1 INTRODUCTION

Kuot is a non-Austronesian (Papuan) language spoken by some 1,500 people in north-central New Ireland, Papua New Guinea. It is the only non-Austronesian language in New Ireland Province, but is structurally quite different both from its Austronesian neighbours and from non-Austronesian languages in other areas of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. It is spoken in many situations of daily life, but is losing ground to the English-based creole Tok Pisin, in which all Kuot speakers are fluent. Sadly, Kuot is for the most part not being transmitted to children, and is likely to disappear within the next few decades.

At the time when white people first arrived in the region, there were Kuot speakers on the west coast of New Ireland and in the mountains, but not on the east coast. After the establishment of a German government post in Nusa in 1900 (later moved to the site of the present provincial capital, Kavieng), warfare ceased and roads were built along the coasts. In the following decades, the inland population gradually moved to the coasts, either taking up residence in existing villages or establishing new ones. Today, there are Kuot villages on both coasts but none in the mountains.

The analyses presented in this work are based on original data collected during some 18 months of fieldwork in Papua New Guinea between 1997 and 2000. Most of this time was spent in Bimun village on the west coast of New Ireland, in the south of the Kuot-speaking area.

The present volume covers the following topics. This chapter provides a grammatical overview and discusses Kuot as a linguistic type, names used for Kuot in previous sources, and data and the fieldwork situation. Chapter 2 gives socio-cultural information about the Kuot speakers, in terms of prehistory, history, ethnography, kinship and beliefs, and also discusses dialects and the prognosis of survival of Kuot. Phonology is the subject of Chapter 3. The criteria for word class membership are set out in Chapter 4, which also contains a discussion of the difficulties involved in defining morpheme types. Chapter 5 deals with nouns.¹

1.1 Grammatical overview

This section provides a summary of some of the main features of Kuot grammar with particular attention to areas not treated in separate chapters in this dissertation. A brief discussion of Kuot from a typological point of view is also given.

¹ Lindström (forthc.) is a full descriptive grammar of Kuot.
1.1.1 Nominals

Nouns have the inherent and covert category of gender (masculine or feminine) in the singular, and the context-dependent and overt category of number (singular, dual, plural), where dual and plural but not singular are marked by suffixes. On the nouns themselves, the plural form is referred to as non-singular (nsg), as this form is also the base for the dual.

In most parts of the grammar, there is no singular marking independent of gender, and no gender marking independent of singular, giving the following overall marking system:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>masculine</th>
<th>dual</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>feminine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nouns fall into several declensions. About half the nouns in the language simply have the non-singular ending -(i)p suffixed to the end of the word. I call this the plain declension. Most of the rest have the last syllable or last segment subtracted before the non-singular is added (the special declensions). Mostly, the special declensions are associated with a particular gender. The declensions are not productive, and all loans go into the plain declension. Many kin terms and a few person words form dual and plural/non-singular on a different pattern (cf. 5.4.1).

**Gender** is covert on nouns in the plain declension, but is expressed on verbs (marking subject and object), adjectives (marking subject), possessives (marking possessor and, for some, possessee), prepositions (indexing the nominal) and demonstratives (indexing the nominal).

Agreement and cross-referencing morphology have forms for twelve pronominal categories. They are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Pronominal categories.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 masc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 fem.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is thus no gender distinction in the first or second person. First person dual and plural distinguish inclusive and exclusive (i.e., there are different

---

2 The exceptions are: (i) the third person singular future object marker of verb class II, -ŋ, which does not differentiate m/f; (ii) several forms in the paradigm of alienable possession markers (PossII) do not distinguish gender in a singular possessee. There is also the case of adjectives (iii), which in non-third person subjects are doubly marked for number: once through the portmanteau number/person prefix, and once through a suffix indicating number.
forms for ‘we’ depending on whether the addressee is included or not). The forms for first and second person are recognisable across the system, while third person forms vary a lot; this is particularly true of the singular forms. (All pronominal forms are given in Appendix I.)

There are independent **personal pronouns** only in the first and second person. In the third person, (complex) demonstratives are used in pronominal functions. **Demonstratives** are of two types: simple and complex. There are only four simple forms: Singular masculine (*i*), singular feminine (*u*), dual (*li*) and plural (*mi*). There is no proximity distinction in these forms, which mostly occur together with complex demonstratives. They also function as prefixes within complex demonstrative forms.

Among complex demonstratives there are two types of stems: locationals/directionals (see 1.1.5 below), and some stems which are bound and are only used within the demonstrative paradigm (e.g. *-sik* ‘DEM’). All demonstratives can be used anaphorically, and some are used only in this way and never exophorically (i.e., for deixis in physical space). Person prefixation is obligatory when these forms are used as demonstratives. Demonstratives can be determiners or heads of noun phrases, and are often used also with new referents (similar to the first-mention use of ‘this’ in English).

In the **noun phrase**, demonstratives and cardinal numerals precede a noun head (in that order), while attribute construction and relative clauses follow. Ordinal numerals may precede or follow the head. There are also two particles with complex functions related to the specificity of a referent: *non* and *ba*. The **attribute construction** here refers to a particular way of expressing attributes, marked by the relator *lǝ* prefixed with the same third person prefixes that are used on demonstratives, followed by the attributive expression. The construction is common with predicates such as verbs or adjectives (and is in fact the only way of having an attributive adjective), but can also be used with nouns, quantifiers, or entire clauses. (1) shows an adjective in the attribute construction (cf. also 1.1.8.1 below):

(1) *makabun u-lǝ mukǝ-u*
    woman 3f-RELR pregnant-3f
    ‘pregnant woman’

### 1.1.2 Predicates and verb phrases

This section deals with verbs and adjectives, and the structure of the verb phrase.

#### 1.1.2.1 Verbs and adjectives

A salient feature of Kuot verbs is the the differential ordering of cross-referencing affixes and clitics on verbs, which is lexically governed as has no synchronic function. Different verb stems require subject affixes or enclitics and object affixes to appear in different orders, producing three intransitive classes (I, II and III), paired with four transitive classes (I, IIA, IIB and III). Many stems can be either transitive or intransitive; among these ambitransitives there are
both S=O and S=A types in all verb classes (i.e., those where the subject of the intransitive corresponds to the object of the transitive, as with pak ‘break’ (class I), and those where the subject of the intransitive corresponds to the subject when an object is added, such as uan-la ‘wait’ (class III)).

Class I has subject enclitics and object prefixes. Class II has subject prefixes, but is split in the transitive; in IIa, third person objects are suffixes, and non-third person objects are prefixes; in IIb all objects are prefixes. Class III has subject “infixes” and object prefixes. In adjectives, third person is marked by suffixes alone, while in the first and second person the subject is marked by prefixes. With first/second person prefixes, the suffixes still are retained, now marking number.

(2) | Intransitive | Transitive |
--- | --- | --- |
I. subj. enclitic | pasei=ŋ | a-pasei=ŋ |
obj. prefix | talk=3mS | 3mO-talk=3mS |
‘he talks’ | ‘he talks of him/it(m)’ or ‘he tells him’ |
IIa. subj. prefix | u-libǝ | u-libǝ-o |
obj. suffix in 3 | 3mS-cry | 3mS-cry.for-3fO |
‘he cries’ | ‘he cries for it(f)/her [mourns]’ |
obj. prefix in 1/2 | to-u-libǝ | 1sO-3mS-cry.for |
‘he cries for me’ |
IIb. subj. prefix | u-lo | a-u-lo |
obj. prefix | 3mS-talk | 3mO-3mS-talk |
‘he talks’ | ‘he tells him’ |
III. subj. “infix” | uan-u-la | a-uan-u-la |
obj. prefix | wait-3mS-stm₂ | 3mO-wait-3mS-stm₂ |
‘he waits’ | ‘he waits for him(/it.m)’ |
adj. subj. suffix in 3 | kan-i | — |
big-3m | ‘he (it.m) is big’ |
subj. prefix in 1/2 | to-kan-i | — |
1s-big-sg | ‘I (m/f) am big’ |

Only Class I is productive.

