

# Stable Multilingualism in a Small Language Group: The Case of Kaki Ae\*

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## 1 Introduction

The plight of endangered languages has taken an increasingly high profile among the linguistic community. Krauss (1992:7) states that 'I consider it a plausible calculation that – at the rate things are going – the coming century will see either the death or the doom of 90% of mankind's languages.' Krauss bases this calculation on the assumption that the only truly 'safe' languages are those with official state support or over 100,000 speakers. In Papua New Guinea this implies that the only safe languages are Tok Pisin, Hiri Motu, Enga (110,000 speakers), and Melpa (128,000 speakers). And the experiences of a number of researchers, especially in the East Sepik and Madang provinces, would bear out the prediction that many of Papua New Guinea's languages are definitely endangered if not moribund. In recent articles in this journal, Kulick (1987) and Smith (1990) report on two cases of moribund languages in Papua New Guinea.

At least at the present time, however, we have found a very different situation in surveys conducted in Gulf and Western provinces over the last ten years. Most of the languages which have been surveyed have from 200 to 5000 speakers. Although each language community is multilingual in a number of neighbouring and lingua francas, all except one seem to be vital at present. Furthermore, the situation seems to have changed little from that reported in Franklin (1973) which was largely based on surveys completed in the late 1960s.

In this paper I report on the situation in Kaki Ae, a small language spoken near Kerema in Gulf Province. The observations reported here are based on two visits to the area: a one-day visit in October 1990, and a one-week stay in November 1993. The purpose of this report is to document the situation at this point in time. Hopefully this will establish a base-line against which to evaluate further changes in the sociolinguistic situation. In this way I trust we will be able to ultimately gain greater understanding of the factors involved in language vitality. In

\* The surveys reported in this paper were made under the auspices of the Papua New Guinea branch of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. The 1993 survey was underwritten by a grant from the UNESCO Office for the Pacific Studies administered by Research School of Pacific Studies of the Australian National University. I would like to thank the Kaki Ae people for their assistance during this survey. Their obvious love for their language made this a most enjoyable time.

section 2 I present general information regarding the demographic, geographic and linguistic situation. This is followed by an outline of the socio-economic situation in section 3. Next I discuss language use and attitudes in section 4. Finally, I offer some concluding remarks regarding the language situation.

## 2 General Information

Kaki Ae is spoken in six villages southeast of Kerema in Gulf Province of Papua New Guinea. Brown (1973) refers to the language by the Toaripi designation *Raepa Tati*, or 'Hill Tati'. Native speakers have no generally recognised name for their language, but dislike the designation *Tati* since they feel it refers to 'bush people' in Toaripi. In fact, the phone [t] is nonexistent in Kaki Ae. In discussions regarding the proper name for the language people preferred either *Kaki Ae* (from *kaki*, a modified form of [tati], and *ae* 'language') or simply *Ae*.<sup>1</sup> *Kaki Ae* seemed to be the preference of the wider community and so will be used in this paper.

As shown in Map 1, the villages of Gupra, Uriri, Ovorio, and Kupiano are located along the road from Kerema to Malalaua. The other two villages, Lou and Lovere, are located along the the coast. The six villages include approximately 69 houses, located as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Number of Houses in Kaki Ae Villages**

Gupra	8	Lovere	4
Kupiano	4	Ovorio	13
Lou	17	Uriri	23

In a survey of language ability conducted in Uriri, I found there are approximately 4.5 people per house. If this number holds throughout the language group, the present population of the six villages is approximately 310. The population shows moderate growth over the last two decades in Table 2.

**Table 2: Kaki Ae Population**

1970 census <sup>2</sup>	266
1980 census <sup>3</sup>	297
1993	310

The languages surrounding Kaki Ae are shown in Map 2. Keuru, Opau, Tairuma,<sup>4</sup> and the Kaipi dialect of Toaripi are all members of the Eleman language family; Kamea and Akoye<sup>5</sup> are

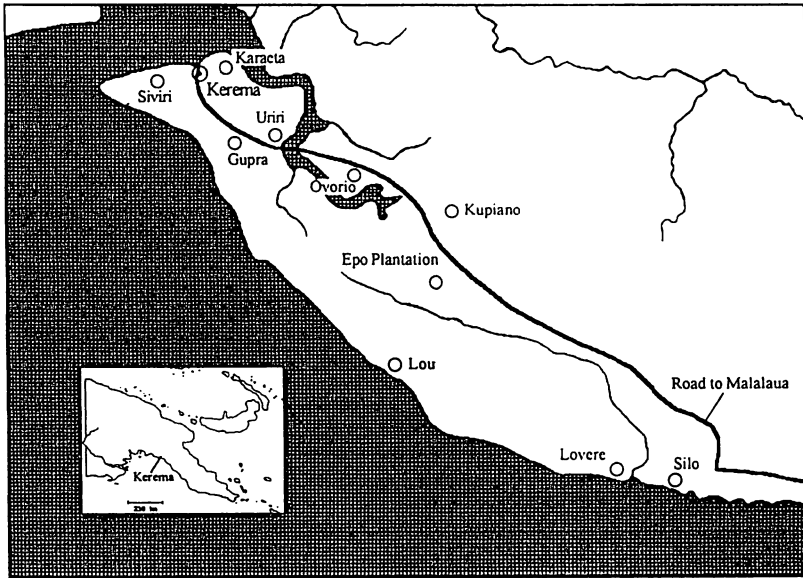
<sup>1</sup> Grimes (1992) gives the name of the language as *Tate*. Alternative names listed are *Raepa Tati*, *Tati*, *Lorabada*, and *Lou*.

