This edited volume represents the first book-length study of the history of research on Australian Aboriginal languages, and collects together 18 original papers on a wide variety of topics, spanning the period from first settlement to the present day.

The introduction sets the scene for the book by presenting an overview of the history of histories of research on the languages of Australia, and identifying some of the major issues in Aboriginal linguistic historiography as well as directions for future investigations. Part 1 presents three detailed investigations of the history of work on particular languages and regions. The eight papers of Part 2 study and re-evaluate the contributions of particular individuals, most of whom are somewhat marginalized or have been marginalized in Aboriginal linguistics. Part 3 consists of six studies of specific linguistic topics: sign language research, language revival, pidgins and creoles, fieldwork, Fr. Schmidt’s work on personal pronouns, and the discovery that Australia was a multilingual continent.

Overall, the volume presents two major challenges to Australianist orthodoxy. First, the papers challenge the typically anachronistic approaches to the history of Aboriginal linguistics, and reveal the need to examine previous research in the context of their times — and the advantages of doing so to contemporary understanding and language documentation. Second, the widespread presumption that the period 1910-1950 represented the ‘dark ages’ of Aboriginal linguistics, characterized by virtually no linguistic work, is refuted by a number of studies in the present volume.

William B. McGregor is Professor of Linguistics at Aarhus University, Denmark. His primary research focus is on the languages of the Kimberley region, far north-west Western Australia, on which he has been working for over two decades. He has published grammars and sketch grammars, as well as books on various themes, including Verb classification in Australian languages (Mouton de Gruyter, 2002), The languages of the Kimberley, Western Australia (Routledge Curzon, 2004), and numerous articles on topics such as grammar, semantics, typology, and discourse organisation. He maintains a strong interest in the history of linguistics, and has published many articles on missionary linguistics in the Kimberley, and has recently published an edited and annotated version of Frs. Neises and Worms 1953 Australian languages.

Encountering Aboriginal Languages
Studies in the history of Australian linguistics

edited by
William B. McGregor
Encountering Aboriginal languages: studies in the history of Australian linguistics

edited by

William B. McGregor
Pacific Linguistics 591

Pacific Linguistics is a publisher specialising in grammars and linguistic descriptions, dictionaries and other materials on languages of the Pacific, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, East Timor, southeast and south Asia, and Australia.

Pacific Linguistics, established in 1964 through an initial grant from the Hunter Douglas Fund, is associated with the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at The Australian National University. The authors and editors of Pacific Linguistics publications are drawn from a wide range of institutions around the world. Publications are refereed by scholars with relevant expertise, who are usually not members of the editorial board.

FOUNDING EDITOR: Stephen A. Wurm
EDITORIAL BOARD: John Bowles, Malcolm Ross and Darrell Tryon (Managing Editors), I Wayan Ain, David Nash, Andrew Pawley, Paul Sidwell, Jane Suggs

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD:
Karen Adams, Arizona State University
Alexander Adelaar, University of Melbourne
Pete Austin, School of Oriental and African Studies
Byron Bender, University of Hawaii
Walter Busang, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz
Rebert Blust, University of Hawai’i
David Bradley, La Trobe University
Lyle Campbell, University of Utah
James Collins, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
Bernard Comrie, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology
Sorjana Dandjewiwi, Universitas Atma Jaya
Matthew Dryer, State University of New York at Buffalo
Jennifer Edmondson, University of Texas at Arlington
Nicholas Evans, University of Melbourne
Margaret Fiarzy, Monash University
William Foley, University of Sydney
Karl Franklin, SLI International
Charles Gricius, SLI International
Nikolaus Himmedman, Ruhr-Universität Bochum
Lillian Huang, National Taiwan Normal University
Bambang Kuswadi Purwanto, Universitas Atma Jaya
Noboru Kuros, University of Leiden
Harold Koch, The Australian National University
Ferdinand Lüchtmann, University of Auckland
John Lynch, University of the South Pacific
Patrick McConvell, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
William McGregor, Ashesi University
Ulrich Maier, Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel
Claire Meye-Ponsard, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
Bernz Neuthard, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main
Gary Roestbak, Universiteit Leiden
Lawrence Reid, University of Hawai’i
Jean-Claude Riviere, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
Melenine Takeotiana, University of Auckland
Toshio Tsubota, University of Tokyo
John Wolff, Cornell University
Elizabeth Zeitouna, Academia Sinica

Encountering Aboriginal languages:
studies in the history of Australian linguistics

edited by
William B. McGregor

Pacific Linguistics
Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies
The Australian National University
2008
This book contains photographs of, and mentions the names of, some now deceased Aboriginal people. Readers should be aware that in some communities seeing photographs and/or hearing the names of dead people may cause distress, especially to close relatives. Before using this book in Aboriginal communities, the reader should determine the wishes of senior members and take their advice on safeguards.
# Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of maps</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of figures and plates</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations and conventions</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributors to the volume</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William B. McGregor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1: Investigations of particular languages and regions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Gamilaraay (Kamilaroi) language, northern New South Wales—a brief history of research</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Austin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. History of research on Bardi and Jawi</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire Bowern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I could have saved you linguists a lot of time and trouble: 180 years of research and documentation of South Australia’s Indigenous languages, 1826–2006</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Simpson, Rob Amery and Mary-Anne Gale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2: Investigations of the contributions of particular individuals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Contextualising Yngev Laurell’s Australian collections, 1910–1911</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathias Boström</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Listening to the last speakers</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luise Hercus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. R.H. Mathews’ schema for the description of Australian languages</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold Koch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Nils M. Holmer’s research on Australian languages</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William B. McGregor and Matti Miestamo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Norman B. Tindale and the Pitjantjatjara language</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Monghan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Campbell Moore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. A history of the 1842 Descriptive Vocabulary
   David Campbell Moore 301
12. Language is like a carpet. Carl Georg von Brandenstein and Australian
   languages
   Nick Thieberger 321

Part 3: Investigations of particular topics
13. But our language was just asleep: a history of language revival in Australia
   Rob Amary and Mary-Anne Gale 339
14. A history of the study of Australian Aboriginal sign languages
   Adam Kendon 383
15. History of fieldwork on Kimberley languages
   William B. McGregor 403
16. History of research into Australian pidgins and creoles
   Peter Mühlhäusler 437
17. Wilhelm Schmidt's Die Personalkomnina in den australischen Sprachen
   revisited
   Fritz Schweiger 459
18. The European ‘discovery’ of a multilingual Australia: the linguistic and
   ethnographic successes of a failed expedition
   David P. Wilkins and David Nash 485

Language index 509
Name index 513
Subject index 520

List of maps
Map 1: Some Australian language families and genetic groups xiv
Map 2.1: Languages and dialects in northern New South Wales 38
Map 2.2: The languages neighbouring Gamilaraay and Yuwaalaraay 39
Map 3.1: Languages of Dampier Land and Western Kimberley 60
Map 4.1: South Australia, showing places referred to in the text 87
Map 5.1: Route of Laurell's travels in the Kimberley 148
Map 8.1: Nile Holmer's fieldwork languages 225
Map 9.1: Yankunytjatjara, Pitjan tjara and neighbouring dialects 253
Map 9.2: Section of Tindale's 1940 map of Australian tribal distribution 254
Map 9.3: Sketch map of a section of 'Jankunyadjara' territory 266
Map 13.1: Locations of some languages undergoing revival 354
Map 15.1: Traditional locations of main Kimberley languages mentioned in text 405

Map 17.1: Section of map of Australian languages from Schmidt (1919a) showing
   main languages mentioned in text 464
Map 18.1: Sketch of route traversed in April 1791, after Campbell (1926) 487

List of figures and plates
Figure 1.1: Decadal counts of publication year of items in Carrington and
   Trifft (1999) 12
Figure 1.2: Time periods covered by the contributions to this book 22
Plate 2.1: Primary school student composition in Gamilaraay 52
Plate 2.2: Revised Gamilaraay web dictionary 54
Plate 2.3: Web dictionary example sentence hyperlinks 55
Plate 3.1: Sample page of Laves' notebooks 64
Figure 5.1: Second page from Laurel's field notebook 1910-1911b 151
Figure 5.2: Page from Laurel's field notebook 1910-1911d, describing conventional
   gestures used in the Mt. Barnett area 152
Plate 5.3: Laurel among Aborigines in Mt. Barnett area during a staged
   coronation, 1911 158
Plate 5.4: A photo from the mission on Sunday Island 159
Plate 6.1: Nancy Egan (Wemba wemba) with her younger children Valerie and
   Paul, and granddaughter Patsy revisiting Framlingham Settlement near Wannanbool in western Victoria 164
Plate 6.2: By the rubbish dump at Dareton 166
Plate 6.3: George Dutton Kalpili, Wilcannia 1967 167
Plate 6.4: Maudie Nyalon Akawilyika, the last and final speaker of several languages 171
Plate 6.5: Jack Long, last and final speaker of Mathimathi 172
Plate 6.6: Alice Oldfield, last speaker of Kuyani 173
Plate 6.7: Gilbert Brimfield, the last to recall a sizeable Nukanu vocabulary 174
Plate 6.8: Mick McLean Irinyili makes a point, Dalhousie, 1976 175
Plate 6.9: Linda Crombie makes a point 175
Plate 8.1: Nile Holmer doing fieldwork in northern New South Wales in 1964 226
Plate 8.2: Nile Holmer on his second fieldtrip to Australia, Cooberpump, in 1970-1973 238
Plate 9.1: Norman B. Tindale after the Mann Range Expedition, July 1933 255
Plate 10.1: T.G.H. Strehlow's translation committee, 1948 274
Plate 12.1: Carl Georg Christoph Freiherr von Brandenstein 322
Plate 13.1: 1977 Bundjalung course in Lismore 344
Plate 13.2: From Falling Star 358
Plate 13.3: Kaurna funeral protocols project, February 2005  
Plate 15.1: J.R.B. Love’s Worrorra translation team, 1929  
Plate 15.2: Fr. Worms at work in Broome  
Plate 15.3: Sample page from one of Fr. Hermann Nekes’ notebooks  
Plate 15.4: One arrangement from the *Men and trees* photo series  
Plate 15.5: An Excelsior phonograph, the type usually supplied by the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv to travelers  
Plate 15.6: Postprandial fieldwork on Groinyandji at Jiljiyarrie, 1980  
Plate 15.7: Screen shot from a video recording of a narration by Maudie Lennard, illustrating use of gestures  
Plate 15.8: Howard Coate and Bill McGregor in conversation outside Coate’s demountable in Derby, 1995  
Plate 17.1: Fr. Wilhelm Schmidt, 1928  
Plate 17.2: Fr. Wilhelm Schmidt, 1952  
Plate 17.3: Title page of Schmidt (1913b)  
Plate 18.1: Dawes’ (1791:46a) comparative table

