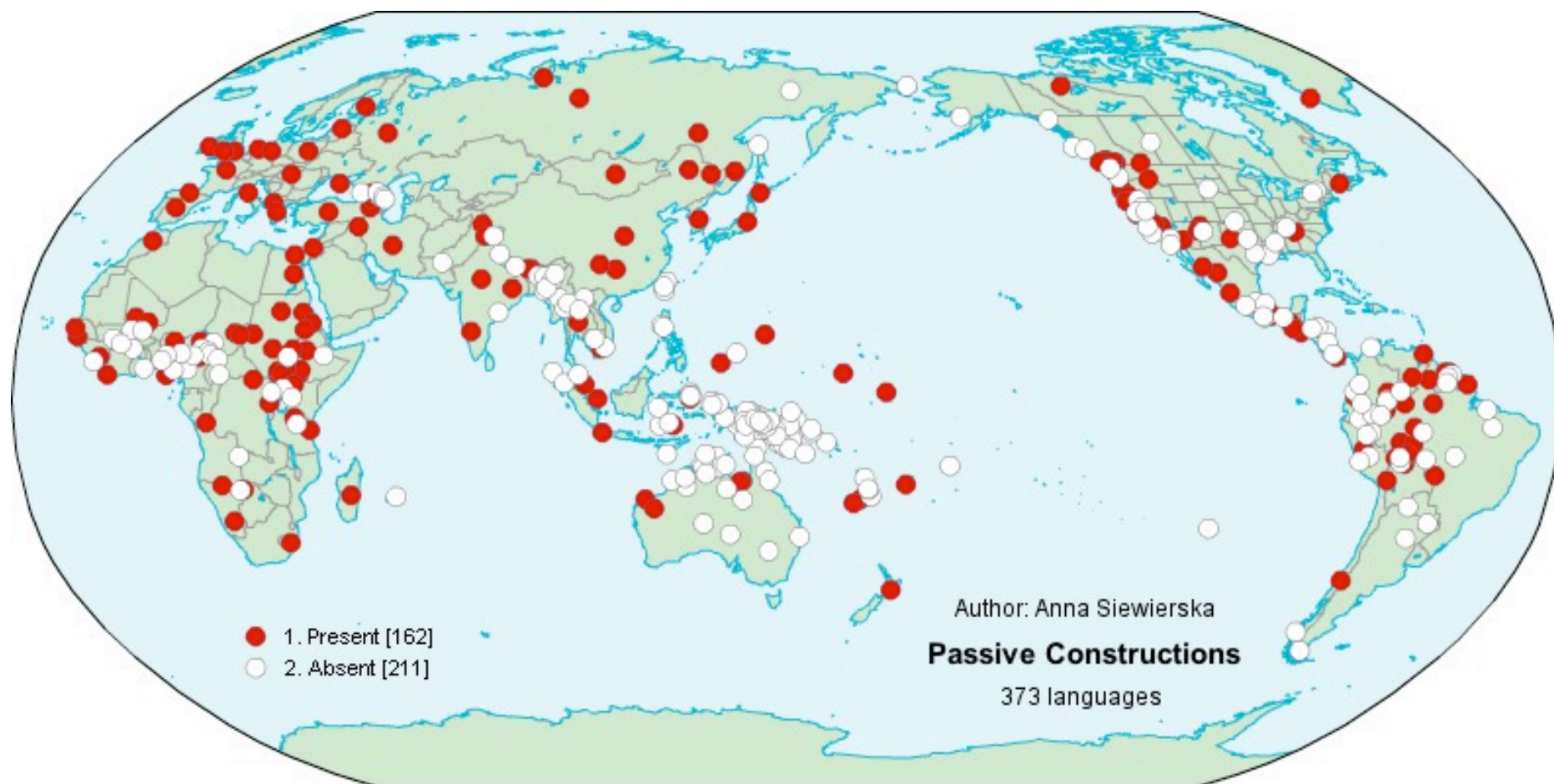
## Inflectional Future

Latin *amabo* 'I will love', from *amare* 'to love'











