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Historical sociolinguistics in colonial New Guinea: The Rhenish mission society in the Astrolabe Bay

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Abstract: The Rhenish Mission Society, a German Protestant mission, was active in a small part of northern New Guinea, the Astrolabe Bay, between 1887 and 1932. Up until 1914, this region was under German colonial rule. The German dominance was also reflected in rules on language use in official contexts such as schools and administration.

Missionaries were strongly affected by such rules as their most important tool in mission work was language. In addition, they were also responsible for school education as most schools in the German colonial areas in the Pacific were mission-run. Thus, mission societies had to make decisions about what languages to use, considering their own needs, their ideological convictions, and the colonial government's requirements. These considerations were framed by the complex setting of New Guinea's language wealth where several hundred languages were, and still are, spoken.

This paper investigates a small set of original documents from the Rhenish Mission Society to trace what steps were taken and what considerations played a major role in the process of agreeing on a suitable means of communication with the people the missionaries wanted to reach, thereby touching upon topics such as language attitudes, language policies and politics, practical considerations of language learning and language spread, and colonial actions impacting local language ecologies.

Keywords: colonial language contact, language politics, New Guinea, German mission society

1 The historical context: German colonialism

Germany held a number of colonies in the Pacific and in Africa during the three decades prior to the First World War (1884–1914). The German government's main interest in these dealings was mainly economic and political. In addition, a

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cultural and linguistic impact on the local population was desired for economic reasons, for reasons of political control and, to some degree, for reasons of contemporary moral consideration. In order to affect all this, communication with the local population had to be achieved. The colonial administration made repeated and diverse efforts to implement German as the official language in several settings (administration, government, education) in the colonial areas in Africa as well as in the Pacific region. In many places, Pidgin English (and/or English) had acquired a sound position as a *lingua franca* between the local population and the colonial European-origin expatriates, as well as among the expatriates.¹ This was not a preferred solution from the German perspective as English-speaking countries were considered political rivals in the colonial context. Permitting their language to spread in German colonial areas was therefore perceived as a threat to one's own national identity (e. g. Samoanische Zeitung 1901–1914, July 8, 1911: 2; Sembritzki 1913). Then again, there were strongly conflicting opinions in the colonial circles in Germany on whether or not to spread the German language (cf. Friederici 1911; Sembritzki 1913; Hiery 2001; Sokolowsky 2004; Engelberg 2006). Throughout Germany's colonial period, the so-called *Sprachenfrage*, the language question, was never ultimately resolved. Repeated changes and readjustments in the German colonial language policy reflect this indecision (cf. Stolberg 2015).

The German colonial government assigned an important role in spreading German to the mission societies who were, particularly in the Pacific region, the main providers of school education. Mission societies, however, had their own preferences with respect to language use. Missionaries relied on language to communicate the contents of their belief, to missionize, and to teach. When they arrived at their destinations, they needed a functioning means of communication as soon as possible. While Catholic missions tended to adjust their language policies to that of the government (using German as the mission language), the matter was different for Protestant missions. The latter generally preferred, for ideological reasons, the use of the native language(s) of their addressees for missionizing and teaching (cf. Adick and Mehnert 2001: 266–275). Therefore, they put a strong emphasis on their learning the local language(s) as fast as possible. New Guinea was one of the colonial regions, however, where this intention was put to a hard test. Because of the high number of languages

¹ In addition, Malay was in use in German New Guinea and, for a time, was discussed as an option for a *lingua franca* as well. Huber and Velupillai Forthcoming; however, referring to Friederici (Friederici 1911: 94), point out that after 1910 there were only few speakers of Malay in this region, so that option was not considered further.

spoken there,² it was impossible for the missionaries to learn all native languages that existed within their mission territories. They had to make pragmatic decisions on language use that ultimately led to changed language ecologies in these areas.³ This did not preclude the use of German, even where local languages were chosen in principle. For example, the decision for borrowing lexical items from German when translating the Bible into local languages could result from the combination of insufficient familiarity with these languages in grammatical and lexical respects,⁴ as well as the great cultural distance of the local to the European ways of life, not to mention to those referred to in the Bible (cf. RMG 3.014a-9 Helmich *Terminologie*).

The current paper is set within the context of colonial linguistics research (cf. e. g. Calvet 1974; Errington 2001; 2008; Dewein et al. 2012; Stoltz et al. 2016), with a particular interest in the role of language politics, language ideology, and language planning in the language interactions between the missionaries and the inhabitants of the colonized territories. It takes a micro-sociolinguistic perspective on one specific region where three different mission societies as well as the German colonial administration, represented by a trading company (the New Guinea Company), tried to establish a working agreement on what language(s) to use with the local inhabitants. Due to differing preferences, the outcome was variable across agents and over time.

It is the goal of this paper to arrive at a better understanding of the small steps of influencing and shaping communicative practices that eventually had far-reaching implications for local language ecologies. To this end, the paper traces language and linguistic mission activities in the Astrolabe Bay in Papua New Guinea during the period of German colonialism, with a special focus on the activities of the Rhenish Mission Society (*Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft*, RMG). Such activities were conditioned by the tension between the respective German colonial legislature and the (contrasting) needs for the missionaries' intended everyday work and interaction with the local people. More specifically, the paper's main aims are (a) to analyze what strategies of language interaction RMG missionaries applied, and (b) to identify these strategies' impact on the languages and the language ecology of the area where the RMG was active

2 The current estimate for Papua New Guinea is 850 (Lewis et al. 2014 [1951]).

3 While the language situation was particularly complex in New Guinea, this observation holds generally for the German colonial territories in the Pacific region and in Africa.

4 The missionaries themselves were well aware of their limited language competence. This is a topic in Helmich's *Terminologie* (RMG 3.014a-9 Helmich) as well as in documents from European missionaries and teachers in Africa, cf. Christaller for Ewe in Cameroon, 1888 (in Adick and Mehnert 2001: 247).

during the German colonial period. To this purpose, the investigation is based on archival material that reflects and reports on language-related mission activities in the Astrolabe Bay area. Three selected areas of such activities are in particular focus: (1) the linguistic effects of translating the Bible and creating a corpus of Christian literature in the local languages as carried out by non-native speakers of the target languages; (2) semantic change induced by introducing a new belief system; and (3), the impact on local language ecologies incurred by relocating languages (e. g. selecting non-local languages as school or mission languages) as well as people (groups and individuals) to new language environments.

As for the structure of this paper, Sections 2 through 4 present the historical, geographical, language, and language politics setting around the RMG's activities in New Guinea. In Section 5, the focus is on a detailed view of the missionaries' linguistic and language-related activities in this specific setting, investigating different strategies of language interaction, and analyzing their respective linguistic outcomes. Section 6 evaluates the linguistic impact of this colonial language contact setting, and Section 7 concludes the paper.

Please note that place names and language names are used according to their appearance in the archival materials. Additional information on alternative names is provided where necessary or applicable.

2 The Rhenish Mission Society (RMG) in New Guinea⁵

The Rhenish Mission Society (*Rheinische Missions-Gesellschaft*, RMG; today part of the *Vereinigte Evangelische Mission*, ‘United Evangelical Mission’, VEM) was one of the German Protestant missions that evangelized in so-called German New Guinea, more specifically in *Kaiser-Wilhelmsland*, the northern part of today’s Papua New Guinea (cf. Steffen 1995). Their mission area was the Astrolabe Bay in today’s Madang Province, including the islands Karkar (formerly Dampier Island) and Bagabag in the north and part of the Rai Coast in the south (cf. Figure 1). Two other mission societies were active in the Astrolabe Bay area: the Catholic mission Societas Verbi Divini (‘Society of the Divine Word’, SVD, since 1895; also referred to as *Steyler Mission*) and another Protestant mission, the Neuendettelsauer Mission (ND, since 1886; today *Mission Eine*

⁵ I thank Stefan Engelberg for providing me with digital copies of the documents in focus and for making available to me his personal notes on them (Engelberg 2011a; 2011b).



Figure 1: Astrolabe Bay (New Guinea 1:500,000. Series T401, U.S. Army Map Service, 1942. Map Collection, Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/ams/new_guinea_500k/index.html (accessed 12 December 2016)) with names of RMG mission stations marked by rectangular edging [marking mine].

Welt, ‘Mission Society One World’) (cf. Steffen 1995). Relationships between the different societies were not always friendly and tended to have a competitive touch. Especially between Catholics and Protestants, demarcation lines were drawn (cf. RMG 3.002-1 Nobonob), and the moves of the respective other party were carefully observed, lest it intruded into one’s own mission area.

