

WHAT'S IN A NAME? AN ETYMOLOGICAL VIEW OF LAND,
LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION FROM
CENTRAL WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES

Tamsin Donaldson

Prehistorians, historians, linguists — people working in each of the disciplines represented at meetings of the Southeast Australia Study Group — are all interested in finding answers of one kind or another to the question 'Who was where when in southeast Australia?' This paper is about Aboriginal views of Aboriginal distribution. In it I draw heavily on what I have learned from a small group of people who still speak their ancestral language, and from their descendants, who do not. I would like to acknowledge their contribution, and hope that this account of their experiences provides a helpful form of purchase on their past.

Much of what documentary evidence there is for relations between people and place since the arrival of Europeans consists of tribal maps, or accounts of 'the dispositions and boundaries of the tribes'¹ which might serve as a basis for such map-making. The map-maker's preoccupation, largely dictated by the medium, is to distribute named groups of people (or the languages spoken by them) mutually exclusively over the entire territory chosen to be mapped — say the State of Victoria, or the State of New South Wales.² There are no *a priori* reasons why some of the assumptions useful to makers of tribal maps should coincide exactly with Aboriginal people's perceptions of how they inhabited their own world, or rather worlds. Indeed there are several reasons why they might not. Why, for instance, should people with an orally-transmitted culture necessarily be interested in achieving a taxonomy of territorial or linguistic groups which are mutually exclusive? (They have no need to insert

Tamsin Donaldson is a linguist with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. She has written a grammar of Ngayampaa as spoken by Wangaaypuwan people (1980). This paper was conceived while compiling a dictionary of the language, as a means of presenting its vocabulary for designating social groups. While writing the paper she was a Visiting Fellow in the Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, Australian National University, with funding from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. The Map was prepared by Val Lyon, Department of Geography, Australian National University.

¹ The phrase is A.P. Elkin's, from a letter to W.E.H. Stanner, dated 29 March, 1934. Stanner is asked to visit the 'large camp of natives' at Menindee to get information needed in the preparation of a 'map of the tribes of this State [N.S.W.] . . . You should find some who could give the dispositions and boundaries of the tribes from Ivanhoe to Broken Hill and further'. (MS. 10, W.E.H. Stanner Papers, A.I.A.S.) I am grateful to Diane Barwick for drawing my attention to this manuscript.

² The irrelevance of state boundaries to Aboriginal social organisation does not seem to have been a deterrent to this sort of choice. See Note 1.

precise boundary lines on maps.) Or, more importantly for this essay, why should they be interested in achieving a uniform taxonomy, a taxonomy which implies a consensus of mutual recognition and shared nomenclature between all the groups included on the map, however different their languages and cultures, and regardless of the larger maps being likely to include, from the perspective of any one group, other groups living beyond the known world of its practical experience? (They have no need to account for what goes on far away in the same fashion as they do for what constitutes their lived experience.)

The maps we have tend to vary considerably from one another, sometimes in their designation of 'tribes', and sometimes in the allocation of their boundaries. Given that they normally aimed at excluding the effects of post-contact disruption, this alone suggests that there were indeed some failures to come to grips with Aboriginal perceptions. How are we to assess the discrepancies today? More fundamentally, can we still uncover any principles of Aboriginal perception which will point towards there being particular types of systematic misrepresentation reflected on the maps?

Throughout south eastern Australia, people of Aboriginal descent, apart from those trying to 'learn back' an Aboriginal language, perforce from elsewhere in Australia, are now speaking English exclusively, even if the odd word or conversational convention from an ancestral language survives in it. The southernmost exceptions in the 1980s are half a dozen people who call themselves and their language *Ngiyampaa*. They were born around the turn of the century and grew up in their ancestral country between Sandy or Crowl and Willandra creeks, well south of Cobar and just north of Ivanhoe, in western central New South Wales. None of them still live there. These few, formerly with the help of relations of theirs who are no longer alive, have been working with me for some years to record their language. If one asks *Ngiyampaa* speakers, as I often did in the early days of our collaboration, map-makers' questions about 'the dispositions and boundaries of the tribes', one gets an even more bewildering array of answers than is already available from earlier investigators' writings and maps (and their information is confusing enough; hence my questions). If on the other hand one analyses the terms available to the *Ngiyampaa* in their own language for naming speakers of languages and people associated with certain tracts of land, one begins to get insights into how the map-makers achieved the variety of results they did; and into how today's *Ngiyampaa* speakers and their descendants, as a result of their own and their neighbours' histories, have come to use the nomenclature in the kinds of ways they do.

The first part of this paper shows that *Ngiyampaa* speakers (who have no equivalents for either 'tribe' or 'boundary') make use of several etymologically distinct naming systems, and that different contexts call forth names from different systems, according to who, if anyone, is to be contrasted with those being talked about. It then becomes clear how some investigators, in their reduction of the social universe of the *Ngiyampaa* and their neighbours to map form, made certain specific kinds of mistake, for lack of etymological expertise. They did not know enough about the relevant languages, or the relations between them.

The second part of the paper looks at changes in the ways in which people of *Ngiyampaa* descent perceive their social world — changes which have taken place as a result of their physical displacement from their ancestral country and along with their changeover from speaking *Ngiyampaa* to speaking English.

NGIYAMPAA³ AND NGURRAMPAA: 'LANGUAGE', 'COUNTRY' AND NAMES FOR PEOPLE

Speakers of *ngiyampaa*, if asked to explain the name, say it means 'the language' or 'the lingo'. They call the area they come from their *ngurrampaa*, which they translate as 'country'. Both words consist of a root followed by the same suffix *-paa*, and other English equivalents can be found to draw attention to this structure. It is hard to translate *-paa* consistently in all contexts since the notion it represents is rather more abstract than 'time' or 'place' but subsumes both — let us try 'world'. Examples are *yurrumpaa*, with *-paa* attached to the word for rain, which is equivalent to 'rain-world' or 'rainy weather'; and *tharriyalpaa*, with *-paa* attached to *tharriyal* 'heat', the 'world of heat' usually translated as 'summer-time' or 'summer'. In the word for 'country', *-paa* is attached to *ngurra*, which means, as in so many other Australian languages, 'camp'. It is also used as an equivalent for 'home' in the affective sense ('house' is *kunytyi*) and for 'bed'. So *ngurrampaa* is literally 'camp-world', 'camp-place' or 'home-land'. The *ngurrampaa* of surviving *ngiyampaa* speakers is the world in which they once used to 'camp about'. It is represented in Figure 1 by the shaded area, which encompasses every place for which someone has been able to tell me a *ngiyampaa* name, names learnt in the course of 'camping about', many of them also 'sung out' by participants in the last *purrrpa* or 'school for making men' in 1914, as they leapt forward announcing themselves in the preparatory gatherings. In the language name, *-paa* is attached to *ngiya*, homophonous with the root of the verb 'speak, talk, say', a nominal which is translated according to context as 'talk, saying(s), word, law': *mayingku ngiya*, '(Aboriginal) people's *ngiya*', for instance, is very often translatable as 'the blacks' law', and *kuuyngku ngiya*, 'white men's *ngiya*' as 'the whites' talk' or simply 'the whites', when used in reference to English, or as 'the whites' sayings' when the reference is to non-Aboriginal lore and belief, say about predicting the weather. The best literal equivalent for *ngiyampaa* might be 'talk-world', or 'world of the word'.

So far, what we have is a picture of the *ngiyampaa* inhabiting their own 'camp-world' and perceiving it in terms of the 'word-world' which makes them who they are. Beyond their camp-world, and sometimes camping within it, were people seen as other people, and classified according to two kinds of difference — they either had different territorial associations or they spoke differently. These taxonomies included the *ngiyampaa* themselves, distinguishing both all the 'other' people and various *ngiyampaa* from one another by means of the same type of criterion.

