

areas, and overseas treatment schemes, unless donor funded, eat up health-sector budgets. Keeping professionally qualified health staff in remote rural areas is a challenge for all Pacific Island states, where not only nationals may refuse to serve but also doctors recruited from other developing countries. In some states this is related to poor governance, where health centers and rural hospitals have been allowed to become dilapidated, lacking drugs and equipment, with staff salaries sporadically paid.

The book explores in detail how skilled health workers make decisions to migrate or remain at home and provides a number of illustrative case studies from the survey on the options and dilemmas of skilled health workers. Family considerations are prominent in many of these accounts, particularly among Islander nurses; by staying they may directly care for their families but by going they may provide them with material support. Some choose both options, alternately working abroad and at home.

Connell critically examines the various policy options open to Pacific Islands governments, such as the rationing of training by offering less internationally marketable credentials, offering salary supplements, improving workplaces, and bonding graduates trained in health sciences abroad. Should small Island states train more intermediate paramedical staff than doctors, even when paramedics are unwelcome among local people who want “real” doctors? Should they change the rules to allow nurse practitioners and medical assistants to take on greater responsibilities—and possibly to acquire more prestige—

than is presently allowed to them? Should they embrace migration and make brain drain more positive? This would mean investing in an education system that produces many highly skilled migrants, assuming that the benefits will flow back to the Islands in the form of remittances and other forms of support for their families back home.

The book is written in an accessible style and is likely to be of interest to general readers who follow social and economic trends in the contemporary Pacific. It will also be a particularly useful resource for academic teaching and research in the interdisciplinary fields of Pacific studies, development studies, migration studies, and public health studies.

PENELOPE SCHOEFFEL  
*Independent University,  
Bangladesh*

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*Gossip and the Everyday Production of Politics*, by Niko Besnier. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009. ISBN cloth, 978-0-8248-3338-1; paper, 978-0-8248-3357-2; xiv + 243 pages, orthography and transcription conventions, maps, photographs, notes, references, index. Cloth, US\$49.00; paper, US\$25.00.

This book by Niko Besnier shows how gossip on the island of Nukulaelae, in Tuvalu, is not just the abstract function of social control of morality but has real consequences for people. Besnier argues that gossip entails the exercise of political power, which includes ramifications beyond

the original microsocial contexts of interaction in which the gossip was originally constituted. He discusses the properties of gossip that give it authority to shape more macrosocial processes.

Niko Besnier is a distinguished cultural anthropologist with intellectual roots in linguistics and interdisciplinary sociolinguistics. He carried out extensive ethnographic fieldwork on the island of Nukulaelae during the 1980s and 1990s and continues to maintain relationships with people from there. Nukulaelae comprises 1.82 square kilometers of land around a lagoon that measures three by eight kilometers, with a population of approximately 350 people concentrated on the largest islet.

Throughout the book, Besnier provides a good deal of information about how he carried out his research, which focused on language and language use and has already resulted in a series of papers, a grammar of Tuvaluan, and a monograph on literacy on Nukulaelae. Besnier lived in a mutually supportive relationship with a family who sponsored his presence in the local community. He recorded speech that took place on the island, particularly in the cooking hut related to the home of the family he lived with, and he hired a local research assistant to transcribe those recordings. He also later recorded interviews with some of the people who were either talking or talked about in the initial recordings. He made it known that he was recording, although he acknowledges that people may have sometimes forgotten about that. All of the instances of transcriptions and translations of gossip in the book come from the

cooking hut, which is characterized as a sort of canonical or prototypical context for the occurrence of gossip—a place that is somewhat private, or at least marginal to the public life of the community.

The author addresses the fact that in writing about gossip he is touching on a subject some would view as negative in itself, or as one that shows people in a negative light, and therefore ought not to be written about. But he defends the focus on gossip as warranted in part by the consequences it can have. He also questions whether it is appropriate to write only about aspects of local social lives that are valued by the people being discussed. This is an important issue, one that anthropologists do not typically write about openly.

In any case it is very clear that for both Besnier and the people of Nukulaelae, gossip is by definition bad (a view I do not personally share) and not necessarily truthful. This contrasts with speeches made in the maneapa or meeting house which are considered beautiful in their orderliness, truthfulness, politeness, elegance, and deep thought.

Besnier shows how gossip is shaped by sociocultural processes that involve the community as a whole, or systematic subsections of it (eg, mainly women or mainly men). Nukulaelae gossip also can involve communities as diverse in encompassing scope or scale as other island communities in Tuvalu, the Gilbert Islands, Nauru, and Sāmoa, all in the Western Pacific. At the same time, the social processes and ideologies involved in gossip can be global, notably through the constant capitalist movement of labor.

Because economic anxiety is acute on Nukulaelae, since early Western European contact, young unmarried men have left the home community to support it by working as seamen, as plantation laborers, and, during the time of Besnier's research, as laborers in phosphate mines on Nauru.

