

# 15 *Borrowing in Niuean*

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## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

An investigation into borrowing in Niuean can be conveniently broken down into two eras:

- The prehistoric and pre-European era
- The contact, missionary and modern era

The first of these is closely linked with Niue's culture history, which gives rise to the question of what affinities Niuean has with other Polynesian languages. While a number of linguistic experts in this field (Elbert 1953; Pawley 1966, 1967; Clark 1976, 1979) have demonstrated quite clearly that Niuean is a Tongic language, there remains some doubt as to the 'complete' picture, as expressed by Clark (1979:264):

Niuean, as a number of features of its phonology and grammar clearly show, is an offshoot of the same major branch of the family as Tongan. However, there are various peculiarities suggesting that the linguistic history of Niue may be more complex than the simple Tongan colonization of a previously uninhabited island.

The complexity referred to is the suspicion that there is also some Nuclear Polynesian (Samoan) inheritance, and that there may even be some evidence of East Polynesian influence. The most extreme positions taken in the past are those by Smith (1902–03) and McEwen (1970) who argue for what in modern linguistic parlance would be called a Samoan and an Eastern Polynesian substratum respectively. This article will look into these and some other claims in some detail, culminating in the suggestion that very little linguistic evidence exists to support any of these claims.

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The era of contact and missionisation offers more secure evidence for borrowing, notably that of considerable Samoan influence in the Niuean Bible. The fact that Niue and the Cook Islands together fall under New Zealand administration adds to the possibility of borrowing from Aitutaki and Rarotonga. Wider travel of Niueans (including kidnapping of Niuean labour) also gives rise to possible borrowing from more diverse sources. Last but not least the oncoming onslaught of English has its beginnings in this era. The modern era is notable for the influence of English (via New Zealand) education on Niuean. Add to that the modern media of radio, TV and video (and lately the Internet), and heavy borrowing from English may undermine Niuean to such a degree that it may disappear. Language ecology issues will be touched upon here.

## 2 Niuean language origins: the substrata myth makers

As indicated above, we will not engage here in an argument as to whether or not Niuean is fundamentally a Tongic language. All the available linguistic evidence suggests it is. Nevertheless, as all ethnologists-cum-linguists have noted to date, Niueans distinguish between the northern part of Niue called *Motu*, and the southern part called *Tafiti*. While it may be natural to speculate that this is a clue for two migrations and linguistic divisions, it is of course equally valid to speculate on the opposite, i.e. one linguistic migration that subsequently split into two regional dialects (or simply gave different names to different parts of the island, a common enough practice). S. Percy Smith (1902–03) set out to ‘prove’ the former. This ‘irrepressible colonial bureaucrat-cum-amateur ethnologist’ (Ryan 1998) proceeded to promote a Samoan substratum myth that would influence all those who came after (including indigenous historians like Talagi (1982)).

While it is not my purpose to debunk this myth in detail, I would like to point out just a few fallacies in Smith’s argument, mainly by showing that the ‘evidence’ can equally be used to support an opposing scenario.

- Niuean culture history gives as ancestral homelands the following: *Fonua-galo*, *Tulia*, *Tonga* and some other islands; Smith in his considerations ignores the ‘other islands’, does away with *Fonua-galo* as ‘lost land’ and with *Tonga* as ‘foreign, south, ship’ and dwells on *Tulia*, a place name on Savai’i, hence evidence of Samoan ancestry. Given that Smith provides English glosses for *Fonua-galo* and *Toga*, he could have done the same for *Tulia* which means ‘unwanted’ in Niuean, and as such is not a bad fit for the legend that the culture heroes who first came to Niue were in fact ‘unwanted’ in their own islands (see Pulekula in Smith 1903); for argument’s sake *tulia* can also be derived via Tongan *tu* and *liia*, at least based on Churchward’s (1959) relevant dictionary entries.
- The absence of tattooing in Niue is attributed to an erstwhile Samoan migration because Samoans for some time in their history did not have tattooing, it being introduced to them by the Tonga-fiti people. Contemporary Samoan historians (Tavale 1997) tell us however that tattooing in Samoa has always existed along with Tongan and Fijian tattooing traditions; the island of dispersal for Samoan tattooing traditions is

said to be Manu'a. My theory as to why there is no Niuean tattooing tradition (there is nevertheless a common Niuean word for it, *tātatau*) is that the migrants were dissident Tongans (from Vava'u) who eschewed such hierarchical status symbols; the lack of suitable flora for making dyes may be another cause.