The classification according to territorial associations involves adding a suffix *-kiyalu* to a word indicating some feature of the terrain with which the group is associated. On present-day evidence, the type of association specified by *-kiyalu* is hard to define. In addition to being used to form names in this way, it is attached

³ In this section, names are in italics — without initial capitals. This is to draw attention to their being analysable words in the language from which they come; the same suffixes which are used to derive them are also used, with varying productivity, to create other words which do not correspond to English proper names. It will be noticed that a nasal sound (*m*, *nh*, *ny* or *ng*) precedes suffixes added to some roots, e.g. *ngiya-m-paa*. For a detailed explanation see Donaldson (1980:31-35). *ngiyampaa* words are spelt according to the practical orthography adopted in Johnson et al. 1982.

to *ngurra* 'camp' to make a term which can be used for referring to women. Women were the '*ngurrangkiyalu*, the camp pigeons, the home ducks' as one person put it to me, by contrast to the men, in that if women wanted to talk about something, they'd visit from camp to camp, while men would go to their *ngulupal*, a 'big sort of shed'.⁴ During the removal of the young boys who were to be made men at the *purrrpa*, the women, referred to in this context too as *ngurrangkiyalu*, were covered up with leaves and forbidden to peep on pain of death. At the same time, the *puupuu*, the beings whom they understood to be carrying off the boys, would punish them for any past transgressions against male prerogatives by flattening their camps and scattering their possessions. Today, *ngurrangkiyalu* is often translated as 'housewife'.⁵ The only other word not referring to some feature of a terrain to which I have heard *-kiyalu* attached spontaneously is *purrrpa*, the 'school for making men' itself. *purrrpangkiyalu* are initiated men who 'have been through the rules', or, to give the *ngiyampaa* way of expressing it in literal translation, men who have been 'tied into the *purrrpa*'.

The *ngiyampaa* whose *ngurrampaa* is shown on the Map (Figure 1) are of two kinds according to the classificatory system involving the suffix *-kiyalu*. Both 'woodlanders', those associated with the eastern part — including all today's *ngiyampaa* speakers — are *pilaarrkiyalu* or belar people (belar* trees being a conspicuous element in the landscape) while those associated with the western part, who used to camp mainly around Marfield station in the northern west of the *ngurrampaa*, were known as *nhiilyikiyalu* or 'nilyah tree* people'.⁶ People associated with the stony country to the north of the *ngurrampaa* were called *karulkiyalu*, *karul* being the *ngiyampaa* word for 'rock' or 'stone'.

The associations of all three of the groups mentioned so far, of the two woodlander groups and of the *karulkiyalu*, are with terrain which lacks permanent watercourses. The *ngiyampaa* speakers I have worked with often refer to all those who camped in the *ngurrampaa*, whether belar people or nilyah people, as 'drylanders' by comparison with the two kinds of 'river people' whose descendants still live to the east and the west of their *ngurrampaa*. The *ngiyampaa* word is *kalinytyalapangkiyalu* — *kali* means 'water', also used for 'river'; and *-thalapaa*, or *-tyalapaa* when the preceding vowel is *i*, is the privative suffix meaning 'without' — literally 'waterless people'. Doubtless the *karulkiyalu* would also have been so described in the context of such a comparison, but today's *ngiyampaa* speakers know very little about their erstwhile northern neighbours, except for a story about their green body paint leading to the discovery of copper at Cobar. This discovery probably contributed as much as

⁴ Kennedy and Donaldson 1982:7.

⁵ Hampton and Kennedy 1980:308-9.

⁶ While the whole shaded area of the Map (Figure 1) is *ngiyampaangu ngurrampaa*, the 'camp-world of *ngiyampaa* speakers' within living memory, it is subdividable into an eastern *pilaarrkiyalungku ngurrampaa*, the 'camp-world of the belar people' and a western *nhiilyikiyalungku ngurrampaa*, the 'camp-world of the nilyah tree people'.

* The belar tree is *Casuarina cristata*. 'Nilyah', spelt 'nelia' in many reference books, is the local English name for *Acacia loderi*, and presumably comes from its *Ngiyampaa* name *nhiilyi*. Other *Acacia* species are sometimes called 'nelia' in English, but not by people who also speak *Ngiyampaa*.

anything to cause their disappearance from the area.⁷

The two groups of 'river people' are the *kaliyarrkiyalu*, people associated with *kaliyarr*, the Lachlan River (sometimes pronounced *kaliyarra*); and the *paawankay*, the very different and traditionally hostile people of *paawan*, the Darling River.⁸ In the latter term, it will be noticed that the suffix to the name for the Darling River is no longer *-kiyalu* but *-kay* which appears to have a similar meaning, 'belonging to'. (*paawankiyalu* is perfectly intelligible as a synonym; *paawankay* is simply more institutionalised, conventionally preferred). The only other *ngiyampaa* word to which I have heard *-kay* attached is *kurraarr* 'far away'. *kurraarrkay*, like *kurraarrkiyalu*, is a term used for referring to people who come from far away, people from *kurraarrpaa*, the world beyond the known, precisely identified worlds of particular peoples, as the following anecdote reveals. For a traditionally-minded *ngiyampaa* person, willy-willies are one of the special means by which *wirringan* ('doctors' or 'clever' people) travel. Once on a rabbiting expedition, someone disturbed in the bush by a willy willy passing very close to her rushed to rejoin the rest of us, saying she was frightened that a *wirringan* was after her. I asked who. '*kurraarrkay*, might be from Queensland' was her reply. In any case 'belonging to the Darling River' is the literal meaning of the *paawankay*'s own name for themselves, and for their language too. They are *paakantji*, *paaka* being what they call the Darling River, and *-ntji* their suffix meaning 'belonging to'. Like *-kiyalu* among the *ngiyampaa*, *-ntji* also forms a number of *paakantji* terms for identifying groups associated with contrasting territories — *paarruntji* the 'Paroo River people' further north, and *parrintji*, '*parri* or scrub country people' to the south east.⁹

It would appear that the *paakantji* (and for that matter the *paarruntji* and *parrintji* too) regarded differences in territorial association labelled according to this principle as automatically linked with speech differences. These varieties of speech were referred to eponymously — so that the *paarruntji* were said to speak *paarruntji* just as the *paakantji* spoke *paakantji*, and so on. How do *ngiyampaa* speakers perceive linguistic differences and institutionalise them in their terminology for distinguishing different kinds of people?

paakantji, *paarruntji* and *parrintji* were linguistically very similar (and equally unlike *ngiyampaa*). Speakers of all three varieties used the same set of names to refer to themselves and each other by, and the suffix *-ntji* had the same form and meaning in each variety. When *ngiyampaa* speakers distinguish between themselves and other groups perceived as speaking differently despite overall similarities in their speech, they have available a terminology based on different principles. In this terminology, each name, which can refer either to the way of speaking itself, or to members of the group identified by their use of it, demonstrates a single linguistic difference which has been selected as criterial. This criterial difference is the word which the group concerned uses for 'no' (and to form negative sentences, derive a verb meaning

⁷ Harris forthcoming.

⁸ Though beyond *paawankay* territory, the Barwon River is also *paawan*, being, according to *ngiyampaa* speakers, the same river. For *ngiyampaa* attitudes to the *paawankay*, see Kennedy and Donaldson 1983:17.

⁹ Hercus 1982:96-7. My spellings follow the practical orthography used in Jones et al. 1981. See also Note 24.

