On the Relative Instability *tina- 'Mother' in the Langauges of Eastern Oceania

John Lynch

University of the South Pacific

1. The Problem

When Austronesianists begin work on a (for them) "new" Oceanic language, they expect to find a number of lexical constants – reflexes of reconstructed Proto Oceanic (POc) etyma which are found in just about every Oceanic language. Among the top ten or so of those they would expect to find, I would hazard a guess, would be reflexes of *tama- 'father' and *tina- 'mother'.[1]

In many cases, especially in the western part of the Oceanic region, their expectations would be met: in Gedaged, Manam, Yabêm, Motu, Misima, Tolai, Nakanai and Roviana, totally unexceptional and 'well-behaved' reflexes of *tama- and *tina- occur. With few exceptions, the pattern is disrupted only by the occasional substitution of an obvious address term for one or the other of the reconstructed etyma, like Gapapaiwa *mama* 'father' or Duke of York *nana* 'mother' – and even then, these forms have solid Proto Oceanic antecedents: Chowning (1991:67) cites the reconstructed vocative terms *mama* referring to the father and *nana* to the mother.

Take one step further east, however, into what I refer to here as eastern Oceania, and the situation becomes quite different[2] Almost all of these languages retain *tama- 'father',

and they retain it with regular reflexes of the protoform; the few that do not can be exemplified by a couple of Eastern Polynesian languages which have lost both *tama- and *tina- (at least with the meanings originally ascribed to them) and have replaced them by terms meaning male and female parent which are compounds based on *matuqa- (for a discussion of which see 3.1.3 below):

(1)   'father'   'mother'
        Hawaiian   makua-kāne   makua-hine
        Rarotongan   metua-tāne   metua-va'ine
        parent-male   parent-female

Rotuman is apparently unique in the Central Pacific subgroup in **completely** replacing **both *tama- and *tina-** with terms which have no known Proto Oceanic antecedent with these meanings – ö'fá 'father' and o'honi 'mother'.

Many other languages of eastern Oceania, however, have retained *tama- meaning 'father' but have lost the term *tina- with the meaning 'mother'; for example:

(2)   'father'   'mother'
        Solomon Islands
        Bughotu   tama-   ido
        'Are'are   ama-   nike-
        Vanuatu
        Mota   tama-   raveve-
        Vatrata (Bek)   'eme-   reŋe-
        Polynesia
        Tongan   tamai   fa'ē

Equally interesting are the large number of eastern Oceanic languages which (a) retain both *tama- and *tina- with their original meanings, (b) reflect *tama- perfectly regularly, **but** (c) make quite irregular phonological changes to the reflex of *tina-. (Expected but non-occurring reflexes are marked with a double asterisk.) For example:

(3)   *tama-   *tina-
                    Actual   **Expected**   **Actual**   **Expected**
                    Reflex   **Reflex**   **Reflex**   **Reflex**
        Solomon Islands
        Talise   tama-   tama-   na-   **tina-
        Asumboa   tama-   tama-   iñi-   **(t,s)ina-
        Vanuatu
        S.E. Ambrym   tamo -   tamo-   nino-   **tino-
        Whitesands   təm-   təm-   it-   **sən-

Let us look briefly at some fairly rough statistics. Tryon's (1976) survey of Vanuatu languages, for example, shows that, of 122 non-address terms for 'father', all derive from POc *tama-* except for a couple which seem to derive from an address form. However, of 135 non-address terms for 'mother',[3] only 88 (about 65%) derive from POc *tina-* and, unlike the reflexes of *tama-*, many of them show irregular phonological developments. Of the 47 terms which do not reflect *tina-*, a number derive from some other reconstructed kin term (see 3.1 below).

Tryon and Hackman's (1983) survey of Solomon Islands languages shows a similar pattern. Excluding Papuan and Polynesian Outlier languages, there are 94 separate wordlists in that volume. Only three non-address terms with the meaning 'father' do not derive from *tama-*, but seventeen with the meaning 'mother' do not derive from *tina-*. As in Vanuatu, there have been more unexpected phonological developments with reflexes of *tina-* than with terms reflecting *tama-*.

