

Kobon is a member of the Kalam family of the East New Guinea Highlands Stock. It is spoken by about 4,000 people living in the Kaironk Valley on the border of the Western Highlands and Madang Provinces of Papua New Guinea. Its phonological structure is not atypical of other Trans-New Guinea Phylum languages of the area. There are nineteen consonantal phonemes, with fortis versus lenis (and often prenasalised) obstruents, a well-developed series of alveopalatal consonants, and a considerable degree of complexity in the "liquid" area: Davies recognises three lateral phonemes — alveolar /l/, alveopalatal /ʎ/, and retroflexed flapped lateral /ɭ/ — in addition to an alveolar flapped vibrant /r/. Seven vocalic phonemes are recognised; three front, two central, and two back. Quite a number of phonemes show considerable allophonic complexity: /f/, for example, has seven different allophones, /g/ and /u/ five, and /b/, /d/, /x/ and /r/ four each. There is also a fair amount of partial overlap, with certain phones now being allophones of one phoneme, and now of another.

If all Davies had done was to work out this rather difficult system and present his results, then that in itself would have been a useful publication. But Kobon Phonology is in many ways a most unusual work on the phonology of a Papua New Guinean language.

First, the discussion of the segmental phonology of Kobon is preceded by a reasonably lengthy presentation of the model within which the phonology is described. Davies relies heavily on the model as proposed by Pike (1947). But he also provides a most useful review of the literature on the "psychological reality" of phonemes, and discusses the relevance of these theoretical issues to the analysis and description of Kobon phonology.

Second, this psychological orientation carries over into his discussion of a proposed orthography for Kobon; and I find most interesting the way in which he interrelates the linguist's "scientific" intuition and the native speaker's "psychological" intuition regarding the nature and distinctiveness of particular phonemes.

The book is also significant in another respect: the copious amounts of data provided, and the quite detailed phonetic description of the various phones of Kobon and of the phonetics of normal speech. He thus provides a sound basis from which comparative phonological studies in languages of the family can proceed.

Just one or two minor faults mar the quality of the book. We are referred on p. 11 to Ohale (1974) and on p. 15 to Leopold (1939); the bibliography, however, lists Ohala (1974) and Leopold (1947-54). Again, on pp. 38-40 we are shown examples of contrast between /ɛ/ and

/ø/, /h/ and /ɔ/, and so on; my original reading was that /ø/ represented some kind of front rounded vowel, and it was only on closer inspection that I realised that /ø/ represents zero, and would have been better written as  $\emptyset$ , without slashes.

But these are minor quibbles. My reaction on completing the book was not only that it provides a very good description of a particular language, but that it is also a model to which I would like to refer my students: this, I would say to them, is how to write up the phonology of a language.

#### REFERENCE

Pike, Kenneth L. 1947. Phonemics: a technique for reducing languages to writing. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.

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Stokhof, W.A.L. Woisikà II: Phonemics.  
Pacific Linguistics, Series B, No. 59,  
Canberra, 1979; xi + 188 pp.

As the title implies, this is the second study of Woisika, a Papuan language on the island of Alor of East Indonesia. The first study was an ethnographic one published in Pacific Linguistics D 19 in 1977 (reviewed in Kivung 11:1, 1978, by Stephen Ranck).

#### 1. Introduction

Woisika is located in the central part of the island of Alor and is classified as a stock-level family within the sub-phylum-level