'deny' etc.). The name for each variety consists of the particular word for 'no' used by the group, followed by its own form of the comitative suffix meaning 'having' or 'with', a suffix which occurred with approximately the same range of functions in all of them (as far as it is still possible to tell). The important thing to realise about this nomenclature, important in that it is unexpected from the point of view of people familiar with naming systems where a given language variety has one name and one name only, is that when *ngiyampaa* speakers consider themselves in terms of this taxonomy, they no longer name themselves *ngiyampaa*, but *wangaaypuwan*. *wangaay* is their word for 'no' and *-puwan* is their form of the comitative suffix. Other 'no-having' groups were once immediate neighbours of the *wangaaypuwan*. There were the *wayilwan*, who said *wayil* for 'no' and used *-wan* for 'having' after an *l* sound, instead of *puwan* (whereas *wangaaypuwan* use *-puwan* in all circumstances). And there were the *wirraathurray*, whose word for 'no' is remembered by the *wangaaypuwan* as *wirray* or *wirraay*, and whose comitative was *-thurray*, or *-tyurray* after the vowel *i*.¹⁰ When further characterising other 'no-having' groups' peculiar ways of speech, *wangaaypuwan* typically picked on certain other synonyms besides their words for 'no', synonyms which are clearly cognate to a linguist but vary partially in their pronunciation from *wangaaypuwan* speakers'. The only *wayilwan* speakers whom today's *wangaaypuwan* recall were people who came to live in their *ngurrampaa* after the creation of a government-run Aboriginal Station at Carowra Tank in 1926. They are remembered as having said *kumali* for 'hit', and *wala* for 'head' (whereas *wangaaypuwan* say *pumali* and *pala* respectively). The feature of *wirraathurray* speech which sticks most in *wangaaypuwan* speakers' minds is the occurrence of an *ng* sound at the end of many words in other respects identical to their own — for instance 'They'd say *palang*' (for 'head'). *wangaaypuwan* people might also discuss the relative 'lightness' or 'heaviness' of the different varieties. It is unclear with what particular properties of the varieties (if any) such judgements were originally associated. The surviving evidence for both *wayilwan* and *wirraathurray* pronunciation, which includes Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies archive tapes of several speakers and isolated words still remembered by people of both descents, is not particularly suggestive. Nor do I know whether *wayilwan* and *wirraathurray* people also ranked the different varieties in the same way. One of today's *wangaaypuwan* speakers who regards her own variety as 'lighter in the tongue' than the others supposes that anyone would consider 'their own' lighter in the tongue than any other language, taking the phrase to mean 'easier to pronounce'.

When it comes to distinguishing the way in which the *paawankaay*, the Darling River people, speak, the *ngiyampaa/wangaaypuwan* speakers have no name for their language which characterises it by the word they use for 'no'. They simply call the

¹⁰ Some speakers of *wirraathurray* appear to have allowed the final *y* of their word for 'no' to condition a *-tyurray* pronunciation of the suffix, instead of dropping the *y* as did those known to today's *wangaaypuwan*. It is in an anglicised version of this pronunciation [wirædzəri] that the name is most widely used today. The anglicisation 'Wiradjuri' is perhaps the commonest spelling now, probably as a result of its use by Tindale (1974). (The long *aa* of *wirraathurray* does not prove that *wirraay* and not *wirray* was the form for 'no' used by *wangaaypuwan* speakers' acquaintances; it may result from a lengthening of short *a* in the presence of the suffix.)

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language of the *paawankay* *paawankay* too, thus calquing the *paakantji*'s own way of referring to their language as well as to themselves as 'belonging to the Darling River'. Used in this way, *paawankay* is translated into English as 'Darling talk'. Nor do the *ngiyampaa* characterise 'Darling talk' in terms of synonyms resembling words in their own language, since the two languages are so very different. Such synonyms are few and far between. Instead they mention homonyms with different meanings. Regardless of whether they have ever learnt any of the language of the *paawankay* (which they would never have been able to understand simply on the basis of knowledge of their own language) they are all familiar with at least one word which sounds similar in both, but, because of having different meanings in each, could, at least theoretically, give rise to risible misunderstandings between *paawankay* and themselves. The most frequently cited is *kali*. 'They call a dog *kali*!'¹¹ (*kali*, it will be remembered from the word for 'drylander', means 'water' in *ngiyampaa*.)

In the case of the *paawankay*, linguistically and culturally very different from themselves, the *ngiyampaa* name for them remains the same, as we have just seen, whether the focus is on their language or on their territorial associations. Name-formation is based not on *ngiyampaa* onomastic principles but on the *paakantji*'s own. How did the two *ngiyampaa* taxonomies — the sets of people designated according to their association with land by terms formed with *-kiyalu* and the sets designated by speech variety according to their words for 'no' — relate to one another? This is set out in Table 1:

TABLE 1
Names by Territorial Association Linked to 'no-having' Names

People named by territorial association	English Equivalent	People named by word for 'no-having' in their language
<i>pilaarrkiyalu</i>	belar people	<i>wangaaypuwan</i>
<i>nhiilyikiyalu</i>	nilyah tree people	<i>wangaaypuwan</i>
<i>karulkiyalu</i>	stone people	<i>wangaaypuwan</i>
<i>kaliyarrkiyalu</i>	Lachlan river people	<i>wirraathurray</i>

Some comment is needed on these correspondences. Firstly, a distinction needs to be drawn between language ownership and simply being able to use a language. Belar people regularly describe the nilyah tree people as having spoken 'Darling talk as well as their own' — they lived in close enough contact with the *paawankay* to be bilingual, unlike the belar people, few of whom today know more than a few words of it. Belar people however do not seem to have *spoken* their riverine neighbours' talk, *wirraathurray*, in addition to 'their own' though members of these two groups also spent time in each other's countries. They claim rather that they *understood* it, with

¹¹ Actually *karli*, with a retroflex lateral *rl*. Lacking this sound in their own language, *ngiyampaa* speakers hear it as an apical-alveolar *l*.

remarks like 'They can't fool me with that *wirraathurray*'.¹² Close association, with members of each group speaking 'their own', could lead easily to mutual comprehension. Secondly, the Table represents what a few *belar* people have remembered from their childhoods at the beginning of the century. As I said earlier, their knowledge of their one-time neighbours to the north is slight. They have not been consistent in their judgements as to how far north 'stone country' extended or as to whether the *wayilwan* they knew were also 'stone people' or not. My basis for saying that at least some (and therefore probably all) of them were *wangaaypuwan* is a manuscript word-list of sixty 'Wongiwoibon' words collected from 'Old Nanny', reputed to be the last speaker of the local language at Cobar. She died around 1914.¹³

Finally, a point of a quite different kind. The 'no-having' varieties *wangaaypuwan*, *wayilwan* and *wirraathurray* were similar enough to have a great deal of shared vocabulary. Among the words they shared were *ngurrampaa* for 'camp-world' or 'country' (*ngurrampaang* in *wirraathurray*) and also (more confusingly for the map-makers) *ngiyampaa* for 'word-world', 'the language'. Not only *wangaaypuwan* speakers, but *wayilwan* speakers also, referred to their language and to themselves, except when distinguishing themselves from speakers of other 'no-having' varieties, as *ngiyampaa*. (It would appear that *wirraathurray* speakers also had the word *ngiyampaang* at their disposal, though the evidence is less conclusive.)¹⁴ The name 'Ngiyampaa', by which I first introduced the people whose social nomenclature I have been describing, and by which they introduced themselves, a decade ago, to me, does not serve to single them out from everyone else in their social universe from whom they would see themselves as distinct on either territorial or linguistic grounds.

