



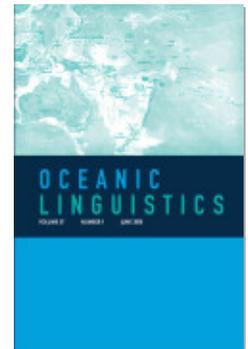
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*North Borneo sourcebook: Vocabularies and functors* by Jason  
William Lobel (review)

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Jason William Lobel. 2016. *North Borneo sourcebook: Vocabularies and functors*. PALI Language Texts: Southeast Asia. Social Science Research Institute. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. xi + 274 pp. ISBN 978-0-8248-5779-0. \$50.00, paper.

Jason Lobel's *North Borneo sourcebook: Vocabularies and functors* is a valuable collection of lexical data for 46 languages of northern Borneo. The volume is closely modeled after Reid (1971), and anyone familiar with this earlier work will see the obvious parallels. The data, 500 basic lexical items plus 94 "functors" for 46 languages of northern Borneo, were mostly gathered by Lobel himself. The exception is Bonggi, data for which were provided by Michael Boutin (1). As a data resource, the volume is a welcome addition to the growing field of Bornean linguistics. The book will be most useful for comparativists, and those who need a resource for quick word look-ups and comparison between multiple languages. Absent from this volume are most morphological data and any sentence data, although the volume is intended to serve as a lexical resource, so the absence of morphological and sentence data is to be expected. It is worth noting that Lobel did record roughly 100 sentences for each language, but did not include them in the publication, likely to save space (1).

The book is organized into two parts: (i) Language Information and (ii) The Wordlists. The wordlist section is further subdivided into the main 500-item wordlist and the 94 functors, which include numerals (1–10, 11, 20, 30, 40, 100, 200, 1,000), adverbs of time, parts of the day, interrogatives, negators and existentials, adverbial particles, demonstratives, case markers, and personal pronouns.

The introduction contains basic information on the geographical location of languages in the volume, and an overview of subgrouping. The languages in the volume are spoken almost entirely in the Malaysian state of Sabah. A single language, Brunei Dusun, is spoken in Brunei Darussalam. Two, Kolod and Limbang Bisaya, are spoken in Sarawak. Several more, mostly Tidung varieties, are found in northern Kalimantan, Indonesia. Lobel presents a mostly noncontroversial subgrouping of the languages of northern Borneo that includes the Northeast Sabah and Southwest Sabah groups, themselves part of the larger North Borneo subgroup (see Blust 2010; Lobel 2013b; Smith 2017). Most of the languages, 40 out of 46, are Southwest Sabahan. The linguistic position of the remaining six languages—Idaan, Sungai Seguliud, Begak, Bonggi, Molbog, and Bulungan—is not clear-cut. While Blust (2010) and Smith (2017) group Bonggi with Idaan in Northeast Sabah and Molbog with Greater Central Philippines, Lobel groups Bonggi and Molbog together in a Molbog-Bonggi subgroup "whose exact linguistic position has yet to be determined" (3). He is careful to point out where the various proposals differ and, at any rate, the goal of the volume is not to argue for or against any specific subgrouping proposal, and he is quick to move on. Bulungan remains somewhat of a linguistic mystery, but its inclusion in this volume will hopefully lead to a fresh subgrouping hypothesis. Later in the introduction, the reader finds useful maps demonstrating the geographical position of all languages in the volume. These maps show how far south "Sabahan" languages extend into modern day Kalimantan.

The first section, language information, closely resembles the section by the same name in Reid (1971). It contains basic data on the pronouns and functors in each language, where and when data were elicited, and where the language is spoken. Each language is given a single page, with data organized in tables. Unlike Reid (1971), Lobel does not include a list of phonemes for each language, but has included a much fuller data set of functors, which includes tables outlining short-form and long-form nominative pronouns, genitive pronouns, and oblique pronouns. He also includes a full set of demonstratives for each language, which may (depending on language specificities) include short- and long-form nominative, genitive, oblique, topicalized, and manner forms. A significant addition to the *North Borneo sourcebook* is case markers, listed for each language in both the Language Information and Wordlist sections. Lobel uses the term “case marker” in the manner of Blust (2015). The case markers are a welcome and valuable addition, as case marker data from Lobel (2013a) and earlier drafts of this sourcebook played important roles in Blust’s reconstructions.

The wordlist, at 500 entries for 46 languages, is quite robust. Languages are listed by subgroup in a vertical column, and data are organized in alphabetical order by English gloss in three vertical columns on each page. This organization allows for quick reference, and the wordlist itself is easily approachable. The phonetic accuracy of the entries themselves seems quite reliable, and I was unable to find any significant differences between data in the sourcebook and data from my own fieldnotes. Like any wordlist, however, there are a few gaps and oddities that need to be pointed out. There is an entry for ‘old’, but not for ‘young’. There is no entry for ‘year’, but there are entries for things like ‘day before yesterday’ and ‘day after tomorrow’. There are entries for ‘wild pig’ and ‘domesticated pig’, but not for ‘pig (in general)’ (Proto-Malayo-Polynesian [PMP] \*babuy), a distinction that does exist in Sabah. Some common plants are missing, including bamboo, sago, derris root (used as fish poison), and edible ferns. Some seemingly important items are not on the list, including loincloth, tattoo, sunhat, verbs for carry, blowpipe, and dart, among others. These omissions, however, are not a serious problem. The wordlist must be constrained for space, and it is otherwise full of valuable lexical data. The keen observer will be able to list omissions from any word-list, no matter its size and scope. The only area, however, where there seems to be an important lack of data is Bornean fauna.

