PREFACE

The title on the cover of this dissertation, Topics in the grammar of Kuot, is designed to allow for a less than unitary collection of subjects within. It makes it possible to shamelessly lump together such diverse topics as phonology, kinship, and nouns in the same volume, as long as they pertain to the Kuot language, or its speakers. The background to this is that the original PhD project was a full descriptive grammar of Kuot. Somehow the draft manuscript kept growing and growing, but the end of the project remained elusively at a constant distance of “about six months”, while evermore pages were being added. When graduation was long overdue, all respectable funding possibilities had been exhausted for over a year, and exciting linguistic projects requiring a PhD appeared on the horizon, my supervisors Kari and Östen stepped in. They wisely suggested that I present some sections of the work for the degree, so that I could move on to greener linguistic pastures while continuing to revise additional chapters with a view to eventually publishing the full grammar.

Two main criteria were used to select the chapters to go into the dissertation: autonomy and overview. The socio-cultural chapter and the chapters about nouns and phonology were judged to be relatively free from cross-reference to chapters omitted in this version. To compensate in some degree for missing chapters, overviews of Kuot grammar are provided in the introduction and word classes chapters.

There are many people without whom I could never have carried out this work. First of all, it would not have happened at all if Bob Dixon and Sasha Aikhenvald had not invited me to Australia to do linguistic fieldwork. Their Research Centre for Linguistic Typology not only provided an enormously stimulating working environment, but also paid for fieldwork expenses (even from Australia, the cost of airfares to Papua New Guinea is excruciating). Bob has read and commented on all drafts, some of them in several versions, and by appointment undertook the boring but sadly necessary task of nagging me about overdue chapters. Both Bob and Sasha were always supportive and happy to discuss any matter linguistic, and I feel that being able to share their extensive experience and that of other members of the centre has contributed a lot to my development as a linguist and a member of the linguistic community.

The Linguistics department in Stockholm let me make a radical change of topic and move to a different hemisphere for years without severing my affiliation or, even more amazing, discontinuing my salaried graduate position. Not only that, but my primary supervisor Kari Fraurud carefully read drafts posted, faxed or emailed from remote places throughout the entire period, even when she took up a job outside Stockholm University. She always sent back lots of useful and well-considered feedback, and her enthusiasm and belief in my ability to carry out this project never wavered.
Angela Terrill has contributed massively to improving local and global qualities of the present text. Even before she was officially appointed “language scrutinizer” during the last few months, she had enthusiastically read everything I wrote about Kuot for a long time, and commented on every level (typos, text organisation, grammatical analysis, and points of comparison with Lavukaleve, her own dissertation language). In the best of all possible worlds, every graduate student would have a friend like that.

Östen Dahl read the whole text in the last frenzied weeks, saving me from several gaffes, and bringing up lots of interesting points of discussion which I hope to be able to develop and incorporate in the future version. Others who have read parts of the manuscript and/or provided valuable discussion of particular matters in Kuot grammar are Robert Eklund, Bert Remijsen, Gerrit Dimmendaal and Bob Rankin (all Phonology), Glenn Summerhayes (Kuot & its speakers; Previous sources in Introduction), Fritz Serzisko (tense and aspect matters and many other bits and pieces; he also helped with German sources and translations). In Melbourne, Tim Curnow was always on hand to discuss any urgent upcoming matters of analysis.

The input of all of the above has contributed enormously to making this volume a much better piece of work than it would otherwise have been. Needless to say, any remaining faulty analyses, flaws and inconsistencies exist in spite of their best efforts and are entirely my own responsibility.

Pétur Helgason let me use his font (with IPA characters) and especially made italicised versions of some characters, making the dissertation much more pleasing to the eye.

Tom Dutton did his best to teach me Tok Pisin before I went into the field.

Moving to a new continent where you have almost no connections is supposed to be hard, but I really enjoyed my time Australia, and in the end leaving was incredibly much harder than ever arriving. So many people became part of my life, and it is sad indeed to have a whole part of your life 17,000 kilometres away. Some of the most important people are Tim Curnow & Tony Liddicoat, Angela Terrill & Michael Dunn, Sinclair Dinnen, Luisa Miceli, Fritz Serzisko, Anna & Andrew Margetts, Jim Grundy & Sandi Bone, John Bowden, Tonya Stebbins, and Glenn Summerhayes. Tim in particular would have his name in gold if I could afford the extra printing cost.

In Sweden, my sister Anne Gailit pulled a heavy load while I was away, taking care of all manner of boring and time-consuming practicalities like income tax forms, renewing my student ID card, emailing me bank statements and all those things that one is only too happy to outsource but which are not so much fun to find on one’s table. She also sent wonderful parcels of sweets and other necessities to the field, and not least, she visited me every year, twice in Australia and twice in New Guinea. In the last week before printing this thesis, she spent several days, evenings and nights with fiddly processing of maps, making the cover background and turning my fuzzy cover layout idea into a file the printers would accept. Acres of gold print are certainly due.
My parents Aia Gailit-Lindström and Pär Lindström also visited, once in Australia and once in New Guinea, and I am particularly happy that they could share my Bimun life for a few weeks. Generally, they have a lot to answer for in my choice of career, in that they fostered inquisitiveness at an early age by resolving to always answer our questions. (But it always seemed to me that they were somehow inexplicably un-enthralled by language). Big thanks to my father also for producing all the basic maps in this book, and for scanning and processing the photos.

