REVIEWS

Moyle, R.M.: *Takuu Grammar and Dictionary: A Polynesian Language of the South Pacific*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, 2011. 428 pp., bib., DVD, figs. AUD$95.00.

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Pacific lexicographers have been a disparate lot. The earliest were traders and beachcombers, then for a long time the market was cornered by missionaries, who morphed into linguists and anthropologists. This dictionary of Takū, however, is something of a radical departure, one researched and compiled by an ethnomusicologist, the third in a series of monographs resulting from extensive field work spread over 15 years.

This is a very substantial work. It comprises an introduction, a grammatical sketch of some 50 pages, a dictionary with approximately 6,000 entries, some with profuse and fascinating detail, and an English-Takū finder-list. Apart from the minutiae of the physical and cultural environment, many helpful notes on usage are included—for example, the observation (p. 27) that the *a/o* possessive distinction was retained by some speakers up until the 1990s. Another particularly valuable bonus is a DVD of the text which also includes hundreds of photos and video clips illustrating flora and fauna, topography, material culture and song and dance performances.

Takū is an atoll, politically part of Papua New Guinea, the people of which speak the second most westerly Polynesian language (only Nukuria is further west). It subgroups immediately with Nukuria, Nukumanu, Ontong Java (Pelau and Luaniua) and Sikaiana, and more remotely with Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi to the north. Remarkably, the number of Takū speakers appears to have plunged to as few as 12 in the late 19th century, but is now approximately 500. In terms of material culture, Takū holds the distinction of being one of the few Polynesian cultures which traditionally used a loom and penis sheath (not necessarily at the same time); linguistically it is almost unique (along with Nukuoro) in having metathesised Proto Polynesian *niu 'coconut' to *nui* and, like Tuvalu and some other outlier languages, is characterised by geminate consonants, while there are ongoing changes of *l > r and *f > h, which are described and illustrated in detail in this work. Because of its relative isolation and lack of natural resources, coupled with the decision not to admit missionaries until recently, Takū is arguably the most traditional of all Polynesian communities. In recent years it has gained some unwanted notoriety by being the first Pacific island to be so threatened by rising sea levels and salination of gardens that there are plans to evacuate the entire population and resettle it on nearby Bougainville—witness the poignant entry for *kamatū* "shrub taxon… formerly plentiful in the soft ground at Sialeva, but all such locations have now been eroded by rising sea levels".

As Moyle recounts in the introduction, this is not the first Takū dictionary. A predecessor was compiled, but never published, by the linguist Irwin (later Jay) Howard and associates, including myself, at the University of Hawai‘i in the late 1970s. Moyle has built on this pioneering work, and includes quite a number of entries which were recorded in it, but had become unknown by the time Moyle conducted his fieldwork some 20 years later, particularly in more arcane fields such as tattoo design and string figures.

The dictionary is attractively produced and easy on the eye and in the hand, with helpful drawings showing canoe, house and loom parts, but alas no map. It could have been better proof-read. I counted some 70 typos, mis-orderings, mis-glossings and other slips, the most egregious being the misspelling of grammar as ‘grammer’ in, of all places, the cataloguing-in-publication entry, and the replacement of the headword *vere* with *vasi*. A whole section of the sketch grammar is repeated, almost verbatim—appearing first as “2.3.4 Nominalised verbs” then reappearing a couple of pages later as “2.3.7 Verbal nominalizations” (the forests weep).

The author acknowledges his debt to linguists who guided him, or whose work he followed, in writing the sketch grammar and compiling the dictionary, but there are a number of places where he appears to have ventured out alone into unfamiliar territory: the claim (p. 3) that all dictionaries are “founded on the assumption of uniform usage”, confusion between “grammar” and “syntax” (p. 6), accounts of the functions of tense markers—in particular *ku*—and prepositions and conjunctions which are at odds with the examples given or linguistically implausible, confusion over demonstrative pronouns (pp. 30-31), failure to note that demonstratives often function as articles, failure to note a number of other “compound verbs” like *hanake* (p. 41), and the redundant information (p. 172) that locative nouns are not preceded by an article. The section on phonotactics also omits to mention the very obvious fact that recent loans from Tokpisin and English have radically changed syllable structure, introducing non-geminate initial consonant clusters (e.g., *skul*), final consonants (e.g., *mak*), and even a new phoneme, the velar nasal (e.g., *ring*, *teng*—found in examples but not listed in the dictionary). In all of these cases, however, it is a saving grace that the profusion of examples given throughout the work enables readers to draw their own conclusions.