The object prefixes have evolved out of the set of forms that mark inalienable possession (except for the future object forms in class IIa), and the subject en-

---

3 The quotes around “infixes” are because a more useful approach is probably to say that they are prefixes to the second part of the stem, the whole form being the result of compounding or similar in the past. The subject affixes are identical to those of class II and have the same morpho-phonological interactions with the second part of the stem, and it seems likely that class III is historically derived from class II.
clitics of class I appear to have grammaticalised from the forms that mark alienable possession (see 1.1.3 below).

The subject prefixes for first and second person on adjectives have the same form as the object prefixes on verbs, and it is possible that an earlier stage of the language had some form of split S marking, where the same forms marked objects of transitive verbs and subjects of stative verbs (now adjectives).

Several factors combine to suggest that class II is the oldest in the language, followed by class III and adjectives (see below), with class I the most recent one. The most important factors are summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2: Age of verb and adjective classes.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stems have no /s/ or /f/</th>
<th>Subj. affix interacts with stem</th>
<th>Nominalisation is morphological</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class II</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class III</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>(+)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class I</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first two factors are discussed in 3.2.3 and 3.3.3. Regarding nominalisation, class I has zero derivation between verb and noun. For example, class I *ibir* ‘run’ can be used as a verb (‘to run’) or a noun (‘a run’), and *kudat* ‘fence’ likewise can be ‘a fence’ or ‘the action of erecting a fence’. The class has probably developed from a noun+possessive combination although synchronically not all class I verbs can be used as nouns and vice versa. Verb classes II and III have morphological derivation for action nominalisation, whereby an ending -(i)ap is added, and the obligatorily filled subject slot takes the second person singular subject affix. For adjectives -nim is added to the stem:

(3) cl. II -num ‘walk’ cl. III aga-lie ‘rest’
2sS nu-num ‘you walk’ 2sS aga-nu-lie ‘you rest’
NOM nunumiap ‘walking’ NOM aganulap ‘resting’
adj. mur- ‘good’
NOM murinim ‘goodness’

A transitive verb stem will take the ‘dummy object’ prefix u- in the pre-verbal object slot when nominalised (e.g. class I u-fir scraping; see further below).

Verbs have no other non-finite forms.

Adjective stems can form causatives by addition of a suffix -ra and then belong to verb class I (e.g., *kan*– ‘big’ (adjective), *kanira* ‘enlarge; honour’ (verb class I)).

---

4 Nouns which also have uses as verb stems are with few exceptions feminine. This tallies with the fact that the subject enclitics are identical or similar to the PossII forms used with feminine possessees.
Parts of the verbal system show a future vs. non-future distinction (see also 1.1.8.3 below). Some stems in verb classes II and III have stem alternations and / or stress shift for future; subject markers in the first and second person singular and third masculine singular change their vowel from /u/ to /a/; and the subject suffixes of verb class IIa also have different forms for future. Some forms may thus be severally marked, while others are not marked at all, depending on the particular combination of stem and affixes.

One of four non-pronominal prefixes can replace object prefixes in the pre-verbal slot, causing the verb to be syntactically intransitive. They are te- ‘reflexive’, ne- ‘reciprocal’, u- ‘dummy object’ and da- ‘pluractional’. Reflexive is exemplified in (4) with class IIa -bulǝ ‘cut’ and reciprocal in (5) with IIa -nǝm(u) ‘kill, injure’:

(4)  
\[te-u-bulǝ\]  
refl-3mS-cut  
‘he cut himself’

(5)  
\[ne-me-nǝm\]  
rec-3pS-kill/injure  
‘they killed each other’

The reflexive has an interesting use as an impersonal form (which may be regarded as an incipient passive). This is available with future reference only, so that saying that ‘the clothes will wash themselves’ means that the clothes are to be washed, sometimes with an implication that someone present ought to do something about it. There is no possibility of adding an agent phrase. In the non-future, third person plural is used in impersonal senses: e.g., ‘they carried me’ translates as ‘I was born’.

The ‘dummy object’ u- is thus called because it fills the preverbal object slot of a transitive stem when it is used in an intransitive construction. The stem is still semantically transitive, but is rendered syntactically intransitive in a particular instance of use. As mentioned above, u- is used in the nominalisation of transitive stems. It is also used when a non-specific object is expressed as an oblique, marked by an inalienable possessive (Poss I) rather than cross-referenced. This is shown in (6) a., contrasted with b. which has the full core argument cross-referencing (cf. 1.1.8 below on core vs. oblique arguments):

(6)  
a.  
\[me-la=r mǝn u-pit=meŋ \]  
‘they went (and) cut firewood’; ‘they went firewood-cutting’

b.  
\[me-la mǝ-pit=meŋ \]  
3pS-go 3pO-cut.firewood=3pS firewood.nsg  
‘they went (and) cut (the) firewood’

The ‘pluractional’ da- is somewhat less common. It indicates plurality associated with the action in some way. For instance, of a dog that bites a lot (7) can be used, and we also find it in the occasional nominalisation, such as the one in (8), which is based on -nǝm(u) ‘kill, injure’:
1.1.2.2 The verb phrase

In the verb phrase, only the head is obligatory. Other elements as applicable occur in the following order: the first element is the periphrastic future marker e(ba), followed by auxiliary verbs or particles, then serial verbs and last the head.

Auxiliaries encode mood and aspect senses such as habitual (particle buat, verb class II -me) and ‘want; be about to’ (particle nǝmo and verb class II -ga), while serial verbs are limited to ‘go’ and ‘come’ (-la ‘go’, mu-o and -op ‘come’). There is further a particle mǝn giving continuous (progressive) aspect which can occur either before or after auxiliaries and serial verbs and appears to be fairly new to the system. We also find an aspect enclitic =rǝ (=arǝ=/r) which attaches to the first constituent of the phrase (unless that constituent is mǝn, in which case it attaches to the following constituent). The functions of this aspect marker include perfect-like and completive-like uses, but it is difficult to characterise fully and to label, as it has weak semantics and interacts with predicate semantics. It is therefore simply glossed as ‘ASPect’ here. (The same slot is used by adverbial enclitics; cf. 1.1.6 below.)

The only syntactic difference between verbs and adjectives is that future is marked periphrastically twice for adjectives, with e(ba) as for verbs, and with an additional ba following the head. In this, adjectives are like other non-verbal predicates.

Non-verbal predicates can be of a variety of word classes, and only a couple will be illustrated here. Among nouns, some take class I verbal morphology when used as predicates, and a handful take the same first and second person marking as adjectives. The majority, however, are not morphologically marked for predicate function. Aspect and tense marking function as in other predicate phrases. Future marking has the extra ba after the head. The following example illustrates a noun phrase (consisting of a single noun) in predicate function with future marking:

(9)  Eba afǝrǝt ba. 
     FUT rain FUT2 
     ‘(there) will be rain.’

1.1.3 Possessives

There are two full sets of possessive markers indexing possessor for all 12 person/number/gender categories. The first, PossI, is for inalienable possession, which in Kuot entails body parts and all other part–whole relations (but not kin). PossI also has a variety of other functions, marking e.g. material and instrument and a general associative (much like compounds in Germanic lan-
The alienable possessives (PossII) index both possessor and possessee (only third person referents can be possessed). PossII is used for alienable ownership and kin, and also has some benefactive uses. These forms are of more recent origin than PossI, and appear to have been formed from the latter plus other person-marking material present in the language. The PossII set is most likely the source of the subject enclitics of verb class I.

