ABAU

The Bembi dialects are found in the Bewani Mountains. It is not known how numerous they are, but inland along the border with Dutch territory the language runs south until at least a dialect of it is found at Abau. ...

[quoting Laycock notes]
"At Green River the language is Abau. Tradition places these people as having come up the Sepik, and their language is possibly relatable to Iwam, although structurally it suggests Wogamusin ..."
- Capell 1962:47.

... Abau (c. 3,386 speakers). ...

... The figures ... for Abau is taken from Languages of the Amanab Sub-District, by Richard Loving and Jack Bass ... The language is there called 'Green River'.
- Laycock 1965a:118, n. 2.

Abau: (a) 3390 (b) all villages of Green River local CD, and most, if not all, of August River CD ...
- Laycock 1968:45.

(Djarok)
4545 [speakers]

The Abau language (Central Dialect) is spoken by 4000 people who live along the banks of the Sepik River and some of its tributaries, from the Irian Jaya International Border, east to Yellow River.

... the Abau language, the main tongue spoken in the Green River census division of the West Sepik District.
There are over 3,500 speakers of this language, living in approximately 40 villages along the Sepik River and some of its tributaries -- a long narrow area stretching from immediately west of Yellow River Patrol Post to just across the West Irian border.
It is not known authoritatively to which other languages the Abau language is related. The Abau people recognize only general speech differences between some villages and have no names of dialect areas.

... the village of Anaiehyom, which is otherwise known as Idam 1.
Working from the standard survey list used by S.I.L., it was found that approximately 65% of the vocabulary items are the same as is spoken in the central dialect; 20% involve pronunciation differences which necessitate changes of spelling, and 15% are entirely different lexical items.
- Bailey 1975b:52.

The people themselves use the term /_íá_k/ 'lial's language' to designate their language as distinct from that of other people. The word /_íá_/ is probably a loan word from a neighbouring language (possible Amto) meaning 'foreigner'. However, as the term Abau is accepted and used as the English name for the language group by the government and in published articles, it is felt best to continue in its usage.
The designation 'Green River' should no longer be used to indicate the Abau language.

* The Abau number about 5000 people and inhabit about 1700 square miles of territory along the Sepik mainstream between the International Border and Yellow River, as well as the valleys of the August, October, Green and Idam Rivers. ...
- Craig 1980:5.

Figure 1: Map of Upper Sepik Area -- Geographic Features; Villages.
[ABAU]
Miniaburu
Biake
Kobraru
Yablawai
Buliap
Bibiyum
Iles
Hufi
Isu
Selelian
Antibi
Bamblediam
Isabu
Bisiaburu
Buna
Iaburu
Dieru
Otwelimakom
Hogru
Tila
Rawei
Bifrou
Mukwasi
Mahaneli
Baiwal
Wiro
Baio
Beimap
Basis
Wagu
Niohillam
- Craig 1980:37.

* [Map]
Bibyun -- ABAU
Dieru -- ABAU
Green River -- ABAU
Wusianum -- ABAU
Yapsiei -- ABAU
- Wurm & Hattori 1981

According to Laycock (1973:69, 74), Abau belongs to the Upper Sepik Stock of the Sepik-Ramu Phylum of P.N.G. languages. The Abau language group is located in the southern portion of the Amanab Sub-district of the West Sepik Province. Abau villages are located / along the Sepik River from longitude 141° 40' upriver to just beyond the Irian Jaya border; along the lower Green and Hauser Rivers; along the Idam River; along the August (Yapsie) River and in the villages in the vicinity of the Green River Government Station.
- Martin 1981:210-211.

Abau is spoken by 4,317 speakers in 28 villages which are located in five P.N.G. Census Divisions. In addition, there are some speakers (reportedly only a few) along the Sepik River beyond the Irian Jaya border. The 1980 census figures organized by Census Division and village are presented in Table 2. Absentees are excluded from these figures since villagers reported that absentee seldom returned to their home villages.

1980 Census Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yabalhai C.D.</th>
<th>Green River Local C.D.</th>
<th>Idam C.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baio 122</td>
<td>Iburu 238</td>
<td>Idam #1 322</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to Laycock (1973:69) and more recent S.I.L. sources, Abau is bordered on the north by Yuri (Karkar), Sengai (Anggor) and Busa. It is bordered on the east by Namie and on the south by Musian, Amto and Mianmin. To the west across the Irian Jaya border the situation is less certain, but the languages there would appear to be Biksi and Pyu. Abau is not closely related to any language which borders it.

- Martin 1981:211.

It is evident that three major dialect areas emerge ... and arbitrarily have been given the following names in this report: The Central Dialect, the Up-River Dialect, and the Down-River Dialect. The villages of the Central Dialect have more in common with the other two dialects than either of the other two do with each other -- hence the name Central Dialect.

