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CHAPTER **5**

Diversity, Hierarchy, and Modernity in Pacific Island Communities

Niko Besnier

1   INTRODUCTION

The Pacific Islands are inhabited by some of the most diverse and dynamic human groupings in the world. It is in part thanks to this diversity and dynamicity that sociocultural anthropologists and linguistic anthropologists, since they began conducting fieldwork among Pacific Island peoples, have made important contributions to our general understanding of the complex interaction among language, society, and culture. For example, sociocultural and linguistic diversity has enabled scholars to explore the motivations underlying the efflorescence of lifeways and communicative resources, as well as its limitations and consequences. Similarly, the dynamic nature of social formations, languages, and structures of language use in Pacific Island communities has provided fascinating materials with which we have sought to understand ways in which sociocultural change and linguistic change interface with one another. Research on language, communication, and sociocultural dynamics in the Pacific Islands has thus enabled linguistic and sociocultural anthropologists to explore one of the most fundamental questions of the discipline, namely the internal structure and outer limits of human diversity.

Sociocultural anthropologists never tire of showing that society and culture are inherently changeable, constantly adapted to new situations, absorbing elements from all directions, and transforming themselves in the course of history. As a constitutive element of society and culture, language reflects as well as enacts change, and the Pacific Islands provide fascinating examples of the way in which the relationship among language, society, and culture can at once be stubbornly resilient and

constantly in flux. This chapter provides examples of areas of research in which linguistic anthropologists working in the Pacific Islands have contributed to our understanding of the role that language plays in reflecting and contributing to the dynamic character of society and culture.

1.1   Regions and Histories

The Pacific Islands conjure images of extremes and paradoxes. Consisting of a large number of small islands scattered over the largest ocean of the planet, the region presents some of the most extreme patterns of social, cultural, and linguistic diversity anywhere in the world. Diversity, for example, characterizes the range of kinship structures, political organizations, and economic practices found among Pacific Island societies. Cosmologies, ritual practices, and modes of thought all exhibit remarkable variation, particularly since the advent of colonialism and the concomitant importation of new forms of thinking, believing, and feeling. The inhabitants of the Pacific Islands speak numerous and diverse languages. While numbers are very difficult to advance conclusively, about a fifth of the world's languages are spoken in the Pacific, a particularly dramatic figure considering that the region is inhabited by a tiny fraction of the world's population and represents less than 1 percent of the earth's land area.

Deciding what to include under the term "Pacific Islands" is somewhat arbitrary. For the purpose of this chapter, it is expedient and historically logical to use the term to refer to all islands in a region bounded to the west by New Guinea, to the northwest by the Mariana Islands, to the north by Hawai'i, to the extreme southeast by Rapanui (Easter Island), and to the south by New Zealand. The area therefore excludes the Aboriginal societies of Australia, which form a radically divergent cultural complex: descendent of populations that migrated into the then joint Australia–New Guinea continent around 40,000 BP, Aborigines conserved a social, cultural, and linguistic homogeneity over the centuries that bears no known relation to the sociocultural forms and languages of the Insular Pacific, and that contrasts sharply with the diversifying sociocultural efflorescence that characterized the Pacific Islands over the centuries.

The regional boundary between the Pacific Islands and the world that lies to the east of the region, namely South America, is easy to draw, in that there are no verified social, cultural, or linguistic commonalities between the two areas, and no evidence of sustained prehistoric contact. In contrast, the regions lying west of New Guinea, i.e., the Indonesian and Philippine archipelagos, display continuities of many different kinds with the Insular Pacific. For example, many languages of Indonesia and the Philippines are related to languages spoken in the Pacific Islands (as well as further afield, in Madagascar, Taiwan, and small pockets in the Southeast Asian mainland). Patterns of social organization and cultural life found in many parts of Indonesia and the Philippines bear resemblances to dynamics prevalent among Pacific Island societies. Where the societies of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines differ from Pacific Island societies is in terms of their size, history, and contemporary sociopolitical situation. Not only do Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have considerably larger overall populations than any Pacific Island nation, but most societies and

speech communities of Indonesia and the Philippines are also considerably larger than most Pacific Island societies and speech communities. Furthermore, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have maintained social and cultural ties with continental Asia much more continuously than the Pacific Islands; as a result, Insular Southeast Asian societies and cultures bear similarities to societies and cultures of the Asian continent that are not found in the Pacific Islands, as a result, for example, of the successive influence of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. These divergent characteristics do lend some support to the identification of a Pacific Island region as separate from Insular Southeast Asia, as long as one bears in mind that important patterns of sociocultural continuity still straddle the boundary between the two regions.

The Pacific Islands are commonly divided into three regions: Polynesia (etymologically, "many islands"), Melanesia ("black islands"), and Micronesia ("small islands"), as illustrated in map 5.1. Polynesia is often described as a "triangle," with as its apexes Hawai'i, Rapanui (Easter Island), and New Zealand, with the addition of the Polynesian Outliers, small communities geographically embedded in Melanesia and Micronesia but that bear cultural, historical, and linguistic affinities to Polynesia. Micronesia inscribes a large arc across the northern and central Pacific, from the tiny island of Tobi, halfway between Palau and the westernmost tip of New Guinea, to Kiribati (Gilbert Islands). Melanesia comprises generally larger islands and island groups than the other two: New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and Fiji. But it is important to bear in mind that these labels are historically contingent, as the product of Europeans' early intellectual and colonial interests in the region. Charles de Brosses, a French sea captain, coined the name "Polynesia" in 1756, but for a century or so it referred to all the Pacific Islands. The tripartite division that we use today was proposed in 1832 by Jules Dumont d'Urville, another French ship captain, but it was already conceptually present in the racialist and evolutionary distinctions that Europeans had been drawing in the Pacific since the Enlightenment. Eighteenth-century writers, for example, viewed the light-complexioned, hierarchically organized, and technologically sophisticated Polynesians as more advanced on a putative universal scale of human development than the more darkly pigmented, politically more fragmented, and less technologically endowed Melanesians (Micronesia did not occupy a prominent place in the European representational preoccupations of the time). Polynesians, particularly Tahitians, came to embody for Europeans of the time the mostly positive image of the morally pure "noble savage," while Melanesians were viewed as examples of animalistic, uncivilized, and dangerous savagery. Directly and indirectly, these complex and often contradictory images of the inhabitants of the various islands would fuel imaginations back in the European world, and for the centuries to come would inform colonial designs and political policies (see Smith 1985 for a masterful discussion of the way in which the artistic production of the times reflects these images). Despite their morally dubious historical associations, the terms "Polynesia," "Melanesia," and "Micronesia" do serve a useful purpose today, not only as convenient geographical labels, but also as strategic self-identificational symbols that some Pacific Islanders use for a variety of political and cultural purposes, particularly where the politics of postcolonial indigeneity are tense (e.g., Hawai'i, New Zealand, New Caledonia).

