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Engan Fringe Languages (North and South)

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Abstract: In this study, I examine data from languages at the northern and southern fringes of the Engan language Family—primarily Bisorio and Nete, in the north, and Sau (Samberigi), in the south. Based on theories of language dispersal, those languages that are the most geographically distant from the presumed center of a language Family, which in this case is Enga proper and its dialects, constitute the oldest members of the family. These fringe languages are examined to see if they retain certain distinctive features of the proto-language, especially what I have elsewhere (Franklin 1997) called “old endings.” The data also suggest further subdivisions of the Engan Language Family.¹

Introduction

The Engan language family has been well established for some time (see, for example, Franklin 1975, Wurm 1982, Foley 1986, Pawley 2005).² In brief, it is represented by the following languages: Enga and dialects (including Kyaka), Lembena, Bisorio (including Nete and Iniai), Ipili, Huli, Mendi and dialects, Kewa and dialects, and Samberigi (also called Sau). Wiru appears to be a distant relative, as is Fasu.³

Wurm 1982:125-126 lists 10 dialects of Enga (Kopona, Layapo, Sau, Kaina, Mai, Yadapo, Kandepe, Malamuni (in which he also included Iniai and Bisorio); He also lists other Engan languages: Katinja; Lembena; Nete; Ipili (Eastern and Western dialects); Huli; Angal (Mendi) dialects of North Mendi, Angal, Megi, South Mendi, South Angal Heneng, West Mendi, and Angal Henenge, which includes Nipa, Wala and Augu; Kewa dialects of East, West and South (also called Pole),

¹ In particular, divisions based on the endings of: (1) $-\emptyset$; (2) $-ngV \sim -ge$; (3) $-nV$; and (4) $-tV \sim -sV$. The members of (1) include Mendi dialects, and Kewa dialects; (2) all Enga dialects, Lembena and (perhaps) Bisorio and Samberigi; (3) Ipili, Huli and (perhaps) Wiru; (4) Nete. In particular I examine the endings of Samberigi, Bisorio and Nete, but additional information may also point to the divisions suggested here. Of course, subgroups based on these suffixes alone may not be any more reliable than those proposed using pronouns as the criteria (e.g. Ross 2005).

² See <https://pnglanguages.sil.org/resources/provinces/province/Enga/map> for a map of the Engan area. Nete (a dialect of Bisorio) is to the extreme north at the border of the Sepik Province. Samberigi is to the extreme south at the border of the Gulf Province. See also the *Ethnologue* for remarks on the individual languages mentioned in this article.

³ On the relationship of Foe, Huli and Pole (the southernmost dialect of Kewa) see Rule (1977); on Foe, Fasu and Kewa see Franklin (2001); on other possible relationships see Franklin and Voorhoeve (1973) and Ross (1995).

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Southeastern and Northwestern; Sau, also called Samberigi and not to be confused with a dialect of Enga by the same name.

Wurm's inclusion of Iniai and Bisorio within Malamuni is problematic. The latter is a part of the Enga proper language sub-group and has been recorded in Edmiston's survey.

I have no information on *Katinja* and, although *Nete* and *Bisorio* have been alluded to by Wurm and others, there has generally been a lack of data on these languages.⁴

Foley (1986:238) outlines eight languages for the Engan family: *Enga*, *Nete*, *Inai*, *Ipili*, *Huli*, *Mendi*, *Kewa*, and *Sau*. He states that "*Nete*, *Iniai* and *Ipili* are closely related to *Enga* and form a group, as do *Mendi*, *Kewa* and *Sau*" (*Samberigi*—in the Gulf Province). Foley gives no data or evidence for his grouping of *Ipili* with *Nete* and *Iniai*.

To return to the comparison of the northernmost languages of the Enga family (*Bisorio*, *Nete* and *Iniai*) and the southernmost language (*Samberigi*), I will now outline some information about each before suggesting cognates within and between the two areas.

Nete and Bisorio

According to Edmiston (1986, unpublished), the *Nete* dialects are located along the headwaters of the Karawari and Korosameri Rivers in the East Sepik Province. It is a small language group, with probably less than 200 speakers in 8 villages, which Edmiston names.

Although related (65%, according to Edmiston), *Nete*⁵ and *Bisorio* have some obvious differences. A striking one is the dissimilar endings they use to mark body parts and kinship relationships. Most Engan languages have a form something like */*-ng/* but neither *Bisorio* nor *Nete* exhibit this ending.

