

König, Christa, Bernd Heine, Karsten Legère and Ingo Heine. 2020. *The Akie Language of Tanzania. Texts and Dictionary. East African Languages and Dialects*, vol. 29. Cologne: Köppe. 332 pages, 88 photos, 1 drawing. € 69,80. ISBN 978-3-89645-714-1

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Review

<1> With *The Akie Language of Tanzania* by König et al., a wide-ranging study has been published that contributes to the necessary and helpful description of the Akie language. A Volkswagen Foundation research project funded by DoBeS (Documentation of Endangered Languages) made it possible to document and archive the Akie language in Tanzania within an adequate and necessary time frame.

The book is a collection of texts documented between 2013 and 2018, and represents only a fraction of the results of the large documentation project. Many of these, texts, but also other components, audio files and video files are stored electronically in the DoBeS Online Archive at the MPI Nijmegen.

<2> The book consists of three parts: a short introduction to phonology and grammar, a text part and a dictionary (Akie – English, English – Akie), which the authors call a "list". The first part, the Introduction, which the authors label "Notes on Grammar" contains the most basic phonological and grammatical explanations on 10 pages.

The second part, the text collection, comprises 16 texts that were recorded during the research period. These texts focus on the cultural and socio-economic issues that are central to the Akie. The first two texts refer to the Akie's conceptualisation of themselves and their origins, the following two texts to honey collection, a central economic basis of the modern Akie. Text 4 and text 5 address hunting, which, like honey-gathering, is performed exclusively by men and which plays a role in many basic rituals, social activities and oral traditions. The following sixth text on ritual activities describes the first of six rites-de-passage/rituals that are central to Akie culture. Two narratives by Akie women, six short folk tales and a blessing ritual follow this text.

The third part, the dictionary, comprises 125 pages with an Akie-English word list and 62 pages of an English-Akie word list, accompanied by 69 photos, each of which illustrates a word from the list. This actually gives the dictionary a very innovative and informative touch, as it makes it easier to imagine the terms that come from a society that is not very well described.

<3> However, an important role in the use of the text collection is played by the grammar "The Akie Language of Tanzania: A Sketch of Discourse Grammar" (König et al. 2015). Basically, the two books cannot be considered separately, as the book under discussion is a collection of texts that cannot do without the explanatory grammar from König et al. (2015). It is difficult or impossible to understand the complex grammatical structures in the 10-page abridged version of the present book. Therefore, the question arises whether it might have made sense to omit the introduction completely, since the grammatical study from 2015 must be consulted anyway as a necessary source in order to understanding the collection of texts. The authors' approach to make the two books compatible was good: Abbreviations and the form of the interlinear translations are identical.

<4> It is a bit of a pity that the really very good and extensive collection of texts with precise interlinearization is only available as a printed version. An enclosed CD with the collection in digital format would be of great advantage for future research in Nilotic studies.

Thus, the publication of a grammar, a text collection and a dictionary comes together to form a beautiful triad, which is important on the one hand for the documentation of an endangered language, but on the other hand also fills the relatively incomplete description of the southern Nilotic languages.

Reference

König, Christa, Bernd Heine and Karsten Legère 2015

The Akie Language of Tanzania: A Sketch of Discourse Grammar. Asian and African Lexicon Series, No 58. Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa