

**A Sociolinguistics and Literacy Study
of the Nukna People Group**

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SIL – Papua New Guinea

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Part 1: Sociolinguistics

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This paper was written by Matthew Taylor, a member of SIL. Along with his wife, Christy Taylor, he has worked with the Nukna people since March, 2004, as linguists with a goal of translating materials into the Nukna language, including Scripture portions.

The people refer to their language as the Nukna language. Nukna means “my friend.” The language was previously known to the academic community as the Komutu language. Komutu is the name of the largest village in the language area and was probably applied to the language group as a whole by mistake. The ethnologue code is KLT. The Nukna language group is located in Morobe Province, Kabwum District, on the north coast of the Huon Peninsula.

1.2 Methodology

The field work for this paper has been taking place since the Taylors first began work with the Nukna people in March, 2004, and continues up to the present day. The writer has collected data through personal interaction, the bulk of which has taken place in Hamelengan village, with both Hamelengan residents and visitors from other Nukna villages. The writer has also visited most of the other Nukna villages at least once, Lumus and Sauran being the exceptions.

Since there are no roads in the area, the only means of travel is hiking on steep jungle trails. Most villages are three or more hours away, and since heavy rains fall during most afternoons, trips usually end up being overnight visits. Since the writer and his wife have two small children to care for, trips to other villages for them are not common. Sauran village has only a few Nukna families (other residents of Sauran come from the Ono language area) and thus has not been visited yet. The writer hoped to visit Lumus in May, 2006, but was prevented by unusually heavy rains.

Many different kinds of people were interviewed, with a tendency more towards village leaders, people involved in education, and men. Many of the Nukna women do not know Tok Pisin and thus are very shy about interacting with outsiders. The goal of the literacy situation study was to get a general picture of the literacy situation without spending an inordinate amount of time interviewing hundreds of people spread out over a wide area. Therefore, much of the literacy data collected in late 2005 was not gathered first-hand. For many of the villages (Hamelengan, Siang, Sauran, Nukam, Supsungan, Apalap, Komutu, Sunde), village leaders were interviewed. For others (Lumus, Bit, Tokipulan), two educated Nukna men from Komutu village collected this data (Esonu Mulilong and Eti Gusing). Thus there are undoubtedly some inconsistencies in the data due to potential differences in methodologies.

2. Geography

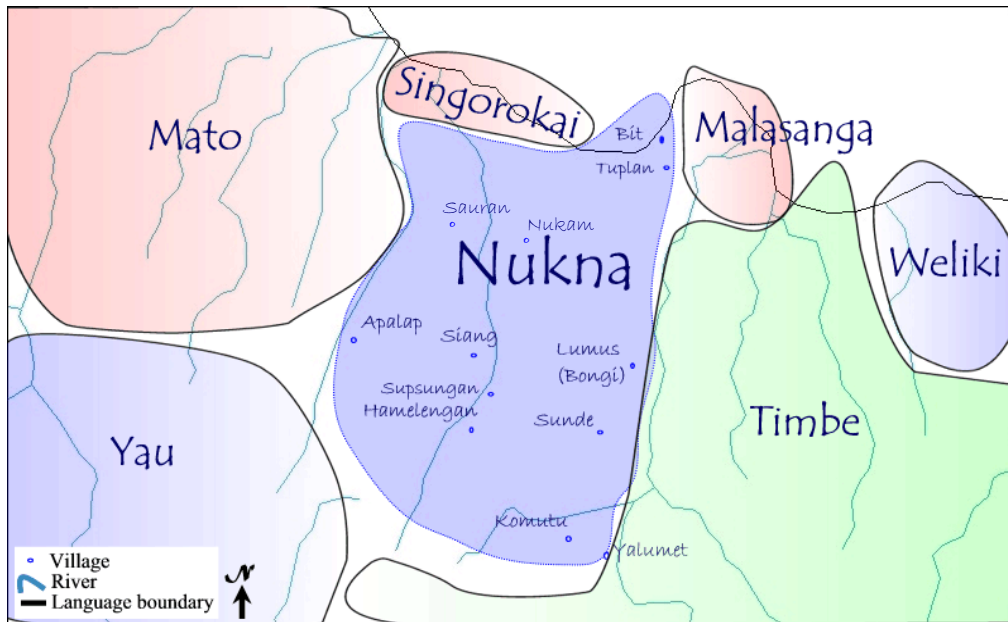
2.1 Summary of geographical area

The Nukna language area encompasses the Kerame River valley and the western side of the lower Timbe River valley, down to the coast of the north side of the Huon Peninsula in Morobe Province. There is also one village, Apalap, in the Sari River valley. The terrain varies from coastal in the north, with sandy beaches and low hills, to mountainous in the south, with rugged terrain and steeply falling rivers. Village elevations vary from sea level (village of Bit) to just over 4,000 feet (Sunde and Lumus), though the Nukna area encompasses areas with elevations over 9,000 feet. Some Nukna village are located on ridges, while others are located on relatively level areas of mountain slopes. Compared to their neighbours, the Timbe people, who are a much more populous people group to the east, the Nukna people have an abundance of land and there is no danger in the foreseeable future of a land shortage. There are no roads or navigable rivers in the Nukna area, so travel between villages is exclusively by footpath. Trails often descend into and ascend out of steep river valleys and, during the rainy season, paths can be difficult to travel on. Travel to the government station in Yalumet is by foot, where those who can afford to can travel by air to Lae. Others walk to the coast at Bukara (a village in the neighbouring language area of Singorokai), catch an ocean dinghy to Wasu, and then travel on to Lae by ship. People also travel occasionally by foot over mountainous terrain to Derim, in the Timbe language area, and to Sapmanga, in the Yau language area.

2.1.1 Location of language group map

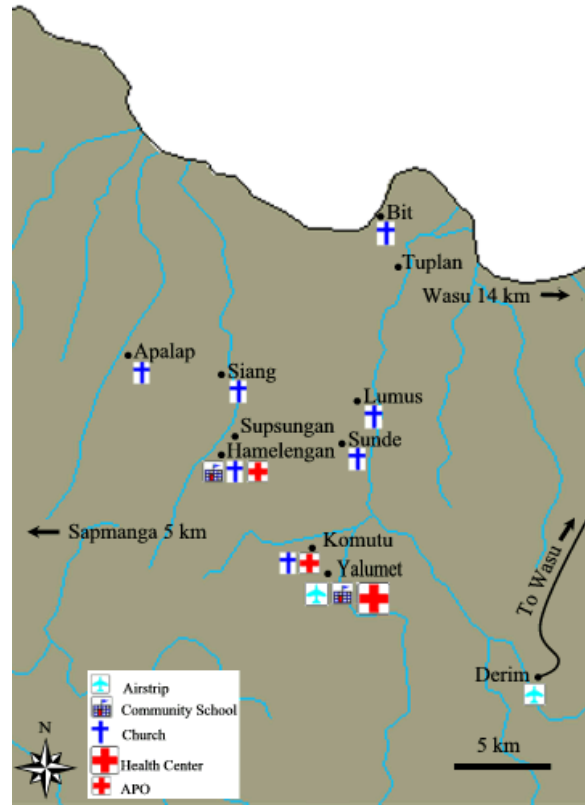


Map 1.1: Location of the Nukna Language Group in Papua New Guinea (Rueck, et al. 2003)



Map 1.2: The Nukna Villages and Surrounding Languages (Rueck, et al. 2003)

