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Volume nine 1985
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ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1985

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The cover design carries the text of the opening paragraphs of the Kamilaroi Myth, Emu and Brolga, the subject of the article by Peter Austin and Norman B. Tindale in this issue. The emu and brolga images are based on western New South Wales cave paintings recorded by Mr F.D. McCarthy. Cover design by Richard Barwick.
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p.26   fn 10, third line   Change [wirædzeri] to [wirædʒeri]
p.27   bottom line   Change ‘apicao-’ to ‘apico-’
p.29   fn 15, last line   Change 'Wọŋaibon to 'Wọŋaibon and
'nji:amba to 'Nji:amba
p.31   line 9   Change wadi to wadi
   line 10   Change madi to madi
p.33   1st para, third last line   Change ‘of their’ to ‘or their’
p.34   Table 2, 2nd column   Change ‘mission’ town’ to ‘‘mission’ near town’
p.39   Plate 1, line 4   Change kuny tui to kunytyi
p.40   Plate 3, line 2   Change nhileyikialu to nhiilyikialu
INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal languages have long intrigued linguists and historians alike. Their number, distribution and diversity raise interesting questions about their relationships to one another and to languages in other parts of the world and consequently, about their ultimate origin. Unfortunately, however, their importance as vehicles of Aboriginal culture and thought has only gradually been appreciated. The lateness of this development is to be regretted because so many of the languages, particularly those in the more closely settled areas of Australia, have become extinct in the meantime and others are now on the verge of extinction.

The aim of the present volume is not to describe or analyse Australian languages, however. Rather it is to show how studies of them may be used to contribute to a better understanding of Aboriginal history. To illustrate this the volume brings together eleven papers written by linguists focussing on different aspects of language and history. These fall naturally into three fairly distinct, although partly overlapping, groups: those dealing with oral texts and history (Austin and Tindale, Hercus, Kelly and Evans, Muecke, Rumsey and Wirrunmarra), those using historical linguistic techniques to attempt to probe deeper into pre-historical aspects of Aboriginal origins, distribution, and culture (McConvell, Sharpe), and those describing sociolinguistic aspects of language use and change (Donaldson, Harris, Haviland, Sandefur, Shnukal).

Yet the volume is more than just a presentation of different aspects of what linguistics has to contribute to Aboriginal history — it also provides insights into, and comments on (more or less directly) the Aboriginal condition today as well as on the Aboriginal response to a constantly changing world. Thus the papers dealing with oral texts and history are just as much about change and death as are those about specific languages and their speakers. Other papers show how adaptable Aborigines have been in adjusting to the new circumstances they have found themselves in following contact with Europeans — new languages were developed for example, and their own modified to meet new requirements. This is important for being rarely recognised, as is the Aborigines' skill in using whatever linguistic resources are at hand to build intricate communicative systems which few Europeans ever get to observe let alone understand. This is illustrated by John Haviland's article on the linguistic situation at Hopevale in North Queensland, for example. Haviland not only shows how Europeans have been misled into thinking that the traditional language of the area, Gugu Yimidhirr, is dead, or just about so, when it is in fact very much alive and plays a subtle role, together with English and other Aboriginal languages, in interpersonal communication between members of the Hopevale community. Still other papers give an insight into ways of Aboriginal thinking and the way they viewed various events of significance. Thus there are eye-witness accounts about how Wangkangurru people left their home in the Simpson desert at the turn of the century and how the Kaiadilt people saw a would-be settler make a systematic attempt in about 1918 to eliminate them by 'shooting down everyone except the girls he intended to rape'.

Finally, the volume is about history itself, about how texts become historical documents. For this reason four of the papers include texts transcribed in their original form. The publication of the original is by no means superfluous. Even when the language is traditional and few if any readers are likely to know it, a mere translation is not enough: the text with the gloss is, after all, the closest we can get to what people said and thought. In the field of oral history, it represents an historical document.

Tom Dutton and Luise Hercus
Diane Barwick

As this volume was going to press we were shocked to be informed of the sudden death on 4th April, 1986 of our friend and colleague Dr Diane Barwick, foundation editor of this journal and principal guiding force throughout its existence. We publish the following letter, which expresses sentiments shared by members of the Board, from the Foundation Chairman to the current chairman as the Board's tribute to one who has inspired us throughout the last decade. A further appreciation of her work and contribution to Aboriginal Studies is to be presented in a later issue.

'I wish to put on record an appreciation of Diane Barwick as a foundation editor and planner of Aboriginal History. When it was decided to start an interdisciplinary journal of Aboriginal history within the Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History Diane Barwick was the first person we thought of to join us at an editorial level and to help at the planning stage. Diane was at first hesitant. I had struck this kind of hesitancy before, particularly by senior anthropologists only too well aware that failure of an Aboriginal-oriented project tended to reflect adversely on the Aboriginal people rather than on those organising the project. Expectations, so I was told, were raised and could not be lived up to.

But Diane's hesitancy was shortlived. Once convinced that those involved were committed and that finance was available, she quickly made the project her own. Editorial conventions were worked out to suit several disciplines, scholarly procedures were laid down for reviewing articles, and longterm plans were made for regular publication. Needless to say Diane's contribution was a major one. Her own exacting standards soon became journal standards, and her wealth of contacts and breadth of vision ensured interdisciplinary success.

From the first Diane had a large say in choosing the members of the Editorial Board, many of whom were handpicked as valued and trusted colleagues with the right sort of qualifications. Diane was also responsible for inviting interested Aboriginal members to our committee, so that we early benefited from their experience and expertise and have had at least one Aboriginal editor. That we had a larger number of women on the committee than on other comparable committees was also due to Diane, though it was a reflection of a balance of talents rather than any conscious policy. That two of our most valued committee members, both women, have recently obtained chairs is an index of this. Diane herself, I had always hoped, would one day be given a chair of Aboriginal history.

It is ironical indeed that for seven years Diane Barwick edited Aboriginal History, exercising all her professional skills, without salary or remuneration of any kind, bringing a certain amount of credit to the University, while the University itself, despite its National designation, has never officially endorsed an Aboriginal project. When Diane
resigned as an editor in 1982, due to her Bicentennial and other commitments, she thanked Peter Grimshaw and myself for establishing ‘a new journal and a new discipline’. While we may have created the opportunity it was in fact Diane who founded this discipline.

As a foundation editor Diane was conscientious beyond the call of duty. Not only did she carefully scrutinise every article and correspond with every author, but she also did all the copy editing, proofreading and liaising with the press. Her word was law, but in the main everyone respected her and appreciated the time and energy she put into each production.

I have already received several letters from Diane’s early colleagues on the Board who speak of her in glowing terms. They sometimes fell out with her but she had their love and respect. They saw her as a great encourager, as a guide and a sympathetic friend. I cannot recall ever having fallen out with her, though she would sometimes give a gentle break. ‘How is it, duckie,’ she would say, ‘that historians turn yesterday’s anthropology into today’s history?’ Her knowledge of Aboriginal history sources was extensive, and she gave considerable assistance to scholars all over the nation. Even vacation scholars visiting A.N.U. from state universities benefited from her expertise and bibliographical knowledge given freely and gladly.

The role of Diane Barwick in the wider world of Aboriginal affairs will be described by others. One was always conscious of her wide and humanitarian commitments. Although concerned for social justice and equality of opportunities she had individually thought out views on most issues. She had a broad empathy for all Aboriginal people: she did not divide them into categories according to political beliefs but saw them all as a people with their own dignity and corporate traditions. I believe that Aboriginal people have benefited by her work for Aboriginal History.

On this Board there is no doubt that her demise is our insuperable loss. Her wise counsel, knowledge and contacts, her dedication and, above all, the distinctive impress of her personality, will be sorely missed, though in our hearts we know that she has lit a lamp for us to follow. Her memorial must be our renewed dedication.

Sincerely,

Niel Gunson.
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INTRODUCTION

The Kamilaroi (or Kamilaraay) are an Aboriginal people who traditionally occupied a large tract of country in north-central New South Wales (Tindale 1974, Austin, Williams and Wurm 1980). The Kamilaroi language was spoken in several dialect forms and is closely related to Yuwaaliyaay (the Euahlayi of Parker 1896, 1978) and Yuwaalaraay to the west (see Austin et al 1980, Williams 1980). It is more distantly linked to Wiradjuri and Ngiyampaa of central New South Wales (Austin et al 1980, Donaldson 1980 — see Map 1).

Information about the Kamilaroi language has been collected sporadically for more than a century, beginning with early recordings in the 1850s. Highlights of these materials are Ridley (1875) and Mathews (1903). More recently, Tindale collected vocabulary items and kinship terms in 1938 (Tindale 1938); and Wurm worked with the last fluent speaker, Peter Lang, in 1955 (Wurm 1955). Dixon and Austin were able to check vocabulary between 1971 and 1973 (see Dixon (1984:217-8)). A description of the language utilising all available materials is being developed (Austin and Wurm (in preparation)).

To date, the only text materials available for Kamilaroi are Bible translations compiled by Rev. William Ridley during his mission among the people of the Namoi region (Ridley 1856, 1875 — see also Greenway 1911). No mythological texts have been published. We present here a Kamilaroi traditional story as recorded by Tindale in 1938. The text concerns Emu and Brolga and is part of a widespread Australian tradition.

Peter Austin studied at the Australian National University, completing a thesis on the Diyari language of northern South Australia in 1978 (published by Cambridge University Press in 1981). He has carried out linguistic fieldwork in Northern New South Wales (on Kamilaraay), in northern South Australia (Diyari and Ngamini) and the north-west of Western Australia (Kanyara and Mantharta language groups). His current research focus is the Western Australia languages for which he is preparing dictionaries, grammars and text collections. He is presently senior lecturer and Head of the Division of Linguistics, La Trobe University.

Norman B. Tindale studied linguistics at the University of Adelaide in a special course under Professor J. Fitzherbert, following earlier instruction in orthography under Baldwin Spencer in Melbourne. His data gathering commenced with the Ingura people of Groote Eylandt in the Northern Territory in 1921-22 and has included gatherings of texts within every State of the Commonwealth, including one Tasmanian text. Many of his parallel tribal vocabulary lists are currently being studied.

Tindale wishes to indicate that he is not linked with the devising of the new system of orthography used in this paper. His preference still is International Phonetics for text material and Geo. II for geographical terms.

1 Peter Austin wishes to thank Burt Draper, Hannah Duncan, Ron McIntosh, Leila Orcher and Arthur Pitt for sharing their knowledge of Kamilaroi with him. Thanks are also due to R.M.W. Dixon and S.A. Wurm for access to their unpublished fieldnotes. This paper has benefitted from a number of helpful suggestions from Tamsin Donaldson.

2 The name Kamilaroi is spelled Kamilaraay in the transcription adopted by Austin (see Footnote 4 and Austin and Wurm (in preparation)).
Map 1: Kamilaroi (Kamilaraay) and neighbouring languages.

Map 2: Distribution of Emu and Brolga/Bustard myths.
THE TEXT.

Tindale carried out anthropological and linguistic research on Kamilaroi during fieldwork conducted as leader of the Harvard-Adelaide Universities Anthropological Expedition of 1938-39. On 18 June 1938 he began work with Harry Doolan and two other old Aboriginal men on Kamilaroi social organisation and language. In his journal (page 125), he recorded that on Tuesday 21 June he ‘obtained the first part of the legend of the Brolga and the emu in text’. The following day, Wednesday 22 June, he notes that he:

obtained the rest of the legend of the Brolga and the emu in text from Harry Doolan, assisted by Stanford. The men were at first at difficulties with their own language because it has not been used by them for some years, except occasionally in conversation. After yesterday they thought out the details carefully and gave me a very useful text in the Kamilaroi of the Namoi River. The story resembles closely the emu and brolga story of the Tanganekald of the Coorong, S.A., in the first half; the sequel is different. I could not get any hints of localization of the legend. It is a camp fire story told by men to their children.

Tindale transcribed the story (journal pp.127-137) in the International Phonetic Alphabet (which had long been standard for writings of the Adelaide School) and obtained from Harry Doolan a word by word translation into English, and for the first nineteen lines plus lines 42 and 43 a running translation of each sentence.

In 1979, when on a visit with Tindale at his home in Palo Alto, California, Austin learned of the text and obtained a copy of it. Because of its uniqueness and historical importance, we decided to publish it in full in the present collection.

In the following, each sentence of the legend is presented in five lines. The first two are the transcription and word by word gloss, exactly as recorded by Tindale, except that the sentences are numbered and capitals at the beginning of sentences are not used (thus obviating the need to print upper case ñ). The third line is a respelling of the Kamilaroi words into a phonemic orthography devised by Austin, plus a division of the words into their likely morphemes, indicated by hyphens. The fourth line presents morpheme-by-morpheme glosses; this glossing is based upon analyses of all the available Kamilaroi material plus William’s (1980) grammar of the closely related Yuwaalaraay language. Because no native speaker of Kamilaroi is presently available, the grammatical analysis and glossing must be seen as tentative and in some cases speculative. Where no interpretation could be suggested a ? is employed. The fifth line is the free English translation of each sentence; for the first nineteen sentences (and 42, 43) this translation was supplied by Harry Doolan. Austin has prepared a free translation for the remainder (sentences 20 to 41, 44-48) based on the grammatical analysis, and this is included in brackets. Harry Doolan provided some additional comments throughout the telling of the story and these are given in angle brackets.

3 A photograph of Harry Doolan may be found in Tindale (1976:18).

4 The spelling is intended as a practical orthography and follows usual Australianist conventions: th and nh represent lamino-dental stop and nasal respectively; ng is the velar nasal; ny is a lamino-palatal nasal; rr is a flap, and r a retroflexed continuant; R indicates that it is unclear whether rr or r is intended. Vowel length is indicated by doubling. Where a word occurs nowhere else in the Kamilaroi materials, it is preceded by *; spelling of these words is particularly doubtful.

5 Abbreviations used in the glosses are: ablat - ablative case; cont - continuous; dat - dative case; dl - dual; erg - ergative case; fut - future tense; habit - habitual; imper - imperative mood; loc - locative case; nfut - non-future tense; pres - present tense; prog - progressive; purp - purposive; rel - relative clause; sense - sensory evidence; tr vb - transitive verbalizer.
EMU AND BROLGA

1. 'dinewan 'pular puralka jana yilani wušuka:ko.
   emu (female) with brolga (female) goes gathering 'wušuka
thinawan pulaarr purralka yana-ngila-nhi wuthukaa-ku.
emu two brolga go-cont-nfut root type-dat

'The emu went with the brolga to gather wuthukaa roots.'

2. 'neiruŋa 'mo: yilani
   They went over digging up it
ngaarrinka mawu-ngila-nhi over there dig-cont-nfut

'They spent their time digging.'

3. bularu 'purula:ko 'kaingil
   both many children (possessed)
pulaarr-u purrulaa-ku kaaynkil
   two-dat many-dat child

'Both of them had many children.'

4. 'ma:lu winaŋani
   one of them (i.e. the emu) thought of it (the plan to trick the brolga)
maal-u winanga-nhi
   one-erg think-nfut
jale 'ŋurago jana wondai
   as towards camp went
yalu ngurraya-ku yana-waa-ndaay
   again camp-dat go-prog-rel

'One of them thought of a trick (to play on the other) as she walked with him to camp.'

5. jalu: 'ramil a 'rindai 'ra:ruma 'puralka 'yari
   "in the morning" over there the brolga was
yalu ngami-ngari-ndaay ngarrima purralka ngarri-y
   again see-morning-rel over there brolga sit-nfut

'Next morning she saw the brolga over the way.'

6. 'puralka kokoe
   brolga asked:
purralka kakay
   brolga call out-nfut

'The brolga asked.'
7. “tala:ra nginu ‘kaingal’
where your children
thalaa? nginu kaaynkil
where you genitive child

‘Where are your children.’
Answered the emu:—

8. “a! ‘bum:ai’
ah! I killed them
aa puma-ay
ah kill-nfut

‘Ah I killed them.’

9. “’minjako?’
what for
minya-ku
what-dat

‘Why?’

10. “’kamila ‘tu boring ‘uun ‘dai
unable to feed them
kamila *nguthaRu-laa-ndaay
cannot feed-prog-rel

‘I was unable to feed them all.’

11. “’garaka! ’minjako?
poor things! what for?
ngarraka nginya-ku
poor thing what-dat

‘Poor things — why?’

12. “a! ‘kamila wuqilandai ‘toarinja
cannot feed them their food
aa kamila wuq-thila-ndaay thuwar minya
ah cannot give-?-rel food something

‘I cannot give them food enough.’

13. ‘qinda ‘bula ‘kuli:r kola tealumai ‘boma ‘la:bilika
you yourself husband ask whether you can kill them
nginta-pulaa kuliri kuwaa-la thayaluma-y puma-laa-pilika
you-self spouse speak-imper ask-fut kill-prog-?
14. 'kaminda burula: nguzaruldeigo
   you won't the whole crowd have to feed
kamil-nta purrulaa *nguthaRu-lta-yku
not-you many feed-prog-purp

'Then you won’t have to feed so many.'

15. "raleikejundi tuar: kuraldana"
   from you and me food eat too much
ngali-kii-ngunti thuwar *kuRa-lta-nha
we dl-oblique-ablat food take-prog-pres

'They take too much food from us.'

16. "ki:r! raijia koei kuli:r rai"
   yes I will tell husband mine
kiirr ngaya kuwaay kuliirr ngay
   yes I tell-nfut spouse I genitive

'Yes I will tell my husband about it.'

17. "ja:ma rali bomali kainkal gulbiri."
   will we kill children some
yaama ngali puma-li kaaynkil kulprr
   question we kill-fut child some

'Husband — will we kill some of our children?'

18. maneir raleiki jundi kuraldana minjam japul
   why are they from us eating everything
? ngali-kii-ngunti we dl-oblique-ablat
   *kuRa-lta-nha minyaminyapul take-prog-pres everything

'Why are they eating all our food?'

19. ra ki:r! bumali gaingal puralgalgar."
   ah! yes! kill children the greater part
ngaa kiirr puma-li kaaynkil purrul-kalkaa
   ah yes kill-fut child big-plural

'Oh yes. Kill most of the children.'
( The next day the female brolga meets the woman emu again while food gathering:- )

20. "ja:ma karaal"
   "how is it now"
   yaama-karra-ngal question-sense-?

['How's things?']
21. 'ra:, 'ki:r, boma'labkeir.'
ah yes I killed them
ngaa kiirr puma-laa-?
ah yes kill-prog-

['Ah yes I killed them.]

22. najil bula:r ijil ka: 'wa:na."
now two only I fetch along
nhayil pulaarr yiyal kaa-waa-nha
now two only bring-prog-pres

['Now I have only two to bring along.]

23. 'a! 'keiru:mai."
ah you did it
aa giirru-ma-ay
ah truely-tr vb-nfut

['Ah you did it.]

24. ''maruwa'§ai 'jene jene je'le
out here (like this) they walk
marra-bathaay yana-yana-yla-y
there-like go-go-prog-fut

['There they are walking along.]

25. 'maraa '§ai 'turali 'kaingal
out here all my youngers
marra-bathaay *thuRa-li kaaynkil-kalgaa
there-like ?-fut child-plural

['There the children come.]

26. jaleigol! maruwa'§ai raija 'puru'la
"this way"! out here my whole lot of
*yalaykul marra-bathaay ngaya purrulaa
this way there-like I many

'kaingal 'kar ke'reigul
children I am leading
kaaynkil kaa-?
child bring-?

['This way over there I am bringing my many children.']
EMU AND BROLGA

27. "\[\text{ ngima-palanga } yana-nhi \text{ purralka } \]
away? go-nfut brolga

[\text{ ‘The brolga went away.’}]

28. "\[\text{ ngiirr thalaa } \text{ ngarri-ylngayi-la-nhi } \]
there somewhere sit-habit-prog-past

[\text{ ‘She stayed away for some time.’}]

( The brolga is very sad at being tricked into killing her children. She remains away “twelve months” and returns. She sees the emu walking about gathering food as before. )

29. "\[\text{ ta’la } \text{ ngiirr } \text{ palanga } \text{ ngarri-ylngayi-la-nhi } \]
long distance away remained “sat down” a long time

[\text{ ‘Oh you stayed away a long time.’}]

30. "\[\text{ ngiiliminya yana-waa-nhi kamil winanga-ylngayi-la-yku } \]
from here go-prog-past not think-habit-prog-purp

[\text{ ‘I went from here so as not to be thinking about them.’}]

( The brolga woman is feeding with her mouth, her arms are hidden behind her back. She is acting a part to trick the emu. )

31. "\[\text{ ngiiliminja } \text{ jeneweinje } \text{ kamil winara-ylngayi-ylngayi-nji } \]
from here went off away so as not be thinking

[\text{ ‘Why are you eating so?’}]

32. "\[\text{ puuRi } \text{ bo} \text{ yon } \text{ ginji } a \]
it happened arms of me

[\text{ ‘Ah sister I cut off my arms.’}]

15
33. “minjako?”
what for
minya-ku
what-dat
[‘What for?’]

34. “jalai waṉai maru taldaito”
this way just like this I feed
yilaay-pathaay maru tha-lta-yku
thus-like good eat-prog-purp
[‘It is good to eat like this.’]

35. “boçon dali ba:ga”
arms feed not
pungun tha-li ?
arm eat-fut
[‘I’ll eat without using my arms.’]

36. “ra jei!”
“I see”
ngaaay
all right
[‘All right.’]

37. ‘yindu baṉai boçon gara ᑳiila you arms cut it would be good
ngintu-pathaay pungun karra-ngili-ya you-like arm cut-cont-imper
[‘You cut off your arms like this.’]

38. ‘minjako  waṉai’
what for do that
minya-ku ?
what-dat
[‘What for?’]

39. o! maru waṉai taldainda jele ᑳeia
oh good like this eating will be like myself
maru-pathaay tha-lta-ntaay yila ngaya
good-like eat-prog-rel like I
[‘Oh it would be good to eat like me.’]
40. "ya!  iralaba?ai  jana  wuindai
    ah!  when like this  I  go back
    ngaa  yilaala-pathaay  yana-wuwi-ntaay
    ah  this-like  go-back-rel

[‘Ah I’ll go back like this.’]

41.  ‘ki:r  daijalumi  koli:r  yai  ‘weira  ko:li
    yes  I will ask  husband  mine  if  say
    kiirr  thayaluma-y  kuliirr  ngay  ?  kuwaal-li
    yes  ask-fut  spouse  I genitive  speak-fut

kei ‘rirar
‘he might’
kiirru-?
truly

[‘I’ll ask my husband if he will say I can.’]

42.  ‘ya  keir.  karar*eileigo  tara  woi?indai
    oh  yes  cutting them off  tara  woi?indai
    ngaa  kiirr  karra-ngilt-yku  ?-wuwi-ngintaay
    ah  yes  cut-cont-purp  ?-back-rel

‘jera:la
bye & bye
yilaalu
later

‘Oh, yes we will cut them off tonight.’

43.  kulibarga  jereganda
    three  suns
    kulipaa-ka  *yaRakan-ta
    three-loc  sun-loc

‘Three days later.’

44.  ‘ja:ma  ‘gara  yai’
    how  cutting
    yaama-karra-ngay
    question-sense-

[‘How’s things?’]

45.  ‘ki:r  boxon  ‘kara-nilinji
    yes  arms  we have cut off
    kiirr  pungun  karra-ngili-nyi
    yes  arm  cut-cont-nfut

[‘Yes I cut off my arms.’]
NOTES ON THE TEXT

Tindale (1938:137) has the following notes from the storytellers:
formerly both the emu and brolga had large families; the old emu took two
with her and hid the others in a patch of bush. The emu tricked the brolga
(and) that is why the brolga only lays two eggs today.
The brolga when he has his wings folded does not show them very much.
After she had had her revenge, she danced and jigged with happiness — the
brolgas still do this."

A story almost identical to this Kamilaroi myth is presented in Parker (1978:17-20) as
‘Dinewan the Emu and Goomblegubbon and Bustard’. A Yuwaalarraay version of the text is
given on pp.187-9. Williams (1980:131) presents the story of emu and brolga as told to her
in Yuwaalarraay by Arthur Dodd in 1978; it is a very brief text which corresponds to the first
half of the one told by Harry Doolan.6

6 Robinson (1966:196-7) contains a text in English entitled Dinnawun and burralga, related to him by
Maria Boney, ‘Yoalarai’ (i.e. Yuwaalarraay) tribe.
EMU AND BROLGA

A mythological story similar to this is also known to descendants of the Wiradjuri who formerly occupied the country to the south of the Kamilaroi. Len ('Bushi') Kirby of Murrin Bridge has published a story entitled 'Emu and Native Companion' (Kirby 1982) which describes the trick played by brolga on emu, though no mention is made of the emu’s hiding her children. Tamsin Donaldson (personal communication) recorded a text in English entitled ‘The native companion and the emu’ from Isobel Edwards of Darlington Point on 17th July 1980. Mrs Edward’s text is almost identical to the Kamilaroi story except that the respective tricks of brolga and emu are presented in the opposite order to that presented in the text above.

The themes of these New South Wales texts recur, with some variations, across the continent. Reed (1978:114-7) presents an Emu and Brolga story from the Murray River region and Massola (1971:43) has one from south-eastern Australia (no more detailed localisation is given). In Massola’s version the Emu burns (rather than cuts) her wings off and then tricks Brolga into killing (and eating) her children. The order of events is thus reversed from the Kamilaroi text, but the same as in the story collected by Donaldson. Tindale is preparing for publication a Tanganekald (South East of South Australia) legend similar to the Kamilaroi text. In one version of the Tanganekald story there is a contest between the two birds, involving an attempt at revenge by the brolga who causes a marine flood over a large area of land favoured by the emu. In South and Western Australia we find texts dealing with emu and bustard (wild turkey), rather than brolga. Schebeck (personal communication) recorded an Adnyamathanha (Flinders Ranges) myth in which emu and bustard appear as sisters (see also Mountford 1976). Events similar to those found in the Kamilaroi text occur. Austin has also recorded a traditional text of the Jiwarrli (Gascoyne region, Western Australia) involving emu and bustard (see Butler and Austin 1985). In this story the two birds test who can fly best and who can run best. Emu’s legs stick out when he7 flies but he is able to run fast, so he is advised by bustard to cut off his wings. There is no trickery involved in the Jiwarrli text and no mention of emu tricking the other bird into killing his children.8 A Cape York peninsula version of the story in the Yadhaykenu dialect of Uradhli told by Willie Somerset is presented by Crowley (1983:391-7). Again, emu and bustard are involved and similarities to the Kamilaroi text are striking, for example, the first line (in translation) reads '[There were] two of them going for scrub yams.' The bustard tricks the emu into burning her wings off and in return the emu tricks bustard into killing her children (cf. the reversal of themes in the texts recorded by Donaldson from a person of Wiradjuri descent and by Massola). Fire is again mentioned in a story entitled ‘Nurrun the emu and manor the plain turkey’ presented in English by Bozic (1972:57-9). Interestingly, the emu and bustard are described as a married couple; unfortunately there is no location given for the text but it is possible that ‘Nurrun’ is intended to represent Wiradjuri ngurrunj ‘emu’.

Evidently, the Kamilaroi text is one version of a widespread mythological complex involving several motifs:

7 There is no indication in Jiwarrli of the sex of the protagonists. The masculine English pronoun is intended in its unmarked sense. A running competition story is also found in Merritt (1983:14-15) where a myth involving emu and curlew (not brolga or bustard) is outlined. Merritt is of Wiradjuri descent.

8 Donaldson has brought to our attention Pritchard (1929[1975]) which contains a partial emu and bustard text in pidgin English from the Ngarla area (northern Pilbara).
(a) emu and brolga (or bustard)
(b) competition (and in some places trickery)
(c) mutilation of emu by cutting or by fire
(d) brolga (or bustard) murdering her children.

These themes and texts containing them, are as widely distributed across the Australian continent, if not more so, as the well-known eaglehawk and crow myths (see Map 2).

The following are specific comments (mainly linguistic) on the Kamilaroi text:

1. line 1 — *pulaarr* is the usual word for ‘two’. Its occurrence between the two nouns here seems to indicate a use as a conjunction. *wuthukaa* is a type of edible root which grows in the black soil plains. Williams (1980:191) translates it as ‘tar vine’.

2. line 3 — the occurrence of dative *-ku* on *purrulaa* does not appear to be correct because the sense is ‘of the two [there were] many children’.

3. line 8 — preceding lines 8, 10, 12 in the margin Tindale wrote ‘emu’. Preceding lines 9, 11, 15 in the margin is ‘brolga’.

4. line 10 — the root of the verb in this sentence is not to be found in other Kamilaroi materials. The use of the relative clause form here suggests it is offered as a reason ‘because I cannot (continue to) feed them’ (see also lines 12, 39, 40).

5. line 12 — the element 

6. line 14 — this example shows a bound subject marker affixed to the negative particle. The medial *l* is morphophonemically deleted.

7. line 15 — the vowel length of the oblique stem formant is not certain, but compare Ngiyampaa *-ki/N-* (Donaldson (1980:123)).

8. line 17 — in the margin Tindale wrote ‘brolga to husband’.

9. line 18 — the word *maneir* is unclear; normally ‘why?’ is based upon *minya* ‘what’.

10. line 19 — in the margin Tindale wrote ‘old man brolga’.

11. line 20 — in the margin Tindale wrote ‘emu’. The analysis of this sentence is somewhat tentative but it is likely that it is a greeting consisting of *yaama*, the question introducer, plus *-karra*, a clitic indicating a statement based upon sensory evidence. A parallel construction is found in Ngiyampaa (see Donaldson, 1986: 139). Identification of the final syllable is unclear. There it is written as *-ngal* and in line 44 as *-ngay*. Austin recorded a Kamilaraay greeting *yaamangay*, which seems also to contain *-ngay*.

12. line 21 — in this margin Tindale wrote ‘brolga’. The analysis of *bakeir* is unclear. It may contain *kiirr* ‘truly’.

13. line 23 — in the margin Tindale wrote ‘emu’.

14. line 25 — the verb in this sentence is not found in other Kamilaroi materials.

15. line 27 — a suffix *-palanga* is also found in Williams’s text (1980:131). She was unable to gloss it.

16. line 29 — in the margin preceding lines 29, 31, 33, 36, 38, 40 and 45 is ‘emu’. Preceding lines 30, 32, 34, 37, 39, 44 and 46 is ‘brolga’.

17. line 37 — under *baaaj* Tindale has ‘wajai’, like this, ‘better go, had better’.

18. line 42 — in the margin Tindale wrote ‘emu husband’.

19. line 43 — the usual Kamilaroi term for ‘sun’ is *yaray*.

9 See Maddock 1978 for a comparison of myths of this type (which he calls ‘Southern’) and Dalabon texts featuring the emu.
EMU AND BROGLA

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LEAVING THE SIMPSON DESERT

Luise Hercus

INTRODUCTION

Whenever — as appears to be common these days — people claim they are the first to cross the Simpson Desert from south to north or west to east, walking or running, in winter or summer, they forget that others were there before them: the Simpson Desert was home for generations of Aboriginal people. The southern Simpson Desert was the territory of the Wangkangurru. Their only permanent source of water was what they called mikiri. These were small soaks: they were described for the first time by David Lindsay in the journal of his expedition into the Simpson Desert in 1886. He visited nine of these soaks with the help of a Wangkangurru man named ‘Paddy’. Thanks to brilliant navigation by Dennis Bartell, who had studied Lindsay’s journal and worked out distances in camel-time, the prehistorian

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22
Peter Clark and I were able to visit these nine soaks in May 1983. ¹ It was a unique experience to see the places which I had heard about for many years from Wangkangurru people, and to find exact confirmation of what they had spoken and sung about. For instance there is a deep trench at the Pirlakaya soak, there are white rocks on the sandhill just north of Pilpa.

¹ A brief account of this trip, with strong emphasis on the use of four wheel drive vehicles, appeared in the Overlander, August 1983 (pp.30-37). It was written by Tony Love.
Plate 2: At the Pudlowinna soak, Dennis Bartell and Tony Love are using the hand-auger.
Photo by J. Knight

Plate 3: The remains of a humpy at Parlani soak.
Photo by J. Knight
LEAVING THE SIMPSON DESERT

Beelpa soak. The soaks are all different from one another, they have their own special character, but in some ways they are all similar: they are shallow depressions in low-lying areas. Wangkangurru people got down to the water by digging narrow tunnels, in some cases over 20ft deep. There were more of these soaks than the nine visited by Lindsay, at least sixteen that we know of, with water of varying quality. After rains people could move away from the soaks and get water from the many *irpi* ‘claypans’ and *ikara* ‘swamps’. There are accounts of people digging deep channels in the claypans so that water would stay there longer to delay the necessity of having to go back to the soaks. One of the traditional song cycles of Wangkangurru literature deals with the theme of the poor taste of the water of one of the soaks, *Pulupudnunha* (Lindsay’s ‘Boolaburtinna’ soak) and people longed for rain so that they could go out to the swamps, but the soaks were always there when all the surface water had dried out: there was no reason to leave the desert.

There can be no doubt about it, Wangkangurru people lived and died in the desert: the artefacts around the *mikiri* and the burial sites bear witness to that.² They had matrimonial and ceremonial links with lower Southern Aranda people, and trade-links much further afield still: there are accounts of Wangkangurru people going to Anna Creek to get grinding dishes, and to Parachilna in the Flinders Ranges to collect red ochre. This meant that groups of Wangkangurru men visited their neighbours (as did other Aboriginal people) and went on long expeditions, but their home was, and remained, the Simpson Desert. In the summer of 1899-1900, however, lured by tales of plenty, they left the Simpson desert never to return.

By 1965 there were only three Wangkangurru people left who were born in the desert. They were:

- **Maudie Naylon Akawiljika**, born about 1885, probably at *Marrapardi*, the Murraburt soak. She died in Birdsville in 1981.
- **Mick McLean Irinjili**, born about 1888 at *Pirlakaya*, the Beelaka soak. He died at Pt Augusta in 1977. His immense store of traditional knowledge made him a legend in his own lifetime.
- **Topsy McLean Ikiwiljika**, born in about 1898 at *Puluwani*, the Poolowanna soak, called Pudlowinna by Lindsay. Topsy, who was Mick McLean’s sister, was only a small child when she left, and had to be carried. She only had second-hand knowledge about the desert, from her parents and other relatives. She died in 1974.

Both Mick McLean and Maudie Naylon were in ‘the *mikiri* country’ long enough to regard it as their home and they constantly spoke of it, particularly Mick. The late Graham Hercus and I, and later Bob Ellis (from the Aboriginal Heritage Unit of South Australia) made several attempts to take Mick McLean back to his country, but he was old and ill, and convinced that he would die there, which he very nearly did.

Mick McLean was a brilliant speaker of Southern Aranda as well as Wangkangurru and worked with T.G.H. Strehlow. He naturally wanted to talk about the desert. In his famous 1970 article on ‘Totemic Landscape’ T.G.H. Strehlow appears to have misunderstood Mick McLean when he used Wangkangurru terms: this is probably one of the very few minor errors he ever made. *ikara* (‘jikara’) is the Wangkangurru word for ‘swamp’. Strehlow thought it meant ‘freshwater lake’, and then listed under that name most of the Simpson Desert.

² We found burial sites in the immediate vicinity of several of the *mikiri*. See Peter Clarke (MS).
soaks. He wrote (p.93):

‘Erenjeli had been given the names of the larger freshwater lakes by his male relatives, who had left this area only about the turn of the century’.

In the note referring to this passage (p.135) he listed Pulawini, Marabati, Murkarana, Kalijikana, Jatalkna, Palkuru, Palarinuna, Pirbana, Pilakaija, Kalalumba, Parapara, Walbarka, Puruputu, Palani, Madluna.

These places were soaks: this is corroborated by the evidence of the last desert Wangkangurru people, by Lindsay’s description, and by all the evidence we gathered on our visit. There was nothing secret-sacred about either the names or the actual soaks, nothing that belonged only to the ‘male relatives’. Everybody had to know the names, everybody had to live at the soaks when the surface water dried out. There were long song cycles and myths centred on the soaks. All these myths had secret-sacred sections, but by sheer necessity the soaks themselves had to be common property. Maudie Naylon knew the names and the places and the greater part of the myths just as well as did Mick McLean.

There were secret-sacred places in the Simpson desert, but they were not soaks: apart from several outcrops of gypsum these were claypans, such as for instance MaRarru, the Two Men (Initiation History) ritual centre. Men went there for ceremonies when conditions were suitable. Some women had to be present too, but only on the periphery: they certainly could not visit this site casually when foraging.

In conversations with Mick McLean we usually somehow ended up speaking about ‘the mikiri country’. In August 1970, he gave a detailed account of how his people left the desert. This account is in Wangkangurru with a few sentences in English, and it is transcribed here in a practical orthography, and with a grammatical gloss: details of the orthography and of the abbreviations used in the gloss are listed at the end of this paper. Some minor changes have been made to the sequence of the story as told by Mick McLean, particularly where we had some interruptions.
LEAVING THE SIMPSON DESERT

Text

1 M.\textit{thangka-libarna arni} Palkuru-nga.

Stay -ANC we (excl) Balcoora\textsuperscript{2} - LOC.

\textit{anthunha apirla, payayi-kunha arluwa}

My cousin\textsuperscript{4}, aunt -of child

\textit{katha-nangka-ngura} Riley\textsuperscript{5}-kunha kaku

walk -CONT S - CONT Riley -of elder sister

\textit{katjiwiRi Anpanuwa, ukakunha apayi.}

big Anpanuwa, her younger brother.

2 \textit{uka anthunha withiwa \ anthunha apirla-pula}

He my male cousin my cousin-two

Palkuru-nga mingka mirpa-nga, mingka

Balcoora-LOC hole dig out-IMP, hole

Translation

1 M. We were all living at Balcoora.\textsuperscript{3} There was my female cross-cousin, older than me,\textsuperscript{4} daughter of my father's sister, and there were Riley's\textsuperscript{5} big sister Anpanuwa and her younger brother.

2 This male cross cousin of mine and the two girl cousins older than me, we all used to dig holes in the loose

\*M. refers to Mick McLean. As the whole text is from him the abbreviation is not repeated except where there are a few questions from L. (Luise Hercus).

\textsuperscript{3} The Balcoora soak is within the Simpson Desert Conservation Park. Lindsay (MS: p.4) describes his visit there in 1886 as follows:

'... top of sandhill at 6.50 — met 5 natives who were friends of our boy — they said water was only a "pickaninny way" travelled on until 8 oclock being tired of the natives "one fellow sandhill then catch him water".

Camped on a good flat — no spinifex today.

Saturday 9th. Unable to get an observation for Latitude. Thermometer 48° at 5.15 a.m. On bearing 45 at 6.45 over a sandhill and at 6.55 came to the well.... The well is on the slope of a depression, not in the centre as is the case with the others, it is 20ft deep and sloping.

Some large native Miamias are here'.

Subsequently (p.6) he mentions:

'We had brought another native with us from Balcoora, our boy not being very sure about finding these later wells', [he is referring to soaks in the eastern part of the Simpson desert].

\textsuperscript{4} \textit{apirla}. The basic meaning of this kinship term is 'unmarriageable woman of the opposite moiety and of one's own or the alternate generation level'. The shade of meaning intended here is 'older female cross-cousin', and it may refer to Maudie Naylon \textit{Akawilijika}: according to her own account she spent some of her earlier years at the same camp with Mick McLean, and they both jokingly recalled how she could boss him about because she was a big girl while he was only little. She however probably left earlier and was not part of the group that finally left from Balcoora. The term \textit{apirla} is given as 'abila' by Elkin (1938:64). It corresponds to the Adnjamathanha word \textit{ngaparla}, (for the loss of initial \textit{ng} see Hercus 1979 and for details about \textit{ngaparla} see Schebeck, Hercus and White 1973). Interestingly enough the geographically intervening language, Arabana, uses the less closely related term \textit{pilja}.

\textsuperscript{5} Anpanuwa was the second oldest of the Naylon family. She had several brothers; the brother who was close in age to Mick McLean was probably Jimmy Naylon \textit{Arpilintika}, who died in Birdsville in about 1965. His brother Riley Naylon was considerably younger: he was born after the departure from the Simpson Desert. He was a brilliant stockman and horse-breaker (see the illustration 'Riley rides the skewbald colt' in Farwell 1950 p.32). He died in Port Augusta in 1978.

27
(continued)

2 mirpa-rna pudnu-ruku kutha yatjapara
dig out -IMP, heap - ALL water sparrow
6
pirda-lhuku kutha pirpa-lhuku kutha
kill -PURP water- pour -HIST water
kudni-lhiku puthu-ru, mingka kutha-
put -HIST dish- INST, hole water-
marna-li - ma -lhuku.
mouth-ADV-make-HIST.

2 (continued)
ground (by the soak) so that
we could kill 'sparrows'.
We used to pour out water
that we got from a wooden
dish and put the water into
the hole, we filled the hole
right up to the rim.

(continued)

3 irlna yatjapara mapu thika-rna, partjarna
Thus sparrow mob come-IMP, all
wila-wila thika-rna mapa - rna -yi
multitude come-IMP assemble- -IMP -ACT
-thika-lhuku, kutha thuuru puntha-lhuku
-come-HIST, water inside drink -PURP
kutha-nga mapa -rnda.
water-LOC assemble -PRES.

3 Then a mob of 'sparrows'
would come, a huge number
would get together to come
there. They would flock to­
gether to drink the water
inside the hole.

4 pula-ru nhatji-nangka-rda mingka,
might be
Two-ERG watch-CONT S-PRES hole,
murlapara7 too! pula-ru wilpilpurru
pigeon Two-Erg branches
punta-yi-kanha, brush'm in.
break-ACT-PERF,

4 Two of us would be watch­
ing that hole all the time,
there might even be a top­
knot pigeon!7 We used to
break off branches and
brush the birds into the
hole.

5 uta kari-nha pirda-lhuku partjarna
Then they-ACC kill -HIST all
mingka-nga. kathi ngurku, njari-njara, kathi
hole- LOC. Meat good, tiny, meat
mardu, thiki-lhiku, wadni-lhiku.
sweet, take-HIST, cook -HIST.

5 Then we killed them all in
the hole. That was good
meat, only a tiny amount
on each, but it was sweet.
We would take them back
(to our humpy) and cook
them.

6 yatjapara was the Arabana-Wangkangurru name for the orange chat, Ephthianura aurifrons. It seems
that chats were widely called 'sparrow' in the Lake Eyre basin. Gason 1879:286 mentions a Diyari
term for 'sparrow', and Johnston 1943:286 considers that the name 'sparrow' refers to the closely
related gibber bird or desert chat Ashbyia lovensis, but this does not occur in Arabana country and
yatjapara certainly does. Although they can exist in a very arid environment all the chats are easily
attracted to water. Two important mound-springs in Arabana are called Yatjaparanha on account of
this. It was usually considered pathetically small as a food item, and this feature is emphasised in
several legends, most notably in the Emu History from Mierantana Waterhole on the Macumba, where
a grandson feeds his blind grandfather on yatjapara 'sparrows', while he himself has lovely feasts of
emu down-wind from where the old man is sitting.

7 muriapara is the top-knot pigeon which was considered a much more desirable item of food than
'sparrows'.

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LEAVING THE SIMPSON DESERT

6 L. thutirla thadlu, karna padni?
Boy only, man not?

M. karna katji-nangka-ngura, karna wila-wila.
Man turn-CONT S CONT, men multitude,

uljurla kari yuka-ka pawa-ku pawa
woman they go -PAST seed -DAT seed

karra-rna ikara-nga, thirthi-pawa.
seek -IMP swamp-LOC, pigface -seed.

7 thutirla mankarra-kari thangka-ngura kutha-nga,
Boy girl -they sit -CONT water-LOC,
anthunha withiwa katjiwiRi, arluwa
my male cousin big, child

katjiwiRi karawali kathi-nga katha-ngura
big youth meat-LOC walk -CONT

pirda-lhuku, yatjapara tharni-rna -thu,
kill -PURP, sparrow eat -IMP -EMPH.

8 thutirla-ru -thu pantu -nga warra-rna.
Boy -ERG-EMPH salt lake -LOC play -IMP.

L. kultji?
round stone?

M. No. mathapurda katjiwiRi irlina warra-rnda
No. Old man big thus play -PRES
kultji-ri.8
stone -INST.

9 uta thangka-lhuku walta nguru-nga walta
Now sit -HIST time other -LOC time
nguru-nga. malka ngurka-rina week malka
other -LOC. Not know -DIST week not
ngurka-rina month malka ngurka-rina year,
know -DIST month not know -DIST year,
malka ngurka-rina irlangkuta
not know -DIST thus

how long we been there,

ngarka nguru ngarka nguru thangka-rda.
evening other evening other stay -PRES.

8 kultji means ‘round stone’ and the term was also used for the game which was played with such a
(Footnote 8 continued on next page)
We did know the cold of winter-time and the heat of summer. We all lived there together and my father went about killing carpet-snakes: we had meat and were satisfied. We weren't really worrying about food, not like today when people eat every five minutes!

In the end ...

L. The soak dried out?
M. No, we had plenty of water. There were a lot of humpies there and we all got water from the soak, we had a big camp there.

There was a big camp at Murraburt (the westernmost Simpson soak). There was also a camp at Mokari and a big camp at Padlarina. That's not far from the Kallakoopah. We came through there afterwards, when we were getting ready to leave that country.

(Footnote 8 continued)

stone. Mick McLean always stressed that the game was like cricket. It was played in large flat areas such as claypans by grown men as light entertainment after special ceremonial occasions, particularly initiation. There is a song-sequence about the game in the Two Men Initiation History.

Carpet-snakes were a much sought after item of food throughout the Lake Eyre basin, but they were hard to catch. Men risked their lives digging for them in the sandhills: they dug out the burrows of carpet-snakes and the resulting tunnel could easily cave in.

Mokari is in the western Simpson desert. It is not one of the main soaks: it is known as a Dog History site. The name Mokari is now used for a well developed air-strip used in oil exploration in the Macumba lease area of the Simpson desert.
13 L. *mina-hu* mikiri thadna-ka?

What -DAT soak (country) leave -PAST?

M. anaku, kari yanhi-lihiku arni yuka-rnda

I don't know. They say -HIST we go -PRES

kudnangkari karla-rku ngarrimatha-nga

south creek-ALL flood -LOC

thangka-lhuku.

stay -PURP.

13 L. Why did you leave the *mikiri* country?

M. I don't know. They (the adults) started saying: 'We'll go down south to the creek and stay there by the flood-waters'.

14 kutha karla-ngu karla-ngu, karla-ngu

water creek-LOC flow-CONT, creek-LOC

thangka-lhuku parru tharni-lihiku.

stay -PURP bream eat -PURP.

kari yanhi-laminta-rnda thadna-rnda nguRa

They talk -RECIP -PRES leave -PRES camp arla.

true.

14 'There is water flowing in the creek, we can stay by the creek and eat bony bream'. They talked like this amongst themselves and so they left their own country.

15 yuka-rnda Punarani -riku, waljpala

Go -PRES Poonarunna11 -ALL. Whitefellow

thangka-ngu, out-station kari thangka-liparna,

stay -CONT, they stay -ANC,

but I didn't know that then.

15 They were going to Poonarunna.11 There were whitefellows there, living on an out-station, but I didn't know that then.

16 My father had seen whitefellows, but my mother and I hadn't. I was a little boy when he left me at Balcoora to go and get red ochre from over there at Parachilna.

Parachilna-rku kari yuka-ngu anha

-ALL they go -CONT me

thadna-ma thutirle njara, arni nguRa-ngu

leave -IMP boy small, we EXCL camp -LOC

thangka-ngu.

stay -CONT.

16 My father had seen whitefellows, but my mother and I hadn't. I was only a little boy when he left me at Balcoora to go and get red ochre from over there at Parachilna.

They went off to Parachilna, leaving me behind as a small boy. We went on staying in our camp (at Balcoora).

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11 The Poonarunna out-station was in use for only a short while, it was already abandoned at the time of Gregory's visit in 1901. When Mick McLean first arrived there it was still inhabited: this dates the events described by Mick McLean in this paper as taking place in 1899-1900. This date coincides with drought conditions over much of southern and central Australia, and good rains in parts of Queensland, which caused floods in the Diamantina and the Kallakoopah which is simply a branch of the Diamantina.
16 (continued)
The end of that railway was along Beltana in that time, waru yarndi, long, long ago.

17 He made a song out of that, my old man, Wangkangurru song:

v.1. Railway yarilu waya'
    tralaa tralaa
    Beltana yarilu waya'
    tralaa tralaa

yarilu waya' Beltana yarilu'
    tralaa tralaa Beltana tralaa.

warritha-ru thupu nhatji -rna: afar -ABL smoke watch -IMP:

v.2. kali'ngkrima kayiya'
    kali'ngkrima na' kali'ngkrima yayai'
    wandura warritha' far away

wanduraliya

That is all song words for maka-thupu wanka-ngura.
    fire -smoke rise -CONT.

18 walta nguru-nga antha katjiwiRi-thin -ina train
    Time other-LOC I big -become
    nhanhi-lhiku, maka-thupu tharka-ngura, train
    see -PURP, fire -smoke stand -CONT, train

maka-thi-ya! maka-thupu nhanhi -lhiku
    fire -EMPH! fire -smoke see -PURP

waya-rnda.
    wish-PRES.

I did see'em in the end, when I went to Peake, Warrina.

18 Later, as I was growing up, I wanted to see a train. I wanted to see the smoke going up in a continuous column, oh how I wanted to see the fire of a train! I wanted to see the smoke of that fire!

I did see it in the end, when I went to Peake Station, at Warrina (the siding used by people from Peake, see J.W. Gregory 1906:140).

12 This statement involves a chronological problem. At the time of the exodus from the Simpson desert Mick was about 12 years old, and there are other pieces of evidence which confirm that he was born about 1888. The railway line ended at Beltana in 1881, it was continued to the north after that, reaching Marree in January 1884 (Fuller 1975), so Mick McLean’s father Pintha-Mirri must have been to Parachilna before Mick was born. It seems likely that Mick telescoped into one the two or more visits to Parachilna that he had heard about as a child. Obviously – and Mick’s account makes this very clear – the men who had been on the long and adventurous journey talked and sang about it for years. (For discussions about journeys for red ochre see Gason 1879:280, Horne and Aiston 1924:128, and Elkin 1934:5).
Leaving the Simpson Desert

19 anthunha anja, not proper anja but belonging to
My father, father
Finke, he call'm cousin my anja, kari nguyu-nga
father, they one -LOC
yuka-ka, uka-ru malaru pantu malaru
go -PAST he -ERG however salt lake however
kari-nangka-ngura, pantu katjiwi Ri kathi
see -CONT S-CONT, salt lake big -Lake
Thandra.
Eyre.

'20 He got a song there too that same time:
Kathi- Thanda' warda'yi yadle'yi ya Kathi- Thanda'
Lake Eyre over there close Lake Eyre
wamara wamara pantjina'nga te'yi ya Kathi Thanda'
Wind wind circle round Lake Eyre
warde'yi warde'yi ya Kathi-Thanda' yala'.
there there Lake Eyre.

21 My uncle Tjangili, he find this song.
Tjarlpa Parkulu Kinpili. uka-kunha arhuwa nguyu,
Trees Two Kinpili. He-POS child one,
mankarra,
girl,
while we at Palkuru,
katha-nina puthu-nga
go -DIST dish -LOC.

22 uka thangka-liparna, muyu nguru muyu nguru
He stay -ANC, day other day other
thangka-rda
stay -PRES
I might as well give you Kanti-purrunha:
Kanti pulpa'ra ya'ra rapinta'nayi
wadlhu 'kanha pulpa- ra marnda, waranga?
Ground him powder-CAUS make, where?
This is Tjangili's song, he made it on the way back
from Parachilna.

19 My father, not my real
father but a man belonging
to the Finke, who called my
father 'cousin' — they all
went together (down to
Parachilna), he however was
fascinated by the salt lake,
that vast salt lake called
Lake Eyre.

20 So he got a song for Lake
Eyre on that same occasion,
(the journey to Parachilna):
Lake Eyre is just there close
by, Lake Eyre.
The whirlwind circles
around, it circles around
Lake Eyre.
Lake Eyre is just there close
by, Lake Eyre.

21 My uncle Tjangili, he found
this song (i.e. it came to
him as an inspiration).
The song called The Two
Trees was found by Kinpili.
He (Tjangili) had only one
child, a (baby) girl, and
while we were at Balcoora
they carried her about in a
wooden dish.

22 He stayed on, day after day
he stayed.
I might as well give you his
song about the waddy (which
he had lost).
My waddy can smash the
ground to powder,
My waddy, where is it?
This is Tjangili's song. He
composed that too on the
way back from Parachilna.
Near the soak there was always nardoo in the swamps, native pear (Cynanchum floribundum), and also pig-face and parakeelya in the wintertime. In the heat of summer they still foraged to satisfy our hunger and we ate mulga-apples, mulga gall.

The roots of trees were dry when they left that country to go down to the creek. L. Was it to see old man Marna-Wiljpa?
M. It was to go to his country, he was calling for us.

There was a big lot of wild parsnip (Trachymene glaucifolia) growing on the loose soil, watered by the flood. The creek was flowing.

That creek was not like this the time we went there. (in August 1969). Some time I'll take you to show you their country, but the creek has been buried and filled in with soil.
They finally set out, they
got ready to travel south.
They went carrying water in
waterbags made of hare-
wallaby (Lagorchestes) skin
and rat-kangaroo (Calo-
prymnus) skin. They took
water from the soak (at
Balcoora). It was good, cool
water.
You don’t want to drink all
the time.

There was cold water in the
bags, the waterbags, and we
pulled out the waterbags to
pour water into a wooden
dish. The women carried the
water for everybody, they
went without the (heavy)
nardoo-stones.

My mother carried Topsy in
a wooden dish. I was a boy
and went running along. My
two younger fathers (my
father’s two younger
brothers) were there too.
One died at Finnis Springs,
the other at Macumba.

We started walking and on
our way we stopped at the
Pudlowinna14 soak to the
south (of Balcoora). We
stayed there for two days
before leaving. We headed
south from Pudlowinna, but
then we came back and
stopped again at Pudlowinna
to get more water.

Pudlowinna is Lindsay’s version of the name of the soak north of the big saltlake named Poolowanna
on modern maps. It is not very far from Balcoora to Pudlowinna.

(Footnote 14 continued on next page)
My grandmother died, my grandmother from Urlirda (an important Southern Aranda site of uncertain location on the lower Finke). She was my paternal grandmother, the grandmother of the opposite moiety, an old, very old woman. They buried her at Irlipaltja, away to the south, between Pudlowinna and Padlaringu.

That poor old woman just couldn't walk any further, she was there just like a bullock (that has been overrun). She had become quite emaciated and was so weak that she could not move. She was so weak that she died there. Just like an old cow she just couldn't walk any further.

(Footnote 14 continued)

Lindsay gives the following account (MS:p.11):

'This was a good well with a good supply but some dead thing must have got into the water as it was absolutely rotten and made us sick'.

He also speaks of a 'magnificent flat'.

Pudlowinna is indeed situated in a well vegetated low-lying area. The immediate surrounds of the soak were surprisingly green at the time of our visit to the area in 1983 and on a subsequent occasion in 1984. This was the only soak at which we saw reasonably preserved wooden artefacts, a shield and a spear.

15 Irlipaltja is not a soak. It is probably the name of a particularly big sandhill: sandhills of major size or significance all had distinct names in Wangkangurru country.

16 Disrespect was the last thing Mick McLean would have intended by this expression. He loved his paternal grandmother and moreover she represented his main link with the southern Aranda country around the lower Finke. He was simply evoking a pathetic picture, one that he must have witnessed many times while mustering.

On another occasion Mick McLean described to Sally White and me how his father had actually carried the sick woman on that trip over the sandhills for several days until she died.
LEAVING THE SIMPSON DESERT

33 L. kari muyu kulpari thangka-ngura?
They day three sit -CONT?
M. anthunha apirla -nga? ko, muyu
my paternal grandmother-LOC? Yes, day
kulpari thangka-ngura, ukaliri yuka-lhuku ariarda
three sit -CONT, then go -PURP ready
witji -rna kudnangkari yuka-lhuku
become-IMP south go -HIST
(Padlaringu-ruku) kudnangkari yuka-lhuku,
(Padlaringu-ALL) south go -HIST,
going south all the time.

34 L. minha tharni-ka?
What eat -PAST?
M. Plenty kathi, thalka, yadluru, kadnungka.
meat, bilby, lesser bilby, hare wallaby.

L. pawa padni?
Flour nothing?

M. pawa njurdu, wanpa-nguru kardapu-nga.
Flour too, carry -CONT head -LOC.

L. ngalta -nga?
Headband-LOC?
M. wirinja-nga. wirinja karra-rna kardapu-nga
Nest -LOC. Nest tie -IMP head -LOC
kudni-lhiku ngalta -nga wanpa-lhuku pawa
put -HIST headband-LOC carry -HIST flour
ipa -yiwa-lhuku, irlana-thu mudlu -nga,
grind -TR -PURP, Thus -EMPH sandhill -LOC,
parra-lhuku mudlu -nga.
travel-HIST sandhill-LOC.
tjarlpa wadni-wa-lhuku, nguRa marra-nga
Food cook -TR-HIST, camp new -LOC
kurda-yiwa-lhuku.
sleep -TR -HIST.

33 L. And did they stay there for three days?
M. For my paternal grandmother? Yes. We sat there
for three days and then we
got ready to travel south
to Padlaringu, and then we
went south again, travelling
south all the time.

34 L. What did you eat?
M. There was plenty of meat,
there were bilbies (*Macrotis
lagotis*), lesser bilbies (*Mac-
rotis leucura*), and hare
wallabies (*Lagorchestes
leporoides*).
L. Didn’t you have any grass
seed?
M. We had grass seed too,
they used to carry it on
their heads.
L. On top of the head-
band?
M. In a ‘nest’. They tied up
this nest and put it on
their heads on the head-
band. They carried grass
seed so that they could
grind flour. This is how they
travelled on the sandhills,
over sandhill after sandhill.
They cooked food on their
journey, and they slept in a
different camp every night.
35 then, early one morning as we were walking and going up (a sandhill) the old man said:

‘This sandhill here is called Thikira. It (represents) the Ancestral Crane, it belongs to the Ancestral Crane. It is a high and steep sandhill. This is where the Crane left (the creek country).’

36 there is a soakage here, a main soakage that is called Pawa-mingka ‘Grass seed Hole’. It is right in the creek, and there is a big sandhill just above.

37 there (on this steep sandhill?) is this stone from the History Time . . .

L. When did you first see another mob of people?
M. nothing on the way.

M. Over there on the Big Creek, the Diamantina.
There was nothing, nobody on the way. They were living on the Diamantina.

17 The sandhills in question were on the western side of the Simpson desert in the area around Tuppana waterhole on the lower Macumba. Mick McLean had an uncanny memory for places; he led us to the remains of a cattle-rustler’s yard on the lower Diamantina about seventy years after he had last visited that area. Near Tuppana however the sandhills had been eroded and changed so much that even he very nearly got lost.
LEAVING THE SIMPSON DESERT

37 (continued)

Pirlakayanha is further east, most from that country already gone karla-nga thanga-ngura, Marree, creek-LOC sit -CONT, Killalpannina.

38

arni yuka-ka
We go -PAST
we’re not the last, last people my uncle kaka Imatuwa, kaka arla anthunha, ukakunha uncle Imatuwa, uncle true mine, his ama kari nhata, nhata kari yuka-rna mother they behind, behind they go -PRES arni-nha wampa-rna-rnda, uta ipali us -ACC chase -SP- PRES, already before yuka-ka.
go -PAST.18

39

arni yuka-rna kutha paka-rna -yangu itijiltji
We go -PRES water dig -SP -PLUP soakage anthunha anja -ru kutha ngunta-ka:
my father-ERG water show -PAST: nhararda kutha itijiltjayi!! uta paka-lhuku!
Here water soakage!! Now dig-PURP!

40

kathi pirda-lhuku yuka-ngura mudlu-nga meat kill -HIST go -CONT sandhill-LOC mudluwaltu ngadla wadnangkani, kapirri, kadni rat-kangaroo many carpet-snake, goanna, frillneck yadla pirda-yi -ngura close kill -ACT-CONT old men kill’m, mob old men, Riley’s father,19 karna partjarna wapayi-ka kari anthunha mapu man all finish -PAST they my mob anthunha wathili mapu, partjarna wapayi-ka.
my own mob, all finish -PAST.

37 (continued)

Beelaka is further east (than Balcoora). Most of the people from that country had already gone. They were living by the Diamantina, at Marree and at Killalpannina.

38 We went on. We were not the last people, the last were (those with) my uncle, my proper uncle Imatuwa. He came back for his mother and those with her. They came behind, they were behind us. He was chasing people (out of the desert), he had already left before, but came back.18

39 We went digging a soakage for water, my father showed us.
‘Here is soakage water!!
Now dig!’

40 They went to kill meat on the sandhill, they got rat-kangaroos (Caloprymnus) and many carpet snakes, goannas and frillneck lizards. They got them quite close by. A mob of old men killed them, Riley’s father,19 and all those old men who are now dead, my mob, my own mob. They are all dead now.

18 Mick McLean recalled on another occasion how Imatuwa had left the desert earlier with a group of people from Beelaka, and how he returned to collect all his relatives.

19 Riley Naylon’s father Ngunili was a ritual leader of the grass-seed history.
41 You know where you been

pathara nhanhi -lhiku kadni ularaka-nganha

box-tree see -HIST frillneck History-from

kadnha -nga that’s where my cousin kumpira

mountain -LOC dead

Thirili

Thirili

all come with my mob.

42 kurda-yiwa-lhuku Makaru-thakanili.

Camp -TR -HIST ‘Fire by-striking’ (Wild Dog Hole).

(Punarani -nga) pudluka wila-wila, manaputu.

(Poonarunna-LOC) bullock multitude, don’t know.

antili nhanhi-lhiku nhantu, pudluka.

First time see -HIST horse, bullock.

43 mikiri -nga malka thangka-ka rapiti: thalka,

Desert -LOC not sit -PAST rabbit:21 bilby,

mudduwlutu, yadiluru, parkaya, kadnunnga

rat-kangaroo, lesser bilby, bettong, hare wallaby

njurdu thangka-ngura Pampilta -nga

also sit -CONT Pompapillinna-LOC

kadnunnga thangka-ngura mudlu -nga.

hare wallaby sit -CONT sandhill -LOC.