In what follows, I will look first of all at cases where *tina-* has been retained but where its phonological development is irregular in some way. I will then look at cases where *tina-* (and in a few cases *tama-* as well) have been replaced by some other term. Finally, I will suggest some possible factors which go **part** – though only part – of the way to explaining why *tina-* was lexically much more unstable than *tama-* in eastern Oceanic languages.

2. Unexpected Formal

While one expects occasional formal irregularities in words containing certain 'problematical' POc phonemes (like *R* or *y*), there is nothing phonologically inherently problematical about the form *tina-* which might lead us to expect unusual changes. The irregular changes I document here are, therefore, unexpected developments.

I will begin by examining in some detail the languages of the Southern Vanuatu family, since just a few languages illustrate a number of different kinds of formal modification, and will then look in a more general way at other languages of eastern Oceania.

2.1. Southern Vanuatu

---

[3] Tryon listed just one word for 'father' and one for 'mother' in each language/dialect. In most cases, the word listed is a reference term, but in some cases it is an address term; in a few cases, the list for a particular language has an address term for one meaning but a reference term for the other. This explains the discrepancy between the totals (122 and 135).

All eight non-Polynesian languages in Southern Vanuatu reflect POc *tama- 'father' regularly (in two cases with the accretion of initial *e*, possibly a relic of a POc personal article)[4] However, while all eight languages also reflect POc *tina- 'mother', only Ura reflects it regularly. In (4) below, I give the reflexes of *tama- (which are exactly as expected); as far as *tina- is concerned, I give both the actual and the expected reflex. Forms are represented phonemically rather than orthographically; one of the alternative Sie and Anejom̃ 'expected' forms contains the accreted relic personal article *e-*, while the other does not.

(4)

		*tama- 'father'		*tina- 'mother'	
			Actual		Expected
Erromango					
	Sie	e/tme-	nr/in/me-		**sina-, **esna-
	Ura	rimi-	e/hine-		
Tanna					
	N.Tanna	təm-	it-		**sən-
	Whitesands	təm-	it-		**sən-
	Lenakel	rəm-	in-		**sən-
	S.W.Tanna	ləm-	nə/sən-		**sən-
	Kwamera	remu-	ri/nhə-		**hinə-
Aneityum					
	Anejom̃	e/tma-	ri/si-		**sina-, **esna-

The changes which have taken place are as follows (note that some languages have made more than one change):

(5) Change	Language(s)
a. Unexpected accretion of *nV-*.	Sie, S.W.Tanna
b. Accretion of *rV-*.	Sie, Kwamera, Anejom̃
c. Accretion of *i-* (if different from (5b)).	N.Tanna, Whitesands, and possibly Lenakel – see (5d)
d. Unexpected loss of *t. (This may be loss of the first syllable and accretion of *i-*.)	Sie, Lenakel
e. Unexpected loss of second syllable.	N.Tanna, Whitesands, Anejom̃

---

[4] Ross (1988:99-100) cites evidence supporting the reconstruction of a personal article *e* in both Proto North New Guinea and Proto Meso-Melanesian. In addition to the form for father, Anejom̃ shows initial *e* on two other kin terms: *etpu-* 'grandparent' < POc *tubu, and *etwa-* 'same sex sibling' < POc *t(ou)ka; and see also the discussion in 3.2 below regarding Anejom̃ *eŋa-* 'wife'.

f. Accretion of -*me*.   Sie

Some of these changes have a relatively natural explanation. With (5a), for example, a reflex of the POc article *na* is accreted onto most common nouns in Southern Vanuatu languages (e.g. *kapika* 'Malay apple' > Lenakel *nə/kəvək*, *paraq* 'sprouting coconut' > Lenakel *nu/vera*), though generally not onto personal nouns or directly possessed kinship terms. However, there are exceptions to this: e.g., *taci-* 'younger same-sex sibling' > Lenakel *no/rh-*, *maRuqane-* '(woman's) brother' > Lenakel *na/mwan-*. So accretion of *na* is not too unexpected, though there is no such accretion onto *tama-*.

With (5b), Clark (1985:212) notes that there is a feminine personal article of the form *ro* found in Marino (spoken on Maewo) and in the languages of the Banks and Torres; while Early (1994) notes the occurrence of a 'female personal prefix' *le-* in Lewo. These would derive from earlier *(r,dr)V*. Kwamera and Anejoñ *ri-* may be related to this form, though the form itself does not occur as a feminine personal article or prefix in these languages other than in the word for 'mother'. Change (5c) may actually involve the same accretion, since in North Tanna, Whitesands and Lenakel, *r, *l > *l* before high vowels but > *i* before non-high vowels (e.g., *rani* 'day' > *n/ian* in all three languages).

