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Francesca Merlan and Alan Rumsey

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Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language No. 10

**Ku Waru**

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The aim of this series is to develop theoretical perspectives on the essential social and cultural character of language by methodological and empirical emphasis on the occurrence of language in its communicative and interactional settings, on the socioculturally grounded 'meanings' and 'functions' of linguistic forms, and on the social scientific study of language use across cultures. It will thus explicate the essentially ethnographic nature of linguistic data, whether spontaneously occurring or experimentally induced, whether normative or variational, whether synchronic or diachronic. Works appearing in the series will make substantive and theoretical contributions to the debate over the sociocultural–functional and structural–formal nature of language, and will represent the concerns of scholars in the sociology and anthropology of language, anthropological linguistics, sociolinguistics, and socioculturally informed psycholinguistics.

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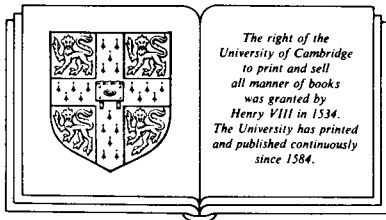
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# Ku Waru

Language and  
segmentary politics in the  
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Papua New Guinea

**Francesca Merlan and Alan Rumsey**

Department of Anthropology  
University of Sydney



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## Abbreviations

### GRAMMATICAL ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS USED IN CHAPTER 5 AND APPENDICES

Abs	absolute
Ben	benefactive
Col	collective
Com	comitative
Csv	causative
Dat	dative
Def	definite
du	dual number (on verb)
Du	dual or 'salient pair' (on NP)
Erg	ergative
Fut	future
Gen	genitive
Hab	habitual
Hrt	hortative
Igv	interrogative
Imt	imminent
Imp	imperative
Ins	instrumental
Jus	jussive
Loc	locative
NF	non-final
Opt	optative
NP	noun phrase
pl	plural
Ppl	participle
Prf	perfective
PPr	present progressive
RP	remote past
sg	singular
Sjv	subjunctive
S/I	singular/indefinite
SR1	switch reference 1

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SR2	switch reference 2
1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
2/3	second or third person (see Appendix B.3.1.)
//	phonemic or underlying form
→	'is realized as'
[ ]	phonetic form

## OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

M	mother('s)
F	father('s)
B	brother('s)
Z	sister('s)
S	son('s)
D	daughter('s)
H	husband('s)
W	wife('s)
SP	segmentary person (see section 5.2)
: :: :	homologous relationship, e.g. A:B::C:D: 'A is to B as C is to D'
	between segmentary names indicates coordinate relation, e.g. Kopia-Kubuka 'the pair of Kopia and Kubuka'
	between segmentary names indicates superordinate-subordinate relations, e.g. Kopia\Kaja 'the Kaja segment of Kopia'
K-M-E-A-L	the congeries of tribes consisting of Kusika, Midipu, Epola, Alya, and Lalka (see section 3.1.3)

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## Preface and acknowledgments

This book presents an extended, ethnographically-based argument concerning the relationship between social structures and action, focusing upon speech as a salient aspect of the latter. Evidence for our argument is drawn from seventeen months of fieldwork which we conducted jointly between June 1981 and November 1983 in the Nebilyer Valley, Western Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea.

Even before going to New Guinea, we had always felt acutely the lack of successful integration of language-focused studies into mainstream ethnography. We sensed that this lack was due, not to the irrelevance of such material to ethnographic description and social theory, but to the much more fundamental problem of treating situated social *action* (including speech) as an object of ethnographic description and analysis. Our field time in the Nebilyer Valley not only strengthened our general conviction that there is a need to develop analyses of social action (integrating its linguistic and other aspects), but also provided us the opportunity to be present at many kinds of events which seemed to demand analysis in terms which could better reveal the relationship between structures and action. This volume is our attempt to provide such an analysis.

The research on which the book is based was undertaken during a first, exploratory trip during June to August, 1981, and then for 14 months between 1981 and the end of 1983. Two interruptions were necessitated by our involvement in Aboriginal land claims in Australia. These rapid transitions from the New Guinea Highlands to Aboriginal Australia and back were unsettling, but also had the positive effect of making differences between the two situations stand out in even greater relief than they otherwise might have. Alan Rumsey made a three-week return visit to our field site, Kailge, in January 1986, during which he worked mainly on mapping, and checking ethnographic information relating to the analyses in Chapters 6 and 7.