I have outlined the various ways in which those *ngiyampaa* who are also *wangaaypuwan* and *pilaarrkiyalu* name themselves and others, and described also how these 'others' in turn made use of the same names and sometimes of different ones. It will, I hope, be clear from this account that map-makers and other non-Aboriginal investigators who have asked Aboriginal people in the central west of New South Wales such questions as 'What is your language?' 'Where is it spoken?' 'What is your tribe?' 'Where is its country?' could get a variety of answers even from the same person, depending on the way that person assessed the context and purpose of the question. In addition, certain questions such as 'Where is the country of the *ngiyampaa*?' or 'What is so-and-so's language?' might also meet with different answers from different people, depending on the identity of the person asked.¹⁵

¹² In *ngiyampaa* speaker's English, this is equivalent to the passive 'I can't be fooled . . .'. No one actually speaks *wirraathurray* in their presence any more. *ngiyampaa* was the *lingua franca* at Carowra in *ngiyampaa* country (Table 2). But it is no longer possible to find out in exactly what circumstances people who knew other forms of language used them.

¹³ Mathews and Mathews c.1914. One *pilaarrkiyalu* woman married a man from Cobar, the late Bill Williams. Mrs Williams says that he was *wangaaypuwan*; and that he also said *kumali* for *pumali* (also associated with *wayilwan* speech) but not *wala* for *pala*.

¹⁴ Günther 1892:92.

¹⁵ It is clear from the Berndts' report on their visit to Menindee (Berndt and Berndt 1943) and from related correspondence in the Elkin Papers that they commonly found the same

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Can we attribute the enormous variation in different investigators' assessments of 'the dispositions and boundaries of the tribes' in western New South Wales to any systematic failures to appreciate the logic behind the information they gathered? The answer is a straightforward 'yes'.

There are at least three kinds of systematic misinterpretation, each hingeing on different preconceptions about the use of the names which identify people in terms of language, their relation to each other and to other names.

The most predictable and persistent mistake was to assume that the term *ngiyampaa* was equipollent with the 'no-having' terms, and therefore used in the same way to distinguish a separate variety of language and its speakers. This led to attempts to map three separate tribal territories, one each for the *ngiyampaa*, *wangaaypuwan* and *wayilwan*. Norman Tindale's map, a summarising of his sources which marks 'Ngemba', 'Wongaibon' and 'Weilwan' countries, reflects this tradition.¹⁶ If there ever were any group calling itself *ngiyampaa* which did not have either *wangaay* or *wayil* for 'no', one would expect it too to have an alternative 'no-having' name. There is no evidence for any such group. Had those who made this kind of mistake understood the etymology of the 'no-having' names and the usage of the term *ngiyampaa*, one would expect, instead of three territories, either two (*wangaaypuwan* and *wayilwan*), or else one, encompassing all the people who referred to their own language as *ngiyampaa*, without reference to their different words for 'no'.

The second type of mistake was made by people who understood the etymology of the 'no-having' names but not the way in which the term *ngiyampaa* was used. It was to assume, not that *ngiyampaa* was an equipollent term with respect to the 'no-having' ones, but rather that it was a subordinate one in an onomastic hierarchy where groups distinguished by their terms for 'no' were sub-divided into groups with local associations. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown produced a tribal map showing two rather than three territories, 'Wongaibon' and 'Weilwan',¹⁷ and offered the suggestion that 'the Njambar' were a 'local division of the Weilwan'.¹⁸

The third type of misinterpretation is best illustrated in terms of the set of 'no-having' names. It stems from an extremely commonly felt need on the part of non-Aboriginal analysts of Aboriginal matters to create superordinate cover terms where Aboriginal taxonomies do not have them. This is typically achieved by selecting one term from a set of (from the Aboriginal point of view) equipollent terms and giving it generic status. R.M.W. Dixon describes how linguists have tended to fairly arbitrarily select the name of one of a group of closely-related speech varieties distinguished by Aborigines and use it as a cover term for reference to the grammatical system common to them all — 'a linguistic abstraction, and one which is not necessarily regarded as

individual being identified in different ways, the terms chosen varying both from person to person and occasion to occasion. See for instance p.3 of the report, where it is noted that 'a Wongaibon would often identify himself as a 'Nii:amba and *vice versa*'.

¹⁶ Accompanying Tindale 1974.

¹⁷ Radcliffe-Brown 1918:226.

¹⁸ Radcliffe-Brown 1923:433.

particularly felicitous by speakers of the language [concerned]'.¹⁹ An excellent example of the same sort of procedure being applied to the 'no-having' terminology for naming language varieties and their speakers occurs in A.L.P. Cameron's 'Notes on some tribes of New South Wales'.²⁰

The linguist's need for a cover term arises from the desire to make a hierarchical distinction between 'language' and 'dialect'. If the differences between a number of speech varieties to which Aboriginal people give different names are small scale and systematic enough for all the variation to be adequately described within the context of a single general description, then the named varieties are regarded as 'dialects' of a single 'language' — for which a name then has to be found. Cameron feels the need to make a similar hierarchical distinction between 'tribe' and 'nation', a distinction which he explains as follows:

When the word ['tribe'] is used in this paper it refers to a whole community of people, whose language, laws, institutions, ceremonies, and customs are the same, and who call themselves by a certain name. The word "nation" will be applied to a group of kindred tribes, who are on friendly terms, and whose language and laws are somewhat but not altogether similar.

From the point of view of linguists like those referred to by Dixon, the tribes within one of Cameron's 'nations' might well be described as speaking dialects of a single language. Though Cameron's 'nation' consists of a *group* of tribes, and as such is less of an abstraction than the linguist's 'single language', the same problem arises of finding a name to call it by. Cameron adopts the same solution — taking one of the 'no-having' terms — by his own definition all 'tribal' names — and using it as a cover term to name a 'nation'. When he 'enumerate[s] the nations and tribes', he writes *apropos* of the *wangaaypuwan*: 'It seems to me probable that the Wonghi or Wonghibon tribe . . . was in fact a branch of the Wiradjeri [*wirraathurray*] nation'.²¹

Cameron goes on to quote a conversation with a Wathi-wathi man to support the idea:

In speaking of a Wonghi black to one of the Wathi-wathi tribe, who had referred to him as a Wiradjeri — I said, "He is not Wiradjeri, he is Wonghi", and my friend replied, "It is all the same, only they talk a little different; Wiradjeri blackfellows say 'Wira' for No! and Wonghi black fellows say 'wonghi', but they are all friends".

All friends, yes, but all Wiradjeri? The Aborigine's response to Cameron's challenge makes nonsense of the latter's usage of the name as a cover term. The similarity between the *wirraathurray* and the *wangaaypuwan* which Cameron conceptualises

¹⁹ Dixon 1980:43.

²⁰ Cameron 1885:345. All quotations from Cameron are from this and the following page. Tindale draws attention to a number of such 'nations' of 'dubious origins' (1974:156).

