

INTRODUCTION

The Loyalty Group consists of three main islands which are parallel to the axis of New Caledonia and situated approximately eighty miles to the east of it. These islands lie from N.W. to S.E. between 21°10' and 21°40' S. lat. and between 166°20' and 168°20' E. long.¹

This study examines the Dehu language, spoken on the island of Lifou by a population of some 7000 Melanesian inhabitants. Lifou has a total area of 444 square miles.

There are two languages spoken on Lifou, Dehu and Miny, although this latter language, used only in addressing chiefs has all but disappeared. Miny seems to be a heavily embellished form of Dehu with many similar lexical items. Some of the Miny vocabulary, however, is apparently unrelated to the ordinary language, Dehu;² no study of Miny is attempted in this Dehu Grammar.

Previous studies in this language include:

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| 1852 | A. Cheyne | Word List in <i>Description of the Islands in the Western Pacific</i> . |
| 1860
& 1873 | H.C. von der Gabelentz | <i>Die Melanesischen Sprachen</i> I & II, Leipzig. |
| 1882 | P.A.C. | <i>Notes Grammaticales sur la Langue de Lifou</i> , Paris. |

¹S.H. Ray, *The Melanesian Island Languages*, Cambridge, 1926.

²cf. D.T. Tryon, *Dehu-English Dictionary*, Canberra, 1967.