Chapter 1

Introduction

While the unpublished material concerning the languages of the Admiralty Islands is considerable, the number of published grammars is very small, especially when one considers the number of languages spoken in Manus Province and their importance in the Oceanic family. Thirty years ago Healey (1976b:225) wrote of the Admiralties that “the most urgent task for the future is to preserve and publish the very considerable materials already collected”; this is still true.

This book was written in order to make more usable the valuable data compiled by Po Minis and the New Britain missionary P. Josef Meier for the ‘Manus/ Moanus’ language (now usually called ‘Titan’). Meier published seventy-five texts in this language in the journal *Anthropos* between 1906 and 1909 (with an addendum in 1912). The corpus is about 25,000 words. The stories contain brief information about the speakers and are glossed word-for-word in German (and occasionally in Latin when the topic of discussion was delicate). He provided no free translations. Meier also compiled a brief wordlist of about a hundred items and a short sketch of the language. After working initially only on the Meier materials, I was able to gain access to the unpublished Manus fieldnotes of Reo Fortune (1928) and Theodore Schwartz (1953–1954); they constitute a considerable set of resources in their own right. This raised the question of whether to try to amalgamate all the Titan materials into a single grammar, or to continue with a book based on a single cohesive (although imperfect) source.

I have decided on the latter, that is, to work from Meier’s corpus as the main source, but with notes to other sources where available. My aim in the preparation of this volume was not to write a full grammar of the language, but to make the older German materials for Titan more accessi-
I have written a sketch based on the texts but since I did not conduct fieldwork with native speakers and I have no firsthand knowledge of the language, this volume should not be seen in any way as a definitive study of Titan. Rather, I hope that it will serve as the basis for further study of the language, and as a source of comparative data. A synthesis of all extant materials needs to be done in consultation with native speakers of the language.

This book is divided into three sections. This, the first, is the sketch grammar, based entirely on the texts collected by Meier and published by him in Anthropos. Patricia Hamel’s (1994) Grammar and Lexicon of Loni: Papua New Guinea has been very helpful as a guide to interpreting ambiguous data. Part Two is a wordlist compiled from the texts, with an English-Titan reversal. Part Three contains the texts published by Meier. I have provided English glosses based on Meier’s German ones and free translations (something that Meier does not include). A map showing all place names referred to in the texts can be found on page xxii above.

1.1 Description of the Meier Corpus

In 1901 there appeared in the Mitteilungen des Seminars für orientalische Sprachen a summary, by Heinrich Schnee, of the languages of the Bismarck Archipelago (Beitrag zur Kenntniss der Sprachen im Bismarck-Archipel). It contains a classification of the languages and a discussion of each group, along with a small amount of data. Schnee (1901:272–277) gives the pronouns in a variety he calls “Manus”, along with numerals, and a list of basic vocabulary. He also gives the numbers and a few words from “Die Sprache der Usiai” The language of the Usiai (people) which he places on Papitalai Island. His data is based on that of two speakers, Po Minis and Po Kicong.

Josef Meier read the description of Titan and wrote to Anthropos pointing out a number of mistakes and dialect mixings in the data. The two men had worked with the same person, Po Minis, who had learned to read and write between talking to Dr. Schnee and working with Meier. Po Minis was a student at the Catholic Mission on New Britain (Rakunei, Neupommern (New Britain)) where Meier was stationed. Po Minis came from Sivisia, the north-easternmost island off the coast of Lou, and one of the group known as the Fedarb Islands. When Po Minis returned to the Admiralties, he collected and translated into his own dialect a number of stories for Meier,
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who included them in his publication of “Admiralty Islanders’ Myths and Stories” (Mythen und Sagen der Admiralitäts-Insuläner) in Anthropos.

The publications in Anthropos are under Meier’s name alone; however, in the introduction to the first set of stories (Meier 1907:647), Meier states that the collection of the materials is due almost entirely to Po Minis, who wrote down the stories from friends in the Admiralties, hence my dual credit in the subtitle of this work.³

When Po Minis eventually returned to own land, after he had learned to read and write, I gave him the task of writing down all the other stories that he knew about and sending them to me. He also did this. So I credit Po Minis almost alone for the collected material that I have brought to publication. What he heard from his earliest childhood on and kept in memory, and what he later investigated through questions, all of that he faithfully communicated to me. Certainly the treasurehouse of tradition is not yet exhausted.

