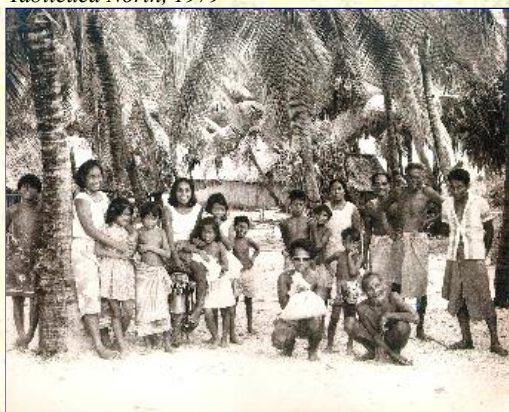




# Kiribati

Tabiteuea North, 1979



(photo by Steve Trussel) Click for large image.

**KIRIBATI**, (pronounced like *kee-ree-bus*, the native pronunciation of *Gilberts*) is a small island republic in the middle of the Pacific, with a population of about 70,000 Micronesians. Formerly part of the British Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, Kiribati became independent in 1979, while I was there on leave for a year from my graduate studies at the University of Hawaii, doing linguistic research for the [Kiribati Peace Corps Language Handbook](#).



- [Kiribati Bibliography](#): the latest version, extensively updated, with title and topical indexes.
- [A Chronological Bibliography of Banaba](#)
- [Treaty of Friendship](#) Between the United States of America and the Republic of Kiribati, signed at Tarawa September 20, 1979. (Thanks to John D. Boswell for supplying a copy!)
- [Kiribati Links](#)

## Kiribati in the News

photo by Franco Salmoiraghi - click to enlarge



1996 (Quentin Letts)

[Kiribati struggles against rising sea levels](#) - July 3, 2016 (Mike Ives)

[2000 greeted with song, dance](#) - January 1, 2000 (*The Japan Times*)  
[Date Line Politics](#) - August, 1999 (*Honolulu Magazine*)  
[U.N. admits Nauru, Kiribati, Tonga](#) - September 16, 1999 (*The Japan Times*)  
[U.N. entry of Kiribati, Nauru OK'd](#) - June 27, 1999 (*The Japan Times*)  
[Christmas cleared for spaceport](#) - September 17, 1998 (*The Japan Times*)  
[Tiny Island's Date-Line Jog in Race for Millennium](#) - Mar 23, 1997 (Nicholas D. Kristof)  
[Last sunset of the 20th Century](#) - Jan 25, 1997 (Cleo Paskal)  
[Pacific braces for millennium storm over matter of degrees](#) - Jan 25,

## Gilbertese (te taetae ni Kiribati)

From my collection of Gilbertese linguistic data, I've selected a few of the more interesting items. Among these are the earliest known descriptions of the language, Horatio Hale's 966-word list, collected in 1841, as part of the U.S. Exploring Expedition 1837-1842, and published in 1846 with the report of the expedition, and a 320-word list, published in 1847 (collected in 1845) by M. Fabre, a doctor aboard a French ship which picked up a canoe-load of drift Gilbertese, given here in my translation of the original French, with the word list in English order.

- [Hale's Tarawan Vocabulary \(1846\)](#)
- [Fabre's Polynesian Vocabularies \(1847\)](#)

**Caution:** Both the [Kiribati-English Dictionary](#) and the [English-Kiribati Finderlist](#) below are works in progress, still being edited and proofread. They are posted here 'as-is' for the benefit of researchers, but numerous typographical and other errors must certainly exist, so they should be used with caution and the understanding that the data should be verified.





