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Eight Languages of the Admiralty Islands, Papua New Guinea

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EIGHT LANGUAGES OF THE ADMIRALTY ISLANDS, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations used in this work are those of *The Leipzig Glossing Rules* (https://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/pdf/Glossing-Rules.pdf) with the addition of those listed below.

1	1st (person)
2	2nd (person)
3	3rd (person)
CL	classifier
DL	dual
DR	drinkable
ED	edible
EX	exclusive
EXT	extended
IN	inclusive
N	noun
P	person
PADM	Proto-Admiralty
PEADM	Proto-Eastern Admiralty
POC	Proto-Oceanic
PREP	preposition
PSEA	Proto-Southeast Admiralty
s.o.	someone
s.t.	something
TL	trial
TP	Tok Pisin
VET	vetative
voc.	vocative

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks are due to the late Wes Rooney, Headmaster of Manus Government Secondary School in Lorengau when I collected my data, and his wife Nahau (a speaker of Nali, now also deceased), who facilitated my efforts to work with students at the school. I express my gratitude also to the late Stephen Wurm, under whose auspices I went to New Guinea while spending two years as a postdoctoral research fellow in the Department of Linguistics of the Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University from 1974 to 1976, and the late Donald C. Laycock for assistance in the preparation of an elicitation list in Tok Pisin.

During the same trip data was collected for Mussau of the St. Matthias archipelago (Blust 1984), Gapapaiwa of Milne Bay in southeast New Guinea, Madak of central New Ireland, and on my return to Australia via Port Moresby through the good offices of Tom Dutton and his family I had brief informant sessions with speakers of Wogeo, Manam, and Takia, all spoken on small islands off the north coast of New Guinea.

Thanks also go to James Hafford, for entering some of the data in an initial draft (which had to be substantially edited and revised), and to Hiroko Sato for suggestions which led to improvements in an earlier version of the Seimat and Bipi sketches. Finally, and needless to say, I thank the many students at Manus Government Secondary School in Lorengau, most of whom are now in their 60s, who generously taught a curious stranger a bit about their languages so many years ago.

In order to facilitate a review of such a large manuscript, I am told that its various parts were shared among seven anonymous readers, and I wish to thank them all for their work and their comments. My thanks also go to Piet Lincoln for his map of the Admiralties, to the editor of *Language & Linguistics in Melanesia,* Olga Temple, and the journal's board, who agreed to publish a manuscript of this magnitude, and to Malcolm Ross for his monumental efforts in editing the manuscript for publication.

Robert Blust,
Honolulu, April 25, 2021

INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

The Admiralty Islands are part of the Bismarck archipelago of Papua New Guinea in the extreme northwest of Melanesia. The major island in the group is Manus, a hilly and moderately forested landmass about 100 kilometres in length, and 29 kilometres in average width. The highest point on Manus is Mt. Dremsel, at 718 metres above sea level. The people of this island are traditionally known as Usiai (Mead 1930). It is fringed on every side by smaller islands on which nearly all villages are coastal (Ohnemus 1998, Map 1). In addition to Manus and its immediate satellites (Los Negros, Pityilu, Ahus, Ponam, Sori, etc.) the Admiralty group includes Wuvulu, Aua, the Kaniet islands, and the Ninigo lagoon, well to the west of Manus, and the Southeastern islands (Lou, Paluai, Pak, Tong, Rambutyo, Nauna) less distantly to the southeast.

