benefit from an awareness of the kind and extent of typological diversity to be reckoned with. Books like Guido Seiler's *Präpositionale Dativmarkierung im Oberdeutschen*, however rare, bode well, on both sides.

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Nicole Kruspe, *A Grammar of Semelai*. (Cambridge Grammatical Descriptions, 3.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 520 pages, ISBN 0-521-81497-9, EUR 106.70.

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The linguistic typologist, as archetypal end-user of descriptive grammars, has two reasons to rejoice with the publication of Kruspe's grammar of Semelai, an Aslian (Mon-Khmer, Austroasiatic) language of peninsular Malaysia. First, the book adds to the library's A-list of grammars in quality and comprehensiveness. Second, it makes a significant addition to the language sample, being the first full reference grammar of an Aslian language (followed now by Burenhult 2005), and one of surprisingly few comprehensive grammars of an Austroasiatic language. It is certainly more representative of Austroasiatic languages than its more famous and better described cousins (Khmer and Vietnamese), having been spared the ravages of national language status.

As primarily a reference work, a grammar must be designed for the generic linguist, anyone from any area of the discipline, who comes looking for answers to unforeseen questions, motivated by very different sets of presuppositions (cf. Ameka et al. 2006). The best grammars, therefore, are readily accessible by linguists regardless of intellectual orientation or specialization. In addition, a grammar must be as comprehensive as possible within the confines of publishability. Kruspe's grammar of Semelai exemplifies this multiple ideal. It is comprehensive, well organized, and well conceived.

This is the third in the Cambridge Grammatical Descriptions series.[1] The publisher's blurb tells that the series contains "comprehensive grammars of previously undescribed languages that are of outstanding theoretical interest",

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1. It is remarkable that a major press agreed to publish this book at all, and the other books in its series, given the frequent pariah treatment of new grammatical descriptions. (And it is therefore not surprising – though regrettable – that CUP is not commissioning further titles for the series.) Major presses do regularly publish grammars, but mostly only those of major, national languages. Ironically, these grammars of well-known languages seldom if ever approach the quality and comprehensiveness of a grammar like Kruspe's.

where each presents "a full explanatory account, providing a permanent record and a research resource that will continue to be studied long after the language itself has passed into extinction". In accordance with this *raison d'être*, Kruspe's book describes the facts of a minority language in meticulous detail, and with excellent coverage of the range of topics a generic end-user may expect in a reference grammar. The chapters are: 1. Semelai; 2. Phonology and phonotactics; 3. Morphology; 4. Word classes; 5. The verb; 6. Pronouns: personal, ignorative, and demonstrative; 7. The noun phrase; 8. Prepositions and the prepositional phrase; 9. Grammatical relations, constituent order and coding strategies; 10. Basic clauses; 11. Complex clauses; 12. Expressives; 13. The quotative marker, interjections and discourse clitics; 14. Texts. There is a good balance to the range of topics. While many grammarians for one reason or another give greater attention to some topics at the cost of others (though no jury should convict them), Kruspe is beyond reproach, displaying exemplary well-roundedness. Equally careful attention is given to the range of topics which make a reference grammar genuinely comprehensive.

Those interested in phonology and morphophonemics will find Chapters 2 and 3 thorough and richly detailed. Even those readers looking to skip forward to the morphosyntax are given good reason to pay attention to prosody and syllable structure – as Kruspe explains (p. 64), they are necessary for a proper understanding of the language's intriguing morphological processes. These processes are covered in Chapter 3, with an elaborate inventory of affixation types: prefixation, suffixation, circumfixation, and infixation of various kinds, involving both the affixing of pre-specified morphological material and the rule-governed derivation of new forms via complex rules by which phonological material is copied from a root and affixed in various ways. These processes show an amazing array of semantic functions. Derivational morphology is further treated in discussion of the verb in Chapter 5, where we enter into the morphosyntactic manipulation of valency, transitivity (in the general sense, i.e., involving distinctions in aspect and degree of agentivity), and other features of argument structure. Of typological note is an unusual variety of split-S marking which, unexpectedly, employs the MORE A-like form when a lone actor is being compelled by someone else rather than instigating the action themselves (pp. 6, 160). Aspects of the noun phrase are covered in detail in Chapters 6 to 8, followed by an insightful and absorbingly detailed description of the general phenomena of clausal and sentential syntax: systems of encoding grammatical relations, word order, and coding strategies (Chapter 9); basic clauses (Chapter 10); and complex clauses (Chapter 11). The balance of breadth and depth to this grammar reveals the mastery which Kruspe has brought to the job of writing it.

