

BORROWED RULES AMONG POLYNESIAN LANGUAGES

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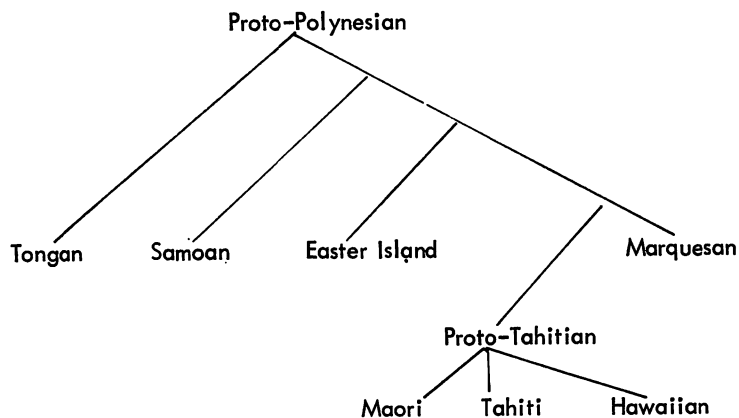
0. Introduction
1. The Problem
2. Borrowed Rules
3. The Solution

0. One of the many consequences of applying generative phonology concepts to diachronic linguistics has been the discovery that as linguistic rules are borrowed through time and space they become generalized (King, 1969: 98-99). Since Polynesian diachronic linguistics is virtually devoid of documented sound change, this kind of information can prove exceedingly helpful in disambiguating certain genetic relationships. In this paper we shall not only demonstrate that there is evidence for rule borrowing within the Polynesian triangle, but that this phenomenon has interesting consequences for both the Maori and Tahitian languages in comparison with the other languages of Central Polynesia.

1. At present there are at least four major competing classifications of the languages of Polynesia. This means that we must seek for some criteria that will enable us to select just one model as being the unique representation of internal relationships of the Polynesian languages. Before considering this problem in detail let us first consider what these models are and how they differ from each other in their treatment of the Maori and Tahitian languages.

Just about two decades ago Elbert published an important study on the internal relationships of the languages of Polynesia. This work represented the first attempt at postulating a Polynesian family tree. Although twenty languages were included in that pioneer study, we shall only concentrate on seven of them, *viz.*, Tongan, Samoan, Maori, Tahitian, Easter Island, Marquesan, and Hawaiian. On the basis of comparative and lexicostatistic findings Elbert arrived at the following results:

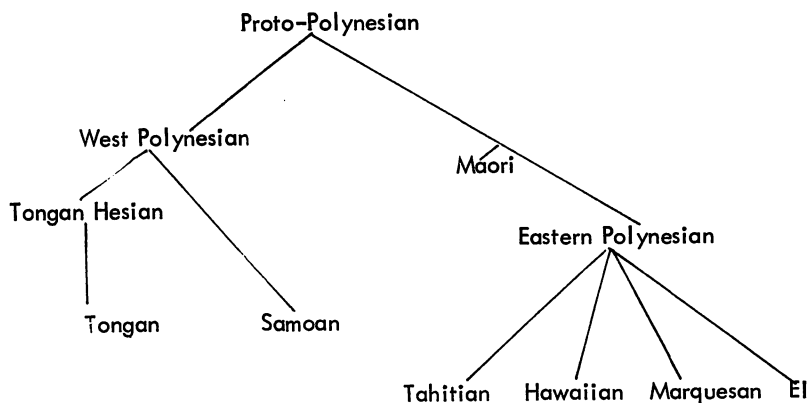
Chart 1 Elbert (1953)



The relationship of Maori and Tahitian are of special interest to us in this paper. Elbert treats them as a subgroup of Proto-Tahitian. We agree with Elbert that these two languages do form a subgroup but we disagree with his assessment that Hawaiian shares an equal status with them.

The next linguistic study on the relationships of the Polynesian languages comes to us from the lexicostatistic findings of Dyen (1963, 1965). His assessment can be graphically represented as follows:

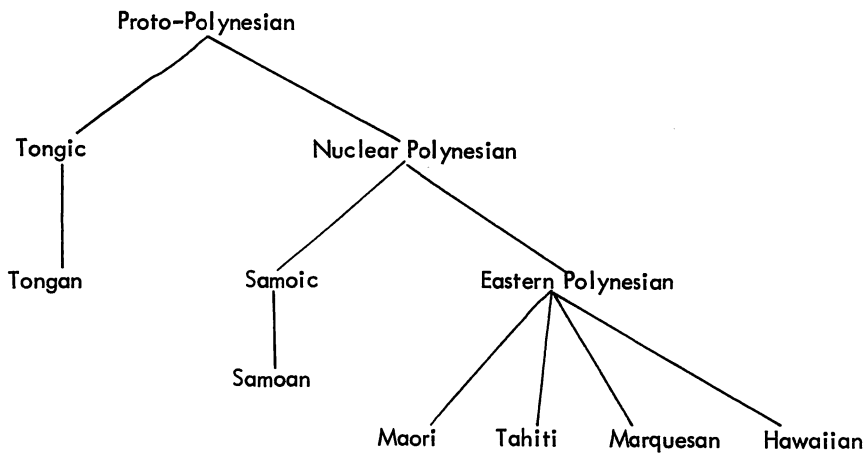
CHART 2 Dyen (1963, 1965)



In lieu of treating Maori and Tahitian as a special subgroup Dyen separates them. Maori is placed in a Pre-Eastern Polynesian position, and Tahitian is not only considered to be Eastern Polynesian but also on a par with that of Hawaiian, Marquesan and Easter Island.