## 4.2. Study correlations between different features

*Head-final*

OV  
NpPo  
GenN

AdjN

*Head-initial*

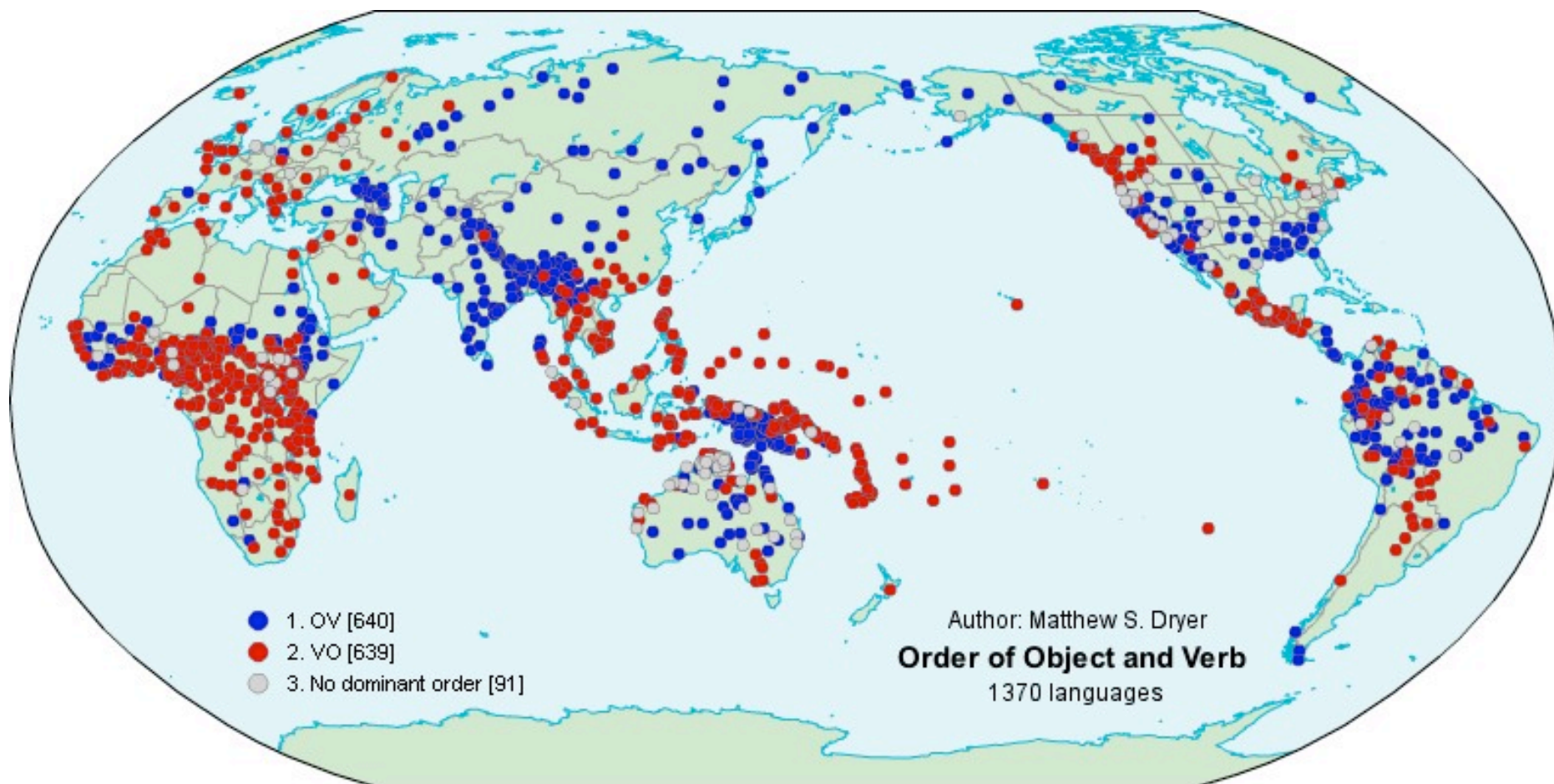
VO  
PrNp  
NGen

NAdj

verb phrase  
adpositional phrase  
noun phrase

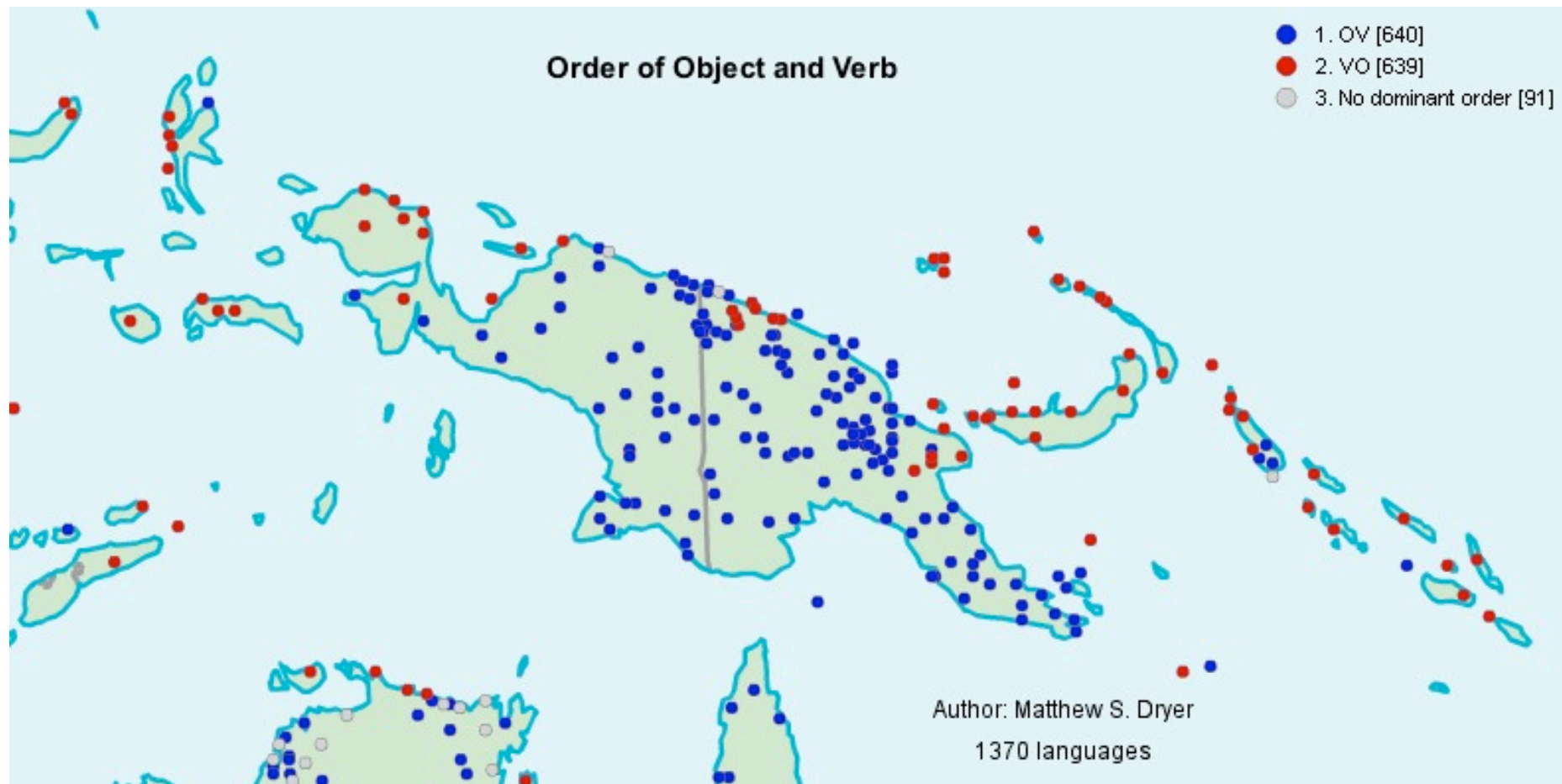
noun phrase

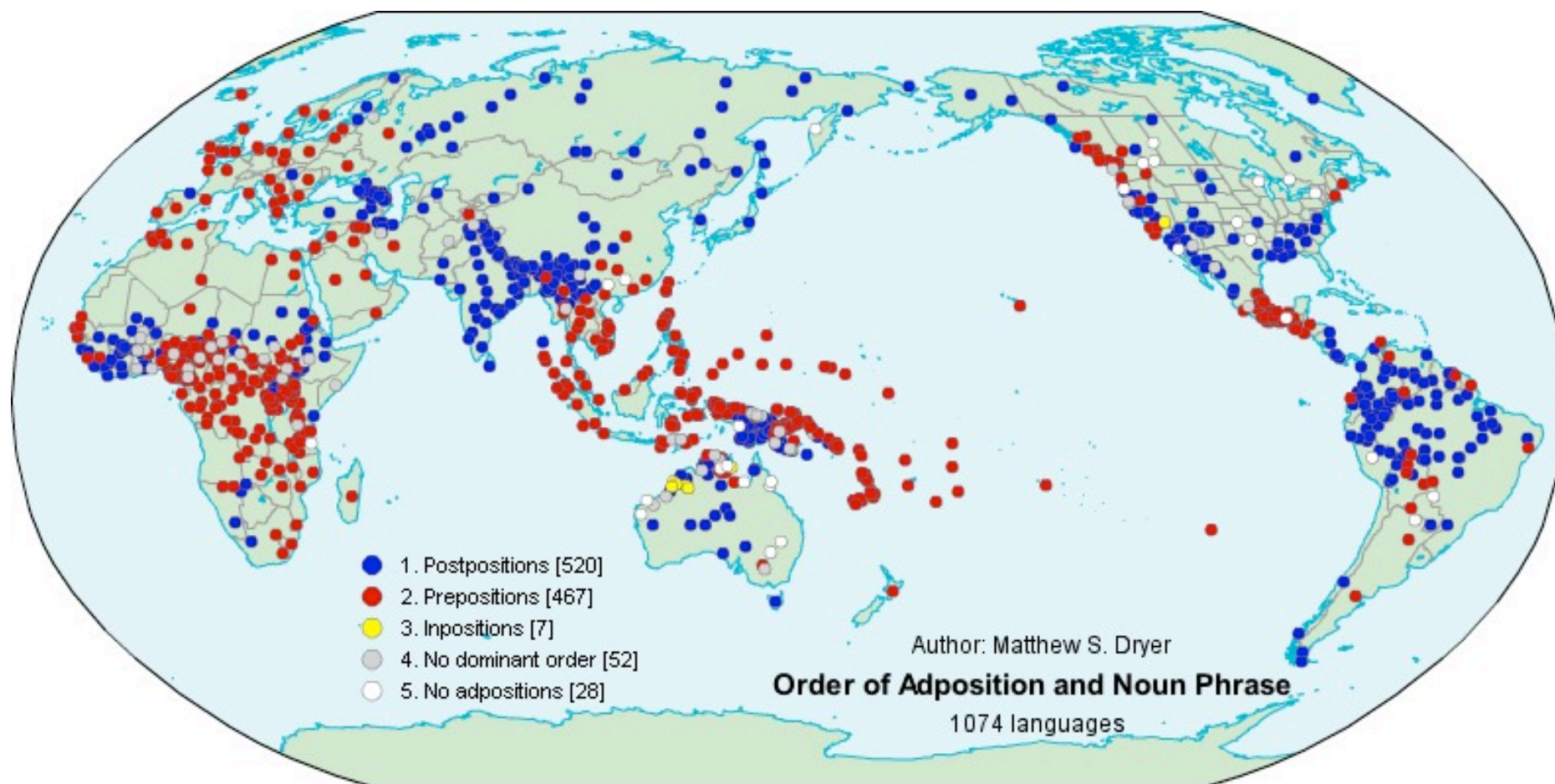




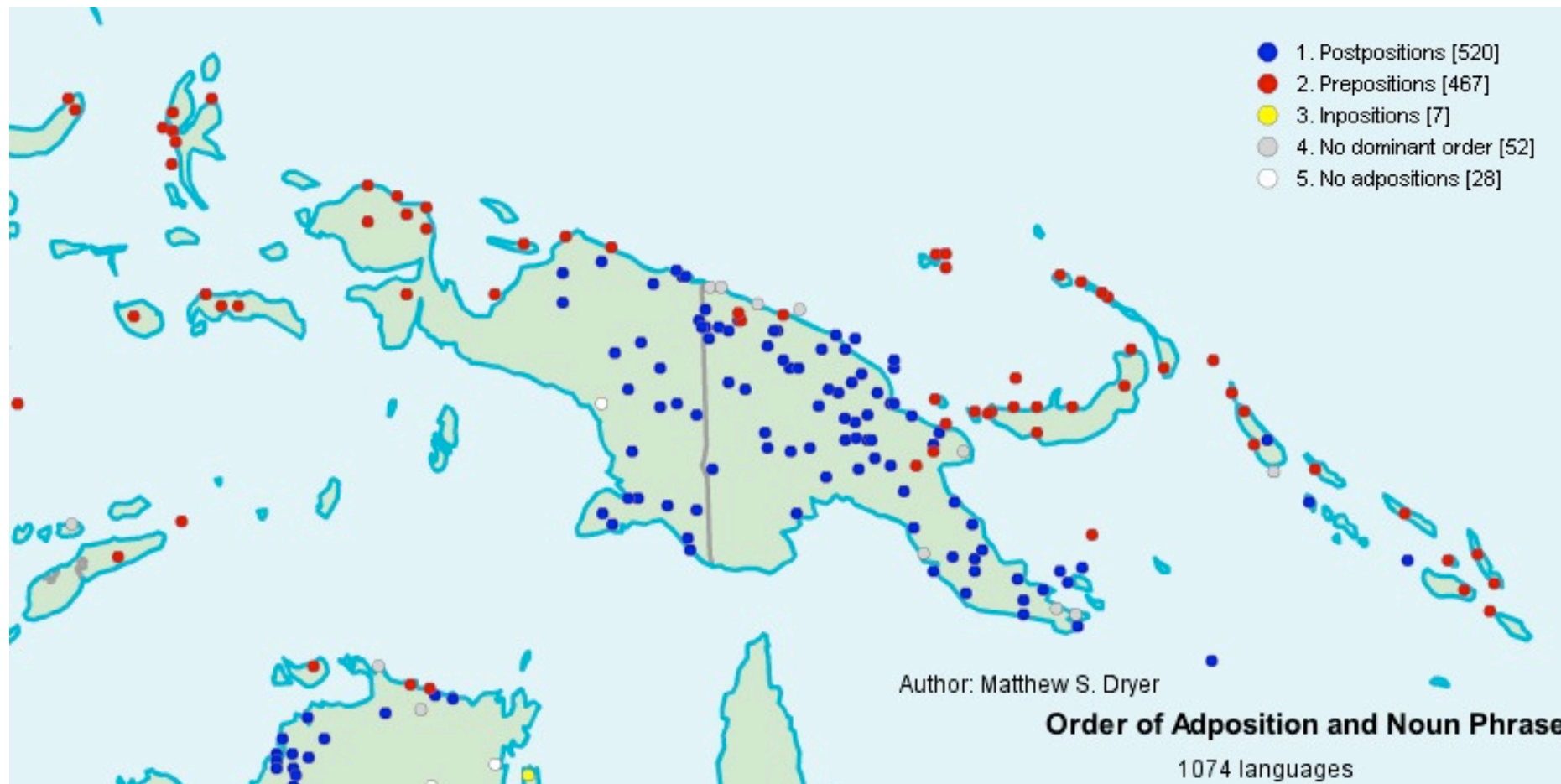
### Order of Object and Verb

- 1. OV [640]
- 2. VO [639]
- 3. No dominant order [91]