<sup>2</sup> These are the figures reported by Brown (1973:285).

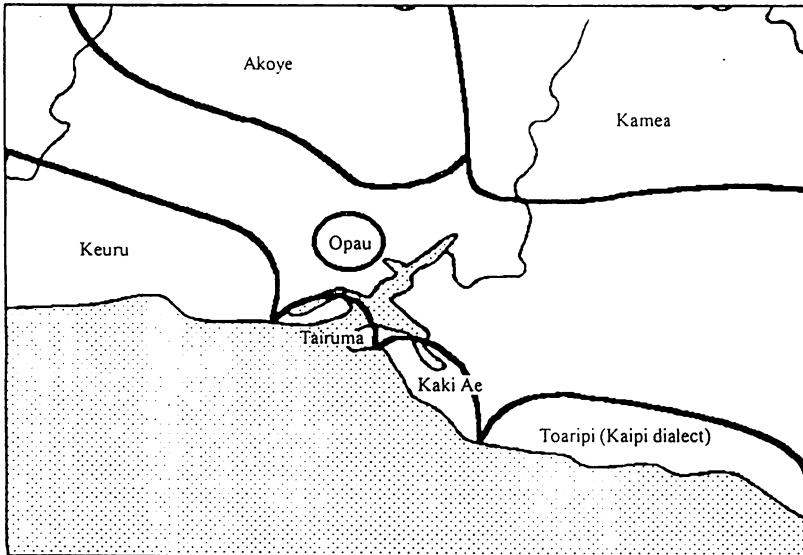
<sup>3</sup> These figures are from Rural Community Register: Gulf Province (1984).

<sup>4</sup> Tairuma is referred to as *Uaripi* by Brown.

<sup>5</sup> Lloyd (1973) refers to Kamea as *Kapau* and Akoye as *Lohiki*; Wurm and Hattori (1981) refer to Kamea as *Hamtai*.



MAP 1: KAKI AE AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES



MAP 2: KAKI AE AND SURROUNDING LANGUAGES

members of the Angan language family. All have more speakers than Kaki Ae does, in most cases considerably more, as shown in Table 3.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 3: Population of Neighbouring Languages**

Kaipi	4689	Keuru	4523
Tairuma	2470	Kamea	32,400
Opau	1116	Akoye	850

Two other Eleman languages also have more speakers: to the east of Kaipi is Toaripi proper with over 14,000 speakers, and to the west of Keuru is Oroloko with over 7000 speakers.

There is minimal variation between the different villages.<sup>7</sup> This is not surprising since Ovorio, Gupra, and Kupiano represent relatively recent splits from Uriri. There are alternants for particular words, for example, /mɑʔi ~ waʔi/ 'go down'. These alternants are idiolectal, however, a single speaker using both forms in some cases. Franklin (1975) classifies Kaki Ae as a family-level isolate in the Eleman stock based on the word lists supplied by Brown (1973; field notes). This classification agrees with Brown's statement that, 'My investigations suggest that Raepa Tati has its nearest affinity with the Eleman language family.' (p. 286) Franklin reports Kaki Ae is between 15% and 21% cognate with the different Eleman languages. Many of the similar forms, however, are almost identical. This suggests that the similarities may be due to borrowing, not genetic relationship. The borrowing hypothesis is supported by the fact that in several instances Kaki Ae speakers can identify a form reported by Brown (1973) as a borrowed form and give the 'true' Kaki Ae form. For example, I was told the true Kaki Ae form for 'louse' is /amuri/, not /saruta/ (cf. Kaipi /sarutʃɑ/); 'bark (of tree)' is /βɛraʔɑ/, not /ruru/ (cf. Kaipi /ruru/<sup>8</sup>); 'sand' is /fae/, not /kekene/<sup>9</sup> (cf. Kaipi /kekere/). Because of this I feel the claim that Kaki Ae is related to the Eleman languages at the stock level is questionable.

### 3 Socio-Economic Situation

The Kaki Ae people have been affected by a number of outside influences including spouses from outside the language group, the Christian church, education, and economics. After discussing each of these influences in turn, I will briefly describe village life in general.

<sup>6</sup> All population figures are from Wurm and Hattori (1981).

<sup>7</sup> The majority of time was spent in Uriri village as it is the largest village as well as the source of three of the other villages. I did spend one day in Kupiano and another day in Lou, and talked with residents from Gupra and Ovorio. In all my investigations outside of Uriri, I found that the group is extremely uniform in language use. In addition, due to the fact that I stayed in Uriri for the majority of the week I was able to talk to and observe the majority of people who live in the village. Thus, I feel my observations are an accurate representation of language use and attitudes among the Kaki Ae speakers.