During the early 1880s, the RMG had been headed by Friedrich Fabri, a strong advocate of colonial ideas (Fabri 1883 [1879]; cf. also Bade 1987).⁶ As a result of Fabri’s political positioning, in 1885, the RMG was asked by the German government to set up the protestant mission work in German New Guinea (Bade 1987: 62). The RMG accepted but, because of that background, had to commit itself to following the rules of the New Guinea Company (NGC) that represented the colonial German government in this region until 1900. This included the choice of locations for mission stations as well as an obligation to serve as interpreters and mediators and to support the NGC by choosing educational contents for their school instruction that helped provide the NGC with adequately trained and ‘acculturated’ local workers. In particular, “[t]he mission society was free neither to choose its field of work nor to make decisions on the location or relocation of outposts, but had to submit its plans to the *Landeshauptmann* (leading official of the NGC) for approval” (Bade 1987: 64).

The missionaries of the RMG founded their first mission station in 1887 (at Bogadjim, in the south of the Astrolabe Bay). The NGC, a trading company already well established in the late 1880s, had one of its major trading stations in Madang (then Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen), next to the RMG’s mission area (Bade 1987: 65; Loeffen 1991). The close neighborhood had certain advantages with respect to providing the missionaries with food and other necessities during the first time of installing themselves in the Astrolabe Bay. As a whole, however, the missionaries were not pleased with this vicinity because they considered the NGC a dangerous influence to their new and prospective converts who, they feared, would be attracted to inappropriate activities and possessions that the company as well as the harbor city offered (e. g. RMG 3.002-1 Nobonob; RMG 3.003-1 Ragetta).

According to the arrangements, the NGC expected the RMG missionaries to translate and mediate between the agents of German government and trading, and the local population, thus to advance the mutual communication (if mainly to the advantage of the NGC). Repeatedly, however, a rather distancing view towards the colonial German population is expressed in the mission documents, mainly on moral grounds. The focus of the mission’s engagement with the local

⁶ This position was not shared by all members of the RMG.

languages was directed towards everyday communication as well as transmitting the message of the Bible, but much less towards practical communication with and for German officials. This seems to have been an obligation that was carried out if it could not be avoided, but was granted little importance otherwise. Accordingly, it is not a topic in the documents investigated that focus on language policies, on the acquisition of local languages, or on Biblical translation matters.

The early decades of the mission's activities there were not successful from the mission's point of view. Many deaths in their own rows and few converts in the area were the results up until c. 1911. After that, and especially during and soon after World War I, things began to change, and repeatedly large baptism ceremonies were held at the RMG's mission stations (e. g. RMG 2.997-1 Bogadjim; RMG 2.998-1 Bongu; RMG 3.003-1 Ragetta; Bade 1987: 67; cf. also; McSwain 1994: 23 for Karkar). The RMG's involvement in New Guinea ended officially in 1921 (Bade 1987; Pech 2001) and practically in 1932. The Australian government, having taken over the formerly German colonies in New Guinea, required the RMG in 1921 to transfer its mission areas to the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia (Bade 1987). The archival records of the RMG mission stations list the RMG missionaries as staffing the stations, at least in part, up until 1930/31, together with American and Australian Protestant missionaries whose precise denomination is not given in these lists (RMG 2.997-1 Bogadjim; RMG 3.001-8 Neuguinea (Karkar); RMG 3.003-1 Ragetta).

As pointed out earlier, the special focus of the current paper is the handling of language and language policies in the context of the German colonial period and as carried out by the RMG in an area with a particularly high density of languages. Its main interest is thus to take a closer look at the interactions between German colonial government language politics and policies, on one hand, and the local mission-related activities and actions in language matters, on the other hand. This focus limits the time frame to the period between 1887 and 1914 (the beginning of WW I when Germany in effect lost the control over its colonies). This is, however, not to the exclusion of material and data after that date where this material relates to questions relevant to the paper.

3 RMG stations and languages in the Astrolabe Bay area

The location of mission stations determined what languages the missionaries were in contact with (cf. Taylor 1977: 834f). This is particularly relevant in the

case of the Astrolabe Bay (and other parts of New Guinea) where many small speech communities lived, and still live, in short distance from each other. Figure 2 (below) gives an impression of the current distribution and density of language communities in the former RMG mission area around the Astrolabe Bay. Of the languages that were mentioned as spoken at or around the RMG mission stations in the RMG documents, the following are listed by name (Ethnologue numbering in square brackets): Amele [351], Anjam (= Bogadjim) [378], Bongu [380], Nobonob [338], Gedaged (= Ragetta/Bel) [355], Takia (on Karkar) [317], and Waskia (on Karkar) [314].

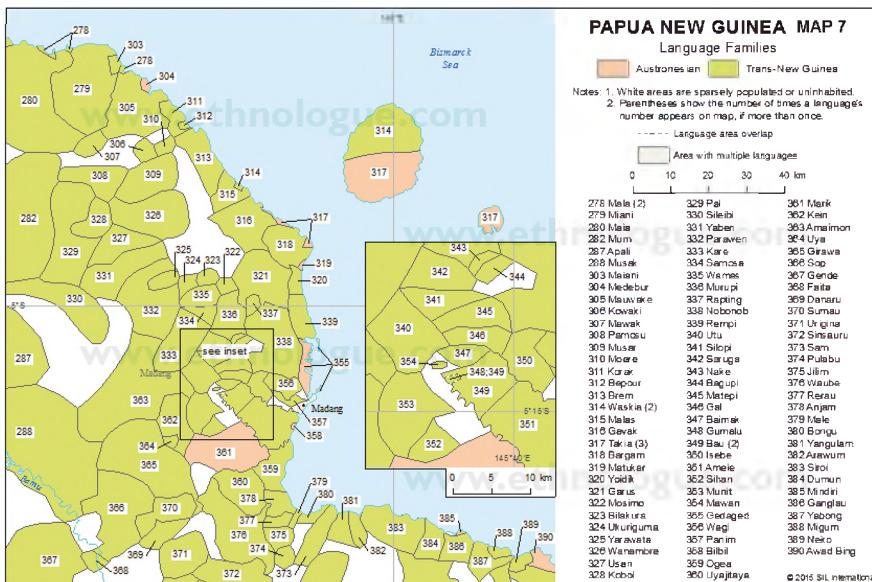


Figure 2: Languages in the former RMG mission area (Lewis et al. 2014 [1951]: http://www.ethnologue.com/map/PG_07).

Note: While using a map from Ethnologue for illustration, I wish to emphasize that the language classifications put forth by Ethnologue are not without difficulties. The language boundaries indicated on this map imply that language areas can be clearly delineated, and that it is possible to distinguish languages unambiguously. This view is challenged by, e. g. Mühlhäusler (2006). The work of Z'Graggen (e. g. Z'Graggen 1975) on the languages of the Madang province demonstrates how difficult it is to draw such lines.

The choice of the location for a new mission station depended on various factors, such as climate or density of population (Loeffen 1991: 77). Occasionally, mission stations had to be left for reasons of natural catastrophes, such as volcanic

eruptions (for example, on Karkar Island in 1895; Loeffen 1991: 64,⁷ RMG3.001-8 Neuguinea). Sometimes a combination of a difficult climate (from a European perspective) and a continuing hostile attitude of the local people towards the intruding mission led to the relocation of a mission station. Among the reasons for the choice of Bogadjim as the first station is, apparently, the RMG's link with the German government: Bade (Bade 1987: 64) points out that the RMG, due to its obligations towards the government and the NGC, was not free to choose the location of its settlement (cf. above), and Loeffen (Loeffen 1991: 60) notes that Bogadjim was situated near Stephansort, an NGC station. While the geographical neighborhood is a fact, the chronology is a bit unclear. The mission station in Bogadjim was founded in 1887, and it seems that Stephansort was founded to become an NGC station only a year later, in 1888 (McKillop and Pearson 1997: Ch. 2; Meyers Großes Konversations-Lexikon; Meyer 1909: 938). It "became a focus of company operations in 1891" (McKillop and Pearson 1997: Ch. 2), however, and by 1893, it was linked to the neighboring locations Bogadjim, Alt-Erima, and Erima by a working railway system. Madang, further up north, on the other hand, was already an established place⁸ for colonial government and trade, as the New Guinea Company had set up a post there in 1885 (McSwain 1994: 20), and it was within the missionary area of the RMG. It is also the location where the first RMG missionary, Thomas, arrived in 1887. So it appears that the NGC restriction on locations for mission stations, as mentioned by Bade (1987), has to be taken in the sense that the range of the mission area as a whole was determined by the location of official colonial places. What was not meant, apparently, was a requirement for all mission stations to be located at or close to NGC stations.

