

## Changing language patterns in a Papua New Guinean society

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### パプア・ニューギニアの一社会における 言語パターンの変化

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#### 概 要

パプア・ニューギニアのニュー・アイルランド島には、元来、唯一、ナリク語を使用してきた人々が生活している。しかし、地理的流動性の高まり、民族相互間の結婚、その他の社会変化により、現在では、その全員が少なくともナリク語とtok・ピシン語（ニューギニアのピジン英語）の二言語を併用するようになっている。そして、tok・ピシン語が使用される領域は、ますます広がっており、時には完全にナリク語に取って代わる状況も生じている。また、子供達の多くはtok・ピシン語を主要言語として育てており、結果として、ナリク語が語彙、文法構造において、tok・ピシン語にますます近似していく変化を見せている。その変化は一個人において緩やかなものであるが、集団間で比較した場合、かなり多様化しているのが現状である。今後、ナリク語が長期的にその活力を維持し続けられるか否かは、ニュー・アイルランド島の指導者達の手中にあると言える。

#### Abstract

As a result of increased mobility, interethnic marriage, and other social change, all speakers of the Nalik language of New Ireland, Papua New Guinea are now at least bilingual. Tok Pisin is used in an increasing number of domains, sometimes to the exclusion of Nalik. Many children now grow up with Tok Pisin (New Guinea Pidgin English) as their dominant language. As a result, the lexicon and grammatical structure of Nalik are changing to resemble more closely these of Tok Pisin. For each speaker this change is gradual, causing considerable linguistic variation among different groups of speakers. The long-term future of Nalik depends on efforts by New Ireland leaders to preserve its vitality.

Key words: Nalik language, Austronesian languages, multilingualism, Papua New

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

In many ways language is a reflection of the society in which it is used. Therefore in a society which is undergoing great change, it is not unreasonable to assume that language use will change. In a multilingual society one can expect that this change can involve changes in the choice of which language is used in any given situation. It can also involve changes in the lexicon and grammatical structure of the language in the direction of a newly introduced language in the society. All of these processes are now occurring in the small, previously homogeneous Nalik society of New Ireland, Papua New Guinea.

Papua New Guinea accounts for nearly half of Melanesia, linguistically the most diverse part of the world. It has an astonishing 848 separate indigenous languages (Grimes 1988: 688), more than any other country in the world. With an land area about twenty percent larger than Japan and a population of just under 4,000,000 (*Pacific Islands Yearbook* 1989: 4-5), Papua New Guinea is by far the largest of Pacific inland nations. It occupies the eastern half of the inland of New Guinea together with a number of smaller islands to the east, one of which is New Ireland (see Map 1: Papua New Guinea).

A minority of Papua New Guinean languages are Austronesian. These include Nalik and seventeen other languages of New Ireland Province. The Austronesian languages are related to languages in the rest of the Pacific, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Madagascar, as well as to the aboriginal languages of Taiwan. Most languages of Papua New Guinea as a whole, but only one of the nineteen languages of New Ireland Province, are non-Austronesian. The non-Austronesian languages have no known relatives outside of northern Melanesia.

With the great movements of peoples and ideas as a consequence of Western

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the clan orators (*maimai*) in the Nalik area and the New Ireland Provincial Government for their support of this study, as well as Maimai Michael A Xomerang and Mr Matthias Tovot for sharing their extensive knowledge about early Nalik history. I would also like to thank Kyoko Hayashida for her comments on an earlier version of this paper. Any factual errors, however, remain entirely mine. *Mea culpa*.

Most of the data corpus for this work was collected during an extended period of residence in New Ireland 1989. Additional data were collected from 1990 to 1992 during shorter visits to New Ireland and consultations with native speakers of Nalik living in urban areas in Papua New Guinea and overseas.

colonialism beginning in the last century, and Japanese expansionism in this century, two pidgin languages have become lingua franca for most of Papua New Guinea, Tok Pisin (New Guinea Pidgin English) in the north and Hiri Motu (Police Motu) in the south. The national constitution adopted at Independence in 1975 gives Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu, together with English, de facto status as national languages. The constitution also gives the 846 vernacular languages, such as Nalik, some status as symbols of Melanesian culture. Moreover, it recognises the right of citizens to be addressed in a language they can understand when dealing with the police or justice systems. For many citizens this must be in a language other than the three national languages. The constitution permits the use of vernacular languages in literacy and other educational endeavours. Although most education is still English-medium, in recent years the government has permitted local communities to choose which languages to use as the media of primary education. Many communities, including some in New Ireland, have chosen to begin early primary education in a language other than English.