The most dramatic example of the political reach of gossip centrally links Nukulaelae with the island nation of Nauru. Besnier describes how a man from Nukulaelae was brought down from a position of authority and relative prosperity, in part through gossip that he had used sorcery. The Council of Elders on Nukulaelae fired him from his job as leader of young men from Nukulaelae who work in the phosphate mines in Nauru. The man, distraught over the damaging gossip, was heard of not only in the Tuvalu capital of Funafuti, but also as far away as Sāmoa.

How does gossip come to have such influence, especially when it is false? Besnier's answer is complex and spread across the chapters of the book. Perhaps most basically gossip participates in hegemonic discourses and the oppositions to them that are widespread in the society. In Besnier's terms, there is heteroglossia of the sort Mikhail Bakhtin wrote about (beginning with his 1934 paper on discourse in the novel): the existence of conflicting discourses within any field of linguistic activity. In Nukulaelae, political tensions are created by the coexistence of discourses valuing hierarchy on the one hand, and egalitarianism on the other. Hierarchy in leadership is perceived to be needed, but too much of it or the wrong kind can offend egalitarian values. Some

unwanted forms of egalitarianism can also be imposed by a social hierarchy in which old men rule. These situations lead to gossip. Gossip is collaboratively created and its impact is enhanced through (re)iterations, and through transformations that carry it across situations and genres.

The actual speech of gossip has properties that give it plausibility, or perhaps save it from implausibility. It sounds like kinds of things that have been true or been believed in the past, being framed by familiar discourses. It is co-constructed, involving listeners as well as tellers. It is disorganized, vague, and ambiguous, depending for comprehension on the preexistence of shared knowledge among those who engage in it together. These properties make it hard to attribute gossip to just one person or to hold any given person accountable for its spread. In sum, it has both plausibility and deniability.

Ultimately Besnier's point is that what gives gossip power is that even though it may initially be produced in relatively private small gatherings of little prestige or authority, if it has certain properties, it will be repeated over and over, including in public genres such as sermons in church and speeches in meetings that do have authority and credibility, so that it is ultimately a heteroglossic phenomenon.

This book presents an important and innovative vision of gossip that dramatically brings home the political impact it can have. This impact of gossip is not limited to small, relatively isolated communities like Nukulaelae, although the systematicity in the spread of gossip may be easier to recognize or comprehend in a

small community than it is elsewhere. Besnier is persuasive in his argument that any image of gossip as somehow contained and confined to the everyday and the trivial is illusory and leads us to downplay an important aspect of human life. This innovative book was selected by the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL) for its 2010 prize for outstanding book in any field of applied linguistics.

SUSAN U PHILIPS  
*University of Arizona*

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*Homealani*. Documentary, 60 minutes, digital DV-Cam, color, 2010. Written, directed, produced, and edited by Ann Marie Nālani Kirk. Released by Blue Crater Media.

2010 constituted a landmark year for Native Hawaiian filmmakers with the premiere of the 'Owi Film Festival, which ran from 1–26 May at the Honolulu Academy of Arts Doris Duke Theatre. Although Native Hawaiians have been active in the filmmaking process for at least the last forty years, the presentation of a collective body of their work in festival form has never been achieved—until now. The film festival was the culmination of an eight-month-long collaboration between film curator Gina Caruso and Hawaiian filmmaker Ann Marie Nālani Kirk; Kirk's two films *Happy Birthday*, *Tutu Ruth* and *Homealani* (the subject of this review) were featured in the festival lineup.

*Homealani*, Kirk's most recent and inarguably most personal work, documents the life of her grandfather, Colonel Oliver Homealani Kupau,

who lived during a time of tremendous cultural, social, economic, and political change in his native Hawai'i. He was born in 1899, a year after the illegal annexation of the islands by the United States, and he witnessed the transition of Hawai'i from US territory to its eventual designation as the fiftieth state in the union in 1959. During that time, Kupau sought to adapt to changing circumstances while never forgetting his Native Hawaiian roots. Kupau's experiences mirror those of many other Hawaiians who had to negotiate between their mother culture and the introduced culture of the United States. It is this universal feature of the film that enables audiences—in particular those of Native Hawaiian descent—to identify with Kupau's life, whether through their own firsthand experiences or through the stories of family members. Indeed, at a 2009 screening of the film at Kamehameha Schools—a private school for Native Hawaiian youth where Kupau was a student in the early 1900s—several elderly audience members stood up at the end to relay their own experiences of having to maneuver between two cultures. This powerful moment of collective remembering underscored the fact that *Homealani* is not only an intensely personal portrait of a single individual, but also a partial unfolding of the wider panorama that is the Native Hawaiian experience in the wake of Western hegemony.

Kirk uses footage shot by her grandfather on 16mm film stock during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s to transport the audience back in time and to introduce them to the world through his eyes. The opening section