During the following years, the RMG established further mission stations along the coast of the Astrolabe Bay, and to some extent also inland from the coast. Some of the stations (e. g. Kurum on Karkar Island) had subsidiary stations that are not listed in detail here. In their chronological order, the stations were located at Bogadjim (1887), Siar (1889–1910), Kurum/Kulobob (1890–1895), Bongu (1896), Ragetta (1901), Nobonob (1906), Nagada (1908; a mission plantation and school farm belonging to the Ragetta station), and

⁷ Loeffen (Loeffen 1991: 64) suggests that the volcano eruption was the occasion but not the deeper reason to leave Karkar at that time. Unresolvable conflicts between the local population and the missionaries, and consequently an expectation of little success in their efforts from the missionaries' perspective seem to have been more substantial factors in this decision.

⁸ 'Place' is used here with reference to the concept of place-making. In the given context, this means that by setting up buildings, railways, plantations, or institutions that are part of a colonial framework, colonial place-making is carried out (cf. e. g. Amith 2005; Broch-Due 2005; Stolz and Warnke 2015). It is this concept that is relevant here when referring to a location as being a(n official) colonial place.

Kurum again (1911) (cf. Hanke 1912). The mission stations in Amele and Keku were installed only after WW I, that is, after the period that is in focus here. For completion, these stations are included in the following overview, listing the RMG mission stations alphabetically and providing some information on the languages spoken there. The detail of information on the stations and their associated languages varies due to the availability of sources.

Information on written production by RMG missionaries in the respective languages is provided where applicable. The texts and publications constitute the earliest written documentation of these languages, making them a valuable source for linguistic and language-historical investigations. It has to be kept in mind, however, that they were usually not produced by native speakers of the languages but by European-origin missionaries, thus outsiders and (advanced) language learners, making them prone to deviations from the actual language use at the time.

3.1 Amele

Station: In Amele, founded in 1916, there was a teachers' training school and seminary (established in 1923), and teachers trained there staffed several mission schools in the Astrolabe Bay area (e. g. in Bogadjim, Bongu, and Nobonob). It is mentioned that the geographical location is advantageous because it provides good access to the adjoining inland regions (and their inhabitants) (Steffen 1995; RMG 2.997-8 Bogadjim).

Language: Amele, a non-Austronesian⁹ language. It is spoken today in the hills up from Astrolabe Bay, between Gum and Gogol rivers. The speech community consists of 40 villages with c. 5,300 speakers (1987). (Lewis et al. 2014 [1951]: <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/aey>)

In 1925, a primer in Amele was prepared by RMG missionary Wullenkord (RMG 3.013-7 Lit-Nobonob).

⁹ The languages spoken in Papua-New Guinea belong to two large language groups, Austronesian and non-Austronesian. Non-Austronesian languages that are indigenous to Papua-New Guinea are also referred to as Papuan languages. They belong to different language families that are not genetically related to each other. One of the non-Austronesian/Papuan language families is the group of Trans-New Guinean languages. All of the non-Austronesian languages spoken in the Astrolabe Bay area belong to this group.

Throughout this paper, I use the more general term “non-Austronesian” when referring to indigenous languages of Papua-New Guinea that are not part of the Austronesian language family.

3.2 Bogadjim

Station: This was the first RMG station in New Guinea, founded in 1887. It functioned as the main RMG station until 1918, after which it became a subsidiary station. Only the people from the closest mountain area are reported to have been attracted to the station, which suggests that there was no strong influence on the population in the wider radius of Bogadjim. The neighborhood of the NGC stations Stephansort and Erima is claimed to have had a negative impact on the proselytes (RMG 2.997-1 Bogadjim).

Language: Anjam, a non-Austronesian language. Current alternate names for Anjam are Bogadjim, Bogajim, Bogati, Bom, and Lalok. It is spoken in the Astrolabe Bay district by roughly 2,000 speakers (2003). (Lewis et al. 2014 [1951]: <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/boj>)

RMG missionaries started to put Bogadjim into writing in 1896. Up until 1926, the missionaries Hoffmann, Diehl, and Eiffert produced a total of 13 written and printed documents, most of them in several editions. The RMG documentation (RMG 3.013-4 Lit-Bogadjim) lists a primer (1897, 1911, 1914), a dictionary manuscript (1903, 1915, 1926), a grammar manuscript (1912), stories from the Bible translated into Bogadjim (1896, 1914, 1917), and a hymnbook and catechism (1914, 1925) (RMG 3.013-4 Lit-Bogadjim). In 1913, the missionaries' language conference decided to use Bogadjim generally as "Kultus-, Schul- und Schriftsprache", i. e. as the language for (Christian) ritual, for school, and for writing (cf. Diehl-1, Hanke-7; cf. Section 5.3.2 below).

3.3 Bongu

Station: This station was founded in 1896. It was an independent mission station until 1918 and became a subsidiary station of Keku afterwards. For the time around 1930, it is reported that the teacher in Bongu had been trained in the Amele training school and, at the time of the report, was in the process of introducing Amele as the school language in Bongu (RMG 2.998-1 Bongu), in spite of the decision for Ragetta as the "universal language" as mentioned in Hannemann (around 1930, cf. Hannemann-1).

Language: Bongu, a non-Austronesian language. It is spoken today in the Astrolabe Bay area and along the Rai Coast. The census data for 2000 report 850 speakers (Lewis et al. 2014 [1951]: <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/bpu>).

RMG missionary Hanke prepared the first Bongu primer in 1899. It included a Bongu translation of the Ten Commandments, the profession of (Christian)

faith, the Lord's Prayer, and several additional prayers. According to RMG documentation (RMG 3.013-6 Lit-Bongu), Hanke was the only RMG missionary (up until 1916) who produced written and/or printed texts in Bongu. In addition to the primer, the RMG archive holds his Bongu translations of biblical stories (1902, 1915), a hymnbook (1906, 1916, the latter edition including a catechism), an extended edition of the primer (1906), and a grammar and dictionary (1909, published) (RMG 3.013-6 Lit-Bongu). Furthermore, there is a handwritten document in the RMG archive titled *Liturgie* ('liturgy') that seems to be in Bongu as well. It is a draft for a complete Protestant service, with headings in German (for example, *Glaubensbekennnis* 'profession of faith'; *Segen* 'blessing') and indications of what part was to be said by the cleric or missionary (*Geistlicher*) and what part by the congregation (*Gemeinde*). The contents, i. e. what was actually to be said, are filled in in Bongu. This document is neither dated nor is there an indication of authorship. As Bogadjim was decided to be introduced as the RMG's church language in February 1913, the document probably precedes this date.

3.4 Keku

Station: This inland station was founded in 1918. It is mentioned that from there, increasing contact further into the inland was possible, so that this station was more promising than Bogadjim regarding the extension of the missionary efforts. Bogadjim was administered as a subsidiary station of Keku after 1918 (RMG 2.997-1 Bogadjim). The station at Keku existed until around WW II (<http://legacy.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?peo3=12918&rog3=PP>), that is, well after the time when the RMG stations had been turned over to the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia.

Language: It is not possible to tell from the RMG evidence what language was spoken at and around Keku. Keku was located bordering both the Waube and the Amowe language areas (<http://legacy.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?peo3=12918&rog3=PP>), so both languages could have been used but none of them is mentioned in the RMG reports. Apparently, it was Waube that was the preferred mission language.¹⁰ Alternate names for Waube are Kwato and Waupe; in 1981, there were 780 speakers of this variety (Lewis et al. 2014 [1951]: <http://www.ethnologue.com/language/kop>).

¹⁰ I thank an anonymous reviewer for information on the preferred mission language in Keku.

3.5 Kurum (Karkar)

Station: There was a RMG station on Karkar, three hours east of Kabailo/Kavailo (also named Kulobob/Kulubob, located in the southeast of the island), between 1890 and 1895, that was given up.¹¹ A new mission station was founded at Kurum in 1911, and several subsidiary stations were established subsequently in different parts of the island. German RMG missionaries worked there continuously at least until 1929. During the 1920s, a teacher training school and a middle school were founded in Kurum. In addition, 35 elementary schools are reported for the island in the early 1930s (RMG 3.001-8 Neuguinea).

While RMG missionaries and their co-workers (but not their wives) are always mentioned by name, this is usually not the case for mission members, teachers, etc. of local origin. In contrast to this common practice, the description of the Kurum/Karkar station lists six persons from Karkar and two from Samoa who were actively involved in serving at mission stations, in founding subsidiary stations, or in teaching at different levels. For at least three of them, it can be established that they worked there before WW I (RMG 3.001-8 Neuguinea).

Languages: In the north of Karkar, Waskia, a non-Austronesian language is spoken (c. 20,000 speakers in 2007) while in its southern part, Takia, an Austronesian language, is in use. Takia is also spoken on Bagabag Island (which belonged to the mission area of Kurum/Karkar) and in a few coastal villages of the Astrolabe Bay north of the former RMG mission area (cf. Figure 2), summing up to c. 40,000 speakers. (Lewis et al. 2014 [1951]: <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/wsk>; <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/tbc>)

3.6 Nagada

Station: Nagada was not a mission station but a plantation, including an agricultural school (Hanke 1912; Schlunk 1914: 260–261; Hiery 2001: 214–215). It belonged to the mission area of Ragetta. Between 1914 and 1922, a RMG missionary was the plantation manager, but there is no information on the period prior to this (RMG 3.003-1 Ragetta).