On the map of Davies and Comrie (1985:276) *Bisorio* is located on a tributary of the Sepik River, some 60 kilometers south. East of *Bisorio*, about 40 kilometers and along another tributary of the Sepik, is the village of *Iniai*. Both "languages" (with speakers from those named village areas) appear to be closely related.⁶ As I have noted elsewhere (Franklin 1997), the Pinai language is

⁴ My additional data for *Nete* and *Bisorio* come from SIL wordlists, as well as from the *Bisorio* New Testament, translated and published by The New Tribes Mission (now called Ethnos360). *Samberigi* data are from unpublished phonological and grammatical notes by Murray and Joan Rule (Evangelical Mission of Papua), a wordlist from Don Mosely of the same mission, as well as my own research in the area (Franklin 2023).

⁵ On some SIL wordlists *Nete* is also called *Pikaru* or *Bikaru*. *Bisorio* is sometimes also listed as *Iniai*.

⁶ Conrad and Lewis do not mention *Iniai* but show general lexical relationships between *Bisorio* and *Pikaru* 1 as 58%, with *Pikaru* 2 at 62%, with *Enga* and *Bisorio* as 21%. These languages are not related to language groups along the Sepik, nor to groups further east, such as *Yimas*.

located on the outskirts of the Enga area, north of the Yuat River. Davies and Comrie tentatively included Pinai and Wapi with Wabuk (Wiyaw) and Aramo in the Waibuk Family. They classified the languages on the basis of lexicostatistical counts of Aramo, Pinai, Wiyaw, and a language they call Nanguwetan (=Nang below). According to them, 'Aramo is 68% cognate with Pinai 1 and 70% with Pinai 2, indicating that Aramo and Pinai are distinct languages within the same subfamily.' (Davis and Comrie 1985:277)⁷

Conrad and Lewis (1988) give word lists for *Pikaru 1*, *Bikaru (Bragge)*, *Bisorio*, *Enga*, *Piame*, *Biami (Bragge)* and *Hewa 1*. Edmiston (1986) gives SIL wordlists for *Enga*, *Nete*, *Bisorio*, *Iniai*, *Lembena*, *Meakambut* and *Erem* (also called *Pinai*). Edmiston concluded, on the basis of his cognate percentages, that *Nete*, *Bisorio* and *Inia* formed one sub-family (64-68% cognate), *Erem* and *Lembena* formed another (70% cognate), and that *Enga* and its dialects formed a third sub-family. Both sub-families varied from *Enga* with about 38-40% cognate. *Meakambut* does not seem to be related to any of the other groups. Wurm (1975) and Laycock (1973) had treated *Erem* as a part of the Sepik-Ramu phylum.

Samberigi (Sau)⁸

L.A. Flint headed up an expedition by the Papuan government into the Gulf in 1922 and an account appeared in the 1921-1922 Annual Report.⁹ The expedition had extensive contact with Samberigi villages, as well as those in other language areas. The vocabularies collected by Flint and published in later Annual Reports were examined by the author in 1958, allowing me to postulate additional language groups to the south and east of the *Samberigi* (Franklin 1968, 1973, 2023).

In my 2023 article on Samberigi, I mentioned that the Papuan Annual Reports give names of the locations, dates of collection, and wordlists, with information such as the following:

⁷ In my study of old endings in Enga (Franklin 1997) and as I mentioned in that study, I consulted several word lists: Rev. L.A. Cupit of the Australian Baptist Missionary Society took one in 1971, and it is included as Pinai-1. Dr. R.N.H. Bulmer also took a list (Pinaye) in 1968 which he thought was Pinai, but turned out to be Mae Enga, according to Cupit (personal correspondence to S.A. Wurm). Bulmer's list was collected at the Hoyara settlement on the north-east side of the Jimi (Yuat) Gorge, in the East Sepik District. He noted that the people were very similar to the Kyaka and Sau Enga, but very different from the Karam and Kobon people to the East. The list I consulted for the area was collected and published by Davies and Comrie (1985).

⁸ Some of this data on Samberigi is from my 2023 article "Samberigi (Sau) and Kewa," *Language and Linguistics in Melanesia*, Volume 41.51-65.

⁹ Called "Report on the Patrol through the Samberigi Valley, Mount Murry District, Delta Division," it includes a daily log and a few linguistic phrases and words as well as many anthropological notes. There is a summary of the villages visited, the number of men's houses, including the names of the tribes and groups comprising the villages, a summary of the populations.

