

4. NORTH ASMAT

4.1. General

The interior to the north of CA is still largely unexplored territory. The population of the area consists largely of small bands of semi-nomadic people moving over wide areas from one temporary settlement to another. They keep away from the main waterways and are therefore seldom seen. Part of the population has settled in more permanent villages and these have been contacted by the Government and Mission. But even now they are only on a fringe-contact level (Trenkenschuh 1970:19). These villages are:

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| 85. Sagapo | 90. Pupis |
| 86. Ti | 91. Weyo |
| 87. Yenesoko | 92. Emo-Espeno |
| 88. Awemu | 93. Irogo |
| 89. Momogo | 94. Yakapis |

There is, and was in the past, regular contact between the southern-most NA villages and their Keenok neighbours. At least in Momogo and Pupis there are people who know some Keenok. Trenkenschuh (1970:19) reports of Sagopo that its language is 'different from but still, with difficulty, understood by Keenok speakers'. Since formerly Sagopo and Momogo formed one village some knowledge of KN can be assumed to be present in Sagopo as well. It is likely that the Sagopo people use this knowledge in their contacts with KN speakers so that Trenkenschuh's observation cannot be taken at face value as an assessment of the intelligibility of NA to KN speakers.

There must be a considerable number of semi-nomadic bands of people in the area. Van Dongen (1970:26) reports fifteen names of such groups obtained from informants of Monu and Mu-Akani. They are: Weagu²⁹, Amson, Etogo, Wegu, Tiraman, Keke, Itmo, and Yerepmo on the Unir River; Amamu and Evesayi on the Veyo River, and Tomu, Teiyen, Yur, Epin, Yurak, on the Pomac River. From people of Manep he obtained eleven names: Biro, Keiri, Fagan, Anipit, Bor, Yuno, Ofin, Bener, Tames-Sogoni, Yoigin, and Beag (1970:25). Van der Schoot (1969:14) mentions the following groups and their locations: the Nafarepi on the Akimuga River; the Warowe and Waituku on the Cemara River; the Owapu on the upper Owap (Oost Kasteel) River; the Epame and Itamwe on the

²⁹I have changed only the typically Dutch features of Van Dongen's spelling of the names: oe, ie, and j have been changed into u, i, and y respectively.

Pocakap (Kleine Bloemen) River; the Etoko³⁰ on the Poc (Bloemen) River. The name Nafarepi or Navaripi has become current as a common name for all the people inhabiting the interior between the Asmat and Sempan language areas.

4.2. The Data

Only in Momogo, Pupis, Irogo, and Ti have word lists been collected. In chapter 2 I have shown that lexicostatistically the Momogo, Pupis, and Irogo lists seem to represent one language which is separate from but closely related to Central Asmat, Citak Asmat, and Casuarina Coast Asmat. If however Trenkenschuh's remark on the intelligibility of NA to speakers of KN is right, this would point to NA being a dialect of CA rather than a separate language.

The Ti list is too short to be amenable to a lexicostatistical analysis, but further inspection shows that it is sufficiently similar to the other three lists to be included in NA. The four lists share a number of phonological and lexical features which distinguish them from the other Asmat languages. On the other hand they also share some phonological features with the KN and SO dialects of Central Asmat. I shall discuss these features on the basis of the comparative list given below. The originally phonetic spelling of the native words in the list has been simplified by omitting most of the diacritics. The NA data have not yet been phonemicised; my impression is that the sound system of NA is identical to the KN system with the exception that [r] possibly is an allophone of /t/ and not a separate phoneme [cf. 7.4.5.). In the last column of the list are given:

a) One or two corresponding words in CA, if any; where possible they have been taken from the KW dialect. b) The list number of the item in the list of Proto-Asmat reconstructions (chapter 8.3) where all the data are presented.

³⁰ Names like Etoko, Waituku, Owapu, Itamwe, Warowe all contain a morpheme meaning *people*: o, u, we, owe. The Etoko mentioned by Van der Schoot could be the same group as the Etogo mentioned by Van Dongen.