One of [Robin White's](#) Kiribati woodblock prints, "On the beach at Bikenibeu" (1992)

## **A Combined Kiribati-English Dictionary**

based on the works of  
Bingham and Sabatier/Oliva

compiled by  
Trussel and Groves  
1978

revised and edited by  
Stephen Trussel  
2003

**A B E I K M N NG**  
**O R T U W**

## **An English-Kiribati Finderlist**

An English index  
based on and linked to the

### **Dictionary**

compiled by  
Stephen Trussel  
2003

**A B C D E F G H I**  
**J K L M N O P Q R**  
**S T U V W X Y Z**

## **Descriptions of the Kiribati Language**

Stephen Trussel

University  
of Hawaii

1983

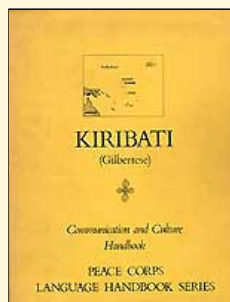
## **Peace Corps Language Handbook Series:**

### **Kiribati Language Lessons**

These handbooks, which I produced with EIL in 1979, are long out of print, and unavailable anywhere else that I know of. In 2003 I began converting them to web pages, but the process was interrupted after about 10 lessons in each book. In Aug. 2010, I heard once again that Peace Corps had no copies available, and as I'd received numerous requests to increase the online inventory, I began scanning the remaining chapters, presented here as *pdfs*...

#### **Complete Communications Lessons PDF**

### **Communication and Culture Handbook**



#### **Introduction**

#### **A. First Contact / Personal History**

1. [Greetings](#)
2. [What's your name?](#)
3. [How old are you?](#)
4. [Where are you from?](#)
5. [M'aneaba speech](#)

#### **D. Arranging a Meeting**

16. [Time](#)
17. [Place](#)

#### **E. Getting Around**

18. [Do you know the way?](#)
19. [Meeting](#)
20. [The Gilbert Group](#)
21. [Travel](#)
22. [How far?](#)
23. [When does it come?](#)
24. [How long does it take?](#)

#### **F. Commerce**

25. [At the store](#)

#### **G. The House**

26. [A Kiribati house](#)

#### **H. Health**

27. [Illness](#)
28. [The body](#)
29. [Bathing](#)

#### **L. Geography / Resources**

39. [On the beach](#)
40. [The coconut tree](#)
41. [The toddy cutter](#)
42. [The pandanus tree](#)
43. [Plants and animals of Kiribati](#)

#### **M. The Sea**

44. [The lagoon and the oceanside](#)
45. [The Kiribati canoe](#)
46. [Fishing](#)
47. [Ikarii: bony-fish](#)

#### **N. Social Activities**

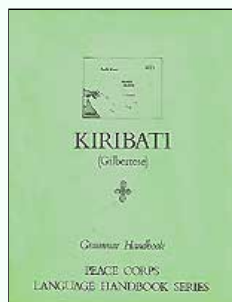
48. [Clothing](#)
49. [Games](#)
50. [Religions](#)
51. [Recreation](#)

#### **O. Civil Structure**

52. [The M'aneaba](#)
53. [Independence](#)
54. [Government workers](#)

6. <a href="#">How long?</a> 7. <a href="#">Where do you live?</a> 8. <a href="#">The farewell</a>  <b>B. Language Learning</b> 9. <a href="#">The language learner</a> 10. <a href="#">What's it in Kiribati?</a> 11. <a href="#">Conversation</a> 12. <a href="#">I don't understand</a> 13. <a href="#">Some help</a>  <b>C. Family</b> 14. <a href="#">The family</a> 15. <a href="#">My brothers and sisters</a>	<b>I. The Meal</b> 30. <a href="#">The invitation</a> 31. <a href="#">Dinner</a> 32. <a href="#">Time to eat</a> 33. <a href="#">Smoking</a>  <b>J. Occupations</b> 34. <a href="#">Occupations</a> 35. <a href="#">How to make things</a>  <b>K. Education</b> 36. <a href="#">How many kinds of schools in Kiribati?</a> 37. <a href="#">Go to the blackboard</a> 38. <a href="#">Reading and writing</a>	<b>P. Miscellany</b> 55. <a href="#">Weather</a> 56. <a href="#">Things I did today</a> 57. <a href="#">Opposites</a> 58. <a href="#">Do you like it here?</a> 59. <a href="#">Tools</a> 60. <a href="#">Marriage and children</a> 61. <a href="#">Useful expressions</a>  <a href="#">English-Kiribati Glossary</a> <a href="#">Kiribati-English Glossary</a>
--	--	--

## Grammar Handbook



### 1. Sounds and Spelling

- [The vowels](#)
- [The nasals](#)
- [The consonants](#)
- [Nasals before other consonants](#)