²¹ For background to the spelling 'Wiradjeri' (one of over sixty used in the literature!) see Note 10. The selection of this and particular other names as cover terms by researchers is usually not so much arbitrary as governed by the course of contact history (including of course the contacts of the researchers) — in other words, by who learnt what from whom first, and where. 'Wiradjeri' people were encountered before *wayilwan* or *wangaaypuwan*, living as they did over an extensive area much closer to Sydney. It is a sign of their greater prominence in non-Aboriginal experience generally that it was their words rather than cognates from the more westerly varieties that passed into Australian English (Donaldson 1985).

as shared nationhood is recognised — 'It is all the same . . .', but the idea is not expressed by giving a single name to all those who are 'friends', let alone one of the names used to distinguish between them. The sense of shared sameness is not lexicalised, but made explicit by all the groups who are 'friends' sharing a single derivational mechanism in the formation of their names, adding the suffix '-having' to the word for 'no'. The Wathi-wathi man whom Cameron quotes was not a Lachlan but a Murray River man. The language by which he is identified is in turn formed according to a different etymological principle, one also used in the formation of the names of *his* neighbours' languages, this time reduplication of the word for 'no'. *wadi* means 'no' in *wadiwadi* (Wathi-wathi), so does *madi* in *madimadi*, *wemba* in *wembawemba* and so on. Cameron classifies the Wathi-wathi and Muthi-muthi (*madimadi*) along with the Ithi-ithi (*yidayida*) as tribes belonging to another 'considerable nation' 'adjoining the Wiradjeri' to the south.²² In the case of this 'nation' he says that he has 'not yet succeeded in finding any common distinguishing name' by which to call it. Once again, the sense of shared sameness (and differentness from the peoples to the north) is not given lexical acknowledgement in a single superordinate name, but is expressed in the sharing of a single derivational process for forming names. While noting this sub-lexical type of Aboriginal identification of similarity between groups, it is important also to realise that it does not lead either to categories of groups which correspond exactly to Cameron's 'nations' or to members for them which correspond exactly to his constituent 'tribes'. For instance, not all the people with 'no-no' languages fall into Cameron's (unnamed) 'considerable nation'. And there were also several more groups to the north and east of the *wirraathurray*, *wangaaypuwan* and *wayilwan* whose languages were named on the same 'no-having' principle. Cameron selects the name for one of these (with *kamil* for 'no') as the superordinate cover term for his 'Kamilaroi nation'. Nor do sets of speech varieties named according to the same etymological principles necessarily coincide with sets of dialects which can conveniently be described as belonging to a single language. From a linguistic point of view, though the 'no-having' languages are all much more closely related to one another than to any named according to other principles, it would have been an extremely complex task, judging from the available evidence about what they were like²³ to write a combined grammar of all of them. On the other hand, the *paakantji* 'belonging to the Darling River' had many other neighbours speaking closely-related dialects besides those already mentioned as having names constructed on the same pattern, the *paarruntji* 'belonging to the Paroo River' and the *parrintji* 'belonging to the scrub country'.²⁴

If one approaches the literature for southeast Australia, especially the discussion of tribes and boundaries and the maps, with an awareness of the possibility that one or more of these three types of departure from Aboriginal perceptions and naming practice may have influenced authors' attempts to organise the information available

²² Hercus 1969:454. The spellings are those to be used in a revised version (Hercus forthcoming). The italics for the language names (on Hercus' Map 2) are mine.

²³ Summarised in Austin, Williams and Wurm 1980.

²⁴ For other *paakantji* neighbours with differently constructed names, see Hercus 1982:7-13.

to them, it becomes much easier to make sense of inconsistencies in their results. Names from different types of naming systems may have been thought to belong to the same set; and names, whether from different systems or the same one, may have been improperly related in a hierarchical fashion, a given name being mistakenly made subordinate or superordinate with respect to some other or others.

If groups as Aboriginally-defined can be successfully identified, there are still likely to be problems in gaining a detailed understanding of how they were associated with certain stretches of territory. In concluding this section, it is worth mentioning a different kind of clue to Aboriginal distribution – the etymology not of group names, but of place names. Today's *wangaaypuwan* speakers of *ngiyampaa* define their *ngurrampaa* or 'camp-world' as the area where they know place names. Since the 'having' or 'with' suffixes of the 'no-having' languages were also commonly used in the formation of place names, including many which have been taken into English, we can at least tell where speakers of *wirraathurray* have been responsible for certain place names, and where speakers of one or the other kind of *ngiyampaa* have – whether of the *wangaaypuwan* or *wayilwan* variety cannot normally be deduced since the most frequent form of the suffix in *wayilwan* is also *-puwan*.²⁵ 'Quambone' for instance can be traced to *kuwaympuwan*, meaning 'blood-having' in both. Quambone has a more southerly counterpart ending in what is phonetically a common Anglicisation of the *wirraathurray* equivalent of the suffix. Possibly also once called 'blood-having' (*kuwanytyurray*), it is now the site of a wheat silo with a name more suited to the kind of puzzle I have been trying to unravel – 'Quandary'.²⁶

²⁵ For a list of place names which, 'with varying degrees of certainty' show the *-thurray/-tyurray* suffix, see Nash 1974.

²⁶ Annette Hamilton (1980) is concerned, as I have been in this section, with disparities between various writers' accounts of 'the allocation of people to land' (p.85), (in her case in the Western Desert where linguistic differences are institutionalised under 'go-having' rather than 'no-having' names). She also attempts to explain the disparities through an appeal to 'the perspectives of the Aborigines themselves' (p.90). But her particular task leads her to focus not on a discussion of systems for naming groups, nor on associations between named groups and particular stretches of territory, but on a quite different mechanism for connecting people to land – patrilineal descent – in a part of Aboriginal Australia in which she sees change 'from a place-based to a father-based system of definition of rights' (p.106).

For Quandary, see Map. The basis of my guess at its former meaning was a *wirraathurray* cognate for *ngiyampaa* *kuway* 'blood', spelt *guán* by Günther (1892:87), and the knowledge that place names in both languages often refer to body products. A recent visit to the area cast doubt on this part of my etymology, revealing a tradition, recorded by a local historian, that 'Quondary [as it was first spelt] . . . is the aboriginal word for "place of the possum"'. It formerly named the spot, three miles away on Mirrool Creek, where the first buildings in the district were erected, before 1850 (Webster 1956:45). The 'having' suffixes of place names are often rendered into English as 'place of'. But the widely remembered *wirraathurray* word for 'possum' is *wilay*. I have not found evidence of any other word for 'possum' which might be spelt *quon* by an English speaker, unless it is present in the first part of Günther's *gummil* 'thread from possum wool' (1892:88).

NGIYAMPAANHThALAPAA, NGURRAMPAANHThALAPAA: *SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION 'WITHOUT LANGUAGE', 'WITHOUT COUNTRY'*

In this section I want to set the search for an accurate reconstruction of past Aboriginal views of Aboriginal distribution in its contemporary social context. I have explained some of the kinds of difficulties non-Aboriginal observers have had in coming to grips with Aboriginal social nomenclature, and have suggested one potentially helpful approach to the quandary posed by their often mutually inconsistent accounts of who was once where – examining the etymology of the names. As late as the 1970s it was still possible not only to discuss Ngiyampaa²⁷ nomenclature with speakers of the language, but also to hear them use it with each other in accordance with their childhood memories of a now vanished social world. Further south and east even the oldest Aboriginal people have lost touch with the equivalent parts of their ancestral pasts, as have many of the descendants of the oldest Ngiyampaa, so that they are no longer able to straighten out the historical record from their own experience. But everyone's sense of who is who in their lives today derives ultimately from those earlier social views, however much of the vernacular nomenclatures of their rationales may have been adaptively forgotten by successive generations who have reshaped their means of identification in response to later events.

There are many differences of detail between the experiences of Aboriginal people in western New South Wales within living memory and those of earlier generations south of the Murray. But in both areas colonisation resulted in constant pressure on those associations between people and place and between people and language which had formerly been basic to the distinction and naming of social groups. Under such pressure, what features of the old naming systems can usefully survive? What new naming strategies do people adopt for organising their altered social universes? The following sketch of how the people of Ngiyampaa descent have responded is offered in particular to those who cannot easily appreciate their own forebears' versatility precisely because they were versatile; to the people who have to rely for knowledge of their vernacular heritage on occasional documents, often with failings of the kind discussed in the previous section. Their current historical view of themselves, and others' of them, has to depend to some extent on speculation. But perhaps the speculative element can be refined by looking at one example of how adaptive changes happen from generation to generation.

