

Verbal Morphology in Enggano and Nias

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APLL16, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1-3rd July 2024

Introduction

- This paper presents a comparison of verbal morphology in **Enggano** and **Nias**, both Barrier Island languages spoken off the south coast of Sumatra, Indonesia.
- Whilst Nias is generally recognised as Austronesian, the **status of Enggano** has long been a matter of debate (see e.g. Capell 1982, Blench 2014, Nothofer 1986, Edwards 2015, Smith 2017, 2020, Billings & McDonnell 2024)
- Most now agree that **regular sound correspondences** do support the inclusion of Enggano in the Austronesian family (see e.g. Nothofer 1986, Edwards 2015, Smith 2017, Billings & McDonnell 2024).

Introduction

- In this paper, I will use **typological comparison** to argue for the same conclusion: namely that Enggano should be included in the Austronesian family
- Specifically, I will show that there are striking parallels in the **verbal morphology** of Enggano and Nias, and that differences can be largely explained through processes of historical change in the functions of different constructions.

Roadmap

- Enggano Verbal Morphology
- Nias Verbal Morphology
- Historical Developments in Enggano
- Conclusions



Enggano Verbal Morphology

Background on Enggano



- Enggano is spoken by approx. **1,500 speakers** on Enggano Island, Sumatra, Indonesia
- The language today is considered **endangered** as speakers increasingly shift to Indonesian

Background on Enggano

1850-1900	Early Wordlists	Von Rosenberg 1855, Van der Straaten & Severijn 1855, Walland 1864, Oudemans 1879 Helfrich & Pieters 1891, Helfrich 1893, 1916
1930s	Hans Kähler	Grammar Sketch (Kähler 1940) Text Collection (Kähler 1955, 1957, 1958, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1964, 1975) Dictionary (Kähler 1987, published posthumously)
1980s-2020s	Recent Work	Nothofer (1986), Nikelas et al (1994), Yoder (2011) Wijaya (2018), Butters (2021), Riswari et al (2021)
2018-present	AHRC-funded documentation project	Corpus of audio and video recordings (Meok) Swadesh lists from across the villages Grammar, FLEX database of glossed texts and lexicon

Verbal Constructions in Old Enggano

- In Old Enggano, verbs occur in one of **three forms**:

- (1a) ka e'anaha **ka-bu-pua=ha** e-kaka kaha:i'i e-huda **bu-form**
 then 3-**bu**-see-EMPH DIR-person one DIR-woman
 'then he saw a woman' (Kähler 1957, 5.9)
- (1b) e-kaka e'ana kea-ba'a **i-pua** 'ua **bare form**
 DIR-person DEM NEG-INTENSIVE 3-see 1SG
 'As for that person, he didn't see me' (Kähler 1940, 17.6)
- (1c) kia **ki-pua** 'ano=nia **ki-form**
 3SG KI-see friend=3SG.POSS
 'He sees his friend.' (Kähler 1940, 53.6)

Verbal Constructions in Old Enggano

- This applies equally for **intransitive verbs**:

- (2a) pahumānã **ka-b-Edo**, *bu-* form
morning 3SG-BU-cry
'In the morning, it cries' (Kähler 1958, 21.2)
- (2b) kEo-ba'a **y-Edo** bare form
NEG-EMPH 3-cry
'He is not crying' (Kähler 1940 Grammar, 15.48)
- (2c) 'o'o **k-Edo** *ki-* form
2SG KI-cry
'You cry' (Kähler 1940 Grammar, 36.6)

Verbal Constructions in Contemporary Enggano

- The same three constructions are still found in Contemporary Enggano:

(3a) **ka**-bu-pü y-a'u dop ean
 3-BU-see nmlz-good land dem
 'We can see how beautiful the land is' (Bakblau, 22.1)

(3b) Selus ke' **i**-pü Maria
 Selus NEG 3-see Maria
 'Selus didn't see Maria' (Basic Structures, 745.1)

(3c) Selus **ki**-pü Maria
 3SG KI-see Maria
 'Selus saw Maria' (Basic Structures, 746.1)

Major Changes:

- Loss of final vowels
- Loss of case marking

Person Marking in Enggano

- Enggano has free pronouns and two sets of person markers:

	Free pronouns	Set 1 (with bu-)	Set 2 (with bare)
1SG	'ua	'u-	'u-
2SG	'o'o	'o-	u-
3SG	kia	ka-	i-
1PL.INCL	ika	ka-	ka-
1PL.EXCL	ai	'u- -'ai	'u- -'ai
2PL	aduu	'o- -a'a	u- -a'a
3PL	ki	da-/di-/ki-	da-