- The following names are declared by Smith to be of ancient Samoan origin, while I would claim that some may be recent imports via Samoan missionisation and general travel: *Hamoā* (Samoa), *Matafele*, *Havaiki* (Savai'i), *Tutuila*, *Vaea*, *Tuapa*, *Avatele*, *Tafiti* (Samoan for 'Fiji'—a claim not supported by any Samoan dictionary or my Samoan informants) and *Lakepa* (same as *Lakemba* in Fiji). Leaving aside *Lakepa*, which Smith seems to derive from Fijian rather than Samoan, let us look at the rest: *Hamoā* in Tongan is *Ha'amoā*; *Matafele*, a contemporary place name in Apia, occurs in Niuean as a slang word for 'loose behaviour' but is not found in Tongan; *Havaiki* as the mythological homeland of Eastern Polynesians has rarely been associated with Samoan Savai'i, and anyway Taumoevolau (1996) has made a convincing case that the word can be derived from Tongan also; the base *tuila* in *Tutuila* is also extant in Tongan, as is *vaea* (for *Vaea*) 'to come apart'; *Tuapa* can be based on Samoan *tu'apa* 'faraway, cliff' or *tuāpā* 'outside'—no cognates found for Niuean or Tongan; *Avatele* can be derived from Niuean *ava* 'channel' and *tele* 'to move like a crab' and as such is a descriptive place name (a similar case can be made for Tongan).

*Tafiti*—generally glossed as 'stranger, distant land' for Niuean—deserves special attention because it is the famous counterpart to *Motu*. Since Smith claims that the *Tafiti* people are of Tongan ancestry, one would have to argue that the supposedly Samoan *Motu* people named the southern part of Niue '*Tafiti*' (which Smith wrongly claims to mean 'Fiji' in Samoan) subsequent to its invasion from Tonga—a somewhat implausible argument. In addition one would ask why it was named after 'Fiji' (Smith even suggests that the Tongans invading were those who had previously occupied parts of Fiji)—when in fact *tafiti* is a perfectly good Tongan (and also Samoan) word meaning 'struggle, somersault'. Interestingly the Niuean *Tafiti* is entered in POLLEX as a possible CE witness (also noted as such by Clark 1979) to *Tahiti* 'stranger, distant land, etc.', and as such more of a witness of some Rarotongan/Aitutakian influence (which is not implausible per se—and will be dealt with in this article below—but unlikely in this context of Tongans occupying the southern part of Niue). To me it makes equal sense (neither are convincing arguments) to interpret *Tafiti* in the first place as 'struggle' (i.e. Tongan invaders struggling with more established settlers) and the word itself acquiring a secondary meaning on the *Motu* side as 'strangers/invasers from a foreign/distant land'. The supposed dualism of *Motu* vs. *Tafiti* as emphasised by Smith and subsequent commentators has in fact a much less dramatic background in Niuean culture history (even as told by Pulekula in the Smith volume). *Motu* according to tradition is the place of first landfall on the north-eastern coast (the expected landfall when coming from Vava'u in Tonga). Here the narrow reef is flat but the absence of channels makes landing very risky, involving riding a wave onto the reef (several European shipwrecks in this area attest the treacherous waters along this coast). Nevertheless arrivals with no prior knowledge of the island would have to risk such a landing, and indeed the whole coastline of the northern half of the island affords very few safe landing sites. An eventual exploration of the island by

early settlers who arrived via the *Motu* side would have realised that the southern part of the island has quite a number of much safer landing sites, and while it may be idle to speculate, it would make sense that return voyages would have communicated such navigational know-how to other prospective arrivals (such as the later Tongan migrations and invasions via *Tafiti*). So while there is a geographical dualism with regard to landing sites, reinforced by culture stories which tell of 'southern' warriors who get into trouble and defect to the northern *Motu* parts, it seems to me there is no linguistic or cultural dualism, other than dialectal differences that are a natural result of geographical differences, and as the geographical differences are small, the dialectal differences are also small, notwithstanding claims by Smith to the contrary.