PossI and PossII employ the same construction:

\[
\text{POSSESSEE MARKER POSSESSOR}
\]

Since the markers index possessor, they can also be used as possessive pronouns (giving the structure POSSESSEE MARKER), and this is the default for first and second person. The choice between PossI and PossII is semantic, in the sense that the same noun can take either coding depending on whether it is a part of something or alienably possessed, in a given instance:

(10) \[ \text{pupu a kumurot} \]

\[ \text{meat 3m.PossI pig(m)} \]

‘pork’

(11) \[ \text{pupu aŋ Abraham} \]

\[ \text{meat 3m.PossII.s A.} \]

‘Abraham’s (piece of) meat’

There are also special interrogative forms (‘whose’), agreeing with the possessed in number and gender. No nouns are obligatorily possessed. The forms are given in Appendix I.

1.1.4 Prepositions

Kuot has ten prepositions. Two have no indexing affixes and differ syntactically from the rest: \( \text{ga} \) ‘and’, which can be used in the sense ‘with’, and \( \text{onim} \) which indicates origin in space or time. The rest index a following noun by affixes expressing number, gender and person; some do so obligatorily, others optionally. If the referent is pronominal, it is expressed as an affix:

(12) \[ \text{to-buo *bo turuo} \]

\[ \text{1s-on on 1s} \]

‘on me’

If a nominal following a preposition is relativised, the preposition is always indexed for that nominal (unless it is \( \text{ga} \) or \( \text{onim} \)), here \( \text{dram} \) (f):

---

5 An alienable – inalienable distinction in possessives is associated with Austronesian-speaking areas of Papua New Guinea, and it is possible that Kuot has been influenced by contact in this respect. However, the distinction in neighbouring languages is quite different: in Nalik and Madak, inalienable possession encodes both kin and body parts, and at least some inalienably possessed nouns appear to be obligatorily possessed. The structure of the morphological expression of the two categories is also different in those languages.
1.1.5 Locationals and directionals

Like many languages in Oceania, Kuot has a set of deictic forms that encode not only a referent’s distance from the deictic centre, but also the direction, and to an extent elevation. The Kuot forms I call location/directional are used in adverbial functions, and have seven basic senses (ten forms). There are locational senses such as ‘here’ (to) and ‘there’ (tie), but also more complex directional ones such as ‘down; seawards; northwest’ (-dǝŋ), ‘up; uphill’ (tuan), and ‘other way; southeast’ (-ma). Figure 1 illustrates the use of the three most basic terms.

The form -dǝŋ ‘down’ is used both for northwesterly direction along the coast and for the direction towards the beach as far as the water’s edge. The form tuan ‘up’ is used for the mountains and also onto the sea from the beach, but some way from the coast the sea goes down again, as shown in Figure 2.

To the basic forms other morphemes can be added, indicating relative distance etc. The morphology in this area is rather irregular and no examples will be given here.

---

6 “Directional” here refers to the fact that they indicate the direction, rather than just distance, from the deictic centre, but the term does not necessarily imply movement.
All the stems in this set (in their simple or complex form) can be affixed with third person prefixes and used as demonstratives (cf. 1.1.1 above). Note the difference in use as locational/directional vs. demonstrative:

(14)  u-on+ma  tie
     3mS-sit  there
     ‘he sits/sat there’

(15)  u-on+ma  i-tie
     3mS-sit  3m-there
     ‘he/that one sits/sat’

(16)  u-on+ma  [i-tie  mikana]
     3mS-sit  3m-there  man
     ‘the/that man sits/sat’

1.1.6  Adverbs and adverbial clitics

There is a fairly rich set of adverbs in Kuot, covering categories such as time and manner. Some appear to be related to words in other word classes, and many end in /t/ which may at one stage have been an adverb-forming derivation, but there is synchronically no productive way of forming adverbs. Adverbs are invariant in form, and relatively free in syntactic terms, although there is a preference for the second position in the predicate.

There is also a set of six adverbial enclitics which attach to the first constituent in the phrase to which they belong (and thereby provide a nice criterion for phrase-hood). The continuous aspect particle $\text{m}_\text{ǝ}$ is not counted when “first constituent” is sought. The enclitics have meanings such as ‘just’, ‘now’, ‘still; yet; first’, ‘emphatic’ (example (17)), ‘also’ and ‘a little’ (example (18)). The aspect enclitic $=\text{r}_\text{ǝ}$ occurs in the same a lot as the adverbial clitics, but is mutually incompatible with them.

1.1.7  Negation

There are several types of negation in Kuot, and most have an association with non future verbal morphology, even in future temporal reference. The most general negator is $\text{t}_\text{ǝ}le$, which negates any type of predicate. It occurs before the negated constituent:

(17)  $\text{t}_\text{ǝ}le=\text{kan}  [u-me  ubi]$
     NEG=EMPH  3mS-HAB  work=Ø
     ‘He didn’t use to work’

(18)  $\text{t}_\text{ǝ}le$  kakarat,  kakkaliat=arokan.
     NEG  near  far=a.little.(more)
     ‘it wasn’t near, it was rather far.’

There is a variant $\text{t}_\text{ǝ}la$ which is used in future contexts (with non-future verbal morphology).

An interesting alternative for general negation is $\text{man}_i$, normally the question word ‘what’. It is particularly common in the northern Kuot-speaking area. The use as a negation appears to have developed from an ironic formulation (something like ‘you think what, he worked??’ meaning ‘he didn’t work’), and retains
traces of question intonation. It also differs from *tolo* in that *tolo* is part of the phrase it negates, as evidenced by the placement of adverbial clitics like =*kan* ‘EMPH’ (as in (17)), while *mani* is not:

(19) **mani** *u-la=kan u-ona*  
what 3mS-go=EMPH 3mS-sit  
‘he didn’t go and sit down’

The negative existential *karuk* ‘is not’ or ‘there isn’t’ is also used as ‘no’. In the negative existential use, the thing which is not is sometimes expressed with the preposition *me* ‘to, for’, but more often with a PossI possessive, as in this example:

(20) **Karuk**=*kan ma* *lop tiro*  
is.not=EMPH 3p.PossI child.nsg here  
‘There are no children here’

The types of negation so far mentioned are associated with a particular intonation contour (see 3.6).

Prohibitive (i.e. negative imperative) is expressed by the particle *buat*, which is also used with non-future forms (while imperative in positive polarity is expressed only by future forms of the verbal morphology, where available):

(21) **Buat** *ma-mi-lo!*  
but  **Ma-mi-loa!**  
PROHIB 3pO-2pS-tell 3pO-2pS-tell.fut  
‘Don’t tell them!’ ‘Tell them!’

The apprehensive marker *bun* (and related forms), sometimes translated ‘lest’, is also used with non-future verbal morphology:

(22) **U-rau, n*omo* **bun** me-*n*omo-*a* ga me-*o.*  
3mS-be.afraid COMPL APPR 3pS-kill-3mO and 3pS-eat.3sO  
‘He was afraid lest they kill and eat him.’

(The future forms of the verbs here would be *me-n*omo-*η* and *me-ony.* )

### 1.1.8 Clauses

A clause can minimally consist of a verb (or adjective) with cross-referencing morphology. Clauses with two full noun phrases do occur but not very often, one or zero being more common.

The unmarked constituent order in Kuot is predicate-initial with optional noun phrases for core arguments: V (S) (O). Subject and object are cross-referenced by affixes/enclitics on the verb:

(23) *o-ikat=on* Adam [muabari *ay*]  
3fO-check=3mS A. sun/clock(f) 3m.PossI.s  
‘Adam checked his watch’

(24) [n*omo o-u-uluan*] [i-*tie* non *kuraima*] nirobu  
want 3fO-3mS-follow 3m-there ‘some’ bush.spirit(m) coconut.palm(f)  
‘this bush spirit wanted to follow the coconut palm (up)’

*Buai* is homonymous with and possibly related to the particle marking habitual.
Only noun phrases which are coreferent with cross-referencing morphemes can occur bare in the clause, and are understood to be in a core argument function. All other roles of noun phrases must be marked by prepositions or possessives. Core arguments are thus identified by the presence of cross-referencing and the absence of prepositions or possessives with any coreferent noun phrases.

