KUNJEN PRONOUNS AND KINSHIP

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0. INTRODUCTION

The fifty or sixty Kunjen (Oykangant) speakers who live at the Mitchell River Mission and on surrounding cattle stations are now largely detribalised, observing to a lesser and lesser degree the customs of their ancestors.[1] This discussion of their pronominal and kinship terms brings to light a distinct correlation between Kunjen linguistics and social behaviour.

1. PRONOUNS

Kunjen pronouns are free forms; the following matrix represents the Nominative forms:

Chart Ia

	Person		*Singular*	*Dual*	*Plural*
NOMINATIVE	1	incl.	–	aliy	ampul
		excl.	ay	alinj	anjtan
	2		inang	upal	urr
	3		il	ul	etn

Kunjen words follow a vowel-initial/consonant-final pattern.[2] Comparison with the pronominal forms of geographically nearby languages indicates that conformity to this

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word-pattern has been achieved for Kunjen pronouns largely by the loss of the initial consonant and/or final vowel.

The Common Australian 1st pers. sing. nom. ngai suggested by Capell (1962)[3], the Gugu-Yalanji ngayu[5] and the Wik-Munkan ngay[4] are thus reduced to the ay above. This systematic change may be traced also in the 3rd pers. dual nom. ul that has clear relationships with Gugu-Yalanji pula, Koko Bera pulu and Wik-Munkan pul; the 2nd pers. plur. urr which relates to Gugu-Yalanji yurra, Koko Bera yurr; and other forms.

The persistence of pul in the dual forms of Kunjen is confirmatory evidence of its antiquity and stability in the Cape York/Western Desert Languages, already remarked on at length by Capell (ibid.). pul appears with a vowel change (Koko Bera yipel, 2nd pers. dual), with loss of part of the form (ul above), minimally (Wik-Munkan pul, 3rd pers. dual), or in inversion (Gugu-Yalanji pula, Kunjen upal, 3rd pers. plur.).[6]

The particle li noted by Capell appears also in the 1st pers. dual forms; a feature shared by Gugu-Yalanji and Koko Bera.

These occurrences are significant in view of the very low level of coincidence of Kunjen words with Capell's "Common Australian" vocabulary (ibid., 80ff.). Only five Kunjen words approach this CA list: el 'eye', al 'fire', uw 'give', in 'sit', utjir 'two'.

Chart Ib indicates that the general marker for possessive case is -ang, and Chart Ic indicates -ngan as the general marker of the objective case.

Chart Ib

	Person		*Singular*	*Dual*	*Plural*
POSSESSIVE	1	incl.	–	aling	ampung
		excl.	aten	alinjang	anjtang
	2		inin	upang	urrang
	3		ingin	ulang	etnang

Chart Ic

	Person		*Singular*	*Dual*	*Plural*
OBJECTIVE	1	incl.	–	alingan	ampungan
		excl.	atun	alinjan	anjtangan
	2		inun	upangan	urrangan
	3		ingun	ulangan	etnangan

The regularity of formation of the non-singular forms contrasts with the unpredictable singular forms.

2. SOCIAL ORGANISATION: KINSHIP

There has been considerable anthropological research into the social organisation of the Cape York tribes. R.M. and C.H. Berndt (1964, 80-81), commenting on this work, refer to Sharp (1939):[7]

> "The question of status is significant here, as in all Aboriginal societies to a lesser or greater degree, and this is expressed through specific status relationships. Sharp speaks of 'weak relationships' balanced by 'strong relationships', saying that this 'is necessary for a society in which every active individual relationship, at least between males, involves a definite and accepted superiority and inferiority... Even in distant relationships there is always present a recognized element of superordination and subordination' (ibid., 419). This inequality, inherent in the kinship terminology, is demonstrated in kinship behaviour, and is further exemplified in asymmetrical or unilateral preferential marriage."

This concept of 'superordination' and 'subordination', applied to kinship terminology in Kunjen, reveals an interesting structure. Since the marriages follow the general Murngin pattern, and the society is strongly patrilineal, males take priority over females where otherwise any equality might be assumed. Membership in a senior generation confers superordination.

The numerals in the following chart indicate a difference in generation levels.

3. KINSHIP TERMS

Chart II

	Superordinate		*Subordinate*	
2	apmingarr	ff/mm	arrngkapmalk	ss/dd
	atjingarr	fm/mf	arrngkatjalk	sd/ds

(Continued on page 56)

Chart II - continued from page 55

	Superordinate		*Subordinate*	
1	ipangarr	f/fb	arrngk	child
	amangarr	m/ms		
	alangarr	mb/fsh	uwangarr }	niece/
	injangarr	fs/mbw	antangarr }	nephew
0	olangarr	ob	akangarr	yb
	epangarr	os	elangarr	ys
	orangarr	h	urrangarr	w
	ulangarr	cousin	etnangarr	cousin

Differentiation on the basis of generation and sex remains valid up to the final "0" sector where the upper series (orangarr, urrangarr) is superordinate to the lower (ulangarr, etnangarr), following the pattern of the preceding "0" sector (brother/sister) but the reason is less obvious. It is to be found in the status of the progenitors of ulangarr and etnangarr, certainly, but an established pattern has yet to develop.

