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## **The Manambu Language of East Sepik, Papua New Guinea (review)**

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retain a piece of land in Montalvo encroached upon by a colonist. While these seem to be disparate narratives, Nuckolls deftly shows how they are interrelated. The subjectivity, and the moral flaws, of the colonist who tried to steal Luisa's land are analogous to those of jaguars. The strength and persistence of Luisa, which resemble those qualities of her grandmother, allows her to defeat the predator and to continue to live in the Runa way (fully human life).

The conclusion brings us back to the three main themes of the book: ideophony, dialogue, and perspective—overlapping and synergistic features of Amazonian Quechua grammar and ways of speaking. The use of ideophony, argues Nuckolls, is a kind of fulcrum that gives humans a way to enter into the nonhuman world and to infuse speech with animism. Ideophony is a crucial component of the Amazonian perspectivist patterns (see below) that structure dialogue and perception of the world. Nuckolls wonders why, then, linguists have persistently neglected the study of ideophones and missed the subtle and complex ways that ideophonic systems can distinguish among various perspectives and enrich human subjectivities in relation to nonhuman nature.

The “linguaculture” of the Runa, as Nuckolls has shown through the words of an extremely competent and poetic individual, is a subtle and complex system intimately interconnected with Amazonian ecologies. Luisa may be a marginalized individual within the political and economic structures of the world system, but as a human being she is “an expert citizen of a world that is bountiful and beautiful, yet dangerous and unpredictable” (p. 145).

This book is a fascinating linguistic study that shows how the language, grammar, and ways of speaking also contribute to the perspective changes and transformations that define the complexity of Amazonian and other Native cosmologies. Nuckolls's work thus makes a valuable and timely contribution to Amazonian anthropology in addition to Quechua linguistics. The documentation of Luisa's life story and descriptions of her poetics are also relevant to ethnopoetics and should be studied, as well, by those interested in examples of how indigenous people sustain relationships with a living and fully human ecological world. I recommend the book to anthropologists, linguists, poets, ecologists, and the public in general.

**The Manambu Language of East Sepik, Papua New Guinea.** ALEXANDRA Y. AIKHENVALD, with the assistance of JACKLYN YUAMALI ALA and PAULINE AGNES YUANENG LUMA LAKI. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. xxvi + 702. \$55.00 (paper).

Reviewed by John Newman, *University of Alberta*

Manambu is a Papuan language, a member of the Ndu family, spoken in the Sepik region in the north of the mainland of Papua New Guinea. Aikhenvald reports that the language is spoken by about twenty-five hundred people (river people, as opposed to jungle dwellers) in five villages, located mainly along the banks of the Sepik River. An estimated two hundred to four hundred speakers live elsewhere. The book under review contains between its covers a description of the grammar of Manambu, but to call it merely a “grammar” does not do justice to the extraordinary accomplishment and intellectual richness represented by this book. In so many ways, Aikhenvald's book qualifies as a model of what linguists with modern sensitivities should be aiming for when setting out to write a grammar of an indigenous language based on fieldwork.

Even before beginning chapter 1, the reader is struck by the earnestness and exceptional thoroughness of the author. In her acknowledgments, Aikhenvald pays tribute, individually, to a great number of people who contributed in one way or another to the

current book, including speakers of Manambu, colleagues in academia, colleagues at the Summer Institute of Linguistics, and others. It is not just that so many individuals are acknowledged, it is rather the very personal manner in which these acknowledgments are made that makes this section feel so heartfelt. In a real sense, the acknowledgments section sets the tone of the whole book, contextualizing what follows as a piece of writing very much grounded in the reality of life lived within the Manambu-speaking community, where relationships with the speakers would appear to be central and critical to the task of learning and describing the language. I say “would appear” because Aikhenvald does not reflect at any length on this aspect of the methodology involved in carrying out her fieldwork, apart from stating that “participant observation played a considerable role in discovering the ways in which the language is used” (p. 29). Her role as a participant-observer is very much evident from the acknowledgments and from the real-world contextualization that she is able to provide in the course of explicating examples of use of the language. In acknowledging the valuable contribution to the book made by a young girl Kerryanne, for example, Aikhenvald comments on how the girl was assigned the duty of assisting Aikhenvald in first-aid activities (p. xvi). Undoubtedly, Aikhenvald would have much to offer new (and experienced) fieldworkers when it comes to commenting on methodological or broad philosophical aspects of relations between linguists and the communities in which they work. Such reflections, though, are outside the scope of the book under review, which represents the product, rather than the process, of fieldwork. In any case, it is clear that Aikhenvald’s approach to fieldwork is a long way removed from what Maxwell (2005:333) portrays as the “classic” field situation, namely, a situation in which “linguists often work with one or two principal ‘informants’.” And it is evident that Aikhenvald’s participation-observation approach leads to insights that might not otherwise be available to the researcher, one example of which concerns constituent structure. Aikhenvald reports that as she became accepted within the community and expected to understand stories as any other adult speaker of the language would, postposed noun phrases (used especially for purposes of clarification) became less frequent (pp. 537–40).

