

Komba (KPF)

**SURVEY OFFICE**

;  
Komba

Dialect

Survey

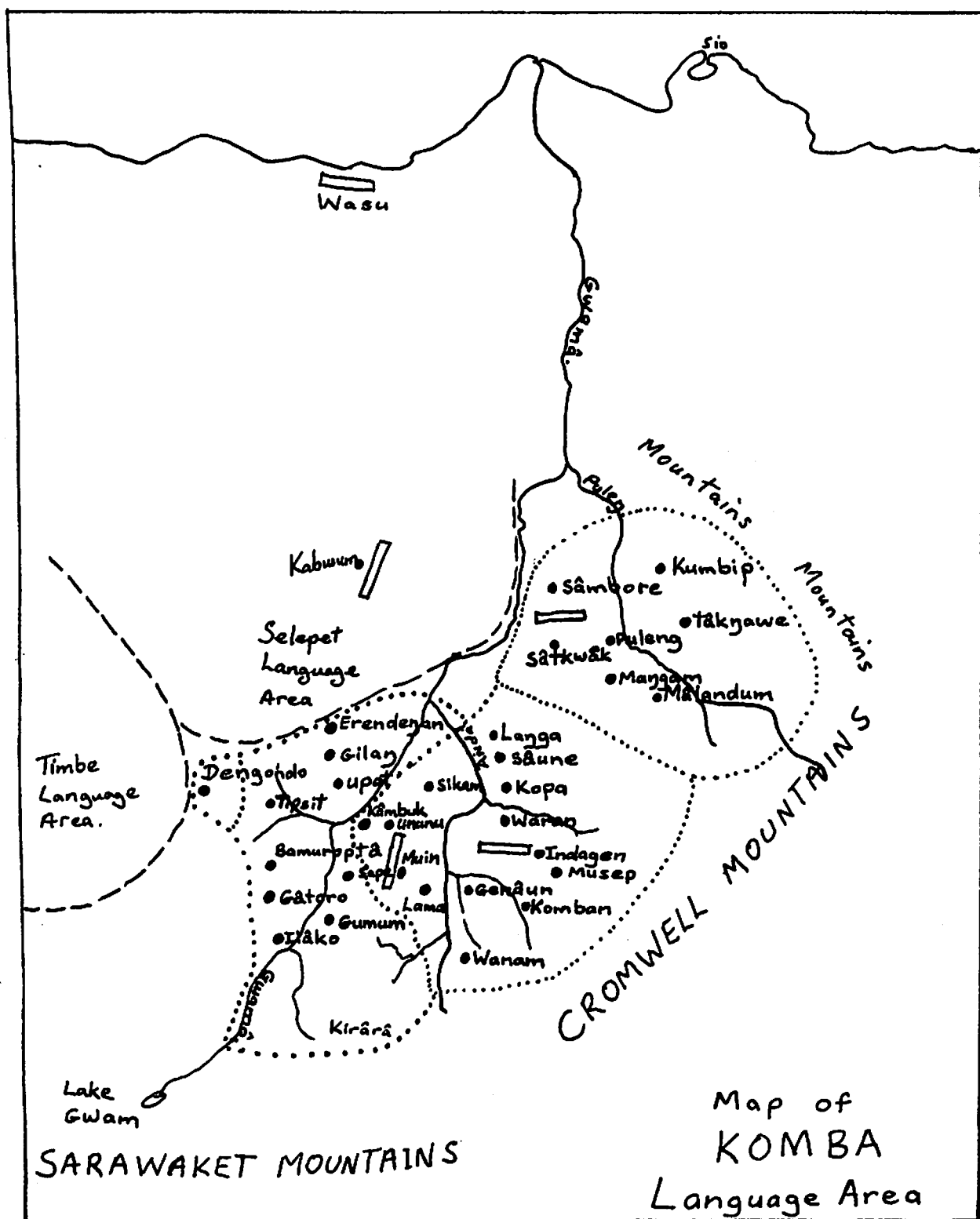
Neville Southwell  
1976

**Preface.**

This paper is a brief survey of the dialect differences found in the Komba language.

