

# The Genetic Position of the Mawes Language

## Paper

The Mawes language of the north coast of Papua, Indonesia was first reported already in Robidé van der Aa (1879:112) and van der Leeden (1954:7) but the first actual language data to be published are the ca 20 words in Galis (1955:143). Next, government linguist Anceaux collected wordlists probably in the late fifties, but these were not published until Smits and Voorhoeve (1994). However, some of the material was used by Voorhoeve (1975:40) to classify Mawes as a family-level isolate within his Tor-Lakes-Plain stock, i.e., sharing 12%-27% cognates on a 100-word list with at least one other Tor or Lakes Plain language, but the cognate judgments required to support this have never been published. This classification has been retained in later listings. However, now that a small but significant amount of basic lexical data is available (including 250 words and 15 sentences from an unpublished SIL survey (Wambaliau 2006)) the suggested relationship may be re-evaluated. We will show the comparison of Mawes basic lexicon to Tor-Orya and Lakes Plain languages and argue that there is as yet insufficient evidence for concluding a genetic relationship between Mawes and these languages.

## References

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