## **2. Setting and history**

Nalik is spoken in northern central New Ireland, in an area bounded by speakers of Kara, another Austronesian language, to the north, and by speakers of Kuot, the only non-Austronesian language in New Ireland, to the south (see Map 2 : Languages of New Ireland). The most widely reported estimate of Nalik speakers, even in the latest list of world languages published by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (Grimes 1988: 667), is still that reported twenty years ago by Beaumont (1972: 13), 2,618. But the unreliability of estimates for this region is shown by the report four years earlier by Lithgow and Claassen (1968: 26) of only 1,461 Nalik speakers. Recent census reports have regrettably not included data on nonurban language use, so recent and reliable information about the number of speakers is not available. In the mid-1990 national census a total of 3,210 people were recorded living in the Nalik area, with an additional 796 living in areas where transitional dialects linking the Nalik and Kara languages are spoken (PNG National Statistical Office 1992: p.c.). This totals 4,006 persons. It can be reasonably assumed that about the same number of Naliks live outside the Nalik area as do non-Naliks in the Nalik area, so in the absence of more reliable data, this number can be taken as a very rough approximation of the total number of Naliks. As will be seen below, the degree of fluency in the Nalik language varies among Naliks, and there is evidence that the language is beginning to disappear as a primary language among

younger Naliks. This estimate of the number of ethnic Naliks is therefore not necessarily an accurate estimate of the fluent speakers of the language.

Since the pre-World War I German colonial administration, most Nalik speakers have lived on the east coast along the Boluminski Road, although there are several Nalik-speaking villages on the west coast, and many families still have gardens on the central interior plateau. Most people are subsistence farmers, and earn money through the sale of copra and cocoa. Palm oil has recently been introduced, but is as yet mainly limited to large plantations owned by non-Naliks. Some Naliks, however, do receive income from royalties from or employment with both these plantations and the controversial export oriented timber industry. There has been extensive gold prospecting in the central mountains, but, in contrast to the vast discoveries on nearby Tabar and Lihir islands, there has not yet been any discovery of commercial importance. Since before the introduction of Australian colonial rule in 1914, a considerable number of Nalik speakers have also been wage earners in private industry or the public service. Today, except for those who have retired and returned to their home villages, or who teach in local schools, most of these wage earners live in the provincial headquarters Kavieng, or in urban areas outside the province.

Nalik society is matrilineal and a number of Nalik-speaking women have achieved national recognition. For example, the first Papua New Guinean woman law graduate, Margaret Elias, is Nalik, and her mother, Elti Kunak, was awarded an M. B. E. for her work in promoting the post World War II women's movement.

As in New Ireland as a whole, the Nalik-speaking area benefits from a high standard of education. Virtually all children in New Ireland attend primary school, and in comparison to the national population, a disproportionately large number receive secondary and tertiary education. In Papua New Guinea as a whole, one third of all children of primary school age do not attend school at all. Of those who begin grade one, one-third drops out before completing grade six, and of those who do finish, two-thirds are not admitted to secondary school (Rannells 1990: 37). In contrast to these national statistics, primary education is virtually universal in Nalik villages. For example, in 1989 in two typical Nalik-speaking villages, Madina and Luapul, all children attended primary school, village authorities did not permit children to drop out of primary school, and eighty-seven percent of the graduating grade six class were accepted into secondary school the following year. All education is at present English-medium, although the provincial government has a plan to introduce a pilot scheme for vernacular pre-school,

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and eventually primary school, education in Nalik. With this in mind introductory monolingual Nalik primers were written in 1990 using the new standard Nalik orthography which I had prepared in 1989 (Lawe 1990).

