COMPARATIVE GRAMMARS OF FIVE NEW BRITAIN LANGUAGES

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

This attempt to compare the grammars of New Britain languages was
undertaken for two principal reasons. First, it was hoped to discover
whether the subgroups established on lexical grounds might agree more
in grammar than in vocabulary. Apart from a Polynesian Outlier lan-
guage once reported as spoken in a single village in New Britain
(Lanyon-Orgill 1942), the AN languages recorded to date seem to fall
into eight separate subgroups, and I have not yet found it possible to
reduce the number (Chowning 1969, 1976). (Indeed, I have recently
received a brief wordlist for a language called Amara, spoken in three
villages in West New Britain, which although clearly AN is not readily
assignable to any of these subgroups.) Several other investigators,
notably Capell, have pointed to grammatical features shared across
lexical boundaries, but there is dispute about the number and signifi-
cance of these features. I particularly hoped to ascertain whether
there was a frequent, if not constant, association between certain
features (such as the structure of the genitive and the use of post-
positions), since such associations are assumed to have implications
for the history of the OC languages (see Pawley 1977b).

It was also hoped that the comparison might turn up additional
features which might be assignable, if not to POC, to some western
branch of it, whether the postulated New Guinea Oceanic (Milke 1965,
Pawley 1977b) or a smaller grouping within New Britain.

Finally, a minor question was whether any of the features of New
Britain AN languages were shared with the NAN languages and could
possibly be attributed to influence from the latter.

In writing this paper, I have not had access to some of the relevant
comparative materials, especially the most recent works of some of the

others interested in the subject. Consequently I have limited my dis-
cussion largely to points raised in earlier papers by Capell and Pawley.
I have also not been able to obtain some of the published grammars of
Tolai. Given the incomplete nature of much of the material, I have
had to limit discussion to points covered in all of the grammars avail-
able to me. Also, because of the ways in which this material has been
presented, I have tended to retain traditional terms for grammatical
categories. My doing so should not be taken to indicate rejection of
alternative analyses, such as those in Johnston's description of
Lakalai (1978a); it is simply a convenience, and one that I think does
not grossly misrepresent the data.

2.0. THE LANGUAGES TO BE COMPARED

2.1. *CHOICE*

Of the eight subgroups, an adequate amount of grammatical information
was available to me for only five, and in most cases for only one lan-
guage in each subgroup. I have accordingly concentrated on five lan-
guages, each of which is assumed to represent a different subgroup.
They are Tolai (Tolai-Patpatar subgroup), Mengen (Mengen subgroup),
Lakalai (Kimbe subgroup), Sengseng (Whiteman subgroup), and Kove (Siasi
subgroup). Much but not all of the information about the last two
languages is from personal fieldnotes; for the first two I have relied
on the published sources; and for Lakalai I have drawn heavily on R.
Johnston's Ph.D. thesis as well as on material collected by myself and
others.[1] In the last part of this paper, I shall refer to some com-
parative material from other languages in the same subgroups. Melamela:
and Bola (Lakalai); Kaliai, Bariai, and Gitua (Kove); Banaule and
Mangseng (Sengseng). I shall also refer briefly to the other New
Britain languages outside these subgroups.

2.2. *LOCATION*

A brief description of the locations of the languages may help with
the question of whether they are likely to have influenced each other
(see maps in Chowning 1976). Tolai is surrounded by NAN languages,
Baining and, earlier, the reportedly extinct Taulil-Butam. In the 19th
and 20th centuries, the Tolai traded with other groups of the north and
south coasts of New Britain, notably speakers of Lakalai and its closest
relatives in the Nakanai subdivision of Kimbe. It has been argued,
notably by Salisbury (1970), that these extended trade networks were
very late post-European developments. In any case, there is no reason

to suspect that Tolai and Nakanai, while in their present locations,
could have influenced each other to any great extent. We do not know
whether AN-speakers lived on the northern part of the Gazelle Peninsula
before the presumably late arrival of the Tolai, but the presence of
Lapita pottery on Watom Island, just off the peninsula, suggests that
they did.

By contrast with Tolai, the Kimbe languages are in contact with
some of the others being considered. Speakers of East Nakanai (Melamela)
live adjacent to speakers of an interior dialect of Mengen, and a
number of lexical isoglosses link the physically most distant dialect
of Mengen with Lakalai, the westernmost dialect of Nakanai.

Other western Nakanai dialects are in contact with Mamusi, the
closest relative of Mengen. Lakalai, however, is bounded by two very
different branches of the Whiteman subgroup, Mangseng to the east and
Banaule (Kapore) to the west, with a representative of the Pasismanua
dialect chain, to which Sengseng belongs, very near by. Again there
is evidence of lexical interchange, of a type (such as names of wild
trees) to give support to the hypothesis that Lakalai-speakers may have
settled in territory once occupied by Whiteman-speakers, and maintained
close contacts with the latter afterwards. Goodenough (1976:31) has suggested
that the phonology of Lakalai was influenced by Whiteman languages; at
one time, the opportunity for grammatical influence (in either or both
directions) was almost certainly present. In the recent past, the
Lakalai maintained friendly relations only with the Banaule, whose own
lexicon had been greatly affected as a consequence, and who are reported
to be bilingual in Lakalai.

Kove has direct contact with two sets of Kimbe languages, Bola
(Bakovi) of the Willaumez subgroup and Bali-Vitu (whose membership in
the subgroup might well be disputed). I do not have enough information
about the grammar of either language to detect any possible influences
on Kove, but considerable lexical interchange has occurred. Kove is
not known to be in contact with any Whiteman languages, though it is
possible that some are spoken in the interior behind the eastern Kove
villages.

At present, of the specific languages under consideration, Lakalai,
Sengseng, and Kove are not in contact with any NAN languages, which in
New Britain are heavily concentrated in the north-eastern part of the
island. As was noted, Tolai is in contact with Baining, and Mengen is
adjacent to and often assumed to be heavily influenced by a different
NAN language, Sulka (see maps in Chowning 1969, 1976).

3.0. THE NOUN

I do not propose to discuss in detail the transformation of one part
of speech to another; in most cases considerable information is avail-
able, though the original classification (as 'adjective, intransitive
verb', etc.) is often doubtful, as may be the assumption that one form
represents the root and another the derivative. Here I shall mention
only a few features that have sometimes been assumed to have a more
limited distribution than actually exists.

3.1. ARTICLES

These occur in all the languages considered except Kove, but differ
somewhat in form and function from one language to another. In Tolai,
the preposed article is a or ra, the former normally occurring only at
the beginning of an utterance. It is omitted with kinship terms and
under various other circumstances.

In what Müller calls the Cape Orford dialect of Mengen, an article
ta normally follows the noun. He notes that in the Cape Quoi dialect
"hört man nur selten den Artikel nach dem Substantiv" (1907:80), but
does not explain the variation. It is not the result of influence
from Sulka, in which an article a precedes the noun.