The Komba language is spoken by about 12,000 people whose home area, the Komba Census Division is the south eastern division of the Kabwum Sub Province, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea.

The authors first allocated in the village of Muin (Konge) in 1966 and have continued working with the Komba language from that date up until the present.



### The geography of the Komba area.

The geographical situation of the Komba people in the Kabwum Sub Province is a relevant item to focus on as we look at the dialects and variations in the language. As is very obviously the case in many parts of Papua New Guinea, terrain such as rugged mountain ranges or deep river gorges has had an influence in discouraging travel and movement back and forth between local groups leading to the developing of individual speech forms and patterns distinctive to each local area.

Referring to the map on the previous page, let us then consider the terrain of the Komba speaking people.

The Komba speakers live in rugged mountain valley facing the north coast of P.N.G. The valley is bordered on the south and east by the jungle covered 3,000 metre high Comwell mountain range.

There are no immediate neighbours nearer than several days walk in that direction. To the west of the Komba area is a lower ridge with an even lower pass above the village of Dengando. Over this ridge is the valley inhabited by the neighbouring Timbe language speakers, numbering some 11,000.

To the north west of the Komba area in the direction of Kabwum are villages of the other neighbouring language - Selepet, spoken by some 7 to 8 thousand people.

The valley is virtually horseshoe shaped opened in the north by the steep walled river valley of the Gwama River flowing out to the North coast. This steep walled ravine<sup>e</sup> divides the Northern Komba area from the neighbouring Selepet villages. The upper section of the river although not impassable is still a significant barrier dividing the Komba villages of Gilax /Upat and Erendnan on the west from Sikam / Ununu and Kâmbuk on the east. Two tributary rivers flow into the Gwamâ from the south west. The more northern being the Pulerx river flowing from a side valley where some seven Komba villages are located. This side valley is separated from the next to the south by a jungle covered mountain spur of the Comwell range on the east stretching to the steep sided Gwama River on the west.

The more southerly side valley is the section with the highest population, there being about 15 villages scattered on both sides of the Ândâ River.

A Komba view of dialect divisions.

In speaking of variations of their language, speakers of the (upper) main southern Komba area divide their language into three dialects labelling the upper (southern) two by the river names, Gwama den Gwama speech (dialect) and Ândâ den Ândâ speech (dialect). They make a further distinction referring to the Komba speech of the (lower) northern valley as wenzâ den lowland speech (dialect). (For consistency this dialect could be referred to as the Pulex River dialect.) So we see that Komba speakers of the central area see their language having three significant dialects. Below we list the villages of each division seen as a significant variant dialect by Kombas speakers. We include village populations as of 1972-73 census count.

<u>Gwamâ Dialect.</u>	<u>Population.</u>
Erendengan	815
Gilang	464
Upat	333
Dergando	345
Tipsit	717
Bâmuroptâ	328
Sanon	256
Ilaka	671
Gumum	443
Sape	<u>270</u>
Total population	<u>4642</u>

<u>Andâ Dialect.</u>	<u>Population.</u>
Umun	358
Sikam	334
Ununu	476
Konge	413
Lama	161
Geraun	225
Gatseq	175
Komban	250
Wanam	127
Musep	375
Indagen	1313
Waran	490
Kopa	291
Saune	208
Langa	<u>445</u>
Total population	<u>5641</u>

<u>Puleng (lowland) Dialect.</u>	<u>Population.</u>
Satwag	181
Sambori	168
Puleng	165
Mangam	396
Melandum	432
Taknawe	403
Kumbip	<u>221</u>
Total population	<u>1966</u>

We may summarise that Komba speakers see their language as having 3 distinct dialects.

1. Gwamâ Dialect      10 villages      4,400 population
2. Ândâ Dialect      15 villages      5,600 population
3. Pulen Dialect      7 villages      2,000 population

This covers the approx. 12,000 speakers of the Komba language.

