

## Preamble

The following paper was read at a meeting of the Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea (1986?) Given a renewed interest in Papuan languages and the accommodating emergence of the Internet, it seemed a good idea to make these data more easily available. The paper has only been slightly edited in favour, hopefully, of greater clarity. The Fas language was studied at intermittent periods from 1978 to 1988. The rather abrupt and untimely end of the research program, meant that much data and rough drafts remained unpublished and unavailable. This publication is part of an attempt to remedy that to some extent.

For more information consult the SIL [PNG Language Resource Site](#).

See [kwomtari](#) for general information on Fas and the Kwomtari phylum language area.

Wietze Baron

**Hoogezand, he Netherlands October 2007**

# **Malay Influence on West Sepik Kinship Terminology**

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# MALAY INFLUENCE ON WEST SEPIK KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

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## **The North West-Sepik linguistic map.**

Foundational work in establishing the linguistic boundaries in the West-Sepik and especially North of the Sepik river, is reflected in such works as Capell (1955,1942), Laycock (72,73,74,75) and Loving and Bass (1944).<sup>1</sup>

In 1981 The Australian Academy of the Humanities in collaboration with the Japan Academy published a colourful LANGUAGE ATLAS OF THE PACIFIC .

It is somewhat unfortunate that the information reported on in this paper was not available prior to the publication of the atlas, but then that is inevitably the fate of maps of areas still under investigation The following provisional changes will have to be made:

### **1. The Samararu language.**

This language which had not yet been identified, will be documented in Baron & Whitacre (forthcoming). Laycock (73, 43) included its villages (Samararu, Onei and Mori) with those of the Fas speaking group. The One! and Samararu dialects are somewhat diverse and Mori(closer to Onei) is in an advanced stage of transfer to Fas. The language is very different from Fas and because of its affinity to both Warapu and the Rawo family (see below), I am placing it with these languages in a separate sub-division as a branch of the Krlsa stock of the Sko phylum.

The name is chosen for the following reasons:

1. Mori is unsuitable as it is already largely Fas speaking.
2. Onei would be appropriate (more prestigious village),but its resemblance to One renders it unsuitable for identification purposes. This leaves us with Samararu only, as a village whose name can be used to designate the language.

### **2. The Nori language**

Capell (1954.38) mentions Nori as an example of a language spoken by only one village. It is situated "close to Sera".

Laycock (75,854), unable to locate it, suggests that it was Warapu speaking and possibly bi1ingual with Fas. He furthermore suggests that it might be the village called Onei,"also known as Mori". Though the village of Onei almost definitely resulted from a group breaking away from inland Mori or from the relocation of a village originally nearer Mori, it is not to be identified with Nori.

The Nori villagers joined the Puindu village (Sera language) and through intermarriage and extensive social interaction gradually transferred to Sera. When Sugu Afoke, Steve Whitacre and I came through in 1979, only three older fluent speakers remained.

### **3-. The Talis language**

Though clearly and closely related to at least Vanim, this language which is situated at Leitre between the Poko and Pino villages, appears to merit independent

language status. There is no spontaneous mutual intelligibility between the two languages and their cognate count is low (about 1/..)

#### 4. The Imonda language

As is expected to be documented in W. Seiler (forthcoming) the language spoken by Imonda village appears to be sufficiently different from Waris to merit independent status.

#### 5. The Guriaso language

The Kwomtari language, ever since it was first documented by Loving and Bass (64) included villages (Guriaso, Maragin, Mafuara, Wurabai and Ekas) which speak an entirely different language. In order not to upset the taxonomic apple cart too much before a more conclusive investigation has been carried out, and with an optimistic cognate count (4 certain + 9 possible cognates in about 98 items) and some slight grammatical indicators, I am including Guriaso, for the time being, in a Kwomtari stock.