In Lakalai, there are two articles, la preceding most nouns and e
a limited series, including all proper nouns (see Johnston (1978a:21-8)
for a fuller discussion). Although e is particularly likely to be used
with living creatures, it is not confined to them, and some nouns (e.g.
lamo 'mosquito') may take either e or la. The original distinction
between them may be breaking down. The article is omitted in address,
epithets, and a few verbal phrases such as hare koumu! 'shut (your)
mouth!' but not with kinship terms used in reference.

In Sengseng, the question is complex. All personal names are pre-
ceded by articles which distinguish sex, a (or its dialectal variant
wa) for males and e for females. These also precede the word for 'who?'.
(Precisely the same system is found in Tolai, where the prefixes are to
for males and ia for females.) In Sengseng, if an ordinary noun is
preceded by one of these syllables, the latter is likely to be treated
as a separable prefix and discarded in certain compounds. The Sengseng
attitude is also shown when they adopt Pidgin words; normally they dis-
card these initial syllables as well as initial ai- or wai-, so that
Pidgin wailes 'wireless' is reduced to les. Most nouns do not, however,
begin with these syllables and so have nothing that could be called an
article.

Kove lacks articles entirely.

Capell points out (1969:44) that the occurrence of articles in the languages of Papua New Guinea is uncommon and apparently not correlated with other grammatical features. In New Britain they are not uncommon, but it is worth noting that their occurrence and form vary between very closely related languages, as has been indicated for Mengen. Friederici believed that some nouns in Bariai, the closest relative of Kove, had a suffixed indefinite article, indicating *'the head'* rather than *'his head'*, but this so-called article is not distinguishable from a suffixed personal pronoun. In Kilenge, which I have put in the same subgroup with Kove, an article na normally precedes the noun, though the word-lists I have seen indicate that it may not be used with all nouns or in all dialects.

In Lakalai, the article has no grammatical functions apart from marking nouns. The same applies to Sengseng. The situation with Tolai is unclear; ra is used only when the preceding word ends with a vowel, and so never begins a sentence, but there are suggestions that it may also function as an object marker (Rickard 1889:413).

As regards other New Britain languages which contain articles, more variation seems to exist. Bischof says that in Ubili, a dialect of Melamela (Kimbe subgroup), the article (a) is never found at the beginning of a sentence, hence presumably its omission in most wordlists,[2] but sample Melamela sentences in Parkinson (1907:787) shows it in this position. The difference may be dialectal. By contrast, Goodenough's (1954:MS) sample sentences from Banaule of the Whiteman subgroup shows that the neuter article i- always appears with the subject noun but never with the direct object; the admittedly inadequate data suggest that in this case omission of the article marks the object. This is the only case in which the use of the article seems to have a clear grammatical function other than marking nouns and noun classes.

As regards the shape of the article, the na form (which includes Lakalai la) is not common but occurs in languages geographically so far apart and unlike (Kilenge and the Western Nakanai dialects, especially Lakalai) as to bolster Pawley's assumption (1973:167) that it is probably a retention from POC. In Amara, the ungrouped West New Britain language, the article used is na, ne, or no, varying according to the first vowel of the noun root (the variation does not seem to reflect noun classes). The distribution of the article a in East New Britain (Melamela and Tolai) is of interest because it is also found in the NAN languages of the Gazelle Peninsula, Baining and Sulka (see Parkinson 1907:751, 768).

3.2. *SEX MARKERS*

These seem to be confined to personal names, the Tolai and Sengseng cases mentioned above, with two exceptions. Some Mengen nouns take a feminine suffix -pi, similar to English *'-ess'*. The masculine is un- marked. The other exception, found in some Whiteman languages including Sengseng, will be discussed under pronouns.

3.3. *PLURALS*

The published grammars, which seem concerned to fit the languages to European models, may exaggerate the importance of plural marking, but it does seem to be particularly highly developed in Mengen, which has a complex and apparently unique system involving prefixes to the root, suffixed particles, and inflection of modifiers such as posses- sive pronouns. More in line with other New Britain languages is the formation of the plurals of kinship terms by reduplication of the first syllable: tatamar *'our fathers'*. In Tolai, a number of so-called 'signs of the plural' occur, but since they usually turn out to mean something like *'some'* or *'many'*, it is not clear that the designation is correct. Rickard, however, states (1889:424) that a shift in stress to the first syllable from the second distinguishes the plural marker úmana from what would otherwise be a homonym meaning *'some'*: a úmana bul *'the boys'*. Reduplication of the root occurs as well: di tun a palpal *'they are burning the houses'*.

Sengseng plurals are formed only by adding modifiers to the noun or using plural pronouns: e.g. tina-hi! (voc.) *'mothers!'* (a common way of addressing a group of women).

In Kove, reduplication is the only way of forming plurals, but it is rare, and the only examples I can find concern human beings. Kinship terms are often duplicated, but so, in stories, are the terms that designate heroes and heroines. Reduplication occurs with kinship terms even if they are not in the series that takes the suffixed possessive. This fact is worth mention because in the Kaliai dialect of Kove des- cribed by Counts, reduplication is said to occur only with nouns that take the suffixed possessive, and all of the examples given are of kinship terms (Counts 1969). For Bariai, however, Friederici gives several examples involving animals (e.g. tumatuma *'lice'*). He regards this as rare, the more usual device being to repeat the word after the connective ga *'and'*. He gives numerous examples of this usage, which he equates with the addition of the modifier busa *'many'*. In Kove, the construction with *'and'* occurs, but I have not interpreted it as a

simple plural: waro *'day'*, 'waro Ga waro *'every day'*; ere *'one'*, ere
Ga ere *'all kinds, differing'*.

In Lakalai, except for valua *'men'*, which contrasts with tahalo
'man', reduplication of all or part of the root is the only way of
forming plurals; they may be indicated however by the simple use of
the plural pronoun. Johnston notes that reduplication is used with
either 'natural' groups such as members of a clan or village, or where
there is a special emphasis on plurality, such as a "very large number"
(1978a:228) and not otherwise. I think his analysis is probably correct,
though the distinction is not always clear in texts, which may shift
between the simple and the reduplicated form with reference to the same
actors or objects. What is true is that reduplication to form plurals
is much more common in Lakalai than in the other languages under con-
sideration, and applies as frequently to animals and objects as to
human beings. Furthermore, although only partial reduplication is used
if the root is longer than two syllables, either partial or full re-
duplication may be used with nouns of two syllables (kerakera *'parrots'*
and bolobolo *'pigs'*, but kukuru *'pigeons'* and uagaga *'canoes'*). Pawley
(1977a) has suggested that partial reduplication to pluralise nouns not
referring to human beings was a Polynesian innovation, but certainly
it exists in Lakalai, nor does there seem to be any reason to separate
it from cases in which plurals are formed by complete reduplication of
the root, as is usual in Tolai.

