KITLV

Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde

Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde

Bijdragen

tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde

164·2/3

2008

Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia and Oceania

M.C. Ricklefs, *Mystic synthesis in Java; A history of Islamization from the fourteenth to the early nineteenth centuries*. Norwalk, Connecticut: EastBridge, 2006, xvi + 263 pp. ISBN 1891936611. Price: USD 29.95 (paperback).

NICO J.G. KAPTEIN
Leiden University
n.j.g.kaptein@let.leidenuniv.nl

This excellent book is the first volume of a trilogy dealing with Islam in Java from the coming of Islam until the present.[1] This first volume discusses the early history of Islam in Java, from the fourteenth to the early nineteenth centuries. It links up with previous research by others, such as D.A. Rinkes, H.J. de Graaf, Peter Carey, and Professor Ricklefs himself, but differs from previous research in that the primary focus here is on Islam – or, to put it more accurately, on the process of Islamization, as this became manifest in the contest between Javanese identity, with its Hindu-Buddhist notions and its local and regional features, and Islamic identity.

This process is recorded chronologically in six chapters, starting with the earliest evidence of the presence of Islam in Java, the gravestone of Trawulan in East Java dated 1368/69, and ending in the early nineteenth century, when the advance of Dutch colonial rule resulted in dramatically new social and political realities. In a fascinating and extremely well-documented narrative, the author leads the reader through this long period of time, demonstrating that the Islamization of Java was not a simple linear process of ever-growing presence and visibility of Islam in Javanese life and culture, but rather a series of fluctuations with its ups (under Sultan Agung and Pakubuwana II) and its downs. In his interesting conclusion (pp. 221-35), entitled 'Achieving mystic synthesis', Ricklefs states that by the start of the nineteenth century the dominant mode of religious identity in Java was basically Islamic, both in terms of ideas and in terms of customs, but that at the same time elements of non-Islamic origin within this identity were acknowledged. Because in this fusion mysticism (in the philosophical sense, thus applicable both to Islamic and to Javanese culture) played a central role, the author speaks of 'mystic synthesis'.

In reading the book, I had my doubts about just one particular point. Throughout the work the author uses particular practices as markers of Islamic identity – for instance, the recitation of the creed of the Muslim faith (the *shahâda*), Islamic burial (instead of cremation), and (male) circumcision (pp. 15, 223). In some historical contexts, circumcision was definitely such a marker: after the VOC garrison was defeated at Kartasura in 1741, for

1 On 9 July 2007, the second volume, entitled *Polarizing Javanese society: Islamic and other visions (c. 1830 – 1930)*, was published by NUS Press in Singapore.

instance, those Europeans taken prisoner were forced to convert to Islam, and this entailed circumcision (pp. 130-32). In other cases, however, it may be more problematic to regard circumcision as a marker of Muslim identity, because the same custom is attested to for Java before the coming of Islam. This point, however, does not diminish the force of the central argument of the book, which I find entirely convincing.

Clearly structured and well written, *Mystic synthesis in Java* is a pleasure to read. Despite its use of a large number of Javanese terms and names, which may at first discourage readers unfamiliar with Javanese culture, the book is remarkably accessible. Moreover, the many well-chosen illustrations (and four maps) make it even more appealing, even if the way in which these illustrations have been reproduced unfortunately does not match the high standards of the narrative. The book includes a lot of new sources - in many cases, unpublished sources. It also demonstrates an impressive and unrivalled command of the relevant Javanese and Dutch archival sources, a command which is the fruit of an active scholarly life in Javanese history covering more than 30 years.

All in all, this book is definitely a must for specialists on Java and Indonesia. Moreover, in view of the synthesis theory that the author develops, it is certainly also of interest to a wider audience of scholars working on the comparative analysis of Muslim societies, and to students of comparative religion who are interested in the relationship between Islam and local culture.

Rebecca Sue Jenkins, *Language contact and composite structures in New Ireland*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International, 2005, 253 pp. [Publications in Language Use and Education 4.] ISBN 1556711565. Price: USD 24.95 (paperback).

MARIAN KLAMER
Leiden University
m.a.f.klamer@let.leidenuniv.nl

Papua New Guinea (PNG), with over 800 languages (Gordon 2005), is probably the country with the greatest linguistic diversity in the world. Most of the indigenous minority languages of PNG have fewer than 1,000 speakers (Kulick 1992) and are threatened with extinction. Several lingua francas have developed in this small nation, including Tok Pisin, a pidgin based on English, and Hiri Motu, a pidgin based on Motu, an indigenous Oceanic language spoken in southeastern New Guinea. In addition, the Australian administration after World War I reintroduced English. As a result, most of

the four million inhabitants of PNG speak three or more languages.