#### 6. The Fas and Kwomtari families

Loving and Bass (64) posited the Kwomtari family (Kwomtari and Biaka) and the Fas stock (Fas and Baibai). Their cognate percentages are far too low for both groups. (L&B: F/Ba=13% , K/Bi=30% WB: F/Ba 33-44%, K/Bi:38-48%) The reasons for this low count (for F/Ba at least) seems to lie in the operation of obscuring sound laws (like deletion of velar stops (via glottal?),  $t/r^2 \leftrightarrow k$  and metathesis. Cf. *kɛy* and *rɛgi* 'hand' or *kaməso* and *dasmo*<sup>3</sup> 'smoke' ), short (embedded) verb stems (e.g. "Definite" is realized by the preverb particle 'nə' for Fas and 'pa' for Baibai. Given the basic stems *kuw-* and *ru-*<sup>4</sup> "he already ate" for Fas and Baibai resp., which are related by the r/k interchange, given also the k->Ø rule which relates Fas 3Psg -Ø suffix to Baibai 3Psg -k suffix, the forms 'nəkuw' and 'paruk' present unambiguous cognates, yet it would be hard to relate them even by a fair stretch of etymological imagination. Finally a technical error (likely to occur in field situations) may be blamed for the low count.<sup>5</sup>

Then for some reason (note) Laycock reversed the situation so that in Laycock (73) we find a Kwomtari family (Fas and Kwomtari) and a Baibai family (Baibai and Biaka).

While it is abundantly clear that Fas and Baibai as well as Biaka and Kwomtari are solidly related (lexically as well as grammatically), the basis for positing further relationships is extremely tenuous and the situation as indicated in the appendix is only provisional.<sup>6</sup>

## Kinship Terminology

It seems remarkable that the only terms which were shared throughout this tentative phylum were kinship terms (the addressive forms for "father" and "mother"). Runners up are (probably late) loans like *tɔmak(w)ɔ* (different from more recent 'tamiok' for "axe" and 'pena' "knife" (source unknown), which are shared by 4 out of five of the languages. Earlier(?) (shared) loans like the words for 'tobacco', 'pig' etc. fare even worse.<sup>7</sup>

Where does this lead us?

We will have to ask the following important questions!

1. Are kin terms (especially the addressive variants for "father" and "mother") developed in isolation for each language and similar only because of universal constraints?
2. If not or not exclusively, could they constitute a persistent phylic core?

Though one may note that Bloomfield in *Language* (1933 p11,15) uses the term for 'mother' to illustrate the relatedness of Indo-European languages (from \*mater), the use of these forms is clearly hazardous.

Especially forms for father and mother tend to be universally similar (cf. [mɛm] which is used in Frisian for 'mother', in Kamasau (Torricelli) for 'grandfather', in Monumbo (Torricelli) for 'father' and a bit of research would probably yield a lot more convincing examples<sup>8</sup>), labial and dental nasals and stops appear to be common with more than chance frequency suggesting (R.Jacobson 1960) that ease of early language acquisition (universally probably the word for 'mother') plays an important role.

Did speakers within each individual language then independently "develop" their own terms?

Though universal similarity between terms can probably be attributed to universal (early) acquisitional constraints<sup>9</sup>, just as clearly the terminology is also genetically and contactually determined. Parents nor their children normally "invent" their own terms, though they may choose from available sets.<sup>10</sup>

The various words for "mother" in Indo-European languages can be traced back to a shared root, and the more specific addressive forms seem to be sensitive to borrowing. I have the feeling that the addressives 'papa' and 'mama', which occur also in many non-romance Indo-European languages were borrowed from French at one stage or another (French has had enormous linguistic and cultural influence in Europe and also note that in the Germanic and Slavic languages often more "original" forms co-occur<sup>11</sup>).

Though the Jacaranda dictionary does not assign a source to Tok Pisin 'papa' it does not seem doubtful at all that the term [papa] used by some Fas speakers to address their parents and especially in addressing and referring to their fathers-in-law, is related to the very same term we find in the Romance and other languages of Europe.

We conclude then that given caution, genetic and/or borrowing relationships may be identifiable for "cognate" sets.

In this study I am claiming that the similarity between various kin terms in a number of W-Sepik and Border languages is not accidental, nor genetic (that is not indicative of a single phylic root), but the result of inter-phylic borrowing, probably caused by relevant cultural mismatches in a contact situation.

## **The spread of kinship terms**

As illustrated by charts A and B, there is considerable inter-phylic overlap especially in regard of the terms for "father" and "grandparent", the basic term 'ay(X)' for which we have more extensive data (for Irian Jaya taken from Voorhoeve (71)) is in fact used by languages in 5 phyla and 5 isolates :

### ***Use of ay(x) per phylum***

1. Sko Sko, Samararu(?)
2. Trans New Guinea      Except Amanab probably the entire Bewani family.  
     TNG or Sepik-Ramu      Anggor(S-W),Dera
3. Kwomtari      All languages-
4. Sepik Ramu      Abau, Yellow river
5. Torricelli      One, Olo (central?)
6. Isolates      Karkar (Yuri), Nagatman, Busa, Amto, Musian

Our data on 'aw(X)' "grandparent(mother)", is not as extensive as that for "father", but the term seems to be distributed along similar lines.