However, the tripartite division of the Pacific Islands does not reflect the complex prehistory of the human settlement of the region. Archaeological records indicate
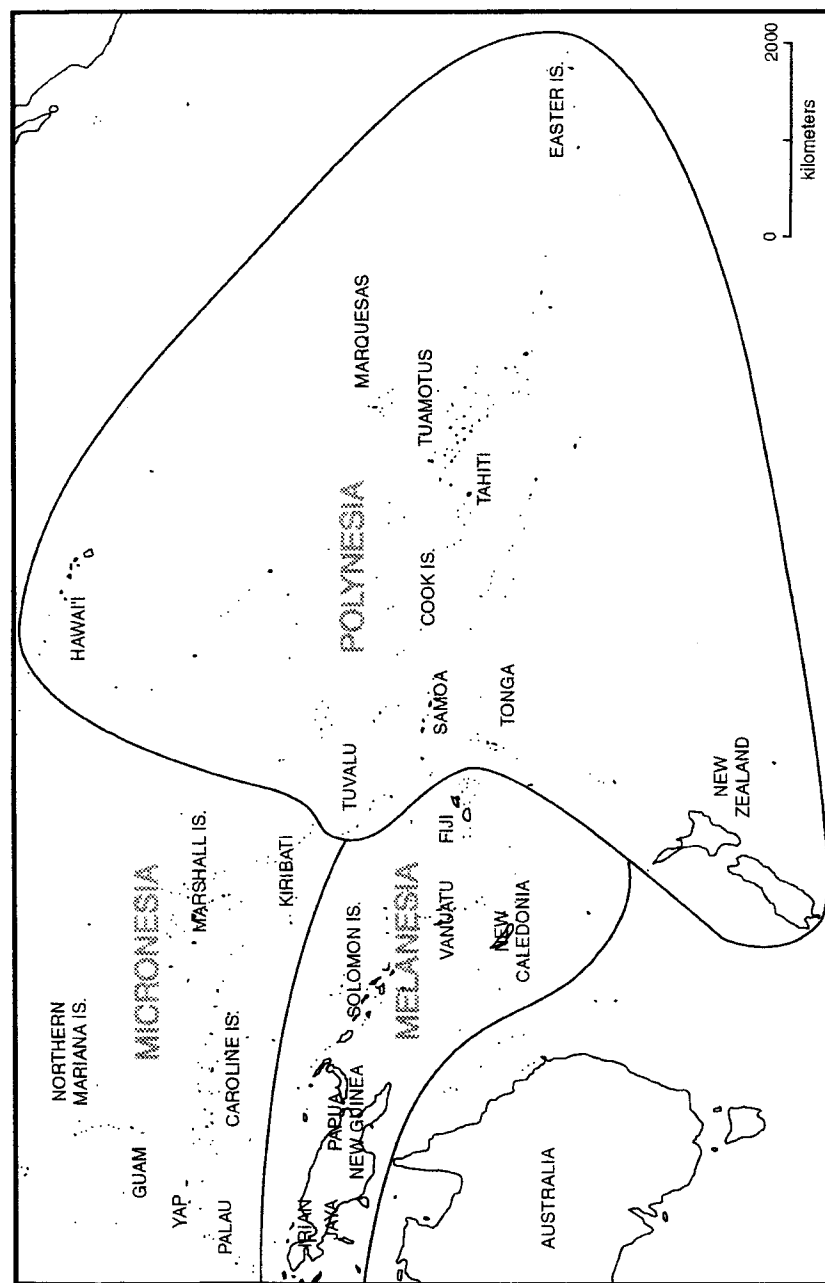
Map 5.1   Cultural areas of the Pacific Islands as commonly identified in the early twenty-first century

that the process through which humans came to inhabit the Pacific Islands was long and complex. Humans appear to have begun settling New Guinea and surrounding islands around 40,000 BP. The most likely origin of these settlers is Southeast Asia, and their relationship to the people who settled Australia around the same time is unknown. They began engaging in plant domestication around 10,000 BP. Several millennia later, new waves of settlers began joining these earlier settlers. Probably originating from the coastal areas of East and Southeast Asia, migrating via Insular Southeast Asia, these intrepid travelers as well as seasoned agriculturalists began descending on the Pacific Islands by sea around 5,000 BP, settling parts of Melanesia and Western Micronesia first, then moving east towards Polynesia and the rest of Micronesia. In Melanesia and Western Polynesia, they are identifiable in archaeological records through remains of an unremarkable but specific style of decorated pottery, which archaeologists call Lapita. Lapita remains have been found in coastal areas throughout Melanesia, all the way to Samoa and Tonga in Western Polynesia (and indeed blurring the boundary between Melanesia and Polynesia), and have been dated from about 3,300 BP until 2,500 BP, when the manufacture and use of pottery seems to have been abandoned for a variety of reasons. These remains bear witness to the first stages in the gradual exploration and settlement of the islands of the region over the course of the centuries, which ended when the descendants of Lapita pottery users settled New Zealand and Hawai'i shortly before 1,000 CE.

The most consequential period in the history of the Pacific Islands since first settlement is arguably the last few centuries, during which time contact between Pacific Islanders and European and European-derived populations intensified. This contact began slowly in the sixteenth century, and until the second half of the eighteenth century was mostly confined to Western Micronesia, where Iberian navigators claimed for the Spanish crown islands that were strategically placed on the trade route between South America and the Philippines, a move that was followed by the virtual decimation, through violence and disease, of the inhabitants of Guam and the Mariana Islands. The rest of the Pacific Islands had no sustained contact with Europeans until the 1770s, when European navigators, James Cook being the most famous among them, began expanding their traveling horizons into Polynesia, Melanesia, and the rest of Micronesia. Following closely on their heels, a host of newcomers soon began reaching the shores of the Pacific Islands, including Christian missionaries, adventurers, small-scale traders, ambitious colonial entrepreneurs, whalers, and of course government agents in charge of furthering the colonial interests of various powerful nations. The increasingly intrusive presence of these various groups, of diverse nationalities (at various times and in various parts of the region, Dutch, British, French, German, Japanese, and North American) and driven by often divergent agendas, had many implications for the social, cultural, and political constitution of the Pacific Islands, as well as for local languages, as I will discuss presently.

The colonial era greatly complicated the composition of the population in several locations. The example of New Zealand serves as a useful illustration of these post-colonial complexities. Voyagers from Eastern Polynesia (e.g., Tahiti, Marquesas, Cook Islands) were the first to settle New Zealand more than a millennium ago, developed into what we know today as Māori society and culture, and remained the sole inhabitants of the two islands until 1840, when settlers from Britain began

colonizing New Zealand, competing for land and resources with the Māori, and often appropriating them with little regard to prior ownership. Within a few decades, the Māori had become a disenfranchised, embattled, and numerically insignificant minority in their own land, and their numbers were steadily decreasing due to such factors as a high rate of tuberculosis, aggravated by poverty and marginalization. It was not until after the Second World War that population decline was reversed, and today people who identify themselves as Māori comprise 15 percent of the country's population (3.7 million). The 1960s experienced a Māori cultural renaissance, aspects of which I will describe later in this chapter, and the beginning of a politics of indigenous activism, focused on land claims and demands for political participation. Comparable historical trajectories in colonial and postcolonial times have characterized other Pacific Islands, including Hawai'i, Guam, and New Caledonia. In some cases, colonial-era immigrants to the Pacific and their descendants are people of non-European descent, as is the case of the Japanese, Filipino, and Chinese inhabitants of Hawai'i, Filipinos in Guam, and Indians in Fiji.

While colonialism in its most blatant forms is largely a thing of the past, its impact is still felt in consequential ways in the Pacific Islands. One of the most dramatic aspects of the postcolonial Pacific is the diasporic nature of many societies of the region. For example, numerous Tongans and Samoans today live in New Zealand, Australia, and the United States, and there are more Tokelauans, Cook Islanders, and Niueans living in New Zealand than in Tokelau, the Cook Islands, and Niuē respectively. Some groups have moved from their islands of origin to another island of the Pacific: many Caroline Islanders have settled on Guam, and Wallisians and Futunans are more numerous in New Caledonia than in Wallis and Futuna. The migrations that have given rise to these diasporic communities are often recent, and are fueled by many different motivations, including the search for better economic opportunities. Yet we must also remember that the desire to travel and settle elsewhere is hardly new, since it was fundamental to the aboriginal settlement of the Pacific Islands itself. Diasporic Pacific Island communities generally maintain a strong attachment to their islands of origin, but second- and third-generation Pacific Islanders born in industrial societies of the Pacific Rim often come to understand their identity differently from their parents or grandparents, in response to the different allegiances that they must negotiate.

