PDF hosted at the Radboud Repository of the Radboud University Nijmegen

The following full text is a publisher's version.

For additional information about this publication click this link.
http://hdl.handle.net/2066/43574

Please be advised that this information was generated on 2018-07-07 and may be subject to change.
and how, then, are we to locate the concept of ethnicity (regardless of whether one wants to challenge it or not) with respect to the concept of Malayness in this book?

It is rather a shame that the book does not include an article on the orang Asli, specifically the southern Aslian and the Riau groups, as these groups are as much part of the alam Melayu as Malays from Johore are. A look at what these groups reveal about Malayness (and by extension orang Melayu) would have enriched the book. Finally, an article on the Malay-speaking Muslims of greater Pattani, and those descended from Pattani living in the central region of Thailand, should also have been included in the book for completeness (although Collins does mention them in the conclusion of his article).

The topic of this book, and of the 1998 Leiden conference from which it emerged, is less unique than it seems. An earlier conference on ‘tribal peoples of the Malay world’, organized by Geoffrey Benjamin and Cynthia Chou in Singapore in 1997, had already explored issues of Malayness from the perspective of the tribal peripheries. Some of the authors in Contesting Malayness also published in the book resulting from the tribal peoples conference (Geoffrey Benjamin and Cynthia Chou, editors, Tribal communities in the Malay world; Historical, cultural and social perspectives, Singapore: ISeaS, 2002). Outside of Malay studies, yet another conference-based volume has explored similar issues within the Tai-speaking world (Andrew Turton, editor, Social identity in Tai states, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2000). These three end-of-the-twentieth-century books seem to reflect the end-of-the-twentieth-century academic preoccupation with unravelling the overly rigid categorizations of peoples and identities which were constructed during the colonial era, and which were ultimately accepted in part by those they were applied to.

one of the shining specimens of grammars written during the first half of the
last century available to today’s linguistic community, preserving quite well
Dempwolff’s original meaning.

There are a number of excellent grammars available in Dutch and German
of both Austronesian and Papuan languages of the greater New Guinea area,
written mainly by missionaries or colonial officials. Of course, such gram-
mars can be, and have been, consulted by linguists interested in areal or
typological features, but often they can only be found in university libraries,
and the descriptions often need close reading because the original authors
were not in the habit of providing morpheme-by-morpheme glosses.

Otto Dempwolff began his career in New Guinea as senior medical officer
for the German colonial troops, but he immersed himself in local languages
and in due course became a founding father of Austronesian comparative
linguistics. At the request of Lutheran missionaries, Dempwolff agreed to
write a grammar based on sketches and more than 400 typewritten pages of
stories collected by Heinrich Zahn. Zahn himself wrote a highly appreciative
foreword (pp. ix-x) for the resulting book, *Grammatik der Jabêm-Sprache auf
Neuguinea*, as Dempwolff had just passed away in 1938.

Dempwolff explicitly (p. 11) rejects the traditional European framework
(based on Latin) when presenting Jabêm lexical categories, in order to convey
the genius of the language – Bradshaw and Czobor preserve here the German
*Sprachgeist* (‘language spirit’). This helps the reader truly understand the
structures and their functions in this Austronesian language. As Bradshaw
and Czobor note (p. xi), Dempwolff appears to have been familiar with
Pilhofer’s grammar of Katê, a Papuan language with a switch-reference sys-
tem. He gives a lucid account of serial verb constructions recognizing same
and different subject sequences (pp. 100-14). Indeed, his work is the founda-
tion for much recent work, most of which is given in a list of references (p.
13), including Bisang (1986) and Bradshaw (1999).

Jabêm is one of the few Austronesian languages with lexical tone, as was
recognized by Dempwolff, but later analysed more comprehensively by
Bradshaw and Ross. A good summary can be found in the sketch by Ross
(2002), who also refines the description of the verb conjugations and the role
tone plays in this domain. One of the reasons Ross included his sketch in *The
Oceanic Languages* (Lynch, Ross and Crowley 2002) was that ‘despite the study
that has been devoted to Jabêm, there is no easily accessible account of it’.

Not only have Bradshaw and Czobor provided a good translation, they
have also done readers ‘in another place and time’ a great service by providing
near morpheme-by-morpheme glosses for each Jabêm example. Occasionally
they point out in footnotes when Dempwolff’s translation seems to be at vari-
ance (p. 62) with the comprehensive Jabêm dictionary (Streicher 1982), ‘itself
a translation and revision of a German original by Zahn’ (p. xi).
the reader in another time is served by references throughout this translation to equivalents of a particular structure in other new Guinea languages (pp. 20, 52-53), to possible etymological sources of certain terms (p. 65), to better analyses, such as Bradshaw’s discussion of verb conjugations (p. 16), and to interpretations of Dempwolff’s statements (p. 100).

In summary, while Ross’s sketch of 2002 is certainly a valuable introduction to the language, various aspects of jabêm which Ross did not deal with, or looked at only in passing, can now be learned about from this translation of Dempwolff’s original work. We should be thankful to Bradshaw and Czobor for making Dempwolff’s lucid description of this Austronesian language so highly accessible. To say it in their own words: ‘[t]hey have ended up turning reasonably straight furrows and [...] the crop is worth the labor of reaping’ (p. xi).

References

Bisang, Walter

Bradshaw, Joel

Ross, Malcolm

Streicher, J.F.
1982 Jabêm-English dictionary. Canberra: department of Linguistics, research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University. [pacific Linguistics C 68.]