

T. E. Dutton (ed.), Studies in Languages of Central and South-east Papua. Pacific Linguistics, Series C, No. 29, 1975; xviii + 834 pages, 5 maps.

Over one hundred languages are spoken in central and south-east Papua. Although linguists have known of the existence of these languages for a century or longer, we actually know little about most of these languages. Dutton's volume - one is almost tempted to term it 'pioneering' - thus goes a long way towards filling a tremendous gap in our knowledge.

Nine of the twelve articles are grammatical sketches of non-Austronesian (NAN) languages in the region: Koita (by Dutton himself), Mountain Koiali (R. & S. Garland), Barai (Olson), Ömie (Austing & Upia), Magi (Thomson), Yareba (H. & N. Weimer), Korafe (J. & C. Farr), Guhu-Samane (Richert), and Yeletnye (Henderson). Each of these contains a brief phonological statement and a grammatical summary; we find very little on the syntax of Ömie and Korafe, however, and little on the morphology of Guhu-Samane. All except Henderson's Yeletnye sketch provide an illustrative text; as well, Dutton provides an 1100-word mini-dictionary of Koita, and Henderson a brief Yeletnye wordlist.

These grammatical sketches represent three NAN families (Koiarian, Mailuan, and Yareban) and two NAN stocks (Binanderean and Yele-Solomon Islands) of the region. The Gailalan, Kwalean, Dagan, and Manubaran families are unrepresented. Collectively, however, these nine articles give an instructive overview of the NAN language-types in central and south-east Papua. One might be excused the comment that Henderson's brief (18 pages) sketch of the infamous Yeletnye language of Rossel Island is distressingly short, and that a brief article on the genetic relationships of the NAN languages might have been included. Otherwise, the NAN collection is most satisfying.

Of the three articles on Austronesian (AN) languages, only one is a grammatical sketch - Kolia's description of the Balawaia dialect of the Sinagoro chain, which also contains a 2000-wordlist and a short text. The omission is more apparent than real, since there is already a certain amount of published material on the grammar of a number of AN languages in the area.

The other two articles are more of a regional nature. Cooper's dialect survey of Coastal Suau is a painstaking analysis of the interrelationships between some of the members of the Suauic dialect chain. It is to be hoped not only that the final product of his research will soon be available, but also that similar surveys are soon conducted on the other dialect chains in the region.

Probably the most significant article in the volume is Pawley's survey of the genetic relationships obtaining among the AN languages of the Central Province. Pawley clearly shows that these languages belong to a closed subgroup of Oceanic; but he also attempts - successfully, in my view - both to further subclassify the languages of the subgroup and to locate their nearest relatives outside the subgroup. At the end of his article he gives a number of 'principles' by means of which culture-historical inferences might be drawn from linguistic data. This is not the place to suggest that rather more might have been made of the 'mixed language' or 'pidginisation' hypotheses in attempting to reconcile linguistic facts with the archaeological record. Pawley's article remains a significant contribution to the study of the AN languages of the region.

If Dutton's volume has a major fault, it is that no overall map showing the location of language families and stocks has been included. In all other respects, however, it is an excellent piece of work - one that, I hope, will be soon emulated for other parts of Papua New Guinea and the Pacific.

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