Personhood and linguistic identity, purism and variation

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1. The Herderian equation: linguistic ideology in the West

Linguistic ideology can be defined as that cluster of beliefs that a particular speech community holds about the form and function of language. Speech communities vary in size and network density, and this can be linked to variations in linguistic ideology, a good example being the contrast between most educated laypersons' general prescriptive beliefs about language, e.g. the standard language is best and to be emulated, with variations from this stigmatised, versus professional linguists' descriptivist views, which value all varieties equally and attempt to describe each without prejudice. Of course, even within a community such as professional linguists, there are subgroups with their own ideological beliefs about language, such as critical discourse analysts versus minimalist grammarians. It is important to understand that ideological beliefs are not theories per se, but rather the background of largely unexamined assumptions that guide the construction of specific theories, be they folk theories or scientific ones.

What concerns me here are some of the central ideas about language that have guided European political and educational policies toward language over the last few centuries. These beliefs were clearly articulated by the German Romantic philosopher Herder, who argued for an essential correlation between the language of a community and their mind or spirit (German *Geist*). This was part of a wider German nationalist project of the 18th and 19th centuries, to forge a unified German nation-state from numerous principalities and kingdoms of central Europe that were German speaking, and this lead to a triple equation: the culture of a people (their mental functioning as a community) is essentially correlated with the language they speak and in turn should ideally correspond to a nation-state. Note that monolingual communities are the ideological focus here. The close correlation between a language and a nation-state was further emphasised during the revolutionary period following 1789. In opposition to the overthrown and discredited notion of the subject under a monarch arose the concept of the citizen with their rights and duties in a nation-state. To inform citizens of these rights and duties and to promulgate the nationalist ideology, a shared language was needed, a standardised language imposed from the elite political center upon the periphery. The French revolutionaries actively promoted the spread of Parisian French through education and publications and suppressed the minority languages. This idea rapidly diffused across Europe and drove state policy toward language. The 19th century saw a particularly brutal period in the suppression of the minority Celtic languages in the British Isles, for instance (Grillo 1989). The policy of American, Canadian and Australian governments in removing children of their indigenous communities from their homes and putting them in English language only boarding schools, with severe punishments if their native languages were spoken, is yet another example. The assumption behind this policy was that if indigenous children became

English speakers, they would in turn become good citizens of the nation-state with a European mindset.

Implicit in all these assumptions and policies concerning language are some fundamental and highly influential ideas about personhood that were popularised in two important political treatises by the 17th century English philosopher Locke. These challenged previous ideas that governments gained their legitimacy exclusively from God, the basis of absolute monarchies, with the view that they derive it from the consent of those who are governed. People as individuals freely associate and form a contract to cede some of their independence and sovereignty to a government, so that the government can look after their security and needs, particularly property needs. If the government exceeds those rights ceded to it by the populace and threatens the natural rights of those individuals it governs, they have a right to rebel, overthrow and replace it with a new government with new terms of the contract of governance (all of this, of course, is exactly the point of the American Declaration of Independence). These same principles in French guise underpinned the French Revolution. The French revolutionaries overthrew the monarchy and changed the notion of the governed from the subject of a monarch to a citizen of a nation-state, and in the process foregrounded further the idea of personal identity in a modern nation-state as an individual who freely associates and enters into contract with like others, for the purpose of forming collectivities, political and otherwise.

What I will term the Herderian equation, language = culture = nation, is closely tied to this Lockean understanding of personal identity, and this powerful fusion has been and continues to be a highly influential ideology in folk and political discussions about language. This is illustrated in high relief by the catch-cry of the Indonesian nationalists of the first half of the 20th century, 'one nation, one people, one language', and this in a country of hundreds of indigenous languages! The 'one language' they were referring to, of course, was Malay, modern Indonesian, the standard(ised) language of the nation-state deemed necessary to educate its citizens and promulgate the nationalist agenda. Similar stories abound: the rise of Swahili in East Africa, the imposition of Russian on the Uralic and Altaic minorities of Siberia, Chinese language medium schools in Tibet. The European linguistic ideology embodied in the Herderian equation is now worldwide, part of the mostly unquestioned beliefs of the political and economic elite of the modern nation-state. Nor are scientific practices concerned with language exempt from its influence. Note how the demarcation of ethnic/cultural groups on maps of the indigenous peoples of the world, be they in the Americas, Australia or Africa, almost invariably correspond to linguistic boundaries. This is clearly a false reification; at least since Boas (1911), if not well before, anthropologists and linguists have known that cultural and linguistic boundaries are not coextensive, yet so powerful is the Herderian equation in guiding our pre-reflective practice that we still draw maps that lead us to deduce exactly this.

Folk beliefs about linguistic purism also illustrate the force of the Herderian equation: if a language is essentially correlated with the mental habits of its speakers (their culture in this view), then elements of other languages within it can have a deleterious influence on their cultural and mental vigor. This has been exemplified in

Europe in periodic drives to rid national languages of perceived foreign elements, or even more wholeheartedly, to replace the language of a nation with one seen as more emblematic of the culture of its speakers. Norwegian is a particularly striking case of this. Norway was ruled by Denmark from the 15th century and received its independence in 1814 during the height of the revolutionary period in Europe. In the colonial period the official language was Danish, albeit with a Norwegian pronunciation, but the informal speech of the local urban elite was their local dialect with a heavy Danish influence. This became the basis of a standardised form of Norwegian for the new independent nation, called Dano-Norwegian. However, this choice was strongly contested by many Norwegians, particularly those in rural areas, because of its close links to the former colonial power and its lack of any emblematic status for Norwegian identity. Consequently, a schoolteacher named Aarsen suggested a new standard language based on the rural Norwegian dialects of the western part of the country, believed to be those with the least Danish influence. This language called Nynorsk ('new Norwegian') was made an official language of the country on a par with Dano-Norwegian in 1885, largely as a result of strong nationalist sentiments.