44 kari-ri nguni-ri anha damper tharni-lhiku,

They-ERG give -NAR me damper eat -PURP,

malka tharni-li, madla, pawa athu ngurka-yira

not eat -HAB, bad, seed I know -PUNC

tharni-ra ‘thu.

eat -PUNC I.

20 The reference here is to an increase site for frillneck lizards and for witchetty grubs. Box-bark had been used in the ritual and we were looking at the trees from which bark had been stripped long ago. The site is in Arabana country near Mt Coppertop in the Peake and Denison Ranges.

21 The soaks in the Simpson desert are surrounded by large deposits of fragments of bones of animals, birds and lizards that had all been cooked and eaten there. The mammal remains were of bettongs and other small marsupials, there was no sign of rabbit remains. The only exception was at Murraburt, the westernmost soak, and we surmised that people must have revisited this soak, coming from Dalhousie at a later period. (Peter Clarke, MS).
LEAVING THE SIMPSON DESERT

LINGUISTIC EFFECTS OF THE MOVE FROM THE DESERT.

The people who lived in the Simpson Desert following the life-style described above by Mick McLean called themselves *Wangkangurru mikiri-nganha* ‘Wangkangurru people from the soaks’ (the name Wangkangurru is based on *wangka* ‘speech’, *ngurru* ‘strong, hard’). They also called themselves *Wangkangurru Mungathirri-nganha* ‘Wangkangurru from the high sand-hill country’. These terms were used to distinguish them from the *Wangkangurru karlanganha*, the Wangkangurru from the Creek (i.e. the Diamantina and the Kallakoopah). The people ‘from the Creek’ also called themselves *Marlupapu-nganha* ‘from the Marlupapu country’, as well as *Wangka-tjaka* and *Wangka-tjari* ‘little language’.

Wangkangurru people obviously had an advantage over some of the other groups in the northeast of South Australia: the Yawarawarka for instance were fenced out of their own lands, poisoned food was put out for them and they were hunted down. They had to seek refuge at the mission at Killalpannina (see Farwell 1950:160). Wangkangurru people left their country of their own volition, over a prolonged period, and the exodus described by Mick McLean was the second-last of what was presumably a number of similar events. Wangkangurru people, both ‘from the Creek’ and ‘from the high sandhills’ went to a number of different destinations as is evident from the testimony of the people themselves and from all the written sources, particularly Horne and Aiston (1924) and Basedow (MS). They went not only to the mission at Killalpannina but also to Birdsville, to the stations at Andrewilla, Alton Downs, Pandie Pandie, Mt Gason, and Mundowdna, to Marree, Finniss Springs, Anna Creek, Peake, Oodnadatta, Macumba and Dalhousie. The population became completely fragmented although to this day the descendants of Wangkangurru people are aware of their original unity.

The Wangkangurru ‘from the high sandhills’ were divided into a number of local groups but they spoke one language. This was still evident in the 1960s: the speech of the people born in the Simpson desert showed no more than the ordinary variation one finds between individuals. One or two younger persons who had been brought up by parents who both came from the desert, and people who spent their early years in a similar environment all spoke in the *mikiri* way, down to small details of intonation and emphasis. There are now only two people left, two sisters at Birdsville who speak what one might call the pure Simpson desert form of Wangkangurru. Other people of Wangkangurru descent at Birdsville were brought up among speakers of Yarluyandi, Mithaka and Ngurlupurlu. Their speech is still Wangkangurru, but with a few differences particularly in intonation and emphasis, some minor points of grammar and the use of particles (see Hercus MS). Their singing style is also different: Mick McLean was always intrigued by his friend and distant relative Johnnie Reese, who was born on Alton Downs, singing Wangkangurru songs ‘other people’s way’. Similarly the descendants of Wangkangurru people who were living far away to the west among speakers of the closely related Arabana language tended to have an Arabana accent and were influenced to varying degrees by Arabana grammar. Two people were said to be ‘mixed up’ and this indeed seemed to be the case. Another person spoke with a Diyari accent. In 1965 there remained only two Wangka-tjari speakers, whose ancestors had come from the Kallakoopah, and had belonged to the *Karla-nganha* or *Marlupapu-nganha* group. They had spent some time at Killalpannina and knew Diyari well but did not speak with a Diyari accent.

Anyone who has heard the people who were born in the Simpson desert cannot but have been impressed by their strong sense of unity, the sense of ‘my own mob’ which encompassed
the local groups using the different soaks. This unity was reflected in the language. But by now, over eighty years since the 'Wangkangurru of the high sandhills' left their homes in the Simpson Desert this exodus has had its full effect and there are almost as many variants of Wangkangurru as there are speakers. It seems inevitable that in years to come this fragmentation of the language will continue. Already now members of the younger generation, even siblings, vary considerably as to what and how much, sadly in fact if anything, they have learnt of the Wangkangurru language *mikiri-nganha* 'from the soaks', *Mungathirri-nganha* 'from the high sandhills'.

**ORTHOGRAHY**

A practical orthography has been used in this paper.
Plosives have been written as unvoiced, i.e. *k, t, th, p*, except for the retroflex which has been written as *rd*, since it is always voiced in Wangkangurru.
The prestopped nasals and laterals (which are not phonemic) have been written as they are pronounced, as *dnh, dn, pm, dlh, dl*.
Retroflex consonants have been indicated by an *r: rd, rn, rl*.
Interdental consonants have been indicated by *h: dh, nh, lh*.
Palatal consonants have been indicated by *j: tj, nj, lj*.

In the case of prestopped consonants and homorganic consonant clusters, retroflex, dental and palatal consonants have been indicated only once, by *r, h, and j* respectively, *rnd, not rnr; dnh not dlhn; nti, not njt*.

The three *r*-sounds of Wangkangurru are represented as follows:
*r* is a front flap
*rr* is a front trill
*R* is retroflex

**ABBREVIATIONS**

The following abbreviations have been used for linguistic terms in the interlinear gloss:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABL</td>
<td>Ablative case</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>Accusative case</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Active stem-forming suffix</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADV</td>
<td>Adverbial suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>Allative case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>Ancient past</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAUS</td>
<td>Causative case</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONT</td>
<td>Continuous participle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONT S</td>
<td>Continuous stem-forming suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIST</td>
<td>Aspect showing distance in time or space</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMPH</td>
<td>Emphatic clitic</td>
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<td>Punctiliar present</td>
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<td>PURP</td>
<td>Purposive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Speed form, indicating action undertaken before departing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td>Transitory aspect</td>
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</table>
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THE McKENZIE MASSACRE ON BENTINCK ISLAND

Roma Kelly and Nicholas Evans

The Kaiadilt people traditionally lived in the South Wellesley Islands in the Southern Gulf of Carpentaria (see Map). They were extremely isolated and had little or no contact with other Aboriginal groups. Most now live on Mornington Island (traditionally Lardil territory), although attempts to return to the South Wellesleys are now being made.

Nicholas Evans teaches at the School of Australian Linguistics, Batchelor, N.T. He recently submitted his Ph.D. thesis, a grammar of the Kayardild language, at the Australian National University. He is currently producing a Kayardild dictionary and a collection of ethnographic and historical texts.
The Kaiadilt were afforded their first glimpses of Europeans relatively early, in 1802, when Mathew Flinders met six of them on Allen Island. But they did not emerge fully from their isolation until 1948, when the entire tribe was moved to Mornington Island Mission at Gununa. This made them the last group of coastal Aborigines to come into regular contact with Europeans.

In the intervening period there were various attempts at contact by Government officials, missionaries and would-be settlers. During the 1860s a settlement, Carnarvon, was established on Sweers Island. For the few years of its occupation the Kaiadilt largely avoided Sweers, although there were some clashes with Europeans there. Other Europeans to visit Bentinck Island, such as the explorers Captain Stokes (1841) and Captain Pennefather (1880), were carefully avoided, but observed from cover. Dr W.E. Roth, Northern Protector of Aborigines (who visited Bentinck Island in 1901), and his successors Howard (1910) and Bleakley (around 1917) managed only fleeting contacts.

The massacre recounted below occurred around 1918, in conjunction with the only European attempt to occupy Bentinck Island itself. The Kaiadilt tradition does not identify the murderer, and no contemporary record of the massacre exists. Safely beyond the reach of a law that was in any case indifferent to the taking of Aboriginal lives, the murderer's untrammelled excesses went untried and unpunished. The European party almost certainly included one McKenzie, remembered by the wife of an early Mornington Missionary as 'a physically big man, an elderly rugged individual' (Tindale 1962a:266). He had obtained a Government lease to occupy Sweers Island and part of Bentinck Island. Arriving in 1911 'with some sheep and an Aboriginal woman, probably a mainland from Burketown way' (Memmott 1982:33), he built a hut near the mouth of the Kurumbali estuary on Bentinck Island.

During his short time on Bentinck Island, McKenzie systematically tried to eliminate the Kaiadilt, riding across the island on horseback, and shooting down everyone but the girls he intended to rape. Tindale, who has compiled a detailed genealogy from oral sources, estimates that eleven people were killed (1962b:305) — about 10% of the Kaiadilt population.

Later he moved to Sweers Island where he ran sheep and goats and established a kiln supplying lime around the Southern Gulf. For a time he employed two Mornington Islanders but 'they soon became disenchanted by the continual diet of goats' heads and livers' (Memmott 1982:34) and flagged down a boat to Mornington Island. McKenzie then obtained other mainland Aborigines as helpers, and a European partner named Nelson. But it is unclear who was with him on Bentinck Island at the time of the massacre.

Roma Kelly, who tells this story, was born about 1917 and heard about McKenzie from her own parents. Her Kaiadilt names are Dibirdibi 'rock cod' and Mambunkingathi 'born at Mambunki'.

1 These few paragraphs cannot do justice to the colourful history of the South Wellesleys. Other accounts are in Tindale 1962a and Dymock 1973 but the most thorough is Memmott 1982.

2 A practical phonemic orthography is employed. The digraphs th and nh represent laminodental stops and nasals respectively; rd and rn retroflexes, j and ny palatals, r a retroflex continuant like r in American English (written rl before other retroflexes), and rr an apico-alveolar trill. Vowel length is shown by double letters. There is no voicing contrast, but some stop phonemes are written voiced and others unvoiced, depending on their average phonetic values.

The following abbreviations are used in glosses: ABLative, ACTual (past or present), ALLative, APPRehensive, ASSOCiative, CONSequential, CounTeRFaCTual, DeTransitive (passive or reflexive),
(Footnote 2 continued)

DUal, FACTitive, FUTURE, INclusive, INCHOative, INTENSifier, INSTRumental, LOCative, Nominalizer, NOMinate, OBJECT, PLural, PRECONDITION, PRIOR OBJECT (e.g. OBJECT of a PRECONDITION clause), PRIVative, PROprietive, UTILitative, Verbal Dative, Verbal Intransitive ALLative, Verbal PURPOSE. See Evans 1985 for a description of the grammar.

46
1 **Rukuthi mutha-yadangka-yamala-maru-th**
place name many-OBJ person-OBJ sea-V.D-ACT

**dathina-wala dog**
that-LOT(NOM)

2 **dog durrwaa-j, dangka-wala jarii-j**
dog chase-ACT person-LOT(NOM) run away-ACT

3 **yuuma-thamutha-adangka-apeople,**
drown-ACT many-NOM person-NOM

**kunawun**
child(NOM)

4 **yuuma-th, dathin-ki thungal-i warna-j,**
drown-ACT that-OBJ thing-OBJ dislike-ACT

**dathin-kuru bala-a-nyarr**
that-PROP shoot-DT-APPR

5 **dathin-ki dalurudaluru³ warna-j, bayi-wuru**
that-OBJ gun dislike-ACT fight-PROP

**jardi-ya warna-j,**
mob-NOM dislike-ACT

6 **yuuma-th, jangka-a dumu-y, jangka-a**
drown-ACT some-NOM hill-LOC some-NOM

**walmathi, jangka-a yuuma-th.**
high up some-NOM drown-ACT

7 **kunawuna-nurru-da bardak, marl-da**
child-ASSOC-STILL belly(NOM) child-ASSOC

**kunawuna-nurru, yuuma-th.**
child-ASSOC drown-ACT

8 **kunawuna-wuru bardak, marl-da**
child-PROP belly(NOM) hand-NOM

**kunawuna-nurru yuuma-th**
child-ASSOC drown-ACT

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³ *Daluru*³, though a native Kayardild word analysable as [*thundercrack-* PROP-REDUP] is always indeclinable.
They swam along turning over, dived into the sea, dived under the sea.

Far out to sea they drowned and died.

They sank dead with their children there way out at sea.

Some (stayed) on the crests (of the sand hills), (some) crawled round among the mangroves, in the estuaries.

(They) swam about in the estuaries, and drowned among the mangroves.

(They) went into the mangrove swamps.

They didn't like that thing, that gun thing.

That thing, after (they) had eaten and stolen food.

(They) stole bullocks, the things that are like many mothers.

The neologism ngamathuwala does not mean 'many breasts', as one might expect – this would be munirrwala. Rather, the rationale seems to be that a cow supplies as much milk as many mothers.
(They) were shot at, chased and constantly shot at, followed, robbed, robbed of their women.

(McKenzie's men) took the nubile girls back (to their camp), the nubile girls were taken (sexually). (They) were robbed of some of their women, robbed of some of their children, of half (their children).

(They) were seized, the nubile girls were seized. (They) took the nubile girls back towards the south. (The girls) were taken southward. (They) took the nubile girls back to the south.

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5 McKenzie had a camp at Kurumbali, on the south side of Bentinck Island. One listener remarked here 'just takem one night altogether, bringim back then might be three day altogether. Lot of woman bin find a child, jangkaa kandukandu, jangkaa ngumu [some red (half-caste), some black].'
26  
jangka-a yuuma-th,  
jangka-a
some-NOM drowned-ACT some-NOM

thungkuwa-y,  
jangka-a jingka-ri
mangrove-LOC some-NOM swamp-ALL

27  
thungkuwa-ya barri-ja wirdi-ja
mangrove-LOC crawl-ACT stay-ACT
dakarldi-n-da dakarldii-j
hide-N-NOM hide-ACT

28  
kaba-a-nangku  
jangka-a
find-DT-NEGFUT some-NOM

29  
tright jangka-a yuuma-th,  
jangka-a
some-NOM drowned-ACT some-NOM

mala-iywa-tha katharr-iiwa-th,  
sea-V.I.ALL-ACT estuary-V.I.ALL-ACT

kunawuna-nurru
child-ASSOC(NOM)

30  
jangka-a bala-a-j, walmathi
some-NOM shoot-DT-ACT high up
dumu-y,  
sandhill-LOC

31  
Kunawuna-nurru bala-a-j,  
jangka-a
child-ASSOC(NOM) shoot-DT-ACT some-NOM

bardaka-y,  
belly-LOC

32  
jangka-a kinyin-d,  
rajurri-n-d
some-NOM form-NOM walk about-N-NOM

bala-a-j
shoot-DT-ACT

33  
tharda-jilarri-ya dangka-a, bala-tha
shoulder-hurt-LOC man-NOM shoot-ACT

wurdiyalaa-j
travel about-ACT

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6 The noun *kinyinda* means ‘visible, extended form’ and is appropriate here for a child that has emerged from the invisibility of the womb.
incapable of feeling sorry, nothing.

(They were) strangers, looked like they came from a long way away,

looked like strangers.

The mob who owned that country,

the dulmarra dangkaa (custodians)

they blocked off the owners from (their own) country.

(You would have thought it was) their country.

(The Kaiadilt) went about barred from their own country, unable to go out in the open,

(McKenzie's mob) shot them out into the sea, and killed, killed.

Mothers ran away, fathers ran away,

mothers ran away, grandmothers ran away,
45 jangka-a yuuma-th, jangka-a kurirr, some-NOM drown-ACT some-NOM dead(NOM)
45 some drowned, some were dead.

46 kirthan-da wuran-ki diya-j, surreptitiously-NOM food-OBJ eat-ACT
buluku-ya diya-j, bullock-OBJ eat-ACT
46 Behind his back (the Kaiadilt) ate (his) food, ate (his) bullocks,

47 wungi-ja diya-j, bala-a-ja wirdi..., steal-ACT eat-ACT shoot-DT-ACT stay..., stole and ate (them), they kept getting shot,

48 bi-l-da bala-a-n-janii-j
3-PLU-NOM shoot-DT-N-VPURP-ACT
48 they were asking to get shot,

49 bala-a-ju bakii-ju
shoot-DT-FUT altogether-FUT
49 they would all get shot.

50 jangka-a bala-a-j, jangka-a wirdi-ja
some-NOM shoot-DT-ACT some-NOM stay-ACT
50 Some were shot, some stayed alive.7

birjin-d
alive-NOM

7 The translation is by Nicholas Evans, incorporating comments by the late Darwin Moodoonuthi.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


TIME PERSPECTIVE IN ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN CULTURE:
TWO APPROACHES TO THE ORIGIN OF SUBSECTIONS

Patrick McConvell

INTRODUCTION

In the title I do homage to a paper by Edward Sapir (1916). I make this reference not because I have any ambition to match the scope, originality and brilliance of Sapir's essay, but because the intellectual position with which I want to take issue has parallels to the position with which Sapir took issue. The method which I want to expound is also in the same tradition as the method which Sapir expounded.

The field in which both my argument and Sapir's have their place is that of culture history (or prehistory). In the case of the present paper, the focus is in particular on the contribution of linguistics to culture history, which was also a major concern of Sapir.

Unlike Sapir's wide-ranging selection of examples, this paper takes as its subject one particular question, the origin and diffusion of subsections, a type of social classification into eight named units known locally as 'skins', which, as far as I know, is unique to Northern Australia. Two recent contributions to the literature on the origin and history of subsections

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1 The discussion of the field I am entering is somewhat hampered by irrelevant terminological distinctions, as well as by the kind of prejudices mentioned below. Thus 'Aboriginal History' is generally taken to mean the history of contact between Aborigines and Whites, excluding the many thousands of years which preceded this period, and even, as in the case of the diffusion of subsections, developments which were occurring while Europeans were on the continent, but unobserved by them. The former is the province of Prehistory which is quite firmly associated with the theory and practice of the Archeology of material artefacts. The 'prehistory' of ideas and institutions in the recent period is a kind of disciplinary no-man's land in the present academic configuration. However the history of Aboriginal non-material culture in the period preceding the European invasion and immediately following it could arguably be just as important to Aboriginal people's consciousness of themselves today, as the (for them) by and large tragic history of the invasion and settlement, which constitutes the field of 'Aboriginal History' today. There are several myths associated with the field of culture history which conspire to discourage people examining it: (i) that there was no history before the Whites arrived i.e. that Aboriginal society was in some way static; (ii) even if there was history, the Aboriginal people do not believe that there was; and (iii) that any such history is inaccessible, anyway. None of these points is really valid, but I do not intend to mount an extensive argument on this here. The evidence on the origin of subsections is one small indication that such culture history can be accessible, given the right methods.
have arrived at quite different conclusions about their origins. Although both rely heavily on comparative linguistic evidence to argue their case, there is a great difference in the method employed by each author, and that is to be the main burden of the discussion here.

I shall argue here that von Brandenstein's conclusions are wrong mainly because his methods are wrong, and on the other hand, my conclusions are right (or at least vastly more probable than von Brandenstein's) mainly because my methods are right. Von Brandenstein is employing a method (with his own idiosyncrasies, to be sure) somewhat similar to the method Sapir was breaking away from in 1916, whereas I am following the more modern tradition established by Sapir.

If Sapir's battle was fought and decisively won in 1916, why does it have to be fought again in a different continent? There are at least three circumstances which compel me to recycle the debate in this way. One is that von Brandenstein's work is being published by a reputable publisher, and is receiving good reviews (e.g. Heath 1984, Yengoyan 1984) which scarcely mention the numerous and glaring deficiencies in his method. The second is that there is the possibility of further productive work based on the results and method of McConvell (1985), but that reliance on the results or methods of von Brandenstein would only lead other researchers into blind alleys. The third circumstance is that Aboriginal cultural prehistory (other than that based on archeological material evidence), and in particular work based on comparative linguistic evidence, does not seem to enjoy a good name in Australia. There seems to be a prejudice amongst anthropologists against 'speculation', a word which calls to mind the methods of earlier anthropologists such as Frazer, Morgan etc. Practically any cultural prehistory (other than archaeology) can be dismissed as 'speculation', apparently without consideration of whether the methods of the particular study are sound or not. Like other modern anthropologists, Sapir struggled against the earlier speculative anthropologists, but not to abolish historical speculation or banish history, but to give culture history and the linguistic contribution to it a sounder, more rigorous methodology.

Unfortunately, although the early history of both anthropological and linguistic studies of Australia abounds with wild speculation about the origins of cultural and linguistic traits, there have not been many examples of the use of the more restrained and rigorous methods in Australian Aboriginal culture history since that period. Understandably, anthropologists and linguists have devoted their time largely to the recording of the remaining traditional Aboriginal societies and languages, and to synchronic analyses of them. The main figure who has been publishing work on Aboriginal culture history based substantially on linguistic data recently is von Brandenstein, who repeats many of the mistakes of nineteenth-century specu-

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^2\text{My original paper on the origin of subsections was written in 1977, and presented at the Australian Anthropological Society conference in Canberra in 1981. Data on subsection terms presented in this paper comes from McConvell 1985, and results from my own fieldwork, unless otherwise stated. The orthography is the standard Warlpiri/Walmajarri orthography, except for the Yolngu Matha (North East Arnhem Land) terms in which voiced/voiceless distinctions are made. Where the orthography of original sources is inconsistent or obscure, I have made some small changes in accordance with the best available information. Space has unfortunately not permitted a description of the structure and functions of subsection systems to be included here; a brief description is included in McConvell 1985, which also gives references to other relevant works, such as Meggitt 1962 and Scheffler 1977.}
\]
TIME PERSPECTIVE: ORIGIN OF SUBSECTIONS

lation and adds a few of his own. With this as the sole example of culture history as informed by linguistics currently on view, it is not surprising that reactions to the field in general are not very positive.

It is my intention here, by distinguishing between good and bad methods, to rescue the field of linguistic culture history in Aboriginal Australia from its present lowly position of 'conjecture' and 'speculation' in the eyes of many, and to show that it can make valuable contributions to our knowledge of Aboriginal culture, past and present.

As well as arguing the advantages of the method exemplified by my work (McConvell 1985) and the disadvantages of the method of von Brandenstein (1982) I wish to present briefly the results of the enquiry into the origin of subsections in McConvell (1985), some of which are summarised on the map below, and some possible further extensions of this enquiry. These extensions include further working out of the detail of the origin and diffusion of subsections, and more generally, the gathering of evidence to support a relative chronology of cultural diffusion using the operation of phonological rules on terms for significant cultural items in Northern Australia. Finally I shall briefly discuss how the results of such historical investigation can affect our view of present-day institutions and social change in general.

Map: The diffusion of Subsections.
SAPIR'S METHODOLOGY.

Sapir was among the first to make a clean break with what he called the 'speculative school of anthropology'. Early in his career he wrote in a review of Lowie's *Primitive Society* (quoted in Mandelbaum ed. 1949):

> The ready generalisers on social origins, the rapid readers of many monographic works on primitive societies in pursuit of the one unifying idea have had it very largely their own way.

He clearly intended to change that picture. He castigated those anthropologists for whom:

> . . . the form [of primitive society] and its cultural content alike are but the ordained reflexes of certain supposed traits of primitive mentality.

In the Australian setting he was critical of Schmidt who:

> frequently abandons normal genetic methods in favor of arbitrarily applied typological criteria in order to demonstrate a literal agreement between his Sprachenkreise and Kulturkreise.

Yet Sapir was by no means an opponent of historical enquiry into cultural history using inferences from the present distribution and form of cultural and linguistic items. The 'time perspective' of the title of his essay (1916) derives from the metaphor of a third dimension read into the:

> flat surface of American culture as we read space perspective into the flat surface of a photograph.

The enhanced perspective afforded by this type of study is only truly revealing if the methods of the enquiry are correct. One of the basic principles constantly ignored by the 'speculative anthropologists' whom Sapir attacks is that cultural phenomena:

> must be worked out historically, that is, in terms of actual happenings, however inferred, that are conceived to have a specific sequence, a specific localisation and specific relations among themselves.

Sapir (1916) goes on to detail numerous methodological principles in relation to the type of historical hypotheses that can legitimately be derived from different types of cultural and linguistic evidence. Most of these principles also have one or more cautions attached to them, so that the whole methodology is a finely balanced structure of positive and negative points associated with different types of evidence.

VON BRANDENSTEIN'S AIMS AND ASSUMPTIONS.

Much of the criticism levelled by Sapir at the 'speculative anthropologists' can be repeated almost word for word in relation to the work of von Brandenstein. The remarks about the subordination of method to the pursuit of the 'one unifying idea' and the treatment of various widely separated systems as 'ordained reflexes of a supposed trait of [Aboriginal] mentality' cannot fail to remind the reader of von Brandenstein's approach to subsections. It is his clearly stated aim to show that 'substance' of the subsection systems is the same throughout the ambit of such systems in Northern Australia, and that this meaning resides in the division of temperaments, somewhat similar to the 'humours' of earlier European philosophy.

It is not my intention to take issue with von Brandenstein's ascription of a symbolic meaning to the Kariera section system, from which he claims the subsection system arose, involving four temperamental qualities. His description and analysis of this system is a major
contribution to our knowledge, and this contribution is duly acknowledged in McConvell (1985, Note 6) where a slightly different interpretation of the facts is offered. I also concur with von Brandenstein in tracing the origin of four of the subsection terms to the Pilbara, close to the region of the Kariera.

The fatal flaw in von Brandenstein's approach, however, is the ascription of similar meanings to the subsection terms of all groups to whom the system was diffused, and in order to establish this, the use of a comparative method which is so undisciplined that it could undoubtedly 'prove' just about anything one might wish about the origins of ideas.

Von Brandenstein is frank about his aims, and makes no apologies for the fact that his approach is out of tune with most of his colleagues. His book of subsections (1982:5) begins with the statement of a methodological principle which would be anathema to just about all modern anthropologists or historians:

"If a superstructure of highest philosophical order is found to have existed in one Australian region and to have ruled a particular socio-cultural practice there, it must also be involved in other regions where similar or identical socio-cultural practices can be observed."

I cannot consider in detail what is meant by 'highest philosophical order' or the question of the sense in which a 'superstructure' of this kind can 'rule' a socio-cultural practice, mainly because von Brandenstein's thinking on these points is not made very explicit. The 'superstructure' in this case is the classification into temperamental qualities.

If the substance of the Kariera section system is complex classification by opposed temperamental qualities, similar systems in other areas of Australia must likewise be based on the same contrast.

Even if one is prepared to accept that such a classification played a role in the early development of sections, the type of conditional statement presented above is unacceptable in general as well as being inapplicable to the case of subsections in particular.

It is a matter of common knowledge that cultural forms and practices may be diffused from one group to another without necessarily bringing with them the 'philosophical' or ideological underpinnings of the practices in the source community. Counterexamples to the principle that the original 'philosophical superstructure' of a practice is retained along with its 'manifestations' are so abundant that this principle cannot even be considered a tendency. Moreover arguably such a principle could not work, since the 'philosophical' ideas associated with a practice in one group may contradict ideas current in the group adopting the practice. This could result either in the automatic rejection of the new practice, the automatic total replacement of the indigenous ideas by the borrowed ones, or the uncontrolled proliferation of contradictory ideas in the borrowing group, if von Brandenstein's principle were followed. None of these results is attested or likely: what is commonly attested is the partial borrowing or adaptation of some aspects of the ideas associated with a practice, and their subsequent partial (and sometimes eventually total) assimilation into the ideological structure of the borrowing group.

It is the latter partial and selective character of cultural diffusion which affords us one of the most valuable tools for inferring cultural historical processes, just as the partial assimilation of diffused linguistic elements provides powerful evidence in historical linguistics. Sapir brilliantly used this property of relative firmness or coherence of elements in complexes and the stages between the 'lack of capability of analysis and absolute transparency' to propose hypotheses about the relative age of cultural and linguistic elements. Recognising that
cultural complexes are neither self contained and 'ruled' by an idea, as the extreme idealists like von Brandenstein would argue, nor necessarily completely integrated in a harmonious social system as extreme functionalists propose, frees us to see cultural complexes as the sites of contradictions between new and old elements which are more or less acute, and which work themselves out in definable historical steps. In von Brandenstein's 'all-or-nothing' approach to diffusion, this historical approach to the various 'substances' of sections and subsections in their development is disallowed by the assumption of a ruling idea which pre-empts other hypotheses.

In fact there is very little evidence of the occurrence of this 'ruling idea' of temperamental classification anywhere among present day Aborigines (as Heath 1984 also notes), and von Brandenstein has to resort to very dubious kinds of support for his shaky edifice. The fact that the evidence is as scant and weak as it is (consisting largely of single words that are said to bear some resemblance to or have some connection with subsection terms) itself contradicts the principle that the 'ruling idea' maintains its connection with the practice, since this connection is clearly not a conscious part of Aboriginal culture, in most places. In the case of subsections, it can be guaranteed that if any present day Aboriginals from Fitzroy Crossing to Yirrkala were asked about the 'substance' of subsections, they might talk of kinship, marriage rules, perhaps ceremonial relationships, but none would mention temperament. There is no evidence either that temperamental classification was involved in subsections in these areas in earlier times. Apart from the 'linguistic evidence' (whose value I dispute below) there is no good anthropological data offered to support the claim of an underlying system of temperamental classification associated with any subsection system.

Two cases which purport to offer such support are the Murinbata and the Aranda (1982: 21-23). Since von Brandenstein (correctly, in my view) traces the origin of four of the subsections to the Pilbara, where they did embody symbolic oppositions, and since, in order to conform to his own principle, he must show that the entire system of eight subsections is based on the same or similar oppositions, he introduces the idea that the other four subsections are a 'side set' embodying the meaning flat or small as opposed to the original round or big set. The 'evidence' for this thesis from the Murinbata is a gross misrepresentation of Falkenberg's data. It is stated that ngulu is a term for 'subsection totem'. In fact ngurlu is a term for matrilineal social totem (Stanner); this is also admitted by von Brandenstein (1982: 170), but not in relation to the Murinbata. The matrilineal social totems in this area do

3 There is said to be a belief about an association between physical appearance and moiety in North-East Arnhem Land (von Brandenstein, 1982: 84, quoting Thomson), although one might assume that this is but one of a wide range of symbolic associations of the moieties, as widely reported for this region. Since it is fairly clear that patrimoieties were present in the area before subsections arrived, and in the absence of other evidence, we need not infer any special connection between physical appearance and subsection.

4 As I have shown in McConvell 1985 the four terms which were added to what I call the Northwestern section terms were not simply added as a 'side set', but themselves originally constituted a separate section system (the Northcentral system). The mechanism of the combination of the two systems was primarily built on a particular type of marriage alliance, I argue, not on a symbolic opposition. It may have been that the relationship of the two sets (which I call Divisions 1 and 2, in McConvell 1985) was accorded some symbolic significance at that time other than the fact that they originated in different places. To my knowledge, however, these Divisions are not named or otherwise symbolically recognised at present, except perhaps in the area of the Gulf of Carpentaria where semi-moieties are used.
have some ideological association with physical appearance (skin and hair colour etc.) not temperament, but these associations cannot be attributed to subsections. Von Brandenstein blithely ‘corrects’ the data obtained by Falkenberg, and tells us ‘what was meant by the informants’. Needless to say, Falkenberg’s data are correct, and follow the matrilineal principle of ngurlu (see also von Brandenstein 1982:170-172 and Stanner 1979:94-96; the latter explains how contradictory beliefs come to be present in the area).

The second case, of the Aranda as reported by Strehlow, has more substance: it clearly relates to a belief about some aspects of the physical appearance of people in different subsections. It must be borne in mind that only the Northern Aranda had subsections and had acquired these only in the living memory of Spencer’s informants from the Warlpiri to the north; the other Aranda had sections, the terms for which were very close to Pilbara section terms, and which they had probably acquired directly from the Pilbara. The associations of subsections with physical appearance among the Northern Aranda could well be an extension of similar beliefs about sections acquired from the south or west, and nothing to do with the bulk of groups who have had subsections for much longer periods, and who do not share such beliefs.

VON BRANDENSTEIN’S LINGUISTIC METHODS.

The concluding remarks of Sapir’s essay (1916:462) emphasise:
the danger of tearing a cultural element loose from its psychological and geographical (i.e. distributional) setting. No feeling of historical perspective can be gained for any cultural element without careful reference to these settings.

Another way of bringing out this point is to emphasize the necessity of historically evaluating or weighting a culture element or linguistic datum before it is employed for comparative purposes. The failure adequately to weight ethnological and linguistic data, but to rely largely on the counting of noses, is to an equal extent responsible for the historical vagaries of a Frazerian evolutionist or for those of his counterpart, the Graebnerian diffusionist.

Von Brandenstein is certainly guilty of ‘the counting of noses’: linguistic forms that suit his purpose are produced from a very deep hat, usually with no reference to setting or the weighting which Sapir saw as essential in this type of work. When this method fails, von Brandenstein can resort to the ‘etymological method’ and ‘phonosemantics’. The latter two methods allow him to (1) disregard actual recorded forms of words in favour of supposed earlier forms reconstructed often with the flimsiest of evidence, and (2) to break words into smaller parts or syllables irrespective of whether these are morphemes in the language, and to impute a meaning to these on the basis of some other word, often in some other language with no proven connection with the original language.

This method is not only the antithesis of the careful and constrained method advocated by Sapir in the handling of linguistic evidence, but in its laxity also even goes far beyond the methods used by most nineteenth-century comparative philologists. Sapir found linguistic evidence among the most helpful in constructing hypotheses about cultural history since on its basis research is able to proceed to a positive conclusion that a word or form has been borrowed from a particular language, and thereby ‘gain some idea of the sequence in which the element was assimilated by the different tribes of the region’ (1916:445). Von Brandenstein turns this proposition on its head by gathering words and bits of words from far and
wide without any real attempt to establish actual borrowings between specific languages, arbitrarily distorting phonetics and linking disparate meanings, and introducing circularity by etymologising from words that have already been subjected to etymological ‘adjustment’. Dispensing with the tried and true methods of comparative linguistics, he appeals to ‘sound rules common in Australian linguistics and comparison with names from other systems’ to justify his method, without spelling out what these ‘common rules’ might be, or whether they can in fact be proved to apply in particular instances where he uses them. Thus from among the most reliable techniques available to the cultural historian, in von Brandenstein’s hands linguistic evidence becomes one of the least reliable.

The main aim of von Brandenstein’s elaborate but misguided work of etymology is to establish a series of links between subsection terms, totemic species and other vocabulary items in many languages throughout Australia, which purport to show consistent strands of meaning based on the temperamental classification. As we have already seen the aim is misguided because there is no such guiding principle which rules the pattern of classification systems throughout the continent. There may be significant patterns in local areas which could be revealed by painstaking work: but this is not part of von Brandenstein’s method. Sapir insists that ‘the greater the geographical distance, the stronger do we have a right to demand the evidence to be a historical connexion — that is, the more rigidly do we apply our criteria’ (1916:422) but von Brandenstein exercises no such caution. He casts his net widely, and neither genetic relationship of languages nor actual connection of groups through contiguity or trade route need be invoked to justify the positing of a relationship between linguistic forms. Since he operates with the very broadest semantic categories which constitute his bundles of temperamental characteristics, the most tenuous of shared semantic features suffices to establish a link.

In comparing phonetic forms, von Brandenstein’s method give the investigator a lot of leeway. One of his favourite techniques is the insertion of an unattested liquid (usually r) into words. I have already drawn attention to this predilection (McConvell, 1984) in the case of the widespread Western Desert word *wangka*, which von Brandenstein persistently transcribes *warngga*, for no good reason. In the book being discussed here (von Brandenstein, 1982) the Arnhem Land subsection terms *Waamut*, *Wakaj* and *Gojok* are rendered *Warmut*, *Warlgatj*, and *Kuidjtjurk*, respectively. In the case of *Waamut*, he even goes so far as to star the attested form, as unattested. These insertions make it easier for him to draw certain etymological conclusions, which are nonetheless still doubtful e.g. Heath (1984) points out that Nunggubuyu *kurriddijjtjurk* ‘chicken-hawk’, which is linked by von Brandenstein to the subsection term *Kuidjtjurk* (sic) is in fact unconnected, as the former is a local onomatopoeia. Other similar etymological speculations about bird names are likely to be ill-founded as such names are commonly based on the bird’s call e.g. the Long Billed Corella *kurragitj* supposedly linked to *kurrk* ‘light and warm blood’ (sic) in Western Victoria (1982:10). Other gratuitous, and in the light of the evidence in McConvell (1985), unjustified insertions include the initial k in *Kambadjina* (claimed to be the original stem of the subsection term *Jampijina* and similar forms) which allows a link to be made to the unconnected Nyungic verb stem *kamba* — ‘burn, cook’. Sometimes the errant pathways of etymology seem to be followed in several different directions at once, covering an incredible amount of country in between, as when the term *Kungwarraji* which is said to be the etymon of terms like *Jungurra* which is on the one hand claimed to be related to Tjaru *kunggu* ‘blood’, and on the other hand to be related to the Arnhem Land term *Ngarritj*, which is in turn supposedly related to a term of an
unnamed language ngarrit-ngarrit 'sharp, thin and hard'.

Anyone familiar with von Brandenstein’s earlier work (e.g. 1970) will already be aware of the advantages of ‘phonosemantics’ to anyone who wants to ‘prove’ what they like with very slim evidence, and its disadvantages for anyone wanting to make real progress in culture history. Such analyses of meaning as Paltjarri as ‘one who lets himself be bent’ <paj ‘bent’ + causative tja + rri ‘expressive of the middle voice’ are reprinted in the new work, with such new ones as the derivation of the subsection term Pangardi from the supposed Warlbiri word panga, ‘scratch and itch’, linked to the Corella pangarra.

Many more instances could be cited in which von Brandenstein’s inferences about linguistic connections are either plainly false, or improbable in the extreme, but it would be tedious to continue with the catalogue. In fact, given von Brandenstein’s methods, one must arrive at results whose probability of correctness is extremely low. Much of his linguistic evidence is coincidence, dressed up as historical connection, and it may be that his concept of ‘coincidence’ is faulty. He writes, for instance (1982:58):

It cannot be a coincidence that, on the one hand, Middinj and Pullanj are names of the rainbow and its serpent and that, on the other hand, tjiMiid(ja) tjiMiitj and Pullanj are names for one subsection.

Not only can this be a coincidence, but, in the light of the evidence of the origin of the two subsection terms in question in the area immediately south of Darwin presented in McConvell (1985), is virtually certain to be one. First, the names of the rainbow and its serpent are reported from the Karajarri, a Pama-Nyungan language spoken over 2000 km from the source languages of the two subsection terms, which are not Pama-Nyungan and would share very few cognates with Karajarri. Secondly, there has been the familiar tampering with the attested forms of the terms (although it is far less serious here than in other cases): the lengthening of the vowel i and the consonant l (in fact this is retroflex in the subsection term, not geminate). Third, purported proof on grounds of meaning, both that miitj signifies ‘iridescent’ and pullanj (sic) ‘double’ and also that both these meanings are related to the Rainbow Serpent, lacks credibility in its individual steps, let alone when the whole is considered together, and completely lacks the features of historical specificity and weighting of evidence that Sapir saw as vital.

The two kinds of approaches to linguistic evidence (the mainstream tradition of Sapir and McConvell, and that of von Brandenstein) have gross differences, in terms of probability and therefore also in terms of credibility. The chances that, other things being equal, a typical word form in one Aboriginal language will have the same meaning as the same or a very similar word in another Aboriginal language are very low indeed. If we find such a case, therefore, we have good reason to think that this may not be a coincidence, particularly if we have evidence that there is either a genetic connection between the languages, or that they have been in contact and therefore borrowed words from each other.

In a method such as that proposed by Sapir, the existence of the latter type of evidence, particularly where geographical distance between the languages is great, is a strict requirement for consideration of forms as being related. The number of languages from which evidence of this type may legitimately be drawn would in such a method be very restricted by these requirements. In von Brandenstein’s method, on the other hand, there appears to be little or no restriction on the languages from which items can be drawn for purposes of comparison.
Since we know that both word forms and meanings can change over time, we must allow for some discrepancy between the two matched form-meaning pairs. This must also be subject to principled limitations. Among the most strict of these would be to require that sound changes conform to the known operation of certain sound laws. In the absence of detailed knowledge of such laws in Australian linguistics, we may sometimes have to content ourselves with judgments about the 'naturalness' of certain phonetic changes (about which there is a fair degree of unanimity) and of certain semantic changes (the theory of which is less well developed).

Contrast the probabilities implied by the von Brandenstein approach: his method allows firstly at least the tolerance of the more rigorous method in regard to variation in phonetic form. However the option available in his method of altering phonetic form on the basis of supposed etymological evidence, before comparison is made, would at least double the probability of finding a match. If we then add the very powerful device of 'phonosemantics', the odds shorten considerably once again, since instead of words one can deal in the supposed meanings of parts of words or syllables. Finally von Brandenstein's method allows semantic links to be proposed between very diverse items, on the basis of the items sharing some very abstract or ill-defined temperamental or symbolic quality, or on the basis of quite long chains of such connections.

The increase in probability of 'matching' a form-meaning pair in another language entailed by these processes is vastly more than that brought about by the more cautious method of semantic comparison above. In sum, using von Brandenstein’s methods the probability of a match being a pure coincidence ends up at least as high as the probability that the supposed resemblance results from an actual historical connection, which is an unacceptable basis for serious historical hypotheses. Even if one were able to pick which of the comparisons has some significance, the lack of historically specific hypotheses about the borrowing of particular items and the circumstances under which this may have happened makes the whole exercise somewhat empty.

**VON BRANDENSTEIN'S THEORY OF THE ORIGIN OF SUBSESSIONS.**

Although his method still deserves a great deal of criticism, it is true that von Brandenstein has recognised some of his earlier mistakes, and has rectified somewhat his view of the diffusion of sections and subsections. In the earlier work (e.g. 1970) the role of subsections in diffusing the section terminology was hardly even acknowledged, and the only question of origin that was at stake was that of sections, one system of which he rightly claimed to have had its starting point in the Pilbara. In his more recent work (1982), subsections have come to dominate his investigation, and he has admitted (1982:72) that the Western Queensland section systems borrowed subsection terms, rather than having the Northwestern section terms diffused into their area directly.

Despite these advances, von Brandenstein has not in latest work even come close to discovering the point of origin of subsections, as I indicated in 1977 (a paper now published as McConvell 1985). One reason for this is that he failed to grasp two points which proved crucial in my argument:

(1) Although Spencer (1914) appears in the References of von Brandenstein (1982), there is no discussion of the description of the Awarai (Warrai) Northcentral section system which I (1985) showed was the source of the Division 2 terms which augmented the Division 1
terms which came from the west, to form the new subsection system;

(2) Von Brandenstein completely misjudges the significance of the masculine and feminine prefixes *ja-/na-* which provided the other major clue to locating the origin of the subsection system.

The first point above may have merely resulted from an oversight on von Brandenstein’s part, which may or may not indicate that his preoccupation with the idea (1982:57) of:

the brilliant Aboriginal mind who conceived of the extension of the four section system by adding a side set to it

had got the better of his alertness in looking for alternative explanations of origins. It is a curious fact that everyone who has investigated the origin of subsections, to my knowledge, (e.g. Durkheim 1904, Scheffler 1977) has assumed that they must have arisen by an extension of the system from four to eight categories by an act of will internally within a single group, without even considering the possibility that they could have sprung from a particular type of relationship between two groups, which was in fact the case between the possessors of the Northwestern section system and the possessors of the Northcentral section system. Again Sapir has something apt to say of this type of case (1916:473) when he speaks of the thesis:

that the only conceivable type of culture origin is the association into a functional unit of cultural elements already in existence in unassociated form

This thesis would tend to encourage investigators to seek out the pre-existing forms of both elements of a new cultural complex, not to simply explain the new form as a brilliant extension of an original more partial institution.

The second point above perhaps reflects more directly on von Brandenstein’s method. In relation to the gender prefixes in what is called in McConvell 1985 the Southwestern group of subsection systems, he says (1982:53):

Two main reasons are responsible for a number of changes in the word form: the tendency to retain and restore the 3-syllable rhythm of the names and the well observed sound rule that medial k becomes Ø or initial k is dropped or replaced by w; this is the rule in song language.

This is all very vague and does not even approximate to being an explanation for the widespread prefixes *ja-/na-* found only on subsection terms in languages which have not, and never had, any other prefixes. The approach advocated by Sapir would urge the investigator to search out a particular historical origin and particular path of diffusion of these particular prefixes, as McConvell (1985) has done. Von Brandenstein’s approach contents itself with letting such crucial pieces of the puzzle go unsolved, while the collection of vaguely interesting cultural bric-a-brac, which neither proves nor disproves anything, is given priority.

Three variants of a hypothesis about the place of origin of subsections are advanced by von Brandenstein. All these share the idea that the subsection system arose close to the origin point of sections, in the Pilbara area of Western Australia, i.e. much further west than the points of origin proposed by Elkin (1970) and McConvell (1985). It is worth quoting von Brandenstein’s exposition of the origin at length because it illustrates how far astray his method can lead him (von Brandenstein 1982:70):

the place of origin of the new system branched off from the original section system of the Kariera not along the coast but along a feasible line east of the sand dunes of the Great Sandy Desert. It involves the Mangarla and the Warman in the first place, the Walmatjarri and Kugadja in the second place, with the Tjaru as a third possibility, supposing an originally more easterly position of these
'tribes'. The Mangarla and Wanman had taken on and maintained the section system until recently. For the possibility of a more easterly origin of the subsection system, we realise that the Warlbiri, including the Ngardi, affirm that the system reached them from the west. We may assume that the ingenious person or persons who enlarged the section system must have lived close to the Mangarla, who provided the original CQF name Kunggurra and close as well to the linguistic scenery in which the words miitj ‘multi-coloured’, panga- ‘scratch’ and kamba- ‘to cook and be hot’ occurred together.

Two further alternative hypotheses are presented: (1) that the new system originated among the Karierra at Depuch Island (i.e. in the same area in which the Northwestern section system originated) and spread to the area described above; and (2) that the 'designers of the subsection system' lived around Percival Lakes and (1982:71):

felt the need to join the rainbow dualistic concept as a side set to the main set, and thereby improved the social value of the new system, in particular accounting for the prohibition of certain types of marriage. (Problems of kinship are not discussed in this study). The innovated system was then diffused farther east, where the section system had not yet spread, the most likely places being the former tribal grounds of the Walmatjarri and Kugadja, or some of the smaller groups in their neighbourhood.

The latter supposition gains in probability when our assumption expressed above is interpolated, namely that the tja-/na- prefixation of the subsection names originated at the border of the section and subsection areas east of the Great Sandy Desert i.e. between the Mangarla and the Warnman on the western and the Walmatjarri and Kugadja on the eastern side.

There are some odd features in this picture of the origin of subsections. Three of the groups credited with involvement with the origin of subsections, Warnman, Mangarla and Karierra do not have subsections, but sections, and there is no record of them having had subsections. I presume von Brandenstein is proposing that they had subsections, then changed back to sections, although no evidence worthy of the name is offered for this proposition. The Kugadja (Kukaja) are also implicated in the origin, but it is quite plain that they and other eastern groups of the Western Desert acquired subsections this century from the Warlpiri. Here some weight is placed on the alleged statement by Warlpiri that they acquired subsections from the West, for which no reference is given. If they did receive subsections from the West, it would have been from the North-West, and not from the Western Desert; nor would it have happened this century.

Even more puzzling is the statement that the presence of the ja-/na- gender prefixes supports the inclusion of the Mangarla and Warnman in the group originating subsections. I would take this to mean that there is some evidence that at an earlier stage these languages possessed gender prefixes of this type. However von Brandenstein offers no such evidence, and given that neither gender nor prefixes are known in these languages or any of the languages closely related to them, the possibility seems indeed remote.

The actual 'linguistic evidence' for the area of origin proposed amounts to the existence of the four stems kunggurra, panga-, miitj, and kamba-, of diverse meanings, scattered in different parts of a very broad area of the north of the Western Desert. The supposed connections between these and four of the subsection stems are in fact all coincidental and should be rejected as invalid for reasons of the type set out in the preceding section.
As far as anthropological evidence for the place and nature of the transition to subsections is concerned, von Brandenstein is not very forthcoming. Although he apparently inclines to the common, but as yet unproven, view that the change to subsections reflected a change in marriage rules, he states that his volume is not concerned with 'kinship', a remarkable feat for a book about subsections. Perhaps this is the reason why he makes no reference to Durkheim's hypothesis about the origin of subsections (1904) nor to Elkin's quite reasonable placement of the point of origin of subsections (1970). He is however willing to speculate about the specific cults that were in operation at the time of the origin of the new system, and how the 'brilliant mind' of the inventor or inventors used features of these to devise the new system — all without a scrap of solid evidence.

**McConvell’s Aims and Method.**

Von Brandenstein pursues his aim of uncovering the ‘substance’ of subsections mainly by presenting putative connections between subsection terms and other vocabulary items in a wide range of languages. Such connections are also used as part of the method of establishing connections between terms. By contrast, in my work I do not aim to unearth such common cores of meaning in the subsection terms, nor do such meanings play any role in my historical method. If the terms could be shown to have connotations other than those of kinship and marriage, these could be used but only in a way restricted to the particular historical circumstance in which they could be shown to play a role, not generalised wholesale through time and space. In fact such connotations are so limited that a productive enquiry can be mounted without any major reference to them either in the aim or method. Two of my aims in McConvell (1985) are therefore more modest than those of von Brandenstein: I hope to show:

1. that the area of origin of the subsection system can be located fairly precisely on the basis of linguistic evidence in the area just north of the lower Victoria River, Northern Territory;
2. that the eight subsection terms most generally used arose through the amalgamation of the two sets of four terms of two pre-existing section systems, one originating in the Pilbara district of Western Australia (which I shall call the Northwestern section system), and the other originating in the so-called 'Top End' of the Northern Territory, south of Darwin (which I shall call the North-central section system);

The third aim is more ambitious than those of von Brandenstein in that it makes a serious attempt to describe the actual social process which led to the new system:

3. I also speculate that the amalgamation of the two section systems into a new and qualitatively different subsection system could have taken place in the first instance through the practice of a type of marriage exchange whereby men of only one equivalent patrimoiet in each of the groups possessing the Western and North-central section systems married women of the opposite moiety of the other group, while men of the other moiety continued for some time to marry women of the same group (i.e. the group possessing the same section terms). It will be shown that this arrangement produced all the main features of a subsection system, which was then adopted as a classification system generally irrespective of the form of marriage exchange practised.

My methods in providing evidence for the first two propositions in the article from which
I am quoting above (McConvell 1985:1-2) rely heavily on the accepted methods of historical linguistics. A large number of section and subsection terms are compared, and hypotheses concerning the diffusion of these terms are advanced. The bulk of the evidence consists of making connections between individual terms, and between the structures of the whole subsection systems of which they are part. No resort is made to putative connections between the terms and other vocabulary items. Each link between a pair of terms is justified on the basis that any discrepancy between them can be shown to result from sound changes which are otherwise known to operate in the particular area where diffusion took place. As Sapir insisted, each connection is related to a definable close historical and geographical linkage: in most cases the connection is one of contiguity and shared cultural patterns between the two groups between which terms are claimed to have been diffused. The only significant changes of ‘meaning’ involved are when there is a lack of fit between pragmatic equivalence and linguistic relatedness, as in much of Arnhem Land. In such cases well defined structural transformations are proposed which explain the changes.

McCONVELL’S LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE.

In order to discuss the paths of diffusion in a more structured way, I divide the subsection systems into two groups, the Southwestern and Northeastern (see Map). The terms of the Southwestern group are characterised by:

1. a fairly high degree of similarity between the stems of the subsection terms in different languages;
2. the presence in most cases of reflexes of the gender prefixes ja- masculine, na- feminine to denote male and female members of subsections respectively; and
3. the fact that terms which are historically related are also pragmatically equivalent, i.e. used by different peoples to designate the same actual subsection in practice.

The terms of the Northeastern group also contain terms linguistically related to terms of the Southwestern group, but these are generally fewer in number, and decrease as one moves further north-east. In contrast to the terms of the Southwestern group, the Northeastern group displays:

1. a smaller number of linguistically related terms in different languages, although certain terms are widespread;
2. the absence of gender prefixes on the terms, or the presence of gender prefixes drawn from the indigenous noun-class system of the language concerned or its near neighbours, not borrowed from a distant and obscure source as in the case of the Southwestern ja/na-;
3. in some cases, a lack of ‘fit’ between the linguistic relationship of the terms and the social relationship of recognition by two peoples that two terms are pragmatically equivalent (i.e. if term x is linguistically related to term x’, it does not necessarily follow in this area that x and x’ will be recognised as ‘the same’ subsection, but may on the contrary be assigned different positions in the correlated systems). This type of variation also occurs in some areas between different section systems.

Following detailed comparison of individual terms and sets of terms in the two groups, I go on to reconstruct a set of terms for each group. The reconstructions of the Southwestern set of terms are as in Table 1 below. Consideration of the Northcentral section terms (Table 4) leads to the positing of earlier forms of A2 *-wimij or *-yimij and C2 *-jampij(in).
TIME PERSPECTIVE: ORIGIN OF SUBSECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1: Reconstructed Southwestern Proto-Subsection Terms.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prefixes *ja- masculine; *na- feminine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1 * -panangka</td>
<td>B1 * -purrurla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 * -imij (North)</td>
<td>B2 * -ngala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ngurrayi (South)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1 * -kamarra</td>
<td>D1 * -palyirri (North)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ngurrayi (South)</td>
<td>-paljarri (South)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2 * -mpijin</td>
<td>D2 * -pangarti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2: Warlpiri Subsection Terms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1m japanangka</td>
<td>B1m jupurrurla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f ma] amamgla</td>
<td>f napurrurla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2m jungarrayi</td>
<td>B2m jangala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f nungarrayi</td>
<td>f nangala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1m jakamarra</td>
<td>D1m japaljarri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f nakamarra</td>
<td>f napaljarri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2m jampijinpa</td>
<td>D2m japangardi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f nampijinpa</td>
<td>f napangardi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TABLE 3: Jaminjung Subsection Terms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1m janama</td>
<td>B1m julama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f nanaku</td>
<td>f nawula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2m jimij</td>
<td>B2m jangala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f namij</td>
<td>f nangala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1m jamirra</td>
<td>D1m jalyirri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f namirra</td>
<td>f nalyirri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2m japijin</td>
<td>D2m jangari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f napijin</td>
<td>f nangari</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen that the reconstructed Southwestern subsection terms are very similar to the stems of Warlpiri (Table 2), but this does not mean that the subsections of this group originated among the Warlpiri or even close to their territory. The conservatism of the Warlpiri forms is largely attributable to the lack of a Lenition rule in Warlpiri. Lenition occurs as a general synchronic phonological rule to different degrees, and can be shown to have operated historically on stems, in a number of neighbouring languages, including the Ngumbin group (e.g. Gurindji and Djaru), the Djamindjungan group (e.g. Jaminjung, Table 3 above), the Djeragan group in the East Kimberley (e.g. Kija, Table 12) and a number of languages with terms in the Northeastern group such as Wartaman (Table 4).

The effect of Lenition on subsection terms in these languages is to substitute a glide w for the stops p or k and the glide y for the stop j where the stop is immediately preceded by a vowel-final prefix, such as the gender prefix in subsection terms, or where the stop is initial in a suffix, preceded by a vowel-final stem. Thus *jupurrurla in the northern languages became *juwurrurla; *japanangka > *jawanangka; *nakamarra > *nawamarra etc. Subsequently Glide Deletion and Vowel Shortening replaced uwu and awa with u and a respectively, as in *jurrurla, *janangka, *namarra. Forms close to these starred forms are found in the
East Kimberleys but in the exemplified languages different forms occur due to the operation of other changes analysed in McConvell (1985).

The recognition of the sound change produced by the Lenition rule is of prime importance in the understanding of the detail of the diffusion of the subsection system, and could yield more valuable data on this and other processes of culture history (see further below). This kind of application of data on the results of 'phonetic laws' was considered by Sapir of great value to cultural historiography. One type of evidence to be gained from this was the demonstration that a borrowed word does not show the influence of such phonetic laws as operated before their adoption, or, in the opposite case (Sapir 1916:450):

A borrowed word may happen to have come into use at a period prior to the operation of all such phonetic laws as are capable of affecting it, in which case it exhibits all the phonetic characteristics of words belonging to the oldest ascertainable stratum of the language.

This property of borrowed words is of great chronological value, because it give us:

a minimum age, in terms of relatively datable phonetic laws, for [the] adoption [of the borrowed words], for their adoption and that of the concepts associated with them.

It 'renders great service to the stratification of the borrowed culture words of a language'. Sapir gives the example of two words borrowed from Greek into Anglo-Saxon, one of which can be shown to predate the other because of the differential operation of the sound change k > h. The word for 'hemp', Greek *kannabis* arrived in the pre-Christian period and subsequently underwent the sound change, giving *hcEnap*, whereas Greek *kyriake* 'church' was adopted later and retained its initial k in Anglo-Saxon *cyrice*.

In the case of the subsection terms it can be shown that they were diffused into the Djamindjungan languages, Gurindji and Kija areas before the start of the operation of Lenition, since these languages show the effects of Lenition on the terms, and that they were diffused beyond this area to Walmajarri and Warlpiri also before the operation of the rule, since the latter two languages have adopted the unlenited forms and themselves do not possess the relevant Lenition rules. This process is shown on the Map, indicating how chronological inferences can be drawn from this type of evidence.

Having provided a strong hypothesis about the diffusion of the stems of the Southwestern subsection terms, I had to try to trace the origin of the gender prefixes *ja-/-na-. The proposed diffusion paths of the Southwestern stems themselves pointed to an area of origin in the North-east of the Southwestern group. In the South-western group (leaving aside the Daly River/Port Keats area where diffusion of subsections is known to be very recent; see Stanner 1934), the vast majority of languages have no grammatical gender and no noun-class prefixes, in fact most have no prefixes of any kind. Yet nearly all these languages have subsections which have the gender prefixes *ja-* masculine, *na-* feminine, or reflexes of these prefixes. Sapir stressed the importance for historical enquiry of cases where the productivity of grammatical processes in words of cultural reference was limited, or where morphological irregularity may indicate foreign origin. In this case it seemed highly likely that borrowing of the terms along with foreign prefixes was the cause of the morphological anomaly in so many languages.

Only one of the families of languages within the Southwestern group which have used the subsection terms for any considerable length of time have noun-class prefixes: the Djamindjungan family. Of these only Nungali to my knowledge has segmentable, grammatically
productive, noun-class prefixes in the modern language. The Nungali noun class prefixes are as follows (Bolt, Hoddinott and Kofod):

Gender Prefixes on adjectives: m. ti-, tiya-; f. nya-, nyana-;
Possessives: m. -ya-; f. -na-
e.g. ni-ya-nungkuru 'his arm'; ni-na-nungkuru 'her arm'.

The initial syllables of the masculine and feminine prefixes here (ti- and nya- respectively) do not show any close resemblance to ja-/na- although the second syllable in the alternate forms (-ya- and -na- respectively) do. The alternative forms tiya- and nyana- do show -ya- as a masculine marker and -na- as a feminine marker, respectively.

Note too the 'possessive' forms of the masculine and feminine gender prefixes in Nungali. These are used as follows: if a noun of classes three or four takes a class prefix, the gender of the 'possessor' is marked by an infix -ya-(m)-na-(f), following the class 3 or 4 prefix like ni- above. Intervocalic Lenition is a feature of Nungali and the Djamindjungan languages generally, as can be seen from the pair of words for 'bird': Ngaliwurru julak and Nungali ti-yulak, where Nungali has a masculine class prefix which conditions the change j>y intervocally. Hence the 'possessive' forms of the prefixes can be reconstructed as *ja-(m)/na-(f) i.e. identical to the Southwestern subsection gender prefixes. The same pair of infixes -ya-(m)/na-(f) also occurs as part of the class concord prefixes on adjectives. A similar alternation is found in the Nungali subsection terms in comparison to the neighbouring languages. For instance, where Jaminjung has the subsection terms janama and nanaku, Nungali has tiyanama and nyananaku.

I show in McConvell (1985) that reflexes of the gender prefixes *ja-/*na- are still present in Nungali with a limited function, and that it is these which provided the prefixes for the Southwestern subsection terms. The position of the Djamindjungan languages between the Warrai/Uwinymirr area, which I also show to be the source of four of the Southwestern subsection terms (see below), and the proposed route of the spread of the Northwestern section terms from the west into the south and east Kimberleys also adds weight to the idea that the subsection terms originated in the Djamindjungan area.

Moving to the Northeastern subsection systems, the Wartaman terms provide a point of contact between the two groups of systems as the Wartaman live next to the Jaminjung and Mudbura of the Southwestern group and had a high level of contact with them in pre-European times. The Wartaman terms display the following features:

(a) the stems of the terms are generally similar to those of the Southwestern group, although the prefixes differ;
(b) the terms which are cognate with the Southwestern terms are also pragmatically equivalent to them; and
(c) it can probably be stated with some assurance that the Wartaman have possessed subsections longer than the peoples to the north and east, and it is well known that the subsection system was still diffusing into Northern and Eastern Arnhem Land this century (Elkin 1970).

The prefixes of the Wartaman terms are yi- masculine, and yi + nasal, feminine. The starred form yangala was in fact recorded by Spencer and Gillen (1914). Only the C2 forms are devoid of prefixes. The reconstructed stem for Wartaman are the stems of the feminine forms which follow the prefixes in the Table above, minus the suffix -ani in the case of A2. These reconstructed forms are all closely related to the equivalent proto-Southwestern stems in Table 1.
TABLE 4: Wartaman Subsection terms (Merlan, p.c. 1976).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>A1m yi-warnay</th>
<th>A2m yi-mit</th>
<th>C1m y-anymirra</th>
<th>C2m japijin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>yim-parnay</td>
<td>f yi-mitani</td>
<td>f yin-kanymirra</td>
<td>f japijay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Northeastern group systems which I studied (McConvell 1985) have at least three terms whose stems are shared with the Southwestern group: B2 *(ka)ngala, C1 *kamarra, and D2 *pangarti, and most of the southern members of the Northeastern group have in addition D1 *(kojok) paly(j)arri. Even closer to the Southwestern group, the number of related forms increases, until in Wartaman (Table 4) all the stems are related to Southwestern forms. The reconstructed forms for the Northeastern group as a whole are given in Table 5 below, together with one example of this group, the Gupappuyngu of the ‘Yolngu’ or ‘Murngin’ group of North-east Arnhem Land. Here changes in pragmatic equivalence of the terms have obscured the relationship with the proto-forms, but if the following transformations are noted, the linguistic relationship becomes obvious: A>B; B>A; C>D; D>C; 1>2 and 2>1 in B and C only.