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- Tugi Valley, NW of Samberigi Valley and north of Mt. Murray: Villages of Niai, Hamtagi, Ferimi, Pori, Keniogu, Ru, Purawari, Tiabrigi, Mogoluvu; February 1922; 69 words. These appear to be a mixture of Samberigi and South Kewa (Pole), with several transcription errors.
 - Northern side of Mt. Murray, Samberigi Valley District and in a north by west direction from the Kikori base camp; Villages of Gigiha, Donuga, Foragari, Keremabu, Hagibarigi, languri, Samberigi, Bisaburu, Mogorigi, Fori, Sau, Ianda, Feworu, Haburigi, Masigi, Kerabi, Hosumi, langianda, Kuruwi, Tagibu, and Tiri; February 1922; 120 words, with many transcription errors.

My own (1968) list of Samberigi villages includes many of those noted by Flint and others in the Annual Reports, although some villages were clearly populated by *South Kewa (Pole)* speakers and a few were from the *Polopa* or (even) *Wiru* languages—both to the east of Samberigi.¹⁰ However, because village names are sometimes clan names, they are more difficult to position geographically.

Comparing Bisorio and Nete

Nete and *Bisorio* both have endings that were once more specific in meaning, perhaps indicating absolute or marked possession. The endings are most common on kinship terms and body parts, although they may occur on some adjectives as well. There are, however, certain body parts and other words that are not suffixed: **wida* ‘woman’ is an example.

The following chart (with SIL English glosses) compares Bisorio and Nete and offers some possible proto-Engan forms. Notice, in particular the *-se* ~ *-te* old endings of Nete. The phoneme /d/ always represents phonetic /^hd/ and /b/ represents /^mb/. In East and West Kewa /g/ is not prenasalized.

SIL	Gloss ¹¹	Bisorio	Nete	Proto-Engan	Comments
1.	hair	idi	edi-se	*iri-gi	-se/ -te: -nge
2.	head	yomodi	yamodi-se	-	-di<iri (?)
3.	mouth	habu	habu-se	*kabu-gi	-
4.	nose	dowi	towi-se	-	-
5.	eye	le	re-te	*le-ge	te ~ -se
6.	neck	masa	ma-te	*ma-ge	-

¹⁰ I collected a wordlist from a *Polopa* man who was in jail in Erave but later I visited the area. The language family was first described by George MacDonald in Franklin, ed. (1973). Wiru, an Engan Family isolate, is described by Kerr (1975) and in his extensive website at: <https://witungowituda.wordpress.com>.

¹¹ The ordering in this table follows the numbering in the standard SIL wordlist.

7. belly	eimu-se	eimu-se	*tomba-ge	-
8. skin	habai	hapai-se	*yano-go (?)	-b- : -p-
9. knee	hagi	hagi-se	*ruma-ge	-
10. man	gai	wabi-se	*wamba-ge	-
11. woman	wida	wida	*wenda-ge	-i- : -e-
26 ear	hali	are-re	*kal-ge	h : ∅; -l- : -r-
27 tongue	geda	kera-re	*keke-ge	g- : k-
28 tooth	ne	ne-se	*ne-ge	-se : - ge
29 breast	adu	aru/ aru-se	*andu	- -d- : -r-
30 hand	gi	ki-se	*ki-gi	g- : k-
31 foot/leg	gobo	siri-se	*kape-ge	-
51 back	mosa-se	mosa-se	*masa-ge	-o- : -a-
52 shoulder	kano-wa	kano-se	-	-
53 forehead	wono	wono-se	*weno-go	-
54 chin	kabena	kapina-se	*yaga-pu	-be- : -pi-
55 elbow	loku	logo	-	-k- : -g-
56 thumb	you	you	*su-gi	-
58 heart	tsili	siri-se (?)	-	ts- : s; -l- : -r-
60 bone	tsoboi	kori-te	*kuli-gi	-o- : -u-
73 father	ato-wa	aro-wa	*taka-ge (Ref)	-t- : -r-
74 mother	mau-wa	mau-wa	*mamea (Address)	
75 older brother	hamba-ge	kouwari	-	-
76 older sister	humane-ge	wida xahai	-	-

Although the relic suffix *-ge* appears on only two *Bisorio* words in the above list, in a cursory examination of the *Bisorio* NT I found it on these kinship examples: *haba-ge* 'brother (Mark3:33

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humane-ge; ‘sister’ (John 11:39); *ane-ge* ‘mother’ (Matthew 15:5); *sane-ge* ‘father’ (Matthew 19:5); and *imane-ge* ‘mother-in-law’ (Luke 4:35).