	Momogo	Pupis	Irogo	Ti	<u>CA</u>	
1 armpit	yiməp	yüməp	yiməbe	dziməp	yamepi	16
2 belly	teak	-	tiake	tek	-	34
3 calf of leg	zim ^w i	yimae ndəse	yima ndesa	-	-	59
4 chest	wəni	wane	ɔne	-	-	74
5 goura pigeon	yufu	yuf	-	-	yo	173
6 mouth	mbaf	mbafa	mbwafa	-	ma, me	244
7 navel	bebe	bebe	bebere	beper	-	251
8 neck	ziriri	yirərə	-	yirit	-	252
9 pig	ofu	ofu	-	-	o, wo	280
10 tongue	emene	emene	ɔmɛne	emene	komen	383
11 vein	fiməbi	-	-	fimibir	fim	399
12 ashes	zimre	yimere	-	-	yowmic	21
13 buttocks	-	famwa	fwemore	famor	famor	58
14 dog	yui	yuye	yuuro	dzuur	yuwur	108
15 fish weir	fee	fe	fere	-	fer	142
16 nail of finger	firi	fire	fire	fit	fic	248
17 skin	pitn	pitn	pitn	pitn	picin	336

Items 1-11 all in one way or another distinguish NA from CA, CI, and CC:

1 has cognates in CA and CC but only the NA lists show forms with a high front vowel following the word-initial consonant;

2 has cognates in CC only and these lack /k/: tia, tie;

3, 4, 7 do not seem to have cognates in CA, CI or CC;

5, 6, 9 have cognates in CA, CI, and CC; all of these lack /f/;

8 has cognates in CC and CI. Thses have /t/ corresponding to NA r, or t, see below.

10 has possible cognates in CA and CI, all having initial /k/.

However, if we compare NA with the Sempan language in the west we find that several Sempan cognates are formally quite similar or even identical to their NA counterparts. Thus in Sempan, 2: teake, 5: ifo, 7: mepere, 9: ofo, 10: omane, 11: fumapi. It appears that lexically NA assumes an intermediate position between the Asmat languages and Sempan.

Earlier (3.3.3, 3.3.4) we have seen that SO and KN r_2 corresponds to KW /c/ and /t/, KP /t/. The same holds for Momogo, Pupis, and Irogo r, and for intervocalic r in Ti as is shown by items 12, 16, and 8. The evidence of 8 is indirect: both CC and CI have the form ititi, and in these languages /t/ corresponds to CA /t/ or /c/.

The Ti list differs from the other NA lists in that it has a few cases of word-final t corresponding to r in the other lists (in the sample above: 8, 16). It is possible that a change from t > r was prevented in Ti by an earlier loss of the final vowel (cf. 7.4.5). As is evident from the above sample, Ti has lost a final vowel in many words.

The Momogo and Pupis lists further have a feature in common with KN₂ and SO: the absence of r_1 (items 7, 11, 13, 14, 15 in the sample).

Finally, all four lists share with KN the presence of word-final consonant clusters (17).

The paucity of data allows us to trace only parts of the isoglosses representing these features (isoglosses 10, 11, 12 on map IV). Between Sagopo (85) and Ti (86) the isogloss no. 12 can be drawn with some certainty since Sagopo once formed part of Momogo and can be expected to represent the Momogo variety of NA.

4.3. Summary

So far, the following facts have emerged about NA:

Lexicostatistically it seems to be a separate language closely related to CA, CI, and CC.

Intelligibility for KN speakers if indeed present as reported suggests that NA is a dialect of CA.

Phonologically there seems to be no break between NA and the KN dialect of CA unless NA r can be interpreted as an allophone of /t/.

Lexically, NA often is more similar to Sempan than to any of the other Asmat languages.

It is possible that Sempan and Central Asmat are connected by a dialect chain, only partly represented in the now available data. I shall accept here the lexicostatistical result and classify NA as a separate language pending the outcome of further research.

5. CITAK ASMAT

5.1. General

Citak Asmat (CI) is spoken by about 4900 people living in the area directly east of the confluence of the Sirec and Pasuwe Rivers. In the east and south CI borders on languages of the Awyu-Dumut Family. Culturally the Citak people appear to have been influenced more by the inhabitants of the highlands in the north than by their Asmat neighbours (Van Arsdale 1974:30). They contrast with the coastal Asmat by having a rudimentary swidden horticulture and a relative non-reliance upon sago (Van Arsdale 1975:19). The Government census of 1967 lists twenty-nine villages but only seventeen of these could be identified with villages on Drabbe's dialect map (Drabbe 1963), leaving fourteen village names on the map unmatched with names mentioned in the census list.

The list below contains the twenty-nine village names of the Government census list. Only those villages whose location could be ascertained with the help of Drabbe's map have been numbered and are shown on maps III-V.

Citak Villages

Location known:	Location not known:
67 Senggo	Sumasma
68 Tamanim ³¹	Wowi ³¹
69 Epem	Daiwar
70 Abao	Agauw
71 Fasera	Tomauw
72 Tiurubis	Tayao
73 Vabak	Ver
74 Wautu	Somnak
75 Tiau	Bina

³¹See the postscript (p. 123), point 6.