2   LANGUAGES

The numerous languages indigenous to the Pacific Islands form several families of genetically related languages. In other words, they fall into groups containing languages that all derive from an ancestral language, which we surmise to have been spoken at some time in the course of history (see also Mithun, this volume). These linguistic families are very disparate in size, composition, and geographical spread. On the one hand, languages indigenous to all of Polynesia and Micronesia, most of insular Melanesia outside of New Guinea, and some of the coastal areas of New Guinea, constitute a large and widely dispersed family of related languages. Usually referred to as the Austronesian language family, it spans a third of the globe's circumference, from Madagascar to Easter Island. Since it includes a fifth of the

world's languages, it is possibly the largest or second largest in the world in terms of the number of distinct but related languages it comprises. The remaining languages of the region are dispersed across the island of New Guinea, in small pockets in the Bismarck Archipelago, Bougainville, the Solomon Islands, and the Santa Cruz Islands, as well as on several islands of the Sunda Archipelago, west of New Guinea. These languages are so diverse from one another that historical linguists have only managed to group them into over a dozen distinct families. These families appear to be unrelated to one another, or at least to have diverged from one another over such a long period of time that historical connections are today undetectable through the ordinary methods of historical linguistics. Linguists refer to these languages as "Papuan languages" or "Non-Austronesian languages," the latter term being particularly useful in that it stresses the fact that these languages do not form a language family but a large assemblage of unrelated linguistic groupings.

The distinct genetic characteristics of Austronesian and Non-Austronesian languages of the Pacific Islands reflect in part the history of human settlement of the region. Although genetic relationships among languages are not necessarily the same as genetic relationships among the speakers of these languages (since communities are known to stop using a language and adopt another, sometimes abruptly, as I will discuss later), the Non-Austronesian languages of New Guinea and adjacent areas are nevertheless associated with human populations that were already present in New Guinea about 40,000 BP. Non-Austronesian languages spoken today are possibly descendants of the ancestral language or languages that these populations spoke. If Non-Austronesian languages did derive from a single proto-language, so much time has elapsed since this ancestral language broke up into various dialects that gradually diverged from one another, that no traces of their genetic affinities remain in their structure as they are spoken today.

In contrast, historical linguists associate the language ancestral to the 500-odd Austronesian languages spoken in the Pacific Islands with the Lapita pottery makers and seafarers who began arriving in the region in 5,000 BP. With the exception of a few dozen languages spoken in western New Guinea and two languages spoken in Western Micronesia (Palauan and Chamorro), these languages form a single distinct branch of the Austronesian family, the Oceanic subgroup (see figure 5.1). This fact, combined with archaeological evidence, the comparison of present-day societies of the region, and what we can reconstruct of the vocabulary of Proto-Oceanic, enables archaeologists to assert that the settlement of the Insular Pacific was accomplished relatively recently by waves of people who shared the same culture, social organization, and language, and were perhaps of the same genetic stock.

Since the advent of colonialism, Pacific Islanders have added to their communicative repertoires a number of extraneous languages. The most visible is English, in standard and localized forms, widely spoken as an auxiliary language in the Pacific Islands that have come under British, Australian, New Zealand, or American colonial rule in the last two centuries. In some regions, such as New Zealand, Guam, and Hawai'i, it is today the dominant language, having replaced local languages, as I will discuss presently. French is the principal international language for the inhabitants of New Caledonia, Tahiti and surrounding island groups, Wallis and Futuna, and, alongside English, Vanuatu. Spanish is the second language of Rapanui (Easter Island), and Bahasa Indonesian, the national language of Indonesia, is the lingua

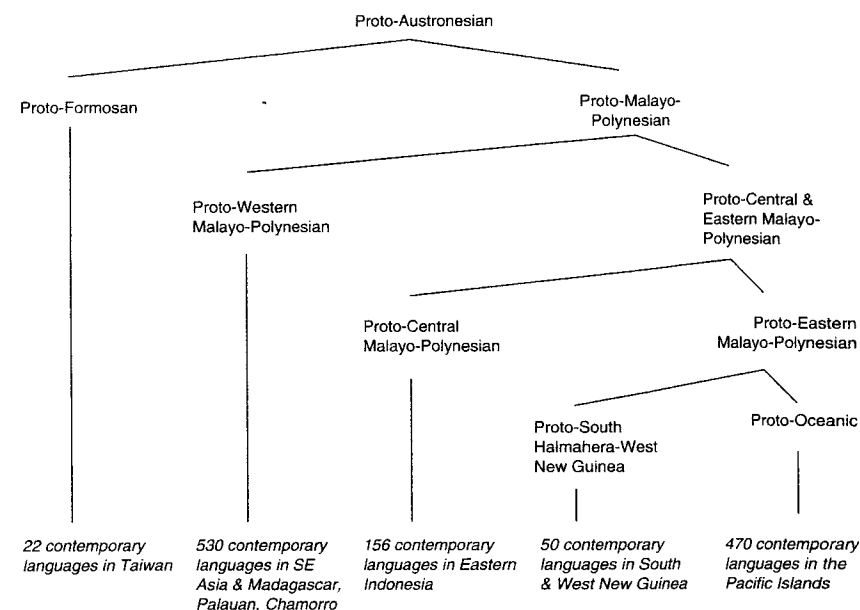Map 5.2   Geographical distribution of Pacific Island language families

| 22 contemporary languages in Taiwan | 530 contemporary languages in SE Asia & Madagascar, Palauan, Chamorro | 156 contemporary languages in Eastern Indonesia | 50 contemporary languages in South & West New Guinea | 470 contemporary languages in the Pacific Islands |

Figure 5.1   Simplified subgrouping of Austronesian languages (after Blust 1995). Most languages spoken in the Pacific Island region are part of the Oceanic subgroup (i.e., descendants of Proto-Oceanic), except for about 50 languages spoken in the South and West of Coastal New Guinea, which form a distinct South Halmahera-West New Guinea subgroup together with a handful of languages of Eastern Indonesia, and Palauan and Chamorro, spoken in Western Micronesia, which fall in the Western Malayo-Polynesian subgroup.

franca of Irian Jaya, the Indonesian-controlled western half of New Guinea. Colonial languages introduced to the Pacific in the past that are no longer used have included German in New Guinea, Samoa, and Micronesia, Spanish and Japanese in Micronesia.

Alongside the languages of colonial powers we also find in the Pacific Islands contact languages that emerged locally in the context of political and economic intrusion from the outside. In the nineteenth century, European colonists recruited Pacific Islander workers to work on plantations in various parts of the Pacific and adjoining areas (Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Northeastern Australia). These workers, principally Melanesians, spoke many different languages, and thus needed a common medium to communicate with their colonial masters and, more importantly, with each other. Thus arose the three English-based creole languages in widespread use in Melanesia: Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea (historically also referred to as "Neo-Melanesian" or "New Guinea Pidgin"); Solomon Islands Pijin; and Bislama in Vanuatu. All three languages are very similar to one another, are given some form of national-language status in their respective countries, and are very healthy languages in terms of numbers of users, some of whom speak these languages as their mother tongue (a sufficient condition to identify them as examples of creole languages). Other relative newcomers to the Pacific include Fiji Hindi, a creolized form

of Hindi spoken by the descendants of Indian migrants brought to Fiji by the British to work on sugarcane plantations, as well as Vietnamese and various Chinese dialects, spoken by small communities in several island groups. Hiri Motu, a simplified form of the Oceanic language Motu, is used as a lingua franca in parts of Papua New Guinea.

