

micas – politización y sindicalización paralizante – más bien que de debilidades pedagógicas. De ser así más y mejores insumos en la forma de maestros bien capacitados y motivados, nuevas aulas y mejores materiales pedagógicos no transformarán la escuela. Más recursos son imprescindibles pero insuficientes para cambiar el rumbo de la escuela secuestrada por fuerzas político-partidistas y sindicales que han desvirtuado su original función primaria que era la de educar. Según el antropólogo, hoy la función primordial y real de la escuela es servir de fuente de empleos para los partidos políticos y de rehén del sindicato de maestros para lograr sus conquistas gremiales. Invertir más dinero en escuelas del mismo género beneficia a los políticos y a los sindicalistas, no a los niños.

El análisis es espeluznante pero el libro termina con optimismo. No todo es sombrío en el sector público de la educación, pues surgieron, casi por accidente histórico, unas 85 instituciones que funcionan como “colegios” pero que son gratuitos. El estado financia los gastos corrientes pero delega contractualmente la dirección escolar en una congregación religiosa. Son escuelas públicas bajo dirección particular. En estas escuelas ni la burocracia estatal ni el sindicato tienen control sobre los nombramientos del personal ni el cumplimiento del horario y calendario escolar, por lo que logran su función primaria de educar con razonable éxito. A pesar de intentos de interferencia de parte de políticos y sindicalistas, estas escuelas “semioficiales” se han mantenido y prosperado gracias al apoyo decidido de la Iglesia Católica y de las familias beneficiarias. Entre estas hay más de una docena que pertenece a “Fe y Alegría”, modelo jesuita que ha resultado exitoso en varios países de la América hispana.

En términos antropológicos Murray analiza esto como una “mutación evolutiva”, que surgió como espontáneo arreglo híbrido, pero que puede constituir la clave evolutiva para el cambio de rumbo que necesitamos en la educación dominicana. Reconociendo la imposibilidad de dismantelar de golpe y porrazo el existente sistema “infectado”, Murray recomienda fomentar “cada vez mayor cantidad” de “escuelas protegidas”, financiadas con fondos públicos pero puestas “bajo el control de educadores privados”, y no solo de congregaciones católicas. En adición a fomentar con entusiasmo el modelo del colegio de barrio y las escuelas semioficiales que ya han demostrado su eficacia, Murray propone cuatro nuevas formas híbridas de escuela-colegio que podrían innovarse, aprovechando la experiencia de las escuelas “semioficiales” y los colegios de barrio dominicanos, así como paradigmas de otros países. Eventualmente las nuevas instituciones estatales híbridas “inoculadas” contra la infección sistémica podrían sobrepasar a las escuelas estatales “infectadas”, conduciendo a una regeneración de la educación básica dominicana en su conjunto.

La literatura sobre la educación dominicana está llena de diagnósticos y propuestas parciales, pero el trabajo de Murray se destaca por su enfoque sistémico tanto de la problemática como de una posible vía de solución gradual. Esta propuesta nos parece lógica y viable, sin embargo debemos confesar nuestro desconcierto, pues a seis meses de haber sido publicada y después de haber

sido debatida con el autor así como con la participación de varios de los principales responsables del ministerio de educación, la propuesta de Murray aunque muy apreciada por los científicos sociales y educadores de vocación, es ignorada o relegada al olvido por quienes tienen el poder de hacer los cambios necesarios – los políticos, burócratas y líderes sindicalistas del magisterio.

Juan Tomas Tavares

**Nekes, Hermann, and Ernest A. Worms:** *Australian Languages*. Ed. by William B. McGregor. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2006. 415 pp., CD-ROM. ISBN 978-3-11-017597-4. (Trends in Linguistics, Documentation, 24) Price: € 198.00

This valuable resource book on Australian Aboriginal languages first appeared in 1953 as the tenth volume in the series “Micro-Bibliotheca Anthropos,” a microfilm series, published by the Anthropos Institute. Fifty-three years later, after numerous peripeties, it has finally become accessible in an easily readable form, accompanied by an invaluable CD-ROM.

“Australian Languages” begins with William McGregor’s introduction, which describes how Fathers Hermann Nekes (1875–1948) and Ernest Worms (1891–1963) had completed the manuscript of their book by 1945, spent seven years of frustration seeking a publisher in Australia, and how the surviving author, Father Worms, finally opted for the microfilm publication of the opus in Switzerland, by the Anthropos Institute.

The introductory section of the book also contains biographies of Nekes and Worms, in which we learn that Nekes was a missionary and linguist, while Worms was an energetic anthropologist and linguist, in addition to his missionary vocation.

Father Nekes arrived in Australia in late 1935, with the intention of carrying out linguistic research at the Pallottine Mission at Beagle Bay in collaboration with his former student Father Ernest Worms. Worms was appointed to the Pallottine Mission in The Kimberley in 1930, spending the next eight years as parish priest for Broome. It was there that he began his linguistic research in 1931, beginning with Yawuru. With the arrival of Nekes in 1935, Worms became more involved in linguistic research, although his major interest always remained anthropological. Nekes’s ill-health forced a premature return to the Pallottine College in Melbourne, where the bulk of the analysis was carried out between 1938 and 1948.

Nekes and Worms were primarily interested in the lexicons and grammars of the languages they studied, although they did collect a corpus of textual material, especially mythological narratives and songs. However, no detailed grammar of any Australian language appears in “Australian Languages,” as the authors’ interests were primarily comparative, historical, and typological.