Although the story-tellers were born in different villages, Meier states that he and Po Minis standardized the language to that of Po Minis’ dialect. “What people told to Po Minis (who, he maintains, speaks nine varieties himself) in different dialects, I have reproduced in his [Po Minis’] mother tongue, because it was unrealistic for me to acquire all the different dialects in so short a time.”⁴ This naturally brings an unknown amount of unreliability to the data, since Meier’s own linguistic abilities in the language are not known and it is unclear how much editing and standardization he undertook.⁵ Meier must have had a fairly good grasp of the language since he was apparently able to talk to Po Minis in Titan.

The corpus is 18,500 words of Titan, interlinearized in literal German. Each text is given a title and they are grouped into nine sections according to subject matter. Each text also includes the author, the author’s home region, and which region the story comes from. The texts range in length from a few lines to several pages. There is also some light annotation, particularly involving ethnographic explanations. An example page is given in Figure 1.1.
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Figure 1.1: Sample Text: Meier (1906:652)

1.2 The Language Name

Meier calls the language ‘Moanus’. This label probably refers to the tripartite division between Admiralty peoples that Parkinson (1999:157), Fortune (1935), Thilenius (1903), and others use; that is, it is not specifically a language name but rather an ethnographic term for a group of people who speak several different languages. Here, Manus or Moanus refers to the people who live around the coast of Manus Island (and adjacent islands) and who built their houses on stilts jutting into the sea, Usiai to the people who live inland, and Matankor to those who live on the coast.6 In early linguistic and ethnographic studies undertaken in the Admiralty Islands, Manus/Moanus is thus a social group rather than a language name.
The name ‘Manus’ is often given as an alternative name for ‘Titan’ (compare, for example, the entries in the Ethnologue (Gordon et al. 2005) which lists Manus, Moanus, Tito, and M’Bunai as alternative names). This is the language spoken on a number of islands off the south-eastern coast of Manus Island, and on Rambutyo. Comparison of Meier’s data with other records of Titan, such as Blust (1975) and Ross (nd), show that Meier’s language is indeed Titan, although a dialect distinct from that recorded by Ross (nd) on Rambutyo.

1.3 Classification and Dialects

Titan is classified by Ross (1988:316–17) as a member of the East Manus network of the Admiralty subgroup of Oceanic. Based on the lexicostatistical survey of Schooling and Schooling (1988:220) and supported by the findings in Ross (1988) based on the comparative method, Titan’s closest relations are Nali, Koro, Lele, and Papitalai. Gordon et al. (2005) recognises two (unnamed) dialects within Titan. The number of speakers of the various dialects of Titan is difficult to determine, but is probably between 3,500 and 4,500, including those living outside Manus Province. The ISO-639 code for the language is ttv.

Apart from some lexical and minor grammatical differences, the most obvious dialect split is between those which preserve distinct r and l phonemes (r-dialects) versus those which have merged r and l as l (l-dialects). Meier’s data reflects a dialect where the merger has not taken place. For example, the word for ‘sun’ in Meier’s stories is morai, however it was recorded by Ross as molai. One finds also rai (Ross lai) ‘blood’ and ramat (Ross lamat) ‘person’. Hauser (p.c., 2000) notes that r-dialect speakers make up approximately fifty per cent of Titan speakers, and are concentrated in two areas: in Pere village and around Mbunai. Blust (p.c.) notes that these are in fact the only r-dialect villages.

1.4 Sources for Titan/‘Moanus’

The following list is compiled from Healey (1976a,b) and Carrington (1996) and represents the complete list of work on Titan that I have been able to uncover.
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1.4.1 Published Sources

1.4.1.1 Schnee (1901)

Schnee published a survey of the languages of the Bismarck Archipelago and in this he includes a few sentences of the ‘Manus’ language and a basic wordlist. According to Meier (1906:216), Schnee included words from l-dialects as well as r-dialects. Compared to Meier’s data, Schnee’s preliminary survey seems rather poor. He lists future forms for present, has incorrect word boundaries, and his transcription is somewhat unreliable.

