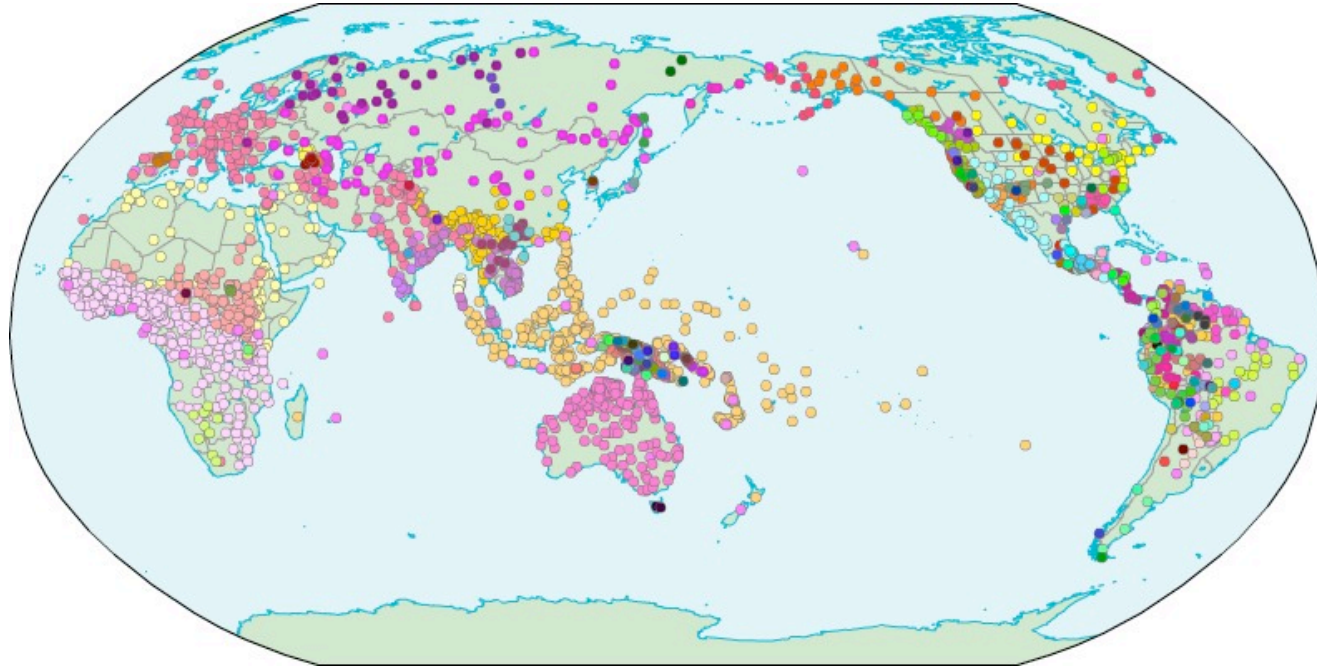


AREAL TYPOLOGY: FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA TO THE GRAN CHACO



Bernard Comrie

*Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology and
University of California Santa Barbara*

comrie@eva.mpg.de

Linguistic Area

A linguistic area

is an area definable in geographic terms

which contains languages belonging to various families

and which share a number of feature values

as a result of intense contact.

If for at least some of these language families there are also languages spoken outside the linguistic area

and which do not share these features,

then there is an even stronger argument for the importance of intense contact within the area.

WALS

Martin Haspelmath, Matthew S. Dryer, David Gil, Bernard Comrie (eds.).
2005. *The World Atlas of Language Structures*. Oxford: Oxford University
Press. Printed volume and interactive CD-ROM.

Martin Haspelmath, Matthew S. Dryer, David Gil, Bernard Comrie (eds.).
2008. *The World Atlas of Language Structures Online*. Munich: Max Planck
Digital Library.

Southeast Asia

Comrie, Bernard. 2007. ‘Areal typology of mainland Southeast Asia: what we learn from the WALS maps’. In Pranee Kullavanijaya (ed.): *Trends in Thai Linguistics* (=Manusya, Special Issue 13), 18–47. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University. <http://www.manusya.journals.chula.ac.th/html/home.php> [Search on “comrie”]

Comrie, Bernard. 2008. ‘The areal typology of Chinese: between North and Southeast Asia’. In Redouane Djamouri, Barbara Meisterernst, and Rint Sybesma (eds.): *Chinese Linguistics in Leipzig*, 1–21. (Collection des Cahiers de Linguistique Asie Orientale, 12.) Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Centre de Recherches Linguistiques sur l’Asie Orientale.

Language families in Southeast Asia

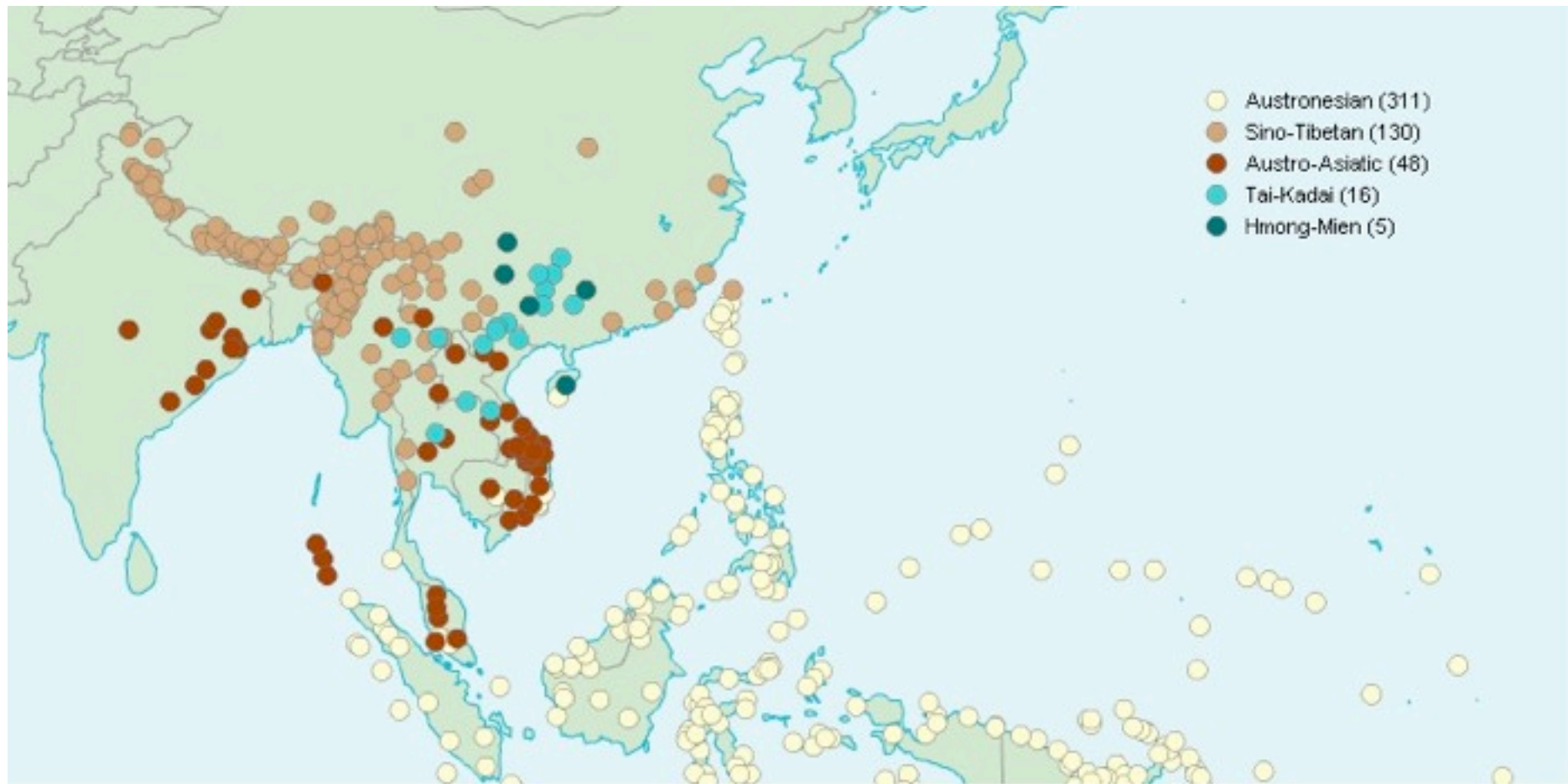
Tai-Kadai (e.g. Thai)