2.1.2 Language area map (villages, roads, rivers, services, etc)



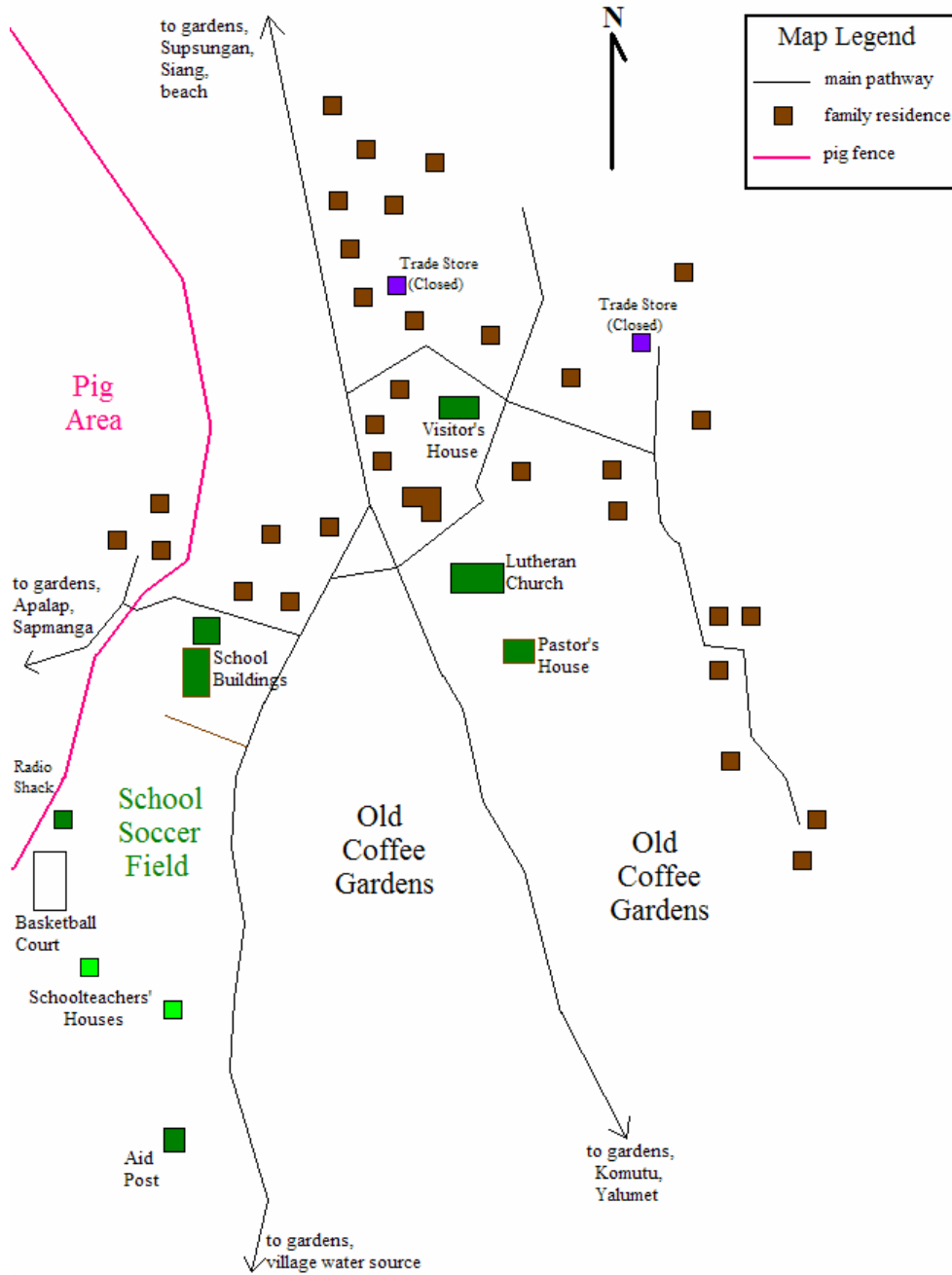
Map 1.3: Villages and Services in and around Nukna Speaking Area (Rueck, et al 2003)

2.2 Climate

The climate in the Nukna area is tropical and rainy, though the amount of rainfall and the average temperature varies from village to village. On the coast at Bit, it is hot and humid. Up in the mountains, Hamelengan enjoys a much milder climate, with the daily high temperature usually being between 20-25°C. For villages in the Kerame River valley, the farther up the valley a village is located, the more rain it receives. Hamelengan receives more rain than any other village in the Nukna area, with rain falling almost every day, even during the “dry” season. Mountain fog is present almost every day, especially in the afternoon. Nights and early mornings are usually clear. For villages in the Timbe River valley, the climate is less wet and grassy areas often turn brown in the drier time of the year. The people divide the year into two seasons: wet (rainy time) and dry (sunny time), though rain still falls regularly in the dry season. The wet season runs from November to April, and the dry season runs from June to September, with May and October being transition months.

3. Structures and Facilities

3.1 Village map



3.2 Structures in village

Hamelengan is the Nukna village with the largest number of building with functions other than basic living quarters. Besides the houses of the Hamelengan inhabitants, the village includes a church, a primary school, a medical aid post building, two trade stores (both currently closed), a “house passenger” (visitor’s house), two teacher’s houses and a pastor’s house.

The Lutheran church building was built in 1966 and can accommodate around 200 people. It has an iron roof and hardwood benches. The people are saving money to build a new church building to replace the current one, which is perceived as being too old, mostly due to leaks in the roof. The church is used strictly for religious functions. On one occasion, rather than meet inside the church, village leaders elected to hold a village-wide political meeting outside in the rain.

The pastor’s house is adjacent to the church and is a typical bush-style house. Currently there is no pastor in Hamelengan and the house is vacant. When the SIL team first allocated in Hamelengan, they were given this house as a residence.

The two teacher’s houses were built in 2004 with hand-sawn timber planks and iron roofs. These houses were built because it was believed that they would make a remote post such as Hamelengan more attractive to school teachers.

The Hamelengan primary school was built by the local people in 1996 with funds from the government. It has three classrooms, two in one large iron-roofed building which also includes the headmaster’s office, and the other in a smaller bush-style building. The people hope to build a more permanent structure for the third classroom. A short distance from the school is an iron-roofed radio shack that also doubles as a storage room for school academic supplies and equipment. A Codan two-way radio and solar panel was provided by the government in 1997, but the radio is currently not working.

The medical aid post is a iron-roofed building that was built in 1993 to provide medical services to the area’s people. The Aid Post Orderly (APO) is a local man, Otentenu Mangu, who was born in Hamelengan.

There are two trade stores in Hamelengan, though both are closed due to there being no trade goods available for purchase. One store is owned by a man who moved to the village of Siang, while the other is owned by the Hamelengan APO. The APO’s store was built about 20 years ago. As recently as 2003, when the SIL survey team visited the area, his trade store was well stocked with basic items such as rice, tinned fish and soap, but from 2004 on, goods have not been available in Hamelengan. Hamelengan residents walk to Komutu or Yalumet, about 3-4 hours’ walk one-way, to purchase goods.

The “house passenger” was built in 2004 as a place for visitors from other villages to sleep. It is a large bush-style house that has just one large room, and occasionally Hamelengan residents also use it for village meetings.

In most of the other ten Nukna villages (the exception being Bit), church buildings are present, though none are as large in size as the Hamelengan church. Komutu is the only village with more than one church building, having two, Lutheran and Seventh Day Adventist.

Komutu also has five trade stores and Lumus has three, and it is reported that all are currently open. Sunde has one trade store that is currently closed.

Komutu has the only Lutheran pastor in the language area, and it also has a pastor's house and the Lutheran Parish Office, a bush-material building built in 2004. Several other villages (Komutu, Siang, Tokipulan, Sauran) also have "house passengers". Komutu also has a vacant one-room schoolhouse built in 2002 when the government sent word that they would start an elementary school in Komutu. Until recently this building was used by the Church of God congregation for worship services, but because of structural problems with the building, they now meet outside.

3.3 Facilities available in the area

3.3.1 Medical

The only aid post in the Nukna language area is in Hamelengan. People come for medical attention from Hamelengan, Supsungan, Siang, Apalap, Nukam and Sauran. People from Apalap, Nukam and Sauran also sometimes walk to the aid post at Bonasi, which is located on the coast in the Singorokai language area. The people of Bit and Tokipulan use the aid post at Weluwelu, a village about 1 ½ hours walk away, in the Singorokai language area.

A government health centre is located in Yalumet, which is on the border between the Nukna and Timbe language groups. People from Komutu, Sunde and Lumus visit this health centre for routine medical care.

For serious medical problems, the people of Hamelengan, Supsungan, Siang, Apalap, Nukam and Sauran sometimes travel to the Yalumet Health Centre, but sometimes they wait too long before going and the patient dies before arriving. In extreme cases, patients are taken to the hospital in Etep, about a two days' walk, or they travel by air to the hospital in Lae.

Most people use a mixture of both traditional medicines and the APO or health centre. Those who have knowledge of traditional medicines often try them first, and if they don't work, then they go to the APO or health centre. However, many are also quick to visit the APO to obtain medicine and bandages, when they are in stock, for basic health needs. Medicines such as panadol and amoxicillin in Hamelengan are often not in stock, and so people also try to get medicines even when they are not really sick, to guard against times of short supply. It is reported that the health centre in Yalumet always has medicines.

People who regularly visit the Hamelengan aid post are charged K2 per year for their entire family, and this allows them to obtain medicine. Otherwise they are charged 20 toea per visit. Those who visit the Yalumet health centre must pay as they go. Charges are 20 toea per person per visit.

Traditional medicine is obtained from certain kinds of vines, leaves, grass, stones and tree bark. Illnesses treated include colds, headaches, asthma, pneumonia, stomach and intestinal pain, ear infections, diarrhoea, and skin disorders such as scabies and grille. The people also use traditional medicine for strengthening teeth, rejoining broken bones, treating abscessed sores, ulcers and boils, getting rid of intestinal worms, helping women during childbirth, curing head lice, counteracting poison snake bites, and for birth control, though this last is discouraged by the Hamelengan APO because he says it is not as reliable as modern

contraceptives. The people of Komutu use a different medicine for birth control, and it is reported to be very effective in producing sterilization of women. In rare cases, women have been known to self-induce an abortion by chewing a certain jungle vine, but this practise is considered wrong by the people, and it is reported to not have happened for a long time.

