5 Nouns

Nouns have the inherent and covert property of gender – masculine and feminine, distinguished in the singular only, and the referent-determined and inflectional property of number – singular, dual, and non-singular (plural). The gender and number of the noun control agreement on demonstratives in the noun phrase, as well as the form of possessives, indexing morphology on prepositions, and cross-referencing morphology on verbs and adjectives.

The main source of loans at present, not surprisingly, is Tok Pisin.

5.1 Introduction to Kuot nouns

Before going into detail about the various properties of Kuot nouns, it will be useful to have an overview of the most important features of the system.

Kuot nouns are divided into eleven declensions on the basis of the shape of the singular form (and its relation to non-singular form). About half the nouns in the language belong in the “plain declension”, where the non-singular is formed by simple addition of the ending -(ip) to the singular form of the noun (with labialisation harmony causing the vowel to be /u/ in some circumstances; see below). The rest fall into the ten “special declensions”, in most of which the last part of the singular form is subtracted before the non-singular ending -(ip) is applied, e.g.:

(1) kiraima kiraip
    nail/claw nail/claw.nsg
    ‘nail/claw’ ‘nails/claws’

The special declensions are not productive. They are presented in 5.2.

Further, there are some non-singular patterns that cut across declensions (in particular those that have a non-singular ending -bip), as well as irregular non-singular formations (5.3) including a few cases of suppletive forms (5.3.3). A number of words denoting persons form alternative non-singulars and duals on another pattern; most of these are kin terms (5.4).

A noun form referring to a plural entity is called “non-singular” rather than “plural” here, for two reasons. First, the non-singular forms the basis of dual in nouns:

(2) alay alay-ip alay-ip-ien
    road(sg) road-nsg road-nsg-dl
    ‘road’ ‘roads’ ‘two roads’

Second, the dual form in nouns is used mainly for animate referents, while the non-singular form is often used for dual as well as plural inanimate referents (see 5.5).
Note that the system of number marking in nouns differs from number marking in all other parts of the grammar. As shown, the dual form of nouns is based on the non-singular (plural); the exception to this generalisation is found in many kin terms and some other human nouns. Everywhere else (such as cross-referencing on verbs and other pronominal marking), dual and plural are in paradigmatic opposition (and there, the term “plural” is used; see Appendix I for the forms).

Kuot has two genders: masculine and feminine, where the masculine includes all nouns referring to human males, and the feminine includes all nouns referring to human females. Gender is distinguished in the singular only, giving the following system in the third person (gender is not distinguished in the first and second person):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>m</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>dl</th>
<th>pl/nsg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Figure 1: Third person number/gender categories.

Higher animates (humans and important animals) have natural gender, and most of the special declensions are associated with a particular gender, but for the vast majority of nouns in the plain declension gender is not predictable. Loan words are frequently given different gender by different speakers. Gender is the subject of 5.6.

The class of nouns is the most variable group of words in the language in terms of phonology. There are no nouns consisting of a single vowel, but all other types and combinations of syllables occur. Three phonological processes are associated with the non-singular formation of nouns: labialisation harmony (see 3.3.4); final /t/ → [r] (3.2.2.2); and final [n] → [l] (3.2.2.4 and 3.2.2.5).

Reduplication is not a productive process with Kuot nouns, although quite a few nouns appear to have been formed by full or partial reduplication in the past; we may say that the forms under discussion have inherent reduplication. That the process (if it has indeed taken place) is not reversible is shown by pairs like the following, whose forms would seem to be related by reduplication of a type attested among verbs, but the members of these pairs have different meanings. Others show that a “non-reduplicated” version is not meaningful:

(3)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dudur</th>
<th>owl</th>
<th>dur</th>
<th>crab (small white sp.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pippin</td>
<td>banana skin, betel husk</td>
<td>pin</td>
<td>betel nut (N Kuot)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karkur</td>
<td>stomach (organ)</td>
<td>kur</td>
<td>wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pətəpat</td>
<td>tail</td>
<td>pat</td>
<td>under</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kətəkut</td>
<td>top of tree or mountain</td>
<td>kut</td>
<td>big food parcel for cooking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pəpəpapa</td>
<td>sibling</td>
<td>pa</td>
<td>but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pəpapapa</td>
<td>in-law</td>
<td>pi</td>
<td>anus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liliut</td>
<td>snail (sp.)</td>
<td>*liut</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>popori</td>
<td>story (N. Kuot)</td>
<td>*pori</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>luluram</td>
<td>dwarf</td>
<td>*luram</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burbur</td>
<td>stone wall</td>
<td>*bur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data for this chapter is a corpus of 892 Kuot nouns.

5.2 Declensions and non-singular form

Declensions are defined by the shape of the non-singular form. Nouns lacking a singular form thus cannot be assigned to a declension; there are 23 nouns in the data which speakers say have no singular form.¹

The special declensions are defined by the form of the last syllable or segment of the word in the singular. Nouns ending in ma, na, bun, bu, uom, bam, nəm, nim, n (except bun) and m (except bam, nəm and nim) each form a declension, referred to by the forms given here (i.e., I will talk of the ma declension, the bun declension and so forth). These endings relate in various ways to non-singular forms; for instance in the ma declension, the ending -ma is subtracted before the non-singular suffix is added; in some other declensions the relation of singular to non-singular form is less regular, and in some cases very variable.

The plain declension consists of all nouns which have a singular form and which do not end in one of the sequences that identify the special declensions. Within this declension, the non-singular formation is mostly regular, although there are some irregular nouns as well, and a few cases of suppletion.

Table 1 summarises information on the size and gender associations of each of the declensions (m=masculine, f=feminine, f/m=can be either, or I have conflicting information, ?=gender not known). The total is the size of the corpus (892) minus the 23 nouns without singular form (which therefore cannot be assigned to a declension, nor to a gender).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>f</th>
<th>m</th>
<th>f/m</th>
<th>?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>plain</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bun</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bu</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uom</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bam</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nəm</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nim</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>869</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ There are also some nouns for which I simply do not have the singular form and do not know whether one exists; some of these have been excluded from this presentation.
It appears that those of the special declensions where a full syllable is taken off in the non-singular were historically formed by addition of that syllable to a prior singular form of the noun. In example (1) above, the earlier form would have been *kirai. Some of the declensions show a degree of semantic unity, which suggests that the ending once had semantic content, although this is presently obscured in many cases. Most of these endings further have relatively constant gender associations, which may be an indication that the endings were originally nouns themselves, perhaps in a compound relation to the stems of which they are now part. The exceptions to these statements are primarily the $n$ and $m$ declensions, identified by the final segment rather than a full syllable; these groups of words are inconsistent both in gender and in non-singular formation. Further discussion of some of these issues is given in 5.2.12 below, after the presentation of the declensions.

There is also a group of nouns sharing a non-singular suffix -bip; this is not associated with a particular singular form but cuts across declensions. A few more patterns deviate from general rules or patterns found in particular declensions; these are also discussed after the declensions have been presented.

Before presenting the data, a few comments need to be made on its reliability. As may be expected, many non-singular forms have been elicited starting from singular forms and vice versa, and this is true of dual forms to an even larger extent. This was necessary to get a respectable database size for understanding the patterns of non-singular and dual formation, and as we shall see there is indeed much variation. But although this would appear to be an area where elicitation could be quite successful, it became apparent that elicited data was not always reliable: most informants tire quickly when working from a list, and there is a danger of over-regularisation when words are presented one after the other out of context (more so for some informants than others). But there is also an amount of instability in parts of the system, so that forms acceptable to one speaker are not always acceptable to others. I suspect that a minority of the forms given below may not be the forms used by most speakers, and that in some cases non-singular forms have been produced where none are normally used. Nevertheless, it would be impossible to get a full picture of the systematic relationships between singular, non-singular and dual forms if only spontaneously produced forms were to be accepted.

Some of the declensions are very large, some very small, and some in between. Small declensions are given in full, and in the interest of space a line has been drawn at 25; declensions larger than that are only exemplified. For the latter, I have tried to include only words where I have attested both singular and non-singular forms in non-elicited situations. In spite of efforts to gather complete information on the forms for the three numbers and gender information for singular forms for as many nouns as possible, information is still lacking for some (especially with respect to dual forms).
This section deals primarily with the morphology of nouns; other sections will discuss the use of dual and non-singular. Gender information is given, but gender as such will be explored in 5.6.

5.2.1 The plain declension: regular non-singular

The plain declension is a default declension in the sense that it is defined by the absence of any of the endings identifying the special declensions, and that all new nouns go into it. The vast majority of nouns in the plain declension form regular non-singular with the ending -(i)p, and labialisation assimilation of the vowel /i/ to /u/ as follows:

(4) Regular non-singular:
- *-p* after a vowel;
- *-up* after a labial consonant (p, f, m), or if the vowel of a final closed syllable is rounded (o, u);
- *-ip* elsewhere (i.e. after any non-labial consonant following a non-rounded vowel)

For example:

(5)

| Sg       | Nsg     |  |  |
|----------|---------|  |  |
| **after a vowel:** | **after a vowel:** |  |  |
| maua     | mauap   | fruit bat |  |
| ie       | iep     | knife    |  |
| aruruo   | aruruop | croton   |  |
| **after a labial consonant:** | **after a labial consonant:** |  |  |
| nǝp      | nǝpup   | part, piece |  |
| ŋof      | ŋofup   | nostril  |  |
| (auam)   | auamup  | cockroach |  |
| **after a closed syllable** | **after a closed syllable** |  |  |
| with a rounded vowel: | with a rounded vowel: |  |  |
| nur      | nurup   | coconut (fruit) |  |
| kakok    | kakokup | snake    |  |
| kaus     | kausup  | Alpinia (ginger sp.) |  |
| **after a non-labial consonant** | **after a non-labial consonant** |  |  |
| **after a non-rounded vowel:** | **after a non-rounded vowel:** |  |  |
| diŋ      | diŋip   | complete darkness |  |
| pas      | pasip   | stick    |  |
| muir     | muirip  | seaweed (sp.) |  |

The word ŋof ‘nostril’ in the second set could be said to doubly condition the /u/ version of the non-singular suffix, as it has both a labial final consonant and /o/ in the final syllable. In the same set, auam is in parentheses because it belongs to the m declension by virtue of ending in /m/, but it takes the regular type of non-singular and is included here to illustrate the point that the effect of the bilabial nasal is the same as that of the bilabial voiceless stop and fricative. A final /a/ often changes to /ǝ/ in the non-singular.2

Examples of nouns in the plain declensions are:

2 See also 3.2.2.4, 3.2.2.5 and 3.2.2.2 on further phonological processes in the non-singular formation.
The non-singular ending will be given in the derived form (-p, -ip, -up) in glossed examples from text, separated by hyphens where possible (for some of the words above: luaga-p bench-nsg ‘benches’ and ŋof-up nostril-nsg ‘nostrils’). The noun to which it is attached will be given with the final segment of the singular form unaltered, i.e., /t/ and /n/ will be written as such, even where the non-singular ending alters the pronunciation to [r] and [l] (e.g. kit-ip [kirip] ‘fires’). In list examples of non-singular formation in this chapter, however, the non-singular forms will be given without hyphens and with the phonological processes for /t/ and /n/ applied, as in (6).

In the column for dual forms, R (regular) means that the dual is formed on the non-singular by addition of -ien as shown in (2) above. The absence of R means that I have no information on dual for the word in question. Where I am aware of duals formed in other ways, the full form will be given.

There are two types of exceptions to the regular formation of non-singular and dual, which will be discussed after the presentation of the special declensions. First, as mentioned, some nouns form non-singular on other patterns which cut across declensions, with 20 words forming non-singular ending in bip, and a few other smaller patterns; some words are simply irregular and do not conform to any pattern (see 5.3). Second, there is a group of human nouns which often have alternative dual and plural forms which pattern differently from other irregular words, and refer to different constellations of referents from the regularly formed words (see 5.4).

Regardless of the type of formation, a Kuot non-singular noun always ends in /p/.

---

3 In the special declensions and for some irregular nouns this is often not possible since the non-singular form is not segmentable into singular+ending. The glossing in those cases will be given with a full stop (.), e.g., ‘claw.nsg’ in (1).
5.2.2 The *ma* declension

The *ma* declension is by far the largest of the special declensions, with 142 members in my data (nearly 16% of all nouns). The words in this declension are the most homogenous both with regard to gender and to non-singular formation. With two exceptions, they are masculine, the exceptions being *bunima* ‘last-born’ whose gender follows the sex of the referent, and *arima* ‘pandanus fruit (sp.)’ which is feminine. Words in the *ma* declension form their non-singular by subtracting *-ma* and adding *-p*, as shown in example (7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sg</th>
<th>Nsg</th>
<th>Di</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ima</td>
<td>ip</td>
<td>subclan; river</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɲatŋarima</td>
<td>ɲatŋarip</td>
<td>mosquito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laukima</td>
<td>laukip</td>
<td>tooth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>irǝma</td>
<td>irǝp</td>
<td>R tooth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuirima</td>
<td>kuirip</td>
<td>blue-lined surgeonfish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dǝdema</td>
<td>dǝdep</td>
<td>R word, utterance, behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pipiduluma</td>
<td>pipidulup</td>
<td>bird (sp.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kakosilima</td>
<td>kakosilip</td>
<td>R small lizard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adaima</td>
<td>adaip</td>
<td>dance mask (malagan, Tok Pisin tatanua)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teima</td>
<td>teip</td>
<td>R man, male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the 142 words in this declension, there is a subgroup of 27 words ending in -*nǝma*. They are all masculine, but some deviate in their non-singular formation. Fifteen of them take the same type of non-singular as the bulk of *ma* words, and four have it as an alternative, but several patterns show up among the rest. All involve subtraction, usually of all of -*nǝma*, and then addition of -*p* or a longer form ending in -*p*, as exemplified in (8). It appears that non-singular formation in this subgroup is quite unstable, as sometimes several forms have been attested for the same word. Only a few examples will be given here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sg</th>
<th>Nsg</th>
<th>Di</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>murunǝma</td>
<td>murunǝp/murunǝpup</td>
<td>fire fly; torch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mǝbinǝma</td>
<td>mǝbinǝp/mǝbilǝpup</td>
<td>/R boil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kapinǝma</td>
<td>kapilǝp</td>
<td>mountain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

/R in the dual column indicates that the dual form given to me was based on the second of the non-singular forms (*mǝbilǝpupien*).

Interestingly, the [n]/[l] alteration observed at the very end of words in the regular non-singular formation (see 3.2.2.4, and 5.2.11 and 5.2.3 below) is here found quite far into the word (and is an option also for *murulǝp* and *murulǝpup*); this is another indication that the original stem ended with (or before) /n/, and -*ǝma* or -*nǝma* was added on at some point in time.

Another interesting point about these non-singular forms is the -*pup* ending. As set out above, the non-singular suffix is normally *(i)p*. The form -*pup* looks as though the non-singular had been applied twice (the bilabial stop */p/ in the first application would cause labialisation harmony in the second application, mak-

---

4 Information is lacking for eight words.
ing the vowel /u/; lenition then causes it to be pronounced [bup]). There are scattered examples of -pup non-singulars in other declensions but it is repeatedly attested in the ma declension, and especially among the nǝma subgroup. In two cases a further syllable /la/ is added: irima – irilǝpup ‘Octomeles sumatranas (tree sp., Tok Pisin ‘erima’)’, and piririma – piririp/piririlǝpup ‘pandanus (sp.)’.

Further irregularities are a few words with unexpected vowels before the non-singular ending:

(9) buruma burǝp laplap
apuluma abulǝp R fish (generic)
uleuma/uleoma ulep parrotfish (sp.)

In the second word, abuluma, the non-singular used is that of abulǝ ‘school of fish’, but I have no explanation for buruma. In uleuma/uleoma the vowel preceding ma is subtracted with ma before -p is added.

The only word in the declension not to subtract -ma before the non-singular is added is the one feminine word, arǝma ‘pandanus fruit (sp.)’, which forms its non-singular by simply adding -p (arǝmap). It is probably incidental that it ends in ma.

The ma declension does not show any obvious semantic unity, although it may be noted that it is particularly well represented among words denoting species and parts of plants, insects, shells and fish, and is found also among body parts and in some words for male humans. The -nǝma subgroup is similar, but also contains four fruit trees, where the corresponding fruits have related forms ending in nǝm (see 5.2.8 below). Words of the ma declension are sometimes in gender opposition with words of the bun declension for entities with natural gender (see 5.2.4 below).