The dictionary does not list Proto Polynesian sources, but does attempt to provide etymologies of loan-words, most of which are from English via Tokpisin, or simply from Tokpisin, and a few from neighbouring Nukumanu. Some obvious loanwords are not given etymologies—e.g., *kapa* ‘metal, tin-can, corrugated iron’, *mameapu* ‘pawpaw’, *tiāina* ‘banana species’—and a number of proposed etymologies are wide of the mark: I find it hard to believe that *hōia* ‘a long time ago’ comes from English *before*; and *suluka* ‘hand-rolled cigarette made from banana leaves’ is not from English *cheroot* via Samoan, but from Fijian *suluka*, presumably via a Melanesian pidgin. Most intriguingly, *sāita* ‘time’ is not indicated as a borrowing, but I would wager good money that it is from German *Zeit*, even though it is not found in Tokpisin.

Most of the natural species are identified, thanks to a number of experts duly credited by Moyle; but I would certainly check the identification of *karū*, a tree with edible fruit, as *Barringtonia asiatica*, whose fruit is a well-known fish-poison, and

the identification of a kind of tuna (*laku*, *takua*) as *Istiophorus*, which is a sailfish.

I have a few minor concerns of a more general nature. The first is regarding the orthography. In Moyle's previous publications on Takū, he used—sensibly, in my view—a macron to indicate vowel length. Here he uses double vowels, explaining (p. 3) that this was a condition of his being given access to Howard's dictionary. I, and again the world's forests, would have preferred that he had not so readily acquiesced to this rather strange condition.

My second quibble concerns example sentences. Many are detailed and useful, but some are totally predictable and provide no further information, e.g., for *mahana* 'feverish' the example given is *te tama nei e mahana* 'this child is feverish', for *vvare* '(of a limb) numb' the example given is *taku vae e vvare* 'my leg is numb', etc.

Finally, the organisation of non-predictable derivatives is always a problem for Pacific lexicographers, because of the extensive use of prefixes—whether to just put them all under the base, or simply list them all as separate heads, or (the solution I prefer as most user-friendly) refer to them under the base then list and define them as separate heads, or vice versa. Moyle has opted mostly for the first strategy, which means that many words are not to be found in alphabetical order, for example *kāoti* 'stop, quit' is found only under *oti*, *pallē* 'move quickly' is only found under *llē*, *takallī* under *llī*, *mēmata* under *mata* 4, *moemiti* under *miti*, and so on.

The author seems unduly pessimistic about the survival of the culture that he has so meticulously recorded, commenting (p. 2) that, if it happens, "the abandonment of the island will render meaningless or superfluous much of Takuu culture currently practised, including its language". However, this is not necessarily the case, as witness many examples of relocated communities in the Pacific that have retained largely intact their language and culture, such as the Banabans of Ocean Island and the Vaitupuans of Tuvalu who have been living on Rabi and Kioa, respectively, in Fiji for nearly 70 years.

Overall, this dictionary is of high quality and excellent value and packed full of many kinds of information, as we have come to expect from Pacific Linguistics, and it is sad to note that, now that de Gruyter Mouton have become co-publishers of PL, the quality will no doubt remain but the cost will shoot through the roof: we will be paying Mouton prices for most Pacific dictionaries from now on.

Hooper, Antony and Iuta Tinielu: *Echoes at Fisherman's Rock: Traditional Tokelau Fishing*. Paris: UNESCO, 2012. xi + 120 pp., bib., figs, glossary, maps (paper). Soft copies available at http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002184/218436e.pdf

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Echoes at Fisherman's Rock is a book, originally written and published in Tokelauan, by a group of Tokelauan elders living in the Wellington, New Zealand, who wanted to have a permanent record of some of the fishing and food gathering traditions in Tokelau. These men, who had lived in New Zealand for a number of years, are part of

the growing population of Tokelauans settling permanently in New Zealand although they visit home from time to time when possible. They have witnessed the growing numbers among the increasingly mobile Tokelauan communities who know and dearly love their island homelands but must live elsewhere because of modern realities. Younger people are speaking less and less Tokelauan and there is an associated decline in the appreciation and knowledge of many traditional practices. These practices were once the basis of survival in the atolls of Tokelau, as well as testimony to Tokelauan cultural ingenuity and environmental adaptation.