This book (a 2002 PhD dissertation at the University of South Carolina, Columbia) takes the multilingual situation of PNG as its departure point, and studies the effects it has had on the structure of two languages, Tok Pisin and Tigak. Tigak is an indigenous Western Oceanic language spoken on the northwestern tip of New Ireland and on smaller offshore islands east of the New Guinea mainland. The author has studied Tigak herself and a brief grammatical sketch of the language (25 pages) makes up Chapter 4 of the book.

One of the major claims in this study is that the vernacular languages of New Ireland and East New Britain formed an 'Austronesian' substrate that provided the morphosyntactic structure of Tok Pisin. In other words, although 75% or more of the words in Tok Pisin are from English (Laycock 1970; Ross 1992 among others), the grammatical structure that combines these words into constituents and sentences derives from the structure of the local 'Austronesian' languages. This is not a new claim; Wolfers (1971:413), for example, noted that Tok Pisin's grammatical structure varies 'under the influence of the particular traditional local languages'. Specific evidence for the central claim of this book is discussed in Chapter 5, 'Is Tok Pisin an Austronesian language?', which describes the history of Tok Pisin and compares its structure with Tigak, as one of the 'Austronesian' languages that influenced Tok Pisin. The author shows that the variety of Tok Pisin spoken on the islands of New Britain and New Ireland indeed employs structures that are parallel with those of Tigak. Examples include the order of constituents -- both languages have clauses with subject-verb-object order, and the corresponding head-initial constituent structure. Other parallel structures are the transitive markers on certain verbs, the ellipsis of third-person object pronouns, and the alternative noun-adjective order. In sum, the socio-economically dominant lingua franca Tok Pisin is structured on the morphosyntactic patterns of its substrate languages, the Oceanic languages spoken in the area.

The book discusses more than just this central issue. Chapter 1, 'The linguistic situation in Papua New Guinea', provides an interesting overview of the area, and of many of the major sources. Chapter 2, 'A review of literature on language contact phenomena', and Chapter 3, 'Theory, methodology and hypothesis', provide the background for the heart of the study, which is to analyse how the languages of PNG have influenced each other. Chapter 4, 'Tigak, a typical Austronesian language', gives a brief grammatical sketch of Tigak, so that it can be used as a representative of the Oceanic languages that have influenced Tok Pisin. The visible outcome of its influence on Tok Pisin are discussed in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, 'Convergence and renewed influence', the author points out that nowadays, the direction of influence is no longer Tigak>Tok Pisin, but rather the other way round: Tok Pisin is now effecting changes in Tigak and other local vernaculars. Some of the influences that Tok Pisin has had on the structure of Tigak are discussed. In general, the claim is that the shared features show that Tigak 'converged' with Tok Pisin, although the author also points out that because Tok Pisin and Tigak resemble each other so closely in both structure and semantics, the evidence for this is hard to find (p. 192). Indeed, the examples of 'convergence' mentioned in this chapter are not entirely convincing. For example, one feature discussed is the loss of the distinction between the indefinite quantity marking of mass nouns versus count nouns. 'Standard Tigak' distinguishes between count nouns ('fish') and mass nouns ('gasoline') by using different words to express indefinite quantities of such objects: *ta mamanam ien* 'some fish' versus *tang rin bensin* 'some gasoline'. In 'Modern Tigak', spoken by the young urban generation, this distinction is lost, and only one quantifier (*rin*) is now used for both count and mass nouns. Because Tok Pisin has only one indefinite quantifier too (pp. 192-3), the loss of the distinction in Tigak is claimed to be a sign that Tigak is 'converging' with Tok Pisin. Another example is the loss of the lexical distinction between words for cold: *lip-lipuk* 'cold (sea or bath water)', *mal-malakup* 'cold (drinking water)', and *votung* 'cold (person)'. Many young Tigaks now use *mal-malakup* for all the meanings of cold, 'converging to the lexical-conceptual pattern of Tok Pisin' (p. 193) – because in Tok Pisin there is only one word *kolpela* 'cold'. The question is, of course, how we can be so sure that facts like these point to convergence with Tok Pisin, since the loss of such lexical semantic distinctions is more generally a sign of language attrition. That is, young Tigak speakers are indeed losing features of their language, but it is not a priori clear that this is caused by structural pressure to converge with Tok Pisin.

Apart from Tok Pisin influencing local languages, there is also the renewed impact of English on Tok Pisin, as English is the language of higher education as well as the language of the expatriates living in the urban centres who hold access to the wage-paying jobs in business and government (p. 201). The author claims that under this influence of English, Tok Pisin is also 'converging' with English. Examples include the replacement of rural Tok Pisin numerals with English forms in urban Tok Pisin (*wanpela ten wan* 'eleven' becomes *eleven (pela)* 'eleven', p. 202), and the replacement of the original trialis pronoun form *tripela* by the use of general plural pronoun forms. English is also said to affect local languages like Tigak in similar ways, for example when the distinction between dualis and trialis in the pronominal system is replaced by a general plural. The data discussed in Chapter 6 indeed indicate that there are a number of similarities between English, Tok Pisin and Tigak. But the evidence is thin: to show convergence between three languages in different directions, one would like to see more detailed evidence than the superficial facts presented here – sixteen pages with fewer than 25 examples.