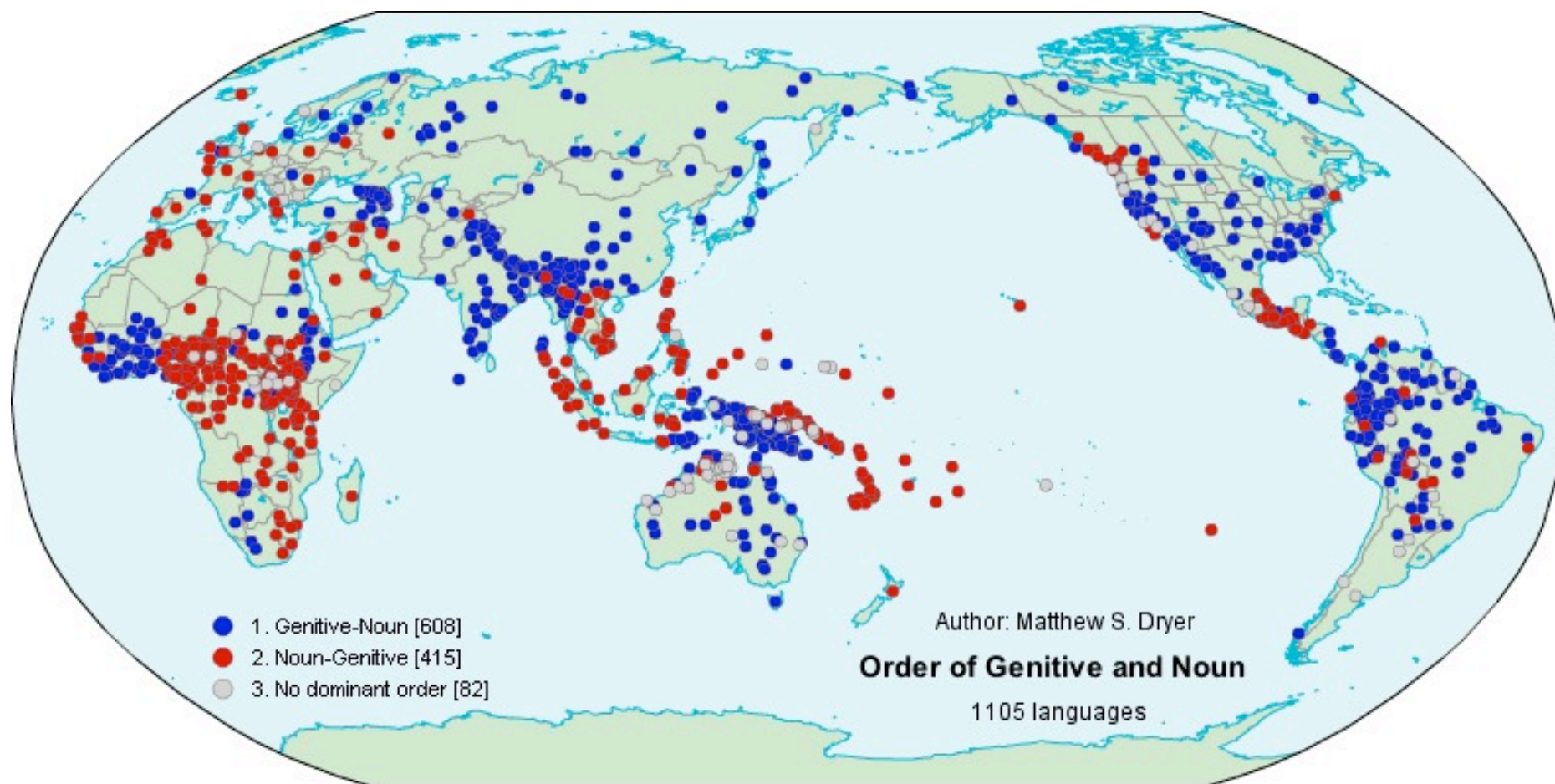


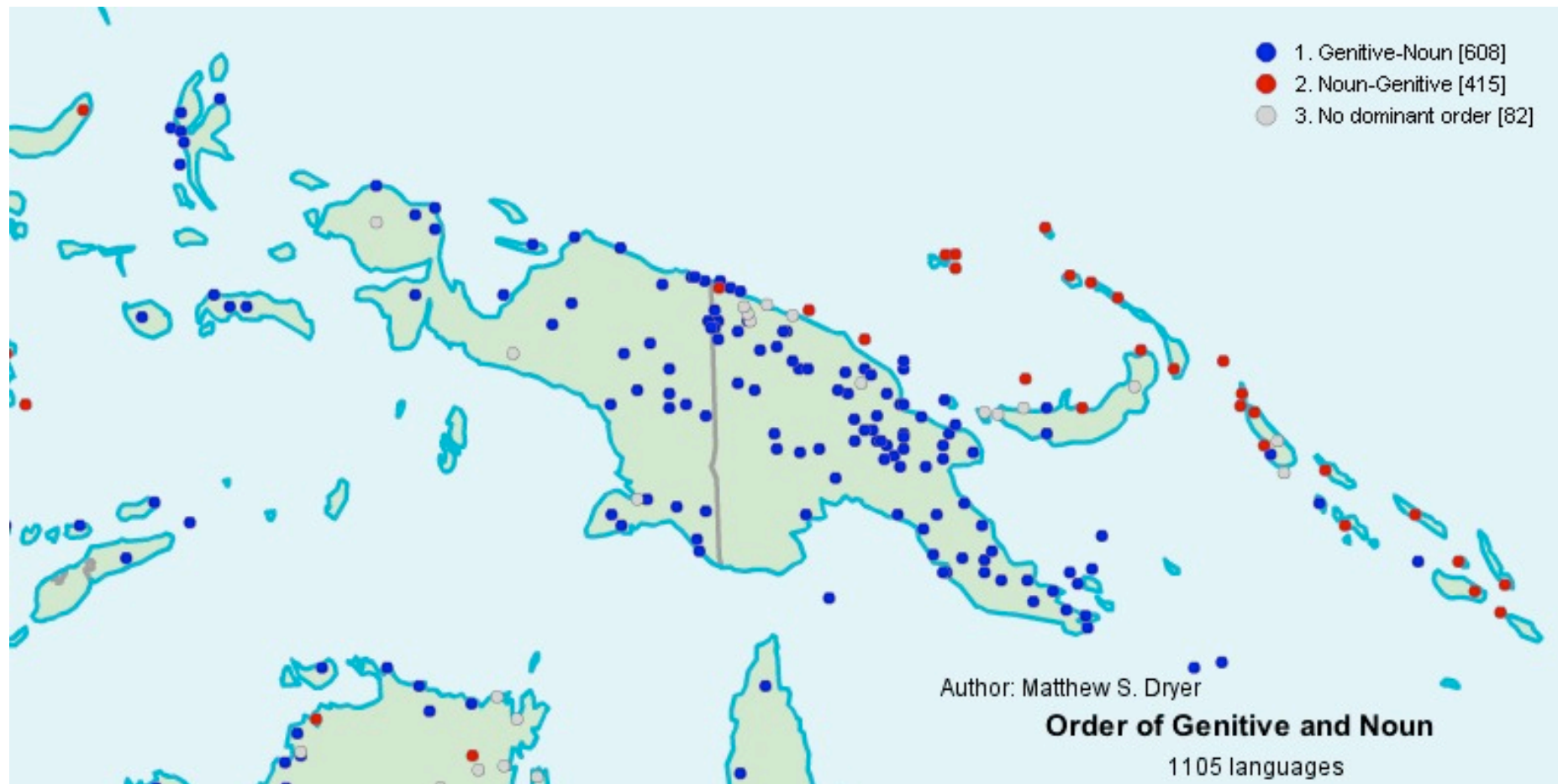


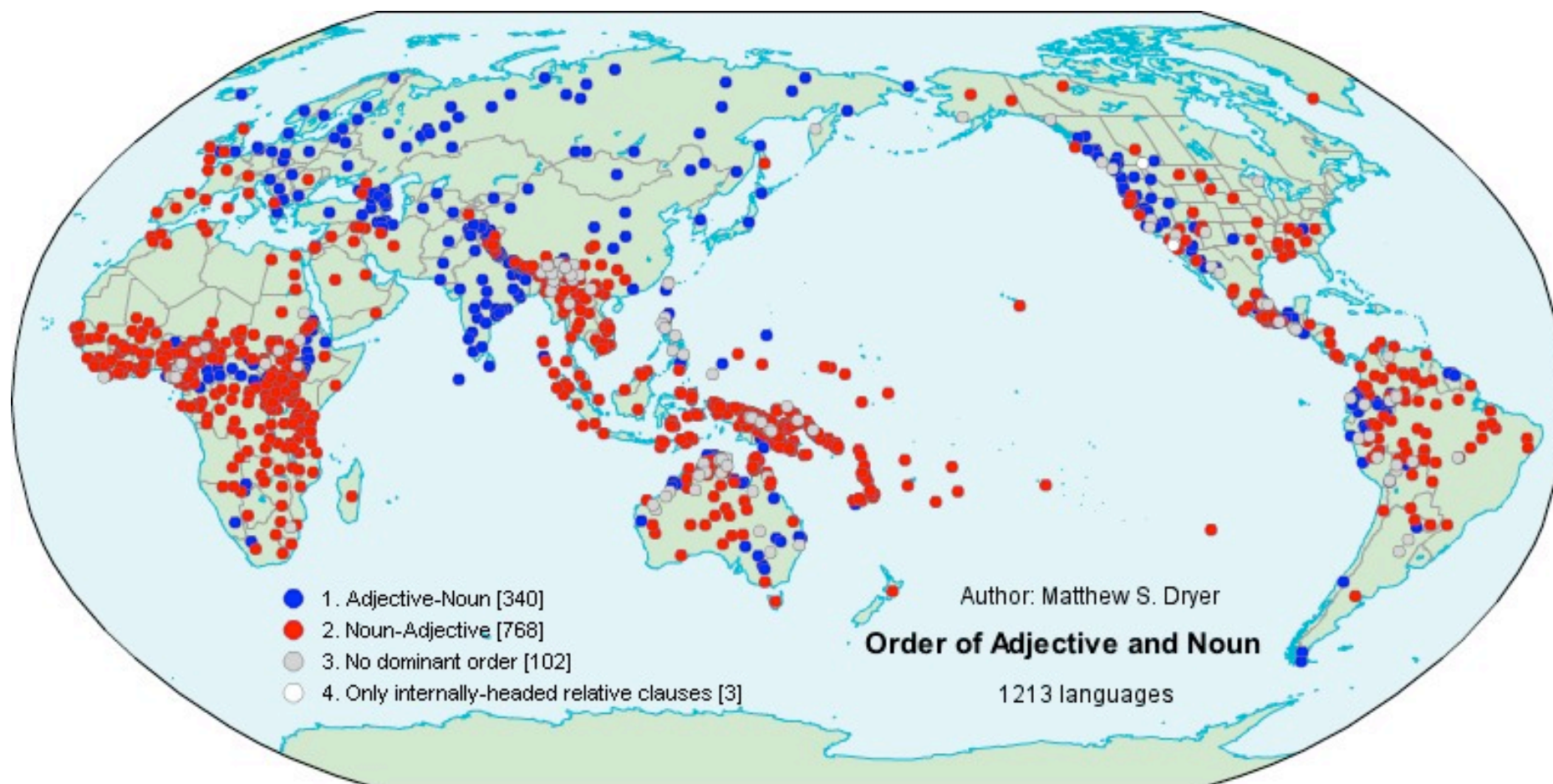




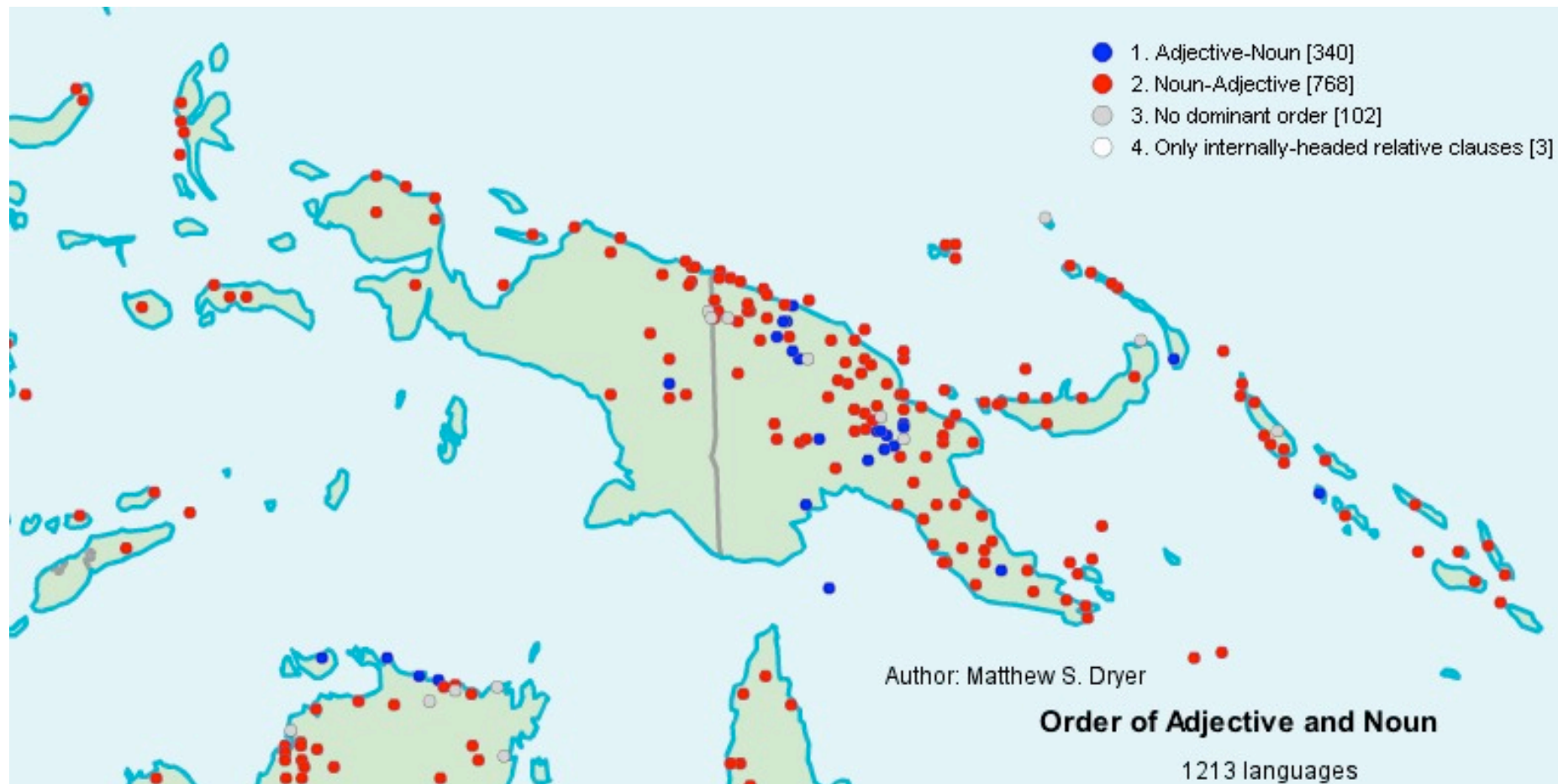