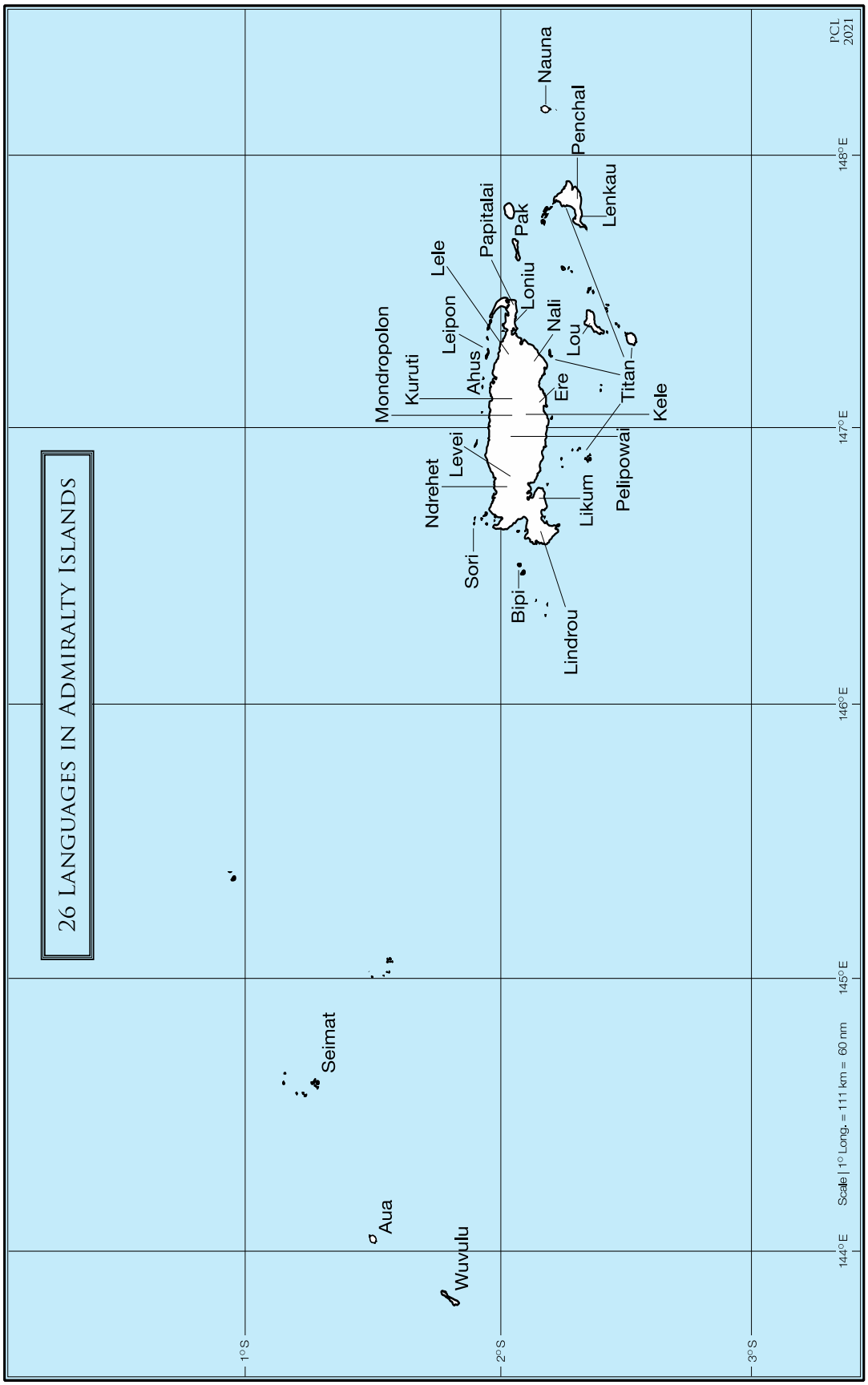
Despite questions raised in some earlier publications, all languages of the Admiralty Islands are members of the Oceanic subgroup of the Austronesian (AN) language family (Blust 1978, Ross 1988). There is reason to believe that the languages of the Admiralties form one of two primary branches of Oceanic (Blust 1998c), with the following internal structure: [1]

Figure: Internal structure of the Admiralty subgroup of Austronesian languages

1. Western Islands
    A) Wuvulu-Aua
    B) Seimat
    C) Kaniet (probably two languages; both extinct)
2. Eastern Admiralties
    A) Manus
        1. Eastern Manus (Loniu, Bipi, Nali, Ere, Lele, Koro [a.k.a. Papitalai], Titan, Kuruti, Leipon, etc.)
        2. Western Manus (Lindrou, Likum, Ndrehet, Levei, etc.)
        3. Northwest Manus (Sori-Harengan)
    B) Southeastern Islands (Pak-Tong, Paluai [a.k.a. Baluan], Pam, Lou, Penchal, Lenkau, Nauna)

