

# Fighting Stigma and Discrimination in Minoritised Languages



# Fighting Stigma and Discrimination in Minoritised Languages:

*A Worldwide Sample*

Edited by

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A Worldwide Sample

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*To the speakers of minoritised languages worldwide,  
as a reminder that 'minority' does not mean being  
on their own.*



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## PREFACE

The present volume was born out of a shared urgency to understand and learn potential ways to resist the forces that endanger our world's minoritised languages. In every corner of the globe, it has now become strikingly easy to encounter speech communities that are experiencing massive pressure to forsake their native languages in favour of one or more so-called majority languages. Language loss is certainly not an isolated incident, but rather the unfortunate outcome of long-standing discrimination, colonial ideologies, extractive economies, and sociopolitical marginalisation, which eventually push the speakers of minoritised languages to abandon them.

There is a popular misconception—one that undoubtedly helps maintain the status of majority languages and cultures—whereby some languages are perceived as *intrinsically* more powerful than others. As such, the minoritised counterparts of these are often framed as destined to *naturally* fade—and, therefore, they would appear to require no intervention in the face of an 'inevitable' process. This assumption, however, could not be further from the truth.

In our day and time, the vast bulk of languages worldwide are systematically being pushed out, sidelined, and insidiously devalued by political systems or ideological constructs that, more often than not, happen to identify with a majority language. Languages other than that of 'the system' are commonly rendered invisible in school curricula, being equally absent from justice and medical settings, and largely derided or blatantly dismissed on popular fronts—even, rather worryingly, *within* their own communities.

And yet, in the face of exclusion and erasure, some of these languages continue to resist, persist, and even thrive. A few of these minoritised speech communities have gone to great lengths to reclaim their prestige and ultimately secure access to high-prestige domains such as formal education and the media. Others have barely endured in popular culture (e.g., in the form of songs or folktales), in family kitchens, and in community gatherings—and, in best-case scenarios, have more recently secured a modest presence online or in public spaces. Whatever the case, for speakers in minoritised communities, languages are not merely means of

communication—they are lived heritage, spoken with love, defended with passion, and carried forward with resilience in often hostile environments.

With *Fighting Stigma and Discrimination in Minoritised Languages: A Worldwide Sample*, I have sought to bring together scholars, community members, and activists who have dedicated their work and personal lives to analysing and confronting linguistic prejudice. Across continents and contexts, contributors to this volume share a strong commitment to linguistic justice, understood here as a form of social justice. Their chapters trace the historical and contemporary mechanisms whereby languages eventually become minoritised, how stigma attaches to their everyday use, and ultimately—and, perhaps, most importantly—how the loss thereof may be challenged, rejected, or even subverted in a handful of cases.

This volume therefore features a wide range of case studies—from classrooms in urban settings to populations in more rural environments, from policy documents to oral history—that collectively shed light on how language minoritisation processes operate, how these can be contested and even reversed, and which potential paths become available once languages begin to be addressed not as a problem to be solved, but rather as a human right to be protected.

As a result, this book is structured into three interconnected sections that seek to concurrently reflect analytical coherence and logical thematic progression. To begin, Part I (‘Navigating language hierarchies: Stigma, identity, and everyday use’) focuses on the lived experience of language stigma, in addition to the array of strategies speakers tend to deploy while navigating and—most relevantly here—*negotiating* its presence in everyday interactions. From a robust analytical lens, these first chapters blend quantitative data with first-hand speaker accounts and much-needed critical reflection.

Craig Alan Volker opens the section with an examination of the proverbially complex (socio)linguistic landscape of Papua New Guinea, where the absence of official language policy results in what the scholar intriguingly and thoughtfully terms a ‘non-policy of benign neglect.’ Far from anecdotal, the country’s current policy vacuum appears to allow exclusionary hierarchies to flourish unchecked. Elena Kkese follows with a rigorous quantitative study that investigates code-switching in Greek-speaking Cyprus, ultimately exploring how these speakers have learnt to navigate a diglossic context heavily shaped by social class, education, and colonial legacy. This chapter foregrounds the complexity of the language-identity interface in multilingual settings, which in turn illustrates how code-switching simultaneously reflects and challenges social norms. Maura Velázquez-Castillo then turns to Guaraní in Paraguay through a vivid

portrait of a language that still faces social marginalisation despite constitutional recognition, revealing the limits of legal protection without systemic cultural and institutional change. Part I closes with Claudia Elena Menéndez Fernández's study of young speakers of Asturian, whose experiences of identity and belonging are shaped by conflicting ideologies, national and regional politics, and emotional attachment to a language that is all too often socially undervalued.