Introduced religion plays an important part in modern Nalik society. Most Naliks have adopted Christianity, although there is an influential Baha'i minority. At the same time, traditional beliefs continue to play an important role in society, and *maimais* (clan leaders and clan orators) have been encouraging a revival of traditional arts and ceremonies among younger persons. The area is well known for its *malagan* (or *malanggan*) carvings and accompanying traditional ceremonies honouring the dead, as well as for the practice of shark-calling, portrayed in the film 'Shark Callers of Koto'.

At any given time there are up to three dozen foreign expatriates and their families in the Nalik area. These include Catholic priests, teachers at the two high schools, foreign spouses of Naliks, and businesspersons associated with the timber or oil palm industries. More influential linguistically are the large number of non-Nalik Papua New Guineans, including Sepiks and Highlanders as well as non-Nalik New Irelanders, who have been attracted for economic reasons over the years since World War II to settle in the Nalik area. Many of the Sepiks in particular now living in the Nalik area are third generation immigrants to New Ireland and regard the province as their home. Very few of them speak Nalik, although many claim to understand it, especially those who have married into Nalik families.

### **3. Change in the patterns of multilingualism**

Today all Naliks know at least one language besides their own. At the turn of the century Nalik was used for all purposes except speaking to some non-Naliks, when another New Ireland language would be used. Today the only domain where Nalik is most dominant is in the home or private conversation. Nalik is still used in many families and, together with, and often interspersed with, Tok Pisin, it is commonly heard in private conversations in Nalik villages, or among Naliks in the 'diaspora'. Because many people now living in Nalik villages do not understand the language, or at least not very well, it is rare to have public meetings which are entirely in Nalik. At weekly Monday morning village meetings, for example, the most important announcements are made in Tok Pisin, although often they are repeated and discussed in more detail in Nalik.

Today knowledge of Tok Pisin (Now Guinea Pidgin English) has become universal.

A concerted search in 1989 failed to uncover any Naliks without a knowledge of Tok Pisin. Even the oldest person interviewed for this study, a ninety year old woman, had a functional command of basic Tok Pisin. One old man on the less developed west coast who died in 1988 was reported to have been monolingual. It is quite possible that he was the last living monolingual Nalik speaker.

Older speakers report that until World War II, Tok Pisin was usually learnt in adulthood. Today Tok Pisin is learnt in childhood, often before, or even instead of, Nalik. Even in many households which I visited where both parents were Nalik, a sizeable minority of children appeared to be learning Tok Pisin before Nalik. This was particularly the case in well educated families who had had the opportunity to obtain employment in urban areas and whose children had therefore spent some of their formative years away from Nalik society. The impression of the society as a whole that Nalik is more difficult relative to Tok Pisin can be seen in the fact that when young children do not understand something an adult says, the adult often repeats it in Tok Pisin.

Undoubtedly, the mixed background of most families today plays an important part in this decrease in the use of Nalik. In a survey of language use in 1989, grade five and six pupils from Madina and Luapul villages at Madina Community School, less than half the students reported that both their parents were Naliks. They also reported that Tok Pisin was used as the sole home language in approximately half the pupils' homes and 'often' or more at home in two thirds of the families. Only a third reported that Nalik was the only language used at home. Given the perception of my position as someone interested in promoting the use of Nalik, it is quite likely that the children overstated their use of Nalik, and that it is actually less than this. Only a handful reported using Nalik with other children either on the playground or at play elsewhere. This correlates with my own observations; living next to the school for almost a year, I noticed children using Nalik rather than Tok Pisin among themselves only once, although many could speak to me in Nalik if prompted.

Most religious services are in Tok Pisin. Although many older Catholic Naliks still remember prayers translated into Nalik and taught to them by a German missionary, Father Hoffman, these are usually used only in family or private situations. Mass and catechism classes are almost always held in Tok Pisin except for one or two Nalik hymns. The United Church, the largest religious group in the area, used to conduct part of its services in Nalik before World War II, but today most of the spoken part of the

service is in Tok Pisin, while hymns are usually sung in Kuanua. The Baha'is, who have few non-Nalik members in New Ireland, often conduct part of their meetings in Nalik, but until recently read prayers and Baha'i scripture only in English or Tok Pisin. With the publication of a multifaith prayer book in Nalik, and a decision by the local Baha'i administrative body to promote the use of 'pure' Nalik, this is beginning to change. The Baha'is are alone in having children's religious instruction in Nalik only.