The bu- form

- The *bu-* form occurs in **verb-initial main clauses** together with SET 1 person markers that agree with S/A:

(4a) **Transitive**

ka-bu-pəa=da'a

3-BU-see=EMPH

e-dahao-dia

DIR-niece-3s.GEN

e-ka'a:i'io

DIR=spear

'His niece saw the spear' (Kähler 1975:62)

(4b) **Intransitive**

ka-bu-puaka=ha

3-BU-depart=PRE D

ka-kakina'ama

PL-elder

'So the elders went off' (Kähler 1975:56)

Accusative Alignment

The bu- form

- The constructions are typically used on contexts where the subject is a **continuing discourse topic**:

Context: a woman comes back from the dead to feed her children but eventually the father becomes suspicious and hides in wait to find out where the food is coming from and discovers his wife:

(5)	ka e'anaha	ka-bu-kEi=xa	honã=nĩã	e'ana
	then	3-BU-catch=EMPH	wife=3SG.POSS	DEM

'Then he grabbed his wife' (Kähler 1957: 9.4)

The bu- form

- They can even be used in contexts where both A and P are highly given:

Context: Then they stumbled across the plantation of those people. The bananas, which had fallen down, remained lying on the edge of the fence.

- (6) kE'anaha ki-mũ-nã'ã=hã ki-mũ-nõõ=hã.
 then 3PL-BU-take=EMPH 3PL-BU-eat=EMPH
 'Thus they took and ate them. (Kähler 1958: 38.3-38.5)

The *bu-* form

- The *bu-* forms are the **most frequent** in narrative discourse as shown from the following counts in Kähler 1955:

bu-	bare	ki-	Total
118 (c. 50%)	70 (c. 30%)	48 (c. 20%)	240

- Hence, we might think of the *bu-* form as the **basic realis construction**.

The bare form

- The **bare form** also occurs in verb-initial clauses together with SET 2 person markers that agree with S/A – primarily following **negation**:

(7a) Transitive

kau=pe **i-paka'aua'a** ka=po'inamo e=puaha u=kaka e'ana
 NEG=yet 3-know PL-maiden DIR=lookOBL=person that
 'The maidens didn't know yet the appearance of the person.'
 (Kähler 1940:103)

(7b) Intransitive

ka keaba'a **y-a'u'ua** e=kidei-da e'ana
 and NEG 3-good DIR=belly-3s.GEN that
 'They did not agree' [lit. 'their belly was not good']
 (Kähler 1975:54)

Accusative Alignment

The bare form

- **Bare verb** constructions also appear in **consecutive/purposive** clauses, typically together with the derivational marker *aba-*:

(8a) **Transitive**

ka-b-ai-xa ama ka-pae e'ana [y-aba-pua ki]
 3-BU-come-EMPH father PL-child DEM 3-CNS-see 3PL

'The father of the children came, in order to see them' (Kähler 1957: 154)

(8b) **Intransitive**

ka-b-ahae-ha [y-aba-kiu-ha i-tita]
 3-BU-go-EMPH 3-CNS-hide-EMPH LOC-there

'It₁ went there and sought shelter there' (Kähler 1955: 90)

Accusative Alignment



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Mid-summary

bu- verbs	Set 1 agreement with S/A [accusative alignment]	basic main clauses
bare verbs	Set 2 agreement with S/A [accusative alignment]	negated clauses consecutive/purposive clauses

The *bu-* and bare form

In **subordinate clauses** headed by *a*= ‘when, if’ and *be* ‘because’, **transitive** verbs are expressed as **bare verbs + Set 2** person markers, whilst **intransitive** verbs take the **prefix *bu-*** without person-marking:

(9a) **Transitive**

a=**da-dohoi**

CONJ=3PL-hear

e=di-'ua-dia

DIR=PASS=say-3SG.POSS

‘when they heard what he had said’ (Kähler 1975:80)

(9b) **Intransitive**

a=**b-ai**

CONJ=BU-come

ki

3PL

na'ani

later

‘when they will come later’ (Kähler 1975:32)

Ergative Alignment

Mid-summary

bu- verbs	Set 1 agreement with S/A [accusative alignment]	basic main clauses
bare verbs	Set 2 agreement with S/A [accusative alignment]	negated clauses consecutive/purposive clauses
bare verbs	Set 2 agreement with A [ergative alignment]	subordinate clauses

The ki- form

- Ki- verbs can occur in **realis main clauses** but never take any person markers:

