

Daniel Macdonald and the “Compromise Literary Dialect” in Efate, Central Vanuatu

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Daniel Macdonald, a Presbyterian Church of Victoria missionary to the New Hebrides from 1872 to 1905, developed a particularly strong interest in language. A prodigious author, he published widely and at length on the languages of Efate, and especially those of the Havannah Harbour area where he was stationed. But if his work is recalled today, it is as something of a curio, both for his insistence—archaic even for the times—on a link between ancient Semitic and Efate, and for his vigorous promotion of the use by the mission and its converts of a single, hybrid Efate language. This paper addresses and seeks to analyze what Macdonald himself called this “compromise literary dialect.” By identifying distinctive features of the three main varieties of Efate languages known today (Nguna or Nakanamanga, South Efate, and Lelepa), we aim to move beyond the lexical comparisons that have been the sole means of gauging relationships among these languages thus far. This enables us to begin the process of investigating the claim of Captain Rason, British Deputy Commissioner for the New Hebrides during Macdonald’s last years on Efate, that the “compromise literary dialect” was in fact a spoken dialect particular to the area of Havannah Harbour. We hope to reconsider and perhaps recuperate some of Macdonald’s writing as a rare if often distorted window on indigenous life and language at a pivotal moment in the transformation of Efate communities.

1. INTRODUCTION.¹ For north and west Efate, in what was then the central New Hebrides (now Vanuatu), the most significant historical sources for the late nineteenth century are the writings, published and unpublished, of the Reverend Daniel Macdonald (1846–1927) of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, missionary at Havannah Harbour from 1872 until 1905. While Macdonald has featured in histories of the Presbyterian mission (Miller n.d., 1981, 1985, 1987), of his trader neighbor Donald McLeod (Cawsey

1. Thanks to Kathy Creely for locating the 1871 translation of John, and to Ruth Bird for copying it at the SOAS library. Abbreviations used in this paper not found in the Leipzig conventions are IRREAL, irrealis; O, object; REAL, realis. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Seventh International Conference on Oceanic Linguistics in Nouméa in July 2007 and at the Inaugural Conference of the Society for the History of Linguistics in the Pacific, Canberra, August 1, 2008, and have benefited from discussion with participants at those conferences. We are also grateful for comments from an anonymous reviewer.

1998), and of Anglo-French rivalry (Thompson 1980), there has been no systematic attempt to mine his writings for the light that they might shed on indigenous lives and languages during the period of his ministry. Elsewhere, we have explored in more detail his ethnographic insights (Ballard and Thieberger 2006). Here we address his work in order to understand the nature of the linguistic varieties used in his writings. Macdonald notoriously devised what he himself termed a “compromise literary dialect” into which he translated Biblical material; a project that attracted criticism from his contemporaries as well as later scholars, including Sidney Ray. However, none of these observers identified precisely what characterized the “compromise.” If these translations did reflect a local variety of mixed dialects, resulting from the movement of speakers of different dialects into the mission settlement, then how does this mixed dialect differ from what we know of languages of the area today? And how will we be able to tell if this variety was only ever written, or if it actually reflected a variety spoken, though perhaps ephemeral, at Havannah Harbour?

It is also of interest to determine to what extent missionary writings might have influenced local language use. Mühlhäusler (1996) claims that languages of the Pacific that have been the focus of missionary translation efforts have consequently undergone lexical and structural change leading to their replacement by English. These claims were examined and largely rejected in reviews by Lynch (1995) and Siegel (1997). Nonetheless, it has been noted by several observers that the language used in missionary translations of Christian material can come to be associated with the sacred nature of the content of the texts and so be held in esteem as the authentic voice of the church in that language. Thus a prestigious variety of Tolai was the result of early missionary errors in translation, yet the Tolai “did not dare to alter what they had been taught to consider the sacred word and what had been accepted as their Bible language for generations” (Mosel 1982:165). Similarly, Geraghty (1989) refers to “Old High Fijian” as a missionary creation that did not reflect any variety of the spoken language, but has nevertheless been held in high regard and has long been the written form commonly in use for Fijian. Crowley (2001) summarizes a number of other cases in which ecclesiastical literary varieties were established in the Pacific, and goes on to discuss the extent to which these varieties could have influenced spoken use of the language. He notes that, for Erromango, the “only grammatical effect on the spoken language that can plausibly be attributed to European missionaries is the aberrant pattern used in greetings” (Crowley 2001:257).

A significant body of translated literature was generated by missionaries on Efate from 1864 until about 1910 (listed in Lynch and Crowley 2001:112). It is useful for historical and comparative purposes to know what language each of these publications is in and what relation these languages may have had to varieties spoken at the time. We have very little information about what seems to have been a network of dialects spoken in villages and hamlets throughout this region before missionary activity resulted in the establishment of larger settlements and likely dialect mixing. If Macdonald was actually recording a variety spoken at Havannah Harbour in the late nineteenth century, as Clark (n.d.) suggests, then it may be the only record of this variety. If, on the other hand, Macdonald set about creating a pan-lectal literary variety in the hope that his translations would appeal to a wider audience, the work is of less interest.

