

Missionary translation in Efate

Nick Thieberger, University of Melbourne

Outline

- Two features of the language Nafsan do not occur in any of the neighbouring languages.
- Similarity to English words (*kano*=cannot, *if* = if), suggests they were introduced by missionary translators.
- What methods were used by those translators and what variety of English did they speak?
- How can words, introduced by a couple of outsiders, be adopted into a language?



Inglis, John. 1887. *In the New Hebrides; reminiscences of missionary life and work, especially on the island of Aneityum, from 1850 till 1877.*



The conditional -f

13:16 Ka fo brig tesa nigag ruk fo taos nasoksok intan; nat i=f fe tae nasoksok intan, ru=f fe tae tesa nigag.

*And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth:
so that if a man can number the dust of the
earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.*
(Kenesis 1874)

i=f

3SG.RS=CND

The conditional -f

Me hopefully ntau faum **if** pi Namurien ni Atua,
psawi

But hopefully next year if God wills it, thanks

(Erakor Village Facebook page 12/2014)

If uel kin ruf ptu ki reason gar kat action nen
ruto-slati go iwi

*If they give a good reason for their action then it
is good*

(Erakor Noticeboard Facebook page June 17 2015)

Namakir

pe/be ...pe/be, and also **peka ... pe/be**

Ko **pe** row Vil **pe** tok bikio,
2s COND go V. COND stay with-me
'If you go to Vila you could stay with me.' (Sperlich p.248 of
grammar and p.17 of revision supplement)

Nguna

In conditional and consequent sentences **pe** is added to the
particle in both:

e **pe** maturu, e **pe** wo mauri,
if he sleep, he will live;
te naata sikai e **pe** surata pogi e **pe** tapila-gona,
any man if he walk (in the) night he stumbles;
e **pe** tika, a **pe** noa ki mu asa,
if it were not (so), I would have told you. (Ray :215).

Lelepa

Conditional clauses are introduced by an initial 'wan' (Lacrampe
2014: 406) No 'f'.

Ura

Naqo

Naqo kam-agli nacava burbut k-abarvu ovon norgen.
if 2S0:PRES-MR:dig kava close 2S0:FIIT-MR:break PL root
'If you dig the kava too close you will break the roots.' (Crowley 1999: 222)

BRIDES &c.

Mele

if = **tausia**, **nagausia** (Clark 1998: 131)

Tausia t'tai roo-masa, sa kar te-nnofo mwasu kiinaa naa.
If the tide goes out, you just stay here. (Clark 1975b: 4, 5)

Eton

Uses **f** in the same way as in
Nafsan

Sye

No special morpheme, but a realis conditional reading
applies to the use of the optative subject with a modified
verb stem, and an irrealis conditional reading applies to
irrealis conditional subjects and modified verb roots
(Crowley 1998: 113)

‘to be unable’ *kano*

Boyfren neu a=*kano* trau daerek pan lek-a-ø.

boyfriend mine 1sgRS=can't just straight go
look-TS-3sgO

My boyfriend, I can't just go straight and look at him. (066:90) (98003B, 1330.2406, 1334.2)

lakn teläp ruk4 *kano* pakot nafet MinicipalityTAX

Because many are unable to pay the Municipal tax (Erakor Village Facebook page 2014)

To be unable *kano*

1864 – Nalag ni Efai – no use of *kano*

1864 – Nadus Iskei nig Fai – no use of *kano*

1868 – I bakelag berkati tok; A *kano* bakor wis.

‘He is really up on high; I can’t come to him’

1881 –Nawisien a nin i bi te nag Yeof i brig i; Komam ra *kano* nrik kik o ki tesa, ko te wi.

The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good.

(Genesis 1881: 24:50)

1874 –Ken ki nrik Yeof kin, nanrogtesan nigneu i tob, kineu a *kano* selati.

And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

(Genesis 1874: 4:13)

Namakir

Mar'isa 'cannot','should not','unable to
Ni **mar'isa** ni loioh na-bitiren na-tonenio bitin' 1s cannot 1s swim
ART-because ART-leg-my sore
'I cannot/shouldn't swim because my leg is sore" (Sperlich p.307)