Robert Eklund also visited in Australia and twice in New Guinea, and kept sending things to brighten my days; everything from fun articles to a full ring binder of guitar tabulature with a CD when I took up playing the guitar.

My first visitor in the field was my aunt, Sara Lindström, who met up with me in Kavieng the first time I went there. As my ‘anti’ she helped give me social context to the villagers of Bimun, to whom a person without social ties is incomprehensible, and it was nice to share that first experience of Papua New Guinea with her. After I ran out of funding, she suggested a big loan from her pension fund – an offer too good to refuse – which kept me alive for several months.

Ulrika Kvist Darnell has been a friend since my first week of linguistics more than ten years ago, through countless cups of coffee, late nights of studying and singing, and party-fixing galore.

Gunnar Källgren (†) was a source of fun and of social cohesion in the department, of tiding-over loans to poor students and campari-sodas for all. She is sorely missed. Her 386 laptop served me well in New Guinea (though it had to have ice packs to cope with the heat of Kavieng).

In Papua New Guinea, Kevin Ford looked after me with friendly hospitality and kindness in scary Port Moresby. The Chungs were always kind to me when I saw them in New Ireland or Ukarumpa. Thanks are due to Michael Laki at the National Research Institute in Port Moresby and Cnl. Dataona in Kavieng for arranging assorted paperwork for my research permit in an efficient and friendly manner. I wish I could have spent more time at the Department of Language and Literature at the University of Papua New Guinea, where Otto Nekitel (†) and Dicks Thomas received me so well the few times I visited.

I want to thank the sisters of the Sacred Heart in Kavieng, Srs Friederika, Catherine and Celine, for opening their home to me, renting me a spacious room in the convent, which I used whenever I came to town during my first longer stay in the field, and where I could leave my computer and other things when I went to the village.

In my second long fieldtrip, I stayed with Ulrike, Steffen and Rebekka Mitz, a family of German volunteer aid workers in Kavieng. I had my own room in their house, and Steffen even built me a desk. No matter how much I enjoyed life in Bimun, it was always lovely to join in a meal of spaghetti bolognese or pizza and have a glass of wine with friends, listen to Steffen playing the guitar, or go and visit the Villeneuves on the boat while they were there.
I have saved for last the people that have added most to my life in this entire project: the people of Bimun. Suddenly, this white woman arrived in their village, apparently intending to stay for quite a while and presumably requiring food and somewhere to sleep. She said she wanted to do something language-related, but since it was not translation nobody was quite sure what. In this situation, not only did the villagers accept my presence, but everyone did all they could to get my life to function optimally (including building Bimun’s first pit latrine!) and make me feel at home. And I did. I will always carry with me the beauty of life in Bimun, the acceptance, kindness, humour and care of the people, our mutual curiosity about each other and our shared laughs.

Some people became especially important. A very close relationship developed with Roslyn, my sister in Bimun; an undemanding, completely accepting closeness. She is the main reason why coming to Bimun will always be coming home for me. Her husband Abraham not only built my much-loved little house and carried the responsibility for my well-being and safety, but was also a fantastic host to my visitors, especially my parents, putting lots of effort into organising picnics and other activities for their enjoyment, with a keen sense of what would be interesting to the foreign guests. I also want to mention their children, Haybie, Maylyn, Elisa, and my namesake Eva, always fun and always cute.

I owe perhaps the biggest debt of gratitude to Robert Sipa, who was my main informant. His linguistic sensibility and his help in analysing the finer points of grammar have contributed immeasurably to my understanding of Kuot. He spent hours and hours working with me on my veranda and our discussions meandered across many topics linguistic and non-linguistic in the course of my months in Bimun, and made my time there even more enjoyable. Thanks must go also to his family, Baumat, Gensen Oliver and Eskol, for not grudging me the time he spent with me.

I also want to thank the following people for recording stories for me to analyse: Abraham Towil, Adam Mode, Anton Taipan, Avagi Philip, Benson Tomaliu, Bernard Puskin, David Jotham, Desi Bais, Eliaiser Peter, Veronica Galeng, John Sikama, Jonathan, Kristina Dalap, Lakin, Lomlom, Lopap Uasita, Lukas, Martin Kada, Michael Akisman, Rebecka Minamo (†), Molongas, Pauline Kotete, Penga Kapelis, Penias Kotlik, Petrus Anis, Robert Sipa, Roslyn Ngas, Sabuen Esau Lali, Sialis, and Siteon. Big thanks also to Tasen for recording lots of traditional songs. And thanks too to Selina and Monica for food and friendship. I wish I could fit everyone’s name on these pages.

Temaieng ula kakau meun mirier inamaniap onim Bimun, ga Kuorup na mirier navup, me nunamap tung ula mumurut mi ga tara buang iat. Miot na dalap tuo geba busit miakatang.