Codrington (1885:83), on the other hand, says that in the Banks, Torres and northern Vanuatu *rV-* is "a common plural article", and Lewo has a 'personal collective' form *le-* homophonous with the female personal prefix discussed above. In New Ireland, Tigak has *ri* as an honorific article used "before proper nouns which do refer to a person who is, or has been, a mother" (Beaumont 1979:58), and Tungak has the same form with similar semantics.[5] All of these forms may be formally cognate, deriving from POC *drV*. The semantic changes involved may have been something like 'female' > 'mother' > 'mother + child(ren)' > 'plurality'.

Whatever the origin of this prefix, changes (5b) and (5c) involve accretions which are not found in other kin terms in the Southern Vanuatu languages.

Given that the third person singular possessive suffix in these languages derives from an earlier -*na*, change (5e) may be explained by loss of one of two adjacent identical syllables: i.e., *tina-na* > *ti-na*. However, changes (5d) and (5f) admit of no obvious explanation.[6]

---

[5] I am grateful to Malcolm Ross for drawing much of this to my attention.

[6] There is a plural suffix -*me* in Sie which is used with kin terms; e.g. *veve-n-me* (sister-his-plural) 'his sisters'. This may be the source of the accretion -*me* in the term for 'mother', but note forms like *nrinme-nr-me* 'their mothers'.

2.2. Northern and Central Vanuatu

With the exception of (f), each of the changes in (5) is also found in one or more languages of northern and central Vanuatu, along with one or two other unexpected developments in the form of the reflex of POc *tina- 'mother'. Given that about ninety languages belong to this group, I will not go into the same detail as I did with the southern languages, but will present just a selection (from Tryon 1976:230-234):

(6)	Location	Language and Form	Change
	Banks	Mosina re/tno-	rV-accretion
	Ambae	N.E.Ambae (Lolsiwoi dialect) ri/si-	rV-accretion; loss of second syllable
	Santo	Tolomako ra/tina-	rV-accretion
	Malakula	Mpotorovo ni/ra- and second consonant	nV-accretion; loss of first vowel
		Leviamp a/unia-	loss of *t; accretion of u (a- is a productive prefix on kin terms)
	Ambrym	S.E. Ambrym n/ino-	nV-accretion, loss of *t
	Epi	Bierebo ka/ña-	kV- accretion (occurs on other kin terms); loss of first syllable, or loss of *t plus metathesis (i.e. ina > nia > ña).

As with their relatives to the south, northern and central Vanuatu languages have made virtually no unexpected changes to the form of *tama- 'father'. Some languages have accreted a personal or kinship article, and this has often resulted in predictable loss of the first vowel of the root, but this is the extent of the variation in this term: e.g. Seke (Pentecost) i/zmia-, Axamb (Malakula) a/rme-, Bierebo (Epi) ka/rme-.

2.3. Solomon Islands

The formal modifications to reflexes of *tina- are rather fewer in nature in Solomon Island languages.[7]

(7)	Location	Language and Form	Change
	Guadalcanal	Talise, Birao na-	Loss of initial syllable.
	Malaita	To'aba'ita tha/ina-	tha-accretion (<*qa-?).
	Makira	Bauro ka/ina-	ka-accretion.
	Utupua	Asumboa iñi-, Tanimbili añi-	Loss of *t, apparent metathesis of vowels (since *n > ñ before *i).

---

[7] While I am aware that the languages of northwest and southeast Solomon Islands belong to two different high-order subgroups of Oceanic, the developments I am discussing in this paper occur on both sides of this subgroup boundary.

By contrast, the only major change that has taken place in reflexes of *tama- has been accretion of an initial consonant after regular loss of *t (as in Dori'o (Malaita) nama-, Bauro (Makira) wama-).