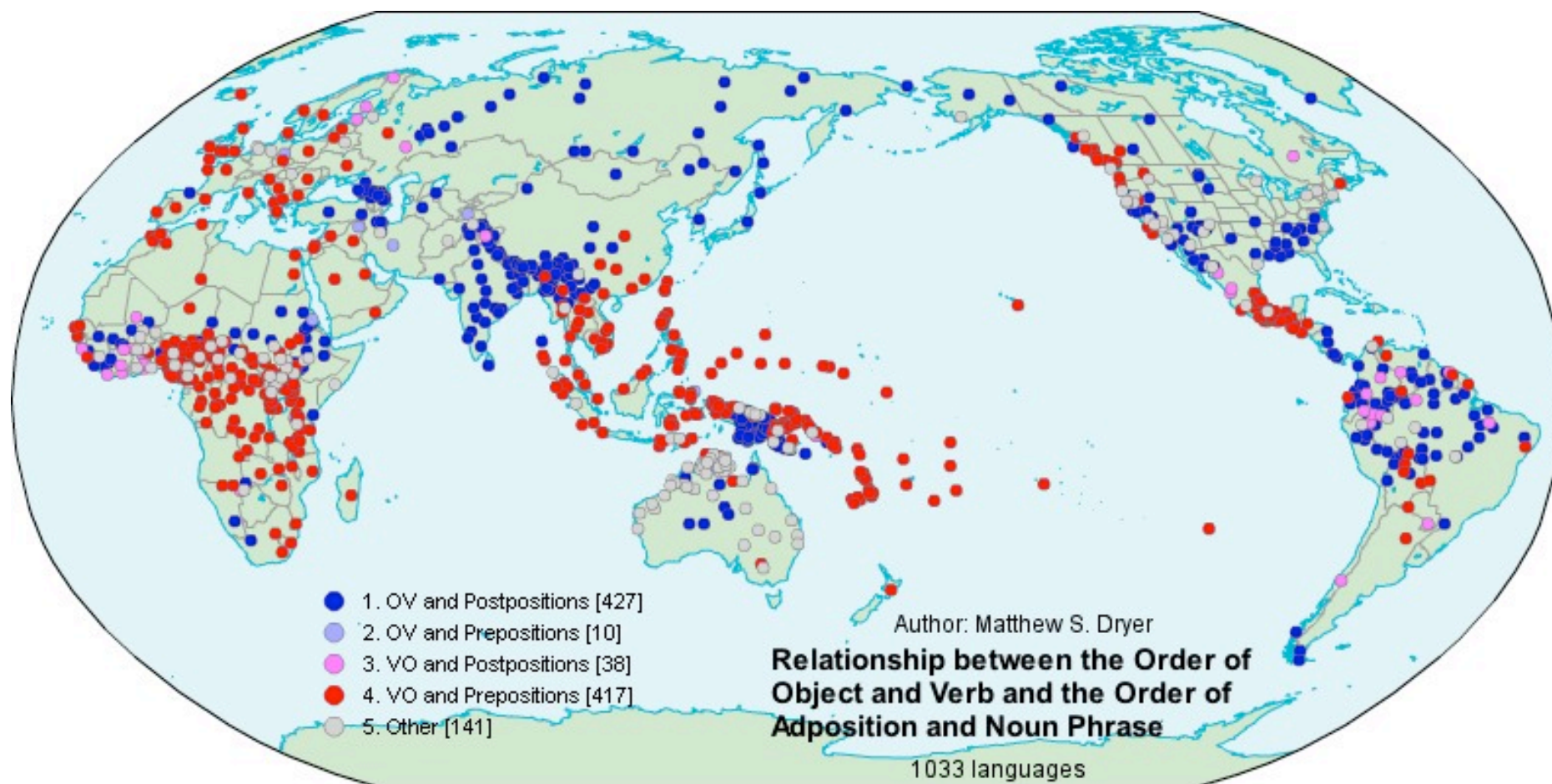






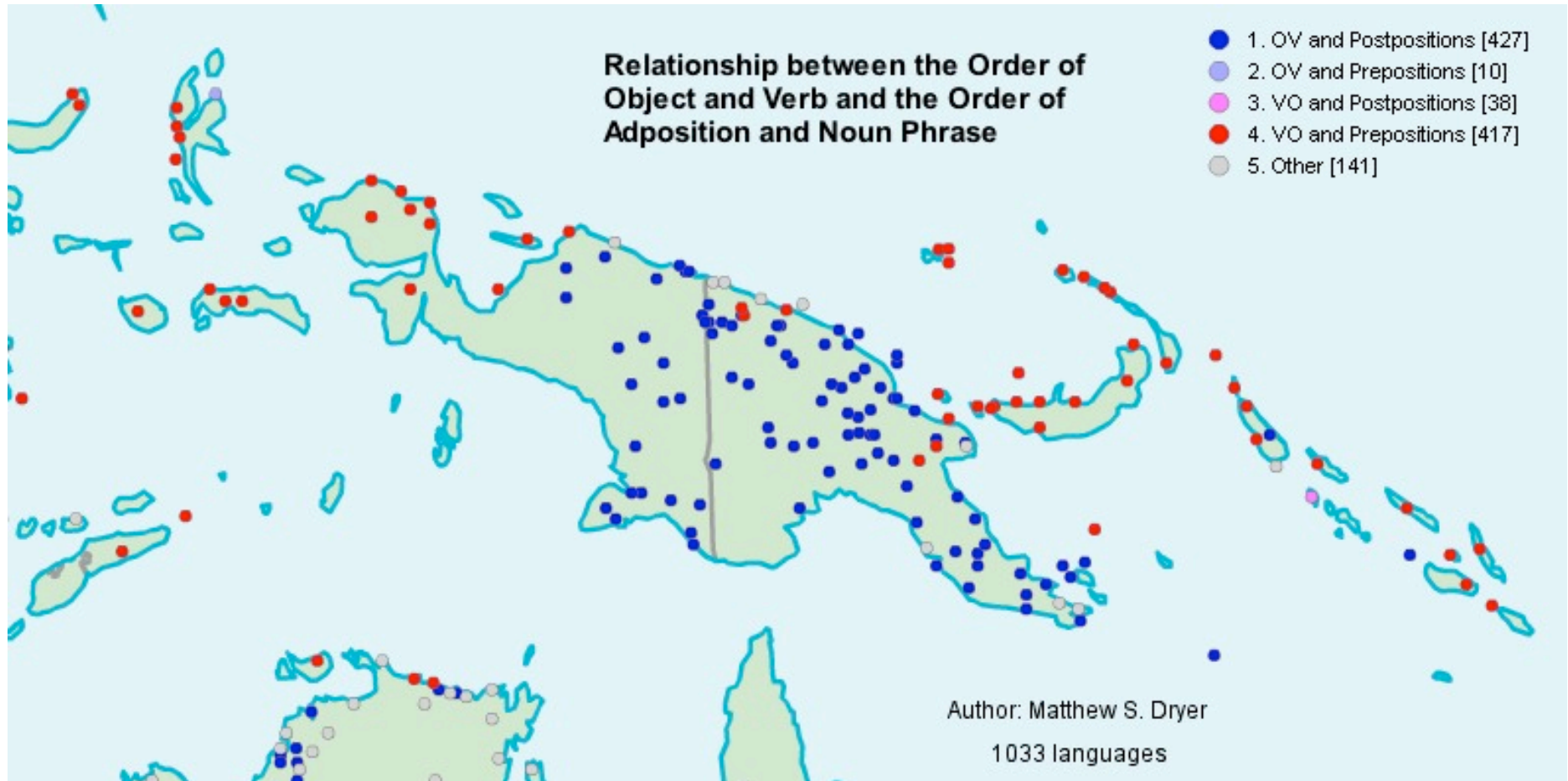






**Relationship between the Order of  
Object and Verb and the Order of  
Adposition and Noun Phrase**

