Donald E. McGregor and Aileen R. F. McGregor, edited by
Don Laycock. *Olo language materials. Pacific Linguistics,*
155pp.

Reviewed by Paschal Waisi
Australian National University

Donald and Aileen McGregor collected most of the material for this
book while serving as missionaries with the Open Brethren Christian
Missions In Many Lands, in Lumi, West Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea,
from 1957-1972. The present review is not that of a professional
linguist, but the Olo language is my mother tongue.

The book is well organised and written, reflecting the painstaking
work of Donald and Aileen McGregor. To begin, a general phonemic
statement clearly identifies twelve consonants and seven vowels. A
description of the occurrence of the consonants and vowels points out
how they are used, and examples provide evidence of contrast between
stops, fricatives, nasals, laterals and semi-vowels. The general
grammar statement which follows explains the irregularities, or
morphophonemic changes. The reasons for these morphophonemic changes
are not given. But the authors clearly show how morphophonemic
irregularities occur. For instance, the loss of a phoneme (p. 15) was
explained by constructing three sentences to indicate the loss,
though the reason for the loss of the phoneme was not given. It is a
loss of a phoneme, and nothing more. Next follows an Olo Noun
Dictionary. The three dialects of Yebil, Lumi and Eritei are clearly
distinguished. The authors take great care in giving the meaning of
words. Where the meanings of some words are not clear they correctly
leave them open for further research, or else a literal meaning is
given. Then follows a careful compilation of the Olo terms for

---

The reviewer is a student in philosophy, Australian National
University, Canberra. Thanks are extended to Dr. Don Laycock for
assisting with the editing of this review.

© Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea  LLM (1983) 14/200-202
body parts, body fluids and excretions and colours. The collection of
texts is well presented. The authors of laments, legends and ritual
songs have not indicated, however, how they came to possess them.
Finally there are the kinship terms of the Wape, well presented, but
without the additional complexity that arises when kinship relation-
ships are utilized during massive exchanges and trade.

The following are notes on particular aspects of the text:
Page 2, the word pal has the same meaning as the English word root:
pal = roots, palol = root.

Page 4, the word kaflap not only means the colour yellow, it is
also a name for a species of plant whose roots are chewed, and which
is used as a herb in curing rites.

Page 5, the word wankesil is an exclamation of sympathy.

Page 6, the word riririm denotes good and bad spirits. It is
equivalent in meaning to the English word soul.

Page 6, the word kolo is a strong assertion of the word olo (no);
sometimes it performs the same function as the English word deny.

Page 6, the word wauwes means an area (usually at the side of a
cliff) where foodscraps and other rubbish are deposited.

Page 6, the word towa literally means bush, but can also mean
devil. One could have given a more specific term toa meaning
evil spirit or devil.

Page 7, the word iltei has the same meaning as mother tongue,
but can also mean intelligible speech.

Page 9, the word yulum not only means a round object, also it
is a name for testicle: yulum testicle, yilfis testicles.

Page 9, the word yuf means wind. Dr. Don Laycock has pointed
out to me that McGregor uses the word yöf for wind, but the word
yuf has a different meaning. Maybe this is due to different dialects:
for instance in Lau'um, we say yuf for wind.

Page 15, the word yeliongkou means ear-rings. Originally sea
shells were ground into ear-rings using stone tools.

Page 31, the word yamkol knee, yamkere knees indicate singular
and plural respectively.
Page 49, the word kital may have been introduced into the Olo language from some other language. The meaning given for kital is doubtful.

Page 94, the word namen not only means the colour green, but also means uncooked.

To conclude, I believe that the McGregor's have done a wonderful job of presenting the Olo language in print. As a small contribution, I have provided the meanings of some words used in the texts, to update the material and to increase the level of communication between Olo speakers and non-Olo speakers.