2. Linguistic ideology in the American Southwest

Do other cultures hold something like the Herderian equation, and, if so, how does it correlate with their cultural construction of personhood? In a classic paper published 50 years ago (Dozier 1956), the American anthropologist Edward Dozier, himself a Native American speaking the Tewa language from Santa Clara Pueblo, contrasted the response to a long term language contact situation of two Native languages of the Southwest: the Uto-Aztecan language Yaqui of the Pacific coast of Mexico and the Tanoan language Tewa of the Rio Grande Pueblos of New Mexico. The difference is striking: Yaqui is full of Spanish loan words and betrays extensive Spanish influence in phonology, word formation and sentence structure, while Tewa, beyond a small number of loans for introduced animals, utensils and concepts, shows almost no influence on any level. While Yaqui heavily borrows Spanish words for introduced concepts or material items, Tewa prefers loan translations built out of purely native elements. Dozier (1956) traces this difference in response of the two speech communities to language contact to differences in social history and what he calls 'processes of acculturation'. He claims that the syncretic Yaqui language and culture was the result of relatively benign Jesuit missionisation. The Jesuits learned the vernacular, translated religious texts into it, permitted the continued performance of some Native ceremonies and rituals (provided attendance at Mass was observed) and protected the Yaqui from more traumatic exploitative policies of the Spanish colonial authorities. The fate of the Tewa under Spanish rule was less favorable. The Franciscan missionaries were much less tolerant of Native ritual and belief and used the full power of the colonial civil and military authority to prohibit these. In addition Tewa land was seized by the colonial authorities. The brutality of the Spanish colonial rule among the Pueblos led to the Pueblo revolts of 1680 and 1696, in which the Native population rose up and expelled the colonial power from their territories. By 1700, however, the Spanish had returned and suppressed the revolts, leading many Native communities to flee their homelands

and take refuge with populations further west like the Navajo and the Hopi, away from the center of Spanish colonial control. Dozier attributes the Yaquis' openness to cultural and linguistic change versus the Tewas' extreme conservatism to their differing histories and ultimately to their responses to these events. In particular, he traces Tewa conservatism to resistance to acculturation, becoming like the Spanish oppressor in word and deed. What few Spanish elements were borrowed were kept clearly distinct and pointedly never nativised. A syncretic system like Yaqui, acculturation to Spanish norms in his terms, never emerged because these elements were exactly the point of resistance to acculturation for the Tewa.

Dozier's notion of acculturation itself creates some problems for his account. First of all, it reflects an ideology favoring the assimilationist policies for indigenous populations in English-settler former colonies like Australia, Canada and the United States that were dominant in the 1950s and 1960s. It was believed that, by following these assimilationist policies, such as removing children from their home communities to English language only medium and Anglo-Saxon culture oriented boarding schools, the indigenous population would gradually but ultimately give up their traditional cultural identity and become modern fully participating citizens of the nation-state. 'Acculturation' was simply an acceptably academic code word within anthropology, using its core concept, culture, for this raft of policies. Note that this assimilation/acculturation ideology is itself a transparent example of the force of the Herderian equation: by speaking English as their native language and being educated in the European mode, the indigenous population would lose its indigenous identity and acquire that of other citizens of the nation-state.

But there is yet another problem with Dozier's notion of acculturation – it is simply too vague to be of much use as an analytical concept. It assumes a monolithic conceptualisation of culture, e.g. the indigenous population would switch from one integrated monolithic cultural system to another. This view of culture is now completely discredited: cultures are now viewed as riven by variation and difference, and the concept has been deconstructed into the idea of cultural practices which are differentially distributed among the members of the social group (Bourdieu 1990; Giddens 1984; Gumperz 1982). In essence, culture is seen as built up out of the identity construction practices of the members of a social group, none of whom share all of the same practices, so in no sense can there be a monolithic integrated 'culture' for any community. When culture is so deconstructed, the notion of acculturation becomes a meaningless cipher – it is far too vague and open ended to describe the sociocultural processes at work. Rather what we need to describe are the cultural and linguistic practices by which individuals and social groups construct their communal identity, and further how these practices shift over time under the influence of adjoining and socio-economically dominant groups. Dozier's notion of acculturation is much too broad a brush to delineate these micro-processes, which really should be the focus of our interest.

Kroskrity (1993, 2000, 2001) investigates these processes by describing the linguistic ideology and its bearing on constructions of cultural identity among the Arizona Tewa, the same language group that Dozier had studied some 30 years

previously. He also notes their striking linguistic conservatism, in stark contrast to the extensive innovation in just about every other domain of cultural practices. The Arizona Tewa live on First Mesa in the Hopi Reservation and are surrounded by Hopi speakers and communities. The Arizona Tewa came to the Hopi after the Second Pueblo Revolt of 1696, at the request of the Hopi to protect them from attacks of marauding Ute warriors, and they are now cut off from fellow Tewa speakers by hundreds of kilometers. The Arizona Tewa have been in contact with the Hopi for some 300 years now and are all bilingual in Hopi. However, just as Dozier had noted the lack of Spanish influence on Tewa, the same is true of Hopi influence: after 300 years of contact and many generations of bilinguals in Hopi, there are only two Hopi loan words in Arizona Tewa! And this is in spite of massive Hopi influence in other cultural domains. Indeed, the Arizona Tewa social structure has been radically transformed from the ancestral Tewa system of patrilineal descent to matriclans as in Hopi, but, crucially, while the system has been remodeled, the kin terms remain Tewa, with the exception of that for 'older sister', one of the two loan words from Hopi (Kroskrity 2000). So for the Arizona Tewa, the oft commented upon conservatism is specifically linguistic, and the obvious question is: why so?

The Arizona Tewa are a diasporic group among the Hopi, which has accommodated to their neighbors in many respects culturally, but hardly at all linguistically. Both the Tewa and the Hopi belong to the general Pueblo culture of Native Americans in the Southwest (Ortiz 1979), and a feature often noted by anthropologists of these societies is their extreme conservatism. A domain of cultural practices shared by all Pueblo societies are the secret religious rituals that take place in the secret chambers with ceremonial altars, the *kiva*. The Arizona Tewa would have had such practices before migrating to the Hopi and would have immediately recognised kindred religious rituals among the Hopi. But among all Pueblo societies, *kiva* ceremonies are marked by a specific register and restricted genres – *kiva* style of speaking. Such speech styles are highly valued in all Pueblo communities, indexical, as they are, of culturally highly valorised religious practices. These *kiva* speech styles are governed by four basic principles (Kroskrity 2001):

1. regulation by convention. There is a reliance on fixed 'canonised' prayers and song texts. Innovation is excluded, so that present practice recapitulates the past.

2. purism. There is an explicit and enforced proscription against the incorporation of foreign words or native slang.

3. strict compartmentalisation. The *kiva* style of speaking is kept isolated from other registers; it neither admits expressions from other styles nor is its use permitted outside of the *kiva*.

4. linguistic indexing of identity. The *kiva* speech style is an index of the social position of its speakers, e.g. ceremonial leaders.

The governing conventions for the *kiva* speech style provide a model for linguistic ideology among the Arizona Tewa generally. The four features noted above when extended to linguistic practices generally would account for the extreme conservatism

of the Arizona Tewa language in spite of three centuries of intense contact with the Hopi. The question then becomes: why is the language of the *kiva* so highly valorised and hence the model for Arizona Tewa speech generally?