It was reported in Hamelengan that many of the young people do not have much knowledge of traditional medicines, and the practice is waning. But it was reported in Komutu that knowledge of traditional medicines is on the increase, as people seek to find alternatives to expensive medicines sold at the health centre.

3.3.2 Buying supplies

Komutu and Lumus have the only open trade stores in the Nukna area. There are no open trade stores in any of the other Nukna villages. Thus, many Nukna people must travel in order to purchase trade goods. Apalap buys things from a trade store in Baxuya (in the Mato area) and in Bukara (in the Singorokai area); Siang, Nukam and Sauran buy things from Bukara, Komutu and Yalumet; Sunde and Lumus buy in Lumus, Komutu and Yalumet; and the people from Bit and Tokipulan buy things in Weluwelu and Wasu. The villages of Hamelengan, Supsungan and Komutu usually buy in Komutu and Yalumet. All of the people also occasionally make trips to places like Bukara, Derim, Wasu and Lae for business, and they buy goods while they are there because the prices are cheaper. However, since everything they buy has to be carried back with them over the bush trails, they seldom buy very much in town. It costs about 215 kina to fly one-way to Lae. The ship from Wasu costs 40-50 kina one-way to Lae. People do not usually travel to Madang.

The main source of cash is profits from selling betel nut. Until recently, people also earned income by selling coffee, but the coffee buyer has left the area due to the high costs of shipping the coffee by air and because the Kabwum coffee mill (in the Selepet language area) has broken down. People from Komutu and Sunde do still sell coffee to buyers in Derim. Many people in the area have planted vanilla, but for most the crop has not matured yet and, in general, knowledge is poor or non-existent in regards to harvesting and curing the cash crop. Because the climate in the Timbe River valley is drier than in the Kerame, the people of Hamelengan sometimes sell edible greens (kumu) to the people of the Timbe River valley during the dry season, when the sun has dried out the Timbe River people's supply. Other items that people sell are tobacco, tree kangaroos, wild fowl, chickens, pigs, woven mats, bows and arrows, pandanus fruit, lime, mustard (daka) and sago leaves (morota). People in some villages (Komutu, Sunde, Lumus, Hamelengan, Supsungan) raise fish in man-made ponds, which they either eat or sell to others. People from Bit and Tokipulan catch saltwater fish and sell them in Yalumet. Because there are very few village stores in the Nukna area, some enterprising residents purchase basic supplies such as torch batteries, store-bought tobacco, and newspaper for rolling cigarettes, and then sell them to their neighbours, but this commercial activity is on a very limited scale.

3.3.3 Water supply

All of the Nukna villages get their drinking and cooking water from nearby streams and springs. There are no water tanks or permanent piped water systems in the language area, with the exception of the Yalumet Government Station, where a few Nukna families have built houses. The station has a water project that brings in piped water from nearby springs. Both Hamelengan and Komutu have submitted applications to the Adventist Development & Relief

Agency (ADRA) for village water projects. Both applications have been accepted, but the projects have been delayed due to the difficulty of transporting the materials to the villages. Some villages, such as Siang and Tokipulan, do not have a water supply close to the village; they have to hike a considerable distance down the mountain to the river. Other villages such as Hamelengan, Sauran, Nukam, Apalap, Bit and Komutu have water sources very close to the villages. Some villages like Sunde, Lumus, Komutu and Supsungan have nearby water sources that go dry in the dry season, and during this time they have to walk a good distance to get to other water sources. Some village people collect rainwater that runs off of iron roofs into pots and other containers. People usually carry water from the river in plastic bottles that have come from the outside, though sometimes they still carry water in bamboo tubes.

4. Demographics

4.1 Population and geographic distribution

Nukna has approximately 950 speakers. The National Statistical Office 2000 population figures, the reported village figures from the Nukna Language Survey Report conducted by SIL in 2003, as well as some data collected by the current SIL language team, are listed in Table 1.1 below.

Village	Census 2000	SIL Survey Report, 2003	SIL Language Team, 2005
Komutu	203	over 200	
Sunde	52 (9 houses)	68 (11 houses)	
Lumus	77	99	
Hamelengan	147 (27 houses)	(25 houses)	
Siang	105	250*	
Nukam			66
Sauran			16**
Apalap	60	63	
Supsungan	34	72	
Bit		(9 houses) ~45	
Tokipulan		(19 houses) ~95	

Table 1.1: Population Figures of the Nukna Speaking Villages

The Nukna people are distributed relatively equally around the Nukna area, but compared to the neighbouring Timbe language group, the Nukna area is sparsely inhabited. There is a lot of land and, in the mountains, a lot of jungle that is little visited.

The people of Hamelengan report that a long time ago, more of the Nukna people lived down near the coast, but there was a migration up into the mountains to escape the malarial climate of the lowlands. In the recent past, the phenomenon has in some measure reversed. As reported by Sunde, in the 1960s, a large number of people left the Lumus area and founded the villages of Bit and Tokipulan. As reported by Hamelengan, in 1998, a large number of people left Hamelengan and Supsungan and moved north to the villages of Siang, Nukam and Sauran.

* this figure is undoubtedly incorrect; based on the number of houses in Siang, there are less than half that many people

** number of Nukna speakers; not including other residents

4.2 Age and sex distribution

The Nukna language area is far from any large town and it is expensive to travel. There are no large business ventures in the wider area, such as plantations, timber harvesting or mining, thus there are not many people who have left the Nukna area. According to the Nukna Language Survey Report, 22 men have moved out of the Nukna area because of work, and this figure seems to be accurate based on conversations with the Nukna people.

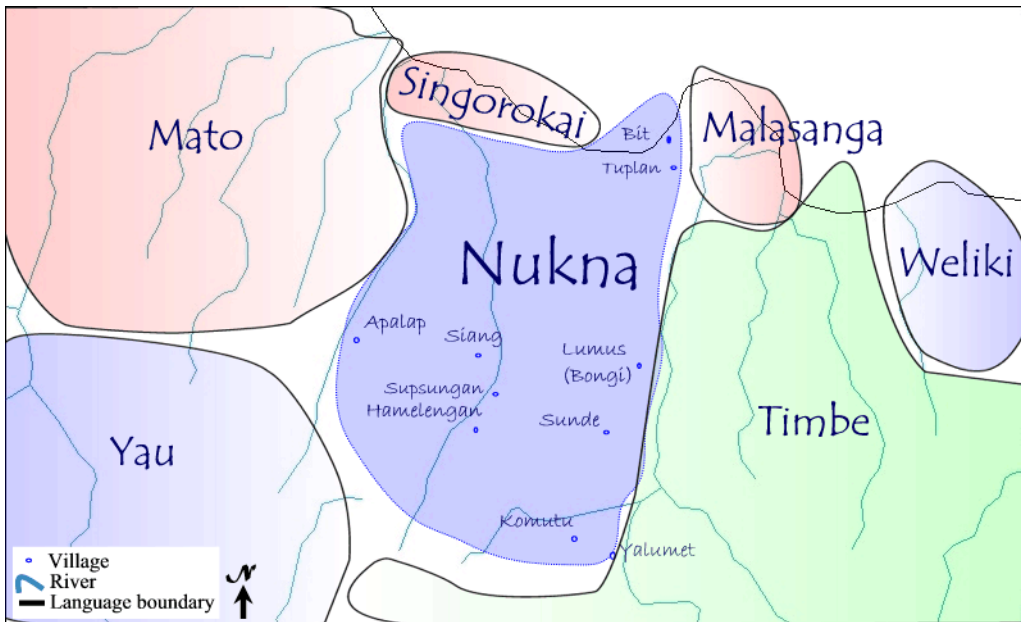
The population breaks down approximately 50-50 between men and women. The number of elderly is what would be expected for a Papua New Guinea people group that has access to basic medical care, though it is hard to come up with an exact figure since many people do not know their age. The writer would estimate an elderly population of around 5%. The number of children is large and the population is on the rise. The people are encouraged by medical workers to practise family planning, but there is no shortage of land in the area and thus no great pressure to limit family size. The average family has five to seven children.