¹¹ Possible reasons for this decision may have been a volcanic eruption and the missionaries' difficult relationship with the local inhabitants, cf. fn. 8 above and Loeffen (Loeffen 1991: 64).

3.7 Nobonob

Station: Nobonob was a well-established mission station in the early 1930s. It had been founded in 1906 as the first inland station of the RMG, located on Hansemann Mountain at a height of 350 m above sea level. One of its primary purposes was to offer a recreational station for those missionaries who worked in hot and humid areas as the climate in Nobonob was much more agreeable for Europeans. The report notes that the climate was even better in Keku (which, however, was founded only 12 years later). In the early 1930s, there was a so-called station school, apparently on a higher level than regular elementary schools, and 20–25 village schools in the surrounding area. About half of the teachers had been trained at the Amele training school. Nobonob station had several solid buildings, a hospital, and a well-kept path network that allowed easy access to this station (RMG 3.002-1 Nobonob).

Language: Nobonob, a non-Austronesian language. Nobonob is spoken today near Hansemann Mountain by c. 5,000 speakers (2005) (Lewis et al. 2014 [1951]: <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/gaw>), that is, in the same area where the RMG station Nobonob was located.

The first written documents in Nobonob by a RMG missionary are Schütz' two-part primer and a hymnbook with catechism, both of 1916 (listed in RMG 3.013-7 Lit-Nobonob). In 1923, Schütz prepared a translation of biblical stories from the Old Testament, the second edition of the primer's first part, and a Nobonob translation of Luther's Catechism. A translation of biblical stories from the New Testament was equally prepared in 1923, and printed in 1926. Also in 1926, 20 hymns were added to extend the hymnbook of 1916 (RMG 3.013-7 Lit-Nobonob).

3.8 Ragetta Island/Siar Island¹²

Station: In 1889, Siar was founded as a main mission station and formed a combined station together with Ragetta (the name of the station also appears as Krantet, Graged, or Mitibog) until 1901. After that, both Siar and Ragetta became main stations, and from 1910, Ragetta was the main station with Siar being its

¹² This station, and the language used there, appears under different names. To minimize confusion, I first summarize reports on the station; here I refer to it by the name used in the RMG documents, Ragetta. I then turn to the language where I give the different names that are used to refer to it, with reference to the respective sources. Note that the language today is mostly referred to as Gedaged or Bel.

subsidiary station. The mission area of these two stations included four additional islands in the port area of Ragetta (resp. Madang); these were Belia, Panutibun, Ruo (Riwo) and Yabob (RMG 3.003-1 Ragetta). Mennis (Mennis 2014: 6) describes their relative geographical arrangement as follows: “Kranket [i. e., Ragetta] Island is a small island off the coast of Madang town [...]. Riwo and Siar are within the harbor whereas Kranket is at the entrance to the harbor and Yabob and Bilbil are around the coast in the open sea.” (cf. Figure 3).

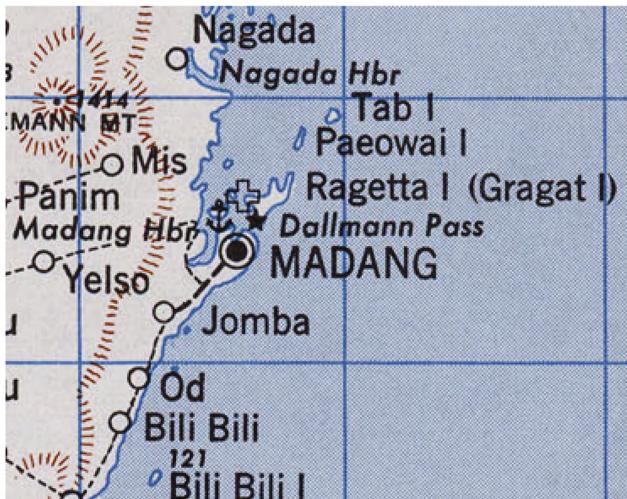


Figure 3: Madang harbor/Ragetta Island (New Guinea 1:500,000. Series T401, U.S. Army Map Service, 1942. Map Collection, Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/ams/new_guinea_500k/index.html (accessed 12 December 2016)).

After 1930, Ragetta was no longer staffed with a missionary but still had several (elementary) schools and a hospital. The report notes that the Ragetta station (and its proselytes) deserved particular care, “da sie eben durch die Lage im Hafengebiet, den Einfluss der Weissen, der [sic!] Bedrohung durch die Katholiken in grosser Gefahr steht” [as it stands in great danger because of its location in the port area, the influence from the whites, and the threat from the Catholics] [translation mine] (RMG 3.003-1 Ragetta). This statement marks the mission’s self-ascribed identity explicitly as non-Catholic, and positioned at a clear – moral, ideological, or attitudinal – distance from other European colonial agents.

According to Finsch (1888) (cited in Mennis 2014: 5), who visited Siar in 1884, “the people [on Siar] had a domineering position in the area”, and Mennis (Mennis 2014: 6) adds that “the Kranket played an important role as an ally to all the other villages”. It was thus a strategically wise decision, from the mission’s perspective, to locate a mission station there, as it could be expected that influence on the Ragetta and Siar people would have an effect on other groups too.

Language: Gedaged, also referred to as Bel (=Ragetta/Siar), an Austronesian language. It is spoken today on Sek, Yabob, Karkar, and Bagabag islands,¹³ in the Astrolabe Bay, and in the Madang coastal villages area by c. 7,000 speakers (2003) (Lewis et al. 2014 [1951]: <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/gdd>). According to Lewis et al. (2014 [1951]), several alternative names are used for Gedaged, among them Bel, Graged, Mitebog, Ragetta, Siar, and Siar-Ragetta. According to Freyberg (Freyberg 1977: 855), Bel has been used as the name for this language since about 1967. Ross implies that Bel may be more of a cover term for several closely related varieties; he includes Gedaged, Riwo, and Siar with the Western Bel languages, with Bilbil and Takia (on Karkar Island) being slightly more distantly related varieties of the same group (Ross 2009: 6, quoted in; Mennis 2014: 10).

Siar and Ragetta are mostly treated as interchangeable names in the RMG missionaries’ written works, except for two instances: Helmich, in his *Terminologie* of 1907, refers explicitly to the Siar language, while a 1926 translation of biblical stories by George is assigned to the Ragetta language (RMG 3.013-5 Lit-Siar/Ragetta). The RMG written production of Siar/Ragetta starts with Helmich’s primer in 1898, followed by a translation of biblical stories by Bergmann in 1899 (RMG 3.013-5 Lit-Siar/Ragetta). Between 1906 and 1914, Helmich prepared eight written works in Siar/Ragetta, among them a catechism and hymnbook (1906, 1914), the aforementioned *Terminologie* (1907), an improved and extended edition of the primer (1908, 1910), another translation of biblical stories (1911), and a dictionary manuscript (1911). In 1925 and 1926, RMG missionary George added a Siar/Ragetta translation of the Gospel of Luke, another extended edition of the primer, and the previously mentioned translation of biblical stories into Ragetta (RMG 3.013-5 Lit-Siar/Ragetta).

The previous overview illustrates the complex language setting the RMG missionaries were facing, a setting that was certainly rather different from the conditions they were used to in Europe. While some of the languages had a wider radius than the immediate surroundings of one mission station (e. g. Gedaged/Ragetta), many languages were nevertheless in use, and with each

¹³ On Bagabag Island, Takia is also spoken.

extension of the mission area, new languages were added. In addition, social relations and prestige hierarchies between the different speech communities were not transparent to the newcomers and made matters possibly even more complicated for them.

Considering the translations and texts prepared and produced by the missionaries in the local languages, it becomes obvious that putting these languages into writing already included language planning in that new vocabulary was developed, either by redefining existing terminology, or by providing new ways of expressing new concepts. The latter was done partly based on the languages' own lexicon and partly by introducing loanwords from German, but also from Greek or Latin occasionally (cf. *Liturgie*; *Sprachkonferenz*; Helmich, *Terminologie*). In this process, a new register evolved for these languages, a register of Christian religion that had not been part of the languages before.

4 Language politics under German colonial rule

Mission activities regarding language practices were closely intertwined with governmental language politics and policies. During the German colonial period, the same general language policies applied in all German colonial areas. There was some variation regarding the strictness of implementation (it was slightly less strict in the Pacific region), and local adjustments were carried out in reaction to political changes (cf. e. g. Sokolowsky 2004 for Togo). While this paper focuses on one specific setting in colonial New Guinea, the general observations in this respect, however, apply to all German-dominated territories, in Africa as well as in the Pacific region.