Ray (1926:197) wrote of Macdonald’s 1907 dictionary that “the words are in hopeless confusion” as “he gives variations of dialect without distinguishing the localities in which they are spoken.” The Presbyterian missionary Peter Milne, based on the island of Nguna to the north of Efate, also dismissed the translation of the Old Testament (published as *Tusi Tab Tuai* in 1908) by Macdonald and their co-missionary John W. Mackenzie, based at Erakor in South Efate, as “not generally useful” for many Efate communities “on account of over two thirds of it being in the dialects which they scarcely understand” (Miller 1987:82). However, we have to read Milne’s views on Macdonald with caution, as the two were engaged in a feud that ran for at least fifteen years. In 1885 Milne got permission from Synod to use *supe* for “god” while Macdonald and Mackenzie used the Polynesian mission term *atua* (the earlier term *leatu* seems to have been dropped from later translations). The dispute then escalated over whose teachers should evangelize the islands of Emau and Emae to the north of Nguna and Efate, and Macdonald finally banned Milne’s work altogether on Efate (Miller 1987:89). The small island of Kakula, between Efate and Nguna, became neutral ground on which north Efate people who wanted to read the language of Nguna could do so, away from the mainland of Efate and Macdonald’s writ. In the light of this ongoing dispute it is wise not to treat Milne’s judgment of Macdonald’s work as neutral.

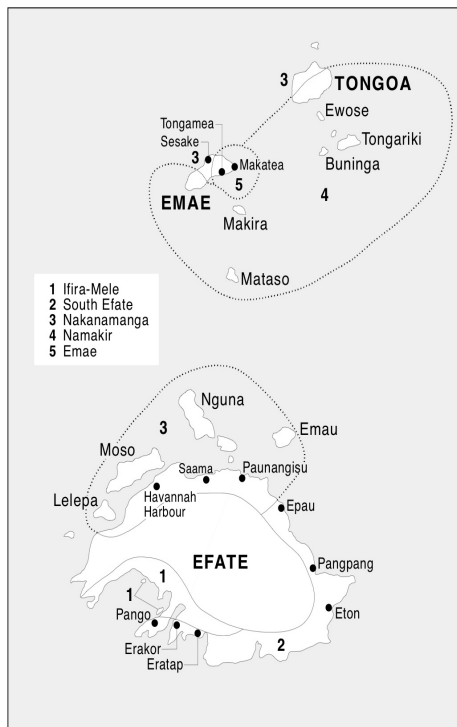
However, Macdonald’s earlier textual translations provide useful information and demonstrate development over time. It would be a mistake to treat all of his work as being of a single piece and to discard or disregard this earlier work on the grounds of association with his later and best-known publications, such as the 1894 dictionary of the language of Efate (republished in 1907), which is rightly regarded as being confused in not reflecting the dialect variation of the period (e.g., Clark n.d.). In this paper we analyze one of Macdonald’s early works, the translation of John, a key text produced in 1885, based on a translation into the Erakor variety of South Efate some fourteen years earlier by the missionary James Cosh. As will be seen, this text is crucial in providing a parallel text in both South Efate and in Macdonald’s “compromise” dialect. To illustrate the problem of dealing with Macdonald’s translations, his 1877 translation of the Prodigal Son, given as being in the “Samoa” dialect (presumably from Samoa Point) (Capell n.d.), is in a different variety from both the 1871 and the 1885 versions of John that we discuss in this paper. We hope to be able to prepare a comparative analysis of all of the various Macdonald translations similar to that provided in this paper for the two editions of John. First, however, it will be useful to establish what distinctions can be made among the different language varieties on Efate.

2. THE LANGUAGE SITUATION ON EFATE. Lynch and Crowley (2001: 107–15) summarize the literature on Efate languages and conclude that there are two broad groupings that they call Nakanamanga (with some 9,500 speakers) and South Efate (with some 6,000 speakers), each composed of discrete dialect chains (see map 1, from Lynch and Crowley [2001:108]). Their summary is based mainly on Clark’s (n.d., 1985) comparison of wordlists (summarized below) and his conclusion that the varieties form a dialect chain (Clark n.d.:24), although they note his conclusion that there is no obvious isogloss bundle separating South Efate and Nakanamanga. Capell (1962) por-

trayed the linguistic situation of Efate as being characterized by historical movement from the inland mountains to the coast, with the inland dialects having close relationships to their coastal neighbors. To further complicate the picture, we know that the Erakor variety of South Efate was used well into the twentieth century as the language of Presbyterian proselytizing,² and that the first local lay teachers posted to the Mangaliliu area, for example, were from Erakor.³ This may help to explain why South Efate is understood by Lelepa speakers, while Lelepa remains difficult if not incomprehensible to an unaccustomed South Efate speaker (as we will see in Stahl's work below). In this paper we employ the labels Nakanamanga, South Efate, and Lelepa as heuristics that largely match the grouping of language varieties known today on Efate.

Tryon's (1979) comparison of a set of some 240 words from each of the locations given in table 1 shows a high degree of similarity in the wordlists, as does Clark's later revision (summarized in table 2) of this comparison based on more data. In the counts of both Tryon and Clark, Lelepa shares more cognates with Nguna than with Pango or Eton, but Clark (n.d.:24) groups Lelepa (which he calls a "transitional dialect") with

MAP 1. EFATE LANGUAGES



2. *Natus Nalag*, the Efate hymnal, first appeared in 1867 (published in 1868 as *Nalag ni Efate* and subsequently augmented and republished in 1892, 1912, and 1971).

