

The Manambu Language of East Sepik, Papua New Guinea

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with the assistance of

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Preface

This is a grammar of Manambu, a language of the Ndu family, which is, in terms of numbers of speakers, the largest language family of the Sepik area of New Guinea. Manambu is spoken by about 2,500 people in five villages—three of which, Avatip, Malu, and Yambon, are sufficiently big to appear on most maps of Papua New Guinea. I started studying the language in 1995, as part of my work on classifiers, genders, and noun classes. I was interested in learning a language with shape-based genders. Alan Rumsey was teaching a field methods course at the ANU, with Pauline Agnes Luma Laki as a consultant. I came along to the course, and then carried on working with Pauline for more than ten years afterwards—this is how my voyage of discovery started. I have since worked with several dozen speakers of Manambu, mostly in Avatip. Pauline Agnes Luma Laki and myself are currently engaged in preparing a comprehensive dictionary of the language.

This grammar contains an analysis of the Manambu language, starting from a brief characterization of the language and its speakers, then going on to phonology, morphology, syntax, discourse organization, and semantics. The analysis is cast in terms of a cumulative typological framework of linguistic analysis—which employs ‘the fundamental theoretical concepts that underlie all work in language description and change’ (Dixon 1997: 128) and in terms of which significant typological generalizations are postulated; this has come to be called ‘basic linguistic theory’. I have avoided employing any transient formalisms. This grammar is part of genuine documentation of the Manambu language in its varied facets.

Every chapter of the grammar includes a presentation of the facts of the language interwoven with arguments for their analysis within a typological framework. No attempt has been made to separate pure ‘description’ from theoretical interpretation—which would not be a productive task. A typological perspective for each phenomenon is crucial for the analysis given here.

Detailed exemplification is provided for every grammatical point. Most examples come from texts, and a few from spontaneous—or carefully directed—conversation. An additional objective was to convey as much of the Manambu culture as possible through using naturally occurring examples. I avoid using elicited sentences; elicitation was limited to lexicon and to paradigms.

English glosses are kept as close as possible to the glosses and explanations offered by my consultants. Readers should be warned against trying to draw conclusions concerning Manambu grammar and semantics from study of the translations.

Examples, tables, diagrams, figures, charts, and footnotes are numbered separately within each chapter. Footnotes are also numbered separately for each chapter. The orthography used in the examples from languages other than Manambu, and language names, follows that of the sources (unless indicated otherwise).

This grammar can be used as a sourcebook for further typological studies, and as a model for further grammars of languages of the Ndu and of other families of the New Guinea area. It is far from being the last word on Manambu—the grammar is intended to provide a sound systematic foundation for further studies, reanalyses, and reinterpretations.

It is my hope that this book will encourage linguists to go out into the field and document languages threatened by extinction (before it is too late to do so). Nothing can compare with the intellectual excitement of working out the grammatical system of a previously undescribed language.

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I never planned to work on a Papuan language—until I decided I needed to know more about shape-based genders for my work on classifiers, genders, and noun classes. I am grateful to Alan Rumsey for introducing me to Pauline Agnes Luma Laki in 1995. Pauline adopted me as her younger sister, and has since been my closest collaborator. My warmest thanks go to her.

This grammar would not have been written without the self-sacrificing help, and wonderful linguistic insights, of Jacklyn Yuamali Benji Ala—whom Pauline lovingly called ‘angel without wings’ (*pəp tə-ma:r-na angel*). She spent hours helping me with transcriptions, translations, explanations, and at the same time cooking, cleaning, looking after her children, and telling the most wonderful and sophisticated stories. Her help and dedication could never be sufficiently acknowledged.

I owe an eternal debt of gratitude to my Manambu friends and family. I am grateful to James Səsu Laki, Joel Yuakalu Luma, David Yagenmas Takendu, Leo Luma Yambwi, John Sepaywus, Jamis Katalu Angi Balangawi, Kəmbwiyat, and Kulanawi Yuakaw, for sharing their insights and histories with me. Paul Kat Badaybæg and John Sepaywus were my main teachers of the Manambu history and lore. Catie Teketa:y, Jennie Kudapa:kw, Lowai, the late Wimali Yabukwi, Gemaj, Yuawalup, Maguniway, Yipawal, Sawsepali, Tagwatak, Gaiawalimæg, Walinum, Ester Yuaya:b, and Ńatabi did not just tell stories and sing women’s songs to me—they shared their warmth and friendship, and made me feel part of the village.

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- 1 Pauline Agnes Yuaneng Luma Laki and Kawindu in the former site of Yentschanggai, now completely flooded.
- 2 Ceremonial house at Avatip (1910–12) (Behrmann 1950–1: 323).
- 3 Ceremonial house Warman in modern Avatip during a name debate.
- 4 A view of the Avatip village (the enclave of the subclan Maliau).
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Organization and Cross-references

This grammar has been written as an integrated whole. To understand what follows one needs to have digested what precedes. Chapter 1 provides a quick overview of the main points of the Manambu grammar. Later chapters deal with a particular grammatical topic each.

