

# **Review of Irian Jaya Source Materials by L. Smits & C.L. Voorhoeve, eds., No. 9 Series B - No. 3**

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The Irian Jaya Source Materials (IJSM) is a collection of early written and not easily accessible source materials relating to Irian Jaya, uniting scattered reports of merchants, explorers, missionaries, local administrators, linguists and anthropologists. The IJSM are published by the Department of Languages and Cultures of South-East Asia and Oceania of Leiden University, the Netherlands, within the framework of the Irian Jaya Studies Programme, which has been established to promote knowledge of the languages, cultures and history of this fairly unknown part of the world.

The instalments of the IJSM can be divided into three series. The General Series (IJSM No. 1, 8, 12, 13, 16) contains archival sources and treat perse topics relating to the Netherlands New Guineas. The Series A (IJSM No. 2, 3, 6, 7) primarily deals with pre-World War II pision reports ('Memories van Overgave') written by local administrators. Finally, the Series B accommodates special manuscripts, in particular the vast collection of wordlists compiled by the Dutch linguist J.C. Anceaux (IJSM No. 4, 5, 9, 10, 11) as well as texts from the oral traditions (IJSM No. 14, 15). The wordlists compiled by Anceaux, one of the founding fathers of linguistic research in Irian Jaya, provide data on both Austronesian and Non-Austronesian (Papuan) languages and were used by scholars such as Voorhoeve to propose several tentative classifications of the indigenous Papuan languages of Irian Jaya.

In general, the IJSM series reproduces original texts (including mistakes) and offers few reflections on the data. This ninth instalment combines comparative wordlists of 38 Papuan languages which are mainly spoken in the northeast of Irian Jaya, such as Sko, Daonda, Morwap, Nafri and Kwesten. The data are arranged by lexical item (e.g. MOSQUITO and TO SIT), and entries are given for each language and language variant for which data are available. Although the editors make a point of stating that Anceaux preferred this kind of arrangement, this statement misleadingly seems to suggest that the material is important from a comparative point of view. However, the value of the wordlists is not related to their usefulness for the classification of Papuan languages because lexical material by itself turns out to provide rather incomplete or ambiguous information about genetic relationships between languages. The wordlists offer no grammatical information and merely give an impressionistic phonetic description which heavily depends on the perception of the individual researcher. Although a substantial part of the wordlists was compiled by the linguist Anceaux himself, some data have been copied from standard wordlists taken directly from less reliable sources such as missionaries, local administrators and anthropologists.

Although the practical importance of these wordlists, and wordlists in general, should not be overestimated, it should be stressed that the incorporation of the Anceaux collection within the IJSM series is surely valuable and appropriate, both in terms of the documentation of the early beginnings of linguistic research in Irian Jaya and from the more general point of view of making data accessible.