

7.4.5.13. MISSIONARY LINGUE FRANCHE: TOARIPI

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7.4.5.13.1. INTRODUCTION

The people included in this chapter are mainly the Elema who live along the eastern shores of the Gulf of Papua from Cape Possession to the Aivei mouth of the Purari River, a distance of some 120 miles. With them are two very small groups of people, the Raepa-Tati in the vicinity of Kerema, and the Kovio, whose home is inland along the upper reaches of the Lakekamu River. The former total 266 (1970 census), and the latter about 150.

In marked contrast to these small groups are the Elema who total 37,000. Although, as with tribal groups elsewhere in Papua New Guinea, the Elema were never a political unit, they may be regarded as a single ethnic group, sharing a common traditional culture, and speaking languages and dialects that have a close relationship with each other. A broad east-west linguistic division can be made amongst them. The Western Eleman forms of speech, which include Orokolo and its associated dialects, are characterised by the absence of the phonemes /f/ and /s/ which are present elsewhere. There are, however, regular sound changes, and words in Toaripi which have these phonemes initially appear with /h/ in Orokolo and its related dialects; e.g. fi, hi 'cry'; fave, have 'stone'; siri, hiri 'mildew'; sare, hare 'sun, day'. The following table shows sub-tribes with their languages and dialects, together with population figures taken from census sheets dated 1970-71, except for the Sepoe and Toaripi speakers whose census sheets are dated 1968.

TABLE 1

Sub-tribe	Dialect or Language	Population
Eastern Eleman Linguistic Group		
Sepoe	Sepoe ¹	1,077
Moripi-Iokea	Toaripi	5,343
Moveave-Toaripi		9,018
Melaripi-Kaip	Kaip ²	4,689
Uaripi	Uaripi ³	2,470
		22,597
Western Eleman Linguistic Group		
Opao	Opao	1,116
Hae Haela	Keuru (Belepa) ⁴	1,219
Haura Haela		2,609
Aheave Haela	Aheave	695
Muro	Orokolo ⁵	944
Orokolo		6,395
		12,395

7.4.5.13.2. THE BEGINNING OF LITERACY

When the London Missionary Society opened up work amongst the Elema early in the 1880s, the missionaries found themselves faced by a number of forms of Eleman speech. It became necessary to choose one as the medium through which to work. Toaripi was the obvious choice, for it was the dialect spoken by the largest and most enterprising group of people with whom contact had earlier been made in Port Moresby through the hiri trading voyages.⁶ The speakers of this dialect lived, moreover, in the vicinity of the mission headstation established by James Chalmers in 1884 between the dual village settlement of Mirihea-Uritai, known to the Motu by the name of Motumotu. There two South Sea teachers were settled, both from the island of Manihiki. One of the two, Esekiela, lived only a few months, but the other, Tauraki, a most intelligent and energetic man, made a good beginning to the work. It was he who wrote the first book in Toaripi, *Siare Karoro Mutia Satiriaraia Elema Uri* ('Boy Writing Read Teach Elema Language'), the contents being reading lessons, a short Bible history and 24 hymns.⁷

Chalmers himself together with his wife lived at Motumotu for a brief period, but finding the site unsuitable, he moved the headstation to Moru, near Iokea. Toaripi was still the dialect spoken in the vicinity of the mission station. In former times the Moripi-Iokea had their own dialect, but had changed from this to Toaripi many years before the coming of Europeans.⁸

The successor to Chalmers in 1894 was Rev. J.H. Holmes. He made a beginning in Bible translation, and published his first book in Toaripi, *Buka Ovariave Fara*, 97pp.), in 1897. It contained Scripture portions, hymns and a vocabulary of Toaripi words. The following year he moved westwards to Orokolo, where he again succeeded Chalmers. Although he was no longer in a Toaripi-speaking area, he continued his translation into Toaripi, for it was then being used as the church language for both the eastern and western Elema. His Toaripi publications in 1902 were two primers, *Atutemori ve Buka Meha*, Books 1 (37pp.) and 2 (43pp.) and an enlarged version of his first book entitled *Buka Ovaria ve Asiasi Haria Meha* (210pp.) containing Scripture portions and 81 pages of vocabularies Toaripi-English, English-Toaripi. In the same year the British and Foreign Bible Society published his four Gospels, *Iesu Keriso ve Evanelia*. After his move to Urika in the Purari Delta, Holmes did no more work in Toaripi.