1.4.1.2 Thilenius (1903)

Thilenius’ *Ethnographische Ergebnisse aus Melanesien* [Ethnographic Expedition to Melanesia] (1903:244/346ff) contains a comparative wordlist of varieties he names Tawi, Agomes, Kaniet, Ninigo and Popolo. Blust (1996) includes an evaluation of the reliability of the Kaniet data. The Tawi data is most probably from an l-dialect of Titan; compare for example élua ‘two’ and lágian ‘day’ with Meier’s aruo and ray. Some forms are marked as coming from Usiai varieties. The list includes pronouns, numbers, fauna, adjectives and body parts. There are also lexical differences between the Tawi list and Meier’s Titan data.

1.4.1.3 Meier (1906–1909, 1912)

Data for this study are derived from Meier’s collection of texts. There are seventy-five texts ranging in length from a few lines to several thousand words. The stories in sections VIII and IX were translated by Ulli Beier and published in *Oral History*; however, I was only able to see these after my own translations had been completed. In Carrington (1996) a manuscript grammar by Meier is listed. I have been unable to obtain a copy and have no further information about whether it is still in existence. Internal evidence in Reo Fortune’s materials indicates that Fortune may have had access to a copy, but it is not among Fortune or Mead’s manuscript collections. Further information on the provenance of the Meier corpus was provided above.

1.4.1.4 Parkinson (1999)

There are some song texts in Parkinson’s *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee* [Thirty Years in the South Seas], provided by Po Sing, who is said to be
chief of Papitalai, and Hi Pak from Kerice, who speaks ‘Fedarb’. These texts are included here, beginning on page 443. Parkinson’s orthography is similar, but not always identical, to Meier’s; I have standardized it the same way. The variation in vowel quality that Parkinson’s brief texts show may indicate that Titan probably has more vowel harmony than is evident from Meier’s transcriptions.

Parkinson also published translations of the first of Meier’s stories almost without acknowledgment, but they clearly come from the same collection. There are, however, a few stories which do not appear to be in Meier’s published collection, implying that Meier recorded additional texts which were not published.

Parkinson (1999:170a) gives an annotated list of place names, apparently from an article by Schnee (Über Ortsnamen im Bismarck-Archipel [On place names in the Bismarck Archipelago]), for which I have not been able to obtain further reference details. These are referenced as ‘Parkinson’ in the lexicon and place name list, since Parkinson corrects Schnee’s orthography and provides etymologies.

1.4.1.5 Mead (1942)

Mead (1942) is an ethnography of traditional educational practices in Pere village; it is not a linguistic work. There is, however, a short vocabulary (Mead 1942:372) and a ‘sample legend’ (360ff), about Ndrame (a bird) and Kasomu. Mead also has language fieldnotes; see Section 1.4.2.

1.4.1.6 Fortune (1935)

Fortune’s Manus Religion is based in part on Meier’s own texts and in part on fieldwork in Pere village lasting about six months. His focus is not linguistic but he discusses the translations of and concepts entailed in items of spiritual vocabulary, such as cinal ‘ghost’ and molua ‘soul’, which was helpful in my translation of Meier’s texts.

Fortune makes reference to a “forthcoming” grammar and dictionary of the language, which was never published. The texts and notes are in the Fortune collection in the Turnbull Library in Wellington, New Zealand. These materials are further discussed in Section 1.4.2 below.
1.4.1.7 Goebel (1956)

Goebel translated the New Testament into ‘Manus’ before the Second World War; it was published in 1956. Schooling and Schooling (1980:76–78) discuss this work in some detail. It is in Lele but it appears that the translation was based on material from a single speaker who was not from the main Lele area. It is clearly a different variety from the one Meier recorded, and has not been used in this work.

1.4.1.8 Smythe and Z’Graggen (1975)

This is a collection of comparative wordlists from the Admiralty Islands, including one for a variety called Mbunai, which is Titan (or very similar to it), to judge by the pronouns. For example, the forms *awa* ‘2pl’, *alu* ‘3dl’, and *ala* ‘3pl’ (amongst others) are all identical to forms in the Meier corpus and different from other Admiralty Islands languages. It is an r-dialect list, to judge from *ramat* ‘person’. It would also appear to confirm some points of doubt in the Meier data, such as whether *manuai* means ‘bird (generic)’ or refers to a specific type of bird (it is listed in Smythe and Z’Graggen 1975:148 as the generic word). The wordlist also allows us to confirm some inferences about transcription (although Blust 1975 is more consistent and more complete in this respect). For example, *mwatemwat* for snake implies that we are right in assuming that *moat* is phonemically *m″at* (also in Blust 1975:9).

