

Hans Heinrich Hock, *Principles of historical linguistics*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1986. xiii + 722 pp. AUS\$223.00 (hc)/AUS\$48.75(pb).

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This is a new book in a field that is particularly relevant to linguists in the area covered by this journal. Genetic classification and historical reconstruction of proto-languages and cultures (or parts thereof) are the natural end products of the detailed study of related languages. If linguists are to make any sort of contribution to the self-understanding of countries in the south-west Pacific one way of doing this is through adding to knowledge of the prehistory of languages and associated cultures of the area. This may be no easy task, however. Each case is different and insights are only likely to come to those best trained in all aspects of historical linguistics. This book could be the answer to those in need of assistance in this direction or to those wishing to keep abreast of the field. Certainly it is without doubt the best book I have seen on this subject.

The aim of the book is to provide an overview of the principles (as distinct of methods or discovery procedures) of historical linguistics, in so far as these are generally agreed upon and have been established by over two hundred years of research into language change. As such it is, in the author's words, "something like a manual and state-of-the-art report for persons committed to linguistics study and research" (p.ix). Its publication is motivated by the fact that the field has changed so much over the past thirty years that it is now time to pause to take stock and see what contributions such newer areas as generative linguistics and sociolinguistics (including contact linguistics) can make to the field. Because of those changes also it is no longer possible to provide a broad perspective on linguistic change by sticking to traditional examples or to a particular language or language family. However, by the same token the task of presenting broad principles is complicated by competing theories and claims. This book seeks to overcome these problems in two ways, firstly by showing how the same facts are often analyzable in more ways than one, and secondly by eschewing particular, possibly short-lived theories and attempting to present "an accurate picture of the

various 'permanent' layers of the theory and practice of historical linguistics" (p.viii). This accounts in large part in my view for the special appeal of this book. It is non-tendentious and even handed; the author has no axe to grind although he does have his own preferences for terms (e.g., he prefers anticipatory and perseverant assimilation to progressive and regressive assimilation (p.63) and has his own ideas about generative phonology (as will be seen below) and other topics (eg., metathesis). Another good feature of this book is that although not designed for the beginner it does not take previous knowledge for granted. Instead all necessary concepts and terms are defined as they are introduced.

The book itself is massive -- over 700 pages and easily twice the size of most other similar books in this field. It contains 20 chapters which divide up into about eight topical groups. Chapters 1 and 2 are introductory covering such things as the history of the discipline and the phonetics and notational conventions needed in the rest of the volume. This latter chapter is a departure from the usual in that the author uses a combination of articulatory and acoustic features for descriptive purposes. Some may find the mixing of such features unacceptable but those who are not very familiar with acoustic phonetics and features, or who feel less than comfortable with them will, I think, appreciate this departure from convention.

Chapters 3 to 8 are on sound change. These cover the traditional areas (mostly illustrated by Indo-European examples) but enlivened with discussion of more modern sounding and inviting topics like bleeding and feeding, chain shifts, conspiracies and teleology. Sections of chapters 6 and 8 (dealing with regular dissimilation, metathesis and initial strengthening) are novel (as admitted by the author in the introduction and as previously indicated) and not uncontroversial. However, his proposed strengthening hierarchy in particular (pp.82-83) would appear to be a useful addition to the field.

These chapters are followed by three on analogy, the last of which is on the relationship between traditional surface-oriented approaches to analogy and the generative, rule-oriented approach. In this Hock comes down on the side of the latter as probably providing better explanations of many well attested analogical developments. However, by the same token, one should be careful not to equate generative phonological rule with sound change. They are not the same thing and the relationship between them is by no means direct.

Chapters 12 and 13 are on semantic and syntactic change and Chapters 14 to 16 on linguistic contact. Chapter 14 deals with lexical borrowing, Chapters 15 dialectology and Chapters 16 with such topics as koines, convergence, pidgins and creoles, and language death. This latter group of chapters is the longest section in the book and is the part that interested me most as a linguist working in the Melanesian area. Hock has clearly done his homework on the sociolinguistics side of this very well and is generally as up-to-date as can be expected for the date of publication of this book.

Chapters 17 to 19 follow on internal reconstruction, the comparative method and reconstruction. This again is a very long section and covers fairly traditional ground using Indo-European examples. The final chapter, Chapter 20, is on the nature and causes of linguistic change. Drawing on the work of Labov, sociolinguistic motivations for change are highlighted.

In short this is a very comprehensive and up-to-date book, with a very wide scope and impressive range. It is, moreover, refreshingly clear and easy to read, even entertaining, notwithstanding the many technical issues discussed. Typographically and editorially there are very few slips and nothing that interfered with the accuracy or readability of the text except for the mildly distracting use of "on one hand" (instead of, for me the expected "on the one hand") throughout. About the only minor criticisms I would make are the following:

a) there is no mention of work done in Austronesian linguistics or examples drawn from this area except for one reference to Kâte on p.98 and some reference to "Neo-Melanesian" in the chapter on linguistic contact, Chapter 16. However, in the former case the language is spelled incorrectly and referred to as "Polynesian" when it is exactly the opposite (even allowing for a certain latitude in the use of that term); in the second case Neo-Melanesian is used for Tok Pisin even though reference is made to some of Peter Mühlhäusler's post-1980 work in which the official name is used in the title to articles listed in the bibliography. These slips are unfortunate because they not only show a certain sloppiness not characteristic of the rest of the volume but unfortunately could be construed as manifesting a less than acceptable attitude to this part of the world;

b) although the index to the volume is very well done it could be improved by providing a list of languages referred to in the text.

Notwithstanding these slight defects the volume is very well presented. Priced at AUS\$48.75 for the (sewn) paperback version this is extraordinarily exceptional value.