The similarity of these terms is clearly beyond chance. Even though, theoretically, the chances of independent "development" of a term like ay(x) in various languages is considerable, the geographical co-occurrence of these "accidentally similar" forms, makes such a hypothesis highly unlikely. Further more for two "accidentally similar" sets of forms to occur in almost parallel distribution, renders such a hypothesis quite unacceptable.

Though the area is still strewn with classificatory problems, we will take it for granted that a number of separate phyla exist in the area. This, it seems, forces us to adopt a "borrowing" hypothesis to explain the cognates. Sensitivity to borrowing is clearly evidenced by the Simog (TNG phylum) use of both 'me' and 'afɛ(y)' for "mother 3P Ref.". Situated between Fas/Baibai and Imonda/Waris, it employs the 'me' form for the addressive and accepts both 'me' and 'afɛ(y)' (a typical Bewani Family form) for 3 P reference. (Also cf. the 'api/ape' forms in Amanab and Karkar(Yuri) and Anggor/Fas 'me(ɛw)'). Given that borrowing is indicated, we will need to ask what motivated it

## Aspects of Fas Kin Terminology

Could there be anything inherent in the kinship systems of these languages and/or in the wider linguistic/cultural context in which they occur(ed), which gave rise to the need for borrowing terms?

Though kinship systems in the area appear to vary in significant ways, common factors are also to be found and it may be instructive to just have a look at aspects of such a system in the language with which I am most familiar. The analysis even of these selected aspects is yet incomplete, but it will hopefully serve its illustrative purpose:

As in many other languages the addressive forms for "father" and "mother" in Fas are different from the ones used to refer to someone's parent. This latter fact has rendered existing word lists of the regional languages somewhat unreliable for the present purpose, as frequently the reference form is solicited. Fas employs a (probably residual) 3 P reference suffix (Also an infrequently used one for 2 Person), so that 'apɛ' appears as 'apɛ-fuw' "his/her older sibling (same sex)" This phenomena also occurs in other languages in the area (Waris and Imonda employ – , Simog possibly -y, Amanab -ɣ, Abau -if/uf etc.)

To say that 'ay(ɛw)' is the Fas addressive and 'bafo' the reference term, is not entirely correct, In that 1st person and 2nd person reference also require the "addressive" form . The forms are distributed as follows:

ayɛw	'addressive'
ayɛw to	' my father'
ay abuw	'your father'
bafo wɔbuw	'his father'

(Notice that Abau employs a similar distribution: 'ɔr(if)' "his father", 'ayo' for every thing else. (Others like Nagatman may have similar conditions)

The "addressive" 'ayɛw' , when used, is used for a variety of relations:

### ay-

Relation	Ref. term
1. Biological father	bafo
2. Spouse's father	koko(-fuw)
3. Father's younger brother	at(-fuw)
4. Husband's father's younger brother	oɛy(-fuw)
<b>apuw</b>	



Relation	Ref. term
1. Male grand parent	apuw
2. Father's older brother	apuw

(Notice that a term exists for grandchild 'fəsε' but 'apuw' is also often heard, especially as addressive (typically Malay?) Notice further more that other languages (e.g. Waris) employ the same term for grandparent and grandchild)

### **apε**

Relation	Ref. term
1. Older same sex sibling	apε(fuw)
2. Same sex child of father's older brother (also in Abau)	apε(fuw).

Notice the crucial father's older/younger brother distinction which raises father's older brother to the status of "grandfather" and his children, no matter their age, to "older siblings".

This is, of course, looking at the system through a European grid. The implication of this system for Fas society itself remains as yet unstudied (land rights probably are an important factor)

### **awɔ**

Relation	Ref. term
Paternal and maternal grandmother	<b>awɔ</b>

### **me(εw)**

Relation	Ref. term
1. Biological mother	maso
2. Father's sisters	hat(-fuw) (?)
3. Mother's sisters	maso
4. Father's brothers' wives	hatfuw mofɔ(wife)
5. Spouses mother	maso

