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PART 2.15.

ISOLATES

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2.15.1. ISOLATES: SEPIK REGION

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2.15.1.1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The Sepik region - by which we understand here an area extending from just west of the border of Irian Jaya to just east of the division between the East Sepik and Madang Districts, bounded in the north by the sea-coast, and in the south by the Highlands foothills - has more than its share of isolates and small phyllic groups. The reasons for this are not immediately apparent; the speakers of these languages do not live in particularly inaccessible or difficult terrain, although it is only in recent years that contact has been made with them; far more inaccessible areas in the Central Highlands of Papua New Guinea have populations which speak languages which are clearly relatable to the surrounding linguistic stocks. One theory is that the Sepik region has been one of considerable population movement, and that the populations speaking the linguistic isolates represent remnants of populations that have been absorbed everywhere but in the little pockets surrounding the great migration routes (see 3.4.1. in this volume); another possibility is that the isolates represent refugee populations.

Whatever the reason, the Sepik isolates present a linguistic and migration problem. It is true, of course, that the languages are classified as 'isolates' (or rather, are 'unclassified') because information on them tends to be scanty; further research may establish that these languages have in fact quite clear relationships with linguistic groups elsewhere on the island of New Guinea. But the isolates have, in most cases, been carefully compared with representative languages of all major groups in a radius of about a hundred miles, and with each other, and to date show no traits which would allow them to be included in larger groupings. A listing of them, with numbers of speakers is accordingly

given here, followed by discussions of each language, with such data as is available (following and updating Laycock (1973)). The listing runs approximately west to east. Further details and discussion may be found in Laycock (1973), and locations on the map of Sepik region languages in 2.11.1. in this volume.

SEPIK REGION ISOLATES (with alternative names)

Yuri	740+		
Busa	307	Busan	
Nagatman	496	Nagatiman	
Amtō	230	Ki	
Musian	75	Musan	
Erem	?		
Pinai	100?	Pinaye, Wapi	} see note at end of 2.15.1.
Wiyaw	1000	Wiyavik, Wiabuk, Wuiabuk	
Aramaue	300+	Aramo	

Of these, Amtō and Musian are now believed to be interrelated (see below 2.15.1.2.4. and 2.15.1.2.5.) and to form a small phylum(-level stock) (see 1.3.4. in this volume). Also, Pinai, Wiyaw and Aramaue are now believed to be fairly closely interrelated (see below 2.15.1.2.7.-9.) and to form a family, the Piawi (stock-level) Family, within the Yuat Super-Stock in the Ramu Sub-Phylum of the Sepik-Ramu Phylum (see 2.11.3.5.1. in this volume).

2.15.1.2. NOTES ON THE INDIVIDUAL LANGUAGES

2.15.1.2.1. YURI

Yuri is spoken in seven villages near the Irian Jaya border, just north of Green River. It is characterised by a lack of gender and morphological marking in nouns, three numbers, and suffixation of subject-markers in verbs. Counting is by a body-parts system terminating at 23. Words tend to be short, and the language may be tonal; in these and other respects it resembles languages of the Ok Family (Trans-New Guinea Phylum), but the lexicon shows no resemblance. The suggestion is made (in Laycock 1973) that it may turn out to be related to Oksapmin, which shows similar typological features, and was until recently counted as an isolate. (Oksapmin has now been tentatively included in the Trans-New Guinea Phylum.) No basic data have been published on the language, although Laycock and the Summer Institute of Linguistics have unpublished survey lists; the language is mentioned by Loving and Bass (1964), and by Laycock (1965, 1973).

2.15.1.2.2. BUSA (BUSAN)

Busa was first mentioned by Loving and Bass (1964), who classed it as a member of a 'Busa Phylum' containing only one other member, Amto (not 'Nagatman', as erroneously stated in Laycock 1973). However, Busa shares only about 8% cognates with Amto, so that this relationship, without any other supporting evidence, must remain doubtful. More recently, Conrad and Dye (1975) found only 4% cognates between Busa and Amto, and conclude 'from this data a Busa phylum seems unlikely'. No higher percentages with other languages of the area have been found.

From Laycock's 1971 fieldnotes, Busa shows the following features: no morphological plural marking in nouns, no dual forms in pronouns; subject-marking by prefix in verbs, object marking by suffix; verb morphology, and perhaps pronouns, distinguish a third singular feminine subject; nasal vowels occur, and tone may also be present. The numerals obtained appear to be fully decimal, but this is so unlikely a feature in the interior of New Guinea that it may be preferable to regard this as a recording error (perhaps the first ten numerals of a body-parts system). The typological features of Busa suggest Torricelli Phylum languages, but lexical agreement with Torricelli Phylum languages seems absent.

2.15.1.2.3. NAGATMAN (NAGATIMAN)

Nagatman is also first mentioned by Loving and Bass (1964), as an isolate; some material was also collected by Laycock in 1971, and a short wordlist can also be found in Conrad and Dye (1975). The language has some nasal vowels, and marks subject concordance by suffixes unrelated to the free pronoun forms; there is no gender, no dual, and no morphological marking of plural in nouns. Numeration is quinary.