3. Kalkot of Erakor was posted to "Mangaliliu," near the present-day settlement of Mangaliliu on the mainland of Efate, in 1875 (Macdonald n.d., Diary entry for January 1, 1875; Philibert 1972:5).

South Efate on the basis of shared lexical innovations despite, as he notes, no clear demarcation of groups of isoglosses.

TABLE 1. TRYON'S (1976) COGNATE PERCENTAGES

		Lelepa	Nguna
	Pango	73	68.8
Eton	82.6	71.2	69.2

TABLE 2. CLARK'S (n.d.) COGNATE PERCENTAGES

		Lelepa	Nguna
	Pango	77	75
Eton	83	77	79

Thus far, the subgrouping of Efate varieties has perforce been based on lexical and phonological features, because little grammatical analysis had been done on mainland Efate. The only grammatical work on an Efate language up to the end of the twentieth century was a sketch grammar of Ngunes (Schütz 1969b). A recent grammar of South Efate (Thieberger 2006) provides more detail for a comparison of Efate languages. Certain grammatical and morphological features distinguish Nakanamanga, Lelepa, and South Efate: for example the negator is /ti/ in Lelepa rather than /ta/ in Nakanamanga, and both Lelepa and South Efate use a two-part negation as shown in table 3.⁴ The pronouns are, in the main, quite distinctive as can be seen by the list of free and bound pronouns in table 3.⁵ South Efate and Lelepa encode mood in the pronouns; that is, broadly speaking, a pronoun will appear in one form if the action encoded by the following verb has already occurred at the time of the discourse frame (realis) and in another form if the action has yet

TABLE 3. COMPARISON OF SELECTED NONLEXICAL FORMS IN THREE EFATE LANGUAGES

	Nakanamanga	Lelepa	South Efate
1SG	kinau / (t)a	konou / a; ag	kineu /a; ka; kai
2SG	niigo / (te)ku; ða [†]	nag / ða; ku	ag / ku; ða; kui
3SG	nae / (t)e	nae / e; eg	ga / i; ke; ki
1PL.INCL	nigita / tu	kinta / tu; tug	akit / tu; tuk; tui
1PL.EXCL	kinami / (t)au	kenem / ur ~ ao; ?	komam / u; ko; ui
2PL	nimu / ku	kumu / kur; kurug ~ kug	akam / u; ko; koi
3PL	naara / (t)eu, (t)ou	naara / ur; urug	gar / ru; ruk; rui
'no'	ee	ee	itik
'yes'	io	seg ~ ao	ore
Negation	ta ... (mau)	ti ... mou	ta ... mau

[†] ða is given as an imperative form by Schütz (1969b:28).

- While Schütz (1969b:28) says negation is marked by *taa* alone, it also regularly, but not exclusively, occurs with *mau* glossed as “limiting” (Schütz 1969b:46) at the end of the clause in a number of textual examples (Schütz 1969a), just as it does in two-part negation in South Efate.
- In table 3, pronouns are given in the following order: free pronouns, then prefixed pronominal forms following the forward slash, then realis; irrealis; perfect forms. We are grateful to Sébastien Lacrampe for additional information on the Lelepa irrealis forms.

to occur (irrealis); and, in South Efate there is yet another form of the pronoun encoding completed and past events (perfect). In Nakanamanga it seems there is a mood distinction only in second person singular, with /pa/ marking the subject of an imperative, and /ku/ used in all other contexts. The pronominal forms are largely different in each language variety and, as bound pronouns obligatorily occur in every sentence, these forms appear very often and can be used as diagnostic of the languages. There are strong similarities between all Efate languages, structurally and in the lexicon, but not to the point that Crowley (2004:6) notes for Sye and Ura, which he observes are structurally almost identical.

For the language varieties in the region around Havannah Harbour we have very little information. From the recollections of present-day chiefs of Lelepa and Mangaliliu, it is possible to reconstruct that the Udaone dialect in the immediate vicinity of Macdonald's mission station in Havannah Harbour was probably related most closely to the Los dialect on Lelepa. The Los dialect is now effectively extinct even on Lelepa. The coastal area from Faterana through Samoa Point to Udaone appears to have been something of an uninhabited no-man's land, due to intersettlement warfare on the mainland of Efate, and this is why this area was the first to be sold to Europeans in the 1860s and 1870s. Dialects followed the chiefly domain boundaries, which ran across the islands of Lelepa and Moso and over to the Efate mainland, so that the dialect of Los in eastern Lelepa corresponded to Faterana on the mainland, (western) Lelepa to the adjacent Mangaliliu area of Efate, west Moso to the Udaone area of Havannah Harbour, and so on (see map 2). It is difficult to say much more about language varieties at this local level, but for the purposes of the present discussion we will regard this group as constituting a Lelepa language.

In 1972, Tryon (1972) assigned Lelepa to the same group as South Efate, but in 1976 he included it with North Efate (Nakanamanga). Clark also notes on the basis of Tryon's lexical comparison that the position of Lelepa is "somewhat unclear" but, on his own further analysis, he concludes that Lelepa should be "classified as a northern dialect, if not a separate language" (Clark n.d.4).