<sup>8</sup> /βɛraʔɑ/ (recorded by Brown as /meraʔɑ/) is the general word for 'skin' in Kaki Ae; /ruru/ is the general word for 'skin' in Kaipi.

<sup>9</sup> Brown gives /fae foʔolo/ as an alternate form for sand.

Marriage patterns have been a major source of outside influence. Currently, either the husband or wife is from a non-Kaki Ae language group in just over half of all families living in Kaki Ae villages. Table 4 shows the distribution of Kaki Ae spouses for 43 households in four villages.

**Table 4: Place of Origin of Spouses in Kaki Ae Villages**

Village	Both Ae	Non-Ae Wife	Non-Ae Husband	Total
Gupra	3	5	0	8
Uriri	6	8	4	18
Ovorio	7	4	2	13
Kupiano	4	0	0	4
Total	20	17	6	43

All but three non-Kaki Ae women are from surrounding language groups: 5 Tairuma, 4 Toaripi, 2 Kaipi, 2 Opau, and 1 Orokolo. The other three are from the Highlands, Central Province, and Koriki (Gulf). These three all live in Gupra. Most of the men, on the other hand, are from outside the area: two are from the Highlands, and one each is from Koriki, Sio (Morobe), and Gogodala (Western). The one man from the area is a Kamea. All the non-Kaki Ae men who have married Kaki Ae women came to Kerema to work, then decided to marry a local woman and live in her village.

While the introduction of non-Kaki Ae men into the village is a recent phenomenon, the introduction of non-Kaki Ae women into the village is not. Table 5 shows marriage trends in Uriri village over a longer period of time.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 5: Place of Origin of Spouses in Uriri Village (Longitudinal)**

Age	Both Ae	Non-Ae Wife	Non-Ae Husband	Total
20-35	4	5	4	13
36-50	6	3	0	9
51-70	5	5	0	10
71-90	5	0	0	5
Total	20	13	4	37

For at least 60 years, about half of all wives have come from outside the Kaki Ae language group. This represents a considerable outside influence.

<sup>10</sup> In cases where both spouses are deceased, I estimated what their current age would be by adding 25 to the age of their offspring.

A second major outside influence has been the Christian church. The London Missionary Society entered both the Toaripi and Orokolo areas at the end of the 1800s (Williams 1972:52-56). Currently, the only church in the area is the United Church,<sup>11</sup> the church that developed from the London Missionary Society. There are pastors at Uriri and Lou, neither of whom speak Kaki Ae. The pastor at Uriri is Toaripi, and the pastor at Lou is Kaipi. The pastor at Uriri also looks after Gupra, Ovorio, and Kupiano. Due to geographical considerations, the Kaki Ae congregations are split between two church circuits. Uriri, Gupra, Ovorio, and Kupiano are grouped with the Tairuma villages. Traditionally these villages have all been part of the Orokolo circuit. For almost three years now, however, these villages (along with Kerema town) have made up the Tairuma Interim Circuit. It has not been decided whether this interim circuit will become a permanent circuit or will be reunited with the Orokolo circuit. Lou and Lovere, on the other hand, are grouped with the Kaipi villages as part of the Koaru circuit.

The people seem to actively support the church at the present time. Attendance on Sunday morning has averaged around 70 in Uriri over the last nine months, varying from a low of 50 to a high of 130.<sup>12</sup> One of the single young men is currently doing a theological course by correspondence through the Christian Leaders Training College under the supervision of the pastor. Another young man has organised an active youth programme.

Acceptance of and involvement in the church has not resulted in the people totally dropping traditional religious beliefs. Both healing magic and sorcery are still practiced by some people in spite of the fact that the church leaders actively oppose both. Sorcery is seen as a problem within the community as a whole as well as by church leaders. There have been accusations of sorcery leveled in recent deaths. In addition, a number of village splits can be traced to claims of deaths caused by sorcery.

Other aspects of the traditional religion which are still maintained, although in modified forms, are traditional stories, singsings, and naming and initiation ceremonies. With regard to stories, there are a number of old people who still tell the traditional stories and the young people are interested in hearing and learning these stories. The taboos against speaking the names of some of the traditional heros are still observed. With regard to singsings, traditional Kaki Ae singsings are held at Christmas and New Year as well as at funerals. People still make traditional headdresses for these occasions. In the past people composed new singsings. The young people do not seem to be learning the singsings, however, preferring string band music.

The focus of the naming ceremonies for babies and initiation ceremonies has changed. Currently these ceremonies are occasions for people to have a good time and show appreciation to traditional sponsors. Even in the case of the initiation ceremonies, the traditional teaching aspect is no longer important.

<sup>11</sup> There is at least one Catholic in Gupra; this individual converted while working in the Highlands.

<sup>12</sup> The pastor of the Uriri church has been keeping detailed attendance records over this period of time.