2.4. Polynesian languages

Polynesian languages are interesting in a different way. No Polynesian language that I am aware of retains *tama- and *tina- with the meanings 'father' and 'mother' and without formal modification. Where the terms are retained with the original meanings, they have been phonologically modified – usually by the accretion of a reflex of the POc third person singular possessive suffix *-na, but sometimes by some other accretion:

(8)		*tama- 'father'	*tina- 'mother'
	Tongan	tamai	----
	Samoan	tamā	tinā
	East Futuna	tamana	tinana
	West Futuna	tamana	jinana

Some Polynesian languages which have replaced these terms with compounds based on *matuqa- 'parent' retain *tina-na with a specialised meaning; cf. Hawaiian kinana 'mother hen and her brood', Rarotongan tinana 'female parent, used only of animals or birds'.

Polynesia is I think unique in Oceanic in retaining the unmodified term *tama- but changing the meaning from 'father' to 'child'. Some languages thus reflect *tama- in two different forms and with two different meanings; e.g.:

(9)		'father'	'child'
	Tongan	tamai	tama
	Samoan	tamā	tama
	Tuvaluan	tamana	tama

3. Replacement

In this section, I will look at two different kinds of replacement of POc *tina- in the languages of Eastern Oceania – by a reflex of a POc kinship term reconstructed with a meaning other than 'mother', and by some other term not (as yet) reconstructed for POc.

3.1. Semantic shifts in other Proto Oceanic kin terms

In some of the languages which do not reflect *tina- with the meaning 'mother', a reflex of another POc kin term – either *taci- 'younger same-sex sibling' or *tubu- 'grandparent' – is used with this meaning. I will also discuss developments in the term *matuqa- 'mother's brother'.

3.1.1. *taci- 'younger same-sex sibling'

The languages of one fairly discrete geographical area in northern Vanuatu have a reflex of *taci- 'younger same-sex sibling' with the referent 'mother'. These are the languages of Ambae, Pentecost, and the northern half of Ambrym which, however, belong to two different primary subgroups of the North Central Vanuatu (NCV) family, Northern and Central:

(10)   **Northern Vanuatu languages**
  Ambae: Northeast Ambae (Wailengi, Lolomatua), Nduindui *re/tahi-*
  Pentecost: Raga *ra/tahi-*

  Central Vanuatu languages
  Pentecost: Apma *dači-*
                  Seke *dahe-*
                  Sa *dai-*
                  Sowa *dasi-*
  Ambrym: North Ambrym *rahe-*
                  Lonwolwol *rae-*

The Northern Vanuatu languages in (10) have accreted *rV-*, Clark's feminine personal article (see 2.1 above). The other Pentecost languages (which belong to the Central Vanuatu subgroup) suggest *daci* rather than *taci-*, possibly accreting the article – i.e. *na taci- > n-taci- > daci-* – though these languages show no other evidence of article accretion.

As for words meaning 'younger same-sex sibling', Raga has the form *tihi-* 'younger sibling' (Walsh 1990:115), which also appears to derive from *taci- but with an unexpected change in the first vowel; while Lonwolwol has the non-cognate form *hela-* 'same-sex sibling' (Paton 1973). I have not been able to discover the words for same-sex sibling in the other languages noted in (10)[8]

---

[8]One of the difficulties with working largely with wordlists (like those in Tryon 1976) rather than with fuller dictionaries is that one does not have access to additional vocabulary in most of the languages concerned. In many cases, for example, *tina may be retained, but with a semantic shift (as in Sa *isin* 'woman, wife' discussed below); but this is usually not apparent

Sa has the form *isin* 'woman, wife' which may reflect **tina-* with a semantic shift, but I have not been able to discover any other reflexes of **tina-* in these languages.

3.1.2. **tubu-* *'grandparent'*

There is another set of languages, all in West Santo (Vanuatu), which appear to have shifted the meaning of POC **tubu-* from 'grandparent' to 'mother'. The forms in (11) are unambiguous (Roria having accreted *rV-*, and possibly *e-* as well):

(11)   Santo: Morouas, Narango *tupu-*
                    Narango (Nambel dialect), Tambotalo *tumbu-*
                    Roria *rie/tpu-*

The forms in (12) are less certain, involving as they do the loss of the first syllable of **tubu-* and the addition of final *i* (and note again some cases of *rV*-accretion):

(12)   Santo: Wusi *pui-*
                    Navut *ra/mpui-* (Matae dialect *ra/pui-*)
                    Lametin *ra/mbui-*

Mention should also be made here of apparent reflexes of **tubu-* with the meaning 'wife' rather than 'mother' in one Erromangan and one Santo language – Sie *retpo-* (with accreted *rV-*), and Tolomako (central Santo) *tupu-*. Sie does not reflect **tubu-* with the meaning 'grandparent', having replaced it with *itais* (which also means 'old person' and 'moon'); I have been unable to discover the Tolomako word for 'grandparent'.