Notice that the father's older/younger brother distinction does not affect their wives. If addressives are used, father's older brother would be addressed 'apuw' and his

wife 'meyɛw' (There usually is a significant age gap (18-15 years with his first wife, much more for subsequent marriages)  
 'apu' and 'aw' are used fairly consistently, also it often seems, by younger people for the elderly in general<sup>12</sup>. On the other hand the use of 'ayɛw' and 'meɛw' is not required, very frequently, depending on age and/or family tradition, parents and their equivalents are simply addressed by their proper names (also observed for Waris (B.Brown, pers. communication), but apparently prohibited in Abau (A.Lock, pers. comm.) Also in Anggor (though less so for 'mother') (S.Amafin. pers. comm.)  
 As direct in-law relations can not be called by their names, descriptive terms may be used ("father of X" for instance) or Tok Pisin 'papa' comes in handy.  
 As already indicated Tok Pisin 'papa' is also employed in certain families, replacing 'ayɛw'.

G.Graham (pers. communication) reported that in Naineri village (Amanab) no use of addressives for Father and Mother were observed. Judith Lesley (pers. communication) after some investigation found a term for mother 'mafa' but confirmed Graham's observation that no term for Father was employed. Parents are addressed by their names as a general practice. Lesley found addressive terms in the central dialect ( 'api' "father", 'maya' "mother"), but whereas the reference terms are regular throughout ( 'awa(ɣ)' ("his/her father"), 'afa(ɣ)' ("his/her mother")), the addressive system seems rather diffuse (cf. chart A also for Karkar(Yuri) ).  
 Similarly in Fas, whereas the reference system is well established, the usage especially of the 'ayɛw' and 'meɛw' addressives, is somewhat irregular and unestablished. One informant remarked that the usage of 'ayɛw' to address father's younger brothers (ref: 'hat') is of more recent date.

Let me put forth as a working hypothesis that in these participating cultures at one stage kinship terminology was only employed referentially. Furthermore that at a subsequent stage the need arose for special addressive terminology, resulting in the adoption of new terms sometimes even entirely or partially replacing the existing referential ones, or alternatively, causing the extension of reference terms to function as addressives also.

The need for such a development could reasonably have been triggered in a contact situation with a (probably more prestigious) culture in which "proper" address is socially required.

## Malay Influence

Other PNG societies clearly forbid the use of proper names in addressing (grand)parents. Abau was already mentioned (and notice that only the 'ay(x)' -form might have been adopted), Kamasau and Usan would be other random examples of such a situation (A. Sanders and G. Reesink pers. communication). This leads to the possibility that spread of these terms originated in a (probably influential) regional language. Though once the need had arisen, more regional terminologies may have filled some gaps, the extent of the borrowing as well as the direction of its spread (From Humboldt Bay into at least the West Sepik ?) (cf. chart B ) suggests a more powerful "confrontation".

My information on neighbouring Malay culture(s) is clearly inadequate, never the less, believing that the progress of science has suffered more from the lack of hypotheses than from a few too many, let me go ahead anyway and suggest that we

consider the possibility of Malay influence.; Malay cultures, it seems, are known for their hierarchical structures and often elaborate systems of address. The difference in this respect between Malay culture and one in which parents and (probably) grandparents were addressed by their proper names is enormous and bound to be neutralized in a contact situation. That influence of the more dominant culture would result can hardly be doubted. Could such a contact situation have arisen and when would it have taken place?

W. Seiler ( ? ) in an article called The Spread of Malay to Kaiser Wilhelmsland challenges

*"the widely held belief that Malay traders used to visit the Sepik area long before the Europeans arrived there in the mid-eighties of the 19th century.." (p 67)*

This belief, it seems, was largely based on late 19th century reports of traders and missionaries who encountered Malay traders and Malay influence on the islands off the Wewak and Aitape coast.

In these reports it seems to have been taken for granted that this kind of contact went back a very long time. Seiler quotes from Parkinson:

*"There can be no doubt that the whole coastline described above has been visited by Malay seafarers since time immemorial... All this (Malay words and found artifacts W.B) indicates that enterprising sea-farers from the East Indian Islands have been journeying along the New Guinea coast since time immemorial*  
(Parkinson 1979 [1980] : 39/40)