While earlier ethnographers had described them as exemplars of egalitarian societies, more recent works on Pueblo communities (Levy 1992; Whiteley 1988) have reported a clear Native distinction between classes of what of might be loosely termed a noble/priestly/ruling class versus commoners (Hopi: *pavansinom* 'ruling people' versus *sukavuungsinom* 'common people'; Arizona Tewa *pa: t'owa* 'made people' versus *wɛ t'owa* 'weed people' (Kroskrity 2001)). In this system of stratification those clans who had jurisdiction over the most important *kiva* ceremonies also owned the most and the best land for farming. The *kiva* rituals in a sense rationalise the hegemony or symbolic domination (Bourdieu 1991) of the ruling clans and their privileged access to natural resources. It is important to remember that the Hopi and Arizona Tewa, while sedentary and dependent on the cultivation of corn for subsistence, reside in a high desert environment with intermittent and unreliable rainfall, and in this context the system of social stratification serves to 'manage scarcity, not abundance' (Levy 1992:156). In times of famine, the social stratification prioritised those most important to the ceremonial system, who concomitantly held the most productive land, and encouraged others to leave the community, with the least disruption to both the ceremonial system and crop productivity.

But, as in all hegemonies (Gramsci 1971), in normal conditions of adequate crop yields, the function of the ceremonial complex was to mask the system of social stratification, to lead all members of the community to believe that they had an equal share in the community's welfare. Successful rituals, although stratified, required the participation of many in the community, either as performers or supporters of the performance. In contributing to a particular clan's ceremonies, other clans expect similar support when their turn comes to stage them. The effect of this is the muting of clan ownership of particular rituals in favor of shared village responsibility. All of this is the source of the egalitarian ethic of Pueblo communities articulated by members and reported by earlier ethnographers. Note that the *kiva* ceremonials bulk large in the construction and justification of the local ideologies of both social stratification and egalitarianism, and it is therefore not surprising that the norms of language in these ceremonials would serve as the locus for the construction of Arizona Tewa linguistic ideology.

Consider this also for notions of identity, the construction of Arizona Tewa ideas about personhood. This is not a Lockean world where individuals build political institutions by contracts of free association; rather the political world was traditionally a ramification of the ceremonial one, and this is an arena where one's place is pre-assigned, both on an equal and a ranked basis. Whether one is a participant or a supporter/onlooker in the most highly ranked rituals, the ceremonies themselves are indexed by the *kiva* speech style. When one is functioning in the most highly valued roles in Arizona Tewa society, in essence an Arizona Tewa person in its most actualised form, one enacts oneself (i.e. one's self) in the *kiva* style of speaking. Further, given the overall similarity of *kiva* ceremonies and social structure for the

Arizona Tewa and the Hopi, it is exactly the use of the Arizona Tewa language itself which indexes the Arizona Tewa ritual complex and the Arizona Tewa person in contrast to the Hopi. There could be no stronger force guaranteeing the separation of the Arizona Tewa language from Hopi and its remarkable conservatism in the face of widespread convergence in other domains of culture. Nothing is truer than the Arizona Tewa aphorism, 'Our language is our life', a powerful restatement in indigenous terms of the Herderian equation.

3. Linguistic ideology in the Middle Sepik

Newton (1975:197), in profiling Sepik communities in Papua New Guinea, described them in the following terms: "the result of groups of people, under pressures of fighting, famine, or for other reasons, having moved about freely and regrouped as they could. Consequently no village is a monolithic unit. It is, rather, more or less stable congeries of clans having closer ties with each other than with those of other places." Thus, like the Arizona Tewa community, Sepik villages are formed by immigration of diasporic groups. But the Arizona Tewa community, while diasporic, is relatively homogeneous and clearly in Native terms ideologically opposed to the Hopi. This is not the case in the Sepik; as the above quote from Newton points out, each Sepik village is the result of numerous immigrations, and its clan structure, a recapitulation, albeit, as we shall see, a typically mythologised one, of the migration history. Although each individual village community is a unique amalgam of immigrant groups, due to its individual migration history, the overall effect of this pervasive pattern of population migrations is a largely homogenised Sepik culture, as the cultural practices common to fissioning communities are dispersed to new sites through emigration. Forge (1972) estimated 200 to be the optimum population of a Sepik village before internal conflict led to fission and emigration of some clans to new villages, and the oral histories of Sepik communities amply attest to this as the major demographic process in the region.

In this paper, I will concentrate on a subsection of the Sepik region, the Middle Sepik, in which the processes of diffusion have produced a more or less well delineated culture area. Within it, the history of migration has been rendered cosmological (see Keesing (1981) on 'celestialisation'), and, as such, provides a social charter for villages. The world is understood as being created by the activities of the ancestors as they migrated over land and rivers to individual village sites. These ancestors are totemic, creative spirit beings, and they are the focus of ritual and, ultimately, mundane interest, with any concern with actual distant historical figures tenuous at best. Because of the constant fission and reforming of villages along clan lines, the same basic cosmological beliefs and migratory schemas are shared across Middle Sepik villages, regardless of language spoken. Villages speaking Iatmul or Manambu of the Sepik language family and those speaking Yimas or Karawari of the Lower Sepik-Ramu family share the same cosmology and social structure regardless of the deep linguistic differences, a pattern repeated throughout the Sepik region (see Saxena, this volume, for a related situation in Kinaur, northern India). Within the region, there is no sense of inter-village solidarity based on shared linguistic allegiance; villages speaking the same

language may have closer cultural and social links to neighboring villages speaking a different language than to each other. It is the shared cosmology and linked social structure that bind the region together in spite of the very high linguistic diversity.

The various clans of the Middle Sepik villages have totemic ancestors who are not only their source, but also, through their activities along the migratory routes, the source of natural phenomena like the sun, moon, hills, trees and so forth, which are themselves totems of the various clans and therefore creative spirit beings. Thus, the world is not as it appears to ordinary uninitiated human perception; a particular tree, for instance, a black limbum palm, is not really as it appears, but a being, a totemic primordial spirit, in the form of a tree. Its true nature is only available to those with the proper ritual knowledge and power through initiation. The black limbum palm is a totem then of that clan whose totemic ancestors created it in the migratory myths, just like other natural phenomena, the sun, moon, river sections, etc. As the totemic ancestors of the clans migrated across the land and rivers they created the world and its objects, yet more totemic ancestors, laying out paths across the region. Map 1 (Telban 1998:72) shows the migration routes of the seven clan clusters of the Karawari speaking village, Ambonwari. The clans have highly diverse origins: Clan 1 from the Iatmul speaking area of the Middle Sepik River; Clan 2, from the Alamblak language region; Clans 2-5, from the Lower Sepik River region of Angoram and other Karawari speaking villages; Clan 6, from Yimas or the Arafundi speaking villages; and Clan 7, from the Upper Yuat River, from villages speaking either languages of the small Yuat family or Arafundi. Each of these clans has links and privileges, cosmological and mundane, e.g. trade, with clans in villages in their regions of origin, as well as various places along their migratory routes. The oral legends and songs of the migrations relate these origins and also the activities of the ancestors along the routes, providing a social charter of the rights of each clan over particular domains, objects and places, all of which were important figures in the activities of the migrating ancestors. Most important of all are names, public and secret, for the various totemic ancestors, their props and creations during their cosmological activity in fashioning the world. Knowledge of these names, particularly the secret ones, gives access to the spirit powers of the totems. These names do not actually refer to a totem; rather they instantiate them. The power of the name does not so much bring the totem into being, as they always exist; the spirit world of the totemic beings is the true nature of the world, just one unavailable to ordinary perception. Rather they allow the spirit of the name invoker and that of the totemic being to commingle, so that the invoker's power is augmented by being co-substantial with the totemic being (the Christian Eucharist provides a partial model here). Calling a name is a performative activity, which alters the being of the invoker, not a mere act of reference. Language is viewed in its primary function here as performative, and the classic Austinian distinction (Austin 1962) between performative and constative speech acts is eclipsed.

