

PROTO WHO DRANK KAVA?

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In attempting the reconstruction of the distant past, linguists, archaeologists, physical anthropologists, biologists and oral historians all have their parts to play. Although the papers presented at this symposium have all attempted to reconstruct the Austronesian past primarily through a consideration of the linguistic facts, the conclusions that we reach often have important implications for the other disciplines as well.¹

One thing that becomes apparent from a number of the papers presented at the Austronesian Terminologies conference is that many archaeologists are sceptical of the contribution that linguists have made in the past in their reconstruction of Austronesian culture history. While conceding that linguists have developed a fairly reliable technique for reconstructing past *forms*, archaeologists tend to be much more sceptical of the reconstruction of the *meanings* of some of these forms.

Sometimes, there is good justification for this kind of scepticism. On the basis of the meanings of reflexes of Proto Polynesian **tusi*, it would be logically possible to reconstruct one of the meanings of the original form as 'book'. No linguist (as far as I know) has ever reached this conclusion, and Walsh and Biggs (1966:122) quite rightly accept that the meaning of 'book' for reflexes of **tusi* in modern Polynesian languages represents a late eighteenth and early nineteenth century parallel semantic shift from original 'point, indicate, delineate', via the introduced meaning of 'write'.

There are other instances, however, where linguists have, or may have, erred in their reconstructions. Walsh and Biggs (1966:40) also reconstruct **kumala* 'sweet potato' as a Proto Polynesian word, yet it has now been fairly well established on the basis of non-linguistic evidence that the sweet potato was a relatively late introduction into Polynesia from South America. Others have reconstructed Proto Austronesians as literate metallurgists, arousing the scepticism of archaeologists.

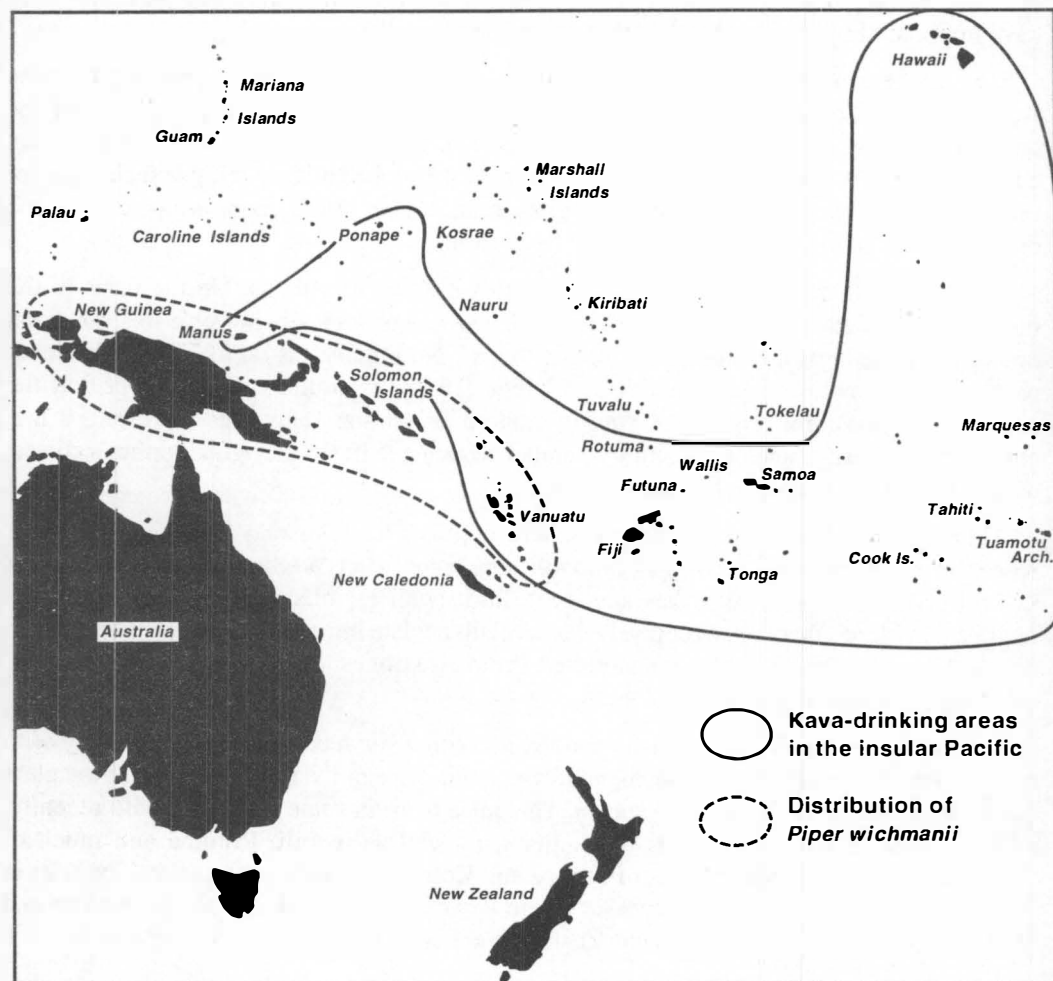
In this paper, I relate the linguistic and the non-linguistic reconstructions of history with regard to the consumption of kava, the mildly narcotic juice of the roots and stem of the plant known botanically as *Piper methysticum*. This juice is, or in some cases was until recently, widely drunk around the islands of Vanuatu, as well as in Fiji, Rotuma and much of Polynesia, the Micronesian islands of Ponape and Kosrae, and one or two isolated pockets in Papua New Guinea. Areas in Polynesia where kava was not drunk include the remote and climatically unsuitable islands of New Zealand and Easter Island, though in some areas, such

¹ Thanks to Kirk Huffman, Paul Geraghty, Monty Lindstrom, John Lynch and Vincent Lebot for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Responsibility for final conclusions, of course, rests with myself.