Vowel length is marked in monosyllables in the wordlist, e.g., *kwį:t* ‘octopus’. Turtle is *garahat*, confirming that Meier omitted the [h] (see also *apih* ‘sago’. However, the wordlist is not phonemically notated, so some of these h’s might be spurious.

1.4.1.9 Other published works

There have been studies of the bilabial trills in Titan by Maddieson (1989) and Ladefoged et al. (1977). These are both acoustic studies and contain little vocabulary information. Their results are borne out by these data (as much as one can say with no recordings). Kraft (1921) is a translation of the gospel of Mark into a ‘Manus’ language (Kele according to Healey 1976b). Ray (1891:5–7) contains a very short l-dialect Titan vocabulary from “Green Island, Admiralty Islands”.

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1.4.2 Unpublished Materials

There is a considerable amount of data on various Titan dialects. Wordlists
have been collected by Ross from Titan as spoken on Rambutyo Island,
and Blust (1975), from Timoenai, off the coast of Tawi (south of Manus
Island); Ross (nd) includes a brief sketch grammar; it differs in several
points from Meier’s data. There are at least six unpublished dictionaries
of various dialects of Titan: Fortune (1928), Lusk (nd), Klaarwater (nd),
Mead (nd), and Schwartz (ndb).

The Fortune papers contain several hundred typescript pages of textual
data, ethnographic notes, and a dictionary draft of over 1500 items. The
language is Titan and seems to be from the same (or very similar) dialect
to that of the Meier corpus. Comments in the Fortune manuscript imply
that it itself includes material excerpted from secondary materials Fortune
had access to, although no references are given. Several texts from Meier
(1906) have been translated in the Fortune papers. Fortune’s transcription
is not very consistent in places, with both $U$ and $u$ marking intervocalic /u/
or /w/, and both $N$ and $ng$ for the velar nasal /ŋ/. This may also imply that he
was compiling material from more than one source without standardizing
orthographies. Either Fortune or Mead compiled a list of “useful phrases
from the Manus Grammar”. The list resembles a phrasebook for travellers.
Unfortunately, there are numerous obvious typographic errors in both the
Titan and English sections of the manuscript, which makes it of limited use
as a way of checking uncertainties in Meier’s transcript.

A considerable collection of Manus material can also be found in
Mead’s personal papers (Library of Congress, MS009117) including texts
and dictionary materials. Most of this linguistic material comprises copies
of Fortune’s fieldnotes and Theodore Schwartz’s transcripts of field tapes.
The Schwartz materials comprise a collection of narrative texts, conver-
sations, and courtroom speeches. They are transcribed in a regular Titan
orthography and literally glossed in Tok Pisin.

Fortune typed and proofed a number of the Meier Anthropos texts. The
corrections are varied and include changes to typographical errors intro-
duced in the copying of the original texts, errors corrected in the Meier
publication, and some pronunciation notes (a sample is given in page 385).
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1.5 Methods

A short note on the methods used in compiling the sketch is in order, since I did not do fieldwork with Titan speakers. I used three different techniques in compiling the grammar. I treated the corpus as I would one of Latin, or any other for which native speakers were not available for linguistic work. That is, I looked for generalizations which hold for the texts, as well as for exceptions to those generalizations. This is quite straightforward for parts of the grammar such as constituent order, pronouns, or negation. It is less easy to compile paradigms or make generalizations about the functions of derivational morphemes because of the risk of missing or unrepresentative data.

I then worked through Hamel’s (1994) Loniu grammar, Wozna and Wilson (2005), and Ross’s (2002) sketch of Kele; that is, the other published synchronic material for Admiralities languages. I used these works as additional prompts for investigation of the Meier corpus, and for hints as to likely solutions for underdetermined distributions. I have made a note where an analysis for Titan is consistent with behavior noted for another Admiralities language but cannot be confirmed from the available data. In a number of cases, it was possible to show that Titan patterned differently from one or more languages in the subgroup (for example, Kele marks some animate objects with a preposition which does not appear when the object is inanimate; this does not occur in the Titan corpus, although the cognate preposition does show some animacy effects elsewhere).