Loeb's (1926) anthropological account of Niue is an uncritical continuation of Smith (1902-03) even though he noted that only 'minor differences appear in the [...] languages of the two ends of the island'. These two works together then shaped the cultural and linguistic perception of Niue well into the 1960s when J.M. McEwen, as resident commissioner and noted amateur linguist, undertook to write his Niue Dictionary (published only in 1970). In his introduction he advances an even more amazing theory than Smith did:

Although the vocabulary generally resembles Tongan there is an appreciable number of words which are absent in Tongan, but which are shared with Samoan, with Eastern Polynesian, or with both. Although the basic pronouns follow Tongan [...] Niue has no preposed pronouns as in Tonga and Samoa and the range of pronouns is much nearer to that of the Eastern Polynesian languages. It may be that the original language of Niue was closer to the Eastern languages, but it has been strongly influenced by successive Tongan incursions [...] (McEwen 1970:viii).

We might refer to this as the Eastern Polynesian (and a bit of Samoan) substratum theory. Let us examine the evidence cited. While in the first instance it is noteworthy that Niuean only has the one set of pronouns characteristic of Eastern languages, the loss of the parallel emphatic set (so called by Krupa 1982) in Niuean is part of a natural trend inherent in the pronoun system of PPN that leads ultimately to the Eastern pronominal system. (If anything this development would put Niuean into a similar time depth to the Eastern languages, a suggestion borne out by archaeological data which suggest first settlement around 0-500 AD). Furthermore as McEwen (1970:viii) notes also, Niuean preserves the preposed pronoun in the first person singular. The possessive set also is reminiscent of the 'older' Samoan/Tongan system in that Niuean has a preposed and postposed set of possessives (although the differences are minimal).

The next set of McEwen's evidence is worth citing in full:

An interesting phenomenon in Niue, which may indicate the merging of two Polynesian streams, is the habit of using two synonyms as a compound expression. For example, *hako* (Samoan *sa'o*) and *tika* (the East Polynesian word) are normally used together as *hako-tika*, meaning straight or correct. Either word may be used alone. Other examples are *fia-manako*, *fa-mahani*, *liu-foki*, *ola-moui*, and so on. Similarly, where a word has an elided *l* in Tonga the same form usually occurs in Niue, but frequently the form with the *l* is also retained, often as an exact synonym and sometimes with a slight modification of meaning. Examples are *ikiiki/likiliki*, *mui/muli*, *maona/malona*, *akau/lakau*, and many more. In other cases an East Polynesian form co-exists with a

“Tongic” form, such as *hinei/konei*, *hina/kuna*. Although the west Polynesian word *lelei* (good) is known in Niue, the word almost universally used is *mitaki*, cognate with Cook Islands *meitaki*, Tahitian *maita* ‘i, Hawaiian *maika* ‘i, etc. In some cases East Polynesian words not used in common speech are used in respectful language, e.g. *haele*, to come or go (common words *hau*, *fano*, *o*); *vae* or *ve*, foot (common word *hui*).