5.2.3 The na declension

There are 36 words in the na declension. They are predominantly masculine, but three are feminine (girivǝna ‘snot’, pasina ‘pig snare’ and the homonyms buna ‘green pigeon (sp.)’ and ‘fine black sand’); for two further words I have received contradictory gender information (danmǝlina ‘lymph’ and burumuana ‘broken knife without a handle’). One more word, pasǝna ‘clansman; clanswoman’, takes either gender depending on the sex of the referent.5

As for the non-singular formation, most of these words subtract -na and then add -p (20 words, plus two which also permit another pattern), for instance:

5 I lack gender information for one word; for the two with contrasting information I am inclined to trust the speaker who said they are masculine. Information on non-singular forms is missing for two words.
Eight words add the non-singular suffix without subtraction (the two variable words mentioned have this as the alternative), e.g.:

(11) Sg | Nsg | Dl
-----|-----|-----
kapuna | kapunap | R dog
pasena | pasenap | clansman, clanswoman

Of the remaining four words for which information is available, one is of the bip type (biamna ‘shoulder’; see 5.3), one is suppletive (mikana – teip ‘man’; see 5.3.3), and the last two are:

(12) Sg | Nsg | Dl
-----|-----|-----
mabaruna | mabarulap | marabuven | nipple
kona | topup | R bathing place in river

The first of these can be seen either as a case of subtraction of -na and adding of -lap, or as a version of the [n]/[l] variation seen in forms ending in /n/ (5.2.11; cf. also above on the -nama subgroup of the ma declension above in 5.2.2. The second word also has two possible analyses; either the stem is partly suppletive (or at least very irregular, going from kona to topu-), or it is a case of subtraction of -na and adding of the alternative non-singular -pup that we saw in 5.2.2 (kona does not accept the non-singular forms *top or *tonap).

The na declension does not show any consistent semantic pattern.

5.2.4 The bun declension

In the bun declension there are 17 words, and all are feminine. This declension has quite a strong association with referents of female sex, although inanimate nouns are also represented. Non-singular forms are varied, as are duals. All 17 words are given here:

(13) Sg | Nsg | Dl
-----|-----|-----
makabun | makaulap | makabie | woman
kube bun | kubeulap | kubebie | young woman
kuraibun | kuraip/kuraibulup | kurailxien | female bush spirit
kume bun | kumeulap | R/kumebie | sow
laibun | laibunup | R | bitch
pu raibun | purailap | R | hen
mukuse bun | mukusebup/mukusebulup | /R | female possum
kifibun | ?kifbulup/-bulap | | female rat/mouse
muralai bun | muraliap/murulailap | | rock etc. where spirits dwell

---

6 The word kapuna ‘dog’ exists with the same meaning in neighbouring Nochi (Austronesian).
We find a variety of non-singular strategies, many involving the subtraction of -bun, and the addition of -p or -(u)lǝp. In other cases, the non-singular suffix is simply added to the singular form (sometimes causing the [n]/[l] variation; see 3.2.2.4, and 5.2.11 below). In the case of kuraibun, murmǝlaibun and udebun (which also has the form utebun), the shorter non-singular form is the form used for the masculine equivalents (kuraima, murale and uduma). The last two non-singulars, alip and lalabip, are simply irregular, but lalabip together with donabip and ubulubip belong with the non-singulars ending in -bip (5.3 below).

As for the dual forms, makabie and kubebie belong to a pattern that occurs with some words for female humans (see 5.4). The duals of kuraibun and one of the possibilities for suaebeun illustrate a common type of irregular dual in Kuot: instead of being formed on the non-singular form of the noun in question, they are formed on a non-singular pattern used with other words in the same group. Thus the non-singular base of kurailǝpien would be *kurailǝp, and of suaebeulupien *suæbeulup. Although the forms are unattested for these particular words, it is clear that they represent ways of forming non-singular which are attested for other nouns of a similar form.

As mentioned, bun words frequently refer to female entities. They further often contrast with words for male entities, having the same or a similar initial part of the stem. I am aware of the following pairs:

(14) female (bun)               masculine
    kubebun young woman           kubǝma young man
    kuraibun female bush spirit   kuraima male bush spirit
    kumebun sow                   kumurot boar
    puraibun hen                  pura rooster
    kifǝbun female rat/mouse      kifǝma rat/mouse
    murmǝlaibun rock etc. where  murmǝle rock etc. where
    spirits dwell, fem.           spirits dwell, masc.
    udebun banana plant, fem. sp. uduma banana plant, masc. species

It can be seen that -bun often contrasts with -ma in these forms; sometimes with Ø (pura, murmǝle); kumurot does not belong to a pattern. The form makabun ‘woman’ (not in example (14)) could conceivably be in a similar relationship with mikana ‘man’ although the vowels are different.
Regarding the terms for male and female rats or mice, they are not actually used that way of rodents, for which the masculine *kifoma* is used, but instead of human children; see 5.6.3.1. Alternative forms are *kispōma* and *kispebun*.

### 5.2.5 The *bu* declension

There are ten words in the *bu* declension. Eight of these are feminine; six denote fruit or nut trees. One word is given different gender by different speakers, *lerabu* banana stump. The other masculine word is *kanakanotubu* ‘sorcerer’, and I was told that it could be applied to a woman too if she exhibits the behaviour associated with the word (typically standing behind other people’s houses at night); the word would then take feminine agreement.

Non-singualrs either replace *-bu* with *-lōp* (with some vowel variation preceding the endings), or add *-p* to the end of the full singular form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(15)</th>
<th>Sg</th>
<th>Nsg</th>
<th>DI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ŋareobu</td>
<td>ŋarəlōp</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Canarium nut tree (TP galip)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opəliobu</td>
<td>opəlōp</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>breadfruit tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arəmaibu</td>
<td>arəmailōp</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>pandanus tree (sp.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kəbiobu</td>
<td>kəbelōp</td>
<td>kabio bipien</td>
<td>Malay apple tree (TP laulau)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>səbaibu</td>
<td>səbaip</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>fruit tree (sp.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nirobu</td>
<td>nurəlōp</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>coconut palm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lerabu</td>
<td>lerəbup</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>banana plant with stock cut off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maibu</td>
<td>maibup</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>digging stick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liobu</td>
<td>liobup</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>hole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kanakanotubu</td>
<td>kanakanotubup</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>sorcerer (m)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note that the fruit of *arəmaibu* is called *arəma*, and in the case of *nirobu – nurəlōp*, the similarity to the most general word for the coconut, *nur*, is obvious. The other words for trees do not have related stems for fruits or nuts. It seems possible that the *-(V)bu* ending derives from a word meaning tree or fruit tree and we may note also that it is the words with this meaning that take the non-singular ending with *-lōp*. The words taking the simple *-p* non-singular may end in *-bu* coincidentally, not the least considering that *lerabu* is also singled out as different by being given masculine gender by some speakers.

### 5.2.6 The *uom* declension

This is another small declension, with eight members, all feminine. There is no apparent semantic unity. Non-singular is formed by subtracting *-om* and adding *-p* in all cases but one, and dual is regular (where known):

7 It could be that the /i/ of the singular form is a result of vowel drift. (The word *nur* for ‘coconut’ exists also in Austronesian Nalik and could be a loan).
Note that this group includes words ending in -uom but not just in -om; the words in -om belong to the m declension. This is because the non-singular formation is different.

5.2.7 The bam declension

The bam declension has 24 members, all feminine. This is the only declension that appears to have a semantic component of singulative, i.e., the words are used to refer to single items that are normally considered part of a larger mass of similar things. The non-singular is formed by taking off -am and adding -ǝp – this could be seen also as just removing -m and adding -p with the vowel changing from /a/ to /ǝ/. This occurs in the m declension too (see 5.2.11 below), but the semantic factor in many of the bam words and the fact that the non-singular formation is the same for all but three of them, motivates the postulation of a separate declension. The words are listed in (17):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sg</th>
<th>Nsg</th>
<th>DI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bǝbam</td>
<td>bǝbǝp</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oplǝbam</td>
<td>oplǝbǝp</td>
<td>leaf (generic); butterfly fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abam</td>
<td>abap</td>
<td>breadfruit leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lapararebam</td>
<td>lapararebǝp</td>
<td>pandanus (sp.) leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaburubam</td>
<td>kaburubǝp</td>
<td>R smaller leaves on coconut fronds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purubam</td>
<td>purubǝp</td>
<td>grass shoots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pagaribam</td>
<td>pagaribǝp/pagarip</td>
<td>coconut flower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pibam</td>
<td>pibǝp</td>
<td>R taro stalk/flower (eaten)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nebam</td>
<td>nebǝp</td>
<td>fish scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>binbam</td>
<td>binbǝp</td>
<td>feather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pudibam</td>
<td>pudibǝp</td>
<td>R rib</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kalilisbam</td>
<td>kalilisbǝp</td>
<td>white hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kofibam</td>
<td>kofibǝp</td>
<td>little finger, little toe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ka)kaf不通/+(ka)kaf不通bǝp</td>
<td>(ka)kaf不通bǝp</td>
<td>R bamboo flute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labǝbam</td>
<td>labǝbǝp</td>
<td>fibre of coconut shell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>murukkebam</td>
<td>murukkebǝp</td>
<td>wood chips (in pieces, being chopped)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kiribam</td>
<td>kiribǝlǝp</td>
<td>vine (sp.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaubam</td>
<td>kaubǝp</td>
<td>R betel pepper vine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuriribam/+</td>
<td>kudǝrǝp/kudǝribip</td>
<td>burnt skin of tubers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leibam</td>
<td>leibǝp</td>
<td>/R prong of fishing spear or comb paddle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enbam</td>
<td>enbǝp</td>
<td>tiny walking track</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 Gender is unknown for three words.
The words that do not follow the pattern are the alternative non-singular forms for pagaribam, where all of -bam is subtracted and only -p added; kiribam which is kiribolap rather than *kiribap, and kuriribam. The latter has been given to me in several versions both in the singular (e.g. kudiriram, kudiram, kudiribam; some of which would not be in the bam declension) and non-singular, and they do not always match; in other words, it is quite likely that another speaker may form *kuriribap from the singular form given in (17) – there is little point in dwelling on the relations between the singular and non-singular for this word, other than to note that both are variable.

The source for the ending -bam may be the word bǝbam ‘leaf’ which in itself looks like a reduplicated form of bam. It is notable that several words in this declension denote various types of leaves (and ‘paddle’ may perhaps be considered leaf-like), and that several others are typically part of pluralities (such as ‘fish scales’ and ‘coconut fibres’ (both also leafy)). I aware of related stems for only three words. They are opalǝbam ‘breadfruit leaf’ which is related to opǝliobu ‘breadfruit tree’ (see 5.2.5 above), and kofibam, which is related to another type of flute called kofi – the latter was made from several pieces of bamboo (like a pan flute), while the kofibam was a flute from a single piece of bamboo. Atlubam ‘smooth-tailed trevally’ is related to atluma, which signifies a school of atlubam.

5.2.8 The nǝm declension

The nǝm declension has 39 members and there is not the space here to give a full list. All nǝm words are feminine.9 Several non-singular strategies are used, and most involve subtracting -nǝm and adding either, -lup, -ǝp (-lap) or just -p; others simply add the non-singular suffix to the full singular form, e.g.:

(18)  |   Sg   |   Nsg   |   DI   |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kǝsomunǝm</td>
<td>kǝsomulup</td>
<td>R mango fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pǝnǝm</td>
<td>pialap</td>
<td>R village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kǝbunǝm</td>
<td>kǝbup</td>
<td>R young coconut (fruit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nǝnǝm</td>
<td>nǝnǝmup</td>
<td>R mouth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several words have alternate strategies (e.g. deknǝm – deklǝpup/dekmulup), and there are also unique patterns (e.g. burunǝm – bureip ‘water, water bottles’).

Six of the words end in munǝm rather than just nǝm. Munǝm in itself means ‘kidney’ and may be the source of the ending for several of the words in this declension. We may also point to nǝnǝm ‘mouth’ as a possibility, parallel in form to bǝbam in the bam declension. However, the semantics of the words in this

---

9 I have no gender information for four words; two others were given as masculine but later corrected. Two words lack non-singular information.
declension fit better with ‘kidney’: eleven of the nouns ending in -ном denote fruits or nuts, and several more denote smallish round things, e.g.:10

(19)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sg</th>
<th>Nsg</th>
<th>DI</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>къоомунам</td>
<td>къоомулуп</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>mango fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>кубунам</td>
<td>кубуп</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>young coconut (fruit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>дъорокунам</td>
<td>дъорокуп</td>
<td></td>
<td>seed on vine for dance rattle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>татаракунам</td>
<td>татаракуп</td>
<td></td>
<td>seed of иунама; “castanets”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>талимунам</td>
<td>талимулуп</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Terminalia nut (TP talis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>танунам</td>
<td>танулуп</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pometia pinnata fruit (TP ton)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>лъоганам</td>
<td>лъогалуп</td>
<td>лъогалуиен</td>
<td>Barringtonia nut (TP pau)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>кабоом</td>
<td>кабалуп</td>
<td></td>
<td>Malay apple fruit (TP laulau)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>сакъобуанам</td>
<td>сакъобуалап</td>
<td></td>
<td>Malay apple (var. sp.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>лакъобуанам</td>
<td>лакъобалуп</td>
<td></td>
<td>fruit (sp.; TP natu); boxfish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>утнуом</td>
<td>утнулуп/утнуомуп</td>
<td></td>
<td>fruit/seed (sp.) that floats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>фикоом</td>
<td>фикообиип</td>
<td></td>
<td>coals, embers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>пакамунам</td>
<td>пакамулуп</td>
<td>пакъобиип</td>
<td>testicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>мунам</td>
<td>мулуп</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>kidney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>дъекнам</td>
<td>дъеклуп/дъекнулуп</td>
<td>R/R</td>
<td>joint in bamboo, knot in plank</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many other words do not fit this pattern (e.g. нонам ‘vine to lash together fence’, бурунам ‘water’, пянам ‘village’, икунам ‘root’, паккобинам ‘intestine’, ибунам ‘back’, мобинам ‘lip’, обинам ‘canoe’, муагъомам ‘sergeant fish (spp.)’). Several of the words denoting fruits or nuts have related stems denoting the trees:

(20)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>mango</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>къоомунам</td>
<td>къоомама</td>
<td>talis nut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>талимунам</td>
<td>талима</td>
<td>Malay apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>сакъобуанам</td>
<td>сакъобуама</td>
<td>fruit/seed (sp.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>кабоом</td>
<td>кабоубу</td>
<td>Malay apple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.9  The ним declension

The ним declension has 14 words, of which 11 are feminine and one masculine (бараним ‘bird net; store’).11 This group is semantically diverse, and the non-singular formation is heterogenous too:

(21)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sg</th>
<th>Nsg</th>
<th>DI</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>боним</td>
<td>боп</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>кураним</td>
<td>курап</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>low tide; year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>бараним</td>
<td>баранип</td>
<td></td>
<td>net for catching birds; store (masc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 Another possibility concerning the origin of the ном ending would be a lexeme meaning ‘fruit’ (there is synchronically no generic word for ‘fruit’ in Kuot), and perhaps ‘kidney’ was seen as fruit-like somehow. However, a large number of words in this declension are not fruit-like at all and it does not seem useful to speculate further on the matter.

11 I have no gender information for two words.
Bonim ‘name’ forms the non-singular by subtracting -nim and adding -p; karanim subtracts -nim but adds -ip. Baranim has -m subtracted and -p added. The non-singular of muaranim is in fact formed on a synonym with the same stem from the ma declension, muareima (masc.). The next five words form non-singular by adding -up to the full form of the singular, although some informants maintain that tǝnim does not have a non-singular form. Uadan has two possible singular forms, and the non-singular given to me is based on the form which is not in the nim declension. I have no information on the non-singular for ionim, but the last three words simply have no non-singular forms.

The ending -nim is homonymous with the ending that forms nominals from adjectives. However, only sǝsǝrapunim is an obvious derivation from something which is currently an adjective in the language, namely sǝsǝrap- ‘wet’ (it could be translated ‘wetness’). A less direct relation holds between muaranim ‘branch’ and the adjective mupmuar- (mutmuar-) ‘branching a lot’, and between panim ‘heat etc.’ and the adjective pǝppamnǝ- ‘hot’. The fact that there are several abstract nouns in this declension, as well as the fact that feminine gender is predominant, may suggest an origin in (now obsolete) adjectives for a few more of the words; all morphological nominalisations and a majority of abstract nouns are feminine (see 5.6.3.2 below). Mǝlonim ‘behind’ and uadan/uadanim ‘between’ are both relational nouns, and cannot be used of parts of objects or persons (see further 5.7.1 below).

