upon layer of meaning, first by the implied presence of the woman’s father, and in the end by lurid implications of homosexual incest between father and son. By the end of the book, the flute with its plug has come to embody a dizzying array of ideas, encapsulating “complicated scenarios of intrauterine life, combining relations among generations, parricide and filicide, copulation and death, gestation and birth, etc., as if they were simultaneous and the same” (349).

The sheer complexity of the analysis raises questions about its salience for actual Gimi lives, especially when these ideas supposedly have such deep psychological roots. Gillison is not always clear about which interpretations come from informants and which from her own intuitions. I found myself grasping tightly to those bits of exegesis that clearly did come from the Gimi themselves, and feeling more and more uneasy about the rest. Gillison’s description of her confirmation techniques didn’t help. She knew she was on the right track when, after she suggested a possible interpretation to an informant, the informant did not change the subject but offered another story on the same theme “without discussing or analyzing it directly” (14). Nevertheless, Gillison’s interpretive talents are formidable, and the accumulated weight of the rich material she brings to light leaves a sense of a truly impressive achievement.

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This book is the fourteenth volume in the series titled Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language. Its focus is the demise of a small language called Taiap, spoken by fewer than 100 persons of Gapun village in an isolated part of the Sepik region of Papua New Guinea. Kulick seeks to explain why villagers are abandoning their vernacular language in favor of Tok Pisin, an English-based pidgin/creole and the most widely spoken lingua franca in Papua New Guinea. In 1987 no village child under ten actively used Taiap. They either already spoke or were acquiring Tok Pisin.

Although we are fortunate to have a few detailed studies of language shift in Europe (eg, Nancy Dorian, Language Death, 1981; Susan Gal, Language Shift, 1979), this book is the first to systematically describe the process in Papua New Guinea, a country with unrivaled linguistic diversity containing some 850 languages. Many of these are spoken by small numbers of people and their future is by no means secure. Kulick’s study is also the first to concentrate on the language socialization of the first generation of children who are growing up without their vernacu-
lar rather than on the last generations of adult speakers.

Instead of invoking the usual macrosociological explanations of language shift, for example, industrialization, urbanization, in- or out-migration, none of which has affected Gapun villagers to any great degree, Kulick attempts to answer the question of why and how people come to interpret their lives in such a way that they abandon their language. The book is in essence about the reasons villagers have come to regard Tok Pisin as an essential attribute for those who wish to participate in modernization as opposed to those who are perceived as backward.

In chapter 1, “The Villagers and Their Village,” Kulick describes the village setting. Chapter 2 moves on to consider “Language and Talk in the Village” and the introduction of Tok Pisin into the villagers’ linguistic repertoire. Tok Pisin has a short history in Gapun, beginning sometime after 1914, when the first men to be recruited by whites left the village and later returned with knowledge of pidgin they had picked up while working on a plantation near Rabaul in New Britain. Later, when Christianity came to the village in the late 1940s, the language of conversion was Tok Pisin. In the 1950s virtually every unmarried young male spent at least a year working as an indentured laborer, which meant even more exposure to Tok Pisin. Until recently, women did not acquire this language and even today their shift toward Tok Pisin is not as advanced as that of the men. Nevertheless, the traditional pattern of multilingualism has lost ground with each generation. Older men sometimes knew as many as five languages. The present generation of young boys knows only Tok Pisin well.

Chapter 3, “Having Hed,” and chapter 4, “Showing Save,” discuss two concepts of particular importance, hed (literally Tok Pisin “head”—relates to personal autonomy), and save (Tok Pisin “knowledge”). Hed has become linked to the vernacular, and save to Tok Pisin, Christianity, and modernity. Thus, Kulick claims, Taiap is losing its ability to express positive aspects of self.

In chapter 5, “Preparing to Change,” Kulick argues that the main effect of European colonization for these villagers, in particular in the form of Christian missionization, has not been realized in terms of material goods, but rather as an ideological transformation that has led to a different way of looking at the world and their place in it. From the time of its arrival in Gapun, Christianity has been associated with the coming of “cargo.” According to Kulick, the villagers believe that one day a huge transformation will occur, and they will become white skinned. Money, factories, and modern technology will suddenly transform their lives. In reality, however, the villagers have transformed Christianity as a way of making sense of their knowledge of white people and their save. Their own traditional beliefs have become intertwined with Christian doctrine and biblical stories. Kulick describes how his own arrival and presence in the village was interpreted in the villagers’ cosmology. He was thought to be the returned ghost of a child who had died a few years previously. At the same time, Christianity is
the “road” to the sweeping changes the villagers hope for. It in turn is linked with literacy and schooling, because the priorities of Christian conversion dictated that Christians should be able to read the Bible.

So far, Kulick says, English has played no role in the villagers’ conception of development, but I expect that will change soon. It has already happened in more developed parts of the country, where people have rejected mission education in vernacular languages and Tok Pisin in favor of government schools that teach in English (Romaine, Language, Education and Development, 1992). In the final chapter, “The Process of Language Shift,” it emerges that villagers do not see themselves as having made a conscious decision not to transmit their language. On the contrary, they see themselves as reacting against the shift, in particular, against the stubbornness of their own children. Yet at the same time, it is clear from the description of their language behavior in chapter 6, “Becoming Monolingual,” that children are given more input in Tok Pisin than in Taiap, and adults do not expect or insist that children speak Taiap.

Here and there Kulick neglects to gloss certain Tok Pisin expressions, which may be annoying to those with no knowledge of the language (eg, 7, 11, 31). I also found the material in chapter 7, “Contextualizing the Self” about the concept of stori (Tok Pisin “story”), less clearly integrated with the main argument of the book. Apart from this, the book is exceptionally well written. It is an excellent study that should be read by linguists and anthropologists, as well as those more generally interested in processes of social and cultural change in the Pacific.

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When the United States acquired Micronesia after World War II, education was seen as the principal means by which to promote American goals of democracy, development, and dependency in this new territory. The original plan for universal elementary education rapidly exploded in the 1960s and 1970s to provide some secondary and even postsecondary education in Micronesia and to further open educational opportunities in Guam, Hawai‘i, and the US mainland.

Micronesians have eagerly sought education as a means to enter the modern world—as a resource to acquire jobs, money, material goods, and new forms of status. Pursuing educational goals has usually entailed the progressive migration and enculturation of Islanders as they advance through the school system. Schooling has often been blamed for the loss of traditional Micronesian culture.

As a Peace Corps high school ESL instructor in Chuuk at the height of the education explosion in the mid-1970s, Julie Flinn was directly confronted with issues of cultural identity and