A third major outside influence is education, although this influence has been much more recent. As part of a survey of language ability in Uriri village, I recorded the highest grade level completed by each member of the household, as well as by parents (alive or deceased) who were from a Kaki Ae village. This information was not known for 12 males and 10 females, most of whom were deceased. The results for the remaining 50 are summarised in Table 6.

**Table 6: Educational Attainment by Age**

		Males				
		Grade: none	1-3	4-5	6+	Total
Age:	11-20	0	0	3 <sup>13</sup>	4	7
	21-30	5	0	2	2	9
	31-50	6	0	1	0	7
	51+	3	3	1	0	7
	Total	14	3	7	6	30
		Females				
Age	11-20	2	1	2	2	7
	21-30	2	3	0	1	6
	31-50	3	0	0	1	4
	51+	2	1	0	0	3
	Total	9	5	2	4	20

The three males and one female age 51 or over who completed between 1 and 3 years of schooling went to mission schools in Orokolo or Toaripi. These schools were evidently discontinued by the time the group aged 31 to 50 attained school age. Prior to 1990 all children who attended school went to Kerema. Considering how close the villages are to Kerema, a relatively high number of people over 20 never attended school. The number of people 20 or under who did not attend school is much lower, especially among males.

There are currently no students from any of the Kaki Ae villages attending high school or vocational school, although there are a few young people in the villages who have gone past grade 6. There are three individuals in the community who have some tertiary schooling.

In 1990 a new school was established at Epo Plantation. Currently it has grades 1 and 4. The composition of the school by village is given in Table 7.

<sup>13</sup> These three are currently attending school at Urilolo Community School.

**Table 7: Enrollment at Urilolo Community School**

Village	Male	Female	Total
Gupra <sup>14</sup>	7	4	11
Uriri	8	3	11
Ovorio	7	6	13
Kupiano	11	5	16
Epo Plantation	18	2	20
Uara Kerema	1	1	2
Total	52	21	73

The overwhelming preponderance of males is due in large part to the children from Epo Plantation. These children are mostly Kamea speakers whose parents work on the plantation. If the children from Epo Plantation and Uara Kerema (also non-Kaki Ae speakers) are ignored, the ratio of Kaki Ae males to females is 33:18. While the percentage of males is still large, it seems to accurately reflect the communities involved. In my survey of Uriri, for example, I found 10 males and 3 females between 7 and 12 years of age. The headmaster confirmed the claim of the village people that all eligible children from Gupra, Uriri, Ovorio, and Kupiano attend school.

Interest in education seems to be increasing. There are approximately 22 children in grade 4 and 48 children in grade 1.<sup>15</sup> The school is ultimately intended to serve all the Kaki Ae villages including Lou and Lovere. At present there are children from 4 Lou families staying with relatives in one of the villages listed in table 5. Plans are underway to build a dormitory at Epo or Kupiano for other children from Lou and Lovere. The headmaster reports that the Kaki Ae community is cooperative and supportive, seeing the school as 'their' school.

While the school is definitely an outside influence, the current staff, both from Gulf Province, are trying to support the local culture. There is a local culture component in the school which covers traditional dance and songs. People from the community originally taught this class; now the school staff handle it. Both are also in favour of the establishment of vernacular preparatory schools where children would learn to read and write in Kaki Ae before beginning schooling in English.

The fourth area of outside influence is economics. There is regular travel between all Kaki Ae villages and Kerema. Residents of the four villages along the road, Gupra, Uriri, Ovorio, and Kupiano, have ready access to Kerema. It takes approximately 45-60 minutes to walk from Kupiano to Uriri, and another 60 minutes from Uriri to Kerema. A PMV (public motorised vehicle – public transportation) costs K1<sup>16</sup> from Kupiano to Kerema and 50t from Uriri to

<sup>14</sup> Also includes the houses between Gupra and Uriri known as Kiks. This community consists of the houses of a Kikori (Kerewo) man and his Uriri wife, and of their married children.

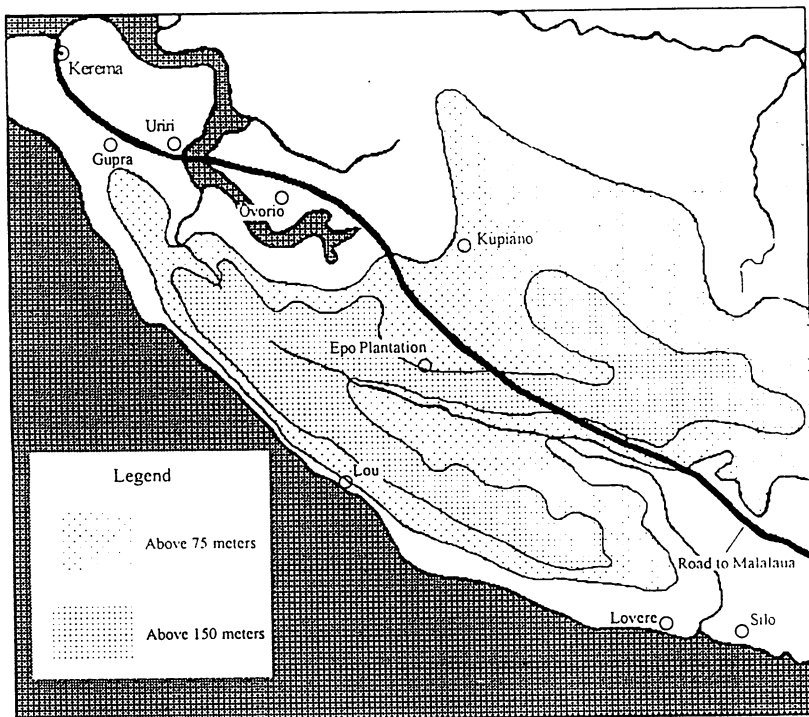
<sup>15</sup> These numbers do not equal 73; I do not know the source of the discrepancy.