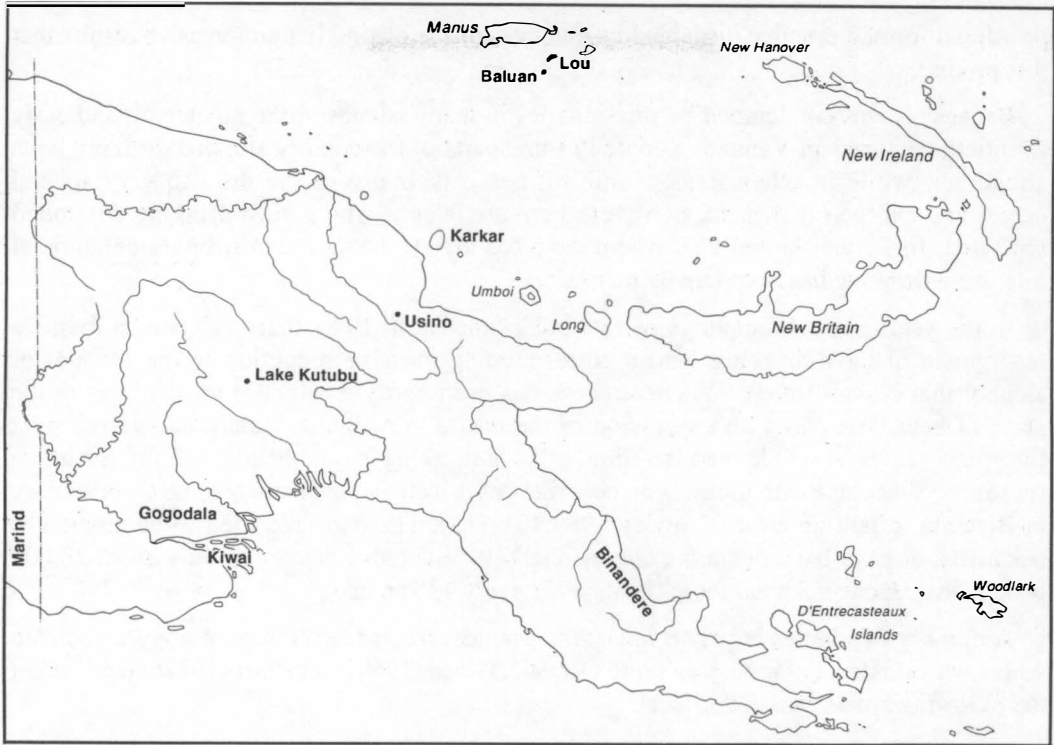
as Tahiti, kava was much less commonly found than in other parts of Polynesia. There are also some areas of Vanuatu where kava was traditionally not drunk at all, or was very restricted in terms of who could drink it or when, for example, Ambrym and southern Malakula (Huffman, pers.comm.). Kava-drinking is not reported from the Solomon Islands, except for the evidence of the entry *kukumanu* in Arosi, which Fox (1970:216) glossed as follows:

a coconut drinking cup, for solemn occasions; usually decorated with carvings of birds; formerly used at ceremonial kava drinking at death ceremonies.

Maps 1 and 2 show the distribution of kava-drinking areas in the Pacific at the time of initial European contact.



MAP 1: DISTRIBUTION OF KAVA-DRINKING AREAS IN THE PACIFIC



MAP 2: KAVA-DRINKING AREAS AND LOCATIONS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The customs surrounding the consumption of the drink in the Pacific vary from area to area. In Vanuatu, kava is by tradition a drink for men only, sometimes being drunk recreationally and sometimes ceremonially. When drunk recreationally, it is generally consumed in the late afternoon or early evening, with a minimum of ambient noise, so that the drinker can 'listen' to the effect of the kava.² The strength of traditional restrictions against women drinking kava in Vanuatu varied from island to island, and in some cases, women could be put to death for even catching sight of men drinking kava. In Polynesia, however, the drinking of kava is much more a matter of ritual, with important occasions being marked by kava ceremonies of extreme formality and elaboration, with rigid hierarchies determining who can drink kava, and when.

Kava can be prepared in a variety of different ways in different areas. In some places in Vanuatu, the fresh roots are ground on a wooden plate, in others in the hand with a piece of coral rock, and in others they are chewed and the liquid squeezed out. Today in Vanuatu, and in other parts of the Pacific, the roots are also commonly pounded in a metal pipe (or even ground in a meat grinder). In some parts of the Pacific, most notably Fiji, kava is sold in

² Which, the reader is assured, can be positively delightful, despite the fairly appalling taste. Geraghty (pers.comm.) disagrees on the latter point, though I have to point out – *pace* Geraghty – that ni-Vanuatu generally regard anybody who actually *likes* the taste of kava as being somewhat odd.

powdered form, a practice disdained in Vanuatu for the distinctly unimpressive results that this produces.³

Because it was condemned by missionaries in many islands in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Vanuatu, people in some parts of the country stopped drinking kava altogether, while in other areas people restricted their use of the drug to very special occasions. On the other hand, however, there are islands where kava-drinking continued unabated. In Polynesia and Fiji, where kava has always had a much stronger ceremonial role, kava-drinking has been largely maintained.