### Preface

This volume, like so many edited volumes, has an all too lengthy history, much longer than either the contributors or the editor would have wished. Its initial impetus traces back to the *Fourth International Workshop on Australian Linguistics: History of research on Australian languages*, held in Aarhus University on 24–25 June 2002. Six of the papers in this volume were presented at that workshop, namely those presented in Chapters 1–3, 5, 8, and 17. This represents all of the contributions to the workshop dealing with the historical topic, with a single exception, my own paper on the work of Frs Hermann Nekes and Ernst Worms, which appeared in a reconstituted form in the editorial introduction to their magnum opus, *Australian languages* (2006, Mouton de Gruyter).

The workshop participants agreed that it would be a good idea to publish an edited volume containing these contributions; the conference organiser, myself, was duly dangled in as editor. However, it was also felt that these six contributions needed to be augmented by additional papers in order to expand the treatment in depth and comprehensiveness. In particular, one of the major gaps was felt to be the lack of contributions by Aboriginal people themselves. Regrettably, despite attempts to obtain such contributions, none eventuated; this is acknowledged as one of the main weaknesses of the present volume.

It of course took time to solicit and receive additional contributions, and it took some three years before revised versions of all of the contributions were received, and an initial draft of the entire work took shape. (Regrettably, not all solicited papers were forthcoming, leaving gaps that I would rather have seen plugged—see also my ‘Introduction’.) Editorial intervention turned this draft into a more coherent work, and in January 2006 a version of the book was submitted to Pacific Linguistics for evaluation.

I was fortunate to receive the referee reports during a two month period as visiting scholar in the Department of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, in mid-2006. This greatly facilitated initial publication negotiations and planning. I thank John Bowden, general editor of Pacific Linguistics, and Julie Manley, for their prompt, cheerful, and helpful responses to my endless queries concerning formatting and other editorial matters. For their insightful and useful comments on the manuscript thanks also go to the ‘anonymous’ referees, whose identity (as is so often the case) could hardly remain concealed, thanks to intertextuality, Hilary Carey and Peter Sutton. All of the contributors have benefited greatly from their advice. Many other people contributed significantly to the book; they are identified in the individual contributions, as are photograph credits. Last but not least, thanks go to Margaret Blake, whose copy-editor’s eye caught all too many inconsistencies, syntactic infelicities, and omissions before it was too late.

William B. McGregor  
Aarhus, December 2007
Abbreviations and conventions

Language names are given as far as possible in the preferred modern spellings, where known. This is usually the form employed by literate speakers of the language, or accepted/preferred by the community of its speakers, owners or their descendants. Otherwise, the spelling is either according to the AIATSIS standard (as per the Indigenous Languages Database (2002)—a revised version of which will soon be accessible online as AusLang, at http://austlang.aiatsis.gov.au/), the standard recommended by a language centre, or to the most widely accepted spelling employed in the literature. In some cases, however, it is not possible to reliably identify languages referred to in earlier literature, and in these cases the spelling of the sources has been retained.

Throughout standard conventions are employed: cited words are given in italics, except when given specifically in phonetic, phonemic, or graphemic form, where the standard brackets [], [], and <> respectively, are used. Any other abbreviations or conventions are explained in the individual contributions.

Contributors to the volume

Rob Amery
University of Adelaide
robert.amery@adelaide.edu.au

Peter K. Austin
SOAS, University of London
pa2@soas.ac.uk

Claire Bowern
Rice University
bowern@rice.edu

Mathias Bostrom
Svenskt visararkiv/Uppsala University
mathias.bostrom@visararkiv.se

Mary-Anne Gale
University of Adelaide
maryanne.gale@adelaide.edu.au

Luise Hercus
Australian National University
luiseh@dodo.com.au

Adam Kendon
University of Pennsylvania
adam@dora.net

Harold Koch
Australian National University
harold.koch@anu.edu.au

William B. McGregor
Aarhus University
wilkins@hum.au.dk

Matt Miestamo
University of Helsinki
matti.miestamo@helsinki.fi

Paul Monaghan
University of Adelaide
Paul.Monaghan@adelaide.edu.au

David C. Moore
University of Western Australia and Finke River Mission
DavidC.Moore@nt.gov.au

Peter Mühlhäusler
University of Adelaide
pmuhliau@hotmail.com

David Nash
ANU and AIATSIS
David.Nash@anu.edu.au

Fritz Schweiger
Universität Salzburg
Fritz.Schweiger@sbg.ac.at

Jane Simpson
University of Sydney
jhs@nall.usyd.edu.au

Nick Thieberger
University of Melbourne
thie@unimelb.edu.au

David P. Wilkins
University of Sydney
wilkinsdavid@sbcglobal.com
1 Introduction

WILLIAM B. Mc Gregor

1. Preliminary remarks

In Australianist linguistics the main motivations for delving into the past have been not so much to understand the ideas and conceptualisations of past investigators as to utilise and evaluate the language data they recorded. Even the few works devoted to the history of the subject have tended to address it predominantly from the perspective of the usefulness and relevance of previous work to today's concerns, anachronistically evaluating the contributions of past scholars in terms of modern knowledge. Little serious attempt has been made to reconstruct the thought of earlier times, arguably the primary goal of the history of science (Graff 2001:2), or to understand the work of previous investigators within their social and intellectual milieus. As Hans Aarts has put it:

"The task of gaining the proper depth of historical perspective within a given period can only be satisfactorily achieved by soliciting all relevant contemporary knowledge without reference to or misguidance by the later accumulations of scholarly opinion and assignment of influences, which are far too often and too easily obscured by the status of unexamined doctrine. (Aarts 1967:10)"

The primary motivation of this book is to redress this lacuna and attempt to reconstruct the linguistic thought of earlier times, and of investigators of the traditional languages of Australia. Thus each of the following seventeen papers that make it up attempts to understand thought about Australian Aboriginal languages from previous times as more or less coherent conceptual systems, as much as possible situated in their socio-cultural and intellectual contexts. Each rejects anachronistic projection of today's ideas and narrow focus on what is immediately relevant to us today. At the same time the papers aim to present both honest and critical attempts to understand and appraise the work of past investigators; nothing is served by excessively uncritical and laudatory evaluations that skim over the surface of past investigations. To do so would be as unscholarly as taking the opposite approach—unfortunately all too common in Australian linguistics and, until very recently, anthropology—of anachronistic dismissal.

1 I am grateful to the participants of the Fourth International Workshop on Australian Linguistics: History of research on Australian languages for comments, to Hilary Carey for copies of published and unpublished articles, to Ian, Harold Koch, Jane Simpson, and Peter Sutton for comments on a previous draft, and especially to Russell McGregor for a detailed discussion and critique of an earlier draft of this paper and for suggesting additional references. The final responsibility for any inadequacies, of course, lies with myself.

© Pacific Linguistics
Aside from the scholarly reasons for doing research on the history of ideas about Aboriginal languages, some personal considerations might also be mentioned. Much documentary research is sheer drudgery, at least for me, and not nearly as exciting as doing fieldwork. But it can be punctuated by the occasional sudden realisation of the point of a piece of writing, an understanding of what the writer is really up about, or the sudden appearance of a key example. Thus, after hours of poring over tense and inexplicit—insufficiently comprehensible—passages in Nekes and Worms Australian languages (Nekes and Worms 1953), I have occasionally had a sudden insight into what they were trying to say. On other occasions, perusing this and other early documents (such as Taylor's 1895 grammar of Nyulnyu) I have been surprised by the unexpected appearance of examples of grammatical phenomena poorly represented in my own Nyulnyu data.

Before getting down to business, it may be worth correcting the common misconception that it was members of James Cook's 1770 party who were the first Europeans to record words of an Australian Aboriginal language. In fact, the first confirmed attestation of an identifiable word of an Aboriginal language dates to almost a century earlier than Cook, and from the opposite side of the continent. The privateer William Dampier, who was in command of his ship somewhere on the northern end of the Dampier Land peninsula in 1688, mentions in his journal that when some local Aborigines approached the ship threateningly, the ship's drum was sounded, at which they 'ran away as fast as they could drive, crying "Guri, guiri" deep in the throat' (as quoted in O'Grady 1971:782, citing from Stroven and Day 1949:588, quoting in turn from Dampier 1697). As Toby Wadley has observed, this is most likely the Bardi word agwari, the term for a malevolent spirit (Wadley 1979:197). There is no evidence that Dampier or his crew made any serious attempt to record words of the language he encountered, so Cook's party still retains the title of first to attempt systematic elicitation and recording of words, as opposed to incidental observation.