Austroasiatic (e.g. Khmer, Vietnamese)
also languages outside SE Asia (eastern India)

Sino-Tibetan (e.g. Chinese, Burmese)
also languages outside SE Asia (Himalaya)

Hmong-Mien

Austronesian (e.g. Indonesian)
most languages spoken outside SE Asia



Order of Object (O) and Verb (V)

+ VO

phôo sùu rôt

father buy car

‘Father bought a car.’

Thai

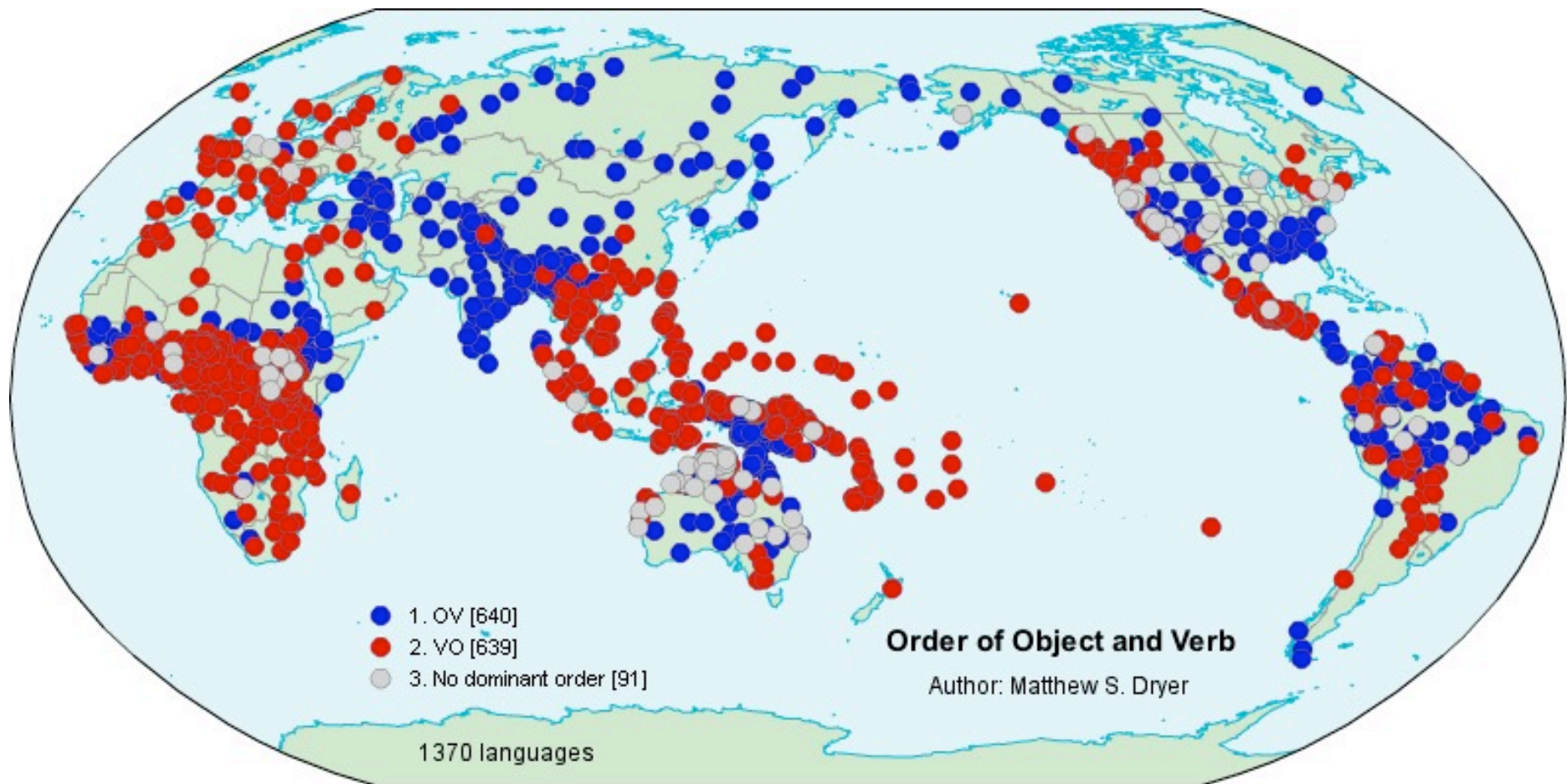
– OV

bi nom aw-laa

I book take-PST

‘I took a book.’

Mongolian



Order of Genitive (G) and Noun (N)