### 2. Dialects

### 3. Intransitive Sentence Order

- [Position of additional material](#)

### 4. Transitive Sentence Order

### 5. Interrogatives - Part 1

- [yes - no questions](#)
- [negative questions](#)
- [tag questions](#)
- [tiaki](#)

### 6. Interrogatives Part 2 - Who, Whose

- [antai - who](#)
- [antena - whose](#)

### 7. Interrogatives - Part 3 - What, How Many

- [teraa - what](#)
- [raa - what, which?](#)
- [iraua - how many?](#)
- [Notes on asking 'what'](#)
- [Notes on asking 'the how many-th'](#)

### 8. Interrogatives - Part 4 - When, Where, Why

- [nningai - when](#)
- [iia - where](#)

### 14. The Article

- te**
- taian(i)**
- te naa n**
- Person Articles  
EXERCISES

### 15. Pluralization

- absence of **te**
- presence of **taian(i)**
- relative pronouns
- demonstrative pronouns
- Numbers
- other quantity words
- subject pronouns
- objects
- taan(i)**  
EXERCISES

### 16. Numbers - Part 1 - Introductory

- ua**
- 1-10
- 10-100
- 100-1,000
- 1,000-1,000,000
- over 1,000,000
- years
- how many?  
EXERCISES

### 17. Numbers - Part 2 - Classifiers

- man**
  - ira-man**
  - position of numerals
    - teuana**
  - tabe**
    - tatabe**
  - other classifiers
    - note on **teni** and **wani**
- EXERCISES

### 18. Numbers - Part 3 - Ordinals

- ordinals
- used verbally
- distributive
- fractions
- approximation
- mathematics  
EXERCISES

### 28. Relative Pronouns

- adjectives
- apposition
- person demonstratives + relatives  
EXERCISES

### 29. Adjectives

EXERCISES

### 30. Adjectives - Part 2 - Comparison

- intensification
- comparison
- superlative
- equality
- summary  
EXERCISES

### 31. Verbs - General

- Tense
- Agreement
- Interrogative, Adverbial & Adjectival
- Repeated Action
- Passive
- Transitive Formation
- 'To be'
- 'To have'  
EXERCISES

### 32. Agent Marking

EXERCISES

### 33. Reduplication

- Usually
- Continuity
- Adjectives  
EXERCISES

### 34. Time Expressions - Adverbial

- Demonstrative Time Adverbs
- Adverbial Expressions
- Auxiliaries
- Verbs  
EXERCISES

### 35. Locative Expressions

- Locative Adverbs
- Prepositions  
EXERCISES

- c. [maia](#) - from where  
d. [bukin teraa](#) - why

#### INTERROGATIVE REVIEW EXERCISES

#### 9. Interrogatives - Part 5 - Question Verbs

- a. [ngaa](#) - to be where  
b. [aera](#) - to do what  
c. [uara](#) - to be how  
d. [nakea](#) - to go where  
e. [kangaa](#) - to do how  
f. [rikea](#) - to pass by where  
g. [iraanna](#) - to do in what way

#### 10. Imperatives - Part 1

- a. basic imperative formation  
b. negative imperatives  
c. Imperatives with **an(i)**  
d. lengthened vowels  
EXERCISES

#### 11. Imperatives - Part 2

1. formed with **na**  
a. first person plural  
b. second person  
c. negatives with **na aki**  
2. with **ke**  
3. **taiaoka, butiiko**  
4. imperative verbs  
EXERCISES

#### 12. Negatives

1. **aki** - not  
2. **tuai, tuai men** - not yet, never  
3. negative response to questions  
a. **aki**  
b. **tiaki**  
c. **akea**  
EXERCISES

#### 13. Nouns - Introductory

1. Nominalization  
2. Possession  
3. Plurality  
4. Gender

#### 19. Pronouns Introductory - Summary

1. emphatic  
2. subject  
3. object  
4. possessive  
5. poss. suffix  
6. relative  
7. demonstrative  
a. relative time  
b. relative place  
c. demonstrative time  
d. demonstrative place  
EXERCISES