5. Language Use

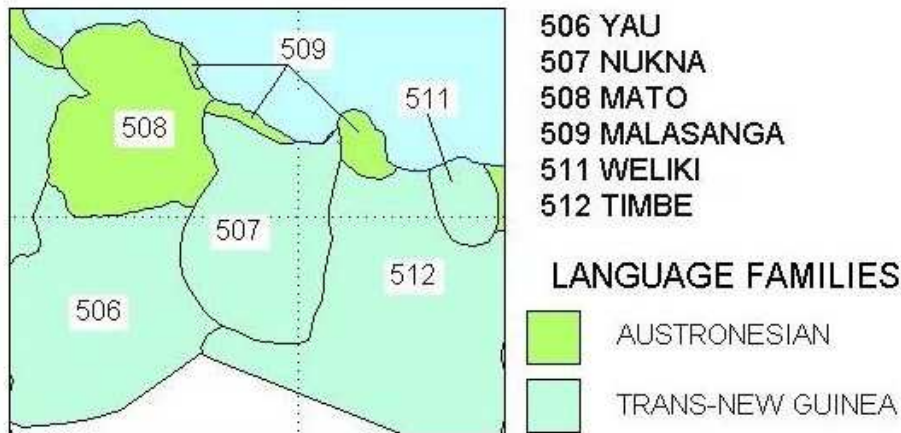
5.1 Language Repertoire

5.1.1 Surrounding languages (including map)

The languages surrounding the Nukna language are as follows: Timbe, Yau, Mato and Malasanga. The Weliki language is also nearby and known to be linguistically related to Nukna. Timbe and Yau are also in the same language stock. Map 1.5 shown below, obtained from the SIL Nukna Language Survey Report, also shows a language marked as Singorokai. However, ethnologue maps show the Malasanga and Singorokai language areas, as marked in the map below, as being one language, named Malasanga. Furthermore, the Nukna people assert that the two are one language. The reason for designating them as two languages in the map below is not known. It is also reported that there is one Weliki village, named Kawange, inside the Timbe area marked on the map below, just across the Timbe River from Sunde.



Map 1.5: The Nukna Villages and Surrounding Languages
(Rueck, et al. 2003)



Map 1.6: The Nukna Language Area and Surrounding Languages (©2003 SIL)

As a general rule, the languages surrounding Nukna are not well-known by the Nukna people, though there are exceptions. Many of the people in Bit understand Malasanga, because of the village's proximity to the Malasanga area. The Mato language is understood and spoken by the people of Apalap, and some people in Apalap also know a bit of Yau and/or Malasanga. A few people in Komutu speak and understand Timbe, while two people in Hamelengan know some Yau. Some people in Sunde understand some Timbe and/or some Weliki, while some people in Lumus understand some Timbe.

Many people of the older generation understand the Kâte language, which has been the church language in the Lutheran church for decades. However, Kâte's influence is waning and no one in younger generations understands it.

Leaders of the Pakesu Church, a group originating from the Sialum area, have

established churches in Siang, Sauran and Nukam villages. The Pakesu often use their own language, Ono, in church services for singing and the liturgy. However, at this time, the Nukna people do not understand Ono.

Bilingualism is not strong and Tok Pisin is used when speaking with people from other languages. The one exception is Apalap village, where many have intermarried with people from the Mato language area. As a result, Mato is used frequently by the Apalap people.

5.1.2 National languages

Very few people know English, and those who do have only a limited book knowledge. Those people who do know some English are almost always located in a Nukna village that is near a school. Very few women know any English.

Tok Pisin is widely spoken and understood, though there are some women who do not speak it or do not feel comfortable using it. There are also a few elderly men who are not fluent in Tok Pisin. Children do not usually learn Tok Pisin until they start school.

5.1.3 Dialects (including map)

The Nukna people, for the most part are in agreement over where the dialect boundaries are, though a few minor differences were encountered. Village leaders and other men of Hamelengan, Komutu, Sunde and Supsungan were interviewed, while opinions were gathered from people of other villages in casual conversation. The general consensus is as follows:

- 1) Hamelengan, Supsungan, Siang, Nukam, Sauran
- 2) Sunde, Lumus, Tokipulan, Bit
- 3) Komutu
- 4) Apalap

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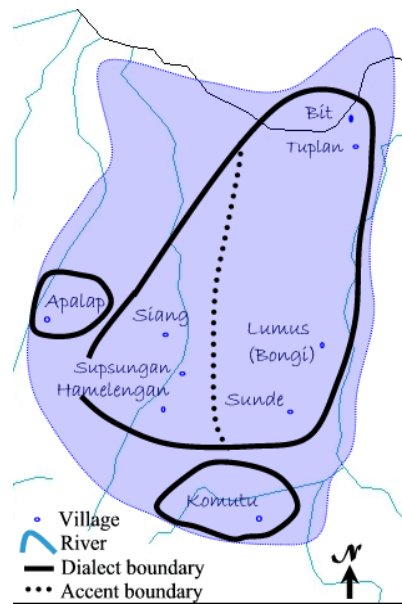
The people of Sunde reported that groups 1 and 2 above were all one dialect, but when given examples by the writer of differences between the two, agreed that some lexical and phonemic differences are present.

Some people from Hamelengan grouped groups 1 and 2 together, while others said they were different dialects.

People from Hamelengan and Apalap said that their dialects were not the same, while people from Komutu said that groups 1 and 4 above were one dialect.

Based on the perceptions of the Nukna people interviewed, it would be reasonable to say that the tentative hypothesis reached by the Nukna Survey Team in 2003 is correct. The team designated three Nukna dialects, with an accent boundary between groups 1a and 1b, as follows:

- 1a) Hamelengan, Supsungan, Siang, Nukam, Sauran
- 1b) Sunde, Lumus, Tokipulan, Bit
- 2) Komutu
- 3) Apalap



Map 1.7: Nukna Dialects (Rueck, et al. 2003)

5.2 Language domains

In almost all day-to-day living situations, Nukna is used exclusively, though Tok Pisin is heard more often in Bit, Tokipulan and Komutu than in other villages. The writer has observed this language use in Hamelengan, Supsungan, Siang, Komutu and Sunde. For the other villages, this information was reported by residents of Hamelengan, Komutu and Sunde.

In church services, a mix of languages is used. Announcements are made in Nukna and sometimes Tok Pisin. Songs are sung in Nukna, Tok Pisin, Kâte and, in Pakesu villages, Ono. As observed, in the SDA church services in Komutu, songs are sung in English, Tok Pisin and Nukna. Liturgy is read in Tok Pisin (Lutheran) and Ono (Pakesu). Prayers are offered in Nukna and Tok Pisin. Sermons are delivered in Nukna and Tok Pisin. As observed, Hamelengan sermons are almost exclusively in Nukna, while, as reported, other villages like Sunde and Lumus tend more toward Tok Pisin. As reported, in Siang, Nukna is usually used for sermons, but when Pakesu leaders from outside the Nukna area visit, Tok Pisin is used. As reported, Komutu sermons at the Lutheran church are often in Tok Pisin because they have a pastor from outside the language area. At the Komutu Church of God, as reported, only Tok Pisin is used for sermons, while at the SDA church, as observed, Tok Pisin and Nukna are both used.

Tok Pisin is the main language used in the schools, though English is also used as part of the curriculum. From time to time, the Hamelengan school has a special Nukna cultural time, where the vernacular is allowed; the rest of the time it is forbidden to speak the vernacular. At the Yalumet primary school, it is also forbidden to speak in Nukna or Timbe. In Yalumet there is a Tok Pisin elementary school (grades 1 and 2) that has students from both the Nukna and Timbe areas. Children are allowed to use their own vernacular, but the teacher is from the Timbe language area, so it is reported that Nukna is not heard much.

There are no official Nukna elementary or preschools yet inside the Nukna area, though the people of Komutu and Hamelengan have made plans to start vernacular elementary schools (grade 1) in the next year or two. A man in the small village of Kanjin, an offshoot of Lumus, has started a non-government-sanctioned vernacular preschool (see section 8.1).

At large community meetings, there is a mix of Nukna and Tok Pisin, with more Nukna being used. As observed, some people do use Tok Pisin at large meetings where people from many Nukna villages are gathered. For example, men running for local level government positions give campaign speeches in Tok Pisin, possibly because this is the language of government when the local level government council meets in Yalumet. People from Hamelengan say that when people from many villages meet together, some people use Tok Pisin to make it easier for the different dialects to communicate. As observed, when people just from Hamelengan meet to discuss community issues, Nukna is used almost exclusively. As observed in Komutu, only Nukna is used, unless the pastor, who is not fluent in Nukna, is present; then Tok Pisin is used. As observed in Hamelengan, village court is held in Nukna, even when people from different Nukna dialects are involved in the proceedings. If someone from outside the Nukna area is present (the Timbe village of Koyon is inside the same government ward as most of the Nukna area), Tok Pisin is used.

5.3 Language stability

The Nukna language appears to be very strong and stable, with the exceptions of the villages of Bit and Apalap, which have had a lot of linguistic influence from their neighbours. In many villages, Tok Pisin does not seem to be taking over, as evidenced by small children who do not even know how to speak Tok Pisin. One seldom hears Tok Pisin words mixed in when people speak Nukna. In Lutheran villages, Nukna appears to be gaining strength in church services as the Kâte language loses its influence. In Pakesu villages, the outside leaders' practice of using Ono in church services may lead to a decline in the use of Nukna in church.

Because of the Nukna language's current vitality, and due to the fact that the Nukna area is relatively isolated from towns and has no roads, one would expect the language to continue to flourish during the next twenty years. The Nukna people share this expectation and do not currently have any worries about the decline of their language.

6. Language Attitudes

6.1 Attitudes to other languages

The Nukna people are proud of their own language. It is a strong source of personal and group identity for them. While they tend to feel overshadowed by the large Timbe population to their east, they have not allowed the Timbe language to weaken their own language, with the possible exception of Komutu, where some Timbe words have come into use.