The cosmology and social structure of the Iatmul is the best documented among Middle Sepik cultures (Bateson 1932, 1958; Stanek 1982; Wassman 1991); their art as a visual representation of this cosmology is justly famous around the world among primitive art enthusiasts. Maps 2-3 provide the mythological routes of the totemic

ancestors of two of the clan groupings represented in the village of Kandingei (Wassmann 1991:298-306): Ngama of the earth (*nyame*) moiety and Posugo of the sky (*nyawi*) moiety. All Iatmul clans have their origin in the same place, Gaikorobi; the ancestors of the Iatmul quite probably did originate here historically, as the Iatmul language and the language of Gaikorobi village are clearly closely related. But from this point, the mythological migrations of the clans diverge greatly. The Ngama moved westward through the grassy country of the Sawos speakers, crossed the Sepik River and traveled along Lake Chambri, first along the eastern side, occupied by speakers of the unrelated Lower Sepik-Ramu language Chambri, and then along the western side populated by people of the Yerakai language. They then crossed the Sepik River again up to the village of Burui, where a close relative of Iatmul is spoken; and then followed the northern bank of the Sepik River to the village of Avatip, which currently speaks another Sepik family language, Manambu. The Posugo, on the other hand, first migrated eastward, through the grasslands and swamps north of the Sepik River and then crossed it at the site of the present most downriver village of Iatmul speakers, Tambunum. In earlier times this area was certainly not Iatmul speaking, but rather belonged to a completely unrelated and typologically very different Lower Sepik-Ramu language, probably either Karawari or Angoram, and this fact is still the source of conflict over land rights with the Karawari speaking village Masantanai to the south. The Posugo clan cluster then continued westward along the south bank of the Sepik River, through the territory of speakers of Lower Sepik-Ramu languages, down the Korosmeri River into the swampy blackwater region and foothills south of Lake Chambri, territory of speakers of languages of the Sepik Hill family, very distantly related to Iatmul. They then passed along the eastern side of Lake Chambri, where is spoken the Lower Sepik-Ramu language, Chambri, now cut off from the other Lower Sepik-Ramu languages by Iatmul, and then crossed the Sepik River again and passed through the grassy country north of the river populated by closely related Burui speakers. Remember that all Iatmul villages have parallel mythological migrations for their clans. And not just these: as we saw above, the same pattern is shared by all Middle Sepik villages, even those speaking languages completely unrelated to Iatmul, like Karawari or Yimas. The notion of foundation by migrations thus is rendered cosmological. All villages in the region, regardless of language background, itself an unstable fact over time, have overlapping migration myths and hence parallel social structures and ceremonial lives sanctioned by such myths. Ritual complexes, moiety organisations, songs and even names of totemic ancestors have diffused over the whole region.

This mythology has powerful implications for Native conceptualisations of personal identity. The person sees himself (and I am talking about a male ego here; this complex of myths and rituals is very much associated with cults of initiated men) as a member of a clan and bears names to which he is entitled as a member of a clan. The clans are not village-bound, but through the complex of myths, rituals and the activities of totemic ancestors, are in the very nature of the cosmos itself. The names a man bears are those of the totemic ancestors, and, indeed, through them, he is of the same nature as these totemic ancestors. His place in the world and the kinds of relationships he

enters into with others come not through some contract he forms with them, but rather it is largely ordained by his place in the cosmic system. The kinds of exchange relationships, secular and ritual, he and his clan have with others are set by the activities of the mythological ancestors, and, to a large extent, the advantages and disadvantages of these relationships and, hence, the relative rankings of his clan in ritual status, are predetermined. While Middle Sepik villages are remorselessly egalitarian in their secular dealings, the ritual world is quite hierarchical: clans whose myths provide a charter for exchange relationships with ritually powerful villages are ranked higher in the ritual system of the male cults than those not so advantaged (Harrison 1990b). Note that unlike the Arizona Tewa, this ritual ranking does not carry over into preferential control of natural resources. One cause of this is undoubtedly ecological; unlike those dwellers of a horticulturally marginal high desert environment, the Middle Sepik villagers live in a zone of great abundance of protein food in the form of fish and shellfish and also extensive stands of sago palms to provide carbohydrates. There is no need to find a celestial justification for the allocation of scarce food resources, hence the system of ritual ranking remains confined to that domain, although this is now starting to shift under pressures of modernisation.

Because the clans are defined relationally in terms of exchange potential, both in ongoing exchange activities and by the activities of their totemic ancestors as they passed through the lands where these exchange partners now reside, exchange relationships, secular and ritual, current and primordial, are implicated integrally in the definition of the person. The person is not an individual, but very much a dividual, an intersection of all these lines of his multiple exchange relationships (Strathern 1988; Wagner 1991). Because the person is of the same nature as the totemic ancestors whose names he bears, themselves indexical of real and potential exchange relationships, the notion of genealogical descent becomes effaced. Conceiving of a person as a unique point on a line of genealogical descent, as we in the West are wont to do, a practice reflected in our use of surnames plus given names, is a completely arbitrary sectioning in Middle Sepik terms, both temporally, in the substantial identification of person and totemic ancestors, and spatially, because of the diffusion of lines of exchange throughout the cosmos. Thus, neither the familial kin-based understanding of personhood in Western culture nor the free rational contractor of Western political and economic thought have correspondents in Middle Sepik conceptualisations.

Let me turn now to how all this plays out in Middle Sepik linguistic ideology. First, as mentioned above, with reference to the performative force of names, Middle Sepik peoples conceive of language as action, as a way to get things done. All of these cultures make a distinction between what can be loosely glossed as 'understanding/care' and 'will' (Harrison 1990a; Kulick 1992; Telban 1998). The passive act of hearing is associated with the former, but active speaking, getting one's way through language, with the latter. In the Yimas language the verb *malak-* 'talk' is polysemous with a second meaning 'quarrel'; Harrison (1990a) reports an identical polysemy in the unrelated and geographically non-contiguous language, Manambu. The Iatmul verb *wa-* 'say, call' is linked in couplets of the ritual language with *ngla-* 'weep' (Wassmann 1991). Thus, Middle Sepik thought fixes upon the active, speaking, doing

role of language, transparently. Its performance, rather than the more passive listening, comprehending side, is a site for ideological formation. Understanding, care, empathy is linked to the ear, and femininity, but assertion, will, autonomy, in essence 'penetration', is tied to the mouth, and masculinity; speaking is metaphorically linked with hitting and striking and thereby copulating.