3.4. *NOUN FORMATIVES*

I do not propose to discuss the process in detail, language by
language, since there is so much variation. Instead I shall confine
myself to two processes of particular comparative interest. Within
New Britain the most widespread noun formative is a suffixed -Na,
which is particularly common in Kove (and its close relatives) and
Mengen. The cognate suffix -la in Lakalai is attached only to roots
of more than two syllables, which greatly restricts its use. In
Sengseng, the usual noun formative is a suffix -Nin. The resemblance
to -Na is suggestive, but cognacy is uncertain, not so much because of
the final consonant (these forms in Mengen often take a further pos-
sessive suffix -na) but because of the vowel. (POC *a usually remains
a in Sengseng except under the influence of i or u in an adjacent
stressed syllable.) Tolai seems to lack a cognate suffix. The use of
a noun-formative infix is, as far as I know, confined to Tolai, Lakalai
and its close relatives, and Mengen. The Tolai and Lakalai forms are
unquestionably cognate (usually -in- in Tolai, changing to initial ni-

in some environments; usually -il- in Lakalai). This infix is very
common in Lakalai, not being restricted in its occurrence by the nature
of the initial phoneme as in Tolai (see Franklin and Kerr 1962:96).
In both languages it is usually located after an initial consonant;
alternatively (in Lakalai before words beginning with a vowel, l, or r)
it becomes a prefix. In Mengen, by contrast, the infixes are -N-,
-iN-, -oN- or -uN- (where N represents the velar nasal), and these are
located farther back in the root, following either the first vowel or
the second consonant: e.g. kalnan, kaliNnan *'work'*. Cognacy between
the Mengen infix and the Lakalai-Tolai one seems unlikely but hardly
to be ruled out.

   In Lakalai, the noun-formative infix -il- always has the shape VC,
even when it is prefixed (rather than infixed) to roots beginning with
vowels, /l/, or /r/. In Melamela, however, when it is used as a prefix
it sometimes appears as in- and sometimes as ni-, the reasons for its
variation not being evident (inani *'eating'* but niabi *'gift'*). Nor is
it clear why some verb roots take the prefix and some the infix; the
prefix occurs before vowels and /l/, but compare minate *'death'* with
nimavalu *'putrefaction'*; nidame *'a kiss'* with dinodo *'compassion'* (from
dodo). In all these cases, the roots are shared with Lakalai. The
possibility that some of the forms are borrowings from Tolai is not
supported by the evidence; cf. Tol. nian *'meal'*. On the other hand,
Bola, also in the Kimbe subgroup, but to the west of Lakalai, shows
only ni- as a prefixed noun formative, and no infixes have been iden-
tified in a fairly lengthy wordlist.

3.5. *NOUN CLASSES*

   It is possible to talk of noun classes in these languages on various
grounds. The assignment of differing articles has been touched upon
briefly. The use of different possessives will be discussed below.
The question of sex gender will be discussed under pronouns. There
remains the varying ways in which Mengen nouns form plurals, which may
be grounds for talking about different noun classes in this language.
Nothing quite comparable seems to exist in the other languages. I do
not have readily available the data that would enable me to judge if
predicates and co-referential pronouns vary according to whether the
subject or object is human or non-human, animate or inanimate (but see
Johnston 1978a:136).

3.6. *POSSESSIVES*

Although such terms as 'gender' are often used with the implication
that the nature of the noun determines the type of possessive pronoun
to be attached to it, it is well known that often the determining
factor is the nature of the relationship, with 'possession' only one
possibility, so that in many languages a single noun may take more than
one kind of 'possessive' construction. Keeping these facts in mind I
shall nevertheless, in the interest of brevity, speak of both 'classes'
and 'possessives'. In at least three of the languages under consider-
ation, the same noun may have different meanings with different posses-
sives. Johnston gives a short list for Lakalai (1978a:222); and I know
of one example in Kove, though no doubt others exist (ele liNe *'his
behaviour'*, vs. aia liNe *'his treatment (by others)'*. Tolai is a well-
known case (see Pawley 1973:18). These are only superficially alike,
however. Johnston points out that, in Lakalai, the distinction between
dominant and subordinate, or agentive and objective, possession is not
drawn in this way, all possession being dominant (1978a:228), in contrast
to the situation in Kove and Tolai.

The simplest system is a dual one, involving one set of suffixed
possessives and one free form. This is found in Lakalai and Sengseng.
As might be expected, the suffix occurs with kinship terms and parts
of the body in particular. In Lakalai the suffixed pronouns are in-
variable, but in Sengseng some kinship terms take endings different
from those used elsewhere. These aberrant endings undoubtedly represent
borrowings from neighbouring languages. The free forms in these lan-
guages also resemble each other. In Lakalai they all begin with t-,
but the following vowel may be a or e, and the endings do not all co-
incide with the suffixed possessive ones (e.g. la mata-gu *'my eye'*;
la luma taku, la luma tegiaku *'my house'*). In Sengseng the free form
consists of ta- plus the suffixed possessive ending (mata-No *'my eye'*;
mok ta-No *'my house'*). In both cases it seems probable that te- and
ta- reflect the POC preposition *ta (see discussion in Pawley 1973:
148-9).

Mengen also has two sets, but there the free form is also declined
according to whether the object possessed is singular or plural. The
singular forms all begin with k-, the plurals with N-. In the third
person only are there some variant forms that may express a different
sort of relationship (see Müller 1907:90-1). In addition a few parts
of the body do not take the suffixed possessives, though most do.
This distinction is found in other New Britain languages, though not
in the main ones being discussed here. It is said by Pawley to be
common in OC (1973:155-6).

Tolai has a three-class system, as does Kove. One set is suffixed.
The other sets coincide roughly with those that are elsewhere labelled
'neutral' and 'edible'. The 'edible' category encompasses a variety
of other relationships or attitudes towards the object; considerable
attention is paid to this in Tolai grammars. In Tolai the mark of the
'neutral' is ka- or kai-; of the 'edible', a-. In contrast to the
three languages already mentioned the possessives precede the noun,
which drops its article.

In Kove (disregarding the third person singular, which is always
aberrant), the mark of the 'neutral' is le- and of the 'edible' a-.
These take the suffixed endings and precede the noun. In addition both
'close' and neutral possession can be expressed by a preposition to-
which takes direct object endings. The point is worth mentioning
because in Gitua, a New Guinea language that seems closely related to
Kove, the to- forms (toga- in Gitua) are said to constitute a fourth
class of 'permanent possession' (Lincoln 1976). This is certainly not
the case in Kove, where to- constructions are used for emphasis or in
constructions like the following: launi-Gu kana to-Go *my hair (is)
like yours*. There also occur constructions with to- plus suffixed
pronoun (or pronominal object) in which the relationship is not one of
possession: u mo vahi, kehehe to-Gai- *you stay away, sand (is coming)
to us* (comment to a child scattering sand as it plays). Comparable
constructions exist in Sengseng: Na se ta-et *I give to her*, and
suggest that despite the unexpected vowel, Kove to- is also derived
from POC *ta. In Tolai, ta- with suffixed pronoun is used to express
a variety of non-possessive relationships (see example and discussion
in Pawley 1973:149, where Tolai is called Kuanua).