The grammar itself is introduced in chapter 1 with an overview discussion of the language, the villages where Manambu is spoken, the social organization of the community, relationships with neighbors, linguistic affiliation, etc. The core of the grammar is presented in chapters 2–21, with the final one, chapter 22, being a closer look at genetic and areal relationships, new developments in the language, and a discussion of various factors influencing the current linguistic situation, the author’s thoughts on the prospects of survival of the language, and reflections on the “Manambu revival” movement. The inclusion of these final sections, reflecting insightfully and at length on the status of the language and the degree to which it is or is not threatened, is more than one is accustomed to in grammars—there is no provision for this kind of information, e.g., in the *Lingua Descriptive Studies* questionnaire (Comrie and Smith 1977), which has been taken by many linguists as a basis for writing descriptive grammars—but it is a welcome addition and one which is fully consistent with current perspectives on how linguists approach lesser-known and threatened languages.

The thematic flow of the grammar chapters is familiar enough to linguists. In broad outline, Aikhenvald proceeds from phonology, through word classes, properties mainly associated with nouns (gender, number, etc.), properties mainly associated with verbs (tense, aspect, mood, verb compounding), valency-changing devices, and clause linking, to discourse-pragmatic devices. Chapter 21, “Issues in Semantics and Features of Lexicon,” takes the reader well beyond the scope of more traditional grammars, which do not comfortably allow for extended treatments of lexical items. This chapter is a fascinating excursion into the semantics of some basic verbs (‘eat’, ‘drink’, ‘see’, ‘hear’, speech verbs, ‘body’ terms, speech etiquette, how to address each other, and much more). While the

topics of most chapters are well known and are part and parcel of contemporary linguistic discourse, it is the nature of the data collection underlying these chapters which is noteworthy. As Aikhenvald explains in a brief section entitled "Basis for This Study" (p. 29), the grammar is based on material collected during field sessions with over fifty speakers, transcribed and translated into a corpus of more than fifteen hundred pages of texts, notes, and conversations. A very generous amount of textual material with inter-linear glosses and extremely helpful commentaries on each line of text is included towards the end of the book. The emphasis on connected speech (traditional stories, life stories, stories about recent events, mourning songs, songs of lament, etc.) correlates with a deemphasis on more traditional elicitation methods which target a specific phoneme, word, phrase, or construction. Aikhenvald explains: "Elicitation was used very sparingly, and as much as possible, was through Manambu. It was employed to complete paradigms, and check hypotheses" (p. 29). This reliance on collecting data, where possible, at the level of discourse rather than words or sentences would seem to go hand in hand with the participant-observation orientation and a strong desire to represent, through the published grammar, aspects of the cultural life of the community in which she is working. The researcher has to enjoy the trust and confidence of the speaker for the latter to share life stories, culturally deep stories, etc., and establishing one's credentials as a trusted participant-observer facilitates such sharing of stories. Eliciting a paradigm of noun declension relies far less on having established oneself as a participant-observer. A preference for story-based data, as opposed to word-based data, reflects, too, a trend seen in much of the research that goes under the name of (electronic) "language documentation" and would allow at least some of the methods and tools of corpus linguistics to apply to the data. Aikhenvald is keenly attuned to usage, and her extensive corpus provides a strong empirical basis for commenting on it; in many places throughout the grammar she notes relative frequency of use of words and constructions with descriptors such as "often," "hardly ever," and "frequent." In distinguishing the properties of various prohibitive constructions (p. 322), for example, relative frequency of properties plays a critical role. Sometimes a percentage number reflecting frequency of occurrence is reported, as when Aikhenvald qualifies the categorization of Manambu as verb-final in main clauses by noting that about 15–20 percent of main clauses are, in fact, not verb final (p. 535).

