Roger Keesing. **Kwaio Grammar.** Canberra: The Department of Linguistics, ANU, 1985 [**Pacific Linguistics**, B-88]. vii + 299 pp. $35.80.

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The Austronesian languages of island Melanesia probably number well over 200, and the number of these languages that are even moderately well described is small. Of the 105 languages of Vanuatu, there are so far published detailed modern grammatical descriptions of less than half a dozen. Although the 60 or so languages of the neighbouring Solomon Islands have benefited from the extensive survey work of scholars such as Ivens in the first three decades of the twentieth century, Ray in the 1910's and the 1920's, as well as Tryon and Hackman's 1983 opus[1], there is about as little detailed coverage of individual languages as we find for Vanuatu languages. The addition of any detailed and clearly presented grammatical descriptions of any of these languages in this context is therefore most welcome. Keesing's grammar certainly fits this description. This work is to be additionally commented for its clarity as its author was a self-confessed nonlinguist. Many grammars written by people with more direct claims to being linguists have been less successful than Keesing's grammar of Kwaio.

Keesing aimed to set out his grammar in such a way that it was not theory-bound and thus of limited access to descriptive linguists of varying theoretical orientations. He does not devote great amounts of discussion to justifying analyses; rather, he concentrates instead on providing many examples and illustrative sentences, which allow the reader to form his or her own opinions concerning a particular analysis. Keesing has also done his homework, in checking how cognate constructions have been named and described in other Oceanic languages. Since my own grammar of Paamese is one of those works referred to in this way, I encounter much that is familiar, and find little need to criticise a treatment that I had already discovered to be convenient for a typologically similar language.

The grammar is well organised, with the first chapter describing the phonological system, including not only the basic set of phonological contrasts, but also a number of morphophonemic alternations that occur in the language. There follows a chapter on morphology, which treats word level derivations in nouns, pronouns and verbs, as well as other minor parts of speech. A separate chapter is devoted to phrase level syntax, which details the structure of noun phrase, verb phrases, prepositional phrases and temporal phrases separately. The next chapter describes the grammar of simple sentences, while there is a short final chapter on the structure of multi-clause sentences. Finally, there is about eighty pages of textual material that is carefully analysed and translated. Combined with Keesing's previously published dictionary of Kwaio,[2] this makes Kwaio one of the best described of all the languages of island Melanesia.

The language itself is probably not very remarkable as Oceanic languages go. It has pronominal copies before the verb, transitive suffixes, prepositional verbs, fronting of topicalised noun phrases and numerous other features that will be familiar to scholars of Oceanic languages. However, the details will be welcomed by historical linguists attempting to piece together the subgrouping and reconstruction of Oceanic languages.

However, this grammar will not be referred to just by specialists in Oceanic linguistics. Another recent volume by Keesing[3] presents some challenging views on the history of Melanesian Pidgin. Having a detailed grammar of one of the major substrate languages for Solomons Pijin will allow various claims about the nature of substratum influence to be tested. Now what is needed is a similarly detailed treatment of the early substrate languages for Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea. Tolai is constantly compared with Tok Pisin in the literature, yet there is no readily available grammar of Tolai that the general pidginist/creolist can refer to as a way of checking claims. In this respect, given Keesing's personal view that Solomon's Pijin is little more than relexified Kwaio, it perhaps would have been better if somebody else could have written the Kwaio grammar to ensure impartiality. I don't subscribe to quite such a strongly stated substralist view as Keesing in this respect,[4] though any disputes I have with his arguments are not in his analysis of Kwaio, but of Pijin.

It is traditional to offer a few grumbles at the end of a review, even one that is favourable. One that I would contribute is that there is nothing in the grammar on the speakers of the language or where they live. Maps of the Solomons, and of Malaita, would have been useful, as well as some background information on the cultural practices and the recent history of the speakers. On the whole, however, Keesing's grammar is well worth reading, and readers with either a pidgin/creole shelf or an Oceanic languages shelf will find a useful place for this volume.

NOTES

1. D.T. Tryon and B.D. Hackman. 1983. Solomon Islands languages: an internal classification. **Pacific Linguistics**, C-72.
2. Keesing, Roger. 1975. **Kwaio Dictinary. Pacific Linguistics**, Series C-35.
3. Keesing, Roger. 1988. **Melanesian Pidgin and the Oceanic substrate.** Stanford: Stanford University Press.
4. Crowley, Terry. **Beach-la-Mar to Bislama: the emergence of a national language in Vanuatu.** In preparation.