TABLE 5: Reconstruction of the proto-Northeastern subsection terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>A1 * ngarrij(palan)</th>
<th>A2 * purlany</th>
<th>C1 * kamarra</th>
<th>C2 * wamut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* purrala (South)</td>
<td>* palang (East)</td>
<td>* palyarri (South)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 6: Gupapuyngu Subsection terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>A1m burralang</th>
<th>A2m balang</th>
<th>C1m gadjak/gudjuk</th>
<th>C2m bangardi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B1m ngarritj</td>
<td>B2m burlany</td>
<td>D1m waamut</td>
<td>D2m gamarrang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>galitjan</td>
<td>f bilinytjan</td>
<td>f gutjan</td>
<td>f bangarditjan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Northeastern group of subsections the subsections either have no gender marking, have gender suffixes as in Table 6 above, or the gender prefixes attached to the subsection stems are the gender (noun-class) prefix of the indigenous language, or those of near neighbours from whom the term was borrowed.
The same eight stems that formed the basis of the Southwestern terms were also adopted by the immediate eastern neighbour of Djamindjungan, Wartaman, which supplied the terms with its own gender prefixes yɨ (m) and yɨn- (f). Slightly to the north, Ngalkbon, Mayali and others formed their own sets of terms, using some of the Northwestern section terms, but also more different terms probably originating in some more easterly variants of the North-central section terms. The Northeastern subsection terms then spread further into Arnhem Land, and east to the Gulf of Capentaria.

**McConvell's Theory of the Origin of Subsections.**

Simply on the basis of the subsection terms themselves, then, I was able to construct a fairly detailed picture of where the subsections originated, and how they spread. Using data about section systems, I was then able to confirm the area of origin, show in detail how two section systems merged to form the new system, and proceed to develop hypotheses about the social process involved in the transition highly constrained by the nature of the linguistic evidence presented. It has already been mentioned that four of the stems of the Northern Aranda, Warlpiri and the reconstructed proto-Southwestern subsection stems generally are closely related to the four section terms of Southern Aranda. The related subsection terms are A1, B1, C1 and D1, and will be referred to below as Division 1 terms, in contrast to Division 2 terms (A2, B2, C2, D2). It can be shown that at least three and possibly all of the Southern Aranda section terms are cognate with, and very similar to, the section terms of the Ngarluma and other groups in the Pilbara, 1600 kilometres to the west.

This connection with the Northwestern section system has been known for some time (Meggitt 1962, von Brandenstein 1970). Strangely the source of the Division 2 terms had not to my knowledge been discovered before my work, although the nature of the diffusion evidence above provides clear signposts to the region that needs to be investigated and the relevant data on the pre-existing Northcentral section system is very accessible in Spencer (1914). The reasons for this failure to grasp the true origins of the subsection system before probably results from factors already discussed: the failure to apply a systematic linguistic method to these problems and the assumption of the 'extension' of the section system within one group.

Of the section system discovered among the Warrai, Spencer (1914:54) had this to say: the organisation is closely similar to that of the Southern Arunta, where there are only four class names.

Spencer went on to remark:

it is somewhat remarkable to find two tribes, each with the four, named intermarrying groups, one at each end of the long stretch of country, a thousand miles in all, that lies between the southernmost Arunta and the Warrai in the north. In all these tribes the organisation is fundamentally identical, but it is only at the extreme northern and southern limits that we find only four class names, elsewhere there are always eight.

Even more remarkable is the fact that the eight (subsection) names are essentially drawn from the four section names which appear in the south among the Aranda, combined with the four different section names in the north, of which we have only two examples, the Warrai and their southern neighbours, the Uwinymirr (data from recent fieldwork by Mark Harvey, p.c.).
In Tables 7, 8 and 9 below I show the Aranda and Kariera terms of the Northwestern section system, and the Warai (Awarai) terms of the Northcentral section system, drawn from McConvell (1985). If we compare the terms of the Northwestern section system to the stems of Division 1 (A1, B1, C1, D1) terms of the reconstructed Southwestern subsection terms (Table 1) or of Warlpiri (Table 2) the relationship is obvious (with the possible exception of Kariera *purungu*). If we then compare the stems of the Northcentral section terms (disregarding the *a-* and *al-* prefixes) to the stems of the Jaminjung (Table 3) and Wartaman (Table 4) terms, the relationships between the A, C and D terms and the A2, C2 and D2 subsection terms is again obvious. The Northcentral B section term does not appear to relate to any Southwestern subsection term directly, although if we note that the Uwinymirr equivalent is *pularang* (Harvey, p.c.) we could propose that this may be related to the widespread Northeastern B2 subsection stem *palang* (cf. Gupapuyngu *balang*). An alternative Northeastern section B proto-stem *kangala/kangila* probably existed which provided the B2 section terms in the Southwestern subsection systems and the more westerly Northeastern subsection systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Northwestern Section System</th>
<th>Northcentral Section System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 7: Kariera</td>
<td>TABLE 9: Warai (Spencer 1914)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A panaka</td>
<td>Am a-winnij</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B purungu</td>
<td>Bm a-pularan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f al-winnij</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f al-pularan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C karimarra</td>
<td>Cm a-jampij</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D palyarri</td>
<td>Dm a-pangarti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f al-jampij</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f al-pangarti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 8: Southern Aranda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hale 1973</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A pinangka</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B pirrurla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C kimarra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D paltharra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two sets of subsection terms, Division 1 which comes from the Northwestern section system, and Division 2 which comes from the Northcentral section system must have combined to form the subsection system somewhere between the Warrai and Uwinymirr south of Darwin, and the Northwestern section system advancing to meet it from the west. As far as the Southwestern subsection terms are concerned, we can pinpoint their origin more accurately than this, on the basis of linguistic evidence, as discussed above. On the basis of the preceding evidence I proposed (McConvell 1985) that the Southwestern subsection system originated in the Djamindjungan family of languages around the lower Victoria River Basin, and subsequently spread south into Central Australia and west into the Kimberleys. Four of the terms used (Division 1) came from the west and four (Division 2) from the area to the north.

Having reached this level of understanding of the specific historical nature of the combination of two section systems, hypotheses about the origin of subsections based on the symmetrical augmentation of each section within one group, such as those of Durkheim (1904), Scheffler (1977) and von Brandenstein (1982) must now be discarded. In McConvell (1985) I go on to build a new hypothesis on the new understanding arrived at by the use of a careful and systematic linguistic method.

The key feature of the transition which has been revealed by the discovery of the merging of the two section systems concerns the patrimoeties, which in the area concerned are today
called Wedge-Tailed Eagle and White-faced Heron. In the merging of systems, the major asymmetry apparent is the fact that children of men of one patrimoity were assigned subsection terms from the same section system as their father, whereas children of men of the other patrimoity were assigned terms of the other system from that of their father, of the two section systems which originally combined to create the new system of subsections. It is this feature for which an explanatory hypothesis is offered.

The model I propose incorporates the idea that between the two groups (Northwestern and Northcentral) Heron clans exclusively or predominantly gave women to Eagle clans, whereas within the groups Eagle clans exclusively or predominantly gave women to Heron clans. (I use the terms Eagle and Heron here to indicate patrilineal moieties of the same composition as Eagle and Heron moieties today, not to imply that Eagle and Heron were the moiety terms in use at the time).

This means that while such an alliance system was in operation, Heron men married Eagle women of their own group and their children were naturally assigned section names also from their own group. On the other hand Eagle men married Heron women of the other group. By the rule of section and subsection assignment which is the most common in the case of ‘wrong’ marriages in Australia (when the father and mother are not in a ‘straight’ marriage relationship) the child receives the section or subsection appropriate to it as its mother’s child, disregarding the father. This case is somewhat different, in that the marriage here is not ‘wrong’, but into a different group with a different set of terms. Nevertheless, similar considerations may have been at work. Other factors which may have encouraged the assignment to the child of a Northwestern-Northcentral marriage of a term from his mother’s group include:

(a) the fact that the mother with whom the child had its closest bond in its early years would in all probability call it by her group’s term; and

(b) the possible presence of matrilineal social totemic organisation alongside sections in the area. This organisation (the totemic groups are usually known as ngurlu) is present today in the Victoria River area, and may have supported an identification of the child with its mother’s group.

Finally, the marriage pairs of the original section systems were reinstated, probably because in most cases the wife would have moved to live with her husband’s group and would have been called by the term current in his group. All the essential features of the new system having been established, it then diffused to the south, west and east.

In the final part of my paper (McConvell 1985) I go beyond the use of linguistic evidence to include social and cultural data of relevance to the argument. Sapir supported the use of this kind of data in conjunction with linguistic evidence in cultural history, as long as the main principle of the weighting of different types of evidence was adhered to. In my speculations it is always made clear what kind of probability can be assigned to each piece of evidence. Sapir was also concerned not to be overly zealous in excluding certain types of evidence. Writing of what he calls ‘native testimony’ (1916:396), he says:

‘Native testimony’ includes myths and legends, for Sapir. To support my hypothesis about the social process involved in the origin of subsections, I use the structure of the myth about the struggle between Eagle and Heron, founders of the two patrimoieties. There are notable parallels between the structure of this myth and the social process involved in the
origin of subsections. Despite the scepticism of many anthropologists about the value of myth in the reconstruction of history, it seems to me a resource that should not lightly be ignored, providing due caution is exercised in recognising that myth involves multi-layered symbolism rather than any literal rendering of historical events. While not necessarily endorsing all the conclusions of Dumézil, it seems that his use of myth in the reconstruction of previous social and ideological systems has proved of some worth, and could be at least tried out in Australia (Littleton 1966).

IMPLICATIONS OF McCONVELL’S THEORY OF THE ORIGIN OF SUBSECTIONS.

It has been argued here that von Brandenstein’s method in cultural history is in error, and that this leads him to erroneous conclusions about the origin of subsections. McConvell’s method belongs to the more scientific tradition of Sapir, and hence provides us not only with much more reliable conclusions about the area of origin and paths of diffusion of subsections, but also with useful tools to make further discoveries in Australian Aboriginal history.

One of the extensions of McConvell’s initial findings is in the detailing of the social process involved in the innovation of subsections, discussed above. Many possible lines of enquiry open up, but I cannot do more than mention a few here: the role of the interpretation of myth, the possible role of matrilineal totemic organisation in the transition, the relationship of subsection systems to marriage rules and further work on the little-known Northcentral section system.

Now that some definite landmarks have been established in the history of diffusion of subsections, work on building a relative chronology of culture history can begin in earnest. The importance of the lenition sound change in the Southwestern subsection area, illustrated on the Map, has already been stressed, but what has been described so far is only a very general picture of the situation in regard to one set of cultural items. What is needed now is a deepening of the examination of the detail of lenition and other phonological rules as they affect particular languages, and the broadening of the sample to include other cultural items which may have been borrowed before or after such rules applied. Certainly there is evidence in the operation of sound changes in the languages of the west of the Northern Territory and the East Kimberleys which can provide clues to the culture historian. Even within single languages, lenited and unlenited forms of certain items may be found. Sapir bids us pay attention to place names in order to capture archaisms in the language, and this approach seems certain to bear fruit in this area. For instance the place names Mapunkuj and Pakarrji in the Northern Tanami Desert have alternatives Mawunkuj and Paarrji with lenition of p>w and k>w>∅ respectively; through this, mapun is revealed as an earlier form of the word mawun ‘initiated man’. Morphological elements can be suspected of being recently borrowed on the grounds that they do not undergo normal phonological rules. For instance the suffix -kari ‘other’ in Gurindji could well have been borrowed from Warlpiri as it does not become *-wari following a vowel, whereas the equivalent morpheme in Jaru does (kariny>wariny) so is likely to be either an earlier borrowing or to have descended from a common ancestral stock shared with Warlpiri.

With regard to the borrowing of cultural items, whether or not lenition affects them could be a good guide to the relative chronology of the diffusion of ideas and artefacts in this area. For instance the terms wirika for axe and wiriki for hook boomerang do not
exhibit lenition of k in Gurindji (cf. *jalka > jalwa ‘heron’) so may have arrived along with a new type of axe and boomerang, respectively. The term *kaja for a short fighting spear shows no lenition of j > y (cf. *mangkaja > mangkaya ‘bark shelter’) and no lenition of k > w in its reduplicated form kajakaja ‘spurs’. It appears likely from the testimony of local people that this type of spear was in fact imported into the Gurindji and Mudburra area from farther south relatively recently. If any of the hypotheses about these artefacts is correct, then it puts the date of diffusion of subsections to the Gurindji before the diffusion of these items to them. We have other independent means of ascertaining the spread of artefacts: historical records, the study of trade routes (as in Mulvaney 1976), archaeology and rock art studies, at least. Together with the linguistic evidence of the type described, this puts a powerful tool for the construction of culture history chronology in our hands. As individual examples and patterns multiply, the more precise can we expect our chronologies and hypothesised cultural diffusion paths to become.

A further application of the chronological principle inherent in sound changes concerns the initial-dropping change which is known to have taken place in the Arandic languages. Since we know that four of the Northern Aranda subsection terms (Division 2 in Table 10 below) were borrowed in the nineteenth century from the Warlpiri (Spencer and Gillen 1936), the fact that they appear today without the initial j- and n- of the Warlpiri terms indicates that they were borrowed before initial-dropping ceased to operate in Aranda. The other four terms of the northern Aranda system are almost identical to the Southern Aranda section system which, it is probable, was borrowed from the area of origin of the section system in the Pilbara. Although the difference has been levelled in recent times, when Spencer and Gillen recorded the terms the Division 2 terms, unlike the Division 1 terms, retained an initial vowel indicating their lesser age in the language and their different source. The differential treatment of *j (retained in C2, but > th in D1) also points to this age difference in the two Divisions of terms (as pointed out to me by David Wilkins; see McConvell 1985, Note 4).

TABLE 10: Northern Aranda Subsection Terms
(Spencer and Gillen 1936)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>panangka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>akngwarriya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>kamarra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>ampijana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>purrurla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>angala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td>paltharra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td>apangarta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The contention is that the Aranda section terms arrived directly from the Pilbara, whereas the Warlpiri Division 1 subsection terms arrived after having travelled across the Kimberleys from the Pilbara, having been involved in the origin of subsections around the lower Victoria River then having been diffused south across the Tanami Desert. If this is true, then the Warlpiri stems have retained a remarkable resemblance to the original section terms despite their long journey. This would tend to persuade one to the view that this original diffusion of sections and subsections was rather rapid, as indeed the diffusion of subsections in this century is known to have been. The diffusion cannot have been very recent, however, certainly not in the last century as Meggitt (1962) proposes, as this would not leave enough time for lenition to have had such profound effects in the northern languages, let alone for initial-dropping to have affected the borrowed terms in Aranda as well.

Many such problems of chronology will no doubt be cleared up with more careful and
detailed work using the methods outlined. Even in the form of the Southwestern subsection terms there remain problems to be explained. I present the possible beginnings of an explanation of one such lacuna; like many of these points, a solution would not only fill a single gap, but contribute to the weaving of the whole pattern of culture history in northern Australia. In McConvell (1985) I had no explanation for the occurrence of nya- as an alternative to na- as a feminine prefix in some subsection terms. This occurs only in the most westerly subsection systems of the Southwestern group, in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. I give below two examples of systems with some nya- feminine forms, in Kija and Walmajarri:

TABLE 11: Kija Subsection Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male term</th>
<th>Female term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1m jawan</td>
<td>B1m juwurr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f nyawana</td>
<td>f nyawurr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2m jungurra</td>
<td>B2m jangala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f naminjilli</td>
<td>f nangala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clm jakarra</td>
<td>D1m jawalyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f nakarra</td>
<td>f nyaajarri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2m jampin</td>
<td>D2m jaangari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f nampin</td>
<td>f naangari</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 12: Walmajarri Subsection Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male term</th>
<th>Female term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1m jawanti</td>
<td>B1m jupurr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f nyapana</td>
<td>f nyapurru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2m jungkurra</td>
<td>B2m jangala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f nanyjilli</td>
<td>f nangala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clm jakarra</td>
<td>D1m japalyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f nakarra</td>
<td>f nyapajarri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2m jampiyirnti</td>
<td>D2m jangkarti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f nampiyirnti</td>
<td>f nangkarti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two systems above are clearly closely related. The most important difference in the terms is the replacement of intervocalic p in the Walmajarri terms with w, an example of the process of lenition which has already been mentioned in relation to the difference between the Jaminjung and Gurindji terms, on the one hand, and the Warlpiri terms on the other. In terms of the model of diffusion of subsection terms in McConvell (1985), the unlenited forms spread out from the lower Victoria River Basin to the Warlpiri and Walmajarri via the Jaminjung, Gurindji, Kija etc. Subsequently an areal phenomenon of lenition of intervocalic stops began to effect the latter languages which were the first to receive subsections in the Southwestern group, but affected Walmajarri in a less profound way and Warlpiri not at all.

The most noticeable difference between the Kija and Walmajarri terms on the one hand and the Jaminjung, Gurindji and Warlpiri terms on the other is the presence of nya- as the feminine prefix of the A1, B1 and C1 terms in the former westerly languages, contrasting with the feminine prefix na- (with occasional variants nu-, ni-) in all forms in the latter easterly languages. The geographical extent of these two features (lenition of p following gender prefixes, and some nya- versus all na-) is shown on the Map.

It is my contention (McConvell 1985) that the ancestors of the present day Djamindjungan languages were involved in the early development and diffusion of the subsection system,
and contributed the typical *ja-/na- prefix to the forms which subsequent diffused throughout the Southwestern group. The forms *ja- and *na- are not the prime gender prefixes in any living language of the region but Nungali has *ya- and *na- as infixes denoting the gender of the person, following other noun class suffixes, which I have shown are descended from earlier masculine and feminine prefixes, *ja- and *na- respectively. The change *ya- < *ja is quite justifiable given the abundant evidence of j>y Lenition in Djamindjungan both historically and synchronically.<ref>

The three terms which take the feminine prefix nya- in the extreme western subsection terms are all in Division 1. Recall that Division 1 is made up of A1, B1, C1, D1, which in the Southwestern group of subsection systems are the four terms which are descended from the original four section terms which arrived in the Victoria Basin from the Pilbara to the west. They could well have entered the area of the ancestors of the present-day Djamindjungan family after Division 2 terms, which may have been present as section terms in the area before the transition to subsections had begun. Even if both Divisions of terms were used in the Djamindjungan area before the transition, Division 1 would have probably been used by more westerly groups than Division 2. Thus the prefix nya- could have been either a later development affecting the later arriving terms, as the existence of nya- as a more recent feminine prefix in Nungali suggests, or a more westerly variant, or both. Further clarification of these questions using the methods outlined will help to refine our model of the origin of subsections.

Outside the immediate area which we have been examining, the general method of the disciplined use of related linguistic forms to contribute to historical reconstruction has great potential. One fertile area for this type of work would be the Gulf of Carpentaria. Particularly dramatic phonological changes have affected many of the languages of this area sufficiently recently and with sufficient local variation to make the nature of the changes relatively accessible to us today (see Klokeid 1976, Black 1980). One such dramatic change is the group of Truncation processes that have affected Lardil (Hale 1973, Klokeid 1976, McConvell 1981) and to a lesser extent, Kayardilt (Evans 1983). This is the obverse of Arandic Initial dropping in that it involves loss of final segments and syllables of words. These phonological changes have had profound effects on the grammar of the languages, so that a relative chronology of a chain of changes and their consequences and hypotheses about the stages of differentiation of the ancestral Tangic language can be built up. In addition to this there is quite probably a complex interaction between these changes and the changes of sea level in the Gulf which has been responsible for rendering various islands inaccessible during certain

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periods, and at other times uninhabitable due to the salinity of water supply. These changes can be studied through various geological techniques of investigation. Furthermore the contact and lack of contact implied by the water level changes on the one hand and linguistic evidence on the other is also reflected in blood-group differentiation and other genetic data (Simmons, Tindale and Birdsell 1962). Local legends, carefully handled, could also yield relevant evidence. In all, the potential for constructing a quite detailed chronological framework for this part of the Gulf of Carpentaria is great, without even carrying out archeological work.

Aside from these opportunities to develop a more accurate conception of hitherto little understood developments in Aboriginal history, the method and the conclusions presented here also challenge the theoretical preconceptions of anthropologists in the face of historical questions. Stanner has been hailed as a pioneer because he described and analysed a process of rapid social change which took place as the subsection system first began to spread into the Daly River/Port Keats area, entailing various phases of adaptations of local beliefs and practices (Stanner 1936a, 1979).6 Radical change of this kind is clearly not confined to the period of Aboriginal history involving contact with Europeans, and observed by Europeans. The spread of section systems, the invention of subsections and their subsequent diffusion are examples of major changes in the social practices of Aboriginal people which took place in earlier times.

An essential tool for the understanding of such changes is the concept of contradiction between relatively autonomous social and ideological systems, such as between new and old social classifications. Any social investigator who ignores this and attempts to reduce all social phenomena to the manifestations of a single ruling principle, or a mere function of an integrated social whole, is ultimately fated to follow von Brandenstein into the wasteland of what Sapir called 'merely conceptual abstractions' divorced from historical actuality. Thus

6 Stanner’s report on fieldwork in 1934-35 (1979), which only came to my notice after I had completed this article, anticipates a number of points made in this article in addressing the question of the origin of subsections, although Stanner does not offer any substantive hypothesis of their actual origin:
(1) He accepts the idea of diffusion of subsection terms accompanied by ‘conventionalisation’ (loss of original, possibly totemic, meanings) (1979:98);
(2) He accepts the selectivity inherent in absorbing the new system since ‘cultures absorb only compatible traits’ (1979:101);
(3) He rejects ideas of the ‘invention’ of the system by a ‘hypothetical wise old man’ (1979:100) – an idea recapitulated by von Brandenstein (1982);
(4) He rejects a completely kinship-dominated explanation of subsections, such as that in Scheffler (1977): ‘neither moieties, sections nor sub-sections can be regarded as basically kinship groupings’ (1979:100);
(5) Most significantly, he sees the possibility of origin in the interaction of systems: ‘nor should we overlook the possibility ... that it may be the mutilated survival of several impinging types of totemism’ (1979:101).

The latter three points mark Stanner off as in advance of those whom I have characterised as participating in a paradigm which assumes that ideological production and innovation take place within the boundaries of a single system or a single ‘society’. He saw the origin of subsections as perhaps being a totemic system which combines (1) matrilineal descent; (2) apparently indirectly matrilineal descent; and (3) a social, rather than cult character. Although the ngurlu system has two of these features, in 1935 Stanner was still looking for a group which possessed the three features and hoping to find such a group in the Central Desert. In fact, ngurlu and similar matrilineal features attenuate and disappear in that area.
those social anthropologists like Scheffler who wish to show that subsections and similar classifications are merely 'superclasses' derived from kinship systems are running the risk of producing only a mirror image of the speculative anthropology whose theories of the primacy of the social classification systems they claim to oppose. It is the same error, shared by functionalists and their seeming opponents like von Brandenstein, which leads to the unwarranted assumption that new social systems must be 'extensions' of pre-existing systems or ideas already present in one social group. As we have seen, important changes like the transition to subsections can equally arise from the contradiction and interaction of two systems in neighbouring groups, and it is the gradual working out of the contradiction in historical stages that leaves its trace in the language and culture and makes that history accessible to us today.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


INTRODUCTION

The substantive point of this article is to put into print some versions of the story of Janda-marra, also called Pigeon, a famous Aboriginal 'outlaw' of the Kimberley district of Western Australia (see Map), who in the 1890s worked as a police tracker, then turned against the police, releasing all their prisoners and fleeing to the Kimberley ranges. He and his followers evaded search patrols for over two years, during which time he led several raids upon Kimberley cattle stations, capturing rifles and ammunition which he is said to have planned to use in an all-out campaign to oust European settlers from the area. He was finally shot down in 1897.

The story of Pigeon occupies a significantly central place in representations of the history of Aboriginal-European contact in the Kimberleys. Among Aboriginal communities in that area the story is a living part of local history, and while most Aboriginal people in the region will at least have heard of the story, the main rights to it are recognised as residing with the Bunuba people, especially with such key figures as Banjo Wirrunmarra. Accordingly, the Fitzroy Valley Bunuba community has recently been incorporated into a production company for the purpose of producing a feature film about Pigeon. European versions of the story include a novel by Ion Idriess (1952) and academic-historical accounts by Howard Pederson (1980, 1984). Aboriginal writer Colin Johnson has made significant use of the story in a novel (Johnson 1979).

While it is clear that in and through these rewritings of his story Pigeon's actions become the site of ideological contestation (e.g., his representations as 'tragic hero' or 'revolutionary
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hero’), our aim is not to provide an interpretation of the history of the texts to be reproduced here. Nor is our aim that of laying claim to finally reproducing the authentic and original accounts, even though Banjo Wirrunmarra’s name would tend to authorise the texts in this way, central as he is to the sites of Aboriginal (Bunuba) repetitions of the story.

Rather, our methodological aims are to make some general statements concerning ‘history as texts’ and to outline and justify a particular technique for transcribing oral traditions from tape recordings. These two aims are interrelated in that the method of transcription is one which we believe to be especially suitable for representing some important textual features of Aboriginal oral history in written versions. If we say more about transcription conventions than is necessary for enabling readers to follow the texts, this is because we also want to make the method available to people who might want to use it for transcribing other texts.

HISTORY AS TEXTS.

History for westerners exists in at least two dimensions. In one dimension it is a sequence of objects that precede the present — a positivism in which the universal ordering function of terms like ‘precede’ and ‘present’ is generally assumed without theoretical justification. In the other dimension, history is, as Morphy and Morphy (1984) have put it, ‘the incorporation or conceptualisation of the past in the present and as such is part of human consciousness and provides a framework for future action’ (loc. cit: 459; cf. Bloch 1977). This latter view allows, with the notion of ‘incorporation’, for an understanding of history as a process of constant reconstruction of its texts according to changing professional protocols. In this sense, there would be a third dimension for the existence of history, and that would be history defined as the activities of history departments, including their principles, professional codes, and politics (‘framework for future action’).

As linguists, we propose to adopt the second of these points of view in conjunction with what has been called the ‘text of history’, for two main reasons (cf. Barthes 1982). The first is that we feel that in one important sense the construction of history — whether spoken or written — is a textual activity. What historians do is construct accounts: they form the raw material of events into textual shapes — forms which do not stand in any privileged or transparent relation to the events in question. The second reason concerns the relocation of the spoken word and the development of ‘oral history’ in Australia and elsewhere.

Until recently, Aboriginal people have generally not been represented as speaking subjects in the literature of Aboriginal history, anthropology, or even biography. This situation has changed considerably during the last decade. Aboriginal History has flourished as an academic field, partly due to changes in the political position of Aboriginal people, and partly because ‘oral history’ has now become respectable among the world community of academic historians. Since the founding of this journal in 1977, articles have regularly been published in which Aboriginal people, as authors, co-authors, or collaborators, speak in the first person about history as they have experienced it, both as actors in the narrated events and as interlocutors in earlier oral text productions.

3 For example, even Stanner 1960 — which was one of the first published works in this genre, and is still one of the most sensitive — includes only a handful of quoted utterances by the man whose life story is being told.
Strictly speaking, no such publication is itself an instance of oral history, since the medium is print rather than talk. To the extent that we are willing to call such productions oral history, this is presumably because they start from spoken accounts as their 'primary sources'. These spoken accounts are generally recorded on tape, transcribed, and — if in some distinctively Aboriginal form of English — subjected to various lexico-grammatical transformations and other editing procedures before being reproduced in print. For instance, Bruce Shaw says of his collaboration with Jack Sullivan that 'Editing, transforming the narratives from the spoken to the written word, was relatively extensive', so as to place them into 'standard colloquial English' (Shaw and Sullivan 1979:97, cf. Shaw 1984).

It is obvious that a similar editing procedure has been followed in, e.g., Bell (1978), Shaw and McDonald (1978), Shaw and Sullivan (1983), Morphy and Morphy (1984).

Generally, it is only when reproducing 'traditional' Aboriginal-language accounts that authors present verbatim (phonemic) transcripts of what was said. These are usually accompanied by inter-linear glosses, and often by 'free translations' too — the latter in standard or colloquial English (see, e.g., Merlan 1978, Heath 1980).

The effect of these transformations is that, although Aboriginal people are represented in the edited English 'translations' as speaking in the first person, they are made to do so in a voice which is not their own, and much of the meaning of the original oral performance is lost or altered. We believe this situation may be improved upon by using a system of transcription something like the one which has been developed by Dennis Tedlock and his Amerindianist colleagues over the past fifteen years, as expounded in Tedlock (1983). A similar system was developed independently by Stephen Muecke for the representation of Australian Aboriginal English narratives (Muecke 1982; cf. Roe and Muecke 1983, Benterrak et al 1984). The scheme which we propose here draws upon both systems, incorporating what we see as the most useful features of each for publishing Aboriginal oral accounts.

A METHOD OF TRANSCRIPTION.

In common with Tedlock, our aim is to render the oral text in such a way that it can easily be re-presented or performed in something like its original oral-dramatic form. The conventions which we (and Tedlock) propose for this are — in the main — ones which have

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4 This phrase has been put in quotation marks here because the canons of standard historiographic practice would seem to require written or otherwise 'objectified' speech as 'sources', which are 'primary' because they are understood to provide a kind of 'hard evidence' against which the 'secondary' productions of any particular historian may be 'tested' in order to assess their validity. It is of course possible to treat particular transcripts (or electronic recordings) of particular oral performances in this way, but that sort of objectification has no basis in Aboriginal tradition.

5 This is not to gainsay the considerable strengths of the works cited in the previous two paragraphs. Shaw and Sullivan (1983) in particular goes a long way toward the enfranchisement of Jack Sullivan as a speaking subject, Keesing (1983) notwithstanding. We accept the arguments of Shaw (1984) against Keesing's plea for a more literary 'translation' of Aboriginal English, but favour an approach which is even less compromising than his in its faithfulness to the oral texts. Cf. the remarks by an Aboriginal working party for the Bicentennial History Project: 'When the cues, the repetitions, the language, the distinctively Aboriginal evocations of our experience are removed from the recitals of our people, the truth is lost to us' ('A Black View of History, Culture'. The Age 13/2/81.)

6 Stephen first saw examples of Tedlock's work in 1984.
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long been in use for the printing of poetry and plays — western genres with which Aboriginal oral narrative has far more in common than it does with written prose.

The most basic collocational unit which is evident from the sound of those narratives (as opposed to their grammar) is not the clause or the sentence, but what Tedlock calls the line: a stretch of speech which is bounded on both ends by silence. Tedlock represents every such ‘line’ in one line of print beginning at the left margin of the page. Where the spoken line is too long to fit into one line of print, it is continued in an indented one(s).

Here we will adopt Tedlock’s procedure, with one difference, as per Muecke (1982:187-8). In our scheme, not every pause will be considered to terminate a line. This is because some pauses (a fairly small minority of them) in our tape recordings can clearly be distinguished as hesitations. These sound very different from deliberate pauses because after the pause, the voice begins at the same pitch at which it left off, and continues the pre-pause contour rather than starting a new one. In our scheme, unlike Tedlock’s, these hesitation pauses will be considered to fall within the line. All other pauses will be taken as boundary markers between lines. Pauses within the line will be represented by hyphens.

As in Tedlock’s scheme, we indicate prosodic prominence by capitalisation, e.g.: ‘... and he told him to GET OUT of it.’ (When the word ‘I’ is prominent, this will be shown by boldface.) Another prosodic feature which figures in the Aboriginal texts (and in oral performance generally) is the ‘stylistic’ use of over-lengthening. We indicate this by repeating letters in proportion to audible length, e.g., if the ‘o’ in ‘long’ is held to three times its normal length, we would write it ‘loong’.

Other paralinguistic or prosodic information (including specification of extra long pauses) is occasionally provided in parentheses, as per standard practice for indicating ‘stage

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7 This is roughly the same unit which is referred to in Muecke 1982 as a ‘narrative clause’. Because the latter term could easily be confused with ‘clause’ as a grammatical unit, we will abandon it in favour of Tedlock’s term ‘line’. But see below for a (minor) difference in what qualifies for us as a line.

8 These silences are usually at least half a second long, and must be distinguished from the much briefer ones which occur, e.g., during the occlusion of some stop consonants. The latter are not heard as pauses, partly because of their brevity and partly because of the intonational factors discussed below.

9 Note that, although every line break falls at a break between intonation contours, not every contour is coterminous with a line, since the contour boundaries are not always accompanied by a pause. Cf. Halliday 1985, who speaks of tone groups as information units ‘one following the other in unbroken succession with no pause or discontinuity between them’ (p.274). But although this is often true, it is readily apparent from his examples (pp.274-286) that when a pause does occur it is almost always at the beginning or end of a tone group. Thus on formal grounds it seems reasonable to propose that the line as we have defined it is a higher level unit on the same prosodic hierarchy to which Halliday’s ‘foot’ and ‘tone group’ also belong (though its functional relationship to the tone group is far from clear). Note that only by excluding hesitation breaks at line markers can this proposal be sustained.

10 Obviously the details which are specified in this way are only a small subset of the ones which could have been noted. Since we have at our disposal no rigorous functional theory on which to base such a selection, we must rely solely upon our sense of what is significant, according to our experience as interlocutors in oral text productions of this kind. Regarding the length of pauses between lines, we now consider Muecke 1982 and Tedlock 1983 to have unduly complicated the transcription by specifying this ‘etically’ throughout (Muecke in whole-second intervals and Tedlock by specially marking all pauses over two seconds long). Since our experience suggests that not every long pause is ipso facto especially significant, we now specify ‘long pause’ optionally in parentheses. Our deliberations on this matter owe much to the advice of Bill McGregor, whose help we gratefully acknowledge.

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directions', e.g., (in a soft voice), (points west), (closes eyes) etc.

Where there is a change of speaker, the new speaker is identified by initials at the left margin, followed by a colon. The speakers so identified in the texts below are Banjo Wirrunmarra, Alan Rumsey, and Stephen Muecke. Contra the practice of most writers of 'oral history', but in common with Tedlock (1983:285-343), we think it is important to represent something of the fundamentally dialogic ground of oral texts, fully acknowledging in this case that they are the product of interaction between non-Aboriginal, academic investigators and an Aboriginal 'informant' of considerable skill and experience, both in that role and as a 'story man'.

For spelling Wirrunmarra's English, we have kept as close as possible to standard English orthography. Wirrunmarra’s English in these texts is not the stabilised Kriol of Sandefur (1979), but a more-or-less idiosyncratic lect which is generally close enough to Australian colloquial English to be intelligible to English speakers who have no familiarity with Kriol. Where this is not the case, the Aboriginal forms in question are glossed in footnotes.

The above conventions provide what we think is a good compromise between richness of prosodic and contextual detail, and simplicity. Much more phonetic and choreographic detail could have been included, but this would have made the transcripts too complex to be performable in real time and/or readily intelligible to non-linguists. The system which we are advocating here is one which we hope will not only make texts such as the following ones readily available to a non-academic audience, but will facilitate the transcription and publication of them by literate speakers of Aboriginal English with little or no special training in linguistics.

An added advantage of presenting just these audible features is that it then becomes possible to translate (non-English) Aboriginal language texts in such a way as to preserve some of their most important aural features in the English renditions. For line breaks, line-level prosodic prominence, stylistic vowel lengthening, and many paralinguistic features of Aboriginal-language texts (unlike their segmental-phonological and word-level supra-segmental features) have functional values which are largely preserved when these features are incorporated directly into the English-language scripts. Furthermore, the uses of these features in Aboriginal English are almost identical to their uses in ‘traditional’ Aboriginal languages. This is well exemplified by the first text below. It starts out in the Ungarinyin Language (see Rumsey (1982) re Ungarinyin grammar; Blake (1981) for orthography), for each line of which we have provided an English translation which carries over the prosodic features notated as per the discussion above. After line 40, the tape recorder was switched off. A few minutes later, it was switched on again, and Wirrunmarra picked up the story where he had left off—now in a variety of Aboriginal English. Note the similarity in average line length, in the uses of prosodic prominence, and in what gets put into a single line.

11 Cf., e.g., Shaw and Sullivan 1979:97, who apologise for the fact that ‘parts of the narrative are responses to questions’, and delete the questions from the published ‘narrative’.

12 It is no accident that Tedlock’s system of notation is useful in just this way, for the ‘translation of style’ from American Indian languages into English was just the purpose for which Tedlock developed the system.
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THE TEXTS.

The following two texts about Pigeon were recorded seven years apart — the first by Alan Rumsey in 1984, the second by Stephen Muecke in 1977.

We have chosen to present both of these texts in order to provide an example of the nature and extent of the continuity of an Aboriginal oral tradition, as held by a particular story-teller. You can see how some details in the narrated events — e.g. the topographic ones discussed in footnote 26 — are reproduced exactly even after seven years, and others, such as the number of funnels on the Koombana, are slightly altered. An advantage of the system of transcription we are using here is that it also gives you some idea of the enduring particularity of Wirrunmarra’s craftsmanship as a shaper of oral history. We will here refrain from detailed comparison of his version of the story with other accounts (but cf. Muecke 1983a), since our aim is not to add to or improve upon Pederson’s admirable work of compilation (1980, 1984) but rather to let Wirrunmarra (whom Pederson (1984:14, footnote 7) describes as ‘custodian of the Pigeon story’) speak as directly as possible to our readers. Where extra background information may be required in order to follow what he is saying, this will be given in footnotes rather than in a concluding section, in order to let BW have the last word.


As told in Ungarinyin

anggalu policemana
warraj amanga
Jandamarra
biyinggerri
5 brrru gugudu burrinyirri
burrarda bundumangerri, joli
bundumindanirri
Limalwurru-gu
AR: Limalwurru

English Translation
the policeman came
he picked him up
Jandamarra
the two of them went
they chased blackfellas
they chained up the lot of
them and brought them back
to Lillamaloora13
Lillamaloora
yes
then he ASKED him
‘I want to kill some kangaroo for them’
he said
and the white man said ‘o.k.

you know where the rifle is,
hanging up there
take it’, he said
so he took it
he looked around for rifle
cleaner, ‘there’s none’

13 This is the name of an old police station near where the Lennard River breaks through the Napier Range (see map). Its stone ruins can still be seen. Note that in line 48, after Wirrunmarra has switched to English, he uses the anglicised version of the name.
amara
winingara werri
wumen
he said
he put in one
bullet
he shot him right there
that policeman
from before, that one
‘OUR WOMEN
you chase after
why
why don’t you shoot him?’, they
said to him (long pause)
so he SHOT him
then he himself
he took them
to Windjana Gorge
he took them in
and he kept the lot of them
right there

25 ngawurr on mindi-nga
jinda policeman
galumun-nangga-gurde di
NYADAGA WULUN
gugudu biji nyindi

30 waga
ngawurr anjawu budmaranangga
(di-yu NGAWURR oni
di andu yu
andumindanina:)
35 Windjana Gorge
darag andumindani
mindi-yu andiyilani
burrardangarri

right

40 FINISH
(tape off for a few minutes)
When you ready
AR: oh, you ready?
BW: you ready?
AR: um

45 BW: right
what he done when he shot that man
ah, the place
Lillamaloora
he WENT

50 he was on that cave
in Windjana
AR: Jandamarra jirri (Ungarinyin: ‘Jandamarra, that one’)
BW: Jandamarra
that Pigeon Hole

55 old Grandfather Blythe came with a . . .? calf
weaners
water’m in Windjana Gorge
when he stoop down and getta water
in Gorge

60 and he told him to GET OUT of it
old Blythe take his, take his TIME to get out of the water
they was that many CATTLE there
anyhow he fired a shot and he KNOCK his THUMB off
old fella jump up
all the cattle rush
to the bank
he take'm in to the open
and THEN
that was that — JANDararra

he wasn’t a friend of anybody now\(^{14}\)
he was on his own
he was a outlaw
and AGAIN
he shot, the young policeman

my father
he was runnin’ over, what?
one mile
in the plain
Plum plain

shot him in the fingers
AR: your father?
BW: my r’own\(^{15}\)
and he got into the spring there
Ninety Two Spring he bin get in there

BROAD DAYLIGHT
he had ‘nother shot
in the YARD
the old fella still run along
the kid got onto the HORSE

go down to Fitzroy Crossin’
tell the police THERE
his BOSS got shot
so he went tooo Oscar Range
when he got into Oscar Range

he shot the manager
Doug Waley
one MORNIN’
and he went from there
to King Leopold

he had many fight with the Aborigine people up there
they couldn’t KILL him
‘cause he was a OUTLAW
Jandamarra

\(^{14}\) Here and elsewhere, Wirrunmarra uses the word ‘now’ to mean ‘at this point in the narrated event’ rather than ‘at the time of this speech event’. This is a standard feature of Kriol and Kimberley Aboriginal English.

\(^{15}\) ‘rown’ is the equivalent of standard English ‘own’ as in ‘my own’. It is common in Kimberley and Top End Aboriginal English, and probably has arisen from a re-segmentation in the analogic base provided by the phrases ‘her own’, ‘their own’, ‘our own’, ‘your own’, etc.
and he went ‘round again
105 go back to Windjana
stay around there and he came back to Tunnel\textsuperscript{16}
he bin LIVE around there
and
Pilmer\textsuperscript{17} got on to him AGAIN
110 so HE shot one police boy in town
so Pilmer got upset
he wanted to FIGHT him
but MANY police
and the stock
115 bin chasing up Jandamarra
but that wasn’t good enough
but he was lettin’ them go
he didn’t want to take the life of man
but YET
120 Minko Mick
he sailed all the way from
Roebourne
with Koombana\textsuperscript{18}
see Koombana was a four-funnel
125 big ship
he landed in Derby
so they got a mail coaches
mail coach bin take him from Derby to Meda
and he got on that other one again take him to Kimberley Down
130 and he got on that ‘nother one took him to Fairfield
and he — got on to horse
ride over to Tunnel
put on his — belt
he walked down there
135 he nearly shot one old fella
two kid was giggling there
and he shot the — ground for ‘em
they roll down
and Minko Mick said ‘there, right

\textsuperscript{16} The reference here is to Tunnel Creek (see map), a cave where Pigeon hid out. This is the same place which in Idriess 1952 is called the ‘Cave of Bats’.
\textsuperscript{17} Pilmer was the constable at Fitzroy Crossing.
\textsuperscript{18} Cf. the \textit{Weekend Australian} (April 13-14, 1985, p.3): ‘High Tech Search for the Cursed Koombana’, which reports that the Koombana was built in Glasgow in 1908 and lost at sea somewhere between Port Hedland and Broome in 1912. She is described as having been the ‘pride of the Adelaide Steamship Company’s passenger fleet’ and as having had a ‘distinctive tall funnel’.
PIGEON THE OUTLAW

140 you can have this belt’ he just put one slug in
and he follow the river up
and he found him in the
behind the boab tree
he was up into the hill
145 somebody else fire a shot from ‘nother end
he turn around
and Minko Mick
straightaway
he shot him in the THUMB
150 his THUMB
and there was, his LIFE was in the thumb
and that’s — he beat him there
he was a — a wit doctor19
AR: witch doctor
155 BW: um — Minko Mick
AR: um — he KNEW that
BW: yeah he knew that
AR: about that THUMB
BW: that’s it
160 AR: yeah
BW: that’s all the story — Rumsey
AR: yeah?
why did that — ah — Pigeon — how did he know how to — put his life
into his THUMB like that?
165 where did he learn all that stuff?
BW: well only you and I say this
murlal jirri20 ('he was incestuous')
AR: um
BW: ngawi-nangga ('his father’s sister')
170 lala-nangga ('his sister')
walma-nangga ('his wife’s mother')
gugudu inyi ('he chased after')
AR: he went with every kind of relation
BW: yeah well that’s it

19 ‘wit doctor’ is probably a re-etymologised version of the English ‘witch doctor’ (cf. Rumsey 1983). In
the following line, A.R., who had not noticed this usage before, seeks confirmation that B.W. has in
fact said ‘witch doctor’. But instead of giving it, B.W. apparently understands A.R. to be asking ‘Which
doctor?’ He responds by repeating the man’s name, ‘Minko Mick’, and then goes on to use the term
‘wit doctor’, in lines 177, 277.

20 Here BW switches the Ungarinyin language — which he knows to be the one AR understands best — in
order to explain how Pigeon gained special powers by breaking the Aboriginal ‘law’. Cf. lines 101-2:
‘they couldn’t KILL him / ‘cause he was a OUTLAW’, which set up an interesting relationship between
Jandamarra/Pigeon’s positions vis à vis the Aboriginal ‘law’ and the European one.
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1985 9:1

175 AR: and that’s
BW: SO the life was come OON and OON and OON
so — that way he was sort of a WIT doctor
but he was a OUTLAW
because he had his life in his thumb
180 AR: ah yeah
BW: and when they finish — SHOT him there
and they cut that THUMB there
they can see that little HEART was there
AR: ah yeah
185 BW: I don’t know HOW they PUT it there
AR: yeah
but you reckon that murlal
BW: um
AR: made him,
190 BW: yowe
TOO CLOSE
murlal too close21
AR: and — why did all the Aborigines wanna shoot Pigeon too?
BW: well they didn’t understand him
195 why he done it because
way back
Pilmer and Billy Richardson22 was SHOOTING PEOPLE
THOUSANDS and THOUSANDS of people, they start from
from
eastern state right down
to north
right up — to west
AR: yeah
BW: they were killin’em THOOUSANDS and THOOUSANDS of BLACKFELLAS
200 AR: yeah?
BW: but he heard that and some of his people bin get killed too
some of OUR people bin get killed
AR: yeah
BW: so only one man
210 he had a feeling for his own people
AR: yeah?

21 In other words, the women whom Pigeon ‘chased’ were not only of the wrong classificatory kin categories, they were also among his ‘close’ relatives within those categories, which means they were doubly proscribed for sex or marriage (cf Rumsey 1981:183,190-1).

22 Richardson is the ‘policeman’, ‘the white man’ referred to lines 1-32 above. It seems interesting that he is never referred to by name there, but only after we have shifted from Aboriginal-language narrative to an English-language ‘interview’ situation.
PIGEON THE OUTLAW

BW: that Pilmer and Richardson
   THEY done it
215 but — SO he had to pay back for that
AR: well at first he was WORKING for that Richardson
BW: yeah with Billy Richardson he was WORKIN' for him AFTERWARD
   because he bin shooting people first
   him and — Pilmer
220 and after all when Pigeon
   get a bit OLDER
   come back and work with the POLICE
   PATROLLING
   so
225 he got a chance then
AR: was he just waiting for that chance the whole time or,
BW: (overlap with end of line above above) MMAYBE
AR: what made him change his mind?
BW: but — somehow that thing bin come, we, I don't know
230 AR: yeah
BW: I can't follow up
AR: do you know of any other people working with Pigeon or was
   he all by himself?
BW: he had his mate, they call him name Captain
235 AR: Captain
   oh yeah
BW: blackfella
   and he's the fella
   he had — he had a thought
240 'oh — police bin kill'm people'
   but they always be talk about
   'why these black— blackfellas get shot'
AR: yeah
BW: 'by one man
245 thousands of people
   WHY?'
AR: yeah
BW: everyone lookin' at
   their own people droppin' down with one — slug
250 AR: yeah
BW: one man standin' up there loading gun just like— somebody
   blind or— dumb sittin' up
AR: yeah
BW: and they all get shot
255 so
   I think Pigeon had a feeling
after that
and he bin keep PICTURING, you know?
and maybe

260 that's how that thing been comin' to him
and so when he got a chance
so HE had to do it
AR: when he was— when Pigeon was hiding out did he have any woman with him
or— just Captain? 23

265 BW: he had himself, nobody else
he— he done his own battle
AR: yeah
BW: he didn't want to bring anybody in
see, he was goin’ to try

270 do it as a THEY done it
same thing well he wanted to do the same thing
give it back to them
one man one man
so he's no friend there

275 AR: yeah
BW: but I— where— I don't understand
why this— wit doctor went up there
this is the thing that I don't understand
AR: yeah

280 BW: and he bin take a life of BLACK man and BLACK man been get shot by
WHITE people WHY couldn't he leave ALONE?
AR: yeah
BW: that was the story that I understand, you know
AR: if he LEFT it alone what do you think would have happened?

285 BW: well he had ta been a
king of Australia
and everything would have been come back — right way
AR: you reckon?
BW: I reckon

290 AR: all right
BW: he 'ant to been big fella
go on
(grins) might be we been talkin’ toooo faar?

23 Idriess 1952 portrays Pigeon as having been accompanied by his mother and a young wife ‘Cangamvara’ (a most unlikely-looking word for Kimberley Aboriginal languages).
TEXT 2: PIGEON STORY, AS TOLD TO STEPHEN MUECKE BY BANJO WIRRUNMARRA, 1977

1  BW:  now
PIGEON
Pigeon START OFF
him bin

5  I talk to you
with the Pidgin English, pidgin24
white man tongue pidgin
he bin start off got
breakin' in HORSES

10  him bin SHEARER
shearin' sheep
with a BLADE
not a machine
'cos those days they had a blade (SM: yeah)

15  so he bin work on that one
shearin' blade
he bin work Quanbun
Noonkenbah
Liveringa then he went back to Kimberley Down25

20  he work there
an' he went back to p'lice camp
then he start p'trol
he went for p'trol
look around some BLACKFELLAS inna bush

25  he tracking (long pause)
what they done?
they killed two white man
in Mount Broome
then p'lice went up to find him

30  so they pick-im-up
Pigeon the outlaw
they take-im in
up on the range
then Pigeon walk up

35  an' he got a MOB
an' he bring them back
SOME was there
right one
that bin kill the white man

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24 The narrator distinguishes Pigeon's name from that of the variety of Aboriginal English.
25 Names of Kimberley stations.
but he didn’t know who he was
take him to Windjana Gorge
tie them there
an’ Pigeon
they turn around tell’im Pigeon ‘alright you wanna get a — kangaroo
for us?
we can’t jus’ sittin’ down here starve hungry on the chain
you bin bring us
so you mus’ FEED us’
so
Pigeon turn around and see boss
the boss (…?) ‘I wanna get a — kangaroo for these prisoners’
‘Alright you know where the rifle’
so he went up and get the rifle
‘stead of he go for -KANGAROO he shot his boss
in Windjana
Lillamaloora
that was a p’lice station
(softly) anyhow
he went there
got the mob
take-im off from chain
an’
he bin
in the hill
everyone followed him up there
but he the one done all the FIGHTING
an’ this OTHERS didn’t understand him
(softly) they never have-im fight
anyhow
he went across to Ninety Two
he shot one white man there
then he went to Oscar
Oscar Range
station
he shot one white man there
early mornin’
then he went down to Plum Plain
he see MOB comin-up gotta horse
stockboys and the p’liceman they ALL come
look for Pigeon
then he take off
from that big plain
Plum Plain
they chased him
PIGEON THE OUTLAW

85 when he got into the HILL country
he look back he knock that hats off the p’liceman
take his hat off
(knocks table) one bullet
he ask that p’liceman he says

90 ‘You want you life or you wanta dead?’
p’liceman said ‘No I wanta life’
‘You go back’
so
he just taste ‘im but if he wanted-im he hadda kill-im then

95 anyhow he let-im go
he went to Brooking Gorge
corner of Brook or Leopold
an’ he went tooo
(long pause followed by brief inaudible section)

100 he went to King Leopold
he get a mob of blackfella there big tribe
they start fight there
they take-it-away one woman from there
young girl

105 they couldn’t fight-im
they couldn’t foller-im
went back to Windjana
he bin fight for SIX YEARS
and ah

110 governor or government went up there and said
he went up he get up he’s there Pigeon ‘You there?’ ‘Yes
I’m here’
‘Ah’
well we all friend now you’ll have to come down’

115 so Pigeon didn’t take a risk
so he knock his hat
said ‘you better go off’
said ‘ah I don’t want to (almost inaudible) . . .’
knock his hat off this government bloke whatever he was

120 anyhow he went back again
so (laugh)
(. . ?) stay there too long
anyhow they follered-im up — so LAS’ he felt himself

125 he was
he was losing hope
they can put a bullet right across here
shootin-im in here
nothing can come out
not even water
not even a drop of blood
(softly) nothin’ doin’
no matter how many shot he used to take here nothing doin’
THAT didn’t put him back
anyhow

one
maban blackfella witdoctor
come from ROEBOURNE
they used to call’im ah Minko Mick
he got onto the boat

in
Roebourne
or Onslow
boat call — er name ah
Koombana

three funnel
come right up to Derby landed
anyhow blackfella got onto — mail coaches
they take-im to Meda and from Meda to Kimberley Downs and from Kimberley Downs to Fairfield

then he ride across with horse
horseback
went to Tunnel
he SLEEP one night there
he didn’t go fast

but next mornin’
they stirred’im Pigeon up
so he got up
to start shooting — but this bloke seen his life
soo

witdoctor told them boys
‘Alright
I know’ he said
‘I take jus’ one bullet in my rifle’ he said ‘I’ll kill’im an’ you fellas can go an’ pick ’im up

26 Compare lines 135-52 here with lines 120-32 in text 1. It seems that one form for the ‘correct rendering’ of an Aboriginal history of Pigeon is the enunciation of series of correctly ordered place names for the movements of the main participants of the events, in this case Pigeon and Minko Mick. The two narratives from BW separated by seven years maintain this correct ordering. Also, when historical accounts are collectively constructed by Aborigines, a (perhaps the) major task is to establish the names of places and the right sequence of movements among them. This textual and rhetorical feature is in marked contrast to ‘Western’ historical texts, which instead are periodised around linear time intervals, dates. Obviously, neither historical form relates directly to Truth, but they represent the work of authority in the text and the codification of appropriate knowledges. In this connection, note also the appearance of a place name at the end of this story as an important datum about this particular text production and/or its producer. Pandanus Park is a market garden-cum-Aboriginal settlement along the Fitzroy River, of which BW is identified as the founder. This text was recorded there.
PIGEON THE OUTLAW

165 cut his HEAD off
so this Pigeon went up ah
Minko Mick
followed the river up
he got into the boab tree

170 he look up
upwards
Pigeon was right on top in the cliff
so he FIRE ONE shot he knock him in his thumb\(^{27}\) — so he fell down an’ he sing out
‘I shoot’im, you can go in and pick’im up whenever you want

175 very fright they said ‘NO we can’t run up to pick’im up’
‘NO — you go in an’ see’im’
‘he’s finished’
‘alright’
oh well they didn’t argue with’im all them fellas run up there

180 and see
sure enough Pigeon laying there
smashed up
‘is thumb
(pause for tape change)
so when Minko Mick — went up there he looked ‘is — thumb he found

185 a little
little heart\(^{28}\)
like a fish
in his thumb here (shows thumb)
that where he shot

190 an’ that was the end of the old Pigeon story
SM: Oh good
BW: it’s from Banjo
Pandanus Park

\(^{27}\) In other Aboriginal accounts, Pigeon’s ‘Achilles’ heel’ is variously hand, foot, or thumb.

\(^{28}\) A common practice for Aboriginal ‘doctors’ was (or is) to appear to remove small pieces of quartz, etc. from sick people. ‘Little heart’ may relate to this practice.
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BUNDJALUNG SETTLEMENT AND MIGRATION

Margaret C. Sharpe

SYNOPSIS.

The Bundjalung (Bandjalang) dialects, including Gidabal, formed a particularly well-defined language group in a clearly defined geographical area as shown in Map 1. As a group of dialects Bundjalung was well recorded, with the earliest grammar of one of the dialects being published over 90 years ago (Livingstone 1892); there are earlier word lists (Curr Vol 3, 1887), and grammars of other dialects published in 1913 (Allen and Lane), 1942 (Smythe), 1967 (Cunningham), 1971 (Geytenbeek and Geytenbeek), 1978 (Crowley), and 1985 (Sharpe). Archaeological work and sacred sites have also been well documented in this area, and there are studies of the social organisation. An attempt to reconstruct migration and social contact patterns using a cross-disciplinary approach therefore seems worthwhile. Archaeological, language, geographical, ethnohistorical and ethnomusical data are looked at in this paper.

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1 Bundjalung is the preferred ethnospelling of the language/dialect, with u for the short /a/ sound (as in English /but/) in the first and third syllables, ensuring that the unsophisticated English-speaking reader pronounces the name correctly. In recent linguistic studies the name is usually spelt Bandjalang, and within the language itself, the preferred spelling would be Banjalang. To this day (1985) Gidabal people, whose home area is around Woodenbong in northern N.S.W., maintain their dialect name Gidabal in opposition to other Bundjalung dialects. In recent times other Bundjalung people have all laid claim to the name Bundjalung, though within the last 50 years many of them would have used distinctive names for their own dialect groups, such as Yugambeh, Wiyabal, Wahlubal, Galibal, etc. (using linguistic spellings).

The two phonemes /d/ and /dj/ (alveolar and alveopalatal stop respectively) collapse together in intervocalic position, and in rare word/syllable final use. This collapsed phoneme is symbolised d in Gidabal, and as j in the other dialects. Except intervocically, /dj/ (j) was realised as an alveopalatal affricate in Yugambeh, identical with English /j/; in other dialects it is usually an alveopalatal stop. However intervocically the collapsed phoneme can vary; it is always a dental fricative in Gidabal (and is considered there an allophone of /d/); it varies between a dental fricative, an alveopalatal fricative and an alveopalatal stop in some other dialects, and in some it has a distinctly sibilant sound, a type of fricative [z] (and is thus perpetuated in the name Warrazambil Ranges from wardam/wardjam 'mythical monster, eel, whale'); in Wahlubal and other more southerly dialects it appears to be an alveopalatal stop. Interestingly, in Woodenbong, the spelling of the dental fricative as d is causing a spelling pronunciation of this group name to develop among school children.
PREAMBLE.

The Bundjalung, including those who identify as Gidabal, are a group who have maintained to this day a sense of identity, a knowledge of their traditional territories and borders, some knowledge of the language (substantial for older people, items of vocabulary incorporated into English for younger people), and much of their mythology. With these in many cases is a healthy self-esteem for their own communities and ways of doing things. For example, a Baryulgil high school girl a few years back could reject a well meaning correction of her pronunciation by a school peer by saying ‘I was reared up as saying X’.

Crowley (1978), in connection with his work on the Tabulam, Baryulgil and Rappville dialects of Bundjalung did considerable work collecting and comparing grammars, word lists, etc. of the Bundjalung dialects, and made some suggested groupings of dialects, estimating that there were originally (i.e. immediately preceding white contact) somewhere between one and two dozen separate dialects (or in some cases languages) in the Bundjalung group (1978:144). He lists and describes briefly some 19 of these (1978: ch.6). While he made some grammatical and phonological comparisons, most prominently he used a list of common nouns that differed in the various dialects: the words for man, woman, boy, eye, hand, sun, spear, and some other items. His map showing dialects, and his groupings of the dialects, are shown in Maps 2 and 3.
In intermittent contact with and work on some of the dialects since 1966, I had often speculated on the avenues of contact between the different groups. In particular the late Joe Culham’s description of his country round Beaudesert as *manaldjahli* or ‘hard, baked ground’ intrigued me, and I speculated on reasons for the name until in the late spring of 1977 I approached this area from the south instead of the north, and noted the striking difference in climate each side of the New South Wales-Queensland border: lush and green to the south, and dry and yellow to the north at the end of the dry time. This suggested some comparison with the land to the south of the border, though some sources suggest there was little such contact in this area (as opposed to near the coast). However it is also possible to consider the contrast as being with coastal territory.

The task of comparing the dialects and reconstructing probable lines of communication proved to be much more than could be encompassed in the scope of a paper such as this, based on the limited time I had to devote to the task. I therefore see this paper as exploratory, summarising some of the language and other data, and suggesting a possible field for intensive research by a scholar who could devote a stretch of uninterrupted time to it, and

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2 *h* is used throughout my transcription to indicate vowel length. Bandjalang dialects have four long vowels /ah/, /eh/, /ih/, /uh/, and three or four short vowels /a/, (/e/), /i/, /u/. The phonemic status of short /e/ is in doubt in some dialects, as it only occurs word finally fluctuating with /i/ or /a/, or word medially from a shortening of long /eh/.
perhaps invoke computer help in correlating the many factors and variables. I have therefore
gone to some pains to include in the references all sources which could be of use, whether
directly used by me or not, with some annotation where I felt it helpful.

Calley (1959) speculated that the Bundjalung once occupied much more territory, and
were driven back into less accessible fastholds by other encroaching tribes and cultural in­
fluences; he surmised that already schooled in resistance before the coming of the whites,
they were more able to maintain their identity after this time, not only against the very
different white culture but even against other Aboriginal groups. Calley pointed out that
uniquely in this area of New South Wales/Queensland, the Bundjalung had no section system,
although he detected evidence of an incipient and uneasy attempt to amalgamate this system
with their own. The two systems conflicted in marriage rules.

Linguistically, the difference among the Bundjalung dialects is not great, at least as far as
our records will allow comparison. Bundjalung people often refer to the dialects as ‘different
languages’; this may be as much a social attitude as a linguistic one. At least, on classical
assumptions of language change, our evidence points to a fairly small time depth for the
current differences, of possibly less than 500 years. Certainly the Bundjalung dialects are
much more like each other grammatically, phonologically and lexically than English and
German. The differences are comparable to those between English dialects. By contrast,
adjacent languages, while sharing the occasional vocabulary item in the same form, and with
some other words which are clearly cognate, differ quite obviously in the pronouns and com­
mon vocabulary, and in grammar and grammatical forms. The frequent lenition in Bundja­
lung of ‘stop’ phonemes (/b/, /d/, /dj/, /g/) has no counterpart in neighbouring languages to
my knowledge.

Most place names in the Bundjalung area have forms and meanings clearly recognisable
from Modern (1880-1977) Bundjalung. One well known exception, the place name Unumgar
(Nganamgah) had no meaning that anyone was able to find, and is claimed by Gidabal
people (from the Woodenbong area) to be from an older language or people. The Bundjalung
in recent times had no intercourse with tribes to the south of the Clarence, and intermittent
contact with Wakka Wakka and Gabi to the north. Even now there is suspicion of those to
the south. The Queensland government policies worked towards movement of peoples from
their traditional lands into reserves further north, which disrupted the pre-European patterns
of movement and contact, in which, as Calley suggests, outside cultural influence was mainly
from the north and on the Bundjalung groups north of the present state border.

ARCHAEOLOGY.

