AFGHANS AND ABORIGINES: DIYARI TEXTS

Ben Murray and Peter Austin

Ben Murray, the oldest and most fluent speaker of Diyari, now lives at Marree, South Australia, where he was born in 1891. His mother was Arabana and his father Afghan. Diyari was formerly spoken to the east of Lake Eyre in the far north of South Australia and currently has fewer than a dozen speakers. Ben Murray's two humorous stories about encounters with Afghans were told in Diyari to Peter Austin, who transcribes and analyses them here.

Emily and the Afghans

The first story dates from Ben Murray's childhood in the late 1890s. There were at that time a large group of Aboriginal people camped in the Frome Creek a few kilometres east of Marree and they were occasionally visited by some of the large number of Afghans who lived in Marree. The story concerns an encounter between Emily Russell (jirimurrini), a cousin of Ben Murray, and two itinerant Afghans in the Frome Creek. It demonstrates one shrewd Aboriginal girl's handling of the Afghans' requests for sexual favours.

1. ngayani pirrki-rna karidi-nhi nhaka.
   we plural excl-nom play -ptcple creek -loc there-loc

2. thana -li dika-yi nhinha Frome karidi.
   they plural-erg call-pres him-acc creek-abs

3. ngarda-nih pula ngarrpingarrpI mandu
   then -loc they dual-nom Afghan two-abs
   wakara-ya.
   come -past

1 The transcription employed here is a practical orthography and differs from that in Austin 1981. The digraphs th, nh, lh represent lamino-dental stop, nasal and lateral respectively, j, ny, ly are lamino-palatals, rt, rd, rn, rl are apico-domals (retroflex), r is a retroflex continuant, r an apico-alveolar flap and d between vowels is an apico-alveolar trill. Each numbered line is a sentence and commas separate clauses of complex sentences. The following abbreviations are used: abs — absolutive case; acc — accusative case; add — additional information; all — allative case; antipass — antipassive; aux — auxiliary verb; dat — dative case; dist — distant; erg — ergative case; exclam — exclamation; fut — future tense; ident — identified information; imper — imperative mood; imp1DS — implicated (or purpose) clause whose subject is different from that of the main clause; imp1SS — implicated clause whose subject is the same as that of the main clause; inchoat — inchoative ('becoming'); loc — locative case; nom — nominative case; old info — old information; pass — passive; pre — present tense; prop — propiety ('having'); ptcple — participle; redup — reduplicated; reflex — reflexive; rel1DS — relative clause whose subject is different from that of the main clause; rel1SS — relative clause whose subject is the same as that of the main clause; trvb — transitive verbalizer; vicin — vicinity. For a description of the grammar of Diyari (phonology, morphology and syntax) see Austin 1981.

2 The distant past tense auxiliary wanthiyi is left out here since the context in which the story was told unambiguously located it in the distant past.

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Peter Austin and Ben Murray, at Marree, S.A.

Photograph by L.A. Hercus
4. pula wakara-yi nhanthu-yali, thana they dual-nom come -pres horse -erg they plural-nom
mankada pirrki-rnanhi pakarna karakara-lida-matha. girl-abs play -relDS also near -add-ident
5. pula kurlikunga-rna ngari -yi, nhanthu they dual-nom jump -ptcple go down-pres horse-abs
kada-rna. tie -relSS
6. ngarda-nhi mankada parda-rna pada-yi then -loc girl-abs catch-ptcple lie -pres
7. Come on! Come on! Give me nikinikil³!
8. nganha yingki-yamayi yani -ka. me-acc give -imper like this-token
9. wapa-mayi:⁵ go -imper
10. wapa-mayi yini! go -imper you
11. wata ngathu yinha nganja-yi. not I-erg you-acc want -pres
12. yini kini wanda nhanthu-yarri, you-nom penis-abs thick horse -like
dangki-danki -yarri. redup -donkey-like
13. yaru -ka nhani yatha-yi. like that-token she-nom say -pres
14. yundu wata nganha kudaka -rnahni nganhi yulya -nhi you-erg not me-acc release-relDS I-nom police-loc
yatha-lha nganayi. speak-fut aux
15. nganhi mariarlu yulya -nhi warrapa-thadi -lha nganayi. I-nom truly police-loc relate -antipass-fut aux

³ The origin of this word for sexual intercourse is unclear. The speech of the Afghans, as Ben Murray mimics it, shows a number of pidgin English features, e.g. [gib] for 'give'; see also lines 16 and 24 of story 2.
⁴ This word was accompanied by an obscene hand gesture.
⁵ Lines 9-16 were addressed to the Afghans in English and translated here into Diyari.
16. yini nhaka-lda wakara-rnanhi, ngathu marlarlu
   you-nom there-loc-add come -relDS I-erg truly
   yinha kanyangadi-ya nganka-lha nganayi.
   you-acc jail -all make -fut aux

17. ngarda-nhi nhani karrka-yi,
   then -loc she-nom shout -pres

18. kanku-wara -yi! nhawu -ya parla -li
   boy -plural-exclam he-nom-near sexual arousal-erg
   ngana-yi ngakangu.
   be -pres me-loc