Rev. E. Pryce Jones in the meantime had settled at Moru, and as he acquired familiarity with the vernacular he took over the work of providing books in Toaripi. His chief contribution was the completion of the New Testament, published by the Bible Society in 1914. He continued working on this translation, and a revised version appeared in 1928. Another book of his appeared first in 1923 and continued through reprints until 1952. This was *Fara aea Salamu aea Ualare la loki leita o* ('Hymns, Psalms (extracts) and Prayers') (167pp.).

Believing that through education he could best further his work, Pryce Jones took a keen interest in the mission schools under his direction. In the Government Report for 1909 he received high commendation for the work of his schools. The Government Report of 1911 states that eastwards from Kerema (i.e. the mission schools under the supervision of Pryce Jones), there were 12 schools with a total attendance of 1,127 scholars. English had been taught in the schools from 1905, but the missionary required fluency in the vernacular (i.e. Toaripi) reading and writing before the scholars proceeded to English. To assist reading in the vernacular he produced a school reader in Toaripi. The Mission Report for 1915 gives 1,200 as the total school enrolment, and states

that over half were able to read the New Testament. Thus Toaripi was early established as the literary dialect throughout the Eastern Elema.

7.4.5.13.3. LITERACY AMONGST THE WESTERN ELEMA

Westwards from Kerema as far as the Aivei mouth of the Purari River Toaripi was also being used as the church language. There it had certain drawbacks. In contrast to the Eastern Elema there was no large body of indigenous speakers of Toaripi. While not completely unintelligible, it was to a varying degree strange to them all.

A further difficulty was that there was no one to teach Toaripi. The mission staff at that early period came mainly from various South Sea Islands - Rarotonga, Niue, Tahiti and Samoa - where the London Missionary Society had established work. As time went on some mission teachers were appointed from the Central District of Papua; these were Motu-speaking. Whether South Sea or Papuan, each mission teacher came to his appointment amongst the Western Elema ignorant of the local language. There was no set course of study for the newcomer, but according to his ability each one picked up a working knowledge of whatever was the dialect of the locality where he was settled. In his church and school work he had however to use books printed in Toaripi, a form of the vernacular unfamiliar both to him and to his people.

While Holmes was missionary at Orokolo his interest in and familiarity with Toaripi gave it some local relevance. In 1907, however, he moved into the Purari Delta to open a new station at Urika. Here he became involved in translation work in the Namau (Koriki, Purari) language. The new missionary at Orokolo, Rev. R. Bartlett, came to his appointment with the same language difficulty as his mission staff; the books for use in church and school were in Toaripi, but the local vernacular was Orokolo.

His successor, Rev. H.P. Schlencker, who settled at Orokolo in 1912, was an experienced missionary already familiar with Motu. Finding that Toaripi was not well understood amongst the Western Elema, Schlencker began translating into Orokolo. In 1922 he produced a Gospel Harmony which was printed privately. Four years later, and a year before he retired through ill-health, the Bible Society published his Four Gospels and Acts, classed by the Society as a 'tentative' version.

7.4.5.13.4. LATER TOARIPI PUBLICATIONS

In the same year that Schlencker retired, Pryce Jones also resigned from Moru, although he subsequently returned for a brief period in order

to complete the revision of the Toaripi New Testament. Shortly after his final departure from Papua, *Ava 0*, a short catechism, was printed in Sydney from a manuscript which he had prepared.

Apart from reprints, 16 years elapsed before the next publication in Toaripi appeared. This was in 1944 when a school hymn book *Atutemori ve Fara Buka*, that I had written, and an illustrated school primer of mine, *Atutemori ve Mutita Buka* ('Children's Reading Book') (47pp.), were published. Other books that I have written in Toaripi are: *Fara aea Veveu* ('Hymn and Service'), (155pp.), published in 1969, the third of a succession of such books to be printed, each larger than its predecessor; *Ovava Lei Peita Mai* ('Way of Light') (48pp.), which was published by the Scripture Gift Mission in 1963. The Toaripi Old Testament is being published by the Bible Society; *Salamo* ('Psalms') came out in 1960; *Genese* ('Genesis') in 1963; *Esodo* ('Exodus') in 1965 and *Iobu* ('Job') in 1968. For the last three books I designed covers along the lines of the traditional Elema art, thus taking a first step towards rehabilitating it.⁹ I am currently working to complete the whole Bible in Toaripi.