The language activities undertaken by missionaries were determined by two central factors that had to be brought into accordance with each other: First, the mission societies themselves had a practical and a theological interest in mastering the new languages in order to be able to carry out their mission work; and second, the language laws and regulations proclaimed by the German colonial government required them to teach and spread German, at least to some degree (cf. Hanke-5; Hanke-6). The latter aspect had practical implications for the mission societies as they depended in part on the financial support of the German government (cf. e. g. Orosz 2011; Sokolowsky 2004, esp. regarding Africa; Mühlhäusler 2012; Stolberg 2015).

Language policies of the German government were implemented in direct and indirect ways. Direct ways of influencing language use consisted of laws,

official recommendations, and other types of legal orders. One circular that applied to all German colonies was proclaimed in 1897, recommending that German had to be the first non-indigenous language to be taught in schools (Figure 4). In other words, it was allowed to instruct students in their own first language(s) or another local language but if a non-indigenous language was introduced in addition, German had to be taught first. The teaching of additional non-indigenous languages was not prohibited but it was only allowed if German instruction was offered too.¹⁴

75. Auszug aus dem Runderlaß der Kolonial-Abteilung des Auswärtigen Amtes, betreffend deutschen Sprachunterricht.
Vom 27. Februar 1897.*)

Der Kolonialrat hat in seiner Sitzung vom 23. Oktober v. Js. auf Antrag Seiner Hoheit des Herzogs Johann Albrecht zu Mecklenburg-Schwerin den Beschluss gefaßt:

„Der Kolonialrat empfiehlt der Regierung, unter Berücksichtigung der in Betracht kommenden Verhältnisse, darauf hinzuwirken, daß, wenn in den Schulen (sc. innerhalb der deutschen Kolonien) neben der Sprache der Einheimischen noch eine andere gelehrt wird, die deutsche in den Lehrplan aufgenommen werde.“

Berlin, den 27. Februar 1897.

Auswärtiges Amt. Kolonial-Abteilung.
Frhr. v. Richthofen.

Figure 4: Circular on colonial German language instruction of February 27, 1897.

[Translation:

75. Excerpt from the Circular of the Colonial Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, concerning German language instruction. February 27, 1897.

The Colonial Council, in its session of October 23 of last year, passed the following resolution at the request of His Highness Duke Johann Albrecht zu Mecklenburg-Schwerin:

“The Colonial Council recommends to the government, under consideration of the pertinent circumstances, to effect that, if in the schools (i. e., within the German colonies) in addition to the indigenous language another language is taught, the German language is to be included in the curriculum.”

¹⁴ Riebow et al. (Riebow et al. 1893–1910), *Deutsche Kolonialgesetzgebung VI* (1901–1902: 141). This circular was mainly geared against the teaching of English (in the absence of German) by English-speaking mission societies in the German colonies (cf. Stolberg 2015). Note that the German colonial legislation applied to all so-called *Schutzgebiete* (protectorates) unless specified otherwise. This included the protectorate New Guinea that, up until 1899, was administered by the *Neuguinea-Compagnie* (New Guinea Company), a privately owned trading company operating in New Guinea.

Berlin, 27 February 1897

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Colonial Department.

Freiherr v. R i c h t h o f e n.]

[Translation mine]

Further, local regulations could apply with respect to the extent of German instruction (hours per week, grades, etc.) or regarding the use of German in other contexts, such as in communication with German colonial officials and administrative staff. Indirect measures of influencing the use and diffusion of German were applied in addition. Some of them were specifically directed towards the missions as cooperation partners in education, such as financial support (cf. Hanke-5, Hanke-6). Teaching German meant, for the missions, a better financial standing as additional funding was available if their students successfully completed exams in German.¹⁵ This, in turn, allowed the missions to expand their work and establish more schools, permitting them to extend their influence on the local people. During the 1920s, Hannemann (Hannemann-1:1) points out that the decision for one shared mission language (rather than using a range of local languages) would allow the mission to transfer and move their staff to other locations as needed (cf. also Taylor 1977: 833), emphasizing that this would be met with approval by the (then Australian) colonial government. A good cooperation with the respective colonial government was thus considered important for securing the space (legally and economically) to carry out satisfactory mission work. The government, in turn, relied on the school system of the mission societies to provide an education that was practically applicable from the colonial ruler's perspective.

5 Language planning in the Astrolabe Bay: Evidence from the Rhenish Mission Society

5.1 Translation and lexical change

Different aspects of language planning were part of the missionary work. A new linguistic register was developed by lexicalizing Christian concepts; this included lexical expansion by introducing new loanwords (mainly from

¹⁵ This connection applies particularly to the German colonies in Africa and less to the areas in the Pacific (cf. Sokolowsky 2004).

German or Latin) and by creating new words from existing lexical material. Semantic change was triggered when indigenous concepts were either aligned to or contrasted with Christian concepts; and the exploitation of morphological and syntactic options in order to express Christian concepts could lead to new or changed morphological and syntactic routines. Two of the documents from the RMG, the report on the *Sprachkonferenz* ('language conference', 1898) and the *Terminologie* ('terminology', Helmich 1907), exemplify these issues with particular clarity by documenting the effort that was made by several missionaries to translate sections of the New Testament into Bongu and Siar. The missionaries' doubts and decisions are recorded in much detail, offering a good account of the linguistic processes that were applied.

The most far-reaching effect was probably caused by putting these languages into writing as it involved not only assigning graphemes to sounds (including determining what a phoneme is) but also reducing ambiguity and variance and thus creating deliberate lines between closely related varieties of languages. As carriers of religious knowledge as well as agents of the colonial power, missionaries were considered powerful and therefore held prestigious positions. Thus, the decisions they made as to what was to be the written register of a language had considerable weight in the socio-linguistic evaluation of what they decided to write down. This goes even so far as having a missionary's learner variety (of Wemo, a variant of the Kâte language) codified as the written standard (Paris 2012: 47; Mühlhäusler 1996: 147–148; Ross 1996: 611).

5.1.1 Report on the *Sprachkonferenz* of 1898

The document reports on the RMG language conference held in Bogadjim in 1898; there is no indication of authorship. The central topic of the conference was translating different parts of the New Testament and in particular of the Lord's Prayer. A concern mentioned repeatedly is that the attending missionaries still felt insufficiently equipped to produce acceptable translations. It is indicated that, even after ten years in the Astrolabe Bay, their linguistic competence was not profound enough to transfer Christian concepts appropriately in the respective languages (under discussion are Bongu, Bogadjim, and Siar/Ragetta). A recurring way of putting it is that an appropriate word has not (yet) been found in the respective language, thus leaving open whether such lexical item exists but is unknown to the missionaries, or whether the corresponding lexeme does not exist in the language. Difficulties in understanding the morphological structure, e. g. the function of verbal suffixes, are

mentioned several times, and the report concludes self-consciously with the suggestion to study Codrington's (1885) work on the Melanesian languages in depth.¹⁶

5.1.2 Terminologie (Helmich 1907)

The full title of the document is *Die Bildung einer schriftlichen Terminologie in der Siar Sprache und die damit verbundenen Schwierigkeiten* ('The development of a written [Christian] terminology in the Siar language and the difficulties associated with it'). Its author is the RMG missionary Helmich who was placed in the Siar/Ragetta region from 1894 to 1913. On 24 handwritten pages, he discusses different Christian concepts and the options for translating them into Siar (Gedaged). It becomes clear from this document that he consciously avoids introducing loanwords into Siar, and that he made an effort to use existing linguistic material. Helmich broaches this issue explicitly (p. 120–121), exploring the advantage of using a "zero loan word" (Pech 1985: 32, 45), that is, a loanword that has no previous meaning or connotations for the speakers of Siar, and therefore its semantics cannot interfere with the Christian concepts assigned to it. As a specific example, he refers to introducing the Greek noun *basileia* 'church' and contrasts this option with the difficulty of having to use the Siar word, *medaiu*, for both 'church' and 'congregation' or to use the Siar phrase, *Anute inon kagin*, for both 'kingdom of God' and 'church'. The notion of having to cover different concepts with the same lexeme comes up several times, and it is implied that Siar does not (seem to) offer the appropriate lexemes that are needed. While this is not surprising with the introduction of a whole new system of belief and values,¹⁷ it is also conceivable that Helmich's command of Siar is still somewhat limited, in particular with respect to terms relating to (traditional) religion and spiritual matters that an outsider of a community was probably not easily granted access to.