5.2.10 The m declension

The last two declensions, m and n, are different from the eight so far presented. Their identifying endings are not full syllables, and in the n declension gender is mixed to a larger degree than in the other declensions. Although most of the nouns form non-singular by the rules set out for the plain declension, there are a number of cases of subtraction of the last segment. The combination of unpredictable non-singular formation and less consistent gender is the reason for treating them as special declensions.
The *m* declension has 21 members: sixteen feminine, two masculine, and two either.\(^\text{12}\)

Various non-singular types are represented. Two words lack non-singular forms,\(^\text{13}\) nine add -up to the full singular form, and two more do so as one of two possibilities. Four words replace the final -m with -p. **Bukom** ‘head’ belongs to the group of nouns with plurals in -bip, and **makasiem** ‘eaves beam’ subtracts -em and adds -p as one alternative:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{Sg} & \text{Nsg} & \text{Dl} & \text{gdr} \\
\text{irǝm} & f & high water in river \\
\text{lǝlem} & m & song and dance (type) \\
\text{amasǝm} & f & sand \\
\text{ubiem} & f & sea, salt water \\
\text{pirom} & f & \\
\text{afaum/avaum} & f & slit gong, guitar \\
\text{galaum} & f & pandanus (sp.) \\
\text{uaniem} & f & tree (sp.; TP magas) \\
\text{auam} & f & cockroach \\
\text{demdem} & f & land snail (from TP) \\
\text{malobiem} & f & tongue \\
\text{boiôm} & f & dolphin \\
\text{laragam} & m & (fish?) hawk \\
\text{luluram/lutam} & m/f & dwarf \\
\text{makasiem} & m/f & eaves beam \\
\text{neim} & m/f & edge of river or hill \\
\text{ipam} & f & leaves to cover mumu \\
\text{bulǝlom} & f & taro (generic) \\
\text{burukkam} & f & knot \\
\text{dikkam} & f & nit; fruit (sp.) \\
\text{bukom} & f & head; coconut water flask; lastborn pig \\
\end{array}
\]

5.2.11 The *n* declension

The *n* declension has 81 members (and so will not be given in full here). Of these, 40 are feminine, 25 masculine, and ten either feminine or masculine. Of the ten words with variable gender, seven denote persons (‘firstborn/leader’, ‘friend/partner’, ‘orphan’, ‘same-sex same-generation in-law’, two words for ‘crazy person’, and ‘dead person’) and take the gender of the referent. The other three simply have variable gender (‘goatfish’, ‘sea snake (sp.)’, and ‘(kind of) basket’).\(^\text{14}\)

A feature of the non-singular formation of nouns ending in /n/ is the [n] to [l] alteration described in 3.2.2.4, whereby a final [n] is frequently realised as [l]

\[^{12}\text{One more lacks gender information.}\]
\[^{13}\text{Information is missing for three more.}\]
\[^{14}\text{Gender is unknown to me for four words; and two relational nouns, arakkin ‘opposite/straight over’ and uadan ‘between’ do not have gender (see further 5.7.1).}\]
when the non-singular suffix is applied to a form ending in \( /n/ \) (cf. also 5.2.4, 5.2.2 and 5.2.3 above). It appears that all words can accept the variation, and it occurs also in recent loan words (e.g. \textit{suppun} – \textit{suppulup} ‘spoon’), although there is a tendency for words already containing \( /l/ \) to retain \([n]\). Here forms will be given with \([n]\) or \([l]\) as they were taken down.

Most nouns in the \( n \) declension form non-singular in the regular way given in (4) above (since gender is variable in this declension, gender information will be included), e.g.:

\begin{verbatim}
(23)  Sg  Nsg  DI  gdr
  kin  kilip   R  f  small amount of water
 ŋoun ŋoulup  f  fish hook
gun gulup   R  f  breadfruit
boun boulp   f  wave
lakkuan lakkuanip  f  village
kaun kaulup   R  m  weed
panan panalip  m  nest
sobin sobilip  m/f basket from one coconut frond
\end{verbatim}

Six words form non-singular by subtracting the final \( /n/ \) and adding \(-p\):

\begin{verbatim}
(24)  Sg  Nsg  DI  gdr
  kein keip   R  m  basket with head strap
lukuan lukuap  R  m  house
kamin kamip   R  m  yam
muuan muap    R  m  betel pepper
kiban kibap   R  m  leg/foot
mikan mikap   R  m/f friend/partner
\end{verbatim}

A few other scattered patterns are also found:

\begin{verbatim}
(25)  Sg  Nsg  DI  gdr
  olbuan olbuop olbuanipien  m  blood
  nibuan nibuop nibuanipien  f  top of yam, to replant
  uon uailup   R  –  married couple
laksaman laksap/-manip  m  wooden “propeller” to catch shark
tinin tiniliap   R  f  dance group
kilan kilalap   R  m  arm/hand
unun unulup/unuliap unulupien  m  stand of bamboo or bananas
gan galip/galibip  f  garden (N Kuot)
\end{verbatim}

In this last group of words we also find two dual forms, for \textit{olbuan} and \textit{nibuan}, that do not follow the irregular non-singular exhibited by the word but are instead formed on what would be a regular non-singular form (while for \textit{unun} the dual follows one of two possible non-singular forms).

The word \textit{uon} ‘married couple’ takes dual agreement and thus does not have gender. From the point of view of agreement and form, it could be considered dual, and most probably has that origin. But it can in turn take non-singular and dual morphology as a singular noun would; see further 5.4.1.
Three words in the $n$ declension lack non-singular altogether.\footnote{For nine more I do not have the information.} They are:

\begin{align*}
\text{laurien} & \quad \text{f} \quad \text{shadow} \\
\text{in\text{\textae}mon} & \quad \text{f} \quad \text{the world; ground; sky, space} \\
\text{lakabuon} & \quad \text{f} \quad \text{stick of firewood}
\end{align*}

For \text{lakabuon} a suppletive non-singular is used: \text{lap}, which in turn has no related singular form.

Both the $n$ and the $m$ declensions could be treated as part of the plain declension, in that non-singular is largely regular and they do not have an identifying syllable like the other special declensions. However, there is a higher than normal level of irregularity in the non-singular formation, and this is why they are treated as separate declensions here. For the $n$ declension, it is also the case that it has a lower than usual correlation between gender and declension.

\subsection*{5.2.12 Origins of special declension singular endings: hypotheses}

This section summarises some facts about the eight declensions that are defined by the last syllable of the singular form (i.e., $ma$, $na$, $bun$, $bu$, $uom$, $ham$, $n\text{\textae}m$ and $nim$, ignoring $m$ and $n$). Several facts support the idea that the endings were added to originally shorter stems at some point in history, apart from the fact that they are subtracted in the non-singular.

There are a number of words in the special declensions that have related forms (without the endings) in Austronesian languages in the region, as well as in Tok Pisin (which has some 15\% of its vocabulary from local languages, primarily Tolai/Kuanua of New Britain).\footnote{Mühlhäuser (1997: 176) gives the proportions of lexifier languages in Tok Pisin as 77\% English, 16\% indigenous, and 7\% German and other.} The words have most likely been borrowed into Kuot. There are no English-based words with these endings, so presumably the word formation processes that led to the declensions had stopped being productive by the time Tok Pisin became known in the area. The related words of this type that I am aware of are given in Table 2.
Table 2: Old loans in the special declensions.
The language abbreviations are: TP=Tok Pisin, Kr=Kara, Lk=Lakuramau, 
Nc=Nochi, Md=Madak, POC=Proto-Oceanic.17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kuot</th>
<th>Decl.</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ubianama</td>
<td>ma</td>
<td>TP uben</td>
<td>fishnet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tālinīma, tālinunam</td>
<td>ma, n</td>
<td>TP talis, POc *talise</td>
<td>Terminalia catappa (nut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naero-bu</td>
<td>bu</td>
<td>POc *[ka]yaRi</td>
<td>Canarium almond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nātjarina</td>
<td>ma</td>
<td>TP nātja</td>
<td>mosquito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maminīma</td>
<td>ma</td>
<td>TP mamin</td>
<td>doubleheaded maori wrasse (fish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taurima</td>
<td>ma</td>
<td>TP taur</td>
<td>Triton shell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kifōma/kispōma, kifōbun/kispōbun</td>
<td>ma, bun</td>
<td>Md kisap, Lk skif, POc *kusupe</td>
<td>rat, mouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uduma, udebun</td>
<td>ma, bun</td>
<td>Kr fiut, POc *pudi</td>
<td>banana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kasonīma, kasonunam</td>
<td>ma, n</td>
<td>Ne kasu</td>
<td>mango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kubunam</td>
<td>nēm</td>
<td>POc *kubo, *kubwa</td>
<td>young coconut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tananam</td>
<td>nēm</td>
<td>TP ton, POc *tawan</td>
<td>Pometia pinnata (fruit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sikaima</td>
<td>ma</td>
<td>Kr səvəwə</td>
<td>grasshopper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last two sets may not be related, but the first ten items seem convincing.

There is also the fact that there are a number of related words in different declensions, as we have seen above (for instance kubōma – kubebun ‘young man – young woman’; kasonōma – kasonunom ‘mango tree – mango fruit’; opōliobu – opōlabam ‘breadfruit tree – breadfruit leaf’; and muaranim – muareima, both ‘tree branch’.) These suggest an earlier base, to which the endings were added (*kubə, *kəso, *opəl-, *muarə, etc.).

We have also seen that the [n] to [l] alternation that is typical at the end of words sometimes occurs quite far into the stem in the special declensions (in words ending in -nēma in the ma declension, and in the na declension), which may be an indication that the /n/ was once at the end of the word. Another possibility is that the phonemic distinction between /l/ and /n/ (which is still only partial) only developed after these words were established, and did not affect them.

The issue of semantic unity is more difficult. One possibility is that there was at least partial noun classification in the past (common in non-Austronesian lan-

guages in the region), and that the endings were once classifier morphemes. Another possibility is that the ending may at one time have been a meaningful lexical item and the construction initially something like a compound word (not presently a word formation strategy in Kuot). The compound scenario would account for the gender association of declensions, if the gender of the compound word came from the last part, the present-day ending. This would also account for the semantic unity that we see in some declensions: if for example there was a feminine noun bu (or an earlier related form) which meant fruit-bearing tree, and trees started being called ‘x fruit tree’ instead of just ‘x’, this would account quite nicely for the bu declension we see today.

One problem with these ideas is that there are exceptions in all cases, and some declensions have no discernible semantic unity at all. As Kuot is a genetic isolate, there is no comparative data against which to judge semantic drift, that is, there is no external data to help us determine whether non-typical words in some of the declensions originally meant something else, or to support the notion that some words may have the declension-defining ending coincidentally, or indeed to verify a hypothesised origin for the ending.

5.3 Other non-singular patterns

A few words form non-singular on other patterns; some more are irregular, and there is a small amount of suppletion.

5.3.1 -bip, -iap and other smaller non-singular patterns

Some types of alternative non-singular formation cut across declensions. In particular, there is a group of 20 words that take a plural ending in -bip. The -bip ending is sometimes added to the full singular form; in other cases part of the singular stem is subtracted. For several words, other non-singular forms also exist. The words taking the bip non-singular are given here with gender and declension information (“p” stands for the plain declension):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sg</th>
<th>Nsg</th>
<th>Dil</th>
<th>gdr</th>
<th>decl.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>danuot</td>
<td>danuoribip</td>
<td>danuoripien</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sëgor</td>
<td>sëgorabip</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dëkor</td>
<td>dëkorabip</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uppaau</td>
<td>uppaubip</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuada</td>
<td>kuadabip</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>buttock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>këdi</td>
<td>këdibip</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>bamboo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dëde</td>
<td>dëdebip</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tape</td>
<td>tapep/tapebip</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bie</td>
<td>biebip</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>shell, shell scraper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kudat</td>
<td>kudarip/kudaribip</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biamona</td>
<td>biamabip</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>shoulder blade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labun</td>
<td>lalabip</td>
<td>labunupien</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>bun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>donabun</td>
<td>donabulup/donabip</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>bun</td>
<td>blue fly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unbulunubulup</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>bun</td>
<td>coconut frond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kudiribam+/+kudirap/kuderibip</td>
<td>/R</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>bam</td>
<td>prongs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fikanom</td>
<td>fikabip</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>nam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kimanom</td>
<td>kimabip</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>nam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nouns: Other non-singular patterns

Both of the irregular duals are formed on what would have been a regular non-singular; for *labun* the non-singular is suppletive (or at least involves rather far-reaching changes to the stem) while the dual goes back to the singular form. For *parabunom*, one informant also gave a dual form *parabunomupien*.

Some words get an ending with the form *-bip* through other mechanisms, and should not be included here. This concerns words whose singular form includes */b/*, to which *-ip* is added after subtraction of the original ending; they are *karebima* – *karebip* ‘piece of sweet potato cooked in coconut milk’, *pakkubinom* – *pakkubip* ‘intestine’, *obinom* – *obip* ‘canoe’, *mobinom* – *mobip* ‘lip’. A couple of words which have no singular form also end in *-bip*: *tubebip* ‘coastal people’ and *burabip* ‘old garden’. Since their relation to the singular form is not known, it cannot be determined whether they are bona fide *bip* non-singulairs. 18

Another, albeit less common, form of non-singular marking is *-iap*. It is found with many time words (including recently borrowed names for weekdays), as well as with some ordinary nouns:

(28)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sg</th>
<th>Nsg</th>
<th>Di</th>
<th>gdr decl.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>tor</em></td>
<td><em>toriap</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>parabira</em></td>
<td><em>parabiraiap</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>nabit</em></td>
<td><em>nabiriaip</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>afternoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>arubu</em></td>
<td><em>arubuiap/arubuap</em></td>
<td>R</td>
<td>night, darkness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>iley</em></td>
<td><em>ileyiap</em></td>
<td>R</td>
<td>daylight, daytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ties</em></td>
<td><em>tiesiap</em></td>
<td>R</td>
<td>language, speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>tinin</em></td>
<td><em>tiniliap</em></td>
<td>R</td>
<td>dance group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>papparak</em></td>
<td><em>papparakiap/p’apparakiip</em></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mønat</em></td>
<td><em>mønariap/mønarip</em></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>feast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>unun</em></td>
<td><em>unuliat/unulup</em></td>
<td>unulupien</td>
<td>stand of bamboo/banana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kaure</em></td>
<td><em>kaureiap/kaurebap</em>/kaureiap/kaurep*</td>
<td>m/p</td>
<td>useless activity, trivia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A further possible member is *inomniap* ‘people’. This word has no singular form, but appears to be related to *inomon* ‘world’ and to neighbouring Nochi *inaman* ‘people’. There is a tendency for stems which can also be used as class I

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18 It may be suggested that the *bip* forms consist of the regular non-singular *-ip* with a */b/* that may formerly have been part of the singular form. However, there are two reasons why this seems unlikely. First, voiced stops are not permitted as final segments (cf. 3.2.1), and nor are there any corresponding *gip* or *dip* endings to suggest that they once were; second, the vowel of the non-singular would be expected to be [u] after */b/* as after all other final bilabials but we find only *bip*, and there are also no *bup* forms conditioned by rounded vowels (as should be the case for e.g. *uppau* and *un-bun*).
verbs to take the -iap non-singular (if they can be pluralised). In this context we may note that papparak ‘food’ is related to parak ‘eat’ (see also 5.8.1 below).

Two more words have non-singular forms ending in -iap, namely ubi – ubiap ‘garden’ and popori – poporiap ‘story’; however, the words themselves end in /i/, and so the non-singular ending may equally be -ap, since this ending occurs in a couple of other words in the data. It is one of two possibilities for arubu ‘night’ and one of four for kaure ‘trivia’ (both given in (28)), and is used also in kilan – kilalap ‘hand, arm’. Pianǝm – pialap ‘village’ of the nǝm declension may count in this group too, with a [n] to [l] alteration in the stem.