Seiler argues that these conclusions were premature, that any kind of substantial contact could not have been established before the second half of the 19th century. His conclusion is based on reports of early explorers who found that very little influence, if any at all, had filtered through Eastward along the coast. From a report on the 'Etna Expedition' which reached the Humboldt Bay for the first time in 1885, it becomes clear that the people there were virtually untouched by foreign influence. From then on contact was to increase rapidly. Where earlier contact had been established (e.g. the islands around the 'Vogelkop' and selected parts on the mainland (Seiler p.72), Malay influence was apparent in emerging social hierarchies. After the 'Etna Expedition.' all of this influence was also brought to bear upon the Humboldt Bay area reaching inland, also beyond the "border". (id. p.74). It seems then that if Malay culture did affect West Sepik and Border Kinship terminology, it must have started to take place some time during the second half of the 19th century. By then bird of paradise shooters had started their trips inland:

*"Having reached this bay the traders also went inland in their search for good shooting opportunities. They naturally crossed into German territory as well, as the border was of no significance at the time. Their activities were roughly confined to the area north of the Sepik; it is there that the Australians, when they first reached this area between the wars, time and time again found themselves spoken to in Malay by people who supposedly had been uncontacted by outsiders before."*  
(Seiler. p.74)

We need not assume that the Malay hunters were the only source of change. A chain of influence and transfer may have developed from the Humboldt Bay inland. Is it accidental that the Malay word for "father" is [aya] 'ajah' and that \*a(m)pu is established as a Proto-Western Malayo-Polynesian Vocative with the meaning of "grandfather/grandchild" (R.Blust 1979.295)? Are the Malay terms 'abang' "older brother" and 'mi' (used for a man's wife(?) R.Walker,pers. communication) significant at all in this respect?

And how about the other kinship terms? Is it possible that, once the need had arisen, terms were picked up from neighbouring languages or that reference terms acquired additional addressive functions?

At this point not much is to be gained from further speculation, but hopefully one day further knowledge of the historical and present situation will provide some answers

## Conclusion

The similarity of certain kin terms in the given West Sepik languages is clearly beyond chance. As these "cognates" are found in various phyla, they can not be accepted as reliable data for classificatory purposes. As neither an accidental nor a genetic source is likely, the similarity is attributed to borrowing. The source of borrowing remains highly speculative but Malay culture would not be an entirely unlikely candidate.

## Notes

1. The material from which this paper draws was gathered during three surveys. One in 1979 walking from Fas (Sowana) to the coast (Warapu/Malol) with Yetin Ufani. A second one with Steve Whitacre and Sugu Afoke walking from Malol to Vanimo and finally a helicopter survey with Robert Brown undertaken in 1983 to reinvestigate the Kwomtari phylum. This survey was funded by the Sepik region of S.I.L. In addition to the Kwomtari survey a helicopter trip was made to Samararu to establish its linguistic identity, funding for the latter trip by the Research School of Pacific Studies <ANU> is gratefully acknowledged. Robert Brown and Judith Lesley are especially thanked for their cooperation in gathering data and for helpful discussions. The following are thanked for providing specific data and comments: C.Campbell (Nagatman/Busa), A. Lock (Abau), D.Price (Karkar(Yuri)), S. Amafin (Anggor), B.Staley (Ole).

The author has been a resident of the village of Kilifas for extensive periods from 1977 onwards.

2. The general direction of the rule is still under investigation.

3. Loving and Bass have regularly [d] where we have [r]. The sound is no doubt the flapped r.

4. Vocalic variation in the high vowel region is great in Fas and probably also in other regional languages, specifically Baibai. Fas [ow] or [uw] has to be

distinguished from [u], but the distinction is subtle and unlikely to be picked up at initial description. Consequently the uw<->u contrast between Fas and Baibai is insignificant at this stage of Baibai research.

5. At least 26 items of their list (the one at SIL Ukarumpa) have the English and vernacular terms incorrectly lined up.

6. The high percentage of cognates (7-18%) between Kwomtari and Baibai can probably be fully attributed to loans.

7. As often more than one term is employed (cf. Fas : 'pupw' besides 'pena') further research may show that these terms have full distribution.

8. Taikat (Voorhoeve 71) has 'mama' for mother! (see also note 10)

9. Based on Murdock 1957, to which I had no access, the conclusion seems justified that the labial nasal predominates in terms denoting "mother". Jacobson (60) attributes this to the sucking activities of a child which are accompanied by "a slight nasal murmur, the only phonation which can be produced when the lips are pressed to mother's breast or to the feeding bottle and the mouth is full".

10. Murdoch excluded "forms resembling mama and papa" unless comparative data on related languages clearly demonstrated their indigenous origin" which Jacobson deemed too superfluously rigorous. If, however, borrowing strategies can be testified, such precaution may well be called for.