During our first field trip of 1981 we received support from the Australian Research Grants Council (ARGC). During the longer period of our fieldwork we were supported by a National Science Foundation Research Grant (No. BNS-8024174). We wish to express our gratitude for this support, and our particular thanks to Dr Paul Chapin of the National Science Foundation, Washington, DC.

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We are also grateful to Professor Stefan Wurm, then Professor in the Department of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies of the Australian National University, who facilitated Alan Rumsey's visiting fellowship at that institution during the first half of 1981.

Both Andrew Strathern and Marilyn Strathern, whose joint and separate anthropological work in the Mt Hagen area now spans well over two decades, were from the first supportive of our plan to work in the region. We thank them for their generosity, and for continuing discussion and scholarly exchange. Our debt to the richness and depth of their work in the Hagen area will be apparent throughout this book.

We also wish to acknowledge with gratitude the suggestions of Daryl Feil and the late Ralph Bulmer in the planning and early stages of our work.

In Papua New Guinea, we owe thanks to many people and are unable to mention them all here. We were affiliated with the Language Department at the University of Papua New Guinea, and are grateful to Professor John Lynch and Dr Terry Crowley for their assistance.

In Ukarumpa, we visited Rob and June Head, Summer Institute of Linguistics workers of many years' experience in the Kaugel area, who generously provided us with copies of their linguistic analyses of that dialect, closely related to Ku Waru. In Mt Hagen, Bruce Blowers also gave us the benefit of discussion of linguistic matters.

In our early search for a suitable field site, and also subsequently, we received much assistance from Catholic priests stationed in the Nebilyer and on the western side of the Tambul Range, who offered us transportation, hospitality and introductions to local people. In particular, we want to thank Father Sigmund Kruczek (Kuruk), Father Paul (Togoba), Father Don O'Connor and Father George (Ulga), and Father John Roelfs (Tabuga) who introduced us to Kailge, our eventual field site. We also thank Bishop Bernarding for discussing with us the Catholic mission in the Nebilyer.

In Mt Hagen, for advice, hospitality and other assistance we wish to thank Roy Berger, Susan Bonnell (then in the Office of Provincial Planning), Kenn Logan, Lois Logan (secretary to Nambuga Mara, former Western Highlands Premier), John Pun (Provincial Secretary), Thomas Nakinch (National Parliamentary Member), and Paias Wingti (National Parliamentary Member). Woytek Dumbrowski and Paul Gorecki, each doing research in the Hagen area, facilitated our trips to the northern 'last Melpa' area, adjacent to the Jimi Valley. The late John Watts and his wife Edith showed us great hospitality on several of our trips into Mt Hagen from the Nebilyer Valley. Dennis and Susan Malone, Summer Institute of Linguistics literacy workers at Tambul, invited us to visit them on their side of the range. We warmly remember Betty Harding at the Mapang Hostel in Mt Hagen who – we hope it may now be said – allowed us to stay there on trips to Mt Hagen at the 'missionary rate'.

We feel a continuing commitment to those who helped us in the Nebilyer Valley, and we look forward to an extended return trip there. At Kailge, Kopia *ada* Yaya took us in and invited us to build our house on his land. We became good friends with him and his family: his daughters Noma, Kin, Jingaba and their children. We enjoyed the company and assistance of Kopia Councillor Noma and his wife Nulya, the late Kopia Kajipu and his wives Yuni and Rami and their large households; Kopia Owa and his family; our close neighbors

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Kopia Opa, his wife Rltim and their daughter Tong; Kopia *ada* Yapu and his wife Pilya and their family; Kopia Magistrate Waima; Sirku and his wife Portap and their family; Palimi Lkuraya, wife Lam and family. Our most assiduous assistants in language transcription were young Kopia men whom we thank here for their persistence at an exacting task, and their general high spirits: Wai Andrew Kajipu, Ambak Owa, Simon Mek, Pai Kajipu, Don Kajipu, and Kerim Koi.

Kubuka Magistrate Unya and his wife Maria were hospitable and helpful to us in many ways, as were Lalka Peace Officer Kewa and his wife Pepu. We gained much from our association with Tilka Councillor Dop (including an unforgettable lesson, early on, in how to ford the River Luip at its height!), Dena Councillor Numje, Midipu Councillor and Magistrate Kujilyi, and Kulka Councillor Pokea. We also thank Epola Koluwa and Midipu Lkerim at Palimung for their assistance.