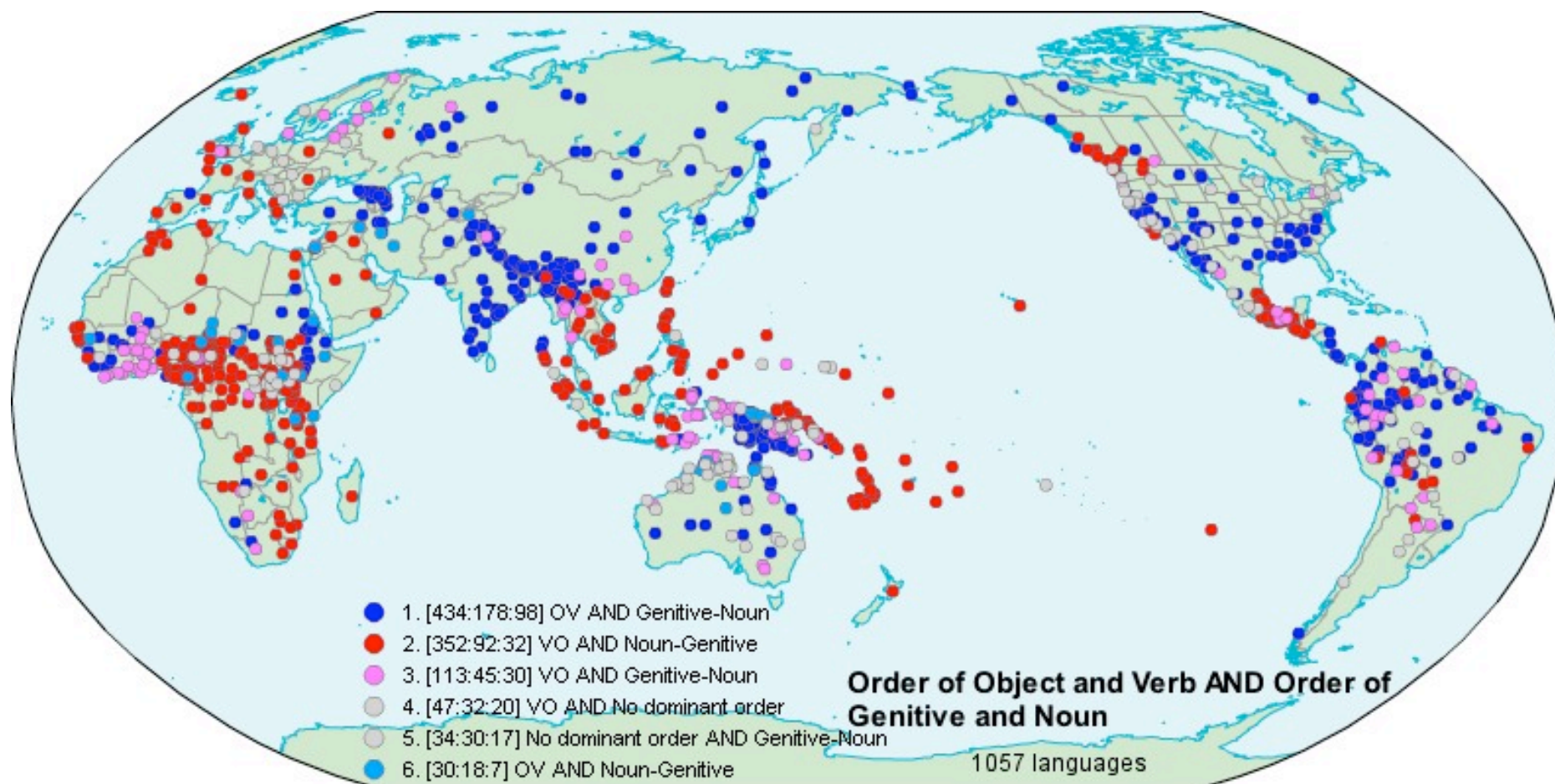
- 1. OV and Postpositions [427]
- 2. OV and Prepositions [10]
- 3. VO and Postpositions [38]
- 4. VO and Prepositions [417]
- 5. Other [141]