In the Lutheran churches that use the Kâte language, attitudes are clearly separated by age group. The younger generation does not like the use of Kâte, since they can't understand it, but they allow it to remain out of respect for the older generation who have worshipped for all their lives in Kâte. According to local church leaders, once the older generation passes on,

Kâte will no longer be used.

In the Pakesu churches, the Ono language is viewed as being the language of the church and of God, thus it is valued and respected, even though the people cannot yet understand it.

Tok Pisin is recognized as having value, both for educational purposes and for interacting with people from different languages, but in comparison to Nukna, the people look down on Tok Pisin because they say it can be difficult to express deeper meanings with Tok Pisin.

English is highly esteemed and is seen as the key to a good education and to finding a good paying job. People in Hamelengan say that they would like to see their children learn to speak English.

6.2 Attitudes to dialects

For the most part, each dialect group feels proud of their own way of speaking, with the possible exception of Apalap, whose dialect is found to be difficult to understand by the other dialects. The people of Apalap are reported to not say much when they are visiting other villages.

The Nukna dialect with the largest number of speakers, encompassing the villages of Sunde, Lumus, Tokipulan, Bit, Hamelengan, Supsungan, Siang, Nukam and Sauran, holds the highest prestige. Some of the villages (Komutu, Apalap, Bit) that are near the border of other language groups have allowed some mixing of words to occur, so people from Komutu, Sunde, and Hamelengan feel that Hamelengan, situated in a geographically central location, far from any other language, has the purest form of speech. Hamelengan also has an aid post and a community school, so these indirectly give even more prestige to the Hamelengan dialect. Komutu, the largest of the Nukna villages, has reported that they know their dialect incorporates some Tok Pisin and Timbe, and so is not “true” Nukna. For these reasons Komutu village leaders have recently agreed that the Hamelengan dialect would be the best for translating the Bible. People in Sunde have also said that the Hamelengan variety of speech should be used for translation work.

As reported, when people from different dialects meet, they usually each use their own dialect when speaking, though people sometimes try, with limited success, to switch to the other person’s dialect. Sunde reported that they can speak Komutu’s dialect, but that Komutu cannot speak theirs. This is probably due to the fact that Komutu’s population is three times as big as Sunde’s.

7. Religion and Language

7.1 Religious groups

7.1.1 Lutheran Church

The Lutheran church first came to the areas surrounding the Nukna area between the years of 1918-1925, but the Nukna people report that Lutheran missionaries did not come to the Nukna area until the late 1930's, just before World War II. A national Lutheran evangelist came to Hamelengan and started a church, and it spread to the other Nukna villages from there. Currently there are Lutheran congregations in Hamelengan, Supsungan, Apalap, Komutu, Sunde, Lumus, Bit and Tokipulan. The church is administered by the national Lutheran Church, headquartered in Lae, while locally it is administered from Ulap, near Wasu. In the Nukna area, there is only one Lutheran pastor, named Hefosoka Yaung, a Timbe man whose ministry is centred in Komutu. He regularly travels to the Lutheran churches in the villages belonging to the Komutu and Hamelengan parishes, which do not include the villages of Bit and Tokipulan. These two villages are in Weluwelu parish and are served by a Lutheran pastor located in Weluwelu. In the Nukna Lutheran congregations who do not have a pastor, church leadership consists of local lay members. Language use varies from congregation to congregation, but overall Tok Pisin and Nukna are used primarily, with singing also being done in Kâte.

7.1.2 Seventh Day Adventist Church

The Seventh Day Adventist Church first came to the village of Komutu in 1996, brought by two Komutu people who attended SDA services in Lae. SDA members are currently located only in Komutu and Bit (one person in Bit and eleven in Komutu). The church is administered by the SDA church headquartered in Lae, and more locally by a SDA churchman living in Mamok, in the Timbe area. The local Komutu congregation is led by a layman, Esonu Muliliong. As observed, languages used during worship are Tok Pisin, English and Nukna. For singing, a lot of English is used due to the SDA hymnal that is used. Prayers and sermons are made in Tok Pisin and Nukna. They built a small church building in 2006.

7.1.3 Church of God

The Church of God first came into the Nukna area in 2002. This Pentecostal church was started in Yalumet in the 1980's by a local man and has spread through parts of the Timbe and Nukna areas. Church of God members from the Nukna area are exclusively from Komutu, with the Hamelengan Headmaster (who is from Komutu) also a member. There are about 20-30 members and they currently do not have a place of worship, so they hold services outside. They worship every day. Leadership is provided by the Church of God headquarters located in Yalumet, with the founder, Deso Engam overseeing administration. Local Komutu leadership comes from a local man, Tirinu Birinu. During worship, it is reported that they sing songs in Nukna, Tok Pisin, Kâte, Timbe, Motu and English. Prayer and sermons are done in Tok Pisin and Nukna.

7.1.4 Pakesu Church

The Pakesu Church first came to the Nukna area in 1997, from the Sialum area. The church in the Nukna area was first started from visits between relatives in the two areas. The

church first took root in Hamelengan, but all of the Pakesu members left Hamelengan in 1998, settling in Siang and Nukam, and founding a new village, Sauran. Congregations are now located in these three villages, with two households in Hamelengan and four or five people in Apalap also being adherents. The exact number of Pakesu members is not known, but since the entire villages of Siang, Nukam and Sauran are Pakesu, it is reasonable to assume around 200 Pakesu members in the Nukna area. Administration for this church is located in the Sialum area, and local leadership is located in Siang. The Pakesu leaders in the Nukna area are Kitape Uninyong (head elder) and Tangiliong Muningi (parish chairman). As reported, the following languages are used in the following situations: liturgy – Ono; sermons – Nukna; worship – Nukna, Ono; prayer – Nukna. When the Sialum leaders visit, services are conducted only in Tok Pisin and Ono.

7.2 Local view of religious groups

There is a good deal of friction among the four denominations. The Lutheran church, which has been around for a long time, sees itself as belonging to the Nukna people and resents the “intrusion” of newer denominations, especially the Church of God and the Pakesu. Part of this is undoubtedly doctrinal differences. The different denominations also look down on each other for the various styles of worship. When the Church of God first came into the area, there was a lot of anger and verbal fighting. The Lutherans ridiculed and disparaged the more upbeat pentecostal style of worship, saying the worshippers were out of control. The Church of God members said that the Lutheran worship was dry and boring. The Lutherans also charge that the Church of God holds to some heretical doctrines. The outward manifestations of these issues have ceased, but people from the two churches still do not agree with one another. The SDA church seems to be more accepted than the other two newcomers, and no criticism of the SDA church has been heard.

The Pakesu church is considered a cargo cult by the Lutheran church. Lutheran leaders have reported that the Pakesu believe that cargo will arrive soon for true believers, and that Jesus’ earthly ministry did not take place in Judea and Galilee, but in the Sialum area of Papua New Guinea. It is reported that they believe that the white men later came and changed the Bible to trick the PNG people. When the writer brought up these subjects with both Pakesu leaders and lay members, these beliefs were strongly denied. When this denial was related to the Lutherans, they laughed and said that the Pakesu were lying to the writer in order to trick him. Thus, discovery of the truth has come to an impasse of the “he said, she said” type.

There is a lot of confusion and mistrust between the Pakesu and Lutheran churches. One example is when the Pakesu leaders decided to remove the cross from the top of their church building, saying that it was an image and thus could distract people from a true worship of God. The Lutherans immediately began spreading the rumour that the Pakesu did not believe in Jesus’ death on the cross, and the Lutheran pastor said that the Pakesu would all go to hell because they did not believe in the cross.

Both the Lutheran and SDA church leaders and members have expressed that Nukna would be much better for Bible reading and liturgy (Lutheran only), but that the materials are not yet available. There seems to be strong support to increase the use of Nukna in these churches, if the opportunity presents itself. Not as much information is known about the attitudes of the Church of God and Pakesu churches, since the churches are considered marginal by the larger population and the writer has had a hard time finding opportunities to discuss these issues with church leaders and members. The Pakesu church leaders did express to the SIL survey team that they would use the vernacular scriptures if they were available.

When the writer has spoken with the Pakesu leaders from outside the language area, they have expressed interest in vernacular Scriptures, but also were clear that Ono is the established language of the Pakesu church.

7.3 Attitudes of religious group leaders to Scripture and literacy

Leaders of the Lutheran and SDA churches have expressed a strong desire to use the vernacular Scripture, because they recognize that Nukna is easier to understand and has a richer meaning for them. Lutheran church leaders who have expressed their support include Simenty Nune (Hamelengan), Hesinge Sakjongke (Supsungan), Gutnan (Sunde), Pastor Hefosoka Yaung (Komutu) and Emshon Simiong (Komutu). The SDA leader (Esonu Muliliong) is also strongly committed to seeing the vernacular Scriptures used in the churches. Additionally, the leaders of the Lutheran and SDA churches have also asked on multiple occasions for an adult literacy programme to be started. Reports have been heard that the Pakesu have also been asking for an adult literacy programme. See section 9 for more information on attitudes toward literacy.