Today's oldest Ngiyampaa, born at the turn of the century, know what it was like to grow up in their own country, named with names in their own language. But control over it had long since passed into the hands of station owners; and their neighbours' territories, which were, for one reason or another, more highly valued by

²⁷ In this section I revert to spelling those names for languages and their speakers which are now used by people speaking English according to English spelling conventions, with initial capitals (c.f. Note 3). Like Peter Read (this volume) I shall also use the now popular spelling Wiradjuri (rather than Wirraathurray), which represents the pronunciation used when English is spoken (see Note 10). 'Ngiyampaa', unless otherwise indicated, always refers to the language with *wanguay* for 'no' belonging to the people from the shaded area on the Map, or else to the people themselves. *Ngiyampaa* is used where the reference is specifically to the language.

the invaders, already had sizeable towns on them.²⁸ Nevertheless some of the patterns of intergroup relations associated with ceremonial life in the area were maintained, at least until the last *purra* or 'school for making men' was held in Ngiyampaa country in 1914. The Ngiyampaa were later to be physically removed from their *ngurrampaa*, in circumstances which would lead to the increasing and eventually exclusive use of English amongst their descendants.

Table 2
Ngiyampaa Institutionalisation and the Transition to English

Date	Where the Ngiyampaa lived	In whose country (by language)	Use of Ngiyampaa	Use of English
1900	Their <i>ngurrampaa</i> , 'camping about' on pastoral stations	Ngiyampaa	First and main language	With pastoralists (mainly by men)
1926	Carowra Tank, isolated 'mission'	Ngiyampaa	<i>Lingua franca</i> between Aborigines (mainly Ngiyampaa)	And with 'mission' management
1933	Menindee, 'mission' town	Paakantji	Domestically among Ngiyampaa	And <i>lingua franca</i> between Ngiyampaa and Paakantji and in town
1949	Murrin Bridge, outside town (Lake Cargelligo)	Wiradjuri	Privately among oldest Ngiyampaa	Main or first language of all (Ngiyampaa, Paakantji and Wiradjuri descent) And at town school

Table 2 shows how three successive governmental moves institutionalised the Ngiyampaa on 'Aboriginal stations' or, as the people themselves called them, 'missions', at first within their own country and then in other people's.²⁹ At the same time it indicates the way in which these moves promoted the changeover from speaking *Ngiyampaa* to speaking English. The Map (Figure 1) shows where these institutions were, and also towns in or near which Ngiyampaa people unwilling or unable to live in them have resettled themselves at various stages. Towns marked with black dots show where people with some claim to the language were living at the beginning of the 1980s. Others have gone off the map, especially to Sydney, or were taken away as children and have not returned. The Map shows a fourth move as well, in the 1970s, of people from Murrin Bridge to Wagga Wagga, where they were offered Housing

²⁸ The consequent paucity of contact between the Ngiyampaa and their northern neighbours has been mentioned above.

²⁹ For an account of 'the dispersal policy in New South Wales' see Read 1983. For its effects in Wiradjuri country see Read (this volume). Ngiyampaa people were less immediately distressed by the dispersing effects of government policy than by being transported to live at close quarters with people of other descents (Kennedy and Donaldson 1983:17).

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

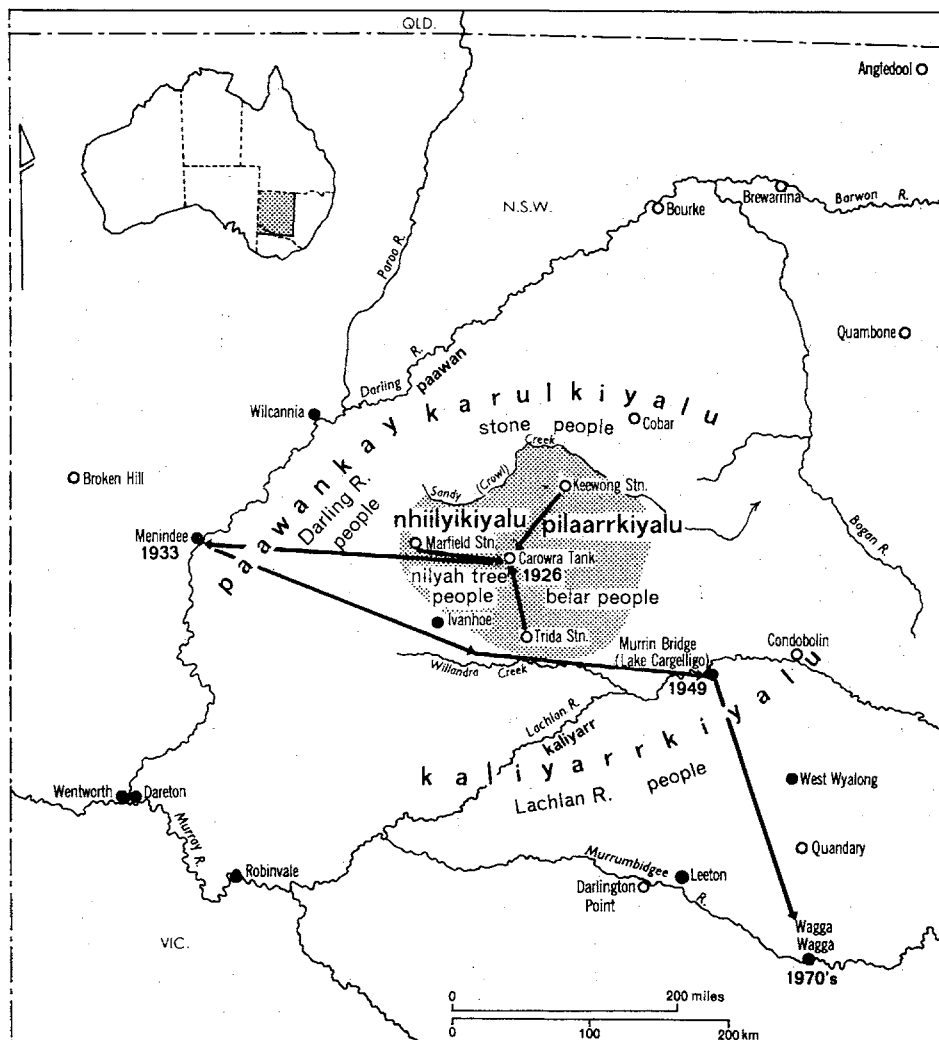


Figure 1 – The *ngurrampaa* or 'camp world' of today's *ngiyampaa* speakers, with arrows showing how they have been moved away from it. Their *ngiyampaa* is *wangaaypuwan*, that is 'with *wangaay*' as their word for 'no', while that of some more northerly speakers was *wayilwan*, 'with *wayil*' as *their* word for 'no'. Groups placed on the map are named according to territorial, not linguistic, associations.

Commission homes in various suburbs under The Voluntary Family Resettlement Scheme.³⁰ This further scattered the remaining *Ngiyampaa* speakers, but the exclusive use of English, marked as their own by occasional private words of 'lingo',³¹ was already established amongst their descendants.

The places where people of *Ngiyampaa* descent have by now lived and the linguistic resources they now command are extremely various, varying hugely from person to person. But the four different modes of life which have replaced each other within living memory may serve to distinguish four core 'generations' from each other in terms of a degree of commonly shared experience. It can be seen in Table 2 how those born at the turn of the century have known all four ways of living; those born in the mid-twenties three different kinds of institutionalisation; those born in the mid-thirties two 'missions', both outside their own country; and those born from the fifties on 'mission' life at Murrin Bridge only.

