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References

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Over the last twenty years Western Borneo, in particular the Indonesian province of West Kalimantan, has drawn the special attention of linguists. The apparent diversity of local Malay-like language varieties has given rise to the assumption that West Borneo must have been the homeland of the ancestors of present-day Malay, and of the Malay-like languages of Sumatra and mainland Malaysia. In-depth studies of the languages of West Borneo are rare, however. The present study is therefore particularly welcome.

The language variety described in this book is spoken in separated pockets of West Kalimantan and Sarawak by well over 33,000 speakers. As the title of the book indicates, it is known by more than one name. The group of Malayic dialects the language belongs to is known as Kendayan in the literature and in Indonesian/Malay. However, since this name also has an ethnic meaning and is used to refer to people speaking non-Malayic languages as well,
adelaar prefers the local etymon kanayatn to refer specifically to the group of related malayic language varieties to which Salako belongs. According to the rules adelaar presents for the pronunciation of this Salako variety, one would have expected the spelling kanayatn [kanãyˈətn], but the rounding of /a/ to [ɔ] may be too restricted to befit the general name. Among the kanayatn speakers themselves the different varieties are known by shibboleths, such as the word for ‘what’, which in Salako is dameà [dameˈɔ]. The names used by speakers of the dialect itself are bahasa badameà ‘language characterized by dameà’, bahasa dameà ‘dameà language’, or just katà diri’ [katɔ diriˈɔ] ‘our language’; the name bahasa Salako comes from the name of the river and town located slightly north of the area where the language variety is spoken today.

adelaar’s study consists of four parts: an introduction with references (pp. 1-18), a sketch grammar (pp. 19-83), a collection of twenty texts (pp. 86-219), and a Salako-English lexicon (pp. 221-328). Only the first text is provided with interlinear glosses and sentence-by-sentence translations. The lemmas in the lexicon are roots and are followed by semantic, morphological, and idiomatic information, and often also collocations and example sentences, largely taken from the texts. In addition etymological information is presented, whereby the author distinguishes borrowing from or through Indonesian and lexical items which can be identified as cases of interference or code switching. The influence of modern Indonesian on the lexicon and language use is obviously strong.

This influence has led to considerable complications in the sound system of the language. The lexicon consists of inherited malay(ic) words which have undergone all typical kanayatn sound changes, and malay(ic) and more foreign words (borrowed from or through malay/Indonesian) which have not undergone these changes, or only partially so. adelaar’s approach in the sketch grammar is purely synchronic, which leaves the reader with a picture that is unnecessarily confusing, especially with regard to phonology, spelling, and pronunciation. It would be interesting to analyse adelaar’s data diachronically as an ordered sequence of sound changes.

The most interesting feature of Salako grammar is the verbal system. What in Indonesian is or has become the prefix di- (for the undergoer-oriented – or passive – voice with a third-person actor) corresponds in Salako to a proclitic di which, when no actor is expressed, is attached to the verb (which may have a nasal prefix indicating that the action of the verb reached its completion), but otherwise to the expression of the actor. The latter may be any personal pronoun or a regular noun phrase and should precede the verb (which in turn may be marked by a nasal prefix to express completion). These phenomena have already led to new hypotheses about the history of the malayic group of languages, including malay/Indonesian.
In several places Adelaar compares features of Salako with the latter language. Indeed, knowledge of Indonesian helps in understanding much of Salako’s grammar: similarities and ‘deviations’ are easier to digest. Readers who lack that knowledge may find Adelaar’s description too sketchy on some points. Word structure is not immediately transparent if one does not know Indonesian, and this hampers recognition of lexical roots and consequently the use of the lexicon, without which the texts are rather difficult to read. The more so since nineteen out of the twenty texts are presented without interlinear translations and without any indication of boundaries between roots and affixes or words and clitics, whereas the (free) translations of the complete texts are not even printed on the facing page.

It is possible that the editors of the series in which Adelaar’s study appears had a say in this. The result in any case is a book which (though by no means free of printing errors and notational inconsistencies) is a welcome contribution to the study of a lesser-known group of Malayic language varieties, but which can only be properly appreciated by Malayologists.


Because of the large size of the Austronesian language family, Austronesians have so far only succeeded in offering fragmentary notes on its development and internal structure. The present collection of papers fills some of the gaps in our knowledge. In the first chapter, the late Terry Crowley discusses the problematic distinction between dialect and language in general and in Oceania in particular, concentrating on traditional naming of communalects by speakers of Oceanic languages themselves. His findings amply demonstrate Peter Mühlhäusler’s bias when he asserted in his Linguistic ecology: Language change and linguistic imperialism in the Pacific region (London: Routledge, 1996) that traditional Pacific societies had no concept of ‘language’, and that naming and identifying languages were deplorable and unjustified practices by colonial politicians and European missionaries. At the same time, Crowley stresses the well-known fact that it is in practice impossible to determine