There is also a group of words that have a non-singular ending -ip, in spite of the singular form ending in a vowel. All belong to the plain declension:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sg</th>
<th>Nsg</th>
<th>DI</th>
<th>gdr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>uǝ</td>
<td>uaiǝp</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lǝsǝbǝ</td>
<td>lǝsǝbaip</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>leatherjacket (sp. of fish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sǝŋa</td>
<td>sǝŋaiǝp</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>magic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kalaŋa</td>
<td>kalaŋaiǝp</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>crab (sp.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utoŋa</td>
<td>utŋap/utŋaiǝp</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>ashes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oga</td>
<td>ogaip</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>green parrot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kapǝ</td>
<td>kapǝp/kapaip</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>food parcel; roof</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are also a few words that end in /e/ in the singular, but where the /e/ is removed and replaced by -aip in the non-singular (sometimes optionally). It appears to be possible to form duals on either this form or a regular non-singular form (in the case of nide the non-singular *nidep is not attested but still forms a base for the dual). All are in the plain declension:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sg</th>
<th>Nsg</th>
<th>DI</th>
<th>gdr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nide</td>
<td>nidaip</td>
<td>R/nidepiǝn</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ǝnǝne</td>
<td>ǝnǝnep/ǝnǝnaip</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>sea shell (generic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ǝmlokǝ</td>
<td>ǝmlokaiǝp</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>meat or other “extra” to go with tuber food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ǝmrǝmu</td>
<td>ǝmrǝmupe/ǝmrǝmulaiǝp</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>stone (type)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ǝkoko</td>
<td>ǝkokoipe/ǝkokaip</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>rock etc. where spirits dwell; earthquake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m/f</td>
<td>diff.-sex cross-cousin; man’s mo-in-law</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A similar case but involving other vowels is fǝlo – fǝloap ‘bamboo section; cup’.

5.3.2 Irregular non-singulars

The general (masculine) word for pig, kumurot, has the irregular non-singular kumep. For a few more words irregular alternatives have been noted: afaii – afaiap/afailap ‘raintree, Samanea saman’, lǝga – ǝlǝgap/ǝlǝgalap ‘nut tree (sp.), Barringtonia’, and kaure – kaurep/kaurebap ‘trifle, nonsense’. A further atypical non-singular is found with two words for pigs of certain colouring; see 5.6.1 below. One group of nouns with particular irregularities is kinterms and human nouns, which are discussed in 5.4 below.
5.3.3  Suppletive non-singulars

Suppletive non-singular forms are rare except among human nouns (see 5.4). I am aware of only three other words:

(31)  |   Sg     |   Nsg    |   Dl     |   gdr |   decl.   |
     |---------|---------|---------|------|----------|
     | lakabuon | lap     | f       | n    | firewood |
     | labun    | lalabip | labunpie | f    | bun      | bed    |
     | kanepunm | kinep/kanepulup | R/R | f    | nom      | finger |

The second of these is not even necessarily a truly suppletive word, as the *bun* ending is frequently removed in the non-singular, and it is possible that the remaining part of the stem, /la/, has then been reduplicated (although reduplication is not a productive process with nouns). The shorter plural for ‘finger’ is also similar to the singular.

5.4  Non-singular and dual with kin terms and human nouns

A number of human nouns have special non-singular and dual forms. Kin terms are particularly interesting in that many of them have regular duals and non-singulars alongside the special dual and non-singular forms, with different meaning. Some other human nouns also have special dual forms.

5.4.1  Kin terms

A set out in 2.6, kin terms in Kuot are typically reciprocal, so that the term can be said to refer to the relation type rather than the persons connected by it. For example, the word *eia*/*aia*/*ieta*/*iaia*) means both ‘grandparent’ and ‘grandchild’. Both the grandparent and the grandchild can refer to and address each other by the term, and we could say it applies to a “grandrelation”.

Several terms of this type have special dual and non-singular forms, which contrast with regular dual and non-singular forms, and have different application. In the duals there are also sometimes particular forms for pairs of females. This is the only area of the language where gender is morphologically differentiated in forms which are not in the singular. 19 For *eia*, we get the following forms (The variability in base across these forms is probably accidental, and presumably all forms could be produced on any of *aia*, *iaia*, *eia* or *ieta*):

(32)  |      |          |            |      |     |
     | aia/aia etc. | grandrelation (sg) | eian   | grandparent with grandchild, minimum one male (dl) |
     | eiarie | grandmother with granddaughter (dl) |
     | aiaiup | granparents with grandchildren (has to have two generations; nsg) |
     | eiapien | 2 grandparents or 2 grandchildren (regular dl) |
     | eiap | grandparents or grandchildren (regular nsg) |

The forms that are unique for the kin terms, here *eian*, *eiarie* and *aiaiup*, refer to combinations of people connected to each other by the kin relation designated to the term, but not to people on one side of it, as it were. In other words,

19 There is a single example among adjectives of gender being distinguished in the plural: *mago-* ‘good’ which has masculine plural *magoim* and feminine plural *magom*. 
if referring to a pairing of a grandfather with his grandson, *eian* is appropriate, but this term is not used to designate two grandparents, or two grandchildren, for which the regular form *eiapien* is instead used.

Some speakers only allow the regular dual and plural forms in possessive constructions. This is presumably a collocational restriction, in that the noun phrase with the kin term would normally denote one end of the relation, the possessor being at the other end so to speak, that is, when you say ‘his grandparents’, the grandparents will be of a single generation and therefore referred to with a regular form; the possessor being linked to them by the relation designated by the term, expressed in a different noun phrase. For example:

(33) \[pare=liŋ \quad pparie \quad <> \quad ga \quad [mən \quad ne-i-li-i].\]
\[
\text{get.up}=3\text{dS} \quad \text{sisters.dl} \quad \text{and} \quad \text{CONT} \quad \text{REC}-\text{look}-3\text{dS-stm}_2
\]
‘the (2) sisters looked at each other.’

(34) \[li-ga=r-ma \quad [ppapa-p-iən \quad anan]:\]
\[
\text{3dS-say}=\text{ASP}?? \quad \text{sibling-nsg-dl} \quad 3\text{m.PossII.dl}
\]
‘Lak-i=rə \quad [ppapa \quad biŋ]?’
\[
\text{where-3m}=\text{ASP} \quad \text{sibling} \quad 1\text{dn.PossII.sg}
\]
‘his (2) sisters said: “Where is our brother?”’

These two examples are from the same story, and it is the same two sisters that are referred to in both. In (33), the form *pparie* shows that they are in a sistership relation to each other. Although they are of course still sisters to each other in (34), the focus here is on their relation to the brother, and the regular dual is used instead of the feminine dual form.

It is interesting to note that the terms which have special dual and non-singular forms denote relations where the persons would typically work or spend time together.

A list of the special dual and non-singular forms known to me is given in Table 3, with the kin terms from which they appear to be derived, and with the regular forms alongside for comparison. Translations are given for the regular forms only for relations involving more than one generation, where they can be made unambiguous; for instance ‘two brothers-in-law’ is ambiguous between the readings “two men in a brother-in-law relation” (special dual) and “two men in any relation, both brothers-in-law to someone else” (regular dual).
Table 3: Special dual and non-singular forms with some kin terms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dual</th>
<th>non-singular</th>
<th>regular dual</th>
<th>regular non-singular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>naga ‘mother’</td>
<td>numan ‘mother + son’</td>
<td>numeilup ‘family</td>
<td>nagapien ‘2 mothers’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>numarie ‘mother + daughter’</td>
<td>members’</td>
<td>nagap ‘mothers’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ira ‘father’</td>
<td>iran ‘father + child’</td>
<td>(?irulup ‘father + children’)</td>
<td>irapien ‘2 fathers; 2 parents’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poppa ‘sibling’</td>
<td>papan ‘brother + brother/brother + sister’</td>
<td>papailup ‘sibling group’</td>
<td>poppapien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>paparie ‘sister + sister’</td>
<td></td>
<td>ppapap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tata ‘maternal uncle; man’s sister’s son’</td>
<td>taran ‘mat. uncle+niece or nephew’</td>
<td>tarailup ‘mat. uncle(s) + nieces and/or nephews’</td>
<td>tatapien ‘2 uncles; 2 nephews or nieces’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i)aia, (i)eia ‘grandrelation’</td>
<td>eian ‘grandparent + grandson’</td>
<td>aialup ‘grandparents + grandchildren’</td>
<td>aiapien ‘2 grandparents; 2 grandchildren’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>eiarie ‘grandmother + grand daughter’</td>
<td></td>
<td>aiap ‘grandparents/ forefathers; grandchildren’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mela ‘same-sex-in-law’</td>
<td>melm ‘man + brother-in-law’</td>
<td>(?)</td>
<td>melapien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>uon ‘married couple’</td>
<td>uailup</td>
<td>?uailupien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bəuaga ‘woman married to husband’s brother’</td>
<td>bəuagalen ‘2 women married to brothers’</td>
<td>bəuagailup ‘women married to brothers’</td>
<td>bəuagapien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kokup ‘same-sex-cross-cousin’</td>
<td>kokuplen/-lien ‘2 same-sex cross-cousins’</td>
<td>kokupleilup ‘several same-sex cross-cousins’</td>
<td>(?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>luop ‘man married to wife’s sister’</td>
<td>luoplen/-lien ‘2 men married to sisters’</td>
<td>(?)</td>
<td>luopup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20 The special dual and plural forms suggest that an older stem for mother may have been *num (cf. 2.6.2).
21 There is an interesting variation between /pp/ ([p]) and /p/ ([v]) in these terms, related too to the term papa used for spouse’s same-sex sibling (cf. 3.2.2.1).
22 This form exhibits an interesting variation between /t/ and /r/, similar to that between /pp/ and /p/ in poppa.
The dual forms for the first seven words follow the same pattern: Forms for females only end in -rie, and forms for mixed or male pairs end in -n. For the last three words, we find the dual ending -len (/lien/) (also found on kulen ‘two boys’; see below). In the non-singular, available forms end in -ilup.

The word uon ‘married couple’ is listed among duals as it takes dual agreement and conforms to the pattern of dual kin terms ending in /n/. Remarkably, informants are willing to give dual and non-singular forms for it. My information regarding the other forms of this word is somewhat contradictory, but I was told that the regular dual would be used of two couples, and that uailup can refer either to several couples or to a family constellation of one man with two wives, or a woman with two husbands (both sometimes occurred in the past). The form ?uolup is acceptable to some but not to others.

Another form that deserves mention here is makapien ‘same-sex in-law’. This is used in address (or, less often, third person mention) between two women or two men related through marriage, alongside more specific terms such as mela ‘brother-in-law’ and lauaga ‘sister-in-law’. This word is used of singular referents in spite of being a dual form (ending in -p-ien), and (at least) traditionally, dual agreement was used in address to single referents in this relation as a mark of respect, which indicates that the form is not accidentally dual-like. What is remarkable about this word is the fact that it can take another dual ending to refer to two referents: makapien-ip-ien. There is no related singular stem *maka.

5.4.2 Other human nouns
A few more nouns denoting humans, but which are not kin terms, also have deviant dual and non-singular formation. They are given in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dual</th>
<th>Non-Singular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>makabun ‘woman’</td>
<td>makabie makaulp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kubebun ‘young woman’</td>
<td>kubebie kubeulp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kulǝmut ‘girl’</td>
<td>lobie lop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kulot ‘boy, child; young man’</td>
<td>kulen lop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Irregular dual and non-singular forms with some human nouns.

---

23 The -n is presumably related to the /n/ in the regular dual ending -ien, and also to the forms li- and le- etc. marking functions such as subject and object (cf. 3.2.2.4 and Appendix I). The feminine duals for kin terms (-rie) and other human nouns (-bie; see below) are the only instances where a (third person) dual suffix does not end in /n/.

24 This non-singular ending does not occur elsewhere in the non-singular formation in Kuot (although all non-singular nouns end in /p/).

25 If the form ?uailupien is genuine, it would be quite unique in using a regular dual on the kin-style non-singular.

26 Similarly, plural forms are used between cross-cousins of different sex; see 2.6.4, 2.6.5, and 5.5 below.
These forms differ from the kin terms we saw above in several respects. First, there are no alternative regular forms. Second, the non-regular endings themselves are different. Here, the female dual forms end in -bie rather than -rie (although the male form kulen is on the same pattern as the male kin duals ending in -n). In the non-singular, both makabun and kubebun end in -ulop (slightly different from -ilop in kin terms). Kulǝmut and kulen share the suppletive non-singular lop, and kulǝmut has the related dual form lobie while kulot has kulen. None of these forms represent general processes or patterns (although non-singular -ulop and -ilop are found with a few more words in the bun declension; see 5.2.4 above).

5.5 Number: usage

The form of cross-referencing, indexing and agreement morphemes always follows the number (and gender) of the noun. This section is about the factors that determine the number of nouns.

Dual number is used primarily for humans, where two referents are consistently coded with dual form. For inanimates, even obviously paired things such as legs and eyes are normally expressed with the non-singular (plural) form without the dual suffix. The dual can be used with inanimates if the fact that there are two of something is particularly stressed or salient in the context, and it is obligatory following the numeral ‘two’.

Regarding non-singular, essentially all instances of reference to more than one entity are coded as such, with the non-singular form for plural (or dual) referents. One area of exceptions concerns respectful usage in avoidance relations among certain kin, particularly between siblings and cross-cousins of different sex. The kin system, the terms and their usage are described in 2.6. This usage is not productive and is only used with the particular kin terms for which it is established, and is disappearing even there. The address term for same-sex in-law of the same generation (i.e., spouse’s same-sex sibling), makapien, traditionally required dual agreement, and is still used that way by some speakers. Remarkably, mixed singular and dual agreement is sometimes found with makapien (otherwise never allowed in Kuot):

\[(35)\] na-ga ma-la lakum?
2sS-want/be about to 2dS-go where
‘where are you going?’

This can thus also be rendered ma-ga ma-la lakum? or, less politely, na-ga na-la lakum?. Different-sex cross-cousins are addressed with non-singular forms, including the term itself: kokolep/kokolaip, rather than kokole (sg).

Other exceptions to following factual referent number, as we shall see, are similar to what is found in other languages which regularly mark number on nouns. Where singular is used for more than one referent, it is primarily to do with

27 I also have a note that kumebun ‘sow’ has a dual form kumebie (and also a regular one kumeulapien). It is otherwise restricted to humans.
things such as non-specific reference to a category of referents; where plural is used for singular it tends to be countable units of mass nouns and the like. In a few cases, non-singular marking can also be an expression of respect. As in most languages, there are also certain idiosyncrasies in this area.

Singular is used for non-focused and non-individuated categories of referents in the following examples:

(36) \textit{to-kar} = \textit{ŋ} \ pîsguma  \\
1sO-bite=3mS \ ant(sp.;m)  \\
‘the ant(s) bit me’

(37) \textit{i-la} \ me \ bøbam  \\
3fS-go \ for \ leaf  \\
‘she went for leaf’ (to wrap food for cooking)

(38) \textit{a-rok} = \textit{ŋ} \ kierima  \\
3mO-cut=3mS \ sharpened.stick(m)  \\
‘he cut stick(s)’ (for a fence)

(39) \textit{Inamnëiap \ onim \ Ostrelia}  \\
people.nsg \ ORIG \ Australia

\textit{lø} \ tøle \ me-\textit{me} \ me-\textit{na}-\textit{a} \ buruma  \\
RELR \ NEG \ 3pS-HAB \ 3pS-wear-3mO \ laplap(m)  \\
‘Australian people don’t wear a laplap’

(40) \textit{dak} = \textit{ŋ} \ obinøm \ a \ losinay  \\
be.full=3fS \ canoe(f) \ 3m.PossI \ whitebait(m)  \\
‘the canoe is full of whitebait’

(41) \textit{mitøø} \ na=\textit{ŋ} \ karøt  \\
very \ be.plentiful=3fS \ betelnut(f)  \\
‘there is a lot of betelnut’

(42) \textit{nømø} \ me-\textit{maniø} \ karøt  \\
want \ 3pS-want.3sO.fut \ betelnut(f)  \\
‘they want betelnut(s)’

The low level of individuation is clearly a factor, in that the nouns in these constructions cannot take modifiers; if they are focussed enough to have modifiers they are focussed enough to take the non-singular form. However, the last example can in fact take a quantifying expression to form \textit{pøpøt o karøt} ‘lots of betelnut’ – according to my informant the result is exactly equivalent to an expression marked for non-singular: \textit{pøpøt ma karøt-ip} ‘lots of betelnuts’. This may be to do with the type of modifying expression; it is not possible to have for instance \textit{karøt i-\textit{lø} \ kan-u} ‘big betelnut’ in (41) without marking the head for non-singular.

As the examples suggest, this usage is found mostly in noun phrases in object function, although subject function does occur too, as in (36).

In other cases, non-singular is used for pluralities, which sometimes do not even have singular form, for example in (43) where only one has a singular form at all:
The idiosyncrasy is shown for instance in that *ipup* ‘grass lying after someone walked on it’ is non-singular only, while *lobenim* ‘grass-like type of bamboo’ is singular only. There is nothing in the meaning of the words which readily explains this difference.