There is no premium put on language purism in Middle Sepik thought. The Middle Sepik is a diasporic region writ large, and importantly, it is the mythological processes which took place during these pandemic diasporas which are the grounds for the definition of personhood. Unlike the Arizona Tewa, whose identity is largely fashioned in terms that existed prior to their diaspora, in the language they brought with them from their former settlement, Middle Sepik peoples have no interest, understanding or articulation of a time prior to the diaspora. It is the details of the diaspora of his totemic ancestors that make a person what he is. Because of the cosmological nature of the primordial migrations and the resulting shared rituals, beliefs, names and social structures across the region regardless of language, it is these rather than the language spoken which are the major sites for the construction of ideologies of personhood. Given the local ideology of language as the act of speaking to exhibit will and the ideology of the person as a member of a clan defined as a diffuse network of exchange relationships, cross-village and often cross-language, always seeking to augment his ritual power, it is not surprising that, in contrast to the Arizona Tewa, Middle Sepik communities are linguistically open, constantly taking linguistic elements from neighboring groups.

We see the workings of these ideologies in clear relief in the ritual languages of Middle Sepik communities. All Middle Sepik villages have male initiation cults, and central to these is the learning of sacred songs and myths and long lists of names for totems. The last is no mean feat: Bateson (1932, 1958) estimated that a fully initiated Iatmul man knew something on the order of 10,000 complex polysyllabic totemic names! Many of these names are secret, known only to initiates of a given clan, and particularly efficacious through identification with ancestral totems in gaining spiritual power. Hence, they are highly sought after by other clans (Harrison 1990b). The language of this ceremonial knowledge of the male cults is quite parallel to *kiva* speech in Arizona Tewa culture. But for the reasons outlined above, rather than being a display of linguistic purism, the ritual language of the cults exhibits many foreign elements. Let me illustrate from the domain of names, undoubtedly the single most important domain of ritual language in Middle Sepik cultures. The Iatmul names of totemic ancestors and their props in the migration mythology is replete with items taken from neighboring, but unrelated Lower Sepik-Ramu languages, possibly Chambri or Karawari (and the Chambri names for totemic ancestors are in turn often taken from Iatmul (Gewertz 1983)). Consider the following pairs of names for the primordial crocodile who created the land (Wassmann 1991):

(1)   (a)   **Andi**-kabak-**meli**

                earth-crocodile-Masc

(b)   Kɨpmɑ-kɑbɑk-**meli**

        earth-crocodile-Masc

The bits of these names in bold are of Lower Sepik provenance: *andi* is the word for 'ground/land' in all six Lower Sepik languages as well as Proto-Lower Sepik. Note that it occurs as part of a word, a name, probably through compounding. The suffix *-meli* occurs on names in Lower Sepik languages, where it is associated with masculine gender; it appears, for instance, in its Yimas form in the native name for the village, *Tamprak-mal,* Tamprak being a central founding totemic ancestor in its mythology. For a second example, consider the names that three different clans have for the oar which was used to propel the canoe in primordial migrations of their totemic ancestors (Wassman 1991):

(2)   (a)   Yambun-**ka-wi-maŋgɨ**   (Ngama clan)

                upper course of Sepik River-go by water-up-Female

        (b)   Wɑmbɨ-ŋgusɑ   (Nyaura clan)

                wild limbum palm (totem)-oar

        (c)   Yaman-ŋgusa   (Ndane clan)

                Borassus palm (totem)-oar

Note the first part of each name consists of a name, common or totemic, of an important totem for that clan. For (2) (b) or (c) this is just compounded to the word for 'oar' to produce the totemic name for the respective clans, but (a) is constructed quite differently. The common Iatmul term for the course of the Sepik river above Iatmul country is sequenced with three Lower Sepik forms: the verb root *ka-* (Yimas *ŋga-*) 'go by water', which is contrasted in Lower Sepik languages with 'go by land' (Yimas *-mpu-*); the morpheme *wi*, meaning 'up', which is a verbal prefix in Yimas; and the feminine suffix *-mmaŋgɨ,* sourced in a Lower Sepik suffix marking nouns denoting female humans, Yimas *-maŋ* and Karawari *-ma < *-maŋ*. What is particularly striking in (2) (a) is the borrowing of Lower Sepik bound forms to build up a Iatmul totemic name.

This valorisation of foreign elements in effective language also shows up in the secular language of commercial trading exchange relationships, and in a quite remarkable way. For the cosmological reasons discussed above, all Middle Sepik villages engage heavily in commercial trade relationships with neighboring villages. Even if a village could theoretically be self-sufficient subsistence-wise, it is not, but is engaged in a long term intergenerational trading relationship with neighbors. Many items were traded traditionally, but within the riverine Middle Sepik region, the main trade transaction was the carbohydrate staple sago for the protein staple fish (Gewertz 1983). The protein staple fish was, of course, more highly valued, and those villages with ecologically advantageous riverine or lacustrine environments for catching fish, such as the Iatmul, Chambri, Yimas, etc, would exchange that for sago produced by their comparatively disadvantaged grasslands or rainforest/swampland dwelling neighbors.

The language of these secular exchanges was not normally the native language of either party, but a pidgin language using the language of the fish producers as superstratum. Such trade-based pidgin languages have been reported for the Iatmul, Manambu and Yimas, but only in the last case is there any significant documentation of the pidgin language(s). Note again the lack of interest in linguistic purism and the valorisation of the foreign; these pidgins are amalgams of two or more languages. While Yimas may be the dominant lexifier, the superstrate, of these pidgin languages, they all contain elements of the other, substrate, languages spoken by the sago suppliers.