In the first place there is no ‘habit’ in Niuean of forming compounds from two synonyms; it is a marked formation that can equally be explained as a language-internal strategy to derive emphatic (superlative) word forms (found in many languages, for example in the English expression *straight as straight can be*). Regarding the specific example of *hako-tika*, *hako* is a perfectly common Tongic word, while *tika* is more interesting because it appears to be an Eastern Polynesian word as noted in POLLEX (in Niuean it only means ‘spear, dart’ and not ‘correct, straight’ as suggested by McEwen, hence the compound *hako-tika* corresponds to a ‘straight as a spear’ simile). However even Loeb (1926) wrote that the *tika* (spear throwing) sport is common enough in all of Polynesia, and indeed an examination of Western Polynesian languages shows this to be true. An examination of Churchward’s (1959) Tongan Dictionary reveals that *sika*, *pasika*, *tasika* are Tongan words with a very similar meaning (*sika* ‘dart’) and indeed Churchward notes the Fijian equivalent *tiqa*, all of which puts paid to the Eastern Polynesian reconstruction. Equally in the Samoan dictionary (Milner 1966) we find *ti’a* ‘dart’; in the Pukapuka dictionary (Salisbury n.d.) *tika* appears as ‘dart’; and from Beaglehole and Beaglehole (1938) it appears that the *tika* is indigenous to Pukapuka (a Samoic language) rather than being a recent import from Rarotonga. In fact from the detailed description of the *tika* in Beaglehole and Beaglehole (1938) it appears to be remarkably similar to the Niuean *tika*, and can thus be taken as one of the few possible items of evidence of a Pukapuka–Niue connection, as proclaimed in Pukapuka culture history (Beaglehole and Beaglehole 1938) and also cited by Talagi (1982) who adds the mysterious note that ‘some Niuean words and kinship terms seem [...] to have their origin in Pukapukan’. None of my Niuean informants have been able to substantiate this though (hence *tika* remains the only clue).

Let us look now at the other ‘doublets’ McEwen cites as being evidence of the merging of East and West: *fia-manako*, *fa-mahani*, *liu-foki* and *ola-moui*. *Fia* occurs as Tongan *fie* and *manako* as Tongan *manako*, and both have pretty much the same meanings as in Niuean. The Niuean compounding is yet another example of an emphatic formation whereby *fia* ‘want, desire’ and *manako* ‘wish, want’ combine to yield ‘insist’. Next *fa-mahani*: *fa* (a particle marking habitual aspect) is the same as Tongan *fa’a*, and *mahani* ‘habit, custom’ is reflected by Tongan *maheni*, again with very similar meanings, and yet again the compounding can be explained as an emphatic formation meaning ‘constantly, without fail’. A very similar case can be made for *liu-foki*. In the case of *ola-moui*, contemporary Niuean informants say this compound is obsolescent (separately the words are still in common use) and in any case both words appear in Tongan (*moui* as *mo’ui*). In sum, none of these forms can be counted as evidence for Eastern or Western Polynesian substrata.

Next in line are the doublets which differ only in their retention of /l/, namely *ikiiki/likiliki*, *mui/muli*, *maona/malona*, *akau/lakau*, and many more. While the ‘many more’ is an exaggeration in my view, let us ask what the explanation for this phenomenon may be. Let us look at the last example, also cited by Clark (1979), whereby *lakau* is seen as evidence for