Nguna

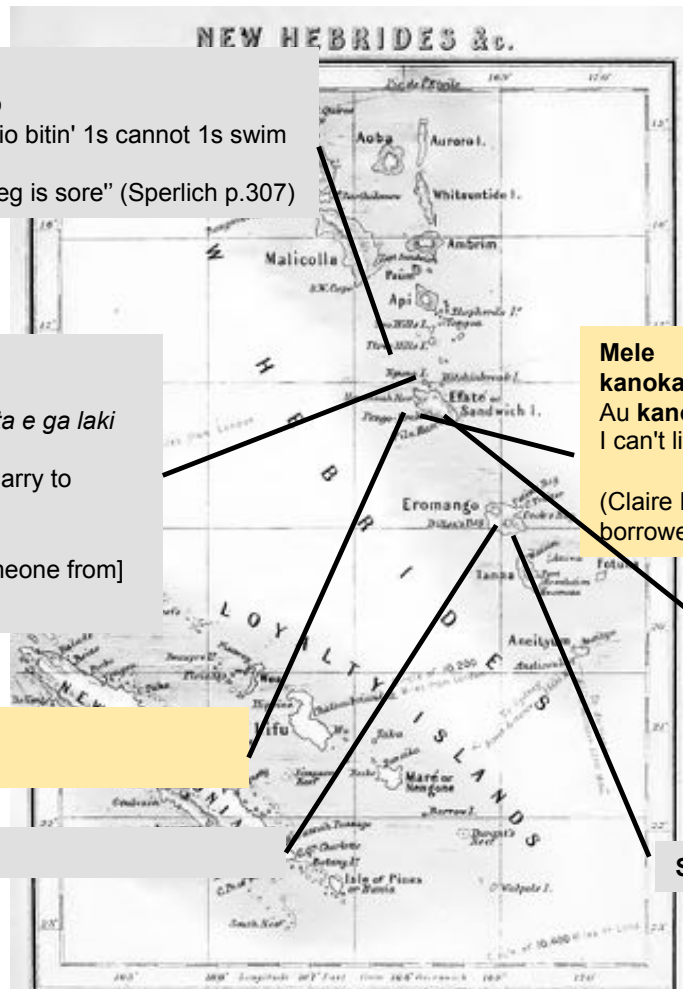
Marisaa

E mari-saa euaaua naga na-gorai ni na-toko-ana pota e ga laki pa-ki
it unable allow that female of village other she int, marry to
na-toko-ana rota
village other
'It wouldn't allow a girl from one village to marry [someone from] another village.' (Schütz grammar p.6)

Lelepa

Kano 'be unable'

Ura



Mele

kanokaanoa (vi) be unable.
Au **kanokaanoa** ma kamosikea t'tama naa.
I can't lift this child.

(Claire Moyse-Faurie suggests this is innovated and probably borrowed from Nafsan)

Eton

Sye

How is the concept of 'to be unable to' expressed in languages around Nafsan?

McArthur (1981 :22) estimates the population of the whole of Efate in 1874 as 2000.

In 1853 there were 250 Pango people in church (Steel 1880: 223).

Presbyterian Missionaries to South Efate until 1900

Missionary	Pango	Erakor	
Mose and Setefano		1845	
Sipi and Taavili (Murray 1863:236)	1845		
Mose and Setefano			1846 (Eratap)
Rata, Simona, Tairi, Lealamanu, Sepania		1846	
Pikika and Kaviriri	1853		
Missionaries withdrawn	1854	1854	1854 (Eratap)
Teamara, Teautoa and Toma (from Raratonga)		1859	
"Two from Aneityum"		1860	
D.Morrison (died of consumption in Auckland in 1869)		1864-1867	
Ru and Kakita (from Raratonga)		1868	
J.Cosh	1866-1870	Late 1860s	
Natonga, then Tupatai (from Aneityum)	Late 1860s ?		
J.W.Mackenzie		1872-1912	
Unnamed			1879 (Bufa)



James Cosh, http://adb.anu.edu.au/uploads/adb/3266/thumbs/A030436_246x550.jpg



J.W.Mackenzie and Maggie Mackenzie 1903

<http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15799coll123/id/79573>

Translations produced before 1900 in Nafsan

Anon. 1864. *Nalag Nig Efate*. Aneityum: Mission Press.

Anon. 1868. *Nalag nig Efate*. Trans. D. Morrison. Sydney: Mason, Firth, nigar asler (Mason, Firth and Co).

Anon. 1892. *Tusi nalag Efate Niu Ebrites*. Sydney: F. Cunninghame and Co.

Bible. 1864. *Nadus iskei nig Fat*. Aneityum: Mission Press.

Bible. 1866. *Nafsanwi nig Iesu Krist nag Mark*. Trans. D. Morrison. Sydney: Sheriff and Downing.