Archaeologically, there is evidence of Aboriginal settlement in the Bundjalung
area going back to at least the mid fifth millenium B.C., and evidence of continuity in
material culture north and south of the Clarence (McBryde 1974). Sullivan (1965) claims
that in basic tools the Bundjalung resembled more closely those to the north, while burial
practices reflected a connection to the south and a differentiation from the north. She
suggests economic innovations spread more rapidly among those in social contact than reli­
gious practices. McBryde discovered evidence of a change in technology which took place
about 2000 B.C., and another, a shift to bone and wood for many finer tools, took place
after 1000 A.D. While Calley endorses Sullivan’s view on there being free social contact in
the north and none to the south, he warns against the assumption that allegiances and
hostilities expressed in the ethnographic present would necessarily have been maintained
UNCHANGED OVER A LONG TIME DEPTH, EITHER AMONG THE BUNDJALUNG GROUPS OR TOWARDS THOSE OUTSIDE THEM.

GEOGRAPHY.

Map 1 indicates the extent of presumed Bundjalung occupation as described by Bundjalung people this century. Along the coast the territory stretched from somewhere north of the Clarence to somewhere north of Southport. In the upper reaches, the territory spread across the Clarence River, encompassed the Richmond River basin, and extended as far west as Tenterfield on the Tablelands in New South Wales and Allora (beyond Warwick) in Queensland. Further north there is no record of territory extending beyond the Boonah/Moogerah area.

Apart from the Tablelands area of Tenterfield and further north, there are many mountainous areas in this section of country, many of which formed traditional territorial boundaries; a number of these were penetrable only with difficulty. Beliefs about hostile spirits in the mountains (i.e. ones that belonged to no tribe or family and therefore had no allegiance) reinforced this. However there were a number of more negotiable routes, even across the McPherson Range on the New South Wales—Queensland border, which formed the biggest barrier.

Between present New South Wales and Queensland there is evidence of communication channels up the Numinbah Valley (Gresty 1946-7), and I suggest, on the basis of vocabulary similarities between Gidabal and Yugambeh, that there must have been some western routes used. Travel in the area (not as extensively as I would like — some footwork would have been invaluable) has helped in knowing about possible routes through the Border Ranges. Apart from a route well to the west (past Warwick), a route through northwest of Koreelah and Koreelah Creek towards Boonah, through the pass with the Boonah border gate, was and is open eucalypt forest and grassland, and seems quite passable.

The middle and lower reaches of the rivers were very fertile, and the climate was mild ("Summerland" the tourist maps proclaim it today). While places like Warwick and Tenterfield on the Tablelands could be very cold, with frosts and the rare snowfall (Warwick had a traditional 'cold increase' site, and Gidabal folk etymology links the name Warwick with their word waring for 'cold'), frost free times in the lower areas were quite long. Summer and autumn were the wettest times; late winter and early spring the driest (Sullivan 1965:2).

At the time of European settlement, there were basically three types of vegetation: a subtropical rain forest was far more widespread than today; much of this fertile land is now cleared, except in the mountains. The rainforest (the big scrub or gabal) reached right to the riverbanks in most places, and its past existence is responsible for the 'un-Australian', relatively eucalypt-free pastures of today in the Northern Rivers area. The rainforest extended into the McPherson Range and north to Mt Tamborine, but did not extend inland much further than Mt Lindesay. Sometimes near the rivers, further back from them, and in the higher lands, there was a mixed eucalypt forest. Along the coast there were heaths and swamps.

Moogerah (mugar) is a recognisable Bundjalung word (it could also have been the word in Yagarabal to the north). Its meaning is /storm, thunder/, and storms are common around the peaks surrounding today's Moogerah Dam.
Possum was plentiful in the rain forest area, and their skins were used to make blankets. The nature of the rainforest precluded use of some weapons of the hunt useful in more open country; this applied to much of the eucalypt forest area in the territory also. Both animal and vegetable food was plentiful, and the Bundjalung could live a more settled life than many other groups. Fairly large buildings, some 8-30 feet in length and up to six feet in height were observed by early European explorers and their Aboriginal helpers. Nonetheless seasonal movements did occur as sea and land foods came into season. For at least some of the Bundjalung groups, the most extensive movement was a roughly triennial visit to the Bunya Mountains to take part in the bunya nut feasts, after which early reports are that they returned looking particularly well nourished.

**PHYSIQUE.**

Early European observers commented on the fine stature and physical condition of the Bundjalung people when compared with those further inland. Some of this is perhaps retained today. For those who know Bundjalung people, there is a distinctive squareness of jaw which often sets them apart from other groups, despite the perhaps 50% European ancestry of the Aboriginal population of this area. As marriage is mainly within the Aboriginal community the proportion of European ancestry has not changed much in the last fifty years.

**THE BUNDJALUNG MYTH OF THEIR ARRIVAL.**

Bundjalung myths still current today include one on the origins of the Clarence River and one on how the Aborigines first came to Australia. Calley suggests the latter myth was imported from tribes to the south or southwest, but those Bundjalung and Gidabal who tell the story claim it as their own. I have included three versions of the same story, arranged in chronological order of their collection. The first version is from the Minyangbal group, near Byron Bay. (In this first account, I have substituted ng for the symbol g (g with a dot in the centre) used by Livingstone (1892) for the velar nasal. 'indicates an accented vowel, and although the symbol ‘a’ (a with a dot in the centre, for which I have substituted ø) is not explained clearly, it probably indicates an unaccented neutral vowel).

Berrungen korillabo, ngerring Mommon, Yaburong. —

'Berrung came long long ago, with Mommom (and) Yaburong'.

Thus begins a Minyung Legend to the following effect:-

Long ago, Berrúng, with his two brothers, Mommól and Yaburóng, came to this land. They came with their wives and children in a great canoe, from an island across the sea. As they came near the shore, a woman on the land made a song that raised a storm which broke the canoe in pieces, but all the occupants, after battling with the waves, managed to swim ashore. This is how 'the men', the paigbol black race, came to this land. The pieces of the canoe are to be seen to this day. If any one will throw a stone and strike a piece of the canoe, a storm will arise, and the voices of Berrúng and his boys will be heard calling to one

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4 Hoddinott 1978 outlines myths from the Gumbaynggir area, which show overlap with these myths, particularly in the name /Birugan/, though I had not checked this reference at the time of writing this paper.
another, amidst the roaring elements. The pieces of the canoe are certain rocks in the sea. At Ballina, Berrung looked around and said, nyung? and all the paigal about there say nyung to the present day, that is, they speak the Nyung dialect. Going north to the Brunswick, he said, minyung, and the Brunswick River paigal say minyung to the present day. On the Tweed he said, ngando? and the Tweed paingal (sic) say ngando to the present day. This is how the blacks came to have different dialects. Berrung and his brothers came back to the Brunswick River, where he made a fire, and showed the paigal how to make fire. He taught them their laws about the kipara and about marriage and food. After a time, a quarrel arose, and the brothers fought and separated, Momom going south, Yaburong west, and Berrung keeping along the coast. This is how the paigal were separated into tribes.

The second account is told by Alexander Vesper, and quoted in Robinson (1965:40-43) and in Australian Dreaming (Isaacs 1980:13,14).

This story has been handed down by the Aboriginal people through their generations. This story cannot be altered.

I am sixty-seven years of age. I heard this story from my grandfather who was a full-blood of the Ngarartbul tribe near Murwillumbah. On my grandmother’s side the tribe was Gullibul, from Casino and Woodenbong. I heard this story also from many old Aboriginals who came from other tribes.

The first finding of this unknown land, Australia, was made by three brothers who came from the central part of the world. The names of these three brothers were Manoom, Yar birrain and Birrung. They were compelled to explore for land on the southerly part of the world because they forced out of the centre of the world by revolutions and warfare of those nations of the central part.

They came in a sailing ship. As they made direct for the south, coming across different islands and seeing the people in these islands, they kept in the sea all the time until they came to Australia, to the eastern part of this continent.

Their first coming into the land was at Yamba Head on the Clarence River. They anchored just on the mouth of the Clarence. This was the first landing of men in this empty continent. They camped, taking out of their empty ship all their camping belongings, such as a steel axe and many other things of the civilized race in the central part of the world.

After they had rested from the voyage, through the night a storm started to rise from the west. The force of wind broke the anchor and deprived them of the ship, which was driven out to sea and never seen again.

These three brothers had each a family of his own and they had their mother. Their three wives were with them. When they knew that the ship was gone, they reasoned among themselves and said, ‘The only possible chance is to make a canoe and return from here from island to island’. So they went up the Clarence River and they came across a blackbutt tree. They stripped the bark off it, made

5 Baygal is the most common word for ‘(Aboriginal) man’ in the Bundjalung dialects. It is also used adjectively (baygalnah with possessive suffix) to mean ‘Aboriginal/Bundjalung/Gidabal’. Ngahn(du)/ngehn(du) is the word for ‘who(erg)’. 
a big fire, a long fire, and heated the bark until it was flexible, until you could bend it about as you pleased. Out of this long sheet of bark, they made a canoe. Three of these canoes were made.

They went back to their families and told them to get everything packed up as they were about to leave. Their families said, ‘Yes, we’ll pack up, but mother has gone out for some yams. She was looking for something to eat’. So they sang out. They searched along the beach, among the honeysuckle and the tea-tree along the coast, trying to find the old woman. But she had wandered too far out of reach of their search. She thought within herself that her sons would not be able to make the canoes so quickly.

The three brothers said, ‘Well, she might have died. We’ll have to go back into the sea’. So they packed up and took to the ocean in the three canoes with the intention of returning to where they came from.

After they got a distance out from Yamba Head, the old woman arrived back at the camp they had left. She went up to the top of the hill and started singing out for them. And then she saw them far out on the ocean. She was trying to wave them back, but it seemed to be impossible for her to draw their attention. So she was angry with them. She cursed the families and said to the ocean to be rough. As she cursed them and spoke to the ocean to be rough, the ocean started to get fierce. They attempted to continue on against the tempest, but they were driven back to the northern shore beyond Yamba. They were compelled to come in to land at the place which is now known as Evans Head.

They made the first settling place in Australia at Evans Head. One of the sons returned to Yamba when the ocean was calm and found the mother still alive. She had lived on yams. They as how Yamba got its name. Well, that word ‘yam’, it comes from a civilized word. It means ‘sweet spud’. So that word alone will give you a clue as to where those first people came from.

So one brother went back to Yamba and brought the mother to Evans Head. When they settled there, in the course of time, they increased their families. One family race generated northwards on the Australian coast, one to the west and one to the south. As they were generating, they were keeping on extending, and they kept in touch with each other all the time.

They went on in that manner and eventually they became tribal races, and the first language of their origin we call Jabilum, that means, ‘The Originals’. Tabulam is the word the white man made out of this word. The first language of these Jabilum was the Birrein tongue. And the second was Gumbangirr, of the Grafton tribe. Weervul is the Ballina lot. And Gullibul, that is between the two. Gullibul sprang out of the centre from Tweed Heads.

The third account is from Ted McBryde, as told to Creamer in 1977. It appears this has been influenced by recent hypotheses on the origin of humankind in Africa, and on lower ocean levels in the past, with extensive land bridges through the Indonesian archipelago and land-hopping by raft or other craft.

Way back in the Dreamtime, there was a family came, originated I suppose from Africa, and they came across country and in those days we believe that Java and New Guinea were all joined to Australia and they eventually ended up here. They came by canoe and landed at Yamba . . . The three brothers, the eldest one
was Bundjalung, the second eldest was Gullybal and the third, the youngest fellow was Gidabal. Bundjalung, the eldest boy, he took up the Lismore to Byron Bay area to just below Kyogle. And then the next son, Gullybal, he took in this area here and the youngest man, he went on to the Woodenbong area. So that’s where we originated from, as far as I know.

When we consult written records of language data, we also are not immune to some re-interpretation. The point has often been made by linguists that old word lists, compiled by interested but linguistically untrained people, can be interpreted in the light of more recent material collected by trained linguists. There is much truth in this, but a little danger also. At times the interpretation is clear in the light of more recently compiled data, but it is also possible to twist old records in the light of current data. Can we be sure that the phonology has remained unchanged? Has English had any influence over the years on some of the sounds? An interesting shift of vowel in some words between /u/ and /a/ in some recently recorded Bundjalung dialects makes us cautious about too hasty judgements on earlier transcribers in this notoriously confused area, let alone others. Even the qualified linguists, especially those using a phonemic model, bias readers’ interpretations of sounds (and the reader includes themselves). For example, many people are aware that the vowel written *u* in English has undergone a shift in some English dialects; we discuss it and hear it as a much more marked shift in vowel quality than it often is, merely because we impose our own phonemic grid or transcription grid on the phonetic sounds heard. For this reason, in writing this paper, I have referred back to the detailed description of sounds and their variants in the various sources, wherever these are available, and pre-eminently have drawn on my own hearing of speakers from eight purported dialects. With unlimited time, referring back to tape recorded records, where available, would be valuable.

**CLAN, HORDE AND TRIBE.**

Accounts of names of Bundjalung ‘tribes’ and their boundaries show some confusion which is due, at least in part, to some of the following factors:

1. What a particular group called itself and what its neighbours called it were not always the same. For example a group called Birihn ‘south’ by those to the north of it would hardly merit the same name from those to the south of it. The name Galibal (Gullybul, Gullyvul, etc.) could be applied to any group who pronounced the final vowel of *gala/gale/gali* ‘this’ as *i*, by a (neighbouring) group which did not. Such groups called ‘Galibal’ could be distinguished among themselves using some other difference, e.g. the use of *nyang* versus *minyang* for ‘what’, or the shape of the second person singular nominative pronoun (*wiya/wiye/ wuhye/wuhje* etc.), or the pronunciation *yugambeh* (versus *yagambe*) for ‘no’.

2. Like anyone else it seems a Bundjalung person could identify him/herself in relation to others by naming a smaller or greater unit they identified with, both present or past, in the same way that I could variously identify myself as a south-hiller, an Armidalean, a New South Wales person, a Sydneysider or an Australian — or I could identify myself by a number of parental family names. Thus the late Joe Culham could call his group *Yugambeh* (those who say *yugambeh* for ‘no’) or *Manaldjahli* (referring to the Beaudesert area). In the second origin story quoted above you will note how Vesper identifies two Bundjalung groups with which he has affiliations through his grandparents, and moreover uses the term Galibal to refer inclusively to what are generally conceded to be two dialects, that of Casino and
Woodenbong. For this reason the territories identified with different groups by different sources vary in extent also, depending on the perspective of the source.

(3) Quite early on in European contact times there is evidence of some identification of groups with places which only got onto the map after European settlement, e.g. town names such as Rathdowney, Boonah, Beaudesert, Casino and Kyogle. Particularly under Queensland policy many Bundjalung people were shifted from their ancestral territories. Those who were not moved to reserves much further north soon appeared to identify themselves by a town which was developed in their territory, which may or may not have been on the land their family had most close associations with. We therefore cannot take at face value statements on territories of different ‘tribes’. Generally statements which use the term ‘clan’ or ‘horde’ are less subject to misreading. We can assume that statements which describe the territory of the Gidabal as extending as far as Allora, and others which assign the western region to another group (Geinyon according to Woodenbong Gidabal people, who also claim it is a very different language) can be reconciled. My own bias is to regard names ending in \(-bal\) or names based on the word for ‘no’ as dialect names, and the others as clan names, but even this is suspect. As an Appendix I have included a list of all names of tribes/clans I have encountered.

ETHNOMUSICAL DATA.

Over the years, linguists, musicologists, radio programmers and others have collected between them a large number of songs from Bundjalung and Gidabal people. Many of these are repeats of performances recorded on other occasions, and a lot are poorly recorded. Margaret Gummow, of Sydney University, is at present engaged in further study of many of these songs. I have probably heard the bulk of available recordings, and have helped in transcribing words of some of them.

All but possibly one of the songs known to me refer to post European contact times, and a number have a mixture of English and Bundjalung/Gidabal, or some admixture of English words. Tunes are mainly non-Western, with varying ‘scales’, some compatible with Western music, some not. None are sung by the original composer, though the singer often named the composer. When this was done, the indication was that the song dated from the 1880s to the 1920s. At least one English song sung by Bundjalung singers was sung in other areas of Australia (Mary Brunton’s work on detribalised Aboriginal music is worth referring to here).

Among such songs were some claimed to be Gumbaynggir or Gamilaraay, indicating some contact with people from those tribes to the south and west; however the singer could give no meaning for these. For most of the purportedly Bundjalung songs, meanings could be given, and in some cases enough of the vocabulary of the song was said also to enable me to transcribe the words of the song with reasonable confidence. The Geytenbeeks transcribed a number of songs also. A few songs were claimed to be of the nonsense type, where meanings

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6 The one song claimed to be ‘really old’ was recorded in two contexts. In one it was stated to be a song of blessing sung by a grandmother over her grandson; in the other it was claimed to be associated with the story of the arrival of people in the area from overseas. The words, though not fully transcribable, appear to be recognisably Bundjalung.
could not be assigned. For those I could not transcribe, there was at least enough evidence to determine whether the words were Bundjalung or another language.

Words changed phonologically in the singing. Initial stops were often prenasalised, or stops lenited to sound like nasals (an extension of a general unique feature of Bundjalung towards lenited or fricativised 'stop' phonemes). Length of vowels was tailored to the music, not to what linguists have described for the dialects.

Different versions of songs showed some indications of dialect shifts with different singers, though there was also evidence of retention of forms of one dialect when sung by someone who would normally use different forms. The presumed more original version of one song (the 'Getting a bride' song) had a more 'Aboriginal' melody and style with English words, whereas a version I recorded at Cabbage Tree Island from Douglas Cook had some Bundjalung verses, a change of place name to suit the area, but more western Bundjalung features of grammar.

The late Dick Donnelly (died 1977) was one of the more well known singers, and his repertoire (none composed by himself) included Gumbaynggir and Gamilaraay songs, as well as songs from different Bundjalung regions. Some referred to travel to the Northern Tablelands area (Armidale and further south), although they clearly postdate the construction of roads in the wording we have. The same collection of songs from different languages and places occurred with other singers also, so we can assume there were social contacts between these different groups.

Outside the collection of songs I have heard is one from the Gabi Gabi people (who inhabited the Bunya Mountains area of Queensland) recounting the visit of people from the south (presumably Bundjalung) (Eve Fesl, personal communication).

There were Ngarahgwal (Nerang area, Qld coast) and Geinyon (Warwick area) songs sung by Gidabal people; these songs were passed on to them by grandparents, etc. from these groups (Geytenbeek, MS).

To date, study of such song collections does not add significantly to our knowledge of migration patterns within the Bundjalung area, but does hint at more contact to the south and west beyond the Bundjalung area than Calley spoke of.

LINGUISTIC DATA.

In classical techniques of tracing back related languages and dialects to a postulated original source language, the assumption is often made that groups split off from the original group and migrate, having little or no further contact; gradual shifts and borrowings occur, so that the dialects and languages gradually diverge. On this type of assumption, proto-Germanic, predating current Germanic languages (English, Dutch, German, Swedish, Danish, etc.), is assumed to have been spoken some 2000 years ago, and proto-Indo-European some 4000 years ago. On this model, the Bundjalung dialects would have a common ancestor no more than perhaps 500 years ago. Opinions differ on the mutual intelligibility of the extreme dialects. Crowley suggests a figure of about 50% (1978:143). Bray (1899) states that:

the language of the Aborigines is sometimes completely different 30 miles away. I remember in 1863, that I cut a road from the Upper Tweed to the Upper Richmond. I had some Aborigines with me, and we came across others belonging to the Richmond River District, those with me could not understand a word the others said. I acted as an interpreter. I could speak to mine in their own language

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and could make the others understand me. So, again, the Aborigines 30 miles north of here (Kynnumbool) speak a totally different language, although some of the word may be the same.

Yet Rankin quoted Mr Frances McQuilty from near Lismore (Rankin 1900:132) as claiming:

he can converse easily and fluently with the natives in the neighbourhood of Lismore, and says that the same language, with slight variation, is spoken on the Tweed, and extends inland from the seaboard of the Richmond and Tweed districts for about 150 miles, but the language spoken by the natives on the Clarence seaboard and inland is quite distinct from that on the Richmond.

The last account agrees closely with what is known of the different languages south of the Clarence, and with the linguist's impression of the mutual intelligibility of the Bundjalung dialects.

If social organisation as observed during early European contact times and even today is any guide, there was, among the Bundjalung as elsewhere in Australia, considerable intermittent social contact between different groups, and intermarriage with groups who were not ones' neighbours. While Bundjalung were organised along patrilineal and patrilocal lines, and one presumes (on modern evidence) that children were expected to speak their fathers' dialect, it is hard to envisage that some influence on vocabulary, grammar and phonology did not occur from the wives brought from other places, particularly if they spoke mutually intelligible dialects. In addition prospective husbands often visited and stayed in the territories of their future wives for 1-2 years as ngarbindja (Calley 1959:65), allowing their possible future in-laws to judge their suitability in character and economic provision. Unless Bundjalung Aborigines are very different from other people, intermittent importations of vocabulary, grammatical and phonological variants must have occurred. Conversely, when relationships between certain clans was strained by warfare, it is entirely possible that small differences of dialect could be deliberately increased or emphasised, just as it has been in the New Guinea area, again among small population groups (Wurm 1983). However evidence from all sources, including my own contacts, indicate that some differences Bundjalung people point out as marking distinct dialects were really quite small, and in many cases minor enough that the second language learner of Bundjalung would barely notice them. The problem for Bundjalung and Gidabal people with these differences, as they explain it, is that sometimes an acceptable word in one dialect has a 'rude' meaning in another. Embarrassment or the fear of offending another about such items looms large for many of them.

The Bundjalung language, while sharing some vocabulary with neighbouring languages, does not appear to me to show the type of relationship with them that could indicate any close connections within the last one or two thousand years. A possible exception is Yeygir, a small language group between Bundjalung and Gumbaynggir in the coastal Clarence area, which may show some influence or similarities. It is purportedly a language which mixes

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7 According to recent research by Wurm and others (Wurm 1983), there is mounting evidence that in the Pacific and in New Guinea among small population language and dialect groups innovations and shifts can at times be very rapid. In a small group, the innovation or conservatism of one significant person can quickly be transmitted to the whole population in a way that simply cannot occur in language groups of the size represented by the Indo-European language groups.
features of Bundjalung and Gumbaynnggir. In times from the earliest European contact to the present, there is evidence of very little social contact between the Bundjalung and those to the south of the Clarence on the coast, or with those in the New England Tablelands area south of Glen Innes. Evidence on social contact to the west into the New England Tablelands to the southwest is not clear. As noted above, some post-contact Bundjalung songs refer to travelling to the Tableland area, and Gumbaynnggir and Gamilraay songs were passed on to Bundjalung singers. There are conflicting accounts of how much friendly contact there was between different Bundjalung hordes or clans, and which of them had social contact with groups to the north and northwest of them in present Queensland, but there is clear evidence of regular contact between some of the Bundjalung groups and those to the north, particularly when the bunya nuts were in season, when it is known Bundjalung groups went north for the feasts to the Bunya Mountains, some 300 km away (see Map 1).

As noted earlier, Crowley put forward a grouping of Bundjalung dialects. He did this with commendable caution. In all the older word lists there are omissions which cloud the picture. Also in some cases (and some of these are modern studies), we cannot be sure where the home territory (and therefore presumed home dialect) of the informants are or were, nor whether their language had been influenced in any way by the dialect of those they lived with. Smythe, for example, stated his grammar was based on data from informants of the Bundjalung (the term he uses for the Baryulgil dialect), Wiyabal (the Lismore dialect) and Galibal (which he claims is from Warwick). Crowley claims the only possible source for Smythe's dialect is the middle Richmond River area round Casino, where Smythe's fieldwork was centred. Crowley had access to some lists I have not been able to view, but I have perhaps looked at two or three of our common sources in more detail, and obtained some further data on the Lismore and Coraki dialects.

Items which Crowley compared across dialects were the following, on which I will comment as I go:

1. A list of common vocabulary items, the words for man, woman, boy, eye, hand, spear, sun. Three of his maps showing isoglosses are reproduced as Maps 4, 5, 6 here. The isoglosses for 'man' and 'woman' are the same. However a number of older lists lack the word for 'woman' (and 'girl' — a bias on the part of male collectors of their generation!) and a careful look at some of the old word lists suggests the word baygal and mibiny were both used in some areas, perhaps the second more as a plural for 'the Aborigines'. (At Tabulam, Woodenbong and Lismore-Coraki, mibiny is recorded with the meaning 'face', sometimes 'person'; in Gidabal and Wiyabal mibiny also has the verbal meaning 'know'). Crowley's isogloss for the two forms for the word 'hand' appears inaccurate for both Woodenbong and Lismore

8 From recent communication I have had with Joyce Clague in Maclean, it would seem that considerable information on Yeygir may still be available, and the community is considering putting it into a book or books.

9 Calley's study indicated that in general Bundjalung and Gidabal people of that time lived in what had been their ancestral territory or in an area which traditionally bordered it. As Smythe's linguistic work predated Calley's study by only a decade or so, presumably the dialect or dialects he worked on would have been reasonably close to his place of recording, i.e. Casino, according to Crowley 1978.
Map 4: Isoglosses for baygal/mibiny 'man' and dubay/jalgany 'woman' (after Crowley 1978:160)

Map 5: Isoglosses for djabuh/djanagan 'boy' and mil/djiyaw 'eye' (after Crowley 1978:161)

Map 6: Isogloss for yalgan/nyangga 'sun' (after Crowley 1978:163)

1 At Lismore Cunningham (Sharpe) recorded both djabuh and djanagan from Turnbull (Cunningham 1979). Crowley gives djanagan for Copmanhurst area also.

2 The form nyungga may also occur in the north and Cunningham (1967) lists nyunggulgan for 'summer' in Yugambeh.
dialects, on the data I have. Regarding the forms for ‘spear’, a lot of vocabulary lists have both *djuwan* and *bilahr*, which raises the question as to whether the occurrence of just one in a brief list of words is highly significant.

(2) Lenition of /dj/ (alveopalatal stop) through dental or sibilant fricative forms in some dialects to /y/ in other dialects. Map 7 reproduces Crowley’s map showing distribution of the

![Map 7: Distribution of lenited and unlenited forms (after Crowley 1978:170)](image)

lenited and unlenited forms for three pronoun forms and the ergative suffix after /y/. There are gaps in the data, unfortunately, but there is enough data to show the general trend.

(3) Irregular verbs. Crowley postulated an original list of 14 of these. Apart from two monosyllabic stems, it appears the other twelve were unlike other Bundjalung verb stems in ending in consonants. The irregularities occur because of the addition of different augments for different tenses, aspects, etc. of the verb. The verbs are:

- eat *ja-
- see *nyah-
- go *yan-
- fall *bin-/ban-
- become *wen-/wan-
- sit *yehn-/yahn-
- emerge, arise *bahn-
- die *balahn-
- leave *wun-/wan-
- take, get *gahng-
do what nyang-
bite ying-
hit, kill bum-
kick bang-
cry dung-

The added augment is -a/-ga with most stems and tense forms, and -a/-ga/-ba with yan-;
-bihny/-biny is used as augment before certain nominalised or participialised forms.

(4) Some grammar, in particular forms of the personal pronouns 1st sg, 2nd sg, 3rd sg fem, 2nd and 3rd pl. My guess is that the form nyahn.gan\(^{10}\) ‘she’ could have been an older form which some dialects dropped in favour of the more transparent nyulagan from nyula ‘he’ + -gan feminine suffix. The third person plural form djanabang/djanabi occurring in northern dialects is rather close in form to the corresponding pronoun in languages immediately to the north. Again the more ‘regular’ nyulamang (or its metathesised form nyulangam)\(^{11}\) appears to be a coined regularised form.

(5) /i/, /e/, or /a/ final vowels on the demonstrative series gali etc., mali etc., gili etc. this, that, that yonder. In all data recorded by Crowley, Geytenbeeks and myself, the final vowel fluctuates in these words, from /e/ towards /a/ in more southern dialects, and from /e/ towards /i/ in the more northern ones. A similar fluctuation occurs in the final vowel of nyula ‘he’. Livingstone (1892:6) lists ‘nyuly’ for ‘he’, ‘nyan’ for ‘she’, ‘ngully’ for ‘we’, ‘buly’ ‘you pl’, ‘channaby’ ‘they’ and ‘ngai’ ‘I’. As the form ngali ‘we’ seems unchanged in all recorded dialects, I assume \(y\) is to be interpreted as /i/, and therefore in Minyangbal ‘he’ ends in /i/ most commonly.

(6) minyang/nyang alternation for ‘what, something’. Interestingly there is an overlap in use; both are used in the Lismore area. Languages to the north of the Queensland Bundjalung dialects used minya for ‘what’.

To the above list of variants which Crowley notes, I would add the following:

(7) /e/ vs /a/ vowel in some past tense forms (and future forms, where these exist) in the irregular verbs, notably yan.gehn vs yan.gahn ‘went’, and in yehn-/yahn- ‘sit’. The /e/ form occurs in Yugambeh and the Cabbage Tree Island dialect of the Cook family, but not in other records I have examined.

(8) Vowel shift from north to south (using these directions loosely) of /a/ to /e/ (sometimes also to /i/) in some items, such as ‘who’ ngahn/ngehn/ngihn, and ‘you sg erg’ wahlu/wehlu/wihiwu is attested in one old list seen by Crowley.

(9) Vowel shift from north to south of /u/ to /a/ in some items:

‘no’ yugam/yagam (most occurrences have the suffix be/-beh (thus yugambeh, etc.)
‘food (vegetable)’ nungany/nangany
‘leave’ wuna/-wana-

Yet older fluent Gidabal speakers today (1985) sometimes use a low back vowel [ o ] in the first two syllables of yagambeh.

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10 I use a period to separate /n/ and /g/ when these occur in sequence, to distinguish the sequence from the velar nasal.

11 A number of metathesised words appear to occur in Bandjalang. One of the most obvious is gung for water in some dialects (other dialects have a different form) — a common Australian form is ngugu. To my knowledge, this metathesising tendency is not shared with neighbouring languages.
(10) Some other vocabulary items, in particular those for 'girl', 'big', 'two', 'camp'. There are three different words for 'big' in different dialects, 'two' has two slight variants, and in the south (N.S.W.) the word for 'camp' equates with waybar for 'fire, firewood, matches', whereas in Yugambeh it equates with diman 'ashes'. Also the /ay/ sequence assimilates to resemble /e/ in the pronunciation of many from dialects south of the Queensland border; the few records I have seen from the north of the border do not contain this, but it is not ruled out.

(11) Consonant 'harmony' rules for some suffixes: the consonant in the suffix after /w/ varies. Wahlubal, and presumably Wehlubal and Birihn, had a different rule to other dialects.

(12) Past/non-past locative suffix distinction. Yugambeh, Minyangbal and Gidabal have this distinction attested; other dialects do not. Gidabal and Minyangbal have recorded the suffix -nahdjil 'past possessive', and it is preserved in the place name Billinudgel a little to the north of the Minyangbal territory.

(13) Length 'hopping' in verb suffixes. In general Bundjalung words avoid two successive long syllables. When these would occur in some verb affixation, the second lengthening is dropped in Wahlubal and possibly Wiyabal, but shifts to the right one syllable in Gidabal and Yugambeh. The presence of length is often signalled by stress when it is not in the first syllable, yet in fluent speech, length, even for the linguist who 'believes' it is there, is often not heard where it 'ought' to be. In songs, as noted above, the length is more clearly dictated by the tune and its rhythm and note lengths than by the words. I am reminded that one Gidabal speaker has often told me 'our languages weren't meant to be written down'!

(14) Length vs no length in the vowel of locative and some other suffixes. Wahlubal appears to lack this length, Gidabal and Yugambeh to have it. Holmer did not record it; he did not generally record length in vowels, nor the contrast between [i] and [e], though he did comment on some variability in vowel length and quality. Both Oakes and I have noted length contrasts in our records of the Lismore-Coraki dialect(s). Because of the way they were recorded, we cannot be sure about some of the other dialects.

(15) Existence of an inclusive first person plural pronoun. This appears to be coined in northern dialects (Yugambeh, Minyangbal) from the first person plural pronoun (ngali) and the 2nd person singular ergative pronoun (wahlu) to make ngaliwahlu. Languages to the north have a distinct pronoun for this inclusive, so it was probably coined under this influence.

(16) Presence or absence of the 'without' suffix -djam (Gidabal -dam, and/or its use on nouns only, or verbs also. Wahlubal appears to lack this length, Gidabal and Yugambeh to have it. Holmer did not record it; he did not generally record length in verbs, nor the contrast between [i] and [e], though he did comment on some variability in verb length and quality. Both Oakes and I have noted length contrasts in our records of the Lismore-Coraki dialect(s). Because of the way they were recorded, we cannot be sure about some of the other dialects.

(17) Use of -lur/-ur (Livingstone has -oro') as a past habitual suffix. Old records of northern dialects have this, also Holmer's record of Wiyabal, but a different form is used in Gidabal.

(18) Use or frequent use of the suffix combination -lehla for present continuous as opposed to its rare use, also the meaning which is most closely assigned to the -li suffix (lehla = -li + -hla 'present tense'). In Yugambeh and Gidabal the meaning seems to be continuous, whereas Crowley (1978) analyses it as antipassive for Wahlubal. There is indication that, while the continuous aspect is most in focus in Gidabal and Yugambeh, it has the other
function also in these dialects. Livingstone notes its presence in Minyangbal, suggests the meaning progressive, but states doubt. He comments:

In fact, it may be stated, once for all, that while there is an abundance of forms (in the verbs), the aborigines (sic) do not seem to make very exact distinctions in meaning between one form and another. (Livingstone 1892:15)

This may mean, of course, that they could not explain it to him any better than most of us can explain the subtleties of English, or that he failed to grasp subtleties of meaning in what we know from the Geytenbeeks’ and Crowley’s accounts, to be a rather intricate system.

(19) The extent of use of the gender system. At most there were four genders in Bundjalung: masculine, feminine, arboreal and neutral. Northern dialects, recorded earlier, indicated an extensive agreement between adjectives and nouns, whereas more recent work in southern dialects shows it less in use. Allen and Lane (1913), for example, have much more detail on noun morphology than I could obtain in 1965-6. Allen, it must be realised, was a first language speaker of ‘Wangerriburra’, though he had apparently not used it for some 50 years when he co-authored the paper.

(20) Possible substitution of /g/ (usually in its fricative allophone) for /dj/ in djahdjam ‘child’ in some dialects. One of the old lists has chargun for ‘child’, and the late Lyle Roberts of Lismore and others from that area appeared to use the fricative allophone of /g/ medially at times, as well as /dj/ in its alveopalatal stop and dental fricative allophones.

(21) Shift of /ay/ sequence towards a mid glide /ey/ in baygal, waybar etc. This seems most marked in dialects to the south of Lismore, Kyogle and Woodenbong. Yet in May 1985 I heard the same ‘southern’ pronunciation of waybar in conversation between two Gidabal speakers.

(22) Lack of distinct future tense inflection in Yugambeh (as recorded by me), so that the ‘present tense’ inflection is used for any non-past. The ‘future’ form seemed also lacking in the older record of the dialect (Allen and Lane 1913). Yet Gidabal speakers can optionally substitute present tense for future today, and I am sure others from other dialects have done so, just as in English we can use the present tense for future. Absence of future inflection from Joe Culham’s speech could have been considered idiosyncratic and in part due to lack of use of the language for years, except that firstly he was resident at Woodenbong (Mulli Mulli) where a future tense form was in use, and secondly Allen and Lane’s list also lacked it. The future tense inflection in Bundjalung, -hny is confusable with the past indefinite inflection -hn for English speakers, but it would have been less so for Bundjalung/Gidabal speakers, who had both phonemes in their language.

SUGGESTED DIALECT GROUPINGS AND/OR MOVEMENTS.

Map 3 reproduces Crowley’s suggested grouping of the dialects. Below is shown his suggested pattern of dialect splits.

12 A check through Geytenbeeks’ data and mine reveals, I think, only one occurrence of the ergative suffix occuring on a subject of a verb with the –li affix. This could be regarded as a performance slip. Brian Geytenbeek, when I discussed the point with him, felt that Crowley’s analysis could well also apply to Gidabal.
At this stage I would generally agree with Crowley's analysis, but would feel that the Albert-Logan group (or groups) had some regular contact with the Gidabal groups to the south. It is hard for the normal human brain to keep all the factors listed above in mind at once. The task is considerably complicated because of gaps in data and some uncertainty as to which part of the Bundjalung/Gidabal territory the recorded speaker(s)' dialect was from. However as I see it, I would suggest the following refinements to Crowley's picture:

1. The centre of greatest variation in features (especially phonological features) is usually in the Casino/Kyogle area, indicating that this area can be regarded as some type of central area in the dialects.

2. I would postulate a vague (necessarily so, because of continued contact between groups) split between a group shifting south from one shifting north, then a spread of the northern group up the coast into present Queensland and also along the inland area south of the Border Ranges. This accounts in general for phonological differences in the dialects. It also accounts for past tense locative forms being common to Gidabal and the northern coastal dialects (evidence for the -nahdjil past locative suffix in coastal dialects is preserved in the place name Billinudgel *bilinahdjil* 'once belonged to parrots', there is other evidence of the past tense locative vowel shift from /ah/ present to /ih/ past in records of Gidabal and Yugambeh).

3. Contact with languages further north in Queensland accounts for a few features of northern dialects, e.g. the inclusive 1st person plural pronoun, the 3rd person plural pronoun, the minyang form for 'what', etc.

4. Easy geographical proximity could account for the gradual shift in some phonological features (the dental fricative /d/ intervocalically in Gidabal and from speakers at Tabulam whose ancestral lands were between Tabulam and Woodenbong contrasting with the /dj/ phoneme at Tabulam and further south). Vocabulary differences place Gidabal closer to the more eastern dialects in some respects.

5. My postulated route of contact between Gidabal and Yugambeh through the Boonah border gate area could account for some similarities in vocabulary between these two dialects which do not seem to be reflected in the more coastal dialects.

**CONCLUSION.**

As the reader will agree, a lot of miscellaneous information has been collected but few firm conclusion have been reached. My hypotheses above are very tentative, more as ideas to be played with than anything I would consider even tentatively established. However, I present the discussion believing that if progress is to be made in reconstruction of past social and language shifts in Australia, a multidisciplinary approach is essential. It can also give pointers to what are useful things to look for in the various subdisciplines. A bringing together of available specialists in the various fields could be more useful than one person researching all sources. Geographical features and evidence of changes in vegetation can point up possible trade, contact or migration routes, as can the spread and alteration of songs, or evidence of trade (cf. McBryde 1983).
This bibliography is divided into two sections: A, those works consulted, and B, those works not consulted.

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Williams, Stan and Charlotte Williams. 'Ngara:ngba 1 and other matters, and songs', recorded by B. Geytenbeek, MS in possession of A.I.A.S., Canberra, c.1966.

APPENDIX

LIST OF LANGUAGE/DIALECT/CLAN NAMES FOUND IN THE LITERATURE

Balgabari: a section of the Yugambeh or Beaudesert dialect group, to the east of the Albert River, according to one of Holmer's informants (Holmer 1978:410).
Bandjalang (Bundjalung/Banjalang): claimed originally to refer to the Coraki and Bungawalbin Creek dialect, but now claimed as a name by those in Lismore, Tabulam, Baryulgil, etc. Given by Calley as the dialect of the Gugin clan near Byron Bay and Murwillumbah. He also gives it as clan name and dialect name for Lismore, and dialect name of the Ngowaidjal (Gurigaiburi) clan of Coraki.
Baryulgil: see Wehlulbal.
Birihn/Birihnbal: 'south', 'south people', applied to those around Rappville (Crowley 1978:156), applied by Richmond River people to those on the Clarence River, and by those on the Tweed to those on the Richmond (Livingstone 1892:23).
Bukibal: (transcription of first vowel uncertain, due to poor microfilm) a Bandjalang clan name of the group round Boonah (Calley 1959).
Casino: according to Crowley (1978), little is known of the geographical extent of this dialect.
Copmanhurst: Crowley (1978:157) suggests the dialect spoken around here was heavily influenced by Gumbaynggirr.
Dinggabal: only the Geytenbeeks give this name, from Woodenbong (Gidabal) informants. It applies to a dialect spoken on the Clarence River between Tabulam and Woodenbong, and was purportedly the dialect spoken by the late Dick Donnelly.
Galibal: Geytenbeeks place this on the Richmond River around Kyogle, but the title Galibal can be applied more widely, to those who pronounce 'this' as galt. Given by Calley as both clan name and dialect at Grevillea.
Geynyon: given as the language name of the Warwick/Allora area by informants at Woodenbong (Geytenbeeks and Sharpe).
Gidjabal/Gidabal/Kithebal etc.: the dialect of the Woodenbong area.
Gialil/Girlille: Gialil is given by Calley as a Bandjalang clan name located at Killarney and Warwick. Hausfeld gives Girille as a dialect name in this area.
Gugin/Kokin: ‘north’ Livingstone (1892) states the term was used by Richmond River Aborigines of those on the Tweed, and by those on the Tweed of those on the Logan. Gugin is given by Calley (1959) as the clan name of a Bandjalang dialect-speaking group at Byron Bay and Murwillumbah.
Guribaiburi: (dwellers at Coraki) given by Calley as an alternative clan name for the Bandjalang-dialect speaking people at Coraki.
Kitabal, Kitapul, Warwick dialect: spoken around Warwick, Allora, Killarney and the source of the Condamine and Logan Rivers. This, according to Crowley’s investigations (1978), is another dialect from the Gidabal of the Woodenbong area.
Manaldjahli/Munuldjali: the name preferred by the late Joe Culham for his dialect (Yugambeh of Beaudesert, Logan and Albert River basins) (Cunningham 1967, Calley 1959).
Manandjali: another form of the name Manaldjahli, recorded by Holmer (1978) and in some old records at the University of Queensland. The name is sometimes used in reference to Beaudesert (Holmer 1978: 410).
Minyangbal: (Livingstone 1892) the dialect of the Brunswick River and Byron Bay areas. Calley (1959) attests it as a clan name and dialect located at Coochin.
Murwillubah: Bray (1899/1900) gives this as the name of the tribe of the Murwillumbah area, after which he named the area the town later developed on.
Nerang Creek: (Crowley 1978:147) I suspect the name Ngarahngbal (etc.) is what the name Nerang is derived from, though Crowley thinks this is a different dialect.
Nganduwal/Ngando: (Livingstone 1892:3) along the Tweed River.
Ngarahngbal/Ngarah?wal/Ngarahgwal: Gold Coast area, between the Albert and Tweed Rivers (Crowley 1978:145 and sources listed by him).
Ngarabal/Ngarapal/Ngarabul given by Calley as a clan and dialect name of those on the Tweed River.
Ngenduwal: claimed by Livingstone to be used by the Nganduwal of the Minyangbal of Byron Bay and Brunswick River.
Ngogedjal: given by Calley as a clan name at Woodenbong, of the Gidabal dialect.
Ngowaidjal or Guribaiburi: given by Calley as the clan name of the Bandjalang dialect speaking group at Coraki.
Nyangbal: claimed by Livingstone to be the dialect spoken along the Richmond River. Crowley equates it with the Ballina dialect.
Wahlubal Tabulam-Drake dialect: It appears (as I compare Calley’s list with names I know of present families at Tabulam), than many of the present Tabulam people originally came from the Pretty Gully/Paddy’s Flat area.
Wangerriburra: (Allen and Lane 1913) given as the name of the group John Allen belonged to, in the Albert and Logan River area. The same dialect as Yugambeh (Cunningham 1967).
Whelubal: a name for the Baryulgil dialect or others nearby where the 2nd person singular ergative pronoun form is weliubal. Weilubal is given as the dialect name at Drake and Tabulam by Calley.
Wiyabal: usually used of the dialect spoken around Lismore, Alstonville, Dunoon and Nimbin.
Wudjebal: according to Geytenbeeks, a dialect spoken along the upper Rocky River in the foothills of the ranges west of the Clarence River and in the ranges west of Cangai. Wudjebal is given by Calley as a dialect name at Old Bonaibo, Bonaibo, Millera and Sandylands.
Yagarabal (Jagarabal): given by Cally as a possible Bandjalang clan name of those living to the north of Boonah. Other opinion regards this as another language.
Yugambal: A language or dialect to the west of the Bundjalung area, alleged by most sources not to be a Bundjalung dialect. However Halliday (1979) equates it with Dick Donnelly’s dialect, which was certainly a Bundjalung dialect.
Yugambeh/Yugumbir/Jukambe: (Cunningham 1967) the dialect spoken in the Logan and Albert River areas, including Beaudesert. According to some accounts it extended westwards to Boonah, but others (Hausfeld 1960) suggest Yagarabal was spoken there. It is also claimed by Bonnar (personal communication 1977) to be a name of the Lismore dialect, where ‘no’ is pronounced yugambel/yugambeh.
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FROM SPEAKING NGIYAMPAA TO SPEAKING ENGLISH

Tamsin Donaldson

This paper is both background and sequel to 'What's in a name? An etymological view of land, language and social identification from central western New South Wales.' That paper's first part looked at traditional Ngiyampaa social nomenclature, and its second part 'at changes in the ways in which people of Ngiyampaa descent perceive their social world, changes . . . which have taken place alongside their changeover from speaking Ngiyampaa to speaking English'. Here I outline the causes of the changeover and discuss some of its symptoms.

Similar transitions have been or are being made all over Australia. It is now likely that less than a quarter of the two hundred odd discrete Australian languages known to have been spoken in the past are still being acquired by children. These children are also learning English, at the very least to the extent that educational policy is implemented. What does the future hold? Which elements in the linguistic history of the people of Ngiyampaa descent are likely to be repeated in communities whose languages are being as universally spoken now as Ngiyampaa was, at least in the southwest of Ngiyampaa territory, for a hundred years or so after the first intrusions of English speakers? (By 'universally' I mean 'right through', as the usual Aboriginal phrase goes, by all generations.)

I shall be concentrating on the twentieth-century linguistic experiences of a group of Ngiyampaa speakers from this southwest corner, from the dry belar and nelia tree country north of Willandra Creek and south of Cobar and Sandy or Crowl Creek — see Map — and on those of their descendants. Members of this group, and their language, are also known as Wanggaaypuwan. Their Ngiyampaa is 'wangaay-having' (-puwan means 'having' or 'with'). That is, it has the word wangaay where the more northerly variety has the word wayil (both words meaning 'no'). Unless otherwise stated 'Ngiyampaa' should be taken from now on as referring to this group or to their Wanggaaypuwan variety of the language.

One of the features of the more recent history of the Ngiyampaa which has parallels in the history of many other Aboriginal groups is their repeated institutionalisation in a series of government run 'Aboriginal stations'. I have already pointed out in 'What's in a name?'

Tamsin Donaldson is a linguist based at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. She has written a grammar of Ngiyampaa as spoken by the Wanggaaypuwan people (1980). She has since been working on its lexicon as an aid to historical understanding of matters ranging from colonial perceptions of Aborigines to traditions of song-making. She is compiling a Ngiyampaa dictionary.

1 This paper was written while I was a Visiting Scholar in the Linguistics Department at the University of Cambridge. I would also like to thank students of the course 'Language in Aboriginal Australia' at the Australian National University for their reactions to some of the material. The paper of course owes its existence to the knowledge and insights of my Ngiyampaa colleagues.

2 Aboriginal History 8, 1984:21-44.

3 Beginning with Charles Sturt's expedition of 1829.
how the three successive governmental institutionalisations of the Ngiyampaa, at first within their own country, and then in other people's, promoted the changeover from speaking Ngiyampaa to speaking English. Each brought with it new kinds of everyday transactions requiring English, and the proportion of the daily round in which Ngiyampaa could appropriately be used dwindled further.4 This was summarised in Table 2, reproduced here for ease of reference.

As a result, it is possible to distinguish four different twentieth-century 'generations' amongst those of Ngiyampaa descent, according to the different range of social contexts in which members of each acquired their Ngiyampaa and/or their English. I shall name these generations according to where members' early childhoods were spent. These places are listed in the leftmost column of the table.

It is then in turn possible to link ‘generational’ background so-defined with specific changes in people’s acquisition of Ngiyampaa, or more precisely, with certain formal symptoms of its progressive de-acquisition, generation by generation. These symptoms are manifested now in systematic variation between the Ngiyampaa of the two generations who speak it, and in the Ngiyampaa available to those who do not.

It is not possible, however, to link generation-by-generation increases in the need to use English as shown on the table in such a regular way with formal changes in the kinds of English spoken, plentiful though such changes have been. There are so many other types of event which have influenced Ngiyampaa people’s experiences of English, both specific to their own history (eg. whether or not they were ‘taken away’ during childhood, the sorts of work they have done) and more general in their impact (eg. the advent of radio, then television). Then there is the question of the processes involved in singling out which of the many forms in people’s experience they actually use and transmit. I shall therefore only be discussing Ngiyampaa English or changes in it in so far as they throw light on changes in Ngiyampaa.

Before going on to characterise the linguistic environment in which each generation grew up in a little more detail, it is worth noting that although government policy led in this case to such clear-cut stages in the impact of English and the loss of Ngiyampaa it did not actually make the overall process of changeover to English faster than for other Aboriginal groups whose experiences of government interference did not involve such thorough-going institutionalisation. Indeed the first settlement at Carowra Tank concentrated Ngiyampaa speakers within their own country and away from any town. As a result Ngiyampaa was spoken by the southwestern drylanders for far longer than by most people of either Wangaaypuwan or Wayilwan descent elsewhere, who survived in a more scattered fashion as pastoral workers or
were gathered straight onto town-based 'Aboriginal Stations' together with people from
other linguistic backgrounds, as at Brewarrina and Walgett.

The first generation, the oldest people whose memories we can draw on, I shall call the
ngurrampaa generation, because they refer to their own ancestral country as their ngurrampaa.
They were born there around the turn of the century, and grew up 'camping around' within
it. Their elders had the sort of minimal contact with station people that had become neces-
sary to them since their country had been taken over by pastoralists. Many of the men be-
came stockmen and a few women worked in the laundries of the stations. Despite increasing
economic dependence on rations and pastoral work, they determined much of the etiquette,
if not the language itself, of communication with the usurpers. This can be seen in the follow-
ing description of Ngiyampaa dealings with the Fletcher household on Kaleno Station (taken
up in 1880) during the first decade of this century:

The men seldom came to the homestead complex, leaving the women to collect
their requirements.

On rare occasions Jimmy Keewong appeared in the distance, turned his back on
the Fletchers, and shouted his orders over his shoulder for Sarah or Fanny to
relay.

Plate 1: Ironing at Kaleno Station, probably c.1911.[Photograph: Emily Fletcher,
courtesy Cobar Museum]
If necessary Jimmy would approach with his request if Henry Fletcher or my grandfather came out, but he had no intention of speaking directly to the ladies of the household.  

Some of the ngurrampaa generation had white fathers, though only one of these became part of the Ngiyampaa community. As children, all of the ngurrampaa generation learnt and used Ngiyampaa as their first language. All of them were also learning some English, however rarely they used it. There is only one person remembered by the oldest people alive today who never learnt any English. He was also a person who never learnt to cope with clothes, put both his feet in the same trouser leg and so on, and was regarded as mayaal (‘wild’) by those who knew him.

The second generation are by their own reckoning the ‘Carowra Tank mob’. As time passed and the life of ‘camping about’ became less and less viable, people had tended to congregate in the centre of the ngurrampaa at Carowra Tank, ‘our main meeting place’, the largest government tank in western NSW. This became a place where they were able to collect rations. Then in 1926 it was made an institutionalised ‘camping place’ (the official term) or ‘mission’ (the residents’), with a manager appointed by the Aborigines Protection Board. A number of people who were not Ngiyampaa came to live at Carowra. There were a couple of isolated speakers of distant languages such as Ned Rogers ‘from the Northern Territory’ (Roper River) and Dick Smith ‘from Queensland’ (Nockatunga). Otherwise the strangers were mostly Wiradjuri, mainly from Hillston on the Lachlan River, to the immediate south of Ngiyampaa country; and also people of Wiradjuri descent from the Warangesda Mission at Darlington Point on the Murrumbidgee, after it was closed in 1924. Ngiyampaa and Wiradjuri are closely cognate. Speakers of either would have had no great difficulty in learning to understand speakers of the other. It appears that Wiradjuri speakers began speaking Ngiyampaa as a lingua franca, while Ngiyampaa speakers were intrigued to learn differences between Wiradjuri vocabulary and their own. Jack Johnson, also known as Moolbong, a Wiradjuri man, was noted as a clever man and a singer. The language of the songs he made himself has occasional Wiradjuri characteristics. Even the manager learnt to distribute the meat rations in Ngiyampaa, singing out ‘Purrpi, pirraay, kurraluu . . . ’ (‘belly, running guts, liver . . . ’). In any case the children of Wiradjuri-speaking parents who grew up at Carowra learnt to speak the same kind of Ngiyampaa as did their Ngiyampaa peers. The English they were acquiring was considerably different from that of at least some of their elders. Charles Cherbury, the manager who used Ngiyampaa butchering terms, wrote an account of an elderly man ‘proud . . . that “mine belonga Wonghibong tribe” ’ explaining how he made rain:

When time come to make rain, mine go away from the camp, where everything is very quiet, take mine rainstone, sit down for long time, and pray to ’Big One up there’. . . . Then the wind bring along clouds, clouds hit one another, and rain falls.  

Although people who knew the rain-maker react adversely to Cherbury’s account as making him speak ‘Jacky-Jacky talk’, maybe for its condescending tone as much as for the

5 Marjorie M. Wilson, letter to author, 6 January 1979. This Jimmy Keewong was probably the Jimmy Keewong who was grandfather to some of the surviving ngurrampaa generation, and Sarah, their grandmother.


7 Cherbury 1932.
Plate 2: Growing up in the ngurrampaa, probably c.1911. ‘An Australian Blacks’ Camp’ on Kaleno Station. (The man may be Jimmy Keewong.) [Photograph: Emily Fletcher, courtesy Cobar Museum]

Plate 3: Growing up at Carowra Tank, October 1929. Children outside the school, including (back row) Kathleen Johnson, Gladys Johnson, Chrissie Biggs and Mabel Biggs, and (front row) Gus Williams, Isaac Smith and Gary Williams. [Photograph: AIAS N1608.25. Original photograph from Aborigines Welfare Board Collection in the State Archives Authority of New South Wales. Supplied by AIAS]
Plate 4: Growing up at Menindee, 1930s. Children pose for a visitor to the mission. [Photograph: Aileen Morphett (then Underhill). AIAS N3577.7A]

Plate 5: Growing up at Murrin Bridge, 1957. Children in the school (including the teacher’s, front row). [Photograph: Jeremy Beckett]
actual forms attributed to him, they enjoy remembering incidents when this same old man's English gave them pleasure through its oddity from their point of view. Nevertheless, at least one member of the Carowra Tank generation sometimes says that she never learnt either Ngiyampaa or English properly. It is not clear what impact the little school at Carowra had either on its pupils' English or their attitudes towards it. I have not met anyone who learned to more than sign their name there.

The third generation I have called the Menindee generation. In 1933 the water supply at Carowra Tank threatened to fail. The Carowra Tank mob were shifted out of their own country into Paakantji territory to a stretch of river bank outside the town of Menindee, together with Paakantji people gathered up from along the Darling River, of whom they were traditionally suspicious. The languages of the two groups were very different. Speakers of Ngiyampaa and of Paakantji would not have found each other's languages at all intelligible on first hearing. There was however a small group of westerly Ngiyampaa speakers of the ngurrampaa generation, whose territory abutted on Paakantji country, who already spoke Paakaantji 'as well as their own'. At Menindee English became the lingua franca between speakers of the two languages as well as being used in all dealings with non-Aboriginal people.

A decade after the move, Ronald and Catherine Berndt visited Menindee for six weeks. In their report, they comment: 'An interesting feature is the presence of the mother tongue as a secondary language, used by the majority in ordinary conversation'. That is, although English was used as a lingua franca, the Paakantji were talking Paakantji and the Ngiyampaa amongst themselves. The Berndts also got the impression that 'most of the children speak 'Pa:kindʒi'. They go on to quote residents:

an old 'Pa:kindʒi woman said confidently: "You known, that 'Nj:amba, that's a very hard language, sounds like 'dago' talk or Chinese talk. All this time and I've never been able to learn that language." A middle-aged 'Nj:amba woman remarked in the same way — "You'll never be able to learn that 'Pa:kindʒi — I been here long time now and my mother talked 'Pa:kindʒi, and I tried but I can't learn it. They sound queer somehow, like they were 'dagoes' talking. It's a very hard language." 9

Children of both descents growing up with this linguistic background were speaking English to one another at the mission school, regardless of whether they had an Aboriginal language in common or not.

The fourth generation I have named the Murrin Bridge generation. The Menindee mission proved a disaster, for a great many reasons which it is not relevant to examine here. In 1949 the residents were shifted once again to what was officially described as a 'model village', Murrin Bridge on the Lachlan River, a few kilometres outside Lake Cargelligo. This new mission was neither in Ngiyampaa country nor in Paakantji country, but in Wiradjuri territory. There were also a few local people of Wiradjuri descent living there, and more in the district, especially at Euabbalong, none of them Wiradjuri speakers. In 1964 children were sent for secondary schooling in Lake Cargelligo, and four years later, for primary schooling also. From 1971 the old Murrin Bridge school has housed a Save the Children Fund preschool.

8 For the Paakantji community's practical orthography see Jones 1981.
9 Berndt and Berndt 1943:19.
From the time of this move on everyone of Ngiyampaa descent was speaking English either exclusively or most of the time. There was increasing intermarriage between descendants of all the different groups. Twenty years or so later, in the early seventies (when my own acquaintance with Murrin Bridge people began) there were no Ngiyampaa people left older than the ngurrampaa generation born around the turn of the century. These were the only people who were still speaking any Ngiyampaa. They were doing so rarely and privately amongst themselves, joined occasionally by some of the younger Carowra Tank mob. Amongst other and younger people they would be speaking English.

There are perhaps two main principles governing what variety of language you (choose to) speak to whom. The first could be called ‘communicative economics’: you maximise your ability to be understood by those you need to have understand you. I have just described how this principle of communicative economics has increased the role of English as a lingua franca for each successive generation of the people of Ngiyampaa descent. The second principle is very different. It is one of what might be named ‘emotional comfort’: through using particular linguistic forms you are able to share your sense of feeling at home with those whom you belong amongst and, conversely, to distance yourself from others to whom you may feel opposed. Anyone who has a first language or dialect which differs from the public standard will know the sense of privacy and intimacy which its use confers, constantly recreating old ties between its users.

What about the feelings of members of the four generations of Ngiyampaa descent towards the fact that they cannot now share the intimacy of speaking Ngiyampaa with one another? When I showed the Table to a meeting of people predominantly of the two younger generations for their views and comments, one person, with a Paakantji father and a mother who had spoken Ngiyampaa ‘right through’, made a point of telling me afterwards that the Table did not give the real reason why people of his age had not learned to speak the language. ‘We just weren’t interested. We’d sooner be playing football or something.’

Members of the ngurrampaa generation, asked during the nineteen seventies what was happening to the language, and why, would usually reply with a rhetorical question born of observing the relative confidence of the increased numbers of post-war migrants in talking their languages in public. Varying the formality of the response they might say to me: ‘Dagos learn their own kids their own yabber’ (or ‘gibberish’) ‘so why are we shamed?’ or perhaps: ‘The Italians teach their own kids their own language, so why don’t we?’10 As with the views offered to the Berndts at Menindee, using languages neither Aboriginal nor English as points of reference eases the approach to inherently disturbing issues of social relations and linguistic power. Such answers are, however, still questions, and rhetorical ones. They invite no further probing. That might seek to involve this generation in responsibility for at the very least colluding in the undermining of their own language and culture, although their own more personal feelings have consistently been, on the one hand, of loyalty to the culture and language and, on the other, of a sense of impotence about maintaining them in the face of ‘this modern world’. I am not of course suggesting that they haven’t also enjoyed increasing their word-power in English (to borrow a phrase from the Readers Digest), or welcomed

10 ‘Yabber’ and ‘gibberish’ here are not pejorative so much as relaxedly Aboriginal. That they may seem pejorative to non-Aborigines is a reflection on the kind of English vocabulary which was used in the pidgin of early contact, and so survived in the English that Aboriginal people made their own. See also footnote 25.

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many, though by no means all, of the other experiences offered by the ‘modern world’.

Some have even made an explicit virtue of perceived necessity, withholding Ngiyampaa from the young on the grounds that they need ‘all English’ now, in order to succeed in their modern world. In this they are subscribing to a, from an Aboriginal point of view, novel notion, appropriated from monolingual English-speaking culture: the notion that people (or those who are younger than themselves, at least) can only really cope with speaking a single language. Traditionally, a degree of multilingualism was normal in Aboriginal societies, as amongst the westerly ngurrampaa generation people who had spoken Paakantji as well as Ngiyampaa. But in not speaking Ngiyampaa in front of younger people its remaining speakers are also drawing on traditional values within their own culture. Earlier generations died in possession of untransmitted ceremonially-derived knowledge because there were no younger people appropriately prepared through other, prerequisite, ceremonial experience to receive it. Someone now in her sixties described to me how in her youth she had overhead members of the ngurrampaa generation talking Ngiyampaa together ‘like music’. They would drop their heads in sudden silence, kuyanpuwan, as she said (‘with shame’) at the approach of children. ‘Shame’, or ‘shyness’, as Aboriginal people, for want of better equivalents, translate kuyan and corresponding terms in other languages, is the moral response, the traditional safeguard of propriety ‘our pride what we live by and the principle of the country’ as someone of Wiradjuri descent put it to me recently.\[11\] The language itself was becoming in some respects like ceremonial knowledge. It was not to be lightly exposed to children who were, as we have seen, likely to show themselves ‘not interested’, even if moved by it at some, then probably unacknowledged, level, as the describer of Ngiyampaa as sounding like music obviously had been. The old people were becoming elegiac custodians of what was now primarily a cultural property, a heritage rather than the unselfconscious vehicle of daily life. As one person who had grown up in the ngurrampaa began with wistful dignity, when I asked in the early seventies if she had any particular message she would like preserved on tape: ‘Ngiyanuna palunhaarra, wangaay mayi wiiyakala, Ngiyampaa ngiyarapa.’ (‘When we die, there will be nobody left who can speak Ngiyampaa.’)\[12\]

It thus makes sense that the oldest Ngiyampaa speakers should feel awkward with any implication that they might be individually answerable for letting go of a source of communal comfort or solidarity or unique shared identity. The community of Ngiyampaa descent has been caught in a paradoxical situation. They are faced with two inescapable binds, binds of a kind being confronted by linguistic minorities in rapidly changing societies all over the world.

