Richard A. Benton, *The Flight of the Amokura: Oceanic Languages and Formal Education in the South Pacific.* Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1981. xiv+236pp., endpaper map.

Reviewed by John Lynch
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Amokura is the Maori name for the *Phaethon rubicauda,* a bird with *"long scarlet tail streamers and pure white plumage"*, whose range "is almost identical with that of the Austronesian languages" (1). The fate and fortunes of those languages -- at least in terms of their widespread functional use in modern Pacific states -- are compared with the fate of traditional cultures, symbolised by the ornamental amokura plumes:

> some of these languages were seen [by the Oceania Advisory Committee to the Director-General of UNESCO] to be under grave threat of extinction; others were already dead, or preserved, like the prized feathers of the amokura, symbols and relics of a bygone freedom (2).

And yet the subtitle of the book is, at least to a certain extent, misleading: the book does not deal evenly with the languages of Oceania, but focusses most heavily on New Zealand (76 pages), with a lessening of the depth of the coverage as the reader progresses westward: northern Polynesia is dealt with in 28 pages, Micronesia in thirteen, Fiji in six, and Melanesia in nine. Benton justifies this uneven coverage, partly on the grounds that

> it is in New Zealand that the debate over the educational status and value of the indigenous language has been most adequately documented, and has perhaps the longest continuous history, (xi)

and partly because of the unavailability of useful information from many other parts of the region. The audience, too, is expected to be a a New Zealand one, or is at least at a slight disadvantage if not already familiar with things

New Zealand: as one example only, the liberal sprinkling of Maori words, phrases, and verses, many of them untranslated, leaves the uninitiated slightly in the dark.

But this is really a minor quibble. What Benton has tried to do is to discuss one case in very considerable detail, pay brief attention to the rest of the region in the light of this not atypical case study, and then, in the final three chapters, examine both the present and the future roles of Oceanic languages in education. Read in this light, the book is an extraordinarily useful one for anyone concerned with the use of language in education in Oceania.

The case of the ups and downs -- mostly downs -- of Maori in the New Zealand educational system is given a very detailed historical treatment. As head of the Maori Unit of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research since 1971, Benton has both a wealth of experience and a vast range of published and unpublished sources to draw on, and the story is presented with a fine sensitivity. The complementarity of language and culture, both within and without the formal education system, is discussed clearly and simply. This is a vital issue in any kind of language policy formulation, but one which is often (consciously or unconsciously) ignored. Benton shows how obvious, and important, the relationship is.

But the New Zealand situation is not simply a matter of English and/or Maori, and a chapter is devoted to the complicating situation of the status of the languages of the growing immigrant Polynesian community. It is here that the New Zealand case takes on greater validity as a comparative base for the states of the western Pacific: in New Zealand, it is not simply a matter, as it is in much of the rest of Polynesia, of reconciling one metropolitan language with <u>one</u> vernacular language, but rather a one-many situation.

The chapters on the other areas of the Pacific are, as I mentioned above, rather brief. They provide a useful general picture of those areas with which the reader is not familiar though, in such a brief space, give very few real details. In each case, the situation is virtually identical (though there are, of course, local

peculiarities): in formal education and, by extension, in the public domain generally, metropolitan languages are viewed as "modern", vernacular languages as "backward". The effects on self-image and on the promotion -- or even retention -- of and respect for traditional cultures are obvious.

The final three chapters are concerned, first, with a summary of the discussion at the 1974 South Pacific Commission Bilingual Education Conference, and then with a brief examination of "policies and possibilites" and a somewhat longer one on bilingual education. Again, Benton clearly places language within the wider social/political/cultural context, affirming that decisions about language and language use cannot be made in isolation from this context. At the same time, he sounds a warning note concerning the influence of the schools themselves in any bilingual programme (201):

> The role of the school in strengthening the social position of these languages and promoting the common cultures of their speakers within the framework of a social order striving for justice, equality, and freedom is ambiguous and, in itself, indecisive.

Yet because the school does play an important role in the implementation of what are effectively political decisions, its influence is significant:

> Few children escape the ministrations of teachers: the social and linguistic environment of classroom and playground thus has great potential for the liberation, stagnation, or destruction of Oceanic languages and of the cultural identity they have conferred on those who treasure them.

The amokura still flies, but its plumes have become museum pieces. The Oceanic languages, argues Benton, are heading the same way. This sensitive treatment of a crucial issue in our region should be compulsory reading for all concerned with the planning and practice of education in Oceania.

224 Ulrike Mosel, *Tolai and Tok Pisin: The Influence of Substratum on the Development of New Guinea Pidgin, Pacific Linguistics*, B-73, viii+146pp.