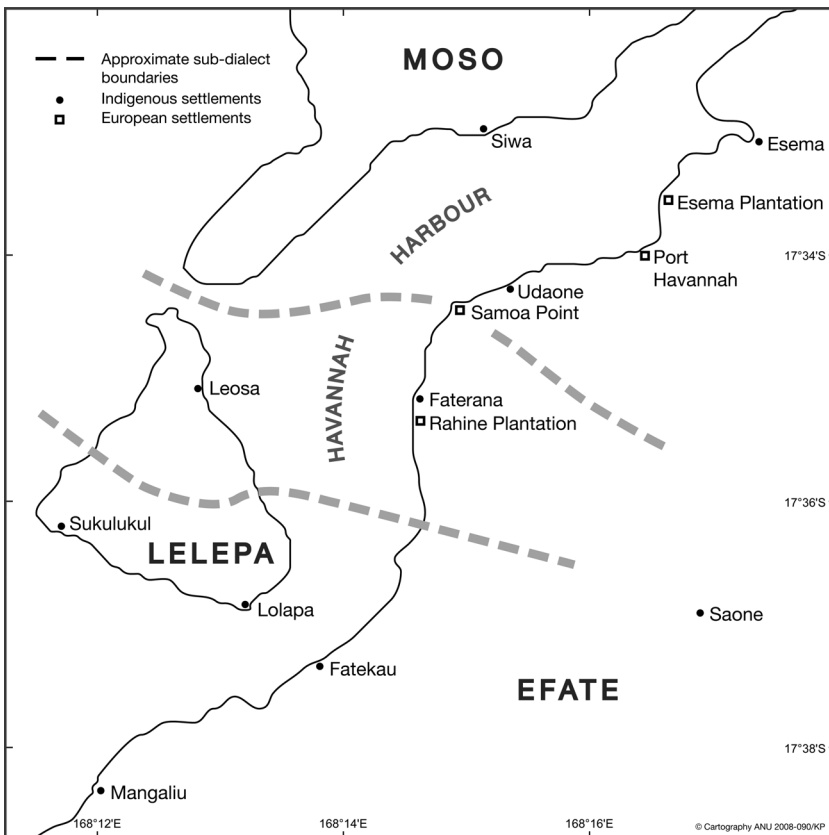
Stahl (1994) conducted an intelligibility survey of the Efate varieties Pango, Eton, and Lelepa, to test the extent to which speakers of each variety understand speakers from other varieties, using a method developed by Casad (1974). The results are summarized in table 4. They should be read as follows: Eton speakers have a mean comprehension of Pango speakers of 95 percent, whereas Pango speakers have only a 64 percent mean comprehension of Eton speakers. In summary, Lelepa understands Pango and Eton but not vice versa, and Eton understands Pango but not vice versa. On the basis of this work, Stahl concludes that each variety forms a separate language. With some of the linguistic complexity of Efate mapped or reconstructed in this way, we turn now to consider the role of Daniel Macdonald in generating the "compromise dialect" of Havannah Harbour.

TABLE 4. EXTRACT FROM STAHL'S (1994) INTELLIGIBILITY SURVEY

PLACE/ TEXT	Eton/ Pango	Eton/ Lelepa	Lelepa/ Pango	Lelepa/ Eton	Pango/ Eton	Pango/ Lelepa
MEAN	95%	55%	84%	88%	64%	41%

3. DANIEL MACDONALD’S LABOR OF TRANSLATION. Daniel Macdonald arrived in Efate in 1872 as the first overseas missionary ordained by the Presbyterian Church of Victoria. Twenty-six years of age and freshly married to Elizabeth, daughter of the missionaries John and Charlotte Geddie at Aneityum, he took up his post at Havannah Harbour on the island’s northwest coast. Not unlike William Ellis on Tahiti, Daniel Macdonald “found himself recording and preserving the culture he had been commissioned to extirpate” (Edmond 1998:156). Again like Ellis, Macdonald’s attentiveness to native religion and oral tradition appears to have derived from his interest in the comparative study of religions. While most of the early Presbyterian missionaries clearly learned a great deal in their extended sojourns on Efate, they typically left little record of local customary practices and language beyond translated Christian material. Macdonald was alone among his missionary colleagues in publishing extensive accounts of traditional practices and beliefs, but neither his original manuscripts nor any vernacular versions that he may have put to paper are known to have survived. A story told by the late Kalsarap Namaf of Erakor village (Thieberger 2000:4), apocryphal though it may be,

MAP 2. HAVANNAH HARBOUR



suggests that any written records kept by the earlier missionaries about the *kastom* (pre-contact) life of the people of Efate were destroyed by the missionary Dr. Mackenzie in his struggle against ‘darkness.’ The story told in the South Efate language recounts how Dr. Mackenzie asked Chief Samuel to fill his canoe with papers and books recording traditional heathen ways, paddle out to the ocean and throw them over the side.

Macdonald’s early Bible translations and other language materials have the potential to provide us with vitally important insights into the language and culture of northwest Efate in the late nineteenth century. However, three areas of difficulty prevent this process from being transparent or straightforward: changes in his grasp of Efate languages over the long period of his tenure as a missionary; his stated decision to create and promote a unitary and hybrid pan-Efate language; and his strange but dogged determination to prove that Efate and other Oceanic languages were closely related to Semitic languages.