The major focus of “Australian Languages” is on the non-Pama-Nyungan Nyulnyulan languages of Dampier Land and adjacent parts of The Kimberley, in north-western Australia. All of the Nyulnyulan languages are

treated, with the exception of Ngumbarl and Warrwa. As the study radiates out from Dampier Land, so the documentation loses intensity and depth. Nekes and Worms also studied a few Pama-Nyungan languages spoken near Dampier Land, especially Karajarri. Further afield their work was brief and basic, with the exception of Kukatja, more intensively studied by Worms.

“Australian Languages” comprises five parts, as follows: Part 1: Grammar of Prefixing and Suffixing Languages of the Southern Kimberley; part 2: Dictionary: English-Native Languages; part 3: Dictionary: Native Languages-English (a paradigmatic syntax); part 4: Comparative Dictionary of Australian Pygmoid Languages; part 5: Aboriginal Texts. Only parts 1 and 5 appear in the text of the book. Parts 2, 3, and 4 are contained in a superb CD-ROM, which is to be found inside the back cover.

The major part of the book (part 1) consists of a word-based comparative grammar, some 250 pages, divided into rather Latinized sections as follows: (1) phonetics, (2) nouns, (3) adjectives, (4) pronouns, (5) verbs of prefixing languages, (6) verbs of suffixing languages, (7) adverbs, (8) exclamations. Each section is introduced by a skilful editor’s introduction, which situates the Nekes’s and Worms’s analyses in terms of modern-day Australian Aboriginal linguistic theory. In fact, the editor, William McGregor, a specialist in Nyulnyulan languages, states that “Australian Languages” is “perhaps best regarded as a pan-varietal grammar of the languages of Dampier Land and adjacent regions of the Kimberley mainland, with a generous scattering of comparative observations on languages from other parts of the continent” (29).

“Australian Languages” is very much a product of its era, when Australian linguistics was really just beginning. There are obvious defects, such as the fact that the authors often failed to identify morphemes, especially suffixes, regarding them as alternative forms of stems. Nekes and Worms adopt Capell’s classification of Australian languages into prefixing and suffixing, classifying and nonclassifying languages. They make no suggestions about genetic relations among languages, although they do regard the Nyulnyulan languages as a distinct group.

McGregor defends the quality of Nekes’s and Worms’s work on the Nyulnyulan languages, rating it as of consistently good quality, stating that their transcriptions of Nyulnyul, Bardi, Nyikina, and Yawuru words are reasonably accurate and that one can infer the same in regard to now moribund languages by comparison with extant languages. Bearing this in mind, it is obvious that “Australian Languages” presents a considerable amount of new data on languages never before and, in some cases, never since described.

Part 5, Aboriginal Texts, consists of three chapters containing 14 texts and 6 songs, the first of which is included in the accompanying CD-ROM. McGregor has taken great pains to ensure that the source and gloss lines are presented in a reader-friendly form.

Parts 2, 3, and 4 are contained in the CD-ROM which accompanies the book. Part 2 consists of an English-Native Languages finder list to part 3, a very extensive

Native Languages-English comparative dictionary containing numerous sentence examples of usage, originally six-hundred pages of the original 1000-page manuscript. To have this in searchable form is of huge benefit to researchers. Part 4, a Comparative Dictionary of Australian Pygmoid Languages, is a short wordlist of Dyirbal and neighbouring languages of the Cairns rainforest in Queensland.

William McGregor has done Nekes and Worms, himself, and Australian linguistics a considerable favour with his expert commentary, some 438 footnotes, and his skilful and lucid presentation of what must have presented a difficult editorial challenge. The fact that McGregor himself is an expert in the Nyulnyulan languages puts him in an unrivalled position to bring out the best in the work of Nekes and Worms and he does not disappoint. “Australian Languages,” in its modern form, will prove an invaluable resource for Australianists and indeed for the Aboriginal communities whose languages it documents.

Darrell Tryon

**Poirier, Sylvie:** *A World of Relationships. Itineraries, Dreams, and Events in the Australian Western Desert.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005. 303 pp. ISBN 0-8020-8414-1. (Anthropological Horizons, 28) Price: \$ 29.95

This book about the Aboriginal (mainly Kukatja) people of Balgo in Western Australia was first published in French in 1996 as “Les jardins du nomade. Cosmologie, personne et territoire dans le désert occidental australien” (Münster 1976). This English version of the book is not merely a translation of the original, since the author states that she has put the French manuscript through extensive revision, although the basic drift of the two books is apparently the same. I’m not sure how or why the cleverly titled “Les jardins du nomade,” which translates to “The Gardens of the Nomad,” became the more prosaic “A World of Relationships,” but something was certainly lost in the “translation.” For the metaphor of the garden (see p. 91) captures well the way in which this book is intended to communicate the primary idea that the Kukatja lifeworld is one formed as both cultivated and domesticated space.

Poirier identifies a handful of key themes within this overall idea. In keeping with contemporary paradigms, she emphasises the negotiability and changeability of the Kukatja world, as against older paradigms which, in her view, erroneously accentuated the prescriptive nature of Aboriginal social life. As she puts it, she is interested in the fundamental “‘openness’ and ‘flexibility’ inherent in the Aboriginal system of law and cosmological order” (5). In this regard her work is a welcome and erudite addition to the trend in Aboriginal ethnography which began in earnest some 30 years ago with the work of Fred Myers, whose studies of the Kukatja’s Pintupi neighbours are regularly referred to in “A World of Relationships.” Of particular importance for Poirier is the way in which a “sense of place” is inseparable from a “sense of events” (6); that is to say, place is modelled as