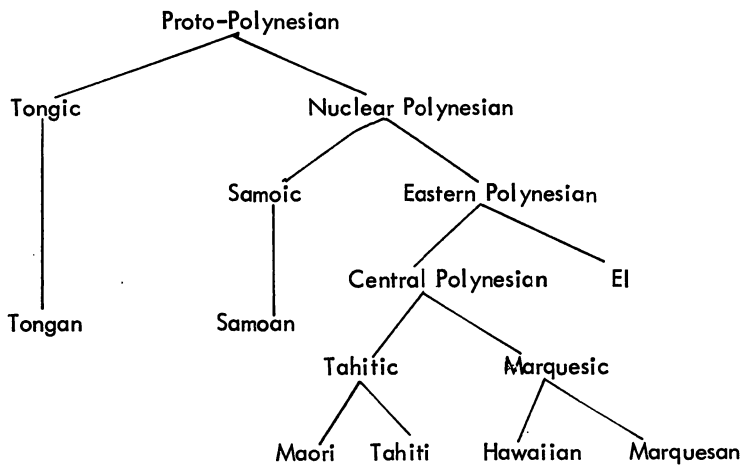
Another view of the Polynesian languages can be found in the work of Pawley (1966). He concurred with Elbert in separating Proto-Polynesian into two major groups of which the first was Tongan and the second was Nuclear Polynesian. The latter group was further subdivided into Samoic and Eastern Polynesian. In this final branch of the family tree Pawley treats both Maori and Tahitian as a subgroup which shares equal status with Marquesan and Hawaiian.

CHART 3 Pawley (1966)



Finally Green (1966) published his statement of the linguistic relationships of the Polynesian languages. His family tree differed from that of Pawley in that he arrived at a finer classification of the languages of Eastern Polynesia. It is Green's classification that we find most interesting because it reflects our findings on the role played by borrowed rules.

CHART 4 Green (1966)



2. Now we may return to the problem of selecting one of these four family tree diagrams. We need a linguistic criterion that will enable us to make this decision. The solution to this problem can be found in the use of ordered diachronic rules. In particular it can be found in the concept of borrowed rules. Since borrowed rules are generalized we can infer from this that the more complex or highly constrained rule represents an earlier stage of a diachronic development, and a more generalized rule represents a later stage of development. A case in point is the rule that changes PPN *f to [h] in some of the Polynesian languages.

Evidence for borrowed rules can be readily ascertained from the following cognates.

(1)	PPN	*fale "house"
	To.	fale
	Sa.	fale
	Mao.	whare
	Ta.	fare
	EI	hare
	Mqa	ha?e
	Hwn	hale

- (2) PPN *fetuqu "star"
 To. fetu[?]u
 Sa. fetuu
 Mao. whetuu
 Ta. fetu
 El. hetu
 Mqa. hetu
- (3) PPN *fiha "how many"
 To. fiha
 Sa. fia
 Mao. whia
 Ta. hia (loan)
 El. hia
 Mqa. hia
 Hwn. hia
- (4) PPN *foqou "new"
 To. fo[?]ou
 Sa. fou
 Mao. hou
 El. hou
 Mqa. hou
 Hwn. hou
- (5) PPN *futi "to pluck"
 To. fusi
 Sa. futi
 Mao. huti
 Ta. huti
 El. huti-huti
 Mqa. huti-huti
 Hwn. huki

The interesting aspect of the PPN *f is that it remained unchanged in Tongan and Samoan before all five vowels, and it changed from [f] to [h] in Maori and Tahitian before back vowels, i.e. before [o] and [u]. In all of the other language [f] changed to [h] unconditionally. The rule for Maori and Tahitian can be written as follows:

$$(6) \quad f \longrightarrow h \quad / \quad \text{--- } o, u$$

And the rule for the other languages is:

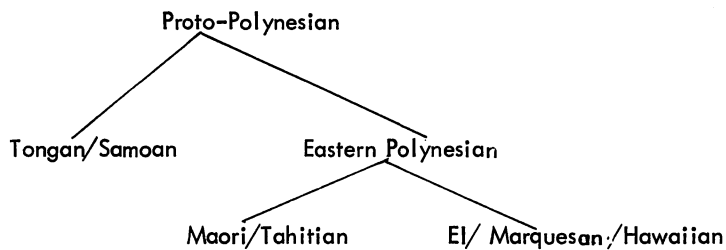
$$(7) \quad f \longrightarrow h$$

Rule (7) is a more generalized version of rule (6). This indicates that the former was borrowed from the latter. It also signifies that both Maori and Tahitian belong together as a subgroup and that they both precede Marquesan, Easter Island, and Hawaiian genetically.

3. Now we may return to the problem of the four conflicting classifications of the languages of Polynesia and re-examine them in the light of our new evidence.

Rule borrowing suggests that (1) Maori and Tahitian form a special subgroup, and (2) this subgroup represents a place after Tongan and Samoan in the family tree, and before Easter Island, Marquesan, and Hawaiian. These claims can be graphically represented as follows:

CHART 5 St. Clair (1967)



Of all of the family tree models discussed in this paper it appears that Green's classification (Chart 4) best concurs with our findings based on the criterion of borrowed rules.

Ordered rules and rule borrowing can play a crucial part in disambiguating genetic relationships among languages, especially in those cases where documentation of sound change is virtually non-existent.

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