Chapter 3 discusses the ways in which grammatical relations are expressed. This chapter is basic for understanding the rest of the grammar. Chapter 2 contains a detailed discussion of phonology; it is not necessary to read to understand the rest of the grammar. Chapter 4 gives an overview of all the word classes, and Chapter 11 concentrates on the organization of verbal morphology, giving a preview of Chapters 12–17. Chapters 18 and 19 deal with complex clauses. Chapter 20 draws together the structure of clausal constituents, clauses, and sentences, and discusses the principles and functions of constituent order and of order of grammatical words within each constituent. Issues in semantics are addressed in Chapter 21. Those interested in cultural background and historical and comparative problems are advised to focus on Chapters 1 and 22.

Examples are numbered separately for each chapter. Examples from texts at the end of the grammar are referred to with the letter T followed by the number of the text and the sentence (that is, T2.40 refers to sentence 40 of Text 2).

All the examples and texts are supplied with an interlinear morpheme gloss, and then translated into English. Homophonous morphemes are differentiated by their glosses. The symbol ‘+’ is used to indicate fused morphemes, e.g. *taba-* is glossed as ‘hand+LK’, its underlying form being *ta:b* ‘hand’ (with the long vowel shortened when the linker is added) and *-a-* ‘linker’. Portmanteau morphemes are glossed with ‘:’, for instance, *mæy* ‘come:IMPV’. All grammatical morphemes are glossed in small caps while lexical morphemes are in lower case. Pronominal prefixes are shown as 1sg, 3pl, in lower case. For polysemous morphemes, different translations in glosses correspond to different meanings.

Cross-references are of two kinds:

- Those preceded by § refer to chapter and section number: for instance, §11.1 refers to section 1 of Chapter 11;
- Those beginning with a number refer to examples in the grammar: for instance, 11.1 refers to example 1 in Chapter 11.

Abbreviations and Conventions

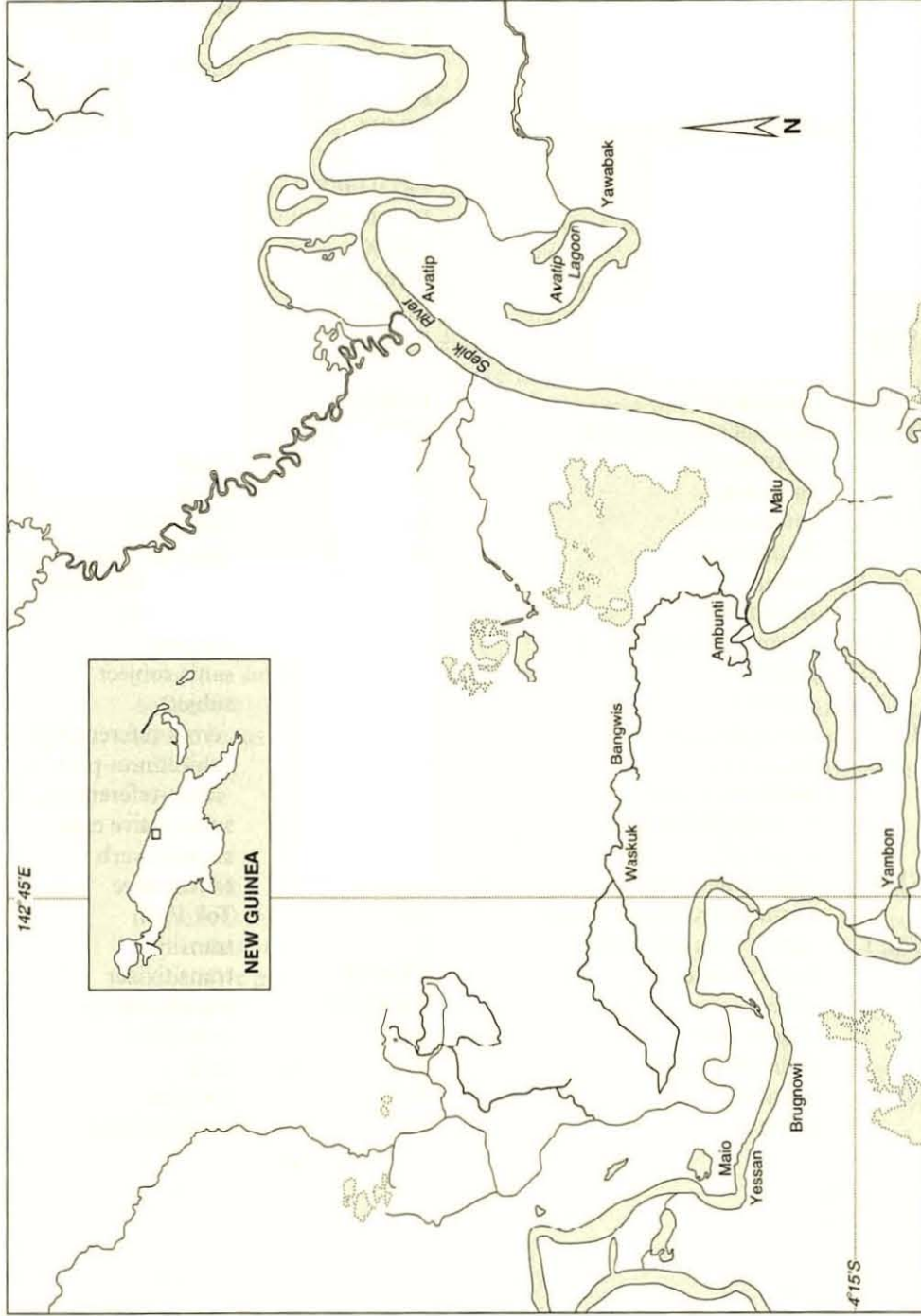
Here and passim ‘-’ stands for any morpheme boundary, that is, a boundary between a root and an affix, or between two roots. The symbol ‘=’ indicates a boundary between a root and a clitic, or an affix and a clitic, or two clitics (see Chapter 2). The symbol ‘ˈ’ indicates a primary stress, and ‘ˋ’ a secondary stress (obligatory on enclitics). Stress is marked on each example in Chapter 2 (‘Phonology’) and in other chapters only if relevant to the discussion.