2.15.1.2.4. AMTO (KI)

As has already been mentioned above in 2.15.1.2.2. Amto was first placed by Loving and Bass (1964) into a 'Busa Phylum', containing only Busa and Amto, with 8% cognates; however, this figure of 8% is reduced to 4% by Conrad and Dye (1975), when obvious loans are excluded, so that it seems that a 'Busa Phylum' must, on present evidence, be rejected. However, Conrad and Dye found 29% of 'probable cognates' with Musian, which seems to establish a genetic connection; wordlists in Amto and Musian collected by David Bailey, the missionary at Green River, support this conclusion. Conrad and Dye further report that Amto and Musian average 7% of shared vocabulary with Arai (Left May) (see 2.14.1.3.)

languages, but they feel that this reflects borrowing. (Laycock (1973) cites Bailey as mentioning widespread bilingualism in the Left May area: Amtó and Bo (Po) speakers understand simple Abau, while many Bo speakers know Amtó, and Rocky Peak (Yinibu) speakers know Bo.) No data is available on typological features.

2.15.1.2.5. MUSIAN (MUSAN)

First cited by Laycock (1973), on the basis of wordlists collected by David Bailey (missionary at Green River), and now apparently established by Conrad and Dye (1975) to be related to Amtó. (See above 2.15.1.2.4. for further details.) Bailey's lists show a third singular feminine in pronouns, but the data yield little else in the way of structural information. Laycock's (1973) comment that Musian may ultimately be classifiable into the Arai (Left May) Family would seem, in the light of the work of Conrad and Dye (see above 2.15.1.2.4.), to be unsupported.

2.15.1.2.6. EREM

A village named Erem is shown on some official maps as an uncensused village on the Upper Yuat River. It is certain that whatever language is spoken there is not the same as any of the known languages of the Yuat River, and the distance between the location of this village and the villages of other known languages make it unlikely that the language spoken at Erem is any really 'known' language of the area, although it is possible that Erem is a northern village of the Pinai language (see below 2.15.1.2.7.). It is included with Pinai on the map of Sepik region languages in 2.11.1. in this volume.

2.15.1.2.7. PINAI (PINAYE, WAPI)

Speakers of Pinai are located on the northern side of the Upper Yuat gorge; they are bilingual in Enga (hence the inappropriate name 'Wapi', which is correctly applied to a dialect of Enga). All that is known of their language is a wordlist of some 250 items taken by Rev. L.A. Cupit in 1970 or 1971; as these words showed little or no resemblance to any other known language of the area, Pinai was listed as an isolate by Laycock (1973). However, comparison of the Pinai list with a shorter list of Aramaue (Aramo) (see below 2.15.1.2.9.) shows clear lexical relationship, even perhaps to the extent of suggesting that Pinai and Aramaue might be dialects of a single language. A lesser resemblance to Wiyaw (see below 2.15.1.2.9.) suggests that a reclassification of these three isolates is in order, although the data is still so slight that any such reclassification can only be very tentative.

2.15.1.2.8. WIYAW (WIYAVIK, WIABUK, WUIABUK)

Wiyaw is spoken in the Sanggapi valley, in the Schrader Ranges, northwest of the Kaironk valley; data consists of a brief unpublished wordlist collected by Andrew Pawley in 1967, and an even briefer list by P.J. Kraehenbuhl (Simbai Patrol Report 5 of 1973/74). Laycock (1973) comments: 'Shows some resemblance to the languages of the Ramu Super-Stock, and is perhaps to be included with them'. This impression is confirmed by Kraehenbuhl's new list available since the publication of Laycock 1973; Wiyaw shows, especially, resemblance to a number of the languages on the Yuat River (members of the Mongol-Langam and Yuat Families of the Sepik-Ramu Phylum) - without, however, showing particularly close relationship to any one of them. Wiyaw shows approximate family relationship to Aramaue, and similar resemblance (though slightly less) to Pinai.

2.15.1.2.9. ARAMAUE (ARAMO)

First documented in a brief wordlist by P.J. Kraehenbuhl (Simbai Patrol Report 5 of 1973/74), Aramaue shows close resemblance to Pinai, and a lesser but discernible resemblance to Wiyaw; its speakers (originally given as approximately 83, but now estimated at between 300 and 400) inhabit an area east of the Wiyaw speakers, at a point (approximately) where the boundaries of the East Sepik, Madang, and Western Highlands Districts meet.

The total data on the last three languages suggests that they are no longer to be regarded as isolates, but can form a single family within the Sepik-Ramu Phylum (because of the apparent relationship to Yuat languages). The details of just where they might fit is discussed in the chapter on the Sepik-Ramu Phylum (see 2.11.3.5.1.).

2.15.1.3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

One fact emerges from the above account of the isolates in the Sepik region: of nine isolates (or 'unclassified languages') listed for the Sepik area in Laycock 1973, and further discussed in this paper, two (Amto and Musian) have now been shown to be related to each other (though no further relationships have been found), and three more (Pinai, Wiyaw, and Aramaue) are seen to be related to each other, and to probably form part of the second largest genetic grouping of languages in the New Guinea area (the Sepik-Ramu Phylum). This leaves only four true 'isolates' - and on one of these there are no data whatsoever, and it may conceivably be identical with Pinai (see above 2.15.1.2.6.). This pattern is likely to continue: gradual relating of the isolates both to each other, and to larger established genetic groupings. Whether all the isolates will eventually 'disappear' in this way is problematical.

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- 1977 Note: Tonson, J. 1976 ('The Languages in the Schrader Ranges', *Working Papers in Linguistics* 16.91-112) suggests that Wiyaw (which he calls Waibuk) and Aramo may constitute a family related to the Kalam Family on the stock level. P. Brennan (personal communication) indicates that Wapi (1000 speakers) and Pinaye are two distinct, though apparently closely related, languages.