19. yarro wapa-ni -mayi, danga-danga -rna.
   this way go -plural-imper redup-hunt away-relSS

20. ngayani parrjarna mindi-yi,
   we plural excl-nom all-abs run -pres

   then -loc they dual-erg them plural-acc leave -pres

22. nhanthu-nhi kathi-yi ngarda-nhi wapa-rna
   horse -loc climb-pres then -loc go -ptcple
   kuda -rna, thuka-thadi-rna kuda -rna.
   go away-relSS carry-pass -ptcple go away-relSS

23. yaru -ka thana murda -ya.
   like that-token they plural-nom finish-past

24. ngarda-nhi nhani yatha-yi.
   then -loc she-nom say -pres

25. yini nhaka-lda ngingki -rda wakara-rnanhi,
   you-nom there-loc-add here-vicin-loc come -relDS
   nganhi madi -ya mindi-lha nganayi, yulya
   I-nom Marree-all run -fut aux police-abs
   mani-lha.
   get -implSS

26. nganhi marlarlu ngunda-yi.
   I-nom truly think -pres

27. kanji mindi-yi nhani, nhaka-lda nhawu
   can run -past she-nom there-loc-add he-nom
   wakara-rnanhi.
   come -relDS

6. The word kanyangadi is used for ‘chain’ and ‘jail’; its pre-contact meaning is unknown.
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28. yaru -ka nhani murda -yi, yatha-rna
   like that-token she-nom finish-pres speak-relSS
   nhungkangu.
   him-loc

29. nhawu wata marla thika -yi.
   he-nom not more return-pres

Translation
1. We were playing in the creek there.
2. They call it the Frome Creek.
3. Then two Afghans came up.
4. They came on horseback, right close to where the girls were playing.
5. They jumped down, tying the horses up.
6. They (one of them) grabbed (one of) the girls.
7. 'Come on! Come on! Give me nikmikil
8. Give it to me like this'.
9. 'Go away!' (Emily said).
10. 'You go away!'
11. I don't like you.
12. Your penis is big and thick like a horse, like a little donkey'.
13. That's what she said.
14. 'If you don't let me go I'll tell the police.
15. I'll truly tell the police all about it.
16. If you come again, I'll truly put you in jail'.
17. Then she called out.
18. 'Boys! He's sexually aroused over me.
19. Come over here and hunt (him) away'.
20. We all ran over.
21. Then they left them.
22. (They) climbed on their horses and went away, riding away.
23. That's how they finished.
24. Then she said.
25. 'If you come here again I'll run to Marree to get the police'.
26. I truly think.
27. She could have run (the distance) if he had come back again.
28. That's how she finished talking to him.
29. He never came back.

Dora and the Afghan
The second story is set at Etadunna on the Birdsville track when Ben Murray was a young man working on the station. It concerns Dora, a daughter of the European station manager, who used her knowledge of Diyari and of the Afghans' religious practices to make a public spectacle of an Afghan who stopped to talk to her.
1. Dora nhani yatha-rna\textsuperscript{7} nhangkarni ngathata -nhi.
   she-nom say -ptcple her-dat younger sibling-loc

2. yula thika -lu -mayi.
   you dual-nom return-dual-imper

3. yurra\textsuperscript{8} wapa-ni -mayi, ngapiri ngandi-nhi
   you plural-nom go -plural-imper father mother-loc
   yatha-lha, nganha nhayi-rnanthu.
   say -implSS me-acc see -implDS

4. ngathu nhinha -ya ngari-ika -yi nganthi-nganthi-ya
   I-erg htm-acc-near go -trvb-pres redup -animal -all
   nhingki-nhi-wa thana -nha wanda-lha nhinha
   here -all-dist them plural-acc show -implSS him-acc

5. marlarlu ngarda-nhi pula thika -yi.
   truly then -loc they dual-nom return-pres

6. ayil! ngapiri! yarra wapa -lu, ngayana well father this way go-dual-imper we plural incl-nom
   nhayi-lha Dora-nha.
   see -implSS Dora-acc

7. Dora-ndu ngari -ika -yi nganthi-nganthi-ya
   Dora-erg go down-trvb-pres redup -animal -all
   nhingki-nhi-wa.
   here -all-dist

8. Dora-ndu ngari -ika -yi, mungka-mungka -rna nhinha
   Dora-erg go down-trvb-pres redup -embrace-relSS him-acc
   yaru -ka, yaru -ka nguna kuda-rna
   like that-token like that-token arm-abs put -relSS
   nhungkangu yarrkarla-nhi.\textsuperscript{9}
   him-loc neck -loc

9. ngalda wapa-yi nhingki-nhi-ya.
   we dual incl-nom go -pres here -all-near

10. ngarda-nhi pula karakara ngana-yi marlarlu.
    then -loc they dual-nom close be -pres truly

11. [GRUNT! GRUNT!]