Even at traditional *malagan* ceremonies, held to commemorate the dead and to exchange money between clans (see Volker 1992) Tok Pisin is often used. This is especially the case when non-Nalik relatives or in-laws are present. Because a *malagan* has traditionally been an occasion to display one's skills in rhetoric, many speakers prefer to speak in Tok Pisin rather than shame themselves by what they believe to be a lack of eloquence in Nalik.

Another widely spoken introduced language is English. English has been used as the medium of instruction at all schools since the 1960s, and, in contrast to most of the rest of the country, New Ireland has had universal primary education for many years. Formal English classes for adults were also held in some areas in the 1960s so that acquaintance with at least basic English is not uncommon even among older persons. Nevertheless, only a minority of Naliks have achieved a high degree of fluency in spoken English, as it plays a very minor role in the society outside of school. There are, however, a few educated households with one non-Nalik spouse in which English is the home language. Although a number of Nalik families have Malay, Chinese, or German ancestry, these languages are not used today.

The modern media are virtually all in Tok Pisin or English. The only newspapers, magazines, and books (with one or two recent exceptions) come from outside New Ireland, and the only television is by satellite from Australia or the United States. The provincial radio station in Kavieng broadcasts speech (as opposed to music) only in Tok Pisin and, occasionally, English. There is only one public sign in Nalik, that on the village meeting house (*a vaal a piraan*) in Munawai village. Even very local signs, such as at trade stores or in churches, are in Tok Pisin or English. Nalik is, however, often used in singing, both in traditional and modern styles, and a number of Nalik musical groups have been recorded, either for broadcast on provincial or national radio, or for commercial release on cassette.

Today relatively few Naliks have a good command of one of their neighbouring languages. Both today and in the past, Naliks have been reluctant to learn Kuot, the

neighboring non-Austronesian language to the south, and have generally expected Kuot speakers to learn Nalik. The fact that many Naliks can trace their ancestry to Kuot families indicates that Nalik has been in a dominant position over Kuot for a number of generations. It is probable that prolonged contact between Kuot and Austronesian languages, including Nalik, has resulted in extensive borrowing into Kuot from Nalik. Lithgow and Classen (1968 : 28), for example, found that on the Summer Institute of Linguistics list of 120 basic words, 23% of Nalik and Kuot words were cognate, even though Kuot is not an Austronesian language. At least one lexical difference between geographic dialects in Nalik appears to be due to borrowing from Kuot. 'White coral' is *balangtang* in all dialects except the West Coast dialect, where it is *blaakan*, the same as in Kuot.

In contrast to non-Austronesian Kuot, traditionally many Naliks did have at least passive knowledge of Austronesian Tabar, spoken on islands to the east of the Nalik-speaking area, of one of the other Austronesian languages of the northern New Ireland mainland, especially Kara. This is reflected today in the knowledge which many older Naliks have of these languages, and in the fact that the lyrics of many well known traditional songs alternate in the middle of a stanza between these languages. It is also reflected in the use of the Kara word *raxo* 'good', a cognate of Nalik *daxo* in the idiom:

- 1 ) *Ka raxo, ka daxo vaa?*  
 3SG good 3SG good where  
 'Things will be all muddled in the end.'

It should be noted, however, that younger Naliks tend not to develop bilingualism in these languages. Instead, young Naliks usually use Tok Pisin with non-Naliks, including those from nearby Tabar or Kara-speaking villages, or even the village of Lakuramau, where a dialect of Nalik is spoken that is very different from Nalik proper.

Another Austronesian language formerly used quite extensively in the Nalik area is Kuanua, the language of the Tolais of nearby East New Britain. For many years Kuanua was the language used by the Methodist mission in its schools and for religious purposes. Older Methodist Naliks are often quite fluent in Kuanua, to the extent that they switch to Kuanua to discuss religious topics or to quote the Bible. Although Kuanua is still used for hymns in the United Church (the successor to the Methodist mission), middle-aged and younger Naliks usually know Kuanua only if they have a Tolai parent or have spent a considerable amount of time in East New Britain.

