

# 68. Nengone

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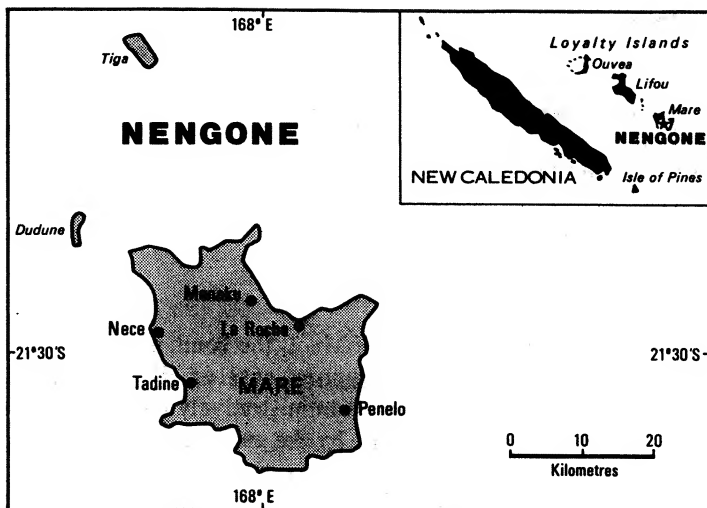
## 1. Introduction

Nengone is spoken on the island of Mare, the southernmost of the Loyalty Islands, some one hundred kilometres east of the mainland of New Caledonia. The Loyalty Islands are administratively part of New Caledonia. Nengone or Pene Nengone is spoken by the approximately 6,500 inhabitants of the island of Mare and by a varying number of Mare expatriates working in Noumea, the New Caledonian capital. There is little discernable dialect variation.

Mare has a surface area of 650 square kilometres (Dubois 1984). It is located at approximately 21° 31' S. lat. and 168° E. long.

The earliest studies of Nengone include wordlists by Turner (1847), and Inglis (1851), as well as the work of H.C. von der Gabelentz (1861). Also significant in the nineteenth century were Codrington (1885) and Mueller (1888). In 1903 the Bible (Anon 1903) was translated into Nengone by the British and Foreign Bible Society, and it was this which served as the basis of the account of Nengone which appears in Ray (1926). The first study of Nengone based on field study rather than published documents was that of Maurice Leenhardt (1946). This work also contains an extensive wordlist for Nengone, as indeed it does for all of the languages of New Caledonia and its dependencies. Later works devoted to Nengone include Tryon's (1967), and Tryon - Dubois (1969 and 1971). More recently Dubois (1984) has published an encyclopedic ethnography of the people of Mare which is rich in ethnocultural lexical material collected during Dubois' lengthy stays on the island between 1939 and 1967, as a missionary. The lexical material here presented in the comparative lexicon is taken mainly from the Nengone dictionary referred to above.

Nengone distinguishes three registers, namely *pene animac*, *pene egesho* and *pene iwateno*. *Pene animac* is the register used in everyday speech, while *pene egesho* is a register of insult and vulgarity, used especially in the heat of battle by warriors. A third register, the language of respect, an honorific register, is known as *pene iwateno*.



Map 68. Nengone language area

*Pene egesho* often reflects common Austronesian roots replaced in the language of everyday intercourse. Thus one has, for example *net* (POC \**mate*) 'die, dead', instead of *taŋo*, *wa-neč* (POC \**mata*) 'eye' instead of *waegogo*. There are also significant lexical differences between the common register and that used in honorific speech, reserved for communication with chieftains. One has, for example *wien* 'good' (*pene iwateno*), as opposed to the common register *roi*, *kođaru* 'eat' as opposed to *kaka*, *čanaeon* 'hear' as opposed to *taeđeŋi*. The differences between the three registers are very largely lexical, although *pene iwateno* is characterised by the use of honorific suffixes with both nouns and verbs. Compare, for example:

Pene Animac	Pene Iwateno	
<i>sibon</i>	<i>siboton</i>	'ask'
<i>sian</i>	<i>siaton</i>	'send'
<i>udi</i>	<i>uditon</i>	'reject'

The differences between the common and the respectful register are also well exemplified in the following pronominal table:

	Common	Respectful
I	<i>inu</i>	<i>inuŋo</i>
you sg.	<i>bo</i>	<i>bua</i>
he/she	<i>bon</i>	<i>nuboneŋo</i>
we dl incl	<i>eθew</i>	<i>eθewewŋo</i>
we dl excl	<i>eŋe</i>	<i>eŋewŋo</i>
you dl	<i>ŋewŋo</i>	<i>buŋewŋo</i>
they dl	<i>bušewŋon</i>	<i>bušewŋoneŋo</i>
we pl incl	<i>eje</i>	<i>ejeŋo</i>
we pl excl	<i>eŋij</i>	<i>eŋijeŋo</i>
you pl	<i>buŋij</i>	<i>buŋijeŋo</i>
they pl	<i>buič</i>	<i>buičeŋo</i>

Tryon, Darrell T. 1995. Nengone. In: Darrel T. Tryon (ed.) Comparative Austronesian Dictionary. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.