The subject of a non-verbal/non-adjectival predicate can be said to have defective subject properties: while it is bare in the clause, there is no possibility of cross-referencing. Here kuraibun ‘spirit woman’ is predicated of the phrase u-sik makabun ‘that woman’:

(25) [kuraibun] [u-sik makabun].
spirit.woman 3f-DEM woman ‘that woman (was) a spirit woman.’

A common permutation to clause structure involves topicalisation through fronting. Either a subject or an object noun phrase may be fronted, but not both. The construction is marked by the relator (RELR) lǝ, or by ga (otherwise ‘and’), with no difference in meaning. In the following example, the subject of an intransitive verb has been topicalised:

(26) Samǝtmǝrun lǝ tǝle [u-me ubi].
S. RELR NEG 3mS-HAB work=Ø.
‘Samǝtmǝrun didn’t use to work.’

Adverbials, in particular time adverbials, are frequently topicalised too, and may or may not be marked by lǝ or ga. If both an argument noun phrase and an adverbial are fronted, the adverbial comes first and the argument before the predicate. Here there is a time adverbial and a topicalised object:

(27) Na tǝrǝ tinan, [u-to gas]
in time before 3f-here story(f)
lǝ [mǝn pa-me-lo] [eia-p pam].
RELR CONT 1pxO-3pS-tell grand.relation-nsg 1px.PossII.pl
‘Before, our forefathers were telling us this story.’

Possessee can be topicalised out of possessive constructions too. In the following example, the topicalisation and marking with the relator creates a copulative construction from the otherwise similar complex noun phrase [[U-tie ubi] anj [tata anj]] ‘that garden of his uncle’s’:

(28) [U-tie ubi] lǝ anj [tata anj].
3f-there garden RELR 3m.PossII.3s maternal.uncle 3m.PossII.3s
‘That garden (was) his maternal uncle’s.’

In one example, there appears to be recursive topicalisation, where the possesor has been topicalised out of a possessive construction (naga anj i-sik mikana) which is in itself fronted:

---

8 The exceptions are inherently locative nouns (which include place names), and locative complements of the inherently directional verbs -la ‘go’ and ma-o ‘come from’.
There is no formal subordination of clauses in Kuot. With the possible exception of temporal adverbial clauses, all clauses can have aspectual and temporal marking in the same way. Clauses are conjoined with ga ‘and’, pa ‘but’, lǝ ‘relator (RELR)’, o ‘or’. Temporal adverbial clauses can be coded by the relator lǝ or the word tǝrho ‘time’. Purpose clauses are indicated by the preposition me ‘to, for’. Prepositions generally require nominal complements (as do possessives), and would normally have to be followed by nominalisations, but the nominal restriction can be circumvented with me by using the future marker e(ba), which allows for the use of a full clause following me:

(30) me-la na [i-tie nǝp] me [eba o-kosar=meŋ] ubi.
    3pS-go at 3m-there place(m) for FUT 3fO-make=3pS garden(f)
    ‘they went to that place to make a garden.’

1.1.8.1 Relative clauses

Relative clauses follow their heads, and are marked with the relator lǝ. Here the relative clause modifies the possessor (lǝmot ‘python’) in the complex object noun phrase:

(31) o-i-op [u-sik sǝgor aŋ i-sik lǝmot
    3fO-3fS-find 3f-DEM egg(f) 3m.PossII.s 3m-DEM python(m)
    [lǝ u-abu-o] ].
    RELR 3mS-put-3fO
    ‘she found this egg of this python (who) had put (=laid) it.’

The relative clause is very similar to two other constructions: topicalisation and the attribute construction. It differs from topicalisation only in that there is another clause which is interpreted as the main clause, while the relative clause is understood to modify a nominal constituent.9 The only structural difference between a relative clause and a clause in the attribute construction is that the relator takes person prefixes in the latter function (cf. 1.1.1 above). Semantically, attributes tend to express properties perceived of as somehow integral to the referent, while relative clauses tend to be more general in this regard.

Nominals in many types of roles can be relativised: subjects (transitive or intransitive), objects, possessors and obliques marked with possessive markers, and noun phrases out of prepositional phrases.

1.1.8.2 Questions

Kuot has question words for ‘who’ (aka, noun (m)), ‘what’ (mani, noun (m)), ‘do what’ (-amani, verb (class II)), ‘whose’ (auaŋ etc., possessive), ‘where’ (la-

9 There are probably intonational clues to the function as relative clause, but these remain to be investigated.
kum, adverb), ‘be where’ (lak-, adjective), ‘when; how many’ (namuk, adverb). Mani ‘what’ has the form man when used together with a noun (man kukuom? ‘what/which tree?’). ‘How’ is expressed by ‘like what’, are mani, and ‘why’ by ‘for what’, me mani.

Aka ‘who’ and mani ‘what’ tend to be topicalised (fronted), but can be left in the normal position of the item asked about; the interrogative adverbs lakum and namuk can be topicalised too (namuk is usually topicalised in the sense ‘when’). When fronted, question words are treated the same as other constituents and the construction is marked with the relator lǝ. Question-word questions have their own intonation contour (see 3.6.).

The interrogative nouns and adverbs have indefinite uses corresponding to ‘whoever’, ‘whatever’, ‘wherever’, ‘whenever/however-many’. Mani can further be used as a negator as described in 1.1.7 above.

Yes/no questions are marked only by intonation; primarily a sharp rise on the last syllable (see 3.6). If an affirmative answer is expected a tag a can be added to the end of the sentence – this then carries the high pitch. In replying, aa ‘yes’ to a question in negative polarity confirms the proposition including the negation (i.e., ‘yes’ to the question ‘Won’t you come tomorrow?’ means that the person will not come).

1.1.8.3 Tense/irrealis

The only temporal distinction that is consistently marked in Kuot is future vs. non-future. The category called future here could also be analysed as irrealis, but each analysis has some problems and I have chosen to use the label “future” for this grammatical category. There are two expressions of future: the particle e(ba), and some verbal morphology (see 1.1.2 above).

The future morphological alternations are the only marking of imperative (in positive polarity). They are sometimes also the only expression of immediate future. They are further triggered by the use of the future particles e (immediate future) or eba (future), and are optionally used after the auxiliary verb -ga ‘want; be about to’.

Eba in turn has several contexts of use. It always conditions future verbal morphology. In addition to plain future temporal reference, it is used to mark a kind of procedural habitual; in clause complements of the preposition me as mentioned above; in clause complements of the verb puo ‘be able to’ (with the relator lǝ); and optionally in if–then constructions (more often in the ‘then’ clause but possible in either or both).

Future morphology and eba do not co-occur with several types of negation: the future negator tǝla, the prohibitive marker buat, and the apprehensive marker bun (and related forms).

1.2 Kuot as a linguistic type

Predicate-initial languages are rare in the region, and Kuot is possibly unique among non-Austronesian (Papuan) languages in this respect.
The Polynesian outlier languages of Takuu (Mortlock) and Nukuria (Fead) in Bougainville Province (Papua New Guinea) are probably VSO since this is the dominant structure in Polynesian languages, but I have no specific information on these. The nearest other VSO language would be Austronesian Roviana in the New Georgia island group in the Solomon Islands. Surrounding Austronesian languages on New Ireland are all SVO. As regards other non-Austronesian languages in the region, most seem to be SVO (Baining, Taulil and Butam, Sulka, Kol, Ata and Anêm in New Britain, and Bilua in the Solomon Islands; Taulil seems to have the option VS for some stative clauses), or SOV (Rotokas, Nasioi, Buin and Motuna on Bougainville, and Lavukaleve, Savosavo and Touo (Baniata) in the Solomon Islands). Non-Austronesian (Papuan) languages on New Guinea island are predominantly verb-final.