This introductory piece is organised as follows. First, section 2 presents a historically and thematically oriented overview of histories of Australian Aboriginal linguistics, providing a backdrop for the book. Following this in section 3 the papers making up the book are overviewed, and their major themes identified. Section 4 concludes with a brief summary, and identifies additional themes of interest to the study of the history of Australianist linguistics and directions for future research.

2. A history of histories of research into Australian languages

To date, rather little has been written on the historiography of Australian Aboriginal linguistics. One might say that the subject has barely been born, though it has at least been conceived. There are no major monographs on the topic, or on any subtopic, such as exist on the history of linguistic ideas (such as Robins 1984), or of specific domains such as syntax, phonology, and morphology. The few extant works are either sections or chapters of books, or separate articles published in journals. Virtually all were published after 1960, when Australian Aboriginal linguistics came to age (see Table 1.1 below).

It is far beyond the scope of the present introductory chapter to present a comprehensive and/or revisionist history of research into Australian languages; indeed, it is the purpose of the entire book to lay the groundwork for such an enterprise. Rather, I have a more modest goal in mind, namely to overview existing histories of research on Australian Aboriginal languages, and attempt to put them into something of a historical, or perhaps more accurately chronological, perspective.

Four major types of work are relevant: (a) national and regional histories of research that cover the entire continent or significant regions throughout the whole time period; (b) local histories of research on particular languages; (c) personal histories; and (d) histories of particular linguistic topics or themes. We discuss these types in order in the following sections.

2.1 National and regional histories

2.1.1 Overview

The first historical account of Australian Aboriginal linguistic research I am aware of is contained in pages xi–xxiv of John Fraser's introduction to Threlkeld (1892). Over half of this account is a biography of Threlkeld, with a list of his published and unpublished works on Wabakal. The remaining two pages single out a few of the main figures from the nineteenth century: George Grey, W.H.I. Bleeke, L. Threlkeld, Horatio Hale, William Waiz, James Günther, C.G. Teichelmann, C.W. Schürmann, and W. Ridley (a number of nineteenth century investigators are omitted from this list, who made a significant contribution.) The contributions of these individuals is mentioned, but not evaluated or discussed in any depth. Over half a century later Arthur Capell mentions (1956), in less than a page of typescript, around a score of individuals he considered to have made a significant contribution to the field until that time. Again critical evaluation is entirely absent.

The first treatment that really deserves the label of a history is a ten page discussion dating to the mid-1960s, O'Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin (1966:2–13). O'Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin characterise the work of the first century of colonisation as uneven in quantity and quality—a half of works are single out as good, including Horatio Hale's grammars of two New South Wales languages (1846). Works from this time is characterised as 'pre-phonemics'; they were typically phonemically under-differentiated. In particular, O'Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin (1966) remarks on the failure of many observers to distinguish reflexes from apical stops and nasals, and major inconsistencies in the usage of vowel symbols such as e, especially by speakers of English. A notable omission from this history is Threlkeld's Wabakal grammar (1834, 1892).

According to O'Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin (1966) research in the subsequent century was punctuated by three eras of survey-type research. Edward Currie ushered in, in their view, the first era of survey linguistics, with the publication in 1886 of his four volume work comprising 120 item lists in nearly 500 language varieties. O'Grady saw this as a precursor of the third survey period, characterised by lexicostatistical investigations, that began in the mid-1950s (O'Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin 1966:8). The second period began in the late 1930s with the extensive survey work of Arthur Capell on northern Australian languages, in which, by contrast, lexicon played second fiddle to grammar.

The research in between these survey eras is not treated in detail. Some descriptive research is referred to, but not examined critically. It is observed that the fifty year period fol-
It was about then that institutionally-based research began, firstly with the establishment of the chair of anthropology at the University of Sydney in 1926, and Elkin’s appointment to it in 1933, which led soon after to the appointment of Arthur Capell (1902-1986) as the same department. The establishment of the journal Oceania (founded in 1929) which in its early years published a considerable amount of linguistics, and was one of the few very cutlets for articles on Australian languages, was also a relevant factor. It was also about the same time that detailed grammatical descriptions began to appear; Capell considered T.D.H. Stanley’s grammar of Arrernte (1944) to have been ‘the first full scale grammatical account of an Australian language’. Although not published until the mid-1940s, typescript versions had been available during the 1930s (Capell 1970:676; see also Moore, this volume).

Capell’s history is a valuable consolidation and compilation of the works up to the late 1940s, thus of course long since vetted. This is not just because the past thirty or so years have seen a veritable explosion of research on Australian languages, but also because of historical documents that have since come to light. Significant among these is William Dawes’ work on the Sydney language (1790), unscathed in the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1972. Furthermore, since Capell’s article a number of institutions have arisen that focus on Aboriginal languages, the School of Aboriginal Linguistics (1974), subsequently incorporated into Batchelor College, the Institute for Aboriginal Development, and a number of Aboriginal-controlled language centres (see Amery and Gale, this volume).

Capell’s history contains a number of inaccurate and controllable claims, as might be expected of a work of its temporal and geographical scope. Thus Daisy Bates’s work as a collector of words across the continent goes unmentioned, and the early comment on her work concerns her 1914 publication on the languages of the south-west (Bates 1914). Garrod’s Lavis is dismissed in a few words (pp.681-682), principally on the grounds that he published almost nothing. Capell also largely disregards the role of Adelaide institutionally-based research, with the expeditions of the Board for Anthropological Research, and the South Australian Museum and the University of Adelaide that date to about the same time that institutionalized research in Sydney began (see Morgham, this volume); as well as this, there was the Adelaide school of Linguistics (see Simpson, Amery and Gale, this volume; Morgham, this volume; and Moore, this volume). This omission is presumably a relic of the rivalry between Adelaide and Sydney for Rockefeller Foundation funding that founded the disciplinary base in anthropology, ultimately won by Sydney, just as the cavalier treatment of Lavis may reflect the old rivalry between A.P. Elkin and his predecessor in the chair of anthropology in Sydney University, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown.

The year after Capell’s history Stephen A. Wurm’s Languages of Australia and Tasmania (1972) appeared. An entire chapter of this book, amounting to some 16 pages, is devoted to the history of research; in general it can be characterised as less critical than Capell’s account. Wurm distinguishes three periods, as follows.

The first period, beginning in 1790 and extending to the 1920s is chiefly characterised by the collection of words in a great variety of languages and the compilation of very short, sketchy descriptions of a considerable number of languages largely following a set pattern of description on the basis of Latin grammar (Wurm 1972:12). Wurm mentions many of the most significant players in this field, including the wordlist collectors, the describers of particular languages, and the classifiers. Of the classifiers, Schmidt and Kroober are singled out most notably. Wurm evaluates the contribution of Kroober more positively than the contribution of Schmidt, in that it was Kroober who perceived the overall unity of the languages of the continent—a contentious hypothesis, yet to be convincingly demonstrated.
The second period began with the appearance in the 1930s of Arthur Capell on the scene, and extended to the early 1960s. Wurm identifies three crucial characteristics of this phase: surveying and detailed study of the northern languages; strong focus on structural and typological features; and recognition of overall unity. It was in this phase that special varieties such as mother-in-law varieties, and secret initiate varieties were accorded careful attention. Alf Sommerfeldt’s notorious attempt to link Arrernte language and culture, and his construal of both as ‘primitve’ (see especially Sommerfeldt 1938) is mentioned completely uncritically (see Wilkins 1989; Alpher 1994 for critiques). Also during this period a number of more detailed studies of particular languages were undertaken, resulting in grammatical descriptions and dictionaries, and a few text collections. Wurm remarks that very little of the work of this period was ever published.

The third period is linked to the establishment of the Australian branch of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in 1961 (though SII courses had been taught in Australia since 1950—Oates 2003:29) and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (now Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) in 1964. Both institutions provided an impetus to linguistic research.

The third period is characterised by considerable diversity in linguistic interests (Wurm 1972:22); establishment of lexicostatistical investigations; beginning of detailed comparative-historical investigations; demonstration that some aberrant languages were linked to other Australian languages; in-depth investigations of a number of languages resulting in grammatical descriptions and dictionaries; large-scale surveys, sometimes revealing languages thought to be dead; utilisation of amateurs in collection of data; archiving of recorded materials in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies; study of special characteristics of the languages; understanding of linguistic prehistory, and inter-disciplinary projects with pre-historians, and publication of results of the research. Although this period was only a little over a decade old at the time this paper appeared, many more researchers already figured in it than in the previous periods, and it accounts for over half of the chapter.

Two of the three general surveys of Australian languages published in the early 1980s, Dixon (1980) and Blake (1981), also contain discussions of the history of study of Aboriginal languages; the third, Yallon (1982), says nothing.

Dixon (1980:8–17, 20–21) provides a short account of the history of ideas about Australian languages, the bulk of which (all bar one page) deals with the pre-1910 period. This does not purport to be a detailed history of research on Australian languages, and nor is it, many details and personages being omitted.

The previously discussed histories acknowledge the relevance of certain external factors—anthropological and linguistic theories, governmental policy and institutional changes—to research on Aboriginal languages. Dixon goes a step further, explicitly linking (Dixon 1980:12) interest in Aboriginal languages and cultures with external socio-political and ideological factors; indeed, he suggests a correlation between this interest and the general level of treatment of Aboriginal people. Thus he suggests that the first few years of each new colony was characterised by considerable interest in the languages and cultures, which rapidly gave way to apathy; as the colonies consolidated and expanded. Then in about 1875, with the externalisation of government in most regions, a rise of social Darwinian sentiments that Aborigines would inevitably soon die out, and that they should be treated in a kindly fashion—‘soothe the pillow of the dying race’, as Daisy Bates put it. This marked the appearance of amateur anthropologists, who were usually also avid word collectors. The subsequent thirty or so years until about 1910 he refers to as the ‘golden age’ of amateur anthropologists and linguists.8

In general Dixon projects a more positive evaluation of the work of the last decades of the nineteenth century into the first decade of the twentieth than does Capell, who dismisses most of it on the grounds of the manner much of the material was gathered (via questionnaires sent to people at the colonial frontiers) and because it was often used to support theories of origins. Dixon’s evaluation of the work of Fr Wilhelm Schmidt is also considerably more positive than Capell’s.