Few absolute statements can be made about the grammatical structures of Non-Austronesian languages, which are extremely diverse, although some generalizations can be drawn. These languages tend to have very small inventories of contrasting phonemes and sometimes have very reduced pronoun systems (e.g., the same form is sometimes used for both singular and plural or for different persons). The morphology of nouns is generally simple, although some languages exhibit noun classes. In contrast, the morphological structure of verbs can be extremely complex, often with patterns of suppletion in verb paradigms. Non-Austronesian languages tend to place the verb at the end of clauses, and exhibit two unusual features, which are not exclusive to them but are common among them and uncommon in other languages of the world. First, verbs are frequently strung together in chains, with the last verb being the only fully inflected form, and the preceding verbs each describing analytically one aspect of an action or one action in a sequence of actions (verbs are often inflected to mark whether their referents are sequenced in time or simultaneous). Pawley (1993: 95) provides a classic example from Kalam, a language spoken in the Madang Province of Papua New Guinea:

b   ak am mon p-wk   d   ap   ay-a-k.
man that go wood hit-break get come put-3RD.SING-PAST
'The man fetched some firewood.'

In this example, the Kalam sentence, in which the action is described through a series of concatenated verbs, is the simplest way of expressing the situation described by the English translation, where the action is denoted by the single verb "fetch." In such a system, verbs denote very abstract notions and form a closed class. Complex meanings are expressed analytically by stringing appropriate verbs together. The second characteristic feature is the marking of switch-reference on verbs, that is, the inflection of verb forms according to whether or not their subject is identical to the subject of the preceding verb in a verb chain.

The Oceanic languages of the Austronesian family are also very diverse in their structural characteristics, although they exhibit an air of greater familiarity among themselves than the Non-Austronesian languages, owing to the fact that they have been diverging from one another for no longer than three or four millennia. For example, we find often quite complex pronoun systems in Oceanic languages, as illustrated in table 5.1, which can mark two or more degrees of plurality and, in almost all languages, a contrast between inclusive and exclusive forms in the first person plural ("we including you" vs. "we excluding you"). Possession frequently distinguishes between different kinds of alienability and other kinds of possession (e.g., a body part or close kin is marked with a different type of possession from a mundane object), as illustrated in table 5.2. Noun and verb forms undergo few morphological derivational changes. Verbs can often be marked with suffixes indicating transitivity, and prefixes indicating a range of semantic functions (e.g., reciprocal, causative). Verbs are generally clause-initial or clause-medial, and some verb chaining

effects are found, although in much more reduced form than in Non-Austronesian languages.[1]

3   TALK AS COMMODITY IN A MODERNITY-ORIENTED WORLD

The linguistic picture of the Pacific Islands drawn in the last section is one of extraordinary diversity and variety: a multitude of languages, many genetic groupings, and a vast panoply of structural characteristics. A simple question arises out of this description: how does such a situation of extreme diversity maintain itself over time? In particular, how does linguistic diversity fare in the context of the shrinking and homogenizing tendencies that the world is experiencing at the dawn of the third millennium? The question is not just a linguistic question, but also a sociocultural one: in many parts of the Pacific Islands, particularly Melanesia, the diversity we encounter is not just one of languages but also one of social structures and practices, belief systems, rituals, and cultural ethos. Language, here as elsewhere, offers a strategic window into the dynamics at play.

Anthropologists with an interest in language have long recognized that language in many parts of Melanesia is an important commodity. Several decades ago, social anthropologist Richard Salisbury (1962) conducted fieldwork among the Siane of the New Guinea Highlands, speakers of a Non-Austronesian language numbering about 15,000, who, like other inhabitants of the region, are surrounded by other societies speaking different languages, amongst whom figure the Chuave, about 8,000 strong. The two groups maintain strong links with one another, through frequent intermarriage and exchange, and in active bi- and multilingualism, to the extent that the two languages are used with equal frequency in the border village

Table 5.1   Paradigm of personal pronouns (free-morpheme forms) in Standard Fijian. Paucal pronouns are used in reference to three or more referents up to a small number, plural pronouns for large numbers

Number	Singular	Dual	Paucal	Plural
Person				
first inclusive	---	kedaru	kedatou	keda
exclusive	au	keirau	keitou	keimami
second	iko	kemudrau	kemudou	kemunī
third	koya	irau	iratou	ira

Table 5.2   Paradigm of first-person singular possessive pronouns in Standard Fijian

Form	Used with nouns denoting	Example
-qu	body parts, kinship categories	tama-qu 'my father'
kequ or qau	edibles	kequ madrai 'my bread'
mequ	drinkables	mequ bia 'my beer'
noqu	all other notions	noqu i-lavo 'my money'

where Salisbury conducted fieldwork. On formal occasions, such as ceremonial exchanges, important orators whose native language is Siane are known to speak to other Siane villagers in Chuave, and use a translator, a strategy that contributes desirable prestige to the occasion and to the orator. Songs that his informants dictated to Salisbury were all in Chuave as well as other neighboring languages. Clearly, multilingualism is a high prestige commodity among the Siane, and the multiplicity of languages both enables it to have value and is in turn maintained by the prestige that people assign to it. Diversity is obviously the product of linguistic history, in that languages tend to be numerous when they have been spoken in an area for a long time (Pawley 1981); but linguistic diversity is equally the product of ideological constructs and social action (Irvine and Gal 2000).

The value attached to multilingualism and the linguistic diversity associated with it fits into a broader spectrum of sociocultural dynamics at play in the region. Melanesians have been described as quintessential "modernists" (Robbins 1998), in that they constantly seek out and value the new, different, and exotic, the esoteric potentials of which they exploit fully. This lends a peculiar quality to life in Melanesia that anthropologists working in the region have long striven to capture: "Melanesians have . . . been found to be creative, dynamic, episodic, improvisatory people who enact and manage 'flow': people who construct, counterpoise, and interpret what is secret and hidden as opposed to what is revealed and manifest, thereby obviating their own conventional constructions, and thus constituting essentially open, self-transforming, processual societies" (Dalton 2000: 290, cf. Lederman 1998: 440–1). Language use in Melanesia, and the qualities that the region's linguistic situation presents, converges with this general orientation toward the creative, open-ended-ness, and the processually driven.

It is precisely these qualities that give rise to fascinating forms of linguistic creativity in Melanesia, such as secret codes associated with certain rituals or activities that have religious overtones (Foley 1986: 42–7). Such is the case of the so-called "pandanus languages" that many groups in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea have innovated. The Kalam utilize a special vocabulary in two situations: while gathering the nut of the mountain pandanus, an activity that occupies them for several weeks a year; and while butchering, cooking, and eating cassowaries (Pawley 1992). While neither the pandanus nut nor cassowary meat constitutes a major ingredient of today's Kalam cuisine, both are associated with secrecy and ritual: pandanus nuts, like other forest offerings, are protected by forest spirits who render the nut inedible unless people trick them into thinking that they are not harvesting it; while the cassowary, as humans' cross-cousin, is a ritually potent bird. The phonology of the pandanus vocabulary is the same as that of ordinary Kalam phonology and the syntax of pandanus language is essentially the same as that of ordinary language, but utterances are completely unintelligible to the non-initiated. As illustrated in table 5.3, some pandanus words are borrowed from other languages, others derived creatively from ordinary language, and yet others completely made up. Whatever their derivation, pandanus words and their use result from a conscious effort to conceal meaning in order to fool the forest spirits, at least in the context of pandanus-nut gathering. Kalam pandanus language demonstrates the close kinship between creativity, ritual, and secrecy in the Melanesian symbolic world.