Although word order may not always be the best indicator of other structures in a language, it may be interesting to look at how various features in Kuot pattern together.

In Greenberg’s first formulation of word order universals (Greenberg 1990 [1963]), a harmonic VSO language should have the features given in the left-hand column in Table 3 (which is not exhaustive – only the major and most often quoted features are included). In terms of these features, Kuot shows up as a harmonic language, matching all the major features, as indicated by pluses in the second column.

Table 3: Greenberg’s harmonic VSO language and Kuot.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greenberg’s typical VSO features</th>
<th>Kuot</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>prepositions (Pr)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possessor follows possessee (NG)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>concomitant with prepositions according to G.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attributive Adj follows N (NA)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>attributive use is non-basic for Kuot adjectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative clause follows N (N-Rel)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflected auxiliary precedes verb</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that Greenberg’s parameters are essentially statistical, recording only the tendency for certain features to co-occur (in a sample of only

10 A web page giving samples of the Takuu language suggests that it is verb-initial but the data is inconclusive (http://members.tripod.com/~Lakoa_Fitina/Takuulan.htm, 18 April 2002).

11 Unfortunately, most of these languages are as yet very incompletely described. In most cases I have gleaned the information from a few reproduced sentences, so it is not certain that these are representative of a larger sample. Only for Bilua and Lavukaleve did I have access to full grammars: Terrill (1999) for Lavukaleve and Obata (2000) for Bilua.
30 languages). Others have proposed various explanations for these tendencies.\(^\text{12}\)

On another approach we may look at Kuot in terms of headedness, where a less consistent picture emerges. While the clause is left-headed, the noun phrase has the head (normally the noun) in the middle somewhere to the right, and predicate phrases have the head (normally the verb) as the last constituent.

Kuot is similarly split if we look at head–dependent marking (roughly following Nichols (1986)). Kuot is head-marking on the clause level, i.e., grammatical roles are indicated by cross-referencing affixes on the verb for up to two arguments (word order too indicates grammatical role where two argument noun phrases are present), and there is no case marking. Within a noun phrase, on the other hand, it is the dependents of the noun that are marked for agreement, and in the singular, gender is marked on dependents only and not on the noun (while non-singular number is explicitly marked on the noun as well as on dependents). As prepositions often agree with the following noun, prepositional phrases would have to be seen as head-marking as well. Relativisation is unmarked in this respect.

### 1.3 Language name and previous sources

It appears that most of the language names in New Ireland were applied by the Australian administration some time in the 1940’s or later. In 1962, Capell wrote:

“There is much confusion in the naming of languages in the northern half of New Ireland. In earlier periods, village names were generally used, e.g., Lugagun. In recent years the custom has grown up and has been followed in Australian Government circles of using a word which means ‘my child’ as a language name, so that Lugagun becomes Natik [sic!] and Kanalu becomes Barok.”

(Capell 1962a: 101) [“Natik” here should be “Nalik”].

Most of the early administration records were destroyed by the Japanese during the second world war, but from 1945–1975 there are reports from government officers in the Australian administration, who carried out yearly or twice-yearly patrols through the territory (see 2.3). I have not come across any information as to the origins of the naming practice, although similar practices were used to name languages in Australia. Any official comments on the topic in documents of the administration for the Mandated territory of New Guinea are likely to have been destroyed during the Japanese occupation of Rabaul during the War in the Pacific (WWII).

There was clearly no principle of language naming before 1930. Both Chinnery ([1930?]?) and Powdermaker (1971 [1933]), carried out their respective fieldwork in 1929 (in Powdermaker’s case until 1930), and neither makes any mention of such a principle, but continue using village names. Powdermaker even

\(^{12}\) For a critique of the underlying assumptions and discussion of alternative approaches, see Dryer (1995).
INTRODUCTION: LANGUAGE NAME AND PREVIOUS SOURCES

makes the observation that the linguistic units had no names (p. 31). Lewis reports that the Nochi speakers in 1954 simply used an expression meaning ‘Interior People’ for the Kuots (Lewis 1969: 27 and map on p. 29).

When language names were introduced, languages on offshore islands remained called by the name of the island or island group. Madak (Mandak) to the south of the Kuot area refers to a group of languages rather than a single language, and they were presumably grouped under the same label as a consequence of sharing the word for ‘boy, child; young man’. The Madak language spoken next to the Kuot area is known as Lamasong (or Lamusong; Lavatbura-Lamusong) after prominent villages. Although it is linguistically incorrect, I will refer to any (or all) of these languages as Madak, since this is the name that people use locally today, and I was normally not able to verify what precise area was referred to. In most instances it would have been the area adjacent to Kuot.

As regards Kuot, there is a discrepancy between the name Kuot and the word for ‘boy; young man’, which is kulot. In patrol reports from the 1950’s, Kulot is indeed used. A report from 1948/49 notes that the “Kulot” language is used from Bimun to Naiama on the west coast. Patrols at this time generally fail to notice the existence of Kuot-speaking villages on the east coast – since those villages are interspersed with Nalik and Nochi villages it is likely that Kuot speakers were bilingual and used the more established languages of the area. During this time it also appears that attempts were made to align administrative divisions with language boundaries. “Kulot” became a census division and was still referred to by the administration by that name in 1972/73 (report 5).13 The name Kulot remains as the name of the community school near Lamou village (in the Madak-speaking area just south of Bimun).

In the 1960’s and 70’s, linguists start using the term Kuot, as can be seen in Table 4 below. None of the sources makes reference to the origin of this name, nor indeed any comment at all concerning its introduction despite the administration’s continued use of Kulot. The only clue to it being an indigenous name is an intriguing mention in a patrol report from as early as 1949/50 (report 13) of a “mountain tribe ‘Guat’”. ‘Guat’ is almost certainly the officer’s interpretation of “Kuot”. The relevant section of the report concerns the relocation of Liedan village on the east coast, whose inhabitants apparently wanted to change from one coastal site to another. The report says: “... village of LIANDAN. These people, of the mountain tribe ‘Guat’ were induced to come down to the coast years ago, and have now decided to abandon their old village site on an exposed headland...”

The occurrence of Kuot (as ‘Guat’) in the patrol report suggests that it was around fairly early as a name for some grouping of Kuot-speaking people, although it is by now impossible to establish precisely what meaning or domain

13 By 1973–74 the census divisions had changed and the Kuot area became part of the Central West Coast and Central East Coast divisions, possibly as part of the preparations for independence.
of usage it had. Unlike *kulot*, Kuot does not have a meaning known to present-day speakers. The only explanation for this name that I was able to get from speakers came from one elderly man who suggested it might be because of the use of *kuot!* as an exclamation expressing surprise or incredulity. Madak speakers use *madak!* (and in Tok Pisin ‘man!’ is used). This is a possibility, but it is equally possible that these uses are in fact derived from the now established names in use for the languages and peoples. It also seems likely that if such usage was salient enough for passing government officers to pick up, it would have been found in some older sources by anthropologists, and would perhaps have been noted as something used jokingly of neighbouring peoples and so forth. I have not come across any such reference, even for the better-studied Madak, Nalik and Nochi populations.