If Malay influence on PNG kinship terminology can be established, the hypothesis of 'mama' (in Taikat) having been borrowed (from Dutch? via Indonesian/Malay) should at least be taken care of.

11. Cf. Dutch mu/mama, German muti/mama, Russian t'at'a/papa

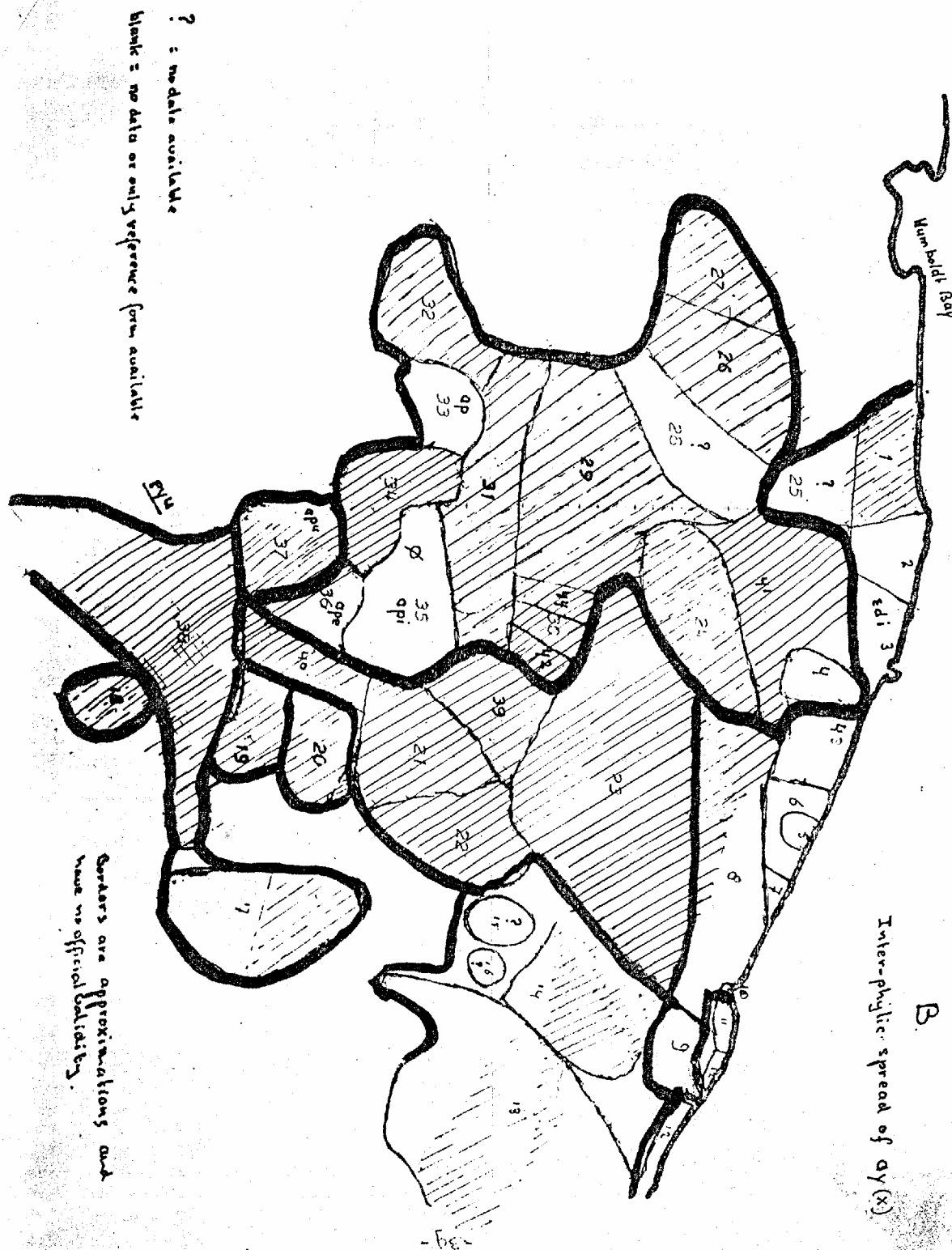
12. More complex kin relations may be involved.