¹⁶ One anonymous reviewer points out that this suggestion was unlikely to be helpful as Codrington strongly relies on his knowledge of one Melanesian language, Mota (spoken on Vanuatu). It is not clear from the document whether the missionaries attending the language conference were not aware of this mismatch, or whether simply no other sources of information were available to them.

¹⁷ The high borrowability of loanwords related to religion indicates that this is not an unusual setting (cf. Tadmor 2009).

5.2 Language planning and semantic shift: *tivul-tamol*, *tamol* and *tiwud*

5.2.1 *tivul-tamol*

In 1896, a Hungarian artifact collector, Biró, visited Ragetta Island. Mennis (Mennis 2014: 8) cites from his reported experience when he, due to a misunderstanding, encountered a rather dangerous situation. “Suddenly Biró realized he was the object of their attack and began fumbling through his word list to say, ‘Don’t shoot’, but he knew they were not going to wait while he found the appropriate words. Among themselves the Kranket¹⁸ people said the ‘tivul-tamol (foreign devil) keeps his mind wrapped in paper’” (Mennis 2014: 8, citing; Molnar-Bagley 1993: 25). The description offers two kinds of linguistically relevant information: First, it relates the use of a lexical item, *tivul-tamol*, that is used to refer to the European, and second, it illustrates the European’s lack of a sufficient command of the local language, in this case Gedaged/Bel (=Siar/Ragetta). Mennis (Mennis 2014: 9) comments that both German and Pidgin English were little known among the villagers in New Guinea at that time.¹⁹ Europeans, on the other hand, usually had little or no command of the local languages, except for the missionaries, as she points out explicitly.

A closer look at the phrase *tivul-tamol*, translated as ‘foreign devil’ in the above quote, is interesting because it links to issues of language planning and (planned) semantic shift.

5.2.2 *tamol*

The Austronesian basic vocabulary data base (ABVD), an internet resource on Austronesian lexical items, bases its entries for Gedaged on the Gedaged-English Dictionary published in 1952 by Mager, a Lutheran missionary in the former RMG area. In the ABVD word list for Gedaged, entries 53 and 54 contain the lexeme *tamol*, translated into English as ‘person/human being’ and ‘man/male’, respectively.

The lexeme *tamol* has 11 occurrences (tokens) total in the *Terminologie* by Helmich (1907), in various compound combinations, being used to mean ‘man,

¹⁸ Kranket = Ragetta/Gedaged/Bel.

¹⁹ This is probably at least in part linked to the fact that Malay was used as a *lingua franca*, cf. Seiler (1983); Seiler (1985). But cf. Huber and Velupillai Forthcoming and fn. 1 above.

human'. When proposing a phrase to refer to "Christians" (*Christus tamol*), as opposed to non-Christians, Helmich expresses his doubts whether also women would be properly referred to by using *tamol*, although, as he points out, *tamol* can also mean 'human, person' in general. As an alternative and more inclusive expression to refer to a Christian person he suggests *tamol-pain* (132–133).

The following table (Table 1) lists all *tamol*-terms Helmich proposes as translations for different items of Christian terminology.

Table 1: *tamol* in Christian terminology (*Terminologie*, Helmich 1907).

Term suggested by Helmich (1907)	Original German translation (Helmich 1907)	English translation
1 totol tamol (114)	Bote; eine mit einer Botschaft beträute „Mittelperson“	messenger; a „middleman“ entrusted with a message
2 tamol ai /tamol nanun ai (121)	Menschensohn	the Son of Man (i. e., Jesus Christ)
3 wal tamol (122)	Wind- und Regenmacher	wind- and rainmaker
4 tamol tinin miliau; tamol auan itau (123)	der Lahme; der Taubstumme	the paralytic; the deaf-mute
5 tamol masos, tamol dagom (125)	der Sanftmütige /Demütige; (auch:) ein friedfertiger Mensch	the meek (person); (also:) a peacemaker
6 tamol gegaun tea, tamol wagai tea, tamol nagoas tea (125)	Durch eine Negation kann man die Sache [d.h., sanftmütig /demütig /friedfertig] auch wiedergeben [...].	By negation, the concept [i. e., of a meek person] can be expressed, too [...].
7 Christus tamol (132); tamol-pain (133); tamol (133)	Christ; Christ /Christin; Mensch	Christian; Christian (male /female); human, person
8 tamol-pain se (133)	Heiden; Leute, die von dem nichts haben, was die Christen empfangen haben	pagans; people who have no part in what the Christians have received

5.2.3 tivul /tiwud

The report of the *Sprachkonferenz* of 1898 (p. 1) notes: "Das dem entsprechende Wort auf Siar würde *tiwud* sein, allein hier wird dies Wort außer auf Halbgötter auch auf Menschen, wenn auch ausschließlich auf die weißen Leute, angewendet" [The corresponding word [sc. to the Bongu and Bogadjim word *roté*, meaning 'God'] in Siar would be *tiwud*, only here [i. e. in Siar] this word refers, in addition to demigods, also to humans, if only to white people] [translation

mine]. Based on the lexical information from the ABVD and the two RMG documents, all of it pertaining to Gedaged (Ragetta/Siar), it can be concluded that *tivil-tamol* (as cited in Mennis 2014: 8) consists of the two parts *tivil* and *tamol*, the latter meaning ‘man, person’. *Tivil* may be derived from ‘devil’ (German ‘Teufel’), and it is also close to Tok Pisin *tevel/tewel* which can refer either to the devil (in the Christian belief system) or to a demon or a spirit of some kind, but not necessarily with a negative connotation.²⁰ There is possibly also a link to *tiwud* as described in the report on the *Sprachkonferenz* (p. 1, cf. above), a lexeme that, according to this source, was used for referring to demigods and whites/Europeans. *tivil-tamol* then would mean something like ‘white ghost/spirit person’. Mennis does not mention whether this was the common way of referring to Europeans. It seems, however, that Molnar-Bagley’s translation of *tivil* as ‘devil’, not ‘spirit’ (as cited in Mennis, above) could have been the result of missionary language planning: The missionaries promoted semantic change in order to develop a Christian terminology, sometimes by installing negative connotations with ritual and religious terminology from the non-Christian belief systems. Another example of such new conceptual and linguistic border line between Christian and traditional religion is the desire to name those who have been converted to Christianity and, crucially, also those who have not, the latter by using an expression *ex negativo* (cf. Table 1, line 8) even though they were the ones who represented the unmarked case before the missionaries’ arrival.

5.3 Colonial and mission activities affecting the language ecology of the Astrolabe Bay

Certain colonial and mission actions must be considered cases of “unplanned” language planning (Baldauf 1994): they were not primarily intended to change the language ecology (Haugen 1972; Creese and Martin 2008) of the region but in practice, that was precisely the impact they had. Three types can be distinguished in the RMG context: (a) whole speech communities were moved to a different location (=forced relocations); (b) non-local languages were implemented and spread; and (c) individuals were moved and placed into new language environments and speech communities. Note that type (c) also includes all missionaries’ presence in foreign-speaking countries.

20 cf. the use of Tok Pisin *tebel* (=tewel) to refer to a spirit or ghost being (e. g. Schild 1977: 162).

5.3.1 Forced relocations

As a punishment for counter-colonial behavior, that is, revolts or rebellion against German or generally European colonial agents, punitive expeditions were carried out (e. g. Bade 1987: 64), and in more severe cases (from the European perspective), whole communities were forcibly relocated. This action affected the islands off the Madang coast in 1904, and again, to a much greater extent, in 1912. The report on the Ragetta station states laconically: “1904 & 1912 aufständisch, 1904 Rädelsführer verbannt, 1912 die ganzen Bewohner von Ragetta, Siar, Panutibun, Belia verbannt, die Inseln als Regierungseigentum erklärt, während des Krieges mit Erlaubnis d. austr. Regierung zurückgekehrt [...]” [1904 & 1912 rebellious, 1904 revolt leaders banished, 1912 all inhabitants of Ragetta, Siar, Panutibun, Belia banished, the islands [were] declared governmental property, during the war [the former inhabitants] returned with permission of the Australian government [...] [translation mine] (RMG 3.003-1 Ragetta).

The 1904 relocation apparently led to the desertion of Bilbil Island as all inhabitants were moved to the mainland (Mennis 2014: 13). This is likely to have resulted in more intense language contact between groups that had been in contact before but only during periodic trading trips. The sources do not offer precise information on where the Bilbil inhabitants (were) settled after their relocation. Figure 3 (above), however, includes Bili Bili (=Bilbil) as a place name on the mainland coast as well as for the island of Bilbil. This location can be presumed to indicate the area where the resettlement of the Bilbil people took place. As a result, the Bilbil (Austronesian) language community became surrounded by the Amele speaking (non-Austronesian) language community.