<sup>16</sup> K1 (1 kina) currently equals about US\$1.06. There are 100 toea (t) to the kina.



Kerema. Access to Kerema is more difficult for residents of Lou. As shown in Map 3, the foot path from Lou to Epo Plantation goes up a relatively steep incline. It is possible for people to get from Lou to Kerema by dinghy although they still need to carry cargo up and down the bluff. The only outboard motor in the village was given to them recently by their member to parliament. It is sometimes possible to find dinghy transport with a dinghy from Silo, especially when coming from Kerema to Lou. The standard rate for dinghy travel is K1 per passenger.

This ready access to Kerema is reflected in the fact that there are no aid posts in any of the villages, as people are served by the Kerema Hospital. Similarly, there are few trade stores (or canteens) in the villages since people generally purchase store goods in Kerema. It also means that people can regularly bring garden produce to sell in the Kerema town market. This is a major source of income since most of the surrounding villages are located along the ocean on sandy ground and do not have access to good gardening areas. Several non-Kaki Ae people living in Kerema town indicated to me that the best produce in the market is that brought by the Kaki Ae people.



MAP 3: TOPOGRAPHY OF THE KAKI AE AREA

The other major source of income is selling betelnut in Port Moresby. Dinghies regularly travel between Kerema and Iokea, close to the Central Province border when the ocean is not too rough. From there it is possible to travel by PMV to Port Moresby. Transportation costs for the dinghy trip are K40 per passenger and K5 per bag of betelnut; for the PMV costs are K10 including cargo. Bags of betelnut are generally sold for K200 to Highlanders who sell the individual betelnuts in the Port Moresby market.

One other potential source of income is the rubber plantation at Epo. In the past this was operated by the Gulf Provincial Government, and most of the employees are Kamea speakers. Recently one-third of the plantation has been returned to the traditional Kaki Ae landowners. There are hopes that more will be returned in the future, and that the plantation will provide income to the Kaki Ae community.

The ready access to Kerema along with a relatively steady source of income has resulted in a fair amount of store goods in the village. Common purchases include sugar, salt, kerosene, and soap. While the people are largely dependent on their gardens for food, they supplement their diet with rice and mackerel (tin fish) from the stores.

The mixture of Western and traditional food sources is perhaps typical of most areas of life for the Kaki Ae people, although the proportion changes from one cultural domain to another. For example, Western tools, and cooking and eating utensils are common in the village and have largely replaced traditional items, although some traditional dippers made from sticks tied to half coconut shells are in use, and people know how to make them. Houses, on the other hand, are constructed largely of local materials with thatch roofs and walls of woven sago bark.<sup>17</sup> Nails are generally used, however, to put the frame together. There is at least one house in Gupra made from fibro with an iron roof.

Dugout canoes are still the traditional form of river transportation and for fishing, and boys know how to make them. The canoes have small double hulls and outrigger, with a platform across the hulls. On the other hand, as mentioned above, the people of Lou now have a dinghy and outboard motor for travel to and from Kerema on the ocean.

Women of all ages make bilums, baskets from coconut leaves and mats from pandanus. All are common in the villages. The pandanus mats are coloured with commercial dye or gentian violet. Most women can also make the traditional grass skirts, although they are not generally worn. Men of all ages make spears, and bows and arrows. The shafts and bindings of the spears and arrows are made with traditional materials, and the points are made with metal.

Pigs and chickens are both common in the villages. The pigs are not fenced, but wander freely. Other domesticated animals include hunting dogs and cats. Nondomesticated animals like opossums are also raised in cages.

<sup>17</sup> The woven walls were introduced by the South Seas pastors who worked in the area under the London Missionary Society.

In summary, the Kaki Ae community has absorbed a number of Western influences, but has integrated these influences without losing its identity. The traditional clan structure is strong, although some of the clans are small or have died out. In areas like crafts, the traditional culture is strong. Even in areas like music, where the singsings seem to be dying, the Kaki Ae identity is continuing in Kaki Ae string band choruses as is mentioned in the following section.