**Substances** of various kinds also have different default expression with regard to number. Some are singular only, some non-singular only; others are normally singular but can take non-singular, which then has a semantic effect of quantity: either that there is a lot of the substance, or that there are several units of it.

The following are examples of nouns for substances which are either singular only, or non-singular only:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sg only</th>
<th>Nsg only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>ubiem</em></td>
<td>sand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>urup</em></td>
<td>lime powder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>tabaunim</em></td>
<td>dew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mulukarap</em></td>
<td>ear wax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mageis</em></td>
<td>sweat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>parab</em></td>
<td>semen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One noun which can take either singular or non-singular form is *olbuan* ‘blood’; singular is the default, but non-singular does occur. This example is from a story of a nasty road accident, at a point where the participants are washing blood off a truck:

(45)  
\[\text{...u-tta obinom lo dak=ien=ar=} \text{ar} \text{ ma olbuop.}\]  
\[3f\text{-ANAPH canoe(f) RELR be.full=}3fS=\text{ASP} \text{ 3p.PossI blood.nsg}\]  
‘…that car (which) was full of blood.’

The use of the non-singular here indicates that there was lots of blood (although it is also the case that it was the blood from several different people, and perhaps also several pools of blood). Similarly, if *utaro* ‘ashes’ is used in the non-singular (*utaraip* or *utarap*) it can mean that there are lots of ashes, or it may refer to the ashes of several fires. When *burunam* ‘water’ is used in the non-singular (*bureip*), it is understood to mean water bottles.28

Some words have particular usage patterns. This particularly concerns *ubi* ‘garden (southern Kuot)’, which is frequently cross-referenced as the direct object of a verb, even when there are other more salient candidates. In these cases, the garden itself could be seen as having the role of location or ground for the action. In this piece on how gardens are prepared, the garden is not even cleared,

---

28 This is not an option for *ubiem* ‘sand’, for which one would have to use the noun for a container to get a corresponding meaning, e.g. *baket-ip o ubiem* for ‘buckets of sand’. *Pirom* ‘sea water, saltwater’ has to be construed as *ubiem: kadi-bip o pirom* ‘bamboo (lengths) of saltwater’.
but still causes feminine singular cross-referencing, rather than the many trees felled and cut up in its preparation:

(46) \[U\text{-tie}, \text{ tubiat}\,=\,\text{bat} \; \text{ga} \; \text{pa-bulə-o} \; \text{me} \; \text{laurup} \]
    \[3f\text{-there} \; \text{later}=\text{now} \; \text{and} \; 1\text{pxS-cut-3fO to down} \]
    \[\text{ga eba } i\text{-lamiŋ}=\text{arə} \; \text{laurup} \; \text{ga } i\text{-ot}. \]
    \[\text{and FUT } 3\text{fS-fall.fut=ASP down and } 3\text{fS-lie} \]
    \[\text{Ga eba } pa\text{-airə-yə, me eba } lal\text{-uo ba}. \]
    \[\text{and FUT } 1\text{pxS-leave-3sO for FUT dry-3f FUT}_2 \]
    \[\text{Eba } lal\text{-uo ba } u\text{-tie } ubi. \]
    \[\text{FUT dry-3f } \text{FUT}_2 \; 3f\text{-there garden(f)} \]
    \[\text{ga } u\text{-tie, } \text{ tubiat}\,=\,\text{bat}, \]
    \[\text{and } 3f\text{-there later}=\text{now} \]
    \[la e=\text{bat } pa\text{-la } o\text{-rəlkit}=\text{pay}. \]
    \[\text{REL} \text{ IMM.FUT}=\text{now } 1\text{pxS-go } 3\text{fO-chop.up}=1\text{pxS} \]
‘Alright, then we cut it [the trees] down and it will fall down and lie. And we’ll leave it, so that it will dry. This garden will dry, and alright, then, we’ll go and cut it [the trees] into little pieces.’

One verb, meaning to ‘harvest the produce from a garden and consume it’ can only take the garden as object:

(47) \[\text{eba o-iparək}=\text{meŋ } ubi \]
    \[\text{FUT } 3\text{fO-harvest.and.eat garden(f)} \]
‘they would harvest and eat (the produce from) that garden’

### 5.6 Gender

The two genders in Kuot are called masculine and feminine, since male humans (and male major animals) are consistently found in the masculine gender and female humans (and female major animals) are found in the feminine gender.

We have seen in the above that the special declensions except the \(n\) declension are associated with a particular gender, that is, they have morphological gender assignment (cf. Table 1 above). We will see (5.8.1) that the same can also be said of some types of action nominalisations.\(^{29}\) For the vast majority of the remaining nouns in Kuot, approximately half of the noun vocabulary, it is the case that gender is

- semantically opaque (not predictable from general principles)
- consistent (one noun, one gender)
- covert (formally unmarked on the noun).

The main exception to gender being semantically opaque is nouns denoting persons and higher animates. Exceptions regarding consistency occur primarily between speakers, and only very rarely does a single speaker use a word with

\(^{29}\) Kuot has no diminutive or augmentative, categories which are subject to morphological assignment in many languages.
different genders. Aside from the special declensions presented above, there are only a handful of nouns where the form of the noun itself indicates its gender. Each of these points will be raised below.

Figure 2 is a rough representation of the gender assignment principles in Kuot. The main dividing line is between the special declensions where gender assignment is morphological, and the plain and n declensions which are open to semantic assignment. A much smaller group of words denoting humans and higher animates receive gender in accordance with the sex of the referent. There is some overlap with morphological assignment here such that those human and animal nouns that are in the special declensions are almost always in a declension of the appropriate gender; in the few cases where this is not the case, the gender association of the declension is overruled in favour of natural gender (cf. 5.6.3.1 below). The rest of the vocabulary, i.e., nouns denoting inanimates and lower animates in the plain and n declensions, is open to gender assignment by other semantic principles, but as we shall see, only a few weak tendencies can be suggested, and gender is largely opaque for this group (what Corbett (1991: 13) terms “semantic residue”).

Figure 2: Gender assignment in Kuot.

30 Dahl (1999: 105ff.) suggests a different way of characterising the source of gender, as “lexical” and “referential”. Lexical gender covers all cases where gender is a fixed property of a noun, and includes morphological and idiosyncratic gender, as well as semantically motivated but fixed gender, e.g. Russian sud’ja ‘judge’ which is masculine by association with a long line of male judges and often governs masculine agreement even when applied to a female judge. Referential gender is all instances where gender is determined by properties of the referent, in the context of a particular act of reference. In Kuot, the box with the broken line in Figure 2 would fall under referential gender, and the rest under lexical gender. Since the few potential conflicts between lexical and referential gender are resolved in favour of referential gender (i.e., there are no cases parallel to sud’ja), the analysis is in this case not greatly influenced.
The fact that gender is a property of each noun lexeme (with the exception of nouns referring to humans and higher animates), constitutes a difference from many gender systems found on New Guinea. There, even many two-term systems with female and male as the semantic core for animates, are classifying, in the sense that (inanimate) nouns take their gender from the semantic properties of the referent. In such systems, we may find that ‘house’ is masculine if it is long or big and feminine if it is round or small, and so forth (Foley 1986: 77–91).

Most non-Austronesian languages of Island Melanesia have some form of gender or noun classes, and this has been taken to indicate deep-level genetic relationships. However, Terrill’s (in press) investigation of the available data shows that there is a great deal of variation between the languages, in terms of the number of distinctions made, the semantic bases of the systems, and the forms of the morphemes that express gender in the grammars of these languages. If the languages are indeed related, it is possible that the relationships between the systems have been obscured by the long time that has elapsed since their separation. Alternatively, and on the present data perhaps more likely, the property of having gender is an areal feature predating the arrival and spread of Austronesian languages through the region.

The rest of this section will be devoted to investigating gender in the plain and the $n$ declensions, whose members do not have gender through morphological assignment.

5.6.1 Covertness of gender in the plain and $n$ declensions

Kuot gender conforms to Hockett’s statement that ‘[g]enders are classes of nouns reflected in the behaviour of associated words’ (1958: 231). In only three Kuot nouns that I am aware of is gender as such marked on the noun itself, and in all three cases the marking appears to be adjectival (see below). In the rest of the vocabulary, gender and number are reflected morphologically only in agreement, indexing and cross-referencing morphology. The form of the noun gives no indication as to what gender it belongs to.

One way to show that form is unrelated to gender would be through homonyms, but there are very few homonyms in Kuot that do not involve loan words (for which see below). I am aware of only a few homonyms and near-homonyms, some of which have different genders:

(48) $\begin{align*}
\text{lukuan} & \quad \text{m\ house} & \quad \text{lukkuan} & \quad \text{f\ village} \\
\text{bökba̱} & \quad \text{m\ temporary\ fence} & \quad \text{bökba̱} & \quad \text{f\ hipbone} \\
\text{kakko̱} & \quad \text{m\ eagle} & \quad \text{kakko̱} & \quad \text{f\ neck} \\
\text{boŋabəŋa} & \quad \text{m\ hornbill} & \quad \text{boŋabəŋao} & \quad \text{f\ beam\ along\ top\ of\ side\ wall}
\end{align*}$

I know only of three more homonyms:

31 No gender distinction is made in objects in future forms of class IIa verbs.
Some loan words happen to have the same form as indigenous Kuot words. These may have the same gender as the Kuot homonyms, or they may have different gender. Loan words are often unstable in terms of gender, but it seems clear that their gender is not determined by form:

(50) | **Kuot sense** | **Loan sense** |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kofi</td>
<td>m bamboo flute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kap</td>
<td>m stick for moving mumu stones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kar</td>
<td>f shell (sp.), shell scraper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pin</td>
<td>f betelnut (northern Kuot)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fok</td>
<td>f vagina</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first two words, *kofi* and *kap*, in the borrowed senses, are treated as feminine in Bimun but as masculine in Kabil on the east coast.

Conversely, the gender of synonyms could tell us something about the relation of form and gender. Occasionally, synonyms do have different gender, as the following:

(51) *muabari* f sun; watch  *lamarunpo* f steepheaded/ember parrotfish
    *espan/efan* m sun  *bǝrǝruon* m steepheaded/ember parrotfish

Nouns that can take either gender depending on the sex of the referent vary a lot in form, giving a further indication that form is irrelevant for gender, e.g.:

(52) *poi* child  
    *pǝppa* sibling  
    *bekkulǝ* namesake  
    *sopsop* blind person  
    *karun* orphan  
    *natauan* firstborn  
    *sǝdǝk* vain person, show-off  
    *ŋoŋ* idiot; deaf person  
    *dǝbǝnot* crazy/subnormal person

A very few nouns have **overt gender**, with different forms for masculine and feminine referents. They are given in (53):

(53) **masc.** | **fem.** |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>maro</em></td>
<td><em>maro</em> thing; filler noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>lapulu</em></td>
<td><em>lapulu</em> black pig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>lumle</em></td>
<td><em>lumlo</em> brown pig</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The words in the first pair here are very common, and are frequently used as fillers while a speaker tries to think of a particular noun or proper name (glossed
‘whatsit’ in examples), taking the gender of the intended noun. The non-
singular and dual are regular: marǝp and marǝpien. There is also a related loca-
tive form marǝn, used when trying to think of a place name. The gendered
endings are adjective-like (as will become apparent in the following para-
graphs).

The second pair is clearly derived from the adjective puppul- ‘black’ (which is
however normally reduplicated), together with the relator la which is sometimes
used to form nouns (see further 5.8 for this process). The masculine and femi-
nine forms tally with the forms used for the adjective: puppul-i for masculine
and puppul-u for feminine. However, the parallel plural/non-singular form
would be *laqulim, but is instead laqulumup, which is irregular but not adjec-
tive-like.

The last pair appears to be perfectly parallel with the second (many adjectives
end in [e] and [o] through phonological processes described in 3.3.3), but there
is not currently an adjective *umlǝ- as would be expected, neither with the
meaning ‘brown’ or any other meaning. The non-singular form is laumlamup.

5.6.2 Consistency in gender assignment
With extremely few exceptions, the system is stable on the level of individual
speakers, so that each speaker treats each word as either masculine or feminine
all the time. Such variation as there is thus occurs mainly between speakers.
With some words, this variation is idiolectal, with others dialectal or genera-
tional.

Many words are attested over and over in the data, and remain stable in terms of
gender (e.g. tǝrǝ ‘time’, pirit ‘dry coconut frond’, ulaŋ ‘moon, month’ which
are always masculine; and others which are always feminine, for instance karǝt
‘betelnut’ (southern Kuot), kit ‘fire’, ubi ‘garden (southern Kuot)’, alaŋ ‘road’).
But there are some curious exceptions. One concerns the word for ‘story’, gas
(south Kuot), which occurs at the beginning and often also the end of nearly
every recording from the southern Kuot-speaking area. It is treated as feminine
by most speakers in Bimun, but some elderly speakers and speakers on the west
coast mostly treat it as masculine (speakers of the northern dialect mostly use
another word, popori, which is always feminine). In some cases, it varies in the
speech of a single speaker, so that it is feminine at the beginning of the story (‘I
will tell a story...’) and masculine at the end (‘That’s the end of my story...”), or
vice versa.33

Another area where some variation occurs is (perhaps trivially) production mis-
takes, where speakers mistakenly give a word the wrong agreement. This is

32 This may be an interesting area for psycholinguistic research into gender and lexical
organisation, since the usage of gendered fillers shows that speakers usually know the
gender of a noun before they have retrieved the lexeme they wish to use.

33 It is interesting to note that a homonym (gas) meaning ‘bush spirit being’ takes gen-
der according to the sex of the referent – however, there is no indication that the words
are related.
most common where the agreement (or indexing or cross-reference) marker comes before the noun, meaning that the speaker may have had another noun in mind, as in the following, where the verb with the faulty object cross-referencer is followed by some hesitation:

(54)  
\[
O-\text{faka}=\text{on}=\text{ar}\hat{\text{a}} \quad <\text{pi-} \quad \text{mar}> \quad \text{pirit}
\]
\[
3\text{m}-\text{make.fire}=3\text{mS}=\text{ASP} \quad \text{whatsit(m)} \quad \text{dry.coconut.frond(m)}
\]

‘He lit the <...> frond’

Here it is also the case that the verb used is one that is almost always used with kit ‘fire’ which is feminine, and it is not quite appropriate in the context according to the speaker who helped me transcribe it.

While production mistakes are not infrequent, they are almost universally corrected when a text is transcribed. For the issue of gender consistency it is also interesting to note that the filler words mar and maro (see above) almost always match the gender of the sought-for noun.

5.6.2.1 Speaker awareness of gender variability

Most speakers do not show a high level of awareness of variability, even when it comes to loan words, which are the most variable. For instance, there is the Tok Pisin loan ‘bilum’, meaning the net or string bag common on New Guinea, but not traditional in New Ireland, though now widely used. Some speakers treat this word as masculine, others as feminine. Several times I was corrected on this point, sometimes faulted for using masculine, other times for using feminine. There are two interesting points about this; first that many speakers have apparently not noticed the variation among fellow native speakers, since if they had they presumably would not correct a learner; and secondly it illustrates the principle that a word can only have one gender for most speakers. For most speakers, the most common attitude when presented with an instance of use of a word with different gender from what they would themselves use, is that the other usage is simply wrong. A few speakers (notably my main informant, Robert Sipa) had made the observation that some words vary between speakers, and could even formulate relevant generalisations for particular words, such as the generational or geographic distribution of its gender variability.

5.6.3 The semantics of gender

Three groups of nouns can be distinguished with regard to gender assignment in Kuot (this is expressed also in Figure 2 above):

- nouns referring to humans and higher animates follow the sex of the referent (natural gender)
- nouns in the special declensions where nine of ten declensions have a gender association, as do nominalisations (morphological assignment)
- the rest (no rules: opaque gender assignment)

The special declensions were given in full or exemplified in 5.2 above, with their gender distributions. It was seen that all of the special declensions except the n declension are associated with a particular gender (the association being a
little weaker for the na and m declensions). This subsection is concerned with words in the plain and n declensions, looking first at words whose grammatical gender follow the sex of the referent, and then at the rest of the vocabulary. It will be seen that very little can be concluded in terms of semantic underpinnings for nouns which do not receive gender through morphology (as in the special declensions, and to an extent nominalisations), or through the sex of the referent.

5.6.3.1 Humans and higher animates
Words denoting humans or relations of either gender almost always take the gender of the referent (some were given in (52)), and this occasionally overrules the gender associations of special declensions, such as bunima ‘lastborn’ of the ma declension and kanakanotobu ‘sorcerer’ of the bu declension. In the case of kǝǝnima ‘twin’ speakers agreed that this word is masculine (possibly because of being in the ma declension) but no one asked could think what a female twin was called. Some words are of course only applicable to persons of a particular gender, such as unuli ‘traditional doctor; one who does war magic’, a function that can only be performed by a man.