In the years since Vanuatu gained its independence in 1980, there has been a massive resurgence of kava-drinking (and a corresponding massive reduction in the amount of alcohol that is consumed). This resurgence has been partly a response to increases in the price of beer, and partly an expression of the desire to maintain Melanesian values over European values. A whole 'neo-tradition' of kava-drinking is establishing itself in the urban centres of Vila and Santo today, with new rules of usage, and even a whole new vocabulary in Bislama to talk about it (Crowley 1989:111-113). There are reported to be about 140 nakamals, or kava-bars, operating commercially in Vila today, a town of only about 18,000 people, that is, one nakamal for approximately every 130 people!

A number of sources have, on linguistic grounds, reconstructed terminology associated with kava-drinking as far back as Proto Oceanic. Grace (1969) and Blust (1972c) reconstruct the following kava terms at this level:

*kava	kava
*ka(n)ta	kava branch
*kosa	kava remains
*tunas	kava root shoot

The reconstruction of *kava in Proto Oceanic was presumably based on the fact that *kawa presents an uncontroversial reconstruction for Proto Polynesian (Walsh & Biggs 1966:30), and that apparently cognate forms occur in the Manus languages of Papua New Guinea, that is, *kau* in Baluan and *ka* in Lou, *keu* and *kau* in some of the coastal Madang languages, and that the forms *sakau* in Ponapean and *suhka* in Kosraean are possibly cognate as well.

We can be reasonably certain on non-linguistic grounds that kava has been around in Vanuatu for some considerable time, and that it long predates European contact. Garanger (1972) reports the oral tradition from the Efate and Shepherds area of Central Vanuatu which said that when the leader Roi Mata died, a number of couples were buried alive with him. Most versions of the story report that the men were stupefied by strong doses of kava before they were killed, while other versions indicate that they were hit on the head to knock them unconscious. The wives of these men who were sacrificed beside them were said to have been buried fully conscious. Photographs of the grave site excavated on Eretoka, or Hat Island, movingly show the men to have died peacefully, while the women clearly suffered agonies (Garanger 1972, Figures 154-175). The men's skulls were intact, which is more

³ The Vanuatu Commodities Marketing Board is currently experimenting with the manufacture of a new product by which the active ingredient is extracted in soluble form so that a teaspoonful in a glass of water is all that is needed. This *neskava* is not yet available commercially.

consistent with those versions of the story which reported that the men had been anaesthetised with kava. Radiocarbon dating places these burials at around AD 1265.⁴

The question that we should examine now is: To what extent is the non-linguistic evidence consistent with kava having had Proto Oceanic antiquity? And if kava-drinking should prove not to go back as far as Proto Oceanic, then how can we account for the linguistic facts which point to the reconstruction of **kava* as a Proto Oceanic term?

The geographical and biological origins of kava have yet to be definitively resolved, though it certainly goes back considerably further than the seven hundred years suggested (but by no means proven) by the archaeological evidence in Vanuatu. Some non-linguistic sources suggest that kava-drinking began in Polynesia. This is the easiest theory to argue against, however, as there is no biological evidence that the *Piper methysticum* plant from which the drink is taken is indigenous to any of these islands.

Other sources suggest that kava originated somewhere in the western Pacific rather than in the east. Some early twentieth century commentators suggested that kava-drinking began in Papua New Guinea, and that this custom was later supplanted in all except residual pockets by the chewing of betel nut. One problem with this interpretation is that there is good evidence that **buaq* can be reconstructed as a term for 'betel nut' as far back as Proto Austronesian, and there is also associated vocabulary going back a very long way which suggests that this was chewed. Thus, rather than representing a relatively recent introduction, the chewing of betel nut seems to be of much greater antiquity on linguistic grounds.

Despite this, some more recent studies have also supported a western origin for kava. Lebot and Cabalion (1986:19-21) presented an argument on botanical grounds that the plant may have originated in the cooler highland forests of Papua New Guinea. Their chemotypic and genetic work suggested that kava probably evolved from *Piper wichmanii*, a plant that is found in an arc from Papua New Guinea to Vanuatu (see Map 1). Although this plant is similar in appearance to *Piper methysticum*, it grows wild, and its roots cannot be used for drinking, a fact which is reflected in the Bislama name for this plant, that is, *waelkava*.

The kava plant can reproduce itself when a branch from an old plant bends back to the ground allowing a new plant to take root from it. However, for kava to spread from island to island human agency is essential. Thus, if kava did originate in the west, its occurrence further to the east could only be accounted for as being the result of human migration, as there is no biological evidence for the multiple domestication of *Piper wichmanii* (Lebot, pers.comm.).