#### 20. Subject Pronouns

EXERCISES

#### 21. Emphatic/ Independent Pronouns

EXERCISES

#### 22. Object Pronouns

- a. reflexives  
EXERCISES

#### 23. Possession - Part 1 - Independent pronouns

EXERCISES

#### 24. Possession - Part 2 - Suffixed pronouns

1. body parts  
2. family relationships  
3. intimate possessions  
4. states of mind and feelings  
5. positional relationships  
6. nouns formed from verbs  
EXERCISES

#### 25. Possession - Part 3 - Genitive n

EXERCISES

#### 26. Demonstrative Pronouns

EXERCISES

#### 27. Person Demonstratives

- a. Neuter demonstratives  
EXERCISES

#### 36. Prepositions

1. **i**  
2. **irou**  
3. **mai**  
4. **man**  
5. **n(i)**  
6. **nako/nakon**  
EXERCISES

#### 37. Tense / Auxiliaries

1. present/past indeterminate  
2. **a** - immediate indeterminate  
3. **tabe n** - continued action  
4. **nang(i)** - immediate future  
5. **na** - general future  
6. **a tib'a** - immediate past  
7. **a tia n** - completed past  
8. additional auxiliaries  
EXERCISES

#### 38. Conjunctions

1. joining noun phrases  
2. joining sentential structures  
a. two verbs or adjectives  
b. second sentence as object of verb  
c. two simple sentences  
EXERCISES

#### 39. Conditional Sentences

1. if  
2. since, when  
3. additional conjunctions  
EXERCISES

#### 40. Compounding

EXERCISES

#### Appendix 1. Higher Numbers - Old System

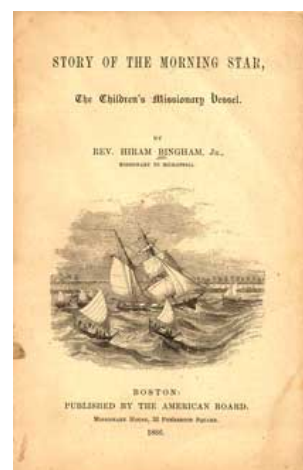
#### Appendix 2. Numeral classifiers

#### Answers to Written Exercises

#### Index

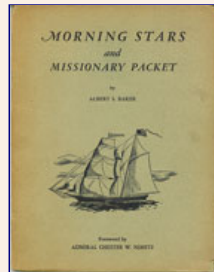
## *The Morning Stars* 19th C. Missionary Ships to the Gilberts

[click to enlarge](#)

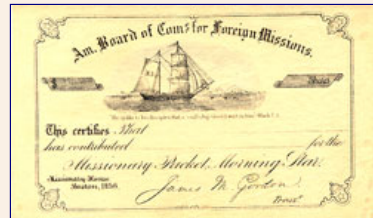


**Story of the Morning Star**  
**The Children's Missionary Vessel**  
 Rev. Hiram Bingham, Jr.  
 1866

**Sequel**  
 1883



**Morning Stars and Missionary Packet**  
 by Albert S. Baker, M.A., M.D., B.D.



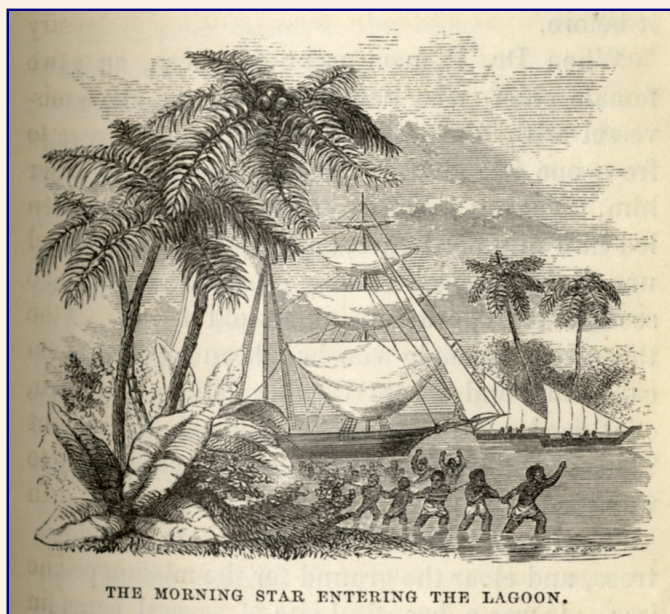
Marshall Islands stamps commemorating the first *Morning Star*