Having looked at the Komba speakers evaluation of the dialect divisions of the Komba language, we will go to the word lists taken from Komba villages throughout the language area, compare them and consider the differences. After having compared these lists we find them falling into four fairly consistent groups. The Gwamâ villages will be divided into two subgroups, labelled 1a and 1b as they have fewer differences.

<u>Group.</u>	<u>Villages.</u>	<u>Population.</u>
1a	Erendengan	815
	Gilang	464
	Upat	333
	Dengando	<u>345</u>
	Total	<u>1957</u>
1b.	Tipsit	717
	Bâmuroptâ	328
	Sanon	256
	Ilaka	671
	Gumun	443
	Sape	<u>270</u>
	Total	<u>2685</u>
2.	Umun	358
	Sikam	334
	Ununu	476
	Konge	413
	Lama	161
	Geraun	225
	Gatseŋ	175
	Komban	250
	Wanam	127
	Musep	375
	Indagen	1313

<u>Group.</u>	<u>Village.</u>	<u>Population.</u>
2. contd.	Waran	490
	Kopa	291
	Saune	288
	Langa	<u>445</u>
	Total	<u>5641</u>
3.	Satwag	181
	Sambori	168
	Puleng	165
	Mangam	396
	Melandum	432
	Taknawe	403
	Kumbip	<u>221</u>
	Total	<u>1966</u>

Below we have listed words from the word lists which appear consistent throughout the 4 respective groups.

<u>Word</u>	<u>1a</u>	<u>1b</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
I	nâ	nâ	nâ	nâ
we (dl)	net	net	net	net
we (pl)	nen	nen	nen	nen
you	gâ	gâ	gâ	gâ
you (dl)	zet	zet	zet	zet
you (pl)	zen	zen	zen	zen
he	zâk	zâk	zâk	zâk
they (dl)	zet	zet	zet	zet
they (pl)	zen	zen	zen	zen
this	zirâ	zirâ	zirâ	zirâ
two	zagât	zagât	zagât	zagât
rain	map	map	map	map
water	too	too	too	too
smoke	kabâk	kabâk	kabâk	kabâk
ashes	kâu	kâu	kâu	kâu



<u>Word</u>	<u>1a</u>	<u>1b</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
sand	sak	sak	sak	sak
mountain	bakŋâ	bakŋâ	bakŋâ	bakŋâ
earth	hân	hân	hân	hân
stone	kât	kât	kât	kât
lake	deŋgân	deŋgân	deŋgân	deŋgân
cliff	sim	sim	sim	sim
sea	saru	saru	saru	saru
stick	kâmbam	kâmbam	kâmbam	kâmbam
loin cloth	pet	pet	pet	pet
knife	zemba	zemba	zemba	zemba
tree	nâk	nâk	nâk	nâk
leaf	ilumŋâ	ilumŋâ	ilumŋâ	ilumŋâ
root	ândâŋâ	ândâŋâ	ândâŋâ	ândâŋâ
fruit	bongâ	bongâ	bongâ	bongâ
bird	nii	nii	nii	nii
louse	imen/pâre	imen/pâre	imen/pâre	imen/pâre
rat	selon	selon	selon	selon
fish	iŋan	iŋan	iŋan	iŋan
frog	kaŋ	kaŋ	kaŋ	kaŋ
flying fox	kombâ	kombâ	kombâ	kombâ
banana	âuk	âuk	âuk	âuk
sweet potato	gokâ	gokâ	gokâ	gokâ
snake	mulum	mulum	mulum	mulum
python	gombam	gombam	gombam	gombam
fly	sâp	sâp	sâp	sâp
animal	zu	zu	zu	zu
man	a	a	a	a
woman	ambân	ambân	ambân	ambân
orphan	mandu	mandu	mandu	mandu
claw	sâlâpŋâ	sâlâpŋâ	sâlâpŋâ	sâlâpŋâ
breast	dimâŋâ	dimâŋâ	dimâŋâ=	dimâŋâ