#### 4 . Change in the lexicon and discourse styles

In such a situation it is not surprising that the Nalik lexicon has been heavily influenced and, in the opinion of most older speakers, impoverished, by prolonged contact with dominant Tok Pisin. This has not been limited to Tok Pisin loans for new ideas or technologies that did not exist in precontact society, such as *baalus* 'airplane', *kompyuta* 'computer', *paati* 'political party' and *lotu* 'religion'. Increasingly, even words thought to be the basic core of the lexicon of a language by many linguists are being replaced by loans from Tok Pisin, e.g. *anti* 'aunt', *gaat* 'have', and the entire numeral system.

Moreover, the semantic range of indigenous Nalik words is changing in the direction of their Tok Pisin equivalents. Since Tok Pisin is a pidgin language, its words tend to have a more general semantic range than in a non-pidgin language. Thus, although Nalik traditionally had three words for each of the main kinds of fishing nets used in New Ireland, today younger speakers only use one general word, a cognate of Tok Pisin *umben* 'fishing net', for all three. Similarly, younger speakers today do not usually know the Nalik names for many of the reef fish they catch. Since Tok Pisin does not have many names for many individual fish species, this means that many younger speakers must use ad hoc descriptions or generic names to differentiate species.

Perhaps the most interesting example of semantic change has been the influence of the Tok Pisin word *hat*. Previously Nalik made the same distinction as English between 'hot' (*lagaf*) and 'hard' (*vulvulazai*). In Australian English these two English words are differentiated primarily on the basis of vowel length. In Tok Pisin, with no distinction of vowel length and a much less complex vowel system than English, these two words have become homonyms, so that Tok Pisin *hat* can mean 'hot' or 'hard'. In Nalik the meaning of *lagaf* has expanded to parallel that of Tok Pisin *hat*, so that it, too, now means 'hot' and 'hard', while *vulvulazai* has become obsolete.

A more subtle change is in a preference for directness, especially when speaking in public. Many older clan orators claim that today, even when leaders do speak in Nalik, they use a direct style of address in imitation of English, rather than the very indirect style used in the past. For example, in the past if a leader wished to chastise someone for committing adultery, he would either speak at a village gathering about an animal going astray or a garden going wild, or he would simply chant traditional words meaning the equivalent of 'sin' or 'unclean'. The guilty parties would not be named, but would, at least in theory, feel publicly shamed and amend their ways. Today the offending parties

are more likely to be named in public and told to behave properly, often with the offence being described in very direct terms.

## 5. Change in grammatical structure

As Tok Pisin has become the dominant language of Nalik society, the grammatical structure has also begun to change to become more like that of Tok Pisin. This is particularly noticeable in the disappearance of the alienable / nonalienable distinction in the speech of many speakers who are younger or who do not have strong traditional ties.

The speech of older speakers indicates that, as is the norm in Austronesian languages, Nalik traditionally differentiated between inalienable and alienable possession. Inalienable possessive forms were reserved for items which could not be removed from the owner, such as body parts, blood relations, and customary land. Alienable possessive forms were used for all other items. In modern Nalik many speakers no longer use the special inalienable forms. Undoubtedly this is due to the dominating influence of Tok Pisin and English, both non-Austronesian languages which do not make a distinction between inalienable and alienable possession.

The inalienable possessives are suffixes to the noun being possessed. Examples of sentences with inalienable possessives include:

- 2) *dama-nagu*  
father-my: IN  
'my father'
- 3) *a latlagai-num.*  
ART shadow-your: SG: IN  
'your shadow.'

Unlike the inalienable possessives, the alienable possessives are separate words which follow the noun. Examples of sentences with these possessives include:

- 4) *a buk surugo.*  
ART book my: AL  
'my book'
- 5) *a vaal zunum*  
ART house your: SG: AL  
'your house'

Today there is a continuum in the use of inalienable and alienable possessives. At one end of the continuum are the most conservative speakers, generally older and more

traditionally oriented, who make the greatest use of inalienable forms. At the other end are the innovative speakers, generally younger and less traditionally minded, who use these forms seldom. It is rare for any two speakers to agree on the use or nonuse of inalienable possessives with all words, especially those which do not occur often, and many speakers use both conservative and innovative forms interchangeably with one or more words.