+ NG

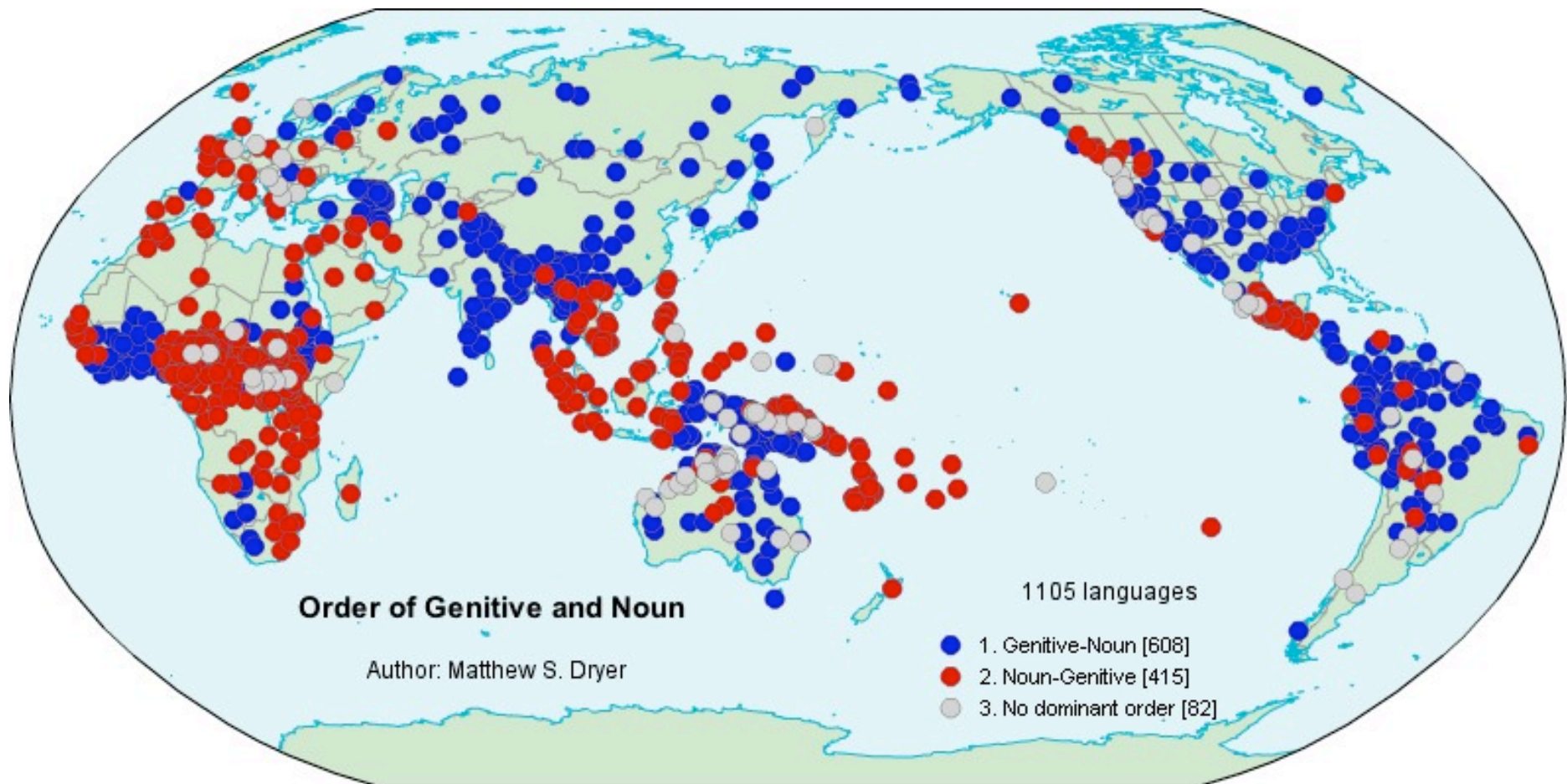
náŋsǔu (khǒŋ) nók
book of Nok
'Nok's book'

Thai

– GN

baatar-iiŋ exner
Baatar-GEN wife
'Baatar's wife'

Mongolian



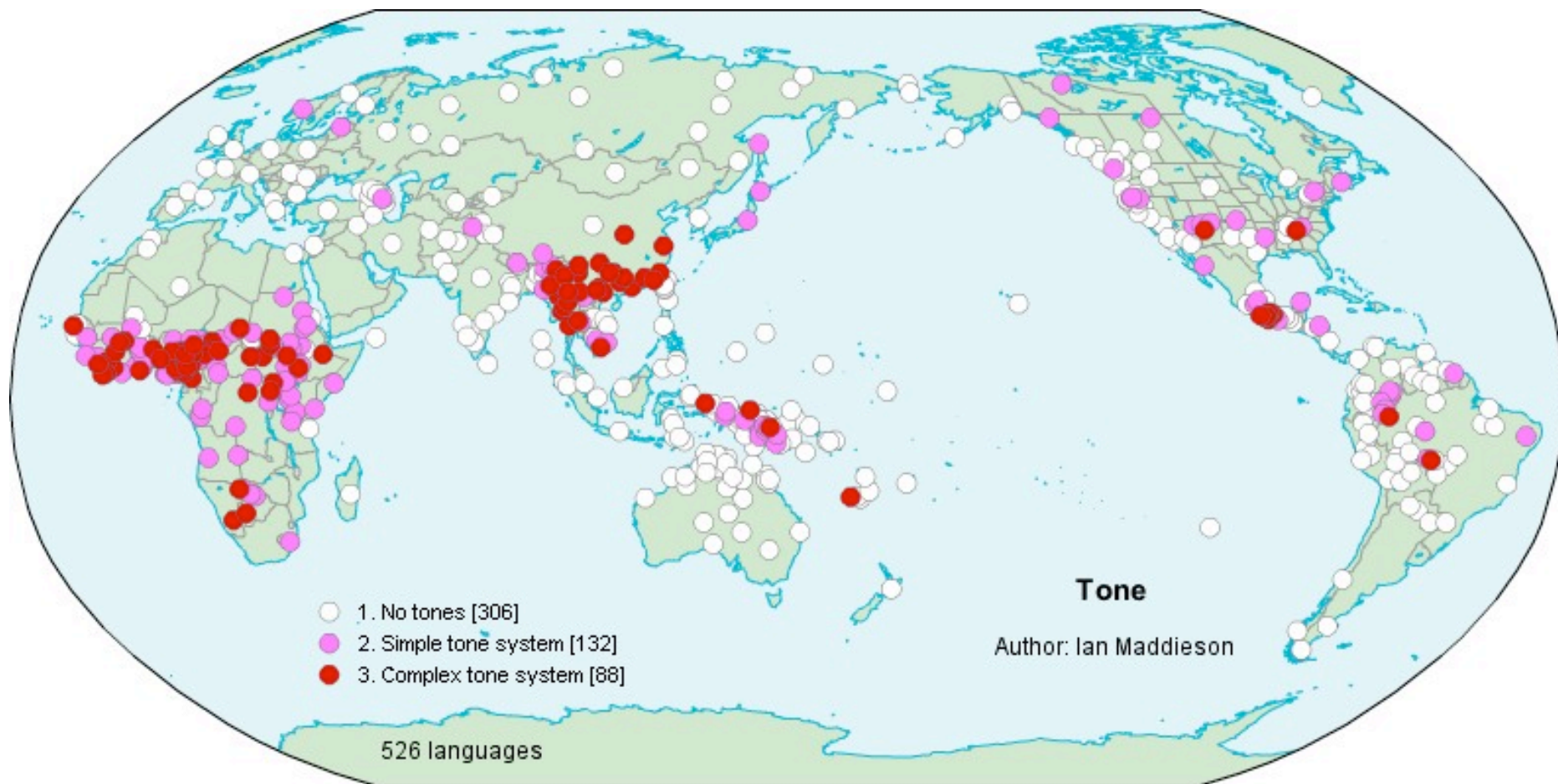
Complex tone system

- + Three or more phonemic tones

Thai

<i>khāa</i>	‘restless’
<i>khàa</i>	‘galangal root’
<i>khâa</i>	‘to kill’
<i>kháa</i>	‘trade’
<i>khǎa</i>	‘leg’