Nuclear Polynesian (Samoan *laa'au*) influence (PPn *\*ra'akau*,  $*r > \emptyset$  in Tongan and Niuean, while  $*r > l$  in Samoan and mainly  $*r > r$  in Eastern Polynesian). For a start Niuean *akau/lakau* is not a doublet in the sense of being spelling variations (reflecting different origins), but rather they mean different things, i.e. *akau* 'tree' and *lākau* 'shrub', and it can be shown that *lākau* is a derivation of *la* 'branch' (PPn *\*ra'a*) plus (*a*)*kau* 'tree', thus a compound in which 'branches of a tree' acquires the meaning of 'shrub, small tree'. Interestingly PPn *\*ra'a* changes to Tongan *va'a* 'branch' which would suggest  $*r > v$  (in addition to  $*r > \emptyset$ )—and as such might have to be added to Clark's (1976) Polynesian Consonant Correspondences. But what about the other examples cited by McEwen? The doublet *ikiiki/likiliki* 'small' is indeed noted as a variation (possibly dialectal) in Sperlich ed., (1997), but interestingly enough the same doublet exists in Tongan, with *likiliki* occurring only in compounds. *Mui/muli* is not a real doublet: *mui* is a local noun 'behind' while *muli* is a common noun 'last measure of something'. While semantically related and possibly both deriving from PPn *\*muri*, this cannot be considered as strong evidence of a direct Samoic influence (i.e. pre-Tongic) until a clear pattern emerges. PPn  $*r > \emptyset$  for Niuean and Tongan may well have various exceptions, especially as the change  $*r > l$  is a natural change that occurred in most other Polynesian languages. One can argue that Tongan has a similar pair *mui/muli*, with *mui* being synonymous with the Niuean *mui*, while the Tongan *muli* is glossed as 'foreign, outside' and as such not outside the semantic scope of *mui* 'behind'. This leaves *maona/malona*: here McEwen specifically attributes *maona* to the Motu 'dialect' (which McEwen denotes as the Eastern Polynesian dialect) and *malona* to the Tafiti 'dialect', but we still find a near synonym in Tongan, *malona* (but no variant *\*maona* which would be expected according to the  $*r > \emptyset$  rule). What does this tell us? Perhaps an independent Niuean tendency to elide // in certain environments, but again no strong evidence that it constitutes either Samoic or Eastern Polynesian inheritance. Certainly McEwen's contention that Niuean keeps the // as a doublet form, whereas Tongan does not, cannot be substantiated.

This leaves McEwen's final point about Niuean having another set of doublets, namely those of Eastern Polynesian – Tongic form as in *hinei/konei*, *hina/kuna*, *haele/hau*, *fano*, *o*, *vae*, *ve/hui* plus the special case of *mitaki*. With the demonstrative forms *hinei/konei*, *hina/kuna* we are on thin ice as these doublets are in fact language-internal to both Niuean and Tongan (the *k*- forms are derived via the nominal predicative marker *ko*) and are by no means synonymous. Even less convincing is the assumption that *hinei* and *hina* are related to Rarotongan/Aitutakian (which would be the logical Eastern Polynesian connection if there was one). And while forms of *haele* and *vae* do occur everywhere in Eastern Polynesian, these two words are by no means uncommon in Tongan and in Nuclear Polynesian generally. This leaves *mitaki*: and indeed here we cannot but argue that it is an Eastern Polynesian import (EP *\*maitaki*) even though there is a Tongan form also, namely *mā'itaki* 'favourite wife or concubine'; given the sound change from the EP [ai] or [ei] to Niuean [i] one can assume that the import is not recent. It remains a mystery to me how such a common word can be replaced by a borrowing from a source that at best is extremely sporadic, but as a parallel one might consider English *sk*- borrowings from Scandinavian which are few in number but include the basic word *sky*. See below however for another possible explanation for *mitaki* being a more recent import.

In conclusion there seems little linguistic evidence that Niuean has either a Samoic or Eastern Polynesian substratum. This is not to deny that Niue had contact with these linguistic communities, but none seems to have impacted on Niuean in a way that would allow us to speak of a substratum. Sporadic borrowing may however be witnessed in the EP derived *mitaki* item (though the case that this is of a later era will be discussed below). Given the extreme geographical isolation of Niue, one would indeed expect only a minimum of borrowing. The relative proximity of Tongan speakers (via Vava'u) as prime settlers of Niue is in accord with linguistic analysis of Niuean as a purely Tongic language.