Part II ('Margins of survival: Language endangerment and acts of determination') turns readers' attention to the fragile landscape of language preservation, where minoritisation and loss certainly loom—but so does hope. The chapters in this section engage directly with the intersections of language and power by tracing how policies, institutions, and deeply ingrained linguistic injustice have gradually led to the erosion of the ecology of minoritised languages. In so doing, their authors illuminate the resilience and determination of speaker communities worldwide.

First, Maria Reina Bastardas i Rufat offers a rare window onto the case of Friulian, a lesser-studied Romance language whose historical marginalisation within Italy has gone largely unnoticed even within the field of Romance linguistics. Her chapter thoughtfully invites readers to consider how academic and institutional neglect can end up reinforcing invisibility. Focusing on the Basque-speaking context, Larraitz Ariznabarreta provides a compelling account of language activism, revealing strategic pragmatism and ideological negotiation as the underpinnings of one of the most successful—and sustained—language revitalisation initiatives in Europe. Drawing from both institutional data and activist narratives, Ariznabarreta skilfully captures the ongoing tensions that arise at the crossroads of state-supported normalisation and grassroots resistance.

At this point in the second section, Shaawano Chad Uran's contribution introduces a distinct critical voice, as he offers a powerful reflection on the Anishinaabe language and the painful legacy of internalised shame among its speakers. This chapter serves as a poignant reminder that language loss is not merely a sociolinguistic phenomenon, but it often also evolves into deeply emotional trauma that is passed down from one generation to the next. Finally, Kleber Naula Yautibug brings us into mid-twentieth-century Andean Ecuador, where Protestant educational networks—primarily established by US missionaries—played an unexpected role in shaping the linguistic practices of Kichwa speakers. Through archival research and testimonies pertaining to his own family, he thoroughly reconstructs the

historical moment in which native language, religion, and ethnic identity eventually intersected and converged in a myriad of complex ways.

As the final section, Part III (‘Resistance and the reimagining of linguistic futures’) shifts the focus from survival to transformation. These last—but certainly no less significant—chapters explore how speakers and institutions can be effectively mobilised to build fairer and more inclusive outcomes in minoritised speech communities. Along these lines, Alà Baylac Ferrer and Carla Ferrerós Pagès examine the current sociolinguistic status of Catalan across states, reflecting on what it means today to defend a language that—despite varying degrees of institutional recognition—remains consistently endangered by most measures. Their chapter outlines priority courses of action and specific areas for intervention—including education policy and media representation—ultimately calling for coordinated efforts and solidarity in revitalisation initiatives.

Continuing the examination of ongoing challenges to linguistic equity, Kole Odotola offers a unique portrait of Yoruba in Nigeria, where colonial ideologies still cast long shadows over language use and sociolinguistic attitudes. In so doing, Odotola advocates for a radical reassessment of African Indigenous languages within their respective education systems, challenging some of the dominant conceptions of modernity that continue to contribute to the marginalisation of Yoruba. Finally, the volume culminates in Rajiv Ranjan and Fred Poole’s exploration of AI and its implications for Hindi and the multilingual mosaic of present-day India. This chapter offers both a warning and a possibility—while AI technologies may exacerbate existing linguistic inequalities, they also appear to hold potential for the preservation and promotion of linguistic diversity when developed and utilised with inclusivity and community input in mind.

Taken together, the eleven chapters in this book provide, beyond simply an additional scholarly resource, a collective statement of resistance. Each of the contributions presented here reveals how even the innocent use of a term like *minority languages* can obscure the structural mechanisms that led to minoritisation in the first place. Specifically, they show that stigma is socially constructed—and therefore amenable to *de*-construction and eventual dismantling. They further demonstrate that language hierarchies (e.g., *majority* vs. *minority*) are ultimately upheld on the grounds of power and privilege.

