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Studies of indigenous minority languages have led to invaluable new perspectives in grammatical theory, typology, descriptive linguistics, ethnographies of communication, and countless other facets of linguistics and anthropology. Yet such languages have received comparatively little attention in quantitative variationist sociolinguistics, i.e., the research of language variation and change that has grown out of the Labov tradition (e.g., Labov 1963, 1966, 1994, 2001). In an era of globalization and increasing cross-cultural contact, the time is ripe for more variationist sociolinguistic exploration of indigenous minority languages and the new insights they may bring.

After all, such underrepresented language communities provide successful contrasts and comparisons with more commonly studied language communities. For example, though models of socioeconomic stratification may be very effective in certain urban settings, the rural agrarian villages of some indigenous communities can be more homogeneous in terms of social class, so other factors such as clan (Stanford, this volume) or "covert hierarchies" (Clarke, this volume) may be more meaningful. Besides pointing out such contrasts, variationist research of such languages may also provide cross-linguistic and cross-cultural support for principles in existing sociolinguistic models. Therefore, in the same way that other subfields of linguistics have already gained crucial new perspectives by considering data from lesser-known languages, variationist sociolinguistics has much to gain as well.

This anthology, the first its kind, serves as a platform for side-by-side comparison of 21 fieldwork-based variationist studies of indigenous minority languages. With one or more contributions from each of the six populated continents (Figure 1), this volume offers a broad picture of current developments in the study of variation in indigenous minority languages across the world.