Yimas village traditionally had their main trading relationships with villages speaking three languages, the closely related Karawari, and the unrelated Arafundi and Alamblak; these last two also unrelated to each other. A trade pidgin was used in all three trade encounters, and this fact is particularly notable in the case of the Karawari speaking villages. Yimas and Karawari are closely related languages, on a par with Dutch and German, and nearly mutually intelligible. Indeed, Karawari speakers within earshot could often understand much of our conversation when I was speaking Yimas to friends during my fieldtrips. Needs of intelligibility did not mandate the use of a pidgin in Yimas-Karawari trade encounters. The trade encounter itself did that; the pidgin language was an index of this kind of secular exchange between villages. The pidgins themselves were the property of the clans that had the rights to trade with these villages. They were not publicly available to all. They were not actually secret because they were used in public trade encounters, but they were the birthright of individual clans, and passed on by fathers to their sons like other items of the clan's birthright. Table 1 provides a short comparative lexicon between Yimas and two of its lexified pidgins, one for the Arafundi speaking village of Auwim, and the other for the Alamblak speaking village of Chimbut (the Alamblak data are drawn from Williams (2000); the rest are data from my fieldwork):

Table 1: Lexicons of Yimas-based Pidgins

Gloss	Yimas	Arafundi Pidgin	Alamblak Pidgin
'man'	payum	payum	yenmɨsɨnɑwt
'woman'	ŋaykum	aykum	yerimaŋwi
'village'	num	kumbut	yimuŋga
'betelnut'	patn	patn	yabu
'pig'	numpran	numbrayn	yimbian
'sago'	tupwi	tupwi	sɨpi
'cassowary'	awa	karima	awa
'basket'	impram	yamban	yamban
'water'	ɑrɨm	yim	mɨrɑy
'tobacco'	yaki	yaki	yagi
'canoe'	kay	kay	kay
'flyingfox'	kumpwi	ɑrɨŋgum	kumbut
'I'	ama	ama	apia
'you'	mi	mi	mi
'he/she'	mɨn	mɨn	masaŋgum
'talk'	malak-	mariawk-	mariak-
'give'	ŋa-	asa- (<Y aca- 'send')	seri-

Both pidgin languages exhibit a mix of Yimas and substrate lexical elements. The Yimas percentage is higher in the Arafundi pidgin and significantly lower in the Alamblak pidgin. The non-Yimas lexicon in Arafundi pidgin is of Arafundi origin, but most of the non-Yimas forms in the Alamblak pidgin are not in fact from Alamblak, but from Karawari, and identical to the lexical forms in the Yimas-Karawari pidgin. It is not clear whether the poorly attested Yimas-Karawari pidgin should be classified as a Yimas based pidgin or a Karawari based one, as the Karawari sourced lexicon does seem dominant in it. While the Alamblak pidgin does seem to be based on the Yimas-Karawari one and hence heavily on Karawari sourced lexicon, it was used in Yimas-Alamblak trade encounters and has been relexified in the direction of Yimas, and this justifies treating it as a Yimas-based pidgin for our purposes here, although this complex lexical mix is again a salutary lesson in the unimportance of ideologies of linguistic purism in the Middle Sepik.

Like all pidgins, the Yimas-based ones show structural simplification from the superstrate language. Yimas (and Karawari) are morphologically complex polysynthetic languages with multiple agreement. There is no case marking for core

argument NPs; rather their function is indicated by verbal agreement. The alignment system for agreement is person-based, essentially nominative-dative for first and second persons and ergative-absolutive-dative for third person. Consider the transitive verbs in (3)

(3)   (a)   (i)   pu-**ka**-tay   (ii)   pu-**ŋa**-tay
                     3PL O-1SG A-see   3PL A-1SG O-see
                     'I saw them'   'They saw me'

      (b)   (i)   pu-**n**-tay   (ii)   **na**-mpu-tay
                     3PL O-3SG A-see   3SG O-3PL A-see
                     'He saw them'   'They saw him'

The first person singular forms in (3) (a) show distinct forms *ka-* 1SG A for the actor of the transitive verb *tay-* 'see' and *ŋa-* 1SG O for the object. This is nominative-accusative alignment. The third person form of (3) (b) also distinguishes a prefix *n-* 3SG A for the actor of the transitive verb from a form *na-* 3SG O for the objcct, but the latter form is identical to the prefix for subjects of intransitive verbs, eg, **na**-*wa-t* 3SG S-go-PERF 'he went', and this demonstrates an ergative-absolutive alignment for this person.

       Turning now to ditransitive verbs, consider the examples in (4):

(4)   (a)   **na**-mpu-**ŋa**-tkam-t
              3SG O-3PL A-1SG D-show-PERF
              'They showed it to me'

      (b)   **na**-mpu-tkam-r-**(n)akn**
              3SG O-3PL A-show-PERF-3SG D
              'They showed it to him.'

Note that the additional argument of the ditransitive verb *tkam-* 'show' is indicated by a third agreement affix, a dative affix. For first person singular its form is *ŋa-*, identical to the object prefix in (3) (a) (ii), hence the label nominative-dative for this alignment. But for the third person singular, there is a distinctive dative suffix, *(n)akn* 3SG D, a three way contrast in this person, hence, an ergative-absolutive-dative alignment.

       All this complex agreement morphology is lost in both pidgins, which like pidgins generally, are essentially isolating languages. However, the two pidgins signal core grammatical functions in different ways, and neither of these involves the use of fixed word order so typical of pidgins elsewhere in the world. None of the source languages employs word order to signal core grammatical relations, so this was not a strategy available in the local linguistic ecology. But even more surprising, perhaps, is the fact that the systems for indicating core grammatical relations in the two pidgins are also not found in any of the source languages, although models of these are found in

other languages of the Middle Sepik, such as Iatmul or Manambu. Consider the system for marking core grammatical relations in the Arafundi pidgin, exemplified in:

(5)	(a)	mɨn	tupwi		ama	namban	asa-nan
		3SG	sago		1SG	DAT	give-NON FUT
		'He gave me sago'					
	(b)	tupwi		mɨn		am-bi	ta-nan
		sago		3SG		eat-DEP	PROG-NON FUT
		'He's eating sago'					
	(c)	ama	mɨn		namban	krɑtɨkɨ-nɑn	
		1SG	3SG		DAT	hit-NON FUT	
		'I hit him'					

The postposition *namban* DAT comes from the Yimas allative postpostion *nampan* 'toward'. In (5) (a), with the ditransitive verb *asa-* 'give' from Yimas *aca-* 'send', this postposition is used with the recipient or dative argument, a necessary disambiguating function because ditranstive verbs have two obligatory animate core arguments, the actor and the recipient, and overt marking is necessary to distinguish one from the other. In (5) (b) the two core arguments of the transitive verb *am-* 'eat' differ in animacy; the actor is animate as usual, and the object, inanimate, In such cases no overt disambiguating marker is necessary or appears. However, in (5) (c), both core arguments of the transitive verb, *krɑɲkɨ-* 'hit' from Yimas *kratk-* 'fight', are animate; in such cases the postposition *namban* DAT, which marks recipients of ditransitive verbs, typically animate core arguments but non-actors, is pressed into service for signaling the animate object. Neither source language has this feature; both use verb agreement to express animate objects of transitive verbs and recipients of ditransitive verbs. Yimas uses verb agreement in the alignments illustrated in (3) and (4), while Arafundi has a single set of agreement affixes for objects of transitive verbs and recipients of ditransitive verbs regardless of person. In Arafundi the object/theme of ditransitive verbs has neither verb agreement nor overt case/postpositional marking, but appears as a bare NP. So, while the germ of the idea of treating animate objects of transitive verbs and recipients of ditransive verbs alike exists in the source languages, in the form of the nominative-dative split for non-third persons in Yimas and the general verbal agreement pattern of Arafundi, the actual mechanism employed in the pidgin is not a feature of either language. Nor is it a feature of Alamblak or Karawari. But it is typical of Middle Sepik languages like Iatmul and Manambu. The Iatmul culture is of the highest prestige in the Middle Sepik region, and they also had regular trading exchange relationships with both the Karawari and the Yimas (both villages have clans whose place of origin is the territory along the Sepik River now occupied by Iatmul speaking villages). The language of these trading encounters in precontact times is reported by Yimas villagers to have been yet another pidgin language, but this one based on Iatmul. Unfortunately, although mentioned by earlier ethnographers (Bateson 1932), this pidgin seems to have died out without being documented, but it seems likely that it would