The inclusion of texts and a basic vocabulary list, standard features of this CUP series, follows a strengthening observance of the Boasian ideal of

grammar-lexicon-text, and accords with the standard being upheld here. Most of the illustrative examples are from naturally occurring spoken data (narratives). Kruspe's lengthy field-based participant observation has given her sensitive intuitions about the language, resulting in an authoritative description. My only complaint is one that may be made of just about every grammatical description: none of the texts are from natural/spontaneous conversation, yet conversation is the overwhelmingly dominant context for deployment of grammatical structure in any living language.

This is the first high-standard comprehensive reference grammar of an Aslian language, and it should serve well to bring the Aslian family of languages to wider attention among typologists. The introductory chapter has a useful overview of Aslian peoples and languages, their history and classification (see also Burenhult 2005). The book is an important addition to the descriptive literature on Mon-Khmer languages, whose best known members have received most of the attention in grammatical description, despite being typologically atypical. The genius of your average Mon-Khmer language of mainland Southeast Asia is its rich derivational morphology (cf., e.g., Kmhmu; Svantesson 1983, Premsrirat 1989). Morphologists will find much to enjoy in both the Semelai facts and Kruspe's masterful description of them (Chapter 3).

Another important feature of the language for linguistic typology is the often neglected phenomenon of expressives (Diffloth 1972, 1976, otherwise known as ideophones; Voeltz & Kilian-Hatz 2001), a form class which is remarkably elaborated in Aslian languages, as well as Mon-Khmer languages more generally and other languages of mainland Southeast Asia. The category is widespread in languages of the area, but descriptively almost entirely neglected (Enfield 2005: 189).[2] This word class poses significant descriptive challenges and raises a host of important theoretical issues. Kruspe devotes an entire chapter to the problem (Chapter 12), with a generous supply of data and useful references to the literature.

Most satisfying of all is Kruspe's sustained, sensitive attention to semantics and to the semantic motivations for distinctions which Semelai grammar furnishes. Due to standard constraints, a grammarian typically has little space or time for semantics. If coherent discussion of functional motivations for formal distinctions are provided at all in a grammar, this represents a high standard of work. Kruspe achieves this. Chapter 10, for example, shows an exemplary balance between descriptive attention to meaning and form. The grammar is loaded with insightful discussion of guiding motivations and possible rationales for the formal behavior of Semelai grammar. Different analyses are con-

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2. An exception is Thompson's superb description of Vietnamese, with over 20 pages devoted to ideophones and similar phenomena under the headings "emphatics" and "dramatics" (Thompson 1987: 154–176). See also Burenhult (2005: Chapter 6).

sidered, and choices of solution are well justified. For the student, then, this book is not only a comprehensive treatment of a captivating language. It is a fine guide to the art of grammar-writing.[3]

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3. Since publication of Kruspe's grammar, an erratum was posted on the book's CUP web site:

> To follow the final paragraph of Section 1.3.2, p. 21

> Hoe Ban Seng's 1964 undergraduate field report, published in 2001, devoted a chapter to a preliminary presentation of the Semelai language (Hoe 2001: 95–124) recording an extensive vocabulary of approximately 900 items, and samples of the language with Malay and English glosses. The Malay-based orthography had limitations, failing for example to distinguish the full inventory of vowels, and voiceless aspirated stops, although managing to capture the distinction between the final voiceless velar and glottal stops. Gianno's dissertation, published as Gianno (1990) advanced upon Hoe in accuracy by presenting linguistic data in a phonemic orthography based on work by Gérard Diffloth. It includes narrative transcriptions and appendices devoted to lists of Semelai plant names and related terminology, all based on that phonemicisation.

> The Gianno/Diffloth phonemicisation, to which I only gained access after completing my own initial phonological analysis, is broadly similar to the one advanced here, in recognising ten oral vowels, each with a phonemically nasal counterpart, and three series of stops: voiced, voiceless and voiceless aspirated. It also differs from it in a number of significant points, including an absence of a series of pre-glottalised sonorants and voiceless nasals, the inclusion of a voiced velar fricative, and the treatment of nasality on vowels.