Though there has been considerable variety of opinion in the past as to the biological source of domesticated kava, much of the discussion has been based on an incomplete knowledge of the botanical information. Lebot (pers.comm.) now indicates that his own and Cabalion's earlier conclusion appears to have been in error, and that the most recent scientific evidence points to Vanuatu as the most likely point of initial domestication of kava. It now appears that *Piper methysticum* may not be a separate species after all, but simply a

⁴ Interestingly, despite the remarkable agreement between archaeology and the oral tradition associated with the Roi Mata stories, these have recently been declared by representatives of Ifira to be mere colonial fabrications (Kalsakau 1990:26). The same writer goes on to recommend that these fabrications which have been recorded for posterity and stored in the Vanuatu Cultural Centre should be removed and burned (Kalsakau 1990:27).

domesticated variety of *Piper wichmanii* (Lebot 1989:97-99), with the northern islands of Vanuatu representing the most likely point of domestication (Lebot 1989:112-113). Such a conclusion would also be consistent with widespread oral tradition in northern Vanuatu which points to central Maewo being the source of kava in the northern islands (Huffman pers.comm.), and Lebot (pers.comm.) even goes so far as to say in written comments on an earlier version of this paper that he would localise the domestication of kava on biological grounds specifically to Maewo.

Whatever the eventual conclusion as to the botanical and geographical origin of kava, Vanuatu, with its current concentration of different varieties when compared with other kava-growing areas, apparently represents a major dispersal point for kava throughout the Pacific. It was from there that kava evidently spread initially into Fiji and ultimately to the rest of Polynesia and Micronesia. (This does not preclude the possibility of later reintroductions back into Vanuatu, which could account for some of the oral traditions pointing to an eastern origin for kava.)

If kava were to have originated from the west rather than in Vanuatu as some have suggested in the past, there have been no clear indications as to who might have been the first people to introduce it into Vanuatu. The first human immigrants in Vanuatu were presumably – but by no means certainly – what are now referred to as Lapita people. This culture spread into island Melanesia (and then also into Fiji, Tonga and Samoa) between 4,600 and 3,000 years ago (Bellwood 1987:48). Bellwood (1987:51) presumes that all of the present-day major plant foods (i.e. taro, yam, banana, breadfruit, coconut) were used by these people, who would necessarily have had agricultural capabilities. There is, indeed, plentiful linguistic evidence adduced elsewhere in this volume to show that the Proto Oceanians were agricultural.

Again assuming a possible western origin for kava, it might be tempting to suggest that *Piper methysticum* might have been introduced into Vanuatu, and from there to the rest of the Pacific, by the Lapita people when they arrived at least 3,000 years ago (Shutler & Shutler 1975:59). The Lapita people are fairly widely assumed to have been the speakers of Proto Oceanic (or its immediate and still closely related descendants). However, if the Proto Oceanians were indeed agricultural and brought with them yams, taros, breadfruit and bananas, this would not necessarily mean that they planted kava as well. It is logically possible that kava may have been a more recent introduction, spreading sometime between the arrival of the Lapita people in Vanuatu at least 3,000 years ago and the death of Roi Mata about 700 years ago.

Although I referred at the beginning of this paper to the reconstruction of **kava* as a Proto Oceanic term, this reconstruction is by no means unproblematical. I will return to this point later, but the only word for kava that can be assumed with any certainty to have any degree of antiquity in the Melanesian area is Clark's (n.d.) reconstruction of **maloku* in the language ancestral to probably all of the languages spoken between Efate and the Torres Islands in Vanuatu, that is, Proto North-Central Vanuatu. The details of the phonological histories of most of these languages are still so poorly known that we are not yet in a position to decide if all of the reflexes of putative **maloku* are regular reflexes of this original form rather than post-dispersal introductions via diffusion, but the wide variety in the shape of reflexes certainly suggests that the form is quite old, for example:

Merlav	<i>malop</i>
Maewo	<i>maloku</i>
Ambae	<i>malok</i>
Pentecost	<i>maloyu, mele</i>
North Malakula	<i>melo, malox, malok</i>
South Malakula	<i>namalək, merox, nəmarux</i>
Paama	<i>malou</i>
Epi	<i>miau, miou, mia, melek, mak</i>
Efate/Shepherds	<i>malok, namaloku, nmalok</i>

This evidence is therefore consistent with the more recent view of Lebot that kava represents a northern Vanuatu domestication of an initially wild plant. This domestication could be dated at the time of, or shortly after, the breakup of Proto North-Central Vanuatu, that is, about 3,000 years ago. Geraghty (pers.comm.) points out that **maloku* is also reflected in Fijian, though there it means 'quiet, subdued'. If this were the original Proto Oceanic meaning of **maloku*, the Northern and Central Vanuatu languages would have been adopting a common strategy in coopting a word with a similar meaning to refer to a new cultural development.

There are isolated areas in northern and central Vanuatu which do not reflect **maloku*, but these could easily represent later local innovations. Southern Paamese, for example, has *malou* as the regular reflex of **maloku*, while the closely related northern dialect has *vati-meāi*. This appears to be a very recent semantic shift, as the cognate form in the southern dialect (i.e. *vati-melāl*) means 'stem of wild kava (i.e. *Piper wichmanii*)'. Big Bay *naxai* from Santo looks as if it might originally have just meant 'wood, tree'. The only languages which widely reflect forms other than **maloku* are the languages of south-west Malakula, which seem to derive from an earlier form that had the approximate shape **mbVIVkVndrV*,⁵ and the languages of the Torres and northern Banks Islands, which have forms of the general shape *(nV)yV*. As languages reflecting these forms are all spoken contiguously, however, these facts are consistent with the suggestion that these names could have diffused relatively recently, replacing an earlier reflex of **maloku*.