As do the speakers of most Austronesian languages, conservative speakers use the inalienable forms for kinship as in (2). Among the most conservative speakers, the inalienable forms are still used for body parts, e.g.,

6) *a mit-nagu*

ART hand-my: IN

'my hand'

7) *a ngas-num*

ART mouth-your: SG: IN

'your mouth'

Some of the 'body parts' are not physical parts, but are still parts of a person which cannot be removed, e.g. one's soul, shape, and name:

8) *a varak-nagu*

ART soul-my: IN

'my soul'

9) *a nounau-naande*

ART shape-their: IN

'their shape'

10) *a iza-gu*

ART name-my: IN

'my name'

At the other end of the continuum from these conservative speakers are innovative speakers who rarely use inalienable possessives. Although there are probably not yet speakers who never use inalienable possessives, for most of the categories discussed above, there are speakers who use alienable rather than inalienable possessives. For example, younger speakers were recorded using alienable forms with the following physical and spiritual body parts:

- 11) *a mit sina*  
 ART hand his / her: AL  
 'his hand'
- 12) *a varak sarago*  
 ART soul my: AL  
 'my soul'
- 13) *a iza zaragu*  
 ART name my: AL  
 'my name'

In addition to using alienable possessives with body parts, many innovative speakers use alienable possessives with kinship terms, for example:

- 14) *a nalik saraga*  
 ART boy my: AL  
 'my boy'
- 15) *a yaya zi naande*  
 ART grandparent/child of they  
 'their grandparent/child'

The variation among children in the use of possessives with *iza* 'name' is particularly interesting. Madina Community School is attended by children from both Madina village in the Northern dialect area and Luapul village, an east coast outpost of the West Coast dialect. While Nalik-speaking children from Luapul all use the inalienable possessive as in (10) above, Nalik-speaking children from Madina village invariably use the alienable form, as in (13). Since it can be presumed that the general drift is in the direction of abandoning inalienable possessives in favour of alienable possessives, and not the reverse, this indicates that the centre of at least this innovation is in the Northern, not the West Coast, dialect area.

The loss of markedness for inalienable possession seems to spread item by item through an individual's lexicon, rather than being lost completely all at once as a grammatical category. In the following sentence, for example, one innovative speaker was recorded using the inalienable possessive with the kinship term *moro* 'maternal relative', as would a conservative speaker, but not with the kinship term *nalik* 'boy, son'.

- 16) *Masingsarei ga saxot ga na bur*  
but 1SG like 1SG FUT consecrate

*a moro-gu o*

ART maternal relative-my: IN or

*a nalik surago...*

ART boy my: AL

'But if I want to consecrate a maternal kinsmn  
or a son of mine...'

*Moro* is a less common word in everyday use than *nalik*, so this variation suggests the use of inalienable possessives is more likely to be retained with less commonly used words in the lexicon.

For many speakers the entry for the alienable possession of kinship terms is undoubtedly with Tok Pisin/English loans, which are commonly used today for even the closest family relations, such as *mama*, *papa*, and *sista*. Even the most traditional speakers use alienable possessives with these loans. For example, one of the most erudite traditional clan orators, who is well known for the 'purity' of his speech, was recorded using an alienable possessive with a loan kinship term *lain* 'clan', but an inalienable possessive with the next word, *tau*, its indigenous equivalent:

- 17) *Nis, a lain sarago, tau-nago?*  
who ART clan my: AL clansman-my: IN  
'Who, my clan, my clansmaen?'

To illustrate the variation in the use of alienable and inalienable possessives, forty-five persons of all ages were asked to translate sentences containing four possessives into Nalik. The results are shown in the table below, which illustrates how many in each age group chose either an alienable or inalienable possessive. Four words are listed which refer to blood relatives or inalienable components of a human being ('aunt', 'male relative' 'shadow', 'soul'). In other Austronesian languages the equivalents of these words require the use of inalienable possessive forms.