3.1.3. **matuqa-* *'mother's brother, (senior kin?)'*

A number of languages of eastern Polynesia have replaced both **tina-* and **tama-* with a reflex of **matuqa-*. This term is generally reconstructed with the meaning 'mother's brother'.

> We should, however, note that **matuqa* almost surely derives from the same root that means 'mature' (in Tolai, however, Lanyon-Orgill's dictionary shows a distinction between the adjective *matuka* and the kinship term *matua-*). It seems clear that in AN languages in general, **matuqa* referred to a wide range of senior kin. (Chowning 1991:65)

---

from the lists. (Nor have I been able to discover the words for 'grandparent' in the West Santo languages given in (11) and (12) below; neither of the terms 'younger sibling' or 'grandparent' appeared on Tryon's 1976 list.) However, the loss of **tina* with the meaning 'mother' is itself of considerable interest.

Marquesan has *motua* 'father', but the term for 'mother' is a totally unrelated one (*kui*). In most other Eastern Polynesian languages, however, the reflex of *matuqa-* means 'parent' and is followed by a modifier specifying the sex, as illustrated in (1) above.

There are possible cognate developments in Vanuatu:

(13)   Malakula: Uripiv (Tautu) *mworo-*, Atchin *mira-*, Vovo *mera-* 'mother'
        Efate: S. Efate *n/matu, ne/matu* 'woman'

These forms may well derive from POc *matuqa-*. However, Tautu Uripiv *metuo-* and Atchin *mætua-* 'mother's brother' reflect this form regularly, suggesting that at least some of the forms in (13) may not derive from POc *matuqa* – or at least not regularly.

There is also one case in Papua New Guinea: the Gapapaiwa language of Milne Bay has *madua-* 'mother'.

3.2. Other replacements

There are a number of other terms for 'mother' which have a distribution beyond one or two very closely related languages, and which derive neither from *tina- nor from any other reconstructed POc kinship term that I am aware of. (Interestingly, there are no similarly widely-distributed replacement terms for 'father'.) In each case below (except for the last, for which there is a Proto Polynesian reconstruction), I give a reconstructed term in POc orthography, though the antiquity of the form is obviously much more recent (at least with the meaning 'mother').

One such term for 'mother' widely distributed in Solomon Islands (in both Northwest and Southeast Solomonic subgroups) would derive from *niga-. Reflexes are:

(14)   **Northwest Solomonic languages**
        Shortlands: Mono-Alu *nka-*
        Choiseul: Vaghua *i/ŋgia*
        Southeast Solomonic languages
        Malaita: 'Are'are, Oroha *nike-*, South Malaitan (Sa'a *nika-*, Ulawa *nike-*)

A second reconstruction, of the form *pepe- (often with the prefix *rV-), has reflexes which are reasonably widely distributed in northern Vanuatu:

(15)   Banks: Mota *ra/veve-*, Nume *ra/vve-*, Lakona *veve-*
        Maewo: Marino *ra/veve-*, Central Maewo *rere/fe-*, Baetora *ra/ve*

(The last two forms appear to reflect *rV-pe- rather than *rV-pepe-).

A third set of forms which may just possibly be cognate are:

(16)   Banks: Vatrata (Sasar *rœŋo-*, Bek *reŋe-*)
         Aneityum: Anejom̃ *eŋa-* 'wife'

If the Banks forms have accreted the feminine article *rV-*, and if the Anejom̃ form has the personal article *e-* (which is found on three other Anejom̃ kin terms), then we have a possible reconstructed form **ŋa-* 'mother, wife'.

