

NOTE

Roro Dialects: Corrections and further notes

In Kivung 7, 1, you published a paper of mine entitled 'The Dialects of the Roro Language of Papua: A Preliminary Survey'. I wish to draw attention to certain points for the benefit of readers.

First, there were a few minor printing errors in the text. The village name Punupaka (p.10) should read Pinupaka, while the last two lines on p.6 should read "... or allophones, for example, of /t/". Further, the two maps have been printed in the wrong order: thus the note "see Map 1" (p.3) should read "see Map 2", ; conversely, the note in para. 4.5. (p.7) should read "... the selected list of words and Map 1".

Second, in the selected list of Lexical Differences (p.11), there is an error of mine that I allowed to slip through. For the English word 'cloud' I have listed to'u against the Paitana villages. This is in correct--the error originally appeared through a misunderstanding, for to'u properly means 'crowd' (of people at a meeting, feast, etc.). The correct form is 'aohau'.

Third, I should like to expand a little on para. 6.3. (p.12), where I came easily to the conclusion that marere is an English borrowing. I should point out that in addition to meaning 'letter' (mail) and 'school' it can also refer to the tattoo markings on a woman's body: babi'e ekia marere 'women's writing.' Thus it might be suggested that marere is in fact an old and respected Roro word that has taken on new meaning in the new society i.e.: 'letter' and 'school.' [The root of the verb 'to write' is -rere-, and 'to teach' is bamarere, thus a teacher is bamarere hauna, and a schoolboy is marere miori.]

However there are other Roro words for 'tattoo' and these are boaboa and harahara - both of which also have several other meanings. It is still possible therefore that marere is an English borrowing, though it is not as clear as I perhaps suggested.

It is interesting to note that while both boaboa and harahara are known and used by the young people of today, the meaning 'tattoo' seems to have been largely forgotten.

Finally, in the draft submitted for publication I failed to include an appropriate acknowledgement. Perhaps this could be rectified now by my thanking John Lynch for his help and advice in the production of the paper.

Michael M. Davis
University of Papua New Guinea.