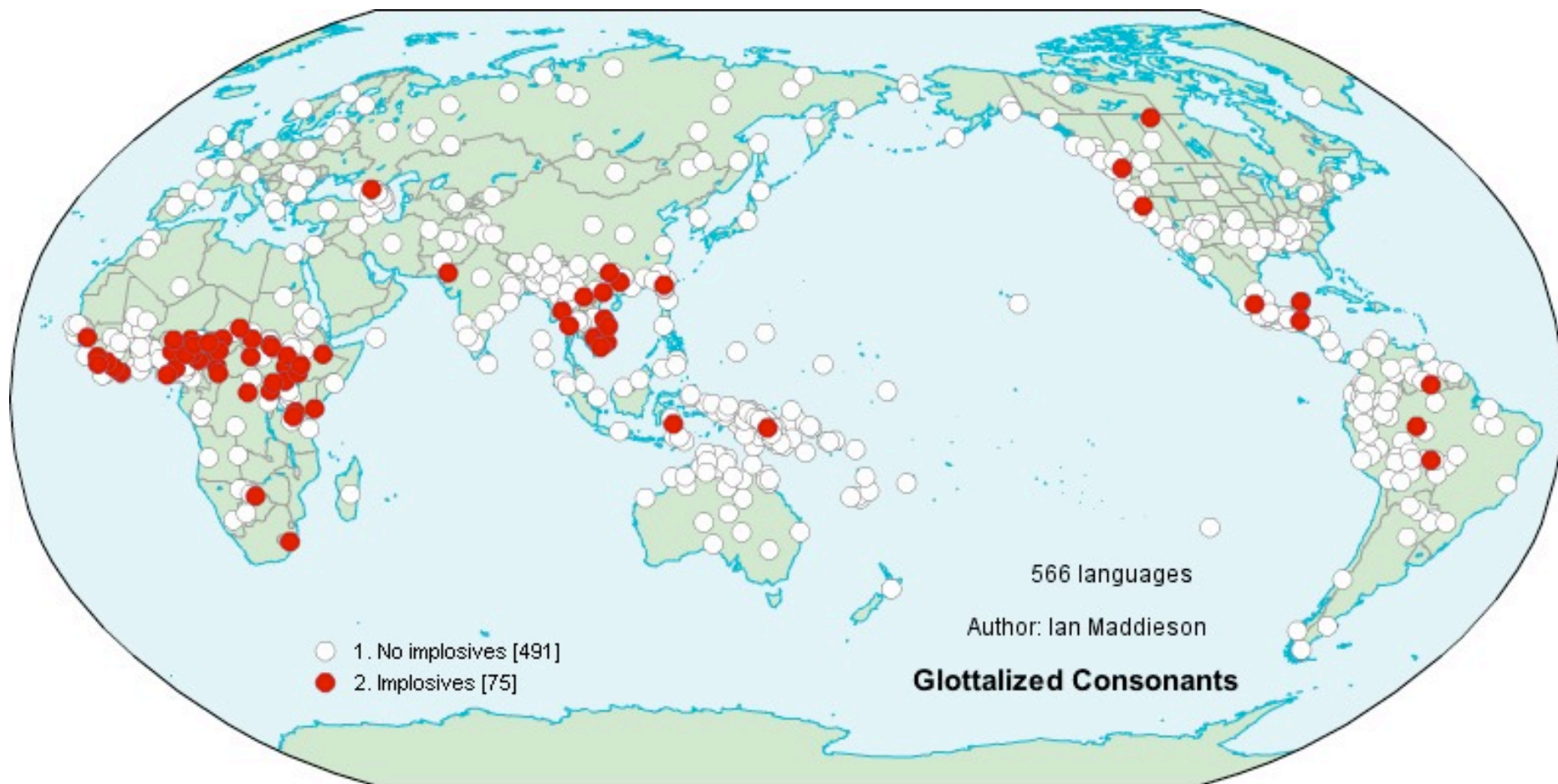
- Two or no phonemic tones



Implosive consonants

+ Vietnamese

đi 'go', IPA [ɗi]



Morphological type

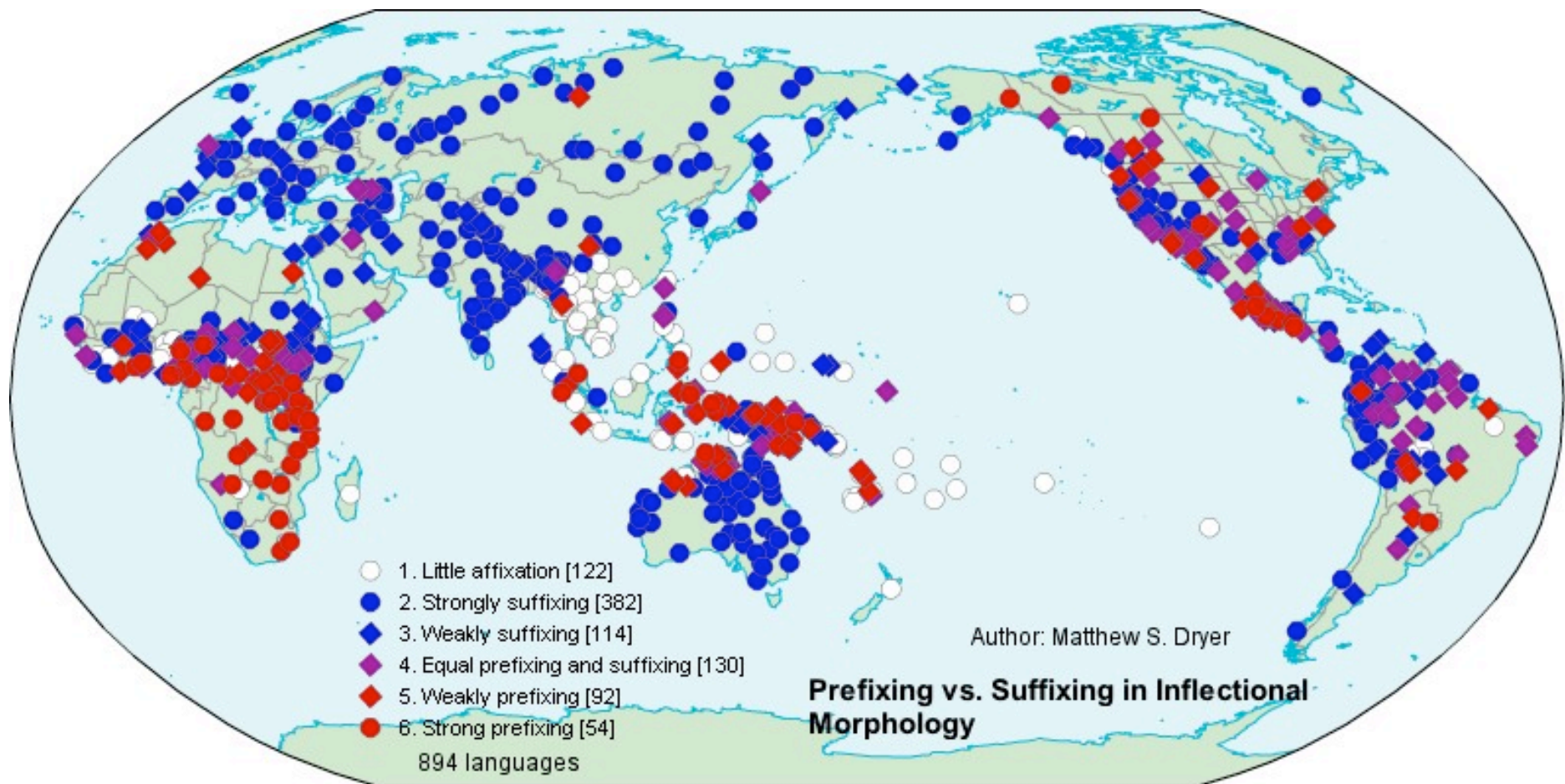
+ Isolating

– Suffixing

Mongolian

nom-uud ‘book-PL’

aw-laa ‘take-PST’