Macdonald’s writings on the languages and cultures of Efate were prolific, and they spanned a long period during which his comprehension and analysis of the languages of the region evolved—so much so that each article or book that he wrote needs to be addressed individually rather than viewed as part of a unitary whole. He kept a diary, now held at the National Library of Australia (Macdonald n.d.), but it is often patchy and runs only from 1875 until 1885. He took no photographs and seems to have engaged in little scholarly correspondence. Most of his efforts were dedicated to translation and to political challenges (the latter detailed in his regular correspondence to Australian newspapers such as *The Argus*). Understandably, early entries in his diary betray a fluid orthography for terms in Efate languages, though he often noted terms for which the precise meaning had eluded him.

The profound challenges of conversion and widespread local indifference to his preaching during Macdonald’s early years at Havannah Harbour created both the space and time for work on language. Macdonald plunged himself almost immediately into the work of Bible translation, starting with the Gospel of Luke, which he seems to have worked on with no more than a couple of local assistants, including Beoumaru. By January 1875, less than three years after his arrival on Efate, he was revising a full draft of Luke, and had in Beoumaru his first Efate-literate pupil (Macdonald n.d., entries for Jan. 1 and Feb. 9, 1875). In 1877, Macdonald was able to publish his translation of Luke, together with a 14-page primer (1877a, 1877b). Later editions of these two works betray some of the transformations in his approach to language (1883b, 1885, 1911).

Macdonald was well aware that there were “several dialects of Efatese, differing from each other as do provincial dialects of England or Scotland” (Macdonald 1889a:6). In addition, he noted, there were “slight dialectical differences in almost every village” (1889a:7). However, by the publication of the next Gospel, that of John in 1885, Macdonald had embarked on a process of hybridization of different Efate dialects in an attempt to create a pan-Efate language, in collaboration with James Mackenzie, the Presbyterian missionary at Erakor in South Efate. The complete New Testament in the hybridized Efatese was finally published jointly by Macdonald and Mackenzie in 1889. In the same year Macdonald published a comparative description of Efatese with Erromangan and Santo languages (1889b), as well as his grammar and dictionary of the Efate language (1889a), rather ambitiously titled *Oceania: Linguistic and anthropological*,

though its coverage consisted largely of Efatese, some Malay—not now classed as an Oceanic language—and a great deal of Semitic.

The gradual emergence of this strategy of hybridization, or compromise between different dialects, was explained by Macdonald in the following terms:

Mr. Mackenzie and I thought it possible to make a kind of compromise literary dialect for the whole of the people so understanding each other when speaking; and most desirable, not only as lessening the expense of printing the Scriptures, but also as a means of uniting the people together, and so helping, in accordance with the spirit of Christianity, to put an end to the separation of tribe from tribe that had been so large a feature of, and so fruitful a source of evil in, the heathen state, and to make it impossible for the future. (Macdonald 1889b:8)

By the 1880s, it seemed clear to Macdonald—and no doubt Mackenzie too—that the dramatic decline of Efate’s population over the previous three decades had left many dialects in peril of total disappearance. There seemed to be no prospect of an arrest in this demographic collapse and, indeed, it was not until after World War I that population numbers on Efate began to stabilize and then slowly rise again. By 1913, there were only about 20 surviving native speakers of the Udaone dialect in which Macdonald had first worked. It is this context that perhaps helps to account for his decision to generate a new pan-Efate language, however radical such a move might appear to us today.

What then was “compromised?” What features of each of these dialect varieties (Lelepa, Nakanamanga, and South Efate) were included and what was excluded? Macdonald’s work, for example, in Ioane (John) 1885, cotranslated with Mackenzie, shows features of both current Lelepa and South Efate. While it could be considered that South Efate has also changed so that we can no longer tell what form it may have taken in the late 1800s, the early South Efate translations (e.g. *Nalag nig Efate*, Anon 1868, or *Nawisien nig Nagmer Apostol*, Bible 1880) show that the language has remained relatively stable over the intervening 130 years. What does “compromise” mean in relation to the Macdonald translation of 1885? If we take the motivation of the missionaries to be the production of texts accessible to the greatest number of people, then we would expect a compromise to include the use of terms and constructions known widely in Efate. Perhaps we could expect, where there was complexity in one but not in another variety, that the less complex form would be used to facilitate communication.

It has also been suggested that the compromise variety was actually spoken at Havannah Harbour. For example, Captain Ernest Rason, British Deputy Commissioner in the New Hebrides from 1902 to 1907, wrote of Macdonald that:

When the missionaries established themselves on Efaté he was in Havannah Harbour, and the natives who first became Christians left their villages and came to the mission station for protection. Thus the language of the mission station became a medley of all the dialects around. This gradually coalesced into a special dialect which became a lingua franca with the natives and was partially understood by all. As the heathen natives died out or became Christian the mission language was claimed as the language of the island. Then the Bible was translated into this language and Dr Macdonald wrote a dictionary of it as if the

missionary language was the original language of the various villages before they were Christian. The poor man only deceived himself and is now deceiving others, but it is not wilful scientific dishonesty ... It is a case of self-deception. (Rason to William Churchill, quoted in Churchill 1911:11.)

It is possible that a number of dialects did coalesce over time as their speakers relocated to larger villages in preference to the former small hamlets, a process hastened throughout the second half of the nineteenth century by the impact of epidemics and by warfare waged with newly acquired guns.