For animals there are separate nouns for males and females, primarily for domesticated animals:

(55) kapura dog, male dog  laibun bitch
    kumurot pig, boar  kumebun sow
    pura fowl, rooster  puraibun hen

(All the female terms are in the bun declension.)

For possums, although they live in the wild, there are separate terms for male and female as well as a generic term:

(56) gǝs m possum, generic
    buraba m male possum
    mukusebun f female possum

There are also male and female terms for ‘rat, mouse’, given in 5.2.4. Rodents are not normally differentiated for sex by speakers, being usually referred to with the masculine term (kifǝma) – the explanation for the feminine form is that parents sometimes affectionately call small children ‘little rat’, and the feminine form is used to female children. The presence of the gender-differentiated forms for ‘rat’ thus does not constitute a violation of the animacy hierarchy. The hierarchy would lead us to expect more differentiation for animals which are salient to humans, normally big animals, domesticated animals, or animals with which humans interact in particular ways, especially those where the sex of the animal determines the nature of the interaction. Rodents do not exactly fulfil these criteria, but the fact that the difference in gender is adhered to when the terms are applied to humans neatly illustrates the relevance of the animacy hierarchy for gender-differentiated nouns in Kuot.

There are not many major mammals or big birds and fishes in New Ireland, and the words for some are found in the special declensions and thus not relevant here (e.g. ‘shark’, ‘old possum’, ‘big lizard’). The few remaining words have
only grammatical gender and do not take into account the sex of the animal, showing them as lower on an animacy hierarchy than humans, domesticates and possums, for instance:

(57) arigariga m wallaby (generic)
    kotarau m wallaby (young)
    leilom f dolphin

To specify the sex of a wallaby or shark for example, the attribute construction is used (cf. 1.1.1).

In narratives, animals sometimes have roles which conflict with the grammatical gender. The grammatical gender usually prevails; for instance in (58) where an egg has been laid by a python – lǝmot python is masculine:

(58) … o-i-op [u-sik sogar] an*[i-sik lǝmot]
    3fO-3FS-find 3F-DEM egg(f) 3m.PossI.sg 3m-DEM python(m)
    lǝ u-abu-o]
    RELR 3mS-put-3fO
    ‘…she found this egg of this python (who) had laid it.’

**Mixed-gender collectives** are referred to using the non-singular of the word for the male, e.g.:

(59) ira-p-ien parents (= father-nsg-dl)
    kumep pigs; boars (sows is kumeulǝp)
    kapunǝp dogs; male dogs (bitches is laibunǝp)

5.6.3.2 *Inanimates and lower animates in the plain and n declensions*

It has not been possible to find a convincing principle or set of principles to account for the gender distribution of the part of the vocabulary which does not receive gender through morphological assignment or sex, although there are a few weak tendencies. Several cross-linguistically attested principles underlying gender or noun class systems in the languages of the world were pursued and will be reported here. I looked at parameters such as shape and size, and categories like fruits, liquids, sharp instruments, fire, substances, time words, abstract nouns, nominalisations, and artefacts and culturally or ritually important items.

A problem with the semantic investigation is that such a large proportion of the nouns receive gender through membership in the special declensions. This means that many of the central members of any suggested semantic category are already “taken”, since many of the nouns denoting any class of items will be in the special declensions and therefore excluded from semantic consideration. This in turn means that the remaining nouns will be fewer in number, and sometimes not very central to the category in question, making the results difficult to interpret.

The parameter of **shape**, typically long vs. round, is exploited for gender in many Papuan languages (cf. Foley 1986: 77–91, Terrill 1999: 127). To investigate it in Kuot, we may look at words first for long things, especially sticks and stick-like objects, and then for round things:
Of the words for long things, six out of ten are masculine, which is not a convincing majority.

For round things, the numbers are clearer, with 15 feminine to three masculine nouns, but some caution is advisable. It may appear from the list that round things have a tendency to be feminine. However, it is also clear that there are many words pertaining to betelnuts and to coconuts and three for breadfruits, and it could be that it is these particular items that condition the gender (although all three masculine words in the group also denote betelnuts). If we were to go by item, so that each type of fruit counts as one, the list would have only seven units. Six of these would be feminine and one ambiguously. This indicates that there may still be a semantic parameter at work here, although it is hard to say whether it concerns roundness or fruits/nuts.

Turning to look at fruits more generally, we find that many are masculine; they were not given in (61) since they are less round in shape:
(62)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>muan</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>betel pepper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tabekka</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>papaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kamin</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>yam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kemǝs</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>wild yam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>euappias</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>yam (‘mami’ sp.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaplo</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>cucumber</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Insofar as there is a shape parameter, it would appear, then, that it applies only to fruits.

Another interesting point in this semantic area is that there would seem to be a tendency for one type of item to have one gender, that is, it seems that coconuts are feminine regardless of the word used, and yams similarly are masculine. Betelnuts, on the other hand, go against this generalisation, and it is not a principle otherwise salient in the language.

If shape has indeed been a factor in the gender assignment of fruits, this principle has been lost. Looking at recent loan words for fruits, we see that the principle of round fruits being feminine and longish fruits masculine is not followed:

(63)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kukkaba</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>cucumber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mǝlen</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>melon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>panekken</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>pumpkin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guava</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>guava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>epol</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moli</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>citrus (spp.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pamelo</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>pamelo/pomelo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lobo</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>chilli</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conspicuously long fruits like cucumbers and chillies are in both genders, and so are conspicuously round fruits like melons and guavas.

Note that there is no gender opposition between fruits and trees in the plain declension. Most fruit trees and many fruits are in the special declensions, where there is a degree of opposition along these lines, but for example nur ‘coconut palm’ is feminine as are most words to do with coconuts.

Size is another parameter sometimes exploited in gender systems (often in conjunction with shape). There are a few words in the data for things conceived of as big and small of “the same”, and all but one pair involve words in the special declensions. The remaining example is a triplet, where the small member is masculine, and the larger two are feminine:

(64)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kǝpa</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>food parcel (for cooking in mumu), normal size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kut</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>big food parcel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>palai</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>feast-sized food parcel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unfortunately, not much can be concluded from a single example. (Further, masculine usage for the last word, palai, has been observed.)

Similar things of the same size can also be found in different genders: oga (m) ‘green parrot’, kilikilo (f) ‘red parrot’ (same size); mareŋ (m) ‘red parrot’ (different kind).
Names of fishes were collected using a book of reef fishes of New Guinea,\(^{34}\) giving a vocabulary of some 75 nouns, with pictures and information on size. Omitting words in the special declensions, we have 47 words to look at. They are too many to include here, but examining the words and the fishes gives no indication that size matters for gender.\(^{35}\)

Among snakes, smaller snakes show a tendency to have feminine gender:\(^{36}\)

(65)\(^{36}\)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kakok</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>snake (generic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lasisok</td>
<td>f/m</td>
<td>snake (sp; small, still, many colours, found high in bush)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nadilik</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>snake (sp; small, fast)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sokopira</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>sea snake (sp; white sometimes black spot/stripe, bites)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lararen</td>
<td>f/m</td>
<td>sea snake (sp; bl/wh hooped, does not bite)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lamot</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>python (southern Kuot)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amora</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>python (northern Kuot)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More names of snakes would be needed to make a valid generalisation. The python is a larger snake than the others in the list, but also has mythological properties, whereby a snake can turn into a man (leaving the skin behind).

The word for ‘stone’, \(adǝ/tadǝ\), is interesting in that a size-based gender distinction is made: small stones are masculine and big stones are feminine. Speakers were unable to think of parallel examples.

Generally, among birds and insects, “special designs”, i.e., unusual types, or particularly large kinds are not found in the same gender; for instance \(bɔnabɔnɔ\) ‘hornbill’ and \(kriskau\) ‘New Ireland bird of paradise’ are masculine while \(dudur\) ‘owl’ and \(kuon\) ‘heron’ are feminine; \(lɔkikio\) ‘centipede’, \(kakoburik\) ‘spider’ and \(kunmɔra\) ‘scorpion’ are feminine while \(paskikio\) ‘mayfly’ is masculine. Of three words for rays, \(afǝra\) ‘stingray (spp.)’ is feminine, while \(nadaila\) ‘stingray (sp.)’ is masculine, and \(lasigilu\) ‘manta ray, spotted eagle ray’ is feminine. Nor are small or “ordinary” species found in the same gender.

**Water, sharp tools and fire** are further categories which sometimes have particular gender associations (for instance in the Australian language Dyirbal (Dixon 1972: 44–47, 306–312), made famous in Lakoff’s (1987) title as “Women, fire, and dangerous things”, since these categories are all feminine in Dyirbal). In Kuot, they all show a tendency to be feminine, but several of the

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\(^{34}\) Allen & Swainston (1993).

\(^{35}\) It is possible to imagine that fish names are to some extent secondary, in the sense that fish may be named for other items. For instance, one fish shares a name with a bird (\(aruku\)), and speakers say that the bird sense is primary. A few more terms are descriptive, such as \(i-lo\) \(kidi\) ‘slippery’ for wrasses and parrot fishes, and \(kɔkket\) \(la\) “impatient” for Janssen's wrasse, a fish that bites very quickly. For the most part, however, the names seem to be primary, i.e. denoting the fish without relation to other parts of the vocabulary.

\(^{36}\) This principle was pointed out by my informant Robert Sipa while discussing gender, and is borne out by the data, which however is limited.
vocabulary are fairly small (especially after omitting words from the special
decensions), which makes it difficult to say anything definite.

For **water and liquids** we have the following in the plain and $n$ declensions:

(66)  
danuot  f  water, river  
kin     f  small amount of still water  
bor     f  puddle  
magu f/m  fresh water bubbling up on beach  
kokke f/m  fresh water bubbling up on beach  
papplie f/m  spring, water coming out of rock or ground  
pipe  f  urine (also cl.I verb 'pee')  
karup  f  spittle (also cl.I verb 'spit')  
mabis  f  sweat (also cl.I verb 'sweat')  
mage.is f  sweat (also cl.I verb 'sweat')  
birǝ f  under sea surface down to sea floor  
mof  m  very high tide  
aforat  m  rain  
olbunan  m  blood

Here the feminine tendency seems reasonably strong, but there is also varying
usage for several words.

It should be noted also that words that can function as verb stems in verb class I
(pipi, karup, mabis, mage.is) are almost exclusively feminine (see discussion on
nominalisations below in this section and 5.8).

If there has been a principle of assigning words for liquids to the feminine gen-
der, it appears not to be operating any longer, as most recent Tok Pisin loans in
this area receive masculine gender (at least for most speakers), e.g. ‘kerosin’
(kerosine), ‘spirit’ (spirits), ‘kodiel’ (cordial), ‘bia’ (bear); though some are
feminine, e.g. ‘sup’ (soup) and ‘ti’ (tea).

**Sharp instruments** have a small tendency to be feminine too (but note too that
some of the words for spears given in (60) were masculine):

(67)  
ie  f  knife  
dabula  f  sharpened stone to be made into axe  
amatau  f  axe (N. Kuot)  
lasak  f  small axe, stone axe; heavy ‘club’  
kubat  m  adze for splitting bamboo

In this group may be included also shell knives and scrapers: *bie* ‘peeler,
scraper’, and *kar/mimidu/mudǝmudǝmun* ‘coconut scraper’, which are all femi-
nine. However, these are also the names for the shells from which the imple-
ments are made, so again other principles may be at work. When Tok Pisin
‘naip’ is used for knife, it is feminine, and so are the loan words *nil/nin* and *pin*
(from ‘needle’ and ‘pin’).

In the category **fire**, we have *kit* ‘fire’ which is feminine; related words like
*bora* ‘smoke’ and *utara* ‘ashes’ are also feminine, but this does not necessarily
indicate a principle to do with fire. *Ilak* ‘lightning’ and *ilen* ‘daylight’ are also
feminine. ‘Dry coconut frond; torch’, *pirit*, is masculine, as are the Tok Pisin
loan words ‘sikar’ and ‘simuk’ for cigarette. The words for ‘coal/ember’ and ‘burning stick of firewood’ are in the special declensions.

**Substances** and mass nouns used in the singular (cf. 5.5 above) are another category that could potentially receive special treatment. Words for liquids were given in (66) above, but there are others that may be regarded as substances:

(68)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tes</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>salt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buna</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>fine black sand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bonət</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>smoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ailu</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>grease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>magit</td>
<td>m/f</td>
<td>coconut fat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utǝɾǝ</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>ashes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>polakkon/kon</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>betel paste (chewed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peka</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>pus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These give no indication of a gender preference, which is perhaps not surprising, given that the count vs. mass distinction is not generally grammatically reflected in the language.

Most **time** words are feminine, excepting one word meaning ‘time’:

(69)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>la</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>day/time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parabira</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(na)bit</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>afternoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ileŋ</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>daylight, daytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arubu</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>darkness, night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tǝɾǝ</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tok Pisin loans such as the names of weekdays are feminine too, and other time words are treated as feminine by most speakers: ‘aua’ (hour), ‘minit’ (minute), ‘wik’ (week). Interestingly, when the Tok Pisin word ‘taim’ (time) is used, it is masculine like its translation equivalent tǝɾǝ.

**Abstract nouns** have a tendency to be feminine (leaving nominalisations aside for the moment):

(70)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abake</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>starvation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lamet</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>big hunger and weakness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>namara</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uno</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>customary law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>podas</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>big fight, war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ka</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>fight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tapuk</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>behaviour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Nominalisations** are generally feminine too. There are two types of nominalisations (meaning action nominals) in Kuot: morphological and non-morphological. Among morphological nominalisations, we find nominalisations from class II and III verbs and nominalisations from adjectives. In both cases, the resulting nouns are always feminine. This may be regarded as another type of morphological gender assignment, alongside the special declensions, since this type of nouns is recognisable through the nominalisation morphology (cf. 1.1.2):
Nouns: Gender

(71) ninimiap  f  life  < -inim  (verb cl II)  be alive/conscious/awake
nuparap  f  death  < -par  (verb cl II)  die
danunumiap  f  fight  < -n -om(u)  (verb cl IIa)  hit; kill
mulinubap  f  shame  < multi-b  (verb cl III)  be ashamed
usinyualap  f  school  < sin-al  (verb cl III)  show
kirinim  f  badness, sin  < kir-  (adj)  bad
kidinim  f  slipperiness  < kid-  (adj)  slippery

The picture is a little more complex when we turn to the relation between nouns and stems of verb class I, which is non-morphological, that is, there is no morphological marking of the transfer between classes. Stems which can be used either as nouns or in verb class I tend overwhelmingly to be feminine in their nominal use. What this means for the question of gender semantics is difficult to say. That is, is it the case that these nouns are feminine because they are also verb stems; or are they feminine for independent reasons, such as the fact that they denote liquids? In the latter case it could be that they can be recruited for verb use as a secondary effect of being feminine. In 1.1.2, I argue that verb class I is a relatively late development in the language, evolved from noun + alienable possessive marker. This would suggest that gender properties, being nominal properties, are prior to verb-forming properties, but it is also possible to imagine a degree of realignment for noun stems used as verbs. As there is no overt morphology marking their association with verbs, we would not want to call this morphological gender assignment.

Inherently locative nouns are feminine too; see 5.7.1.

Another semantic category sometimes utilized in gender systems is nouns for artefacts and/or culturally and ritually important things (e.g. Lavukaleve where they are in the neuter gender (Terrill 1999: 126) and Ojibwa and other Algonquian languages, reported in Corbett (1991: 20, 315). The following examples show that this is not a consistent area in Kuot:

(72)  kein   m  basket for carrying garden produce
kosebul  f  broken kein
sobin  m/f  basket to take things to or from market
kosebek  f  basket
balas  m  plait to finish basket or bera mat
kiriba  f  style or pattern of basket/mat
kapot  f  pandanus mat or “raincoat” (also pandanus sp.)
beka  f  hat/cap
bera  m  mat from one coconut frond
kamiri  m  cup made from leaf
patota  m  walking frame (for infants to learn to stand/walk)
kef  m  net for catching attuma fish
arau  m  net for catching pig or wallaby
sikko  m  comb
sige  f  spoon
tonop  f  shell money
kokkep  f  breast ornament (now:10 toea; money)
lamur  f  corpse display house
lapuo  f  area of men’s house
14 nouns for dances and songs for various ceremonies are similarly scattered between the genders (and at least one can be either feminine or masculine).