<u>Word</u>	<u>1a</u>	<u>1b</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
blunt	sât buṅâ	sât buṅâ	sât buṅâ	sât buṅâ
red	kuriṅâ	kuriṅâ	kuriṅâ	kuriṅâ
white	kâu	kâu	kâu	kâu
tail (his)	daaṅâ	daaṅâ	daaṅâ	daaṅâ
name (his)	kutṅâ	kutṅâ	kutṅâ	kutṅâ
father (his)	ibaṅâ	ibaṅâ	ibaṅâ	ibaṅâ
mother (his)	mamṅâ	mamṅâ	mamṅâ	mamṅâ
el. brother (his)	âtâṅâ	âtâṅâ	âtâṅâ	âtâṅâ
el. sister (his)	ponâṅâ	ponâṅâ	ponâṅâ	ponâṅâ
and	sot	sot	sot	sot
play	serop	serop	serop	serop
fire	kârâp	kârâp	kârâp	kârâp
work	nep	nep	nep	nep
he scratched	aatsap	aatsap	aatsap	aatsap
it swelled	lâmbatsap	lâmbatsap	lâmbatsap	lâmbatsap
he said	sap	sap	sap	sap
he stood	kinzap	kinzap	kinzap	kinzap
he blew	waatsap	waatsap	waatsap	waatsap
he came	gaap	gaap	gaap	gaap
he saw me	neksap	neksap	neksap	neksap
he ate	niap	niap	niap	niap
he knew	nanggap	nanggap	nanggap	nanggap
he died	muap	muap	muap	muap
he slept	uman ziap	uman ziap	umanziap	umanziap
it burned	siap	siap	siap	siap
he threw it	luum paap	luum paap	luum paap	luum paap
he washed it	sanggonsap	sanggonsap	sanggonsap	sanggonsap
he cried	isiap	isiap	isiap	isiap
she sewed it	gâriap	gâriap	gâriap	gâriap
he didn't know it	mân nanggap	mân nanggap	mân nanggap	mân nanggap
he cut it	kârap	kârap	kârap	kârap
he vomited	mogatsap	mogatsap	mogatsap	mogatsap
small	mâiktâ	mâiktâ	mâiktâ	mâiktâ

<u>Word</u>	<u>1a</u>	<u>1b</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
mouth (his)	lâuŋâ	lâuŋâ	lâuŋâ	lâuŋâ
nose	sângân	sângân	sângân	sângân
heart (his)	kâmbiamŋâ	kâmbiamŋâ	kâmbiamŋâ	kâmbiamŋâ
flesh (his)	sunumŋâ	sunumŋâ	sunumŋâ	sunumŋâ
fat (his)	kelâkŋâ	kelâkŋâ	kelâkŋâ	kelâkŋâ
neck (his)	gânduŋâ	gânduŋâ	gânduŋâ	gânduŋâ
back	kândât	kândât	kândât	kândât
hair	sâmot	sâmot	sâmot	sâmot
urine	sandâ	sandâ	sandâ	sandâ
ear	kindâp	kindâp	kindâp	kindâp
hand	bikŋâ	bikŋâ	bikŋâ	bikŋâ
tooth (his)	sâtŋâ	sâtŋâ	sâtŋâ	sâtŋâ
eye (his)	siŋâ	siŋâ	siŋâ	siŋâ
spit	tâp	tâp	tâp	tâp
foot (his)	kiŋâ	kiŋâ	kiŋâ	kiŋâ
skin (his)	sâkŋâ	sâkŋâ	sâkŋâ	sâkŋâ
bone (his)	siŋitŋâ	siŋitŋâ	siŋitŋâ	siŋitŋâ
head (his)	kâukŋâ	kâukŋâ	kâukŋâ	kâukŋâ
armpit	asan	asan	asan	asan
seat (his)	amunŋâ	amunŋâ	amunŋâ	amunŋâ
right side (his)	bongâ	bongâ	bongâ	bongâ
left side	yangâ	yangâ	yangâ	yangâ
it is full	piksap	piksap	piksap	piksap
all	aksik	aksik	aksik	aksik
some	nâmbutŋâ	nâmbutŋâ	nâmbutŋâ	nâmbutŋâ
long	kârep	kârep	kârep	kârep
short	pâŋkânok	pâŋkânok	pâŋkânok	pâŋkânok
big	patâ	patâ	patâ	patâ
dry	too buŋâ	too buŋâ	too buŋâ	too buŋâ
cold	pateŋ	pateŋ	pateŋ	pateŋ
warm	kârâp	kârâp	kârâp	kârâp
good	âlipŋâ	âlipŋâ	âlipŋâ	âlipŋâ
wet	toonoot	toonoot	toonoot	toonoot
seed	kabunŋâ	kabunŋâ	kabunŋâ	kabunŋâ
what	wan	wan	wan	wan