(10a) Transitive

e-huda k-aha:E i-pia
DIR-woman KI-go LOC-garden

‘The woman went to the plantation’ (Kähler 1958, 1.4)

Accusative Alignment

(10b) Intransitive

e’ana e-ko’e’e ki-noo e-kiaki u-kaka
DEM DIR-devil KI-eat DIR-blood OBL-person

‘This demon sucks the blood of people’ (Kähler 1975 Dämonen- Vorstellungen, 1.4)

The ki- form

- *ki-* verbs may combine with other **derivational prefixes** in this context, including *-a* ‘future/ volitional’ (with does not combine with *bu-* in main clauses)

(11) ka-∅-panãũ=hã ka-’ãnõ=nĩã, ki **ki-puru-a** kia
 3-BU-speak=EMPH PL-friend-3SG.POSS 3PL KI-kill-FUT 3SG
 ‘His companions said they would kill him’ (Kähler 1960a, 13.5)

The ki- form

- The **ki-verb** is the only verb that occurs in **relative clauses** as a strategy to relativize on S/A:

(12a) Transitive

e=apama u=kaka [mo'o **ki-'ope** kia] e'ana
 DIR=number OBL=person REL KI-ambush 3SG that
 'the number of the people who lay in ambush for him' (Kähler 1975:61)

(12b) Intransitive

e=kapu [mo'o **k-ai** ne'eni] e'ana
 DIR=clan leader REL KI-come earlier that
 'the clan leader who had come earlier' (Kähler 1975:60)

The ki- form

- For relativizing on P, it is also possible to use a *ki- verb*, or to form a passive verb with the combination of *ki-* + the passive prefix *di-*:

(13a) l'aha e-kudE-a u-měhě-nũ [mõ'õ aruu **ki-no-noo**]?
 where DIR-originate-LOC.NOM OBL-food-2PL REL 2PL KI-REDUP-eat
 'where does the food that you are eating come from' (Kähler 1957, 3.2)

(13b) e-ũ'ã [hěmõ'õ **ki-di-kü'a**] e'ana
 DIR-food REL KI-PASS-support DEM
 'the food which is supported (with stakes)' (Kähler 1960b, 34.1)

The ki- form

- However, it is also possible to use a **passive nominalization** strategy

(14) e-küda'a-yo u-dohúao [mõ'õ e-di-'üdüha-'a u-kaka] e'ana
 DIR-tell-PAT.NOM OBL-boat REL DIR-PASS-startle-APPL OBL person DEM
 'the story of a boat that was startled by people' (Kähler 1960a, 11.2)

Summary

bu- verbs	Set 1 agreement with S/A [accusative alignment]	basic main clauses
bare verbs	Set 2 agreement with S/A [accusative alignment]	negated clauses consecutive/purposive clauses
bare verbs	Set 2 agreement with A [ergative alignment]	subordinate clauses
ki- verbs	S/A pivot [accusative alignment]	main clauses (future) relative clauses

Nias Verbal Morphology

Background on Nias



- Nias is spoken by over 600,000 speakers of a number of different varieties.
- The data presented here is **Southern Nias** from Brown's (2001) grammar.

Verbal Constructions in Southern Nias

- **Southern Nias** has constructions that are similar to Enggano *bu-*, bare and *ki-*:

(15a) ma=i-cici-ni mbatö asu. bare verb
 PFV-3-defecate-TR MUT:floor DOG
 ‘The dog has defecated on the floor’

(15b) ya-m-balö gefe Ama Dali mu- verb
 3-M U-borrow MUT:money Ama Dali
 ‘Ama Dali wants to borrow money’

(15c) Andrehe’e nasu [si=usu ya’o] si= verb
 DEM MUT:dog REL=bite 1SG
 ‘That’s the dog that bit me’

- *bu-* and *mu-* are likely cognate with PAN
 *-um- (Edwards 2015)
- *si=* and *ki-* are plausibly cognate since *s>k is a regular sound change in Enggano (Edwards 2015)

Verbal Constructions in Southern Nias

- Like Enggano, **Southern Nias** has free pronouns and two sets of person markers:

	Free pronouns (unmutated/ mutated)	Set 1 (with mu-)	Set 2 (with bare)
1SG	ya'o/ndrao	gu-	u-
2SG	ya'ugö/ndraugö	gö-	ö-
3SG	ya'ia/ya	ya-	i-
1PL.INCL	ya'ita/ita	da-	ta-
1PL.EXCL	ya'aga/ndraga	ga-	ma-
2PL	ya'ami/mi	gi-	mi-
3PL	ya'ira/ira	ndra-	la-

The bare verb

- In contrast to Enggano, it is **bare verbs + SET 2** person markers that are used for basic **main clause transitive verbs**. Intransitive verbs sometimes have a allomorph of *mu-* and do not take person markers for S:

(16a) ma*i*-cici-ni mbatö asu. bare verb
 PFV-3-defecate-TR MUT:floor DOG
 ‘The dog has defecated on the floor’ (Brown 2001:250)

(16b) m-oloi nasu na mo-huguhugu mbanua
 MU-run.away MUT:dog if INTR-thunder MUT:sky
 ‘The dog runs away when it thunders’ (Brown 2001:206)

Ergative Alignment

This is the pattern found in Enggano subordinate clauses!

