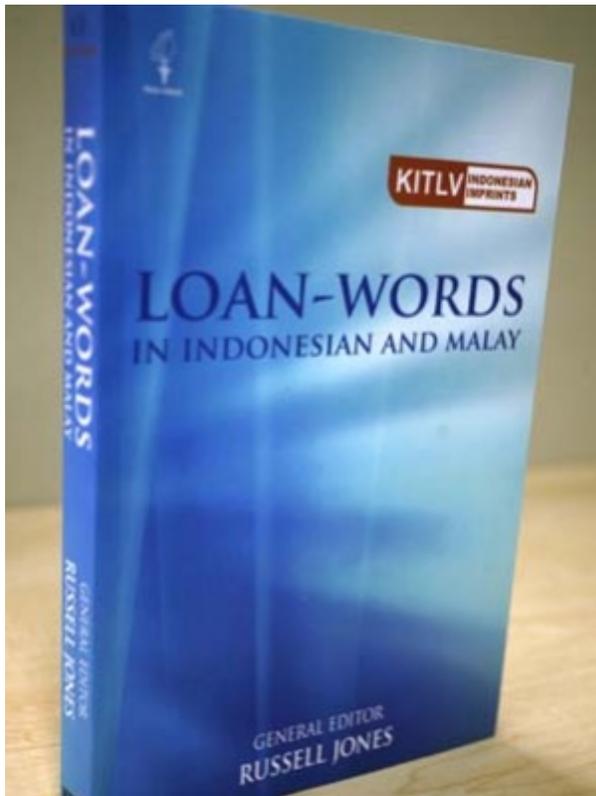


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## A tremendous wealth of information

Nikolaos Van Dam , Jakarta | Sun, 04/05/2009 1:03 PM | Bookmark



Loan-words in Indonesian and Malay is the impressive result of decades of painstaking work by various scholars, all specialists in one or more of the languages from which the collected loan-words (some 20,000) originate.

It is not a full etymological dictionary, but rather a dictionary of foreign (that is, non-Nusantara) loan-words in Indonesian and Malay. Seven lists, encompassing ten different donor languages, were compiled under the aegis of the Indonesian Etymological Project (started in 1973) by J.G. de Casparis and G.E. Marrison (Sanskrit), Russell Jones (Arabic and Persian), N.G. Phillips (Hindi), John Chipperfield and A. Govindankutty Menon (Tamil), Russell Jones (Chinese), C.D. Grijns, J.W. de Vries and L. Santa Maria (Dutch, English and Portuguese), and Masanori Sato (Japanese).

As explained in the introduction, this compilation is not the result of a single homogeneous project. The lists of loan-words from the various source languages were compiled independently at different times and the material has not always been handled in the same way. Work on some of the lists was substantially completed as much as a decade before publication.

Words have been included which were recorded at some time and in some source, but which in many cases are no longer current in modern standard Indonesian or Malay.

Many non-standard spellings have been included as they were found in some variety of Malay or Indonesian. This list "serve\*s\* to extend the range of standard dictionaries to a certain extent by including these unconventional spellings" (p. viii).

The authors have tried to include as many words as possible whose origins are obscure to modern readers. They gathered a variety of notes on the separate entries, but for the sake of the economy this 'final' publication has excluded nearly all of them.

"When the corpus is set up in a website, it should be possible to edit and re-insert many of these notes. Sometimes they are valuable, for example when they record the occurrence of a rare word in an obscure dictionary, or in a Malay manuscript." (pp. viii-ix). No indication is given, however, as to whether such a website will ever be available.

In a similar vein, Russell Jones refers to making the list of Arabic loanwords available electronically, so as to make it easier for Arabists to identify all the Indonesian words originating from the same Arabic root. Fortunately, however, the latter is already possible to some extent through Russell Jones's earlier publication on Arabic loan-words in Indonesian (1978).

Loan-words in Indonesian and Malay focuses on loan-words from languages outside Nusantara, that is, non-Austronesian languages. Words deriving from Javanese, Sundanese or Minangkabau, for example, have not been investigated. An exception is made for the many loan-words from Sanskrit which entered Indonesian via Old Javanese.

The authors have tried to identify loan-words as they were in the donor language immediately before they passed into Indonesian.

The word *razzia* (raid), for example, is clearly of Arabic origin (*ghazwa*), but it has come into Indonesian via the Dutch *razzia* and is therefore counted as a Dutch loan-word.

The authors note that they have always been conscious of the fact that their "identification of the provenance of a loan-word is based on probability rather than conclusive evidence" (p. xii).

To enable the interested user to find the original of the loan-word in its source language, the page number in a well-known bilingual dictionary is provided where the source of the word can be found.

This is done for six languages (Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Persian, Sanskrit, and Tamil) in which finding the word in a dictionary is less than straightforward. The aim is to enable the reader to examine the word in its own linguistic context.