Manambu has a certain amount of variation between allophones (discussed in Chapter 2). Many variants depend on the age of the speaker. Examples reflect the recurrent individual variants which also appear in the Vocabulary at the end of the grammar (e.g. *kamna:gw*, *kamna:* ‘food’, *numa*, *nəma* ‘big’). Examples throughout the grammar are given in their phonological representation. Conventions of transcription are addressed in Chapter 2. Loans and code-switches from Tok Pisin and English are italicized in each example throughout the grammar (in Chapter 22, Tok Pisin words are italicized and English words are underlined).

Abbreviations

A	transitive subject	COMPL.VB	completive generic verb
ACC	accusative	COND	conditional
ACT.FOC	action focus	CONF	confirmation marker
ADDR	addressee	CONN	connective
ADJ	adjective	COP	copula
ADV	adverb	COTEMP	cotemporaneous
ALL	allative	CP	complex predicate
ANAPH	anaphoric	CS	copula subject
APPR	apprehensive	CURR.REL	current relevance
APPROX	approximative	CUST	customary
ASS	associative plural	DAT	dative
AUG	augmentative	DEM	demonstrative
AUX	auxiliary	DEM.PROX.ADDR	demonstrative referring to object close to addressee
BAS	basic cross-referencing	DEP	dependent
CA	common argument	DER	derivation
CAUS	causative	DES	desiderative
CC	copula complement	DIR	directional
CLIM	climatic	DIR.SP.REP	direct speech report
COLL	collective		
COM	comitative		
COMPAR	comparative		
COMPL	completive aspect		
COMPL.DS	completive different subject		
COMPL.SS	completive same subject		

DIST	distal	P	past
DS	different subject	p	person
du	dual	pl, PL	plural
E	English	POSS	possessive
EMPH	emphatic	PRED	predicative marker
EP	epenthetic	PRES	present
EXPR	expressive	PROH	prohibitive
fem, FEM	feminine	PROH.EXTRA	extra strong prohibitive
FOC	focus	PROH.GEN	general prohibitive
FOC.M	focus marker	PROH.STR	strong prohibitive
FR	frustrative	PROX	proximal
FUT	future	PUNCT	punctual
HAB	habitual	PURP	purposive
IMM.SEQ	immediate sequence	PURP.DS	different subject purposive
IMPV	imperative	PURP.SS	same subject purposive
INCOMPL	incompletive	REACT.TOP	reactivated topic
IND.SP.REP	indirect speech report	REC	reciprocal
INSTR	instrument	RED	reduplication
INT	intensive	REP	repetition
INTERJ	interjection	REP.SEQ	repeated sequencing
INTO	intonation	S	intransitive subject
IRR	irrealis	SEQ	sequencing
itr	intransitive	sg	singular
LENGTH	expressive lengthening	SS	same subject
LK	linker	SUBJ	subject cross-referencing
LOC	locative	SUBJ.NP	subject non-past cross-referencing
MANIP	manipulative	SUBST	substitutive case
masc	masculine	SUP.VB	support verb
MOM	momentaneous	TERM	terminative
NAI	natural phenomena	TP	Tok Pisin
NEG	negative	tr	transitive
NEG.SUB	subordinate negator	TRANS	transitivizer
NOM	nominal cross-referencing	TRANSP	transportative
NOM.ACT	action nominalization	UNF	unfulfilled
NP	noun phrase	VB	verb
O	object	VOC	vocative
OBJ	object case	VT	versatile tense
OBL	oblique marker		
OPT	optative		
ORD	ordinal		



MAP 1. Location of Marambu villages