### 3 Contact, missionary and modern era

The anthropology of history of early European contact by Captain Cook and subsequent missionisation has been exhaustively documented by Ryan (1994). Quite clearly with the western LMS headquarters in Samoa there was considerable exchange between Niue and Samoa, both through Samoan missionary teachers in Niue and Niueans being trained in Samoa. The very first missionary encounter (1830) saw John Williams take/kidnap two Niueans who eventually returned to Niue via the Society Islands (the site of the first LMS mission) and Niuean traditional folklore has it that one of them brought back the *tala mitaki* 'the gospel' (Ryan 1994) and as such we might speculate that '*mitaki*'—rather than being a Rarotongan/Aitutakian import—comes from further afield in the East, and furthermore since this import changed Niue forever, the very word associated with it, '*mitaki*', came to replace the Tongic *lelei*. However the return of these two Niueans had no effect in converting anyone and it was another 16 years before a converted Niuean, Peniamina, came back to Niue from Samoa and started the process in earnest. He carried with him his 'Samoan Christian books' (King 1909). Peniamina was followed in 1849 by the first Samoan teacher, Paulo (and his wife). More Samoans followed by the 1850s and Paulo is said to have been a keen translator of religious texts into Niuean (Ryan 1994). The first resident palagi missionary, the Reverend W.G. Lawes, arrived in 1861, and by then practically the whole of Niue was converted to Christianity—in linguistic terms perhaps to Samoan Christianity. Subsequently the Lawes brothers (the Reverend W. George Lawes was replaced in 1872 by his brother Frank who 'ruled' until 1910) established a virtual theocracy and some of the Samoan missionary methods became part of village and national political organisation. The noted amateur linguist-cum-missionary George Pratt, while stationed in Samoa and primarily interested in the Samoan language, had in the meantime also compiled the first ever Niuean vocabulary (1861) and by 1876 he had written a Grammar and Dictionary of Niue. The first complete New Testament in Niuean had made its appearance in 1866, fresh from Pratt's editorial desk (Pratt actually spent nearly a year in Niue to help the translation process along).

On the secular front the labour trade with Samoa (and later with the rest of the Pacific) commenced: in 1868 a trader took some 80 Niueans to work on Samoan plantations (Talagi 1982). Those who returned would have picked up enough ordinary (i.e. secular) Samoan to possibly introduce Samoan words into common Niuean (see below).

Given this history one would expect considerable Samoan influence, at least on the church language used in Niue (and given that this type of borrowing is common in all Oceanic

languages, I will refrain from presenting any of the innumerable examples that can be found in the Niuean Dictionary). While subsequent linguistic developments show a willingness by Niueans to Niueanise (i.e. resist borrowings), the church language has always been considered sacrosanct, in both Samoan borrowings and bad translation into Niuean. On the other hand the influence of Samoan on common Niuean is perhaps less than one would expect: some biblical sayings in Samoanised English, terms related to Niue's political organisation (see below), and a few other borrowings. First we will consider the church-derived terms and then those which may result from general intercourse. All items are compared to possible Tongan cognates to determine the relative likelihood of borrowing from Samoan.

- Two items which are said (Talagi 1982) to derive from Samoan church custom, but are now fully Niueanised, are *fagai* 'to feed, offering, gift (especially to the pastor on a weekly basis)' and *poa* 'offering, gift, donation (especially to a pastor on an annual basis)'. They can be derived from Samoan *fafaga* and *foa'i* respectively (with same meanings); the sound changes would attest to a considerable time depth of the borrowing; however, as the Niuean *poa* also has a possible cognate in Tongan *foaki*, so the Samoan derivation is less secure in this instance.
- A further item, *fono*, also noted by Talagi as being of Samoan origin, has huge implications for the political organisation of Niue; originally denoting 'village meeting' where church elders discuss and organise village affairs, the *fono* concept was eventually extended to a national level and has since become the cornerstone of Niuean political life; while the Samoan *fono* is very much matai based, the absence of a chiefly system in Niue meant that the *fono* concept was entirely new and gave total power to the church elders appointed by the Lawes brothers; to this day virtually all members of the *fale fono* (the Niuean Parliament) have strong church connections and the various political allegiances resemble Christian denominations rather than political parties; *fono* also appears in Tongan with the same meaning but seems to have much less political force than in Samoa and subsequently in Niue, hence it is less likely that the term was borrowed from Tongan, i.e. that *fono* is a Tongic word.
- The Niuean prefix *fai-* 'make, have, possess, collect' is given an extended meaning by adding the Samoan meaning of endearment/respect when attached to kinship (and related) terms, such as:

*faiioga* 'dear teacher', *faifigona* 'dear in-laws', *faimahakitaga* 'dear sister (of a male)', *faimatua* 'dear parent', *faitehina* 'dear younger brother/sister'

In all instances the word without the prefix *fai-* denotes the same core meaning less the endearment/respect factor. The borrowing may originally have been confined to church language (e.g. 'dear Lord, dear Father') and later extended to kinship generally; *fai-* in Tongan operates in a very similar manner to Niuean minus the 'endearment' meaning, hence strong evidence that this was imported from Samoa.