Obligatory numeral classifiers

+

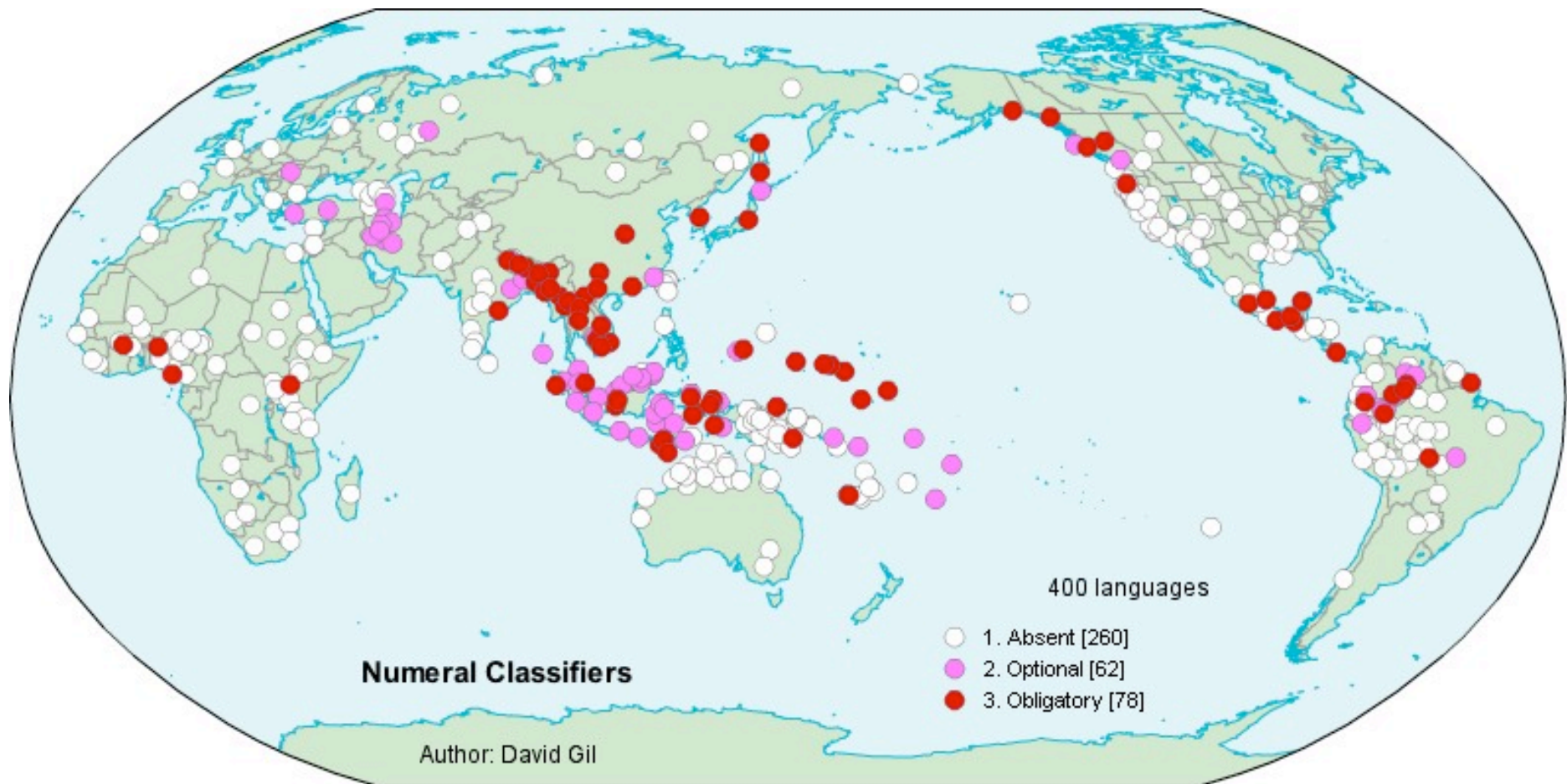
lûuk sǎam khon
child three CLF
'three children'

Thai

—

gurwa-ŋ nom
three-ATTR book
'three books'

Mongolian



Predicative possession: “topic” vs. locative type

+ Top

nǎu mây mii kaaw

mouse NEG exist glue

‘The mouse does not have glue.’