Most of the relocated groups, all of them speakers of Austronesian languages, were resettled along the Rai Coast (Mennis 2014: 11) where non-Austronesian languages were spoken. As a specific example, the Siar population was relocated to the Rai Coast, either in 1904 (Mennis 2014: 11) or in 1912 (Burton 2002 [1999]: 21). They were deported partly to Mindiri (Mindre) and partly to Beliau.²¹

Their forced neighborhood with the Mindiri people ended when the Siars, with the permission of the Australian officials, resettled in their area of origin at the outbreak of WW I in 1914 (cf. RMG 3.003-1 Ragetta). Mennis (2014) and Burton (2002 [1999]) disagree on the exact period of the Siars' stay in the Mindre/Mindiri area. While Burton emphasizes the briefness of their stay (Burton 2002 [1999]: 21), Mennis (Mennis 2014: 11) claims that the Siars lived

²¹ Both Mindiri and Beliau are located on the Rai Coast, with a distance of roughly 25 km/16 mi. between them.

with the Mindiris “for years”, adding that “[a]s a result the Siar dialect is quite well known in that area.”

In her (edited and published) diary, Johanna Diehl, wife of the Rhenish missionary Diehl at Bogadjim, notes on August 29, 1912 that as a consequence of the purported rebellion “Ragetta-, Siar-, Beliao-, Billibil-Leute nach Rai, Häuptlinge nach Rabaul gebracht [wurden]” [‘people from Ragetta, Siar, Beliao, and Billibil were brought to Rai, chiefs were brought to Rabaul’]. Klein, the editor of the Diehl diary, points out that, in fact, in 1912 no rebellion took place but there were rumors of such plans, kindling the Europeans’ fear of an attack (Klein 2005: 201, fn. 348). This vague evidence apparently sufficed to have the suspects deported. Burton (Burton 2002 [1999]: 21) reports on the same event, specifying some more details:

A trial indeed took place in 1912 resulting in the banishment of most of the Madang, Bilbil and Yabob people to the Rai Coast, specifically the Siar, Bilia and Bilbil people to the Austronesian-speaking area around Biliau [=Beliau] (Hannemann 1996: 64; Lawrence 1964: 72), the Kranket and Panutibun people to Migiaz on north coast, and a smaller group of Siars, accused of being the ring-leaders, to Rabaul (Hannemann 1996: 64).

These actions clearly impacted the language ecology of the region as the new-comers as well as the resident speech communities not only had to re-arrange with respect to each other but also interacted much more closely with speakers of other languages they, at best, had been in loose contact with before.

5.3.2 Implementing non-local languages

RMG missionaries usually learned the language spoken at their respective station and in its immediate environment. This is evidenced by their writings in and about different languages of the Astrolabe Bay area and by the records of the language conferences where translation issues and language policies were discussed (as in the documents *Sprachkonferenz* and *Terminologie*). In addition, it was discussed to introduce one (church) language for a larger region, in order to simplify communication matters for the missionaries.²² German, Bogadjim, Ragetta, and Amele were among the non-local languages that were implemented or suggested for implementation in RMG areas where they were not in use before. Examples from other mission societies are mentioned by Hannemann (Hannemann-1) who, around 1930, notes that the Catholic mission, to the north

²² This strategy was also followed in German colonial areas in Africa (cf. e. g. Adick and Mehnert 2001; Sokolowsky 2004).

of the RMG area, uses Pidgin English (i. e. Tok Pisin) as their mission language, while the Neuendettelsau mission, east of the RMG area, had spread Kâte and Yabem as their church languages (cf. also Paris 2012).

The German government intended to have German introduced in all schools in the German colonies as a first step for using it as a language of (wider) communication in the colonized areas. In a letter of 1909 (Hanke-8), Hanke criticizes such plans, in particular that of introducing German as the school language. He specifies that he does neither oppose governmental supervision of mission schools nor making German the general language of communication. The problem he sees refers to the government's demand to teach and use German from the first day of school. Hanke names two reasons for his objection, a practical and a cultural one: There are not enough teachers available to accomplish this goal; and teaching all classes in German would mean, in his eyes, "die Kinder zu Deutschen zu erziehen" [to educate the children to be Germans] [translation mine]. While the first reason was justified in view of the (low) number of German speakers in all German colonies, the second reason reflects a repeatedly mentioned resentment of Germans (and Europeans more generally) against offering a fully German/European education to the local population. It was commonly argued that such education would cause psychological and social conflicts in the communities, but it can also be read to express the desire of drawing a clear line between the colonizers and the colonized by excluding the latter from access to power-related knowledge. Within the colonial setting, this exclusion was generally defended by negating the local population's cognitive and psychological capacity to handle such input.

The topic of introducing German as the *Verkehrssprache* (common language of communication) comes up again in fall 1913 (Hanke-5) when Hanke reports that in the meeting of the district council in Madang, the government as well as the Catholic mission voted for the widespread use of German, apparently to keep the spread of Tok Pisin at bay after having accepted its use up until this time (Hanke-5:2; Hannemann-1:1). Hanke gives the same reasons as before for his disapproval. He rates the options of the RMG to follow its own course against the government and the Catholic mission together as little promising, however. He considers allying with other Protestant missions (Neuendettelsau, Methodists) but concludes rather pessimistically that, in order not to be excluded from co-shaping the school system, the RMG will have to comply with the government's orders.

These reports indicate that Tok Pisin was used widely, by the (Catholic) mission societies and elsewhere. In addition, it becomes clear that even in 1913, there was no straight-forward language policy that was binding throughout Germany's colonial areas. The implementation of German was discussed

repeatedly and by different parties, but it was neither carried out successfully nor strongly reinforced. After the beginning of WW I, this plan was obviously obsolete, anyway.

Another suggestion comes up in the RMG documents in early 1913, when it was decided to introduce Bogadjim as the “einheitliche Kultus- [sic!], Schul- und Schriftsprache” [unified sacral/ritual, school and written language] for the whole of the RMG mission area (Diehl-1; Hanke-7; both letters are of February 1913; cf. also Section 3.2 above). Hanke reports having voted for the general introduction of Bogadjim at the most recent language conference, with the intention of testing the applicability of a shared mission language in a larger area. Diehl reports on the preparation of language learning materials for Hanke (Diehl-1) who apparently did not speak Bogadjim at the time (his mission station was located in the Bongu language region). That is, introducing Bogadjim as the RMG mission language would have required all missionaries who were active in other language areas to learn Bogadjim first before they could use and spread (i. e. teach) the language. This procedure would have required some time before results could have been expected. There is no notice in the investigated documents of how this mission language shift was carried out in practice, and to what extent it was actually implemented. Clearly, such language policy should have impacted the development of Bogadjim, not only in its written form. Putting Bogadjim into writing had been carried out by language learners already (possibly supported by competent speakers of the language). More crucially, its spread to non-Bogadjim speaking communities would have been carried out mainly by language learners whose variety of Bogadjim then would have been the language input for new learners.²³

For the time after 1918, the report on the mission station at Bongu²⁴ notes that the head of the mission school had been educated in the Amele seminary and introduced the Amele language in the Bongu school, with good results (RMG 2.998-1 Bongu; both Amele and Bongu are non-Austronesian languages). No other reference to this language policy was indicated in the investigated documents. It seems to have been a local decision, based on the teacher’s

²³ In a similar setting, a missionary’s learner variety was accepted as a specific church register of a language in the Huon Gulf area (Paris 2012: 47; cf. above). This is not as surprising as it may seem: Sacral or church language, as a register marked for very specific purposes, may deviate from the standard in use in a language community. Cf. the accepted use of archaic grammatical structures and lexical items used in Christian Bible texts, songs, and liturgical exchanges in, for example, English and German.

²⁴ The document is not dated but it mentions that the school was formerly headed by Hanke who died in 1918.

individual language competence and possibly on the prestige of the Amele seminary and the education it provided.

Around 1930, Hannemann proposes introducing Ragetta (an Austronesian language) for the RMG mission area (Hannemann-1). He supports his suggestion with several arguments, first and foremost that of simplifying communication in this linguistically diverse region and, as a result, unifying the Protestant mission movement linguistically and conceptually. For comparison, Hannemann points out that “the Romanists [i. e., Catholics] [...] have introduced Pidgin English as their universal medium”, and he pleads for the introduction of a similarly simple language which he claims Ragetta to be (in contrast to Kâte and Yabem, as he points out). His suggestion was carried out to some extent, leading to a considerably increased spread of Ragetta (cf. Freyberg 1977: 861; cf. also; Taylor 1977: 835).

In sum, several attempts were made, by the German colonial government as well as by the mission societies, to arrive at a unified language policy for larger areas. While none of these plans were fully implemented for the time reported on, they all affected the local language communities and their languages in the sense of “unplanned language planning” (Baldauf 1994). Furthermore, as the documentation of the languages involved was usually carried out by non-native speakers (who often but not always relied on the judgements of competent local speakers), the information available on these languages today may not draw an appropriate picture of the languages as they were actually spoken. This is a general problem with missionary and colonial linguistic documentation, and it is exacerbated by the described spread of languages by language learners.