We made occasional trips to more distant localities in the Nebilyer Valley and beyond. At Ulga, we want to thank Otto Keruwa and Lewa Uwa, and once again, especially Thomas Nakinch for his invitation to visit there. We also want to thank the many people at Togoba, Kemangl, Koibega and Suruk who assisted us with information concerning their perspectives on regional political history and relations.

Even further from Kailge, we gratefully remember our hospitable reception by Mapuke people at Kumai near the Jimi Valley, and especially the companionship of Rafael Rul; the hospitality extended to us by Sister Beverly Wickham of the Bible Mission at Pabarabuk, who put us up on a walking trip to and from West Kambia; Mr and Mrs Jack Taylor at West Kambia who had us and Wai Andrew to Christmas dinner of 1982; and the Opika-Milyaka people who entertained us there, particularly Yobi and his son Damian Yok, and also Naba, Nunya and Kobiki.

For comments on portions of intermediate drafts of this book we thank Daryl Feil, Bill Hanks, Bruce Rigsby and Jimmy Weiner. For their detailed comments on the entire manuscript we are greatly indebted to Larry Goldman, Rena Lederman, Jay Lemke, Neil Maclean, Andrew Strathern and Marilyn Strathern. Our thanks also go to Penny Carter at Cambridge University Press for editorial advice and patience, and to Jean Cooney for her careful reading and skilled copy-editing.

This book is for our sons, the pair of James and Jesse: we look forward to taking them to Papua New Guinea.