The following list of words show the differences found in the word lists taken from the different areas.

<u>Word</u>	<u>1a</u>	<u>1b</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
mine	naat	naat	nâgât	nâgât
yours	gaat	gaat	gâgât	gâgât
who	ḡârâ	ḡâi	ḡâi	ḡâi
that	ende	ende	ândi/ânde	ânde
one	konok	konok	kânok	kânok
three	karâmbut	karâmbut	karâmbut	zagât ḡâi
four	kimembut	kimembut	kimembut	zagât zagât
moon	olongo	kâin	kâin	langep
night	ḡeḡ	ḡâtik	ḡâtik	ḡâtik
star	puut	gururu	saxgelâk	isâ
cloud	âup	âup	sasa/âup	sasa/âup
sky	simbem	simbem	sumbem	simbem
earthquake	kenâḡ	wâriḡ	wâriḡ	kenâḡ
dust	suundum	subundum	suundum	surundum
kunai	ogep	ogep	ogep=	yenzo
road	mâtâp	mâtâp	mâtâp	ken
string bag	iri	iri	irâ	irâ
house	miri/nami	miri/nami	mirâ/namâ	mirâ/namâ
blossom	bolongâ	bolongâ	bâlangâ	bâlangâ
cassowary	kwelâ	kwela	kwela	kpela
yam	aako	nabo	nabo	tâmbâi
liver	elokḡâ	elokḡâ	ambotḡâ	ambotḡâ
stomach	komboḡâ	komboḡâ	kâmbotḡâ	kâmbotḡâ
blood	gilâm	gilâm	gilâm	sep
tongue	nimbulam	nimbulam	nâmbâlâm	nâmbâlâm
death adder	kwaru	kwaru	kwaru	kparu/mutmu
straight	tâḡtâḡ	tâḡtâḡ	tâḡtâḡ	tirik tirik
new	âiḡâ	âiḡâ	uḡakḡâ	irakḡâ
black	omox	omox	sumun	sumun
yellow	gimbâḡâ	gimbâḡâ	gimbâḡâ	gelapḡâ
dog	wâu	wâu	wâu	bua

<u>Word</u>	<u>1a</u>	<u>1b</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
green	gwâlâgwâlâ	gwâlâgwâlâ	gwâlâgwâlâ	nâlânâ
wing	abâtŋâ	abâtŋâ	abâtŋâ	pangam
yesterday/ tomorrow	mukan	mukan	mukan	wârân
he gave me	nigiap	niyap	nigap	nigap
he hit me	nogup	noyap	nogap	nogap
he told me	dâtnogup	dâtnogup	dâdnogap	dâdnogap
he bit me	zigiap	ziyap	zigap	zigap
he tied it	saagap/saagiap			
		saayap	saagap	saagap
he dug it	kendap	kendap	kendap	kendiap
he shot it	zerap	zerap	zerap	zeriap
he counted	sâlîpkuap	sâlîpkuap	sâlâpkuap	sâlâpkuap
it was here	tarâp	tarâp	tâip	tâip
he stabbed it	sâugiap	sâugup	suugap	sâugap

In the word lists containing 158 terms, 115 terms are constant throughout all groups. 43 terms have a variant form in one or more groups.