## Chart A

### *The spread of kinship terms*

Phylum	Language	Father	mother	big brother	grandfather	grandmother
TN	Waris	aya / ara	aβa	ετε		εyndi
TN	Imonda	aye	ape me /	Ete		awo
TN	Simog	ay(ε)	afe(y)	ετε		awo
TN	Daonda	aye	aBa	ετε		awo
TN	Amanab					
	central	Api	maya	ετε	a(m)bi	awu/awo
	Naineri	Ø	mafa	ετε	api	atay
TN/SR	Anggor	Ape aya / ara	me(εw)	amongo	atu	ati
	S.W.					
KW	Fas	ay(εw)	me(εw)	ape	apuw	awo
KW	Baibai	Ay	me	ape	apu	au (aw?)
KW	Kwomtari	aye	mee	ape	apu	awe
KW	Biaka	aye	mi	ape		
KW	Guriaso	ayko	miko	api	apu	awe
ISO	Nagatman	Aya	be(y)	άφα	apu	awá
ISO	Busa	Aya	me(y)	άβa	wári	awá
ISO	Yuri	Aya	ayae	nay	ape	ata
	Wesi	Apu	amu			
S R	Abau	ayo	lbei	oryay	abaw	burway

### Chart B: Interphylic spread of ay(x) + language map



## LANGUAGES

- |              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Sko       | 23. Fas     |
| 2. Wutung    | 24. Pagi    |
| 3. Vanimu    | 25. Sangke  |
| 4. Kr isa    | 26. Tikat   |
| 5. Tal is    | 27. Awyi    |
| 6. Rawo      | 28. Manem   |
| 7. Puari     | 29.         |
| 8. One i     | 30. Daonda  |
| 9. Warapu    | 31. Waina   |
| 10. Nori     | 32. Sengi   |
| 11. Sera     | 33. Yafi    |
| 12. Sissano  | 34. Dera    |
| 13. Olo      | 35. Amanab  |
| 14..One      | 36. Anggor  |
| 15. Seta     | 37. Yuri    |
| 16. Seti     | 38. Abau    |
| 17. Namie    | 39. Baibai  |
| 18. Amto     | 40. Biaka   |
| 19. Basa     | 41. Kilmeri |
| 20. Nagatman | 42. Simog   |
| 21. Kwomtari | 43. Ningera |
| 22. Gariasu  | 44. Imonda  |

## Relationships

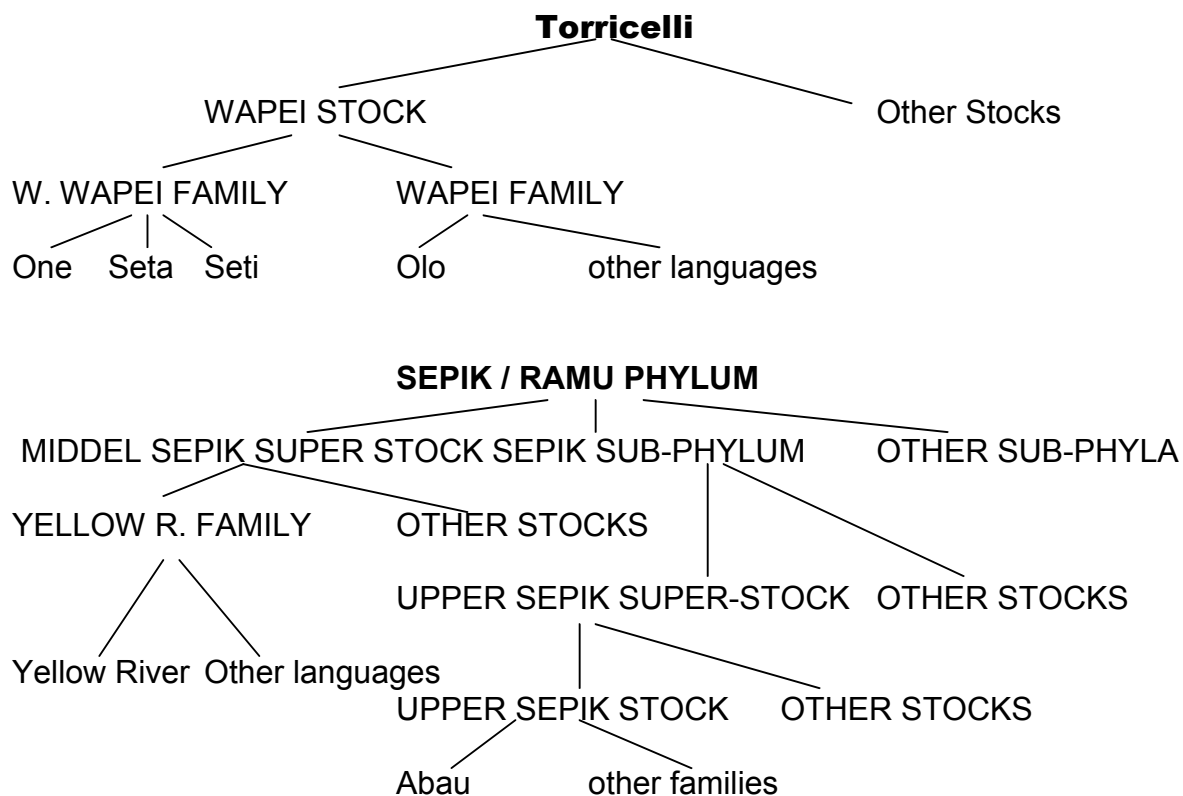
### Trans New Guinea Phylum (Border Stock)