Thai

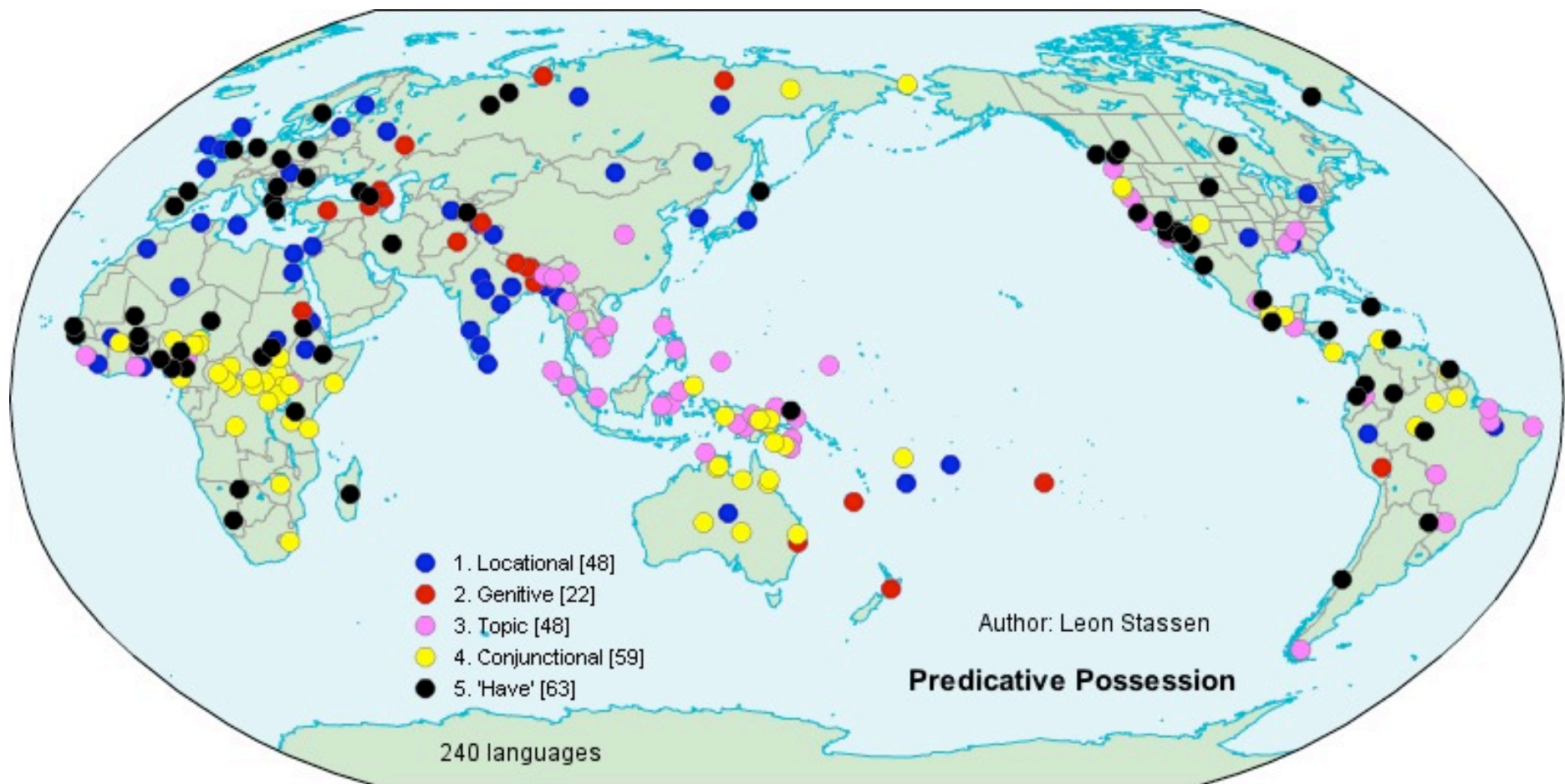
– Loc

baatar-t oloŋ xurdaŋ moʻ bii

Baatar-LOC many fast horse exist.PRS

‘Baatar has many fast horses.’

Mongolian



Sample of nuclear, peripheral, and non-SE Asian languages

Language	Family
Thai	Tai-Kadai
Vietnamese	Austroasiatic
Khmer	Austroasiatic
Indonesian	Austronesian
Hmong Njua	Hmong-Mien
Burmese	Sino-Tibetan
Mandarin	Sino-Tibetan
Mongolian	Mongolic



Distribution of typically SE Asian values for 20 WALS features

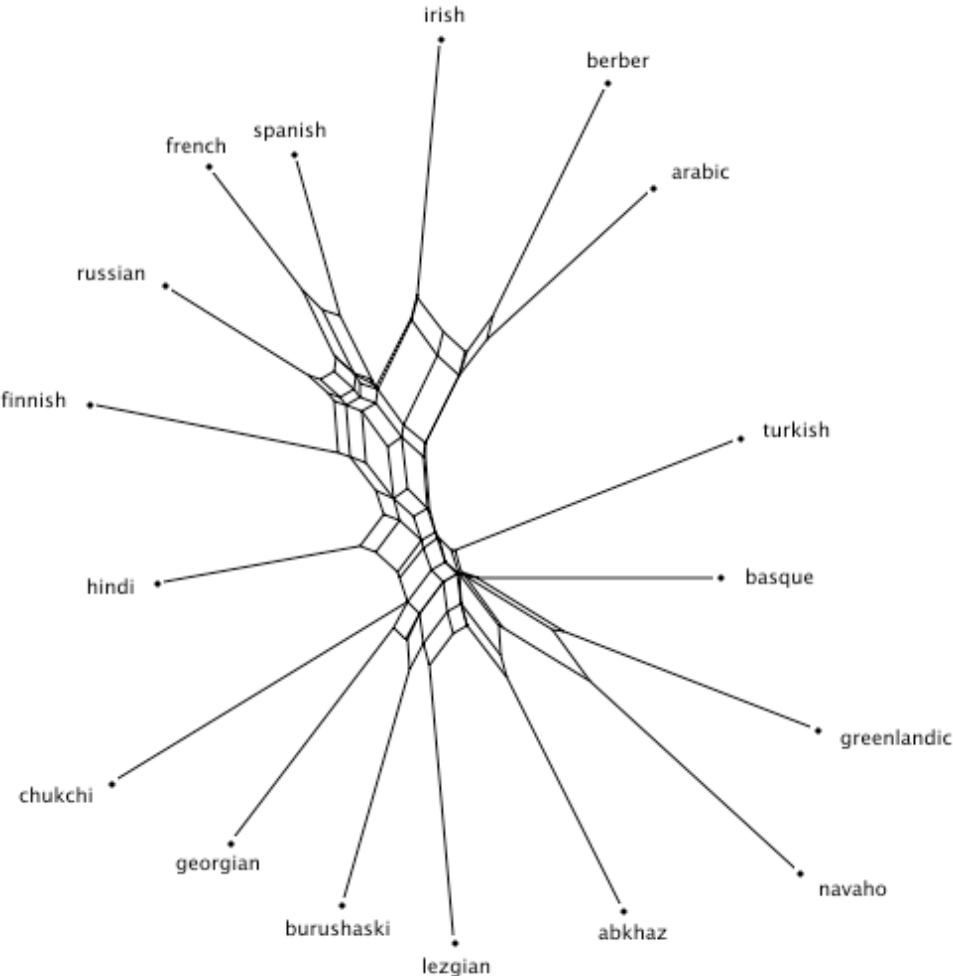
Language	+	−	±/?	Ratio +/−
Thai	18	1	1	18.00
Vietnamese	17	2	1	8.50
Khmer	17	3	0	5.67
Indonesian	13	7	0	1.86
Hmong Njua	9	5	6	1.80
Burmese	10	10	0	1.00
Mandarin	8	11	1	0.72
Mongolian	1	19	0	0.05

Basque

Comrie, Bernard. 2008. 'Basque, Romance, and areal typology: what do we learn from the World Atlas of Language Structures?'. In Hans-Jörg Döhla, Raquel Montero Muñoz, and Francisco Báez de Aguilar González (eds.): *Lenguas en diálogo: El iberorromance y su diversidad lingüística y literaria, ensayos en homenaje a Georg Bossong*, 55–63. Madrid: Iberoamericana / Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert.