Author: Matthew S. Dryer

1033 languages

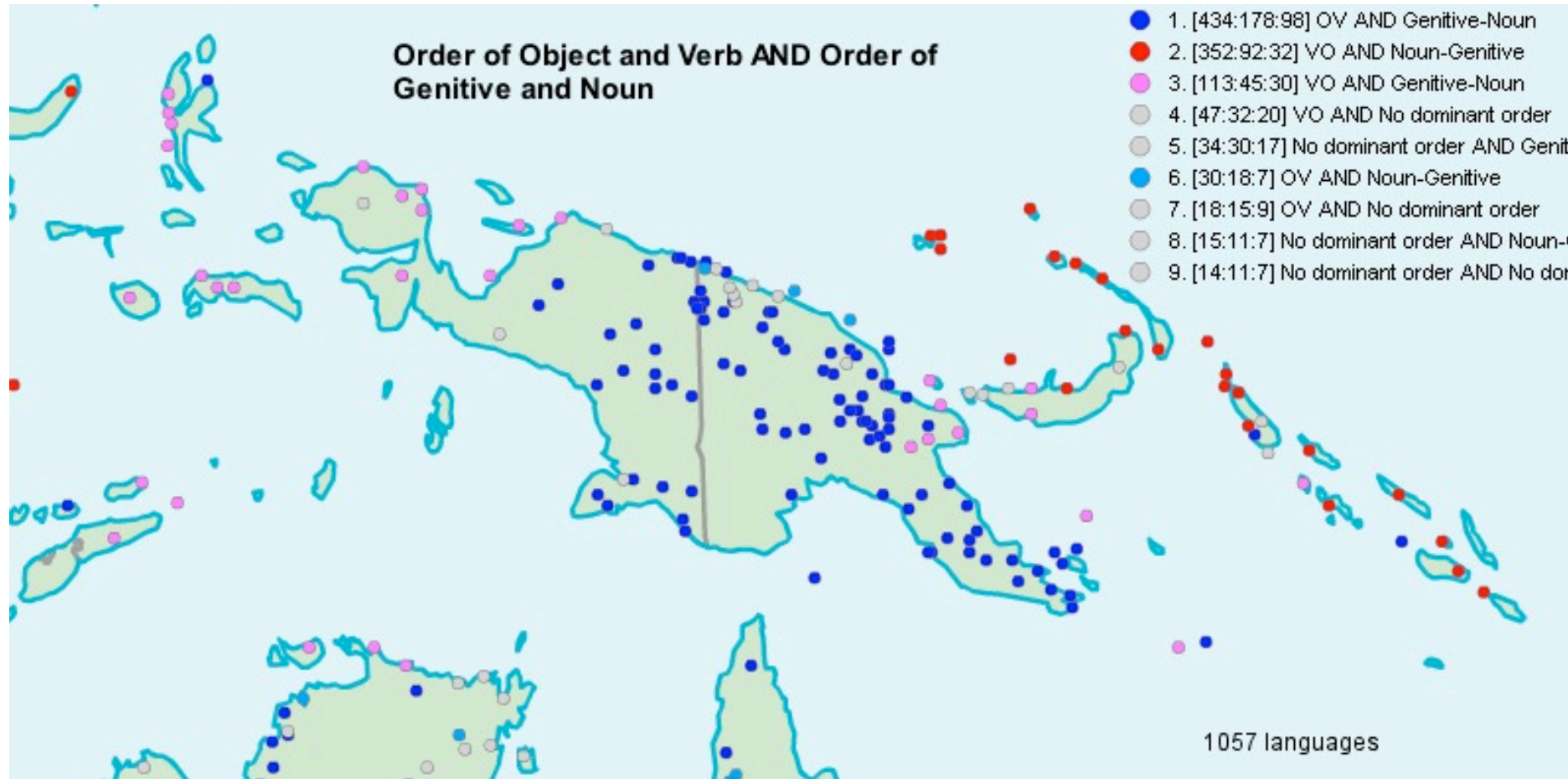


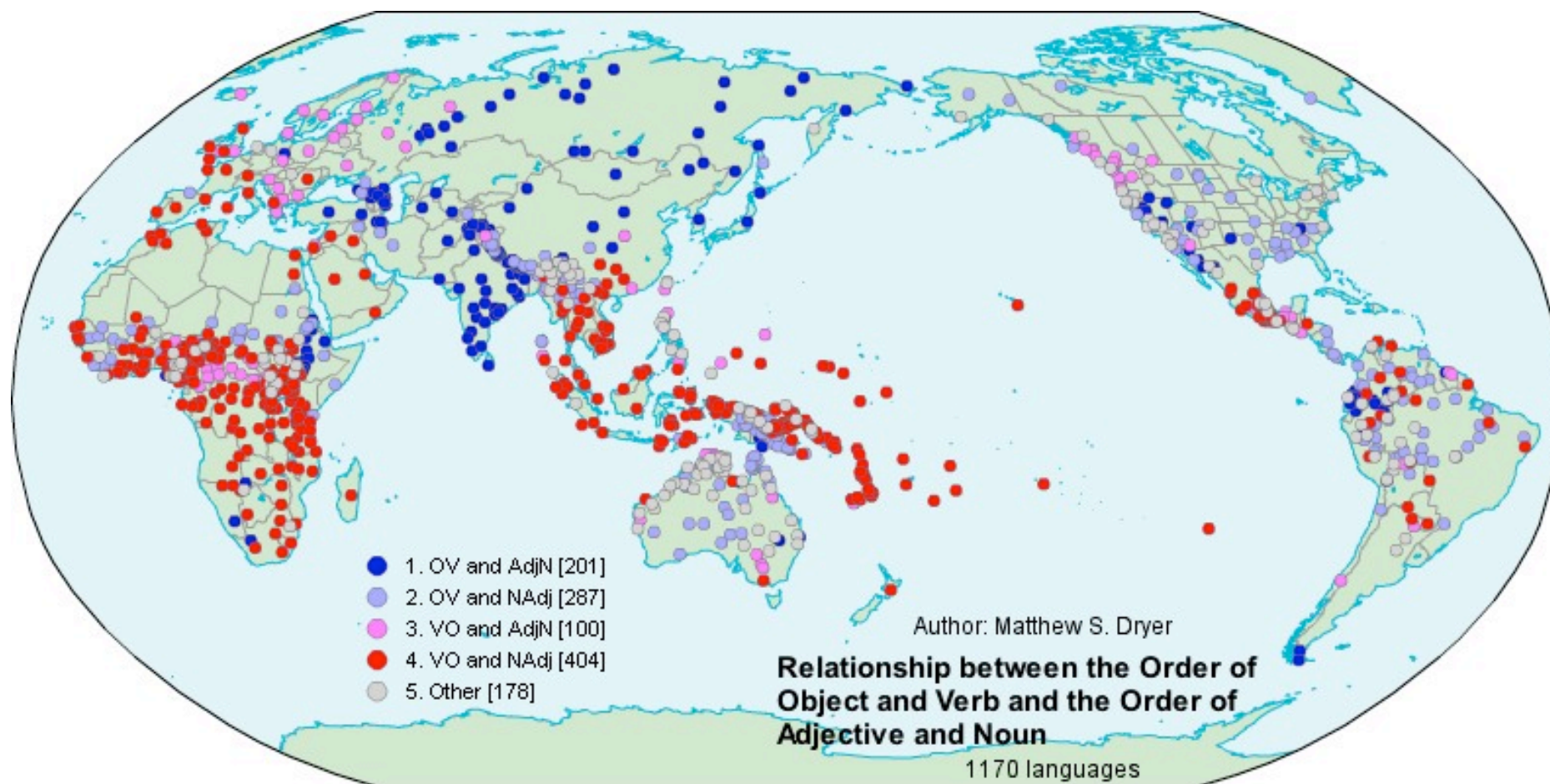




# Order of Object and Verb AND Order of Genitive and Noun

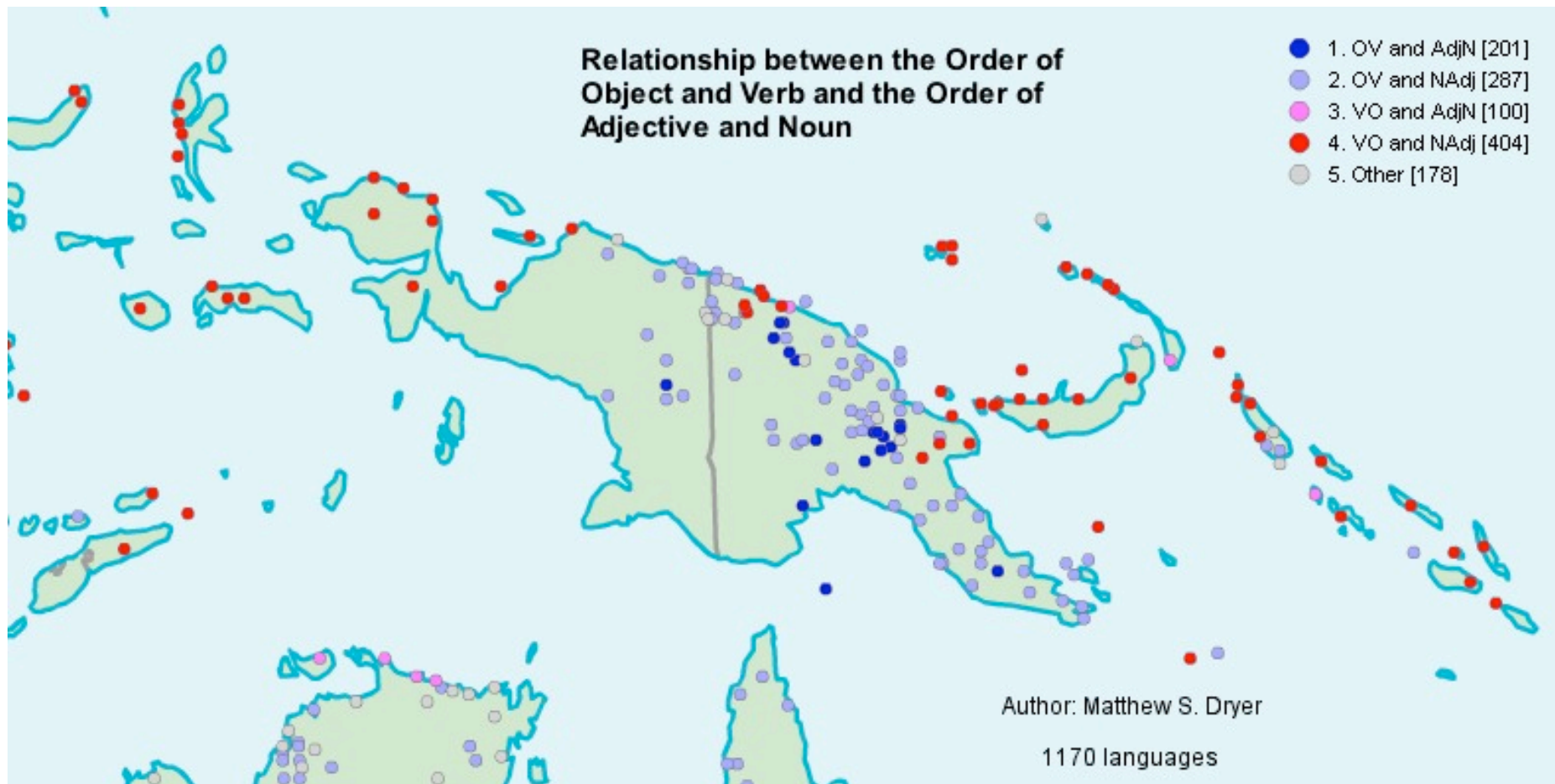
- 1. [434:178:98] OV AND Genitive-Noun
- 2. [352:92:32] VO AND Noun-Genitive
- 3. [113:45:30] VO AND Genitive-Noun
- 4. [47:32:20] VO AND No dominant order
- 5. [34:30:17] No dominant order AND Genit
- 6. [30:18:7] OV AND Noun-Genitive
- 7. [18:15:9] OV AND No dominant order