The first bind lies in the fact that, as a precondition for being used to create feelings of solidarity, a language has to satisfy the communicative needs of those who speak it. To keep doing this for the whole community of Ngiyampaa descent with all its generations, Ngiyampaa would have had to change and develop to meet the new communication needs of the younger generations as the world they are living in changes. In changing, the language becomes tainted, as far as the older generations are concerned, with the very ‘otherness’ of the modern world against which they see their language as a defence. So it becomes emotionally easier to progressively restrict it to use amongst themselves, to retreat into an elegiac

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11 John Pike of Narromine. (He describes himself as ‘from the Nalangga [nal'æŋga] tribe on the Macquarie River’ and the Wiradjuri as ‘part of our tribe’.) Tape LA 9728 in A.I.A.S. Sound Archive.

12 Eliza Kennedy, A.I.A.S. Sound Archive tape deposited in A.I.A.S. Sound Archive.
integrity shared with their peers.

The second bind in this paradoxical situation is that once the process of breakdown in automatic transmission has begun, for those who do not already speak the language 'right through', the feelings of comfort and intimacy in trying to use the language or even in listening to it may yield rapidly to very mixed feelings including for instance the fear of making conspicuous mistakes. These can easily amount to positive discomfort, which can in turn contribute to further lessen the chances of the language's successful transmission. Ultimately acquiring the language becomes a matter of personal commitment to conscious learning, an activity in competition with others such as playing football. It may then be easier to be 'not interested', or even derisive.

The linguistic situation I have been describing so far has taken a slightly different turn in recent years. Since 1971 survivors of the ngurrampaa and Carowra Tank generations have been sharing their knowledge of Ngiyampaa with me, tape-recording songs, stories and other material and teaching me the language so that I could also preserve in writing a description of its grammar and lexicon. Latterly they have also produced Ngiyampaa material, in conjunction with younger illustrators, for use within the community and in schools, both locally and further afield. All this activity has contributed to, and is itself a sign of, a change in the status of Ngiyampaa within the community. There is yet another generation growing up which is free (though not, it is to be hoped, under any compulsion) to be interested. Although the gap in spontaneous oral transmission can no longer be effectively bridged, people not brought up as Ngiyampaa speakers may if they wish set themselves to learn back something of the language, or to learn about it and its history. A more informed understanding on the part of others not of Ngiyampaa descent is also now a possibility.

What the linguistic consequences of all these developments may or may not be in terms of everyday usage forms part of a story as yet in the making. Here I want to draw on the research done so far to give an overview of the kinds of changes that took place in people's Ngiyampaa as its daily use declined in favour of English, of the symptoms of the decreasingly complete transmission of the language from one generation to the next. First I shall discuss changes in grammar, then changes in the nature and context of use of Ngiyampaa vocabulary.

Obviously, my evidence refers to the characteristics of each of the older generation's Ngiyampaa as it has been used in my presence, usually but not always in working sessions, over the past decade. Evidence for exactly how each generation was speaking while the next were infants cannot of course be more than anecdotal.

**GENERATION BY GENERATION CHANGES IN NGIYAMPAA GRAMMAR.**

We may say of the ngurrampaa generation that they learnt a full Ngiyampaa grammar, in the sense that those who are interested in recording the language can, when they think about it, find a way to recast in Ngiyampaa anything which they now normally say in English. (This, of course, is in addition to being able to remember Ngiyampaa ways of talking about things which they don't usually mention in English.) They may sometimes lack appropriate
Ngiyampaa vocabulary, and have to introduce a few English words, but they can find the syntactic means. This does not necessarily mean that members of this generation nowadays spontaneously do use Ngiyampaa constructions to say everything they want to say, without any reversion to English, even on those rare nostalgic occasions when, united in each other’s company, they are moved to speak a little Ngiyampaa, or ‘talk up’ as some put it. Individuals vary in the relish and ease with which they ‘talk up’ and also, at least since the beginning of the project to record the language, in the degree of linguistic self-awareness, amounting sometimes to determination, with which they do it. In any case, such nostalgic ‘talking up’, for instance after funerals, is a matter of slipping back into once-habitual ways of talking, not of recasting or translating from English. One person withdrew altogether from speaking Ngiyampaa after suffering a stroke, finding it taxing and distressing, as she said, to ‘think back’. Another stroke sufferer on first recovery spoke Ngiyampaa exclusively, at the same time mistaking the hospital nurses and patients for the relations and companions of her youth. Here I am characterising this generation’s maximal grammatical resources as a group, what they learnt while growing up, as evidenced in what various individuals have in various circumstances been able to recall for use over the period of my fieldwork: the grammar of Ngiyampaa as described in *Ngiyambaa the language of the Wangaaybuwan*.\(^{15}\)

The second generation, who grew up at Carowra Tank, have inherited essentially the same grammar. I have not been aware of any member of this generation being nonplussed by the grammar of anything said by their elders. But their Ngiyampaa speech differs grammatically in two very obvious ways from the *ngurrampaa* generation’s.

Firstly, they have ironed out some of the formal complications of the language by allowing some of the most widespread grammatical word-endings to appear even more widely, in a predictable and regular fashion, either ousting or reducing the range of occurrence of rarer forms. A comparable phenomenon in learner’s English would be that stage when the past tense of all new verbs is formed according to the rule ‘add -ed’ (appropriately pronounced). Such learners (infants, foreigners or whoever) may say ‘readed, singed, thinked’ etc., before going on to adopt ‘read, sang, thought’. It is worth noting that this sort of practice, though it indicates incomplete mastery of the formal system used by those from whom the learner is learning, does not inhibit communication at all. There is actually no need to go further in order to be understood. It is simply a question of the value attached to ‘speaking properly’ (we may recall the remark of the member of this generation who sometimes feels she never learnt either Ngiyampaa or English ‘properly’). She is however one of a group of peers who all speak Ngiyampaa in this respect in the same way, so that what may seem to be not speaking properly when judged by outside standards (those of the older Ngiyampaa speakers) is in a sense proper (and intimate) for these people within their age-group. It is worth noting also that the older speakers do not chide them or correct these forms, although they are quick, when teaching me, to assert their own forms as the ones which should appear in my record. When the issue eventually had to be raised with people of all ages, including non-speakers, in connection with the production of elementary story books in the language, no-one argued for using anything but the oldest speakers’ forms, although they knew they would be more

\(^{15}\) Donaldson 1980. Its orthography predates the practical orthography developed for Johnson et al. 1982 and used in this paper, including for the occasional words from other languages. Hence *bs* in the title.
complicated for beginners to learn. (Compare this with the situation as regards English, where there are sometimes quite painful intergenerational confrontations in which school-children attempt to correct their elders.)

The following examples illustrate the process of simplifying formal grammatical choices. One involves verb-endings and one noun-endings.16 There is a small set of verbs (sixteen are known) which have a special imperative ending all of their own. If you want to order someone to do something designated by one of these verbs, you add -ka to the verb stem. For example the stem for ‘drink’ is ngaru-. So if you want to tell someone ‘Drink!’ you say ‘Ngaruka!’ This set of verbs includes all the verbs whose stems end in u, plus a handful of verbs whose stems end in either i or a, like all other verbs in the language. Members of the Carowra Tank generation have created a simple rule for identifying which verbs need this -ka ending: they put it on all the verbs ending in u, but on none whose stems end in i or a. They treat the latter like in the other respects most similar larger set of verbs with stems ending in i and a, and give them their imperative endings, -tya and -tha respectively. So while the oldest speakers use ‘Kilkila!’ for ‘Piss!’ and ‘Wanaka!’ for ‘Throw!’ this generation say ‘Kilitya!’ and ‘Wanatha!’ In so doing they have both regularised and reduced the set of verbs which takes the imperative ending -ka.

In English, when a noun is the subject of a transitive sentence, that is, when it refers to a person (or creature) who does something to someone or something, it comes at the beginning of the sentence. In ‘A dog bit the woman’ we know that the dog did the biting, not the woman, or else she would be mentioned first. In Ngiyampaa this is not indicated by word-order, but by putting an ‘ergative’ ending on the subject. Thus in a translation of this sentence, mirri ‘dog’ would have -ku attached to it, allowing the words of the sentence to be put together in any order, e.g. ‘Mirraku winarr kathivi’ (literally, ‘Dog woman bit’), -ku is the form of the ergative ending appropriate for words ending in a vowel. There are other forms for words ending in a consonant, or a group of consonants, -tyu, -thu, -tu, -u, depending on which. But the Carowra Tank generation simply add the commonest form, -ku, to all words needing an ergative ending. Thus, if it is a question of a mosquito, kamukin, rather than a dog biting a woman, the oldest speakers will say ‘Kamukintu winarr kathiyi’, while this generation will say ‘Kamukinku winarr kathiyi’. (The ending marking possession is also -ku, on all words, for both generations.)

The second way in which the Carowra Tank generation’s Ngiyampaa differs grammatically from the ngurrampaa generation’s is of a piece with the first, in that it involves simplifying the business of speaking the language, but less spectacular in that it does not involve changes to frequently necessary forms like verb- and noun-endings. Anyone who has spent time amongst people whose language they do not know well will have realised what a lot of mileage they can get out of the few constructions they do know. Imagine travelling in France on a little school French for instance. If you need to say the equivalent of ‘I don’t know whether the train has gone’ but do not feel up to it, you can perhaps say the equivalent of ‘Has the train gone? I don’t know.’, or failing that of ‘The train has gone?’ with a questioning intonation. Variable amounts of this sort of thing go on in the Ngiyampaa of the

16 For further linguistic details, and the full range of related phenomena, see Donaldson 1980:152-3 and 156-60, especially 157 for the simplification of the verbal system; and 81-5, especially 85 for all simplified nominal inflections. For comparable changes observed in other Australian languages see Schmidt, 1985:54 and 85.
Carowra Tank generation. If one of them records a story, it will be likely to have fewer sub­ordinate constructions in it than an older speaker’s, though when they do occur they are formally just the same. (Here the analogy with survival French reveals one of its many limitations)

The fact that Ngiyampaa is in competition with English sometimes affords other ways of avoiding the grammatically complex. There is one Ngiyampaa construction which is complicated because there is no other at all like it. There is no verb in Ngiyampaa meaning ‘to want’ or ‘to need’. Saying that you want something is achieved by adding a special suffix -nginta, which means roughly ‘in-need-of’ to the word for the thing you want, and using the verb ‘to be’, saying something like, for instance: ‘Water-in-need-of I am’ or ‘To dance-in-need-of I am.’

What the Carowra Tank generation have done is to form a regular Ngiyampaa verb ‘to want’ on the basis of the English one, so that they can say: ‘Ngathu wantitmara kali.’ ‘I want water.’ or ‘Ngathu wantitmara wakakirri.’ ‘I want to dance.’. Older speakers too were using this stratagem in the early seventies. When I asked some of them how you would talk about ‘wanting’ without putting any English in they revived the -nginta construction, and have stuck with it since. But it has not caught on with the Carowra Tank generation.

What about the Ngiyampaa grammar of the generation who grew up at Menindee, who heard the language spoken around them by their elders, but for whom English was the lingua franca and the language increasingly of everyday life? Most seem able to follow stories told by people of the generations above them, judging by their spontaneous laughter in appropriate places when invited by the latter to listen to tape-recordings. But they habitually dis­claim speaking knowledge of the language and would not attempt to retell such stories, or others of their own. They will sometimes use formulaically phrases once common in everyday speech, such as the equivalents of ‘Come here!’ ‘Let’s go’ and the like. When they do, they vary the verb endings and so on appropriately in the context, within the limits of what they choose to say.

Those who have grown up at Murrin Bridge from the early 1950s do not have any grammatical understanding of the language. They may recognise odd familiar words in taped stories, without being able to follow them. They may know a few set phrases as well as odd words, but they are unlikely to be able to analyse the phrases into their constituent parts, so as to recombine them in other ways to say other things. There is for instance a phrase, ‘Yama-karra pity a n!’ which people of this generation sometimes use instead of an English greeting to say hello to me, in recognition of my interest in the language (I am often referred to as ‘that Ngiyampaa waatyin’ (‘white woman’)).

In this phrase, which is very hard to translate neatly, yama means something like ‘Yes or no?’ ‘Well?’ And karra means something like ‘by the sound/look/taste/feel/smell’ ‘according to the sensory evidence’ (by contrast to reliance on the hearsay evidence of what someone has said, which is marked differently). ‘Yama-karra’ is used by the oldest generation as a way of making contact on meeting, without requiring any particular response, as a sort of ‘How’s things?’ or ‘How d’you do?’ It is also used while people are together to secure cooperation in some joint activity, say in lifting something, going hunting or whatever. Here

18 ibid.:241-2.
19 Ibid.:275.
the functional equivalent in English would be something like ‘OK then?’ ‘Well?’ ‘Ready?’ It may be used as well by someone on the point of leaving others rather as someone might say ‘OK...’ or ‘Well...’ in English as a prelude to saying ‘See you!’ (‘Might see you again’ is the literal translation of the Ngiyampaa farewell too.) And the oldest speakers use both yama and -karra separately in a host of other contexts. If asked themselves to translate yama-karra, they will settle on its function as a greeting as the most important one and say it means ‘How are you going?’

What then of the final word of the phrase, pityarr? This means ‘male’ and is used by the old people most frequently in connection with sexing rabbits, birds and so on, where they would translate it ‘buck’ or ‘cock’. One of them sometimes complains, ‘This yama-karra pityarr business, now. That’s only come in lately.’ Pityarr was introduced amongst men at the end of the phrase yama-karra as a translation for ‘mate’, so as to create a Ngiyampaa equivalent for ‘How are you going, mate?’ (Could a play on ‘Wotcha cock?’ have been intended?) In any case younger people using the phrase now are usually unaware that pityarr referred traditionally to males only. If they are able to identify a separate meaning for it at all, they understand it to mean ‘mate’ in general, male or female, as in ‘we’re good mates’. So I can appropriately be greeted ‘Yama-karra pityarr’, though a waatyin.

Their pronunciation of the phrase has also altered, reflecting the fact that they are basically monoglot English speakers. The rr of -karra is usually pronounced like an English r rather than tapped or trilled, and the final rr of pityarr, which has no analogue in Australian (as opposed to, say, Scottish) English, is often omitted altogether. Such anglicising changes contrast with pronunciation changes made by the Carowra Tank generation. The latter have tended to avoid the rarer consonant combinations within Ngiyampaa’s own sound system, but have not made pronunciation changes to Ngiyampaa sounds on the basis of their rarity or absence in English. Rather their pronunciation of English has continued to show signs of having developed among speakers of an Aboriginal language. Thus p or b for English v, especially in proper names.

**GENERATION BY GENERATION CHANGES IN THE NATURE AND USE OF NGIYAMPAA VOCABULARY.**

Although the ngurrampaa generation, as far as one can tell, did not inherit a significantly altered Ngiyampaa grammar from their own forebears, they did inherit a vocabulary which shows a lot of signs of the preceding years of colonisation and of contact with English.

Most urgently, Ngiyampaa speakers had had to modify the vocabulary of the language so as to name the new phenomena of their recent experience. One of the most obvious strategies for doing this was to take over words from English, changing their pronunciation to make them fit the Ngiyampaa sound system. There is evidence of several different earlier generations’ borrowings in the vocabulary of today’s oldest Ngiyampaa speakers.

The first borrowings were completely assimilated into the sound system of Ngiyampaa, so that without the historical knowledge that they refer to introductions to prompt a search for an English source, one would not spot them as foreign in origin at all. Very early for instance, Ngiyampaa people must have been introduced to the idea of nakedness. The Ngiyampaa word for ‘naked’ is nhitkin. The initial n has become nh, the closest nasal sound permissible

at the beginning of Ngiyampaa words. The first vowel has become \( ii \), the second \( i \). The only
final consonants allowed in Ngiyampaa are \( n, l, rr, \) and \( y \). The final \( d \) is replaced by \( n \), made
with the same configuration of the mouth. So in Ngiyampaa, if you are naked, you are
\( nhikin \). Nakedness is something to be covered — in this case with something of more immediate interest to the Ngiyampaa, a \( bulayingkin \) or ‘blanket’. (Blankets appear to have been a chief point of articulation in early negotiations between newcomers and Aboriginal people in some parts of New South Wales.)

There is another later set of loans including such words as \( yurraapat \) ‘rabbit’, \( puthukat \)
‘pussycat’ and \( purrayipit \) ‘breakfast’. One can assume that these entered the language later because the rigour of the assimilation process has been relaxed. Their final \( r \), unlike that of ‘blanket’ have not been changed to \( n \). The entry of some of these at least can be fairly precisely dated, that of \( yurraapat \) for instance to almost exactly a hundred years ago. Rabbits were introduced in 1870 to Balranald on the Murrumbidgee, at the junction with the Lachlan. By 1879 they had reached the junction with Willandra Creek, the southern boundary of the Ngiyampaa \( ngurrampaa \), and by 1884 they were at Cobar, beyond it on the northern side. As for the pussycats, they arrived in force after ‘considerable numbers’, like the four hundred railed to Bourke in 1886, were deliberately released, in a vain attempt to control the rabbits.

Some of these newer loans coexisted alongside fully-assimilated borrowings of the same word. There is for instance another, presumably older loan for ‘cat’, \( purrkiyan \), still occasionally to be heard, from ‘pusscat’. And who would recognise at first sight in \( pakutha \) that other predator of rabbits, the fox? The transformation is utterly logical, matching each sound with that closest to it in the Ngiyampaa system:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{f} & \quad \text{(no fricatives, therefore a stop consonant)} \\
\text{o} & \quad \text{(no o)} \\
\text{k} & \quad \text{k} \\
\text{u} & \quad \text{(to avoid a pair of stop consonants)} \\
\text{s} & \quad \text{(no s)} \\
\text{a} & \quad \text{(to avoid a final consonant)}
\end{align*}
\]

When the words we have looked at so far were taken from English into Ngiyampaa their reference remained the same. But others have been reinterpreted. Such shifts of meaning are as likely to have purely formal origins as to reveal anything about cross-cultural differences of perception. For example \( yurrayilway \) for ‘train’ probably results quite simply from the assimilation of the first and most striking part of the phrase ‘railway train’. However on the occasion of the official opening of the railway itself from Condobolin through to Trida in Ngiyampaa country in 1919, it was the arrival of the first train which made the impact, and called for the making of a celebratory Ngiyampaa song. The already familiar rails themselves, like other objects made of iron, were called \( muntupa \) (etymology unknown). But sometimes shifts in the meanings of loans, particularly from times when few Ngiyampaa can be presumed to have had a thorough knowledge of English, are eloquent of historically significant fundamental differences in outlook. Take for example, the Ngiyampaa word

\[21 \text{ Reece 1967.} \]
\[22 \text{ All information on animal introductions from Rolls 1969, especially pp.30,39,48,118.} \]
\[23 \text{ Tommy Williams 1980.} \]
**patik** meaning 'fence'. When pastoralists first took over Ngiyampaa country, their aim of course was to create paddocks. In order to do so, they set about building fences. As far as the Ngiyampaa were concerned, the material signs of this activity, the fences themselves, were obvious enough. Indeed, they were to help put many of them up. But the purpose and value of the entities thus enclosed, indeed their very existence, were not so immediately perceptible. So the word ‘paddock’ entered Ngiyampaa as **patik**, to name the more obvious fences.24

Another source for Ngiyampaa speakers to draw on for new words for new phenomena was the contact jargon, the New South Wales pidgin25 which began to develop on the east coast in communication between colonisers and colonised. This in turn drew on a number of Aboriginal languages, especially Dharuk from Port Jackson, for its vocabulary, as well as various kinds of English. The Ngiyampaa word for ‘white woman’, **waatyin**, is a case in point, being formed from English ‘white’ and Dharuk **riyin** ‘woman’, via the pidgin ‘(black) gin’. Many English words and some of the new words exclusive to the jargon would have entered Ngiyampaa after Ngiyampaa speakers heard them from white people arriving in their country. But news of some of their possessions travelled ahead along Aboriginal lines of communication beyond the early frontiers, together with words to name them by. The Ngiyampaa for ‘horse’ is **yarraaman**, taken from the contact jargon, whether ahead of their appearance and their riders’ or not cannot be proven. But their westerly neighbours the Paakantji on the Darling River have a word first used by Aborigines in this sense at a more exploratory stage of linguistic relations between Aborigines and colonists. It is **kaangkurru**, formed from the English pronunciation of the Guugu Yimidhirr word **kanguru** for a large black kangaroo. Dharuk speakers with whom the British tried to use ‘kangaroo’ in the early days of the settlement at Port Jackson, not being familiar with the language of the Endeavour River where Sir Joseph Banks had recorded it, had taken it to be English and therefore to apply to imported animals.26

A final outside source for new Ngiyampaa words to cope with the impact of colonisation was other neighbouring Aboriginal languages. The Ngiyampaa word for ‘house, building’ is **kunytyi**, probably borrowed from a Wiradjuri word meaning ‘shelter’, thus allowing the Ngiyampaa distinction between ‘house’ and their own shelter, **nganu**, which they translate into English as ‘mia-mia’.

Loan words from various sources were not the only signs of the impact of English-speaking culture on the Ngiyampaa vocabulary. Analogies perceived between the familiar and the new could lead to the reference of existing words being extended to cover the new. **Kurrumin**, already used for the shadow of something on the ground, or its reflection in water, could be used for ‘photograph’, by virtue of the fact that all three are images. More cumbrously, a stock explanatory phrase could develop for reference to the new object, such as **kurrumin mamarapa** ‘(that which) takes pictures’, i.e. ‘camera’.

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24 Semantic reinterpretations from contained to container, and vice versa, are common within as well as across languages. See for instance the O.E.D. entry for ‘bourne’.

25 For obstacles to the study of this pidgin, see Dutton 1983. Troy 1985 makes an initial compilation of the written sources.

FROM NGIYAMPAA TO ENGLISH

So far I have indicated ways in which the Ngiyampaa speakers, from long before the *ngurrampaa* generation were born, had had to enrich their vocabulary to cope with a spate of new phenomena stemming from the British invasion. But the changes to Ngiyampaa life during this period involved dramatic losses as well as accretions. By and large the additions are known or discoverable, and it is possible then to ask 'How did people talk about them?' Even so there is certainly room for error in assumptions about what is new, and the linguistic evidence can sometimes cast doubt on received opinion. For instance, can the common sow-thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*) or 'wild cabbage' be an introduced plant, as the botanists claim, if languages of western New South Wales (and western Victoria too) have words for it, none of them recognisably loans from English, and none of them known to apply to any other plant as well? Or did people stop eating, and naming, the plant to which it was preferred? When it comes to deducing changes leading to vocabulary losses the task is far harder. Loss means just that, and it is anyone's guess how many words have irretrievably dropped out of use.

It is however quite clear that many specific types of once-used vocabulary were not learnt by the *ngurrampaa* generation. The evidence is of many kinds. Enough is known about post-colonial ecological and environmental changes to know that Ngiyampaa people must once have been able to speak about species for which the language now lacks a word, because today's speakers lacked direct or even hearsay experience of the species as children. Rock art is an area of activity which must have had more associated vocabulary than is now known (a verb 'to paint', a word for 'white paint' and another for 'raddle'). There is even evidence that local rock art was added to during the oldest speakers' childhoods, after 1900. But this was a form of ceremonial activity whose significance and even practice was not spoken of to children. Members of the generation who were children at the time of the last *purrpa* ceremony for 'making men' are very aware that they lack ceremonial knowledge. A pastoralist's son who grew up amongst another group of speakers of the language, mentioned in his reminiscences the existence of an 'inverted' secret language used amongst initiated men. How otherwise should today's oldest speakers even have an inkling that it ever existed? It is fair also to assume there may have been some sort of respect register for talking to or in the presence of certain relatives, which may or may not have involved a special vocabulary. All that is now known is that various kin were once supposed to seat themselves in various ways according to their relationships with one another.

In some cases Ngiyampaa words whose range of reference had been extended were transmitted with the new reference only, previous references having become irrelevant. (*Muntupa*, now only 'iron' is one example.) The small amount of earlier written information about Ngiyampaa, hardly any of it from before this century, is rarely helpful here. But occasionally the earlier and more extensive missionary records of cognate languages enable this process to be demonstrated. Whence for instance the Ngiyampaa word *karran* 'horn (of any introduced domestic animal)'? A missionary vocabulary of Wiradjuri collected around 1840 lists 'Garran

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27 Cunningham *et al.* 1981.
29 Dunbar 1943-4:146.
— a little hook to take out grubs with.31 Even the oldest Ngiyampaa speakers were brought up to call the implements they used for the purpose by the loan word waya, since they were by then invariably made of pieces of fence wire. In the same vocabulary I also found: ‘Wannal — one that is under the restriction of tribal law with respect to food; a lad not yet fully initiated’. I asked my oldest Ngiyampaa teachers if they knew any word sounding like wanaal (my guess at the pronunciation Günther was representing), and if so, how they would use it. ‘Yes’ was the answer, ‘I could say “Ngathu yurraamuthi wanaal kara, I’m wanaal for grog, I won’t touch it.” ’ The word is now usable only in that one context, and provides a way of saying something equivalent to ‘I’m temperance’, or ‘I’m teetotal’.

So much for the lexical inheritance of the oldest speakers: what have the Carowra Tank generation made of it? For a variety of reasons, presumably mainly to do with the change in life-style and therefore conversational preoccupations of their elders when settled at Carowra, and the smaller proportion of their lives in which Ngiyampaa has dominated, their vocabularies are in any case smaller. If they wish to speak Ngiyampaa now, they are faced more often with the need to improvise. For instance, although the Ngiyampaa are drylanders, the oldest speakers learnt that the canoes once used by river peoples were marri, and use this word for other types of boat too. Younger speakers, at a loss, take the word ‘boat’ and perhaps modify it in the most perfunctory way in the direction of Ngiyampaa pronunciation, say paut. (Ngiyampaa words as a rule have two syllables or more.) Or perhaps they simply insert ‘boat’ into the conversation, with a high likelihood of this triggering its continuation in English only. Neither generation regards English words they have modified themselves in recent times as ‘real Ngiyampaa’, even if they happen to conform perfectly to the Ngiyampaa sound system. The will to assimilate new vocabulary has gone. Someone who asked me in Ngiyampaa to fetch some Vicks (Vapour Rub) asked for piks, which is how she would have pronounced the word if talking English. By the loan-formation rules which converted ‘fox’ to pakutha, she should have asked for pikutha.

Whereas the loans already discussed are mostly nouns, a response to a changing world of things, the most obvious difference between Ngiyampaa verbs and English verbs is that they represent two different ways of structuring even the same activities and events. We have seen how the idiosyncratic Ngiyampaa construction to indicate ‘wanting’ was replaced by a loan verb wantitma-. The Carowra Tank generation replaces even quite regular verbs constructions with loans, often on a grand scale. Roughly a third of Ngiyampaa verbs are compounds involving joining a first part indicating some characteristic of the action to a second part indicating something about how it was done, often with which part of the body. Karruun-, for example, indicates that an action failed in its direction. Karruun- can be followed by -ma- ‘do with the hand’, -th- ‘do with mouth’ or -thi- ‘do with foot’. Karruunma- can translate ‘throw (a spear) off target’, karruuntha- ‘make a fool of your mouth’ as someone described what might happen while eating absentmindedly, and karruunthi- ‘miss your footing’, say when walking in burrowed country, or climbing steps. Younger speakers tend either to abandon the subtleties of body-part choice, and use the ‘do with hand’ form in all situations, or, more often, to simply use the one loan verb mityitma- from ‘miss’ in all these contexts. They have abandoned (or never mastered) the analytic system and are ‘thinking in English’ when English verbs have offered a single alternative notion. The same process can be seen at work in the preference of kikitma- ‘kick’ over the Ngiyampaa phrase ‘thinangku puma-’ ‘hit

31 Günther 1892:85.
with foot', and even of *wokitma* - 'work' over *waray-ngama* - 'stand-busy' or *wii-ngama* - 'sit-busy', though *wokitma* (with its unassimilated *o*, as in 'hot'), also suggests pay.

With the Menindee and Murrin Bridge generations, it is a question of which Ngiyampaa words have survived in their English. The overall number of words used is too small for pronunciation changes such as saying *rr* in the English way to cause ambiguities for them. Someone recording words for an educational tape kept saying *yuru* instead of *yurru* for 'rain', unaware till his older colleagues insisted that he try to change it that he was naming the shrike-thrush instead.

Some of the principles behind their forebears' borrowings of English words apply to their retention of Ngiyampaa ones. They have kept words for what the imported English-speaking culture had never had, in so far as what they refer to is still important. So Menindee generation people can name a number of different *wanta* (never translated, but literally 'ugly (beings)'), and no child can grow up at Murrin Bridge without being scared or scaring others with phrases like 'Might be *wanta*!' Some words survive only in meanings which were originally extensions from the main sense, often pejorative or euphemistic. *Minyangkaa* basically means 'something or other', hence 'rubbish, rubbishy'. In English it is used only (and often) to say such things as 'Those are all *minyangkaa*.' i.e. 'rubbish, no good'. *Yingkalaa*, literally 'just like that' is known to English speakers only as a way of referring to a woman who is, according to the English euphemism, 'in a certain condition'. Likewise, Ngiyampaa words for private body parts are retained, or even Paakantji ones which originally entered Ngiyampaa as swear words or euphemisms themselves. (Young speakers of English only are in any case not well placed to distinguish which are which.)

It is often words from other Aboriginal languages which entered the language through the early pidgin that survive in preference to older Ngiyampaa ones, probably partly because they remained at home in people's 'English' as well until it became less and less pidgin-like. Whether originally judged to be 'English' or not, they are now seen as Ngiyampaa, if only because they are distinctively Aboriginal, not being in use in non-Aboriginal English. When the Murrin Bridge people were looking for a brand name for their handcrafted products, they settled on the word *putyirriwan* 'the good one'. It comes from the Dharuk, then pidgin, word often spelt 'boojery', plus 'one'.

Most of the distinctive words retained by these generations in their English, particularly by the youngest people who know the smallest number, have to do with affirmation of one kind or another of their users' special identity, whether as relatives of Ngiyampaa descent, of mixed Ngiyampaa, Paakantji, Wiradjuri etc. descent, or simply as *mayi* or Kooris. They offer a new, less threatening way than trying to 'speak the language right through' of practising the principle of talking for emotional comfort mentioned earlier. Thus words for characteristically Aboriginal foods are often kept in Ngiyampaa, as in 'I'm hungry for *kirrpatty* (rather than 'kangaroo'). The shibboleths which have traditionally served to distinguish Ngiyampaa from neighbouring languages are also widely remembered, and so too are words which are particularly well distributed cross-linguistically, such as *mara* 'hand' and *waatyin* (in some languages *watyiin*).

32 'Budgeree' in the Macquarie Dictionary.

33 The coastal term 'Koori' is often preferred to its Ngiyampaa equivalent *mayi* '(Aboriginal) person'. See Miller 1985:vii.
Many of the people of Ngiyampaa descent brought up at Murrin Bridge without even a passive understanding of Ngiyampaa grammar cannot, however, know, without being told, the extent to which their turns of phrase when talking English also reflect their inheritance. ‘Are you a little blackfeller, are you a little blackfeller?’ croons a young mother cuddling her baby. When I first heard this, I had just been approached for help in translating a Wiradjuri sentence by someone who remembered a relative cuddling babies with it half a century earlier: ‘Burraaydjul-gaa-ndu wirraay’.34 ‘Are you a little Wiradjuri kid?’. Fifty years ago in western New South Wales, babies were being welcomed into the world with the same gentle assurances of belonging, but in terms of an identity based on the language the welcome was spoken in.

A small girl asked me recently for something in Ngiyampaa that she could say to her great-great auntie in the morning. I suggested yama-karra. She wanted to know how she would reply, and I gave some alternatives. Next day she reappeared, saying ‘It worked!’.

Which is what language always does for people, whether its name is Ngiyampaa or English, or something on the way from one towards the other.

34 Orthography as for the Wiradjuri alphabet book being prepared by the Peak Hill Local Aboriginal Research Group.
FROM NGIYAMPAA TO ENGLISH

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INTRODUCTION

When English language speakers first came into sustained contact with Aboriginal people of what is now the Northern Territory coast, they did not bring the English language into a pristine situation of societal monolingualism but into a cultural region in which there had already been developed skills of cross-cultural communication. The speech communities of the top end of the Northern Territory have long had to adjust to prolonged contact with foreign visitors and to develop strategies for making verbal communication possible.

There will always be a great deal of speculation as to who the earliest foreign visitors were. Aboriginal legends and historical and linguistic research can be combined in various ways to suggest answers. The only certainty is that for two centuries or more, prior to British settlement, the coastal Aboriginal people were in sustained contact with Southeast Asian fishermen-traders, usually termed the 'Macassans' (see MacKnight, 1976).

The *lingua franca* of Aboriginal and 'Macassan' communication contained elements of both the trade language of the archipelago and the language of Macassar itself. As Urry and Walsh (1981:97) suggest, this *lingua franca* is probably best regarded as a 'Macassan' Pidgin. It was perceived by Aboriginal people as a language useful for communication with foreigners generally and, as well, was modified by them into a local pidgin for use between distant Aboriginal groups, a phenomenon which has been fully discussed in Harris (1984). Its influence on the languages of the Arnhem Land coast was quite profound, as Walker and Zorc (1981) are discovering.

This paper deals with an almost-forgotten era between 1824 and 1849 when the presence of English-speakers on the Cobourg Peninsula created a new situation of culture contact in which new contact languages were created to cope with new demands for verbal communication.

During this era, the British made three abortive attempts to establish military garrisons on the Northern Territory coast. Historians still debate the real reasons for the establishment of these outposts. Fear of an imminent French attempt to colonise North Australia has long been held to be the underlying reason (Wildey, 1876:81). Most modern historians agree that the immediate reason was the desire to establish a trading port on the eastern archipelago.
which could emulate the success that Singapore had proved to be in attracting the trade of the western regions (Campbell, 1912:80; Davies, 1926:28-30; Powell, 1982a:47). It was hoped, initially, that this port would attract the 'Macassan' trepang fleet (Bauer, 1964:29).

**THE MELVILLE ISLAND SETTLEMENT.**

The first of the military settlements was established by the British in the N.T. on Melville Island in 1824. Called Fort Dundas, it was in reality a struggling little outpost consisting of fifty-one soldiers and three officers, a few of their wives and forty-four convicts. It was a singular failure. Powell (1982a:52) recently summarised the situation as follows:

They had much to endure, these men and women. 'Our little colony became very sickly', wrote Campbell sadly after burying six men in the month of January 1827.
All but one died of fever, probably malaria imported by the crews of the ships which brought supplies from Timor. The fever came intermittently. Diseases of bad diet and poor hygiene were with them always — scurvy, night blindness, dysentery, hepatitis. The dank heat of the Wet oppressed them and its gales destroyed their crops. They recoiled from the endless alien forests, the mud and mangroves with their tormenting swarms of mosquitoes and sandflies: and over all lay creeping fear of the black men.

Not only were the environmental conditions debilitating, but the settlement did not even get that boost to morale which it might have done had there ever been some visible evidence of its purpose. The Macassans never came (Bach, 1958:228). Their normal route lay well to the north east. In fact, one commandant, Barlow, even wondered if anyone in the Archipelago knew that Fort Dundas existed (Bach, 1958:229).

From the outset, relations between the Tiwi people of the island and the British were tense, often violent. An Aboriginal man was shot within a few days of the garrison’s arrival, although it was two years before a British soldier was killed. In typical fashion the commandant, Bremer, exhibited no tolerance and responded with violence to petty theft or any intrusion by the Tiwi, failing, of course, to recognise his own much greater intrusion. Campbell, one of Bremer’s successors, did try to initiate communication, once or twice entering into what he called ‘palaver’, whatever that implies, but no accord was ever reached (Campbell, 1834:154-155). The British considered the Tiwi an unpredictable threat to their outpost of colonial expansion. To the Tiwi, the British were unwelcome intruders, probably all the more unwelcome because European slave traders had already predisposed them to be antagonistic towards foreigners (Hart and Pilling 1960:97-98). The consequences in terms of human relationships were inevitable.

There was also the same inevitability about the sociolinguistic consequences. The failure to develop even the most rudimentary contact language is hardly surprising. The only linguistic contact known to have occurred resulted from a plan by Campbell which he divulged to Colonial Secretary Macleay.

I have watched every opportunity of seizing some of that tribe since the Murder, but they are at present extremely shy and guarded. I certainly might have taken some of them by violent means since that time; but, as they are in a state of barbarous ignorance, I preferred endeavouring to seize one particular man, who appears to be their Chief and has been frequently observed directing them in some daring Acts of Violence, even previous to my arrival in this Island. I shall either secure this individual, or if opportunity offers get hold of a couple of young boys which sometime accompany them. By the latter plan, we might be enabled (by teaching them a little English) to acquaint them with our intentions towards them and convince those Islanders that every act of violence would be followed by severe retaliation.2

Campbell’s plan did not succeed. Neither the supposed ‘chief’ nor his associates were ever captured although one Aboriginal man was eventually taken almost a year later. He escaped within a fortnight, carrying with him, it seems, the only English word which was ever acquired by the Tiwi in those years. The word was ‘Fort Dundas’, now changed phonetically to

2 Major Campbell to Colonial Secretary Macleay. *Historical Records of Australia* (hereafter *HRA*), III [6]:677-681.
**CONTACT LANGUAGES OF NORTHERN TERRITORY**

*Punata* in modern Tiwi. It is significant that some possibly Portuguese words (*piccanini*—'children'; *pakee*—'peace') were among the few items Campbell (1834:158) collected from his prisoner. This is not the only evidence that the Tiwi already knew some words from Portuguese or a Portuguese pidgin (see Harris, 1984:140-143).

The ineffectiveness of the settlement at Fort Dundas as a commercial venture, the perpetual battle with the Tiwi, and the ravages of the environment, finally led the British authorities to order the closure of the garrison. It was abandoned on 31 March 1829, the personnel being transferred to Raffles Bay. Almost all physical evidence of the fort has now disappeared. The four and a half years of exposure to the British had hardly affected the Tiwi. The memorial to Fort Dundas consists only of a few Tiwi stories and dances and in the word *Punata* which only a linguist could now recognise.

**THE RAFFLES BAY SETTLEMENT.**

Only two years after Fort Dundas had been established and before its abandonment was ordered, it was officially deemed to be a failure and so a second attempt was ordered at Croker Island. Stirling, in charge of founding the garrison, located no good water or anchorage on Croker Island and settled, instead, at Raffles Bay on the nearby coast. He named the garrison Fort Wellington and, having set it up, sailed away, leaving Captain Henry Smyth in charge of forty-four soldiers, twenty-two convicts, a Malay interpreter and his son, a surgeon, a storekeeper, two women and five children.

Although Stirling described Smyth as 'a gentleman of good sense, great zeal and experience' he exhibited neither good sense nor experience in his relationships with the local Aboriginal inhabitants of Raffles Bay (Powell, 1982a:52). As Smyth's own diary entries show, theft by the Aborigines, almost exclusively of a petty nature, enraged him right from the beginning and his response was always to attempt immediate physical retaliation, although initially without success.

It is a pity that Smyth, like so many other intruders both before and after him in Australia, allowed his indignation at pilfering by the Aborigines to dominate his reactions to them. From this point on they were fired at indiscriminately whenever they were seen and a cannon loaded with grapeshot was used against them if they approached the camp itself. It is also a pity that Smyth did not read the obvious signs that from the outset, the Aborigines did not intend violence towards the British. He regularly reported their failure actually to harm anyone but failed himself to read the significance, even when a lone soldier or two 'escaped' from a hundred armed Aboriginal men.

... June 14th ... one of the party being a little in the rear of the others, was chased by a number of natives with spears (about seventy or one hundred) who fled on his reaching the party.

... July 17th ... two soldiers followed them near to their general assembly, when a large body came out with spears, and with much difficulty the soldiers escaped.

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4 References to Smyth's diary are to extracts recorded in Wilson 1835.
In the early days of his regime, Smyth recorded another incident which must surely have indicated the basic attitude of the Raffles Bay people. Thomson, a soldier from H.M.S. *Success*, went missing. This was just a few days before the departure of *Success*. Search parties were sent out without avail and finally *Success* sailed without him. It was feared that Thomson had been killed but some time after the *Success* had sailed, a group of Aboriginal people escorted him back to Fort Wellington. Fair-minded people later recalled that on the very same day, Smyth had publicly shamed the man the British considered to be the Aboriginal chief.

After these occurrences, it is somewhat astonishing that the seaman missed the same evening from H.M.S. *Success*, was not massacred by the natives in revenge for the insult offered to the Chief, instead of being accompanied by them in safety to the camp (Wilson, 1835:147).

The importance of this gesture seems to have been lost on Smyth who continued to order Aboriginal people to be fired upon indiscriminately. Although it is certain that some were injured, it appears that none were actually killed up to this point. Finally, after some months, the Raffles Bay Aborigines committed what Wilson (1835:148) regarded as their first (and perhaps only) real act of aggression. A soldier was speared near the garrison, although he eventually recovered from his injury. Smyth, however, ordered an immediate reprisal, the true facts of which can no longer be discovered. Official reports and records of detailed evidence at subsequent enquiries ‘describe’ the event or at least provide the perspective and details which the European participants were prepared to disclose. Wilson, a few months later, tried to piece together the true account of the reprisal.

A party of the military (and, I believe, also of the prisoners) were dispatched in search of natives. They came unexpectedly on their camp at Bowen’s Straits, and instantly fired at them, killing some, and wounding many more. A woman, and two children, were amongst the slain; another of her children, a female, about six or eight years old was taken, and brought to the camp, and placed under the care of a soldier’s wife. After this, the natives kept aloof from the settlement . . . (Wilson, 1835:148).

It seems likely that Wilson suspected but could not determine the extent of the massacre but Sweatman, in 1843, believed the deaths to be as high as thirty (Sweatman in Allen and Corris, 1977:135). Thus was created an atmosphere of tension and fear between the British settlers and the Raffles Bay Aborigines. The pattern of mutual mistrust, into which Smyth had guided the situation, persisted after Smyth’s departure in April 1828, following which Fort Wellington was briefly in the charge of Smyth’s deputy, Lieutenant Sleeman.6

All evidence seemed to indicate that there would be at Raffles Bay a repetition of the disastrous experiences on Melville Island.

Linguistic contact was obviously minimal throughout this period. In the first few weeks of the settlement some attempts were made to barter or exchange gifts but the communication seems to have been pantomimed. During the early days of Fort Wellington, a few of the Aboriginal men were permitted to join in some of the tasks such as cleaning, stoking the furnace and felling timber. It is likely that on these occasions, a few words may have been

6 Lieutenant Sleeman to Macleay. *HRA.* III [6]:764-800.
spoken both by the British and by the Raffles Bay people. Several of the more prominent Aboriginal men were given English nicknames, including Wellington who was presumed to be their leader and whose real name was Mariae. After the first few days of the garrison’s arrival, however, opportunities for any further development of verbal communication ceased.

The pattern of avoidance and suspicion and therefore of negligible linguistic contact, which began early in Smyth’s term as commandant, persisted after he left until the arrival, on 13 September 1828, of Captain Collet Barker as commandant. Under Barker’s influence, the whole atmosphere was to change dramatically.

It only took Barker a day or two to assess the situation. He issued an order on 18 September that guns were not to be used ‘without absolute necessity’. This effectively reversed the instruction issued by Smyth fourteen months previously and not long after the garrison was established, that sentries were to ‘fire whenever they approached’. On 24 September, Barker noted in his diary that he had:

Addressed the men on the importance of avoiding any cruelty towards the natives in case of falling in with them at any time and any violence towards their women and children.7

Barker had obviously ascertained some of the real facts of the massacre in the previous year and alluded to it in his address, stating that he might conduct an enquiry. He stressed that in future, force was not to be used against the Aborigines unless they instigated physical violence first.

Barker was clearly intent on redressing the wrongs of the past and establishing a friendly relationship with the local people. Two months were to pass before he was able even to begin to do so and his diary up to that time records every small piece of evidence of the presence of Aboriginal people, a reflection of his anxiety to meet them and prove his goodwill towards them. His first opportunity did not come until 25 November and it was, finally, the Aboriginal people who made the first gesture of peace. One of the garrison stockmen, Costello, encountered a group of them a short distance from Fort Wellington. They signalled their peaceful intentions by sticking their spears in the ground. Motioning Costello towards them, they presented him with a gift of a basket. On Costello’s return, Barker responded with alacrity.

I went out with him immediately taking with me two handkerchiefs and a pair of scissors. Davis took some bread with him . . . We endeavoured to make ourselves understood by each other in a friendly way for some time. They seemed to make signs that a man of ours was with their people a long way over the bay and went through the motion of a flintlock, the pointing to the place and going through the motion of rowing. They would not come to the camp but seemed to wish we should accompany them. I did so for a short distance but having eaten nothing this morning and making out from them that we should have a long way to go, I explained to them as well as I could that I would accompany them tomorrow morning and they went from me. (Barker’s diary, 25 November)

This little transaction was an event of critical importance, with consequences which continued long after Fort Wellington had disappeared. Linguistically, it was of little immediate significance. Indeed, it was in many ways a perfect example of miscommunication. Only sign language appears to have been attempted and even that was misunderstood by both

7 Barker’s diary, a handwritten MS, held in Mitchell Library, Sydney.
sides. Barker’s reading into the signs that the Aborigines had knowledge of his missing soldier never turned out to be the case. The aborigines did not understand, either, that Barker intended to accompany them the next day. Something infinitely more important, however, was communicated. This was the desire for peace. That night, with feelings of both excitement and apprehension, Barker put his affairs in order in preparation for going out alone the the Raffles Bay Aboriginal people.

Closed and signed all the men’s accounts for fear of any accident happening to me tomorrow as it will not be without risk that I accompany the natives but I consider the object justifies some risk. (Barker’s diary, 26 November)

They had not, however, understood each other and so Barker did not meet up with any of the Aborigines the next day. There was no contact for another week until Barker was around the bay in a small boat.

As we were running along the shore some natives were discovered. We made friendly signs to each other and I ran the boat in and landed unarmed, desiring every one also to remain in the boat. On our approach to the beach the natives retired some distance from it evidently in a little alarm. I advanced to where I supposed them to be and soon fell in with one who seems to be the chief. We exchanged presents, I giving him a handkerchief and he giving me a spear unheaded and the stock for throwing it. He had perhaps taken off the head. He also gave me a string of beads made of a kind of cane. I shewed him a basket which I had taken with me and explained that it was given me by one of his people. I asked for Wellington, when he pointed to himself and repeated the name. They looked in the basket apparently for bread pronouncing a word somethinke it but I was forced to tell them I had none but that I would give them some if they came to the settlement. (Barker’s Diary 2 December)

At last, Barker records that on 7 December, Mariae and Iacanta together with some other men, approached Fort Wellington with considerable trepidation. On seeing the sentries, the other men fled and Mariae and Iacama would have done the same had not Barker showed extreme friendliness and given them some gifts. It was finally a child who allayed their fears. Wilson (1835:74) recorded the incident.

Captain Barker . . . used every endeavour to induce them to come into the camp, but without success, until a little child, belonging to one of the soldiers, went and led in the Chief, Wellington, by the hand. He was evidently under great alarm, looking back frequently, and addressing himself to Waterloo, his fidus Achates who kept in his rear.

Barker showed them around the garrison and recorded in his diary that they were amused at a small monkey ‘and also a pig which they called often as “Big” seeming unable to pronounce the “p”.’ They were quite overcome when they saw the young girl, taken during the massacre.

On discovering the little native girl, both Wellington and Waterloo evinced great emotion, particularly the latter, who was on that account, believed to be her father. Seeing her so well taken care of increased their confidence; she was then named Mary Waterloo Raffles, but her native name was Riveral.

After this occurrence, the intercourse with the natives was renewed, and, as Captain Barker used every precaution to prevent their receiving injury or molestation from any individual in the camp, it continued unbroken . . . (Wilson, 1835:70, 74)
Baker's own diary and Wilson's eye witness accounts of his residence at Raffles Bay, record in considerable detail Barker's indefatigable efforts to establish and maintain an atmosphere of peaceful co-existence between the garrison and the local people. He continually demonstrated his trust in them in a variety of ways. Not long after Mariac and Iacama's first hesitant re-entry into Fort Wellington, Barker had his longed-for opportunity to accompany them alone which he did for a whole day. On another occasion, he decided to remain with them overnight, against the advice of other members of the garrison. Mariac obviously regarded this gesture as a reciprocation of his visits to the garrison and responded appropriately to his guest. Wilson (1835:179-180) described the visit.

A short time before I arrived, Captain Barker had paid a visit to the natives, placing himself under Wellington's care, who seemed not a little flattered by such a mark of distinction. Dr. Davis accompanied him a little way into the woods, and then endeavoured to persuade him to return, representing his expedition to be dangerous and foolhardy. He, however, was not deterred from his undertaking, but gave the Doctor permission to go back, if he felt at all uncomfortable: the Doctor took him at his word, and returned to the settlement, where every one lamented the rashness of the Commandant in trusting himself with such a set of savages; more especially as they knew that the said savages had ample cause for retaliation. These unfavourable surmises were not realised, as Captain Barker was treated with the greatest attention and kindness. Wellington would neither accept of any present himself, nor would he permit any of his followers to do so, although, when in the camp, he was constantly begging for something. In the evening, they prepared a mess of fish, which they had speared, and were highly delighted to perceive Captain Barker partake of it. In travelling, whenever they came to a stream or marsh, one of the natives, named Marambal, insisted on carrying him over. Next day, he returned to the settlement in safety, to the great joy of all our people, who thenceforth, began to consider the natives in a more favourable light than they had hitherto done. (Wilson, 1835:179-80)

In the social sphere, Barker demonstrated his willingness to treat the Raffles Bay people as social equals. They were allowed, on occasion, to sleep within the garrison and encouraged to put on dances for the entertainment of all at the Fort. In response, Barker entertained Mariac and the other leaders in his home where they all waltzed and danced the hornpipe to the tune of the ship's fiddler. (Wilson, 1835:87-100)

It is fortunate that Barker's original diary still survives. Together with Wilson's first-hand observations, there is a full and detailed account of a remarkable year of cross-cultural bridge building. As Powell (1982a:53) has recently commented,

In only a year spent at the settlement, he transformed race relations, mainly through the force of his own personality and tremendous courage. He treated the Aborigines with consistent tact and respect... The black men responded with trust equal to his own and spread word of him beyond their own lands.

In a visit, for example, to Croker Island, people whom Barker had never met mobbed him, calling out 'Commandant! Commandant!' (Wilson, 1835:103). It is, however, thought-provoking to note that Mariac was careful to explain to Barker that he, too, was a 'commandan' among his own people. Without in any way minimising Barker's remarkable contri-
bution to the creation of peace, it should be borne in mind that Barker left all sorts of
written records, including a detailed diary whereas Mariac obviously did not. It is neverthe­
less clear that Mariac’s contribution and efforts at peace-making were also very significant,
even if largely unrecognised. They were two great statesmen, in their own ways.

All things seemed to augur well for the future of Raffles Bay as a commercial enterprise.
Not only was peace established between the British and the local people, but the gardens
flourished, health and morale at the garrison improved markedly, and the Macassans came —
threey four praus in 1829, manned by more than a thousand seamen (MacKnight,1976:130-1).
Thus it was an unbelievable shock to Barker when he was ordered to abandon Fort Wellin­
gton in August 1829. Ironically, during all of Barker’s year of immense effort to create
success out of disaster, the gloomy forebodings of previous commandants and the British
Government’s subsequent orders to abandon the project had been crossing the seas between
Australia and Britain and back again. Barker even contemplated disregarding his orders but
finally did what he considered to be his duty. One of his last acts was to show his Aboriginal
friends around the settlement gardens and to explain to them about the different fruits and
vegetables which were shortly to be theirs. On 28 August, Barker recorded in his diary that
he and the last sentries embarked and ‘abandoned the settlement to Wellington’.

LANGUAGE CONTACT AT RAFFLES BAY.

Very little has been said, so far, about language but a great deal has been said about com­
munication. The forming of a peaceful relationship between Raffles Bay Aborigines and the
garrison at Fort Wellington through the efforts of Mariac and Barker was a very significant
event. In a language contact situation, the nature of the contact and the attitude of the
groups to communication with each other are factors of critical importance in determining
any subsequent linguistic development.

Both Barker and Wilson made definite efforts to record what was communicated or, on
some occasions, what they thought was communicated. They did not, however, say much
about how the communication was achieved. The situation was unusual. Whereas it had, in
common with many colonial contexts of the era, the potential for all the problems which
normally seem to have been associated with the clash between ‘settlers’ and ‘natives’ — and,
indeed, Fort Dundas and the early months of Fort Wellington were typical of such a situa­
tion — the person and attitudes of Barker injected a real difference into what finally happen­
ed at Raffles Bay.

The development from pantomime to conversation took some months. As has been noted
already, the earliest communications between Barker and Mariac and the other Aborigines
were in gestures only. The following quotation from Barker’s diary of 7 December 1828 is
typical.

I also enquired respecting the white men in a boat as I fancied they might have
seen our Crown Prisoners who might possibly be still on the coast and I partly
suspected they had seen them but I could make out nothing positive. It is a
great drawback having no interpreter . . . I think if we could have conversed
together we should be able to . . . make whatever intercourse we might have with
them friendly and pleasant to both parties . . . The natives told us very clearly
that they would return in one or two days, Miago pointed to the sun place about
4 p.m. . . . I half fancied as they were going off that they made signs they would
bring back a white man with them.
It transpired that the pantomimed communication was quite unsuccessful. Within a few weeks, Barker describes attempts at verbal communication, the success of which he is unsure. Wellington and Marambal first appeared and then went back and brought seven others... Wellington was spoken to about his behaviour to Leary (whom he had threatened) which he seemed to understand and earnestly disclaimed any bad intentions... (Barker's diary 20 January 1829)

In a formal report, a month later, Barker expressed his concerned with the lack of verbal communication.

One of our greatest difficulties is the want of knowing each others language, for I feel convinced they are a well disposed people and that, if we could clearly explain to them the line of conduct we expected, we should find them very tractable.

After some months passed, both Barker and Wilson record events in which it is obvious that conversations, sometimes of some complexity, were engaged in and were understood. This event from Wilson, is a typical example.

We visited Mr Radford's grave, and Wellington appeared to be a good deal affected, when he understood who was buried there... He was very particular in his inquiries as to the names and rank of others buried near the same spot; and on returning, we overhead him explaining these particulars to other natives. (Wilson, 1835:93-4)

Thus, all that can be unequivocally claimed is that by the end of Barker's year at Raffles Bay, verbal communication was being achieved. The precise nature of that communication cannot be so categorically determined although a little can be inferred from the evidence Barker and Wilson provide.

There was some English in use. Even if only initially, Barker and the British would obviously have had to use some English but it is evident that Mariac and the other Aboriginal people also learnt and used it.

Some of the more specific evidence is enumerated below:

(i) Even before Barker's arrival, Mariac knew the English name he had been given. 'I asked for Wellington, when he pointed to himself and repeated the name.' (Barker's diary, 2 December). Other Aborigines were also given English nicknames, e.g. 'One-Eye', 'Waterloo'.

(ii) Barker was addressed as 'Commandant' by the Aborigines as he no doubt was by everybody else. This word had, in fact, spread further afield than Raffles Bay and was known by people who had never met him. Barker actually records Mariac's pronunciation. 'Wellington was very earnest with me in explaining that... as he was chief of all, he was commandan.' (22 January)

(iii) Barker records non-English pronunciations of other words such as 'bread' and 'pig'.

(iv) Some conversations, the topics of which are recorded, demand the interpretation that some English was being used. In, for example, the discussion noted above about the graves, Mariac's queries regarding the names and ranks of the deceased people surely demanded an answer in English and even the question would seem to have demanded the use of English.

A particularly important consequence of Barker's attitude to the Raffles Bay people was his attempt to learn what he thought was their language, an attempt which other members of

the garrison emulated. It is not surprising to find that the Raffles Bay Aboriginal people attempted to speak English, or a modified version of English if that is what was presented to them. It was certainly an universal feature of European colonialism that the colonised people learnt the language of the colonisers or at the very least acquired a pidginised version of it. It is, on the other hand, exceptional to find the colonisers having the example of their leader attempting to speak the local language.

With respect to Raffles Bay in 1828, however, it is not easy to determine just what language it was that Barker thought he was learning. It will be shown in this paper that the language used twelve years later by Aborigines trying to communicate with the settlers at Port Essington was the ‘Macassan’ Pidgin. This being so, and given that some of the Raffles Bay Aborigines were also later at the Port Essington settlement, it would seem logical that the same trade language may have been employed when the Aborigines tried to communicate verbally with members of the Raffles Bay garrison. Before considering this further, the small amount of actual linguistic data is given below.

(i) Both Barker and Wilson mention the frequent requests by Aborigines for various items which they named such as *mambrual* (cloth) and *ley-book* (hatchet).

(ii) Many of the Aboriginal people’s names are recorded and obviously used by everybody, e.g. *Monanoo, Luga, Miago, Olobo, Marambal*.

(iii) Barker collected Aboriginal words with specific intention of communicating more effectively. Wilson (1835:315-21) has recorded portions of these lists. Barker even sent his word list to the Colonial Secretary.

(iv) The tribal divisions and affinities of the various Aboriginal people were widely known. In this part of the coast, the natives are divided into three distinct classes, who do not intermarry. The first and highest is named *Mandro-gillie*, the second *Man-bur-ge*, and the third, *Mandro-willie*. (Wilson, 1835:165)

(v) Wilson records some of his own attempts to communicate with Mariac, quoting some Aboriginal words.

Tuesday, August the 4th, Wellington, accompanied by a native, paid another visit to the camp: today his first word was “*Mambrual*”, and the second “*Miago mandrowille*”. He was gratified by my saying “*ee,ee*”, and was then presented with a shirt, when he begged that Miago should not receive anything. (Wilson, 1835:93)

Despite the limited amount of data, it is obvious that words of local origin were in use in the communications between Aborigines and settlers. It is also reasonable to assume that more words were in use than those which happen to have been recorded. Unlike the later experience at Port Essington, however, very few words appear to be derived from Southeast Asian languages.

The only three words definitely in this category are all in Wilson’s word list (1835:315-321). Two of these Wilson acknowledges as ‘Malay’ — *Marege(e)*, the Macassan term for the Aboriginal people (and for their country), and *lipe lipe* — ‘canoe’ derived from the Macassan

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9 Barker to Macleay, *HRA*. III [6]:827, refers to the list but the list itself has not yet been located.
CONTACT LANGUAGES OF NORTHERN TERRITORY

term for canoe, *lepalepa*, widely found in coastal Aboriginal languages today (Walker & Zorc, 1981:122). The third word is *mungedera*, clearly derived from the Macassan term for themselves 'Mangkasara', but which Wilson claims was used at Raffles Bay to designate an item of clothing, no doubt in the Macassan style.

Although further research remains to be done, no other words have yet been shown to be of Southeast Asian origin. In particular, this applies to the words most likely to have been related to a 'Macassan' trade language, such as the terms for known trade items. Wilson (1835:315-321) provides the terms *mambnial* — 'cloth'; *ley-book* — 'hatchet' and *mure mure* — 'knife'. No semantically related similar words have so far been found in the literature and, furthermore, there are distinctly different Southeast Asian (Austronesian) loanwords in modern Aboriginal languages which denote the same items. In their study of loan-words in the *Yolngu-Matha* languages of Northeast Arnhem Land, Walker and Zorc (1981) list *ja:ricari* — 'cloth', *dakul* — 'axe' and *la:ti* — 'knife'.

The presence, therefore, of only a very few Southeast Asian loanwords in the recorded examples of words used in communication at Raffles Bay suggests that the 'Macassan' Pidgin was not the language with which the Raffles Bay Aboriginal people endeavoured to speak to the British. It is, in support of this claim, significant that Barker communicated in what he termed 'Malay' with the visiting prau captains and specifically recorded their observation that there were Aboriginal people further east who 'spoke a little Malay'. (Barker's diary, 2 April; 11 May). Barker's efforts to communicate with the local Aboriginal people were so concerted that it seems highly likely that had they wanted to use the 'Macassan' Pidgin, he would eventually have recognised its relationship with Malay.

It is possible that the Raffles Bay people did try to use the 'Macassan' Pidgin prior to Barker's arrival, and that during the first few weeks of the garrison, when some communication occurred, they discovered that it was not understood by the British. A more plausible possibility is that considerable changes had occurred during the decade between the end of the garrison at Raffles Bay and the establishment of the garrison at Port Essington. There are hints here and there in Barker's Raffles Bay diary that the number of praus which visited the Cobourg Peninsula area in 1829 was considered by the trepangers themselves to be exceptionally high, seeking perhaps more fully to exploit the region. Certainly they were delighted to find the possibility of British protection on the peninsula and returned the following year in force, only to find that the British had gone. It is possible that they may not have been daunted by this and may have begun to establish a more peaceful communication than that which seemed to obtain before the British garrison at Raffles Bay imposed a temporary truce. Certainly there is evidence that whereas the presence of Aborigines from the Gulf of Carpentaria on praus returning to Macassar via the Cobourg Peninsula was a matter of surprise to the local people in 1829 (Barker's diary, May 7), by the 1840s, travelling to Macassar from the Cobourg Peninsula appears to have been commonplace (Sweatman in Allen and Corris, 1977:144).

Another possibility is that the particular Aboriginal people with whom Barker had most contact at Raffles Bay were not those who dealt with the trepangers. Relations between the

10 *Dakul* — 'axe'. Austronesian but probably not Makassarese. e.g. South Philippine *pa-dakul* — 'axe'.

*Jaricari* — cloth. Makassarese *carecare*.

*La:ti* — 'knife'. Makassarese *ladari*.
Aborigines and the trepangers at Raffles Bay appear, according to Barker's diary, to have been strained, even violent. There were undoubtedly differing degrees of contact between Aboriginal people and the trepangers. Aborigines of some regularly-visited localities developed amicable relationships whereas other groups or even other families with much less personal contact did not develop such relationships at all and may have therefore had less competence in the trade language.