Taking the central Komba group (group 2) as the standard for comparison we see that;

Group 1a ; has forms constant with those of Group 2 for 130 terms and variants for 28.

Group 1b ; has forms constant with of group 2 for 134 terms and variants for 24.

Groups 1a and 1b have 16 forms common to both which are variants of those forms found in Group. The 1a. and 1b. groups contain 11 forms which differ one from the other.

Summarising this evidence we conclude that the Komba speakers have a sound evaluation of the dialect differences with the language. The language has three distinct dialects, one to each geographical area, but we must add that Dialect Group 1 is made up of two Sub/Dialects/ groups.

1a. The villages of Erendangan, Gilan, Upat and Dengando.

1b. The villages of Tipsit, Bamuropta, Sanon, Ilaka, Gumun and Sape.

The 1a groups is comprised of the Komba Villages nearest to the adjacent Selepet and Timbe language areas. This suggests that a likely reason for the differences of the 1a Sub dialect from the 1b sub Sub dialect is the influence of the neighbouring languages. We would not however propose that such an answer explains everything. It is obviously a much more complicated explanation involving such things as geographical barriers, migration, kin and trading relationships. We note that there are kin-trading relationships that reach across the Gwamâ River between people of the Gilang area and the people of the Ununu area. In some aspects the 1a Sub dialect seems closer to the No 2. Dialect than 1b is. We note in the word lists the variant verbal forms.

<u>Word</u>	<u>1a.</u>	<u>1b.</u>	<u>2.</u>
he gave me	nigiap	niyap	nigap
he hit me	noguap	noyap	nogap
he bit it	zigiap	ziyap	zigap
He told me	dâtnoguap	dâtnoyap	dâtnogap

Such variants are caused by variant morpho-phonemic rules as to the perturbation that occurs when verb stems take suffixes. This particular set of changes applies to a small set of verbs only. These particular forms are made up of Verb Stem and Object marker (which often cannot be separated) and third person singular immediate past tense suffix -ap.

In this case both the stem and suffix are constant in each dialect/sub dialect, but the effect of the stem and suffix coming together varies.

1a. vb.stem/obj. + suffix beginning with e/a =vbstem/obj +gi/gu+ su

1b. vb.stem/obj. + suffix beginning with e/ə =vb stem/obj+yâ+suffix.

2. vb.stem/obj. + suffix beginning with e/a/əvb stem/obj +gâ+suffix

Note. the â is lost when followed by a vowel.

He gave me	ni-gi-ap	ni-y-ap	ni-g-ap
he hit me	no-gu-ap	no-y-ap	no-g-ap
he bit it	zi-gi-ap	zi-y-ap	zi-g-ap
he told me	dâtno-gu-ap	dâtno-y-ap	dâtno-g-ap

We note however that most verb forms in the word list are much more constant throughout the dialects/sub dialects, but the variant verb forms are the most striking differences found in Dialect no 1 as verb forms re occur so often in everyday speech.

Another variant patter we note from the word lists is that; Speakers of dialect 1 end certain words with the vowel i where the Dialect 2 has â.

<u>Word</u>	<u>Dialect 1</u>	<u>Dialect 2</u>
string bag	iri	irâ
family house	miri	mirâ
mens house	namî	namâ
sun	miri sin	mirâsin
(eye of the dweeling place)		

Speakers of Dialect 1 use the vowel o in certain positions where Dialect 2 uses the vowel â.