The bare verb

- Indeed, this same pattern is also replicated in (background) **subordinate clauses**:

(17a) Transitive

Na **ö-**nuβu-ni ya
 if 2SG-associate.with-TR MUT:3SG
 'If you associate with him' (Brown 2001:287)

Ergative Alignment

(17b) Intransitive

Na moi ya lawa
 If go MUT:3SG high
 'if he goes up high (Brown 2001:150)

The bare verb

- And the same pattern is also found in **negated clauses**:

(18a) Transitive

Löna **la**-faigi **nösi**
NEG 3PL-notice MUT.contents

'They didn't notice the contents' (Brown 2001:472)

Ergative Alignment

(18b) Intransitive

Löna fao **dödö-gu.**
NEG join MUT.liver-1SG.POSS

'I do not agree' [lit. My liver does not co-operate] (Brown 2001:472)

The bare verb

- And the same pattern found in **consecutive clauses** following *ba* ‘and’:

(19a) Transitive

La-halö naβu, ba **la-be** ba zole [...]
 3PL-take MUT.ash and 3PL-put LOC MUT.shell
 ‘They take the ash and put it in a coconut shell’ (Brown 2001:166)

(19b) Intransitive

ba **mo-möi** m-ondi dania
 and INTR-go MU-bathe later
 ‘and go and bathe later’ (Brown 2001:166)

Ergative Alignment

Mid-summary

Bare verbs	Set 2 agreement with A [ergative alignment]	basic main clauses subordinate clauses negated clauses consecutive clauses
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The mu- verb

- *mu*- verb constructions are found in **irrealis clauses** with future/volitional meaning:

(20a) Transitive

ya-m-balö

3SG-MU-borrow

gefe

MUT.money

Ama Dali

Ama Dali

Accusative Alignment

'Ama Dali wants to borrow money' (Brown 2001:502)

Ergative Alignment

(20b) Intransitive

ya-m-a-nana

3SG-MU-ANTIP-hand

nono-nia

MUT.child-3SG.POSS

ba

LOC

va-a-lio

MUT:NMLZ-ST-quick

'Her child will be crawling soon' (Brown 2001:562)

Mid-summary

Bare verbs	Set 2 agreement with A [ergative alignment]	basic main clauses subordinate clauses negated clauses consecutive clauses
<i>mu-</i> verbs	Set 1 agreement with S/A [accusative/ergative]	irrealis/future clauses

The si= verb

- Finally, si= is used to mark **relative clause predicates** and is used as a strategy to relativize on S/A:

(21a) i-be khö-gu mbaru [si=bohau]
 3.RLS-give DAT-1SG.POSS MUT.dress REL=new
 'She gave me a new dress' (lit. dress that was new) (Brown 2001: 413)

(21b) Andrehe'e nasu [si=usu] (ya'o)
 DIST MUT.dog REL=bite 1SG
 'That's the dog that bit me' (Brown 2001: 413)

Accusative Alignment

The *si=* verb

- To relativize on P, the verb is marked with the **passive prefix** *ni-* and A is marked with a mutated form or a possessive suffix (like a possessor):

(22a) nukha [ni-sasai nakhi-gu]
 clothes PASS-wash MUT.younger.sibling-1SG.POSS
 ‘the clothes that were washed by my younger sister’ (Brown 2001, 368)

(22b) u-fake zekhula [ni-rökhi-nia]
 1S.RLS-use MUT.coconut PASS-grate-3SG.POSS
 ‘I used the coconut which she grated’ (Brown 2001: 420)

Similar to Enggano
e-di- construction

- Neither *si=* not *ni-* occur in main clauses.