7.4 Attitudes of religious group members to Scripture and literacy

The members of religious groups are also supportive of vernacular Scripture and literacy. When community meetings are held, village and church leaders tend to answer any questions posed to the village as a whole. But on some occasions, individual religious group members in Hamelengan, Sunde and Komutu have told the writer that they would like to have the Bible in the vernacular and start up an adult literacy programme.

7.5 Perceptions of literacy and literature

Lutheran and SDA leaders have expressed their desire to start an adult literacy programme so that the members of their groups will be able to read the Bible for themselves. No evidence has been seen that anyone perceives literacy as a threat to a particular religious group.

Part 2: Literacy

8. Education

8.1 Children

The only primary school inside the Nukna area is the Hamelengan Community School, which encompasses grades 1-6, though it holds classes for only three grades during any one year. The school serves the villages of Hamelengan, Supsungan, Siang, Nukam, Sauran and Apalap. Recently, people from Sunde and Lumus have considered sending their children to the Hamelengan school. The school is run by the headmaster, Sonny Sokep, a Nukna man from Komutu. In 2005, there was no other teacher and one of the three classes had to be dropped. A new teacher, a young woman from the Finschaffen area, has just been obtained for the 2006 school year.

Instruction is conducted in Tok Pisin and English, with a small amount of Nukna used on special cultural days. In the classroom, it is forbidden to speak Nukna. During recess, they use mostly Nukna and some Tok Pisin. The headmaster, being a Nukna man, is very positive toward the vernacular and wants to assist the SIL team in promoting vernacular literacy. All of the villages, other than Hamelengan, have the problem of distance. School children from these villages sleep in Hamelengan during the week and go back to their homes only on weekends. It is reported that sometimes children become homesick and drop out of school. For a time, the children of Siang, Nukam and Sauran did not attend the school in Hamelengan because of friction between the Lutheran and Pakesu religious groups.

In the villages of Hamelengan and Supsungan, it is reported that all of the children start grade 1, and almost all finish through grade 6. This is a recent change for the Nukna people of these villages, and before the school was built, many students did not attend or finish school. For Siang, Nukam and Sauran, about half of the children attend school, and of those, some do not finish through to grade 6. School attendance among children from Apalap is also poor, and recently those who do attend have started going to the school in Sapmanga (it is not known why).

From Hamelengan, Siang and Supsungan, there are currently eight students attending grades 7 and 8, and five attending grades 9 and 10. There is one student attending grade 12. Nukam, Sauran and Apalap do not have any attending beyond grade 6. There are no Nukna men or women who have attended university.

Hamelengan has plans to start a vernacular elementary school that will give instruction for grade 1 students.

In Yalumet, on the border of the Nukna area, there are two schools: Yalumet Elementary School and Yalumet Primary School. The elementary school has three grades: prep, 1 and 2, though there is currently only one teacher, Sniky Mendon. The primary school has grades 3 through 8, and usually has around six teachers. The school chairman is Kemson Hindi, a Nukna man from Komutu. These two schools serve the Nukna villages of Komutu, Sunde and Lumus, as well as a few students from Tokipulan and many students from the Timbe language area.

The elementary school teaches sometimes in Timbe, and the rest of the time in Tok Pisin. The primary school teaches in Tok Pisin and English, and it is forbidden to use local languages from grade 4 and up. The elementary teacher and two of the primary teachers are from the Timbe area, with the remainder of the teachers coming from outside the local area. The village of Komutu has plans to start their own elementary school that will give instruction in the Nukna language.

The villages of Sunde and Lumus have the problem of distance, and those students who do attend sleep at Yalumet or Komutu. It is reported that all of the children from Komutu start school and attend through grade 6, but in Sunde and Lumus, less than half attend school. Four children from Komutu currently attend grades 7 and 8, four attend grades 9 and 10, and one attends grade 12. No children from Sunde or Lumus attend beyond grade 6.

The people of Sunde report that homesickness and a lack of food cause children to abandon school and return home. Students who sleep at Yalumet tend a small garden to provide food, but it is claimed that others often come at night and steal the garden produce. The students' parents are expected to bring food for their children, which they do, but because of the long distance between home villages and the school, the students are often hungry. Students who sleep at Komutu are given some food by the Komutu people, but it is not enough. The people of Sunde also report that the people of Komutu have a different dialect and way of life, so their children feel uncomfortable living there. Recently, village leaders from Sunde and Lumus have considered sending their children to the school at Hamelengan. Even though it is farther away, they think their children will be more comfortable living there. One man from Sunde sent his daughter to grade 6 in Hamelengan in 2005.

The people of Sunde report that these same problems also affect Lumus, Tokipulan and Bit. The children of Tokipulan and Bit must attend school in Weluwelu, a village in the Malasanga language area about 1 ½ hours' walk away. It is reported that students leave school and return home for the same reasons reported above for the children of Sunde and Lumus.

In 1998 or 1999, a man named Lewin Haringgewe started a Tok Pisin preschool in Lumus. In 2001, he moved the school to a new Nukna settlement in Gonjing, between Lumus and Tokipulan (On a recent visit, the people of Sunde reported that the school was started in 2006). Children from Lumus, Tihun, Gonjing, Bit and Tokipulan attend. The teacher has not received training as a teacher, but instead attended Bible school near Teptep, and later at Finschaffen. The main instruction is in reading and writing, but there may also be other components of the curriculum taught. Now that an alphabet has been developed for the Nukna language, it is reported that there is interest in instructing in the vernacular.

8.2 Adults

In all the Nukna villages, Nukna is the main language used. Tok Pisin is also used in all villages in certain domains such as church services and among schoolchildren, and is also more prevalent in the village of Bit. Mato is used quite a lot in the village of Apalap. English is rarely if ever heard in the Nukna villages.

The literacy rates in the Nukna area correlate strongly with geographic considerations. Villages that are near to a school have higher literacy rates than those that are not. Based on their literacy situations, villages can be divided into three groups.

Nukna Literacy Rates, Ages 10 and Up							
Village	Sample Size	Literate Any Lang.	Literate Tok Pisin	Semi-Literate English	Literate Males	Literate Females	Age 20-39
Group 1 Hamelengan >70%	76	80.3%	76.3%	30.3%	71.1%	89.5%	66.7%
Supsungan	29	82.8%	75.9%	44.8%	86.7%	78.6%	84.6%
Siang	64	84.4%	71.9%	21.9%	82.4%	86.7%	96.6%
Nukam	35	77.1%	68.6%	8.6%	66.7%	85.0%	93.8%
Sauran	16	75.0%	73.3%	6.3%	70.0%	83.3%	66.7%
Komutu	163	70.6%	70.6%	12.9%	70.6%	70.5%	85.5%
Group 2 Apalap 50<70%	30	60.0%	60.0%	6.7%	62.5%	57.1%	73.3%
Group 3 Sunde <50%	44	43.2%	43.2%	15.9%	38.1%	47.8%	50.0%
Lumus	62	30.6%	30.6%	1.6%	41.2%	17.9%	29.6%
Bit	37	45.9%	43.2%	16.2%	52.0%	33.3%	50.0%
Tokipulan	42	14.3%	14.3%	4.8%	22.7%	5.0%	8.3%
Total	598	62.2%	59.3%	15.6%	61.9%	62.5%	69.6%

Table 1.2: Nukna Literacy Rates

Group one consists of the five villages located in the Kerame River valley, Hamelengan, Supsungan, Siang, Nukam and Sauran, as well as Komutu. Literacy rates in this group are between 70 and 85%. These high rates, in the case of the younger generation, can be attributed to the presence of the primary schools in Hamelengan and Yalumet, and, in the case of the current adult population, to the presence of a Sialum man who taught reading and writing (mostly in Kâte) at the behest of the Lutheran Church. He lived and worked in Hamelengan from 1948 to 1979. Before a big church split in 1999, most of the current residents in Siang, Sauran and Nukam lived in Hamelengan and Supsungan. Thus they had much easier access to education than they do now, and it would not be surprising to see the literacy rates in those three villages drop now that the people live several hours' walk from the school.

Group two consists of the village of Apalap, whose literacy rate is currently 60%. Apalap's closest school is in Hamelengan, but it is about six hours' walk away. Children who attend the school must board with relatives in Hamelengan. Some Apalap parents send their children to the school in either Sapmanga or Bonas, though both these schools are also very far away.

Group three consists of four villages strung out along the lower Timbe River valley: Sunde, Lumus, Tokipulan and Bit. All have literacy rates below 50%, with Lumus around 30% and Tokipulan at 14%. These last two rates are surprisingly low, even for villages that are not close to a school, and probably have as their cause the low school attendance of children from these villages. (see section 8.1 for an explanation of this). The literacy rates for these four villages were collected by a young Komutu man named Eti Gusing, and so it is possible that the statistics are unreliable due to a potential difference in methodology.