4.0. PRONOUNS

The other pronouns will be dealt with briefly, with attention to
only a few points. First, the number of sets. Kove has the simplest
system, usually distinguishing only singular and plural, though optional
dual nominative forms exist. (Its closest relatives, Kaliai and Bariai,
are stated to have dual and trial as well: Friederici 1912:172; Counts
1969:123.) Lakalai and Mengen have singular, dual, and plural.
Sengseng and Tolai have singular, dual, trial, and plural; in both of
these languages the trial is actually a paucal, used to designate small
numbers above two (in Sengseng, 3-5).

As regards the subject pronouns, Lakalai has only one set. They are
not used if another subject is expressed, nor need they be repeated
before every verb in a sentence if the subject is obvious. (For a much

fuller discussion, see Johnston 1978a.) The situation is essentially
the same in Sengseng, though it has a partial set of emphatic pronouns
which can precede the usual ones: **No Na ka li-** I *'I shall go!'*.

Tolai and Mengen also have only a single set of subject pronouns,
but their employment before verbs seems to be virtually compulsory.
Kove has two sets of subject pronouns, and the short forms (so-called
subject markers) almost always precede the verb even when a coreferen-
tial subject is expressed elsewhere. Interestingly, considering its
geographical location with respect to these others, East Nakanai also
has a double set of pronouns. The only examples I have show the two
being used together, and I do not know whether the short form is com-
pulsory following a noun subject.

Finally, an apparently unique feature of New Britain pronominal
systems is the marking of sex gender in the third person singular of
some Whiteman languages, including Sengseng. In Sengseng sex is marked
only for human beings and some, but not all, anthropomorphic spirits.
As nouns the terms **ve** (male) and **et** (female) mean *'husband'* and *'wife'*.
The pronouns are used as both subjects and objects; with suffixed
possessives they may be suffixed or prefixed, in which case the neuter
marker **-n** is suffixed (**mata-ve** or **ve-mata-n** *'his eyes'*). The same
prefixes are used before some other nouns (including the words for *'man'*
and *'woman'*), and before most kinship terms, even when the sex is
obvious (**ve-tama-n** *'his father'*). Sex can be indicated in the plural
by putting the sex-marking articles **a** and **e** before the third person
plural **po**, but this is rarely done except as a vocative to a group of
one sex.

This system is found throughout the Pasismanua chain of dialects to
which Sengseng belongs, and also in Banaule, where, however, the words
are not cognate with those in Pasismanua. Banaule is fairly closely
related to Pasismanua. A more remote branch of the subgroup, Mangseng,
apparently does not make these distinctions, which seems to be a unique
innovation.

5.0. GENITIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

Before proceeding to other aspects of word order it may be useful to
describe the structures of genitives, since these have been given con-
siderable attention by those interested in subgrouping the languages
of western Melanesia. The preposed genitive is generally considered
to characterise the languages of the mainland of New Guinea (Milke's
NGAN, Pawley's NGOC). Associated with it in some languages is a double
possessive in which the focal form of the pronoun is stated first,
followed by the object possessed with a suffixed possessive: *'I hand-my'*.

As regards the order it has generally been noted that Tolai and
Lakalai (along with all the other Kimbe languages, including Bali-Vitu)
postpose the possessor in noun clauses. All the other AN languages in
New Britain have a preposed genitive. Tolai and Lakalai are also alike
in interposing a relational particle between the object possessed and
the possessor. In Tolai this is na; in Proto-Nakanai it is presumably
*n, which in Lakalai has not only become l- but coalesced with the l
of the article la, so that it is only visible before nouns taking the
article e. Compare Tolai a ivu na beo, Lakalai la ivu la malu, East
Nakanai a ivu na manu, all meaning *plumage of the bird*, whereas in
Lakalai e tama le Sege *Sege's father*, the presence of the relational
is obvious.

The other languages resemble each other in genitive order: possessor,
object possessed and suffixed possessive. In Kove the order is some-
what disturbed by the fact that the third person singular possessive
only is prefixed rather than suffixed. It is often elided and occasion-
ally dropped, but usually is audible even in teknonymous address:
Kaumu ai tina! *Kaumu's mother!*. In Sengseng where the usual third
person singular suffix has been reduced to -n, it is omitted if the
second noun ends in a consonant, since final consonant clusters do not
occur. So, yu mamai-n *pig's tongue*, but yu kut *pig tail* (both
names of plants). In Mengen no possessive pronoun is necessary: man
ta vunuvunde ta *bird art. feathers (pl. marker) art.*. A different
construction makes it possible to distinguish the foregoing, translated
as *feathers of the bird*, from *bird feathers*.

The double possessive does not occur in Kove, but does in Bariai,
Friederici having noted its similarity to the New Guinea forms. It is
also lacking in the other languages being considered except for Mengen,
which has optionally, rather than normally, a triple possessive: ieo
kama-ig tia ko *I hand-my art. mine*.

Considerably more could be said about the differences between con-
structions involving human beings and others, but a few of the differ-
ences between the systems should be obvious.

6.0. PREPOSITIONS AND POSTPOSITIONS

Pawley's reconstructed POC prepositions (1973:142-3) seem to be
poorly represented in New Britain. If we disregard cases where the
difference in meaning makes cognacy unlikely, very little can be added
to his mention of ta as indicating location in Tolai (his Kuanua) and
possession in other languages of the region that includes New Britain
(1973:146). This is the same form that has been discussed above, as

taking a suffixed personal pronoun, under 'possessives'. As a separable preposition with a variety of meanings (only partially overlapping from language to language), it appears as ta in Tolai; te in Lakalai (Johnston 1978a:244), ta and tawa in Sengseng, and, if I am correct about cognacy, to(ni)(indicating only possession) in Kove.

As has been described in Chowning 1973, Kove pa, pani is certainly from POC *pani, which also seems to appear in Tolai as pa. Form and function make it seem likely that the same applies to the Mengen pag (Müller 1907:86).

On the whole, these New Britain languages differ both in the number of prepositions each possesses (very few in Lakalai, but supplemented by what Johnston (1978a and see pages 1043-65 in this volume) calls coverbs; few in Kove, but supplemented by postpositions; a considerable number in the other three), and in the form of these. One is of interest because it appears in Kove and Mengen but not in the other languages: Kove Na-ni *'for, about'* (Chowning 1973:220), which seems cognate with Mengen NaN *'für'* (Müller 1906:86), and also with Gitua neNgan. These cases may not be so independent as they look; several isoglosses connect Mengen with the extreme west of New Britain, and I had wondered before about common shared influences from the Siassi area.