Table 5.3   Examples of pandanus-language word derivations in Kalam (from Pawley 1992: 320)

Ordinary language	Pandanus language	Gloss	Derivation of pandanus form
tw	gaymen	'adze, axe'	borrowed from neighboring language Kobon
kayn	kmn dep	'dog'	OL 'game mammal catcher'
tob	tawep	'foot'	OL '(for) stepping (on)'
mon	su-tk-eb	'tree, wood'	OL 'biting off, gnawing through'
mon	agi-ep	'tree, wood'	OL 'for burning'
kaj	aglams	'pig'	borrowed from neighboring language Kobon
kaj	gney	'pig'	invented
b 'man' bin 'woman' ñ 'boy' pañ 'girl' cp 'dead person'	aduklan	'person'	invented

The value attached to language diversity and creativity in the Melanesian world provide useful insights into the sociocultural dynamics that underlie the remarkable linguistic diversity one encounters in the region. The use of multiple languages in interaction and the manufacture of secret language varieties are motivated by similar attitudes, namely the political, symbolic, and aesthetic value attached to difference-making through language and the over-elaboration of every way of boundary-marking between tiny communities. Sociolinguists such as Sankoff (1980) and Laycock (1982) demonstrate that the same dynamics underlie many other linguistic phenomena in the region, such as grammatical innovations that defy the regular rules of historical linguistics, and can only be attributed to the conscious manipulation of language to emphasize the individuality and distinctness of one's speech community in contrast to its neighbors. Over time, this creativity, agentively induced change, and insistence on difference generates a linguistic picture for the region characterized by extreme fragmentation and diversity.

The Melanesian qualities of open-endedness and creativity encompass not only the world of symbols, but also material conditions of life. And, here as elsewhere, language is not just a symbolic system embedded in cultural worlds, but also a social and political system embedded in social structures and material processes (Gal 1989; Irvine 1989). Why a Siane orator should feel compelled to use the language of a neighboring group to talk to other members of his own village acquires a particular social logic in light of dynamics of power in Melanesian societies, a topic that has preoccupied sociocultural anthropologists for decades. In a typical Melanesian society, persons acquire power not by inheriting it through the bloodline but by convincing others that they are worthy of holding positions of power. In such societies, power is *achieved*, insofar as members of these societies view power as an achievement, and insofar as power is comparatively less predetermined than in other societies of the world. Consequently, power in these societies is inherently precarious and constantly

in danger of being undermined by claims to power by other equally worthy competitors. A powerful person is often referred to by the Tok Pisin word *bigman* (in most if not all cases, the holder of overt forms of power in Melanesian societies is male). There are several factors involved in acquiring and maintaining power. One prerequisite is that the person already be recognized as a "great man," i.e., the holder of secret knowledge of ritual and magic, often associated with male initiation cults (Godelier 1986). But not all great men are *bigman*; a *bigman* must be able to mobilize others in accumulating large amounts of wealth for him to redistribute with calculated generosity in spectacular ceremonial gift-giving. Other factors that support the *bigman*'s authority may include his courage in war, reputation as a sorcerer, competence as an agriculturalist, and ability to acquire and support several wives, but the most important are crucially dependent on the *bigman*'s persuasive skills: persuading potential followers that he is indeed the holder of secret knowledge, to contribute materially to gift-exchange ceremonies, to respect him, accept his authority, and support his endeavors.

The intimate relationship between talk and power in Melanesian societies is thus hardly surprising, and astute ethnographers of language have animated the complexity of this connection in specific societies of the region. For example, the Kwanga of the East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea spend a great deal of time in weekly village meetings with the purpose of discussing rumors about sorcery and other sources of community disharmony (Brison 1992). However, the meetings rarely solve the problems that villagers associate with these rumors. Instead, the meetings allow village men with political aspirations to manipulate public opinion by encouraging others, through allusions, innuendos, and astutely constructed story-telling (what some scholars have termed "veiled speech," e.g., Strathern 1975), to gossip about their intimate knowledge of sorcerers and sorcery, while overtly denying their complicity in bringing about the misfortunes that villagers believe to be the result of sorcery. It is little wonder that, among the Kwanga as well as in many other Melanesian societies (e.g., Goldman 1983; Merlan and Rumsey 1991; Schieffelin 1990; Weiner 1991), talk in its various forms should be given such importance, as they feel entitled to negotiate, inspect, and argue over every event that affects their lives, and do so to a considerably greater extent than members of other societies.

4   PERSONHOOD, CODESWITCHING, AND BODY HABITUS

The secrecy and ambiguity that pervades Kwanga meetings and resulting everyday talk is associated with a way of conceptualizing the person that the Kwanga share with many other societies of Melanesia, which Marilyn Strathern (1988) terms "dividual," i.e., "as a multiple or composite construction, an internal collectivity of identities, for it is this heterogeneity that makes the perception of his or her unitary individuality or singleness not an intrinsic attribute but an achievement comparable to the collective unity of group action" (Strathern 1990: 213). Working with such a construct, people in Melanesia always expect people, as well as their utterances, to be multi-layered. This view of the person, echoed in different forms in various parts of the Pacific (Lutz 1988; Ochs 1988; Ochs and Schieffelin 1984; Shore 1982; White 1991), challenges Western notions of the person that tend to treat it as an internally coherent and

externally bounded whole, relatively autonomous of the social relations in which it is embedded.

This expectation is articulated in the linguistic resources that Melanesians invoke in political rhetoric, and linguistic anthropologists who have analyzed such forms of language use can shed light on questions that have preoccupied psychological anthropologists, such as the way in which the particularly Melanesian construction of personhood is articulated in interaction. In the tiny village of Gapun, huddled among swamps and rainforests between the estuaries of the Sepik and Ramu rivers in Papua New Guinea, villagers expect interpersonal communication to be inherently indeterminate, multi-layered, and ambiguous, as one would expect of people working with a dividual conception of the self. It is in this context that Stroud (1992) analyzes the meaning of codeswitching in Gapun oratory between the two languages currently in use in the village: the Non-Austronesian language Taiap, which at the time of Stroud's fieldwork was spoken by a grand total of 89 people; and Tok Pisin, the national lingua franca of Papua New Guinea. A long tradition of sociolinguistic analysis of codeswitching, based mostly on communicative practices in urban industrial societies, has striven to assign it specific social and discourse meanings, such as the expression of solidarity, informality, or emotional involvement. In this tradition of inquiry, indeterminacy of meaning is a problem, which both analysts and interactors must resolve. In contrast, Gapun villagers codeswitch between Tok Pisin and Taiap to *create* ambiguity, and not to resolve it, and thus ambiguity *is* the meaning of codeswitching in Gapun. Gapun villagers view the meaning of talk as polysemic and interactionally constructed: multiple layers of meaning and intentionality can "hide" under the surface of discourse, and the work that audiences must engage in to retrieve hidden layers of meaning is full of potential uncertainty.

What this kind of analysis illustrates is that language use, including the linguistic resources that people utilize in interacting with one another (codeswitching, metaphors, indirectness) are constitutively related to aspects of culture, such as the way in which people construe the self. This point may be paraphrased as follows: linguistic practices provide a locus in which culture is created, confirmed, and perhaps debated, at the same time that they result from social and cultural structures and dynamics (Bauman and Briggs 1990). More specifically, Gapun villagers (as well as many others in the region) organize their interactions so as to articulate a sense of self that is layered and indeterminate. In turn, these cultural meanings are deeply embedded in the world of materiality, of particular ways of understanding and enacting power, and in particular political systems. Language, symbolic structures, and social dynamics are thus interlocked with one another.