The Up-River Dialect includes all the Abau villages up the Sepik, Idam and August Rivers from the Central Dialect area. Bisiaburu is transitional. The younger generation there speaks the Central Dialect (like Iaburu), while the older generation speaks the Up-River Dialect (like Idam #1).

The Down-River Dialect includes all Abau villages down-river from the Central Dialect area. Mahani was not surveyed, but with more study may prove (like Bisiaburu) to be transitional between the Central and Down-River Dialects. ...


Appendix A. Map of Abau Area
Central Dialect:
Iaburu
Buna
Abaru
Dieru
Ogru
Iburi
Miniaburu
Simia
Mukwas
Bisiaburu

Up-River Dialect:
Idam #1
Idam #2
Wauru #1
Wauru #2
Kobraru
Sugmayin
Biake #1
Kaseiru
Hufi
Ileis
Imnai #1

Down-River Dialect:
Mahani
Bifro
Baiuwai
Baio
Beimap
Senou
Wagu


1985 census figures
Down river dialect:
Imnai  167
Ileis   49
Wauru 1  162
Wauru 2   48
Idam 1  325
Idam 2  256
Hufi    159
Kaseiru 143
Biak    28
Soukmayon 111
Kopraru 103

Total     1551

Central dialect:
Yapru  404
Buna   109
Mukwas  231
Mahani  142
Baiuwai 124
Bifro   240
Baio    136
Yipru 238
Aparu 179
Dioru 207
Miniapru 167
Simia 34
Pisiapru 113
Ogru 167
Total 2491

Up river dialect:
Beimap 88
Wagu 126
Senou 75
Total 289

- Lock & Lock 1985 Ts:5.

The nearly 600 people of Idam 1 and Idam 2 live in 11 different camps. The village Yapru is also divided into two camps. 300 people live along the Sepik River and another 100 people live along the Hauser River.
- Lock & Lock 1985 Ts:5.

... 28 villages in Papua New Guinea. Sandaun Province, Green River District, Sepik and Green Rivers. Also in Irian Jaya, Indonesia. ...

... The Sepik River to the north of this [AMA] area, to Waku village, is occupied by speakers of the Abau or Green River language (to the Sawiyan_; the Sonamo). ...
- Guddemi 1992:35.

**ABAU (GREEN RIVER)** ... 4,545 (1981 Wurm and Hattori) in 28 villages. Sandaun Province, Green River District, Sepik and Green rivers. Not in Irian Jaya, Indonesia. ...
- Grimes 1996.


**Abau**: around 4,550 speakers reported in 1981, on the Sepik and Green rivers, in Ambunti and southern Amanab Subdistricts, southwest of Namie, West Sepik Province. Also spoken in Irian Jaya, Indonesia. Also called Green River.
- Comrie 1992jj:419.
Identification and Location. The Abau are the westernmost people living on the Sepik River. The name was applied by linguists; it is not used by the Abau people. It might have derived from the kinship term for grandparents, abau. "Green River" is inappropriate as an ethnonym because it is the name of a river flowing mainly through non-Abau territory and of a government patrol post near the boundaries of three unrelated language groups.

Abau territory falls within Sandaun (West Sepik) Province of Papua New Guinea and extends mainly along the south bank of the Sepik from the vicinity of the Yellow River, a northern tributary of the upper Sepik, to the international border of the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya; that is between 141°00" [sic] and 141°00" [sic] E. by 4°S. It also includes the area south of the Green River patrol post and the floodplains of the Idam and August rivers, southern tributaries of the upper Sepik. The West Range to the south is sparsely inhabited by peoples who speak unrelated languages ... On the north side of the Sepik, ... peoples of unrelated languages share a culture not unlike that of the Abau.

Demography. The names of 1990 and 2000 village-based census units are difficult to correlate with Abau villages. The linguist Laycock estimated 4,545 people based on information in 1970. The census figures for 1980 suggest no significant change. It is estimated that the Abau number between 4,500 and 5,000 people ...

Linguistic Affiliation. Abau belongs to the Sepik–Ramu phylum of Non-Austronesian ("Papuan") languages ... The language most closely related to Abau is Iwam, ...

Abau speakers separate Biaka and Pyu speakers, whose languages appear to be related at the phylum level, to the north and west, respectively. ...
  – Craig 2002:1.

* * *

[GREEN RIVER]
1. Green River 3,386

GREEN RIVER = ABAU
   Loving & Bass 1964: Map.

Green River. This is the largest language in the [Amanab] Sub-district with 3,386 speakers within the sub-district and an undetermined number in the headwaters of the Sepik in West Irian. ...

* * *
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<th>Language</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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Pisiapru -- ABAU  Lock & Lock 1985 Ts
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Wiro -- ABAU  Craig 1980
Wusianum -- ABAU  Wurm & Hattori 1981

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