Capell (1962:219) referred to Macdonald's dialect as being "practically extinct: in fact there is some doubt as to what area it represents. Macdonald's earliest translations (e.g. Luke in 1877) were remembered in 1957 by only two old men, now living in Moso and Siviri [east of Havannah Harbour] respectively." Capell clearly considered Macdonald's writings to represent a language variety that was spoken at some time in the area of Havannah Harbour and that Lelepa "may be regarded as the present-day form of Macdonald's HH [Havannah Harbour]." The fact that two men remembered the early translations in the 1950s does not necessarily imply that they spoke the variety used in that translation of Luke.

The main linguistic analysis of Macdonald's work to date has been that by Ross Clark (n.d., 1985) as part of his work on the internal relationships of the Efate dialect chain. He discusses the problem of "Macdonald's dialect," noting that, while the 1907 dictionary is confused, in the earlier work "something more like a single dialect appears. This, one would assume, reflected the local speech of the area around Samoa Point, where Macdonald's mission station was" (n.d.:21).

Churchill, a near contemporary of Macdonald's with an interest in the languages of Melanesia, reviewed Macdonald's dictionary, starting out with a tribute to the thirty-five years he had "spent in the search into the language and the mind of this interesting family of Melanesians" (1911:5). While railing against Macdonald's broader goal of proving the Semitic origin of the languages, Churchill is generous enough to "comment upon the work as dictionary alone and freed from its speculative adornments" (1911:6). His frustration with the poor organization of the work is evident throughout, in particular the lack of identification of which dialect a word is from, but he still concludes that it is the "most valuable contribution to our knowledge of any speech of Melanesia" (1911:11).

Clark comments on Macdonald's 1907 dictionary that there is "generally good agreement with nearby Lelepa," suggesting that "Macdonald's dialect is not merely a pandialectal construct, but represents basically the speech of the particular area in which he worked" (Clark n.d.:23). He goes on to note that there are several doublets or synonyms from either side of lexical isoglosses that suggest movement of speakers of these varieties into settlements and the subsequent availability of multiple synonyms drawn from various source dialects. A similar phenomenon is known from the Australian Western Desert dialect chain for which Hansen (1984:8) notes that movement between local groups has resulted in a large number of synonyms available to speakers. In editing texts with Lelepa speakers today, it is common to find words changed from the Ngunese form, which speakers use quite naturally when recounting a story, to the "correct" Lelepa form, suggesting that there has also been a history of mixing between Lelepa and Ngunu.

4. THE GOSPEL OF JOHN: THE 1871, 1885, AND NGUNESE TRANSLATIONS. The copy of the 1885 translation of the Gospel of John held in the National Library of Australia has the following inscription typed onto a slip on the front page: “‘In 1885 it having become necessary to reprint the Gospel of John it was revised & printed as an attempt at a compromise dialect.’ Murray p.179.”⁶ This tantalizing clue set us on a search for the earlier version, determined that it would give us a key to the sorts of modification that Macdonald considered to constitute a “compromise” version. With this earlier version, we would be able to compare the pre- and postcompromise versions, and thus to understand what Macdonald, in 1885, had regarded as the most appropriate for use in translation. No copies of the 1871 translation were available in Australian or New Zealand libraries, but we finally located three extant copies in England: at Cambridge, the School of Oriental and African Studies, and the British Library. With a digital camera in the hands of a friend in London we were able to have a copy within a few days.

Both translations, and the initial work of James Cosh in particular, represent a significant effort, appearing only five years after Cosh arrived at Pango. This is especially so when one considers the complex constructions that they sought to render into local languages. Biblical texts are not simple, particularly when the source is in Greek,⁷ as can be seen from one example in table 5.

TABLE 5. SAMPLE TRANSLATION LINE OF JOHN 9:7

King James	And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.
1871 translation of John	Ki nrik kina kin, Ba fan loss nai nag i bokot, Siloam, (nabut nagie nin, te ru tuba kin mai). Ki pan loss kai lolo mai. He said to him, You go and wash in the water that is [bokot], Siloam ([nabut] name of which, [te] they threw it and it came). He went and washed and came seeing.
1885 translation of John	Kai nriki na kin, Ba fan tumom bunul uk luk nai ni Siloam, (ru nre a bi Te natubulu). Te uan kin i ban kai tumen bunuli a, kai lolo mai. And said to him, You go wash yourself in the well at Siloam (they turn it to be the sent one). Thus he went and washed himself and came seeing.

By comparing the 1871 and 1885 versions of the translation of John we hope to determine what features appear in the later work that could be considered “compromise” forms; that is, which forms in 1885 are not (current) South Efate, and to what extent we can exclude them as having been South Efate forms in 1885. The most striking feature of the later translation is that it is not so very different from the 1871 version, as can be seen in some sample sentences below from the 1871, 1885, and Ngunes (Nakanamanga—abbreviated as NGU in these examples) translations of John. A reader with a reasonable comprehension of Current South Efate can understand much of the 1885 “compromise” translation.

6. We have not been able to identify the source of this quote, though the missionary author Archibald Wright Murray would appear to be the most likely candidate. The quote does not appear in his 1885 book, *Martyrs of Polynesia*.

7. We know that Macdonald (1883b) was translated from an original in Greek.

- (1) 1:1: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

1871 Nrakabei nafsan i tok, nafsan go Leatu
 1885 Inraka bei nafsan i tok, go nafsan me Atua
 NGU Ragi vea navasaanae toko, go navasaana ma Supe
 rukui mou tok, go nafsan i bi Leatu.
 Ranrua tok, go nafsan i bi Atua.
 ero rua roko, go navasaana e pei Supe.