It is obvious from these data that for many Nalik speakers the distinction between inalienable and alienable possession is not clear. The table indicates that there are two variables which correlate with a decreased use of the marked inalienable possessive forms. The first variable is age. Generally the use of inalienable possessives increases with the age of the speakers. In part is because of the increased use of loan words among

Choice of alienable or inalienable possessives

cue	number with inalienable
1. 'aunt'	0 fC, 1 mC 0 fY, 0 mY 0 fM, 0 mM 1 fO, 0 mO
2. 'clansman'	1 fC, 0 mC 1 fY, 1 mY 3 fM, 1 mM 2 fo, 4 mO
3. 'shadow'	1 fC, 0 mC 5 fY, 2 mY 6 fM, 5 mM 5 fO, 5 mO
4. 'soul'	0 fC, 0 mC 2 fY, 1 mY 5 fM, 2 mM 3 fO, 3 mO
TOTAL INTERVIEWED:	4 fC, 4 mC 5 fY, 8 mY 7 fM, 5 mM 6 fO, 6 mO
f = female C = child (6–13) M = middle-aged (26–50)	m = male Y = youth (14–25) O = Old (50+)

younger speakers, which, as noted above, take only alienable possessives. The second variable is gender. Among all except the elderly, females tend to be more likely than males to use inalienable possessives. Therefore the centre of innovation away from using inalienable possessives is among younger male speakers.

In addition, there are two interesting facts regarding this variation which are not reflected in the table above. The first is that among the youth in the sample were several from New Ireland now normally living in Rabaul or Australia where they use Tok Pisin and English much more than Nalik. In spite of this, these tended to use inalienable possessives much more than the youth in the village. Indeed, this indicates that better education and isolation in the Nalik 'diaspora' reinforce conservative patterns, at least in formal interview situations. Thus the dominance of Tok Pisin or English is of itself

perhaps a condition for, but not the sole cause of, the disappearance of inalienable possessives.

The second is that the conservative children and youth using inalienable forms tend to come from 'noble' families, i.e. leading families that have a reputation for producing clan orators (*maimai*). Similarly, the few elderly men using alienable possessives for 'soul' and 'clansman' were not clan orators. This indicates that, as one would expect, close ties to traditional culture are reflected in conservative language use.

## **6. Conclusion**

The changes in Papua New Guinea since the West made contact with it in the middle of the last century have been staggering, and the title of one prominent Papua New Guinean's autobiography *10,000 years in a lifetime* (Kiki 1968), is an apt description of every society in the country. As with other Papua New Guineans, whereas Naliks traditionally had only a very local identity, today they also have a wider identity as citizens of a modern nation-state and as members of a world community. This has brought the opportunity to live outside the Nalik area for many people at the same time that many non-Nalik persons have come to reside in Nalik villages. As a result, languages other than Nalik, especially Tok Pisin, play a dominant role in the life of many, if not most, Naliks.