Most importantly, the chapters in the present volume remind us that speakers of minoritised languages need not embrace the role of passive victims. We, too, can become—only if we choose to—agents of change on behalf of communities that deserve to freely speak, write, teach, remember, and dream in their own languages. *Fighting Stigma...* is therefore intended

for scholars, educators, policymakers, and language activists alike—but above all, it is dedicated to the speakers themselves, as a heartfelt reminder that their languages are not inherently marginal. They just happen to be marginalised. And in the face of that, what follows is a call to action.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AI: artificial intelligence  
ALI: *Atlante linguistico italiano*  
APLEC: Associació per a l'Ensenyament del Català  
ARLeF: Agenzie Regionâl pe Lenghe Furlane  
Art.: Article (legal)  
ASLEF: *Atlante storico-linguistico-etnografico friulano*  
Ast.: Asturian  
b.: born  
CAAP: Centro Andino de Acción Popular  
CALL: Computer-Assisted Language Learning  
ca.: *circa*, approximately  
Cat.: Catalan  
cf.: *confer*, compare  
CS: code-switching  
CULPA: Centre de Recerca en Llengües i Polítiques Lingüístiques d'Andorra  
dial.: dialectal  
E: Eastern  
e.g.: for example  
et al.: and others, and colleagues  
EULC: Estadística d'usos lingüístics a Catalunya  
EULCN: Enquesta d'usos lingüístics de Catalunya Nord  
EULP: Enquesta d'usos lingüístics de la població  
Eus.: *Euskara*, Basque  
Fr.: French  
Fri.: Friulian  
Germ.: German  
GMU: Gospel Missionary Union  
ibid.: *ibidem*, in the same work  
i.e.: that is, in other words  
INSEE: Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques  
It.: Italian  
LCTL: less commonly taught languages  
lit.: literally  
LLM: large language model

MA: Master of Arts

mod.: modern

N/A: not applicable

ND: no data

n.d.: no date

OER: Open Educational Resource

OPLC: Oficina Pública de la Llengua Catalana

PhD: Doctor of Philosophy

PLATO: Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations

PNG: Papua New Guinea

Sect.: section

*sic*: thus, so

SIL: Summer Institute of Linguistics

SIT: Social Identity Theory

SMG: Standard Modern Greek

SMS: Short Message Service

Sp.: Spanish

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

stand.: standard

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural  
Organisation

vs.: versus



**PART I:**  
**NAVIGATING LANGUAGE HIERARCHIES:**  
**STIGMA, IDENTITY, AND EVERYDAY USE**

# THE LANGUAGES OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA: A NON-POLICY OF BENIGN NEGLECT

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## Abstract

Today, more languages are spoken in Papua New Guinea than in any other country in the world. With an overwhelmingly Indigenous population, the country's Constitution is supportive of its Indigenous languages and cultures. In line with precolonial societies' tendency to favour multilingualism, language choice among Papua New Guineans remains an important signal of intimacy levels in interaction. As this chapter shows, however, after gaining independence from Australia (1975), the country's governments have continued to abide by colonial practices, specifically emphasising the importance of English, positioning Tok Pisin as an oral lingua franca, and neglecting local Indigenous languages known in Tok Pisin as *tok ples* ('languages of the homelands'). This legacy of formal education being linked to English-only instruction (with media and government-related communication conducted mainly in English and Tok Pisin) has resulted in both the government and the public at large neglecting Indigenous languages. Currently, no official resources or policies are encountered that actively promote—or seek to maintain—language diversity locally. Since the early twenty-first century, a national initiative for vernacular-language early education has largely failed, owing to limited resources, inadequate teacher training, and widespread perceptions of unequal access to quality education. My analysis suggests that the absence of policies supporting vernacular language use, combined with what I term 'benign neglect' by both the government and significant segments of the population, has left many young Papua New Guinea citizens unable to speak their ancestral languages fluently—or at all. As a result, at least 312 of the country's languages are currently considered endangered (Eberhard et al. 2022).

**Keywords:** Papua New Guinea; Tok Pisin; benign neglect; multilingualism; Indigenous languages

## 1. Introduction

Papua New Guinea is the largest country in the South Pacific region—both in land area and population—and it is noteworthy for currently hosting more languages than any other nation in the world. Comprising the eastern half of the island of New Guinea, along with numerous islands to the south-east and within the Bismarck Archipelago to the north-east, this Melanesian country has a total area somewhat larger than the US state of California and slightly smaller than Metropolitan France.<sup>1</sup> Its estimated 11.1 million inhabitants (National Statistical Office 2021) speak approximately 840 distinct languages (Eberhard et al. 2022).