- (2) 1:2: The same was in the beginning with God.

1871 Nafsan iskeimau wan i tok,
 1885 Niga uan nigar Atua ranrua tok
 NGU Nae e toko
 nrakabei nigar Leatu rukui mou tok.
 inraka bei.
 ragi vea, nara Ma Supe ero rua roko.

- (3) 1:4: In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

1871 Nagmolien i tok emalubut niga go nagmoliena
 1885 Namolien i tok osa tok go namolien
 NGU Namauriana e toko asa toko go namauriana
 nin i bi namrema nig natamol.
 uan i bi namarem ni natamole.
 wanogoe e pei namarama ki natañoli.

- (4) 1:5: And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

1871 Go namrem i miram nimaliko, me nimaliko ki
 1885 Go namarem i marem namaliko; go namaliko i
 NGU Go namarama e marama namaligo go namaligo e
 tu tae e mou.
 ti tae mau.
 ta atae a mau.

- (5) 1:6: There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

1871 Leatu ki tubulu to natamol, niga
 1885 Atua i tubulu natamole iskei i mai,
 NGU Supe e tipakilua natañoli sikai,
 nagien Yoan.
 nagiena Ioane.
 nagsana Yoane.

- (6) 1:7: The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

1871 Niga wan kin i bi natamol tilsei,
 1885 Niga uan i mai nag ega fi natamole tilsei,
 NGU Nae e umai naga ega vei tea naosokisoki,
 ki mai nag ke tilsei namrem, nag
 nag ega tilsei namarem, nag ega frig
 naga ega naosokisoki namarama, naga tea
 natamol laba ru seralesokos.
 te laba ruga seralesoko.
 mamau puti euga saralomau nalakena nae.

- (7) 1:8: He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.
 1871 Niga i tu bi namrema nin mou, me i nag
 1885 Niga i ta bi namarem mau, me i mai nag
 NGU Nae e ta pei namarama mau ma e umai naga
 ke tilsei namrema nin.
 ega tilsei namarem.
 ega noasokisoki namarama.

In tables 6 through 10 we set out some of the features contrasting the 1871 and 1885 translations of the Gospel of John (CSE = Current South Efate, L = Lelepa, and N = Nakanamanga).⁸ A number of words in the 1885 version are vowelful (e.g., 1 in table 6), contrasting with South Efate which has lost most final and many medial vowels. But, as we would expect in such texts, some words in 1871 also have vowels that are lost in Current South Efate and these could be archaic forms. Coarticulated stops are written in the 1871 version as combinations of characters (/kp/, /gm/) but not in 1885, appearing as single characters (/p/, /m/). Speakers would no doubt have continued to pronounce them normally (with coarticulation), but perhaps the authors considered it simpler for their readers to write a single segment.

The free pronouns in 1885 (table 7) are a mix of Nakanamanga and Current South Efate forms. Mood marking in subject pronominal prefixes (e.g., table 8) features in both

**TABLE 6. COMPARISON OF 1871 AND 1885 TRANSLATIONS:
 PHONOLOGY AND ORTHOGRAPHY**

	1871	1885	Comments
1. Vowels	sernatamol ‘everyone’ namrem ‘light’ numtam ‘your eye’	sera natamole namarema nametam	1885 has vowels in places where 1871 and CSE do not (vowelful words are indicators of northern varieties)
	kanoa ‘person’ kanoa ‘be unable’	natamole ‘person’ kano ‘be unable’	CSE has both <i>kano</i> and <i>natañol</i> CSE has ‘kano’
2. Orthography	takpar ‘sin’ tekbal ‘nothing’ nugmer ‘person’ nugmer ‘person’ nuftea ‘what’	taparo tepal namer namer nafte	1885 ignores coarticulated stops, even though they were represented in 1871 1885 represents vowels correctly (from the perspective of CSE)

**TABLE 7. COMPARISON OF 1871 AND 1885 TRANSLATIONS:
 FREE PRONOUNS**

1871	1885	Comments
kinou (1SG)	kinau (1SG) (N)	kinau (N), konou (L)
ag (2SG)	aga /ago (2SG) (CSE)	niigo (N), nag (L)
niga (3SG)	niga (3SG) (CSE)	nae (N, L)
komam (1PL.EXCL)	auga / gami (1PL) (?)	kinami (N), kenem (L)
akit (1PL.INCL)	nigita (1PL.INCL) (N)	nigita (N), kinta (L)
akam (2PL)	akam (2PL) (CSE)	nimu (N), kumu (L)
nigar (3PL)	—	naara (N), (L)
nigneu (1SG.POSS)	anau (1SG.POSS) (?)	
niga (3SG.POSS)	anena (3SG.POSS) (N)	aneana (N)
aginara (3PL.POSS)	nigar (3PL.POSS)(CSE)	mateata (N)

8. In tables 6 through 10, shading indicates closer similarity to Current South Efate.

1871 and 1885 and the forms here are largely identical with Current South Efate. However, 1885 consistently has no perfective forms and this contrasts with Current South Efate. The pronouns in 1885 are quite different from Nakanamanga or Lelepa.

The future marker /ga/ (row 1 in table 9) in 1885 is from Nakanamanga and Lelepa, and it alternates in the 1885 text with /bo/ which is Current South Efate. This seems to be an example of mixing, but not one that has much utility if it is using the two forms for the one function with no apparent motivation for the alternation.