No tendency has been noted for items concerned with male spheres of activity to follow masculine gender, or vice versa.

More generally, much traditional knowledge has been lost, and there may be mythical associations embedded in the system that are no longer known by speakers.

5.6.3.3 Loans

It has been shown in the foregoing that loanwords appear not to adhere to those weak tendencies that can be suggested on the basis of the available data. This implies that such principles are not accessible to speakers. A few more notes may be made on the topic of loan words.

First, it is interesting to ask speakers why particular words are in particular genders (although the answers should be treated with some caution). I have never heard anyone make reference to male/female-ness for inanimates, nor to properties like shape or size, or cultural importance etc. For loan words, the only principle that does get quoted is analogy with indigenous Kuot words. This is reasonable for instance with ‘taim’ (time) which is masculine like Kuot tarǝ, and ‘naip’ (knife) which is feminine like Kuot ie, since these are used in replacement of the indigenous words. Similarly, all words for boats (‘spidbot’, ‘bot’, ‘sip’ etc.) are feminine like Kuot obinǝm ‘canoe’.

But there are also many cases of mismatch. For example: bǝbam ‘leaf; book’ is feminine, but ‘buk’ is masculine; kukuom ‘tree, wood; medicine’ is feminine but ‘marasin’ (medicine) is masculine; koi ‘half hard shell of coconut, plate’ is masculine but ‘plet’ is feminine (in Bimun); paragima ‘cut or split piece of wood (plank, firewood, bamboo pole etc.)’ is masculine, but ‘pleng’ is feminine. (In all cases, the gender given is the one used by at least some speakers; others may pick a different gender.)

When it comes to words for things that have come in after white contact the analogy model is sometimes even less convincing. For example, all items of clothing are masculine, and this is said to be on analogy with buruma ‘laplap’, which is masculine. I have not been able to get a pre-laplap sense for buruma, but we may note that the two other words for items used as clothing given in (72), kapǝt ‘pandanus mat or “raincoat” (also pandanus sp.)’ and bekǝt ‘hat/cap’, are feminine.

We also saw that liquids and words to do with fire tend to be feminine; yet ‘kerosin’ (kerosine) is masculine (no analogy was presented for this word). When speakers wish to express this sense in Kuot, burunǝm ‘water’ which is
feminine is used. Similarly, the loan word ‘kar’ (car) is masculine, but when loan words are avoided it is replaced by obinom ‘canoe’ (elliptic for obinom meion mi-la toktok-im ‘the red ones’ canoe’, i.e. ‘white people’s canoe’) which is feminine.

In the case of ‘bilum’, ‘net bag’, discussed in 5.6.2.1 above, some speakers use masculine, giving kein ‘type of basket’ as the gender template (although other baskets are feminine). At least one speaker using it as feminine said it sounded feminine, which could indicate a sensitivity for the morphological assignment rules, whereby the majority of nouns ending in /m/ are feminine, although such rules are not generally known, even implicitly.

5.6.4 Gender markedness

No unequivocal answer can be given to the question of which gender is unmarked; the possible criteria point in different directions.

Masculine is used of referents whose gender is unknown, e.g.:

(73)  aka i-sik?
       who  3m-DEM
‘who is that?’

       mani i-to?
       what  3m-here
‘what is this?’

Aka ‘who’ is normally used with masculine agreement even when there is reason to believe it is a woman, for instance if you hear someone in the night and the voice is female.

The following is used to inquire of the sex of a newborn baby:

(74)  i-ari-a man kulot?
       3FS-carry-3mO what child/boy
‘what (sex) child did she (the mother) have?’

The word pǝgǝ ‘thing’ is mostly used as masculine too:

(75)  man pǝgǝ i-tie?
       what thing(m) 3m-there
‘what’s that?’

A possible alternative analysis here is that the nouns are simply masculine (aka ‘who’, mani ‘what’ etc.).37

As mentioned in 5.6.3.1, masculine is used also for mixed-gender collectives. Since gender is not distinguished in non-singular grammatical morphology, the use of masculine for mixed groups can only be seen lexically, where the non-singular of the masculine rather than the feminine is used for mixed groups (example (59) above).

37 I discussed this possibility with my main informant, who was not convinced. Although he was by then very much used to discussing grammatical gender, his unwillingness to say that aka etc. are masculine may be due to their referential possibilities.
In contrast, feminine is used when there is no referent to agree with (i.e. no controller; zero agreement). In Kuot, each verb and adjective has an obligatory subject position, which has to be filled even when there is no referent. This is the case for instance in the expression used for ‘thank you’ – as in most languages in this part of the world there was traditionally no expression translating directly into ‘thank you’, but when the custom of using it was introduced, the expression ‘it is good’ was recruited for the purpose. There is no real-world correspondent of ‘it’, and feminine gender is used:

(76) \[ \text{tema}=\text{ieŋ} \]
be.good=3fS
‘it’s good’; ‘thank you’

Similarly, the “situation in general” is cross-referenced with the feminine, as in \( i-la \) in the next example. There is also a verb meaning, among other things, ‘to reach’ or ‘to last until’. In this sense, it always takes feminine cross-referencing. The following excerpt is from a story where a pregnant woman dies in the bush, but her baby survives and feeds himself off his mother’s body and later roams and eats from gardens in the bush. The preceding sentence translates ‘Again he came, again he came next to his mother, again he suckled of her rot.’, and the story continues:

(77) \[ I \)-la \( puo=\text{ieŋ} \) | \( u-la \) kak-kan-i],
3fS-go until=3fS RELR 3mS-go RED-big-3m
\( \text{kak-kan-i}=r \) \( \text{ga} \) u-num...
RED-big-3m=ASP and 3mS-walk
‘It went (on like this) until he went big, he was big and he walked…’

There is no question of agreement with a concrete referent for the two feminine cross-reference markers here. (The construction with \( puo \) is a type of complementation construction.)

The feminine is used also for discourse anaphors, for instance referring back to the contents of an entire narrative (discourse deixis). In this case it is a speaker who treats \( \text{gas ‘story’} \) as masculine, which shows that the feminine agreement in \( u-tie \) does not agree with ‘story’ but has precisely the function of referring back to the preceding context:

(78) \[ U-tie=t <i-tma- \( \text{gas} > \text{[i-tmat gas]} \) | \( l \) \( \text{tu-arəməə-a} \).\]
3f-there=just 3m- -- story(m) 3m-DEM story(m) RELR 1sS-tell-3mO
\( \text{Tema}=\text{ieŋ} \).
be.good=3fS
‘that’s it (of) <thi- story> this story I am telling. Thank you’

This usage tallies with the prevalence of feminine gender for abstracts (5.6.3.2 above).

Often, agreement with an actual referent is preferred. This is the case with the class IIb verb \( -it ‘know’ \), which tends to cross-reference the referent about which something is or is not known, rather than the entire proposition of knowing or not knowing, for example in the following where the object agree-
ment is with the pigs rather than the idea of an unknown number of pigs (but with slight hesitation before it): 

(79) *Atabo namuk ma kump, tôle=kan <…> ma-tu-ît*

maybe how.many 3p.PossI pig.nsg NEG=EMPH 3pO-1sS-know

‘How many pigs, I don’t know’

Looking at the distribution of nouns, the fact that such tendencies for semantic assignment principles as can be found assign nouns to feminine classes (e.g. categories like ‘water’ and ‘abstracts’) suggests that feminine is (or was) the marked gender. Masculine would have been the default gender for everything except male beings.

However, when we look at the gender distribution of words in the plain declension (Table 1 above) we can see that when there is no morphological assignment, feminine words are in the majority, although the difference is not dramatic (58% to 42% for masculine among words with known gender). Such a distribution is more consistent with a situation where masculine is the positively defined gender, and feminine a default gender. It is of course possible that there were semantic categories associated with each of the genders in the past, but that the categories defined as masculine have become even more obscured than those defined as feminine.

5.6.5 Decline of the gender system

Kuot speakers are very much aware of their language having gender. This is because it is not present in the surrounding languages, which are all Austronesian. However, their awareness does not extend to the distribution of referents across the two genders. Interestingly, neither semantic nor morphological assignment principles are accessible to most speakers. This is evident in that no speaker is willing to guess the gender of a word that they do not know, even if it is in the largest and most regular of the special declensions (i.e., the *ma* declension).

It seems reasonable to assume that there once were semantic principles for the assignment of inanimate nouns to masculine or feminine gender, but it is clear that these are no longer part of the competence of speakers. The inconsistencies found with loan words are one further indication. I was also told that children do not use gender correctly until quite late – about age seven according to my informant (since most children in Bimun are not learning Kuot, I was not able to make any observations on this point). Further, there is no creative use of gender: in many languages, gender can be manipulated for expressive purposes (e.g. using feminine gender for ‘man’ in Manambu conveys femininity (Aikhenvald in press), and in Lavukaleve, feminine can be used to convey smallness of referents, although smallness is not a property of feminine nouns in general (Terrill 1999: 129–130)); in Kuot no such usage has been observed, and none could be elicited.

38 I also asked whether children overgeneralise one of the genders when learning the language, and was told that they do not.
If the assumption is accepted that there would historically have been principles for the distribution of inanimate nouns in the plain declension into the two genders, we would like to know how the present situation came about. Perhaps the most likely explanation is semantic drift, whereby nouns gradually take on other meanings over time. If they retain their gender while changing their meaning, a semantically opaque gender system would eventually result. Again, it is a problem that Kuot is an isolate, since this means that there are no known related languages whose vocabularies can be studied in order to establish the original senses of Kuot words.

If we subscribe to the idea that a young gender system is for the most part systematic and rule-governed, and that the systematicity and rules can be obscured over time by various kinds of drift, then gender in Kuot is clearly old. The opacity seen in Kuot gender could be described as a type of decline of the gender system; not the decline of Corbett (1991: 315ff) or decay of Aikhenvald (in press), who both refer to the loss of one or more gender categories, but rather the loss of the systematic aspect of the system as such, that is, the semantic underpinnings on which inanimate gender was based. It is evident that gender as a grammatical category is alive and well: it is rigorously expressed across all categories that display concord; the concord morphology is not showing signs of collapse; and neither gender seems to be expanding at the cost of the other. The grammatical system is operating; the semantic one is not.

5.7 Sub-classes of nouns

In the above we have looked at the morphological classes of Kuot, and at the workings of gender. We also saw that many kin terms and other human nouns form particular dual and non-singular forms. This section introduces a few more categories of nouns that exhibit particular behaviour in one way or another.

5.7.1 Inherently locative nouns

A few words in Kuot are “inherent locatives”, that is, they do not take the locative preposition *na* to express location. The inherent locatives include the following nouns, and the relational nouns discussed in 5.7.2:

(80)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lakkuan</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lopuo</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>area around men’s house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labinim</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lauburien</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>shade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laurien</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>shade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lomuaririen</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>fork in branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lauaalo</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>above, space above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nabit</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>afternoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parabira</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>morning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

39 This is by no means an unproblematic notion, but it goes beyond the scope of the present thesis.
That the prepositionless use is indeed a lexical property is illustrated by the following examples, where *lakkuan* ‘village’ is used without *na* whereas the synonym *pianǝm* requires the preposition (the examples have been standardised to facilitate comparison):

(81)  
\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{u-onǝma} \quad \text{lakkuan} \\
&3mS\text{-sit/live village}
\end{align*}
\]
‘he sat/lived in the village’

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{u-onǝma} \quad \text{na} \quad \text{pianǝm} \\
&3mS\text{-sit/live in village}
\end{align*}
\]
‘he sat/lived in the village’

Most of the inherent locatives begin with the sequence /ła/, /lǝ/ or /na/, and it is likely that these are the result of fusion of the preposition *na* onto the beginning of the word – as was shown in 3.2.2.4, /n/ and /l/ are only partly distinct as phonemes in Kuot. Another possibility is the creation of nouns with the relator *lǝ* (see 5.8 below).

An interesting case supporting the idea of a prepositional origin is *nabit/nabuit*, where /na/ is only partly fused onto *bit/buit*.

(82)  
\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{U-tie,} \quad \text{bit=} \text{arǝ}, \quad \text{duri=} \text{meŋ,} \\
&3f\text{-there afternoon=} \text{ASP sleep=} 3pS
\end{align*}
\]
\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{parabira} \quad \text{te-u-arǝ} \quad \text{[i-sik} \quad \text{Samǝtmǝrun]}... \\
&\text{morning} \quad \text{get.up=} 3mS\text{-stm} \quad 3m\text{-DEM S.}
\end{align*}
\]
‘Alright, it got afternoon, they slept, in the morning this Samǝtmǝrun got up…’

(83)  
\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{u-tie,} \quad \text{nabuit=} \text{arǝ}, \quad \text{mu-me-o} \quad \text{kobeŋ-ip}... \\
&3f\text{-there afternoon=} \text{ASP come=} 3pS\text{-stm} \quad \text{bird-nsg}
\end{align*}
\]
‘Alright, it got afternoon, the birds came…’

The two examples are by different speakers, so it is possible that the interpretation of the status of /na/ with *bit/buit* differs from speaker to speaker. The speaker of (82) also uses *bit* with *na* elsewhere in the same narrative:

(84)  
\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Na} \quad \text{buit-iap,} \quad \text{Lerago lǝ} \quad \text{[i-me te-i-arǝ]}... \\
&\text{in afternoon-nsg} \quad \text{L. RELR 3fS-HAB get.up=} 3fS\text{-stm} \quad 2
\end{align*}
\]
‘In the afternoons, Lerago would get up…’

(Although (82) and (83) are closely parallel in structure, it is conceivable that a more locative interpretation is intended in (83); nonetheless it is clear that usage differs between speakers, and this word appears to be in an intermediate stage, sometimes treated as an inherently locative noun (*nabit*) and sometimes as a regular one (*bit*).) Example (82) also illustrates the use of the inherently locative *parabira* ‘morning’.

Several words for times of day are used as greetings. They differ in that some are used with *na* and others are not, and cannot be:41

40 The variation between *bit* and *buit* is partly dialectal (with *bit* mainly in the south and *buit* in the north) and partly idiolectal.
(85)  *parabira (*na parabira) morning
    *kabiröna (*na kabiröna) middle
    na ilej daytime
    nabit afternoon
    arubu (?na arubu) night

We may also note that all the inherently locative nouns in (80) for which gender information was available are feminine. I have no explanation for this, except perhaps if the theory of an origin in prepositional phrases is accepted; if so we could say that they are derived nouns, and feminine does tally with the fact that nominalisations from verbs and adjectives are feminine (cf. 5.6.3.2 above).

5.7.2  Relational nouns

There is a group of nouns in Kuot which we may call relational nouns. They express concepts such as ‘behind’ and ‘in between’. As mentioned above, they are a type of inherently locative noun. In many ways they resemble body part nouns, but there are differences. The relation of parts, including body parts, to the whole is expressed with the set of inalienable possessive markers, called PossI. These can be used to link the possessed noun phrase to another noun phrase, or they can be used pronominally, i.e. without a following noun phrase. Relational nouns are used in the same construction as nouns denoting parts, e.g.:

(86)  Pa-la ga pa-la ga pa-la ga pa-la [bet=pay]  
       1pxS-go and 1pxS-go and 1pxS-go and 1pxS-go  arrive=1pxS  
       na nöpm o  [u-sik pirom u-šo kan-u].  
       at mouth 3f.PossI 3f-DEM sea(f) 3f-RELR big-3f  

    *kabiröna ma kuop.
    middle 3p.PossI tree.nsg

    ‘We went and we went and we went and we (went and) arrived at the mouth of this big sea, in the middle of the trees.’

(The speaker is describing a lake, for which there is no Kuot word.) The example shows a relational noun, *kabiröna* ‘middle’, on the last line, and a regular noun, *nöpm* ‘mouth’, on the second line. Note how *nöpm* takes the preposition *na*, while *kabiröna* does not.

A further difference is that body part nouns can be used with alienable possessives (PossII). PossI codes parthood, and since the body part can in principle be detached from the body and talked of as a non-part, it can also take PossII coding (cf. 1.1.3). The relational nouns, on the contrary, can only be used with

---

41 The starred variants are those for which I have obtained acceptability judgements. All of these (except perhaps *kabiröna*) are very common, and I have never heard *arubu* used with the preposition; nor have I heard *ilej* or *bit* without it, as greetings. (This type of greeting is almost certainly inspired by contact with white people. Another type exists alongside it, namely the questions ‘where are you going?’ and ‘where are you coming from?’. These were reported early in this area, and are likely to be much older in origin.)
PossI. This is a consequence of their semantics rather than a lexical restriction: while there can be a leg without a pig attached, there cannot be a ‘behind’ that is not behind something. There is no possibility of using the relational nouns to denote parts (such as ‘back’ or ‘front’); they are only ever relational, and never referential.