Bible. 1874. *Kenesis natus a bei nag Moses ki mtir i*. Trans. Cosh, J. Sydney: British and Foreign Bible Society.

Bible. 1875? *Nafisan nafousien*. Sydney: F. Cunninghame and Co.

Bible. 1880. *Nawisien Nig Nagmer Apostol*. Sydney: F. Cunninghame and Co.

Bible. 1883. *The Gospel according to Luke*. Trans. Macdonald, D.D. Melbourne: M.L. Hutchinson.

Bible. 1885. *The Gospel according to John, Tus Nanrognrogon Uia ni Iesu Kristo nag loane i mitiria*.
Trans. Mackenzie, J., Macdonald, D.D. Sydney: F. Cunninghame and Co.

MacDonald, Daniel. 1875. *Tus Narogorogonauia Ki Iesu Kristo, Anigita Nawota Go Nagmolien, Luka Eka Mitiria, Nimetnafisan 13, 14, Go 15; Naligana Nalotuena Ru Tolu Ru Nea*. 1875. Printed at the Glasgow Foundry Boys Society's Press for Havannah Harbour, Efate.

MacDonald, Daniel. 1883. *The Gospel according to Luke Translated into the Language of Efate, New Hebrides*. Melbourne: M. L. Hutchinson.

Kalsarap Namaf †
**Chief Samuel and Doctor
Mackenzie**



This first story is about the missionary Dr Mackenzie who had written notes about customary knowledge, but then, as he was about to return to Australia, had Chief Samuel take the papers and throw them into the lagoon, as a symbolic way of destroying 'darkness' (the traditional knowledge system of Erakor).

Natrauswen nig Samuel go Dokta Mackenzie.

Selwan ito nag keler pak Astrelia 1912.

Mis isos Samuel.

Inag, 'Pafan pa raru negaag mai sokin eslaor Elaknatu.

Go Samuel ipo pan pa raru nega pan sak kin e-slaor Elaknatu.

Dokta Mackenzie inrik Samuel kin nag, 'Kulek natus nen itu? Paslati pan paai luk raru negaag.' Samuel ipo pan sol natus nen mis inrikin kin.

Samuel ipan slati pan paai luk raru nega panpan inom go mis ipaoskin, 'Inom ko?' Samuel inag, 'Or mis.' Mis, 'Pafa raru me

ɣafalus pak elau namos.' Samuel ipa raru me mis iur euut pak Elignairo pan me inrik Samuel

The story of Samuel and Dr.Mackenzie.

When he was about to return to Australia in 1912.

The missionary called Samuel.

He said, 'You take your canoe and go to that place Elaknatu' And Samuel got his canoe and went to Elaknatu.

Dr.Mackenzie said to Samuel, 'You see these books? You take them and fill your canoe.' Samuel carried the papers which the missionary had told him about.

Samuel carried them and filled his canoe until it was finished and the missionary asked him, 'Is it finished or not?' Samuel said to him, 'Yes mis'. The missionary said, 'Take your canoe and you paddle out to the ocean.' Samuel took the canoe and the missionary ran along the shore to

kin nag,

'Selwan ɣafalus pan ɣaleka afsik naruk ɣatao nawes me natus rukmaui pak ntas pan.'

Samuel itutki natus kailer.

Selwan ipalus mai sak eslaor Elaknatu go mis ipan pak raru nega me itap lek tete natus mau go inrik Samuel kin nag, 'Pafa raru negaag pan sak kin eslaor.' Mis ipak esum nega pan go Samuel ipo pa raru imai sak Eslaorɣur.

This is text 025.

Elignairo and he said to Samuel, 'When you have paddled you'll see I raise my hand you put down your paddle then throw all the paper into the water.'

Samuel threw in the paper and went back.

When he paddled to shore at Elaknatu the missionary came to his canoe, but he didn't see any paper and he said to Samuel, 'You take your canoe back to land.' The missionary went to his house and Samuel went to Eslaorɣur.

