

MINTZ, MALCOLM WARREN. *Bikol-English dictionary*, Quezon City:  
New Day Publishers. Pp. 555

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This dictionary is an expanded edition of Mintz' original dictionary published in 1971 by the University of Hawaii for use by the U.S. Peace Corps. Taken together with the outline of the grammar which is included in the introduction, the book provides a good picture of the Naga City Bikol which is generally understood as the Standard Bikol.

To prepare this expanded edition Mintz went back to Naga City and did additional field research. To that he added items culled from various published sources in the fields of mythology, drama, and early Philippine history as recorded by a Spanish priest who prepared a dictionary of Bikol between 1609 and 1618.

The preliminary pages contain the usual information expected: a preface, a map of the Bikol region, a list of abbreviations used, published references consulted and a table of contents. In the Introduction which follows there is an expanded section containing an outline of Bikol grammar, a description of the sound and spelling systems and a guide to the use of the dictionary. Part I which follows is an English index to the Bikol words. However, because there are some concepts and objects (clothing, food, games, etc.) for which there are no English equivalents not all the Bikol words can be indexed. Part II presents the Bikol-English dictionary which is the bulk of the book. Now we will go through the sections a bit more slowly and make a few comments.

After identifying the various dialects of Bikol, Mintz discusses the present writing system and its relation to the sound system. Then he explains the two modifications he has adopted in writing Bikol words. These are for the purpose of making the identification of roots easier.

The sections on the grammar of Bikol include discussions of the marker classes, the pronouns, verb root classes, tenses, three sentence patterns, the phrase linkers, possessive and modifier phrases and the forms of adjectives. Additional sections following these discuss the classes of verbal affixes and nominal affixes in more detail. The introduction is concluded with a two-part section which explains the format of the contents of Part I and Part II.

The discussions in all these sections are clear and well illustrated with sample Bikol phrases and sentences. The language of the description is non-technical, in fact, it is couched in terms of traditional English grammar, which should help English speaking readers to comprehend it very well.

The discussion of the formation of affixed forms is very good but I would like a little clearer presentation of the parts of speech. Though the labels noun, verb, adjective, appear in the sketch, there is no discussion to help us identify a root when we see one. Marker classes are said to occur before nouns of noun phrases, but there is no definition of a noun. Verbs are identified as bases which have verbal affixation. In a similar manner, adjectives are said to be forms with certain affixations. Although, he does say some adjectives occur unaffixed, I suspect they are classified as such by their affix potential. But I do not know for sure. It seems that Mintz is implying that parts of speech are expanded morphological forms. That is to say, affixes are needed before forms can be identified as to their part of speech. I only call attention to the situation here because this uncertainty of identification of roots is probably why Mintz does not identify roots, or word bases, in the dictionary unless there is an English equivalent. But I would not like to think that he classifies the parts of speech on the basis of the English translations. I think that he would say instead that it is the affixation potential which guides him.

So this leads us to say that the lengthy description of the affixes given in the sketch here is very important to understanding the entries in the dictionary later on. Mintz is to be commended on the painstaking work he has done to describe the affixes. However, in view of the extensive work done in the past fifteen or twenty years on various Philippine languages, I could wish that Mintz had also upgraded this grammatical sketch to give

us more definitive information on the parts of speech. There are still problems in the analysis of root classes, but there has been some advance in this area.

The English-Bikol Index, given as Part I, consists of a long list of English words with their Bikol equivalents. This is not a dictionary. Its purpose is rather to direct the reader to the Bikol words in the dictionary which translate that English word. This is a very helpful device to aid a learner of Bikol.

The dictionary proper follows the index as Part II. The reversal in the order of presentation (an index usually follows the body of the text it indexes) gives a clue to the author's intended audience for the book. Though he nowhere specifies the audience for whom the dictionary was prepared, it seems probable that it is intended for English speakers who want to learn to speak Bikol. He does make the statement, '... the index emphasizes conversational equivalence between English and Bikol' (p. 47).

The dictionary of Part II contains approximately 15,000 main entries. For all the forms which are affixable he supplies a gloss for each different affix+root combination, including multiple affixations if he is aware of it. In this manner he tries to give as complete a description of the formations of the root as he can.

Homophonous forms of roots are given separate full entries even if they are related semantically. One would expect unrelated forms, such as

banggi, evening

banggi, smelling like

to have separate entries as indeed they do. For related forms, however, we would expect one to be a subentry of the other. Instead, they are given separate entries, as for example.

gatas milk, mag-, -an to add milk to.

gatas (sl) -an to take advantage of: to milk.

gati brim, brink, border, verge, end.

nasa- at the edge;

mag- to place at the edge.

gati-gati almost (as in something almost happened): to be on the verge (as of falling.)

This is an example of the author's attempt to slant the dictionary format towards a particular audience.

Another helpful bit of information is added to entries which can be identified as loan words. Mintz has succeeded in giving the source of the loans which come from Spanish, English, Hokkien, Cantonese and Mandarin Chinese, Malay, Arabic and Sanskrit.

Having some idea of how much work goes into the compiling of a dictionary, even of a single entry, I can only admire the voluminous content of this dictionary. It will be helpful to Philippine linguists as well as to anyone striving to learn Bikol. Though there are no pictures or line drawings, it does not materially subtract from its value. Furthermore, since synonyms are not given in the dictionary nor are there many cross references, the index of Part I takes on added significance. It supplies that information though in a different way from traditional dictionaries.

It is always easier to be a critic than a creator of an original work. I could think of some features of a dictionary which would make this more attractive to a linguist wishing to know something of the historical development of the words, or something of the semantic domains in the culture as reflected by the language, but I think we have here before us a very good example of a dictionary prepared with a particular audience in mind. We must congratulate Mintz for being careful and consistent in maintaining that goal all the way through the work and providing us with a dictionary for English speakers wanting to learn Bikol.

The book is an affordable paperback but the paper is good quality. The ink does not smear and the print stands out cleanly and clearly. It is a very worthwhile purchase for those interested in the Bikol language today.