The state of Papua New Guinea can largely be understood as a by-product of Western colonialism. Prior to the onset of colonial rule in 1884, the region's overwhelmingly Melanesian populations did not operate with the concept of a nation-state, nor did they share a unified national identity. Following independence from Australia in 1975, the newly established country inherited both the borders and the name of the two colonial entities that were merged to form it—the Territory of Papua<sup>2</sup> and the Trust Territory of New Guinea.

Nearly half a century later, an increasing number of Papua New Guinea's Indigenous languages (e.g., *Tenis* or *Konomala*, in the province of New Ireland) are at risk of disappearing before they can be fully described or documented. Unlike in many other multilingual countries with Indigenous language communities (e.g., the United States, Canada, New Zealand), this situation cannot be attributed solely to the majority-language

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<sup>1</sup> Regional areas (for comparative purposes): California = 423,970 km<sup>2</sup>; Papua New Guinea = 462,840 km<sup>2</sup>; Metropolitan France = 551,695 km<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The term *Papua* has several contextual interpretations. Originally, it referred to the former Australian Territory of Papua—that is, the south-eastern quarter of the island of New Guinea, which prior to 1905 was known as British New Guinea and today corresponds to the southern region of Papua New Guinea. In contemporary Papua New Guinea, *Papua* usually refers to the latter region, whereas *Papuans* designates its inhabitants. *Papua* is also the name of one of Indonesia's six easternmost provinces, which made up Dutch New Guinea until 1962. In Indonesian usage, the western half of the island of New Guinea is known as *Papua*. Also in Indonesian—as well as in certain European languages such as German—the demonym *Papuan* is commonly used as a synonym for *Melanesian*. Frequently, linguists have also used *Papuan* to designate Melanesia's non-Austronesian languages, regardless of actual kinship. In everyday usage (e.g., Hammarström and van den Heuvel 2012), *Papuan languages* is generally understood in Papua New Guinea to designate the languages spoken in the country's southern region. Here, the term is used in accordance with common Papua New Guinean usage.

mindset of a non-Indigenous population, as the settler population that remained after independence was negligible. The current sociolinguistic status of these languages cannot be explained by the dominance of any particular Indigenous linguistic group over others. Even Enga, despite featuring the largest number of speakers, is now used by merely 300,000 native and 70,000 non-native speakers. Six additional languages have more than 100,000 speakers, but together with Enga they account for just 23% of the population (Eberhard et al. 2022). Although these languages may be regionally widespread, none functions as a nationwide lingua franca.

As it appears, linguistic diversity in present-day Papua New Guinea is not threatened by a single dominant Indigenous language, but rather due to the absence of sustained and meaningful governmental efforts to promote—or maintain—the country’s rich linguistic heritage. I attribute this situation to the state’s ‘benign neglect’ of Indigenous languages and, more broadly, to the enduring effects of colonialism. These very dynamics are further reinforced by growing urbanisation, rural depopulation, and increasing levels of mobility and interethnic marriage, all of which have made the use of lingua francas more necessary than ever. In stark contrast to this neglect of Indigenous local languages, significant effort has been devoted by the government to consolidating English as the sole language of education and the primary language of administration.

To this day, however, the most widely used lingua franca in the country remains Tok Pisin—an English-based pidgin-creole that emerged from the forced language contact experienced by Melanesians during the colonial period. Today, Tok Pisin is firmly established as the primary medium of interethnic oral communication and has become many children’s dominant—and often only—first language in urban areas and some rural settings. Increasingly, even monoethnic families are adopting Tok Pisin as their main or exclusive home language. Despite this extensive use, its formal deployment across institutional domains—particularly in education—remains limited and largely underutilised by government authorities.

## **2. Language choice, identity, and levels of intimacy**

To fully grasp the linguistic ecology of Papua New Guinea, it is first necessary to understand the four distinct tiers of sociolinguistic status observable in contemporary language use. These tiers range, in terms of intimacy, from ancestral languages at the most intimate level, through regional and national lingua francas, to English as the least intimate language. Currently, most Papua New Guinea citizens are at least bilingual and typically multilingual, signalling relative levels of intimacy and

formality through their choice of language—both across interactions and within a single conversation.