Some Conclusions

- *Bisorio* and *Nete* are closely related (perhaps dialects) and are part of a sub-family of the Engan Family of languages
- *Nete* data suggest an old suffix *-se* ~ *-te* that developed independently and is found on only one instance in *Bisorio*
- *Bisorio* and *Nete* have correspondences with proto-Enga forms

Some examples of *Bisorio/Iniai (Nete)* compared with *Pikaru* and *Sau*

In the data which follow, I include single examples for languages, even when there is no corresponding data in other languages. This will provide a ready-made template for future researches to examine and insert the missing data.

Lexicon	<i>Bisorio/ Iniai</i>	<i>Pikaru</i>	<i>Sau</i>	Correspondences ¹²
afternoon	alebo/ aribu	aribo	amba	-l-: -r-: ∅; -b-: -b-: -mb-
all	uwabu&ulabu		luambu	metathesis
armpit			atape-ke	
anus			ite-ke	
arrow	tsemu	somu		ts-: s-
ashes	seya mumu	siaenusi	da- ke/lankae/pete lanka-ke (coals)	s-: s-: s-
axe	boda-piya&bada- biya	pata-fiya		
baby	pada	wabi hogia		
back	mosa-se/ mosa-le	masa-se	hoki	m-: m-

¹²

bad	o-sa/ osa	o-sa	o-tae	-s-: -s-: -t-
banana	Kxai	xai	dej/pou	kx-: x-
bark	tseya habai			
bean	dimigi			
before			amba-lae	
belly/stomach	eimu-se	eimu-se	wale-ke/palo	-m-: -m-
belt			hako	h-: k-
big	gauwa	xakai		g-: x-; -Φ- -k-
bird	hega	nega	ba	h-: n-
black	dumo	tuma		d-: t-
blood	kuku-ba	gugu-wa		k-: g-; -k-: -g-
body			lo-ke	
bone	tsoboi			
boy	wabi (hogila)		weki	
breast	adu	aru	andu	-d-: -r-: -nd-
bridge			to-ko	t- : r-
brother	hamba-ge	kauwari	kame/ameḡ- leḡ/some	
cassowary	kubono	raima		
cheek			pake	EK pae
chest			haako-ko	h- : k-
chin/jaw	kabena	kapina	yanka-ke	k-: k-; -b-: -p-
claw	heya gibo-se	hibo-se		g-: h-

cloud	mole/ moli	yagad		
cold	pabado			
division			tombo	
dog	weina/winya	wena	ia	w-: w-
dry	lunu bi—e		kapua	
ear	hale/ hali	hari		h-: h-; -l-: -r-
earth/ground	yu-gege	ke-ke	ke ke K = mud	g-: k-: k-; -g-: -k-; -nk-
egg	Hapa	gila		h- : k-
elbow	gi le-mogo/loku	logo	tondo-li-ki	-k-: -g-
event			di	
eye	dada/ le	tada-se	le-ke	d-: t-
fat	epenega	ya		
father	ato-wa	aro-wa	apae	-t-: -r-
feather	Idi			
fire	seya	seya		s-: s-; -y-: -y-
fish	laka	raga	tape-li	l-: r-
five	yitso-bu		yu ki	-i- : -u-
flying fox	tsina-wiya&kobi	xodi		
foot/leg	gobo	siri-se	al ke	
forehead	wono/ wonu	wono-se	weno-ko	w-: w-: w-; -n-: -n-: -n-
four	du-meda			
frog	helaga&kxodi	xodi		kx-: x-: -d-: -d-
full	magai ya-se			

garden			e	
girl	wana (hogila)/wana	wida bogiya		w-: w-; -n-: -d-
good	haila	haila	epe-ke	h-: h-; -l-: -l-
green	lbi			
hair	Idi	edi-se	iti-ki	-d-: -d-: -t-
hand	gi	ki-se	ki-ki	g-: ki-; k-; -Φ: -se: -ki
hard/difficult			hook-pu	
he bites	/ bagema na-mo			
he catches	ina-mo			
he comes	ipoka-mo			
he coughs	gose ya-mo		koso	g : k; -e : o
he dances	hode ya-mo			
he dies	huma-mo		koma	h : k; u : o
he drinks`	na-mo			na-la (K)
he eats sugar cane	hila na-mo			
he eats	na-mo		na-me	-o : -e
he falls down	hatogwa-mo			
he gives me	naga ida-mo		ngi	
he hears	witsa-kaiya-mo			
he hits	ba-mo			
he is hungry	hebo biya-mo			
he kills	ba-mo			