Object marking in 1885 also shows both Current South Efate and Nakanamanga forms used (row 2 in table 9), although there is a possibility that an archaic form of the Object marker (-ra) occurred in South Efate as it is also occasionally used in 1871. The form -mus (2PLO) is Current South Efate, and it appears in 1885. This combination of markers is an indication of mixing.

Of the lexical differences given here (table 10), all show 1885 reflecting Nakanamanga or Lelepa, again suggesting that the compromise was effected by incorporating northern features into the existing South Efate translation.

**TABLE 8. COMPARISON OF 1871 AND 1885 TRANSLATIONS:
SUBJECT PRONOUNS**

	1871	1885	Comments
1SG	a (1SG.REAL) ka (1SG.IRREAL) kai (1SG.PFV)	a (1SG.REAL) ka (1SG.IRREAL)	All subject pronouns are similar or identical to CSE. Both L and N
2SG	ku (2SG.REAL) ba (2SG.IRREAL) kui (2SG.PFV)	ku (2SG.REAL) ba (2SG.IRREAL)	include forms that are quite different from those in 1871 and 1885,
3SG	i (3SG.REAL) ke (3SG.IRREAL) ki (3SG.PFV)	i (3SG.REAL) ke (3SG.IRREAL)	e.g., e (3SG.REAL), eg (3SG.IRREAL), ur (3PL.REAL), urug (3PL.IRREAL)
1PL.INCL	tu (1PL.INCL.REAL) tuk (1PL.INCL.IRREAL) tukui (1PL.INCL.PFV)	tu (1PL.INCL) tuk (1PL.INCL.IRREAL)	
1PL.EXCL	ou (1PL.EXCL.REAL) kui (1PL.EXCL.PFV)	au (1PL.EXCL)	
2PL	ku (2PL.REAL) ko (?) kui (2PL.PFV)	ku (2PL) u ([rarely])	
3PL	ru (3PL.REAL) ruk (3PL.IRREAL) rukui (3PL.PFV)	ru (3PL.REAL) ruk (3PL.IRREAL)	

**TABLE 9. COMPARISON OF 1871 AND 1885 TRANSLATIONS:
OTHER MORPHOLOGY**

	1871	1885	Comments
1. Prospective / Future marker	po / fo	bo / ga	po = CSE, ga = L and N.
2. Object markers	∅, -r (3SG, 3PL) Anomalous use of -a (3SG.O) e.g., in <i>nrik kira</i>	a, ra (3SG, 3PL)	1871 <i>Ko frigi</i> (CSE) 1885 <i>Ko frigi a</i> (N) 'We (excl) did it' (CSE <i>Kofregi</i>)
	mu (2PL.O) (= N)	mus (2PL.O) (= CSE)	

TABLE 10. COMPARISON OF 1871 AND 1885 TRANSLATIONS:
OTHER FEATURES

	1871	1885	Comments
Lexical differences			
‘or’	ko = CSE	kite = N, L	<i>kite</i> is L and N
‘love, gift’	nanromien = CSE	nasauian	Only <i>nanromien</i> is used in CSE
‘pour’	lig = CSE	ut = CSE	Both available in CSE
‘now’, ‘at that time’	milfanin / minranin	malfanen / malfanin	CSE is <i>malfanen</i>
Negation	<i>tu ... mou</i> (but the use of /u/ instead of /a/ in /tu/ could reflect the same error as in row 2 above where <i>nañer</i> is <i>nugmer</i>)	ti ... mau	CSE is <i>ta ... mau</i> L is <i>ti ... mou</i>
Anomalous forms			
‘full’	burra	bur	(would expect bur, CSE = ‘ <i>ɸur</i> ’)
<i>te ga</i> DET-3SG.POS	te anena	te nega	1871 is not the CSE form
‘walk’	siwera	siuer	1871 has final vowels where 1885 does not
‘house’	nasuma	nasum	
‘woman’	nimatua	namatu	
Archaic forms			
	nis	nis	<i>nen</i> (DEM, REL) CSE
	mtou ki	matau ki	<i>mtak ki</i> ‘to fear’ CSE
	kopas i		<i>kpasi</i> ‘to chase it’

5. CONCLUSION. It is no small irony that we can now use Christian translations, created to overwrite customary knowledge, in order to piece together our understanding of the early linguistic situation on Efate. The comparison of the two versions of John presented here illustrates a blending of features from as early as 1885 from South Efate, Nakamanga, and Lelepa, truly illustrating a compromise literary variety and giving us a clearer idea of what characterizes this variety. The fact that there is little overlap of functions in the mixing between varieties exhibited in this analysis (i.e., we do not see two different forms being used for the same function) suggests a literary rather than spoken mixing of varieties, or at least a literary editing of the texts to regularize this pattern. In general, compared to the 1871 version, the 1885 version in the “compromise dialect” includes more final vowels, a feature of northern languages, and also includes some function words (e.g., *kite* ‘or’) and morphology (e.g., *ga* future marker, *-ra* object marker) from the northern varieties. However, the question that remains for further study is whether this variety was constructed by Macdonald, as he claims, or whether it was actually already in use in Havannah Harbour in the late nineteenth century. Having explored the language of the 1885 translation, we hope next to be able to investigate other historical sources in order to build a more complete picture of the microevolution of the languages of northwest Efate.

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