Unsurprisingly, the most intimate tier is frequently associated with one's ancestral language. The central role these languages play in shaping individual and collective identity is reflected in the Tok Pisin term *tok ples*, literally 'language of the homeland.' Heritage languages serve as repositories of historical memory and cultural knowledge, particularly evident in taxonomic vocabularies of local flora and fauna (e.g., classifications of bird and fish varieties), as well as in lexicons describing the surrounding geography (e.g., terms for various ocean depths in coastal Austronesian languages, including Nalik). Finally, some of these languages feature sacred or ritual registers reserved exclusively for initiated individuals who have traditionally learnt these formal varieties, once pivotal in communal interactions.

In recent years, however, growing numbers of young speakers appear to have limited or no knowledge of their *tok ples* (Volker 2015). While not exclusively so, this trend is especially pronounced among families of mixed ethnic heritage. As a result, children and adolescents may lose familiarity with the natural environment in which they live (Kik et al. 2021) or with the customary knowledge required to observe the traditional laws of their communities (Silva et al. 2024). For those who do retain competence in their *tok ples*, switching from a lingua franca to a *tok ples* in conversation typically signals shared cultural or kinship ties.<sup>3</sup> In certain contexts, this may also mark the symbolic inclusion of an outsider into the speech community. Similarly, the inability or unwillingness to use a *tok ples* often indexes exclusion from—or estrangement within—that community. This linguistic disengagement further limits participation in customary practices, some of which carry significant social or legal weight.

According to *Ethnologue* (as reported in Eberhard et al. 2022), the average size of an Indigenous language community in Papua New Guinea is 10,473 speakers. It is relevant to note, however, that this figure includes languages like Enga—with over 100,000 users—alongside relatively small speech communities with only a few hundred speakers, as well as near-extinct languages with barely a handful of them. Additionally, these statistics are limited to first-language speakers and therefore encompass individuals for whom the language learnt first in life does not necessarily correspond to their dominant language in adulthood.

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<sup>3</sup> A lingua franca such as Tok Pisin may be a speaker's first—or only—language. However, *tok ples* refers to the ancestral language of an individual that is connected to their ethnic homeland—even when it is no longer spoken. The term *tok ples* should therefore not be translated as 'first' or 'native language.'

The next level of intimacy is represented by regional languages used locally as *lingua francas*. The use of such languages affords speakers a sense of regional identity that extends beyond the much smaller, locally grounded affiliations associated with *tok ples*. Among these regional languages, the most widely spoken is Hiri Motu, formerly known as *Police Motu*, a name that reflects its origins as the working language of the colonial police force in the territory of Papua. This pidginised language is based on Motu, spoken in the vicinity of present-day Port Moresby. As the colonial police expanded British—and later Australian—administrative control throughout Papua at the turn of the twentieth century, Hiri Motu spread accordingly, gradually becoming the principal medium of interethnic communication in the region.

After World War II, following the establishment of a shared administration for the Territories of Papua and New Guinea, Police Motu and Tok Pisin were *de facto* recognised as the respective *lingua francas* of Papua and New Guinea—and also, as discussed below, as two of the three *de facto* national languages of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea. After independence, Port Moresby—now the country’s capital—experienced a significant influx of migrants from the former Trust Territory of New Guinea and, in the process, became increasingly dominated by Tok Pisin. As a result, competence in Tok Pisin has now become essential for younger generations of Papuans who reside or conduct business in the capital. Although Hiri Motu has largely lost its status as the primary *lingua franca* of Port Moresby, it continues to serve this function in many rural areas of Papua, remaining a strong marker of Papuan regional identity. Nevertheless, nearly half a century after independence, the number of Hiri Motu speakers has declined to roughly half of what it was in 1975 (Paaliwala 2012).

The third level of intimacy and formality is marked by Tok Pisin. This pidgin—now increasingly a creole—emerged among Melanesian migrant labourers who came into contact with English in the late nineteenth century, subsequently spreading throughout the Territory of New Guinea as colonial control expanded. In informal contexts internationally, Tok Pisin is often used in conjunction with Pijin and Bislama, two closely related and mutually intelligible languages spoken in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, respectively.