he knows	bae-ma sogo- waseyo			
he laughs a lot	xoyo highi ya-mo			
he laughs	highi ya-mo		kiri	h : k
he lies down	baba-mo	popo		
he runs	sogiyaga foga-mo			
he says	bagome ya-mo			
he sees	da-mo		ada	d- : -d-
he sits	bagema hada-mo	haruno		
he sleeps	baba-mo			
he stands	igiya-mo	kaiegiu		
he swims	iba ba-mo			
he takes			mea	
he walks	pada-mo	yorohu		
he	bagema			
head	yomodi	yomodi-se	you/ambo-ke	
heart	tsili	siri-se		ts- : t-
heavy	kxaida		keda	kx- : k-
horn	xowa fiyage		eke-ke	
house	ata/ anda		da	-t- : -d
I	na		ni-ki	a : i
it burns	tseyda da-mo		rea	
it flies	babaga bama foga-mo		popa	

kidney			kili-ki	
knee	gibo hagi	hagi-se	tumi-ki	
knife	kxai/ dai-se	xai/yakiyafa	rai	d- : r-
later			wetepe	
leaf	yo-xo	yo-ho		-x : -h
light	yafeya			
liver			puki	
long	dosa	tosa		d- : t-
louse	leima	miri-se	lema	-ei- : -e-
man	gai	wabi-se	hali	
meat	kxowa			
moon	hana/babu-me	pupu-me	kana papu	k- : h-
morning	bunabema	pamabi		
mother	mauwa	mauwa	amae	
mountain	hadi/ hadi			
mouth	habu-lu/ habu	habu-se	hambi-li-ki (lip)	-b- :-mb
name	ibi	howasu	bi	
neck	masa	masa-si	ma-ke	
net bag	nou-lou	nou		
new	kxado	oisawi		
night	uwele	ori	rimbae/timba	
no/not	wao		na	
nose	dowi	towi-se	mine-ke	d- : t-

not	wap&demo			
now			ambae	
old man	gai madi	kas kei		
old woman	wida madi	rira ko-se kei		
old	madi	petei		
one man stands	gai-se habila-ma igiya-mo			
one	hapila/ mandi	hubiya	home-ke	
pain			tanda	
person/people	gai		wandae-hali	
pig	menaya/ mena	ya	maenae	
rain	yu ke-ke	kegi	lako	
rat	yanema	sibo		
red	mopi	mofi		-p- : -f-
road	yodo	yoto		-d- : -t-
root	ppu	siya feri		
round	modo bi-se			
salt			epi	
sand	iba kedi	kedi	lpa	
seed	holu-se	sobn-giya		
short	tsoba-giya			
shoulder	kano-wa	kono-wa	peyo-ko	
sister	humane-ge	wida xa hai		

skin	habai	hapai-se	yoke-le-ke	-b- : -p-
sky			yae/ya	
small	hogi-la	hogi-ya		
smoke	seya mosu	papahu		
snake	tsitsiwano	mari		
sleep			ɥ	
son			weki	
star	hadeda	hareda		-d- : -r-
stick	tseya			
stone	hana&hana	hana	kana-ke	h- k-
sugarcane	wila	heila	weli	-i- : -e-
sun	yage	yagi	nate/nare	-e : -i
sweet			tende	
sweet potato	oleya/weleya	weriya		-le : -li
tail	ye-de	yerise	nde-ke	
taro	tsawi	sawi		
ten	gi labo/ ganowa tsobu			
that	ade		do	
they two	yobo		lapo	y : l; -b- : -p-
they	yaga			
this	ai/ogoi		dupi-ki	
thou	ni		ne-ke	

thoughts			hone	
three men	gaisi tsebo-ma			
stand	igiyaino			
three	tsebo/ sebo		tepo	ts- : t-
thumb	you/ yo	you	yu	o : u
tobacco	dugwa			
tomorrow	banebe	tadi benabi	belia	
tongue	geda	keta-si		g- : k-; d :t
tooth	ne	ne-si	ka-ke	
tree	tse-ya	si-ya	ti	ts : s : t
two	damo/ lapu	rabo	yaapo	
vine	pu	pu		
wallaby	ulai	wesina		
warm	hayede			
water iba	iba	zewa	ikali/ipi	
we two	iya&nail			
we	ina			
wet	dabali bi-se			
when?	hatima			
where?	gawa			
white	tsuba	yage fauwati		
who?	abeam		eki-pa	
wind	pabato	howusu	po	

wing	haba-ga	papa-ga	popaa-ke
what?	hane-ge		
woman	wida/ winta	wida	wandae
yam	oleya&weleya	hemi	ndoma/minti
yellow	hade-le		
yes	o		e
yesterday	yahane	penabi	
you (pl)	yaga		
you two	yobo		

*kx > x (a fricative), k (sometimes with h), or /h

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