Another name identifying the Kuot language and perhaps also its speakers among the Kuots themselves is that of *Kun*, a former bush village near the present site of Liedan on the east coast, to which all higher-level clans trace their origins. We thus get expressions such as the following, with Kun taking the slot otherwise occupied by Kuot:

(32) ties onim Kun
    language ORIG K.
    ‘the Kun language’

Village names are still used, especially among elderly people, who will say for example ‘the language of Lesu’ for Nochi, although it is known that it is spoken in more than one village. The use of Kun is a little different: in my understanding there is something defining about the village of Kun because of the clans originating from there. In contrast, I believe that the use of Lesu in the example with Nochi is simply a case of using a name of a part to designate the whole.

The fact that languages traditionally had no names is likely to be associated with their low identificational value in this area; cf. 2.7.5.

Table 4 is an overview of early mentions and sources on the Kuot people and language, with the names used. It is followed by brief comment on each. Secondary sources are included as they are frequently based on notes by earlier researchers rather than published work, and therefore sometimes include material not previously published.

**Table 4: Earlier work or mentions of Kuot (diacritics mostly omitted).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>name(s) used for Kuot</th>
<th>year of data coll.</th>
<th>year of publ.</th>
<th>comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walden</td>
<td>Paneras, Nayama, Laurup</td>
<td>1907–09</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### INTRODUCTION: LANGUAGE NAME AND PREVIOUS SOURCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Language Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Chinnery   | Limalaua, Letatan | 1929 1930 | “...bush languages which appear in purest form in the Limalaua group of people who live in the bush and on the coast near Fatmilak. [...] Limalaua (a bush language) is said to extend to Yendat and possibly to Lemo, Bimun, Panaras, Patlinger and other villages to the west.”
| Meyer      | Panaras       | 1932    |                                                                  |
| Kluge      | Kul, Letátan, Naiyáma | 1941 (MS) | using Walden’s(??) and Friederici’s notes |
| Loukotka   | Naiyáma, Letátan | 1957    | citing Kluge                                                        |
| Capell     | Panaras       | 1950’s? 1962a | uses his own notes on Kuot (never published in full)            |
| Capell     | Panaras       | 1962b   |                                                                  |
| Loukotka   | Panaras (dialects: Kul, Naiyáma, Letátan) | 1962    |                                                                  |
| Laufer     | Ungana-Panaras (Meyer) = Nayama, Panaras, Letatan (Friederici); Panaras (Lakaff, Peekel) | 1966    | quoting Meyer and Friederici                                      |
| Lithgow & Claassen | Kuot (Panaras) | 1966 1968 | “KUOT – only one language, which is known by this name or Panaras. There are 712 speakers.” (p. 3) |
| Capell     | Panaras       | 1969    |                                                                  |
| Capell     | Panaras       | 1971    |                                                                  |
| Beaumont   | Kuot (incl. on maps); Panaras in quoting | 1972    | Bibliography and survey of language work done in New Ireland     |

---

14 I am not familiar with the names Baubun, Nárum, Niáre, Naime, Lágimo, Lauéra, or Panabírat. If the notes are correct, it is likely that the majority of these were bush villages and no longer exist. Note however that Kul/Kun, which is a known site, is not included in Friederici’s published material, although Kluge, using Friederici’s notes, does include that location.

15 I am not familiar with the name Yendat. Lemo is Lemau/Lamou, which is Madak-speaking and included as such, called Lamau (p. 12). Patlinger should be Patlangat.
Further place names given me by Kuot speakers for olden-day settlements in the mountains (no longer, if ever, found on maps) are: Taula, Ti, Nakadi, Louarōnāk (Bolouaranak), Bouoraba, Boderi, Tumauna, Buada, and Ilum Kumebun. These were all in the southern part of the Kuot area, subsumed under the name Taula by the administration (who had a hut there). The populations from there established the coastal villages Bimun and Kabil in the south; Nakasalēkāp somewhat further north; Malua near Lesu (Powdermaker 1971 [1933]: 38); and Lakkuanip not far from Liedan in the northern part of the Kuot-speaking territory. On the west coast, the administration also used the name Neiruaran for a portion of the coast between Panaras and Patlangat.

Walden’s 1911 report on Kuot is only 18 lines long, but is an impressively accurate and relevant description of the language, given that Walden’s task was to collect all he could on all the languages and the ethnography of all of northern New Ireland including New Hanover in two years. It is worth translating the paragraph in its entirety here:

“The interior, the mountains between Hamba and Kafkaf, and the stretch of the west coast between Lemau and Lamassaleng is of particular linguistic interest since here, in the villages Paneras, Nayama, Laurup etc., a language has survived which does not belong to the family of Melanesian or Malayo-Polynesian languages, but according to the conventional terminology is to be counted among Papuan languages. The verb has several different classes according to the prefixing, suffixing, or infixing of pronouns. Two grammatical genders which, apart from the pronouns, are marked in formatives to do with nouns and verbs, indicate that the language is more closely related to that of the Baining in Neu-Pommern [New Britain], of the Monumbo of Neu-Guinea etc.” (Walden 1911: 30)\(^\text{16}\)

Friederici notes (p. 280) that Kuot does not go across the island (as at that time there were no Kuot villages on the east coast). He contrasts it with another linguistic group at Muliamata, saying that their language area does not stretch across as they are clearly recently immigrated (the language is shared with the Tanga

\(^{16}\) Unfortunately, Walden was killed in the first world war, and does not seem to have published more than the four pages from which the Kuot information is taken. Nevermann later published some of his ethnographic notes (Walden & Nevermann 1941).
and Feni (Anir) island groups), while by contrast “the Papuan-speaking Pána-ras–Nayama people have evidently been pushed back from one coast by younger Melanesian elements”. He gives a short word list mainly consisting of terms to do with outrigger canoes.\(^{17}\)

Chinnery ([1930?]) conducted an anthropological survey along the island, with the purpose of investigating the causes and circumstances of the falling population figures. He took down a number of lists of kin terms, including two Kuot ones in the given locations.

Meyer (1932) talks of the linguistic endeavours of the catholic missionaries in northern New Britain, whose territory also included New Ireland. He discusses the study of the Baining in New Britain, and relates how further Papuan languages were found, such as Sulka, and writes “vielleicht auch bei den Panaras-leuten auf Neuirland” (p. 189). His map distinguishes Papuan, Papuan-Melanesian, and Melanesian languages, also marking languages with Polynesian elements. Kuot (Panaras) is classified as Papuan-Melanesian. Meyer also gives the beginning of the Lord’s Prayer (p. 196) – it is not clear who provided the data for it.

Kluge collected a very large number of numerical systems. The Kuot data is from the Deutsche Marine-Expedition 1907 for Kul (Kun), probably Walden’s data, supplied to him by Nevermann, and from Friederici’s unpublished notes for Letatan and Naiama. The source gives the numbers 1–10 for each location (and also 11, 30, 100 for Kul).

Loukotka (1957: 59) writes that according to Kluge there are three non-Melanesian languages of New Ireland: Nusa, Naiyama and Letatan. Loukotka’s 14 lines on New Ireland contain numerous mistakes, and are probably best ignored.\(^{18}\)

Capell (1962a) uses only his own unpublished notes as a source on Kuot (Panaras; p. 103); the list of first lines of the Lord’s prayer (including Kuot) is taken from Meyer (without acknowledgement; p. 93).

Capell’s long article in Current Anthropology (1962b) cites Loukotka citing Kluge, but says the author himself has only been able to locate one non-Austronesian language, Panaras, “which is spoken in a small area of the central


\(^{17}\) Friederici collected much more extensive materials on the languages encountered during his explorations than were ever published (first in 1904 with Dr Karl Sapper, then as leader of the Hanseatische Süsseec-Expedition in 1908); however funds did not allow the publication of more than a fraction of the materials from the second expedition (Friederici 1912: 318–319). Loukotka (1962) reports that he and Kluge worked on Friederici’s very extensive linguistic notes during the second world war, but that the notes were lost following Friederici’s death (which was in 1947).