All four generations are now *ngurrampaanhthalapaa*, 'without (their) country' (-*thalapaa* meaning the opposite of the by now familiar 'having' or 'with' suffix -*puwan*). They are united in their landlessness, but divided in what it means to them. By virtue of enforced inexperience, those generations brought up at Menindee and Murrin Bridge cannot feel the same sense of severance from particular social associations with a particular territory that those who 'camped about' in their *ngurrampaa* or grew up at Carowra Tank do, except vicariously, through listening to the old people. In this they differ little from younger people of other descents, (such as, say, Paakantji from Murrin Bridge) who have never lived in their ancestral countries. The Murrin Bridge Paakantji, however, are in constant touch with other 'Darling River people' who do still live on their ancestral river, since most of the Paakantji who were moved to Murrin Bridge refused to stay there and are now at Wilcannia. No such spontaneous mass return to their townless dryland was ever possible for the *Ngiyampaa*.

A new division based on language has also arisen between the generations of *Ngiyampaa* descent. They are divided into those who are actually *ngiyampaampuwan* 'with *Ngiyampaa*', speakers of the language, and those who are without it, *ngiyampaanhthalapaa*, the '*Ngiyampa*less' generations born since the shift to Menindee who cannot speak it, though many who were small there still understand a good deal.

This progressive twofold loss of land and language, with its attendant inter-generational tensions, has also been paralleled in the experience of the traditional neighbours of the *Ngiyampaa*, though details of their stories differ. For instance, the relative isolation at Carowra enabled people to remain *ngiyampaampuwan* while most speakers of other languages were already experiencing a severe restriction of the contexts in which theirs could appropriately be used.

³⁰ Read 1983.

³¹ And also by other, less carefully controlled, features with wider Aboriginal currency. As a teenager explained recently about a likewise exclusively English-speaking friend (with a different ancestral language from her own): 'She's black, but she's white, so they [strangers in public places] don't know she's black. But when she talks you'd know she's black'.

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Nevertheless, many of the old land- and language-based names have retained some usefulness for social identification today, often in changed form, and sometimes with changed reference because of the modern irrelevance of others in the systems to which they once belonged.

Of the names which designated people according to their associations with territory, those with enduring relevance have been calqued into English, with the English equivalent of the first part of the name being followed by 'people' or 'mob' used in place of *-kiyalu* or *-kay*. Thus people who may not even know that their ancestral language had the terms *kaliyarrkiyalu* and *paawankay* still talk about the 'Lachlan mob' at Condobolin, or the 'Darling River people' of Menindee and Wilcannia. These are the people into whose territories the Ngiyampaa were moved and with whom they have come to mix. But some names were never translated. I have never heard the vanished *karulkiyalu* ('rock' or 'stone' people) referred to in English, and it is doubtful whether young people have heard of their having existed. As for the names which people of Ngiyampaa descent might use in reference to themselves, *pilaarrkiyalu* ('belar people') and *nhiiyikiyalu* ('nilyah tree people'), the younger people who speak English only are not familiar enough with the ecological characteristics of their ancestral homeland to know whether their own forbears came from a part of it where belar trees dominate or a part where nilyah trees are plentiful. The old people themselves, when talking in English about the past, do not either retain these names in their *Ngiyampaa* form or translate them. Instead, they use names which link people with parts of the country by reference to pastoral stations. Thus the *nhiiyikiyalu* are referred to as the 'Marfield mob' (or the 'Geordie mob', after Geordie Murray, their 'clever man'); and the *pilaarrkiyalu* as either the 'Keewong mob' or the 'Trida mob', depending on whether those referred to camped predominantly around the northernmost or the southernmost of the two stations.³² So these are the names through which the younger people may take hold of their history. Other names for 'mobs' or groups of people associated with particular places (as named in English) allow for the designation of new social associations which cut across the old territorial distinctions. 'Carowra Tank mob', for instance, designates a social grouping which is not equivalent to the *pilaarrkiyalu*, or even to the *pilaarrkiyalu* and *nhiiyikiyalu* combined, though the 'mission' was placed in belar country near where it merges with nilyah country. In 1938 a petition was sent from the Menindee 'mission' under the heading 'Carowra Aborigines' suggestion through Dr. Elkin to the Chief Secretary Mr. Gollan' (relating to the composition of the Aborigines Protection Board). Among the signatories were people with quite other backgrounds, including someone originating on the Murrumbidgee, displaced to Carowra on the closure of Warangesda 'mission' at Darlington Point (but none of the Menindee Paakantji, who had not been at Carowra).³³ The name 'Menindee mob' likewise allows people of different territorial origins to sink their differences in recognition of an era of historically shared experience.

³² Trida people and Keewong people had a very small number of minor differences in their *Ngiyampaa*, but there were no institutionalised names in the language for distinguishing regularly between the two groups – though the suffix *-kiyalu* could of course be attached to the vernacular names of the stations, just as it could be to any place name.

³³ Ferguson et al. 1938.

And the name 'Murrin Bridge mob' can serve a similar contemporary purpose. The old Ngiyampaa naming system — by social association with place — continues today amongst people with a different language and different kinds of social associations with different kinds of places, lent resilience no doubt by the common readiness of people of other Aboriginal descents to also persist in viewing social allegiances in terms of territorial associations.³⁴

What has happened with the names for languages and their speakers is more complicated. The language called *paawankay* in Ngiyampaa is referred to in English as Paakantji, or as 'Darling River talk'. None of the 'no-having' names has ever been translated into English, if only because to do so would of course remove the differences between them — their meanings being all identical. Their pronunciation has, however, tended to become Anglicised.³⁵ Ngiyampaa, as we have seen, translates as 'the language' or 'the lingo'. But the habit of referring to it as 'the lingo' when speaking English is less likely to result from translation than to reflect the usage of those who first brought English to the area. Aboriginal people whose languages' names have quite other meanings also commonly refer to them in English as 'the lingo'. The name Ngiyampaa is in any case still in common use amongst people who speak only English, and know it only as the name their elders use for themselves, and for their language when pressed to give it a specific name. But its etymology may have had something to do with its survival in preference to 'Wangaaypuwan', among the generations speaking English only, when they began to assume, like the map-makers whose earlier mistakes were eventually enshrined on Tindale's map,³⁶ that a language will have one name and one name only under all circumstances. It was probably also significant that when the Ngiyampaa were first moved it was not into the territory of another 'no-having' group where the name Wangaaypuwan would naturally be used for purposes of contrast. Descendants of speakers of the Wayilwan variety, also, as we have seen, alternatively called Ngiyampaa, now live mostly in the Coonamble — Walgett — Brewarrina — Bourke area. Among them, both the name meaning 'language' and the 'no-having' name seem to have survived, though not necessarily together with an awareness that they were used to refer to the same language. But here again, the name Ngiyampaa appears to have the edge on the 'no-having' name, probably helped by the long isolation of people of Wangaaypuwan and Wayilwan descents from each other, and the consequent lack of need to distinguish between them by appealing to the difference between their words for 'no'.

The result of this process taking place independently for both groups can be confusing when contact is renewed, as I learnt as long ago as 1971 in Wilcannia. I had met there for the first time a few people from the 'Carowra Tank mob' who were able to teach me some Ngiyampaa. I also met Bert Hunter, originally from the Walgett area, who insisted that what he remembered of his own rather different

³⁴ Quite a different source is being tapped, however, when the Aboriginal residents of a certain suburb in Wagga Wagga joke about their new home as 'Vegemite village'.

³⁵ See Note 10.

³⁶ Tindale 1974.

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Plate 1 – Carowra Aboriginal Station, October 1929. Gidgett Williams (Wiradjuri and Ngiyampaa), left, and Ned Rogers (from Queensland) in front of a signpost indicating Swan and Rock Wallaby Streets (*thanthuu*, here spelt *dunthoo*, means 'swan' in *Ngiyampaa*). The corrugated iron cube, rear right, is a *kuny tui* 'house' supplied by the government. To the left is the back of a *nganu*, 'miamia', or perhaps a *katurr*, 'windbreak', with firewood in front of it.