- 8. [15:11:7] No dominant order AND Noun-
- 9. [14:11:7] No dominant order AND No dor





**Relationship between the Order of  
Object and Verb and the Order of  
Adjective and Noun**

- 1. OV and AdjN [201]
- 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

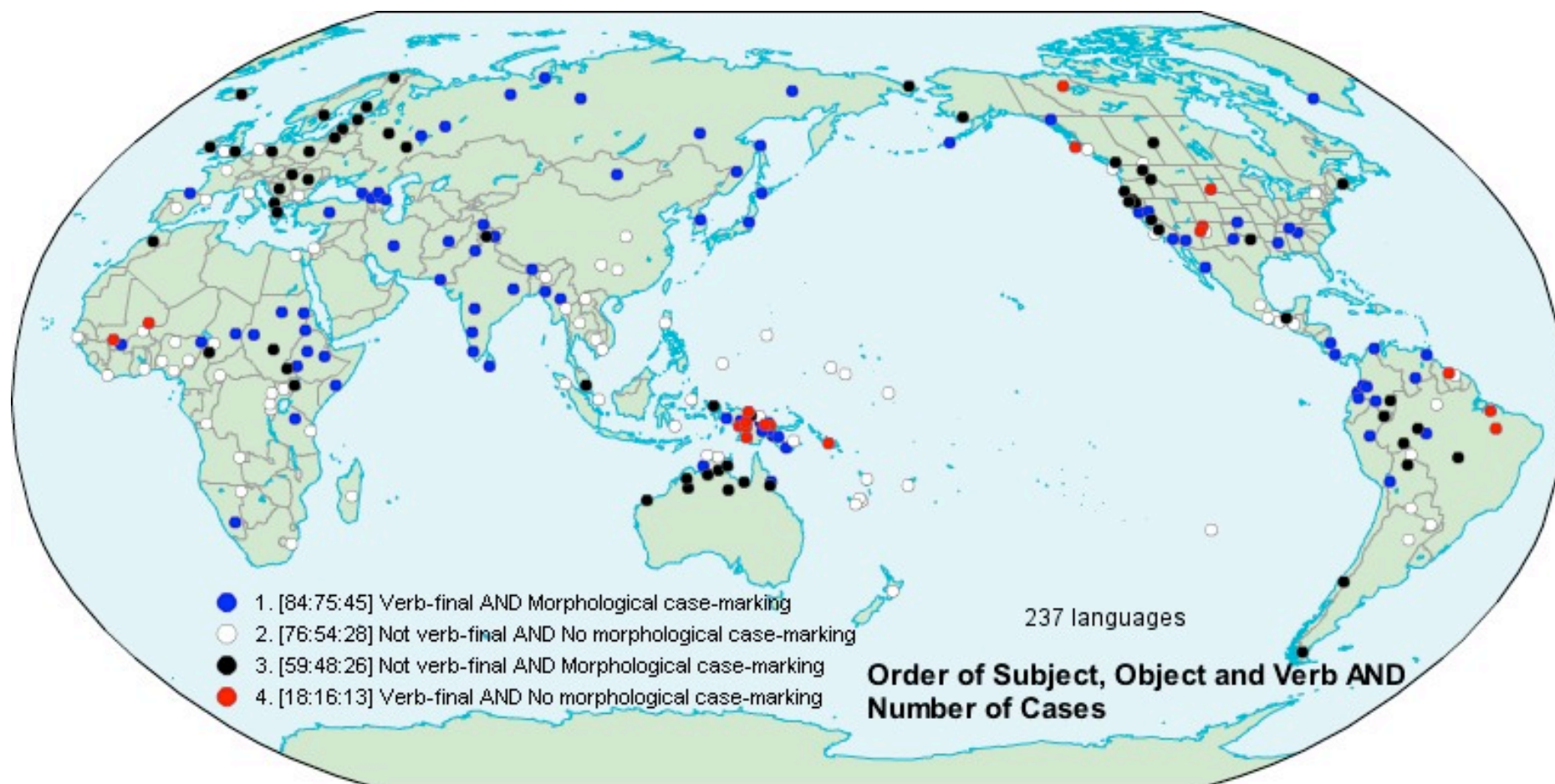
Greenberg, Joseph H. 1966 [1963]. Some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements, in J.H. Greenberg (ed.), *Universals of language*, 2 ed. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 73–113.