Across the language area, the literacy rates of males and females are almost exactly the same. The literacy rate of the 20-39 age group is higher than the average, with the rates of the 10-19 and 40+ age groups being lower than the average. Some young people who are marked as being illiterate are currently in primary school and may become literate with time.

The discrepancy between the “Literate Any Language” percentage and the “Literate Tok Pisin” percentage is accounted for by the fact that a few of the older generation are literate in Kâte, but not in Tok Pisin.

Vernacular literacy rates have not been included, because, until recently, there was no established Nukna alphabet and almost no reading or writing in the local language.

9. Literacy

The only existing literacy programmes currently in place are those found at the regular primary schools in the area, which aim to teach children to read in Tok Pisin and English. Most of the children who enrol in primary school end up becoming literate. However, many children from villages which are not near a school do not attend or leave school before learning to read and write. There is also a perceived obstacle in the form of school fees, which many parents feel they cannot afford.

There are no current literacy programmes for adults. In 2005, Simenty Nune, the Lutheran Church Congregation Chairman from Hamelengan village, tried to teach around five or six illiterate men from Hamelengan to read in Tok Pisin. His only materials were chalk and a blackboard. The weekly lessons were abandoned after a few weeks because Simenty’s other responsibilities as a church worker conflicted with the lessons. However, there is still interest in starting up another literacy programme for adults.

9.2 Agencies and Individuals Concerned with Education

The main entity concerned with educating the local population is the PNG government. Government primary schools reach many of the Nukna youth, and some go on to secondary education in schools outside the language area. There is also a plan to start up elementary schools, which would teach in the vernacular, in Hamelengan and Komutu, but first local teachers must be trained.

At the Hamelengan primary school, the current headmaster is a Nukna man. Other teachers, at Hamelengan and Yalumet primary schools, are from outside the language area.

Currently SIL is not formally involved with any education programme, but there are plans to help provide vernacular curriculum for the elementary schools and start up an adult literacy programme in the next few years. SIL has also given training in alphabet development and translation principles.

There are currently no agricultural or vocational programmes anywhere in the language area.

9.3 Mother-Tongue Literacy

Prior to the Alphabet Development Workshop (ADW) held in November, 2005, there was no evidence of reading and writing in the vernacular. A Nukna spelling guide and some literacy material (story books) are now in the process of being developed and distributed, in conjunction with SIL.

Like most PNG peoples, the Nukna are traditionally an oral society. Reading is not a big part of everyday life, but some reading and writing has been observed. People read the Tok Pisin Buk Baibel and schoolchildren read their textbooks. The Hamelengan headmaster has been seen reading English novels, and the Hamelengan APO receives letters and writes reports in English regarding his medical work. Church leaders receive letters, written in Tok Pisin, pertaining to church matters. From time to time, people send personal correspondence to friends and relatives in other Nukna villages, and they usually write in Tok Pisin.

9.4 Language of Wider Communication Literacy

There seems to be interest in vernacular literacy, in addition to literacy in Tok Pisin and English, because Nukna is the language that people know best, and they also want to strengthen their own language. People also recognize that Nukna is a much better language for expressing a wider range of meaning, than a trade language like Tok Pisin. People in Sunde said that they are not much interested in learning to read and write in English, but only want literacy in Tok Pisin and Nukna. This probably reflects the fact that no one from Sunde has an education beyond Grade 6, so English would be of little use to them.

9.5 Attitude Toward Literacy

Many people definitely see the need for literacy for both children and adults. These people tend to be village leaders in villages that already have relatively high literacy rates. Illiterate men in Hamelengan village have expressed interest in learning to read. People in villages that are far from schools do not seem to be as highly motivated to ensure their children are educated, as can be seen by the lower school attendance rates from these villages. Lack of motivation, however, is not the only obstacle, with school fees and distance from schools also reasons being given.

Reasons for wanting literacy are many. Church leaders in Hamelengan want church members to be able to read the Bible for themselves, so that their Christian life might be strengthened. People in Sunde say that some people would like to preach at church services, but their inability to read impedes sermon preparation. Illiterate people who travel to places like Derim to sell coffee or betel nut say that they suspect they are being cheated by buyers, because they do not know basic math and how to make change. An illiterate store owner in Sunde (whose store is currently closed) says that he has trouble keeping his financial books in order. Illiterate people who receive or want to write letters have to ask for help from others.

9.6 Personnel and Education Resources

Support for a local literacy programme would most likely come from SIL. Grade 8 and 10 leavers would be good possibilities for training, as well as Grade 6 leavers. Ideally, one or two from each village could be trained to head up the literacy training in their own village. The Hamelengan headmaster has already received training in teaching literacy, but his time is

currently taken up by his full-time teaching position. However, he would be a strategic person who could provide help to a literacy programme. The people do not have a lot of money, since they have no roads or industries in the area, but they could still be expected to help out with funding for a local literacy programme, even if only in a small amount. People would also be able to help teachers with things like food and firewood. At present, there are no buildings that would be ideal for hosting a literacy programme. Most likely literacy classes would be held in churches, the local school (in Hamelengan) or possibly outside. All the Lutheran churches and the Pakesu church have small blackboards that would assist in the teaching process.

9.7 Local Definition of “Literate”

For the most part, people define “literate” as being able to read even a little bit. Some people who read Bible passages very haltingly in church services would be considered literate by others. There is a big need to improve people’s reading skills. At this stage, there is only one vernacular book in print, so people have not had much practice at reading the vernacular. As observed, even people who can read Tok Pisin quite well have difficulty reading the vernacular, due to unfamiliarity with the orthography. With time, this situation will probably improve.

10. Literature

Interest in reading does not seem to be especially high, in any language used by the Nukna people. A lack of reading material is one major obstacle to reading, but an even more important factor is the fact that the Nukna are traditionally an oral society. Reading takes place mostly in schools and in church. Few people own books. In Hamelengan, there is a small collection of English books provided for the school children by the PNG government, but village residents do not ever read them. People read the Tok Pisin Buk Baibel and the Lutheran liturgy book. A few people who can read Kâte own a Kâte Bible and/or a Kâte song book. The SDA church leader has an SDA hymnal with songs in English and Bible study guides written in English and Tok Pisin.

In Hamelengan, about six people own radios, and three people own working cassette players. In Komutu about five people own radios, and four have cassette players. In Sunde, no one owns a radio or cassette player. In Lumus, there is one radio with a cassette player. People listen mostly to radio stations that play music, though sometimes people listen to news in Tok Pisin, and once in a while in English. Those who have cassette players listen to music cassettes.

There is a little exposure to video in the area. Men who have travelled to Lae or beyond have seen television. A U.S. Army group came to Yalumet in 2002 to salvage an aircraft downed during World War II, and they showed movies on the weekends that some Nukna people viewed. The SIL team has shown the Tok Pisin version of the *Jesus* video several times in Hamelengan village. In 2006, the Hamelengan headmaster, who is from Komutu, bought a television and DVD/VCD player. Using a generator, he charges money and shows videos to people in Komutu and Yalumet.

11. Vernacular Literature

11.1 Vernacular Materials Produced

To date, one vernacular title has been produced. The *Nukna Trial Spelling Guide* was published in March, 2006, with fifty copies printed at the SIL Press in Ukarumpa. It was produced by the seventeen participants in the Nukna Alphabet Development Workshop (ADW), held in November, 2005, in cooperation with SIL. The guide was distributed in April and May of 2006, being hand-carried to the various Nukna villages. In some villages it was given away for free, while in others it was sold for a nominal fee, according to the judgment of the writer and his Nukna co-workers. There was more interest in the guide than was anticipated, so an additional thirty copies were printed for future distribution. The orthography used was the Nukna orthography developed at the Nukna ADW, which has been given trial status by SIL.

11.2 Titles Planned

There are three vernacular titles in the planning stages. First is an AIDS **awareness** booklet which was produced by SIL and is in the process of being translated into Nukna by Esonu Muliliong. Second is a collection of Nukna stories, and third is a Nukna songbook. These last two books are currently being developed by Esonu Muliliong and Eti Gusing. These two men are travelling around the Nukna language area, collecting stories and vernacular songs from all the Nukna villages. These men and the SIL team hope to publish all three of these titles during the next few months, when they will be sold for a nominal price around the language group.

11.3 Materials and Titles Wanted

People have expressed interest in story books, health books, church song books, liturgy books and Scripture portions.

11.4 Mother-Tongue Writers

The only people who have produced vernacular materials are the participants at the ADW. Several of the participants seemed skilled and eager to write stories. The Hamelengan headmaster has expressed interest in writing stories. The Hamelengan APO and Esonu Muliliong, who used to be an APO, would be good resources when writing health books. Eti Gusing has expressed interest in illustrating vernacular publications.

12. Production, Promotion, and Distribution

12.1 Local Means of Production

The only local means of production is the Hamelengan Community School's office typewriter, which would probably not be available for significant village use. A more professional looking publication would be more accepted by the people.