Photograph: AIAS N1601-3. Original photograph from the Aborigines Welfare Board Collection in the State Archives Authority of New South Wales. Supplied by AIAS.



Plate 2 – Menindee Aboriginal Station, January 1934. A group photograph taken in its early days for the *Adelaide Advertiser*.

Photograph: Courtesy of Ronald Berndt.



Plate 3 – Menindee Aboriginal Station, December 1935. Left to right: Albert Sheppard, Geordie Murray, Leslie Sheppard and Rosie Murray. Geordie was a highly respected *nhiileyikiyalu*, and the 'nilyah tree people' were also known as 'Geordie mob'. He and Rosie always preferred their own camp on the bend of the river to the government's 'houses'.

Photograph: J.E. Keating, the *Adelaide Chronicle*, courtesy of Aileen Morphett. AIAS N3577-97.



Plate 4 – Menindee Aboriginal Station, 1930s. A group of children in front of one of the houses. In the back row are friends of the photographer on a visit to the 'mission', including the Bush Nursing Sister from Menindee, Sister Kessell, far right.

Photograph: Aileen Morphett (then Underhill). AIAS N3577-6A.

language was 'real Ngiyampaa', but that my *Ngiyampaa* teachers were not his people. Though I occasionally came across the name Wangaaypuwan too, used in reference to the language I was learning, the puzzle remained unsolved at the time, since no one produced the name Wayilwan by which to distinguish Bert Hunter's language from it. (Nor had I then recorded his word for 'no', or any instances of *-wan* meaning 'with'.) The only clue immediately available in Wilcannia was that Elsie Jones, with a Paakantji background, could remember having been told as a child that there were two sorts of *Ngiyampaa*. She was able to pronounce the name in two slightly different ways to show a small variation between them in the phonetic contraction of the sequence *iya*.³⁷

People nowadays who are familiar with any of the 'no-having' names do not necessarily know enough of the language they designate to be able to analyse them, even when they contain the word for 'no' in their own ancestral language. People who regard themselves or their elders as Ngiyampaa may not also be able to spot the *wangaay* of Wangaaypuwan as a word of their elders' languages. They are even less likely to realise that the forebears of people they know to be of Wiradjuri descent said *wirraay* for 'no'.³⁸ A Ngiyampaa person who is *ngiyampaanhthalapaa*, 'without the language', or even one who is *ngiyampaampuwana*, who has it, but does not approach the name Wangaaypuwan analytically may assume, on the one name per language principle, that it refers to some quite other people. I recall asking two sisters who identified themselves as Ngiyampaa who the Wangaaypuwan were. The older of the two answered 'Reckon we might be' while the younger suggested they might be 'that Angledool mob'. Angledool was way out of her 'beat'³⁹ for the latter, who tended to say 'from Angledool' in much the same way as someone speaking Ngiyampaa would use *kurraarrkay* 'from far away', as a vague location for the unknown. The etymological argument — 'But we say *wangaay*' — with which the older sister retorted is no longer widely appreciated.⁴⁰

On another occasion I was offered a speculation about the identity of the Wangaaypuwan whose ingenuity proves the practical irrelevance of the issue at Murrin Bridge today. There is a song still sometimes nostalgically sung by a few of the old people there which parodies another more widely known one about a different girl, 'My girl, she's no high-born lady . . .':

³⁷ A.I.A.S. Tape Archive No. LA 9111. Some people of Wayilwan descent currently favour the spelling 'Ngemba' for the name.

³⁸ In his 1947 article 'Wiradjeri Magic and "clever men"', R.M. Berndt quotes extensively from his main informants Jack King and Fred Biggs. He was similarly unaware that their use of *wangaay* identified them as Wangaaypuwan rather than, as they would have said it, *wirraathurray*; and that this is the first substantial committal of their language to print. There are frequent occurrences of *wangaay* throughout the article (*wonai* in his transcription, which makes use of phonetic symbols), included in the first two passages quoted, on pages 335 and 338.

³⁹ Normal travelling range. See below, and Beckett 1965:20.

⁴⁰ 'Wangaaypuwan' can even seem to contrast directly with 'Ngiyampaa'. One of the sons of Mrs Williams (see Note 13) remembers his late father saying that he was Wangaaypuwan. Since he came from Cobar, not his mother's country, he assumes that he differed in this too from his Ngiyampaa mother.

My girl, she's Wangaaypuwan lady
 She's dark but she's not too shady
 Feather like a peacock, just as gay
 She's coloured but she's born that way
 I'm proud of my black Venus
 No coon will a-come between us
 Along the lane we'll cut a shine
 With this Wangaaypuwan gin of mine.⁴¹

The people who are best remembered as having sung it in the past came originally from Darlington Point. Therefore, it was suggested, the Wangaaypuwan were most likely to belong somewhere around there, on the Murrumbidgee (also outside the 'beat' of most of the Ngiyampaa from Carowra).

Among the languages the oldest Ngiyampaa have come across in their lifetimes, *Paakantji* is now the only one besides their own of which more than isolated words and phrases are remembered — and that only at Wilcannia. If 'Wangaaypuwan' has lost its distinguishing power as a language name for quite elderly people, there is little practical need for children with a grandparent or great-grandparent who can 'talk lingo' to give the language any distinctive name. Whether or not particular language names continue to be used depends, ultimately, as with the territorial names, on whether or not they identify a group of people with some current social reality, or with some past shaping importance which those looking back over their lives still recognise. For the *ngiyampaampuwan*, there is no more intimate social tie linking them to contemporaries than having shared their early experience of the world in a unique language now known by so few. To be Ngiyampaa means in effect to have shared a childhood, and 'our people' and 'Ngiyampaa' are synonymous among the oldest generation. But there is a mechanism for identifying 'our people' down through the generations which endures irrespective of linguistic change and loss of country, and irrespective of the confusion of old social categories founded on language and land — to which it may even contribute — and that is kinship. 'Our people' and 'Ngiyampaa' are synonymous for the *ngiyampaampuwan* because they are all related to one another — that is how they have come to grow up speaking the language. Despite changes in how relationships are appraised, and in the terminology used (which is now English), genealogy is still the central means of classifying people, of distinguishing 'our people', that is those with whom a relationship can be traced, from others.

Jeremy Beckett has described how Aborigines' kinship behaviour in western New South Wales, given the history of their 'aggregation and dispersal' has led to ever more widely dispersed and heterogeneous 'constellations of kin'. In 1965 he found that, generation by generation, marriage partners were being found further and further afield, and that 'beats', the localities where a person has kin, is 'known', and can feel at home, were becoming more various and extensive.⁴² The process has continued.

⁴¹ As sung by Eliza Kennedy, A.I.A.S. Tape Archive No. LA 9110.

⁴² Beckett 1965, especially pp.17-23. I have borrowed his phrase 'aggregation and dispersal' (p.13) in the sense of 'being aggregated and dispersed'. Many of his 'prognoses' (p.21) have become realities since the article was written.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

As a result 'our people', for a given person of Ngiyampaa descent, can include many of other descents,⁴³ with inherited claims to other languages and other territories. But conversely, anyone genealogically established as 'one of our people' can properly take a proprietorial pride and interest in *Ngiyampaa* and in the *ngurrampaa* in which its speakers used to camp.

⁴³ Including, of course, non-Aboriginal descent. It has not however been necessary to my argument to discuss this, since it is not relevant to the Aboriginal views I have been trying to explore. What Beckett wrote in 1965 remains true today: '... in most situations the important distinction lies between those who have some Aboriginal ancestry and those who have none' (p.1) – witness Note 31.

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Plate 5— Murrin Bridge, 1983. A panoramic view taken from the water tower.
Photograph: Wayne Nelson. AIAS N3577-3A.