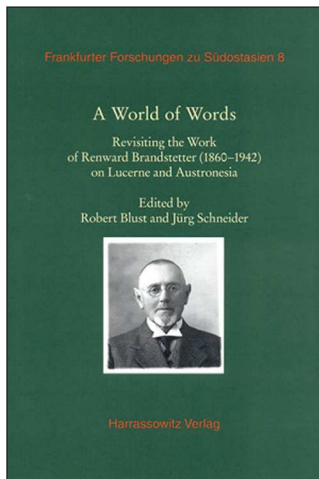


Book reviews

Robert Blust and Jürg Schneider (eds), *A world of words; Revisiting the work of Renward Brandstetter (1860-1942) on Lucerne and Austronesia*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012, xiii + 156 pp. [Frankfurter Forschung zu Südostasien 8.] ISBN 978-3-447-06769-0. Price: EUR 34.00 (soft cover).



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Far, far away ... from here and now.

Isn't that a romantic decoy, an over seducing lure all linguists and researchers in language and literature like to swallow or is it just another myth of an old fashioned pre-digital era?

An intelligent young man meets by total coincidence on a holiday boat trip on an alpine mountain lake another man who tells him about languages which is literally exotic: the languages from the Malay Archipelago. The young man catches fire and becomes one of the founding fathers of the systematic linguistic research on Austronesian language family.

That is the well-known story of how Renward Brandstetter (29 June 1860 – 17 April 1942) got into first contact with his second study object the Malayo-Polynesian languages by the Dutch linguist Georg Karel Niemann (1823-1905).

On the celebration of his 150th birthday, a Symposium has been held on the 28 and 29 June organized by the Institute of Social Anthropology University Bern and the Department of Ethnology of the University of Lucerne.

This conference resulted in two publications. One is a free downloadable online publication in German language *Renward Brandstetter (1860-1942); Beiträge zum 150. Geburtstag des Schweizer Dialektologen und Erforschers der austronesischen Sprachen und Literaturen* edited by Schweizerische Akademie der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften in Berne (2012/ISBN 978-3-905870-27-5) including Brandstetter's autobiography. In this publication the contributions and papers are published which dealing with the work of Brandstetter as a

linguist of Swiss dialects. The second publication is the one under review here and it deals with his work on the Austronesian languages. Entitled *A world of words; Revisiting the work of Renward Brandstetter (1860-1942) on Lucerne and Austronesia* the book contains ten chapters dealing with different aspects of Brandstetter's work and a complete bibliography of Renward Brandstetter's publications.

After an Introduction, Jürg Schneider gives insights into Brandstetter's educational background and Walter Haas into his work as a dialectologist. Holger Warnk and Roger Tol put the focus then on the studies on Malay literature and on the Buginese in specific. Robert Blust and Iwar Werlen describe in the following two articles his approach and research as a general and comparative linguist. Wolfgang Marschall and Waruno Mahdi both write on Brandstetter as a social and political active person. It is then followed by an article on the collection of Brandstetter in the library of Lucerne by Peter Kamber, and in the last chapter, Jacqueline Achermann gives some remarks and an interpretation, dealing with Brandstetter's autobiography.

Without going into detail of each chapter, all of them are worth reading. Most of the authors start their texts with the comment that they will not give full attention to specifics and some authors, even more, ask why should someone write and someone else read about a scientific issue which is not up to date anymore and learn about facts which have been proven wrong decades ago. The question arises at all: Why should we pay attention to a scientist whose work has been influential at his time but leaves no real mark today?

Of course, these introductions to the different fields of activities are well written and contain many hints and remarks an interested reader can use as an orientation for further studies. However, what struck me most was the living picture which arose of this Swiss armchair scientist and scholar, who has never been in Asia and barely has been outside the small town surroundings in the mountainous environment of the Alps.

Beside his most prominent achievement, the first systematic approach to the phonology of the Austronesian languages, Renward Brandstetter also carried out the first translation of an Austronesian text into German. To be precise, it was the publication of *Die Geschichte von König Indjilai* in 1895 and one year later the German translation of the Buginese *Paupau Rikadong* as *Die Gründung von Wadjo*. Nevertheless, the greatest impression on me is his dedication and commitment for the acknowledgment of the Malay language as a language of a "high cultural" whatever that could implicate. Brandstetter's publication series *Wir Menschen der indonesischen Erde* using the term Indonesia in its title is not only a linguistic but an educational pamphlet that includes the aim of recognizing the rights of the people of the Dutch colony of the Nederlands Oost-Indië. Here we find a scientist who became an activist hence at least a lobbyist. Brandstetter shows here clearly that he was a child of his time in respect to his moral behaviour. But his efforts have not been as fruitful as for example the struggle of Edmund D. Morel and the Congo Reform Association that he founded against the murderous exploitation of

the people of the Belgian colony in the Congo. These parallels are interesting.

In 1919 Morel published the book *Red rubber; The story of the rubber slave trade which flourished on the Congo for twenty years, 1890-1910* which recalls at least because of the title to Multatuli's/Eduard Douwes Dekker's 1860 published novel *Max Havelaar; Or the coffee auctions of the Dutch trading company*. Of course, the first one is a non-fictional book, but Morel had the literate of the colonial horror on his side: Joseph Conrad's 1899 publication of work *Heart of darkness* dealing with the colonial violence in the Congo, even though it is also not so fictional. Conrad wrote many more stories, quite a few of them set in the Malay Archipelago but none focusing on the colonial brute force. He deals much more with the individual fate of Westerners in the colonial society as for example in *Almayer's Folly*. The literary processing of facts are even more evident in *Lord Jim* where Conrad for the second part of the story used intensively the 1866 published memoirs *Ten years in Saráwak* of Charles Brooke (Rajah of Sarawak).

In contrary to Morel who did succeed in his fight against King Leopold II of Belgium and Congo the endeavour of Brandstetter has not been that effective but that should not diminish the interest of today's reader in the work and the historical setting of this excellent Swiss dialectologist and Austronesist.

This collection of articles in *A world of words* stimulates readers to have a deeper look at some more reading in Brandstetter's publications which are now all online made available by the Swiss Electronic Academic Library Service, the fact that they are in German and his style needs getting used to nonetheless. As a start, I would suggest his writing on Malay loanwords in Swiss dialects and the short article from 1916 "Die Katze im Schweizerdeutschen und im Indonesischen. Eine sprachwissenschaftliche und volkskundliche Parallele" – a comparison of the cat in Indonesian and in Swiss German language.

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Juniator Tulus, *Family stories; Oral tradition, memories of the past, and contemporary conflicts over land in Mentawai-Indonesia*. PhD thesis, Leiden University, 2012, 313 pp. ISBN: 978-94-6203-160-9.

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There used to be a romantic notion that primitive peoples (non-western societies) were harmonious, peace-loving societies. In the seventeenth century, the sentimentalistic term "the noble savage" began to circulate. The noble savage was pure and unadulterated, in contrast with the modern western man who was seen as egotistical and individualistic. The idea behind this notion was that mankind, in its most original (primitive) form was good.