#### 4 Language Use and Attitudes

Although speakers of surrounding languages do not even understand Kaki Ae, almost all Kaki Ae speakers are multilingual in a number of the surrounding Eleman languages, especially Tairuma, Toaripi (and Kaipi) and Orokololo, as well as in a number of lingua francas, including Hiri Motu, Tok Pisin, and English. I conducted a survey of reported language knowledge among the residents of Uriri village. Information was collected from the head of each household for each member of the household, as well as for the parents of the husband and wife. I attempted to collect the following information for each person: age, sex, marital status, highest grade completed, first language, and other languages understood, spoken, read, and written. I was able to gather some information on 116 individuals, 96 of whom were raised in a Kaki Ae-speaking village. Of these, I was able to gather information on language ability on 52 individuals over the age of 10.<sup>18</sup> The information summarised in the rest of this section deals with these 52 individuals.

Knowledge of neighbouring languages correlated best with age. The results are given in Table 8.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 8: Knowledge of Surrounding Languages**

(S=Speak, U=Understand only, N=Neither speak nor understand)

Age:	Sex	Tairuma			Orokololo			Toaripi		
		S	U	N	S	U	N	S	U	N
11-30:	Male	9	4	3	7	6	3	7	7	2
	Female	8	4	1	7	5	1	8	5	0
31+:	Males	14	1	0	15	0	0	15	0	0
	Female	8	0	0	8	0	0	7	1	0

<sup>18</sup> Language ability in languages other than Kaki Ae drops dramatically among children under the age of 10, probably because they have not had sufficient exposure to other languages. There is no noticeable difference in language ability between individuals between the ages of 11 and 20 and those between the ages of 21 and 30. There were 20 individuals over the age of 10 for whom I could not gather information on language ability. Almost all of these were deceased.

<sup>19</sup> I assume that all deceased people were 51 or over when they died unless there was evidence to the contrary. Deceased people did, in fact, pattern with the '51 and over' (or '31 and over') group.

All Kaki Ae speakers over 30 understand Tairuma, Orokolo and Toaripi, and almost all also speak all three. Among speakers under the age of 30, however, knowledge of the surrounding languages drops dramatically. Less than 50%, 14 out of 29, can speak Orokolo; 14% cannot understand Orokolo. Marginally more can speak Toaripi and Tairuma, which is to be expected in light of the fact that speakers of Kaki Ae have more interaction with speakers of these languages than with speakers of Orokolo.

Knowledge of the lingua francas Hiri Motu, Tok Pisin, and English is affected by both age and sex as shown in Table 9.

**Table 9: Knowledge of Lingua Francas by Age and Sex**  
(S=Speak, U=Understand only, N=Neither speak nor understand)

Age:	Sex	Hiri Motu			Tok Pisin			English		
		S	U	N	S	U	N	S	U	N
11-30:	Male	15	1	0	14	2	0	10	6	0
	Female	10	3	0	9	4	0	6	4	3
31+:	Male	15	0	0	12	2	1	2	7	6
	Female	4	3	1	1	3	4	1	1	6

Ability in Hiri Motu and Tok Pisin is tied to the sex of the speaker, especially in the case of those over the age of 30. Almost all males, regardless of their age, report they can speak both Hiri Motu and Tok Pisin. Half the females over 30 cannot even understand Tok Pisin, while half cannot speak Hiri Motu. Even among females 11 to 30 about 25% can only understand Hiri Motu or Tok Pisin.

Ability in English is uniformly low among those over 30. Once again, ability among females is considerably lower than among males. Over half of the males report they can at least understand English, while only 25% of the females report they can understand English. As can be expected, ability in English correlates most closely with educational attainment as shown in Table 10.

**Table 10: Knowledge of English by Educational Attainment**  
(S=Speak, U=Understand only, N=Neither speak nor understand)

Highest Grade	Males			Females			Overall		
	S	U	N	S	U	N	S	U	N
none	2	8	4	0	1	8	2	9	13
1-3	0	2	1	1	3	1	1	5	2
4-5	4	3	0	2	0	0	6	3	0
6+	6	0	0	4	0	0	10	0	0

More than half of all those with no education cannot even understand English, while all those who have finished grade 6 report they can speak English. As educational attainment continues to rise, I expect speaking ability in English to rise.

Reported reading ability is roughly parallels reported speaking ability. A total of 22 of the 52 people surveyed for language ability indicated they can read in at least one language. Of these, 14 can read English, 13 can read Oroko, 11 Toaripi, 8 Hiri Motu, and 6 Tok Pisin. (Most of the readers could read more than one language.) There is no correlation between reading ability and sex. Reading ability in English is strongly tied to educational attainment and age as shown in Table 11.

**Table 11: Reading Ability in English**  
(R=Read English, N=Does Not Read English)

Highest Grade	Age					
	11-30		31-50		51+	
	R	N	R	N	R	N
none	0	9	0	9	0	5
1-3	0	4	0	0	0	4
4-5	5	2	0	1	0	1
6+	8	1	1	1	0	0

All 14 individuals who can read English are 50 and under and have completed at least 4 years of schooling. Reading ability in English does not carry over into other languages. None of the five English readers who have completed 4 or 5 years of school can read any other language; three of the English readers who have completed 6 or more years of school cannot read any other language.