If kava did indeed originate in Vanuatu, then its occurrence in isolated pockets in Papua New Guinea must be explained, a fact which Lebot (1989:92) concedes to be problematic. Kava was presumably not introduced into Papua New Guinea directly from Vanuatu, or we would expect to find greater evidence of its use in the intervening Solomon Islands. It is, of course, possible that there have been a series of losses and reintroductions of both kava and betel nut over the millenia, with Solomon Islands having only relatively recently switched to betel-nut-chewing over kava-drinking. The same explanation might also account for the fact that kava-drinking on the mainland of Papua New Guinea is so patchy, with the largest area of kava-drinkers coming from the Western Province near the Irian Jaya border, well away from the nearest Austronesian-speaking people. Lebot (pers.comm.) mentions that the names for kava in some of those languages on mainland Papua New Guinea spoken in areas where kava is drunk also mean 'root'. Such a clear extension of meaning would also be compatible with the idea that kava represented a relatively recent introduction however; if kava were very old, we might expect its names to be rather more opaque.

⁵ Until the phonological histories of these languages are better known, the vowels here will need to be unspecified. It is also worth pointing out that this could still be an irregular local reflex of **maloku*.

The word for kava in most areas of Fiji is *yaqona*, while in some areas the variants *qona* and *waqona* are found. This probably represents a semantic extension from earlier **kona* 'bitter'. Geraghty (pers.comm.) points out that there are a number other instances of **a-/ʔa-* with some kind of nominalising function in Fijian.⁶ If we were to assume that kava was being drunk by the speakers of Proto North-Central Vanuatu, their descendants might be expected to have taken it with them on their canoes when they sailed off to colonise Fiji. The fact that Fijian does not share a cognate with the languages of Northern and Central Vanuatu suggests that perhaps kava also spread to Fiji after the initial settlement of these islands from Vanuatu.

Huffman (pers.comm.) reports oral tradition in Maewo as pointing to ancient contacts between Maewo and parts of the interior of western Viti Levu in Fiji. Lebot and Cabalion (1986:169) suggest on genetic grounds that there was probably traffic in kava backwards and forwards between Vanuatu and Fiji, as well as between Fiji and the islands of Polynesia. This non-linguistic evidence is also consistent with a post-settlement origin for kava on Maewo. The fact that the Fijians did not borrow the Maewo word for kava when they acquired it can perhaps be explained by the fact that if only a single canoe-load of people from Maewo were to land on western Viti Levu with a few cuttings of kava, we would not necessarily expect the Maewo word to be transferred. Local Fijian creativity could well have won out, with the word **kona* 'bitter' being coopted.

The oral tradition in Fiji does not fit so neatly with Vanuatu representing the point of origin for kava, as this generally gives a Tongan origin. However, some stories also report that while there was kava before its introduction from Tonga, it was either better varieties that were introduced from Tonga, or it was the elaborate kava ritual that came from the east. The Fijian word *tānoa* 'kava serving bowl' represents a Tongan borrowing, which would be consistent with the suggestion that kava could have been introduced more than once into Fiji, initially presumably from the west, and later again from the east.

Walsh and Biggs (1966:30) present the reconstruction of the word **kawa* 'kava' for Proto Polynesian as uncontroversial. If this reconstruction is in fact correct, then we would need to assume that the Proto Polynesians arrived from Fiji in the Proto Polynesian homeland with kava in their kitbag. It is interesting to note that it was not a reflex of **kona* that the Proto Polynesians used, but an innovated form. One possible explanation is that Proto Polynesian **kawa* did not originally refer to kava, but that it meant 'bitter' or 'sour'. On Easter Island, where *Piper methysticum* was not known, the word *kava* means 'bitter'. While reflexes of **kawa* in East Futunan, East Uvean, Tongan and Samoan refer exclusively to *Piper methysticum*, its reflexes in Hawaiian, Marquesan, Rarotongan and Tuamotuan mean both 'sour' and '*Piper methysticum*'. Thus, we could also suggest that **kawa* in Proto Polynesian could just as easily have meant 'sour, bitter', with reflexes of this word later coming to refer independently to a newly introduced plant.

In discussing the origin of the form **kawa* in Proto Polynesian, there is another point that we should consider as well. Geraghty (pers.comm.) notes that **kawa* is also possibly cognate with the Fijian word *wāqawaqawa* '*Piper betel*', with *wā* in Fijian meaning 'vine',⁷ and *wā(qa)qawa* '*Piper insectifugum* (?)'. While seemingly at odds, these two accounts are

⁶ For example, *ʔalava* and *ʔariki*, both meaning 'chief'.

