

SOME POLYNESIAN WORDS IN NEW CALEDONIA

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Leenhardt's survey of the languages covered 37 languages and dialects which he classified as "Austro-Melanesian", and one Polynesian language (on Uvea, Loyalty Is.). On the main island of New Caledonia, the languages fall into two groups, a northern one which he classified as MN, with an overlaid IN element, and a southern one which might be pre-MN. Ray considered it difficult to classify the Loyalty languages as MN. Dempwolff's reconstruction of Austronesian has played little part in the classification of NC languages until recent times, when Haudricourt has shown that the mainland languages are MN, and Lenormand has illustrated the phonetic correspondences between Lifu (Loyalties) and Malay and Indonesian. Statements about PN borrowings have been made without reference to the factor of common membership of the one language group by NC languages and PN languages, and this paper is concerned with establishing the difference between cognates and borrowings. It is as yet too early in AN studies to attempt any full-scale survey of PN borrowings.

The division of borrowings into those antedating and those postdating European contact is an important one, in view of the well-established tradition of pre-European arrivals of Polynesians. The PN speakers on Uvea came from the Wallis group some time in the second half of the 18th century, probably before Cook's discovery of New Caledonia in 1774. They are the source of PN elements in the population of north-coast villages such as Pwebo, Yengen, Tuho, Wagap, Kanala, etc. in New Caledonia. There are traditions of small arrivals of Tongans in the Loyalties and on the Isle of Pines. These traditions do not exist in Tonga itself. There are also details of post-European arrivals by drift voyage of small groups of Tongans. The major source of PN influence is undoubtedly the Uveans, and it is through the effects of their settlements that Europeans were able to establish early contact with the MN-speaking New Caledonians.

Typical of the difficulties caused by non-recognition of cognates as against borrowings is the word for coconut. In most NC languages, this is nu or ni, which is claimed to be a borrowing from PN niu, although no explanation is given of the phonetic changes. In fact, niu is also MN, and nu or ni are found in many other AN areas. All these words are cognates, deriving from AN *niuR.

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Among the genuine borrowings which can be classified as pre-European are the following words. In several NC languages the FN hele "bamboo knife" is found. In general, the European knife is given the same name as the traditional oyster-shell knife, but some northern languages use either ele, or the name of the native bamboo: this indicates that the FN word is old-established in the North, and suggests Uvean as the source of the loan-word. The Pan-FN term for the booms joining the outrigger to the canoe is kiato, which appears to have no MN cognates. Kiaro is recorded at Wailu, and kioto at Poneriwen. Botanists consider that the kumara was introduced into New Caledonia by Polynesians. The most common form of the name is kumala but most Southern languages, including some having both l and r, have kumara. This seems to reflect, rather than borrowing from more than one FN dialect, the fact that r is an allophone of FN l. The meaning of the word has also been extended to "scrofulous glands" in the neck.

Borrowings after European contact, and particularly after the beginning of missionary operations (Protestant in the Loyalties, Catholic on the mainland), may be classified in several ways. Borrowings from Samoan are through medium of the Samoan teachers used by the Protestant missionaries. These would include Mare beno (herbeno "straw padding on roof ridge", gubeno "square platter of coconut leaves") from Samoan feni "make a join in plaiting" (Mare has no f or y). Lifu has borrowed the word from Mare: behno "mat". In the Loyalties, and earlier (1880s) on the mainland, katia was a common word for "leprosy", borrowed from Sam. 'atia "eaten away" (of flesh by ulcers, etc.). The Sam. greeting talofa is used on Mare, and the ethnic name Samoa (samua) is used in a number of languages for introduced varieties of the banana. Other loan-words reflect European borrowings in FN, e.g. Mare samala "hammer", or the adaptation of FN words to name objects introduced by Europeans, e.g. laulau "table", tusi "paper, letter, book", kili "saw".

FN words in NC French reflect firstly beach-la-mar (pidgin) usage and secondly Tahitian influence (traders and missionaries): some if not all of these were undoubtedly current in MN usage for a time, but few have remained as permanent loans in MN. Among the words attributable to beach-la-mar usage are some of pan-FN use such as Fr. caïcaï "meal, feast", caïcayer "to eat" (FN kai, pidgin kaikai); Fr. tapa "short fringed skirt"; Fr. manou "European coloured material, loincloth" (also MN, but not in NC); others reflect a contribution from specific FN dialects, e.g. Hawaiian kanaka, Fr. Canaque "native of New Caledonia"; Maori kauri, Fr. kaori "New Caledonian Agathis". Some of the meanings are peculiar to New Caledonia, as with pan-FN tapu, where the Fr. tabou has in NC usage the sense of a sculptured figure (often used to mark a taboo). One of the most interesting words is Fr. popinée "native woman or girl", which is a borrowing from Uvean fafine through north-coast NC languages having no f: this reflects the habit of chiefs in that area of going to Uvea to choose wives of part-FN descent.

Tahitian influence is reflected in such French words as bourao "hibiscus" (Tah. purau); tamanou "tree (Calophyllum)" (Tah. tamanu); pareo "loincloth" (Tah. pareu); tayo "friend", "native (man, as opposed to popinée)" (Tah. taio, claimed to be a borrowing from Eng. sailor, but this should have given something like *teira); and taoura "cord", used by Baudoux (Tah. taura).

That the influences have in some cases been very mixed, with an overlaying of one by the other, is shown by the various words for the pig, which is not native in New Caledonia. The FN puaka is found, as is poaka (FN borrowing from Eng. porker, or possibly a MN reduction of puaka, cf. French rendering poika 1882): a better rendering of FN poaka is poka (whence NC French poca). Piki in Dumbea is from Eng. pig. It seems likely that these strata would begin in pre-European times and run up to the period of strong English influence in the South.

Borrowings from FN dialects are in fact not nearly as numerous as writers such as Rey-Lescure and Cané have suggested. Pre-European loans appear to be essentially Uvean in origin. After European contact, FN borrowings occur mainly through European mediation: Samoan missionaries, Tahitian-experienced traders, missionaries and officials, Pacific traders and whalers.

Because the MN languages are richer in phonemes than the FN, the phonemic changes undergone by borrowings are minimal, and generally occur only where an unfamiliar phoneme is met, e.g. f in fenu, or the glottal stop (which becomes k) in 'atia.

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