Splitstree



Relative Hamming distances from Basque

Language	Genus/Family	Relative Hamming Distance
Turkish	Turkic/Altaic	42
Hindi	Indic/Indo-European	43
Burushaski	Burushaski	44
Georgian	Kartvelian	44
Greenlandic, West	Eskimo-Aleut	44
Abkhaz	W Caucasian	45
Lezgian	Lezgian/E Caucasian	45

Relative Hamming distances from Basque

Language	Genus/Family	Relative Hamming Distance
Arabic, Egyptian	Semitic/Afroasiatic	55
Irish	Celtic/Indo-European	57
Berber, Middle Atlas	Berber/Afroasiatic	60

Relative Hamming distances from Basque

Language	Genus/Family	Relative Hamming Distance
Chukchi	Chukotko-Kamchatkan	48
Navajo	Athabaskan/Na-Dene	50
Russian	Slavic/Indo-European	50
Spanish	Indic/Indo-European	50
Finnish	Finnic/Uralic	52
French	Italic/Indo-European	54

Maltese

Comrie, Bernard. 2009. 'Maltese and the World Atlas of Language Structures'. In Bernard Comrie, Ray Fabri, Elizabeth Hume, Manwel Mifsud, Thomas Stolz, and Martine Vanhove (eds.): *Introducing Maltese Linguistics: Selected Papers from the 1st International Conference on Maltese Linguistics, Bremen, 18–20 October, 2007*, 3–11. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Comparison of 120 WALS features as between

Maltese

Semitic/Afroasiatic

Arabic, Egyptian

Semitic/Afroasiatic

Spanish

Italic/Indo-European



Number of shared feature values across the three languages

	S=M=E	S=M≠E	S≠M=E	S=E≠M	S≠M≠E	Total
All features	60	14	36	6	4	120
Phonology	10	3	4	1	1	19
Morphology	2	3	3	0	0	8
Nominal categories	11	0	11	2	0	24
Nominal syntax	3	0	1	1	1	6
Verbal categories	10	0	3	2	0	15
Word order	8	3	2	0	1	14
Simple clauses	8	4	9	0	1	22
Complex sentences	1	0	2	0	0	3
Lexicon	7	1	1	0	0	9

Relative Hamming Distance across the three languages

	M-S	M-E	S-E
All features	38.33	20.00	45.00
Phonology	31.58	26.32	42.11
Morphology	37.50	37.50	75.00
Nominal categories	54.17	08.33	45.83
Nominal syntax	50.00	33.33	33.33
Verbal categories	33.33	13.33	20.00
Word order	21.43	28.57	42.86
Simple clauses	45.45	22.73	63.64
Complex sentences	66.67	00.00	66.67
Lexicon	11.11	11.11	22.22

Gran Chaco



Project “The Chaco as a Linguistic Area”

Principal investigators:

Comrie, Bernard (MPI-EVA, Germany)

Golluscio, Lucía (University of Buenos Aires, Argentina)

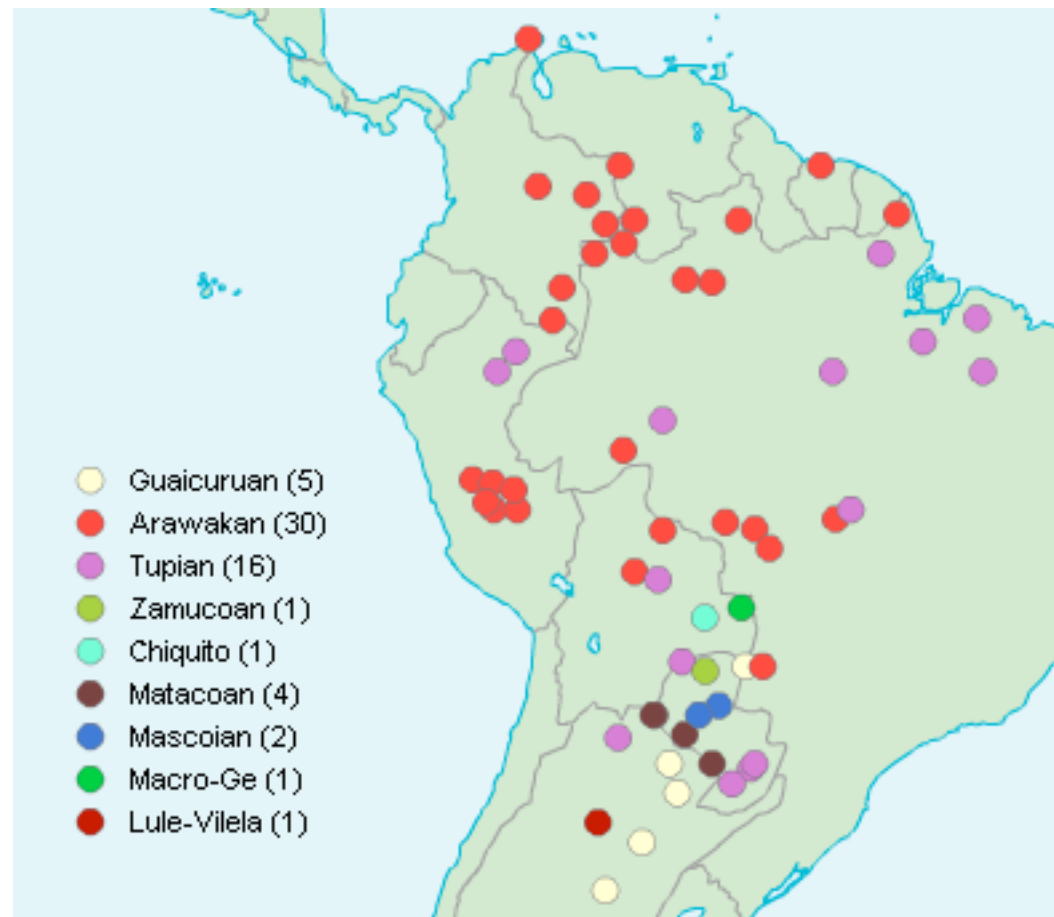
González, Hebe (National University of San Juan, Argentina)

Vidal, Alejandra (National University of Formosa, Argentina)

Preliminary results

Language families of the Gran Chaco

Guaicuruan	(e.g. Pilagá)
Tupi-Guaraní	(e.g. Tapiete; mostly outside the Gran Chaco)
Lule-Vilela	(e.g. Vilela)
Mataco-Mataguayan	(e.g. Wichi)
Zamucoan	(e.g. Ayoreo)
Maskoian	(e.g. Guana)
Arawakan	(e.g. Terena; mostly outside the Gran Chaco)
Chiquitano	(isolate, or part of Macro-Gê)
Guató	(isolate, or part of Macro-Gê)



Comparison with

Andean languages

Adelaar, Willem F.H., with Pieter C. Muysken. 2004. *The Languages of the Andes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Amazonian languages

R.M.W. Dixon and Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald, eds. 1999. *The Amazonian Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tapiete, a relative newcomer to the area,
seems typologically rather different from the other languages
and closer to its Tupi-Guaraní relatives in Amazonia

Languages of the Southern Cone

Few survive, or survived to be documented:

Mapudungun (isolate; could also be considered Andean)

