

J.M. Clifton (ed.), *Five phonological studies*, Ukarumpa: SIL, 1985 [Workpapers in Papua New Guinea Languages, vol. 31]. Pp.V + 122. K4.30.

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This SIL publication contains five "data-oriented" (editor in preface) statements of the phonology of a number of Papuan languages of Papua New Guinea. The exact number of languages under discussion is somewhat unclear; while four papers deal with one language each, the first one by May and Loeweke deals with what they consider to be four languages of the Kaukambaran family, ultimately members of the Trans-New Guinea Phylum. At issue are the two varieties Maiani and Miani. The authors point out that previous writers have classified them either as dialects of one language called Tani, or as three distinct languages. The authors unfortunately offer no justification for their two-language solution.

All the papers are written in a 'classical-phonemics' framework. They all contain a phoneme inventory, a discussion of allophonic variation and the distribution of phonemes. Most papers also dedicate some space to suprasegmentals and morphophonemics. All have a final section on the orthography proposed for the language. That an acceptable orthography is the ultimate goal of this kind of phonological treatment should always be borne in mind when assessing such studies and may help to understand such bewilderment as for instance expressed by Pirkko Luoma when confronted with the question of what to do with the central vowel in Urim. This vowel never occurs in monosyllabic words or word-final syllables. Because of its limited distribution the author would not want to analyse this vowel as an independent phoneme, but rather as an unstressed variant of some full vowel. This would only be a viable solution if this underlying vowel showed up somewhere under morphophonemic variation. Unfortunately, "in many cases there is no clue what its underlying vowel is" (p.118). This absurd state-of-affairs is brought about by the unrevealing narrowness of the mono-systemic approach.

A good deal of editing seems to have gone into the five papers. Occasionally the editor proposes alternative analysis in footnotes; one would wish to see the authors' responses to these proposals. Despite the effort on the part of the editor, some unfortunate statements have remained in some of the papers, statements which make the

reader wonder about the authors' conception of phonemics, e.g. “/i/ and /ε/ are two of the shortest vocoids in duration” (Vollrath, p.53), or “‘kng’ is more exact phonemically” (Luoma p.117) than ‘kg’ to symbolize the prestopped velar nasal [kn].

As just mentioned the first paper by May and Loeweke looks at the four closely related languages/dialects Maiani, Miani, Mala and Maia, spoken by some 5000 speakers (as of 1971). All have a 5-vowel system and the differences in the consonants are slight. All have a voice contrast in stops, though the voiced stops in Maiani are marginal; whether Mala additionally has a series of prenasalized stops is doubtful, since they could be regarded as allophones of the voiced stops, as pointed out by the editor. There are two or three fricatives without voice distinction, a lateral (not in Miani), vibrant and two or three nasals. The syllable structure is simple with no consonant clusters plus maximally one syllable-finally. All languages have contrastive stress. In the section dedicated to the orthography the authors implicitly raise the important issue of the role of the fieldworker in the setting up of an appropriate orthographic system. The authors state that “the men” insist on symbolising the allophones of the bilabial fricative (+/-rounded, depending on rounding of following vowel), possibly because of the influence of English; not surprisingly the spelling is inconsistent but the authors do not feel they should impose a phonemic solution.

Olkkonen's paper deals with Burum, a language spoken by several thousand people in the Burum and Kwat river valleys. Three dialects are postulated, Wanduhum, Yaknge and Siawari. These are said to differ merely in a few phonological features; to what extent the lexicon and syntactic patterns are shared is unclear. The author points out, however, that the dialect Yaknge shares many words with “the Kwat dialect” (p.29) which seems to suggest that the dialectal differences go beyond the few phonological features. There is a rather confusing terminological inconsistency here; on two pages one dialect is called Siawari then Kwat (with Siawari in brackets) and then Kwat is referred to as a language. Of some interest in connection with the dialectal differences is Olkkonen's discussion of the status of the glottal stop. This occurs only in Yaknge (and possibly also in the Siawari dialect; there are conflicting statements, p.29 and p.32) and then only in final position of some two or three morphemes. This phone is analyzed as an allophone of the labiovelar /kp/ which otherwise does not occur syllable-finally. It is argued that a revision in the classification of the Huon languages might be called for on the basis of the outcome of

the development of syllable-final /kp/, glottal stop to the east of Burum, labial stop to the west.

