

4.2.4. HISTORY OF RESEARCH IN AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGES: MOROBE PROVINCE

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4.2.4.0. INTRODUCTION

In an earlier paper (Hooley 1964b), it was stated that the history of New Guinea linguistics is a history of Christian missions in the island. This is just as true of the Morobe Province as it is of the rest of the country, and with few exceptions, most of our information about the languages of the district before the 1950s comes either directly or indirectly from missionaries. McElhanon has also pointed this out in his *History of Linguistic Research in the Huon Peninsula* (McElhanon 1970).

The scope of this section is restricted to the Austronesian languages of the district, but in the days of the first contacts the contrast between Austronesian and non-Austronesian languages was not clearly established. The first mention of languages which later proved to be Austronesian seems to have been in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Since there are several different areas of linguistic research which are of interest to scholars it seems best for the sake of clarity to treat these separately. It is therefore proposed in the following pages to consider research under the headings of language classification, descriptive studies, and comparative studies. Primers, readers and other materials have also been published in a number of the languages but these will not be dealt with here.

4.2.4.1. LANGUAGE CLASSIFICATION

Schellong, a doctor with the New Guinea Company, published some kinship terms from Yabêm (Schellong 1889a), and a volume on the Yabêm language which included wordlists from neighbouring languages (Schellong

1890). About the same time Zöllner, a journalist who toured the New Guinea Company stations, published two sets of wordlists of languages from the mainland and nearby islands. One had fifty words from each of twenty-four languages (Zöllner 1890), and the second three hundred words from forty-six languages (Zöllner 1891). Not all of these languages were Austronesian.

Schmidt (1900-02) published wordlists from several Austronesian languages: Tamî, Bukaua, Yabêm, Gitua (Kelana), and Tuam (Rooke Is.). General exploration of the area continued, but usually more attention was paid to physical and cultural features than to the languages spoken. Ray summed up what was known in 1919 in his 'Languages of Northern Papua'. Two of his groups were Austronesian, one of them including Tamî, Bukaua, and Yabêm, and the other Gitua, Tuam, Mangap, and some other languages from the islands.

When Chinnery produced his report on south New Britain and the islands in 1926 he included vocabulary lists from some of the languages of the Siasi Family which he had obtained from Bamler.

Little further attempt was made to list and classify the languages until Capell carried out his survey in the early 1950s (Capell 1954, 1962). He was followed by Schmitz (1955, 1959, 1960), Loukotka (1957), and Salzner (1960). During this period there was considerable interest in the Austronesian languages as a whole, especially by such people as Dyen and Grace, but their work contained only passing reference to the Austronesian languages in the Morobe Province.

Salzner's *Sprachenatlas* published in 1960 lists a number of Austronesian languages from the Morobe Province. His general grouping of languages corresponds reasonably well to that set up later in Hooley and McElhanon's article (1970), although there are discrepancies and it has not been possible to identify all the language names used by him.

Much of the work carried out by Salzner, Loukotka, Schmitz and Capell was done by sampling and by the use of previously published, and sometimes inaccurate, materials. Some of the inaccuracies were perpetuated, with the result that it was still possible to say in 1964:

It becomes apparent that the most urgent need for the Morobe District is an accurate linguistic map of the whole area, showing the language groups and their linguistic affinities,-- at the very least with respect to the Melanesian/non-Melanesian dichotomy. An indication of the relationships between each language group, and provision of the linguistic material suitable for lexicostatistical and comparative studies would be preferable. (Hooley 1964a).

Voegelin and Voegelin (1964:7f) gave a "Unified List of Austronesian Languages in Melanesia". This gave little more than a list of Austronesian languages in the Morobe Province with the inclusion, probably following Capell, of two non-Austronesian languages (Momolili and Kai).

Fischer (1963) gives cognate percentages obtained by comparing Watut with Wampar, Adzera and Yabêm. He also published some short wordlists from two languages of the Buang Family and from Labu (Fischer 1966).

Harding (1967:4f, 122f) included brief mention of the languages of the islands between the Huon Peninsula and New Britain in his study of the trading system of the Vitiaz Strait. He divided the Austronesian languages there into three groups all of which would fall within the Siasî Family (see 4.4.4.7.).

During the latter part of the decade, Capell classified the Austronesian languages of the whole Papua New Guinea area, including those of the Morobe Province, into two main groups, using typological criteria (Capell 1969, 1971). His application of the criteria is not always consistent however, nor is his choice of languages to be included completely accurate (see 4.4.4.1.). Some non-Austronesian languages appear to be included in the classification, and at least one major family, the Buang, is omitted entirely.