Whatever the reason, the information available at present indicates that despite the unarguable use of the 'Macassan' Pidgin in attempts to converse with the British at Port Essington, it was not used in such attempts at Raffles Bay. Rather, the local people appear to have used their own vernacular and this is what Barker and the others tried to learn and to use.\footnote{Elsewhere (Harris, 1984:161) I have used the term \textit{Iwaidja} to designate this language. Although I acknowledged it then to be a label of convenience, I now prefer to avoid its use altogether in reference to the early 19th century. The historical distribution of language and land-holding groups on the Cobourg Peninsula is highly complex and poses many problems (Powell, 1982b:91). Changes had been taking place before the era of British settlement (Earl, 1846:242) and it should not automatically be presumed that there is direct historical continuity between the language spoken at Raffles Bay in the 1820s and the language known today as \textit{Iwaidja}. I am indebted to Peter Spillett for suggesting to me the possibility, which he encountered in Sulawesi, that the term \textit{Iwaidja} may mean 'place of payment' and may have originally been a label applied by the 'Macassans' to those Aboriginal people who attached themselves to the customs station which was established at Port Essington later in the 19th century. There is some linguistic support for this possibility in that words closely related to Buginese \textit{waja} - 'to pay' are known in other coastal languages (Walker and Zorc, 1981:118) and the prefix \textit{i}- (or \textit{ri}-) can be used in Makassarese to mean 'in' or 'at' at the beginning of place names.}

The best conclusion which can therefore be drawn from the available evidence is that a mixture of English and the local Aboriginal vernacular was the means of communication between the British and the Aborigines at Raffles Bay. Predictably, no sustained conversations are recorded. Wilson (1835) records two short sentences: \textit{Miago mandrowillie} which obviously meant 'Miago (is a) mandrowillie' (see p.158) and \textit{Mute commissaree ande} which occurred as a part of a longer conversation beside Radford's grave:

\begin{quote}
We visited Mr Radford's grave, and Wellington appeared to be a good deal affected, when he understood who was buried there, repeatedly uttering in a plaintive tone, \textit{"Mute commissaree ande"}.
\end{quote}

As Radford was the 'commissariat officer' or storeman, it is obvious that the word \textit{commissaree} is derived from English. In his word list, Wilson (1835:320) gives \textit{mute} - 'good' and \textit{ande} - 'dead'. Thus, Wellington's lament was a mixture of local vernacular and English, and can be roughly translated as '(the) good storeman (is) dead'.

It appears, therefore that the era of communication at Raffles Bay under Barker was too short to enable a stable pidgin to arise. Indeed, given the degree of communicative equality that seems to have characterised the situation, the eagerness on both sides to learn each other's language and the small numbers of people involved, the contact language which was beginning to develop may eventually have been based on both languages had the settlement not been so hastily abandoned. Wilson (1835:89) probably came closest to describing the nature of the developing language when he referred to Mariac's speech as 'great vehemence of jargon and gesture'.

The most important factors are that there was verbal communication, and that this communication spanned a larger range of subjects and was more personal and amicable than is...
normally said of communication between settlers (or invaders) and natives. In the long-term, the linguistic significance of this type of communication between Europeans and Aborigines lay not in the nature of the contact language itself but in the positive attitude to communication of which it was the product. This attitude survived and determined the atmosphere in which communication was to recommence ten years later at Port Essington.

THE PORT ESSINGTON SETTLEMENT.

After the two unsuccessful attempts at settlement, interest in the idea of a military or trading post on Australia's far Northern coast waned for some years. In 1836, however, George Windsor Earl, traveller, linguist and authority on Southeast Asia, re-opened the discussion in response to approaches by Chinese merchants (Spillett, 1972:16-18). Despite initially negative reactions, Earl persisted. When the decision was finally made to resettle the north coast, it was not a matter of trade but of demonstrating occupancy to the Dutch, the French, and even the Americans (Powell, 1982a:54). As Barrow put it 'it would be a most humiliating mortification, to witness the tricoloured flag, or that of the Stripes and Stars waving over Dampier's land'.

An expedition, fitted out in England, sailed via Sydney to the chosen site at Port Essington, close by the old site at Raffles Bay, under the command of Captain (later Sir Gordon) Bremer, first commandant of Fort Dundas, Melville Island. Named Victoria, the garrison consisted of Bremer, Captain John McArthur and his son, thirty six marines, a botanist, a surgeon, Earl (linguist and draftsman), three women and two children (Powell, 1982a:54). Knowing the sorry state of race relations at Fort Dundas and Bremer's obvious lack of skill in establishing a friendly relationship with the Melville Islanders during his brief commandancy there, the choice of Bremer as commandant would not appear to have augured well for relationships between the garrison and the Aboriginal people of Port Essington. Such a prediction, however, would have failed to take into account the legacy of Barker and Mariac's successful efforts at establishing happy communication at Raffles Bay ten years earlier. The Cobourg Peninsula Aboriginal people's enduring belief in the essential goodwill of the Europeans made a vast difference between the beginnings of the earlier settlements and the beginnings of Victoria.

When the small fleet arrived the scene could hardly have differed more from the suspicious and tense beginnings at both Fort Dundas and Fort Wellington. Barker had taught the local people that Europeans could be trusted and, in fact, Bremer was thought to be Barker returning.

As the canoe neared the ship, both the men stood up, and the elder made a short speech, the purpose of which, as may be imagined, was perfectly unintelligible to us . . . The elder, whose name was Langari, singled out Sir Gordon Bremer the moment he came on board, and delivered a long address, shedding tears, and frequently touching his shoulders with both hands in a sort of half embrace. From this repeatedly pointing towards Raffles Bay, and making use of the term "Commandant" in a tone of endearment, it appeared that Langari, who had been a frequent visitor at our settlement at Raffles Bay, had mistaken Sir Gordon Bremer for Captain Barker, the last commandant there, to whom the natives had been very much attached. (Earl, 1846:34-35)

Stokes (1846[1]:393) in reporting the arrival of the expedition in Port Essington, stated that 'one of the Raffles Bay tribe instantly made himself known on the arrival of the expedition in the Bay.' Stokes gave this man's name as Marambari which is almost certainly the man Marambal so frequently mentioned both by Barker and Wilson. As Mariae ('Wellington') and Iacama ('Waterloo') are not mentioned by Stokes, nor in any other writings relating to Port Essington, it must be presumed that they had died.

Even allowing for the confidence born of the memories of Barker, the rapidity with which the Aborigines established a friendly relationship with the members of the new garrison was remarkable. Within a few days, the ship's surgeon, Wallace, writing in the journal of H.M.S. Alligator on 30 October 1838, was able to report that guards hardly seemed necessary. The Aborigines were generally friendly, following the soldiers everywhere and sleeping beside their tents. Some had already started to take up permanent residence on the beach in order to barter fish, crabs and oysters for biscuits and clothing. The only problems seem to have been in relation to pillaging of minor articles and Bremer, fortunately, appears to have adopted a relatively lenient view of such minor offences. Bremer left in 1839 and was replaced by Captain John McArthur. He was said to be a 'pragmatic old fogey' who ruled by the book (Huxley, 1935:149) and Stanley described him as a 'litigious old fool' (Lubbock, 1967:229). Nevertheless, Earl was able to report that by 1844 McArthur:

had succeeded in establishing a system which has brought civilised man into close communication with the savage without any of those violences which usually attend the mingling of such opposite ingredients, and which rendered the course of events in the settlement an uninterrupted flow of harmony and goodwill between the native tribes and their visitors. (Earl, 1846:70-71)

The only truly serious confrontation occurred in 1847 when some Aborigines were arrested for theft and one of them was accidentally shot by a guard while attempting to escape. Perhaps in order to preserve their peaceful co-existence with the garrison, this death was avenged not by killing a white but by spearing Neinmal, an Aboriginal man who had chosen to live at and be identified with the garrison (MacGillivray, 1852:155-156). The consequence of this was feuding between the Aboriginal groups involved and not, ironically, between the Aborigines and the garrison. As Spillett (1972:148) notes McArthur was greatly distressed by the whole issue particularly in view of the long period without violence. The guard was committed for trial at the Supreme Court in Sydney where he was finally acquitted. This seems, however, to have been the only truly potentially damaging event. Writers and observers at the time generally emphasise the remarkably happy relationships. Sweatman, for example, who visited Victoria in H.M.S. Bramble described in his Journal how he swam and played with the women and children and generally had what he termed 'pleasant life' and 'great fun' with them (Sweatman in Allen and Corris, 1977:130). 'The people appear to be really amiable' wrote Bremer to his wife not long after he arrived (Lubbock, 1976:91).

In 1849, Victoria went the way of Fort Dundas and Fort Wellington. It was not so much a failure as an anachronism. Only a few shipwreck survivors ever found their way there and trade languished. The British government never seriously pursued the concept of free enterprise and land occupation, but then none of these things were the real reasons for the existence of the garrison at Port Essington. It was more accurately what Allen (1972:342) terms a 'strategic manoeuvre'. As Powell (1982a:57) points out, the Dutch and the Americans showed no interest in North Australia. The French turned up in the region from time to time and the garrison may have deterred them. By 1849, however, no nation could seriously
CONTACT LANGUAGES OF NORTHERN TERRITORY

doubt the British claim to the whole of Australia and their presence on the coast was no longer needed. When it was learned that the new steamships were going to ply a route far away from Port Essington, the orders were given for its abandonment.

McArthur and the last of the garrison were picked up by H.M.S. Meander on 30 November 1849. As Meander’s log of that day shows, everything serviceable was uplifted and much of what remained was burnt (Spillett, 1972:168). The ruins were left for the Aborigines to salvage and the white ants to devour. Some stone foundations and chimneys and a few graves are still visible today. Earl looked back in 1863 and summed it up thus:

The garrison (at Raffles Bay) enjoyed good health and, after a time, established friendly intercourse with the natives of which we experienced the benefit when the establishment was formed at Port Essington, where friendly relations were never once interrupted. (Earl, 1863:34)

LANGUAGE CONTACT AT PORT ESSINGTON.

Linguistically, the situation at Port Essington was interesting but distinctly different from that which obtained at Raffles Bay. The sociolinguistic situation at Raffles Bay had been one of minimal language contact until the arrival of Barker. Then the situation had changed to one in which an understandably reticent group of Aboriginal people and an aggressive group of European intruders were brought together amicably by the painstaking and diplomatic efforts of their leaders, Mariac and Barker.

On the other hand, at Port Essington, the British were instantly welcomed by a large number of confident Aborigines who immediately associated with them and their activities. As has been reported many times before in Australia’s history, the Aborigines were not only the more eager to acquire the other party’s language but appeared to be much more adept at doing so.13

As already described, at least the word ‘commandant’ was remembered by some people from the Fort Wellington period at Raffles Bay ten years previously and almost certainly a number of other words. One of the more thought-provoking survivals from the Raffles Bay era was social rather than linguistic, a quite remarkable sense of ease and common politeness — remarkable, not because culturally different people should not be courteous to each other but because such courteousness was rarely reported, presumably because social distance was maintained. It was certainly a matter of surprise to Bremer when he first arrived and he commented upon it in a letter to his wife:

... in this intercourse with each other (they) display a kindness and attention which would honor a more polished society; nor are they by any means deficient in natural politeness. They never fail to introduce a stranger of their tribe to us, and endeavour to give him our names. They never leave us, when they go into the woods to sleep, without individually saying “Goodnight” which they utter as plainly as we can.14

Owen Stanley, captain of the Britomart which remained at Port Essington for a brief period after delivering personnel and equipment for the founding of the settlement, recorded

13 See for example Collins 1798 [1]:544; Curr 1887:2; Dixon 1980:69; Brandl and Walsh 1982:76-77.
how immediately the local people attempted to incorporate him and his ship into their own relationship system. This had been done at Raffles Bay and the Aboriginal people may well have therefore expected the captain to understand the significance already.

Apart from a few English words remembered by those Aboriginal people who had been at Raffles Bay and the expectation that the British, too, would remember their relationship system, the first attempts at verbal communication by the Port Essington people were in the 'Macassan' Pidgin. This point was emphatically made a number of times by Earl, a competent linguist.

You ask for vocabularies. I am in the most ridiculous perplexity about them.

After having collected many words, I found that I was making a vocabulary of a horrid patois of the Macassan dialect: in fact, nearly all the words the natives use when speaking with us are Macassarese . . . (Earl 1842:140)

Comparing the local variety with what he termed the 'Macassan language', Earl (1846:244) emphasised that 'they never . . . speak it correctly'. Examples Earl provides include 'berasa becomes bereja, trusaan becomes turutan and salat becomes jula'.

Earl later admitted that he had at first thought that the 'horrid patois' was the primary language of the local people, only later realising that it was their attempt to converse with foreigners in the trade language of the archipelago.

A very considerable portion of the coast natives have, from frequent intercourse with the Macassan trepang fishers, acquired considerable proficiency in their language . . . On our first arrival, the natives, from having been long accustomed to address strangers in this language, used it when conversing with us, and the consequence was that some vocabularies were collected which consisted almost entirely of this patois, under the supposition that it was the language of the Aborigines. (Earl 1846:244)

A shipwrecked Roman Catholic priest, Father Angelo Confalonieri may have been the only person to have seriously studied the Aboriginal language and unlike Raffles Bay, there is little evidence that it was ever used generally in communication between the two groups. It appears that an English-based pidgin arose much more rapidly than any Europeans could acquire a local language and in any case, the local people chose to attempt communication in the 'Macassan' Pidgin, the lingua franca of their international dealings.

It is evident from Earl's writings that the 'Macassan' Pidgin continued in use for some time, perhaps several years although it is now impossible to determine whether or not this

15 Father Angelo Confalonieri survived the wreck of the Heroine in 1846 and reached Port Essington where he worked as a missionary among the local people until his death from malaria in 1848. Perhaps some others had a passing knowledge of a few local words. Some knew enough to inform John Sweatman that the Aborigines taught Confalonieri obscenities, which he then unknowingly used in his sermons. (See, for example, Allen and Corris, 1977:116-117).

16 I am indebted to Peter Spillett for drawing my attention to the existence of material relating to Father Confalonieri's work in Vatican archives. I have also learnt from Harold Koch that Karl Rensch found samples in the archives of Aboriginal languages, and made some notes. Koch's initial analysis of the samples revealed that the language was probably Iwaidja but that it contained evidence of both 'Macassan' and English influence. I have not yet had the opportunity to examine any of this material.
only applied eventually to Earl and others who understood what they called ‘Malay’. It is also evident that an English-based pidgin finally arose and that it began to develop very soon indeed after the arrival of the garrison. Whether by memory from some of the English words used at Raffles Bay or by rapid language acquisition, it is evident that within three days of the arrival of the first ship, an embryonic English-based pidgin was already developing. Earl, for example recorded the following incident on or about 30 October 1838.

Mallamaya . . . was caught one evening after dark in the very act of stealing a shirt . . . he was dragged by his captors to the tent . . . and presented before Sir Gordon Bremer for judgement . . . The prisoner spoke very energetically in his own defence, making a most elaborate use of the few English words that he had picked up, and Sir Gordon Bremer, thinking the fright he had endured would be sufficient punishment . . . allowed him to depart. (Earl, 1846:42-43)

By February 1840, McArthur reported that the Aboriginal people could speak some English but that no whites spoke their language. By 1841 Stokes (1846 [II] :357) described the contact language of Port Essington as ‘such few words of broken English as were then used at the colony.’ After a few more years it was becoming frequently recorded that some Aboriginal people spoke what was recognisably English (e.g. Keppel, 1853:158; Sweatman in Allen and Corris, 1977:44). In other words, the Aborigines’ contact language had changed in two years from the attempt to speak the ‘Macassan’ Pidgin which was not generally understood by the British with the possible exception of Earl, to the use of an English-based pidgin understood by both groups.

It is tempting to suggest that what may have occurred was a relexification of ‘Macassan’ pidgin. The briefly popular idea that relexification is part of the origin of all pidgins (Thompson, 1961) is far too simplistically wide but the idea that some languages have changed their lexical affiliation almost completely, is essentially correct (Koefoed, 1979:52). Evidence of the relexification of the ‘Macassan’ Pidgin on contact with English is not entirely lacking.

There is, firstly, the circumstantial but compellingly logical evidence of language usage. Whereas it is indisputable that at first the Aboriginal people of Port Essington spoke to the Europeans in the ‘Macassan’ Pidgin — in what Earl (1842:140) termed ‘a horrid patois of the Macassar dialect’ — it is also indisputable that within a few years, the same Aboriginal people were using an English-based pidgin.

How did this linguistic transformation occur? Did they suspend the use of the ‘Macassan’ Pidgin and set about acquiring another pidgin based on a new target language, English, or did they continue their initial endeavours to use the ‘Macassan’ pidgin and relexify it, gradually using an increasing number of English words as they acquired them? It seems quite possible that a relexification of the ‘Macassan’ Pidgin is what, in fact, occurred. In this context it is significant that Earl’s statement (1842:140) that ‘nearly all the words the natives use when speaking with us are Macassarese’ was made in July 1840, some eighteen months after the garrison had been established and communication between Aborigines and Europeans was well advanced. The ‘Macassan’ Pidgin was not dropped immediately.

Secondly, the evidence of increasing knowledge of English which the explorer, Ludwig Leichhardt encountered as he approached Port Essington is particularly relevant. At the headwaters of the South Alligator River, three weeks’ journey from Port Essington, he encountered Aboriginal people possessing some European goods. Utilising a word list he had earlier obtained from Port Essington, Leichhardt was able to ascertain the direction in which Port
Essington lay and to check the local people's knowledge of Macassan place-names on the coast. Words from the 'Macassan' Pidgin seem to have been used in the exchange. A few days later, Leichhardt met Aboriginal people who spoke to him in a mixture of 'Macassan' Pidgin and English Pidgin. Leichhardt (1847:495) recorded the words in his diary although he did not at the time understand any of them. He ascertained their meanings some weeks later in Port Essington.

Perikot, Nokot, Mankiterre, Lumbo Lumbo, Nana Nana Nana

Very good, No good, Macassans . . . very . . . far

Perikot and Nokot were from the English 'very good' and 'no good', Mankiterre from the Macassan Mangkasara (see page 159) and lumbo from the Macassan lompo - 'big', 'large'. Nana has not been identified.

At the mouth of the East Alligator River, Leichhardt heard distinct English words including 'commandant', 'come here' and 'very good' although he was still obliged to communicate by means of his word list, asking for water and directions (pp.502-503). By 10 December, Leichhardt was able to record connected Pidgin English speech.

You no bread, no flour, no rice, no backi - you no good! Balanda plenty bread, plenty four, plenty rice, plenty backi! Balanda very good.' (pp.552-523)

The only word from the 'Macassan' Pidgin in the words Leichhardt actually recorded on this occasion was balanda. By 15 December, two days from Port Essington, Leichhardt found no barriers to communication at all.

Leichhardt's observations demonstrate that there was competence in the 'Macassan' Pidgin quite a long way inland and that from a point about three hundred kilometres to the south east of Port Essington, English or Pidgin English competence gradually increased as the British garrison became closer. This competence was expressed in a progressive reduction in the use of the 'Macassan' Pidgin and a corresponding increase in the use of the Pidgin English. This evidence points very strongly to the likelihood that what was taking place at Port Essington, as a consequence of contact with the English language, was a gradual relexification of the 'Macassan' Pidgin towards an English-based Pidgin. There was clearly, therefore, differential command of an English-based pidgin by Aboriginal people of the Port Essington region, depending on their degree of contact with the settlement. Those with minimal contact with the Europeans spoke a mixture of the 'Macassan' Pidgin and English while, as Sweatman observed, some of the Port Essington Aboriginal people became quite close associates of the British, a few who travelled as far afield as Sydney gaining considerable proficiency in English.

They are fond of travelling about and frequently go in the Bughese prahus to Macassar. Several have also visited Sydney in merchant vessels, the "Heroine" had no less than five on board, who, McKenzie said, were among the best sailors he had and one, Jack White, was so active & well behaved that he actually intended giving him the rating of "tindah" (Boatswain's mate) next voyage. When the "Fly" left Pt. Essington in 1845, a youth named Neinmil accompanied McGillivray as a sort of servant, half protege, and remained on board till she sailed for England, when he joined us for a passage back to his native place. He was a good looking boy, and from his good temper and obliging disposition

17 Still a common word today, balanda - 'European', derives originally from Hollander, via the 'Macassan' Pidgin.
became a great favourite on board both ships. He soon learnt to speak English as well as we did, was a capital shot, a good singer, clever fisherman and a most amusing companion in a cruise . . . (Sweatman in Allen and Corris, 1977:144)

Keppel, captain of the Meander actually recorded some examples of this differential use of English and/or an English-based pidgin. At his first encounter, he describes the language as ‘tolerable English’ his second example is perfect English and his third, if not demonstrably a pidgin is not Standard English either.

While working up the Australian coast, we were boarded by a canoe with a crew of six of the veriest looking savages I had yet beheld: one of them, wearing a pair of trousers, the only article of apparel among them, announced himself, in tolerable English, as one of the tribe attached to the settlement at Port Essington. (Keppel, 1853:150)

When riding through the jungle on a shooting excursion, I gave my gun to a naked savage to carry: I was rather astonished at his addressing me in very good English with “should an opportunity offer, sir, I shall fire!”. This man was frequently with me afterwards. One day he said to me “If you English could thrash Bonaparte whenever you liked, why did you put him on an island, and starve him to death?” (p.158)

They will not bear to be hurried. If, feeling hungry and tired and knowing the direction, you take the lead yourself, your guide will sulkily follow and allow you to go wrong, or to pass the place he knows you are anxious to arrive at: and when at last you inquire ‘where settlement?’ with a disdainful look he points towards the place from which you have been travelling the last two hours . . . you say to ‘Darkey’, “what for you do this?” he replies “what for you take guide in bush?” (p. 183)

By 1849 when Victoria was abandoned, it is clear, therefore, that there was an English-based pidgin in use and that some Aboriginal people had command of the English language as well.

For nearly twenty years, there was no permanent European settlement in the Northern Territory. One of the more fascinating aspects of the language-contact history of the region is that during these years, English or an English-based pidgin, survived in the Port Essington area. Indeed, Port Essington was not totally cut off from the English-speaking world after the abandonment of the British garrison. As the friendly attitude of the local Aboriginal people was generally known, it was a frequent stopping-place for some of the increasing number of private ships plying the north Australian coast, as well as for more official vessels. After the establishment of Darwin in 1869, officialdom recognised Port Essington once more and it became the site of a customs outpost, where duty was collected from the ‘Macassan’ traders. Port Essington people’s English competence was frequently noted.

What English they spoke, they spoke properly. (Lewis, 1922:151)

These boys spoke good English, Macassan and, of course, their own language. (Searcy, 1909:36)

The linguistic consequences of this new era of European contact with the Port Essington Aboriginal people has yet to be fully researched although a start has been made (Harris, 1984:203-207).18

18 Some research on the later history of the Cobourg Peninsula has been carried out by Powell (1982b), (Footnote 18 continued on next page)
CONCLUSION

At Fort Dundas, on Melville Island and during the early period at Fort Wellington on Raffles Bay, there was minimal language contact because of aggressive and violent behaviour, particularly on the part of the European invaders. During Barker's time in the final year of Fort Wellington, there was considerable language contact and a contact-language using lexical items from both English and the local Raffles Bay vernacular began to emerge. The time was too short for it to stabilise.

The heritage of Raffles Bay was, finally, not a language but an attitude to cross-cultural communication which made the Aboriginal people so positively welcoming towards the Europeans at Port Essington that the tension and aggression, which might have been predicted, did not eventuate. The early verbal communications by Aboriginal people, apart from a few English words remembered from Raffles Bay, were in the 'Macassan' Pidgin. Within a short space of time, however, an English-based pidgin was in use which, at least in part, may have developed by the relexification of the 'Macassan' Pidgin.

(Footnote 18 continued)

and on the relationship between Port Essington and Darwin in the late 19th century by MacKnight (1969:393-402). Also important is Peterson and Tonkinson's work (1979) for the Cobourg Peninsula land claim. It remains debatable, however, whether sufficient data remains to draw firm conclusions about linguistic and sociolinguistic changes.

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IS GUUGU YIMIDHIRR DEAD?

In late 1983, the linguist Noreen Pym visited the Aboriginal community of Hopevale, near Cooktown on the Cape York Peninsula, for four months. During two weeks of this time she carried out research on changes in the Guugu Yimidhirr language spoken there. In a paper called ‘Observations on language change at Hope Vale’, Pym concludes that the Guugu Yimidhirr language ‘[t]oday . . . is spoken only by the elderly’ (p.153). After describing the range of changes she detects in the speech of two anonymous women at Hopevale (which she contrasts with the ‘traditional’ form of Guugu Yimidhirr documented in an earlier description of mine) she concludes (p.165) that ‘Guugu Yimidhirr is in danger of disappearing completely’.

I spent several months at Hopevale at the end of 1984 without suspecting that Guugu Yimidhirr was on the brink of death, and I was thus surprised at Pym’s findings from a year earlier. She found that Hopevale people, especially children and young adults, are unable to use Guugu Yimidhirr in most contexts and that their knowledge of the language is limited and imperfect. It seemed to me, on the other hand, that both Guugu Yimidhirr — albeit in a constantly changing form — and English — also changing from moment to moment — are both alive and well at Hopevale, and that they both have shared complementary roles in the communicative repertoires of all Hopevale people. The discrepancy between our impressions led me to ponder how two trained observers could have come to such different conclusions. Since both Pym and I hope that our research at Hopevale will have beneficial effects for the community (she characterises her paper as having been written ‘for the people at Hope Vale’), I thought it might be useful to explore our different perspectives by examining language at Hopevale in a somewhat wider social and historical context.

Language and language policy are serious issues at Hopevale. Nonetheless, people both inside and outside the community have differing opinions about the place and nature of language in Hopevale life. A look at the development of the speech community may resolve, or at least locate with precision, some apparent contradictions and dilemmas. One irony is this: 1984 is not the first time an observer has claimed that English was taking over and Guugu Yimidhirr dying among the people of Hopevale or their forebears. Various observers, as I note below, have made the same claim repeatedly since before 1900! If Guugu Yimidhirr

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1 Pym 1984.
2 Haviland 1979a.
has been moribund or, in fact, died as often as observers have suggested, we seem to have not a case of language death at all, but rather one of miraculous language reincarnation.

There is, first, a clear distinction between a simplified outsider’s view of speech and language skills, and the somewhat more complex understanding of abilities, codes and appropriate context for speech varieties that a competent member of the Hopevale community must possess. It is only in grammars and linguists’ imaginations that idealised speaker-hearers possess monolithic linguistic ‘competence’; in practice principled variation or haphazard extemporising, and sometimes downright error, is the rule. And this true for individuals as well as for different segments of a speech community. Such variation and complex contextual under-determination of speech are features of all language use. Hopevale is an Aboriginal community where the traditional multiplicity of language varieties is overshadowed only by an even greater range of social variation in origins, biography, loyalty and circumstance among speakers. In such a case, applying the simplified idealising lens of formal linguistics to language choices (even in the highly restricted context of a small corpus of ‘sentences’ like those Pym uses, elicited from only two informants) leads to an impoverished view of the linguistic phonemena.

Even more pernicious than the oversimplification of the linguistic situation, I think, is Pym’s naive idealisation of the social and historical facts. Characterising ‘changes in culture and life style’, Pym writes (p.156) that ‘[t]he people of Hope Vale have changed from being
a hunter-gatherer traditional Aboriginal culture to being a settled European-style culture. For a start, one could dispute the details of her observations. She claims, for example, that ‘today no one uses a spear even for hunting’ and that ‘[t]he traditional kinship system is largely gone’ (p.156). Yet in my most recent fieldwork, even my own (fictive) kinsmen fed me on speared fish. However, the real danger comes in applying a simple and distorted model — of ‘change’ from ‘traditional’ life to modern settled Hopevale existence — to the complexity of the community’s real history and evolution. Hopevale’s past is a story of constant manipulation by outside forces (including deliberate imposition of language policies), extreme heterogeneity in the available linguistic varieties as well as the constituent population, and a range of experiences in different parts of wider Queensland society that produces, at the very least, different degrees of knowledge and competence in people’s linguistic repertoires.

In what follows I will review the history of the Hopevale community with special attention to language issues. I will end by presenting samples of ordinary talk from modern Hopevale, using them to illustrate both variations in individual linguistic competence and the complex conditioning (and hence the inherent communicative value) of minute code switches within normal speech.

2 THE FOUNDING OF HOPE VALLEY MISSION.

The Hopevale community is a direct descendant of a Lutheran Mission, called Hope Valley, established in 1886 in the aftermath of the Palmer River goldrush, at Cape Bedford, north of Cooktown. People from around the Endeavour River spoke an identifiable form of modern Guugu Yimidhirr at least as early as 1770 when Lt. Cook and members of his crew collected a few words of their language. About one hundred years later, gold was discovered on the Palmer, and the port of Cooktown was opened at the Endeavour mouth to supply the diggings. The resulting devastation of Aboriginal life was total. Within ten years, by the mid 1880s, the scattered remnants of the Cooktown Aboriginal tribes were in a sorry state, and both church and civil authorities began to take steps to organise Aboriginal lives on lines more amenable to European hopes and plans for the area. In 1886 the mission at Cape Bedford was begun by German Lutheran missionaries, with support from local police and the Queensland Government, as well as from missionary societies in South Australia and in Bavaria.

From the beginning, the language of the Aborigines was a central concern. In 1881 the Cooktown Police Magistrate recognised that using Guugu Yimidhirr (although, in those days, he knew no name for it, but only had ‘some . . . boys who understand the language’) was essential to induce people from the remote and scattered Aboriginal camps around Cape Bedford to come into Cooktown, where they might be put to some use about the town. (The ‘use’ the Cooktown citizens had in mind turned out to center on unpaid domestic and bush labour, and sexual abuse.)

3 See Haviland and Haviland 1980 for a general account of the founding of the mission at Cape Bedford. Much of that account is relevant to the present topic. I will concentrate here the role of language in the development of the Cape Bedford community.

4 See Haviland 1974.

5 Queensland State Archives (hereafter QSA) Colonial Secretary’s Files (hereafter COL)/A314, No.2395 of 1881. Letter from St George (Police Magistrate) to Col. Secretary, 27 May 1881.
The early missionaries, who intended to set up a permanent and ultimately self-sufficient station at Cape Bedford, approached the question of language with a clear eye both to the practical secular goals of the bureaucracy, and to their own loftier purposes. The founding missionary was Johannes Flierl, a German who had had some limited experience with Aborigines in South Australia and who was on his way to New Guinea where he ultimately founded a large Lutheran mission. In his initial approaches to the Cooktown magistrate, Flierl argued that the mission should use both English and Guugu Yimidhirr, though on different grounds. Noting that the Cooktown Aborigines were said to know 'next to no English', he stated that 'in daily conversation and by teaching, all what is possible must be done to communicate in English with white people.' At the same time, he continued: 'the main point of all Missionwork is to christianise the heathen — so consequently they become good civilised too — and this chiefly has to be done by religious instruction and preaching of the Gospel. Thereby it is necessary to use as soon as possible the own language of the aborigines [...] so they acquire a right understanding of the gospel of truth.'6 The police supported the missionaries' requests for government backing, and provided an Aboriginal policeman as an interpreter for the first month after the mission was established.7 Thus began a struggle between English and Guugu Yimidhirr as the two extreme poles between which the local Aborigines would have to choose a language.

3 DEAD OR ALIVE?

Pym is not the first observer to be convinced that Guugu Yimidhirr is, if not dead, at least moribund. Since the turn of the century, policemen, Protectors of Aborigines, missionaries and mission officials alike have commented, sometimes with regret, but more often with relief, that the Cooktown people are on the verge of losing their own tongue in favor of English. The tension between the need for Aborigines to learn English in order to participate (or be of use) in wider Queensland society, and the counterbalancing communicative value of Guugu Yimidhirr as the language of people's hearts and souls appears to have been a theme (at least in the eyes of missionaries and administrators) from the foundation of Hope Valley until the present day.

As early as 1887, Missionary Meyer, working in a remote area on the Bloomfield River south of Cooktown, remarked that it was easier to learn the Bloomfield language than to learn the Cooktown language because the people of the Bloomfield area spoke less English than those of the Cape Bedford Reserve, who had already had more contact with Europeans8 than their brethren to the south. Meyer thus had to concentrate on the native tongue rather than try 'to communicate in a simplified form of English',9 as he had been tempted to do at Cape Bedford.

6 Neuendettelsau Archives (hereafter ND), 10 No.3, 26/12/1885. Letter from Flierl to Milman, Magistrate Cktn.
7 Kirche-und Missions Zeitung (hereafter KMZ) No.3 12/2/1886 p.19, quoting Flierl's report of 14/1/1886.
8 Lutheran Church of Australia Archives (hereafter LCA), 1.2 letter from Meyer to Rechner, July 1887.
9 LCA 1.2 Meyer report to SA Missions Congress, Oct. 1887.
In the meantime, the early missionaries at Hope Valley found the task of learning Guugu Yimidhirr daunting and frustrating. In the first place, it was never clear to the missionaries what language they were supposed to be learning: the multiplicity of dialects and languages in the area led them to suspect that their Aboriginal informants were deliberately trying to confuse them.\textsuperscript{10} It is clear, both from contemporary sources and from the memories of Hopevale’s oldest people, not only that distinct regional varieties of Guugu Yimidhirr existed, but that travel and contact between groups who spoke radically different languages characterised Aboriginal life before the European invasion. At least five major languages came into regular contact, from Guugu Yimidhirr and Gugu Yalanji in the south, to Barrow Point and Flinders Island languages in the north, and to the groups of languages, including those called Lama Lama along the coast of Princess Charlotte Bay, and Gugu Warra, inland. Given the clear existence of multiple dialects and languages, and the Aboriginal penchant for polyglot skills, there is reason to suspect that ordinary conversation in a ‘traditional’ context involved considerable language switching. The early missionary Pfalzer, and later the two Germans who spent the longest time at Cape Bedford, Missionaries Schwarz and Poland, alternately despaired at their inability to get on with preaching and explaining the Gospel because their own linguistic skills were inadequate,\textsuperscript{11} and condemned Guugu Yimidhirr itself as conceptually impoverished, inadequate as a vehicle for religious instruction.\textsuperscript{12}

The missionaries began teaching children at Cape Bedford to read and write in Guugu Yimidhirr (the children were pleased to find that paper could speak their language too),\textsuperscript{13} and they started translating hymns.\textsuperscript{14} Little by little the missionaries began to master difficult words, and Poland especially was diligent in trying to apply native concepts to Christian ideas.\textsuperscript{15} By 1889 he had decided that Guugu Yimidhirr, though, in his opinion, syntactically paltry, had both lexical and idiomatic richness, although the natives, he lamented, did not

\textsuperscript{10} Pfalzer writes, in a letter to his Bavarian Mission Society, reprinted in Kirchliche Mitteilungen (hereafter KM) 1887 No.10, that Police Inspector Marrett from Cooktown had confirmed that the Aborigines were deliberately using ‘difficult words’ and mixing words from two or three distinct dialects. Pfalzer, in a letter to the Inspector of February 1887, KM 1887 No.2 78-9, reports that the language has difficult sounds and is spoken rapidly, but that he feels obliged to learn the language quickly in order to transform ‘a mob of cannibals [. . .] into civilized people’. Obviously impatient, he complained in December of the same year, KM 1887 No.3, that ‘one of the worst difficulties is that one’s language skill simply is not up to’ spiritual topics. Schwarz, on arrival at Cape Bedford, writes to the Inspector that he feels ‘useless’ without the language (KM 1887 No.9). And Meyer, at Bloomfield, admits in a letter to Rechner (LCA 1.1 Sept. 1889) that one has to be constantly on guard against committing howlers in translating. His imperfect knowledge of Gugu Yalandji led him to translate the commandment ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’ as ‘Thou shalt not marry’.

\textsuperscript{11} Pfalzer is at first convinced that Guugu Yimidhirr has ‘no spiritual words’ (KM 1887 No.2 78-79, Oct. 1886), and later comes to feel that his working wordlist of 400 to 600 words represents probably one third of the entire Guugu Yimidhirr vocabulary (KM 1888 No.9). (My working glossary for Guugu Yimidhirr contains well over 3,000 roots.) In a retrospective look at the mission effort after more than ten years of work, the founder, Johannes Flierl, reports in KMZ 30 No. 11 (June 1898) that Guugu Yimidhirr lacks words for spiritual or intellectual discourse, as was to be expected from people ‘living on such a low cultural level’.


\textsuperscript{13} Poland’s report (9/1888, reprinted in KM 1888 No.12) to the ‘Red School’ (a sponsoring primary school in Germany) makes heavy use of Guugu Yimidhirr words to describe life and social relation-
cooperate in helping him penetrate it.  

16 Poland letter to Inspector 6/1889 (KM 1889 No. 8).

His best charges, the adolescent girls, for whom he and his wife had primary responsibility, began keeping personal diaries in Guugu Yimidhir.  

17 Poland newsletter, July 1891, reprinted in KM 1892 No.1.

Poland had more trouble with adults, because 'one must converse with them as children.'  

18 Poland 1907, the pamphlet 'Working as a Sower.'

And he continued to feel that he had to be constantly on guard against unwittingly falling into their linguistic traps by saying awkward or obscene things. His efforts at translation were hampered by the fact that:

   [b]lacks accept and repeat any nonsense, i.e., any incorrect translation, never questioning anything they don't understand.  

19 Poland letter to Inspector, January 1898, ND 416.

Nonetheless, in his letters back to Germany, Poland takes great pains to justify his continuing interest in a language, which, as early as 1889, he thinks must ultimately give way to English.  

20 Poland letter to Inspector, 8/1889 (ND 241-244).

At this time, apparently stung by criticism from his German superiors, Poland began to teach English spelling and reading to his pupils.

People at modern Hopevale remember the oldest mission inhabitants, who were products of this early schooling, as devout, moralistic and well educated. They were able to read and write in the archaic orthography for Guugu Yimidhir introduced by Schwarz and Poland, and many continued to write letters in Guugu Yimidhir into the second World War.  

21 Northern Protector of Aborigines Walter Roth reported in a letter to the Commissioner of Police, 24 June 1898, that he was keeping a collection of letters written to him in Guugu Yimidhir by some of the schoolgirls at Cape Bedford. QSA Co. Pol. 142 No.2. Later Poland received such letters during furlough in Germany (ND 521-23, and 536-537, 9 June 1906), and Schwarz received them from elderly people interned at Palm Island during the period from 1942 to 1948. Poland describes the mixture of German, English and Guugu Yimidhirr spoken both by his own son Hermann (Poland 1907, pamphlet 'Farewell'), and by one of the most promising of his early students. (Letter to 'Red School', Sept. 1888, KM 1888 No.12.)

22 People at modern Hopevale remember the oldest mission inhabitants, who were products of this early schooling, as devout, moralistic and well educated. They were able to read and write in the archaic orthography for Guugu Yimidhirr introduced by Schwarz and Poland, and many continued to write letters in Guugu Yimidhirr into the second World War. One woman whose children still survive at Hopevale came to Cape Bedford from Bloomfield as a young woman, and was reported to speak good German. People remember during their long train ride south, when the entire mission was evacuated from Cape Bedford and sent to Woorabinda during the War in 1942, that soldiers and government agents used to walk among them on the train occasionally speaking to them in German, evidently hoping to confirm their suspicions that the Hope Valley station had been contaminated by the influence of the Superintendent, Rev. Schwarz, who was himself briefly interned as a German alien.

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throughout Queensland. The Northern Protector of Aborigines, Dr Walter E. Roth, began a serious study of native custom. He also carried out surveys of the dialects spoken in the hinterlands north of Cooktown, relying heavily on the knowledge and experience of the Cape Bedford Missionaries in his published description of the 'Koko Yimidir' language. Much of Roth's ethnological and linguistic observations convey a sense that the languages and customs of the northern Aborigines were fading and endangered. In 1900 Roth notes that 'now that a provisional schoolteacher has been appointed' to Hope Valley, 'the instruction in and of the English language has commenced. Hitherto all teaching had been imparted in the local Koko-Yimidir dialect'.

Five years later, Roth sounds a refrain which will continue for the next eighty years: 'English in place of the local Koko-Yimidir dialect, is becoming more and more generally spoken [at Cape Bedford]'. But the tension between English and native tongues remains: while learning English is a desirable sign that Aborigines can become both civilised and useful, Roth suggests in his annual report for 1902 that it can also indicate their loss of an appropriate place in society. He describes the removal of several people who had previously been brought from Proserpine to Cape Bedford, when the Lutheran Marie Yamba mission closed.

Seven adult malcontents had subsequently to be returned to Bowen: those spoke English very well and were cheeky enough for anything; they had evidently been too much encouraged in competition with Europeans in the way of cricket matches etc., and had been treated socially far above their natural station in life...

English and uppitiness go together. So too do one's language and one's identity. In the same report, Roth decries the trade in native children, from which:

... prostitution and disease follow, they can only speak pidgeon English, and finally become pariahs among both whites and blacks.

Subsequent Protectors of Aborigines were to express an official preference for Aborigines who spoke English (and acquired skills of some use to European society). Protector Howard, for example, was more impressed by the girls of Cape Bedford than the boys, since the former were asked to do housework for the missionary and thus spoke better English. The

23 QSA Comm. Pol. 142 No.2, letter from Roth to Commissioner of Police 24 June 1898.
24 Roth 1898 and Roth 1901 (QNPA).
25 QNPA Report for 1899.
26 Chief Protector of Aborigines (hereafter CPA) annual report for 1905, p.24, Roth to the Under Sec. of Public Lands.
27 Roth's annual report for 1902, in Queensland Parliamentary Papers (hereafter QPP) 1903. When Poland returned to Cape Bedford about five years later, after a prolonged furlough in Germany, he found that the Marie Yamba people who had remained at Hope Valley now had all learned Guugu Yimidhirr. Poland letter to Inspector, July 1907, ND 539-540. The late George Bowen, one of these people from Marie Yamba and later one of the most influential and respected people at Hopevale (where he was known simply as warrga 'the great'), told me that he learned Guugu Yimidhirr in about six weeks. Even in the 1970s he also remembered some of his own language from around Proserpine.
28 Roth's annual report for 1902, QPP 1903.
29 Howard's report for 1909, CPA 1910.
missionaries themselves began to feel that English was a more appropriate language for Bible study, both because it was conceptually better suited to the subject matter (whereas Guugu Yimidhirr was 'too poor with regard to words and concepts'), and because training Aborigines in English (rather than Guugu Yimidhirr) Scripture gave them better armament with which 'to withstand being among disbelieving whites'. Indeed, by the beginning of World War I, Hope Valley schoolchildren routinely copied their favorite English Bible passages into their school copy books, with immaculate spelling and elegant hands.

After 1910, the Hope Valley community changed, as the parameters of Aboriginal life in Queensland altered drastically. Beginning with the Marie Yamba people, and at an accelerating rate through the first two decades of this century, a continual stream of children from other parts of Queensland entered the tiny Lutheran enclave at Cape Bedford. At first these were 'neglected' children (a euphemism for children of mixed descent), and later any children, found by police in Aboriginal camps, who could by law be taken from their families and placed in institutions for education and training. At Cape Bedford, Schwarz held a mass baptism in 1916, involving nineteen mission-born children, and sixteen girls who had been sent in over preceding years from all over Queensland: Cairns, Rockhampton, Townsville, the Gulf of Carpenteria, and some from the far south. Schwarz described the newly baptised as follows:

Most spoke good English when they came, which made schooling easier for them.
Nonetheless some came directly from an Aboriginal camp and spoke not a word of English [. . .] But now all have found their true home. Whatever their descent they have found their Saviour.

Indeed, a few of these women are still living; they are faithful Lutherans at modern Hopevale, who describe life at 'home' (that is, at the old Cape Bedford station) in elegant, slightly old-fashioned English. One woman, who eventually became a school teacher at Cape Bedford, recalls arriving at the mission station to be be greeted by Schwarz in English with words that she could not understand. (She came from a settlement on the Gulf of Carpentaria and knew neither English nor Guugu Yimidhirr at the time). Another Hopevale acquaintance was brought to Hope Valley as a small child, from his homeland several hundred kilometers to the north of Cooktown, again speaking only his local Barrow Point language, unknown to anyone at the Mission. He recalls spending the first months in his new home — before he learned to speak Guugu Yimidhirr — playing exclusively with the pussycat in the boys' dormitory.

[. . .] they had a cat there, you see. And then the boys was talkin’ to me and I didn’t understand them. I said, ‘Oh, it’s no use playing with them.’ Well I got the pussycat, and I used to play around with the pussycat. That was my friend then.

30 Schwarz letter to Inspector, July 1910, ND 572.
31 Extract from a Schwarz letter, June 1905, reprinted in KM 1905 No.12.
32 More than this, several elderly Hopevale women who were girls during this time have told us that they also pored over Australian women's magazines of the era, imagining cakes, domestic furnishings and clothes of which reality gave them no experience.
33 Schwarz letter to Theile, April 1916, quoted in KMZ 23 May 1916.
34 From a transcribed film, November 1981, Hopevale.
The influx of children from outside the mission continued through the 1920s. During this time, Hope Valley suffered from pressing financial problems, leading Schwarz to open several outstations where families of adult Aborigines tried to subsist on their own farming efforts. Schwarz's reports during this time emphasised the progress in English that the school-children were making. When, in 1924, the Lutheran authorities considered turning control of the mission over to the (Anglican) Australian Board of Missions, Schwarz's strongest objection was that the people had insufficient English to survive the transition to someone else's ministrations.

To 90% of our people, a lecture or a sermon in English would have no more value than if it was delivered in Chinese. Most of our older people (and certainly some of our best) Christians can hardly speak a word of English [...] The younger generation certainly know SOME English [...] but their total vocabulary] if written on fine paper could easily be put in a nutshell (a walnut not a cocoanut). 35

Dr F.O. Theile, then the head of the Lutheran Mission Board that oversaw Cape Bedford, and a distinguished historian of the Lutheran church offered the following detailed linguistic profile of the community after a visit in 1926: 36

I was impressed with the painstaking efforts which both teachers expend on the need of proper understanding of every word spoken and read. In school the language used is English, though even here the native language has often to be resorted to explain the matter in hand.

Theile notes that girls (although not boys) especially love to read, and should be provided with suitable materials from the Lutheran Herald. Theile discusses the linguistic skills that would be required of a new missionary for Hope Valley — Schwartz had threatened several times to resign and was by this time nearly sixty years old — saying that, while English would be useful,

full knowledge of English is not absolutely essential as the Koko Yimidir language would have to be acquired in any case [...] The older inhabitants of the Mission Reserve, especially the married couples on the [outstation at the] McIvor River, understand no other language. They have all learnt English in school years ago, but they have forgotten it again. The men may be able to understand what is most familiar and necessary to them in English, but neither they nor their wives can follow the word of God and a sermon in that language. They conduct all their services and devotions in Koko Yimidir. The younger generation is somewhat better versed in English and their Sunday services are conducted in English, and though they sometimes sing Koko Yimidir at their devotions, they read their scripture lessons from the English Bible. Still, it is noticeable more so among boys and young men, than among the girls and young women that Koko Yimidir is easier to them, and that it conveys more to their understanding than the English. In short, their mothertongue, the language in which they think is Koko Yimidir. In school, the language used is English, though even here the native language has often to be resorted to explain the matter in hand. 37

35 Schwartz letter to Theile, August 1924, LCA 3.
37 Ibid.
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In the late 1920s when another missionary (a native German speaker) was recruited for work at the McLvor, a sore point in his relations with Schwarz and the mission authorities was his difficulty with Guugu Yimidhirr, although again there were differences of opinion about how necessary it was: Schwarz claimed that only Guugu Yimidhirr could 'reach the hearts of our people' \(^{38}\), while the other man maintained that there was no language problem, since all the Aborigines spoke English. \(^{39}\) In 1930 and again in 1937 Theile was still searching for a new man who would be able to learn the Aboriginal tongue:

Surveying the many and diverse duties resting on each one \([\text{of the staff}]\), I can well understand that the study of the vernacular has been somewhat neglected, but I am insisting that the language of the aboriginal there must be acquired. No man, least of all a missionary, can hope to read a people's soul if he does not know the language. \(^{40}\)

And again, seven years later, Theile comments on the necessary qualifications for a new missionary:

A married man with some experience of parish life would be preferable. He should have a love for the Australian Aboriginal and have a desire to understand them. He must be willing to learn the native language \([\ldots]\) he who would wish to touch the soul of these people must know Koko Yimidir. Though all school-work is done in English \([\ldots]\) among themselves they converse in the vernacular only. \(^{41}\)

In 1939, when the need for another missionary has become acute, Theile still observes that Guugu Yimidhirr is the common vehicle of communication, although Hope Valley people are literate in English:

I noticed that among themselves the aboriginals old and young use almost exclusively the Koko-Yimidir vernacular. The morning devotions are conducted in Koko-Yimidir. The Sunday service was in English \([\ldots]\) The natives all read English and many of them like to read. \(^{42}\)

Nonetheless, having found it nearly impossible to recruit an experienced pastor for the job, in stating the precise conditions of a 'call' (through which a Pastor is invited to take on duties in a new community), Theile, ever practical, softens his requirements: in doing so he mentions explicitly that many of the inhabitants at Hope Valley have themselves learned Guugu Yimidhirr only after coming to the mission.

Of course you will understand that 'the language is the shrine of the peoples' soul' and in order to really look into the very depths of the hearts of people you ought to know their language. But \([\ldots]\) as many of them have adopted the Koko-Yimidir dialect only when they were transferred to Hope Valley and all education is in English \([\ldots]\) knowledge of [English] with a smattering of Koko Yimidir is sufficient. \(^{43}\)

\(^{38}\) Schwarz letter to Theile, 25 August 1928, LCA 2 No.1.
\(^{39}\) Medingdoerfer Report for 1928, 29 March 1929, LCA Tape 1 1 No.2.
\(^{40}\) Theile’s report to the Board of Foreign Missions, 16 July 1930, LCA 2.
\(^{41}\) Theile’s report on a visit of inspection from 22 July to 7 August 1937, dated 9 August 1937, LCA 5 No.2.
\(^{42}\) Theile report on visit to Cape Bedford, 29 December 1939, LCA 2 No.1.
\(^{43}\) Theile letter to Petering, 18 June 1939, LCA1-2.
It seems clear that after fifty years of continuing evolution, the Cape Bedford community had by the beginning of World War II, developed a clear linguistic division of labour. Schwarz, always a believer in a kind of rough closeness with his charges through shared language and work, and fluent in conversational Guugu Yimidhirr, nonetheless reserved for English certain functions, especially in relation to religious ideas. This assymetry was preserved in Schwarz’s translations of Bible stories and hymns, along with the peculiarities of his Guugu Yimidhirr itself (heavily accented, and largely dependent on a vocabulary learned in his early years among the coastal people at Cape Bedford).44 Schwarz himself put the matter this way:

There are of course words in the Bible which cannot be translated into Koko Yiriinidir on account of the absence of the corresponding ideas and meanings in this language. In my translations I had the option either to use the English words with which of course all those who have grown up on the station are fairly familiar, or else make use of a long circumlocution. 45

4 DIASPORA — THE EVACUATION TO THE SOUTH.

The first years of World War II were difficult times at Cape Bedford. Resources were scarce, and the needs of the mission community were growing. Rev. Schwarz, with occasional help from assistant missionaries and lay workers, but relying most heavily on a few Aboriginal families on whom he placed considerable responsibility, had tried to establish a succession of new stations and farming operations on the limited terrain of the mission Reserve.

The War came closer, however, and in 1942 the entire population of the mission was, without warning, suddenly evacuated, transported to the Aboriginal settlement at Woorabinda, inland from Rockhampton. Rev. Schwarz himself was interned in a camp for German aliens, and was, thereafter, not allowed to return to his congregation of, by then, fifty-six years. The experience of the next eight years in the south was both traumatic and liberating for the people from Cape Bedford. Their numbers were dramatically and suddenly reduced by disease. Woorabinda left them disoriented and exposed, for the first time in their lives, to unmediated contact with the outside world. People went to school in ordinary schools, had paid employment, travelled on ‘manpower’ gangs, mostly to do agricultural labour throughout the south, and met and interacted with a wide range of unknown, new people, both black and white. They also struggled, through the efforts of a few influential elderly people (Schwarz’s chosen responsible helpers, largely), to keep alive the possibility of returning to their own country again.

When they arrived at Woorabinda, into an unambiguously English-speaking world, the existence of Guugu Yimidhirr in their linguistic repertoires took on an entirely new significance. In the first place, the fact that they had ‘language’ further marked them off from the people of Woorabinda, a separation that had both positive and negative aspects. The Cape Bedford people, whether at home on the settlement or on work gangs away from Woorabinda, shared not only membership in an exiled mission community but also a private mode

44 As I have noted elsewhere, the written Guugu Yimidhirr of Schwarz’s translations, probably ungrammatical and certainly idiosyncratic, has become ‘enshrined as a kind of semiofficial church language’ (Haviland 1979a, p.230) which people cannot easily understand, but which has power and legitimacy as a special code, much like the archaic English of an old Bible.

45 1939/12 Schwarz letter to Stolz, 29 December 1939, LCA No.1.
of speech. Friends recall that in this unfamiliar environment they took comfort and refuge in the company of their fellows, and that Guugu Yimidhirr was the medium of intra-group interaction. In church, Guugu Yimidhirr seemed to feel especially appropriate for the Cape Bedford Lutherans.\(^\text{46}\) On the other hand, a serious issue throughout the period at Woorabinda was the extent to which Cape Bedford people would be allowed to establish normal relations with Woorabinda people. The Cape Bedford elders themselves opposed marriages between the two groups, for example, and people remember violent confrontations on the issue, in which the existence of Guugu Yimidhirr was cited as a device the Cape Bedford people used to keep to themselves.

At the same time, Guugu Yimidhirr provided a sometimes surprising link with an Aboriginal past that Hope Valley people might otherwise have forgotten. At Palm Island, at Cherbourg, and wherever people met other Aborigines, the possibility existed that they would encounter strangers who also spoke Guugu Yimidhirr: a relic of a nearly forgotten childhood in the north before the mechanisms of Aboriginal ‘protection’ had brought them south. Friends at Hopevale have told me of a time when a group of young men from Cape Bedford, living temporarily at Cherbourg while picking arrowroot or peanuts, began to gossip among themselves, in their own tongue, about the peculiarities of the Cherbourg people. Suddenly one old man approached them, saying, ‘You boys can’t run me down. I’m Guugu Yimidhirr too!’ He was a victim of early deportation, having been exiled from the Cooktown area as a youth for fighting or drunkenness, but never losing his own real language after more than thirty years with no one to speak it to. Similarly, mission officials were amazed to discover that one of the Aboriginal policemen at Woorabinda spoke Guugu Yimidhirr, a language he had learned from his mother.\(^\text{47}\)

It is from Woorabinda that we first hear the voices of younger Cape Bedford people on the subject of their language. The insistent predominance of English in the south must have suddenly raised the spectre of language loss. The Lutheran archives contain several letters from Woorabinda schoolchildren asking for written materials in Guugu Yimidhirr (specifically asking that the church publish Schwarz’s translations of Bible stories and hymns):

> Although we can speak our language fluently, we can’t read it and also cannot write it out. But by the help of these books we will be able to do so, like the older people do. We’ll be able to read the Bible stories by ourselves without the help of the older people.\(^\text{48}\)

> Every morning when I get up I get my Koko Yimidir book and sing hymns out of it and other girls join in singing the hymns with me. Every second Sunday we have Koko Yimidir service. It’s beautiful to have our mother tongue printed with the word of God. Some words are hard to pronounce. It won’t be long before we know them all.\(^\text{49}\)

\(^{46}\) Stolz letter to Theile after a visit to Woorabinda in May, 1943, reports that they had a Sunday service while he visited and ‘at the request of some of the members they sang hymms in their own tongue’. LCA 312:513. Similarly, Rev. Gribble at Palm Island wrote to Schwarz (October 1943, LCA 312:513) singing the praises of the elderly Cape Bedford people who had been sent there rather than to Woorabinda. ‘Their much worn humn books in the Koko Yimidir dialect they brought to me and I had the hymns typed out and given to the Bishop of Carpentaria for their preservation’.

\(^{47}\) Letter from Reuther to Thiele, January 1943, LCA.

\(^{48}\) Letter from Monty Wallace to Mission Board, March 1946, LCA 312:513 Box 4.

\(^{49}\) Letter from Mollie Billy to Mission Board, March 1946, LCA 312:513 Box 4.
The Lutheran church ultimately did publish the Guugu Yimidhirr Order of Service which was distributed to the Cape Bedford people at Woorabinda on May 27th, 1946. In subsequent years, both the provisional Lutheran mission in the area, and a Woorabinda schoolteacher, expressed their interest in materials that would help them to learn Guugu Yimidhirr in order to communicate better with the Cape Bedford people.

5 RETURN TO HOPEVALE.

It is eloquent testimony to the Cape Bedford people’s loyalty to their own country that they ultimately succeeded, at the end of the 1940s, with considerable help from Lutheran authorities, in returning to the north. The site of modern Hopevale, 50 kilometers north of Cooktown and about twenty-five kilometers inland from the original Hope Valley, was opened and resettled in the early 1950s, as small groups of workers and later families returned from Woorabinda to clear the bush, build houses, gardens, streets, a church.

Most of the oldest Hope Valley people had died in the south during the War, and many families had been, if not entirely destroyed, reduced to only one or two members. Thus, the experience of exile and return left the community’s social resources radically altered. There was also a serious shortage of marriageable women, so that groups of young men left Hopevale periodically during the fifties in search of wives, many of whom returned with their husbands from Palm Island, Bloomfield, Yarrabah, Weipa and even Woorabinda to raise their families at Hopevale. The community was also augmented by a number of Aboriginal people from south-eastern Cape York Peninsula who had Hopevale kin. Since the 1950s, Hopevale has been a fluid community, with people spending long periods in the south (as part of a Lutheran effort to relocate Hopevale families in the wider context of Queensland towns), young men working away from the mission, and with increased Hopevale participation in the state-wide networks of Aboriginal social life and movement. Missionary Schwarz’s carefully constructed isolation for his Hope Valley congregation was irrevocably dismantled at Hopevale.

Language continued to be an issue at Hopevale. The spouses and other newcomers to the community brought their own linguistic repertoires with them, both augmenting their skills by learning Guugu Yimidhirr as it suited them, and contributing their own speech varieties — bits and pieces of other Aboriginal languages, various Cape York pidgin/creole varieties and habits of speech from rural stations elsewhere on the Peninsula — to the already complex inventory available to Hopevale people.

The same tension we have already met, between English and Guugu Yimidhirr, still cast as an absolute opposition, reappeared in early official deliberations by Lutheran authorities. It seemed useful and progressive for English to be a full vehicle for communication at Hopevale, but at the same time there lingered doubts about its adequacy, compared to Guugu Yimidhirr, in reaching Hopevale hearts. Throughout the fifties, pastors at Hopevale them-

50 Schwarz 1946.
selves used English, but urged church Elders to maintain Guugu Yimidhirr in Gospel readings and instruction. Even the nursing sister, in 1953, made an effort to re-establish the use of the native language, now enshrined in Schwarz's *Order of Service*.

One of my happiest moments I will always remember on this mission station is the talk to the girls in their dormitory, Sunday nights. First we read the Gospel for the day in Koko Yimidir altogether so that their language is kept up. Then we have a Chapter from our story simplified and explained as we go along, for their daily Christian living.

Into the early 1960s, the Hopevale Pastor and outside church observers expressed the opinion that Guugu Yimidhirr was of major importance in spiritual work: it was still a central element in weekly Sunday services, in pastoral visits, and in general religious instruction. Pastor Kotzur, asking for further copies of Schwarz’s Guugu Yimidhirr prayer book, writes:

Natives like repetition and appreciate things that way. If a number [of prayers] are included in their own language, it will be all the better for them, as the parents can then read to the children, and thus all can still pray together. As far as teaching Christianity to the natives, as well as to whites, is concerned, I am a great believer in repetition.

When the Summer Institute of Linguistics placed Bible translators at nearby Bloomfield, there was considerable enthusiasm for their work, and hope that the linguistic inquiries there might ultimately lead to increased knowledge of both Gugu Yalanji and Guugu Yimidhirr on the part of white mission staff.

The Hopevale schoolteacher, in daily interaction with children, had more intimate exposure to the linguistic abilities of the populace than any other outsider at the mission. Her opinion was unambiguous:

53 However, the original call to the first new Pastor at Hopevale (LCA 312:513 Box 4, undated 1949) specifies that the new recruit should work closely with Rev. Schwarz (who was by then living in Cooktown), and that he should learn Guugu Yimidhirr.

54 An unidentified clipping, 'The Gospel came to Cooktown Natives', LCA Box 18:1, May 1954, reports that Pastor Wenke preached at the Cooktown Aboriginal Reserve and that the late Paddy McIvor also delivered a sermon to the people there in Guugu Yimidhirr. Prenzler’s report to the Hopevale Mission Board (hereafter HVMB) June 1956 (LCA 1956-69 No.6) mentions the need for Guugu Yimidhirr, and stresses to the Elders of the community the role they can play in using the language to bring the Gospel to older people who do not know much English.

55 Nursing sister’s report for 1953 from Rohde to HVMB LCA 5:1.

56 Schmidt report on Hopevale visit, August 1960, LCA 60’s and 70’s No.5, describes as the high point of his visit a service in which native elders both sang and read the Gospel in Guugu Yimidhirr. Schmidt also notes that people still come up to receive communion in the same groups in which they were originally confirmed at Cape Bedford.

57 As late as 1969, Pastor Pohlner writes to I. Roennfeldt, 8 January 1969 (LCA 60’s and 70’s No.4) that he has taken a Guugu Yimidhirr evangelist along on a hospital visit ‘where I felt a talk in Koko would help the patient understand’.

58 Letter from Kotzur to Prenzler, 24 August 1962, LCA 60’s and 70’s No.4.

59 Prenzler’s minutes of HVMB meetings, 26 October 1959, LCA 1956-69 No.4; Schmidt report on visit of HVMB, August 1960, LCA 60’s and 70’s No.5; Prenzler report for 1963, p.1, LCA 60’s and 70’s box 13 No.3.
Contrary to popular belief, these children have more trouble in mastering English than Maths. The teaching of English to them is arduous work. In their homes, their native language is used almost exclusively [. . .] At school I encourage them to use English only, as the persistent use of their language is a barrier to them ever learning Grammar.  

She had high hopes for a new reading program which allowed her Grade 1 pupils to out-read the Grade 4s despite ‘the poor knowledge of English these children have when they first begin school.’

Nonetheless, Pastor Albrecht reports, after a visit to Hopevale from July 7th to July 30th, 1964, that the language problem has solved itself.