In this and the following paragraphs, I list specific omissions in Bornean fauna that may have improved an already impressive collection of lexical data. Borneo’s wildlife has provided important resources for the island’s inhabitants, and carries sometimes significant cultural importance. Bornean faunal terminology has special linguistic value as well, because of the island’s position in Island Southeast Asia. Geographically, Borneo sits at the boundary between mainland Southeast Asian flora and fauna, and the flora and fauna of the Philippines. Historically, as the first Austronesian-speaking travelers moved through the Philippines and into Borneo, they found animals that Austronesians had either never seen before, or whose names were lost during the journey through the Philippines. The innovated terms for new animals can sometimes provide important subgrouping evidence after a newly coined term is inherited by the daughter languages (see Blust 1982 on the importance of the Wallace Line in linguistic subgrouping). The absence of

many of these terms from the wordlist is the only area where the reader may be left wanting more. Note, however, that although I list the largest omissions below, the sourcebook remains a valuable linguistic resource.

**Primates:** There are eight species of primate on Borneo, five monkeys, two apes, and the western tarsier. (In what follows, reconstructions are to Proto-Western Indonesian [PWIN], and are from Blust 2010 or Smith 2017.) The monkeys are the ‘pig-tailed macaque’ (\*bəduk/\*bəRuk), the ‘long-tailed macaque’ (\*kəraʔ), the ‘silver-leaf monkey’ (\*buRis), the ‘red-leaf monkey’ (\*kəlasɨ), and the ‘proboscis monkey’. The apes are the ‘orangutan’ (\*kəRiw) and the ‘gibbon’ (\*kəlabit). Finally, there is the ‘western tarsier’ (\*ukəd). Individual languages typically have a name for each distinct species, which have been important for subgrouping, and the distinctiveness of each species allows for confident reconstruction of PWIN words (except for the proboscis monkey, whose protoform evades reconstruction). Lobel includes the pig-tailed macaque (listed as coconut macaque), the long-tailed macaque (listed as gray-langur), the proboscis monkey, and the orangutan. Excluded are the silver-leaf monkey, the red-leaf monkey, the gibbon, and the western tarsier.

**Other large mammals:** By virtue of its position in the Mainland Southeast Asian faunal zone, Borneo has many large mammals that are absent in the Philippines. Many of these mammals have unique reconstructible names that can prove valuable in subgrouping. Some important mammals in Borneo are the ‘clouded leopard’ (\*kuliR), the ‘Malayan sun bear’ (\*biRuan), the ‘Sumatran rhinoceros’ (\*təməduR), the ‘barking deer’ (\*təlaʔus), and the ‘elephant’. These large mammals are important both culturally and as jungle resources to many groups in Borneo. Some large mammals were present in Proto-Austronesian (\*lukəNaw ‘clouded leopard’, \*Cumay ‘bear’), and the presence of PWIN replacement innovations \*kuliR and \*biRuan indicate that the words were lost as PMP speakers moved south through the Philippines. It would have been interesting to see how these words are reflected in Sabah.

**Smaller animals, birds, and reptiles:** Important birds in Borneo include the hornbill (various species), the ‘Great Argus Pheasant’, the ‘spider hunter’, the ‘hill mynah’ (\*tiun/\*kiun), and the ‘coucal’ (\*butbut). The hornbills and Argus Pheasant are culturally significant, and their tail feathers are prized as decorative items. Birds like the spider hunter, the hill mynah, and the coucal, on the other hand, are traditionally important omen birds and played a central role in traditional belief systems. The reading of bird omens is quickly falling out of practice in Borneo, and it would have been nice to have had more linguistic information on these birds.

Other smaller animals that were not included by Lobel, but are of linguistic and cultural interest are the ‘squirrel or tree shrew’ (\*tupay), the ‘flying lemur’ (\*kubun), the ‘river otter’ (\*dəŋən), the ‘binturong’ (\*ma-tuRun), the ‘pigmy squirrel’, the ‘porcupine’ (\*landak or PMP \*taRutun ‘porcupine fish’, used as porcupine in Sarawak and the Barito basin), and the ‘monitor lizard’ (\*bayawak/\*kabuk). The word for ‘turtle’ was elicited with mixed results; as Lobel himself points out the forms given “may consist of a mixture of terms for various types of turtles” (224). This includes the hard-shelled, soft-shelled, and sea turtles, all of which typically have distinct names. Several of these words have

proved important in subgrouping arguments, and would have been a welcome addition to the wordlist.

In summary, the *North Borneo sourcebook* promises to be an important addition to any Austronesianist's bookshelf, particularly those with an interest in comparative or historical work, and that of any scholar with an interest in Borneo. Even though there are minor omissions and a lack of faunal data, the value of the sourcebook as a lexical resource, with 500 words and 96 functors in 46 individual languages of northern Borneo, cannot be overstated. The sourcebook has already made its mark as an important reference piece in recent publications in Austronesian historical linguistics, including my own, and will continue to be an important reference for years to come.

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