- McEwen (1970) notes that Samoan is responsible for the increasing use in Niuean of the grammatical marker *-ina*, which formerly was very rare. This verbal suffix can change an active verb into a passive/ergative category, although most incidences of this nature are lexicalised; an example is *iloa* 'to know', *iloaina* 'to be known'. However,



it should be noted that in Tongan the *-ina* suffix plays a similar role, so McEwen may exaggerate the Samoan influence.

- As English missionaries introduced cricket and other sports to the islands, a term for the 'umpire' was needed early on; this is *fakamatino* in Niuean, from the Samoan *fa'amasino* 'a traditional mediator in disputes'. The sporting term later was replaced in Samoa by *laufali*, again demonstrating considerable time depth for this borrowing; Tongan for 'umpire' is *fakamaau* and appears unrelated to the terms in Niuean and Samoan.
- *Malaga* 'travel party', the concept of going overseas on a mission ship, whaler or trader, also derives from the same word in Samoan (also still with the same meaning); while *malanga* is also a Tongan word, it seems to have a somewhat different meaning (but not totally unrelated).
- *nua* 'horse' is derived from the Samoan *solofanua* (which itself has an interesting etymology, explained as 'the thing/animal that goes past the plantation very quickly'); the Tongan for 'horse' is *hoosi*.
- An early trade item, missionary and otherwise, was the twisted tobacco stick, and the Niuean term for it, *tai*, derives from the Samoan *ta'ai*; Tongan *ta'ai* has an unrelated meaning (*tapaka* is the common term).
- The Samoan fine mat '*ie tōga* must have been part of the early Samoan missionaries' imported household items, and such mats are now simply known as *tooga* in Niuean; Tongan *tooga* has a similar meaning but is considered archaic (not entered in Churchward 1959, but listed in POLLEX).
- A couple of botanical imports from Samoa are the *sagasaga* (*Coix lacryma-jobi*) and the *vaofefe* (*Mimosa pudica*). Both words are the same in Samoan; the Tongan terms are *hana* and *mateloi* respectively.
- Niuean *pato* 'duck', found also only in Samoan, Tongan, Fijian and Tokelauan, and of supposed Spanish origin (POLLEX), could have arrived either way.
- Of questionable origin is *tulula* 'a monstrosity, old rusty vehicle of any sort', which some speakers claim to derive from the same Samoan word (but where the meaning is 'a very long paddle boat'); no comparable Tongan word was found.

While the early missionary influence from Samoa did not altogether cut out Niue's closest (linguistically and culturally) neighbour, Tonga (boats could sail a Samoa–Niue–Tonga route or variations thereof), there developed a relationship with New Zealand which would cut Tonga out of the picture completely. The British annexed Niue in 1900 and soon after Niue, together with the Cook Islands, was given over to New Zealand. Samoa in the meantime was given to the Germans and thus cut off from Niue. New Zealand took to the task with considerable enthusiasm and established a regular shipping service between New Zealand ports, Rarotonga, Aitutaki and Niue. This triangular relationship persists to this very day even though Niue had protested long ago about being lumped together with Rarotonga (the New Zealanders relented on paper but not in reality). This relationship opened the way to a number

of new possibilities for linguistic borrowing: from Rarotongan, from New Zealand Māori, and last but not least from New Zealand English. Let us look at these sources in turn.