Table 5 is a list of relational nouns in Kuot.

Table 5: Kuot relational nouns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sg</th>
<th>Nsg</th>
<th>DI</th>
<th>gdr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kabirına</td>
<td>kabırınap</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>(m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arabura</td>
<td>araburap</td>
<td>(m/f)</td>
<td>middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uadan =</td>
<td>uadanim</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>between 2; middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lekke, leikke</td>
<td>lekkeiap</td>
<td>lekkepien</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arskkin</td>
<td>arakkinip</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>molonim, ulonim</td>
<td>molonimup</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>f?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relational nouns differ in the degree to which non-singular and dual forms are acceptable to different speakers, and the degree to which such forms are used. The issue of gender in these words is also difficult. For almost all non-singular forms and genders given here, some speakers have at some time said that they do not exist.

Thus kabirına and arabura were at first given the genders now in parentheses, while other speakers later said that they do not have gender (I have no examples from texts where any other constituent agrees with any of these words). Kabirına and arabura are normally used in the singular, regardless of the number of referents of the second noun phrase, as in (86). But I was given an example of arabura in the plural, with a singular “possessor”:

(87) araburap o ileŋ araburap o arubu
middle-nsg 3f.PossI daytime(f) middle-nsg 3f.PossI night(f)
‘(in) the middles of the day’ ‘(in) the middles of the night’

The reference would be to repeated instances of (approximate) middays and midnight.

Molonim ‘behind’, on the other hand, itself takes dual or non-singular form depending on the number of the possessor, according to my informants (only examples with possessors in the singular occur naturally in my data, so these are examples given me when discussing these words with speakers):

(88) molonim tuo molonim-up-ien lie molonim-up ma
behind 1s.PossI behind-nsg-dl 3d.PossI behind-nsg 3p.PossI
‘behind me’ ‘behind them (2)’ ‘behind them’

In the third person, it is of course also possible to have a possessor noun, e.g. molonim-up ma makaulap ‘behind the women’. Molonim is used also of non-
oriented items, for instance expressing that something can be behind a stone or tree, which do not have inherent fronts or backs.42

Sometimes there is no possessive marking, if the object or person to which the location is being related can be understood from context. In this example, reference is made to a woman who is uphill from the place of speaking but on her way down, after the speaker, who is also on her way down, and speaking to yet a third woman. The elided possessive phrase would refer to the speaker:

\[
\text{(89) Eba no-du}=\text{ię} \ u\text{-tima}=\text{dı}=\text{ę} \ m\text{łonim}
\]

FUT 2sO-push=3fS 3f-downwards behind

‘The one coming down behind will give you a push’

In terms of number inflection, \textit{lekke} (/\textit{leikke}) ‘before’ is at least partly similar to \textit{młonim}: it takes the dual form when the possessor is dual (but was initially said to have no non-singular form). These constructions are unique within Kuot: nowhere else does the number of the possessor govern the form of the possessed (in this case those relational nouns that have this construction).43

\textit{Uadan}/\textit{uadanim} ‘between’ is a little different for different speakers. Some will allow for it to be used only of a situation where something is found in between two other referents (e.g. ‘between the (2) houses’). For other speakers, predominantly speakers of northern Kuot, it can be used synonymously with \textit{kabirona} and \textit{arabura} for ‘middle, midst’.

\textit{Arakkin} ‘opposite’ is used for alignment in either the horizontal or the vertical dimension; above or across. In one narrative, the first coconut palm grew straight over the grave of a man, and \textit{arakkin} was used. It can also be used for ‘opposite’ or ‘straight across’, as in ‘the hotel is directly opposite the bank’.

5.7.3 \textit{pęsęna} ‘clansman, clanswoman’, \textit{bonim} ‘name’

I am aware of two exceptions to the statement that the choice between PossI and PossII possessive marking is semantic rather than lexical (cf. 1.1.3): \textit{bonim} ‘name’ (which is treated as a body part in many languages), and \textit{pęsęna} ‘clansman, clanswoman’, which are both used with PossI44 – this is particularly surprising for \textit{pęsęna} since all other kin terms take PossII possessive marking.45 An

42 The Kuot use of ‘behind’ is thus similar to that of English in this respect, but unlike that of Longgu (Austronesian, Solomon Islands) in which directional terms like ‘inland’ and ‘seaward side’ are used to relate locations to objects without back/front orientation, unless they are in motion (Hill 1997: 122).

43 Both \textit{lekke} and \textit{młonim} also have some temporal uses, which will not be explored here.

44 There is some variation among words for pimples, sores, substances emanating from the body and the like, which may be partly lexical as well.

45 Interestingly, Volker reports from Nalik that alienable possessive marking is replacing inalienable marking, including kin terms, and the only kin term that is presently only ever used with the inalienable marking is the corresponding Nalik term \textit{tau} (Volker 1998: 132).
example is given in (90), which is an expression to do with a man’s children paying his clanspeople for his contributions to their upbringing\(^{46}\) (with PossII it would have been \(p \dot{s} \dot{s} \dot{a} \dot{p} \ am\)):

(90) \[a-kirip=meq \ me \ un \ p \dot{s} \dot{s} \dot{a} \dot{p} \ a\]
\[3mO-cut=3pS \ \text{to \ RECIP \ clanspeople.nsg \ 3m.PossI}\]
‘they cut him for his clanspeople’

5.7.4 Quantifiers
Three words used as quantifiers are analysed as a sub-class of nouns, but are defective in some respects. \(P \ddot{a} \ddot{p} \ddot{a} \ddot{u} \ddot{a} \ddot{i} \ddot{p}\) (for some speakers \(p \ddot{a} \ddot{p} \ddot{al} \ddot{u} \ddot{a} \ddot{i} \ddot{p}\)) and \(p \ddot{a} \ddot{p} \ddot{ot}\) both mean ‘much’ and ‘many’. The former looks non-singular in form, while the latter looks singular, but neither has corresponding forms in other numbers. Their usage is much like that of ‘lots’ or ‘a lot’ in English, although there is no difference concomitant with number; that is, they are completely interchangeable in all contexts. The same constructions also pertain to \(n \ddot{a} \ddot{m} \ddot{a} \ddot{r} \ddot{i} \ddot{p}\) ‘few’ (often \(n \ddot{a} \ddot{m} \ddot{a} \ddot{r} \ddot{i} \ddot{p}=\text{it} \ ‘just few’), which also looks non-singular in form but has no corresponding stem in another number. All can be used with the possessive construction (this example is partly elicited, in order to get parallel structures for all the words):

(91)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{\(p \ddot{a} \ddot{p} \ddot{ot}/p \ddot{a} \ddot{p} \ddot{al} \ddot{u} \ddot{a} \ddot{i} \ddot{p}\)} & \quad \text{\(n \ddot{a} \ddot{m} \ddot{a} \ddot{r} \ddot{i} \ddot{p}\)} \\
\text{\(3p.PossI \quad \text{pig.nsg}\)} & \quad \text{\(3f.PossI \quad \text{water(f)}\)} \\
\text{\(o \quad \text{burun\text{"om}}\)} & \quad \text{\(o \quad \text{kar\text{"ot}}\)} \\
\text{\(3f.PossI \quad \text{betelnut(f)}\)} & \quad \text{\(3p.PossI \quad \text{betelnut-nsg}\)}
\end{align*}
\]

‘many(much) /few pigs/water/betelnut(s)’

Any cross-referencing morphology would agree with the head, not with the quantifier.

Another common construction used with quantifiers is the attribute construction (cf. 1.1.1):

(92) \[b \ddot{i} \ddot{o} \quad \text{mi-}l \ddot{o} \quad p \ddot{a} \ddot{p} \ddot{a} \ddot{u} \ddot{i} \ddot{a} \ddot{p}\]
\[\text{shark.nsg \ 3p-RELR \ many}\]
‘many sharks’

or for elderly speakers often without the prefixed relator:

(93) \[b \ddot{i} \ddot{o} \quad p \ddot{a} \ddot{p} \ddot{a} \ddot{u} \ddot{i} \ddot{a} \ddot{p}\]
\[\text{shark.nsg \ many}\]
‘many sharks’

\(^{46}\) See 2.7.1 on this custom.
5.7.5 Numerals

It could be argued that numerals be analysed as a sub-class of nouns. Some numerals can be analysed as compounds of the locative preposition *na* ‘in, at’ with erstwhile nouns. Numbers from ‘three’ and up are constructed with PossI possessives. The number ‘ten’ takes dual and non-singular to form the numbers ‘twenty’ and higher multiples of ‘ten’. But they are defective as nouns in that they cannot be used in the attribute construction (thereby differing from the quantifiers which we saw in the attribute construction in (92)). The numerals ‘one’ and ‘two’ deviate in further ways, and numerals were given a class of their own, separate from nouns.

5.8 Nouns and other word classes

This section is concerned with the various relations that nouns bear to other word classes.

5.8.1 Nominalisations: action nominals

There are processes for forming action nominals from predicates, i.e. verbs and adjectives. Stems of verb class II and III and of adjectives are nominalised through particular morphology (cf. 1.1.2). Noun stems cannot normally be converted into verbs of classes II or III, or into adjectives (though the first part of class III stems is sometimes derived from a noun). The relation is normally one of derivation from verb to noun (e.g. *nuloiap* ‘words, sound, talking’ from class IIb -lo/loa ‘make noise, speak’), though in rare cases we do find a noun *ie* ‘smell’ corresponding to a verb stem -ie ‘smell’ (class IIb).

Class I verb stems are simply used without verbal morphology, and conversely, many nouns can be used as verbs of class I (which is the other open class in the language). Not all class I verbs can be used as nouns, and not all nouns can be used as class I verbs, but for stems which may be used as either, we may talk of zero derivation; or we may say that the stems are not subcategorised for the property of verb or noun. This relation is schematised in Figure 2.

![Figure 2: Nouns and verb class I: overlap of stems.](image)

It is interesting to note that the absolute majority of nouns which can function as verbs are of feminine gender (cf. 5.6.3.2 above). The group of stems that can be used as either nouns or verbs range in meaning and use from stems whose sense appears to be basically nominal (e.g. *kudat* ‘fence’) to stems that appear to be basically verbal (e.g. *ibir* ‘run’). Those stems that can be pluralised often take the non-singular ending -iap, rather than the regular -(i)p; this is true particularly of the stems which are primarily verbs.
5.8.2 Nominalisations: actor nominals

Another type of nominalisation is actor nominalisation, that is, a form derived from a verb or adjective, signifying the one who performs an action (e.g. ‘runner’ from ‘run’). Actor nominalisations do not have their own morphology in Kuot. The main strategy used is the same as for the attribute construction (cf. 1.1.1), and it is highly productive. The primary function of this construction is to make an attribute of a predicate (or other constituent) within a noun phrase. The attribute construction is marked by the relator \( l_\alpha \), prefixed with the nominal (demonstrative) agreement markers, e.g.:

(94) \[
\text{kit } u-l_\alpha \text{ kan-u} \\
\text{fire(f) 3f-REL } \text{big-3f}
\]

‘big fire’

In actor nominalisations, we often find such constructions, but without heads, e.g.:

(95) \[
\text{i-l_\alpha kan-i} \\
\text{3m-REL } \text{big-3m}
\]

‘God’

The expression in (95) is fully established in the sense ‘God’ but does sometimes still occur with the head noun ‘man’:

(96) \[
\text{mikana i-l_\alpha kan-i} \\
\text{man 3m-REL } \text{big-3m}
\]

‘God’

Presumably, most of these expressions arose through ellipsis, but many are now highly conventionalised and are used mostly without the former head noun, e.g.:

(97) \[
\text{i-l_\alpha u-ari-o kier} \\
\text{3m-REL 3mS-carry-3fO spear/stick(f)}
\]

‘policeman’ [lit. (the one who) carries a stick (i.e. rifle)]

(98) \[
\text{mi-l_\alpha toktok-im} \text{ from } \text{ […] mi-l_\alpha toktok-im neip ma} \\
\text{3p-REL 3p-REL 3p red-3p skin.nsg 3p.PossI}
\]

‘white people’ [lit. the red (ones)] ‘(the ones) whose skin is red’

We have also seen \( i-l_\alpha \text{ kid-i} \) ‘slippery (one), the name used for several species of parrotfishes and wrasses, mentioned in note 35.

Nominals formed in this way can have further modifiers, including an attribute of the same type, creating a very long noun phrase, as in the sentence from which (98) was taken:

(99) \[
\text{obin om meiŋ } \text{[mi-l_\alpha toktok-im] canoe(f) 3p.PossII.3f 3p-REL red-3p}
\]

Both expressions have counterparts in Tok Pisin, and may be translations of these: ‘bikpela’ is the adjective for ‘big’ and is used for ‘God’ (without a noun head), and ‘bikman’ (from ‘big man’) is a term for the traditional leaders in these areas, applied also to God.
Another strategy for forming nominals from predicates involves the use of the relator (lǝ) without a prefix, corresponding to a relative clause (see 1.1.8.1), but again without a head noun. This is productive particularly in creating place names, e.g.:

(100) [lǝ i-lum kume bun]
REL 3fS-fall sow (f)
‘(where) the sow fell’

(101) [lǝ bilø-u afun]
REL be. stuck-3f turtle
‘(where) the turtle got stuck’

The latter location is known today simply as Lǝbilo and not everyone knows the etymology with the turtle.

Place names can be created by conventionalisation of prepositional phrases as well:

(102) Bo kapinõma Na poplie
on mountain at spring

This is not attested for common nouns.

The same process as in (100) and (101) is likely to have once produced the terms for brown and black pigs given under 5.6.1 above. There is also a species of banana that grows only to about 70 cms, called:

(103) lǝ o-pipi=ieŋ kuala
REL 3fO-urinate=3fS old. woman
‘(that) the old woman pissed on’

Another set of nouns appears to have been formed from other words of various classes through the endings -sik, -ppik and -dik:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>noun</th>
<th>rel. word</th>
<th>cat.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kualappik</td>
<td>kuala</td>
<td>N, wife, old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sukuppik</td>
<td>suku/sugu</td>
<td>V cl I, play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pulapulasik</td>
<td>pula</td>
<td>V cl I, steal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>palalasik</td>
<td>palala</td>
<td>V cl I, be tired/lazy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>simsimasik</td>
<td>?isim?</td>
<td>V cl I, spy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person who spies on others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poppodik</td>
<td>ppo-</td>
<td>adj, be short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lɒbumesik</td>
<td>buma-</td>
<td>adj, be stingy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>short person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stingy person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is possible that *laippǝk* ‘old man’ belongs in the list too, in spite of having a different vowel in the ending; there is a word *lai* meaning ‘husband, old man’ which would make it exactly parallel with *kualappik*.

The ending *-sik* is homonymous with the most common bound demonstrative stem, which could well be the source. I do not know of possible sources for *-ppik* or *-dik*. The process is not productive.

### 5.8.3 Nouns as predicates and in the attribute construction

A noun used in the attribute construction can be required to take predicate morphology, in most cases from verb class I. It is difficult to predict which nouns are concerned, since some take no marking and others obligatorily take marking, and this often concerns semantically similar terms:

(105) *poi u-lǝ makabun* (*makabun=ieŋ*)
    ‘female child: girl’

(106) *makabun u-lǝ kualappik=ieŋ* (*kualappik*)
    ‘an old/ageing woman’

(107) *kǝrǝkǝt* (*i-lǝ) *kǝrǝkǝt=øy*
    ‘beardless (grown) man’

(108) *kulele gun-up lǝ kulele=meŋ*
    ‘ripe breadfruit’

(109) *to-kubǝma* (*kubǝma=øy*)
    ‘I am/was a young man’

Here the predicating noun in the first example is bare, the next three have verb class I marking which is obligatory when the noun is used in predicate function. *Kubǝma* ‘young man’ in the last example belongs to a very limited class of nouns which take adjectival subject marking for first and second person.

The first two examples above show the predicating nouns in the attribute construction, with an indexing prefix to the relator, and in the third we have the possibility of actor nominalisation. The slot created by the prefixed relator for an attribute within the noun phrase has the same possibilities for predicates as those in the relative clause which is marked by the un-affixed relator (cf. 1.1.1 and 1.1.8.1).

Human nouns are an exception to the generalisation that nouns which may be used as class I verbs are feminine, since they follow the gender of the referent for the verbal marking. Borrowed terms for professions always take class I marking, e.g. *titǝ=øy* ‘he is a teacher’, *nas=ieŋ* ‘she is a nurse.’