

REVIEWS

J.A. Z'graggen, 1975. The Languages of the Madang District, Papua New Guinea.
Pacific Linguistics B41. Canberra:
Australian National University, vi + 154.

For me, talking about languages spoken in the Madang Province is not possible without mentioning the name of John Z'graggen. This volume is of great benefit not only to linguists but also to many others whose work involves the people of this province, notably administrators.

In the introduction Z'graggen gives the composition of the book and the purpose of its three parts. Part A is written for the linguist and gives a preliminary classification of all the languages he could find, a total of 174. Part B is for administrators, churchworkers, educators and the like. It lists the census divisions with their villages and the languages spoken there. Finally, Part C is for the historian in linguistic research. It links all the known language names with the various authors who have written about the Madang Province.

Starting with Part C, I would like to commend Father Z'graggen for the order he has brought into the chaos of language names. Anyone involved in PNG linguistics will be aware that quite often a few names refer to exactly the same language, but one author took, for example, the word for "What", another used a village name, yet another used a clan name or what have you. Z'graggen used the name of the largest village if no other name was in apparent use. He admits that quite often the speakers would object to this and prefer their own reference. For example, he himself has adopted Bel, in accordance with the people's wish, instead of Gedaged or Kranket for the Austronesian language around Madang. When I found out that

the people of Wanuma (F15 in Z'graggen's code) used the name Usan to refer to themselves, I started to use this name for the language, adding to the list of over 200 names for 174 languages, accepting the invitation Z'graggen gives in the Introduction of Part A.

With regard to Part B I do not wish to make any comment other than to express my hope that the administrators will use this information for the benefit of the people concerned.

Part A of course is the basis on which B and C are built. It gives a preliminary classification of the languages. As such it can not really be appraised without the earlier volume by Z'graggen, Classificatory and Typological Studies in Languages of the Madang District. (Pacific Linguistics C19, 1971). (I should add that it also needs the volumes which are going to appear as indicated in the bibliography of the present volume.)

The present classification is based on a comparison of about sixty words from each language by the inspection method. This will be followed by a more thorough count of about 300 items of each language. I would guess that the next count would combine more than it would separate, as happened for example with some languages of the Pihom Stock when compared with his earlier work referred to in the previous paragraph. See for example p.23, where Yaben (F16) and Bilakura (F18) are now recognized as dialects of one language. On the other hand, a count of cognates that is based on more material may suggest other classifications. It is somewhat frustrating to read about language classifications and not to be able to check the author's conclusions against his data. A personal communication from Wurm that "The Madang-Adelbert Range languages form a sub-phylum within the Trans-New Guinea Phylum" is not enough evidence for a linguist, particularly when this statement is followed by a reason which states that "some of the

typical Trans-New Guinea word roots are present, but others such as the personal pronouns differ from those common in the Trans-New Guinea Languages" (p.13). The linguist would like to see such a statement illustrated.

Let me give an example of another change in Z'graggen's classification that I anticipate when more data is taken into account. Trying to work out the morphophonology of the pronoun system in Usan (=Wanuma F15), I compared my data with the surrounding languages as given in Z'graggen's 1971 volume. He gives (a) as the paradigm for the past tense of "to laugh" in Dimir (E1), a family isolate north of the Adelbert Range (p.153). In (b) we have a similar paradigm for 'to play' in Usan.

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| (a) | yiŋ sawr - um | "I laughed" |
| | nɛŋ sawr - ɛŋ | "you laughed" |
| | wuŋ sawr - ɛr | "he laughed" |
| | yin sawra - min | "we laughed" |
| | nen sawra - men | "you (pl.) laughed" |
| | wun sawra - mit | "they laughed" |
| (b) | ye sau wa - mei | "I played (Far Past)" |
| | nɛ sau wa - nei | "you played" |
| | wo sau wa - rei | "he played" |
| | in sau wa - minei | "we played" |
| | an sau wa - manei | "you (pl) played" |
| | wuri sau wa - mirei | "they played" |

In the first place, the verbs show striking similarities. In fact, the morphological structure of sauroum 'I play' is: sau 'piece' + wo - r-oum = he + 'verbalizer' + verb ending for first person singular present. In the second place the pronouns, as well as the person/number endings are very

similar. I suspect that something like min and men (or man) are the original forms from which yi/ye and yin/in as well as nen/nε and nεn/an are derived. Of course, further comparative work would have to substantiate this.

On the basis of what I could find I suspect that Dimir (E1) is not a family isolate, but can be included in the Numugenan Family. A final conclusion probably has to wait for the publication of the comparative wordlists of the Adelbert Range languages, which Z'graggen promised in his bibliography.

Ger Reesink
Summer Institute of Linguistics