Apart from grammars of Loniu (Hamel 1994) and Paluai (Schokkin 2020), a short sketch of Seimat (Wozna and Wilson 2005), a phonological sketch and vocabulary of Lou (Blust 1998b), a retrospective grammar of Titan compiled from early twentieth century German sources (Bowern 2011), doctoral dissertations available on line for Wuvulu (Hafford 2004), and Lele (Boettger 2015), a sketch of Koro in Cleary-Kemp (2015), and a few general comparative treatments, little has been published on many of these languages, most of which are not likely to survive more than another generation or two.

[1] First proposed in Blust (1978:34), and supported with two differences by Ross (1988:316-317), who assigns Bipi to the West Manus Network, and Pak-Tong to a primary branch of the Manus Network (2A here), a point to which I will return in the discussion of these languages. Claims that Admiralty languages are closely related to Nuclear Micronesian, as in Smythe (1970) have proven unfounded, and were likely inspired in part by the physical features of the inhabitants of the Western Islands, who resemble the native populations of Micronesia more closely than they resemble the speakers of their closer linguistic relatives in the Eastern Admiralties.


26 Languages in Admiralty Islands
Nauna
Penchal
Lenkau
Pak
Papitalai
Loniu
Lele
Nali
Lou
Leipon
Ahus
Ere
Titan
Mondropolon
Kuruti
Kele
Levei
Pelipowai
Ndrehet
Likum
Sori
Bipi
Lindrou
Seimat
Aua
Wuvulu
PCL 2021
144°E
145°E
146°E
147°E
148°E
1°S
2°S
3°S
Scale | 1° Long. = 111 km = 60 nm

During a linguistic survey conducted from early February to early May, 1975, data was collected for 26 languages of the Admiralties (see map on previous page), primarily from students at Manus Government Secondary School in Lorengau. The languages represented in this survey and the number of contact hours with each (in descending order) are as follows. Where the number of days during which work was conducted on the language is known the number of contact hours is fairly precise, but where this information is not available the figures are necessarily rougher approximations(languages treated in this book are bolded and in italics):

Table 0.1: Approximate number of contact hours with languages of the Admiralties

	Language	Contact hours	Days
1.	***Loniu***	20.0	10
2.	Lou	18.0[2]	?
3.	***Seimat***	15.0	?
4.	Wuvulu	12.0	?
5.	Titan	10.5	3
6.	***Bipi***	10.0	3
7.	Nali	10.0	?
8.	Ere	10.0	?
9.	***Nauna***	9.5	5
10.	***Lindrou***	9.25	5
11.	***Likum***	9.0	4
12.	Levei	8.5	4
13.	***Pak***	8.25	3
14.	Penchal	7.5	3
15.	Leipon	6.5	3
16.	Aua	6.0	?
17.	Pelipowai	5.25	3
18.	Lele	5.0	2
19.	Ahus	4.75	3
20.	Kuruti	4.5	2
21.	Lenkau	4.5	2
22.	Drehet	4.25	2
23.	Mondropolon	4	2
24.	***Sori***	4	2
25.	Kele	3.75	2
26.	Papitalai	3.5	2

All data collection occurred through a mixture of Tok Pisin and English between early February and late April, 1975, working primarily from a questionnaire, with frequent departures from this fixed format where something of interest was uncovered. Most informants were aged 15-17. One of the traits of languages in this area is that it was often difficult to elicit verbs in isolation, the requested form usually being given with an actor. Thus, when asked to supply verbs such as 'to

[2] While working with speakers of Lou I was also able to elicit some Paluai material from interested bystanders over a period of probably no more than one hour (cf. Blust 1998b).

come' or 'to go' (Tok Pisin *kam, go*), informants typically gave me expressions such as Likum *o-mwe* 'you come!', *je ue* 'I am coming', or *o-la* 'you go!'. As in many other Oceanic languages, obligatorily possessed nouns were given with a possessive pronoun attached, but unlike most Oceanic languages this was not always required, some body-part terms being offered both in isolation and in possessive paradigms.