The period from 1910 to 1960 Dixon (1980:16) refers to as the ‘dark ages’ of Aboriginal policy, which was accompanied by ‘virtually no linguistic work’. Only Arthur Capell, he avers, was active during this period, which he dismisses in a paragraph. This period was characterised by widespread popular belief in a single Aboriginal language, and also by Capell’s work. Dixon mentions only the popular word books that began to appear in the 1930s (citing Kenyon 1930). This characterisation of these five decades has since been widely accepted by Australians, and for this reason alone it is important to assess its validity. There are two grounds on which it can be criticised. First, as a number of contributions to this book attest, a good deal was actually going on in Australianist linguistics at the time, and Arthur Capell was by no stretch of the imagination alone (see especially Monaghan, this volume; Moore, this volume; Simpson, Amery and Gale, this volume; see also McGregor 2003, 2007; Nekes and Worms 2006). Second, the characterisation of the period as ‘dark ages’ of Aboriginal policy is not substantiated by any discussion of the policies of the times, which were by no means static during the half-century. Indeed, the period was marked by major shifts of policy and attitudes towards Aborigines, especially after World War II (R. McGregor 1997; Russell McGregor, pers. comm.; Rowe 1998, 2005). In the absence of any characterisation of the policies of the period it is impossible to evaluate the suggested link to the linguistics of the era.

Dixon (1980:16) puts the beginning of serious intensive research to the years post-1960, heralded by Capell’s A new approach to Australian linguistics (Capell 1956). The major institutional event he considers to have been the establishment of the first department of linguistics in an Australian university, Monash University, in 1965 (Dixon 1980:17). A number of linguistics departments emerged in the following decade or so, as did the first publication outlets for Aborigines specifically oriented to linguistics. The first was Pacific Linguistics, devoted to papers and books on languages of the Pacific region; its first books on Australian languages were published in 1967.9 A bit over a decade later came the Australian Journal of Linguistics (1981). Interest in Australian languages gradually intensified, and by the mid-1970s the standard of description of Australian languages began for the first time to measure up to world standards.10

Barry Blake’s history (1981:73–75) is much shorter, and effectively adopts a four period model, though the author does not actually speak of periods. Blake distinguishes the research

---

7 What Dixon fails to take into account is the fact that (as various other commentators have observed) this early interest was in a large part borne by the necessity of communicating with the indigenous population, and declined as the indigenous population declined and learnt English.

8 Here Dixon’s account bears strong resemblance to Eilkin’s: Eilkin characterised anthropological work up to about 1870 as primarily motivated by practical needs of interaction with Aborigines (Eilkin 1963:5), while the subsequent thirty or forty years—this compiling and collating phase—was heavily influenced by anthropological theories.

9 In fact, the first publication attributed to Pacific Linguistics appears under the imprint of Linguistic Circle of Canberra Publications. This is a short piece of just 12 pages by Stephen Wurm on the role of language in the assimilation of Aborigines (Wurm 1963).

10 See Walsh (1975) for a comprehensive account of the work carried out during the 1970s, revealing the wide diversity of interests.
of the nineteenth century as amateur, characterising it primarily as recording of vocabularies, and the occasional brief grammar; he also remarks on the poor quality of the phonetic representation. E.M. Curr’s work (1886) is singled out as one of the major achievements of the century. The early twentieth century was characterised by a falling off in investigations, which did not recover until the late 1930s with the work of Arthur Capell. The subsequent two decades saw a gradual increase in linguistic research. The early 1960s marked the beginning of a fourth period, with the establishment of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, and the explosion of linguistic investigations.

Two pages of the first volume of *Handbook of Australian languages*, co-edited by Barry Blake and Robert Dixon (Dixon and Blake 1979:4-5), sketch a history that closely resembles the story presented in more detail in the previous two works, with a few minor differences in focus. They speak of an early period of collecting vocabularies, culminating in Curr’s four-volume work, a few sketches of particular languages appeared in this period. Then came the Hil in the first decades of the twentieth century, especially from 1912 to 1930. The 1950s saw the appearance of Arthur Capell and his surveys, and Theodore G.H. Sheehan’s work. As usual, the late 1950s and early 1960s is taken to be the watershed, with the beginning of extensive regional surveys and in-depth studies of particular languages; the role of academic institutions is highlighted. A new element in the story is the observation that the first decade or so following 1960 saw a considerable increase in quantity of research that was not always matched by a similar increase in quality.

A revision of this story appears in the fourth volume of the *Handbook* published some twelve years later (Dixon and Blake 1991), here the story is expanded to almost double its previous size, and includes mention of more players in the game. Most similar to Capell’s previously discussed history (1970), two periods are identified, albeit with an intervening hiatus of some two decades. The first period, an amateur period, ran from 1870 to about 1910, and was characterised entirely by educated amateurs whose work was phonetically poor. From the mid 1840s to the late 1870s, however, Dixon and Blake, virtually no research was undertaken on Aboriginal languages. Characteristic of the work of the first period were methodologically unsound attempts at showing links to languages of other continents. The second period, the professional period, ran from 1930 to the present, with a gathering of momentum in the 1960s and 1970s. Compared to most other global histories, this one focuses more on what the authors consider to be significant linguistic characteristics or innovations—Capell’s notion of ‘common Australian’ and his prefixing-suffixing typology, and the 1960s lexicostatistics of O’Grady, Wurm, and Hale. Two survey monographs have appeared to date in the third millennium, one dealing with the entire continent (Dixon 2002), the other focussing on the Kimberley (McGregor 2004).”

Surprisingly given the immense amount of research done on Australian languages since 1980, the apparent changes in Dixon’s views of the history (as represented in the introductions to the *Handbooks*), and the numerous active Australianists who began in the post-1980 era, Dixon avers that his history of the study of Australian languages has ‘dated very little’—albeit the 1980 book (Dixon 2002 xxvii). *Australian languages* contains no discussion of the history of research on the languages, or ideas about them.

McGregor (2004:14–21) identifies three broad and overlapping phases of work on Kimberley languages. The phases can be summarised as follows. (The discussion is restricted to Kimberley languages, and ignores the contribution of linguists to the description of other languages.)

First was an early phase that extended from the late nineteenth century until about 1929, and was characterised primarily by the work of amateurs with little or no linguistic training. In this period, dominated by the collection of wordlists, F.R. Alphonse Tachon’s grammar of Nyulnyulan (1895) stands out, as do the recordings of Fr Bischofs in 1910 (see McGregor 1998, 2000), and Ynge Laurell’s recordings on Sunday Island (see Bostrom, this volume).

Immediately following this was an intermediate phase, running from about 1930 to 1959; this was characterised by increasingly competent and trained investigators, and an appearance of the first academic investigators, A.P. Elkin, Gerhardt Laves, and Arthur Capell. Strangely, the early years of this phase did not herald the appearance of detailed grammars, though noteworthy are Love’s sketch grammars of Worrora (Love 1931–1932; 1934, 1938), and brief grammatical sketches by Arthur Capell. The period might be reasonably characterised as survey-oriented. Notable surveys from the time include Capell’s report on his 1938–1939 field trip through the Kimberley and Arnhem Land (Capell 1940), and Nekes and Worms’ *Australian languages* (Nekes and Worms 1953, an edited version of which appeared in print some fifty-three years later, Nekes and Worms 2006).

Finally, McGregor (2004) identifies a modern phase—extending from 1960 to the present—characterised by the dominance of academically trained investigators. It is in this period that the first detailed grammars appeared, and interest in sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics began to become manifest. Missionary linguists also appear in increasing numbers, and have more linguistic training than before.

2.1.2 Summing up

Table 1.1 presents in summary form the periods identified in each of the histories we have discussed, with the exception of the derivative one in Dixon and Blake (1979). One qualification that should be added is that it is not always possible to identify temporal periods in O’Grady’s history (O’Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin 1966).

It is clear from this tabulation that there is widespread agreement that 1930 and 1960—give or take a few years—represented major watersheds in the development of Australian Aboriginal linguistics. Assumption of three period model seems to be reasonable, and I adopt it in the remainder of the paper, referring to the periods as the first, second, and third periods; so also do a number of contributions in this book. It should be noted however that in identifying periods there is no implication of major paradigm shifts in the Kuhnian sense (Kuhn 1970; see also Newton 1987 and McGregor 2006). None of the histories identify radical changes in linguistic thought or theory from one period to the next, as allegedly happened in linguistic theory with the publication of Noam Chomsky’s first book (Chomsky 1957). The boundaries are generally taken (rightly, it seems to me) to be fuzzy: new ideas and approaches were adopted gradually, making their appearance in one period, and slowly becoming accepted as standard by the early years of the next period.

Figure 1.1 provides a rude measure of the linguistic activity of each decade from 1770 to 2000. The exponential increase in publications post-1960 emerges clearly from this representation, and the increase is continuing, with 861 publications in the first five years of the new millennium. If this continues until the end of the decade, the figure will overreach the maximum value shown on the graph.