\(^{18}\) Apart from smaller mistakes, Loukotka gives the wrong number of non-Austronesian languages, includes a number series for Nusa which is not reported by the authors whose materials he uses, and credits himself with the first report of a non-Melanesian language in New Ireland.
west coast of the island” (p. 375; Panaras is also shown on the map on p. 374, and mentioned on p. 381). Other scholars comment (e.g. Loukotka; see below) and in his reply, Capell makes the observation that the non-Austronesian languages of New Britain, the Solomon Islands and New Ireland are very different (“bearing little resemblance to each other in vocabulary or in structure”), and remarks that there was quite probably great linguistic diversity in the region prior to Austronesian arrival (“That the same state of affairs existed very probably in pre-AN Melanesia does not seem to be at all an extraordinary theory – albeit it is admitted to be a theory...”; p. 423). He further notes (p. 424) that “the four characteristics of [non-Austronesian] languages can only be regarded as typological. Whether they contain anything of historical value has yet to be determined [...] The four points mentioned contrast with the [Austronesian] morphological structure and thus serve as a line of demarcation between [Austronesian] and [non-Austronesian] – nothing more.”

Loukotka (1962: 415), commenting on Capell (1962b), amends his 1957 statement to say that the non-Austronesian language in New Ireland is indeed Panaras, with three special dialects: Kul, Naiyama, and Letátan. Choosing these as dialects is simply an effect of sampling – these were the places where Friederici and Walden collected the data that Loukotka used.

Laufer (1966: 125–128) reviews literature on New Ireland, mainly that produced by missionaries of the Herz-Jesu mission. On Kuot (with the names given in the table) he cites the references by Meyer and Friederici given above, but also two unpublished sources which I have not seen references to elsewhere. One is a lost manuscript: P.J. Lakaff Wörter sammlung der Panaras-Sprache. The other is also a manuscript: P.G. Peekel Grammatik und Wörterbuch der Panaras-Sprache. There is no indication where the latter may be held, and it is possible that it is also lost by now.

Lithgow and Claassen (1968) conducted a one-month survey of New Ireland in 1966, using the first 120 words from the survey word list given in Bee & Pence (1962). They then computed cognacy rates between the different languages, arriving at the conclusion that Kuot makes up a family of its own, the Madak languages another one, and all the rest a third one which they call Patpatar after

---

19 The four features are listed on p. 371; briefly they are 1. noun classes involving concord of some kind; 2. a tendency to mark number as well as class in nouns ... or with a demonstrative particle; 3. complex verbal systems unless there is noun classification; if so, the noun class of subject and object is often marked by affixes; 4. SOV preferred word order and postpositions. Since Kuot has gender, 1 is applicable, as is 3 (although the value of the generalisation is perhaps not obvious). Kuot gender is not marked on nouns, and it has VSO word order and prepositions.

20 Peekel was transferred to a district including the Kuot-speaking west coast in 1930, so it is likely that his writings would be from after that year. Neither manuscript is mentioned in Hüskes (1932), which has a bibliography of works by Catholic missionaries including manuscripts until 1932, so probably both documents date from after that time.
one of the languages. This more or less reflects a view of the situation that most linguists would subscribe to. However, the small size and selection of items on the word list has given some surprising results, such as a 16% cognacy rate between the Patpatar language and Kuot (but 10% between Madak and Kuot, and 22% between Patpatar and Madak). The authors list the following village names on the west coast: Naiama, Panaras, Neiruaran, Patlangat and Bimun; and on the east coast: Kama, Lomaloa, Liadan and Kabil.

Capell (1969: 95) uses Kuot data to support his division of New Guinea languages in various structural types and subtypes (which will not be reviewed here), giving one verb paradigm and three sentences (which are incorrectly segmented).

Capell (1971) is a treatise on the Austronesian languages of New Guinea, but does include Kuot (Panaras) in word lists (p. 256–259), on the map (p. 255) and briefly in the text (p. 263).

Beaumont (1972) is a bibliography of linguistic work in New Ireland. Apart from some of the works indicated here, a few more mention Kuot but are either maps or mentions that give no comment (e.g. Wurm (1971) which just reports that it is established as a Papuan language).

Wurm (1975) attempts to classify all non-Austronesian languages in island Melanesia into families, stocks and phyla. The so called “East Papuan Phylum” in his view includes languages of New Britain, Bougainville Province, the Solomon Islands, Kuot, and Yele of Rossel Island in Milne Bay province. The classification is made on grounds of similarities in morphological systems (but often not shared morphemes; p. 786–787), such as the presence of gender/noun classes, and cross-referenced subjects (and objects) on verbs. This classification is based on very little data, and the absence of shared morphological items makes it at best hypothetical. Kuot is classified as a family-level isolate (p. 789).

Ross (1994) discusses the phonologies of several languages in New Ireland and groups the Austronesian languages into language/dialect networks. He identifies a phonological alliance, made up by certain phonological processes and restrictions that are shared by Kuot and its nearest neighbours but not further afield, and concludes that the Madak phonology is the result of a language shift by an adult population (cf. 3.10). With respect to Kuot, Ross (1997) is mainly a summary (p. 246) of the (1994) paper.

Chung & Chung’s 75-page Kuot Grammar Essentials is the first attempt (1996) at a description of the grammatical structure of Kuot, and as such was very useful to me to get an idea of the language before going to the field. They have

---

21 Once in the field, I decided not to use it, so as to arrive at my own conclusions based on the data I was collecting. As is wont to happen when several people work on a language, many of our analyses differ; it is also possible that the Chungs have revised some of their ideas during the seven or eight years that they have continued to work on the language after writing the grammar sketch.
also led the work on a Kuot hymnbook, two gospels and a nearly-finished full bible translation, produced by various committees led by the Chungs, as well as some literacy materials.

Ross (2001) is a reconstruction of systems of pronominal proto-forms for 19 of the 25 Papuan languages that Wurm grouped into the East Papuan Phylum. He finds evidence for some subgrouping within this set, giving a total of five language groups and three isolates, with Kuot as an isolate (p. 309t, 311). He does not find support for Wurm’s phylum, but introduces the use of “east Papuan” as a geographical designation.

Dunn, Reesink & Terrill (in press) is a preliminary typological survey of the Papuan languages of island Melanesia, with a view to investigating structural relationships between them. Clause and phrase syntax, pronominal systems and verbal morphology are compared, and do suggest lower-level groupings. Of Kuot it is said that “Kuot stands on its own with respect to the languages of New Britain, as indeed with respect to all the other East Papuan languages”. Terrill (in press) compares gender and similar systems of nominal classification in the East Papuan languages. The presence of such systems has been taken as evidence for genetic relatedness among these languages, but Terrill concludes that the systems are so divergent that there is no suggestion of higher-level relationships.

Another work that should be mentioned here, which has been very useful to me, is Wassmann (1995), an historical atlas from the University of Basel which has maps for various segments of time since white contact, giving the names applied to peoples mentioned in published sources, together with an extensive bibliography.

Although Kuot was largely overlooked in the early sources, recent years have seen a renewed interest in the Papuan languages of this area, both as regards linguistic description and contact phenomena, and with respect to the light they may shed on the earliest migrations and settlement at the eastern boundary of human dispersal prior to 5000 years ago. We may expect to see more attention given to these languages and Kuot in the years to come.