The languages for which descriptions are provided here, in order from west-to-east are:

1. Seimat
2. Bipi
3. Lindrou
4. Sori
5. Likum
6. Loniu
7. Pak
8. Nauna

Seimat is spoken in the Ninigo Lagoon, a very large reef system to the west of Manus, and in the Anchorite islands, where it has replaced a different language that became extinct in the first half of the twentieth century. Bipi is spoken on two small islands near the western tip of Manus, Lindrou and Likum are spoken in western Manus, Sori is spoken on Sori and Harengan islands, the westernmost of a chain of islets along a fringing reef which runs virtually the whole length of Manus, some 3-5 kilmetres off its northern coast, Loniu is spoken on Los Negros island, separated by a narrow strait from the east coast of Manus, Pak is one of two dialects spoken on Pak and Tong islands, respectively about fifteen and thirty kilometres due east of Los Negros island, and Nauna is the easternmost language of the Admiralties, spoken some eighty kilometres south-southeast of Manus on a small island of the same name. Although my selection cannot pretend to represent the full linguistic diversity of this remarkable archipelago (once called 'a miniature Melanesia'), it does represent a range of languages over a considerable expanse of the Admiralties from west to east.

Most of the languages of Manus belong to dialect chains, often making the distinction between language and dialect difficult. An exception to this general pattern is seen with Bipi which, despite its location, is part of a dialect complex that includes all languages of eastern Manus, with particularly close ties to Loniu; it evidently is a geographically displaced language that has acquired a number of loanwords from Lindrou, and at least one distinctive sound change from its western Manus neighbors since arriving in its historical setting.

Informants' village sites where known, ages at the time of data collection and number of contact hours are as follows. Approximate population/number of speakers and (where available) extent of language use as given by Simons and Fennig (2020) appear on a separate line.

Seimat: Vincent Tonam, Awin village, age 21 (no record of hours, but estimated to be about 15).
Number of speakers: About 1,200 in 2005. Used by all ages except on Pihon and Amix islands, where Tok Pisin is coming increasingly into general use by younger speakers (Wozna and Wilson 2005:3). More recent data not available

Bipi: Anthony Sipos, age 16, Manuel Joseph, age 18 and Luke Sihamou, age 15. No village specified, but Simons and Fennig (2020) give Maso, Matakei and Salapai as village names (10 contact hours, February 27-March 3, 1975).

Number of speakers: About 1,200 in 2015.

Lindrou (Nyindrou, Nyada): Bonin Boyap and Boluhe Soson, Nyada village, both age 15 (9.25 contact hours, March 14-19, 1975).

Number of speakers: About 4,200 in 1998. Gordon (2005) reports use in "10 villages around the west coast of Manus," including Salien island). A distinct Babon dialect is said to be spoken in three southern villages. Language use is said to be vigorous in all domains, including use in first three years of school.

Sori (Sori-Harengan): Gaspar Francis, Sori village #1, age 15 (4 contact hours, April 2-3, 1975).

Number of speakers: About 570 in 1977. More recent data not available

Likum (Lekum): Benjamin Harry, Likum village, age 14 (9 contact hours, March 4-7, 1975).

Number of speakers: About 80 in 2000, most of population also uses Lindrou. Survival or more than another generation is questionable.

Loniu: In 1975 this language was spoken in two villages on Los Negros island: Lolak (Catholic), and Loniu (Protestant). Data was collected in ten meetings ranging from 75 minutes to two and one half hours, between February 14 and February 26, 1975 from Sioni Papi and Lihieu Elisha, who were then 17 year-old students at Manus Government Secondary School in Lorengau, and stated that they were from Loniu village. In addition to English and Tok Pisin they claimed to speak Naringel which, together with Papitalai, was said to be similar to Loniu.