I have heard their elders pray with the pastor prior to the commencement of the service in Church, and for about two weeks, when I had two periods of lessons with them and each lesson was started with a prayer by one of the elders or one of the evangelists, I have been impressed how they did pray and pour out their hearts before God, in English [. . .] I feel, therefore, if these people would go back in their School and Church work to their own language this would be a step backwards. In Church the Gospel for the Sunday is read by one of the elders in Koko Yimidir, and I have heard them sing some hymns in their language, otherwise they have entirely switched over to English [. . .] It would certainly be a good thing if the missionary would speak Koko Yimidir; it would be a great help in private counselling. However, officially I think the use of English is entirely adequate and will be a help for them to fit into some community in which, as we hope, they will find their place eventually.

Thus, by 1964, the Lutheran authorities tried by administrative policy to resolve the struggle between English and Guugu Yimidhirr — still conceived as monolithic opposites. English was proclaimed the winner. Despite later worries about the role of Guugu Yimidhirr in church and community life, mission policy took essentially this form when my family and I first visited Hopevale in 1971.

60 Lemberg report on HV school, 31 December 1960, LCA 60’s and 70’s No.6.
61 Ibid.
62 Albrecht report to HVMB re visit, 7-30 July 1964, LCA 60’s and 70’s No.1. Albrecht also had doubts about the SIL linguists because they were Baptists.
63 Pohlner, report to HVMB on a trip to Coen, 7-16 June 1969 (LCA 60’s and 70’s No.3), mentions that people seem to have considerable trouble reading the old Guugu Yimidhirr orthography, and expresses the hope that the linguistic work being done at Bloomfield can be extended to Hopevale. ‘[. . .] if we are to do anything about enlarging the hymnal, translating all the Gospels for the Church Year for the benefit of the people spiritually, and as helping to preserve the culture and the language of our people (which I consider important), it is necessary that we start off on the right foot’.
64 Doubts persisted, however, and by the end of the 1970s, the HVMB was actually looking to me for ideas about a cultural and linguistic resource center at Hopevale: Kirsch report on visit to Hopevale and Wujal Wujal, 23 November 1979, LCA 60’s and 70’s No.5.
LIFE HISTORY OF A SPEECH COMMUNITY

6 CODES AND COMMUNICATION.

This extended historical sketch underlines several important features of Hopevale as a speech community. In the first place, far from being a homogeneous group of ‘traditional’ Aborigines, speakers of ‘traditional’ Guugu Yimidhirr, the mission comprises an extremely varied collection of people from different parts of Queensland, along with their descendants and kinsmen, whose linguistic repertoires were and are similarly heterogeneous. Even in the heartland of Guugu Yimidhirr territory, there have clearly always been multiple dialects, and multilingualism has been a normal condition of Aboriginal social life. (In fact, I have argued elsewhere that the existence of multiple words for the same ‘thing’ is an inherently exploitable device for communicative subtlety, that survives even drastic changes in the nature and availability of language varieties.) Moreover, ‘owning’ a language and being able to ‘talk’ or to ‘hear’ a language are not at all the same things: one can be (and, sadly, in modern Queensland, often is) a fluent speaker of somebody else’s language, and a non-speaker or a semi-speaker of one’s own. Many people at Hopevale find themselves in exactly this situation: they have learned Guugu Yimidhirr as native speakers, growing up at Cape Bedford or Hopevale, but they are aware that it is not their language. (And their language, or that of their fathers or mothers, may be known, lost, only barely remembered, or only partially re-learned in adulthood. All of these alternatives are represented in modern Hopevale.)

Let me give an example. A number of people at Hopevale trace their ancestry to areas south of Cooktown where the language spoken is Gugu Yalanji. However, only some of these people still speak that language (which is widely spoken from Bloomfield down to Mossman and Daintree) and are often embarrassed by this fact when confronted with their countrymen. One such man is a fluent and eloquent speaker of Guugu Yimidhirr who has only as an adult learned a few words of his own ancestral Gugu Yalanji. But despite the fact that his native language is Guugu Yimidhirr and not Gugu Yalanji, which he inherits but does not speak, he recently took the remarkable (and obviously ambivalent) position, in conversation with me, that a policy for ‘preserving’ Guugu Yimidhirr at Hopevale was ‘up to these people’ (i.e., the Hopevale people themselves) since ‘my language is all right.’ He was referring to the existence of a nascent bilingual literacy program in Gugu Yalanji (and its absence in Guugu Yimidhirr).

Similarly, one of my closest friends and collaborators at Hopevale came to Cape Bedford as a little boy, speaking only his own northern language. (He is the person who took the pussycat as his playmate, as a little boy.) He became a fluent speaker of Guugu Yimidhirr, but he also took great pains, as an adult, to relearn his own language from elderly countrymen, and he is now the last remaining speaker of the Barrow Point language, though he has no one with whom to speak it. For Cape York people, owning a language is a function of social and genealogical descent, whereas knowing a language is little more than historical accident.

65 See Haviland 1982. Dixon 1977 (3.1.3, 112-118) suggests what may have been an extremely common principle of speech aesthetics in some Aboriginal communities: that felicity of discourse (one might say ‘proper and appropriate speech in context’) often depends heavily on the possibility (and exploitation) of lexical or syntactic variation. What Missionary Pfalzer interpreted as deliberate attempts to confuse may well have been nothing more than Aboriginal efforts to speak politely and eloquently.

66 See Rigsby 1982.
The second point about the nature of the Hopevale speech community is related to the first. Just as there is no uniform biographical profile for Hopevale residents, and no standard or ‘traditional’ linguistic repertoire, neither is there a simple opposition between two monolithic language varieties: standard full Guugu Yimidhirr on the one hand, and some sort of standard Hopevale English on the other. Even without considering the complex mechanisms by which the languages may be combined and shuffled, within both English and Guugu Yimidhirr there exist discriminable varieties and registers. Even people who control what Hopevale people sometimes call ‘deep’ Guugu Yimidhirr often speak the language ‘just lightly’: that is, with simple common words and uncomplicated syntax. People are similarly likely to switch in one breath from something that sounds to my ears like standard Queensland rural English to something that sounds much more like Torres Strait Creole, or pan-Queensland Aboriginal English.

A simple example may be in order here. Former residents of Hope Valley point out that Missionary Schwarz had no tolerance for what he regarded as the ‘broken English’ of Aboriginal society outside the mission. He insisted, instead, that his pupils learn what people now call ‘proper English.’ Indeed, outsiders often comment that elderly Hopevale residents speak elegant, somewhat archaic, English. Such people are proud of their mastery of English and somewhat disparaging of the Aboriginal English spoken at Coen, Lockhart or Bamaga. This same pride, interestingly, carries over into the common device by which English loanwords are incorporated into Guugu Yimidhirr sentences. The normal device for importing an English transitive verb into the Aboriginal language is first to ‘pidginise’ it by adding the pidgin transitiivising suffix -em. One can say:

nganhi gurra visit-em-gurray
lsg+ACC again ‘visit’-TR-do+PAST.
(He) visited me.

Or even

dhana fill-em-up-gurraayga.
3pl+NOM ‘fill up’-TR-do+PAST+HABITUAL.
They used to fill (something) up.

Some careful speakers, especially those who have the ability to use more ‘correct’ varieties of English, often will use such forms, but also will correct or upgrade their English, even when they are speaking Guugu Yimidhirr. That is, they will substitute the more elegant-sounding formative -it as the transitiiviser in place of -em. Thus, I have recorded the following sentences:

nyulu water-it-gurranghu vegetable-ngay
3sg+NOM ‘water’-TR-do+PURP ‘vegetable’-PL.
He wants to water the vegetables.

dig-it-out-gurray
‘dig out’-TR-do+PAST.
(He) dug (something) out.

*Some also admit that they feel that English, too, has a ‘deep’ side which they cannot fathom. My collaborator, the artist Tulo Gordon, has often remarked to me that when English speakers get together and start talking in this ‘deep’ language, he knows that he will not be able to follow the discussion, and takes relieved refuge in his deafness.*
or even the following mouthful:

\[
dhana \text{ ngamugurrayga-mun nganhi } tease-it-gurraalay \text{ galbaaygu}
\]

3pl+NOM many-ERG 1sg+ACC ‘tease’-TR-do+PAST+CONT long

They all kept teasing me all the way (along the road).

The existence of significant variation in English registers is, here, imported to Guugu Yimidhirr.68

A last important feature of language at Hopevale is both obvious and unexpectedly complex. Choosing one language or another (or more accurately, selecting a particular mix of available varieties for a given moment of speech) is clearly a matter of matching appropriate talk to context. But the conditioning criteria may be subtle and multifold. One selects a register for the time and place, but also for the topic, for one’s interlocutors, even for people who are in a position to overhear.69 And if the context under-determines the choice, one also selects a register creatively, to communicate something further by one’s very choice of words.

Let me illustrate the brute facts of contextual determination with a personal anecdote. One dark night in October 1984 I was with a group of Hopevale people trying to right an overturned Land Rover which had slid down a steep bank after trying to push a stalled motorcar. Our conversation was almost entirely in Guugu Yimidhirr, punctuated by individual English words: ‘spanner,’ ‘torch,’ ‘oil,’ etc. At one point, speaking to a youth who had been helping hold the bonnet lid up, I said, in Guugu Yimidhirr: ‘Hey, shine that torch over here, will you?’ Another person present came up to me and said, in a whisper, ‘No, that’s one of those Lockhart boys; he only knows English.’ Except for a single crucial fact (that the boy I didn’t recognise came from Lockhart), of which I, only recently arrived in the community, was ignorant, Guugu Yimidhirr (supplemented in the predictable automobile garage way) was the appropriate language for the moment; but being a competent speaker also involves knowing who one’s interlocutors are, and tailoring one’s words to their ears. In this respect I had demonstrated my socio-linguistic incompetence.

I will end this paper by examining Noreen Pym’s main conclusions about language change at Hopevale, in light of my own observations, and some specific fragments of actual Hopevale speech from natural contexts. Pym argues (p.156):

The major result of the changes in life style is that the young people are no longer acquiring the traditional language. [. . .] Traditional language in all its fullness is now spoken only by the elderly to each other. Less traditional forms of the language and a mixture of Guugu Yimidhirr and English are spoken only in some homes and between some people, mainly in social situations [sic]. Outside the home and in formal situations the universal language is English. [. . .] For today’s young people the language with prestige is English.

68 Bruce Rigsby has suggested, in a letter, that the historical evidence indicates that both the -em and -it forms existed very early in Queensland pidgin English, and that the -it form may in fact have preceded the -em form. Nonetheless, at Hopevale, the best synchronic evidence for the sociolinguistic values attached to these forms is, I think, the fact that certain speakers regularly ‘upgrade’ or ‘correct’ their borrowed English verbs, by substituting an -it form for -em when correcting their own speech, in citation forms.

69 Having a tabooed relative within earshot was enough to induce traditional Guugu Yimidhirr speakers to use the avoidance vocabulary of ‘brother-in-law’ speech. See Haviland 1979b.
By ‘traditional language’ Pym understands the range of lexical, morphological and syntactic devices I elicited from accomplished Guugu Yimidhirr speakers and described in Haviland 1979a. In fact, Pym’s method was to use as her corpus a collection of the English free glosses for a variety of Guugu Yimidhirr sentences in that grammatical sketch, which she presented to her informants, asking them to render them back into Guugu Yimidhirr. Deviations from the ‘original’ Guugu Yimidhirr forms she interprets as changes in the modern language. Cases where English words appear in the re-translations, Pym interprets as instances of ‘loss’, offering a series of possible rationales to explain such loss: English specific words, she suggests, replace more general Guugu Yimidhirr words; Guugu Yimidhirr words that are ‘too hard to say’ are replaced by their allegedly more pronounceable English equivalents; and so on.

On the other hand, I maintain that all speakers at Hopevale, both young and old, employ elements from both Guugu Yimidhirr and different varieties of English, in a wide range of contexts, both at home and at large, both formal and informal, and with different sorts of interlocutors and audiences. To support this claim I will let Hopevale people speak to the issue for themselves, by presenting several fragments of recorded natural conversation.

Is it true that younger people are no longer acquiring Guugu Yimidhirr? Not trusting my own observations, I interviewed my two daughters, aged seven and fifteen during their most recent visit to Hopevale in late 1984. The younger reported that, in the two houses where she spent the most time, one family never spoke to each other in Guugu Yimidhirr (although I myself speak to both parents, people in their late forties, in both English and Guugu Yimidhirr); whereas in the other, her playmates always talked to each other in Guugu Yimidhirr, only occasionally making allowances for my daughter’s limited knowledge of the Aboriginal language. My fifteen-year-old daughter, heavily involved in Hopevale teenage society (and a fluent speaker of Hopevale English) made the following observations:

Her friends use Guugu Yimidhirr for ‘talking about the bush’ and also for ‘swearing’ and ‘typical expressions — words they use a lot.’ Guugu Yimidhirr, that is, is topically appropriate. It is also contextually appropriate:

down at the creek [where kids go to swim on hot afternoons], they use it [Guugu Yimidhirr] a lot more. My older daughter drew the same contrast between the two families that my younger daughter mentioned: one spoke very little Guugu Yimidhirr between themselves (in her presence), whereas the other spoke very little else. Finally, she commented that one of her friends, an unmarried girl of almost twenty, ‘could use the proper word’; that is, she could correct an inappropriate bit of Guugu Yimidhirr usage, and occasionally did so in talking with her mates. These impressions suggest to me that ‘prestige’, a notion perhaps less slippery than usual in

70 There is no doubt that Guugu Yimidhirr, like all languages, is changing, and some of these changes are documented in Haviland 1979a (see, for example, section 3.5.1, p.85). However, I have strong suspicions that such ‘changes’ as the alleged loss of vowel length or of catalytic superimposed genitive constructions simply represent Pym’s inadequate understanding of Guugu Yimidhirr syntax and morphology. For example, bini ‘die+PAST’, in modern Guugu Yimidhirr, still contrasts with binti ‘die+NONPAST’, despite Pym’s claim that ‘[t]here was some confusion as to which syllable should be lengthened (p.159?’.

71 My daughters have spent a total of more than three years at Hopevale since we recommenced our research there in 1976, and I think their observations are at least as interesting as those of, say, ‘two women who gave some sentences on condition they were not identified’ (Pym 1984, p.153).
the context of trend-conscious teenagers, does not unambiguously accrue only to English.

Neither is it clear that Guugu Yimidhirr never appears in 'formal' contexts outside the home. The following fragment of a transcript is taken from a formal meeting of the Hopevale church council on 17 August 1980, called to discuss plans for reorganising Hopevale administration. Both the white staff and Aboriginal elders were present as an Aboriginal pastor explained financial aspects of the new plan. This man, in his mid-fifties, learned Guugu Yimidhirr as a child at Cape Bedford. He is also accomplished at standard English. After some initial language switching, the speaker settled into formal English for making his presentation. Interestingly, he makes a brief foray into Guugu Yimidhirr in the midst of the monologue, for rhetorical reasons which seem obvious in the context of his overall purposes and intentions, as an advocate for a new scheme of self-management for the community.

[Fragment 1: Speech to Church Council meeting, 17 August 1980 discussing self-management at Hopevale]

1: so the government then will
2: give the money to Council
5: when they give the money to the council
6: then the council divide it to these heads
7: so much money
8: and of course they gotta work out how much they
gonna have too
9: as their budget
10: to work for these other things

[Each department will be responsible for maintaining its own budget, and making requests to the Council who in turn make direct financial requests to Government funding agencies.]

11: but (cough) its not going to come on
12: to you straight away
13: but this is what
14: uh
15: we gotta work into the place
16: and
17: it might take a long time for us to learn
18: nothing new [...] for the white people
19: it's simple
20: because they grew up with it
21: but for us we got to learn
22: and we got to be prepared to learn
23: if we going to run this place ourselves
24: and if we not gon' to learn
25: then we gonna make a muck of everything

72 Fragment 1 is transcribed as a monologue, with occasional contextual notes enclosed in square brackets, and with the scattered Guugu Yimidhirr words glossed as they occur.
and then the white man gonna say
yeah, we gave the Aboriginal their rights and
everything
look what they doing with it
they just making a muck of it
and
it has been said before
and
let's not get them to say it again
every time
a responsibility was given to bama
[Australian person]
they destroyed it
[The speaker now begins a short illustrative tale, gradually slipping into an informal English, and then into Guugu Yimidhirr.]
and I can tell you many instances
in Aurukun, young fella
very bright young fella
could run the store
white fella said right
he good man
he can run the store for us
all right
started off good
but you know what happens in our community
you know
don't you know
this young fella had
nyulu had mugay
[he had a paternal uncle]
nyulu had gami
[he had a grandfather]
nyulu had muguurgarr
[he had maternal uncles]
dhuuwyaygarr
[friends]
they used to come hey!
I got no money
you let
I'll book-'em, eh?
[i.e., ‘book’ on credit.]
all right
book-em-gurraayga
[they used to book (things)]
gami gadaayga
[Grandfather used to come]
LIFE HISTORY OF A SPEECH COMMUNITY

60: wanhdharra, I got no money boy  
[What shall I do?]
61: ganaa ngayu book-em-gurral  
[How about if I book (the stuff) on credit?]
62: yeah book-em  
63: before long  
64: the wangarr seen it  
[white men]
65: dhana never helped him  
[they]
[The speaker begins to slide back into formal English.]
66: they went on and went on and went on  
67: I think it went  
68: the last I heard it was  
69: I think it was 40,000 dollars that store was in debt  
70: and what did the wangarr do then?  
[whitemen]
71: they just told him to get out of the store  
72: the last time I went down there  
73: that young fella  
74: he was a drunkard  
75: you wouldn’t think  
76: that was that same young fella that was runnin the store  
77: he has  
78: wrecked  
79: completely wrecked

Notice that the speaker makes a gradual transition to Guugu Yimidhirr, moving through a reduced pidgin-like English register (at lines 37ff., where verbs are no longer fully conjugated on the standard pattern), to a syntax that mixes Guugu Yimidhirr and English words, and finally to nearly full Guugu Yimidhirr sentences (at lines 58-61, where the verb bears the ga ‘habitual’ affix appropriate to traditional Guugu Yimidhirr storytelling). Having finished painting his vignette of Aboriginal exploitation of kinship relations — a vignette which obviously works most vividly in the Aboriginal language — he slides back, around line 67, to standard English. Using Guugu Yimidhirr allows this skillful speaker not only to describe but to evoke the pattern of Aboriginal dependence on kin that, in this context, he wants to warn against.

Similarly, even those contexts where one might expect full Guugu Yimidhirr conversation are not always occasions for the unadulterated Aboriginal language. The following fragment was recorded on October 3rd, 1984, as a group of elderly men sat in the shade of a mango tree, recalling events of their youth.73 The storyteller, D, appears to intersperse an

73 Of course, my presence in the conversation may have induced people to use English instead of Guugu Yimidhirr on occasion, although people seem to address me directly at least as much in Guugu Yimidhirr as in English over the duration of the encounter.
otherwise Guugu Yimidhirr narrative with English comments and dialogue for both rhetorical and dramatic effect. For example, he 'quotes' his own spoken words as opposed to his thoughts (contrasts lines 22-24 with 27-33); in this context — a fight with an English speaking interlocutor — he also uses language shifts to distinguish protagonists. Moreover, he expresses in English some contextual information which belongs most appropriately to English discourse, or which would be difficult to express in Guugu Yimidhirr (lines 18-19, for example).

The story tells of a time in the 1950s when the narrator and a companion ran away from a stock job in the bush north of Hopevale. They walked, with no food and almost no water, for three days, to reach home. Their departure was the result of a fight with white stockmen that arose after the Hopevale men had asked for an early distribution of their tobacco rations.74

[Fragment 2: a fight at Wakooka station. Hopevale Mission, 3 October 1984. D tells his interlocutors (all men from forty to seventy years of age) about a fight he had on a stock job when he was a young man. Some of the Hopevale men on the station had run out of tobacco, and wanted a further issue one day in advance of normal ration day, prompting a fight with some white stockmen.]

2 d; nyulu R**-nda waaday R** said (to me).
3 3sNOM R**-ERG say-PAST

3 nyun-eh?
you, hey!

4 you ask old Shea

[Here D starts reporting R**'s speech in English, but switches to Guugu Yimidhirr in his dramatic portrayal.]

5 j; aaa=

6 d; =nyundu dhaabanga-la nhangu ngalgal-ngu You ask him for tobacco.
2sNOM ask-IMP 3sACC tobacco-PURP

7 nganhdhaan run out We have run out.
1pNOM

8 j; aaa

[ ]

9 r; but that fella he-

74 This and the following conversational transcripts are excerpted from fully transcribed tape-recordings. For each line containing Guugu Yimidhirr formatives, I show the original spoken words (1st line), followed by morpheme-by-morpheme glosses (2nd line), followed by a free English gloss sometimes set in a separate column to the right for clarity. Names of speakers and other people mentioned have been abbreviated. The symbols ']' and '[' mark overlaps, where two or more speakers talk simultaneously. The '=' links two utterances that follow each other directly without an intervening pause. Three dots enclosed in square brackets [ . . . ] indicate that lines have been deleted from the transcript at this point.
[A member of the audience objects that R** was not a smoker.]

10 j; nhanuugu wunay? You had some yourself?
2sGEN-EMPH exist-PAST

11 r; he don’t smoke

12 d; yeah

13 j; nhanu-gu bada wuna-y You yourself still had some?
2sGEN-EMPH down exist-PAST

[Another interlocutor wants to know whether D himself still had tobacco or not at that point.]

14 d; yeah ngadhu Yeah (I had) some.
1sGEN

15 ngayu gurra-y gaari I said, ‘No.’
1sNOM say-PAST NEG

16 I got ngalgal I have some tobacco (still).
tobacco

17 j; heh heh

[The next scene-setting comment could not be easily said in Guugu Yimidhirr, which has no straightforward way to express numbers as large as 18; talk about age belongs to English discourse at Hopevale.]

18 d; ngayu was 1sNOM
19 eighteen, I think

20 j; iii

21 d; mmm

[D returns to his dramatised dialogue with R**.]

22 nyundu dhaabanga-la You ask him!
2sNOM ask -IMP

23 gaari ngayu yinil No, I’m afraid.
NEG 1sNOM afraid

24 gaari-ga ngayu galmba yinil No, I’m scared too.
no-EMPH 1sNOM also afraid

25 ha ha ha

26 ngalgal dhaabangadhi So I asked for tobacco.
tobacco ask-PAST

[The dialogue now switches to English.]

27 heey, Roy

28 these fellows run out of smokes
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1985 9:2

29  j;  aa
30  d;  any chance
31  ration day tomorrow, see
32  j;  aaa
33  d;  this one day before
34  j;  mmm
35  d;  dhana yinharrin wangarr guli gada-y But these white fellows got
3pNOM these white man angry come-PAST angry then.
gurra
and
[...]
42  d;  n- not ration day for these fellas
[...]
47  d;  yarrra  gurra-y That's what they said.
this way say-PAST
48  ngayu gailmab wangarr-gal gurra-y So then I said to the white
1sNOM also white man-ADESS say-PAST fellows:
49  eh
50  you- you payin for that smokes?
51  no
52  well we payin for the smokes
53  j;  mmm
56  d;  wouldn't hurt if we get it the day before
57  [After a while a fist fight broke out, and D describes it in Guugu Yimidhirr.]
1  d;  gundaadhi gurra so we had a fight.
hit-REFLtPAST also
2  wali dhanaan gunda-y I gave them a good beating.
around 3plACC hit-PAST
3  j;  haaa
[But the white antagonist demands new weapons.]
4  d;  mmm
5  I can't fight with the knuckle!
6  fight with a stick
7  ma ganaa Ok, that'll be fine!
   alright! alright
8  j;  mmm
LIFE HISTORY OF A SPEECH COMMUNITY

9 d; ngayu galmba yugu nhanma-y
IsNOM also stick take-PAST
So I also grabbed a stick.

10 j; oh no!=
[But D performs his alleged challenging reply in Guugu Yimidhirr.]

11 d; =ma gad-ii nganhdhaan
Hey! come-IMP 1p1NOM
baga:-dhi-nhu
poke-REFL-PURP
Ok, come on, let’s start poking each other!

12 r; ha ha

13 d; duda-y wugurr-in wali
run-PAST follow-PAST around
They ran away, and I chased them around.

14 dhawuunh manaadhi
friend become-PAST
And then we made up and became friends.

Most ordinary conversation at Hopevale is a more balanced mix between English and Guugu Yimidhirr, and there is unquestionably an asymmetry between ages: younger people speak more English and less Guugu Yimidhirr than do older people. But this generational skewing is not absolute, and in the context of practical activities switching between codes is rapid and often seemingly arbitrary. In the following fragment, several Hopevale people are packing up a four-wheel-drive vehicle in preparation for a return to the Mission after several days camping and fishing by a river. Everyone is tired, and there is a certain anxiety in the air about reaching a difficult river crossing before the light fails. In the transcribed speech, several different mini-conversations are taking place within the overall framework of packing the truck. T is a man in his sixties, L a woman of about the same age, D a woman slightly younger; H is T’s twenty-year-old daughter, and C is L’s daughter of a similar age. Thus, as a practical matter, T and H must negotiate the packing of their joint belongings, as must L and C. All people present are comfortable in both Guugu Yimidhirr and English.

[Fragment 3: packing a truck, Jepsen’s crossing, 10 August 1979]

1 c; yarra wanhun-bi?
that who-GEN-GEN
Whose is that thing over there?

2 t; hmm

3 h; ngadhu towel leave the towel
IsGEN
That’s my towel, leave the towel!

4 leave that bag out!

5 I carry one bag you carry one bag!

6 d; all in one, H****

7 all in one
[...]

10 t; H****, yii nhanu?
H****, is this yours?
this 2sACC

195
11 c; I'll be glad to sleep on my own bed tonight

[T urges the others to hurry up, because he is worried about getting across a muddy place on the river.]

12 t; ma hurry up =
Hey! Hurry up

13 bama nganhdhaan wanto cross-em gurra-nhu We want to cross that whatsit-
man 1p1NOM want to do-PURP name . . .
ngaaanaarru
whatchamacallit

14 c; eeh

15 t; crossing muddy crossing
(cross that) muddy crossing.

16 l; dagu nganhdhaan cross-it gurra-1 Well, we want to cross (the river)
thing 1p1NOM do-NONP (or) we'll have to camp there.

17 c; allright

[L responds to T's urgings (and uses an 'up-graded' version of the English cross-it). Then she switches to English to make a bantering riposte to her daughter C's remark at line 11 above.]

18 l; you won't be saying lovely bed
19 because I'm going to sleep there behind
[. . .]
21 c; more tea in there?
22 l; wash that thing out first
23 yarra nhanu camera ga! Hey, over there is your camera!
that 1sACC VOC

[The last remark, in Guugu Yimidhirr, was addressed to me.]

24 c; mamaa, babaa!
mother father

25 yii half of the thing gotta go in that thing there
here

26 d; ehh, nhangu yii Hey, his thing is here.
3sGEN here

27 ngaanaarru camera-ngu His thing for the camera.
whatchamacallit

In this passage, speakers of both ages seem to use both English and Guugu Yimidhirr, and one of the few discernable patterns in the selection of language is neither topical nor contex-
tual, but *organisational*: speakers seem to respond to another's turn *in the same language*, although they may switch languages between such sequences of linked turns.

The sensitivity of speakers to the *linguistic context* in which a turn at speaking may occur is well demonstrated in the following short fragment in which an elderly man (a recognised expert on Guugu Yimidhirr) and his thirty-year-old son describe to my wife and me the subtleties of social security payments. Speaking to me, M (the son) uses Guugu Yimidhirr or Hopevale English; speaking to my wife Leslie (who at the time understood very little Guugu Yimidhirr), he switches clearly into a more elaborate standard English.

[Fragment 4: talking about the dole, Hopevale 26 October 1977. B is a sixty-year-old expert Guugu Yimidhirr speaker, M his thirty-year-old son. J is the author, and L (whose speech is not quoted) the author's wife.]

1  m; that gotta pay us
2  social
3  ngandhanun wudhil nambal (That) gives us money.
   1p1DAT give money

[Although B is an expert speaker of Inland Guugu Yimidhirr, his son M here uses the *Coastal* word for 'give' in a form, *wudhil*, which B told me repeatedly was incorrect. M's mother, however, does use the word.]

4  so much, you know
5  j; that social
6  m; yeah
7  like ngayu dyiiraal-dhirr Like me, with a wife . . .
   1sNOM wife-having
8  might get 59
9  well nyulu might be dyiiraal-mul Well, someone who doesn't have
   3sNOM wife-PRIV a wife
10  he might get 30 35 or something like that

[I break in to ask whether unemployed adult women also receive social security payments.]

11  j; nhila gabiirr-gabiirr warrga walu J Well, now (what about) big girls
   now girl-REDUP large like like J?
12  m; yo
13  ganaa (?work?) That's alright (for them to work).
   alright
14  but they can't get a job
15  yii
16  here
17  they gotta get job round Brisbane somewhere,
   you know


17 b; Brisbane
18 j; ngaanii?
   why?
19 m; hey can’t get job here, nothing
20 b; they could be
21
   hospital-bi ganaa
   hospital-LOC alright
22 j; dhanangan
   3p1GEN
23 dhananganh nambil social wanhdharra? 3p1GEN money how
   What about their (getting)
   money from Social Security?
24 m; social they still get social
[B at line 25 uses both English and Guugu Yimidhirr verbs.]
25 b; still get maanaarna getting
   [...] They still — they still are getting it.
32 m; we still get that nambal money
33 nhayun dhana split-em-up gurra-l that+ABS 3pNOM do-NONP
   nhaa-dhi see-PAST
   They just split that money up, see?
34 social money
35 to us
36 nganhdhanun 1p1GEN
   (That’s) ours.
37 j; but what about these gabiir-gabiir, no job? girl-REDUP
38 and social wanhdharra?
   how
39 m; nhayun dhanaan still that+ABS 3p1ACC
   They still (get) that
40 they still on social
41 b; still maanaarna getting
42 j; still maanaa get
   (oh), they still get it.
They’re on social services.

social-service-bi dhana
social-service-LOC 3pNOM

still on social

(L comments in English that social and unemployment benefits are different)

[M continues his explanation, now using standard English until, at line 51, he switches his attention away from L and back to B and J.]

it’s different

I think it’s different to man and girls like you know

but if they want to get a job they have to go down Brisbane

or Cairns to get a job

[Here M switches his audience, and begins to talk about the work experience of his sister, who worked for a time in Cooktown.]

but I know this one here been working in

nagaar pub-bi
EAST+ALL pub-LOC

In the east (i.e., Cooktown), in a pub.

If it were the case that children at Hopevale were not acquiring Guugu Yimidhirr, then, whatever the complexities of code-switching in the community, and despite the possibilities for subtle communication offered by the competing language varieties, Guugu Yimidhirr would have little chance to survive. Children’s Guugu Yimidhirr is certainly flawed, in the ears of older speakers, and many young people at Hopevale claim that they cannot understand the ‘deep’ words of adults’ speech. For example, several of my elderly teachers at Hopevale joked with me about the speech of one fourteen-year-old boy in the household where I live, who asked me, holding up an old T-shirt,

yii Leslie-bi
this Leslie-GEN

Is this Leslie’s?

The error here is the choice of the genitive suffix -bi, instead of the correct -wi, which follows a vowel-final noun. (The mistake parallels the misuse of the English articles a and an.) Such mistakes provoke laughter, rather than dismay, at Hopevale, perhaps because language skills, like most other skills, are not acquired quickly in Hopevale society. Instead, there is little pressure on children to become fully competent, either linguistically or socially, until well past the age acceptable in many European circles.

Nonetheless, children and adolescents at Hopevale are actively learning Guugu Yimidhirr. Their everyday speech displays considerable and sophisticated knowledge of the multiple varieties of Hopevale speech. Even their speech play, as the next two fragments show, involves use of Guugu Yimidhirr words. In the first short fragment, two opposite sex cousins, both pre-teenagers, engage in a brief word game in which one gets the other to pronounce a word, so as to be able to append an insulting or challenging remark.
[Fragment 5: a word game, Hopevale 14 August 1979. M and Co are cousins, both about 9 or 10.]

1 m; say it, say ‘not me’
2 co; not me
3 m; you sleepin with me
4 say ‘not me’
5 co; not me
6 sleepin with me
7 m; just say ‘not me’
8 co; not me
9 m; you sleepin with me tonight
10 say ‘october’
11 co; october
12 m; say ‘dunhu’
   husband
13 co; dunhu
14 yii nhanu
   This one is yours.
   here 2sACC
15 m; you my dunhu
16 co; ha ha

In the following short sequence, recorded in the kitchen of our household on the same day, Co tries to tell tales about uncle Ca (a boy one year his senior) for teasing and, probably, hitting another child S. Much of the commentary, both by Ca and by the other children (B and M are two girls of about ten), is in Guugu Yimidhirr. Moreover, the kids indulge in a bit of further linguistic play revolving around the word ngambaayngu which is used in ‘deep’ Guugu Yimidhirr to mark an action as done ‘unconsciously, unawares, stealthily, or in secret’ — a word which none of them is quite sure how to pronounce.

[Fragment 6: telling tales on a cousin’s misdeed, Hopevale 14 August 1979.]

1 co; =Grampa
2 you know what Ca**** bin do
3 he bin teasin uh S*****
4 m; guya guya guya
   not not not
5 co; yeah, you ask S*****
   [I
6 ca; guya ga
   not VOC
7 b; Yeah, Grampa

200
Children, that year, used the Guugu Yimidhirr word *gambul* to signify that something another had just said was untruthful, or that something the speaker had said wasn’t really true but only intended to fool. In line 20, B, unsure of the proper word, repeats her own version *nambaalgu* (which really means just ‘stone’).]

20 b; (??) nambaalgu, eh? C**** J***

in secret

He did it slowly and secretly.

22 ca; gambul, boy!

You’re lying, boy!

stomach
[Fragment 7: being sick at boarding school. Recorded 14 August 1979, at Hopevale Mission. Lo is a youth of about 15, and L his fifty-five year old mother. C is a ten-year-old nephew, listening in. L had been ill, and had been confined to his dormitory, unable to go to class or to go out.]

1) ngali L***
   1duNOM

   L*** and I (were both kept in sick).

2) c; he he

3) wanhunda
   who-ERG

   Who (did it, i.e., kept you in while sick)?

4) lo; Miss X.

5) When I

6) nyulu bin gammon sleep
   3sNOM pretend

   She was pretending to sleep.

7) and I bin get up

8) go outside

9) soon's I bin go nyulu bin start now
   3sNOM

   As soon as I left, then she started up.

10) and nyulu bin standing up on the bed
    3sNOM

   and she was standing up on the bed.

   [...]

12) L*** was lookin at my

13) ngaabaay
    head

14) l; wuuguul-dhirr?
    louse-COMIT

   Did you have lice?

15) lo; too much

16) c; ngaanaa?
    what?

17) lo; mm

   and we've got

18) and

20) yii nyulu
    here 3sNOM

   She was (standing) here.

21) we didn't

22) I bin go sleep

23) nyulu bin come
    3sNOM

   And she came.

24) in that bed

202
25 nyulu bin come with one hand stand up
3sNOM
She came up with one hand, and

yerra bin
over there

[ 

26 1; you wasn’t using your shampoo my boy

27 shampoo nyundu wasn’t using it
2sNOM
The shampoo, you weren’t using it.

I have tried to give the reader a taste of the fascinating complexity and richness of Hopevale speech. It should at least be clear that Guugu Yimidhirr lives, although it is certainly neither static, nor unchanging, nor, sadly, prospering. There is no support for the overly simply idea of fixed and idealised codes, in the face of subtle gradations between different speech varieties. A speech community is a social entity, whose members’ biographies are at least as important as their linguistic ‘competences’ in setting the form of speech. Nor should we think in absolutes: it is possible to speak a language more or less well, and even the barely-competent or the half-competent speaker can use a speech variety for effective communication. The relationship between identity and language is difficult and ambivalent even for members of a speech community; their ambivalence appears importantly in their relations with outside observers and experts. Still, I am in complete agreement with Noreen Pym when she concludes that “[i]t is the present speakers of Guugu Yimidhirr themselves who will decide whether the language dies out completely.’ It is these same speakers who must seize responsibility for their community, and the languages that help bind it together.75

75 Our research at Hopevale has been supported by the Department of Anthropology, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, and by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. Archival investigations have been facilitated by the Lutheran Church of Australia, the Neuen-dettelsau Mission Society, the Hopevale Mission Board and aided by grants from the Director, Research School of Pacific Studies, A.N.U., and a grant to Dr Leslie K. Haviland from the A.R.G.S. I am especially grateful to the late Billy Jacko, and my friends Roger Hart, Walter and Lizzie Jack, and Tulo Gordon, for their help and encouragement in my work at Hopevale; and to Bruce Rigsby, Tom Dutton, Leslie Haviland, Norman McQuown, and Thomas Smith-Stark for suggestions on earlier versions of this paper.
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ASPECTS OF THE SOCIO-POLITICAL HISTORY OF NGUKURR (ROPER RIVER) AND ITS EFFECT ON LANGUAGE CHANGE

John Sandefur

INTRODUCTION¹

In this paper we will consider some of the social, political and historical factors which have been relevant to the decline of traditional languages and the rise of a modern² language in one particular Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory. The modern language, which developed out of the pidgin English lingua franca of the pastoral frontier (Dutton 1983, Harris 1984, Sandefur 1984), is Kriol; the community is Ngukurr.

Ngukurr grew out of an Anglican mission, officially known as Roper River Mission, that was established in 1908 by the Church Missionary Society [colloquially and hereafter referred to as CMS]. The settlement is situated on Aboriginal-owned land just inside the southeastern border of Arnhem Land. Ngukurr functions essentially as a private town, with access by non-Aboriginal people being restricted.

The Aboriginal population of the settlement has characteristically been variable, changing with the seasonal movements of people. In the past up to 50 per cent of the peak, wet season, population would move to cattle stations in the region during the dry season. Today the peak population is approximately five hundred, with movement being primarily directed towards a dozen outstations which have developed within a hundred kilometres of Ngukurr since 1977. Up to 60 per cent of the peak population may be away from Ngukurr during the dry season. Half of the population of Ngukurr is under sixteen years of age. Some twenty basically transient non-Aboriginal people also live in the settlement.

Ngukurr is a fairly isolated community. It is located some three hundred kilometres by road from its supply centre, Katherine, and is just over two hundred kilometres from the nearest town. The highway to the community can be cut during the wet season for up to six months.

The language most commonly used by Aborigines at Ngukurr today is Kriol. It was in the Ngukurr area that creolisation of the pidgin English mentioned earlier first took place, resulting in a deeper 'time-base' for Kriol at Ngukurr than at most other Aboriginal communities. The language in the Ngukurr area consequently shows signs of being more developed, and its

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¹ I am indebted to John Harris and Susanne Hargrave for their helpful comments in the preparation of this paper.
² I use 'modern' here in the sense of 'non-traditional' after the Aboriginal Languages Association [ALA]: "Aboriginal Languages shall mean Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island languages, traditional or modern (including Pidgins, Creoles and Aboriginal varieties of English)" (quoted from the ALA Newsletter, No. 1, April, 1981, page 1).
speakers in general have a greater understanding of the nature and significance of the language. The second most common language spoken at Ngukurr is English. The only traditional Aboriginal language that is actively used by a significant segment of the community is Ritharrngu. Speakers of up to two dozen traditional languages, however, can be found at Ngukurr and many first-language Kriol speakers may have second-language command of one or more of these.

GENERAL SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Socio-political change at Ngukurr cannot be fully understood without reference to changing attitudes and changing policies in the wider Australian community. We will, therefore, briefly consider the broader background before examining the specific situation at Ngukurr.
The history of European-Aboriginal relations in Australia can be described (after Thiele 1982) as falling into three broad stages: neglect, direct control and indirect control. The stage of neglect was the long period of the conquest of the Aboriginal peoples and the gaining of control of their lands by Europeans. Much of this conquest was accomplished through gross brutality; some of it through the establishment of missions and government settlements. The conquest of Aboriginal peoples led in many cases to the demoralisation of those who survived the violence. Governments generally responded in the late 1800s and early 1900s to the problem of what to do with the demoralised remnants of Aboriginal civilisation by instituting ‘protection’ policies to ‘smooth the dying pillow’ of a race that was ‘doomed to pass away’, an approach that neglected to address itself seriously to the problems that dispossession of lands and maltreatment had produced.

The stage of neglect began to end in the late 1920s when Elkin and others became convinced that the protectionist policies should be replaced with policies based on the realisation that Aborigines may not die out. Largely in response to pressure from an informed public opinion, government policy was changed in 1936 with citizenship being the goal of an assimilation process. The new policy implied the development and welfare of Aborigines as citizens in contrast to the idea of the previous policy of protecting a dying race.

Under the new policy the people were materially ‘cared’ for, but their traditions, including languages, were neglected and even directly or indirectly suppressed. The implementation of this new policy, however, was interrupted by World War Two. After the war, details of the new welfare system through which the assimilation policy was to be implemented were finalized, with welfare procedures coming into operation in the early 1950s.

The implementation of the welfare system under the assimilation policy brought in the second stage of European-Aboriginal relations, that of direct control. During the 1950s the Commonwealth Government began to take an active interest in the running of remote Aboriginal settlements in the Northern Territory, with settlements being developed into ‘springboard’ institutions for the purpose of preparing Aborigines for assimilation. Most government-sponsored activities were directed towards this end, with the traditional Aboriginal economy being further broken down under the pressure from institutionalisation, enforced English schooling, cultural domination and manipulation, and economic dependency.

During this period Aborigines became more vocal and politically involved, with many demanding equal rights and having the support of some non-Aboriginal groups. It was thus becoming increasingly difficult for the government to neglect Aborigines. In the Northern Territory a new social welfare ordinance in 1964 ended legal discrimination and resulted in the ‘withdrawal of the whole superstructure of quite rigid controls’ (Rowley 1972:406). The following year the government shifted the emphasis of its policy from one of active contempt for Aboriginal culture to one of toleration and respect. This shift in emphasis was the beginning of a move away from assimilation, which had been directed at the eradication of all vestiges of Aboriginal culture and traits, towards an integration policy which would allow the maintenance of Aboriginal culture and identity in a pluralistic Australian society. The Referendum of 1967 brought citizenship to Aborigines and they were now ‘free’ to integrate into the broader Australian society on supposedly equal terms with Europeans.

The third and most recent stage of European-Aboriginal relations, that of indirect control, officially came into being with the announcement in December 1972 of the self-determination policy of the newly elected Australian Labor Party. The ousted Liberal-Country Party had, in fact, been also slowly moving in that direction. In January 1972 the then Prime
Minister had stated that the government recognised the rights of individual Aborigines to effective choice about the degree to which and the pace at which they could come to identify themselves with the wider Australian society, and that the role of the government should increasingly be to enable the Aborigines to achieve their goals by their own efforts. These were important changes in the stated philosophy and objectives of policy and indicated that the Liberal-Country Party was abandoning its policy of integration in favour of allowing Aborigines to lead a life separate from other Australians. When the Liberal and National parties were returned to power in 1975, they continued to support a policy somewhat similar to that of the Australian Labor Party, although the label was changed to ‘self-management’ to reflect new interests now influential in government. Neither political party has acknowledged separate development for Aborigines as a goal, but it is clearly a consequence of the policies of self-determination and self-management.

These policy changes of the early 1970s have, in essence, only brought policy into line with reality, for the notion of separate development was implied in the establishment of remote Aboriginal settlements (e.g. see Elkin 1944:45). Implicit in these new policies is an acceptance on the part of the government that the integration of Aborigines, especially those in remote areas, into the wider European-dominated social and economic system is not possible or at least is likely to take a very long time. One of the effects of the new government approach is that the geographic isolation of remote Aborigines can be maintained. The government is reducing the likelihood of large-scale migration to towns and cities by raising physical living standards on settlements, promoting an ideology of self-determination and separate development, and influencing Aborigines to accept that separate development will bring benefits. Thus it is that the settlements that were originally established to promote assimilation are tending to have the opposite longterm effect.

**PRE-EUROPEAN CONTACT: pre-1845**

It is not known when nor whence the Aborigines first arrived to take up residence in the Northern Territory. Conservative scholarly opinion accepts at least 30,000 to 40,000 years for the occupation of Australia and much earlier dates than this are being suggested. Throughout those years there appear to have been several waves of migration and movement of languages. The evidence suggests that the linguistic mosaic pattern which existed when Europeans first entered Australia would have spanned only a small fraction of the total time that the first Australians had spent in the land, and it is not known when nor how that pattern developed (Powell 1982:13-15).

Today there are nine major traditional languages represented at Ngukurr (Mara, Warrak, Alawa, Manggarai, Ngandi, Ngakalan, Nungubuyu, Rembarrnga and Ritharrngu). Only one of these languages, as was pointed out earlier, is still spoken by a significant number of residents at Ngukurr. One of the major reasons why Ritharrngu is still actively spoken at Ngukurr is that the Ritharrngu people are the latecomers to Ngukurr, having first arrived in the 1940s in contrast to the other groups who have been represented at Ngukurr virtually from the year of its establishment.

Before the arrival of Europeans, contact with outsiders was virtually unknown by most of the Aborigines of the Ngukurr area. For two hundred years prior to the arrival of the first Europeans, however, Macassans from the southern Celebes had regularly visited the coast of
Arnhem Land in search of Australian trepang. Some of the ancestors of the Nunggubuyu, Wandarang and Mara people are likely to have had contact with the Macassans, while relatively few of the ancestors of the other Ngukurr Aborigines would have had direct contact with them, for the trepang industry was limited to the coastal areas and most of the Ngukurr Aborigines come from inland areas.

The period of Macassan contact appears to have had very little influence on the traditional life of the Aborigines in southern Arnhem Land even though a Macassan camping ground was located near the mouth of the Roper River. This phase of the history of the Ngukurr area had no direct effect on Kriol, although in one respect it did help set the stage for its arrival. Contact with the Macassans resulted in the development of a pidgin variety of the Macassans' language which functioned as a lingua franca between Aborigines of different linguistic groups (Urry and Walsh 1981). This 'Macassan' language was used not only among coastal Aboriginal communities, but also between them and some of the inland groups with whom they had contact. As a result, Macassan influences may have affected Aborigines who had never seen or met a real Macassar. Thus the mechanism of an Aboriginal lingua franca based on the language of an ethnically different people with whom the Aborigines were in contact was firmly established by the time Europeans arrived.

With the increasing European presence in the Northern Territory from the mid-1800s onwards, a knowledge of English became more important than a knowledge of the Macassan language. As a result, the Macassan language began to rapidly decline, being replaced by pidgin English.

**EARLY EUROPEAN CONTACT: 1845-1908**

The 'invasion' of the Ngukurr area by Europeans began in 1845 when the exploration party of Ludwig Leichhardt passed through the area. Two other exploration expeditions, that of Augustus Charles Gregory in 1856 and John McDouall Stuart in 1862, passed through the upper reaches of the Roper River. The next recorded contact was in 1867 when Frances Cadell made an examination of 'the country around the Roper' in a paddle-steamer.

Intensive contact began with the construction of the Overland Telegraph Line between Adelaide and Darwin in the early 1870s. A supply depot was set up at Roper Bar and a sizeable township, which reached a peak non-Aboriginal population at one stage of about three hundred, was established. By 1873 most of the Overland Telegraph Line construction workers had returned south, but the Ngukurr area never recovered from their presence. The region had been opened up, and for the next three decades the government attempted to establish a permanent non-Aboriginal presence in the area. When the Overland Telegraph Line party left Roper Bar, a small community of settlers continued to live there and a store was soon built to service the 'overlanders' from Queensland, who were mostly drovers, prospectors and outlaws, as well as several cattle stations that were established in the district. Throughout the 1870s and into the 1880s the Roper River valley served as the stock route for the tens of thousands of Queensland cattle which were being driven to the developing north. The pattern of relations that developed during this time was one of Aborigines harassing the drovers and killing the cattle with the pastoralists responding with punitive expeditions.

By 1890 the situation was beginning to stabilise. Many Aborigines had been killed during the previous two decades and others had retreated into areas in Arnhem Land where the pastoralists had not penetrated. Some of the Aborigines, however, had been 'pacified' and
remained in the area. They had come to recognise the superiority of European weapons and began to accommodate to the non-Aboriginal presence, with the few permanent settlers in the district beginning to 'employ' them.

This relatively peaceful state of coexistence, however, was shattered by the large cattle syndicate, the Eastern and African Cold Storage Company. This company leased the entire eastern half of Arnhem Land comprising some 50,000 square kilometres, and purchased several cattle stations in the area, thus taking in virtually all of the country belonging to the seven major tribes of Ngukurr. In 1903 the company engaged in what has been described as 'probably one of the few authenticated instances in which Aborigines were systematically hunted' (Bauer 1964:157) and without doubt 'the most systematic extermination of Aborigines ever carried out on the Roper' (Merlan 1978:87). For a time the company employed two gangs of ten to fourteen Aborigines headed by a European or a part-European to hunt and shoot 'wild blacks' on sight. The company went into liquidation in 1908, the year the CMS established its mission station on the Roper River.

It was in this environment that the process of creolisation, which resulted in the development of Kriol, first appears to have taken place. The development and spread of Kriol appears to have been encouraged by the disruption of Aboriginal residence patterns and the reduction of the Aboriginal population consequent on non-Aboriginal occupation and development of the region. Some of the language groups became too small to be viable, while the speakers of others became dispersed over a wide area. As a result, the communities which developed around the cattle stations consisted of speakers of several different languages, with Kriol developing as the lingua franca for daily interaction in this multilingual situation. Within a decade of the turn of the century, Kriol was the main language used by school children at Roper River Mission for talking among themselves.

OLD MISSION: 1908 – WORLD WAR TWO

A new period in the history of the Ngukurr area began with the establishment of the Roper River Mission in August 1908. The mission station was located about six kilometres down river from the present community of Ngukurr. It was destroyed by floods during the wet season of 1939/40 and a new mission station built on the site of the present community. The original mission station and the events associated with it are known as 'Old Mission' by the residents of Ngukurr, so this phase of the history of Ngukurr will be referred to as 'Old Mission'.

Old Mission was established in the midst of the stage of neglect when the colonising Australians were supposedly trying to 'smooth the dying pillow' of the dispossessed original Australians. The prime motives for establishing Old Mission were humanitarian and evangelical. From the beginning the mission was to have industrial and agricultural as well as educational and spiritual concerns. Almost immediately a school and dispensary were started, followed a short time later by agricultural and stock work.

When the missionaries arrived on the Roper in 1908, Kriol, as a pidgin, was well established in the area. The leader of the first Aborigines to come and take up residence at Old Mission, for example, was able to speak it. Just over a year after its establishment, there were at times over two hundred Aborigines at the mission, with an average of seventy being there regularly. Although the Aboriginal population fluctuated as Aborigines moved to and from Old Mission unpredictably, the average population remained fairly constant throughout its thirty year history, slowly rising from seventy to a hundred by the early 1940s. A significant
feature of the demography of Old Mission is that in spite of the marked fluctuation in population, there was a small number of Aborigines who lived more or less permanently at Old Mission almost from the time it was established. The oldest positively identified mother tongue speakers of Kriol are the first generation of the children who grew up at the mission station.

Throughout its existence there were never more than a handful of missionaries in residence at any one time at Old Mission, and most missionaries remained for only a few years. The attitude of the missionaries towards Aboriginal culture and the use of Aboriginal languages, and Kriol in particular, varied. The Anglican missionaries in the Northern Territory are reputed to have adopted a rigid policy from the start, with Aboriginal culture being negatively valued. The Aborigines were encouraged to model their behaviour in all respects fundamentally on that of the European missionaries: ‘they could not change their physical appearance, but they could, and should, change all the rest’ (Berndt 1961:23). The degree to which this was true, however, depended on the particular missionaries in question. Keith Langford-Smith, for example, one of the more advanced-thinking early missionaries, wrote in 1932 that he believed three things were absolutely essential to the mission: a knowledge of the native language, a knowledge of the Aborigines’ laws and customs, and knowledge of their beliefs and myths.

A new mission constitution and policy, which was accepted in 1944 and in effect until 1962, stated that

all missionaries shall, in general, study a suitable native language, and native social customs and laws, for it is an essential part of the policy of the Society that the natives shall not be cut off from their own tribal life . . . . Great care must be taken not to adopt a merely negative attitude to things the missionary regards as evil.

This policy was re-emphasised in 1954 when a letter was circularised which stated in part that ‘the missionaries (should) be informed that the Federal Council expects them to spend time in language study’. In practice, however, the policy of studying language and culture was not always carried out, in part due to ‘busyness and a negative attitude’.3

In the early 1930s when Langford-Smith first arrived, Kriol was used by some of the missionaries. He later commented (personal communication) that ‘most of the white men spoke pidgin [Kriol], which we picked up from the natives’. He also noted that ‘all instruction was done in English or pidgin [Kriol]’, and that ‘many of [the Aborigines] were obviously unable to grasp the meaning of the English [church] service’ (1935:59,57 respectively).

Some of the missionaries, however, did not look favourably upon Kriol and disciplined those who used it. Others, while also disapproving of Kriol, found that it was necessary to use it if communication was to take place. The official mission policy in 1944 stated that:

the use of pidgin English [Kriol] shall be discouraged, and in any region where it is impracticable to base educational work on the use of any one native dialect, English shall be used, and the native trained as far as possible to speak correct English.

3 Quoted from page 1 of a mimeographed report entitled “Church Missionary Society, Linguists’ Conference, Groote Eylandt, 7-10 April, 1970”.
It should be pointed out that this policy was in essence simply a reflection of the general milieu at the time. It was generally being advocated that 'protectors and missionaries need to know Aboriginal languages . . . [but] Pidgin-English is quite unsatisfactory . . . ' for it is simply 'English perverted and mangled . . . ridiculous gibberish . . . childish babbling . . . ' that 'is useless for the conveying of any but the most concrete of directions . . . ' (Elkin n.d.:2, Strehlow 1947:xviii, and Elkin 1974[1938]:65 respectively). The language policy of the mission as a whole was much more favourable towards Aboriginal languages than was that of the government, which at that time was one of outright hostility directed towards the complete suppression and eradication not only of pidgin, but even of traditional Aboriginal languages (Wurm 1971:1034).

Traditional Aboriginal languages were still in active use throughout the Old Mission period. In the 1940s there was such a significant number of Nunggubuyu speakers that the minister set about learning the language and translated several books of the Bible into it, which were then published by the British and Foreign Bible Society. There was also an influx during the 1940s of Ritharrngu and Balamumu people from northeast Arnhem Land, although a few years later the Balamumu along with the Nunggubuyu people moved north to the newly established mission at Numbulwar.

WORLD WAR TWO

The history of the Roper River Mission itself can be divided into two parts, one before the 1950s and one after. The break between the two, although not abrupt, is very clear. The original mission station was destroyed in the 1939/40 wet season and rebuilt at a new location. The move to a new location was followed by World War Two, during which mission staff was minimal and normal mission life interrupted. Unlike the interruption of World War One, that of World War Two completely changed CMS activity in Arnhem Land. Life at Roper River Mission never settled back to what it had been.

The interruption of World War Two appears to have had several significant effects on social interaction which in turn had an impact on Kriol. To begin with, the war brought an influx of non-Aboriginal people into the north greater than ever before, with some 100,000 military personnel coming to the Northern Territory during the war. Thousands of servicemen were stationed throughout the region, manning lookout points all along the river. Children of mixed descent were evacuated to New South Wales and the mission operated with a skeleton staff. Hundreds of Aborigines were 'employed' around the service camps, many acting as guides for scouting parties and some serving on boats patrolling the waterways.

In addition, a number of special compounds were established by the Army along the Stuart Highway and Aborigines encouraged to settle in them. The compounds became meeting grounds for Aborigines from a diversity of languages and localities. The population of the compounds 'covered almost the whole gamut of contact experience, from old Darwin hands and jaded cattle station Sophisticates to people associating with Europeans for the first time' (Berndt 1961:20). Although the compounds were established only 'for the duration', when they were disbanded most of the Aborigines did not return permanently to their traditional country. The compounds thus encouraged the use of Kriol and provided a major impetus for widespread creolisation.

Another significant effect of the war was that it gave Aborigines a freedom of movement which had never before existed. Relatively few Aborigines moved outside their traditional country before the war. In many respects, the war forced them to travel through strange
country and helped many overcome their fear of moving outside familiar regions. The compounds encouraged many Aborigines to make the social adjustments to a new set of relations with members of other tribes, whose languages and customs may have seemed entirely strange, as well as with non-Aboriginal people, on their first step in their journey away from their home area. This new freedom of movement enabled many Aborigines to enter into cattle droving. After the war, for example, many Ngukurr Aborigines spent months away from their own country on droving trips, travelling east across the Barkly Tableland deep into Queensland, or south to the railhead at Alice Springs, or west across the Northern Territory to the meatworks at Wyndham. Such droving continued throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s until roads were opened up and modern transport made droving uneconomical. Extensive droving may account for the knowledge of Kriol by some older Aborigines in communities well outside the Kriol language area, for a number of such Aborigines have said that they learnt Kriol when they had been ‘up north’ droving.

It appears, then, that the influx of people during the war accelerated the use of Kriol, and the establishment of new compounds and collections of Aborigines from a variety of language backgrounds brought about additional creolisation. The freedom of mobility and movement that the war brought stimulated the convergence of numerous varieties of pidgin and Kriol and increased the amount of inter-Aboriginal group communication that was dependent upon Kriol as a lingua franca. The effects of the war were not limited, of course, to the Roper River region but affected virtually the whole of North Australia.

**CMS: WORLD WAR TWO – 1968**

A number of factors combined to bring about extensive changes in Roper River Mission around the middle of the present century. In addition to the relocation in 1940 due to the destruction of Old Mission by floods and the interruption and the changes brought about by World War Two, there was a complete changeover in staff. By the early 1950s the break with Old Mission was complete. The Aboriginal residents of Ngukurr today generally refer to the pre-war days as Old Mission time, and the 1950s and 1960s up until the mission was turned over to the government as the CMS time. This phase of the history of Ngukurr will thus be referred to as ‘CMS’.

The new government assimilation policy and welfare system provided the major impetus for a change in mission policy during the CMS time. In 1947 the various missions in the Northern Territory were urged to help implement the new government plan for the assimilation of Aborigines into the European-Australian way of life. They were encouraged to provide work for the Aborigines, pay wages and open shops so Aborigines could learn to run their own lives and their own communities within the framework of the missions. The government made promises of larger grants for capital buildings and approved personnel to help the missions carry out such programs.

CMS had few hesitations in backing the government’s new approach. As a consequence of these initiatives, the non-Aboriginal staff at Ngukurr increased, a building program was instituted and CMS concentrated on educating and training Aborigines. By the mid-1950s a shop had been opened, electricity and water were reticulated to the homes of Aborigines and motion pictures were being regularly shown. In 1951 CMS began paying pocket money to Aboriginal workers and over the next few years Ngukurr began to operate on a cash economy, with Aboriginal workers being paid full wages by the end of the 1950s.

One of the effects the assimilation policy had was to influence more Aborigines to stay
permanently at Ngukurr. By the late 1950s most had become used to settlement life and had come to see many features of it as desirable, even necessary, and the average resident population rose to 250. The Aborigines had become permanent settlement dwellers unable to move easily back to a traditional way of life. This permanency resulted in a strengthening of the European-oriented activities and beliefs of the Aborigines that had been slowly developing at Ngukurr since 1908.

As was pointed out earlier, the official CMS language policy stated that missionaries were supposed to learn the language of the people, unless it was Kriol, in which case its use was to be discouraged. The government policy at the time was an English-only policy: Aborigines had to learn English and English had to be used in school. In spite of the government and official CMS policies, the CMS superintendent allowed the use of Kriol in school, for the only way to communicate with some of the children was with Kriol. The only way of initially communicating with children who were coming into the school for the first time, whether younger children at the pre-school level or older children from the bush at higher levels, was by using Kriol. It was the only language all the children knew, although some of them also knew a traditional language. Because Kriol was not recognised as a separate language, however, most Europeans thought CMS was treating the Aborigines as inferiors and exposing them to ridicule. It was generally thought that all they could speak was a ‘bastardised’ form of English and that they would therefore always be disadvantaged, which in turn would cause further cultural deprivation.

It was not the European teachers who mostly used Kriol with the children, but rather the Aboriginal ‘monitors’, as teaching assistants were then called. In 1951 the one teacher in the school was assisted by up to eight monitors, depending on the number of students. The student population in the early 1950s fluctuated from a low of about thirty during the dry season to a hundred during the wet season, and up to 150 if a group of Nunggubuyu people were in residence. The monitors were Aborigines who had been through school and could supervise a class once the teacher had outlined a particular exercise. All of the monitors used English in formal lessons but would use Kriol at other times. If the children did not understand the English, however, they would give an explanation in Kriol. They would often do this, not only when they were supervising the lesson, but also when the teacher was taking the lesson. When the Nunggubuyu people were in residence at Ngukurr, a monitor would do the same for them, but use Nunggubuyu instead of Kriol.

Kriol was also generally used by different staff in the daily church services. Those who took the time to prepare their lessons in Kriol received a good hearing, whereas everyone else generally did not. Even so, there was a general feeling among Europeans that to use Kriol was ‘demeaning’ to the Aborigines. Partly because of this, and partly because of the translation which had been done in the early 1940s, CMS initially tried to concentrate on the use of Nunggubuyu. As was noted earlier, however, most of the Nunggubuyu people shifted to the mission at Numbulwar when it was started in 1952. The minister subsequently shifted his focus to Ritharrngu, reasoning that the Ritharrngu group could only comprehend Ritharrngu while the others could understand English.

In the late 1960s a new minister arrived from Sydney. It was openly recognised by then that virtually all of the Aborigines spoke Kriol among themselves, so the new minister, the Rev. D.C. Woodbridge, set about making himself proficient in the language (Cole 1968:26). According to Sharpe (1982:44), the people specifically requested Woodbridge to learn Kriol and to preach in it instead of English. Percy Leske, however, who was at Ngukurr
throughout most of the 1950s and 1960s, claims (personal communication) that the people had placed no extra demand on this particular minister: 'It was generally always implied by the people that they would appreciate things being done in Kriol. It would be much better. It would be more helpful.'

The 1960s brought a number of changes which affected the structure and administration of Ngukurr. Due in part to increasing difficulty in financing the operational activities of the settlement, CMS began planning to hand over control of the settlement to the government. CMS wanted to concentrate its resources on pastoral, evangelistic and educational work, with the government having the responsibilities of civil administration and political and industrial assimilation.