Sankoff studied multilingualism in the Buang area in 1966 and 1967. Her thesis (Sankoff 1968) included lexicostatistical comparisons between Buang and other languages in the province. Although she lacked data from a number of languages, she carried out a thorough, reliable, analysis. Her results showed four language families which are basically the same as those later set up with somewhat more detail by the author (Hooley 1970a, 1970b, 1971; see also 4.4.4. below).

Also in the late 1960s Hooley and McElhanon, in cooperation with other colleagues of the Summer Institute of Linguistics attempted to provide a complete survey of the Morobe Province languages. The results of this work appear in other parts of this volume, (and in Hooley and McElhanon 1970; Hooley 1970a, 1971). We now have a good overall picture of the Austronesian languages in the district and their relationships to one another, but with certain areas still needing fieldwork to fill in details.

When Dyen carried out his lexicostatistical classification of the Malayopolynesian languages (Dyen 1962) he used wordlists from only four languages from the Morobe Province: Adzera, Labu, Tamî and a language he calls Nubamî, which may perhaps be Sipoma. These four languages had quite low critical percentages and there were no clear ties back to the rest of the Austronesian groups. Dyen concluded that the north-east New Guinea-New Britain area was a linguistically diverse one and possibly the original home of the Austronesian languages, but no unequivocal evidence has so far been brought forward, either to confirm or demolish the hypothesis.

4.2.4.2. DESCRIPTIVE STUDIES

In-depth studies of particular languages were very rare until recent years.

Of the Austronesian languages in the district, Yabêm received the most attention, and several major studies have been published. This unique status of Yabêm is due to the fact that the Lutheran Mission chose Yabêm as its lingua franca for the Austronesian (and some non-Austronesian) speaking parts of the Morobe Province, and therefore largely ignored the other languages.

The first works to appear on Yabêm were by Schellong (1890, 1905), and Schmidt (1901). Although various anthropologically oriented articles by different authors appeared from time to time after that nothing more of major linguistic importance appeared until 1917 when Zahn produced a Yabêm-German dictionary. Then followed another break until the late 1930s. In 1937 Streicher produced a German-Yabêm dictionary which is now being reworked into a Yabêm-English dictionary soon to appear in print.

Dempwolff published a grammar of Yabêm in 1939, followed by Zahn's pedagogical grammar in 1940. An English-Yabêm dictionary was later published by the Lutheran Mission (Koschade 1969), but no recent grammar of the language has appeared.

After the war, Capell and Wurm did some work in the area paying particular attention to tone. They demonstrated that tone is a phonemic feature of Yabêm, Bakaua, and Tami (Capell 1949; Wurm 1954). The author has observed that Labu also displays this feature.

Not all the work of the Lutheran missionaries was related to Yabêm, although very little of the other material was published. Stuerzenhofecker (1930a, 1930b) produced some notes on the grammar of the Wampar language (which he calls Laewomba) and a dictionary, while Stolz (n.d.) provided a dictionary of Sio. As these materials are only in manuscript form, the author has not had opportunity to see them. Stolz's work also includes a grammatical analysis of the Sio language by Dempwolff.

Bamler published some materials on Tami in the early part of the century. First to appear were notes on the grammar and a vocabulary (Bamler 1900a, 1900b), followed later in 1912 by a pedagogical description of the language.

Adzera is another language to have been studied in some depth. An early analysis of the language was carried out by Dempwolff (n.d.) and the manuscript is still in Hamburg. Later Holzknecht took up the work. He produced dictionaries of the language (Holzknecht 1960, 1967a,

1967b), but these are unfortunately still only in manuscript form. Some of the results of his work on the phonology and grammar of the language are now being published (Holzknecht 1974a, 1974b, 1974c).

Four other languages have been studied in greater or less detail since the 1950s; Central Buang, Manga Buang, Patep (also Buang Family), and the lower Watut languages (Adzera Family) (see 4.4.4. for details of the families).

The first fieldworker to study Buang was Girard, who spent some months in the area in the mid-fifties. Although she used some Buang words, phrases, and stories in her articles (Girard 1956a, 1956b, 1957a, 1957b, 1959a, 1959b, 1967) she did not study the language analytically, nor attempt to describe the phonology or grammar.