There is a fourth term with a somewhat more restricted distribution. Ysabel languages have a form which suggests something like **ido-*:

(17)   Kokota, Blablanga, Maringe, Bughotu *ido-*
         Nggao *do-*

Finally, we should note the Proto Polynesian (PPn) reconstruction **faqe(ae)* 'mother', with the following reflexes (all in languages which either retain POc **tama-* 'father' or replace it with POc **matuqa-*):

(18)   Tongan *fa'ē*, East Uvea *fa'e*, Māori *whaea*.

In summary, the following forms of some antiquity have replaced **tina-* with the meaning 'mother' in some parts of the region under discussion:

(19)   **niga-*
         *pepe-
         *ŋa-
         *ido-
         PPn **faqe(ae)*

4. Discussion

There are a number of possible explanations for the relative instability of **tina-* 'mother' as compared with the relative stability of **tama-* 'father'. Before going into these, however, it is important to point out that, with the exception of a few cases from the western Solomon Islands and one isolated case in Papua New Guinea, all the languages which I have dealt with so far belong to one or other of the Oceanic subgroups located in eastern Oceania. Ann Chowning (pers. comm.) has pointed to Sengseng *ve/tama-* 'father' but *totni-* 'mother' (though cf. *tina* as an address term), but the vast bulk of the Western Oceanic languages seem to have retained **tina-* and **tama-* with little irregular phonological modification. In eastern Oceania, however, we have seen far

greater instability, both phonological and lexical, especially in the term for 'mother'. In what follows, I will explore various possible explanations for this instability.

4.1. The 'Clan-mother' theory

Codrington (1885:83), in noting the widespread use of a reflex of putative *pepe- (or *rV-pepe-) 'mother' in northern Vanuatu, proposed the following explanation:

> In the word and in the prefix there are the marks of the native customs in relation to marriage and of their history. In that part of Melanesia all the population, without distinction of island or language, is divided into two sets for purposes of marriage. Each of these sets is called in Mota *veve*, a word that means division. If, then, this word *veve* is used for mother it is because the *veve* is looked upon as the parent, the division is not called *veve* because it may be figuratively called a mother...T]he individual woman who is the parent is in the second place; the child is the child of the set, not hers, the women of the set are the mother, not she.

This may explain the replacement of *tina- by *pepe- in this area, and may just possibly explain other replacements in other areas – i.e. if some or all of the terms in (19) meant or derived from terms meaning 'clan', 'moiety' etc. (which further data would be needed to check).

However, Clark (n.d.) has no Proto North-Central Vanuatu (PNCV) reconstruction from which the form *pepe-*, or indeed any of the forms in (19), might derive. He does reconstruct PNCV *tavala 'side, other side, beyond' and the (formally related?) term *tavalu 'side, moiety'; one reflex of the latter reconstruction, Nokuku *towolu-*, is glossed as 'man's brother, woman's sister', which suggests a transfer in reference from a kin group to certain classes of kin within that group. But this doesn't help much with explaining the origin of the terms in (19).

Nor does this theory explain the **phonological** instability of *tina- in those languages which have retained it, or its replacement by reflexes of *tubu-, *taci- or *matuqa- in some other languages.

4.2. Kinship systems and address vs. reference terms

It may be that the nature of the kinship systems themselves have been the stimulus to change. In Crow kinship systems, often associated with patrilineality, members of the mother's patrilineage are usually terminologically distinguished only by sex – thus the same term would be used for 'mother' and 'mother's brother's daughter', for example. This leads to what Ann Chowning (pers. comm.) describes as 'a promising scenario for inventing or importing another term that would distinguish the actual mother'. This might help to explain the widespread replacement of *tina- by some other term, were it

not for the fact that *tina-* is generally not retained in those languages as a reference term for other female members of the mother's patrilineage.

Another possible, and perhaps related, explanation is that an address term for 'mother' may have replaced the reference term *tina-*. I mentioned earlier that Tryon's lists sometimes have an address term, sometimes a reference term, and we cannot deduce much from this per se. Ann Chowning (pers. comm.) has suggested that children, being in closer contact with their mothers than their fathers in most Melanesian societies, might have been particularly likely to have used special address terms for them, and to have substituted them for the usual reference term. She points to Tikopia, where the usual term for mother is *nana* (from the POc address term), and where the historical reference term *tinana* is restricted to mainly poetical use.