GOVERNMENT AND COUNCIL CONTROL: post-1968

Almost a decade before CMS pulled out of Ngukurr, an attempt to help the Aborigines take control of their own affairs was begun. This attempt was primarily through the establishment of a ‘station’ council that functioned as a consultative and administrative body for the running and development of the internal affairs of the settlement. It had sixteen members, consisting of the settlement superintendent as the chairman, seven people who were in charge of major sections of the workforce, and an equal number of Aborigines elected by the Aboriginal population of the settlement. Initially the council was composed of eight Europeans and eight Aborigines, but as Aborigines moved into positions of workforce oversight their number increased against the Europeans. This resulted in an automatic phasing of control to Aborigines.

This council, however, never successfully achieved full autonomy and authority as envisaged by CMS. Its failure to do so, in many respects, was due to historical circumstances. The council possibly could have become self-governing in a few years if CMS had not had to pull out due to lack of finances. When the handover took place, it was reported that Peter Nixon, the then Minister for the Interior, recognised the freedom the Ngukurr people had developed under CMS direction and said that the Ngukurr people should govern themselves. Unfortunately, however, the government ordinance on settlement regulations made no provision for self-government. The government officers who took control of Ngukurr had to abide by the existing government regulations which did not allow the council to continue developing in the direction it had been heading.

The Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory Administration therefore assumed control of the settlement in October 1968 and the Aboriginal residents found themselves dealing with an ill-prepared, and at times reluctant, remote government bureaucracy whose Ngukurr representatives tended to only stay for short periods of time.

About the time of the settlement handover, government policy had begun to swing away from enforced assimilation. When the handover took place, the Aborigines were expecting the government to act positively and decisively in filling the role CMS had vacated. The government, however, was no longer prepared to take the responsibilities that such action demanded. Government policy was increasingly favouring the handing over of responsibility for settlement affairs to Aborigines, but, at the same time, details for the implementation of such policy had yet to be formulated. As a result, government action on Ngukurr was characterised by vacillation and procrastination.

When the Australian Labor Party came to power in 1972, it adopted a policy of self-determination for Aborigines. This resulted in two major changes at Ngukurr. Over the next
few years there was a gradual withdrawal of non-Aboriginal staff, both physically and from positions of control. At the same time, a town council, which was essentially a continuation of the CMS station council, began to accumulate both power and authority over the modern institutional affairs of the community. The council took responsibility for many of the positions vacated by Europeans and employed Aborigines to fill them. Europeans who remained worked either directly for the council, filled advisory positions, or worked in the government office at Ngukurr until it was closed.

The town council gradually increased its control over settlement affairs and resources and by the second half of the 1970s had become the official ruling body of the settlement. The council by that time was all Aboriginal in composition, with the president functioning as both chairman of the council and superintendent of the settlement. Although all members, including the president, are elected by the Aboriginal residents of the community, the constitution requires that each of the seven major tribal groups have a representative on the council.

The current generation is the fifth growing up at Ngukurr. Its lifestyle is now structured in large part by the modern social institutions that were established, structured and, until recently, administered by Europeans. Originally, the Aboriginal population formed a community within the settlement, which was known colloquially as ‘the village’. The settlement administration had little direct interference with the organisation of the village and vice versa. The village was relatively free to organise its internal activities as long as they did not conflict with Australian laws, government ameliorative efforts, or the economic organisation of the settlement.

The rapid changes which have taken place during the last decade in the sociopolitical and administrative structure of Ngukurr, however, have resulted in a lessening of the distinction between village and settlement. Physically this is indicated by the movement of part of the Aboriginal community out of the village into housing in the previously non-Aboriginal-only section of the settlement. Politically many residents of the village who previously had little influence upon the running of the settlement are now actively involved in setting and carrying out community policy.

These changes have also had a significant effect on the use of language. During the period of government control, the council functions were strongly under the domain of English. At the same time Kriol had very low prestige, being openly despised by some government officers. The government school is reputed as recently as 1972 to have abandoned a policy of punishing children who were caught speaking Kriol in school.

The changes in government policies and practices and the Aboriginalisation of most of the major social institutions at Ngukurr during the 1970s have resulted, not in more English being brought into the village, but in more Kriol being brought into the administrative domains of the settlement. The language which used to be confined primarily to the village [i.e. Kriol] has now been taken into virtually all levels of settlement administration, and issues which were previously considered to be mainly of non-Aboriginal interest and thus discussed in English, are now interpreted to be of Aboriginal interest and discussed in Kriol. This does not mean, however, that Kriol has totally taken the place of English throughout Ngukurr. Some of the modern social institutions, such as the clinic, are still under direct control of a local non-Aboriginal administrator. Even though the administrator may respect the fact that English is not an effective medium of communication with a large percentage of the Aboriginal population at Ngukurr and may encourage the use of Kriol by the Aboriginal
staff, the mere presence of a non-Kriol-speaking European in an administrative position demands the use of English. Even those institutions which have been handed over to local Aboriginal control are not independent of non-Aboriginal interlocutors and the resultant pressure to use English.

GOVERNMENT POLICY AND ITS EFFECT ON LANGUAGE USE

The changes in government policy over the years have significantly affected the use of language. The pressure under the assimilation policies was for Aborigines to become, in essence, black-skinned Europeans. This meant that Aboriginal language skills were undesirable, English skills were a pre-requisite, and multi-lingualism was in no way to be encouraged. Increasing involvement on the part of the government in settlements and the enforced schooling of children for the purposes of assimilation, which was often accompanied by dormitory or hostel living conditions, rapidly boosted the rate of traditional language decline and inadvertently encouraged creolisation. Kriol was closer to English than traditional languages, and in that respect Kriol represented a move towards the goal of Anglicisation. At the same time, however, Kriol was almost universally considered to be a pathological development of English which needed to be eradicated. Many Kriol speakers themselves viewed Kriol in this way and saw it as a hindrance to achieving acceptance in the broader European-Australian society.

The pressures which favour movement in the direction of English are essentially the same pressures which have long favoured movement away from traditional languages. Anglo-Australians have a long tradition of an English monolingual mentality which they have consistently tried to impose on Aboriginal-Australians. The imposition of this monolingual tradition became institutionalised in the assimilation policies of the post-war period. The resultant Europeanisation has meant a decline in language facility for most Aborigines rather than an extension or development of it. The multilingualism characteristic of older Aborigines is noticeably lacking in younger Aborigines, for the pressure to assimilate encouraged the development of an English-only linguistic competence. Generally speaking, this pressure, when institutionally applied to speakers of traditional languages in much of North Australia, resulted in the acquisition of Kriol by those speakers. The pressure was also applied, however, to speakers of this 'bad English' (i.e. Kriol) in an effort to move them closer to 'proper English'.

Many Kriol speakers have responded to that pressure by 'moving up' to speaking so-called 'proper' English, but with relatively few exceptions they have continued to speak Kriol. The European educational establishment at Ngukurr has been teaching English and in English for some seventy years, or in Aboriginal generational terms, for four generations. Many of the Ngukurr people who have been through that educational system can speak and read English, but all of them also continue to speak Kriol in their home environment. The assimilation policies of the 1950s and 1960s failed to 'eradicate' Kriol.

Aboriginal-European relations in Australia have always been characterised by separation and European domination. At Ngukurr there was a dichotomy between the village and the settlement, between traditional and modern activities. The village was an Aboriginal domain, while the settlement was a non-Aboriginal domain. The same basic division and domination applied to Kriol and English, both of which have been present at Ngukurr since its establishment in 1908, Kriol in the Aboriginal domain, and English in the non-Aboriginal domain. Use of the two languages followed much the same general pattern as the social interaction of
Aborigines and Europeans. When Aborigines moved out of the village and into the settlement, they moved from an Aboriginal domain into a non-Aboriginal domain. This move required them to switch from Kriol to English, at least as regards speaker intent for those who lacked English competence.

The result of assimilation at Ngukurr, following on the heels of forty years of missionising, was a community of Aborigines who were European-oriented in many of their activities and beliefs, but who had just as obviously maintained many of their traditions. By the early 1970s they had developed a consciousness of community, a feeling of ‘Ngukurrness’, and in response to European domination, a non-traditional sense of Aboriginality. Kriol, a language which was neither traditional nor European, functioned as an identity marker, being used to indicate the non-traditional group consciousness and the Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal dichotomy.

Language is a critical element of group identity even in speakers of low prestige language varieties. By the end of the 1960s, in spite of strenuous efforts on the part of the government, as well as linguists, anthropologists and the general public, the Kriol speakers at Ngukurr were still persistently holding on to their Kriol. With the implementation in the 1970s of new government policies which emphasised Aboriginal identity, the strength of Kriol appears to have been made even more secure.

Under the new policies where an Aboriginal is allowed to stress his Aboriginality if he so desires, it is almost imperative for him to have control of a means of linguistic Aboriginal identification. For many Aborigines, primarily those who speak Kriol as their mother tongue, Kriol is beginning to serve that function. Kriol is no longer being seen as a hindrance to becoming a fully acceptable Australian. Instead, it is being seen as a necessity for linguistically displaying and maintaining one’s Aboriginality. As a result, not only are publicly expressed negative attitudes towards Kriol by Kriol speakers decreasing, but a number of Aborigines are now actively seeking to raise the status and prestige of Kriol as a legitimate Aboriginal language.

Present government policies are reducing the likelihood of large-scale migration of Aborigines to towns and cities. This in turn is reducing the pressure for Europeanisation and Anglicisation on Aborigines as a whole, although in a sense, by taking over modern administrative and operational responsibilities, a more sophisticated form of Europeanisation is being thrust by circumstances on the ruling elite in Aboriginal communities. For the vast majority of Aborigines, however, the Aboriginalisation policies are strengthening the social dichotomy between Aboriginal and European. One of the main effects of ‘Aboriginalisation’ on Kriol speakers is the strengthening of the sociolinguistic dichotomy between Kriol and English. For an increasing number of Kriol speakers, their language is no longer bastardised English, nor is it simply creolised English. For many it has become a language in its own right, a language related to English, but a language which is at the same time distinct from English.
LANGUAGE CHANGE AT NGUKURR (ROPER RIVER)

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THE SPREAD OF TORRES STRAIT CREOLE
TO THE CENTRAL ISLANDS OF TORRES STRAIT

Anna Shnukal

INTRODUCTION

The following paper outlines the second stage of development of Torres Strait Creole, now the *lingua franca*, or common language, of Torres Strait Islanders everywhere. The first stage, which I discussed in an earlier volume of this journal, was that of the creolisation of Pacific Pidgin English around the turn of the century in three Torres Strait island communities. In that article, I argued that creolisation was the result of two factors not reproduced elsewhere in Torres Strait at the time: (1) the creation of *de facto* Pacific Islander settlements on Erub, Ugar and St Paul’s Anglican Mission, Moa, where the Pacific Islanders outnumbered Torres Strait Islanders and (2) the integration into those communities of these hitherto marginal immigrants. The prestige of the Pacific Islanders derived from their function as linguistic and cultural middlemen, interpreters of European ways of life to their Torres Strait Islander kinfolk.

A third stage in the development of the creole began with the war years, when almost all able-bodied men left their home islands to join the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion and, for the first time, came into daily contact with English-speaking Europeans.

The present overview article traces the diffusion of Pacific Pidgin English and the creole which developed from it, focusing on the central islands of the Strait between the early 1900s and the beginning of World War II. Also briefly discussed are certain interwoven historical

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1 This paper summarises the results of fieldwork carried out in Torres Strait in 1981 and 1982, together with library and archival research, which was funded by a Visiting Research Fellowship in Sociolinguistics from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. It is part of an on-going study of the history of the creole *lingua franca* of Torres Strait.

My thanks to Lui Bon, Miller Cook, Tom Dutton, Peter Gillan, Murray Lui, Marriott Mabo, Sam Passi, Bruce Rigsby and John Scott for helpful conversations and to members of the following central island families for their kindness, hospitality, and information: Billy, Bob, Faiud, Garnier, Lowatta, Lui, Mari, Mauga, Mills, Mosby, Pearson, Samuel, Sorogo, Thaiday, Warria.

2 Pidgins and creoles are of particular interest to sociolinguists, since they cannot be fully described without reference to both linguistic and social phenomena. A pidgin is usually said to be a ‘mixed’ language, formed through the fusion of two or more languages. Typical pidgins have a small vocabulary and reduced grammar and are functionally restricted compared to ‘normal’ languages. Most importantly, they have no native speakers. A pidgin becomes a creole, however, when a group of children begins to use it as their first language. When this happens, the creole quickly develops the means of expressing all the communicative needs of its speaker and, on purely linguistic grounds, i.e. without reference to its history, cannot be differentiated from any other natural language.

3 Shnukal 1983.
themes which explain the creole’s survival and expansion during the early decades of this century.

The material presented here has been distilled primarily from conversations with central Islanders, but I have also drawn on: government reports; missionary journals; the accounts of teachers, Anglican priests and travellers who resided in or visited those islands; legends; and the major anthropological and sociological works by Beckett, Haddon, Moore and Sharp.

The major studies of Torres Strait history and ethnography have concentrated on the eastern and western island groups. Probably because of their small and shifting populations and their somewhat ambiguous position between the eastern and western Islanders, surprisingly little has been written about the central Islanders, although recently Masig (Yorke Island) has received attention from a team of Japanese sociologists, only fragments of whose work has been published in English (see Yabuuchi et al 1977:15-19); and from a sociolinguist, Peter Gillan. Anthropologist Maureen Fuary has worked on Yam, but has not yet published her research findings.

The history of Torres Strait Creole is unusual among creoles in that its creolisation and diffusion are the outcomes of two different (though related) sets of historical circumstances. An examination of those two sets of circumstances from a sociolinguistic viewpoint, fitting together a jigsaw puzzle of field observations, oral history and genealogies provided by Islanders and both official and unofficial government and church records, affords a further perspective on the little-researched post-contact history of Torres Strait.

TORRES STRAIT CREOLE

The language in question, Torres Strait Creole, developed from pidgin English brought to the Strait in the mid-nineteenth century by Pacific Islanders working in the marine industries. It was mistakenly believed, both by Islanders and Europeans, to be English, the linguistic symbol of the new socio-cultural order which was at that time beginning to transform all aspects of life in the Strait. This belief was the primary psycho-social impetus both for its adoption as their primary language by the children of the immigrants born on three Torres Strait islands around the turn of the century and, within two to three decades, for its spread to the central islands.

Between 1910 and 1940, the creole became the first language of the children in the central islands and eventually displaced the traditional Australian language, Kala Lagaw Ya, as the primary language of those islands. While this process is not complete as yet, Kala Lagaw Ya has ceased to be a viable community language there, although the creole spoken contains many borrowings from it. Only a handful of elderly first language speakers of the traditional language remain on Yam and Masig and while there are more native speakers on Waraber and Purma, the language is used only among the over-fifty age group and rarely spoken to children. Young people on Purma and Waraber can still understand Kala Lagaw Ya, but they have difficulty in sustaining long conversations in the language and can no longer make speeches, deliver sermons, or compose songs in it.

THE CENTRAL ISLANDS

It is customary to divide the islands and cays of Torres Strait, that stretch of water between mainland Australia and Papua New Guinea, into three main groups: western, central and eastern (see Figure 1). This primarily geographical division, however, parallels geographical, cultural and linguistic phenomena.
SPREAD OF TORRES STRAIT CREOLE

The central islands and cays never supported the large populations of the eastern islands. Generally small, flat, low-lying wooded coral sand formations or scrub-covered sandbanks, often with poor sandy soil and little fresh water, they were not permanently inhabited in pre-contact times. The central Islanders, or Kulkalaig, were semi-nomadic, forced to move from island to island in response to the changing seasons and the availability of water and food. They were the 'fishing people', the major traders and fiercest warriors of the Strait, visiting the western and eastern Islanders as well as the mainland of Papua New Guinea to their north and islands off the Australian coast.

There appear to have been at least three groups of central Islanders. Tudu provided a centre for those who moved among the north-west central islands, whereas Masig and the western island of Nagi were the foci for those who moved among the north-east and south central islands respectively.\(^4\) According to Islanders, the Aurid, Burar, Purma and Waraber people have always been on friendly terms and their relations with neighbouring Nagi were cordial. Haddon reports that the Aurid, Masig, Damud and Purma people went every year to islands off the east coast of north Queensland 'to live for a while and to barter'\(^5\) and legend has it that Waraber and Purma joined with Nagi to fight the inhabitants of Moa. Relations among the central island groups, however, were not always cordial, Tudu making raids on Aurid, for example, and attacking Purma in 1871.\(^6\)

Nevertheless, the central Islanders were linked not only by language and lifestyle, but also by exchange and religion, which in turn linked them with the eastern Islanders. There was reciprocal visiting between the central and eastern peoples and it was not unusual for groups of central Islanders to spend several months on Erub or Mer and be visited in turn.\(^7\) One can infer from stories about those times and from the fact that there appear to have been no central-eastern marriages that the visitors, while on perfectly friendly terms with their eastern island hosts, remained together as a group and segregated from the Easterners with whom they exchanged fish, turtle and shell for fruit and vegetables. Each year canoes from Aurid, Masig, Purma and Yam, as well as from Nagi, Erub and Ugar, rendezvoused at Mer, the focus of the Bumai-Malo cult. They congregated there not only to trade, but also to plan the annual religious festival which would take place on one of the 'lodge' islands.\(^8\) Thus,

\(^4\) The Tudu Islanders are said to have come originally from Babaia, a village on the Bina River of Papua New Guinea and they maintained a close association with the coastal people of Papua New Guinea. There were some marriages but generally the central Islanders intermarried with each other and with the Muralag people from the lower western islands of Torres Strait.

\(^5\) Haddon 1935:88.

\(^6\) Jardine 1872.

\(^7\) Murray, April 1873; March-April 1874.

\(^8\) Malo, the pivotal figure in the eastern island traditional religion, and his three brothers came to Torres Strait from Tuger country in Papua New Guinea. During the journey from Nagi to Mer, each brother settled on a different central island: Sigar on Yam; Kolka on Aurid; Siu on Masig. Malo, however, continued on to Mer. According to Lawrie 1977:326, 'the religion which developed at these places after the coming of the brothers created a bond with Mer.' She claims also that the cult was known at Waraber and Nagi. Coral 1925:11 refers to the Bumai-Malo 'lodges' on Aurid, Purma, Yam, Nagi, Masig, Ugar, Erub and Mer and visitors from those islands were made welcome on Mer. 'Each family at [the Murray Island village of] Las chose a friend from among the visitors and took him into its home. (Friendships made at that time have endured through succeeding generations and are recognised today.)' (Lawrie 1977:336).
there was a long tradition of central-eastern contact, which was later to be reinforced by the Christian churches. 

The language of the central Islanders was a dialect of Kala Lagaw Ya. Ireland, a captive survivor from the wreck of the Charles Eaton in 1834, claimed that the Masig people spoke Meriam Mir, the Papuan eastern islands language.9 This is certainly incorrect, although the central Islanders had indeed borrowed Meriam Mir vocabulary.10 From legends and stories, it is clear that the central and eastern Islanders communicated mainly through handsigns (ol i tok lo an ‘they talked with their hands’) and although there were no doubt bilingual individuals, there were no bilingual communities as there are today on several Torres Strait islands.

Of the sixty or so central islands, only four are currently inhabited: Yam (Turtle-Backed Island), Purma (Coconut Island), Waraber (Sue Island) and Masig (Yorke Island), with 1983 populations of 110, 132, 160, and 131 respectively.11 Nevertheless, all the other islands, cays and reefs are owned and many continue to be used for recreation or production — for camping, fishing, food gathering, gardening and pig keeping.

From historical and legendary sources, both written and oral, we know that many more were inhabited at one time or another, if not permanently. Even in post-contact time, Aurid, Burar, Damud, Gebar, Giaka, Mauar, Mukar, Sasi, Tudu, Umaga and Yarpar all supported populations, sometimes merely one extended family, for at least some part of the year.

POST-CONTACT

In examining the reasons for the abandonment of the traditional central islands language, one is struck, as always, by how closely linguistic growth and decay mirror extralinguistic (socio-cultural and historical) events and trends, even though the precise psycho-social mechanisms underlying the processes are unclear.

In the central islands, several inter-related non-linguistic events appear to explain the

9 King 1837:47.

10 Murray, September-December 1872. According to Haddon 1935:93, the speech of Masig, which marked the linguistic boundary between east and west, was said by other central Islanders in the 1880s and 1890s to be half eastern and half western.

11 Traditional and European names of central islands discussed in this paper are given below, with currently inhabited islands starred:

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<tr>
<th>Central Islands</th>
<th>Traditional Names</th>
<th>European Names</th>
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<td>Aurid</td>
<td>Skull Island</td>
<td>Purma*</td>
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<td>Damud</td>
<td>Dalrymple Island</td>
<td>Tudu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gebar</td>
<td>Two Brothers Island</td>
<td>Umaga</td>
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<tr>
<td>Giaka</td>
<td>Dungeness Island</td>
<td>Waraber*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Masig*</td>
<td>Yorke Island</td>
<td>Yam*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mauar</td>
<td>Rennel Island</td>
<td>Yarpar</td>
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<td>Mukar</td>
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<td>Other islands mentioned are:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Badu*</td>
<td>Mulgrave Island</td>
<td>Muralag*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dauan*</td>
<td>Mount Cornwallis Island</td>
<td>Muri</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erub*</td>
<td>Darnley Island</td>
<td>Nagi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mabuia*</td>
<td>Jervis Island</td>
<td>Saibai*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mer*</td>
<td>Murray Island</td>
<td>Ugar*</td>
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linguistic shift by which the traditional language was replaced as the community language by Torres Strait Creole. These were: (1) the establishment of marine industries, controlled by outsiders and requiring people speaking different languages to live as well as work together for extended periods of time; (2) the widespread acceptance of Christianity, which in the central islands was instrumental (on ideological grounds as well as for administrative convenience) in dispersing populations and establishing permanent settlements on relatively few islands; (3) the growth of schooling, of which the *de facto* medium was often the creole; (4) the creation of an elite group of Islanders, often the descendants of South Sea Islanders or Europeans, with status and privileges; and (5) the change in traditional central-eastern patterns of interaction, including inter-marriage, which led to the breakdown of old loyalties and rivalries. Each of these processes will be discussed in detail below but may be better understood if first situated within the context of increasing external European control in Torres Strait, with all that that implied in societal disruption and feelings of powerlessness among the Islanders.

The post-contact history of the central Islanders is one of incursion, population decline, resettlement and regrouping — a struggle to make sense of and come to terms with the new order gradually imposed by Europeans.

The first recorded contact between Europeans and central Islanders was in 1892, when the Tudu warriors attacked two English ships under the command of Captain Bligh. It is obvious from the account of the skirmish that the Islanders spoke no English, communication being carried out by signs and traditional language words.12

The first central island to be visited by Europeans was Damud, also in 1892, although the visitors apparently did not land. Some three and a half decades later, we have the fullest account of the central islands in Captain King's *A voyage to Torres Strait in search of the survivors of the ship 'Charles Eaton'* and it is from this and the writings of later visitors that we know what little we do about the central Islanders of that early contact period.

Thus we know that in 1836, no English was spoken by the central Islanders. By 1840, however, the Tudu Islanders were reported to know some English words14 and in 1845, the Masig Islanders used the English words for 'water', 'knife' and 'ship'.15

Five events were referred to above as contributing to the displacement of Kala Lagaw Ya by Torres Strait Creole in the central islands of the Strait. These events will now be discussed in greater detail.

(1) *Marine industries.*

During the 1840s, several survey missions were made by British Navy ships and the resulting navigational charts and sailing directions, together with the growing awareness of the wealth to be gained from the marine life of the Strait, encouraged European commercial interest in the area. In 1846 we have the first report of a fishing vessel in Torres Strait, gathering beche-de-mer and turtle shell.16

12 Haddon 1935:72.
13 Haddon 1935:93-94.
14 Haddon 1935:73.
15 Jukes 1847:1,160.
16 Macgillivray 1852:308.
By the early 1860s, beche-de-mer stations had been established in the central islands and, in 1868, Captain William Banner converted his beche-de-mer station on the north-west side of Tudu into the first commercial pearling station in Torres Strait. Banner had previously worked in the Pacific and by 1873 his station employed some thirty South Sea Islanders, both Polynesians and Melanesians. Two years later, the Police Magistrate at Somerset reported that pearling was 'in full swing' in Torres Strait.

During the 1870s, beche-de-mer and pearling stations were established on Purma (George Pearson, Robert Scott and a man named McCourt), Giaka (Edward Mosby and Jack Walker), Gebar (Ernst Redlich), Masig (Mosby) and Damud (Walker), employing, in addition to central Islanders, men from Saibai, Erub, Ugar and Mer. Relations between the immigrant workers and the Torres Strait Islanders were generally good (in contrast to the early years of beche-de-mer gathering) and there were marriages between central island women and the Europeans and Pacific Islanders. Since local labour was never sufficient for the needs of the industry, foreigners - predominantly Pacific Islanders, but also Australian Aborigines and New Guineans from what is now Papua New Guinea - were imported into the region. Having no common language, they used the Pacific Pidgin English of the Pacific Islanders which, according to Haddon, was widely spoken throughout the region by the 1880s and 1890s, especially by men from the islands near beche-de-mer and pearling stations.

Very little else is recorded of the years between 1836 and 1871, the year when London Missionary Society teachers were first placed in Torres Strait. However, we know that with the outsiders came disease and within a few decades, the population of the Strait is estimated to have been halved, declining to between 1,500 and 2,000. Of those, no more than a few hundred would have been from the central islands, which were never densely populated. On Gebar, Aurid, Mauar, Damud, and Nagi, a western island with close ties to the central islands, only remnants of the earlier inhabitants remained.

17 Moresby 1876:29.
18 Beckett 1963:40.
19 Murray (September-December 1872) writes of Gebar that it was 'small and of no great importance on any account. Its population is somewhere from thirty to fifty.' Some Tudu Islanders moved to Gebar in the 1890s but a few years later it was deserted, most of the people, decimated by a disease that was ascribed to sorcery, moving to Yam. I was told that some families settled on Mabuiag and possibly also on Erub. By the 1880s, the once large population of Aurid had disappeared, the few remaining people having moved to neighbouring islands. At that time, only two Sandwich Islanders and a Filipino, Juan Francis Garcia, lived there with their families and the island became uninhabited in 1925 after the death of its last inhabitant, Garcia, whose widow settled on Purma.

Similarly, by 1873 the Mauar people, who then numbered only about twenty or thirty, were being urged by the LMS to move to Masig, with whose people they were connected (Murray, letter of 8 September 1873). In 1922, The Queenslander (14 October 1922:40) reported that Susui, the 'last surviving member of the once populous island of [Mauar]' had died on Masig.

When the Scotsman, Jack Walker, a former partner of Edward Mosby, married a woman from Damud and settled there in the 1880s, the island was still populated. Largely because of water problems, the population dispersed during the LMS time, some people moving to Yam and others to Masig and Waraber.

In 1849, Macgillivray 1852, II: 35 estimated Nagi's population at 150. However, when James Mills, then Frank Jardine's agent, settled there in the 1870s, only a few of its people remained. By 1904, after Mills had imported Aborigines, New Guineans, eastern and western Islanders, as well as other
It should be noted that, while Europeans of course controlled the industries, they were outnumbered by the Pacific Islanders by at least ten to one. Moreover, the Pacific Islanders had high status, derived from their close association with the Europeans, whose chief lieutenants they were. Some of the Pacific Islanders were literate world travellers, experienced in European ways. Joseph John (also known as Iae), a Fijian, who is said to have fought on the British side in the Battle of Sebastopol, was placed in charge of Banner's beche-de-mer station in Banner’s absence and it was he, so one story goes, who discovered the rich pearl-shell beds near Tudu in 1868. James Mills, a Samoan, who was Frank Jardine’s foreman on Nagi, is reported eventually to have leased that island from the Queensland government. In 1911, the Protector wrote approvingly that, under Mills’s management, Nagi, with its extensive coconut plantation of about 40,000 palms, . . . is certainly an object lesson as to what may be done with most of the islands in Torres Straits, practically the whole of which are still in their primeval state, although quite as capable as [Nagi] of being brought into a profitable state of production. According to their descendants, some Pacific Islanders were taken into partnership. Mills is said to have been in partnership with Jardine and Samson Lowatta, a Tanna man, with Mosby.

(2) ‘The Coming of the Light’.

The arrival of the Christian missionaries of the London Missionary Society in Torres Strait on 1 July 1871 is still considered by Islanders to be the single most significant event in their history. Known as ‘The Coming of the Light’, that day continues to symbolise the rejection of the ‘dark’ traditional past and the acceptance of the ‘light of civilisation’ and it is celebrated each year as the Torres Strait national day.

The already high status of the Pacific Islanders, which resulted from their special relationship with Europeans, was reinforced by the arrival of the LMS. For, although the missionaries themselves were Europeans, they in fact spent little time in the Strait, the daily work of conversion, pastoral care and education among the Torres Strait Islanders deliberately being delegated to their South Sea Island teachers.

In 1871, two teachers were temporarily placed on Tudu, where they were welcomed primarily as agents of European protection against enemies, as potential providers of European central Islanders, to work his coconut and copra plantations and his pearling vessels, only two of the original inhabitants lived there, one of whom, Sorogo, was the son of the last chief, Mori (Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for 1904:14). By 1913, only about twenty people continued to live on Nagi, almost all of them descendants of Mills and other Pacific Islanders (Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals 1913:15). The island was abandoned in the 1960s (Benny Mills, p.c.).

20 William Banner, George Pearson and Edward Mosby, among others, brought in Pacific Islander crews with whom they had previously worked in the Pacific.

21 Another story is that an American sailor named Toy was the first to discover commercial quantities of shell in 1861.


goods and 'know-how', as teachers of English and as guides to the ways of 'civilisation'.

In spite of pockets of hostility, determined resistance and apathy, there was nevertheless an eagerness among central Islanders to receive an LMS teacher. In 1872, Murray reported that the Masig Islanders had made 'urgent application' for teachers and of the Tudu Islanders he wrote:

It was deeply interesting to observe the earnestness with which they expressed their wishes to have a teacher, though of course they have a very imperfect idea as to the teacher's errand and office.

The placing of a teacher was not, however, unconditional. It could be argued that the goal of the LMS was to refashion the spiritual and material lives of the Islanders in a manner more consistent with the English Victorian lower-middle-class virtues of work, thrift and modesty. Thus they and their South Sea teachers, often themselves first generation converts in their own islands, tended to see evidence of the Torres Strait Islanders' spiritual conversion in the wearing of clothes; cleanliness; regular church attendance; construction of churches, schools and houses; settlement in tidy villages; and cultivation of gardens; that is, in the adoption of a more 'civilised' way of life.

By 1873, the population of Tudu, where the majority of the central Islanders were then living, was estimated to be 'considerably over two hundred'. The Tudu Islanders, now without a teacher, 'our South Sea Island teachers being unable to remain at the place for more than short periods', were said to be anxious to have another. The missionaries, engaged as they were in efforts to transform the Islanders into self-sufficient cultivators on the Pacific model and thoroughly mindful of the moral harm which could befall them through consorting with shellers, put pressure on the Tudu people to abandon their semi-nomadic way of life and settle in permanent villages, close to church and school. After assurances by the Islanders that they would settle permanently on their garden island of Yam, where 'there is plenty of good water and fertile soil', a Mare teacher, Gutacene, was sent to Tudu.

24 According to Langbridge (1977:29), the LMS 'came with the sanction of the government which felt that they would serve to protect, pacify and civilize the Islanders.' It is interesting to note the two reasons advanced by McFarlane for his decision to place teachers on Tudu (1888:48-49):

First, that they might be a check upon the South Sea islanders, ... [who] often found their recreation on visiting heathen villages, and plundering plantations and homes, ... The poor savages soon found that their clubs and spears were of little use against snider rifles.

Another reason ... was that the [Tudu] islanders had intercourse with those of Bampton, an island off the mouth of the Fly River, where we contemplated forming our other mission station. [Tudu] appeared healthy, Bampton did not; and so we thought it wise to leave them for a time, where we knew it was tolerably healthy and safe, till they became acquainted with the people and place of their destination.

25 Murray, April-May 1873.
26 McFarlane 1888:138-139.
27 Murray, April-May 1873.
28 In 1873, the Mauar people were urged to move to Masig (Murray, letter of 8 September 1873) and as late as 1913, efforts were still being made to induce the Purma Islanders to settle there too. They resisted, however, since 'the natives of each island consider themselves a different people to those on other islands' and, although on friendly terms, were 'averse to sinking their individuality as a distinct body.' (Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for 1913:13).
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from Mabuiag. The Islanders, however, did not keep their promise, the people preferring Tudu 'on account of the facilities which it affords for fishing' and in 1876, with most of the population still engaged in pearling away from Tudu, McFarlane removed the teacher.

In 1879, with the passage of the Queensland Coast Islands Act, the Queensland government annexed all the islands in Torres Strait. During the twenty-five years following annexation, the Queensland government initiated some measures of self-management, most notably the election of island councils in 1889, but seems to have interfered very little in the lives of the Islanders. Since the government lacked the resources to administer the islands, that task at times went by default to the LMS teachers who, by virtue of their spiritual authority, became the de facto rulers on some islands. This added to their prestige and to their symbolic position as powerful 'coloured men' in the changed order. Ultimate authority, however, remained with the Government Resident on Thursday Island.

(3) Schools.

Along with Christianity came the earliest instruction by the LMS teachers in catechism, (Pidgin) English and arithmetic. In the central islands which, by comparison with east and west, were poorly served by teachers, there seems to have been considerable pressure from the Tudu chief, Maino, for a school.

In spite of pressure on the Tudu Islanders to settle on Yam in return for a teacher, however, it was not until the 1890s that certain Tudu families, together with a few Damud and Gebar people took up permanent residence there, whereupon, after further representations from the Islanders, the LMS sent a Lifuan teacher to teach the children of Yam and the neighbouring islands to 'read English'. Maino was reported to be delighted, saying: 'You see, all children grow up now, no savee nothing'. Nor was it only the Yam Islanders who were

29 Murray, letter of 8 September 1873.
30 We can, I think, deduce from this that the majority of the Tudu people were reluctant to abandon their traditional mode of life and submit to the control of the teacher.
31 According to Langbridge 1977: Gutacene served on Tudu from 1873 to 1876; a Lifuan teacher was placed on Yam in 1897, but there is no indication of the length of his stay nor of the date at which a Samoan replaced him, serving until 1914; Simone, from Mare, taught on Masig between 1873 and 1876. After he left, the Lifuan, Gucheng, oversaw the congregation from Erub during at least the following year and in 1893, Gabey, a Murray Islander, was appointed but was dismissed two years later. The Samoan, Samuela, served between 1905 and 1914; Aragu, a Dauan Islander, taught at Purma for some years until the end of 1914. None of the other central islands received LMS teachers.
32 Chalmers 1897. Although it was reported that by 1897 'the few remaining representatives of the once powerful [Tudu] tribe' had settled at Yam (Report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island for 1896 and 1897:6), not all the Tudu people moved there. Individual families settled on Gebar, Masig, Damud, Muri, Purma and Waraber following the 1880s downturn in the pearling industry, a decrease in the price of shell, increasing sickness and the salination of the well water on Tudu. Similarly, Masig became the home of various Damud, Aurid and Mauar people.
33 Letter from Chalmers, dated 14 July 1897, quoted in Lovett 1902:440. Maino is certainly speaking the pidgin here. Pacific Pidgin English features are the use of ol ('all'), the plural determiner; nau ('now'), an aspect marker indicating that a process has begun but is not yet completed; no ... nating ('no ... nothing'), negative preverbal marker plus negative pronoun; and sabe ('savee', originally from Portuguese saber), the verb 'to know'. From the Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition, for which Maino served as an informant, we know that he spoke the pidgin with Haddon (see, for example, Haddon 1904:225).
eager to receive schooling for their children. In an 1897 report, Chalmers tells us that ‘the
great felt want [on Waraber, Purma, Masig and Damud] is the want of education for the
young.’

Education in English was an important element in the decline of Kala Lagaw Ya in the
central islands. Schooling was seen as a necessary adjunct to ‘civilisation’, which imparted
skills and knowledge, the most important being English literacy, needed for coping with and
perhaps even advancing in the new order.

Long before the appointment of government teachers to the Torres Strait islands, the
Masig people had made ‘urgent application’ to the LMS for teachers34 and in the 1890s,
Edward Mosby, an American pearler who had married a Masig woman and settled there in
the 1870s, had hired at least one European teacher for the children of the island.35 After the
Masig government school closed in 1904 following the death of the teacher, James Mills of
Nagi erected the ‘John Douglas School’ (named after the recently deceased Government
Resident) at his own expense and hired a European teacher.36 This school, however, was
soon closed by the government following complaints by parents about Mills’s behaviour.

By 1891, the Government Resident was urging the appointment of a European adminis­
trator-teacher to Mer.37 Following the successful appointment of John Stewart Bruce to
Mer, government primary schools were established on Yam and Masig, as well as on Erub,
Saibai, Mabuiag and Badu.38 In 1900, Mrs Smallwood was appointed to Yam and Mrs McLean
to Masig, where twenty children received regular instruction. However, the school on Yam
closed after six months and the twenty-five Yam, Nagi and Gebar children were without a
teacher. A school was opened on Nagi in 1904, with a Miss Steele as teacher but, perhaps
because of its small population, Purma does not appear to have been given a government
teacher for the Waraber and Purma children until about 1921, when an Erub Islander was
appointed.39

The change to Torres Strait Creole on Yam and Masig is commonly believed to date from
the arrival of the white teachers, who encouraged parents and children to speak English ‘to
improve their schooling’ and punished the use of the traditional language, even in the play­
ground. But there were never more than one or two European teachers in the central islands
and their influence as language models was restricted to the school and to a relatively few
formal situations. More important, I believe, in the dissemination of the newly creolised
pidgin was its use as a lingua franca by prestigious eastern Islanders living in central island

34 Murray, September-December 1872.
37 Report by the Government Resident, Thursday Island, respecting the Condition of Aboriginal Natives
39 In 1915, however, we are told that a ‘temporary native teacher’ was engaged to teach the Purma child­
ren to read, write and do simple arithmetic (Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for
1915:11). As far as I can gather, though this aspect needs more research, Mrs McLean, the Masig
teacher, was followed by Mr Connelly, who taught there from about 1914 until 1920. Mrs Smallwood
then took over until the Second World War. In 1907, Mrs Zahel was reported to be the teacher on
Yam. She was followed in 1910 by Mr Richards and in 1911 by Mrs Smallwood, who later moved to
Masig.

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communities (see below). However, while schooling alone does not fully account for the transition from traditional language to creole, it is significant that the Yam and Masig children, who received instruction in English from Europeans, adopted the creole as their primary language some twenty years before the Waraber and Purma children. Elementary education for the latter during the second decade of the century was provided on Purma by Aragu, a Dauan LMS teacher and hence a speaker of another dialect of Kala Lagaw Ya.40

DISPLACEMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE

This, then, takes us to the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, when there was fairly wide-spread knowledge of Pacific Pidgin English in the central islands among adults, especially men who had worked on the stations. The children still spoke Kala Lagaw Ya as their first language, but those who were near a primary school learned a little English from the European teacher. The traditional language was just beginning to be stigmatised as belonging to the ‘dark, uncivilised’ past and as inappropriate to the new society being created.

By themselves, however, these circumstances do not account for the rapid adoption of the creole as their first language by the Yam, Nagi, Gebar and Masig children born towards the end of the second decade of the century, nor by the Purma and Waraber children born in the 1930s, since similar conditions existed on other islands where the traditional language remained strong.

Crucial in understanding this linguistic change is the role of the creole as a pan-Islander lingua franca, the contributions made to this by the members of a newly emerging Torres Strait elite and increased central-eastern contact, including inter-marriage, during the period.

(4) An emerging elite.

Following the death in 1904 of John Douglas, for many years the Government Resident on Thursday Island, the Torres Strait Islanders were drawn under the ‘protection’ of the Queensland Government. The previous policy of community self-regulation through councils and police under the day-to-day management of the Islanders themselves began to be reversed and became increasingly paternalist and segregationist.41 Under the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction on the Sale of Opium Act of 1897, island ‘reserves’ were created and more and more aspects of Islander lives began to be supervised and regulated.

At a time when movement among the islands was restricted and Islanders were beginning to be aware that their control over events which concerned them was being eroded, one small group of Islanders was set somewhat apart from the others, as favoured by the government and the church and given status through their contribution to their new order.42 Although I have nowhere seen the term ‘elite’ referred to in the literature on Torres Strait and Europeans at the time would probably have referred to those concerned as ‘potential leaders’, it is clear that certain categories of Islanders, most notably priests and teachers, but to a lesser extent police, and later, store managers, were accorded authority, status and privileges, not only by their employers, the church and government, but by their fellow Islanders.

For one thing, having achieved prominent and prestigious positions in the new societal

41 Sharp 1980.
42 The Anglican Church had officially taken over the work of the LMS in Torres Strait in 1915.
order, they were seen as part of the government/church nexus that was increasing its control over the lives of the Islanders. They received wages which, while not always as high as those of men on the company boats during a good season, were regular and assured. Because of their knowledge of ‘English’, they were usually the island spokesmen in negotiations with visiting Europeans and they in turn derived prestige from their perceived ability to deal with Europeans. Many, incidentally, were the descendants of Europeans and South Sea Islanders who had settled in Torres Strait between 1870 and 1900 and as *apkas* ‘half-castes’ were highly regarded (especially as marriage partners) because of their light skins and straight hair.43

Moreover, at a time when inter-island movement was restricted, these men were sent to different communities to carry out their duties and often, it would seem, deliberately posted across the east-west linguistic barrier in order to break down traditional loyalties and antipathies.

From the second decade of the present century, selected Torres Strait Islanders began to be trained as assistant teachers, at first informally and later at the Mabuiag Teacher Training Institute. The first government-appointed teacher at the Purma primary school, for example, which was also attended by the Waraber children, was an Erub Islander and he was followed by a man from Mer. Both men were forced to use the creole, which they spoke as a second language, not only as the language of instruction (which contributed to its prestige and to the widespread belief that it was English) but also in their daily interaction with the Purma people with whom they shared no other language. Some years later, Kala Lagaw Ya-speakers from Saibai and Mabuiag, as well as other Easterners, also taught at Purma but by then the creole had begun to replace Kala Lagaw Ya as the primary language of the children and was well established as the teaching medium in the school.

(5) Cross-linguistic interaction.

Now, whereas eastern and central Islanders had generally been on cordial terms in the past, visiting was limited to exchange and religious occasions and rigorously controlled by both hosts and visitors. Since the groups lived apart and there appear to have been taboos on mixing with the women of the other group, there was no need for a common language.

One would expect these circumstances to have been repeated when, in post-contact times, priests, teachers and policemen were posted across the linguistic barrier, in much the same way as the few European teachers on the islands were (and still are) courteously isolated from the life of the community, whose language they do not share.

For several reasons, however, the nature of post-contact central-eastern interaction had changed. On arriving in the Strait, many Pacific Islanders had established brotherhood relationships with others who shared their first language and these ties remained operative even if the individuals concerned eventually settled on opposite sides of the linguistic barrier. Their children, who may have spoken different languages, were no less cousins, even if fictive ones, with the same rights and obligations as true blood relatives. Moreover, although central-eastern marriages had been extremely rare before contact, from around the 1860s a few Pacific Islanders working in the eastern fishing and pearling grounds had married eastern

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43 The *apkas* were also favoured by the Europeans (for much the same reasons) and generally considered to be intellectually, and even morally, superior to ‘full’ Torres Strait Islanders.
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island women and brought them to the central and western islands, thus establishing affinal ties with the Easterners whom they and their children visited on occasion.44 One expression of the universalist philosophy of Christianity was the encouragement, by both the LMS and its successor, the Anglican Church, of inter-island visiting for church meetings, religious festivals and church openings. This led to the daily discussions between hosts and visitors necessary to plan and assign responsibility for accommodation, the preparation of meals and feasts, tidying up, church services, Mothers Union meetings, dance programmes, and the like. Some years later, inter-island crews on some of the company boats began to visit the families of new friends from other islands and to form sexual alliances with the women. Thus a practical need arose for a common language and this common language in turn contributed to the development of a pan-Islander consciousness which was to have its first major expression in the 1936 company boat strike, so well documented by Sharp.45

To return to the important eastern visitors, who now came to teach or minister to the central Islanders: they could no longer be treated as outsiders and politely isolated at the margin of central island social life. Accorded status by virtue of their position, and linked by blood and affinal ties to their hosts, they could not be excluded from community life as once they might have been. Here again, a lingua franca was necessary, since for the hosts to speak their own traditional language in the presence of the guests would have been discourteous in the extreme. Since neither of the traditional languages was acceptable to both groups and the context of use also had become less traditional, the obvious compromise was the creole, which had by then acquired prestigious first language Torres Strait Islander speakers and had developed a lexical and grammatical structure strongly influenced by the two traditional Torres Strait languages.

CONCLUSION

Variations on this account of the decline of the central islands traditional language and its displacement by an English-based creole during the early years of this century will be familiar to many readers. It is a more conventional tale than that of the initial creolisation of Pacific Pidgin English in Torres Strait. Those who have studied the loss of indigenous Australian languages will recognise recurring elements: incursion of Europeans, intent on exploiting local human and natural resources; rapid population decline; missionary influence and the subsequent dispersal and resettlement of previously nomadic or semi-nomadic groups; increasing external control, with consequent loss of autonomy and feelings of powerlessness and resentment; schooling in English and the stigmatising of the traditional culture and language as 'an inferior tongue', symbolic of the 'unenlightened' past.

In the central islands of Torres Strait, the effect of these processes was compounded by two additional factors: (1) the use of the creole lingua franca by an emerging elite, forced to speak it because of their movement across the east-west linguistic barrier. As we have seen, its use by priests and teachers contributed to its acceptance and status; and (2) the growth

44 The Pacific Islanders played a pivotal role in this process. There is now no central Islander who is not connected, by consanguineal or affinal ties, to the South Sea immigrants and the major families which have dominated central island life and politics since contact were all founded either by Europeans or by Pacific Islanders.

45 Sharp 1981-82.
and changing nature of central-eastern interaction. This interaction, along with all Islanders’ shared experience of external control, contributed to a growing pan-Islander sentiment, the language of which was Torres Strait Creole.

In this light, the adoption of the creole, mistakenly believed to be English and, like all European cultural and material artifacts, endowed with both novelty and prestige, is seen to be a rational strategy employed by the central Islanders to adapt to the profound post-contact socio-cultural changes affecting their communities.

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This is What Happened: Historical Narratives by Aborigines. Edited by Luise Hercus and Peter Sutton. Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1986. Pp. x + 341, with illustrations, maps, bibliography, index, h.c. $22.95.

Recent years have witnessed a rapid growth of publications based on Aboriginal oral narratives, including a considerable number of biographical accounts. These are predominantly written in English. Meanwhile linguists have long made it a practice, as part of their documentation of Aboriginal languages, to record stories told in the languages. Some of these stories have appeared in print, either in grammars of languages as 'texts' illustrating how the language works or in volumes that include grammar, texts, and dictionary (e.g. Heath 1981), although some complete volumes of texts have been published as well (von Brandenstein 1970, Capell 1972, Glass and Hackett 1979, Schebeck 1974, Heath 1980a and 1980b). Such texts tend to consist of traditional myths, ethnographic information, or personal reminiscences; very few of them are on historical themes. In the last few years, however, a number of overtly historical texts have appeared (Hercus 1977 and 1981, Merlan 1978, Murray and Austin 1981). Anthropologists have also published some texts in Aboriginal languages (e.g. Tindale 1939; Berndt and Berndt 1951), and numerous children's stories have been produced for literacy-teaching purposes by the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the literacy production centres associated with the Northern Territory bilingual education programme.

The volume under review is especially welcome then, as it brings together a collection of historical narratives in Aboriginal languages, with translations provided according to the usual standards in Australian linguistics (see Donaldson 1979). This book, in fact, claims to be 'the first book devoted to the contact history of a hunting and gathering people in which the people give accounts in their own languages' (p.6). We have 33 'stories' in 22 different languages, which were first related orally onto tape by 26 different Aboriginal authors, and were later transcribed, analysed and translated by 17 different linguists. (We are not informed whether the tapes are available for listening in the A.I.A.S. sound archive.) Most of the stories are prefaced with a short introduction that gives some biographical information on the author and/or provides the historical context of the narrative. The Aboriginal language version of the story can be read with the help of a morpheme-by-morpheme interlinear translation; the English translation which follows can be read on its own or in conjunction with the original, since the sentences are numbered in each version, although the fact that the two versions are not on facing pages makes this rather inconvenient. The Aboriginal language is printed in smaller characters and in double columns on a buff-coloured background. While this design feature makes for a clear separation between the two languages, it also makes the Aboriginal language version rather hard to read. The book is attractively illustrated with numerous photographs (including many of the authors) and maps, and is provided with an index, relevant bibliography, and notes on the texts and their translation.

The narratives are generally on the theme of Aboriginal contact with non-Aboriginals, and together they 'constitute a reasonable cross-section of personal views of contact history as told by Aboriginals' (p.1). The texts, which vary in length from 4 to 204 sentences, are grouped into four parts titled 'Early Contacts', 'Strangers from Asia', 'Fighting and Killing', and 'Coming to Terms'. The theme of conflict and violence at the meeting of two cultures is, predictably, well
represented here. Some of the stories tell of killings of Blacks and Whites that are otherwise unknown. There are also Aboriginal perspectives of known incidents such as the massacre at Koonchera Point (Birdsville area, 1880s) and the spearing of Frank Bowman (North Queensland, 1910), for which Bruce Sommer puts forth a new historical reconstruction. We also have some vivid descriptions of Aboriginals being pursued by police or punitive parties and often smartly escaping.

The incomprehension that accompanies first contact is another recurrent theme. Storytellers express amusement at their own (or their people’s) first reaction to novelties such as guns, whips, sugar, tea, tobacco, root vegetables. A very personal flavour is communicated by stories such as: the boy who was forced by adults to steal tobacco from a station building; the teenager from Groote Eylandt who went off with the Macassans for four years, leaving his relatives thinking he was dead; Ben Murray witnessing an Afghan’s snake-charming act in which the charmer was bitten and died; Fanny Brown’s discovery of a gold nugget; the Aboriginal man who ‘boned’ a white man, then undid his magic out of fear of reprisal. The historian will also be interested in a Gurindji account of the Wave Hill strike, and in the story of how the town of Cobar got its name.

Some of the texts are not really ‘narratives’. Two are songs, in which the author comments on the appearance of a Macassan taking a bath in the sea or of a Chinaman in a shearing shed. Some of the narratives are not strictly ‘historical’. The first, ‘The way it was’, is essentially an ethnographic text describing the traditional way of life in northeastern South Australia — including such fascinating details as the practice of holding young pelicans in a ‘yard’ to ensure a fresh meat supply. Another descriptive text describes the (introduced) card game of ‘guns’ and comments on the social consequences of gambling. The last text, ‘Land Rights’, is a protest about the Aboriginals’ loss of their lands, while the preceding text produces the speech given by a Gurindji leader on the occasion of the handover by the then Prime Minister of a lease to part of Wave Hill Station.

The 22 languages represented here are, as can be expected, predominantly from the more remote parts of Australia. 7 are from the Northern Territory, 6 from (North) Queensland, 4 from South Australia, 3 from (northern) Western Australia, and one each from New South Wales and Victoria. Only two of them, Anindilyakwa and Murrinh-Patha, are among the 18 major languages having over 500 speakers (see Black 1983:5; cf. Yallop 1982:44). As the editors note (p.5), the volume illustrates the diversity of Aboriginal languages; the contrast between the 7 ‘prefixing’ languages and the remaining non-prefixing languages is quite obvious. The editors also suggest that the book could be used as a reader in Aboriginal languages; the linguist may, indeed, be interested in the texts as illustrations of the grammar of individual languages, as material for the study of discourse structure, or even as a source for observations on vocabulary (for example, the words for ‘gun’ or ‘horse’ in the different languages would make an interesting study; the etymologist may be interested in the Yandruwandha (S.A.) words padi ‘grub’ and adu ‘nardoo’).

This volume also illustrates the diversity of practice within the field of Australian linguistics. In the spelling systems used for the languages, as many as six different symbols are used to represent the equivalent phoneme. Some of the orthographic systems involve the use of diacritic marks, which are occasionally left off by accident. In some ways it would have been preferable if a ‘practical orthography’ had been used for all the texts. Furthermore, although the editors have tried to make the coding of grammatical morphemes as uniform as
possible, the ergative case marker, for example, is rendered in the interlinear translations by such diverse glosses as ERG, AG, A, and OP. The linguistic reader is aided, however, by the provision of tables that explain both the orthographic symbols and the grammatical abbreviations.

The complexity of this publication project, from the point of view of both the editors and the publisher, perhaps partially excuses the long delay in the appearance of the book, although I understand that the book could have come out as much as five years ago. The editors first contacted the participating linguists in 1975 (p.1); as some of the stories were recorded as early as 1963, the contents thus have a somewhat dated feel about them. Some anachronisms I noted are: 'the present Hooker Creek Aboriginal Reserve' (p.305) has been Aboriginal freehold land since 1976 and Hooker Creek is now called Lajamanu; the language called Roper Pidgin by Heath and Roper Creole by Sharpe, is now referred to as Kriol; a number of elderly authors described in the present tense have no doubt passed away since the time of writing.

Apart from a few minor quibbles, we should be grateful to the editors for organising and compiling, and to the A.I.A.S. for (finally) producing, this unique and valuable collection of narratives, which is highly recommended to all students and interested readers of Aboriginal history, culture, and language.

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von Brandenstein, C.G. (comp.). Narratives from the North-West of Western Australia in the Ngarluma and Jindjiparndi Languages. 3 vol. Canberra, 1970.
The principal life-interest of A.T. Yarwood appears to be the historical relationship between white Australians and Asians. The section of the book which deals with this topic (about a third) is well-informed and cogently argued. I have no quarrel with it, and shall confine my remarks to the other two-thirds, which deals with the relationship between white Australians and Aborigines. This section is in my opinion much less satisfactory.

A principal theme is the influence of the intellectual roots of the Europeans on their subsequent relationship with other races. There is some uncertainty in the authors' minds whether the whites were prisoners of their own values, or whether the invasion proceeded through a combination of their preconceptions and physical needs; perhaps rationalisations were merely 'designed to salve the consciences of exploiters' (p.209). Gradually this theme is abandoned and the book becomes more of a straight history. Here is no cause for complaint. The authors are being a little more honest, and a little less ethnocentric, in calling their book *Race Relations in Australia*, unlike the rest of us who continue to write as if 'Aboriginal history' is of no interest to anybody until the whites come into the story.

The weakness of the Aboriginal two-thirds of the book is that it is out of touch with the thinking of the few years before it was published. A rough and ready rule of the 1970s can still be applied to authors of general Aboriginal histories: to what extent do they refer to individual tribes rather than to 'the Aborigines'. Yarwood and Knowling mention very few tribes or linguistic groups. Too many examples are drawn from a single area (the New England region).

Some of the sources are old-fashioned (eg. Goldsmith, 1951 on the Battle of the Pinjarra), or unreliable (eg. Willey, *When the Sky Fell Down*). One can read through the chapters on south-eastern Australia and conclude that nothing happened worth mentioning before 1850 apart from the Sydney resistance, Phillip's head-hunting expedition, Macquarie's Institution, Robinson, Myall Creek and the Port Phillip Protectorate. Some hoary old myths are perpetuated: it is simply not true, for instance, that punitive measures had ceased in New South Wales by 1850 (p. 157). There is scarcely a work of anthropology cited in the bibliography and the consequences of this neglect are apparent in the text. The authors seem quite unaware that they are blundering into a minefield in their assertion that, in relation to the Hawkesbury (but by implication in reference to the whole continent) 'A style of repression had begun that would destroy the tribes as traditional social units, leaving only scattered individuals to adapt to the white man'. Yarwood and Knowling do not seem to be sufficiently acquainted with the most innovative anthropology, the best historical theses and oral literature, to make judgements independent of the standard sources. The lack of insight stands in sharp contrast to the sections dealing with the establishment of the White Australia Policy, which have exactly the qualities which the Aboriginal sections lack.

The trouble with being out of touch with contemporary white and black thinking is that the platforms for writers of Aboriginal history are changing so fast. In the 1950s and 1960s, thanks to Berndt and others, it became acceptable to write about Aboriginal history and concede considerable wrong-doing by the whites. In the 1970s and 1980s, thanks to Reynolds and others, it became the accepted norm that Aborigines offered vigorous and widespread resistance to the invasion. The concept of Aboriginal resistance became a new platform, not just for writers of learned articles and books, but of newspaper features and
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radio programs. It became the atmosphere, the ambience of non-specialist information.

The authors are well in control of these developments. Yet for a year or two before the
book was published there was a further shift in the perception of Aborigines, this time as the
agents or initiators of change. The most obvious example was the analysis of the abandon-
ment of the assimilation policy in favour of integration. Aboriginal opposition to assimila-
tion began to be recognised as the root cause of the policy’s failure. This concession I
believe signalled what will become the gradual adoption by many historians of the position
that Aborigines survived primarily through their own efforts. Their refusal to be killed,
separated, deculturated, protected, dispersed and assimilated explains, ultimately, where
they are today. White advisers, who undoubtedly have had influence in issues such as Land
Rights, followed the black leads, leads which are now, as often as not, lost to white percep-
tions. Aborigines in the 1980s owe their survival as Aborigines to nobody but themselves,
and the concept of Aborigines as initiators may well become a new platform of historio-
graphy.

‘Today’s platforms were last year’s discussions, the stuff of common-rooms and seminars.
Yet there is little awareness in this book of our changing explanations of why things happen-
ed. Thus the general argument for the changes in legislation in the 1960s and 1970s, though
not explicitly made, is based by Yarwood on the whites’ realisation of the inequalities of their
own laws. One may as well argue that changes in public attitudes and law regarding women
came about through the same realisation by males! More specifically, Yarwood argues that
important changes followed the Second World War. They were caused by the questioning of
the ideology of racism and race suppression, the notoriety attached to Hitler’s treatment of
the Jews, and the creation of an international community which found intolerable the
‘mean, narrow and selfish prejudice’ which characterised Australia’s treatment of Aborigines
(p. 259). All of this may be true, but any discussion of the pressures affecting policy should
begin with the confidence gained by Aboriginal servicemen and others, as they came to realise
that there was an alternative to the mission and pastoral station, that regulations could be
defied, that the whites were not infallible, that homelands could be returned to; above all
the perception of themselves as people of worth.

Does it matter that the book is a little out of date in its tone? Yes it does, because,
whether we like it or not, the writing of Aboriginal history is a political act. This is a heavy,
responsible-looking tome written principally by a senior historian. Many students of Aust-
ralian history and race relations, as well as general readers, will look to it for guidance. It is
a moral, concerned book, but much of its explanations of change are not just out of date,
but ethnocentric. It is hard to know why Yarwood was persuaded to leave the field of white/
Asian race relations which he obviously knows so well.

PETER READ

_Hunter Hill, Hunter Island: archaeological investigations of a prehistoric Tasmanian site._ By
Sandra Bowdler. Terra Australis 8, Department of Prehistory, Research School of Pacific
and tables. $10.

It is of the utmost importance that the results of the growing body of Australian prehistoric
archaeological research be made available in readily accessible form not only to prehistorians
in Australia and overseas, but also to researchers in related disciplines and to the interested public in Australia. This volume is a well edited and clearly written report on the research that Sandra Bowdler, now Professor of Prehistory at the University of Western Australia, undertook during the 1970s for her Ph.D. It is well illustrated with figures and plates.

Hunter Hill existed during the Pleistocene glacial period when sea levels were lower and there was a land bridge across the Bass Strait. The hill became an island off the north-west tip of Tasmania during the most recent rise in sea level. The archaeological excavations described by Bowdler were undertaken in a large sea-cut cave, called Cave Bay Cave, near Cave Bay on the east coast of the island. There is a fascinating description of how, as the excavation progressed, clues to the importance of the deposits were found and followed up. This was a difficult site to excavate because of extensive roof falls, but careful stratigraphic control and radiocarbon dates have provided a chronology for the occupation of the site by people, peregrine falcons, owls and Tasmanian devils.

The earliest human occupations date between 23 000 and 18 000 BP with a further hearth dated to some 15 000 BP. At this time the land bridge was in existence and marine foods are absent from the debris in the cave. Environmental indicators suggest grassy plains surrounded the site with a cold, dry and windy climate prevailing during the Last Glacial Maximum. The people left very few artefacts in the cave, but those that were found included quartz with bipolar flaking, a core scraper and several bone points that are reminiscent of similar assemblages on mainland Australia.

The next period of human occupation recorded in the deposits, the Lower Midden, dates between about 6600 and 4000 BP when the sea had risen close to the present-day level. People were exploiting marine resources and marine bird, shellfish and fish remains are found in the deposits together with those of terrestrial animals. Coastal woodland surrounded the cave providing a very different habitat from that of the Late Pleistocene. Quartzite artefacts were more common at this time and the stone tools were larger than those that pre- and post-dated them. A few bone tools were also found.

After 4000 BP there was intermittent occupation with the Upper Midden dating between about 2600 and less than 1000 BP. The Cave Bay Cave deposits, in common with Tasmanian mainland sites, do not include fish and there is a distinct difference in the size and species of shellfish present in this Upper Midden compared with the Lower Midden. Analysis of the meat yield of the shellfish species indicates that the gathering of shellfish during the period represented by the Lower Midden gave a lower return than did abalone collecting in Upper Midden times suggesting an extension of the gathering range to the lower midlittoral and infralittoral zones in the late Holocene. The cave appears to have been abandoned prior to the arrival of Europeans.

The main substance of the publication lies in the detailed analyses of the wide range of finds. Perhaps the most important of these are the faunal remains and the author has gone to considerable lengths to develop an explicit methodology to distinguish between the various agents of accumulation. This in itself is a major contribution to taphonomic studies in Australia. The interpretation of the results is free of polemic; problem areas are discussed candidly and succinctly in both local and wider context. We look forward to reading more about further research in this important region.

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Footnote style:
1 Rowley 1971:107; see also Elkin 1965.
2 Colonial Secretary to Denison, 7 January 1850 (TSA CSO 24/93/3033).

Bibliography entries:
Author's first name or initials must appear as on title page; do not abbreviate to initials.
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CONFERENCE

Sixth Annual Law in History Conference, La Trobe University, 9-11 May 1987. Offers of papers with synopses to be received by November 1, 1986. Convenors: Adrian Howe & Diane Kirkby, Department of Legal Studies, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Vic. 3083.