Thirty of these elders are from Atafu, the smallest and the most northerly of the group of atolls which comprise Tokelau, and the atolls of Fakaofo, Nukunono and Olohega are represented by three others. The Atafu elders, recognising the similarities between the traditional Tokelau practices explored in the book, consulted communities from other atolls. While these communities supported the project they decided to let it be an Atafu-based project.

The book is divided into four chapters. The first focuses on food collecting practices which are carried out on land—mainly bird catching from trees—and along the shore. It lists various ways of catching coconut crabs (*ugauga*), large rock crabs (*kamakama*) and beach crabs (*tupa*), and of netting and catching birds in the tree canopies.

Chapter 2 explains the types of fishing that are done in the lagoon. The method which dominates fishing in the lagoon is line-fishing and several species like mullet (*kanae*), grouper (*gatala*), bait goldfish (*kalo*), big-eye emperor (*mū*) are caught this way. Nets and fish traps are also commonly used to catch a variety of species which are not attracted to lures. Collecting shellfish, especially the sought after tridacna clams (*fāhua*) is popular. Torch fishing, traditionally using bundled dry coconut leaves, today commonly involves uses of pressure benzene or kerosene lamps, or battery-powered torches.

The long list of species which are caught on the reef, usually at low tide, is evident of how important the reefs are in the food chain. Chapter 3 explains how to catch about 45 different species of fish, octopus and shellfish on the reef using scoop nets, baits, spears or a combination of all these methods depending on the fish, the tides and other circumstances.

Chapter 4 describes the fishing approaches and materials used to catch species out in the open sea. Methods for catching skipjack (*atu*), yellow fin tuna (*kakahi*), mackerel scad (*uli*), sharks and turtles are explained. This chapter gives very rich and valuable detailed descriptions and illustrations of materials used and how they are applied.

The book is delightfully interspersed with excerpts from Tokelauan songs and chants, many of Biblical inspiration, all of them engaging the reader's imagination by the way in which poetic imagery is combined with the getting of a livelihood. Singing or chanting while fishing keeps the fisherman alert. Many songs and chants which are romantic or in praise of natural beauty, even hymns are voiced to encourage the fish to bite. They become prayers. Throughout the book the reader learns a lot about different times of the year when certain species are plentiful and why this is so. These times and seasons are usually connected to other events in the natural cycle of food production and consumption in Tokelau culture. My only wish for the book was for more pictures of the species of fish discussed.

I enjoyed reading this book very much; I grew up in a village where fishing was a major part of our livelihood. I am familiar with some of the methods, depending on the species, the time of day, the tide, the season and the weather. This is not surprising given the environmental, cultural and ethnic similarities between Samoans and Tokelauans. But we Samoans did not have to apply the same extent of ingenuity and marine knowledge to feed ourselves as did the Tokelau fishermen, at least not in my youth.

The Atafu men who initiated this book project must be congratulated. It is an excellent and unique initiative. They have provided a model which demonstrates how older people in other Pacific Island migrant communities might preserve their traditional knowledge. Iuta Tinielu and Antony Hooper in turn were recruited to the project when publishing a book was envisioned. To their credit they not only facilitated the publication in Tokelauan—*Hikuleo i te Papa o Tautai*—but also undertook to translate and arrange for the publication of *Echoes at Fisherman's Rock.* I hope the book will be an inspiration for more oral history and traditions projects of this kind. It would be a great to do a project of this kind involving both women and men. It illustrates how the pleasure of socialising and *talanoa* can be productive at the same time and demonstrates a practical way to preserve cultural knowledge and record traditional practices.

The publication is the fourth edition of the UNESCO-sponsored series "Knowledges of Nature". The presentation is most attractive and contains many beautiful photographs of Atafu taken by Judith Huntsman. It will be of value to all who are interested in Pacific Island cultural adaptation and the interaction between marine-dependent peoples and environment.