Olkkonen examines the phoneme system, allophonic variation, phonotactics, syllable pattern and orthography in considerable detail but also has a rather uninformative section on higher-level phonological units. There are also some unfortunate inconsistencies in the text; page 34 exemplifies a velar nasal following an alveolar nasal though the reader would in fact expect a palatal nasal in this position. Furthermore the examples given for the degemination rule (5.2.1.2) suggest that the rule is actually somewhat more complex than indicated.

The longest paper in this volume is by Vollrath on Hewa, a member of the Sanio family, ultimately of the Sepik-Ramu Phylum. After the phoneme chart the author plunges straight into a rather confused discussion of word-final vowels which may become voiceless or are deleted altogether. The consonant system is fairly simple, with labial, alveolar and velar places of articulation and no voice distinction. Consonants neither cluster nor occur finally, Vollrath posits 8 vowels, the possible sequences of which are examined in detail.

There are various sections on suprasegmentals, loan words and morphophonemics, among other. In an appendix Vollrath inconclusively compares his analysis with a previous one done by Cochran on Yoliapi, apparently a dialect of Hewa. The status of Yoliapi remains unclear; Cochran recognized three more consonantal phonemes and listed only 5 vowels. The vowel system of Yoliapi would thus parallel that of the neighbouring, related language Saniyo Hiyewe, which is described by Hepburn in the fourth paper of this volume.

Hepburn's paper is much shorter than Vollrath's, but brings out the relevant facts clearly. The phonology of Saniyo Hiyewe is even more straightforward than that of Hewa. There is a 5-vowel system and the 12 consonants are basically either bilabial or alveolar with no voice distinction. In addition there is a velar plosive and the glottal stop, which only occurs intervocalically. Consonants occur neither finally nor in clusters. The author recognizes 5 diphthong phonemes, where the second element is high front or back. There does not appear to be any particular reason apart perhaps from the general non-occurrence of final consonants not to consider the second element as a semivowel.

Hepburn also provides some information on stress placement in polysyllabic words and looks at external sandhi. For the length of this paper there are rather too many misprints.

The final study in this volume by Luoma examines Urim, a stock-level isolate of the Torricelli Phylum. A rather more complex phoneme system than for Saniyo Hiyewe is postulated, but some phonemes seem dubious. In particular, besides the straightforward 5-vowel system Luoma also lists 5 palatalized vowel phonemes, which are, however, not discussed in detail. Luoma does not make it sufficiently clear why she does not analyse these palatalized vowels as ordinary vowels followed by either a high front vowel or the corresponding semivowel which otherwise apparently only occurs in syllable onset position. The uncertainty surrounding these palatalized vowel phonemes is not eliminated by treating the word for 'go' [kai] once as having a vowel sequence (p.103) and once as having a palatalized vowel (p.109). A second uncertainty concerns length difference in vowels. All vowels can apparently be long or short but length seems to be phonemic only for the low, central vowel and then only in closed-syllable monosyllabic words. The author states that the long vowel can be short, too, but not vice versa. One wonders whether something else might be going on here, perhaps emphasis; the variable phonemicisation of phonetically long *a* in closed monosyllabics does not inspire much confidence in the phonemic length contrast. Thus we find [na:n] 'ridge' as /na:n/ (p.112) and /naŋ/ (p.120) and also [ma:n] 'mother' as /man/ (p.107). A third uncertainty regards the prestopped nasals which cannot occur initially and could conceivably be analysed as having an underlying schwa, as the editor notes. It can only be mentioned here that the author has fairly detailed discussions of morphophonemics, orthography and especially stress, which appears somewhat elusive and not fully understood.

Having highlighted some of the more controversial aspects of the papers I should like to conclude this review by applauding the publication of these phonological studies which contribute to a decrease in the number of Papuan languages of which next to nothing is known. They are thus very valuable and welcome.