While pre-European contact with Rarotonga, and more particularly Aitutaki, has always been a possibility, there is very little evidence that contact was long enough to occasion borrowing in either direction. In addition to *mitaki*, for which we did not really offer any convincing explanation, there are only a few other items, and they point to more recent borrowing occasioned by the New Zealand–Rarotonga–Niue relationship:

- The well-known Rarotongan quilting art form (itself introduced by missionaries as ‘needlework’) called *tīvaivai* has been exported to many other Pacific Islands including Niue, where it is well known linguistically, and also produced locally, but perhaps with less artistic merit than in Rarotonga.
- The Rarotongan *pāreu* ‘colourfully printed wrap-around’ also made its way to Niue together with a sound change  $r \rightarrow l$ , yielding *pāleu*.
- The word for ‘sheep’ is *māmoē*, probably derived originally from Tahitian via Rarotongan, but since it made its way to Samoan too (but not to Tongan), the question of direct versus indirect borrowing cannot be resolved easily.

The New Zealand connection with Niue occasioned quite a few Māori to settle in Niue (quite apart from large numbers of Niueans migrating to New Zealand and/or travelling back and forth between the two places) who did of course learn to speak Niuean, unlike the small number of very influential New Zealand palagi migrants, many of whom struggled with Niuean even after a lifetime living in Niue. When Niue adopted the New Zealand school curriculum lock, stock and barrel, it also inherited the Māori language option for the School Certificate examination, which was taken up by many Niuean students in preference to other subjects, partly because it was easier to learn and also because there were quite a few Māori speakers on the island with whom they could practise. This occasioned quite a few Māori words being adopted into Niuean, prominent amongst which are:

- *pāua* ‘a shellfish’, *taniḡā* (from *taniwha*) ‘sea monster’, and the popular greeting *kia ora*

Finally, another regional loan is *sapi* ‘women’s underpants, elastic’ from Tongan *sapi’i* ‘pull up/down, kick with top of the foot or instep’, likely dating back to only recent times when traffic between Tonga and Niue increased again (Royal Tongan Airlines has been operating the only flights from Niue to Auckland via Tonga for some years now).<sup>2</sup>

This leaves the large number of English loan words, which apart from very recent imports via TV, video and radio, are transliterated to fit the Niuean phonemic inventory. This process can be used as a clue for relative time depth of borrowing: the Niuean allophonic rule of /t/ → [s] before /i, e/ is applied to English loan words only when they have been in Niuean for a long time, as for example:

<sup>2</sup> The connection between Niue and Tonga has never been cut off completely. As is the tradition in Polynesia, land was set aside in Tongatapu for Niuean settlers and visitors, and vice versa for the Tongan community in Niue. The same arrangement between Niue and Samoa obtains to this day.

English *tea* → Niuean transliteration *ti* where /t/ is pronounced as [s]

as opposed to a more recent import

English *TV* → Niuean transliteration *tīvī* where /t/ is pronounced as [t]

*The Niue language dictionary* (Sperlich, ed. 1997) lists some 518 borrowings, the vast majority of which are of English origin. This number may look insignificant beside the total of some 10,000 Niuean entries; however, the onslaught of English now leaves no time for any integration into Niuean (via transliteration or Niueanisation/translation) and English simply takes over as a first language. I have argued elsewhere (Sperlich 1996) that this process endangers the Niuean language as a whole, and I have also shown how the need for fast translation into Niuean has caused some highly marked syntax patterns to become commonplace only because they better fit the English idiom. As mentioned above, early on in the history of English contact, Niueans would Niueanise, i.e. find quite ingenious Niuean equivalents for English words, even words for concepts/objects quite unknown to Niueans. The often quoted examples are:

*vakalele* 'aeroplane' (lit. 'canoe that flies')

*mama pala* 'tuberculosis' (lit. 'damp lungs')

*mata afi* 'match' (lit. 'fragment of fire')

It is imperative that Niuean fend off the English take-over and show some French resistance. But unlike the French, Niueans are in no position to do anything about the looming bankruptcy due to excessive borrowing.

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