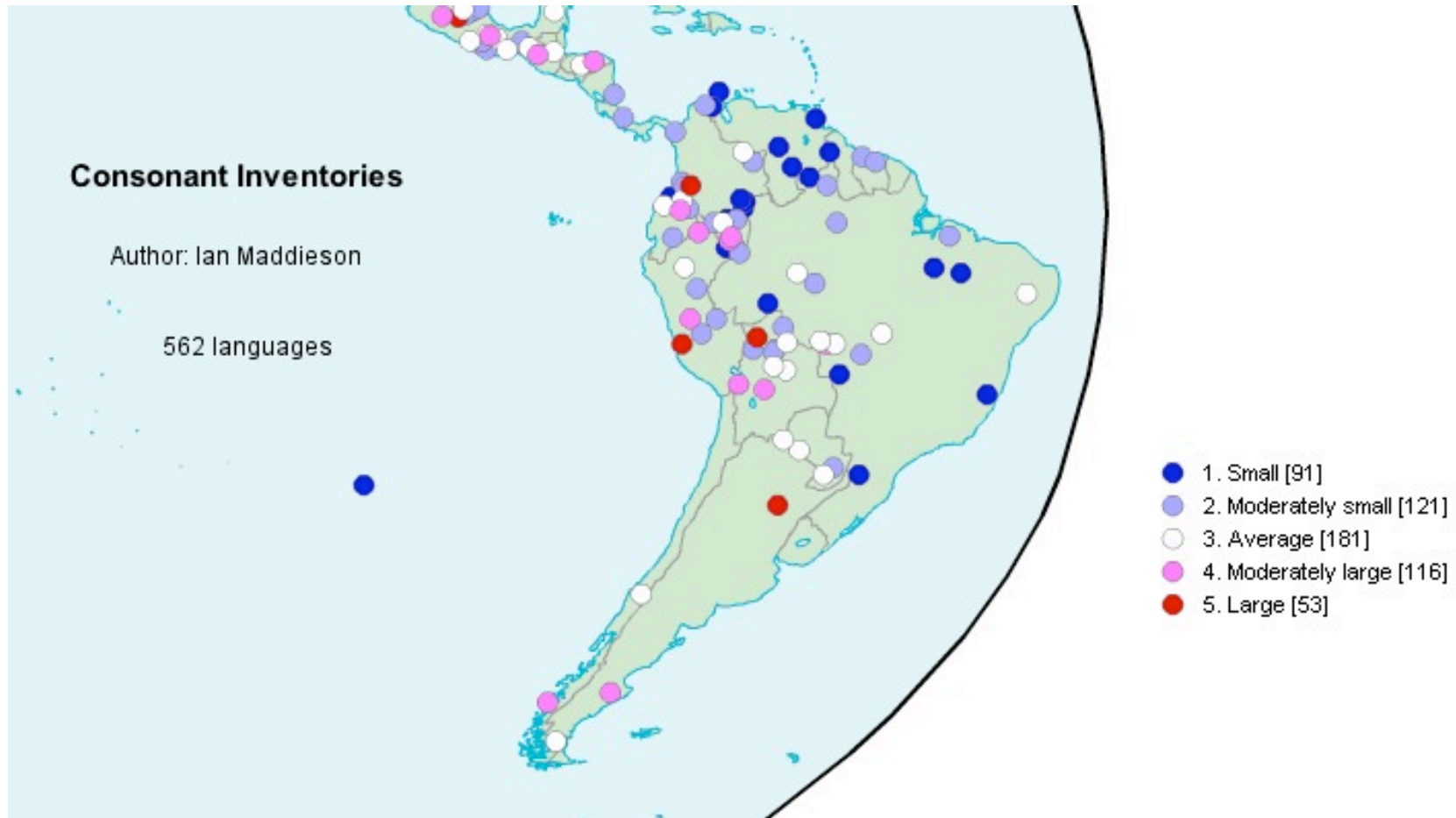
Puelche (isolate)

Qawasqar (probably isolate)

Chon (small family: 2–3 languages)

Yahgan (isolate)

Andean versus Amazonian languages: Consonant inventory



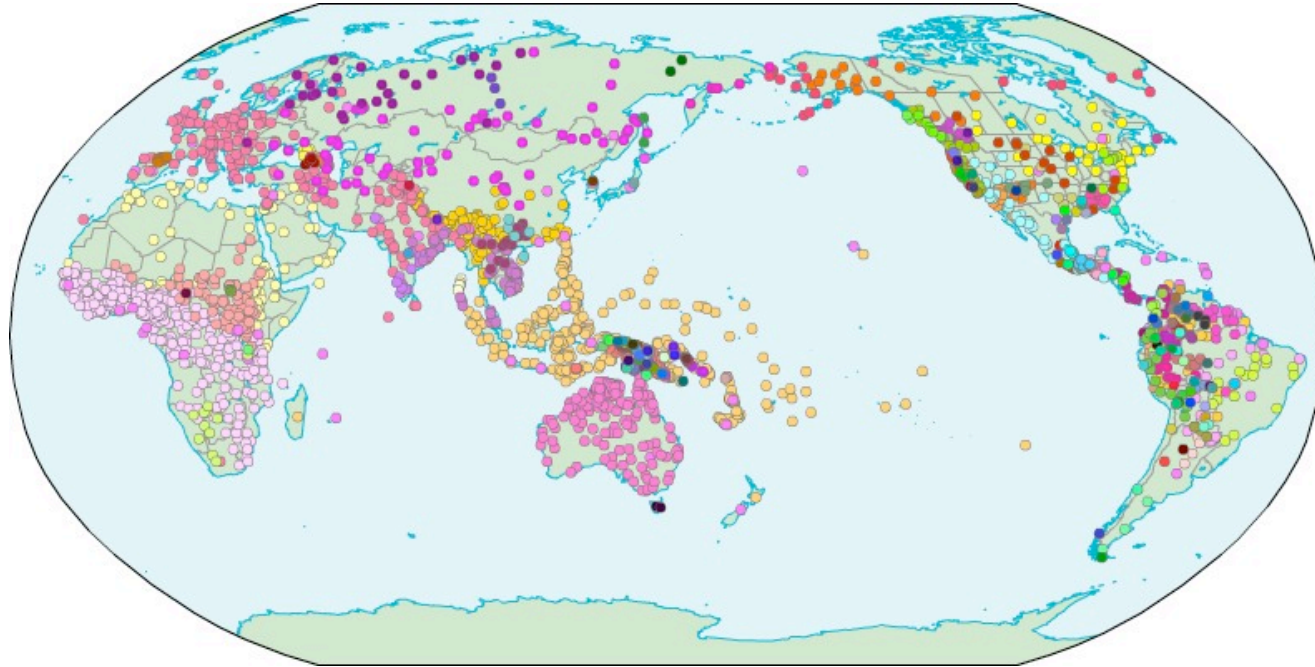
Consonant inventories in the Gran Chaco (preliminary)

Languages in the range Average to Small

Interesting systems with regard to laterals:

No laterals	Tapiete, Chiriguano, Guaraní, Izocéño	Tupi-Guaraní
Only /l/	Abipon, Kadiwéu some Wichi varieties	Guaicuruan Mataco-Mataguayan
/l/ and lateral obstruent	Chorote, Maká, some Wichi varieties	Mataco-Mataguayan
No /l/, but lateral obstruents	Vilela Chulupí	Lule-Vilela Mataco-Mataguayan
/l/ and /ʎ/	Mocoví, Pilagá, Toba	Guaicuruan

AREAL TYPOLOGY: FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA TO THE GRAN CHACO



Bernard Comrie

Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology and

University of California Santa Barbara

comrie@eva.mpg.de