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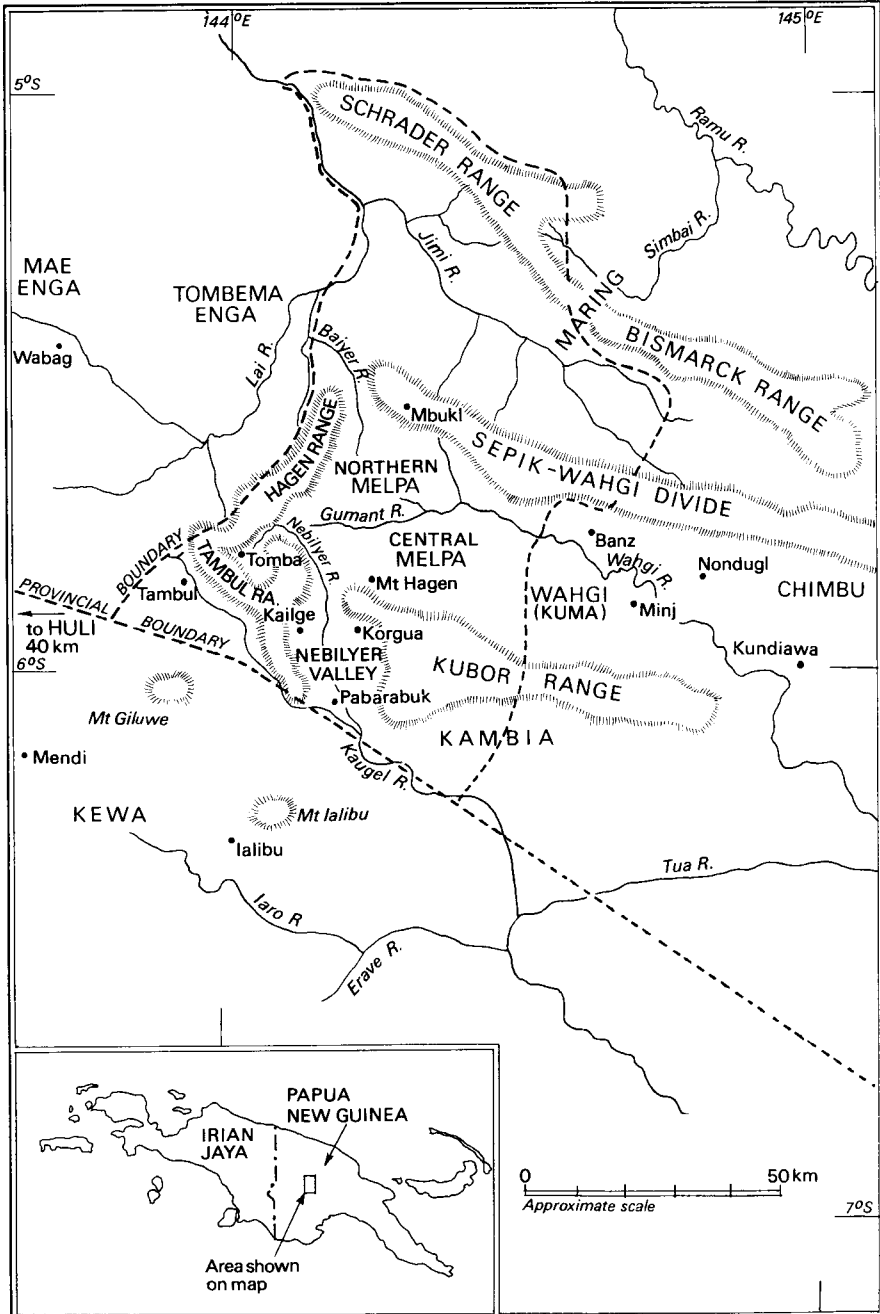
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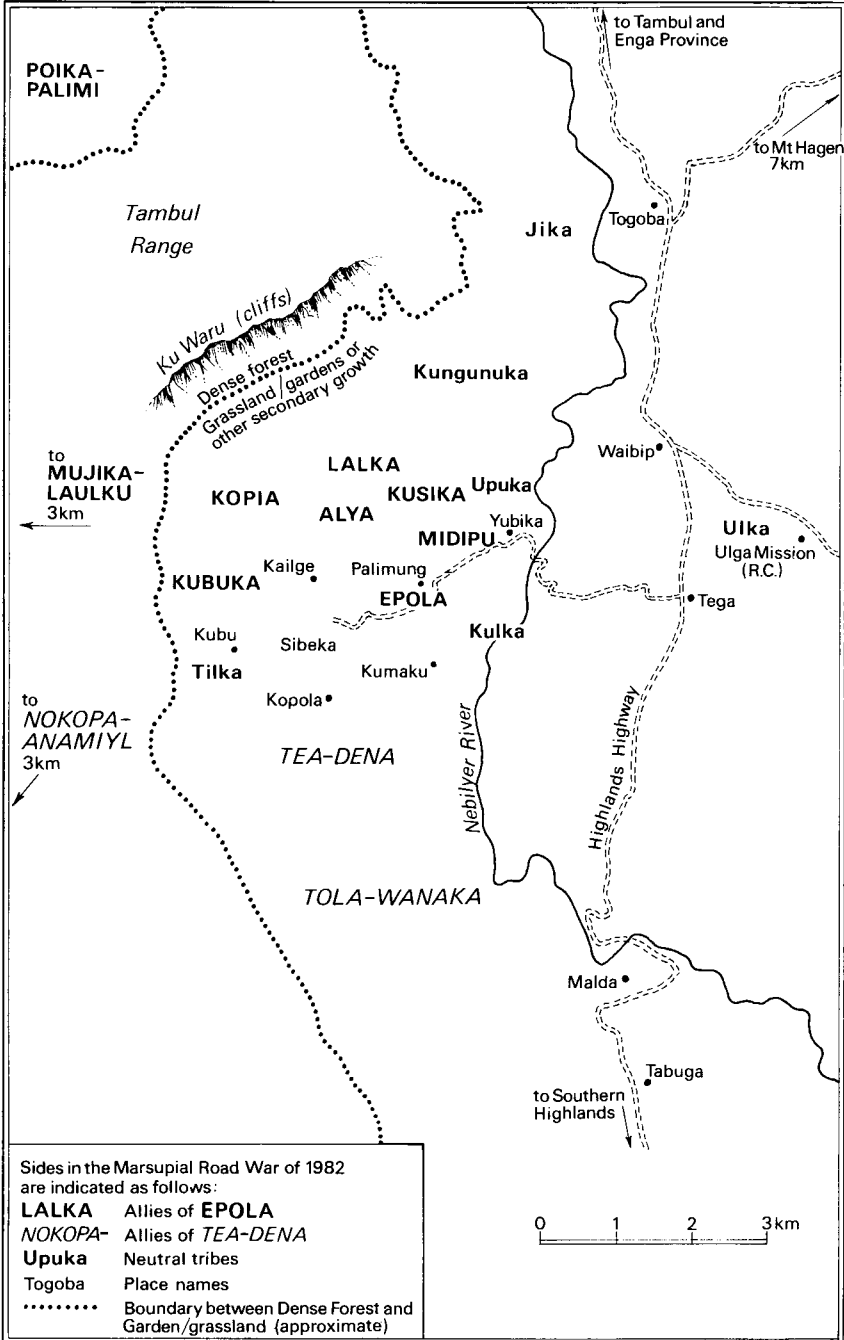
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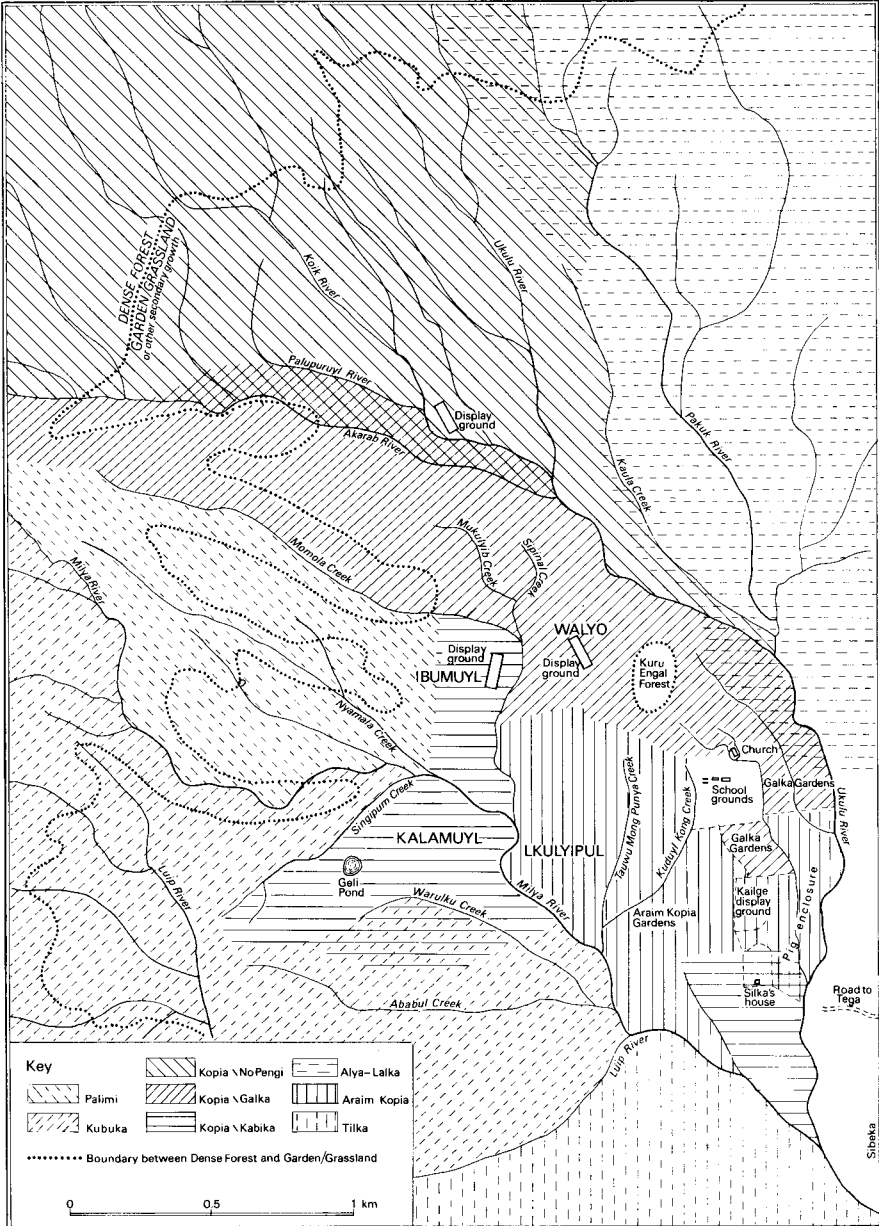
Map 1. The Nebilyer Valley and environs

This map is adapted from Map 1 in A.J. Strathern 1971, *The Rope of Moka*, with some alterations based on more recent 1:100,000 maps by the Royal Australian Survey Corps, series T601, T683.



Map 2. The Ku Waru region and nearby tribes in the western Nebilyer Valley





Map 3. The Kailge area and territorial distribution of *talapi*