

## **From Mountain Talk to Hidden Talk: Continuity and Change in Awiakay Registers**

When the Awiakay of the East Sepik Province in Papua New Guinea left their village or bush camps and went to the mountains, they used to practice a different language register, 'mountain talk', in which several lexical items are replaced by their avoidance terms. Thus they would prevent mountain spirits from sending them sickness or dense fog in which they would get lost on their journeys. In the last decade people's trips to the mountain have become more frequent due to the eaglewood business, however, Christianity caused a decline in the use of 'mountain talk'. Yet a linguistic register rather similar in its form and function has sprang up in a different setting: *kay menda*, 'different talk', or what people sometimes call 'hidden talk' is used when the Awiakay go to the town to sell eaglewood and buy goods.

Like other cultural models, linguistic registers are historical formations, exhibiting change in form and value over time. In this talk I will show how although in a different social setting, with an expanded repertoire and a slightly different function, *kay menda* is in a way a continuity of the 'mountain talk'.

### **References:**

- AGHA, Asif. 2001. Register. In: *Key Terms in Language and Culture*, ed. by Alessandro Duranti, pp. 212-15. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2004. Registers of Language. In: *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, ed. by Alessandro Duranti, pp. 23-45. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BRIGGS, Charles L. and Richard Baumann. 1992. Genre, Intertextuality and Social Power. In: *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*. 2 (2): pp. 131-172. American Anthropological Association.
- FRANKLIN, Karl J. 1972. A ritual pandanus language of New Guinea. *Oceania*. 43, pp. 61-76.
- FRANKLIN, Karl J. and Roman Stefaniv. 1992. The 'pandanus languages' of the Southern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea – a further report. In: Tom Dutton (ed.) *Culture change, language change – case studies from Melanesia*. 1-6. PL, C-120.
- HOENIGMAN, Darja. 2007. *Language and Myth in Kanjime, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea*. MA Thesis, Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis, Ljubljana Graduate School of the Humanities.
- LAYCOCK, Donald Clarence. 1977. Special languages in parts of the New Guinea area. In: S.A. Wurm, ed. *New Guinea area languages and language study*, vol. 3: *Language, culture, society and the modern world*. PL, C-40.
- LAYCOCK, Donald Clarence and Peter Mühlhäusler. 1990. Language engineering: special languages. In: N.E. Collinge (ed.). *An encyclopaedia of language*. pp. 843-853. London, New York: Routledge.
- PAWLEY, Andrew. 1992. Kalam Pandanus Language: An Old New Guinea Experiment in Language Engineering. In: Tom Dutton, Malcolm Ross and Darrel Tryon (eds) *The language game: papers in memory of Donald C. Laycock*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics C-110, pp. 313 – 34.
- STASCH, Rupert. 2002. Joking avoidance: a Korowai pragmatics of being two. In: *American Ethnologist* 29 (2), pp. 335-365. American Anthropological Association.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2008. Referent-wrecking in Korowai: A New Guinea abuse register as ethnosemiotic protest. In: *Language in Society*, 37:1, pp. 1-25 Cambridge: CUP