\textsuperscript{7} The distant past tense auxiliary wanthayi is here omitted. See note 2.
\textsuperscript{8} Line 4 is apparently an error as there were only two brothers involved (see line 5).
\textsuperscript{9} Dora put her arm around the Afghan's neck holding his head down so that he would not see
    where he was being led.
12. yaru -ka piki -piki nhawu -pada.  
like that-token redup-pig he-nom-there

13. Oh he devil, this one!

14. nhawu kathi nhungkarni-li mangathanda  
he-nom clothing him-dat -erg head-abs  
warlpa-thadi -rna, ngarda-nhi mindi-rna kuda -yi.  
cover -reflex-relSS then -loc run -ptcple go away-pres

15. mindi-rna kuda -yi, yatha-yatha-rna.  
run -ptcple go away-pres redup-say -pres

16. He devil! He devil!

17. mayi, minha-ri -yi yini?  
well what -inchoat-pres you-nom

18. nganha nhandu pardaka-rna warrayi, kuji  
me-acc she-erg take -ptcple aux devil-abs  
wanda-lha.  
show -implSS

19. wata marla nhangkangu wapa-lha nganayi.  
not more her-loc go -fut aux

20. kuji nhandu -pada ngamalka-yl.  
devil-abs she-nom-there have -pres

21. ngathu ngunda-rna.  
I-erg think -ptcple

22. nhanhi mankada ngumu-yarri.  
she-nom girl good -like

23. ayi! kuji -nthu nhani!  
well devil-prop she-nom

24. ngayani kingka-rnani, No laugh! No fun!  
we plural excl-nom laugh -relDS

25. wata kingka-nil -mayi.  
not laugh -plural-imper

26. kuji nhawu -pada.  
devil he-nom-there

27. yurra kuji nhinha -pada thayi-yl.  
you plural-nom devil-abs him-acc-there eat -pres

28. yaru -ka nhawu yatha-yi.  
like that-token he-nom say -pres
29. yundu nganja-rna warrayi mankada.
you-erg want -ptcple aux girl-abs

30. yaru -ka nhandu yinha wanda-lha nganayi.
like that-token she-erg you-acc show -fut aux

31. wata maria ngathu nganja-yi, nhanha nhayi-lha.
not more I-erg want -pres her-acc see -implSS

32. karika-ni -mayi!
wait -plural-imper

33. ngathu nhinha ngari -ika -lha nganayi, nganthi-nganthi
I-erg him-acc go down-trvb-fut aux redup -animal
wanda-lha nhinha,
show -implSS him-acc

34. wata nhandu piki dika-rna, windi yatha-rna
not she-erg pig-abs name-ptcple only say -relSS
nganthis-nganthis.10
redup -animal

35. marlarlu nhinha piki-ya nganka-rna nhandu
truly him-acc pig -all snake -ptcple she-erg
yakayita pangki-nhi.
gate side -loc

36. ngarda-nhi wanda-yi nhinha.
then -loc show -pres him-acc

37. thana -pada yingkarni kamanali-tha.
they plural-nom-there you-dat friend -old info

38. ngarda-nhi nhulu nhayi-yi.
then -loc he-erg see -pres

39. ngarda nhawu yaru -ka kathi -yali
then he-nom like that-token clothing-erg
warlpa-rdaka -thadi -yi mulha mindi-rna
cover -ptcple-reflex-pres face-abs run -ptcple
kuda -lha.
go away-implSS

40. kuji nhawu -pada! kuji!
devil he-nom-there devil

10 The Diyari word 'piki' 'pig' is borrowed from English. Dora was careful not to say piki when speaking Diyari, lest the Afghan learn the purpose of her deception.

11 yakayita is borrowed from English 'gate', remolded to fit the pattern of Diyari words (words must be of at least two syllables and end in a vowel).
Translation

1. She said to her brothers.
2. 'You two go back!'
3. 'You all go back to tell mother and father to watch me.
4. I will take him down there to the little animals, to show them to him'.
5. Then they went back.
6. 'Hey! Father! Come here and we will all watch Dora!'
7. Dora took him down there to the animals.
8. She took him down embracing him like this with her arm around his neck.
9. 'Let's go just down there', (she said).
10. Then they got really close.
11. [GRUNT! GRUNT!]
12. That was a pig (grunting) like that.
13. 'Oh, he devil this one!'
14. He ran away, covering his head with his turban.
15. He ran away, yelling out:
16. 'He devil! He devil!'
17. 'Hey, what happened to you?' (we asked him).
18. 'She took me down to show me the devil.
19. I won't go near her again.
20. She has devils.
21. I thought
22. She looked like a good girl.
23. No! She has devils!'
24. When we laughed (he said) 'No laugh! No fun!'
25. 'Don't laugh!
26. That's the devil.
27. You all eat those devils'.
28. That's what he said.
29. 'You wanted the girl.
30. And so she showed you'.
31. 'I don't want to ever see her again'.
32. 'Wait (she had said)
33. I'll take him down to show him the animals'.
34. She didn't say 'pig', only saying 'animals'.
35. Truly she took him to the pigs by the side of the gate.
36. Then she showed him.
37. 'These are your friends'.
38. Then he saw.
39. Then he covered his face with his turban like that and ran away.
40. He's the devil! Devil!

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BIBLIOGRAPHY