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Morphosyntactic evidence for a Nuclear Barrier Islands subgroup

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The languages spoken in the Barrier Islands off the southwestern coast of Sumatra (Simeulue, Nias & Batu Islands, Mentawai Islands, Enggano) have long been hypothesized to form a subgroup together with the Batak languages and Gayo on the Sumatran mainland. Nothofer (1986) presented lexical and phonological evidence for this subgroup which he called “Northwest Sumatra–Barrier Islands languages”. Additional phonological evidence was presented by Smith (2017), and phonological + lexical evidence by Billings & McDonnell (2022), both referring to the subgroup as “Sumatran”.

The internal structure of the Sumatran languages has not yet been systematically explored. Nothofer proposed a closer link between Nias and Mentawai, which in turn link with Simeulue, and all of them with the Batak languages on a higher level.

In my paper, I want to present evidence for a *Nuclear Barrier Islands* subgroup within the Sumatran languages that comprises Nias/Sikulei, Mentawai and Enggano (but excludes Simeulue). The Nuclear Barrier Islands subgroup is characterized by distinct morphosyntactic innovations related to person indexing and alignment, with one-to-one morphological correspondences that suggest a shared origin from a common ancestor, viz. *Proto Nuclear Barrier Islands*.

**References**

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