Today, Tok Pisin functions as a *lingua franca* across much of Papua New Guinea, though its use is less extensive in the south-western and south-eastern corners of Papua, particularly among older speakers. While English predominates in written communication nationwide, Tok Pisin remains by far the most widely used language in oral interactions. *Ethnologue* estimates that, as of 2017, roughly half of all Papua New Guineans had some knowledge of Tok Pisin (Eberhard et al. 2022). Switching from English to

Tok Pisin within a conversation or speech is widely perceived as a move towards greater informality or intimacy. For instance, while a formal meeting may be conducted in English, exchanges during a coffee break or a whispered aside to a colleague are far more likely to take place in Tok Pisin. Among Papua New Guineans living abroad, Tok Pisin likewise remains a powerful marker of shared national identity and cultural background.

One interaction from my own experience illustrates this point. At an informal gathering overseas, an older Papuan participant relied primarily on English when speaking with fellow nationals, as he did not speak Tok Pisin fluently. Later, a younger Papua New Guinean student confided that he felt uncomfortable ‘remaining in English’ when conversing with fellow Papua New Guineans.

Finally, English stands as the least intimate and most formal language used in present-day Papua New Guinea. Since World War II, it has served as the principal language of instruction across subjects and levels in public education—except for a brief period in the twenty-first century when languages other than English were used as the medium of instruction in the early years of primary schooling. With the notable exception of the south-eastern portion of Milne Bay Province—where a local variety known as Milne Bay English functions as a regional *lingua franca*—most speakers acquire English primarily through formal education.

As noted earlier, although English dominates written communication in Papua New Guinea, it plays a considerably less prominent role in oral interaction. Despite being the second most widely spoken language in the country—and therefore a major *lingua franca* (Eberhard et al. 2022)—English is often valued chiefly for its status as an international language, as well as for its role as a key means of accessing knowledge from overseas. For many Papua New Guineans, English continues to be perceived as a language of outsiders—one that is typically adopted for utilitarian purposes and frequently regarded as lacking the creative and metaphoric richness of Indigenous languages (Volker 2015).

### **3. Language use and language policies before independence**

Some 50,000 years ago, early settlers began arriving on the island of New Guinea in successive migratory waves. These populations introduced a number of languages that would eventually develop into most of the non-Austronesian languages spoken in present-day Papua New Guinea (Summerhayes 2023). A much later migration from South-East Asia, dating to approximately 3,200 years ago, brought the ancestors of the Austronesian

languages that are spoken today by approximately 22% of the population (Eberhard et al. 2022)

Pre-colonial speech communities were relatively small, with political units rarely extending beyond a clan or village. As one would likely expect in such contexts, these societies were markedly multilingual, featuring language learning as a major pillar of traditional education—particularly for boys. It was often the case that young males from prominent families were sent to foster families in neighbouring speech communities so that they could learn new languages and build alliances. Multilingualism, along with the ability to publicly interpret between languages, was a prerequisite for leadership in most regions (Volker 1995).

By this stage, trade pidgins had begun to emerge within the commercial networks that developed in certain areas around 800 years ago (Summerhayes 2023), including the variety employed for communication between Motu and Gulf villagers. In other cases, local languages came to function as regional *lingua francas*, as occurred within the Kula<sup>4</sup> trade network of the south-eastern Papuan islands. These languages were taught to young men during the non-trading months to ensure their effective participation in exchange activities.

Contemporary attitudes towards both local Indigenous languages and Tok Pisin reflect ideologies shaped during the German, British, and Australian colonial administrations (1884-1975). In 1884, colonial rule over what is now Papua New Guinea was formally proclaimed through German and British ceremonies in New Guinea and Papua, respectively. Contact with Westerners had begun somewhat earlier through missionaries and traders, but it was the system of ‘blackbirding’—the indentured recruitment of Melanesian labourers for plantations in Queensland, Fiji, Samoa, and elsewhere in the South Pacific<sup>5</sup>—that proved most influential. This forced—and abrupt—mixing of individuals from heterogeneous language backgrounds resulted in the emergence of an English-based pidgin. Returning labourers subsequently carried this language back to their home communities, where it eventually developed into what is now known as Tok Pisin. On this basis, it appears that Pidgin Melanesian English—the common ancestor of modern Tok Pisin, Solomon Islands Pijin, and Vanuatu Bislama—was already known in multiple coastal regions at the time when German and British

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<sup>4</sup> A circular ring of trading among people from different language groups and islands in south-eastern Papua New Guinea, first described by Malinowski (1922).

<sup>5</sup> This system of indentured—and often coerced—labour operated from the 1860s until 1906, with Melanesians recruited to work on plantations in Australia, German Samoa, and other colonial territories (Siegel, n.d.).