The indicators of reading ability in Oroko, Toaripi, Hiri Motu, and Tok Pisin present a more complex picture than in English. Toaripi and Oroko are the official church languages for the entire Eleman area. Published materials in the two languages include a hymnal in each language – a New Testament in Oroko, and an entire Bible in Toaripi. The Oroko New Testament was used in Uriri village, since it is part of the Oroko circuit of the United Church. A total of 10 people can read both Oroko and Toaripi, while 3 can read Oroko but not Toaripi, and 1 can read Toaripi but not Oroko. Reading ability in Oroko and Toaripi is generally limited to those over 51<sup>20</sup> or with 6 or more years of schooling as shown in Table 12.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> The two readers in the age group 31-50 who completed less than six years of school are both 50.

<sup>21</sup> In addition to the individuals reported in table 12, there was one male over 51 of unknown educational level who could read Oroko.

**Table 12: Reading Ability in Orokolo and Toaripi**

(R=Read Orokolo and/or Toaripi, N=Reads Neither Orokolo nor Toaripi)

Highest Grade	Age					
	11-30		31-50		51+	
	R	N	R	N	R	N
none	0	9	1	8	1	4
1-3	1	3	0	0	2	2
4-5	0	7	1	0	1	0
6+	5	4	1	0	0	0

Everyone who can read Hiri Motu or Tok Pisin can also read either Orokolo or Toaripi. All 6 individuals who can read Tok Pisin have completed at least 4 years of school.

Although all Kaki Ae speakers are multilingual in surrounding languages and lingua francas, these other languages are used in restricted domains. Generally they are restricted to church, school, and town. The use of other languages in typical village situations is very limited. English numbers are used for counting. A combination of Kaki Ae, Hiri Motu, Tok Pisin, and English is used when playing sports. English expletives are frequently used, especially by the younger people. Hiri Motu and Tairuma are used in village court.

A combination of Kaki Ae, English, Hiri Motu, Orokolo and Toaripi are used in church, depending on the language abilities of the participants. Orokolo was traditionally used in the church at Uriri since it was part of the Orokolo circuit, while Toaripi was used in Lou since it was part of the Koaru circuit. With the greater use of English songs and scripture, this distinction is becoming less important, but it is still in evidence. Language use in church is somewhat fluid, depending on the activity and speaker. Neither hymns nor scripture reading are in Kaki Ae: hymns tend to be in Toaripi or Orokolo; and the scripture reading tends to be in Hiri Motu, Toaripi, or Orokolo.<sup>22</sup> Prayer, announcement, and the sermon are primarily in Kaki Ae if the speaker knows it, with summaries in Hiri Motu or English for those present who do not understand Kaki Ae. Otherwise, the prayers tend to be in Hiri Motu or English; announcements in Hiri Motu; and the sermon in Hiri Motu, English, or Toaripi (since the pastors are both from Toaripi speaking areas). Non-Kaki Ae participants include the pastor and teachers from the community school.<sup>23</sup> Choruses are sung in many languages, including some like Kiwai that are not known to any of those singing. This is not surprising in light of fact that the traditional singsings were passed down from generation to generation after the meanings of particular

<sup>22</sup> People report they have difficulty reading scripture in any of these languages.

<sup>23</sup> The current pastor at Uriri is a Toaripi speaker, and the pastor at Lou is a Kaipi speaker. The headmaster is a Kaimare speaker (Baimuru area); the other teacher is a Toaripi speaker.

words (or even whole songs) had been lost. People sing choruses because they like the sound of the music. Some young people are also composing original choruses in Kaki Ae or translating choruses into Kaki Ae from Tok Pisin or other languages. Other church activities like women's fellowship, youth fellowship, and Sunday School are generally conducted in Kaki Ae.

At school, teachers report the children use Kaki Ae with each other on the playground. In addition, when the grade 1 students do not understand a given concept, the teacher has other children explain it in Kaki Ae. The P & C (Parents and Community) meetings for the school are conducted using Kaki Ae and Tok Pisin or Hiri Motu. And when parents come to the school to talk with the staff they generally use Tok Pisin or Hiri Motu. Finally, in town people use a combination of Tairuma, Hiri Motu, Tok Pisin and English when interacting with non-Kaki Ae speakers.

Kaki Ae is highly valued by all the speakers I talked to, and the regular use of the language backs up their comments. Kaki Ae is used in village settings by almost everyone in almost all domains. The use of Kaki Ae is not limited to the village, either. Kaki Ae is normally used in Kerema between Kaki Ae speakers. As can be expected given this state of affairs, Kaki Ae is used almost exclusively in all households where Kaki Ae is spoken by both spouses.

The only people who do not regularly use Kaki Ae are some of those from other groups who have married into a Kaki Ae village. Even among this group, many spouses have learned Kaki Ae after marriage. All of the non-Kaki Ae men and all but one of the non-Kaki Ae women can understand Kaki Ae, while one of the six men and nine of the 17 women can speak Kaki Ae. In all but one of the households in which Kaki Ae is understood but not spoken by one of the spouses, it is regularly spoken in the home by the spouse who does speak Kaki Ae.