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I join Malama Meleisea in congratulating the elders of Atafu on this wonderful compendium of traditional Tokelau fishing practices. While Meleisea highlights the volume's contributions to the preservation of traditional Tokelauan fishing lore, I briefly consider its value to the academic community, including not only ethnographers, but also archaeologists, marine ecologists, ichthyologists and conservationists. Important in this regard are the efforts of the editors, Hooper and Tinielu, who have endeavoured to provide scientific names alongside the indigenous Tokelauan nomenclature therein making the information accessible to a broad audience.

When R.E. Johannes published his pioneering study of Palauan fishing practices, *Words of the Lagoon: Fishing and Marine Lore in the Palau District of Micronesia* (1981), he drew serious academic attention to the wealth of indigenous knowledge residing in Pacific Island communities in relation to marine species and environments. *Echoes at Fishermen's Rock* follows in that tradition. This volume, however, is unique in being generated by Tokelauan fishermen whose main aim was to preserve centuries of accumulated knowledge for their children and grandchildren. Fishing is broadly defined in this work to include not only the capture of finfish but also the hunting of other economically important organisms found at the marine-land interface, including

a multitude of crabs, several birds and sea turtles. The elders of Atafu identify more than a hundred different fishing strategies which are organised in reference to their use across the three main marine habitats of a Tokelau atoll, the lagoon, reef and open ocean. The entries not only explain the gear employed and the fish targeted, but also the microhabitats where a given technique should be used, the time of day or year when it is effective, preferred baits, common prey behaviours, tidal influences and even guidelines for successful fish stalking. With respect to fishing gear, the occasional identification of specific functional traits, whose utility might not be apparent to the non-specialist, is useful in considering the design and implementation of certain devices. For example, the entrance to traditional fish traps, the *matatupua*, can be rectangular or round, "it is up to you" (p. 35), or what archaeologists might classify as a "stylistic" trait. But, the authors caution, it is important that the opening of the trap taper inwards and be tilted downwards or the fish are likely to escape.

The entries also highlight social aspects of fishing activities and the organisation of labour in particular. Some techniques work well for the solitary fishermen. Others require a large community-scale labour force. But many rely on cooperation between two to three men and/or canoes. Some techniques further benefit from the guidance of a master fisherman who interprets the fish behaviours (especially those of schooling fish), anticipates their movements, and accordingly orchestrates the fishing party; the complexity of this specialist knowledge is made apparent by the quite detailed accounts of particular fishing strategies. As a whole, the entries provide insights into the varying scales of co-operative ventures and the time investments required by different techniques and, to a degree, the potential economic returns.

Also of considerable interest are the glimpses into traditional knowledge of weather and seasonality in relation to marine resources. The three chapters where specific techniques and targeted prey are reviewed are sprinkled with notes regarding the timing of fish aggregations, and seasonal variation in fish abundance and health (i.e., when fish are at their fattest), as well as knowledge of fish behaviours in response to diurnal and lunar cycles. In the final chapter we are offered further information on what might be termed indigenous meteorology, with a review of indicators of weather changes and seasonal transitions. For example, distant thunder may herald the seasonal onset of *ufu* and *pone* spawning (p. 107), while the burrowing activities of sand or ghost crabs may signal impending changes in weather.

The fishermen of Atafu, assisted by editor Hooper and translator Tinielu, provide a rich and engaging body of information on Tokelauan fish capture strategies, fish behaviours, and the associated fishing gear. This information will be valuable to scientists wanting to understand the complex relationships between foragers, their economically important resources, and marine environments, and the ways these dynamics might change over time. The book also will be useful for those wanting to compare traditional Tokelau fishing practices, or more generally atoll adaptations, with those of other Pacific islands. Finally, the book provides a foundation for considering how certain fishing strategies might affect fish populations. Moreover, in connecting the practices of fishing with their socio-cultural context, the volume offers information useful for fisheries management and for successful implementation of

conservation practices. Produced with UNESCO support as part of their indigenous knowledge series, this concise volume is not only informative but also attractive, well-illustrated and simply charming—a welcome addition to the bookshelf of all who enjoy the craft of fishing.