Summary

		Enggano	Nias
bu/mu- verbs	Set 1 agreement with S/A [accusative alignment]	basic main clauses	irrealis/future
bare verbs	Set 2 agreement with S/A [accusative alignment]	negated clauses consecutive clauses	n/a
bare verbs	Set 2 agreement with A [ergative alignment]	subordinate clauses	basic main clauses subordinate clauses negated clauses consecutive clauses
ki-/si= verbs	S/A pivot [accusative alignment]	main clauses (future) relative clauses	relative clauses

Historical Developments

Ergative Alignment

- Since the pattern of **ergatively-aligned** person marking is relatively common in languages of Sumatra and Sulawesi (see e.g. Wolff 1996, 2002, Himmelmann 1996, Ross 2002, Zobel 2002, 2024, Zobel & Hemmings 2024), we assume that Southern Nias is **more conservative** than Enggano.
- Consequently, we can think of the **ergative pattern** found in **backgrounding subordinate clauses** in Enggano as a retention of an earlier pattern.
- This is in keeping with the cross-linguistic trend for **subordinate clauses to be more conservative than main clauses** (see e.g. Bybee et al 1994, Bybee 2002, Givón 1977, 1979, Hock 2021, Hyman 1975, Crowley & Bower 2010).

Accusative Alignment

- The development of the **accusative pattern** with **bare verbs + SET 2** person markers is not as widespread, but is shared with some other languages of Sumatra/Sulawesi – particularly in purposive clauses (i.e. Mamasa as described in Matti 1994)
- We assume this involves the **extension** of proclitic marking from transitive to intransitive clauses.
- It makes sense that **purposive clauses** would be the locus of innovation since control often involves an S/A pivot, providing some motivation for extending the marking of A to intransitive clauses in this context (see Dixon 1994, Falk 2006).

Bu- as realis main clause

- The development of an **accusative pattern** with *bu-/mu-* verbs + SET 1 person markers is quite rare in the languages of the region (see e.g. Zobel 2024)
- We assume that the *bu-* verb construction may have started as a marked construction (like in Nias) but was later **reanalysed** as the basic realis transitive clause
- This may be linked to the **development of the *ki-* verb**, the general predominance of accusative alignment, or the fact that Enggano has other means of expressing future/volitionality.

ki- as main clause predicate

- Finally, we argue that *ki-* was **reanalysed as a verbal marker**, rather than a relative clause marker (like Nias *si=*), and extended to main clauses.
- This would explain why only *ki-* verbs are found in Enggano relative clauses.
- It is possible that this reanalysis follows from the **reinterpretation of clefts** with headless relative clauses and zero copulas as mono-clausal main clauses (see e.g. Harris & Campbell 1995)
- It may be facilitated by the fact that Enggano has a **dedicated relativizer** *mõ'õ* (unlike Nias).

ki- as main clause predicate

- Interestingly, a similar proposal has been made to explain the development of Western Austronesian symmetrical voice systems.
- It is commonly held that voice morphology in many contemporary Austronesian languages derives from the **reanalysis of argument nominalizations** (see e.g. Starosta et al 1982, Kaufman 2009, Kaufman 2018, Aldridge 2016, Ross 2009).
- The idea is that argument nominalizations bore much of the functional load of relative clauses and were subsequently reanalysed as verbal markers, which is supported by data from **Formosan** languages (see e.g. Teng 2008, Chang 2023)

So maybe Austronesian languages are prone to this type of reanalysis?

Summary

- The differences between the three constructions in **Nias** and **Enggano** can be explained through a series of (possibly interrelated) **changes**:
 - ❖ the extension of person-marking to bare intransitive clauses (**bare + SET 2**);
 - ❖ the reanalysis of *bu-* verbs as the basic realis clause type; and (**bu- + SET 1**)
 - ❖ the reanalysis of *ki-* as a verbal marker and extension to main clauses (**ki-**)

Conclusions

Conclusion

- In this paper, I have demonstrated that both Nias and Enggano share **three verbal constructions** that are strikingly similar in terms of their morpho-syntax.
 - The bare construction
 - The *bu-/mu-* construction
 - The *ki-/si=* construction
- I have proposed that these constructions end up with markedly different functions through a series of (interrelated) changes that may link to **alignment**
- Whatever the exact series of changes, this comparison provides further **typological evidence** for treating Enggano as an Austronesian language.



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With thanks to...

The Enggano Community



With thanks to...

I Wayan Arka, Australian National University

Dendi Wijaya, Kantor Bahasa Bengkulu

Engga Zakaria Sangian, Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu



With thanks to...



Bernd Nothofer, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main
Daniel Krausse, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main
Erik Zobel, Independent Researcher

Colleagues at Udayana University, Bali

Arts and Humanities Research Council UK
The John Fell Fund, University of Oxford
The Endangered Language Fund

Audience at APLL16!