

PAWLEY, ANDREW, and RALPH BULMER (with the assistance of JOHN KIAS, SIMON PETER GI, and IAN SAEM MAJNEP). 2011. *A dictionary of Kalam with ethnographic notes*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics 630, xiii + 810 pp. ISBN 978-085-88-3604-2. \$Aust. 132.00 (Australia), \$Aust. 120.00 (elsewhere), hardcover.

Reviewed by JOHN LYNCH, *University of the South Pacific*

“Making a large dictionary is usually a long and complicated business ... This dictionary is no exception. Its foundations were laid in the 1960s and over the following decades many thousands of hours have gone into building on this foundation” (viii). So begins the acknowledgements section of what is a tour de force, the result of half a century of lexicographical work.

“Kalam is the English name for two closely related languages (or two sharply distinct dialects) spoken around the junction of the Bismarck and Schrader Ranges on the northern fringes of the central highlands of Papua New Guinea” (11). Spoken by about 20,000 people, Kalam is a member of the Madang group of languages, which in turn belongs to the wider Trans-New Guinea group of languages. The two principal authors—Andrew Pawley, an eminent Pacific linguist, and the late Ralph Bulmer, a social anthropologist with a keen interest in ethnobiology—were assisted by many native speakers of the language, but three are singled out as assistant authors because of their long and detailed contribution to the project.

Kalam has featured in the linguistic literature as being somewhat unusual typologically, for two quite distinct reasons. From a phonological point of view, many words may consist only of consonants, with no phonemic vowels though with epenthetic release vowels breaking up consonant clusters: *kpl* [kɨβɨl] ‘weed’, *glmd* [ŋgɨlimɨnt] ‘newly initiated boy’, and the like (28). From a morphosyntactic point of view, Kalam is unusual in that verbs form a closed class, with only about 130 being recorded; and “fifteen verb roots account for nearly 90 per cent of all verb root tokens in Kalam text” (38). However, this limited stock of verbs is augmented by large numbers of phrasal verbs, of two types: verb adjunct constructions (like *suk ag-* [shouting say] ‘shout’, *guglum ag-* [snoring say] ‘snore’, *jlken ag-* [coughing say] ‘cough’ and the like), and serial verb constructions.

The book itself consists of six introductory chapters preceding the main body of the dictionary and the finder list. Chapter 1 (1–10) briefly describes the scope of the dictionary (of which more below) and the organization of entries. Chapter 2 (11–24) first discusses matters of geography and social organization. It then discusses the major varieties of Kalam: this includes on the one hand the two “sharply distinct dialects” referred to above, *Etp mnm* and *Ti mnm*, and on the other hand the “pandanus language,” a specialized variant used when people are harvesting and eating the fruit of the pandanus, whose purpose is “to avoid uttering word-forms of the ordinary language whose use might damage *ahyaw* [= pandanus] fruit in the vicinity” (19). Chapters 3 (25–33) and 4 (34–73) are, respectively, sketches of the phonology (and orthography) and the morphosyntax.

Chapter 5 (74–84), “Notes on the making of the Kalam dictionary,” is not something usually found in the introductory matter of dictionaries. Though brief, it charts an inter-

esting history of lexicographic cooperation. “This dictionary had its beginnings in Ralph Bulmer’s desire to combine a career as an ethnographer with his hobby, studying birds and other animals” (74). Bulmer was based at the University of Auckland when the project began, and was joined on his first field trip in 1960 by Bruce Biggs, who was a member of the same department. In 1963, Biggs handed over the linguist reins to Pawley, then a Master’s student at Auckland; Pawley went on to write his PhD thesis on Kalam grammar, finishing it in 1966. The chapter recounts the recruitment of Kalam assistants (especially the three co-authors), the work of many scholars from various disciplines in providing scientific identifications, the impact on the project of the death of Bulmer from cancer in 1988, and the final revisions. (Simon Peter Gi and Saem Majnep had also passed away before the dictionary was finally published.) This chapter is followed by the sixth and final chapter (85–89), providing a list of references to works cited in the text plus “selected publications that treat aspects of Kalam language, culture and society” (85).

Following all of this introductory material is the meat of the book: Part 1, “Kalam-English dictionary” (91–655), and Part 2, “Kalam-English finder list, including scientific (Latin) names of plants and animals” (657–810).

Let me deal with Part 2 first. Like all finder lists, this one is not a reverse (English–Kalam) dictionary, but rather a list of English words with one or more approximate translation equivalents: “for more detailed information about each Kalam expression the reader should refer to the Kalam-English dictionary” (659). Where more than one Kalam equivalent is given for an English word, more commonly used synonyms precede less common ones.

Now to the dictionary itself. “It provides definitions for about 14,000 distinct lexical units, grouped under about 6000 primary headwords” (1). “Lexical units” are form-meaning pairings, that may consist of a single word or a lexicalized phrase, like, for example, the verb adjunct constructions discussed above, and other multimorphemic or multiword units.

The layout of entries is clear. Headwords are in bold capitals, followed by a semiphonetic transcription, dialect information where relevant, part of speech, and then meanings, often with example sentences; subentries follow, in bold (but not capitals); the whole entry after the first line is slightly indented. Thus:

DLOB [nd̪l̪ómp], *n.* Slime, slimy substance. = **dlom**.

slom dlob, nasal mucus

(**mluk**) **slom dlob yap-**, near syn. **slom dlob g-**, *v.*

impers. (of the nose) Run, be runny, have a runny nose.

dlob jak-, *v. impers.* Be slimy, ooze. Ñi, lum dlob jakp

kadoŋ ok ok! Ma-amnoŋ! Boy, there is wet mud oozing up

where you are! Don’t go there!