Children have been learning Kaki Ae for quite some time in families in which the mother is not from a Kaki Ae village. It is reported that children who do not hear the mother speak Kaki Ae learn it from the other children in the village. Kulick (1987: 142) makes a similar claim for language acquisition in Gapun in East Sepik Province:

... Children in Gapun acquire and learn to use language principally through interactions with their older siblings and other children and not through interactions with their parents.

Whether or not this is actually true of language acquisition in Kaki Ae, my observations are that all children use Kaki Ae almost exclusively in most domains. Even school children who would be expected to use English as a matter of prestige consistently use Kaki Ae outside of the classroom.

Adults report they want the children to be multilingual in Kaki Ae, Hiri Motu, Tok Pisin, and English. At the same time, they want Kaki Ae to remain the first language learned, and the language of the village. There is widespread concern that young people do not speak the language correctly, mixing in non-Kaki Ae words. Even this is probably a product of the high

value placed on Kaki Ae, however, which results in a strict definition of what is 'proper' Kaki Ae. My observations are that the use of non-Kaki Ae words is generally limited to concepts which are not part of traditional culture, like 'Women's Fellowship', 'corner', 'testimony/testify', and 'thank you', or for introduced objects like the iron axe or knife. There are also a few words like 'first' and 'story' that are commonly borrowed. Borrowed words are generally restricted to nouns. In the case of verbs like 'testify', the normal subject agreement suffixes are added. Interestingly enough, there does not seem to be considerably more borrowing by the young people than by the community as a whole.

## 5 Conclusion

Kaki Ae is typical of many of the languages we have surveyed in Gulf and Western Provinces. It is small (in fact, one of the smallest) and all or almost all of the speakers of the language are multilingual both in surrounding languages and in *lingua francas*. It meets neither of Krauss' (1992) criteria for being considered safe: it has no official state support, and has nowhere near 100,00 speakers. In addition, nearly half of all spouses are from surrounding language groups and apparently have been for at least the last 60 years. In spite of this, Kaki Ae, like many other languages in the area, is apparently vital at the present. This raises the question as to why Kaki Ae is not already moribund or at least obviously endangered like so many other languages of Papua New Guinea.

One possible explanation was suggested by Thurston (1992:124):

In north-western New Britain, certain vernaculars with a tradition of being used as *lingua francas* seem to have shifted from the languages most likely to replace neighbouring languages to languages with diminishing esteem among their speakers. Meanwhile, those vital vernaculars with no value as *lingua francas* have developed high loyalty among their speakers. Here, linguistic loyalty seems to correlate with attitudes towards other aspects of traditional culture.

Kaki Ae speakers do seem to consider the fact that no one from neighbouring language groups knows Kaki Ae to be a good thing. One community leader indicated people like to use Kaki Ae in town because it is like a secret language: when one speaks in Kaki Ae outsiders cannot understand the conversation. Kaki Ae serves as a definite source of group identity, a group identity that people are proud of. While this explanation may account for the situation in Kaki Ae, however, it does not account for the general vitality of languages in Gulf and Western which are known by neighbouring language groups.

Another possible explanation is related to the relative prestige of Tok Pisin versus Hiri Motu. Tok Pisin has a high status in areas where it is replacing the local vernaculars. The fluent



use of Tok Pisin is perceived as an asset when seeking employment. It is also the language of choice in towns and markets. Tok Pisin is used in many of the churches. The New Testament was first published in Tok Pisin in 1969, and the complete Bible was published in 1989. Tok Pisin is seen as the 'regional' language in many places. While parents in these areas still say they want their children to learn the local vernacular, they often want the children to learn Tok Pisin before the local vernacular.

Hiri Motu does not share this same influence in Gulf and Western Provinces. It is not used much in economic activities, in part because this area has seen relatively little economic development. The primary source of employment outside of the village is in the Public Service where English is perceived of as more useful than Hiri Motu. There are few markets in most of these areas (outside of Kerema and Daru), so people do not need to use a lingua franca at the market. It is not used extensively in the churches. Most of the missions who began work in the two provinces attempted to use local vernaculars as much as possible instead of Hiri Motu. This is reflected in the fact that the New Testament in Hiri Motu did not appear until 1982, and is still seldom used. The only place Hiri Motu is regularly used is in contacts with government and school officials. I have not found any community in which parents want their children to learn Hiri Motu before the vernacular.

The prestige lingua franca in Gulf and Western Provinces is English. As noted above, English is perceived of as necessary for obtaining good jobs. It is also making its way into the churches through choruses and Bible reading. And in fact, the communities in Gulf and Western in which the local vernaculars seem to be most endangered are those in which it is being replaced by English. This has not begun to happen in Kaki Ae yet. Perhaps the best way to prevent it from happening will be to begin a strong vernacular preparatory school in Kaki Ae. It could be that such an official recognition of the value of the language will be enough to prevent its death.

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