However, people in particular societies do not necessarily all agree about how the self is constituted and communicated. Multiple ways of understanding the person coexist in communities and are associated with different and sometimes conflicting ways of using language. The Kwara'ae of the Solomon Islands, for example, have been missionized over the course of the last century by various Christian missionary movements, particularly the Anglican Church and the South Seas Evangelical Church (Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo 1991). The beliefs of members of the two denominations reflect a different orientation toward many issues: Anglicans seek an integration of traditional aspects of Kwara'ae society into modern life, and are culturally conservative, while Evangelicals profess a charismatic and fundamentalist position that seeks to

do away with traditional modes of conduct and replace them with modernity-steeped practices, such as an orientation to social change and economic development. Kwara'ae of both denominations encode these different positions in language use: Anglicans use both English and high-rhetoric Kwara'ae as prestige codes, and Solomon Island Pijin and low-rhetoric Kwara'ae as everyday codes, while Evangelicals place English at the top of the prestige hierarchy, followed by Pijin and both forms of Kwara'ae, often claiming that they have "forgotten" the high-rhetoric Kwara'ae associated with traditional oratory. Even in formal contexts, Evangelicals opt for a simple and direct way of talking, sometimes at the risk of sounding, to Anglicans, child-like and inappropriate, while Anglicans opt for features of high rhetorical styles, such as a fluent delivery, a paucity of borrowings from Pijin, and a carefully developed argument structure. The differences between the two groups go further: in partial imitation of the practices of charismatic preachers from industrialized societies, Evangelicals' speech and gestures are loud, flamboyant, and boisterous, and they gesticulate considerably more than Anglicans, whose voice and body habitus are slow, fluid, and measured. So marked are the differences in body habitus between the two groups that Kwara'ae can recognize the church affiliations of people from afar. As Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo (1991) demonstrate, microscopic forms of interaction are constitutive of macrosociological and cultural dynamics, linking the apprehension and presentation of the self, religious practice, and socioeconomic orientation to patterns of language use and body habitus, sometimes in divergent and conflicting ways within the same village or the same society.

5   POWER AND PRACTICE IN HIERARCHICAL POLYNESIA AND MICRONESIA

Just as the languages of the Pacific Islands exhibit formidable diversity, the speakers of these languages also organize their social lives and cultural systems in widely divergent ways from one part of the Pacific to the other. Yet, in the midst of this remarkable diversity, recurring patterns emerge, and it is these patterns of familiarity and systematicity that sociocultural anthropologists have worried about since they began conducting fieldwork among Pacific Islanders.

Contrasting with Melanesia-style governance, in which power is contingent and constantly subject to negotiation, governance in Polynesia typically rests in the hands of a chief, and a great deal of social action, at least at first glance, is designed to maintain the association of power with chieftainship. The chief is generally the eldest son of the previous chief or a male member of a specific chiefly group, who inherits power and, excepting cases of gross personal incompetence, is the object of commoners' respect. This respect is sometimes demonstrated in highly dramatic fashion, as on Tikopia, for example, where commoners crawl up to the chief as a sign of submission and deference, a practice they have maintained to this day despite the momentous changes that Tikopia society has undergone in its encounter with modernity (Firth 1979). In contrast with the achieved nature of power in Melanesia, power in Polynesia is *ascribed*, that is, assigned to particular individuals on the basis of their inherited position in society. In the 1960s and 1970s, anthropologists such as Marshall Sahlins (1963) linked the seemingly fundamentally different patterns of

governance in Melanesia and Polynesia with other aspects of the way in which the respective societies are organized. For example, Melanesian societies tend to consist of small autonomous villages, in which kinship is the basis of social organization, since the power of the Melanesian *bigman* depends crucially on his ability to constantly persuade followers to acquiesce to his holding the reins of power, and thus on his ability to come face-to-face with his supporters on a frequent basis. In contrast, Polynesian societies can be much larger entities, since the Polynesian chief's power is largely accepted by all followers, who are expected to believe that the chief is the chief because he is supernaturally anointed (or at least that the system is ordained by God, a common view in the Christianized present), and thus there is no obvious constraint on the number of people that the chief can govern.

The classic distinction between Melanesian and Polynesian systems of governance, remarkable in its conciseness and explanatory power, has been subjected to serious critical scrutiny (e.g., Thomas 1989), and this is where linguistic anthropologists have made important contributions. Indeed, the exercise of power is a notoriously complex affair, and one in which interaction of many different kinds plays an important role. As soon as linguistic anthropologists began to investigate the *practice* of power (as opposed to the more static *structure* of power, which formed the basis of Sahlins' original insights), adding to sociocultural anthropologists' arsenal of ethnographic methods a detailed attention to the analysis of interaction, a more nuanced and complex picture began to emerge.

Samoa is, in many anthropological accounts, a typically hierarchical Polynesian society, dominated by a chiefly system, in support of which non-chiefly people devote a great deal of time and energy. In Falefā, a village on the north shore of 'Upolu, this attention to hierarchy takes the form of constant efforts to maintain a sense of order in everyday life, but a sense of order of a particular type, namely that which elaborates relationships of high vs. low social status, and through which every family and every member of each family is in principle ranked with respect to one another (Duranti 1994). Order of a hierarchical kind is thus over-elaborated in Samoan society, in other words, reinforced on every possible occasion, beyond what is necessary to make the point. So, for example, during village council meetings, or *fono*, in which chiefs of different ranks take part and village matters (e.g., conflicts, bylaws, etc.) are discussed and managed, hierarchy is encoded both spatially and temporally. Spatially speaking, a detailed and well-known pre-set protocol dictates where people sit in the meeting-house, whose two "ends" are for people of highest ranks, while the "front" and the "back" are reserved for people of lower and lowest rank respectively. Hierarchy is temporally elaborated in that the order of mention of participants in the ceremonial recitation that opens the meeting, as well as the order of speakers during the meeting, is ostensibly pre-ordained through a congruent protocol thought to reflect a village-wide hierarchy of roles and kin groups based on a historical charter that harks back to mythological times. These over-elaborated markers of hierarchy, which contrast sharply to the ethos of equality and indeterminacy that permeates formal oratory in Melanesia, are further reinforced by comparable patterns attested outside the meeting-house, in formal and everyday contexts alike.

Yet, while the entire system of hierarchy may at first glance appear immanent and inflexible, the system is in fact much more flexible in practice. For example, the formal part of the *fono* consists in an exchange of *lāuga*, formal speeches, which tend to be

lengthy and difficult to interrupt. Most importantly, since protocol dictates the order of speakers, if a low-ranking person speaks, even high-ranking chiefs cannot interrupt him, and this situation opens up the possibility that a lower-ranking person will castigate, uninterrupted, a higher-ranking person. Rank in Falefā thus derives from various sources at once: in the pre-ordained structural ranking of families and their members, as well as in the ceremonial protocol that dictates who speaks before whom at meetings. These different sources can yield potentially conflicting ways of reckoning rank and power.

The over-elaboration of hierarchy in the Samoan village generates a system characterized by extreme competitiveness among villagers: since everyone has to be ranked at all times, and the pre-set ranking order is not necessarily the only way of determining rank, people vie for power in big and small ways at all times. A prototypical relationship that is suffused with competitiveness is that between same-sex siblings, as a cadet can and often does challenge the higher rank bestowed on an older sibling by default because of primogeniture. Such competitiveness, which social anthropologists have called "status rivalry" (Goldman 1970), can be fierce when the stakes are high, such as when two siblings are both candidates to the chiefly title associated with the family to which they both belong. More generally, political practice in Falefā demonstrates that chieftainship, and rank in general, is not a matter of simple absolute power that remains unchanged over generations, but rather is the result of a complex play in which power is negotiated from moment to moment, sometimes resulting in important changes. Village meetings become the prime arena in which this complex play is enacted, and the linguistic resources available to participants (e.g., turn-taking mechanisms) become the tools for the play.