Manambu offers an array of typologically noteworthy features. There are nine case forms associated with nouns (more than in any other member of the Ndu language family), with some of the case markers also appearing on verbs—the accusative-locative case, for example, signals completion of action or total achievement of a state when applied to verbs. Two genders, masculine and feminine, are found, assigned to nouns according to the sex, shape, and size of the referent. The verb 'give' forms its own, unique verb class, consisting of two stems (one for first or second person recipients, another stem for third person recipient). There is extensive cross-referencing on verbs, a fundamental aspect of the grammar closely tied to the discourse level (syntactic subjects are always cross-referenced, but other constituents may also be cross-referenced if they are more topical than the subject). One positive imperative construction type contrasts with three prohibitive constructions (formally and semantically distinguished). These and other typologically interesting features of the language are exemplified and analyzed in considerable detail.

In summary, Aikhenvald's grammar of Manambu is a sheer tour de force, not just on account of the thoroughness of the grammatical description and analysis, but equally on account of the depth of the engagement of the researcher with the speakers and the community as reflected throughout the book. The author speaks of "the intellectual excitement of working out the grammatical system of a previously undescribed language" (p. xv). The publication of the volume has made it possible for us all to share in this

excitement, albeit in a secondhand way. And still, there is the potential for more discovery and more excitement. As Aikhenvald herself notes, the book under review “is far from being the last word on Manambu” (p. xv).

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**Godoberinsko-russkij slovar'** [Godoberi-Russian Dictionary]. PATIMAT ABDULAEVNA SAIDOVA. Maxačkala: Rossijskaja Akademija Nauk Dagestanskij Naučnyj Centr Institut Jazyka, Literatury i Iskusstva im. G. Cadasy [Makhachkala: Russian Academy of Sciences, Daghestan Scientific Center, G. Tsadasa Institute of Language, Literature, and Arts], 2006. Pp. 456. N.p. (hardcover).

Reviewed by Johanna Nichols, *University of California, Berkeley*

This is the eleventh in a planned series of twenty-one dictionaries of the unwritten languages of Daghestan: the Andic and Tsezic languages and several of the Lezgian ones (branches of Nakh-Daghestanian), small languages without orthographies and publication. (Writing and publication in the five larger Daghestanian languages goes back to the 1920s.) Since 2001, publication of the series has been financially supported by the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig. The effort was spearheaded by U. A. Mejlanova with her Budukh (Lezgian) dictionary (Mejlanova 1984) and took its present form with Madžid Xalilov's 1995 dictionary of his native Bezhta (Tsezic). Xalilov is general editor of the series, and his influence is apparent in the ambitious scope of the works, the core wordlist, and the detail and quality of the lexical entries. Saidova, author of the work under review, is an accomplished lexicographer and field grammarian who has published on Godoberi and on Avar dialects since the 1960s (see, e.g., Saidova 1973). These three are among the big names in the productive and highly competent Daghestan Scientific Center, a branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (in Soviet times it was known as the Daghestan Filial of the Soviet Academy of Sciences), publisher of the series since 1995.

Godoberi belongs to the Andic subbranch of the Avar-Andic branch of the Daghestanian major branch of Nakh-Daghestanian, a very old language family with some thirty or forty daughters (depending on which mutually unintelligible dialects are counted as languages) in half-a-dozen deep branches. The Godoberi speakers number about four thousand (p. 15; Korjakov [2006:30] and Kibrik, Tatevosov, and Eulenberg [1996:x] say about twenty-five hundred). The exact number is difficult to determine as Godoberi is not a census category (they, like the other Andic and Tsezic peoples, are counted as Avars). The self-designation of the Godoberi is *ghibdidi* and their language is *ghibditli micci* (romanized with *gh* = voiced postvelar or uvular fricative, *tl* = voiceless lateral affricate, *c* = voiceless alveolar affricate). Traditionally, they inhabited two towns in the western Daghestanian highlands: Ghidu, the larger town (whose Avar name *Ghodoberi* has given us the Russian and international name of the language), and Shalu (Avar *Zibirxali*), with