12.2 Prospective Means of Promotion and Distribution

The most likely means of promotion and distribution would be through local churches. Komutu has several trade stores that could also be used. However, there are no other trade stores, and no community markets. The Nukna area is also far from town, so materials would be better distributed locally.

13. Orthography

13.1 Existing Orthographies

Currently, there is a Nukna Trial Orthography, developed at an Alphabet Development Workshop held in November, 2005. It was developed by seventeen Nukna men and women from four villages, along with an SIL consultant. A trial spelling guide was published and distributed in April and May of 2006, with the goals of familiarizing the people and testing the new alphabet.

13.2 Similarities Between LWC and Vernacular

The Nukna alphabet is very similar to both the Tok Pisin and English alphabets. The only letters in the Nukna alphabet not present in the other two are <á> and <ng> (the 'ng' sound is actually written <ng> in both English and Tok Pisin, but 'ng' is not considered a letter in those orthographies).

13.3 Complex Linguistic Factors

For the most part, there are no complex linguistic factors that would affect the orthography. When writing suffixes, some people write them as one word, while others separate the root and the suffix.

13.4 Status of Orthography

The current Nukna orthography has trial status, being officially approved by the SIL LCORE department and unofficially approved by the Nukna participants of the Nukna Alphabet Development Workshop.

13.5 Developers of Orthography

The Nukna orthography was developed by the following participants in the Nukna ADW (home villages in parentheses): Hemen Anga (Sunde), Bakeri Botie (Hamelengan), Gawong Gandy (Komutu), Eti Gusing (Komutu), Mawi Hone (Hamelengan), Kike Joku (Supsungan), Muransi Linggon (Hamelengan), Ote Mangu (Hamelengan), Bonging Maring (Hamelengan), Bononge Masi (Hamelengan), Esonu Muliliong (Komutu), Simenty Nune (Hamelengan), Bofuse Ote (Hamelengan), Emshon Simion (Komutu), Basa Siningion (Sunde), Nininge Taha (Komutu), Matt Taylor (SIL), Bae Woxson (Supsungan)

The men who made the biggest contributions were Esonu Muliliong, Simenti Nune, Ote Mangu, Muransi Linggon, Eti Gusing, Gawong Gandy, Hemen Anga, and Emshon Simion.

These men were involved to a greater degree than the others in discussions and decision-making during the workshop, giving valuable suggestions and leading discussions.

Additionally, workshop participants have talked with others in their villages about the orthography decisions reached, and feedback has been positive so far.

13.6 Disagreements over Orthography

There is currently no disagreement on orthography issues. However, when it becomes time to print health books and Scripture portions, there might be a problem between the two largest dialects, one of which uses /l/ where the other uses /r/. Recently, the people of one dialect (Komutu village) have decided that it would be better to use the other dialect for book production, so perhaps this disagreement has ended. It has been decided that stories can be written following the dialect of the story's author.

13.7 Problems with Orthography

Some problems related to the Nukna orthography are:

- 1) the l-r dialect problem,
- 2) people have trouble knowing when to write <a> and <á>,
- 3) people are inconsistent as to where they break up polymorphemic words, and
- 4) people have trouble with consistent punctuation.

Since the orthography was just recently designed, it would be expected that other problems will become defined as testing is carried out.

14. Motivation

People recognize that education is the key to the future, holding promise for political, social, medical and economic benefits. Thus the general feeling around the language area is that knowing how to read and write is a good thing. Everyone agrees that it is important to be literate in the language of wider communication, Tok Pisin. Village leaders in Hamelengan, Komutu and Sunde have said that they want to learn to read and write in the vernacular. People in Hamelengan and Komutu have interest in knowing how to read in English, but this is more of a matter of learning English, rather than learning how to read. Village leaders in Sunde say they have no interest in reading and writing in English.

Some people have expressed their belief that literacy is very important because people need to be able to read the Bible for themselves.

People send and receive letters from time to time. Those who are not literate get help from other people who can read and write letters for them.

As previously noted, people in Hamelengan village tried to start up a Tok Pisin adult literacy programme on their own, but it died out after a few weeks.

15. Attitudes to Education

15.1 Attitudes of Traditional Leaders

Generally, the attitude toward education is very positive, especially in the villages that are close to schools. People in outlying villages recognize the value of education, but do not always send their children due to other factors (see section 8.1 for these factors). The big men in Hamelengan and Supsungan villages are very supportive of education, and some of them are members of the Hamelengan Community School Board. When school board meetings are held, they often start days late because the board members from Apalap, Siang and Nukam show up late or do not show up at all. Komutu's leaders also support education and this can be seen by the high attendance rates of the children from this village. The lower attendance rates of other villages like Sunde and Lumus reflect a lesser commitment to education. Parents say that attendance is important, but when their children drop out of school, the children are allowed to do so.

15.2 Attitudes of Other Leaders

The Lutheran pastor in Komutu is a big supporter of education, encouraging the parents to send their children to school. He has also expressed verbal support for adult literacy, both in Tok Pisin and in the vernacular. He has been working in Komutu, as well as travelling to other Nukna villages from time to time, for the past four years. During this time he has learned some of the Nukna language. People in Komutu say he can "hear" the Nukna language, though he can't speak it. His two children are reported to be fluent in the Nukna language. His own and his family's learning of Nukna show that he values the Nukna language.

15.3 Educational Results Desired by Leaders

Leaders would like to give illiterate adults a chance to learn to read and write so that they can support their children's education, gain the business advantages that come with literacy, and so they can read the Bible for themselves, rather than hearing it second-hand from others. They are open to teaching reading and writing in either Tok Pisin or Nukna, or both, depending on each individual teacher's preference and the literacy materials present.

15.4 Educational Methods Desired by Leaders

With a history of some government schools in the area, the people see the government as responsible for providing education to the Nukna children. As reported in Hamelengan and Sunde, there has always been an interest in adult literacy, but the people could not see any way to achieve their desires. The government has never provided adult education, so the people do not look in that direction. Some, by their own initiative, have attempted to teach others to read, and now that SIL has begun work in the area, there is an expectation that SIL will help start an adult literacy programme. The SIL team has emphasized that, while SIL will help jump-start the programme, it will be the local people who run the programme and do the teaching.

15.5 Life after School

The vast majority of school leavers, at almost every level, return to the villages and live their lives there. Very few go on to use their education in some capacity outside the language

area. Those in the villages who do have an education tend to become village leaders.

Some who have received an education higher than grade 6 often have plans to put their education to use, but factors such as financial problems and family responsibilities usually pull them back to the village. Of those Nukna men who live and work outside the Nukna area, many have only a grade 6 education or lower, and they are involved in unskilled labor. There are currently four students in grade 12 who have plans to enter the work force.

16. Traditional Methods of Teaching and Learning

16.1 Consciously Taught Topics

Topics that are consciously taught include planting yams (planting other crops is not consciously taught); butchering pigs; making spears, armbands, headbands, string bags, kundu drums, wooden plates, bows and traditional dress (grass skirts and bark loincloths); and, in the ancestors' time, sorcery.

Other important topics that are taught by observation and imitation are hunting, making a garden, building a house and raising pigs.

16.2 Students

All of the above skills are taught to young people when they are teenagers or young adults, with the exception of string bags, which is taught to girls starting around 7 or 8 years of age.

In the traditional culture, a younger person would never teach an older man. Now that some young people have gone out and received an education, people recognise that they have special knowledge, and so it is okay for them to teach an older man these things. But as far as things having to do with their own traditional life and culture, the older always teach the younger.

Also, in their traditional culture, a woman would never teach a man, and this is still very strong today. Women do teach their husbands things, but the men say that they try to hide this from the other men. Having a woman teach men in any setting would not be accepted by the people. However, it is acceptable for women to teach boys in a school setting.

16.3 Teachers

The different topics and skills are usually taught to young people by their immediate family (parents and siblings), but if a certain family doesn't have knowledge of some skill, it's all right to acquire knowledge from others outside the family. In the old days, when sorcery was taught, it was taboo for a father to teach poison to his son. The boy would learn it from other relatives, usually an uncle.

16.4 Period of Instruction

Skills are usually acquired in a short period of time, generally in a few days. The exception is sorcery, which was taught to boys over a period of several years while they lived

in a men's house apart from the rest of the village. In current times, skills can be taught at any time of the day or night, and at any time of the year.

16.5 Teaching Methods

When someone wants to teach a child a certain skill, they will first gather all the needed materials, and then they will sit down with the child and teach the skill to the child, both verbally and by example. The child is then given a chance to do it by themselves, and correction is given as needed.

16.6 Rewards of the Educator

According to people in Hamelengan and Komutu, a man who teaches his child all the important skills will have a good name in the community, but a man who does not, will not be respected.

School teachers in Hamelengan village are paid a fortnightly salary and are given garden produce by their students.

16.7 Encouraging the Motivation to Learn

When children resist learning something, their parents scold them and hit them with a stick. If an adult does not want to learn, others will reason with them and scold them.

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