

Introduction

1.1. Location. The Kemtuik language area is located in the northeastern corner of the province of Papua, Indonesia, some 80 kilometers southwest of the provincial capital of Jayapura (see maps below). The language is spoken by approximately 4,000 speakers who live in 23 villages. Quite a few Kemtuik people live in the provincial capital and the surrounding townships.

1.2. Dialects. Three dialect areas can be distinguished for the Kemtuik language. The leading dialect, ‘Kemtuik proper’, is spoken in the villages of Merem and Yanim. The second dialect is spoken alongside the road to Genyem in the villages of Sabron, Samon, Mamda and Meikari. The third dialect is located south of lake Sentani and called *Damoy Blo*. The differences between these three dialects are in fact minor and the ‘Kemtuik proper’ variant is considered the model for the whole area. There is some confusion about the use of the language name [‘Kɛm.tük, ‘Kam.tuk, ‘Kem.tuk]. This is probably due to the non-occurrence of [ü] in Indonesian and the pronunciation of the language name via adjacent areas. But Kemtuik ‘proper’ uses [‘Kɛm.tük]

1.3. Affiliation. Traditionally the small Nimboran language family (Nimboran 7,500; Kemtuik/ Kemtuk 4,000; Klesi/Gresi 3,000; Mekwey/Moi 2,000 and Kuansu Mlap 500) was classified as a subgroup of the large Trans-New Guinea family. However, recent research by Malcolm Ross shows that these families are not affiliated¹. Because of its small size and the differences with surrounding non-related languages such as *Sentani*, *Tanamerah*, *Orya* and *Elseng*, the Nimboran family is of special interest. Culturally the unity between all these language groups is more pervasive than their differences in language and dialect would suggest.

1.4. Papuan Malay / Indonesian. Papuan Malay is an offshoot of Ambonese Malay, mixed with Papuan linguistic features, which has been in use since approximately 1850 with the arrival of bird hunters and missionaries in the area. Because of the mixing of structures, quite a few variations of Papuan Malay can be considered. The national language, Bahasa Indonesia, was introduced in the province in 1962, and has a growing influence, but the different forms of Papuan Malay are still popular and growing in influence as well.

¹ c.f. Malcolm D. Ross, 2005, ‘Pronouns as a preliminary diagnostic for grouping Papuan languages’ In: Andrew Pawley, Robert Attenborough, Jack Golson and Robin Hide, eds, *Papuan Pasts. Cultural, linguistic and biological histories of Papuan-speaking peoples*, 15-66. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics).

1.5. Historical and cultural factors. In 1925 the missionaries Bijkerk and Schneider started to do mission work amongst the *Nimboran*, *Gresi*, *Mlap* and *Kemtuik* language groups. In a number of years most of the people were converted to the Christian religion, although many firmly hold on to the old beliefs as well. Churches and Christian schools were built in almost all villages. The government has established three administrative divisions in the area: *Kemtuk*, *Kemtuk/Gresi* and *Nimboran*. Since 1990 government schools (primary and middle schools) are replacing the old school system. But education itself is still poor. Only a slow growing number of children reach higher education levels. Transmigrant settlements, established in the area since 1975, have not flourished. In fact, many of the original settlements have been abandoned and the inhabitants have moved to coastal areas and the capital Jayapura. Economic development is going reasonably well. The traditional focus on pigs is being replaced by raising cows and goats. Cocoa crop is a major export product. Woodcutting (legal and illegal) impoverished the jungle in the area.

1.6. History of language research.

Since Kemtuik had never been written, analysis of the sound system had to be done first, the results of which were published in 1975 (see: bibliography), when a preliminary orthography was established on the basis of this analysis. From that time onwards, words and phrases were continually added to a lexical database, including (ones) from other parts of the Kemtuik area. From 1975-1981 the author's research was done under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL International), in cooperation with the Cenderawasih University in Abepura, Papua (then: Irian Jaya), Indonesia. Initially research was carried out mainly in the Kemtuik area at the village of Merem, which is considered by the people to be the cultural centre of the Kemtuik, while from 1985 onwards, Sabron-Samon at the other side of the area became the major centre for further research. Between 1985 until 1992 further research was done by Mr. Michael Werner, a field linguist also working with SIL. From 2004 onwards, some fieldwork was done, not only by expatriate field linguists of SIL, but also by students from the University of Jayapura (especially in relation to the Gresi language). An official orthography for the Kemtuik language was established in 2007. In 2008 a preliminary Kemtuik vocabulary in triglot (Kemtuik, Indonesian and English) was published, containing some 2,400 entries. A revised edition is forthcoming in 2013.