have made use of some of the basic structures of vernacular Iatmul, such as its use of the dative case suffix to indicate animate objects of transitive verbs. As Yimas speakers in precontact times must have had some knowledge of this Iatmul pidgin for their trade encounters with Iatmul speakers, who, it must be remembered, were the dominant partner in these exchanges, it would not be surprising if they adopted some features of Iatmul based pidgin into the Yimas based ones. This again demonstrates the openness of these Middle Sepik speech communities to foreign linguistic elements, especially from a high status culture like Iatmul.

But the Yimas pidgins are clearly local developments and not just relexifications with Yimas (or Karawari) items of a prior Iatmul based pidgin. If that was the case, we would expect the grammatical structures of the Artafundi and the Alamblak pidgins to be very similar. But nothing could be further from the truth; they are actually quite different, and this argues that each are local adaptations to the ecology of the languages in their individual trade contact situations. This difference is obvious in the indication of grammatical relations. Consider the examples in (6) (data from Williams (2000)):

(6)　　　(a)　　masaŋgum　　nakn　nambu-seri-kn　　　yagut

　　　　　　　　3SG　　　　　DAT　AGR-give-TNS　　　bag

　　　　　　　　'I gave a (woven) bag to you/him'

　　　　　(b)　　apia　　nakn　nambu-seri-kn　　　yagi

　　　　　　　　1SG　　DAT　AGR-give-TNS　　　tobacco

　　　　　　　　'You/he give tobacco to me'

　　　　　(c)　　mi　　nambu-kwon-kn　　　yagi

　　　　　　　　2SG　AGR-get-TNS　　　　tobacco

　　　　　　　　'You get tobacco'

　　　　　(d)　　apia　nambu-da-kn

　　　　　　　　1SG　AGR-wait-TNS

　　　　　　　　'I wait for you/him'

The prefix *nambu-* in the Alamblak pidgin is an invariable affix that appears on verbs and comes from the Yimas transitive verb pronominal agreement prefix sequence *na-mpu-* 3SG O-3PL A- 'they ____ him' (see (3) (b) (ii)). (6) (a) and (b) illustrate the ditransitive cases, with (6) (a) an example of a first person actor giving to a second or third person recipient, and (6) (b), a second or third person actor giving to a first person recipient. Only the recipient argument appears overtly, and it is always marked with a postposition *nakn* DAT, homophonous with the possessive postposition in this pidgin and derived from a sequence of the Yimas possessive suffix plus the noun class agreement suffix for class V SG, *-na-kn* POSS- V SG. (6) (c) illustrates the case of a transitive verb where the actor is animate, but the object, inanimate. As in the Arafundi pidgin, in this combination, no overt marking is used, as it is unnecessary for

disambiguation. The complication occurs where there is possible ambiguity, where there are two animate arguments for a transitive verb, as in (6) (d). The only possible meaning of this sentence is a first person actor acting on a second or third person object. The higher ranked participant is necessarily assigned to the higher role, hence a hint of a direct-inverse system. Unfortunately, the scanty data available on the Alamblak pidgin do not provide an example of a true inverse situation with a transitive verb, e.g. a second or third person actor acting on a first person object. All the published data with this configuration involve ditransitve verbs, as in (6) (b), but these are not really comparable because all recipients regardless of person are marked with *nakn* DAT/POSS. But again a structure like this is present in none of the source languages. Alamblak like Arafundi uses verbal agreement to indicate both animate objects of transitive verbs and recipients of ditransitive verbs, a suffix in final position on a verb following the actor agreement suffix. But the Engan language to the south, Iniai, with whom the Alamblak traditionally had trading relations and for which encounters there appears to have been yet another undocumented pidgin language (though see Williams (1995) on an Arafundi-Enga based pidgin), does, like Engan languages generally, have a case enclitic that marks both possessors and benefactives, and its form is *na*, homophonous with the Yimas possessive suffix. It is easy to imagine how in a complex multilingual mix calquing from this language or perhaps the pidgin used in trade encounters with these people would see the Yimas possessive suffix (plus its obligatory agreement suffix, in this case the allomorph with the widest distribution – *kn* V SG) being extended to indicate benefactives and ultimately recipients, which are closely related semantically to benefactives. If this scenario is true (and no others are forthcoming at the moment), it is a striking example of how a structural pattern in a neighboring language, to which the Yimas themselves seem to have little direct trading contact traditionally, through diffusion mandated by the cosmologically ordained network of exchanges, comes to be incorporated in a pidgin language used by a clan of the Yimas in their trade with the Alamblak.

4. Conclusion

This paper has investigated the cluster of beliefs that surround language and the language practices and policies that result from these beliefs in three regions: Europe, the American Southwest and the Middle Sepik of Papua New Guinea. I have drawn a correlation between these beliefs and local practices and ideologies of personhood in these cultures. The concept of identity in European societies largely follows from ideological constructions in the political and economic spheres, and, in particular, a guiding principle of contracts entered into by rational agents exercising their rights of free association. But in Arizona Tewa and Middle Sepik societies, concepts of identity are mainly projected out of the ritual sphere: the organizing principle here is where does one stand in a social order ordained by cosmology and the work of the mythical ancestors, an order continually re-presented and given authority in the ongoing ceremonial life of the ritual sphere. In European societies, language choices is about constructing identity choices, and linguistic purism has been largely about building a nation, a *Volk*, out of the multiple and often conflicting claims of identity, strengthening the bonds of association. Among the Arizona Tewa, identity is pre-given, so language

purism is about the preservation of this identity in the face of challenges from the majority Hopi. The language norms of the most valorised source of differentiation from the Hopi, *kiva* speech, a style highly resistant to importation of foreign elements throughout the Southwest, then becomes the source of speech norms for the community generally. In the Middle Sepik, identity is also pre-given, but linguistic purism is a non-issue because identity is not substantive, but a place of intersection of primordial migrations of totemic ancestors and the resulting exchange relationships throughout the region, one which is highly multilingual. In the Middle Sepik, linguistic openness rather than purism is valued, a reflection of the cosmological links a clan has with related clans of a different language background diffused over the region. Note that the fact of being a diasporic community and the manifold effects this has on identity has no predictive effect in attitudes towards language: the Arizona Tewa is a classic Herderian community (albeit for completely different reasons than the nation-states of 19th century Europe), and the Middle Sepik what may be termed anti-Herderian communities. In order to explain these differing outcomes, we need a rich understanding of the ethnographic background in which these respective linguistic ideologies have been constructed. The case studies in this paper present a powerful argument for the central role ethnography must play in any comprehensive description and documentation of a language.