Sankoff worked chiefly in the headwater dialect of Central Buang. Her fieldwork was carried out during 1966 and 1967 with succeeding short visits. Her main interests were anthropological and sociolinguistic rather than analytical and descriptive, so that she did not publish anything on the structure of the language, except for a summary chapter in her thesis (Sankoff 1968:88-106). This thesis, on multilingualism, was a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the subject as a whole and language usage among the Buang in particular. She has since published further on this subject using Buang illustrative materials (Sankoff 1969, 1972a). More recently she has begun a systematic and comprehensive study of the nature of Buang poetry as it is expressed in the oral accompaniment to their dances. So far only preliminary unpublished manuscripts on this topic have appeared (Sankoff 1972b, 1972c), but a complete description is being planned.

The main descriptive linguistic study of Central Buang has been carried out by the author and his wife, who have been engaged in fieldwork in the area at various times from 1959 until the present. Various manuscripts which have appeared from time to time have now been extended and superseded by a fuller description of the phonology and grammar (Hooley 1970a). Two earlier publications (Hooley 1962; 1964c) have also been superseded in some details. Still only in manuscript form is a description of the higher level grammatical features of sentence, paragraph, and discourse (Hooley 1970b). Manuscript dictionaries have been prepared, and plans are being made to publish these. The Buang-English dictionary was prepared by Hooley, Hooley and Johnson (1973), and the English-Buang dictionary by the author's wife (Hooley, J. 1972). Mose Johnson, a native Buang speaker from the village of Mapos, prepared a Buang-Tok Pisin dictionary, working from the Buang-English volume (Johnson 1973).

The Manga Buang language is closely related to Central Buang with approximately 70-75% cognates. It has been studied by Hardwick and Healey of the Summer Institute of Linguistics who have prepared a dictionary as well as a number of papers still in manuscript form on the phonology and grammar of the language (Hardwick 1967, 1969, 1970; Healey 1967a, 1967b, 1970; Hardwick and Healey 1965a, 1965b, 1966a, 1966b, 1967, 1972, 1973).

Lauck and Adams, also of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, have just recently begun an in-depth study of Patep, part of the dialect chain known as the Mumeng language. So far nothing has been published, but there is already a description of the phonology, available in manuscript form (Adams and Lauck 1973).

The languages of the lower Watut were studied by Fischer who included a section on them in his book *Watut* (Fischer 1963). He treats this group as one language with a number of dialects, covering in this the languages listed as Dangal, Maralango, Onank, and Silisili in 4.4.4. in this volume. He does not give any cognate percentages between the different dialects, but he includes notes on the phonology and grammar as well as a vocabulary.

4.2.4.3. COMPARATIVE STUDIES

So far not very much has been done on comparative studies with languages of the Morobe Province, due mainly to the paucity of reliable data.

Fischer has some comparative notes in his book *Watut* (Fischer 1963: 278ff) in which he compares the three Watut dialects with Wampar and Adzera as well as proto-Austronesian. He includes a chart of sound correspondences.

In his 1965 article, Milke wrote comparative notes on the Austronesian languages of New Guinea in which he treats the languages as members of the Oceanic subgroup of Austronesian. His two main points are that the New Guinea languages constitute a specific cluster within the Oceanic subgroup, and that they are derived from proto-Oceanic. With reference to the Morobe Province he discusses firstly the reflexes of *s and *z in the Yabêm and Tamî languages (p.334ff) and Adzera (p.341f). These three languages are also used in lexical comparisons in later sections of the paper.

Capell (1971) in his Austronesian languages of Australian New Guinea chapter, makes passing reference to Yabêm, Tamî, Adzera, and other Morobe Province languages, but he does not treat them in any detail.

Some preliminary comparative work has been attempted on Buang by Sankoff (1968) and Hooley (1970a). Sankoff compared the two dialects of

Central Buang and Manga Buang and attempted to reconstruct proto-Buang phonemes (p.91ff). Hooley (1970a, Chapter 4) discusses the sets of correspondences for the languages and dialects of the Buang Family and attempts a reconstruction of the phonemic contrasts. Some 408 sets of cognates from nine of the Buang speech groups are given in an appendix, but no attempt has been made to reconstruct proto-Buang roots.

Apart from these beginnings no other comparative work on the languages of the province is known to the author.

4.2.4.4. CONCLUSION

There remains much to be discovered to complete our knowledge of the Austronesian languages of the Morobe Province. The principal needs are for more in-depth studies of individual languages, and for more careful application of the comparative method to individual languages and dialects. This in turn should permit us to make more reliable deductions concerning the relations of the various languages and families, and perhaps also to speculate more adequately on the history of the development of these different groups, their prehistory, and the way they are related to the Austronesian languages taken as a whole.

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