The book provides a useful introduction to the influences of the ten main donor languages on Malay and Indonesian.

The earlier published checklists of loan-words from Sanskrit (De Casparis 1997), Arabic and Persian (Russell Jones 1978), and of European origin (Grijns, De Vries, and Santa Maria 1984), have, according to the introduction, been superseded by the present work. Nevertheless, these previous studies remain valuable because they contain information which has - sometimes unfortunately - been omitted in the new collective work.

In his previous wordlist (1978) Russell Jones explained that his investigation was focused specifically on root forms. By way of example, *syair* is included, but not its various derivatives, such as *bersyair*, *menyairkan*, *kepenyairan*. This useful explanation is not included in the introduction to the new book and might have been instructive to those not aware of it.

In the introduction to the section on Arabic and Persian, Stuart Campbell notes that "it is clear that a large proportion of Malay/Indonesian words with Arabic cognates arrived not directly from Arabic but via the medium of Persianized Indian languages spoken by the traders and missionaries from India. In more recent times, words have been borrowed directly from Arabic" (p. xxiii). On the other hand, Campbell observes that, "the Arabic loan words have been consistently borrowed from the literary forms of Arabic - from Classical Arabic in the case of the earlier loans and from Modern Standard Arabic today" (p. xxiv). While fully agreeing with the latter claim, I have not yet seen any convincing linguistic evidence to support the former claim about the influence of the spoken Persianized Indian languages, irrespective of whether it is true from a historical perspective.

Concerning the collection of Chinese loan-words, Russell Jones notes that his study discloses an important difference between Chinese and other donor languages such as Sanskrit and Arabic: "Since the loan-words have come in via the spoken language, and not the Chinese characters, we can identify the Chinese dialects and even minor sub-dialects from which they have come.

Thus we find that more than ninety per cent of them derive from the Hokkien (Minnan) dialect which is spoken in the southern part of Fujian Province - although Minnan speakers constitute much less than one percent of the speakers of Chinese as a whole" (p. xxvii).

The vast majority of Japanese loan-words (hundreds) came into Malay and Indonesian during the Japanese occupation (1942-1945) and disappeared afterwards. Before that, only about five Japanese loan-words could be found. The word *tsunami* (tidal wave caused by earthquake) is one of the most well-known Japanese loan-words used today.

There are some obsolete and contemporary words and expressions which have been left out and could usefully be included in a following edition. Missing words can be found in the dictionaries of Teeuw, Stevens and Schmidgall-Tellings or in the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*.

Among the current Dutch loan-words which have not been included are: bril(len) (eye glasses), buis (tube), doorsmeer (greasing) from \*doorsmeren', jangkung (tall) from Jan (Pieterszoon) Coen, voorrijder (advance motorcycle escort) from voorrijder, maag (stomach), mesyes (sprinkles) from (gestampde) muisjes, pispot (grease gun) being a corruption of vetspuit (only the more common meaning of chamber pot is mentioned), Pit hitam (Black Peter), plakban (adhesive tape) from plakband, poffertjes, pres as in pres ban (inflating tyres), schokbreker (shock absorber), sekir (to sand down, grind) from schuren, sleting (zipper) from (rits) sluiting, sluftef and stel (as in stel veleg). Curiously, Holan (Holland, Dutch) is noted as being a loan-word from Amoy Chinese h\* l\*n, instead of from Dutch Holland or Portuguese Holanda. Kakus (lavatory, WC), from Dutch kakhuis is one of the very few loan-words marked in the dictionary as obsolete, although it is still known by many people today. This dictionary contains so many obsolete words that it might have been better to avoid this label altogether.

Minalaidin walfaizin (greeting used during Idul Fitri) is mentioned, but not walmakbulin, which is nowadays occasionally added, particularly in Arab Indonesian circles. Halal bilhalal is also known as halalbihalal, and although it obviously comes from Arabic, it is not known as such in the Arab world (like some other Indonesian expressions such as mohon maaf lahir dan batin). Russell Jones refers to Hans Wehr's dictionary, but it does not occur there in the form of halal bi'l-halal, but as halal ibn halal, which has, as far as its meaning is concerned, no direct relationship with halalbihalal, although it obviously originated from it. Khawasulkhawas is not from hawasu'lhawas (p. 153) but from khawassu'lkhawass. Khulafa' u'r-rashidin (p. 153) should be Khulafa' u'r-rashidin.

Loan-words in Indonesian and Malay contains a tremendous wealth of information and is admirable as a consolidated reference work compiled with great precision. It is indispensable for anyone interested in the subject.

Russell Jones (general editor), C.D. Grijns, and Jan W. de Vries (eds), Loan-words in Indonesian and Malay. KITLV Indonesian Imprints with Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2008, xxxix + 360 pp. ISBN 978-979-461-701-4 Price: Rp 150,000.

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