The resulting picture of the practice of power in the highly hierarchical climate of Samoan society is after all not fundamentally different from the practice of power in Melanesian societies that elaborate egalitarianism and treat power as contingent. Like their *bigman* counterparts, who must constantly work to convince fellow villagers to partake in their prestige-accruing endeavors, chiefs in Falefā are vulnerable to the verbal criticisms and perhaps even the withdrawal of support of low-ranking villagers. Society in Polynesia is at once hierarchical and dynamic, and the dynamic nature of society is particularly dramatic in Polynesian societies that lack the pre-ordained foundation of the Samoan village: on Nukulaelae Atoll (Tuvalu), positions of power are by definition precarious, and low social status is an excellent platform from which to undermine those in power. In the play of social ascendance and power erosion in such societies, forms of language use such as gossip, innuendo, and grumbling become tremendously efficacious political tools (Besnier 1993, 1994).

Thus the comparison between Melanesia and Polynesia is as much one of difference as one of similarity. Indeed, just as claims to power in Melanesian societies are predicated on the *bigman* exhibiting the personal, and often inheritable, qualities of a "great man" (e.g., that of being backed by supernatural and mythical forces), Polynesian chieftainship is enshrined in mythology through genealogical descent, and deified in one fashion or another (literally god-like in pre-Christian days, anointed by the Christian God in post-missionization times). And in the same fashion that a Melanesian *bigman* must constantly demonstrate his worthiness as a leader, through persuasive skills, control of rhetorical forms, battle-readiness, and mastery of various prized skills, the Polynesian chief must exude approachability as well as the aloofness

associated with high rank, demagogy despite his commanding presence, and readiness to defend his power base despite its apparent stability. Sociocultural anthropologists of Polynesia (Marcus 1989) have captured the dual foundation of Polynesian chieftainship as having a *kingly side* (ascribed, passive, aloof, protocol-encoded) and a *populist side* (achieved, active, engaged, practice-dependent), and the verbal dynamics at play in the *fono* in a Samoan village articulates precisely the sometimes precarious balance between these two seemingly contradictory expectations. Viewed in this light, the workings of power and rank, and the interactional practices associated with them, display commonalities throughout the Pacific Island region. Whether in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea or in a Samoan village, rank and power are relational: without non-chiefs in Polynesia, there are no chiefs, and without ordinary villagers in Melanesia, there are no *bigman*.

In some Pacific Island societies, rank is elaborated through language in a very overt fashion, in the form of honorifics. Honorifics are special words and sometimes constructions that a speaker employs to denote the hierarchical relationship between, for example, the speaker and the interlocutor or the speaker and the referent of talk. Not surprisingly, honorifics are well suited to languages spoken in societies that vest particular importance in social stratification and where social rank is a determinative aspect of the person. Besides Samoa (Duranti 1992) and Tonga (Philips 1991), we find honorifics in Pohnpei (formerly known as Ponape), an elaborately stratified society of the Caroline Islands of Micronesia (Keating 1998). Pohnpeian society is divided in twenty matrilineal clans, within which each person is ranked with respect to everyone else, according to principles that measure the genealogical distance of the person from the senior matriline of the clan. In both ceremonial and everyday contexts, one of the important ways through which Pohnpeians affirm rank is through the use of vocabulary forms referring to certain restricted semantic domains (e.g., movement, mental states, possession) that either exalt or humble a person partaking in the interaction or being talked about. The honorific forms may be derived from non-honorific forms, or they may be completely unrelated, as illustrated in table 5.4.

Given the nature of Pohnpeian rank, one would expect that the occurrence rules of regular, exaltive, and humiliative to be simple: when speaking to or about a higher-ranking person, use exaltive forms, and when speaking to a lower-ranking person, use humiliative forms. Indeed, native speakers themselves provide a version of this rule when interviewed, stressing its rigidity and predictability. Instead, through a careful analysis of the practice of honorific marking in natural discourse, Keating finds that "the nature of Pohnpeian use of honorific forms is highly fluid and context oriented

Table 5.4   Examples of honorific forms in Pohnpeian (from Keating 1998: 49)

Common word	Honorific word	Translation	Literal meaning of honorific
lingeringer	engieng	'angry'	'windy'
pilen mese	tenihrlap	'tears'	'big waterfall'
pouk	malimalih	'blow'	'typhoon'
tamataman	ediedinloang	'remember'	'cloudy sky'
wadek	doaropwe	'read'	—

and not as regularized as native speakers imply" (1998: 56). For example, honorific usage depends on the nature of ongoing activities, and does not just reflect a pre-ordained ranking system, but enables interactors to create and negotiate rank. Furthermore, honorifics index more than just social rank: they can also underscore interpersonal solidarity, which, far from being antonymous to hierarchy, is "an important first step in constructing systems of social inequality and resolving contradictions within such systems" (1998: 65). Here again, language offers a rich panoply of tools for constructing social life.

6   CONCLUSION: PACIFIC ISLAND SPEECH COMMUNITIES IN A SEA OF CHANGE

I end this overview of the problems and prospects for linguistic anthropology in the Pacific Islands by returning to the topic that I showcased at the beginning of the chapter, namely the extreme diversity and heterogeneity of languages and practices in the Pacific Islands. I already pointed out that this diversity is a product of history as much as it derives from the delights and advantages that some Pacific Islanders find in fostering this diversity. However, to quote an oft-cited cliché, strong forces are afoot today that actively undermine this diversity. The homogenizing forces of globalization run the risk of turning multilingualism into monolingualism in a common colonial language or a lingua franca; encouraging people to forget honorific forms, pandanus languages, and the ceremonial protocol of village meetings; and erasing codeswitching and the distinctions between high and low rhetoric. Where are Pacific Island languages heading at the beginning of the third millennium?

A general point bears stressing at the outset. It is actually very difficult to predict in a general way the particular effect that homogenizing forces will have on languages and communities. For example, some scholars have maintained that the spread of literacy is encouraging monoglotism and the disappearance of local languages in the Pacific (Mühlhäusler 1996). While this may be correct in some cases, literacy ultimately has the effect on languages and social lives that people want it to have. For instance, missionaries introduced literacy to the inhabitants of Nukulaelae Atoll (Tuvalu) 150 years ago, and at the time the only literacy skills that missionaries taught them was reading the Bible. Not only did Nukulaelae Islanders not lose their language as the result of becoming literate (and of being missionized in a foreign language, Samoan), but they also began using their literacy skills, almost immediately, not just to read the Christian Scriptures but also to read and write for a host of purposes, ranging from weaving names and slogans in pandanus mats to communicating with far-away relatives through letters (Besnier 1995).

Indeed, the same dynamics that help maintain diversity and heterogeneity in one setting can help erase it in another. For example, the very dividual self associated with the diversity of languages and ways of speaking in the Papua New Guinea Highlands is deeply implicated in language loss in the tiny village of Gapun (Kulick 1992). Like many other New Guineans, Gapun villagers have an elaborate theory of the self, of which they recognize two principal, dividual components: *hed* (a Tok Pisin word derived from English "head"), associated with stubbornness, selfishness, pride, backwardness, women, and paganism; and *save* (literally "to know" in Tok Pisin), associ-

ated with sociability, cooperation, generosity, modernity, men, and Christianity (introduced to Gapun shortly after the Second World War). While these two manifestations of the self are morally polarized, they are both intrinsic to what it means to be human in Gapun ethnopsychology. Crucially, the two principal languages of the community are linked both socially and symbolically with opposite aspects of the self. On the one hand, Tok Pisin is associated with *save*, because it is the language of development, the outside world, and Christianity. On the other hand, the language of *hed* is Taiap, the language of Gapun and of nowhere else.