The second pattern revealed in this graph, partly perhaps because much of the work from that time was not published, but perhaps primarily because the period was characterised qualitatively as a transitional period, rather than quantitatively in terms of raw numbers of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1788</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1788–1792</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-phonemic research, with difficulties in identification of some phonemic segments; a few grammars</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Keep interest in Aboriginal languages and cultures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1788–1880s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mid-1790s–mid-1840s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early years of each new colony characterised by keen interest in Aboriginal languages; this stopped in a few years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mid-1840s–mid-1870s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1770–c.1910</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily work by amateurs, mainly collection of wordlists; a very few sketch grammars</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mid-1890s onwards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First survey era—collection of c. 100 item wordlists on a continental basis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>1890s–1930</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Further descriptive work, and first major attempts at classification of the languages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

publications. Nevertheless, it will be seen that each of the post-1910 decades saw about double the number of publications as the decades between 1790 and 1870. The significant increases in publications from the 1870s to the 1900s may be partly due to the way the counts were performed: individual chapters in surveys such as Curt (1886) being counted as separate publications. This might perhaps argue for recognition of subperiods within the first period (see also next section).

2.1.3 Additional remark

To wind up this section, mention might be made of two works concerned more generally with attitudes towards, and ideas about, Australian Aboriginal languages; both treat scholarly work as well as popular beliefs. The first is Peter Newton’s unpublished MA thesis, ‘More than one language, more than one culture: scholarly and popular ideas about Australian Aboriginal languages from early times until 1860’ (Newton 1987). The temporal scope of this work thus falls into the first period of research on Australian Aboriginal languages (see §2.1.2). Like other writers on the topic, Newton identifies periods in the development of the subject: a first period, 1770–1824, in which raw material was spasmodically collected and left largely unanalysed; and a second period, 1825–1845, in which the first basic grammatical descriptions were compiled.

Newton (1987:348–349) sees 1860 as a ‘watershed, marking the transition in Australian language studies from philology to the more specific science of linguistics’. Simpson (1992), however, argues that a school grammar tradition was centred in Adelaide in the period 1840–1846 that produced materials at least as good as anything else published in the nineteenth century.

Newton (1987) presents a detailed historical account of recorded information on Australian Aboriginal languages, beginning with pre-settlement times, with contacts with Asia and with the first European voyagers. He also discusses in considerable depth the contribution of the first colonists, missionaries, explorers and naturalists, settlers, and officials and others working under the state governments, such as protectors of Aborigines, and government sponsored missionaries. He also traces the effects of Darwin’s ideas on scholarly and popular ideas about Aboriginal languages.

As Newton (1987) rightly observes, the surveys mentioned previously in §2.1.1 are more chronological overviews than histories, and deal quite inadequately with the earliest treatments of Australian languages. Among other things, they typically make little attempt to come to any understanding of the goals and methodologies of the earlier researchers, and evaluate them purely from the perspective of the present. Nor do they show any real attempt to understand those investigators as human beings living lives in social milieus very different from those of the modern academic linguist. Probably this reflects, as Newton observes, a lack of genuine interest in the history of the subject—a situation that fortunately appears to be changing.

In the second of these general works, Barry Alpher (1994) also distinguishes periods in the history of research on Australian languages. He puts the beginning of the modern period of descriptive studies at about 1960, marked by the appearance of Douglas (1964 [1957]) and Lowe (1960). These he considers to be the first works to really ‘crack’ the code of Australian languages. Prior to these treatments, research on Australian Aboriginal languages was principally the work of amateurs, sometimes gifted, punctuated by the occasional professional such as Gerhardi Laves.

2.2 Local histories


In most cases these pieces amount to just a few pages, and do not purport to be historical- graphical works; rather, their purpose is manifestly to provide a backdrop for the modern grammar. In those brief pieces we find reference to previous investigators of the language, and their works. Time is generally the primary organizing principle, and for this reason these excursions could be considered to be histories—or at least chronologies. But they are always more than mere chronologies: there are always evaluative remarks on the merits or demerits of the earlier works, as seen from the perspective of contemporary linguistics (e.g. whether the author adopted a Latinate model, whether phonemes or morphemes were recognized as distinctive units), and particularly from the perspective of the description of the particular language it is embedded in. Typically one finds remarks on the accuracy of the transcriptions; how good the work in question is as a piece of linguistics; and how useful it is to us today.

They are, that is, generally more evaluative than the global histories discussed in §2.1. These local histories do not attempt to locate the previous research in the context of linguistics and other relevant disciplines of the day—and they are not always free of anachro-
nisms—not do they provide the story of any investigator’s life and work. And unlike the global histories, they do not usually distinguish periods or phases in the research. There are occasional exceptions: for instance, Terrill’s (1998) distinguishes two periods of research on Birl. The first, from the 1890s to the 1940s, was characterised by wordlists gathered mainly by amateurs (but towards the end of the period also including some gathered by Gerhardt Laves and Norman Tindale). The second period, dating from 1966, is dominated by trained linguists.

Sketches such as these account for almost all histories of research on particular languages. Few independent publications, either articles or books, treat such perhaps specialised and esoteric topics.11 One of the few exceptions is Tamsin Donaldson’s ‘Hearing the First Australians’ (Donaldson 1985), which discusses research on two languages of western New South Wales, Ngiyampaa and Wiradjuri. Like most local histories this one does not explicitly identify periods, although a number are easily discerned in the text: the earliest wordlists recorded by explorers in the first decades of the nineteenth century; the missionary wordlists and grammars of the 1830s and 1840s; then after some decades of hiatus, the ‘language collectors’ of the late nineteenth century (including E. Curr and R.H. Mathews) who gathered words from a wide range of languages including Ngiyampaa and Wiradjuri; and finally (after another hiatus of more than fifty years, during which just the odd word or two was collected) the beginning of serious work by trained linguists. The latter period, unfortunately, is barely touched upon. The regional focus of this piece permits a more comprehensive and detailed coverage of the topic than is possible for the global histories discussed in §2.1, which are roughly comparable in length. Donaldson also attempts to situate ideas about, and research on, the languages in their intellectual climates. Another exception is Simpson’s 1992 article on the Adelaide school grammar tradition from the mid-nineteenth century, mentioned in the previous section.

One wonders to what extent local and national histories are homologous: to what extent are national tendencies and traditions replicated in local ones, and how are both situated in respect to goings-on in linguistics in the rest of the world?

2.3 Personal histories: the contribution of individual scholars

A fairly diverse array of works can be assigned to this category, of more or less relevance to the history of research on Australian languages. These include biographies and biographical sketches, scholarly editions of the works of particular individuals, as well as works of a more directly historical nature. On the whole, the material in these categories constitutes secondary data for historical studies more than historical investigations per se. In what follows I cast a rather narrow net, and attempt to give an idea of the range of relevant material, rather than provide a comprehensive listing.

Relatively short biographies of linguists and others who have made a contribution to the study of Australian languages can be found in festschriften and obituaries. Among the former one could mention the biographical sketch of Luise Hercus by Isabel White (1990), my biography of Howard Coste (1996a), and Wurm’s (1997) and Tryon and Walsh’s (1997) biographical notes on Geoffrey O’Grady. Worth singling out is Tamsin Donaldson’s ‘Pataka parçaaypawam in western New South Wales’ (Donaldson 1990), which presents recollections of Luise Hercus as fieldworker in western New South Wales by three Ngiyampaa people.

Hercus worked with, Mamie King, Eliza Kennedy, and Murthi Harris. Somewhat similar is Helen Harper’s overview (2007) of the legacy of Terry Crowley’s work on the languages of Cape York Peninsula, which compiles and presents the views of descendants of the speakers Crowley worked with in the 1970s.

Examples of works of the second category are Arthur Capell’s obituary of Ernest A. Worms (1964), Arthur Holmer’s obituary of Nils Holmer (1994), David Nash’s obituary of Gerhardt Laves (1993), obituaries of Stephen Wurm (Hercus et al. 2001; Pawley 2002), and numerous obituaries of Ken Hale (Dixon 2004; Everett et al. 2002; Keyser 2003; Laughren 2001; Nash 2001b; Yengoyan 2003) and Terry Crowley (Evans 2005; Lynch 2005; Siegel 2005; Walsh 2005). Works such as these, as one would expect, tend to focus on details of personal life-history, the individual’s experiences in and away from the field, and tend to lack somewhat in terms of depth of discussion and critical appraisal of their linguistic work.

Other article-length pieces are scattered widely throughout journals and edited books (see below). Among these one might mention the brief edited transcript of an interview with Arthur Capell on his work on Australian languages (Newton 1982), an evaluation of T.G.H. Strehlow’s writing of Arrente (Breen 2004), and examinations of R.H. Mathews’ ethnographic and linguistic research (Thomas 2004, forthcoming).

Longer, book-length treatments exist of the lives and work of just a few Australianist linguists.12 Schurrmann (1987) is a biography of Clumor Schürmann that affords interesting insights into Schürmann’s interaction with Aborigines of south-eastern South Australia, and learning the language. McNally (1981) and Hill (2002) are biographies of the controversial T.G.H. Strehlow (1908–1978). While in some ways more critical than the shorter pieces just referred to, their treatment of Strehlow’s linguistics is quite shallow; see Moore, this volume for a detailed appraisal of Strehlow’s linguistic research. Moreover, Barry Hill has a tendency to beat-up the controversy surrounding T.G.H. Strehlow, and allows himself a considerable degree of poetic licence in his presentation and interpretation of the evidence (Hill 2002) is thus a less reliable secondary source. T.G.H. Strehlow’s autobiographical Journey to Horsehoe Bend (1969), while dealing with the final days of his father’s life, provides fascinating insights into the author, his early life, his relationships with Arrente people, and his aspirations to become a linguist. Dixon’s well-known Searching for Aboriginal Languages: memoirs of a field worker (1983, reissued in 1989 by Chicago University Press) is a popularised autobiographical account of R.M.W. Dixon’s entry to the field of Australian Aboriginal linguistics, and his fieldwork on the languages of the rainforests of north Queensland.