5.3.3 Samoans as missionaries in New Guinea

A different, and more local, kind of language contact was affected by employing Samoan missionaries in the Astrolabe Bay area. Following negotiations between the London Missionary Society (LMS) in Samoa and the RMG (Garrett 1992: 23), several LMS-trained Samoan missionaries arrived in Madang in September 1913 to support the missionary work of the RMG (Steffen 1995: 281; Hanke-6: 1); at least one Samoan missionary, Jerome Ilaoa, had been working in the Madang area since 1912 (Burton 2002 [1999]: 22; Garrett 1992: 24; cf. the brief mention in Hanke-6: 1). Hanke mentions four Samoan couples who were to be stationed at Nobonob and on Karkar in order to support the Protestant interests against the Catholic claims in these areas (Hanke-6:1). Another Samoan missionary, Kurene, whose exact arrival date in the Astrolabe Bay area could not be retrieved from the sources, worked further south, at Bongu

(RMG 2.998-1 Bongu; Hanke-7: 2). Ilaoa is claimed to have been “fluent in the Graged [=Ragetta] language” (Burton 2002 [1999]: 22), but with respect to the new couples’ language competence, Hanke notes communication difficulties, at least at the beginning: “Leider verstehen sie nur sehr wenig deutsch und mit englisch ist es auch nicht besser bestellt” [Unfortunately, they understand but little German, and their English is not much better’ [translation mine]].²⁵ This implies that the Samoan missionaries were unlikely to use German or English in their mission work but acquired the respective local languages. Garrett (Garrett 1992: 24) points out that Samoan, like some of the languages spoken in the RMG area, belongs to the Austronesian languages, possibly making it easier for the Samoans than for the German missionaries to learn these languages. Still, their presence, resulting from the colonial mission situation, led to yet another language contact setting in this area.

6 Linguistic impact

Various types of linguistic impact were caused by the presence of the RMG missionaries in the Astrolabe Bay during the German colonial period. First, there are social and political actions with linguistic consequences, such as relocations of whole speech communities or the transfer of missionaries from Samoa to New Guinea. Then, there are issues of language policy, for example the introduction of different church and mission languages in areas where these languages were not commonly used previously, but also the effects of putting languages into writing and thus codifying them and developing a written standard. Some of these decisions have a long-lasting effect up until today when local languages are still ranked lower in the perception of their speakers than the (former) church languages introduced by German missionaries (Paris 2012). Finally, linguistic decisions on the level of language structure had consequences for the make-up of the languages. Examples are vocabulary change and expansion, semantic shift, and structural effects where missionaries tried to stay as close to the (German or Greek) model as possible also in morphological and syntactic structure. In addition to these more tangible outcomes of colonial language contact, another aspect played a role, too. It was the European-based expectation that language areas could be defined or delimited in unambiguous

²⁵ This is in spite of the German instruction they seem to have received at the LMS seminary in Samoa, cf. Garrett (Garrett 1992: 23).

ways. However, this was apparently not the case for the speech communities in the Astrolabe Bay. Burton (Burton 2002 [1999]: 27–28) reports that even today

“[t]he names of the Yaganon²⁶ languages are in question. I have attempted with many informants to elicit the name by which they refer to their own language, or to that of their neighbors, but with little success. This is less likely to be because no names can be found, rather than that it reflects the forced nature of all group distinctions in this culture area.”²⁷

Kamusella (Kamusella 2015: abstract) suggests that “[l]anguages are formed into discrete entities, as we know them nowadays, by the technology of writing in the service of power centers, usually state capitals. All the choices made on the way – planned or not – amount to standardization which intensifies as the literate percentage of population increases.” While this note frames the European context of power and language, the impact of putting a language into writing, especially in high-prestige contexts such as religion and education, and thus codifying one of several variants as the written standard, had quite comparable repercussions in the colonial setting in New Guinea.

7 Conclusion

Among the large numbers of documents kept in missionary archives, much information on the early missionaries’ linguistic dealings and their communication with the local population lies hidden (cf. Engelberg 2012; Engelberg and Stolberg 2016). Based on a selected number of mission archive documents, this paper traced what happened in terms of language and local communication in the Astrolabe Bay area early in the twentieth century. The language situation during the German colonial period (as during the time of other colonial powers, too) is a fine-grained picture of different settings and contexts. It is difficult to generalize since local conditions could vary so widely and in so many respects. This is not a setting where standard languages stand up against each other, or even just one standard language comes up against minority groups. It is not a simple matter of prestige, even though prestige, very obviously, plays a role here, too, considering the role of written language, church language, and language of education. What comes into play – besides the colonially determined obvious inequity in power and scope of action – is the encounter, if not

²⁶ An area adjacent to and including the Astrolabe Bay.

²⁷ In a very similar vein and wording, Davies (Davies 1954–1956: 105–106) reports on the identification of languages and speaker groups in Nigeria in the 1950s. I thank Anne Storch for pointing this evidence out to me.

clash, of very different cultures, and in the case of the missionaries in particular, of very different concepts of religion, and of the world as a whole. Archival documents such as those investigated are suitable to trace and illustrate the small steps of mutual familiarizing oneself with the unfamiliar. They equally serve to demonstrate where things did not go well, and in some cases they provide information on the reasons for such problems. All these sources have to be put into their proper historical context to become decodable, that is, drawing on additional external information (e. g. the German colonial debate on language use and language choice) is crucial. Documents on missionaries' language practices help to go one step further, though, than a more general historical approach would permit. They make possible recognizing the (religious, ideological, nationalist, etc.) filter(s) through which missionaries viewed the languages and the societal structures around them. They also show how expectancies of how languages are supposed to "behave" or "made up" limit the way in which one can perceive what is actually there (exemplified by complaints about differing argument structures, or about the impossibility of converting a noun into a verb, while German can do this; cf. *Terminologie*). As RMG missionaries were among the first to put the languages of their mission areas into writing, they were also the first ones to produce dictionaries and grammars of these languages. The documents investigated here can contribute to an understanding of how misconceptions, learned expectations, and presumptions about languages in general, and languages of peoples that were considered uncivilized, in particular, entered such works and became generalized (for example, in colonial-time literature such as Geiser 1929; cf. Huber and Velupillai Forthcoming). Among the assumptions that are expressed in the investigated documents (especially in *Terminology* 1907 and *Sprachkonferenz* 1898) is, for example, the view that words that are fit to express Christian concepts were missing in the local languages, that certain morphological operations are not possible, and that some morphological categories abound apparently uselessly (e. g. verbal suffixes).

What becomes equally noticeable is that the missionaries did not always have a sufficient and thorough knowledge of the languages in question when they started to translate the Bible and to compose Christian texts in the target language. Possibly as a consequence of this, still today there are ongoing discussions regarding the translation of Christian terminology (cf. Pech 1985; Roberts 2013; King 2014), which may be due to the recognition of early misunderstandings as well as of a changed language use and a different understanding of traditional religious concepts in comparison with Christian concepts.

Traders and government officials acknowledged missionaries as the (European) experts on the local languages and on communication with the

local population (cf. Mennis 2014). In this position, functioning as intermediaries, and sometimes mediators, they were considered by European expatriates to be involved with the local population (which they were), and locals considered them to be Europeans and outsiders (which they were, too). Missionaries thus provide a “third perspective” between clearly European (origin) colonial agents, on one hand, and the local population that was subjugated under colonial control, on the other hand. This is why it is particularly interesting to look at the extensive documentation of language and linguistic matters by missionaries. Such documents allow for insights into colonial language use and communication that could not be gained otherwise, combining an outsider’s perspective with close-up information on local conditions.

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- Hanke-6 = RMG 2.149-6 Hanke an Kriele, 1913-9-23 (letter)
- Hanke-7 = RMG 2.149-7 Hanke an Kriele, 1913-2-8 (letter)
- Hanke-8 = RMG 2.149-8 Hanke an Speecker, 1914-1-13 (letter)
- Diehl-1 = RMG 2.154-1 Diehl, 1913-2-17 (letter)

Information on RMG mission stations:

- RMG 2.997-1 Bogadjim
- RMG 2.998-1 Bongu
- RMG 3.001-8 Neuguinea
- RMG 3.002-1 Nobonob
- RMG 3.003-1 Ragetta

Lists of written works in languages of the Astrolabe Bay area (as available in the RMG archive):

- RMG 3.013-4 Literatur Bogadjim
- RMG 3.013-5 Literatur Siar/Ragetta

RMG 3.013-6 Literatur Bongu

RMG 3.013-7 Literatur Nobonob

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