Gapun children are exposed early to these overarching and complex linkages that tie together different manifestations of the self, languages, attitudes, social contexts, and gender. They also learn from their modernity-oriented seniors that change is desirable, and that change is enacted through Christianity and schooling. Furthermore, and not surprisingly, change speaks one language, namely Tok Pisin, the language of classrooms, catechisms, the state, and white people (as well as heaven). In contrast, Taiap, however valued it may be for its expressiveness and its ties to the land, is ultimately just the language of the ancestors. Thus, while puzzling over and occasionally deploring the fact that their children are no longer learning Taiap, Gapun adults socialize their offspring in a web of meaning that ensures the disappearance of the language. As a result, the number of speakers of Taiap has been steadily decreasing since the 1970s, even though the population of the village has not. At the time of Kulick's fieldwork, no children under 10 used the language in everyday contexts, opting instead for Tok Pisin.

Language loss in Gapun holds several general lessons. One is that a particular theory of the person may have one effect in one context or at a particular historical moment (e.g., encouraging multilingualism) and exactly the opposite effect in another social or historical situation (e.g., fostering the shift to one language). Second, the forces behind language shift are not purely global or macrosociological factors like television, urbanization, or the Internet. What encourages Gapun children not to learn Taiap is the interface between a deeply local ideology of the self in its relation to the world with sociohistorical forces like modernity, conversion to a world religion, and the postcolonial state. The trajectory of a language in the context of competition among different codes is therefore guided by many complex factors, both structural and agentive, although the Gapun case highlights the complexities of agentivity, since one can argue that, ultimately, the villagers (and the world at large) have little to gain from the language shift they are unconsciously implementing.

Perhaps the most distressing situations in the Pacific are those of peoples who have in the course of history experienced serious demographic and sociocultural discontinuities, and have lost not just language but political power, social institutions, and cultural worlds. The classic cases of major colonial disruptions in the Pacific Islands are those of New Zealand and Hawai'i. Through a series of bloody wars resulting from British confiscations of Māori land in New Zealand waged over the course of the nineteenth century, and through political maneuvering culminating in a coup d'état in 1892 that overthrew the century-old Hawai'ian monarchic state, colonists of British and American origins respectively had become, by the end of the nineteenth century, the dominant political force and, in the case of New Zealand, the numerical majority. They subjugated and marginalized the indigenous Māori and Hawai'ian populations in their own homeland, eroding social institutions, cultural structures, as

well as languages. In New Zealand, for example, educational authorities variously discouraged, failed to encourage, or forbade the use of Māori in schools as part of the government's politics of ethnic assimilationism between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries (Simon and Smith 2001: 141–73), a classic situation that has contributed to the attrition of many minority languages around the world, alongside other factors such as urbanization. Today, the Hawai'ian language and the Māori language are spoken by a fraction of the number of speakers of a century ago, although efforts to revitalize their use, in the context of the social and cultural renaissance that the indigenous populations of Hawai'i and New Zealand have brought about since the 1960s, have succeeded in reversing further attrition and preventing the languages from dying out completely. In New Zealand, new cohorts of children are acquiring Māori as their first language again, partly as a result of the establishment, since the early 1980s, of *kohanga reo* 'language nests', preschools where all interactions are conducted in Māori and are focused on Māori activities.

Small, remote, and rural communities are particularly vulnerable to various forms of encroachment from the outside, and to the dramatic consequences that such dynamics can have for local languages and ways of speaking. Yet sometimes language can turn out to be surprisingly resilient, as people can exploit all the potentialities of language to resist encroachment and assert themselves. For example, Fijians from rural northern Viti Levu engage in a form of ceremonial speech-making linked to a prestation ritual called *sevusevu*, which, far from disappearing, is in fact becoming more and more frequent (Brison 2001). While *sevusevu* is grounded in a cosmological logic, villagers have begun to use it as a symbolic representation of certain versions of village lifeways (characterized by consensus, sociality, and tradition), which they pitch against the lifeways of Fijians from more powerful areas of the country, urban Fijians, Fiji Indians, as well as complete outsiders such as tourists. Their local affirmation of a ritualized form of language thus has multiple audiences, some more global than others, and illustrates that outside forces can in fact anchor rather than obliterate local forms of talk.

An even more dramatic case of language resilience and affirmation is that of Rapanui, or Easter Island, which has experienced a dramatic social and cultural history in the last 150 years (Makihara 1998, 2001). One of the most isolated islands of the world, world-famous for its spectacular megalithic remains, Rapanui is today inhabited by about 3,000 people, two-thirds of whom are of Polynesian descent, with the remaining third being migrants of European descent from Chile, the nation-state to which Rapanui is politically annexed. However, at the end of the nineteenth century, Rapanui Islanders were literally on the verge of disappearing. Already weakened by internal conflicts, the Rapanui population was, in the 1860s, targeted by "Blackbirders," or slave raiders roaming the Pacific Islands in search of laborers for guano harvesting fields and country estates in Peru. Survivors who managed to return to the island also brought smallpox, with calamitous consequences. Between 1862 and 1877, the population reduced from over 4,000 to 110, and the islanders endured further hardship during decades of ruthless military rule that Chile imposed on the island from 1888, which lasted well into the mid-twentieth century.

While it is today impossible to reconstruct the exact mechanisms through which Rapanui managed to survive as a language through the catastrophic events of the last

century and a half, Makihara's careful collage of historical materials and ethnographic data on language and interaction in contemporary Rapanui society goes to some length in providing clues on the dynamics involved. Today, everyone on the island is bilingual in some form of Rapanui and some form of Spanish. However, the different codes spoken on the island form a continuum, with Standard Chilean Spanish at one end and at the other end Old Rapanui, which no one uses and few understand. In between these extremes are various syncretic ways of speaking, whose structure is a blend of the two languages (e.g., Rapanui phonology and syntax with Spanish morphology and lexicon, with frequent codeswitching), and that are the most widely used codes on the island. These syncretic codes play a crucial function: in the context of the growing sense of ethnic identity among the Rapanui, in opposition to the encroachment of the state and to immigration from the mainland, they serve as an in-group code and a linguistic marker of this identity. Furthermore, the syncretic codes have undermined the functional polarization that characterized the use of Rapanui and Spanish in the past, the former being the language of domesticity and the latter the language of public forums. Today, instead, Rapanui in its various forms permeates all interactional contexts, and thus syncretism, far from undermining the local language, has helped expand its functional range and boosted its vitality.

The success story for sociocultural continuity and language maintenance is perhaps that of Pollap Atoll (formerly Pulap), a small atoll of Chuuk State in the Caroline Islands and one of the least modernized islands of the area. Constructed in reference to other Carolinians and yet not strongly politicized, identity in Pollap, in sharp contrast to Gapun, is suffused with pride for a traditional order and for the maintenance of conservative ways, which pays little heed to the other Carolinians' stereotype of the Pollapese as backward and naive (Flinn 1990). Despite being schooled in another language beyond primary education, despite the fact that their language is not anointed as the symbol of an imagined national community, despite the negative images of them that their neighbors harbor, the Pollapese continue with their lifeways, including their language. It is probably the ties of language to identity in its various forms that will save Pacific Island languages and ways of speaking from disappearing, although these ties alone do not ensure that languages survive.

NOTE

1 This chapter will say little more about the historical relationships among the languages of the Pacific Islands or their structural characteristics, fascinating topics that others have treated extensively elsewhere: Pawley and Ross (1993; eds., 1994) and Tryon (ed., 1995) for the subgrouping and prehistorical dispersal of Austronesian languages in relation to cultural history; Kirch (2000) for the archaeological history of the Pacific Islands; Foley (1986, 2000) and Lynch, Ross, and Crowley (2001) for linguistic surveys of Papuan and Oceanic languages respectively; Wurm and Hattori (eds., 1981–3) for a linguistic atlas of the region; Wurm, Mühlhäusler, and Tryon (eds., 1996) for an atlas of contact languages in the Pacific.

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