1.4 Data

The bulk of the data on which the present analysis is based consists of recorded narratives of various kinds. I have some eleven hours of recorded speech, mostly short texts of three to ten minutes; a few are of about 30 minutes. Al-

---

22 Ross (forthc.) extends the investigation to all Papuan language families.

23 The Pioneers of Island Melanesia project (to commence in 2002, within the programme The Origin of Man, Language and Languages of the European Science Foundation) aims to bring forth a more detailed picture of the interrelations between the languages and peoples in the region, pulling together linguistic, genetic and archaeological data, as well as collecting new data within these and related fields.
though there is an over-representation of middle-aged and old men, the data has a fair spread of speakers of different age and sex. Several genres are represented, such as traditional narratives, stories of the type “when I went to town last week”, and procedural texts (“how we prepare sago”). I have no recorded conversational data, but did often make notes of things people said in various situations.24

The contact language was the English-lexified creole Tok Pisin, in which all Kuot speakers are bilingual. I had learnt the basics of Tok Pisin in Canberra before coming to Papua New Guinea, and became increasingly fluent during my time in New Ireland.

After some weeks in the field I would try to transcribe a recorded text myself, and then go through it with the recorded speaker, or anyone else on hand. I would also try to get vocabularies and paradigms. As everywhere, different speakers have different talents, so that the people who are inspired storytellers are not always the same as those who can explain the meaning and use of words or grammatical intricacies of the language to the linguist. It soon transpired that the best results in analysis were obtained working with a speaker in his early to mid-thirties, Robert Sipa, who proved to have an outstanding talent for the sort of abstractions about language that linguists are after. He became my main informant and worked with me several times a week throughout my time in Bimun. Working consistently with one person also impacted on method, in that we developed conventions for talking about all aspects of the language, which made work more efficient.25 Further, he was up-to-date with what I knew and didn’t know about Kuot, and this too helped efficiency. I would of course work with other speakers too, and would sometimes crosscheck Robert’s information, which I almost always found to be borne out. Although I recorded as many different speakers as I could, most of the analytic work where native-speaker intuitions and judgments were needed was carried out with his help.

It took me quite a long time to start speaking Kuot. Part of the reason was that much of the social life in the village takes place in Tok Pisin, so that there were few conversations in Kuot within earshot most of the time to help develop fluent understanding of it, and also few conversations to join into. There are quite a few people who do not speak Kuot in the village, so speakers switch to Tok Pisin very readily, and indeed code-mix a fair bit even without non-speakers present. This meant that I would have to tell people to speak Kuot. I sometimes did, and in particular asked Roslyn and Abraham, my host family, to try and use Kuot to me, but this only worked part of the time.

24 I was simply never game to just turn on the tape recorder without people knowing, and felt it would not be a very relaxed or natural conversation if I did tell them.

25 I think there were no areas of Kuot that were impossible to discuss even in the somewhat crude medium of Tok Pisin, with the exception of some phonological matters (in particular stress).
Another factor is to do with the structure of Kuot itself, where agreement and cross-referencing make the production of a sentence into a jigsaw puzzle. It takes time to learn to do it fast. My own unfortunate personality trait of not liking to make mistakes meant that I did not venture to speak much in the first trip, and I never achieved full speed in utterances of more than a few words. But my interactions were increasingly in Kuot, and people found it entertaining to come and talk with me, which was always useful practice.

1.5 Fieldwork situation

I had decided that it would be socially difficult to check out several villages and have to reject all but one, and had selected Bimun after reading an unpublished report by the Summer Institute of Linguistics Bible translator Chul-Hwa Chung to the effect that the language was strongest in villages belonging to the protestant United Church (rather than the Roman Catholic Church), and stronger on the west coast than on the east coast. This still left a choice, so I studied the map and found that Bimun had several streams nearby and so I opted for Bimun.

It may have been useful to have chosen a village further from the boundary of another language area, but at the time I was not sure of the exact location of the boundary. I also found out later that Bimun village resettled from the mountains around 1930, which surely caused disruption to life in general and perhaps in some ways also to language use.

Much later it came to my attention that people in Panaras, in the northern Kuot-speaking area, were a little disgruntled that so much linguistic attention was being given to the southern area, with the Chungs (SIL bible translators) in Kabil on the east coast and me in Bimun on the west coast, as the people of Panaras consider their dialect the more original one. They will tell you that their village has been there for so long that there was never a time when it was not there (although they say it was called Naunabun; however Panaras is the name used by explorers at the beginning of the 20th century). Given the fact that all clans are said to originate from Kun in the northern area, there may be something to their claim that theirs is a very old Kuot location, and it may or may not be the case that the dialect is more archaic; the dialectal differences are at any rate fairly small (see 2.6; 2.10). None of this was known to me when making my choice of fieldwork location, and I might have chosen differently had I known. But I have had no reason to regret my choice and apart from the considerations just given everything worked out in the best way possible in Bimun.

I first arrived in New Ireland in July 1997, on a tourist visa to select a village for fieldwork and see if I could do anything about speeding up the processing of my application for a research visa. Officials in Kavieng were very helpful, and (unsuccessfully) tried to locate Kuot speakers in Kavieng who could introduce me to a village, and even provided transport to Bimun. On the way to Bimun, we had to stop and ask where it was. The couple we asked turned out to be from Bimun, and they became my host family: Roslyn and Abraham, and their children Haybie, Maylyn and Elisa, and later my namesake Eva. Roslyn’s father
Jonathan Laromeng is a respected bigman in the area, which may have contributed to general approval of the arrangement.

In the first short trip, I spent two separate weeks in Bimun. It was only days before people started telling Roslyn that she had a new sister, and over time we developed a very close relationship. In many areas of Papua New Guinea, kinship defines the types of relations a person may have to other people (cf. 2.6.4). Through Roslyn, my relations to most other people were defined too, so that I had parents and aunts and brothers-in-law, and so forth. The kinship incorporation did not apply to me fully as a white person and obvious outsider. Some people appreciated my efforts to observe name taboos and other aspects of kin-based behaviour, while others seemed to find it rather silly.

Abraham soon decided I needed a house of my own, and built one while I was back in Australia waiting for the research permit to come through. The house was made from bush materials and had a room where I slept and where I could lock up equipment and belongings, and an open veranda where I worked and where people could come and visit. In an unfamiliar environment, private space was a blessing, and also meant that I could be sure I was not in anybody’s way.

I had no cooking facilities beyond a small kerosene cooker, and had all meals with Roslyn and family, which provided a natural way of being part of everyday family life. It was socially impossible to pay for food and housing, but when I went to town I would buy rice, tinned fish, sugar, onions and other items that were in demand, and also things such as thongs and clothes for the children, batteries, occasional items of clothing and so forth. I also brought somewhat more expensive gifts when coming from Australia.

Similarly, I could not pay my main informant Robert Sipa in money, but bought clothes for his children, cigarettes, fishing line and other things that he wanted or seemed to need, as well as bigger presents from Australia.

In the village, I would spend most of the time on my veranda, looking through notes and transcriptions of stories, trying to make sense of the language, preparing questions or working with Robert Sipa (or others who might come and offer to help with my work). Sometimes people would just come and visit for a while. Occasionally I would go to the gardens with Roslyn, which was interesting although I think I got in her way more than I helped. There were of course also chores, such as washing clothes in the river (always pleasant), or weeding and sweeping around the house. I also attended any ceremonies, and on Sundays I went to church. A few times I visited other villages, like Panaras and Kabil, to record stories there. I would have liked to travel the Kuot area more, and also to visit the former site of the village in the mountains, but there was never a suitable companion for such a trip.

I stayed in the village for about three weeks at a time, and then went to the provincial capital of Kavieng for about a week, to collect mail, do shopping, and write reports on various areas of Kuot grammar. I kept a computer in Kavieng (there was no electricity in Bimun) and used it to type up the field reports, which I sent to supervisors in Australia and Sweden. Report writing helped to
make data collection more systematic, and it was very useful to get feedback and further queries while still in the field.

Fieldwork periods were as follows:

1997    July–August    6 weeks
1997–1998  September–July    9 months
1999–2000  August–March    7 months