7.4.5.13.5. LATER OROKOLO PUBLICATIONS

It was Schlencker's successor at Orokolo who continued with the work of Scripture translation. Rev. S.H. Dewdney was appointed to Orokolo in 1936, and he continued there until his retirement in 1970. This long period amongst the Western Elema made it possible for him to gain a surer knowledge of Orokolo than any of his predecessors. This he put to good use in his revision of Schlencker's Four Gospels and Acts, the inadequacies of which had long been apparent. It was in 1951 that the long-awaited *Evanelia Buka Hari Ila aea Aposetolo ve Horova* ('Gospel Books Four and Apostles') appeared. The entire New Testament entitled *Pupu Oharo Are* ('Taboo Word New') was published in 1963. Two other books had appeared in the meantime, one being a school primer, *Akoremari ve Mureaki Buka* ('Children's Reading Book') (47pp.), 1947. This was an adaptation of the Toaripi school primer. The other publication, dated 1943, reprinted in 1952, was a hymn book and catechism, *Hivi Buka Apevelavela Oharo* (95pp).

Following the publication of the New Testament, Mr Dewdney turned his attention to the Old Testament. In 1970 *Genese* ('Genesis') was printed with the same format as the Toaripi *Genese*. *Ruta* ('Ruth') appeared in 1973. As a consequence of this work in Orokolo, Toaripi ceased to be used as the church language amongst the Western Elema.

7.4.5.13.6. RAEPA-TATI AND KOVIO

The vernacular spoken by the Raepa-Tati people is remotely akin to the Eleman language family (see (I) 2.7.8.4.). In basic vocabulary there is agreement that ranges from 17% with Toaripi to 21% with their western neighbours, the Uaripi, and 20% with Kaipi to the east of them.¹⁰ Of their three hamlets, two are situated at the extremity of the Koaru Church Circuit, and hence the people are familiar with Toaripi. The third, Uriri, is off Kerema Bay. As it lies within the Orokolo Circuit the people there are accustomed to using Orokolo as a church language.

Kovio is an Austronesian language that has its closest affinity with Mekeo. Their nearest neighbours are, however, the Moveave-Toaripi. A number of them are bilingual, with a knowledge of Toaripi that they have gained while attending school as boarding scholars at the mission stations of Koaru or Moru. I have translated St Mark's Gospel into Kovio, but it has not yet been printed. A few typescript copies are in use. The two village pastors, themselves Kovio men, use the Toaripi Scriptures and Service books in their work.

7.4.5.13.7. THE USES OF LITERACY

As the names of publications in Toaripi and Orokolo demonstrate, literature in both languages is restricted almost entirely to religious books, the exceptions being the school primers, and these are designed to enable people to read the religious books. The Elema have thus a very narrow range of reading, the main reason for this being the high cost of publication. Such printed literature as is available is the outcome very largely of the support of the Bible Society which has met not only the heavy initial cost of publication, but also by subsidies has enabled the books to be sold at low prices.¹¹

However, although books are few, the people put their literacy to good use in other ways. Local opportunities for advancement being few, large numbers of Elema people during the past two decades have been migrating to all parts of Papua New Guinea, particularly to urban centres. The largest group of these migrants will be found in Port Moresby, but considerable colonies of Elema people will be found in any of the townships. They still retain their language in their urban environment, and also links with their home villages. It is through the medium of letter writing that these people keep in touch with village and family affairs. The Elema, particularly the Eastern Elema, for literacy in Toaripi was early established, must be amongst the most industrious letter writers in the country.

Amongst young people a notable use for literacy is in the writing of love letters. In so doing the youth of today continue in a way the traditional mode whereby a young man made known his desires to a girl. This was by carving his clan designs onto a betel nut which he sent to the girl. Such a design was known as *karoro* in Toaripi or *hohoa* in Orokololo, words that are nowadays used to mean '*letter*', '*writing*'. A departure from tradition is seen in that nowadays not infrequently the girl initiates the correspondence.