4. CORRELATION

A large proportion of the kinship terms set out above is derived from the possessive pronouns of Chart Ib, usually by the addition of –arr, the origin of which is uncertain. urrang 'yours (plur.)', urrangarr 'wife'; ulang 'theirs (dual)', ulangarr 'cousin'; etnang 'theirs (plur.)', etnangarr 'cousin'; anjtang 'ours (excl. plur.)', antangarr 'nephew'.

Minimal change of a vowel in certain of the pronominal forms of Chart Ib has enabled the use of one basic form in expressing several relationships. ulang 'theirs (dual)'; ulangarr 'cousin'; thus modifies to olangarr 'older brother', elangarr 'younger sister' and alangarr 'uncle'.

The first person pronouns (with the exception of anjtang 'ours (excl. plur.)'; antangarr 'nephew') are not used to express kinship.[8] The reason for this is uncertain, but may perhaps involve the fact that kinship terms already express relationships based on EGO. The failure to utilise the first person has made necessary the economy noted above in minimal vowel changes.

With the exception of some of these minimally derived forms, a further patterning may be evidenced by Chart II.

The singular and dual forms of Chart Ib are found in the 'superordinate' column, while subordination is expressed through plural forms.

5. RESIDUAL FORMS

While **injangarr** 'aunty' is traceable to **inin**[9] 'yours (sing.)', terms such as **amangarr** 'mother', **akangarr** 'younger brother' cannot be traced directly to pronominal forms. It is suggested rather that the terms still unaccounted for may be derived from the words for 'man', 'child', and 'give'.

pama '(native) man' is used by the Kandju, Gugu-Yimidir, and Gugu-Yalanji, and may be considered the original form of the Kunjen **apm**, which has undergone vowel loss and inversion to conform to Kunjen phonology. It may be this form, further modified by vowel change and/or consonant loss that is behind **amangarr** 'mother' and **ipangarr** 'father'. This is supported by the occurrence of **apm** in the bloc indicating a generation difference of 2, where it apparently denotes matrilineal or patrilineal continuity of line. **atj** contrasts with **apm** in the same bloc; it occurs in isolation with the meaning of 'mud'.

Berndts (1964), in discussing the responsibilities and privileges of the mother's brother and father's sister, suggest that these relationships are "pivotal" and "crucial" in Aboriginal society. These strong words express the deep interest anthropologists have shown in the mother's brother/father's sister: nephew/niece relationship. The exceptional use of **anjtang** 'ours (excl. plur.)', **antangarr** 'nephew' has already been noted. **uwangan**, our closest dictionary entry to **uwangarr** 'niece', has the meaning of 'might give', which, beside being a departure from the general pattern, carries interesting suggestions.[10]

arrngk 'child' may be the result of the process of vowel loss and inversion applied to **akangarr** 'younger brother'. Neither **pul** nor **li** can be clearly accounted for in any of the kinship terms.

NOTES

1. Kunjen is a name popularly applied to the Oykangant, Olkol, Ayan and Winkan dialect speakers.

2. "Kunjen Phonology: Word, Syllable and Phoneme" (forthcoming).

3. Capell, A., "A New Approach to Australian Linguistics", *Oceania Linguistic Monograph No. 1* (1962) University of Sydney.

4. Godfrey, Marie and Kerr, H.B., "Personal Pronouns in Wik-Munkan", *Papers on the Languages of the Australian Aborigines* (1964) A.I.A.S. Canberra.

5. Oates, William and Lynette, "Gugu-Yalanji Linguistic and Anthropological Data", *Gugu-Yalanji and Wik-Munkan Language Studies* (1964) A.I.A.S. Canberra. (The bi-labial stop phoneme has been re-written as p for comparative purposes.)

6. The form ngupal may also be postulated as a proto-form for upal.

7. Berndt, R.M. & C.H., *The World of the First Australians*, Ure Smith (1964) p.509.
Sharp, R.L., "Tribes and Totemism in North-East Australia", *Oceania*, Vol.IX, Nos. 3 and 4.

8. Unless it is ampung 'ours (incl. plur.)' which would require a complete change in the manner of articulation of the mp cluster to w, and is less appealing than the suggestion above.

9. Schmidt's Group II Pronouns, which Capell infers would apply to the Western Desert/Cape York languages, includes njin, which is strongly suggestive of a form that would permit this derivation of the kinship term.

10. Direct-address forms of the kinship terms are achieved in general by reduplication (partial or entire) of the first syllable of the usual reference term, and the loss of the final -arr. Thus epangarr 'older sister' becomes

epepang; etnangarr 'cousin' becomes netnang. The forms eparrntj(arr), etnarrntj(arr), etc., would be used to refer to '*my* older sister', '*my* cousin', etc. In discussions over a third person, the speaker honours the hearer by using the term denoting the hearer's relationship to that third person. Anthropological research into the social organisation of the Kunjen people will no doubt afford more precise definitions of some relationship terms.

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Orthography used is that established by "Oceania" usage except that rr *denotes a voiceless trill.*

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