One should also mention in this context James R.B. Love’s Stone age bumsken of today (1936). In this book Love—a gifted amateur linguist, who wrote the first grammatical description of Worrora (see §2.1; McGregor 1986)—presents a popular ethnography of the Worrora woven into an account of his experiences as a missionary at Kumunnya mission. As the story unfolds one gets a clear picture of Love as a human being, and his relationships with the Worrora people; language plays a fairly prominent role in the account, and one chapter deals with his experiences in learning Worrora (Love 1926:41–50). Moira Burgess’s BA (Hons.) thesis (1986) presents an evaluation of Love’s contribution to Aboriginal anthropology and linguistics, focussing on his thirteen years at Kumunnya, 1927–1940. Burgess is not a linguist, and her evaluation of Love’s linguistic work is largely based on opinions of contemporary and modern linguists. While this evaluation is rather restricted from the linguistic

12 This is not exclusively the fault of Australianist linguists. Books and journals have to be sold, and the reality is that the market for publications treating exotic languages—to say nothing of the history of their documentation—is severely limited (and is arguably believed by many editors and publishers to be even more limited than it really is).
perspective, Burgess is successful in contextualising Love’s work in its times, in relating it to missionary and academic linguistics of the 1930s and 1940s.

David Trudinger’s exemplary PhD thesis Converting salvation: protestant missionaries in Central Australia, 1939–1946 (Trudinger 2004) also deals with the work of J.R.B. Love, though it focuses on his period at Ernabella (Central Australia), 1941–1946. This work is concerned more with the discourse and praxis of missionaries in Central Australia in the 1930s and 1940s than with the linguistic or ethno-historical contribution of the missionaries. Nevertheless, it provides some fascinating insights into Love’s thought on language and culture, as well as that of other missionaries, including Ronald M. Trudinger, who published the first grammatical sketch of a Western Desert variety (Trudinger 1943). One of the especially interesting aspects of this thesis is the insights it provides into Love’s and Trudinger’s attitudes to the use of the traditional language in relation to the conflicting discourses of missionary work, evangelisation, and modernisation (Trudinger 2004:286–289).

The recent festschrift Forty years on: Ken Hale and Australian languages (Simpson et al. 2001) is unusual in the extent to which Ken Hale’s contribution permeates the papers. Indeed, the book is almost as much an examination of Hale’s influence on Australian Aboriginal linguistics since 1959 and on linguistic theory generally as a festschrift. Hale’s support of Aboriginal participation in linguistic research (see Hale 1965) is also dealt with (Green and Turpin 2001; Yengoyan 2001; Granites and Laughren 2001), as is his encouragement of speakers to maintain their languages. Aside from the expected bibliography of Hale’s writings (Nash 2001a), there are papers treating aspects of Hale’s fieldwork (e.g. S. Hale 2001 (Sara Hale’s reminiscences of Hale’s first fieldtrip to Australia); Green 2001 (an edited version of an interview with Ken Hale on the same fieldtrip); O’Grady 2001 (Geoff O’Grady’s reflections on their 1960 fieldtrip); Nash and O’Grady 2001 (cataloguing the vocabularies gathered in the 1960 joint fieldtrip); Wurm 2001 (Stephen Wurm’s reminiscences of working on Mornington Island with Hale); contextualisation of Hale’s work in the situation of Australian Aboriginal linguistics (e.g. Sharpe 2001); appreciations of Hale as a person and scholar (including Yengoyan 2001; Sutton 2001), and further investigations based on Hale’s corpora (e.g. Koch 2001). Three contributions in this book deal with issues in the history of Aboriginal language education, in which Hale played a role. Hoogearna (2001) gives a critical historical overview of bilingual education in Central Australia. Black and Breen (2001) provides an overview of the history of the School of Australian Linguistics, And Sharp and Theibeberger (2001) outline the history of Wangka Maya, the Pitjara Aboriginal Language Centre, Port Hedland.

Edited versions and collections of the scholarly works of particular individuals are also relevant, though for Australianist linguists these number considerably fewer than for anthropologists, and are sometimes lacking in terms of the contextualisation they provide. Thus the recent reissue of James R.B. Love’s MA thesis (1934) on Worrorra grammar (Love 2000) is no more than a reprint.14 Lacking an appraisal of Love’s work, and with virtually no editorial introduction in the text, this does a considerable disservice to an important and insightful missionary grammar from the second period of research on Australian languages (see §2.1 above). Niel Gunson’s scholarly edition of the published works of Lancelot Thrilbird

14 It seems that J.R.B. Love had already prepared a “rudimentary grammar and vocabulary” of the language (Trudinger 2004:258; see also Simpson, Amery and Gara, this volume,94), which may have served as a foundation or model for Trudinger’s sketch.

15 In the early 1980s I began to prepare a critical edition of Love’s MA thesis, intended initially for my festschrift for Howard Coates (McGregor 1996b). However, it was not completed in time to meet the deadline for the festschrift, and remains in manuscript form, in a halfway state.
Oates (1990) is one of the few works documenting research by Aboriginal people on their languages: in this case, the recordings by two men, Jimmie Barker (1900–1972) and Norman Baird (c.1891–1961), of their traditional languages, Muruwari and Kuku Yalanji. In contrast with the personal histories discussed in the previous section, little is said about the lives of these men (though see Mathews 1968 for a biography of Jimmie Barker), and the focus is on the nature and quality of the documentation they provided. Much of the article consists of a discussion of Baird’s orthography. Barker and Baird were acquaintances of Lynette Oates; other Aboriginal people have also initiated language documentation projects with the intention of preserving their languages, and the stories of these attempts need to be told.

The history of lexicographical investigations of Australian languages, principally the history of the compilation of wordlists and dictionaries, is the subject of just two articles. The first is O’Grady (1971), which deals with work up to the late 1960s. O’Grady gives a detailed overview of the lexical work done during the period since first contact, and discusses the content and organization of some representative works; he also remarks on some aspects of Australian languages that posed problems for early lexicographers, including phonetic and phonemic distinctions, as well as grammatical (the type of grammatical information to include) and semantic (identification of the range of referents and senses of lexemes and specification of definitions) issues. O’Grady (1971) distinguishes between wordlists (consisting of less than 1,000 items) and dictionaries (with more than 1,000 lexical entries), and remarks that just 8 had been published up to the late 1960s, including Australia and Torres Strait Islands. Of these, half appeared in the nineteenth century, the other half in the twentieth. O’Grady also remarks he was aware of forty-eight unpublished dictionaries, all produced during the twentieth century. An interesting suggestion is the idea that a motivation for interest in gathering wordlists in the nineteenth century—often by amateurs with fairly limited contact with the languages—was the widespread interest in the origins of Australian Aboriginals (O’Grady 1971:780). O’Grady also remarks on one aspect of Ken Hale’s fieldwork methodology relevant to lexicographers, namely the solicitation of sentences illustrating prompt lexemes, which often resulted in the appearance of new lexemes.

O’Grady considers the late 1930s as a turning point, the beginning of a new era in Australian linguistics (1971:783). This was inaugurated by Arthur Capell’s first field investigations of languages of the Kimberley and Arnhem Land. Capell compiled relatively extensive dictionaries of some of these languages, though unfortunately none have ever been published. A quarter of a century passed before the appearance of the next publication on this topic, Goddard and Thieberger (1997), which updates the story by treating the period from 1968 to 1993. Cliff Goddard and Nick Thieberger identify the mid-1960s to mid-1970s, in the middle of which period O’Grady’s article appeared, as something of a turning point in Aboriginal linguistics. It saw changes in the universities (especially the emergence of departments of linguistics), in society, and in policies concerning Aboriginals, that led to increasing interest in the compilation of dictionaries (understood as consisting of more than 2,000 entries, with detailed semantic information). Lexicographic work, that is, came to be motivated not just for academic and strictly documentary purposes, but also for practical purposes including education. It was not until the 1990s, however, that such dictionaries were published in reasonable numbers: of the seventeen dictionaries they list for the post-1968 period, fully eleven (65%) appeared in the 1990s—dating to the first four years of the decade. (This of course reflects lexicographic research beginning in the 1980s or earlier.) Goddard and Thieberger (1997) discuss various issues in lexicographical practice, updating the discussion provided in O’Grady (1971). These include orthography (moving beyond the ideal of phonemic orthographies presumed by O’Grady 1971), organisation, and definitional practices.

Three other developments from this period are worth remarking on. One was the advent of the personal computer, and resulting in the computerisation of the field, which (among other things) greatly facilitated production of dictionaries from data files (Goddard and Thieberger 1997:181–185). Another was the increasing role of Aboriginal people in compiling dictionaries and writing definitions (Goddard and Thieberger 1997:181). A third was the emergence in the early 1990s of institutions supporting linguistic work on all types financially and/or logistically (see pp. 6, 8 above).

While neither article identifies periods in the history of lexicographical research on Australian languages, it is worth observing that the two turning points identified—the late 1930s (O’Grady 1971) and the late 1960s to early 1970s (Goddard and Thieberger 1997)—correspond reasonably well with the beginnings of the second and third periods identified in 2.1. Lexicography perhaps followed similar trends in development as Australian Aboriginal linguistics generally, though it lagged behind by about a decade.

Another work dealing with the topic is McGregor (2005), which deals specifically with the lexicographic research of Frs. Hermann Nekes and Ernest Worms, who collaborated in the 1930s and 1940s on investigations of Kimberley languages (see previous section). A substantial—not to say perhaps the most valuable from today’s perspective—portion of their magnum opus (775 of the 1607 pages—almost three-quarters of the work) is lexicographical in nature; the grammatical description fills a paltry 106 pages. This article attempts to situate the author’s wordlists in the historical context, and evaluate their contribution to the documentation of Australian languages.