In various relationships:

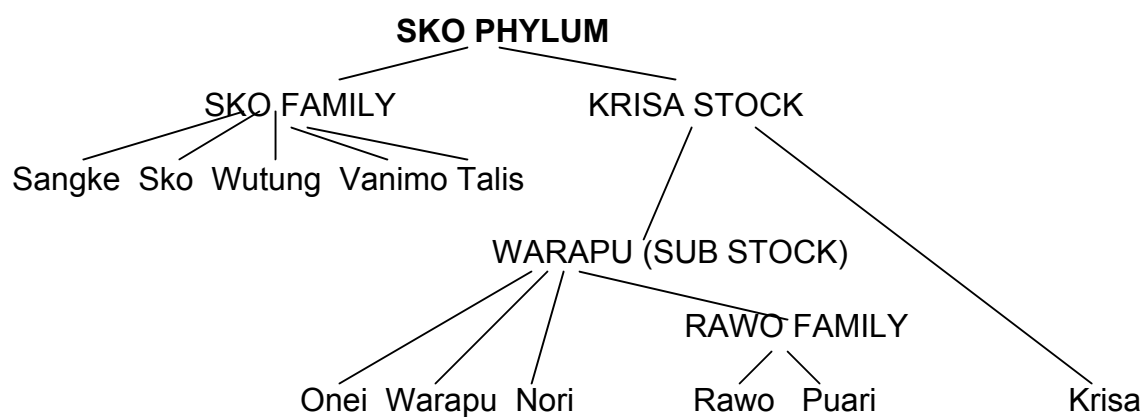
Awyi	Ninera	Amanab	Or Sepik-Ramu (Litteral '80 appendix)
Taikat	Waris*	Yafi	
Manem	Daonda	Anggor	
Kilmeri	Simog	Dera	
Pagi	Waina	Sengi	

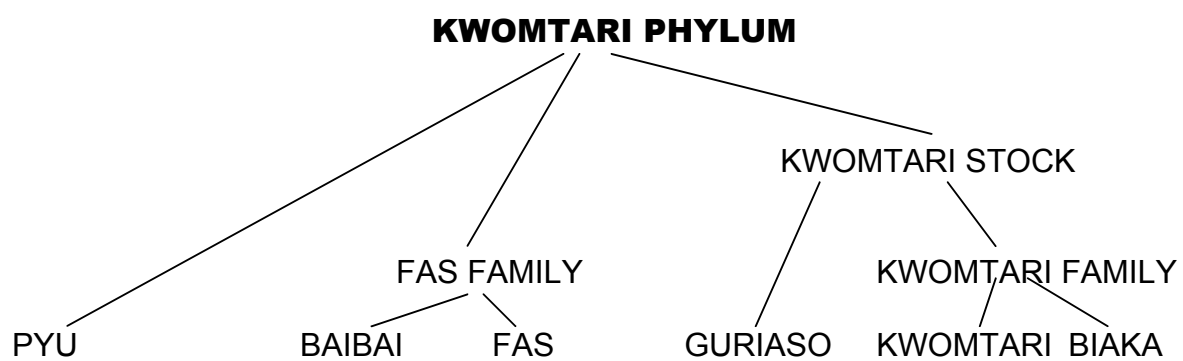


\* The language of Imonda village is probably sufficiently different from Waris to merit separate language status. (pers. Comm.. Bob Brown)



**Austronesian:** Sissano, Sera





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