There are numerous illustrations (mostly line drawings), mainly illustrating fauna and flora terms.

“One of Bulmer’s chief objectives was to understand and describe the Kalam people’s knowledge and use of the natural environment. ... Bulmer intended that the dictionary be a form of ethnographic description, and kind of encyclopaedia of those elements that are codified in language. ... Entries ... should provide a systematic description of Kalam semantic categories and relations. ... The semantic structure of terminologies, such as terms for kinship or colour, or taxonomies of the animal and plant world, or the parts of complex

objects, should be easily recoverable from the information given in dictionary entries” (1).

To exemplify this, I give below a range of definitions of various Kalam terms (omitting material irrelevant to this illustrative process):

- (1) *yakt*: Generic taxon, which includes all birds except cassowaries, and all bats. Contrasts with *kobti* (cassowaries), *kmn* (game mammals), *as* (frogs and small terrestrial mammals), *kopyak* = *kupyak* (rats), *joŋ* (Orthoptera), *gogaŋ* = *gugaŋ* (Lepidoptera), etc. (622).
- (2) *ccp*: Bird taxon, generic for medium-sized “typical” goshawks, *Accipiter* spp. *ccp kamay-ket*: Black-Mantled Goshawk, *Accipiter* spp. *ccp mseŋ-ket*: Australian Goshawk, *Accipiter fasciatus* (176).
- (3) *ced-magi*: Miscanthus sword-grass taxon with rigid cane-like stems. *ced-magi pag ñ-*: attach sword-grass cane to headdress. When boys who have had the nasal septum pierced are about to emerge, after four days of ritual seclusion, a cane stem is set in their headdress to which *tabal* ornaments [skin and plumes of Papuan Lory] are attached (177).
- (4) *kms*: Fishtail palm, *Caryota* sp., or *Gronophyllum* sp. or spp., from which arrows and axe-handles are made. Found in lower Kaironk and Jimi Valleys. The dry leaves are sometimes used as tinder. The pith, very light but rigid, is used as the core around which the elaborate hats worn at *smi* festivals are constructed (301).
- (5) *alŋaw*: Nut-bearing Pandanus taxon (*P. brosimos* or *P. juliamettii* of *Pandanus* sect. *Karuka*), found in mountain forest mainly at altitudes above approx. 2250 m. Grows up to 20 m, sometimes with a single crown, sometimes with up to six crowns. Its large, ball-shaped fruit, about 50cm long, is made up of about 1000 hardshelled nuts, the kernels of which are eaten. Only occasionally propagated by Kalam but extensive groves are tended and highly valued as a food resource. The Kalam say it is propagated by the forest rat *mug* (*Melomys lorentzi*). ... More than 30 varieties of *alŋaw* are distinguished by name, classified on the basis of size, shape, and clustering or otherwise of fruit, and colour and other qualities of the kernel. [A list of subtaxa names follows] (119–20).
- (6) *malk*: Plait, weave, interlace strands or strips, twist things together, as in making string or braiding the hair. Pig-ropes and belts were traditionally plaited by Kalam but weaving of threads with a loom was unknown and braiding the hair is a post-contact innovation (368).
- (7) *ñn pag-*: Count or reckon numbers by the body-parts method, using as reference points positions on the upper body. The person counting begins by pointing to and bending the little finger of one hand, continues along the fingers (1, 2, 3, 4) to the thumb (5), then up the arm to the wrist (6), inner forearm (7), inner elbow (8), bicep (9), shoulder (10), midpoint between shoulder and neck (11), and front base of the neck (12). Counting continues through the equivalent points down the other arm. The first complete round, ending with the little finger of the second hand, equals 23. Subsequent complete rounds each amount to 22 as the counter goes around the body parts in reverse, starting again from the *second* finger of the hand on which the first

round was completed. In specifying numbers of 23 or higher, one round is indicated by flexing both hands with fingers clenched, then extending both hands sideways while at the same time extending the clenched fingers with a rapid flicking motion. 45 is indicated by two such flexing and extending movements, 67 by three, and so on (443).

- (8) *kuj*: Magic, sorcery; formulas or spells spoken or sung in magic and sorcery rites. Elaborate forms of magic are practiced in connection with gardening, hunting, raising pigs and warfare, treating sickness, and gaining the affection of the opposite sex (332).

These examples show the wealth of detail—biological and cultural—found in many of the entries in the dictionary, and illustrate Bulmer’s original desire for an encyclopedic work, “one that tries to capture the ways in which Kalam speakers construct their world through language” (84).

The dictionary is very attractively laid out. Having the headwords in capitals is an excellent navigational aid, especially when there are so many subentries for many headwords. The introductory chapters contain a number of maps and photographs, phoneme charts, grammatical paradigms, sentence examples, and so on, that provide both flesh to descriptive bones and a welcome break in what would otherwise be continuous text.

This volume is thus a very welcome addition to the growing documentation of Papuan languages. Its attention to social, cultural, and biogeographical matters make it a model to be followed in future lexical descriptions of languages in the Pacific.

John Lynch
johnlynch123@gmail.com