Historical information on the classification of Australian languages can be found in some of the general works mentioned in 2.1. Thus O’Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin (1966:6-13), Wurm (1972:23, 96), and Dixon (1980:20-22, 220-228) contain a few remarks on earlier attempts at classification, as does Alpher (1994). These can, however, hardly be called histories of attempts at classification. Nor can the similarly brief pieces appearing in articles and books presenting classifications of Australian languages, such as Wurm (1971), and Evans (2003a). The third section of Capell’s history of research on Australian Aboriginal languages, ‘Research into language classification and linguistic history’ (Capell 1976:708-715) is a somewhat more comprehensive piece, organised thematically according to type of classification.

The most comprehensive treatment is Koch (2004), which focuses on the methodologies employed for establishing genetic groupings more than on the proposed groupings. It is restricted to twentieth century classifications, focussing on four approaches, discussing them in detail and evaluating them: Fr Wilhelm Schmidt’s classification (1919), the first major attempt at classifying the languages of the continent; Arthur Capell’s typological classification (taught in his first article on Australian languages, Capell 1937, though the scheme underwent changes over time); the lexicostatistical classification of the 1960s (e.g. O’Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin 1966); and finally R.M.W. Dixon’s views on classification (e.g. Dixon 1980, 2002).

Remarks on missionary linguists and linguistics are scattered throughout the Australianist literature, in the brief histories of work on particular languages published in grammars and 17 This is a collection of a collection of the importance the authors attributed to works, which they regarded as occupying a central place in both language and cultures. Not only did they see words as the centrepiece of grammar, but they adopted a fairly radical Whorfian stance according to which words serve as carriers of crucial cultural information and values, and that study of the relationships among nearest synonyms and homophones would reveal important aspects of Aboriginal modes of thinking. They also assumed that the study of words—as O’Grady’s above comments—would provide information about the prehistory of Aboriginal occupation of Australia.
other biographical works, and in the national histories. However, Carey (2004) is one of the few publications to date that deals specifically with missionary linguistics in Australia. This paper is also unusual in being one of the few contributions to the history of the subject written by a professional historian rather than by a linguist. Dealing with Australian missionary linguistics from the early to mid-nineteenth century, it situates missionary linguistics in the social and intellectual background of the time, as well as in relation to other work on Australian languages, to the situations of the languages and their speakers, and to missionary linguistics generally. As Hillel Carey observes, for some now moribund languages of eastern Australia missionary grammars represent the most primary if not best documentation. Carey remarks on the consistent failure of missionaries to both document languages, and preserve them—despite in some instances efforts or ideals to the contrary—and suggests some possible reasons (see also Trauluger 2004). She also comments on the treatment of missionary linguistics by linguists and other academic investigators, ranging from dismissal to denigration. Few indeed are the accounts that give missionary linguistics the advantage of a fair and even-handed scholarly appraisal.

Although a number of missionary linguists figure in Carey’s story, the article pays particular attention to the work of one rightly famous missionary linguist, Lancelot Threlkeld, who wrote what is widely regarded as one of the best nineteenth century descriptions of an Australian language (Threlkeld 1834). Threlkeld is notable for setting a standard for the field of missionary linguistics, and the creative descriptive approach he adopted, the extent to which he grappled with descriptive difficulties posed by Awabakil. We lack a comparable treatment of missionary linguistics post-1850.

Another important work on the missionary contribution to knowledge about Australian languages is the previously mentioned unpublished MA thesis by Peter Newton, which devotes two full chapters to missions from 1788 to 1860, i.e. roughly the same time period as dealt with by Carey (Newton 1987:131–218). Newton’s treatment is somewhat more comprehensive than Carey’s, dealing with virtually all missions and missionaries of the period, regardless of how minor their contribution, and their social and linguistic backgrounds.

Heidi-Marie Kneebone’s recent PhD thesis, *The language of the chosen few* (2003) also stresses the significance of the contribution of missionaries. She treats in detail the documentation and description of Diyarra by Lutheran missionaries at Hermannsburg mission, South Australia, from 1867 to 1880. Among other things, Kneebone discusses a number of previously unexamined primary sources, including the first grammatical description of the language and early examples of Indigenous writing. Like most others working in this domain, Kneebone is also motivated by practical considerations, in particular to make the contribution of the early missionaries accessible to descendents of Diyarra speakers.

Other than these detailed treatments, which focus on missionary linguistics of the nineteenth century, one finds a few articles outlining the contributions of particular missionaries—e.g. McGregor (2006b) mentioned above. McGregor (2006b) treats missionary linguistics in the Kimberley region generally, which began in 1890. Also relevant to the topic of missionary linguistics is Lynette Oates brief history of the involvement of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in research on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages (Oates 1999), and her book-length hagiography of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Australia (Oates 2003). And John Harris’ (1990) overview of two centuries of missionary work in Australia contains a good deal of work by missionaries on Aboriginal languages, in particular, on translation.

3. The papers in this volume

Figure 1.2 provides an overview of the contributions to the volume, and depicts the time frame each treat.

The papers are divided into three thematic parts. Part 1 consists of three contributions dealing with the history of research on particular languages or regions. In the first paper Peter Bolt presents research on the now moribund northern New South Wales language Gamilangay. In the second paper Claire Bowern documents research on two closely related Nyulnyulan languages, a dialect of Bardi (highly endangered) and Jwari (effectively extinct). Research on these language varieties, Bolt and Bowern note, has been carried out by amateurs during the nineteenth century. By contrast, Bardi is notable for the number of professional linguists who worked on it, although Bowern is currently in the process of preparing one. Both authors describe the efforts in recent years by Gamilangay and Bardi people to document and revive their languages.

The third paper in Part 1, by Jane Simpson, Rob Amery and Mary-Anne Gall, describes in detail the close to two centuries of research on South Australian languages. Their history agrees well with the three period model proposed in §1.3.1, and the period 1930-2000 emerged as an active one in documentation of South Australian languages. Detailed treatment is provided of a range of topics, both descriptive and applied, and the paper concludes with a discussion of current research, commenting on Indigenous and community directed research, and directions for future research.

The four papers of Part 2 focus on the contributions of particular individuals. The first paper, by Matthew Bosboom, documents the contribution of the Swedish ethnographer Nyberg Laurrell, who, in 1910, compiled brief wordlists of a few Kimberley languages, and made some of the earliest sound recordings, including a recording of a brief conversation. Bosboom situates Laurrell’s work in the context of Swedish and international ethnography and academic concerns, and explores Laurrell’s representation and construction of Aboriginals as revealed by his writings and ethnographic collections.

Lindie Harper’s contribution is an autobiographical account of her entry into the Australian Lutheran Church in the early 1960s, and her work on moribund languages of the south-east of the continent. She provides a passionate account of the fieldwork situation in the region in those days, when Aboriginal languages were more widely denigrated by whites, and Aboriginal people made to feel ashamed of them. Harper concludes with comments on recording of songs, and their linguistic and anthropological significance in language endangerment situations, not to say their status amongst last speakers as significant cultural artefacts.

Harold Koch’s contribution treats the work of R.H. Mathews, who, at the turn of the twentieth century, recorded and published basic information on many languages, mainly from the eastern and south-east of the continent. Koch discusses the general schema Mathews’ descriptions follow, the tension between the data and the traditional system of grammatical description, and the strategies Mathews adopted to deal with problematic data that did not fit the mould.

William McGregor and Motti Miestamo discuss the work of Niels M. Holmer, the only linguist from a Scandinavian country to do first-hand research on an Australian language. Holmer’s fieldwork centred on the eastern part of the continent, where he gathered basic information on some thirty different language varieties from the Torres Strait Islands to the north coast of New South Wales (NSW), many now moribund. McGregor and Miestamo dis-
The next two papers are by David Moore, and deal respectively with T.G.H. Strehlow, and George F. Moore's 1842 *A descriptive vocabulary of the language in common use amongst the natives of Western Australia*. Despite the fact that T.G.H. Strehlow published in 1944 what was then one of the most comprehensive grammars of an Australia language, his grammar of Arrernte (Strehlow 1944), his contribution has in recent years been either ignored or denigrated. Moore attempts to set the record straight by reassessing Strehlow's contribution fairly, while not being eulogistic, and eschewing anachronistic interpretations. Moore suggests that some aspects of Strehlow's grammatical description were motivated by a wish to show that the language was a fully functional one, in no way inferior to European languages, in a bid to counter dominant views of the day. Another important aspect of Strehlow's work was his focus on the collection of texts, in particular of song texts, on which he published a major work (Strehlow 1971). Moore (1842) is one of just four dictionaries (according to O'Grady 1971—see §2.4 above) of an Australian language to be published in the nineteenth century. This work is described in detail in David Moore's second contribution, which also discusses its formation as a collaborative enterprise involving various investigators who contributed throughout the 1830s.

The final paper in Part 2, by Nick Thieberger, deals with the work of the maverick Carl von Brandenstein. Just a few years younger than Nils Holmer (see above), von Brandenstein began working on Australian languages at the beginning of the modern period, when he was over fifty years of age; for the next thirty years he worked on languages of the southern half of Western Australia. Thieberger suggests that many aspects of von Brandenstein's approach fit better with nineteenth century linguistics than with modern linguistics, and tells an instructive story of some of von Brandenstein's conflicts with the linguistic establishment, and his courage and stubbornness to continue regardless of the fashion of the times.

