

Appendix 1

Calculating speaker numbers

Whiteman and Simons (1978:5) gave the number of Kokota speakers as 166, a figure they say is based on the 1976 census (Statistics Division, Ministry of Finance, 1981). The figure is repeated by Tryon and Hackman (1983:20) (rounded up to 170). However the basis for this figure is not clear. In fact the 1976 census gives populations of 43 for Hurepelo, 77 for Sisiga, and 103 for Goveo, a total of 223. It is hard to imagine that numbers of non-first language Kokota speakers resident in the villages would have been calculated and subtracted from these totals. Moreover the validity of doing so would be questionable since Kokota is the normal language of communication in the villages, and as much marriage out is likely to have occurred as marriage in. Also, Kokota speakers in Honiara would not have been counted in these village populations. It may therefore be assumed that the number of Kokota speakers in 1976 was roughly equivalent to the 1976 census figures for the populations of the three Kokota speaking villages.

The picture presented in the 1986 census (Statistics Office, Ministry of Finance, 1989) is less clear. For that census populations were not calculated by village but by ward (a local political entity similar to an electorate). Hurepelo is included in a ward (Susubona) with several much larger non-Kokota speaking villages, and thus its population cannot be meaningfully extracted. Sisiga and Goveo fall within the Kokota ward. This includes no other villages, but may have included a small Maringe speaking settlement, a "Household" of Melanesian Brothers (an Anglican religious order), and possibly a logging camp. The total population of Kokota ward in the 1986 census is 512. Of these, the number of children in the Kokota ward under the age of ten (ie. born after the 1976 census), is 176. Even allowing for a small number of children in the Maringe settlement (there would have been none at the Household or the logging camp), the population of Goveo and Sisiga effectively doubled from the 180 counted in 1976. This gives a 1986 population for Goveo and Sisiga of about 350, leaving a total of 160 residents of Kokota ward not living in Goveo or Sisiga, a figure which seems rather high, so it may be assumed that 350 is conservative.

Assuming the population of Hurepelo also doubled over the same period, the 1986 total for that village would have been between 80 and 90. This plus the figure for Sisiga and Goveo gives a conservatively estimated total of about 445 Kokota speakers in 1986. It may be assumed that population growth in the ten years after 1986 was similar: a large proportion of the population of Goveo today are children, and the 1976 and 1986 censuses separately confirm that the north eastern coast of Santa Isabel is an area of unusually high population growth. Consequently the total number of Kokota speakers today may be estimated to be in excess of 900.