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7. Appendix

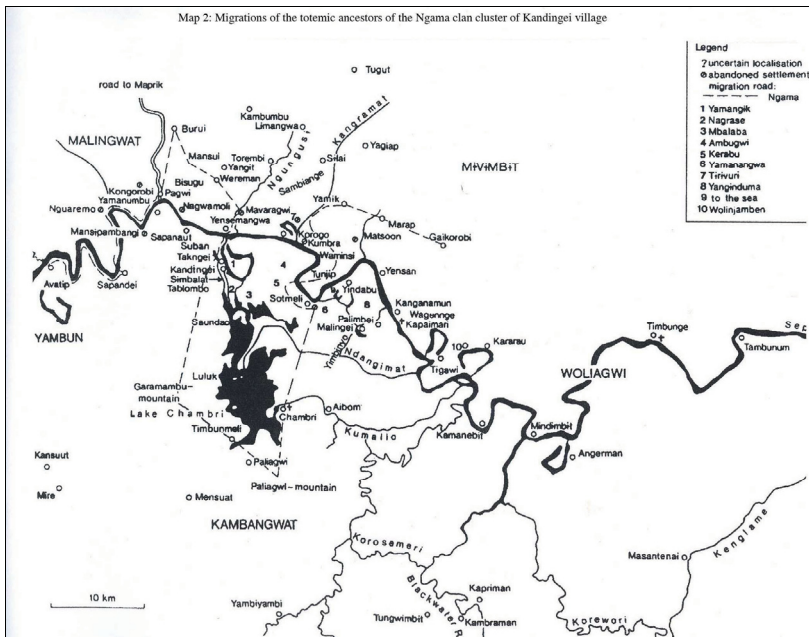*Map 1: Migrations of the Totemic Ancestors of the clans of the Village of Ambonwari*
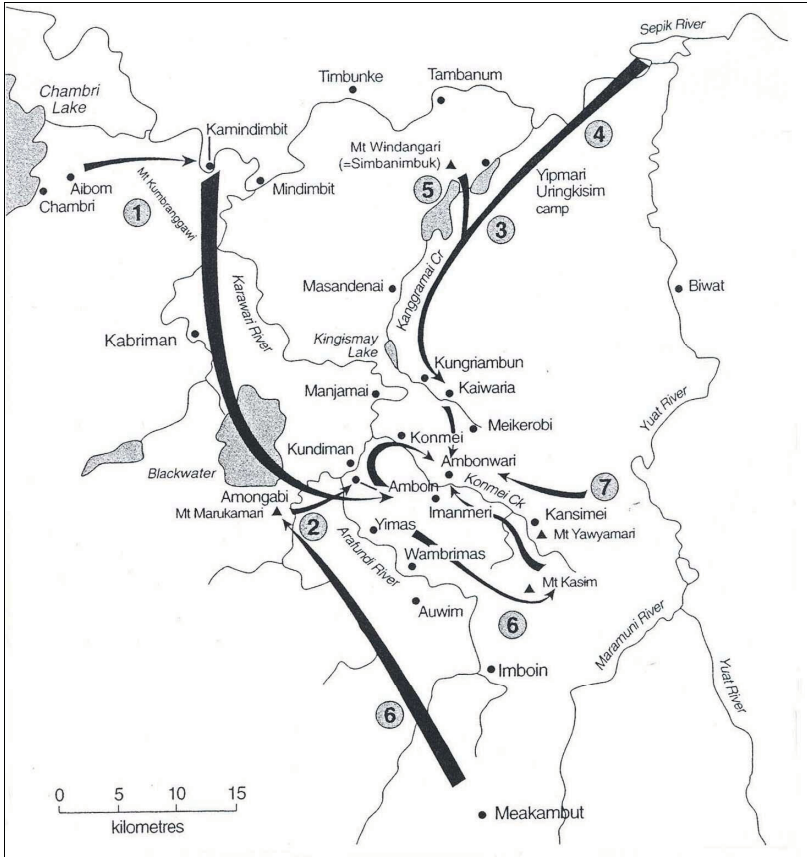
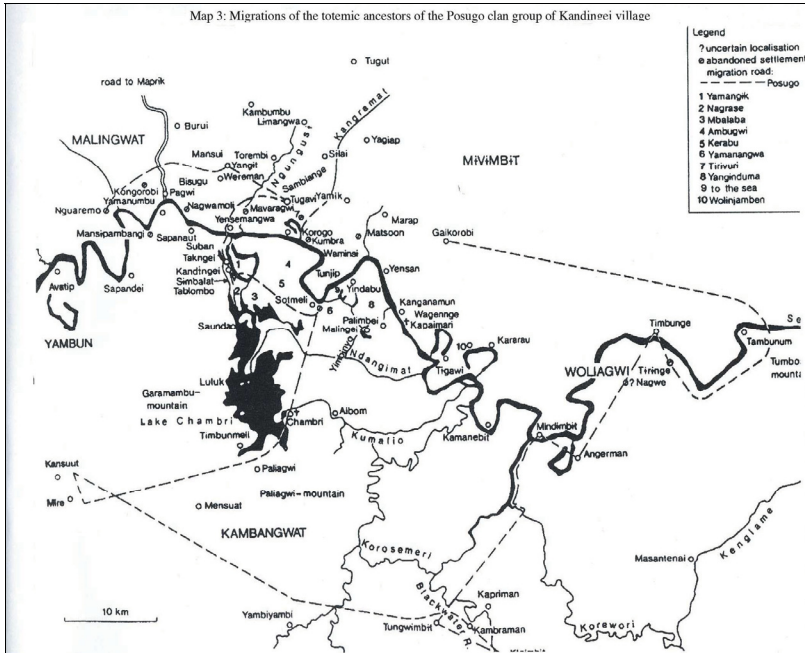MAP 1: Migrations of the Totemic Ancestors of the clans of the Village of Ambonwari

① Crocodile and Bird of Paradise Clans
② Wallaby Clan
③ Cassowary Clan
④ Eagle-1 Clan
⑤ Pig-1 Clan
⑥ Eel Clan
⑦ Pig-2 and Eagle-2 Clans

8.

Map 2: Migrations of the totemic ancestors of the Ngama clan cluster of Kandingei Village

Map 2: Migrations of the totemic ancestors of the Ngama clan cluster of Kandingei village

Map 3: Migrations of the totemic ancestors of the Ngama clan cluster of Kandingei village