Reviewed by Terry Crowley
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This work commences with a short introduction, outlining the history of Tok Pisin (TP), from its beginnings on the Samoan plantations, and the beginning of its spread into what was then German New Guinea from the Gazelle Peninsula. The writer then draws on her extensive field data on the Kuanua (Tolai) language "to show which characteristics of Tok Pisin possibly reflect substratum influence" (7), this being the major aim of the remainder of the book. The writer deals in turn with Phonology (8-23), Lexicon (23-40), Word Classes (40-64), Derivation (64-112), Phrase Structure (112-127) and Sentence Types (127-135), examining each of these aspects of Tok Pisin structure, comparing them with the corresponding structures of Kuanua, and making suggestions as to the possible nature of the connection between each.

In the search for evidence of phonological substratum influence, the writer notes certain instances of fairly clear influence. For example, the origin of the prenasalisation in forms such as sindaun, pundaun etc. probably derives from the obligatory prenasalisation of voiced stops in many of the Kuanua dialects. There are places in the discussion of the phonology however, where the author's analysis of TP phonemes appears to make the discussion somewhat more complicated than it need be. For example, the writer seems confused by the apparently unpredictable reflexes of Kuanua/ɓ/ in TP, as it sometimes appears as /w/ (kawawar *'ginger'*, kawiwi *'wild betelnut'*), sometimes as /v/ (kavivi *'hawk'*) and sometimes as zero (taur *'conch shell'*). While these are the official spellings given in Mihalic's dictionary, from my own observations, many (or most?) speakers actually use /v/ in all of these forms: kavavar for *'ginger'*, kavivi for both *'hawk'* and *'wild betelnut'*, and tavur for *'conch shell'* (though many speakers

 

have a labio-dental glide allophone of /v/ before /a/, which sounds like a [w]).

Mosel makes the point that the TP phoneme inventory and morpheme structure statements are different in a number of significant respects, so there is clearly no overwhelmingly strong substratum influence. She is even reluctant to accept that there has been more than just a minor degree of Kuanua influence on TP phonology, as most features of the TP system seem to have been present in Samoa *before* the introduction of labourers from the Gazelle, in what she calls "ancient Bichelamar".

The next section discusses the lexicon of TP, where there clearly has been influence from the languages of the original labourers. About 15% of the TP lexicon in Mihalic's dictionary are words that fall into this category. Mosel collects all of the known examples (and many are fairly obscure and little used, so it is useful to have the record), and compares them with the corresponding forms in a range of New Ireland languages, as well as Kuanua. It is possible in most cases to locate the particular source language for a given lexical item, and sometimes even a particular dialect of a language. For instance, many of the forms that come from Kuanua come from one of the dialects that have retained the phoneme /s/, though most dialects have unconditionally lost this sound.

We now move on to a discussion of the grammatical patterns of the two languages, which is where we would perhaps expect the most interesting discussion to be found. The discussion of the suffix -im comes under the heading of "Word Classes", as part of the treatment of "Verbs". This suffix corresponds roughly in function to the Kuanua transitive suffix -e (among others), and one might therefore want to conclude that this is evidence of substratum influence. However, once again, Mosel points out that this suffix was present in "ancient Bichelamar", before there was any contact with Kuanua speakers. The only possible contribution that Kuanua could have made, she concludes, is that it could have helped stabilise an originally fairly variable and irregular construction, though even that is not certain, as the

generalisation of a rule so that it applies to all members of a class is a natural kind of grammatical change anyway.

In fact, the entire discussion of TP follows in much the same way. In the treatment of nominal compounding in TP for example, the fourteen distinct patterns are compared painstakingly with the corresponding Kuanua patterns, and the writer concludes that "however similar the constructions in Tolai and Tok Pisin may be, the Tok Pisin word order may have another origin as well" (90).

The book does not appear to have a general conclusion. The writer only provides conclusions to each particular sub-section, without trying to make any overall statement. Piecing together the various discussions of grammatical and other points that the author gives, it would appear to me that she has spent a lot of time showing that there is really very little convincing evidence of substratum influence of Kuanua on Tok Pisin. What is stated as a caution in the introduction (7) appears to be the conclusion: "...both Tolai and Tok Pisin often show features that in the case of Tok Pisin can also be regarded as universal features of pidgins".

This brings me to what I consider to be a major criticism of the book. While it was probably necessary for someone sometime to show in as much detail as Mosel the degree of direct influence or lack of influence of Kuanua on Tok Pisin, it is surely also of great interest to try to account for the various features of Tok Pisin where there is no clear evidence of influence. Mosel refers to the question of "universals" so casually and so occasionally that one has no real idea what her understanding of "universals" is, and what is their role in the development and origin of pidgins.

It would seem to me then, that this book really constitutes just an introduction, though a very detailed and carefully written one, to a much larger work that has yet to appear.