⁷ Analogy with this morpheme could be the explanation for the occurrence of *waqona* as a local variant of *yaqona* in Fiji, as noted above.

not necessarily in conflict. There is no reason why we cannot reconstruct **kawa* as having meant *both* 'Piper betel' and 'sour/bitter' in Proto Polynesian. Anyone who has chewed a betel nut will detect a definite tang in the fruit, leaves or bark of this plant.⁸

It is still likely that the immediate descendants of the Proto Polynesians took kava with them when they ventured out into distant parts of the Pacific. Geraghty (pers.comm.) reports that the Ponapean word *sakau* and the Kosraean *suhka* represent fairly old borrowings from Polynesian **ta kawa*, suggesting a Polynesian rather than a Melanesian origin for kava in Micronesia. The first Polynesian migrants in New Zealand probably also brought kava with them, though it failed to grow in the colder climate. However, the plant *kawakawa* of the related *Macropiper excelsum* from a different genus (which the Maori used for medicinal purposes) is found there. The word *kawa* in Maori is also used to mean 'marae protocol', which would accord with kava having been previously used in a ceremonial context as we find in Polynesia today.

In the earlier discussion of the distribution of kava in Papua New Guinea, I omitted any detailed reference to the two islands in Manus Province where kava is also known, that is, Lou and Baluan. In Lou, kava is known as *ka*, while in Baluan it is *kau*. The mainland areas of New Guinea adjacent to the island of Karkar also exhibit apparent cognates of these forms, that is, *keu* and *kau*. The occurrence of these forms in non-Polynesian Oceanic languages was presumably the basis of the reconstructions by Grace (1969) and Blust (1972c) of a Proto Oceanic form for kava. However, the phonological similarity of these forms to reflexes of Proto Polynesian **kawa*, and the occurrence of apparently borrowed reflexes of this form in Ponapean and Kosraean suggests that the drinking of kava in Manus was possibly introduced from Polynesia via Micronesia, an interpretation which is also suggested by Lebot (1989:91).

While the linguistic evidence for kava having a fair degree of antiquity in northern and central Vanuatu is strong, as we would expect from the biological information, there is no linguistic evidence for kava having been present for this long to the south of Efate. The languages of Erromango, Tanna and Aneityum are well known for their tortured phonological histories, rendering many widespread Oceanic cognates almost unrecognisable. In Lenakel, Kwamera and West and South-West Tanna the word for 'kava' is *nikava* and on North Tanna it is *nika*,⁹ while on Aneityum the word is simply *kava*. Sie, the only surviving language on Erromango, has *nayave*, again carrying the added initial syllable, but still reflecting essentially the same original root. This kind of evidence suggests that kava may not have been present in southern Vanuatu even while it was present in the north, and that it was only introduced much later via back migrations from Polynesia, and that the Polynesian words for kava were borrowed into these languages relatively recently.

Lebot (1984:9) notes that there is a major break in the distribution of kava varieties on either side of a line drawn between Efate and Erromango, which would be consistent with this claim that kava has a separate history in the south. There is also a major ocean gap between Efate and Erromango, which could explain why the earlier discovery of the

⁸ Geraghty (pers.comm.) also points out that the forms *wāqawaqawa* and *wā(qa)qawa* would also be consistent with the reconstruction of a separate Proto Central Pacific form **qawa*, referring to some kind (or all kinds?) of *Piper* species, which would take these forms out of consideration in the history of the form **kawa* in Proto Polynesian.

⁹ An initial syllable beginning with *n-* is present in most nouns in the languages of Tanna.

pleasures of **maloku* (as well as the word) did not reach the southern islands at the same time.¹⁰

Huffman (pers.comm.) and Lebot (1989:93-94) report that oral tradition in the southern islands of Vanuatu points to Futuna representing the source of kava in these islands, with Tonga and Samoa representing the islands of origin further to the east. If this is in fact the case, it could be that kava was introduced into the southern islands of Vanuatu when the ancestors of the present-day speakers of Aniwa-Futunan – themselves already kava-drinkers – arrived from the east. The fact that it is even possible to trace the path taken by kava when it was introduced from Futuna to various parts of Tanna (Huffman, pers.comm.), whereas it is not possible to be so specific in the north, is also consistent with the proposition that kava represents a more recent introduction in the south.

While much of the evidence from linguistics, oral tradition and biology on the origin of kava falls together quite nicely, there are some problems. Perhaps the greatest is explaining the isolated pockets of kava-drinking in Papua New Guinea (and the Solomon Islands?) if domestication began in northern Vanuatu rather than in the west. In the case of most parts of the mainland of New Guinea, I have already suggested that these may represent backwards diffusions ultimately from northern Vanuatu.