When Pawley states (1977a) that POC lacked postpositions, I am not sure exactly what the term includes. I shall consequently restrict discussion to the examples which he and Capell stress: locatives. One of these occurs in many AN languages of New Guinea and also in Kove and its relatives, and is assumed to be cognate throughout the region, appearing as -ai in Motu, -ya in Milne Bay, and -iai in Kove (see Pawley 1977b) - but as far as I know, not in other New Britain languages. It is often glossed as *'in'*. Capell (1971:333) mentions another postposition, lo or lon, with the same meaning, which is found in Manam and Graged of New Guinea, and also in Arawe: i mide pan lo *'it stands garden in'* (example from Capell 1971:268). Capell says that the lo postposition is also found on the north coast of New Britain, but I know of no examples, though it is presumably cognate with a common OC noun meaning *'interior'* (Kove lolo, Lakalai ilo). It is not clear whether it occurs in Mengen, which contains a number of locative phrases in which Na precedes the noun and the locative follows: Na riga paulman *'under the bed'* (riga). Müller does not mention lon as one of these locatives, but elsewhere gives a phrase Na giN lon *'in the interior of the house'* leaving one uncertain as to whether lon here is part of a possessive phrase or a postposition. In either case, postpositions do occur in Mengen. They do not in Lakalai, nor in Sengseng, but in Banaule,

a close relative of Sengseng, Goodenough recorded i-nau a rekere i-mbele hoa *'the thing it rests the house-under'*. Capell specifically states that nothing similar to the postpositions he discusses is found in Tolai (his Tuna) (1969:56), but note the mention above, from Rickard, of the 'prepositions' that end sentences.

The reasons for discussing postpositions in some detail are two. First, like the preposed genitive, they are generally considered to be confined to the New Guinea region. Capell considers them a "mark of NAN relationship" (1969:55) and notes that "in general (they) seem to accompany SOV word order", while Pawley seems to believe that they are so tied to SOV word order as to indicate that any language containing them must once have been SOV (1977b). This point will be discussed below.

7.0. CONNECTIVES

One of Pawley's connective particles, *ma, appears in that shape, meaning *'and'*, in Tolai and Sengseng, and as me in Lakalai. (The Kove ma *'or'* is an abbreviation of mao *'not'*, and is not cognate.) I assume that Mengen mani *'with'* and Kove toma(ni) *'with'* are also not cognate, but it seems possible that the East Nakanai reciprocal verb prefix ma- could be.

A variety of other connectives exist, but with few apparent connections from language to language, except that Kove and Sengseng both use sa to connect clauses with the general meaning *'then, so that'*. They also have similar demonstratives: Sengseng to, ton, Kove to, which can be translated *'the one which'*, as in Kove baket to paka *'the big (not the small) bucket'*. The equivalent form in Lakalai is ale: see Johnston for a full discussion of its functions of 'relativisation and focus' (1978a:155).

In Mengen No serves the same function:

gu   o   veaga ta luo ngo re   vulo
bring obj.marker *wood* art 2 *which* pl.marker *big*
'bring the two (pieces of) wood which are big'

At least in Lakalai, Sengseng, and Kove these particles can introduce any kind of verbal phrase that modifies or refers to the noun they follow, as in Sengseng yah ton mon ahet men *'axe which rests down there'*. They might, then, be compared with other particles in Tolai other than the adjective ligative; if not the relative pronouns mina and man which connect clauses, then the 'prepositions' which end sentences but "must frequently be translated by the relative pronoun"

(Rickard 1889:443): a pem iau bualia me *the axe with which I felled it'*. These prepositions are me, ma and ta-na, the last with inflected endings.

8.0. NUMERALS

I do not think that numeral systems are very useful indications of relationships in OC languages; very closely related languages differ in whether the base is quinary or decimal, or partially decimal (with a separate word for *'10'*). Just for the record, I will note two points. First, in New Britain only Lakalai and some other Kimbe languages spoken on the Willaumez Peninsula seem to have complete decimal systems; all the words are obviously PAN in origin (with Lakalai *'9'* ualasiu, somewhat aberrant). Melamela, however, has only a quinary system. Where Lakalai does differ from many other OC languages (see Pawley 1973:173-4) is in lacking a reflex of the ligature *Na (which would be reflected in Lakalai as la or ɡa), so that Lakalai has savulu *'10'* and salatu *'100'*, whereas Kove has saNaulu *'10'*. (Pawley correctly notes Kove saNaulu hua *'20'*, but the forms from 20 to 50 usually are abbreviated to saNa-hua, saNa-tolu, etc.) The *Na also probably appears in the Mengen and Arawe words for *'10'*: Arawe esuNul; Mengen taNuleli. (See under Connectives.)

9.0. WORD ORDER

9.1. Like all New Britain languages on which I have information, NAN as well as AN, all five of these languages have SVO word order. The point is of some interest because these languages do not agree in their handling of genitives nor use of postpositions, features that Capell and Pawley strongly associate with word order in sentences (see discussion below).

As regards the order of additional words or particles, considerable variety exists. I will deal first with the most common modifiers of the verb phrase. I am assuming that it is usually possible to distinguish a pre- or post-verbal particle from an actual affix to the verb, but judging from the ways in which various investigators have recorded the same languages, considerable disagreement exists. I shall, perhaps arbitrarily, treat unemphatic subject pronoun as separate from the verb, but be less consistent as regards post-verbal forms.

Tolai word order is as follows: (neg. +) subj.pron. (+ tense/aspect markers) + verb (+ obj.). Examples:

```
pa    iau    nunure kaum         tinata
neg. 1st sg. speak  2nd sg.poss. language
```

'I don't speak your language'

```
dia    tara papalum
3rd pl. past work
```

'they finished work'

```
a    bul i    ga  gire ra  boroi
art. boy 3rd sg. past see art. pig
```

'the boy saw the pig'

Mengen is as follows: (subj. +) subj. pron. (+ pl. marker) (+ fut.)
(+ neg.) + verb (+ obj. marker) (+ obj.). There is no mention of a
particle indicating completion. Examples:

```
goiva ta  e      kal  e         ragoi    me
dog   art. 3rd sg. bite obj.marker children collective marker
```

'the dog bites the children'

```
isuo          re  na  sa  la
1st du.incl. pl. fut. neg. go
```

'we 2 will not go'

For Lakalai, I shall take my information and some examples (but not
all my terminology) from Johnston 1978a. The sequence is as follows:
subj. (+ neg.) (+ "irrealis") (+ verb) (+ completion marker) (+ obj.).
If the object is a noun, a co-referential pronominal object marker
may precede it in certain circumstances but is not obligatory. Particles
which Johnston labels dubitative and durative may be placed immediately
after the subject. Examples:

```
e    Baba souka bili (-a)         la  bolo
art. Baba not yet kill (dir.obj.pron.) art. pig
```

'Baba has not yet killed the pig'

```
eia ge       tuga - ti
he  irrealis go     completion
```

'he will have (could have, might have) gone'

It will be noted that when a subject noun is present, no pronoun is
necessary. The same applies if several verbs occur in sequence and the
subject is obvious.