The Christian Review of Sept 1867 says: "Mr Cosh has succeeded remarkably in learning the languages of Fate' (Don 1918 : 19)

"old words picked out of the mire of pagan use and baptised into a new life." (ibid)

"in every Island language equivalents can be found for every word in the Old and New Testaments" (Don 1918 : 39)

"Language is one of the things that heathen natives have not degenerated in." (Don 1918 : 114)

"If ye get married, gang somewhere else an seek your hame - but don't come here to pine away in solitude and sickness"
(Mackenzie, letter to his sister, in Denne 1991: 20)

John Inglis, 1869



It was not till Mr. and Mrs. Geddie had been five years on Aneityum, and we had been one, that he found out the native word for *perhaps*; and I think the missionaries were ten or a dozen years on Tahiti before they discovered some word that was equally common and equally important. (Inglis 1890 : 252-253)

and crowd which thronged the yard.
When the Dayspring returned from
the colonies she brought with her
a box of new hymn books which Mr.
Morison had translated and the
people were all anxious to be
possessors of a copy of the new book.
As James was in great want of hands
to put up a stove & cook-house he
did not know where he was to get help
he told the Erakor & Pango people
that they were each to do a piece of
work for him before they would get
their books. The Erakor folk went
into it with great spirit & the Pango
people were stimulated by their
example and mostly all united
and in the course of two days got
up a cook-house as far as the
rigging to put on. They would be funny
looking erections at home but the

"When the Dayspring returned from the colonies she brought with her a box of new hymn books which Mr. Morison had translated and the people [over] all anxious to be [xx] possessor's of a copy of the new book. As James was for great want of hands to put up a [stove?] and cook-house and did not know where he was to get help he told the Erakor and Pango people that they were each to do a piece of work for him before they would get their books. The Erakor folk went into it with great spirit and the Pango people were stimulated by their example

August 3rd 1868, Pango. Mrs Mackenzie to her sister Maggie

"The most important event of the year has been the placing of the New Testament in the Efatese language in the hands of the natives. Their contribution of arrowroot this year was upwards of 3000 lbs."

November 1889 J.W.Mackenzie report in Anon 1890

References

- Burt, Ben. 1994. *Tradition and Christianity: The Colonial Transformation of a Solomon Islands Society*. Studies in Anthropology and History, v. 10. Chur, Switzerland; Langhorne, Pa., USA: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Campbell, Malcolm. 1974. "A Century of Presbyterian Mission Education in the New Hebrides: Presbyterian Mission Educational Enterprises and Their Relevance to the Needs of a Changing Melanesian Society, 1848-1948." M.Ed, Melbourne: University of Melbourne.
- Crowley, Terry. 1997. "What Happened to Erromango's Languages?" *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 106 (1): 33–63.
- Denne, Janet. 1991. *Rev. James Cosh M.A., D.D., 1838-1900: Minister, Missionary and Academic*. Killara, N.S.W.: Denne Design.
- Durand, Rev W. J. 1922. "The Depopulation of Melanesia." In *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia*, edited by W. H. R. Rivers, 3–24. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Don, Alexander. 1918. *Light in Dark Isles*. Dunedin: Foreign Missions Committee
- Hanks, William F. 2010. *Converting Words: Maya in the Age of the Cross*. The Anthropology of Christianity 6. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Huber, Mary Taylor. 1988. *The Bishops' Progress: A Historical Ethnography of Catholic Missionary Experience on the Sepik Frontier / by Mary Taylor Huber*. Smithsonian Series in Ethnographic Inquiry. Washington, D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Inglis, John. 1890. *Bible Illustrations from the New Hebrides*. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons.
- Macdonald, D. D. 1898. "The Mythology of the Efate." *Report of the Seventh Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science*, 759–68.
- Macdonald, D. D. 1907. *The Oceanic Languages, Their Grammatical Structure, Vocabulary, and Origin*. Oxford: Henry Frowde.
- McArthur, N. 1981. "New Hebrides Population 1840-1967: A Reinterpretation." Noumea: South Pacific Commission, occasional paper no.18.
- Miller, J. Graham. 1987. *Live, Book Five*. Vila: Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu.
- Mühlhäusler, Peter. 1996. *Linguistic ecology: Language change and linguistic imperialism in the Pacific Region*. London: Routledge.
- Murray, A. W. 1863. *Missions in Western Polynesia*. London: John Snow.
- Paton, Maggie Whitecross. 1894. *Letters and Sketches from the New Hebrides*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Schieffelin, Bambi B. 2007. "Found in Translating." In *Consequences of Contact: Language Ideologies and Sociocultural Transformations in Pacific Societies*, edited by Miki Makihara and Bambi B. Shieffelin, 140–65. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Thieberger, Nick, and Chris Ballard. 2008. "Daniel Macdonald and the 'Compromise Literary Dialect' in Efate, Central Vanuatu" *Oceanic Linguistics* 47: 365–82.

Acknowledgments :

Thanks to Janet Denne and Alex MacKenzie for providing records from James Cosh and John Mackenzie



ARC DP0450342, DP0984419, & FT140100214



ARC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR
THE DYNAMICS OF LANGUAGE