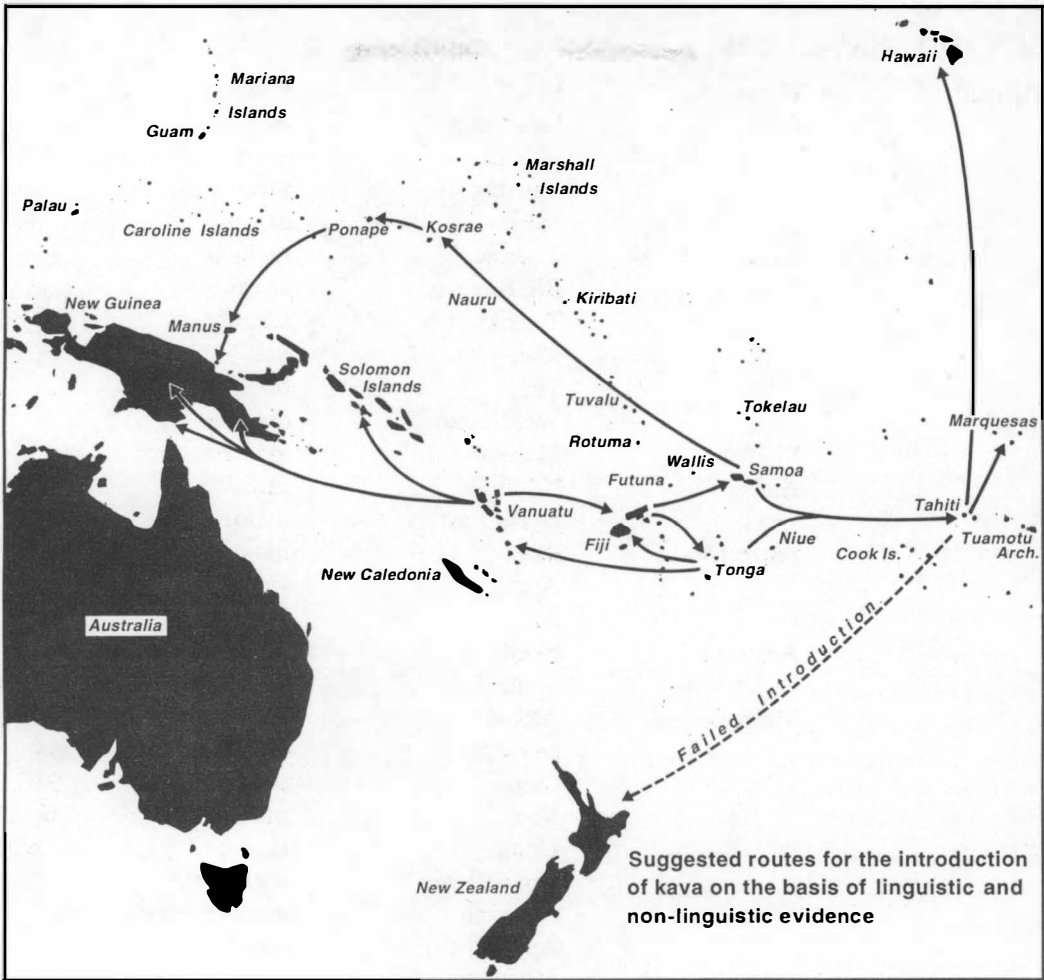
Another logical possibility to consider is that *Piper methysticum* might have been domesticated more than once in Melanesia, though this is a possibility that Vincent Lebot (pers.comm.) explicitly rejects on biological grounds. The fact that none of the various names given to kava in these isolated pockets (as set out in the appendix) are in any way suggestive of a northern Vanuatu source does not argue against a single source for domesticated kava, as we have already seen that Fijian and the Polynesian languages apparently evolved innovated names though the plant itself was clearly introduced.

Another interesting question is the reconstruction by Lynch (1982a) of the Proto Southern Vanuatu word **npali* 'betel nut'. The people of Tafea today do not chew betel nut,¹¹ and Lindstrom (pers.comm.) points out that there is no archaeological evidence for lime-making in Vanuatu, so it is unlikely that the people of the southern islands were ever betel-nut-chewers. If they had a name for the palm, it may be that they used it instead for building, as the split trunks make good walls and floorboards. Lindstrom (pers.comm.) also points out that there are a number of *Areca*-like species on Tanna, all producing useless nuts, so it could also be that Lynch's reconstructed form **npali* actually refers to a different palm altogether.

There are obviously limits to what historical linguistics and non-linguistic evidence can tell us about the distant past. We may never know with absolute certainty where kava was first drunk, when and by whom, and how it was first discovered. In this discussion, I have examined the linguistic evidence and tried to interpret this with what archaeology, oral tradition and botany can tell us. The overall conclusion is that kava-drinking was most probably introduced fairly early on, following the routes indicated on Map 3, and that it was not a Proto Oceanic plant at all.

¹⁰ Linguistically, of course, the southern islands of Vanuatu are something of a mystery, and it is difficult to know how to interpret the lack of close relationship of these languages to other Oceanic languages in terms of the non-linguistic evidence on the settlement of the Pacific.

¹¹ In fact, they refer to betel nut in Bislama as *rabis kokonas* 'useless coconut'.



MAP 3: SUGGESTED ROUTES FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF KAVA ON THE BASIS OF LINGUISTIC AND NON-LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE

This is a conclusion that was only possible by considering linguistic and non-linguistic evidence at the same time. Considering the linguistic evidence in isolation in the past has resulted in the probably erroneous reconstruction of Proto Oceanic kava-drinking. If we linguists want archaeologists to take our attempts at cultural reconstruction seriously, we have to put our house in order and attempt to seriously consider the archaeological implications of our reconstructions. If we are going to argue that the Proto Austronesians, for example, were metallurgists, then we must try to accommodate these people at an appropriate time and place where metallurgy is known to have been practised. Alternatively, we have to persuade archaeologists to dig deeper in other places and in other strata to see if they can uncover evidence of cultural practices suggested by the linguistic evidence but for which archaeology so far offers no clues.

