

Landscape and spatial orientation in Western Pantar (Lamma)

This paper shows how spatial orientation is used to conceptualize landscape in Western Pantar, a Papuan language of the Alor-Pantar family. Where many Austronesian languages distinguish two orthogonal axes landward vs. seaward and up vs. down coast, Alor-Pantar languages distinguish three vertical levels: up, same level, and down. What is remarkable is that this semantic distinction is reiterated in many different syntactic domains. In Western Pantar this distinction is reflected in five different domains: deictic pronouns, deictic adverbs, demonstrative determiners, locational nouns, and directional verbs. This rich inventory of grammatical devices allows precise characterization of landscape features. For example, a trail which ascends from a known but not visible point at the same level can be described using the deictic pronoun *smaume*, which denotes same level, specific, and not visible, together with the directional verb *mia* ‘ascend gentle slope’.

- (1) *smaume* *ta* *pi-mia*
 LEVEL.SPEC.NON-VIS before 1INC-ascend
 ‘let’s ascend from that place over there’

This reliance on complex spatial expressions results in a relative paucity of toponyms denoting prominent geomorphic features. In this rugged country landscape is conceived in the vertical dimension, based around an abstract semantic template (cf. Levinson and Burenhult 2009) which contrasts up, same level, and down.

Word count: 199