Number of speakers: 450-500 in 1994 (Hamel 1994:1).

Pak: Data was collected in meetings that extended over three days from March 22-25, 1975,. from Apollos Sangkei (14), Jack Jonah (15) and Set Kerenkul (14), from Mulireu village on Pak island. The only languages that any of these speakers claimed to know besides Pak were English and Tok Pisin

Nauna: Puliokai Kiendaman, age 15, Paramoh village (9.5 contact hours, March 13-18, 1975).

Number of speakers: about 100 in 2000.

PLAN OF DESCRIPTION.

Since no more than 10 contact hours were possible with speakers of any of these 26 languages apart from the 20 hours with Loniu, 18 with Lou, roughly 15 with Seimat, 12 with Wuvulu, and 10.5 with Titan, the grammatical descriptions are necessarily sketchy. The primary emphasis of a three month survey during which data was collected for over 30 languages in the Admiralties, the St. Mathias archipelago, New Ireland, and the north coast of New Guinea, was on phonology and lexicon, with the intent of using this data for genetic classification, and outlines of the historical phonologies. The descriptions that follow are thus strongly skewed toward phonology and lexicon. Information on morphology and syntax is given where available, but is limited.

Each description consists of 1. A brief introduction to the language, 2. Phonology, 3. Grammar (subsystems, including counting systems, personal, possessive, and demonstrative pronouns, and other categories varying with language), 4. Lexicon (native language-English vocabulary and English-native language finderlist), 5. Historical phonology, 6. Reflexes of Proto-Oceanic (POC) and Proto-Admiralty (PADM). Slight variations from an otherwise consistent format are found in a few cases. An appendix following the descriptions and references provides a comparative vocabulary based on a culturally modified variant of the Swadesh 200-word list.

Admiralties counting systems are something of an exception in northwestern Melanesia in their use of numeral classifiers. These are described and discussed in detail in Blust (2021).

The historical phonology of these languages is generally stated in relation to Proto-Oceanic (POC), with occasional references to etymologies that are currently known only in Admiralty languages. Reflexes of proto-phonemes are thus keyed to the standard five vowel system that is universally accepted (*i, *u, *e, *o, *a), and to the POC consonant system reconstructed by Ross (1998:15), which is reproduced here (for typographical convenience *p^{w}, *b^{w} and *m^{w} are hereafter written as *pw, *bw and *mw):

Table 0.2: Proto-Oceanic consonants (after Ross, Pawley & Osmond 2016:19)

	velarized					labialized	
	bilabial	bilabial	alveolar	palatal	velar	velar	post-velar
stop	p^{w} p		t	c	k	k^{w}	q
	b^{w} b		d	j	g		
sibilant			s				
nasal	m^{w} m		n	ñ	ŋ		
rhotic			r				R
prenasalized trill			dr				
lateral			l				
glide	w			y			

Certain generalizations about the syntactic properties of all Admiralty languages are possible, and can be most economically stated once at this point, rather than repeated in each language sketch. Specifically, although other details may differ, the order of major sentence constituents is SVO, and all languages have accusative alignment.

In general the plan of description follows that used in Blust (1998b) for Lou, spoken on Lou island in the southeastern Admiralties. In this connection it is worth noting an etymology using the name of this island that is widespread in the Admiralties, namely the word for ‘obsidian’. Along with the Talasea site in the Willaumez Peninsula of New Britain, Lou is one of the two major obsidian sites in the Western Pacific, and this material is valued throughout the Admiralties, where it is

called by a word that traces to Proto-Admiralty *patu i Lou ‘stone of Lou’: Bipi *patilow*, Lindrou *betelew*, Levei *pisilip*, Titan *pataniw*, Loniu *piciluw*, Paluai *paylow*, Nauna *perilɨw* ‘obsidian; obsidian spear head’. This word is not known in the languages of the Western Islands (Wuvulu-Aua, Seimat, and those of the Kaniet islands), suggesting that a trading network which included the transport of obsidian traditionally encompassed all languages of Manus and nearby islands, but not the more distant islands to the west.