APPENDIX: KAVA TERMS

Vanuatu	Torres	Hiw	<i>nivui</i>
	Banks	Lehalurup	<i>nva</i>
		Motalava	<i>nava</i>
		Vatrata	<i>vwie</i>
		Merlav	<i>malop</i>
	Santo	Tasmate	<i>malohu</i>
		Big Bay	<i>naxai</i>
		Tasiriki	<i>malou</i>
		Malo	<i>hae</i>
		Tur	<i>bir</i>
		West Santo	<i>malohu</i>
	Maewo	Marino	<i>maloku</i>
	Ambae	Nduindui	<i>malok</i>
		North-East	<i>malovu</i>
	Pentecost	Raga	<i>malovu</i>
		Apma	<i>sini</i>
		Sa	<i>mele</i>
	Ambrym	North	<i>lewe drawe</i>
		South-East	<i>kava</i>
	Malakula	Atchin	<i>melo</i>
		Leviamp	<i>malk</i>
		Uripiv	<i>melu</i>
		Vao	<i>malok</i>
		Unua	<i>malok</i>
		Big Nambas	<i>malox</i>
		Nasarina	<i>nambolakandra</i>
		Ajiauleina	<i>amelkaj</i>
		Mbotkote	<i>nemelakaj</i>
		Natanggan	<i>nimala-gandra</i>
		Nioleien	<i>namalok</i>
		Ninde	<i>nambullo'ore</i>
		Nahava	<i>nimbulund</i>
		Nāti	<i>nambun'undr</i>
		Naha'ai	<i>namalu?</i>
		Navwien	<i>malux</i>
		Akhamb	<i>namwelxundr</i>
		Nasvang-Farun	<i>namwilungg</i>
		Nisvai-Vetbong	<i>namwilungg</i>
		Avokh-Marpagho	<i>nəmarux</i>
		Uliveo	<i>manggmangg</i>
		Port Sandwich	<i>maix</i>
		Banam Bay	<i>namonggomongg</i>
		Mbwenelang	<i>monggmongg</i>
		Aulua	<i>monggmongg</i>
		Panggumu	<i>merox</i>

Polynesia	Paama	North	<i>vatimeāi</i>
		South	<i>malou</i>
	Epi	Lewo	<i>miau</i>
		Lamenu	<i>mia</i>
		Baki	<i>mio</i>
		Maii	<i>mak</i>
		Bierebo	<i>miok</i>
		Bieria	<i>melek</i>
	Efate-Shepherds	Nakanamanga	<i>namaloku</i>
		Namakira	<i>malok</i>
		South Efate	<i>nmalok</i>
		Mele-Ifira	<i>kava</i>
	Tafea	Erromanga	<i>navave</i>
		North Tanna	<i>nika</i>
		Lenakel	<i>nikava</i>
		South-West Tanna	<i>nikava</i>
		Kwamera	<i>nikava</i>
		Whitesands	<i>nikava</i>
		Futunan	<i>khava</i>
		Aniwa	<i>kava</i>
		Aneityum	<i>kava</i>
		Proto Polynesian	<i>*kawa</i>
		Rapanui	<i>kava</i> 'bitter'
		East Futunan	<i>kava</i>
		East Uvean	<i>kava</i>
		Tongan	<i>kava</i>
		Hawaiian	<i>?awa</i> '+ sour'
		Maori	<i>kawa</i> 'sour'
		Marquesan	<i>kava, ?awa</i> '+ sour'
		Rarotongan	<i>kava</i> '+ sour'
		Tuamotuan	<i>kava</i> '+ sour'
		Samoan	<i>?ava</i>
		Fijian	<i>yaqona, qona</i>
	Micronesia	Ponapean	<i>sakau</i>
		Kosraean	<i>suhka</i>
	Papua New Guinea	Manus	<i>ka</i>
		Baluan	<i>kau</i>
	Madang	Karkar	<i>ayuw</i>
		Bogadjim	<i>kial</i>
		Bongu-gorendu	<i>keu, kau</i>
		Gende	<i>karangimi</i>
	Southern Highlands	Lake Kutubu	<i>tokarabu, sagainya, waki, kewato</i>
	Western	Gogodala	<i>sika</i>

	Kiwai	<i>gamad, gámada, gumada, wárikí</i> ¹²
	Mowata	<i>komata, gámoda</i>
	Oriomo	<i>irka</i>
	Keraki	<i>kurar</i>
	N'gowugar	<i>koriar</i>
	Kanum-irebe	<i>ten, ttä, kä</i>
	Jei-anim	<i>bikwe</i>
	Marind-anim	<i>wáti</i>
	Maklenga, Jilmak	<i>jélikí</i>
	Jabga	<i>dikoi, jélikí</i>
	Komolom Island	<i>tóe, túe, túi</i>
	Frederick Henry Island	<i>tóe, tówe, tóá, tigwa</i>
Oro	Mapi River	<i>wághi, bári</i>
	Binandere	<i>pingi</i>

¹² The meaning of the various diacritics in the Papua New Guinea examples is not explained in the sources from which these examples were taken. Most of these attestations are taken from the work of Vincent Lebot, and from Lebot and Cabalion (1986).