A letter has obvious advantages over the personal approach, particularly in the early stages of the affair when the response of the other person is still uncertain, although both boy and girl are living in the same village. If the outcome be a rebuff, it is better for it not to be an open one; unsympathetic people may laugh about it. The approach by letter in love affairs is favoured by another factor, the feeling of *maeamariti* (Toaripi), *maeamakiri* (Orokololo), not uncommon on such occasions. The word has '*shame*' as its general meaning, but in this context '*bashfulness*' would be a better translation.

A somewhat similar feeling gives rise to other types of letters. A request of one kind or another will often be penned rather than voiced, even though the writer be his own messenger. A person wishing to tell off another will put his angry words to paper, although in such a case he will seek someone else to deliver the letter.

There are other and more important uses for literacy, such as in the use of the vernacular to keep minutes of Circuit and other Church meetings. Village co-operative societies likewise record their minutes in the vernacular. The ability to write enables people to set down details about the various exchanges that are made between families and groups,¹² and to preserve in written form any family traditions.

It could be concluded from the paucity of printed books that literacy in the vernacular is of small importance to the Elema people. In assessing the importance of literacy, account should however also be taken of the innumerable letters that pass through the mail, or are carried by hand, and of other uses that are made of the written word. Since it is in Toaripi that they have become familiar with the written word of the vernacular, speakers of other dialects amongst the Eastern Elema will usually use Toaripi when putting pen to paper.

Since the opening of the radio station at Kerema in June 1964, Toaripi and Orokololo have achieved added importance over other dialects in that they are used together with Hiri Motu and English as the languages for broadcasting from that station.

N O T E S

1. Called 'Lepu' by Ray (1907), a name that has no local currency whatsoever. I have not, therefore, used it. Possibly it should have been 'Levo' (= Motu 'Elema'), the name given to the Sepoe by their eastern Roro neighbours at Kivori and Waima.
2. Called 'Milareipi' by Ray (1907). I give the name 'Kaipi' to the dialect because the Kaipi are much more numerous than the Melaripi, and are said to have been first on the coast. An account of the traditions relating to the early settlement of the coast will be found in the *Annual Report 1925-26*.40-1.
3. The township of Kerema, which is within the Uaripi sub-tribal area, has a mixed population totalling 1,552 (1970). The people are mostly Elema, but as their names would have been recorded also in their home villages, there is no need to allocate the town population to the local groups.
4. The word haela, which appears in three of these names, means 'people'. Hence such names are hardly suitable to use in that form as the names of dialects. The Hae Haela are also known as 'Keuru', the name used by Ray (1907). Hence I have continued with it as the name for the dialect. Haura Haela, Aheave, as well as Keuru and Orokolo, are names used for the Haura Haela, although locally Belepa refers to a place within the Haura Haela area.
5. Called 'Elema' by Ray (1907).
6. See chapter 7.4.3.1. in this volume.

7. This was published in 1886. The following year Tauraki was killed, together with his small son, while endeavouring to stop an attack on some Toaripi people by Moveave warriors.

8. This is recorded by Ray (1907:333), who gained his information from Holmes. Enquiries I made about this tradition confirmed it, but like Holmes I was unable to recover a single word of this early dialect.

9. As a consequence of my designing these covers I was commissioned to design a set of Papua New Guinea stamps along the lines of the Elema traditional art. The set appeared in 1966; a second set was issued in 1969, and a third set is appearing in 1977.

10. See Franklin 1973:Appendix H.

11. The subsidy is sometimes large. The Toaripi *Esodo*, for example, cost 75¢ (Australian) each to produce; the selling price was fixed at 10¢.

12. One such family record book that came to my notice some years ago was a second-hand ledger. Amongst the entries there was a list of 34 people who were contributors to a marriage payment. The items they had given were neatly tabulated in seven columns, cash (from 1/- to £1, i.e. 10¢ to \$2 Australian), armshells, dogs' teeth, cups, spoons and the like, the last column being miscellaneous. This list did not include the main contributors. On another page a much shorter list named those who had made up the return gift given by the bride's people on this same occasion.

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PART 7.5.

VERNACULAR EDUCATION