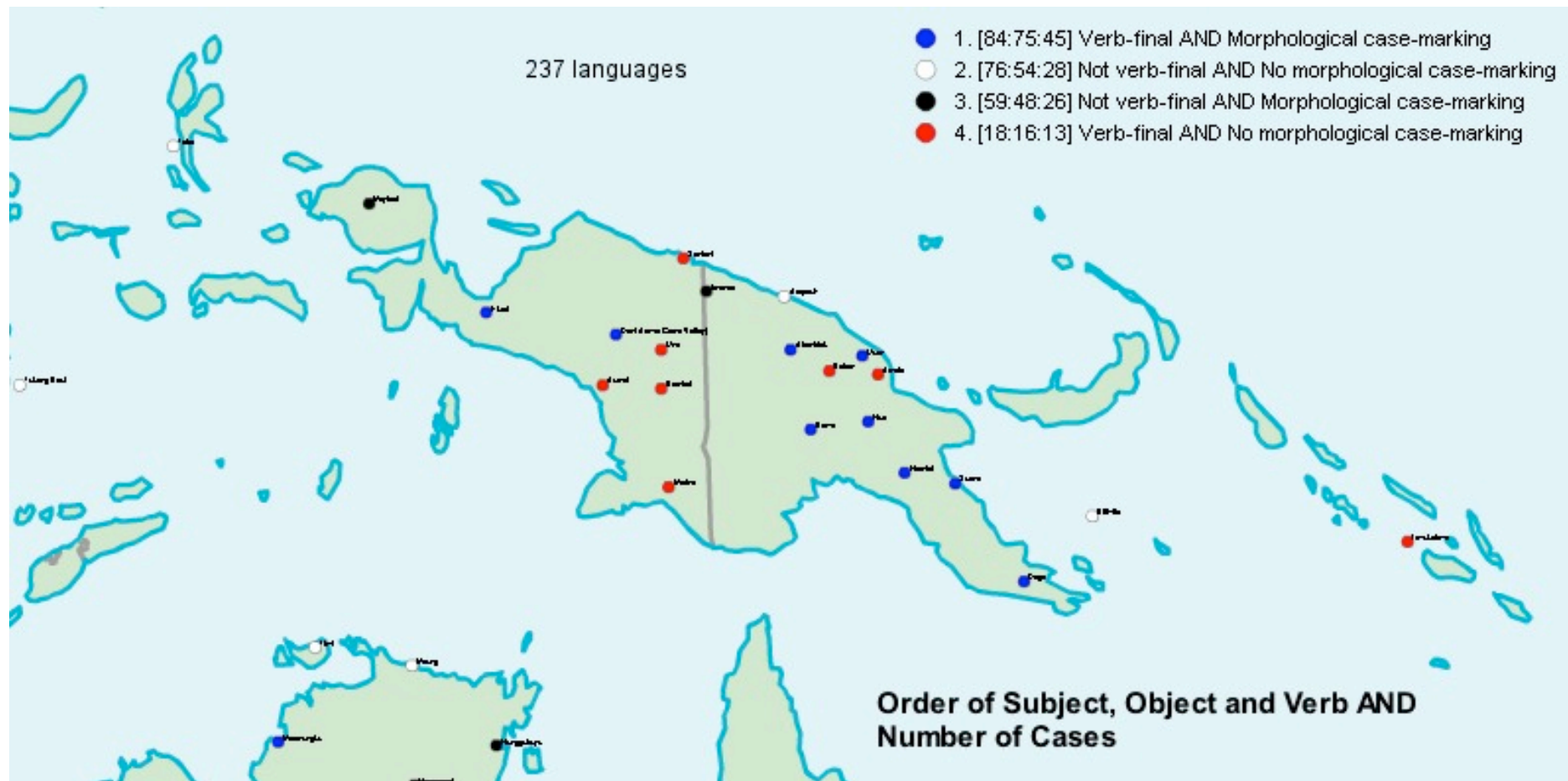
41. If in a language the verb follows both the nominal subject and nominal object as the dominant order, the language almost always has a case system.

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

Haruai

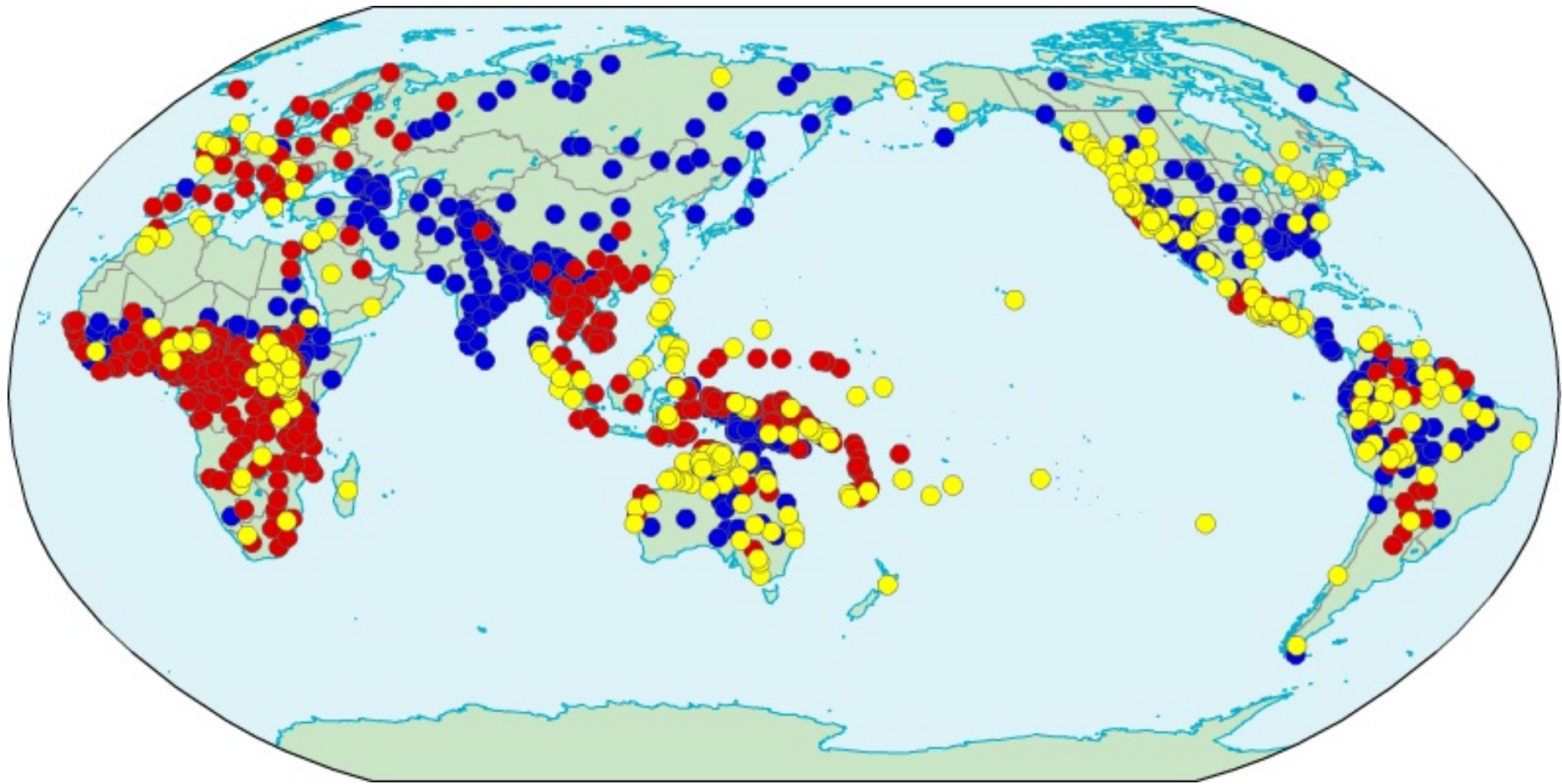






	Worldwide sample	New Guinea area sample
Number of languages	237	22
Verb-final without case	18	8
Percentage	7.6%	36.4%





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