

4.2.8. HISTORY OF RESEARCH IN AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGES: NEW IRELAND

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4.2.8.1. INTRODUCTION

There are nineteen Austronesian languages in the New Ireland Province. As the Tolai (Kuanua, Tuna) and Duke of York languages in North-East New Britain are more closely related to the New Ireland languages than to other languages of New Britain, research on these is also included in this section. There are strong traditions that the speakers of these two languages migrated from New Ireland and there are many links in the missionary and linguistic work.

4.2.8.2. THE EARLY PERIOD

The first New Ireland wordlists were collected in 1616 by Jacob Le Maire and Willem Schouten during their circumnavigation of the globe. Their lists were of the Sursurunga (Claes Pietersz Bay) and Tabar (Moyses Island) languages (reprinted in Lanyon-Orgill 1960:36-52 and 637-39). Another two hundred years passed before any further wordlists were collected, until d'Urville published two lists of Siar in 1834 (reprinted in Lanyon-Orgill 1960:47-50).

It was not until the late nineteenth century that anything more than isolated wordlists was published. In 1875 a Methodist missionary Rev. George Brown established the first mission station in the region in the Duke of York Islands. Brown studied the Duke of York language, and also collected language data from other areas which he visited. With his successor, Rev. Benjamin Danks, he produced in 1882 a large mimeographed dictionary with a grammatical introduction. Using Brown's translations and this work, Codrington included a brief Duke of York grammar in his book on the Melanesian languages (1885:565-72) and also included the

language in the comparative wordlist in the same volume.

The larger language of the Tolai people on the adjacent mainland of New Britain soon attracted more attention from both Methodist and Catholic missionaries. Most of the work was unpublished or reproduced only in limited numbers, although some grammar notes appeared in more general books on the region. The best published work was written in German by a Catholic priest (Bley 1912). This is pedagogical in nature but it has provided a record of the language that is still not completely superseded.

In the same period Father Peekel (1909) provided the first grammar of a New Ireland language - Pala, now known as Patpatar. This grammar, also in German, is less pedagogical than Bley's work on Tolai and is a more complete grammar, rich in examples.

A German deputy governor Heinrich Schnee published (1901) a general article on the languages of the whole Bismarck Archipelago which included lists for Kara (Lamusmus), Patpatar (Bo, Kurumut) and Lavongai (Neu-Hannover). Two German scientific expeditions visited the area and included studies of the languages. From the first, Stephan and Graebner (1907) published some information on the southern part of New Ireland. From the second, Friederici (1912) published the first language map of New Ireland along with brief notes. He also established where the Le Maire and Schouten lists mentioned above and previously identified only as from New Guinea, had been collected.

4.2.8.3. FROM 1914 TO 1945

In the period from 1914 to 1945 very little was published, the only specifically linguistic works being a brief grammar and wordlist of Kandas (Label) by Peekel (1929), a short but useful grammar and phrase book of the Tolai language (Waterhouse 1939) and a brief and uneven general article (Lanyon-Orgill 1942). Some linguistic work was done during this period, mainly by missionaries, and some of this has since been made accessible by the publication, in microfilm form by the Anthropos Institute, of grammars of Lihir (Neuhaus 1954) and Tangga (Maurer 1966), and of dictionaries of Patpatar (Neuhaus 1966), Tangga (Maurer 1972) and Tolai (Meyer 1961). All three authors were Catholic priests. Grammars of Kara by Father Peekel and of Lavongai by Father J. Stamm, and a dictionary of Tangga by an anthropologist, F.L.S. Bell, may yet be published in some form. Many other works were lost in the Second World War during the three years of Japanese occupation.

4.2.8.4. THE POST-WAR PERIOD

In the post-war period there have been two general surveys carried out by A. Capell in 1952 and by D. Lithgow and Oren Claassen of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in 1966. In his fullest published account, Capell (1971) provides short comparative wordlists, grammatical comments, typological classification in relation to other Austronesian languages of Papua New Guinea and some provisional subgrouping. Lithgow and Claassen (1968) made some lexicostatistical comparisons of the languages. Their work is brief but it is very useful for establishing the language boundaries, and it has good language maps.

Beaumont (1972) provides a summary of published materials and major surviving manuscripts of the New Ireland languages, and is more complete than the present article. The paper also goes a little further than Lithgow and Claassen (1968) in establishing subgroupings based on the lexicostatistical approach.

Of individual languages, Tolai has again received most attention in this period. Two major dictionaries have appeared. The first (Lanyon-Orgill 1960) is more scholarly in presentation. It is based on various sources and a period of fieldwork. As well as the main vernacular-to-English section, there is an English-to-vernacular index, and a lengthy introduction gives a good history of work on the language. Also, some consideration is given to its development. Lanyon-Orgill's concept of the extent of the language is rather too broad, but this does not spoil the usefulness of the work as Duke of York and New Ireland words are marked as such in the dictionary. The other dictionary (Wright 1964) is the culmination of a series of Methodist dictionaries for which Revs. Rickard, Fellman and later Linggood were responsible. It is only a Tolai-to-English dictionary, but in this respect it is as complete as Lanyon-Orgill's work and it has the advantage of using the current orthography.

The Territory Administration, in conjunction with the Summer Institute of Linguistics, produced a Tolai language course, which a few years later had a second edition (Franklin and Kerr 1968). The lessons provide source language material and there are accounts of the phonology and dialects. This second edition has a very brief grammar statement by Beaumont.

The only other language on which anything has been written and published since the war is the Tigak language. Two short papers by Beaumont (1969 and 1970) outline the phonology and the pronoun system. Beaumont's doctoral thesis (1974) gives a much fuller account of the language.

4.2.8.5. CONCLUSIONS

Linguistic study of the area must be considered as very inadequate especially in view of the diversity of the languages. General studies may be considered to have ascertained the location and number of the languages, a few general features and some tentative subgroupings. Of the twenty-one languages considered here, only two have substantial grammatical accounts published of them and in both cases this was before 1914. Grammars published in microfilm form, a thesis, surviving manuscripts and short articles provide some grammatical materials on seven other languages. Good dictionaries in book form exist for only one language. Even extensive wordlists are not generally available. As a result, New Ireland has been largely unknown to most linguists.

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