Now the grammar of reference terms in most Oceanic languages is different from the grammar of address terms: reference terms regularly take direct (inalienable) possessive suffixes (e.g. AnejoM̃ *etma-k* 'my father'), while address terms are either unpossessed or possessed with an indirect (alienable) possessive marker (e.g. AnejoM̃ *tata* 'dad', *tata uña-k* 'my dad'). There are some clear cases in Tryon's data where an address term has acquired the grammar of direct possession – i.e. where there has presumably been lexical replacement. One such case is Tur (Santo), which has *tata-ŋ* 'my father', *ma-ŋ* 'my mother'. This is a promising line of inquiry. However, an examination of Tryon's Vanuatu wordlists shows that, where an address term has replaced a reference term and become directly possessed (as in the Tur type discussed above), this has occurred with terms for 'father' as often as with terms for 'mother'.

4.3. Exogamy and contact

The exogamous nature of many of the societies of Island Melanesia might also have been a contributing factor. When a man married a woman from another language group, she would presumably speak the husband's language imperfectly at best, especially in the early stages of her residence in the husband's village. In particular, she might use her own word for 'mother' rather than the word in her husband's language, or she might mispronounce her husband's word for 'mother' – and these changes could well have been passed on to her children, thus becoming part of the language.

In such a scenario, one might imagine that the influence of Papuan languages could also be responsible for lexical replacement in some Oceanic languages, at least in certain areas. An examination of words with the meaning 'mother' in the extant Papuan languages of Solomon Islands, however, shows no likely cognates with the set of innovations in (19), though of course some Papuan languages are known to have become

extinct in Solomon Islands relatively recently, and others may have died out centuries ago. The fact that the Papuan language Baniata has *na* 'mother', presumably from a neighbouring Austronesian language, shows that contact of this type and with these kinds of results **did** take place. Unfortunately, it does not help us to account any of the specific lexical replacements discussed in 3.2.

An appeal to contact or imperfect learning **may** explain lexical replacement or irregular phonological development in certain individual cases, though it is perhaps too simplistic an explanation for all of the cases given above. Indeed, if it is a valid explanation, the question arises as to why this would have applied to *tina- but not to *tama-? This theory, then, also seems to be unable to provide a wholly satisfactory explanation of the facts.

5. Summary

We are left with something of a puzzle. Although both *tama- 'father' and *tina- 'mother' show some instability, the latter has been far more unstable than the former in the languages of eastern Oceania, both in terms of irregular phonological developments and in terms of lexical replacement. A number of possible explanations for this instability were outlined in section 4; they go some way towards accounting for the facts, but nevertheless appear to fall short of any coherent and adequate explanation for this instability.

As with so many other intriguing puzzles in Pacific linguistics, I am forced to conclude by saying that I hope I have stimulated interest in this topic, and that future research may come up with a better explanation.

References

Beaumont, Clive H. 1979. *The Tigak language of New Ireland.* Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, B-58.

Chowning, Ann. 1991. Proto Oceanic culture: the evidence from Melanesia. In Robert Blust (ed.), *Currents in Pacific linguistics: papers on Austronesian languages and ethnolinguistics in honour of George W. Grace.* Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, C-117:43-75.

Clark, Ross. 1985. Languages of north and central Vanuatu: groups, chains, clusters and waves. In Andrew Pawley & Lois Carrington (eds.), *Austronesian Linguistics at the 15th Pacific Science Congress.* Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, C-88:199-236.

_____. n.d. Proto North-Central Vanuatu reconstructions. Computer printout.

Codrington, Robert. 1885. *The Melanesian languages.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Early, Robert J. 1994. *A grammar of Lewo, Vanuatu.* Unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University.

Paton, W.F. 1973. *Ambrym (Lonwolwol) dictionary.* Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, C-21.

Ross, M.D. 1988. *Proto Oceanic and the Austronesian languages of western Melanesia.* Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, C-98.

Tryon, D.T. 1976. *New Hebrides languages: an internal classification.* Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, C-33.

_____, and B.D. Hackman. 1983. *Solomon Islands languages: an internal classification.* Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, C-72.

Walsh, D.S. 1990. Raga descent group and kinship nomenclature sixty years on: a comparison of Rivers' 1914 description with some recent data. In Jeremy H.C.S. Davidson (ed.), *Pacific Island languages: essays in honour of G.B. Milner*, pp.111-118. London and Honolulu: School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London) and University of Hawaii Press.