<u>Word</u>	<u>Dialect 1</u>	<u>Dialect 2</u>
blossom	bolonâ	bâlpnâ
one	konok	kânok

For some terms there is a choice of two or three forms which are not exclusive to one dialect but are known and used throughout two or all three dialect areas, but each area has its more favoured form.

e.g. bird ni/lâut

Ni is generally preferred by Dialect 2 speakers and lâut by other speakers.

sweet potato goka/kembi/batum

Goka is used throughout the Language area but speakers of Dialect 2 often use Kembi or Batum instead.

In contrast to that are terms where a dialect/sub dialect has a form of its very own which is not used or even generally known by speakers of other dialects.

e.g.	<u>Dialects 1 and 2</u>	<u>Dialect 3</u>
path	mâtâp	ken
dog	wâu	bua

An interesting variant of Dialect 3 is the counting system used there which instead of the basic numbers karambut 'three' and Kimembut 'four' uses respectively two plus one and two plus two.

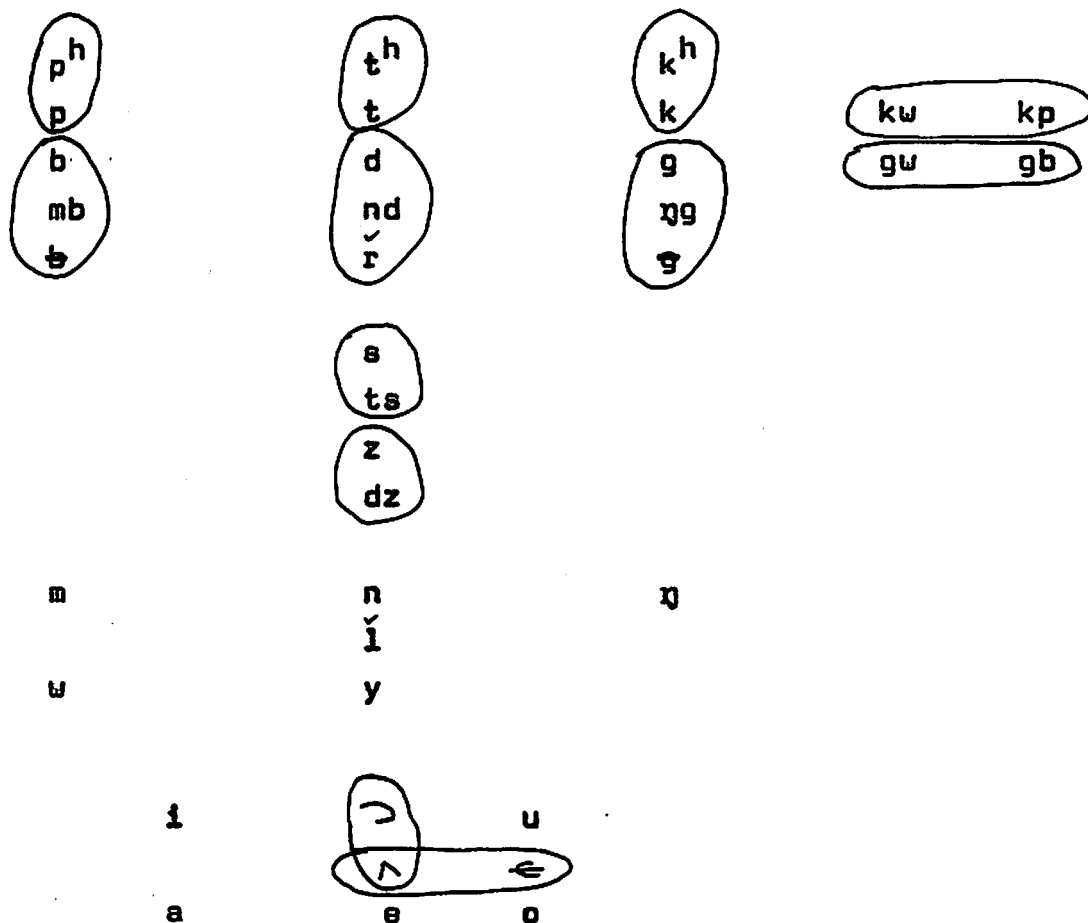
e.g.	<u>Dialects 1 and 2</u>	<u>Dialect 3</u>
one	konok/kânok	kânok
two	zagât	zagât
three	karâmbut	zagât gâi
four	kimembut	zagât zagât
five	bâtnâmbut	bâtnâmbut