This book suffers from a few shortcomings that could have been avoided with a little more editorial assistance. First, although the title of the book is

'language contact and composite structures', and 'its primary purpose is to demonstrate the connection between Tok Pisin and the Austronesian substratum' (p. xvii), this main topic is only really introduced in Chapter 3, halfway through the book. Second, because many useful details on the linguistic situation and the grammatical properties of the local languages are scattered throughout the book, a subject index would have been useful. Third, anyone interested in details about the structure of Tigak will be disappointed by Chapter 4: it contains too few data, and the analysis is superficial. Close reading of this chapter will raise more questions than it answers. For example, why are three of the 25 pages of the sketch spent on 'subordinate clauses', while at the same time it is claimed that their structure does not differ from main clauses (p. 123)? Finally, the typical features of the Western Oceanic substrate languages of Tok Pisin are systematically (and dozens of times!) referred to as 'Austronesian' features (as in the quotes above). But many of the features found in the Oceanic languages discussed in this book (such as the existence of trialis pronouns, and the distinction between alienable and inalienable nouns), are not at all typical of 'Austronesian' languages in general (Klamer 2002; Himmelmann 2005). To refer to features of the Oceanic languages of PNG as having 'typically Austronesian' features is as misguided as referring to features of English as 'typically Indo-European'.

Despite its shortcomings, however, this book is a valuable introduction to the complex linguistic situation of the eastern part of New Guinea and its offshore islands, and it will be useful for anyone interested in this area. The book also contains many useful references to more general linguistic literature and theoretical models on language contact. The main topic, to describe in some detail how a local language like Tigak has influenced Tok Pisin, adds valuable information to our knowledge of the history of Tok Pisin, and it would be a good idea to expand the empirical data on Tigak in future publications. Finally, although the claim that today Tigak is converging with Tok Pisin, and Tok Pisin with English, will need to be more carefully investigated, this book gives arguments for why such hypotheses are plausible.

References

Gordon, Raymond G., Jr. (ed.)
2005 *Ethnologue; Languages of the world.* Fifteenth edition. Dallas: SIL International. [First edition 1951.] Online version: http://www.ethnologue.com.

Himmelmann, Nikolaus P.
2005 'The Austronesian languages of Asia and Madagascar; Typological characteristics', in: K. Alexander Adelaar and Nikolaus P. Himmelmann (eds), *The Austronesian languages of Asia and Madagascar,* pp. 110-81. London: RoutledgeCurzon.

Klamer, Marian
2002 'Typical features of Austronesian languages in central/eastern Indonesia', *Oceanic Linguistics* 41:363-83.

Kulick, Don
1992 *Language shift and cultural reproduction; Socialization, self, and syncretism in a Papua New Guinean village.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Laycock, Donald C.
1970 *Materials in New Guinea pidgin (coastal and lowlands).* Canberra: Australian National University.

Ross, Malcolm
1992 'The sources of Austronesian lexical items in Tok Pisin', in: Tom Dutton, Malcolm Ross and Darrell Tryon (eds), *The language game; Papers in memory of Donald C. Laycock,* pp. 361-84. Canberra: Department of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University. [Pacific Linguistics C 110.]

Wolfers, Edward
1971 'A report on Neo-Melanesian', in: Dell Hymes (ed.), *Pidginization and creolization of languages,* pp. 168-86. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Adrian Vickers, *A history of modern Indonesia.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, xiv + 291 pp. ISBN 9780521834933, price GBP 43.00 (hardback); 9780521542623, GBP 15.99 (paperback).

R.E. Elson, *The idea of Indonesia: a history.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, xxvi + 365 pp. ISBN 9780521876483. Price: GBP 55.00 (hardback).

GERRY VAN KLINKEN
KITLV Leiden
klinken@kitlv.nl

These two new histories of twentieth-century Indonesia, both published by Cambridge University Press, take surprisingly similar stances on many details of the story, but they use different methods and diverge radically in their overall assessments.

Vickers' history is aimed at junior undergraduates beginning their study of Indonesia. It is meant to be read, not used as a reference or a workbook. There is no jargon, and so little Indonesian that even a name like Darul Islam (the 1950s Islamic rebellion) is given only as House of Islam. Contemporary cartoons and even postage stamps make attractive illustrations. Evocative