Sengseng word order is as follows: subj. (+ fut.) (+ 'yet') + verb
(+ obj.) (+ completion marker) (+ negative). Examples:

```
po       ko  so  me
3rd pl. fut. yet come
```

'they are yet to come'

```
humuk      kokoho       suk        som
mosquito bite (redup.) 1st tr.excl. neg.
```

'mosquitoes are not biting us 3'

In contrast to the other languages, Kove lacks any kind of future marker. Instead a connective **tau** or **ta** *'then'*, begins the sentence:

```
tau  i       lalao
then 3rd sg. go
```

'he will go'

Otherwise word order is as follows: (subj. +) subj. pron. + verb (+ obj.) (+ completion) (+ neg.). The subject pronoun is normally repeated, except in a few set phrases and before repetitions of the verb to indicate duration of action. The focal pronoun is used only for emphasis. Examples:

```
Kaumu i       ani puri  Gasili
Kaumu 3rd sg. eat banana completion
```

'Kaumu ate the banana'

```
taita             ta          anani       mota mao
1st pl.incl.focal 1st pl.incl. eat (redup.) snake not
```

'WE do not eat snake'

9.2. *NOUN MODIFIERS*

From what has been said about possessive pronouns, it is obvious that they vary considerably in placement before or after the noun. In most languages other modifiers, of a kind that may be considered adjectival, usually follow the noun. This is invariably the case in Kove and Sengseng. In Lakalai only numerals may precede the noun, but they too usually follow. In Mengen one form of the possessive pronoun is the exception to the rule that modifiers follow nouns (and note that this is the language in which the article follows the noun).

Johnston does not use the term 'adjective' with reference to Lakalai, preferring to treat all predicates as verbs and recognising as noun modifiers only possessives, quantifiers, demonstratives, and deictics (1978a:236-40). In Kove, at least, a distinction between adjectives and predicates is justified by the use of predicate markers only with the latter, and a noun or the focal form of the pronoun with the former. See, for example: eau paka, eau Na titia *'I (am) old, I - 1st pers.sg. pred. marker - stay home'*. With regard to Sengseng, I have also felt justified in talking of adjectives, indicated in some cases by a prefix or connective a - (cf. amutNin *inedible*, composed of a + mut *'to reject (food)'* + noun formative suffix). Modifiers

indicating a species or variety, as of taro, vines, flies, etc., are
connected with the principal noun by a or e: humuk akenken *'mosquito'*,
where humuk is the generic term for small insects such as sandflies and
fruit-flies. A peculiarity of Sengseng is that most adjectives are
preceded by a prefix indicating whether the quality is superficial
(pon, from a preposition meaning *'on'*) or permeates the object (min,
from a preposition meaning *'in'*). A *'dirty cloth'* is called pon-soin,
while *'murky water'* is min-soin.

   Tolai seems exceptional in permitting any 'adjective' either to
precede or to follow, making a distinction that is usually described
as being like one in English between *'the big man'* (in which case some
sort of predicate must follow) and *'the man is big'* (in which case the
'adjective' is preceded by i, the 3rd person singular subject pronoun,
and itself functions as a predicate). Capell agrees that this system
may be peculiar to Tolai (1969:46,47). If the 'adjective' precedes the
noun it is usually, but not always, connected by a connective particle
na: a Nala na pal *'the big house'*.

10.0.   THE VERB PHRASE

10.1.   *VERBAL AFFIXES*

   Both subject and object pronominal markers have been mentioned
above (4.0., 9.1.). Here I am concerned with other affixes.

10.1.1.   Causatives

   All five languages have a causative verbal prefix, and these are
cognate with each other, being obviously derived from the same POC form.
(Both Lakalai and Kove have an additional one, in each case derived
from a verb root meaning *'make, do'*: Lakalai igo, Kove karo.) In Mengen,
Sengseng, and Kove, the prefix is pa-, and in Tolai wa-. In Lakalai
it is fallen together with the reciprocal, and they both have several
variant forms: va-, vai-, vi (with an alternate form hi- for the causa-
tive). Johnston's data indicate that the variation results from contact
with other West Nakanai dialects.

10.1.2.   Reciprocals

   The reciprocal prefix is less widely distributed. It appears in
Tolai, usually in the form wara-. In Sengseng, it is suffixed rather
than prefixed to the root, and usually has the form -wal (-al in some
environments). No such form exists in Kove, which expresses comparable
relations by means of preposition with a suffixed pronoun: i hau

tamone-ne *'he strikes man-this'*; ti hau Na-ri *'they fight'* (-ri is the 3rd plural suffixed form). Müller does not discuss reciprocals in Mengen. It should be added that the use of these affixes in New Britain supports Pawley's comment (1973:150) that reciprocity is only one of the 'plural' relationships expressed by derivatives of POC *paRi.

10.1.3. Transitive Suffixes

Much has been made of these in discussion of OC, particularly EO, languages. In New Britain they have been described for Tolai, where some verbs become transitive by adding a suffix -ane or -e (Rickard 1889:444). In Mengen the usual device is a suffixed -i or -u, depending on the vowel in the root (Müller 1907:253). In at least some cases it looks as if the form with the presumed suffix is the original root (e.g. tani *'to weep over'*). Both the Tolai and Mengen cases show similarity to that of Melamela, discussed below.[3]

In Lakalai an l- prefix precedes the object of some normally intransitive verbs: e.g. eia legelege l-eau *'he laughs at me'*. This can, however, plausibly be interpreted as a preposition that appears in possessives as well as expressing other relationships, and it is probably unjustified to assume that it represents a transitive suffix. Johnston considers it a dative marker (1978a:77-8).

10.1.4. Completion

In Lakalai, but not in the other languages, an affix indicating completion of action is suffixed to the verb preceding the suffixed pronoun object (see below, 10.3.3.).

10.2. *TENSE-ASPECT MARKERS*

10.2.1. Reduplication

In all five languages reduplication of the verb may serve to indicate ongoing or habitual action. In Tolai such reduplication can have other functions as well, such as making a transitive verb intransitive. Reduplication is used much less often in Kove than in Sengseng and Lakalai; I cannot judge its frequency in the other languages.