### Phonological differences / similarities.

The Komba Language is generally phonologically consistent throughout all dialects. That is Komba speakers from all dialects use the same basic range of sounds which they divide into units which they regard as distinctive from each other. The one exception is found in Dialect 3 where the simultaneously released double stops kp and gb are used respectively where other dialects use the labialized stops.



# Phonetic Work Chart.



On the work chart above the phonetic sounds found in Komba are listed. Some have been circled being analysed as variants of each other but regarded by Komba speakers as one distinctive unit. The phonemes of Komba then being,

p	t	k	kw
b	d	g	gw
	s		
	z		
m	n	$\eta$	
	$\text{ɲ}$		
w	y		
i	a	u	
a	e	o	

Note    â symbolizes the vowel phoneme which may have the phonetic qualities ʌ, ɔ, ɞ.

This analysis fits all dialects of the Komba equally except that as mentioned the double stops kp and gb are found in Dialect 3 instead of kw and gw. As these two phonemes are found lowest of all on the listing Phoneme Frequency count it is not considered a great matter for the 2,000 speakers of Dialect 3 to adapt to reading these two phonemes written kw and gw. according to the speech of the 10,000 Komba speakers.

### Conclusion.

The Komba language is found to have three variant dialects. One on the west bank of the upper Guama River adjacent to the Selepet and Timbe language areas. This dialect is made up of two sub-dialects, 1a to the North and 1b to the South and including several villages on the east of the Guama River.

The second dialect is spoken east of the Guama River in the valley of the Ândâ River, to the north and south of the airstrip of Konge and Indagen.

The third dialect is spoken east of the Guamâ River in the Puleng River Valley which is the next side valley north of the Ândâ River Valley.

The language is one language with a fairly high rate of constancy in way of terms, grammatical, use and phonology, but each dialect or sub dialect having its own variants which are generally understood by speakers of the other dialects and sub dialects.

### Village names.

Below note alternative or more common names for villages.  
We have written the river names in this paper as spoken by the people of the Komba language rather than as found on maps.

#### As written by Govt. Officers.

#### As generally spoken by Komba speakers/ or alternative name.

##### Rivers.

Kwama

Gwamâ

Andar

Ândâ

Puleng

Puleŋ

##### Villages.

Erendengan

Erendenŋ

Gilang

Gilaŋ

Upat

Upat

Dengondo

Dengândo

Tipsit

Tipsit

Bamurofta

Bamuropta

Sanon

Gâtorâ

Ilaka

Ilâkâ

Gumum

Gumum

Sape

Sâlikwâk/ Sape

Umun

Kâmbuk

Sikam

Sikam/ Tarotop

Ununu

Tipare/ Ununu

Konge

Muin/ Koge

Lama

Bâbân/ Lama

Geraun

Gerâun

Wanam

Wanam

Komban

Komban

Gatseng

Gatseŋ

Musep

Mugâ:ia/ Musep

Indagen

Indagen

Kopa

Kopa

Contd.

Saune

Langa

Satwag/Satweg

Sambori

Puleng

Mangam

Melandum

Taknawe

Kumbip

Sâune

Lagga

Sâtkwâk

Sâmbore

Pulen

Maggam

Mâlandum

Tâknawe

Kumbip

Other Villages.

There is an inaccessible village (69 people) called Mula in the rugged mountains between the Puleng Valley and the north coast. The villagers, according to reports, speak Komba, but not a pure Komba due to their isolation from other Komba Villages and their proximity to the coastal language.

Another small inaccessible village is in the mountains south of Ilâkâ/ Gumum. The village is named Kirârâ and is a branch off of the Ilâkâ village people. These people are listed in the census under Ilâkâ.