Illustrations from  
 "The Morning Star:  
 History of the Children's Missionary Vessel,  
 and of the Marquesan and Micronesian Missions"  
 by Mrs. Jane S. Warren  
 1860

*click to enlarge*





see also Jane Resture's [The Story of the Morning Star](#)

### Louis Becke [1855-1913]

Louis Becke, a 19th century Pacific writer, set many of his stories in the Gilbert Islands. I've compiled this bibliography:

● [A Louis Becke Bibliography](#)

To provide a sample of Becke's writings, I've transcribed (and slightly annotated) one of his stories here, a grisly tale of treachery and murder in the early 19th century Gilberts, from his collection of stories "The Ebbing of the Tide":

- [Deschard of Oneaka](#) by Louis Becke (1895)



### Robert Louis Stevenson [1850-1894]

Robert Louis Stevenson's "In the South Seas" has two major sections about his time in the Gilberts, one on Butaritari, and one on Abemama. "In the South Seas" is [available on-line](#) as a Gutenberg Project e-text. (A list of thousands of on-line books and references to more can be found at the [Free eBooks by Project Gutenberg](#) page. Here is Stevenson's Abemama section at this site:

- "In the South Seas" [Part IV: The Gilberts - Apemama](#) by Robert Louis Stevenson (1900)
- [Robert Louis Stevenson on stamps](#)
- More on RLS at Richard Dury's [Robert Louis Stevenson Web Site](#).

### Arthur Grimble [1888-1956]

Here's a little story I wrote based on my recollection of Arthur Grimble's "The Limping Man of Makin-Meang" from his "A Pattern of Islands" (John Murray, 1952).

- ["The Pathway to Heaven"](#) by S. Trussel (1988)

And one of Grimble's own from "A Pattern of Islands":

- ["The Calling of the Porpoise"](#) by Arthur Grimble (1952)

A new story about calling porpoises:

- ["Eating Out in Butaritari"](#) by Cleo Paskal (1996)

## Christmas Island



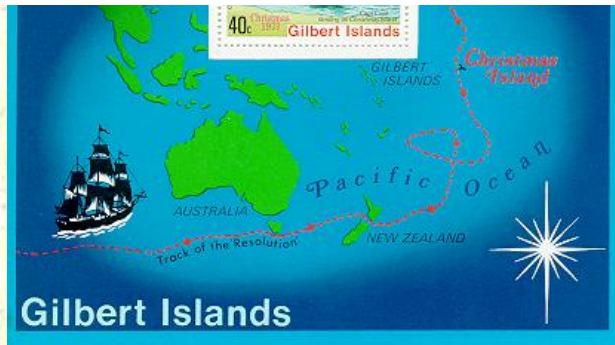
photo by Franco Salmoiraghi,  
East-West magazine, Fall/Winter 1986  
[Click images to enlarge](#)



Christmas (Kiritimati) Island is some 1,500 miles south of Hawai'i, one of the outlying settlements of Kiribati. Here's a copy of the original draft of the essay I wrote for Franco Salmoiraghi's beautiful photo book on Christmas Island in 1986, and a magazine story I did for East-West magazine at that time.

- [The History and People of Christmas Island](#) by Steve Trussel.
- ["Kiritimati: A Christmas Visit"](#) by Steve Trussel.
- ["Christmas Island, 1966"](#) by Bob Thomas.





---

## Links

[Kiribati and Tuvalu Association](#), "official website of the Kiribati and Tuvalu Association of the UK and the Republic of Ireland."

Jane Resture's [Kiribati Homepage](#)

[Kiribati Books](#)

[Pacific Islands Jobs](#) - Job opportunities in the Pacific...

Pacific Islands stamps - [Pacific Islands Study Circle of Great Britain](#)

Pacific Islands links - [Moon Handbooks Micronesia](#)

Mike Wright's [Online English-Kiribati Dictionary](#)

---

[HOME PAGE](#) [e-mail](#)