10.2.2. Otherwise, apart from the Lakalai completion suffix, tense/aspect markers occur outside the verb. The most common is what is usually called a future marker. In Tolai this is na with singular subjects, a with the rest. In some cases it unites with the preceding subject pronoun to produce a special form. In Mengen na is the future

marker throughout. It is also the future marker in East Nakanai, but
not in Lakalai, where ge is used instead. Lakalai has another marker
as well, ga, which indicates, among other things, that something almost
happened. Johnston distinguishes these as non-imminent (ge) and
imminent (ga) irrealis (1978a:90). Certainly he is correct in indicating
(p.91) that I oversimplified (Chowning 1973:217,222) in saying that ge
indicated futurity or intention.

In Sengseng the future marker, ka, is used with all first person
pronouns, and ko with all the rest. (The initial consonant is voiced,
so they sound more like the Lakalai forms than they look in my phon-
emicisation.) As has been noted (9.1.), future markers are lacking
entirely in Kove and Bariai; instead, a temporal connective, tau or
ta *'then, subsequently'* is used: savalele tau Na la *'tomorrow I shall
go'*.

10.2.3. Tolai has several particles marking the past; they precede
the verb. Nothing similar has been reported for other New Britain
languages, though several of them have methods of indicating that an
action is completed. In Lakalai this is most commonly a verbal suffix
-ti, which precedes the object: eau ali-ti-a *'I ate it'*. The cognate
in East Nakanai is -osi. In Sengseng and Kove, the word indicating
completion is a free form placed at the end of the sentence: Sengseng
kut (homonymous with the word for *'tail'*), Kove Gasili. Nothing
similar is mentioned for Mengen.

10.2.4. Negatives

Most, if not all, of the languages have at least two negative markers,
one for negative commands, and one for negating simple statements.
Tolai has at least three. As is evident from the examples above, they
vary greatly in their order within the sentence. These negative
particles are not obviously cognate with each other, though some have
cognates outside New Britain.

10.3. *REFLEXIVES*

This is a case in which the languages differ from each other, but
some interesting points emerge from the comparison. In Lakalai, the
reflexive is indicated by the use of lou, which otherwise means *'again'*.
In Tolai, a similar construction is found, although the word for
'again', mule, is not cognate with the Lakalai one, but mule is cognate
with a Mengen reflexive marker. In Kove and Sengseng, the construction
can be handled by use of object pronouns alone. In Kove, the direct

object third person singular marker is Ø except for the reflexive, so
i lio-i can only mean *'he hanged himself'*. In Sengseng, a special
pronominal object form, sun, is used to indicate that the object is
different from the subject: ve vi-sun *'he struck him (another man)'*;
ve vi-ni *'he killed himself'*. (Not *ve vi-ve, as might be expected.)

   Additional constructions can be used for emphasis. In Kove, as I
have indicated elsewhere (Chowning 1973:225), the form for *'myself,
etc.'* is based on tau + suffixed pronoun, as in some Milne Bay languages.
In Sengseng, by contrast, the noun root, again with suffixed pronoun,
is tiho-, which presumably reflects POC 'reflexive marker' *(n)timpo
(Pawley 1977a): ve tiho-n vi-ni *'he killed himself'*; compare Kove ai
tau i lio-i (this is an example of the aberrant behaviour of third
person singular pronominal possessives; ai here belongs to the suffixed
series).

10.4. *VERB MODIFIERS*

   Since little has been said about this comparatively, I shall simply
note one difference. In Lakalai, many independent verbs also serve as
adverbial modifiers to the principal verb, in which case they, like
other adverbs, are suffixed to the root, preceding the particle indi-
cating completion and the direct object pronoun. For example, golo
deceive; ali-golo-a *'pretend to eat it'*; taro *'remove, reject'*;
abi-taro-a *'take it away'*. Tolai and Mengen have similar constructions.
In Sengseng, when an independent verb is used as an adverb after a
transitive verb, it follows the direct object pronoun. If it follows
an intransitive verb, o is interposed. Examples: li *'go'*; psik-i li
'throw it away'; i yak o li *'it flies away'*. In Kove, as in Kaliai
and Bariai, the usual pattern is two separate clauses connected by
'and': i hoho Ga i la *'it flies and it goes, it flies away'*.

11.0. CONCLUSIONS

11.1. In the introduction (1.0.), it was stated that this comparison
was undertaken with several aims in mind. The results were almost
wholly negative. The features examined did not seem to me to provide
any justification for grouping together languages which had been sep-
arated on lexical grounds. Neither did I find a constant association
between any sets of features (but see below). The only features
attributable to the AN languages of the New Guinea area were already
well known (the use of postpositions and the structure of the genitive).
The scanty data available on the NAN languages of New Britain did not
suggest that they had notably affected the AN languages, except

(probably) as regards the construction of plurals in Mengen, and
possibly as regards sex distinctions in third person singular pronouns,
in the Whiteman languages; this latter feature is found in Baining and
Taulil (Wurm 1975:790). The NAN languages of New Britain do not seem
to be as grammatically complex as some of those of New Guinea, and
some of their features (duals, articles) are commonly found in AN lan-
guages. Indeed, we might wonder whether the AN languages have affected
the NAN ones.

11.2. Although the study did not achieve its objects (possibly because
the wrong features were examined), some points of interest did emerge.
One has to do with the significance, as suggesting the former presence
of other grammatical features, of the preposed genitive and of the use
of postpositions. As has been noted, the preposed genitive is found
in all New Britain languages except Tolai and the Kimbe subgroup, but
several of these seem to lack postpositions (e.g. Sengseng), and all
lack SOV word order. Possibly as a reflection of Greenberg's statements
about the 'harmony' of the preposed genitive, postpositions, and SOV
word order, Pawley has assumed that the presence of one of these
features implies the former presence of the others, as when he says
(1977b) that some languages in the New Guinea region "show possible
relics of SOV order in their syntax. For example, Kove has several
postpositions as well as several prepositions". But why could post-
positions not have been borrowed separately from a change in the order
of the object? We are not in a position to assess the relative resis-
tance to borrowing of such grammatical features, but it is worth noting
that, according to Greenberg (1966:92), "exclusively prefixing languages
are quite rare". A few postfixes, then, need not lead us to firm
conclusions about the current or former presence of other grammatical
features. It seems that the preposed genitive is characteristic of
the AN languages of New Britain, and postpositions are found in a few
(though hardly characteristic of them), but there is no evidence that
any of them ever possessed SOV word order.

11.3. Finally, in his paper for this conference (see pages 383-93 in
this volume), Dahl points out that closely related European languages
differ enormously in the degree to which they retain or lose such
inherited grammatical features as gender, number, case, and conjugation.
He does not mention additional problems caused by borrowing or inno-
vation, but simply notes that grammatical differences are "insufficient
reason for denying that (two languages) belong to the same subgroup".