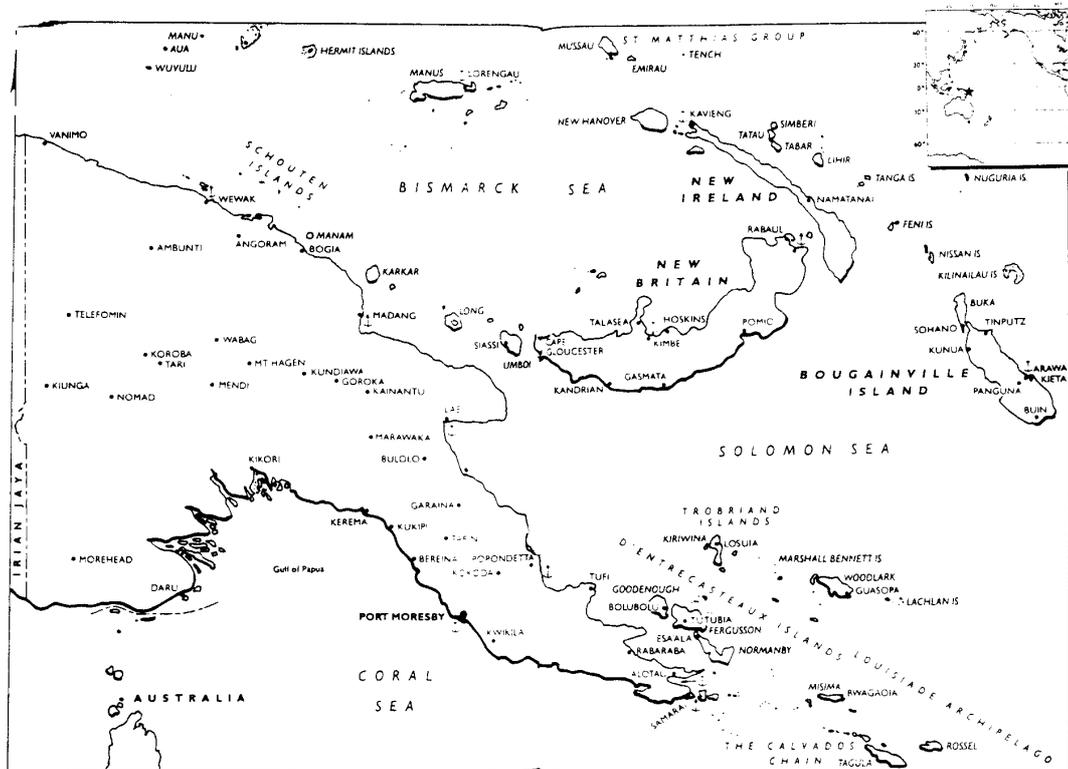
As a result, the percentage of domains in which Nalik is used in the society as a whole is much less now than it was even before World War II. Whereas previously it was used almost exclusively in all domains in Nalik society, today there are many domains in which only other languages are used and there is no domain in which Nalik is used exclusively. Even in the home, Nalik appears to be giving ground to Tok Pisin and, to a much lesser degree, English. Moreover, the structure of Nalik is changing in the direction of the dominant languages. This is occurring both in the vocabulary and, as exemplified by the elimination of the alienable / inalienable distinction, the grammar.

There is no danger that Nalik will disappear in the near future. But unless a concerted effort is made by provincial and community leaders to change these trends, it is unlikely that the language can have long term viability.

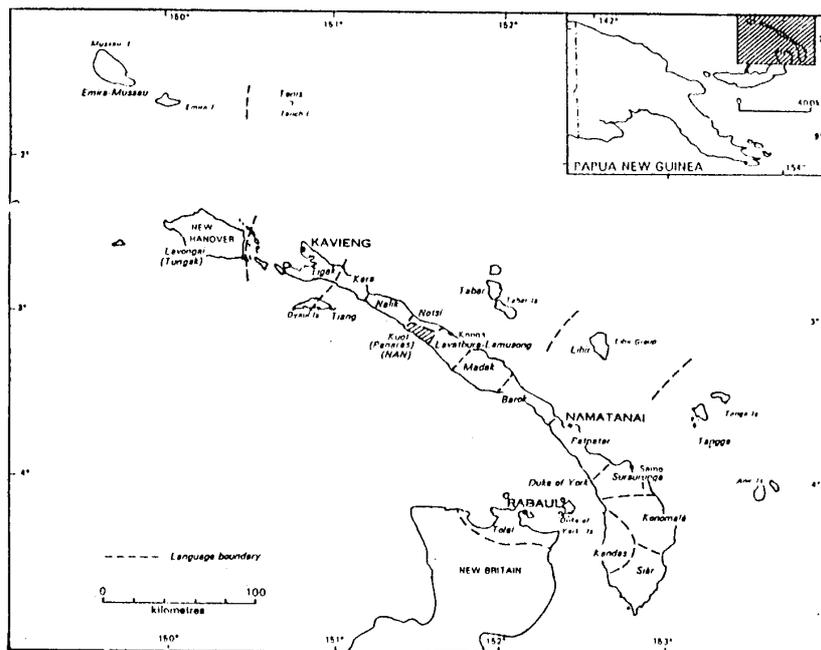
### **Abbreviations used**

AL	alienable possessor
ART	article

MAPS  
Map 1: Papua New Guinea



Map 2: Languages of New Ireland



Changing language patterns in a Papua New Guinean society

FUT	future
IN	inalienable possessor
M.B.E.	Member of the British Empire
p.c.	personal communication
SG	singular
1	first person
3	third person

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