Once some of the selected languages are compared with their (lexically) closest relatives, it is possible to appreciate this point. The outstanding example is Lakalai compared with Melamela (basic vocabulary 64% cognate). A particularly interesting difference between the two languages lies in the distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs. Lakalai lacks a transitising suffix (though the fact that root-final /-a/ always becomes /e/ before a suffixed object pronoun /a/ might give an erroneous impression; also see Johnston 1978a:317). In Melamela, intransitive verbs often become transitive by altering the final vowels: /a/ and /o/ to /e/; /u/ to /i/, as in aso *'to snuffle'*, ase *'to smell something'*; inu *'to drink'*, ini *'to drink something'*. This process bears some resemblance to what happens in Tolai (see 10.1.3.) but even more to what seems to be a similar process in Bola, where the comparative evidence suggests that intransitive verbs ending in /-a/, /-o/, and /-u/ change these to /i/ or /e/ when they become transitive, preceding the suffixed direct object: kalaki-a *'bite it'*, longe-a *'hear it'*.

In addition to the differences noted above in the use of the article (3.1.), the shape of the noun-formative infix (3.4.), and the presence or absence of a dual set of subject pronouns (4.0.), Melamela also differs from Lakalai in possessing a trial, forming the 'reciprocal' with a prefix ma-, having a special marker manei to indicate personal possession (Parkinson 1907:781-7), and expressing *'in'* by a preposition mina, in contrast to the coverbs of Lakalai (Johnston 1978a: chapter 7; compare Sengseng min). The future marker is na, coalesced with the pronoun for first person singular. I lack the data to say that Melamela is more like Tolai than is Lakalai, especially since it may be that Bola shares some features with Melamela to the exclusion of Lakalai, but it does seem that my assessment of the resemblances between Tolai and the Kimbe languages would have been different if I had selected another language to represent Kimbe.

The same kinds of differences are found when Kove is compared with Gitua, its closest relative in New Guinea (45% cognate; see Chowning 1973:208). Among the differences Gitua has a future marker na, a reciprocal plural verb prefix para-, and a preverbal particle indicating completion. Similar examples are to be found within the other subgroups. It would be inaccurate to suggest that grammar is more variable or susceptible to change than lexicon, but there is very little evidence that it is less so.

Indeed, Johnston has suggested (1978a:320) that Lakalai may have simplified its grammar under the influence of AN languages already

present in New Britain when the ancestor of the Kimbe languages arrived.
The present distribution of languages, as well as the sharing of some
vocabulary, suggests that languages of the Whiteman subgroup, which
includes Sengseng, are most likely to have been present in the area
later occupied by Lakalai. The Whiteman languages now adjacent to
Lakalai, Mangseng and Banaule, do not belong to the dialect chain that
includes Sengseng, so this last is not the best choice for a discussion
of possible influence, but I lack adequate data on the grammars of the
other two languages.

    Two obvious features are shared between Lakalai and Sengseng. One
is the two-class possessive system, and it may be significant that the
mark of the separable possessive is similar in both, and that the sep-
arable possessive follows the noun in both languages. They are also
alike in lacking special markers for the direct object. They also lack
the double set of subject pronouns, focal and predicate marker, though
Sengseng does have an incomplete set of special forms that may be used
for emphasis. Otherwise, I am not aware of shared features that might
represent simplifications of POC grammar. Sengseng has some complex-
ities which Lakalai lacks and which may be POC in origin (though the
form taken by the paucal pronouns, at least, suggests that its presence
in Sengseng is not a retention but an innovation based on its non-OC
word for 'three'). On the other hand, Sengseng is more inclined than
Lakalai to use the same unaltered root, without causative prefixes or
stative affixes, to convey both active and passive (or transitive and
intransitive) meanings. It should be mentioned that Banaule does not
look simpler than Sengseng, and the possessive system is much more
complicated. Johnston's hypothesis is appealing, but remains to be
proved.

    Finally, we may return to the question of the stability of particular
grammatical features. Capell and Pawley have pointed out that certain
grammatical features are so variable in OC as to be non-diagnostic:
e.g. articles (Capell 1969:44) and the distinction between body parts
that take a suffixed possessive and those that take a separable one
(Pawley 1973:155). We are not yet in a position to say which features
are likely to be retained from POC. Certainly there is little relation
between the degree to which a language is 'conservative' in phonology
or retains a large number of reflexes of POC morphemes, and the degree
to which its grammar seems non-OC (or non-Melanesian). Tolai has been
used as a source for reconstructing POC grammar by Capell and Pawley,
and naturally tends to fit the model. But Kove, with conservative
phonology and lexicon, seems grammatically neither more nor less con-
servative than Sengseng, which is phonologically and lexically

considerably more aberrant. Mengen, on consideration, looks much less peculiar than I had thought earlier; of its apparent oddities, it may be noted that Codrington finds articles following the noun elsewhere in Oceania, and some New Ireland languages, such as Mandak, seem to have complex systems of forming plurals by adding prefixes.

I still hope that it may be possible to use grammatical data to decide whether some languages of New Britain, in addition to Kove and its close relatives, belong to a larger grouping that includes some or all of the languages of New Guinea. At present, unless the assignment is to be made purely on the grounds of the preposed genitive and the existence of postpositions, the grammatical basis for such a grouping seems unpersuasive. Until it is convincingly argued that these traits are less easily borrowed than some of the others that vary so among the languages of New Britain, I am reluctant to assume that those which share them should even be grouped with each other (except geographically), much less with the languages of New Guinea.

N O T E S

1. In most cases, I have accepted Johnston's description of Lakalai
(his Nakanai): his knowledge of the language is certainly much greater
than my own, as is the time he has given to analysing it. Because of
the problems it causes for comparison, I have not always used his
terminology here. There are points on which our data do not agree,
possibly because some of my informants had spent years living among
speakers of a different dialect; consequently I sometimes list variant
forms (as of the negative and the causative prefix) which he does not
mention.

   While understanding the local pressures that made him decide to call
the language Nakanai rather than Lakalai, I think it is misleading to
use the term without qualification to refer to a single dialect, and
even more misleading to treat Melamela, the language labelled Nakanai
in all the older texts, as if it cannot be called by that term. Con-
sequently I have retained my previous usage (see Chowning 1976).

2. Johnston suggests (1978a:379) that perhaps Melamela has an article
o, but a comparison of Bischof's vocabulary with Lakalai makes it clear
that the initial o- corresponds with Lakalai /h-/ before /a/, repres-
enting POC initial *q or *∅. See for example, Melamela oase *'mouth'*;
oate *'liver'*; oavi *'fire'*; oavu *'lime'* beside Lakalai hare, hate, havi,
havu.

3. A few examples in Kove suggest that suffixed -hani, -ani, or -ni
may make an intransitive verb transitive: suhai *'to spill'*; suhani *'to
pour out'*. If this interpretation is correct, both this form and Tolai
-ane may derive from POC *-aki(ni) (see Pawley 1973:171).

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