The six papers of Part 3 deal with the history of particular topics in Australian linguistics. Together they deal with a fair range of time periods, regions, languages, and themes. This part begins with a paper by Rob Amery and Mary-Anne Gale on the history of language revival in Australia. Amery and Gale provide a comprehensive overview of formal revival efforts for moribund languages of the eastern states, and document official policies relating to language revival, as well as the efforts of community and region-based institutions that have arisen since the 1980s. Three programs are discussed as case studies: Gumbaynggir revival on the north coast of NSW; Kaurna revitalisation in Adelaide; and Ngarindjeri revival in southern South Australia.

In the next paper Adam Kenion traces the history of investigation of sign languages in Australia, updating and expanding the history in his monograph (*Kenion 1998*). He traces observations on Australian Aboriginal sign languages from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Significant is the work done around the turn of the twentieth century by W.E. Roth, A. W. Howitt, Baldwin Spencer and Frances Gillen. From then until about 1970 only brief treat-
ments of sign languages appeared; in modern times Kendon himself emerges as the main player in the field.

In the third paper McGregor attempts to piece together the story of fieldwork on languages of the Kimberley, covering the period from initial colonisation in the late nineteenth century to the present. This article identifies changes to fieldwork as a social practice; methodological changes in fieldwork practices—in particular in the character of elicitation—with the increasing professionalisation of the field; and technological changes and their affects on fieldwork practice.

Peter Mühlhäusler tells the story of research into pidgins and creoles in Australia. He observes that comprehensive descriptions of Australian varieties only began to appear after 1970; this he attributes to concerns of linguistic purity (see previous remarks on Monaghan's article). Investigations of pidgins and creoles intensified in the 1980s and 1990s, with descriptive, sociolinguistic, and educational work being undertaken; this research compares favourably with contemporary research elsewhere in the world. Things have continued relatively unchanged into the present decade, studies of pidgins and creoles remaining fairly marginal to mainstream Australian Aboriginal linguistics.

Fritz Schweiger's contribution deals with Fr Wilhelm Schmidt's monograph on personal pronouns, *Die Personalphormen in den australischen Sprachen*, published in the same year as *Die Gliederung der australischen Sprachen*. Schweiger gives a detailed account of the contents of *Die Personalphormen*, focussing on Schmidt's criteria for classification. Schmidt also pointed out similarities in the construction of pronominal forms, touched on similarities in the structure of case forms, and recognised the importance of borrowing. Interestingly, despite grouping Cape York languages with languages of Arnhem Land and the Kimberley, Schmidt perceived that the pronominal forms of Cape York languages are reminiscent of the southern languages.

The final paper, by Davids Wilkins and Nash, deals with the findings of an early expedition that was universally regarded as a failure. This was an expedition into the Sydney hinterland in 1791 led by Governor Phillip. Although it did not achieve the anticipated geographical findings, encounters with Aborigines led to important new understandings of the language situation. In particular, it became evident that the continent was home to a number of mutually unintelligible languages, and that many individuals were multilingual. Other important linguistic and ethnographic observations were also made during the course of this expedition, that are drawn out and discussed by Wilkins and Nash.

To conclude this overview, three general observations are in order. First, as already remarked, the period from about 1930 to 1960 is accorded relatively good coverage in this book, and the widespread belief that it was a period of virtually no activity in Aboriginal linguistics (see §2.1.1 above) is amply refuted. Second, a significant feature of the papers is the attention they pay to detail: they focus on particular investigators, languages, or topics, and deal with them in depth. Third, it is not just the work of most notable or dominant linguists of the era that is dealt with, but the contributions of rank-and-file Australianists, and the non-conformists. In fact, it might reasonably be objected that the word 'just' should be excised from the previous sentence: the institutionally and intellectually dominant figures from each period are mentioned only in passing in this book. I have two responses to potential criticisms arising from this. To begin with, someone has to write the piece, and if (as in fact the case) no contribution was forthcoming, an editor is left with the options of either curtailing the project altogether or for the foreseeable future, or proceeding with what is available. I have opted for the latter course in the firm belief that the stories of the dominant figures are not that important. For another thing, in case of living individuals I would argue that a suitably dispassionate history is impossible.

4. Conclusion

In this introductory chapter I have attempted to sketch an overview of works treating the history of Australian Aboriginal linguistics. This provides a context for the contributions in the present book, a number of which present new stories, or new appraisals of old stories. Some cherished views about the history of the field have been shown to be false, or at least highly dubious.

Australianist linguists have tended, like linguists generally, to show somewhat less interest in the history of their subject than have their anthropologist and archaeologist colleagues. The axe goes for historians and biographers, who, with few exceptions, have rarely chosen linguists or linguistics as subjects of their investigations. As revealed by the contributions to this book, there are signs of change, that linguists are beginning to see the relevance of the history of their subject beyond the mere contextualisation of their own work. And historians are also beginning to show interest in the history of Aboriginal linguistics. This book attempts to take an initial step in meeting the challenge of developing a "planned linguistic historiography in Australia" (Newton 1987: 7).

Much, of course, remains to be done. To wind up the paper I make a few suggestions concerning prospects for the historiography of Australianist linguistics, remarking on what I consider to be some of the most important themes demanding attention. This list does not pretend to be complete.

Most obviously, there is much scope for in-depth historical investigations of research on particular languages, and by particular individuals, only a small selection of which are treated or even mentioned in this volume. We also need to know more about the linguistic theories and traditions (investigators worked in, and how these shaped the study of Aboriginal languages, including the recording of primary information; vice versa, the impact of description of the Australian languages on linguistic theories needs to be explored. The two dominant traditions of the second period need thorough treatment, the Sydney and Adelaide schools; although the latter is touched on in the papers by Simpson, Amery and Gale, Monaghan, and Moore in this volume, we are a long way from understanding either school, or the relations between them.

The context of Australianist linguistics demands much more attention, including its links with international developments in linguistics, with Aboriginal and international anthropology, archaeology, history, and history and philosophy of science (including linguistics). Also important is the development of a theorised historical account of Australian Aboriginal linguistics, that adequately links the subject to dominant social ideologies and politics, including colonialism and post-colonialism and their discourses (see e.g. Errington 2001; Zwarteveen and Hovdhaugen 2004, 2005). Except for the works by a few historians (e.g. Jones 1996, 2000; Carey 2004; Trudinger 2004) the relation between colonialism and linguistic thought has barely been touched upon in histories of Australian Aboriginal linguistics.

The role of organisations devoted to Aboriginal issues such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, the Summer Institute of Linguistics, the School 18 The reasons are not clear to me. It cannot be simply because the subject matter of anthropology and archaeology is less abstract (a period of recent journal articles would seem to suggest otherwise) and after all, there are innumerable histories—many peoples—of the most abstract subject of all, mathematics.
of Australian Linguistics, and the many language centres now in existence, needs to be explored critically.

The content and methods of Australian Aboriginal linguistics also demand attention. There is a need to know more about how phenomena such as grammatical relations, pronominal categories, pronominal affixes, compound verb constructions, complex sentence constructions, and ergativity have been dealt with over time, and how and why notions such as the phoneme and morpheme became entrenched in the beginning of the third period of research, but failed to do so in the second period. Perhaps more interesting than the history of lexicographical research remarked on in §2.4 is the history of semantic studies of Aboriginal languages. While we have some works treating the history of classifications of Aboriginal languages, these are language-internal, and fail to draw much on wider notions of the human prehistory of the continent, and how the latter ideas impact on the construal of the linguistic past.

The rise and development of ethical considerations remains to be investigated in Australianist linguistics, and in relation to Australian Aboriginal studies generally. And finally, as hinted at various points above, the role of speakers of Aboriginal languages in the development of Australian Aboriginal linguistics has barely been touched upon; nor do we have a good idea of Aboriginal views of research on their languages, or how these views have changed over time.

References


Amery, Rob and Mary-Anne Gale, this volume, But our language was just asleep: a history of language revival in Australia.


Bostrom, Mats, this volume, Contextualising Yagye Laurelle’s Australian collections, 1910–1911.


1956, A new approach to Australian linguistics. Sydney: University of Sydney.


Dawes, William, 1790, Grammatical forms and vocabularies of languages spoken in the neighbourhood of Sydney, 1790. Manuscript notebooks. Originals held in Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.


Introduction


Harris, John, 1990, One blood. 200 years of Aboriginal encounter with Christianity: a story of hope. Sutherland: Albatross.


2006b, Missionary linguistics in the Kimberley, Western Australia. Manuscript of seminar presented at Linguistics Department, University College Dublin, October 2006.


Monaghan, Paul, this volume, Norman B. Tindale and the Pitjantjatjarra language.


Moore, George F., 1842, *A descriptive vocabulary of the language in common use amongst the Aborigines of Western Australia; with copious meanings, embodying much interesting information regarding the habits, manners, and customs of the natives, and the natural history of the country*. London: Wm S. Orr.


2001a, Bibliography of Ken Hale and Australian languages. In Simpson et al., eds, 1–18.


Newton, Peter J.F., 1979, Movements and structures: an historical overview of Capell’s approach to comparative linguistics in Oceania, with an annotated bibliography of his linguistics and other scholarly works. BA (Hons.) thesis, Macquarie University.


1987, More than one language, more than one culture: scholarly and popular ideas about Australian Aboriginal languages from early times until 1860. MA thesis, Macquarie University.


Schweiger, Fritz, this volume, Wilhelm Schmidt’s Die Personalpronomina in den australischen Sprachen revisited.


Sharp, Janet and Nicholas Thieberger, 2001, Wangka Maya, the Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre. In Simpson et al., eds., 325–335.

Sharpe, Margaret, 2001, The trickles become a flood: some of the context of the Hale–O’Grady work and its after-effects. In Simpson et al., eds., 239–244.


Simpson, Jane, Rob Amery, and Mary-Anne Gale, this volume, I could have saved you linguists a lot of time and trouble: 180 years of research and documentation of South Australia’s Indigenous languages, 1826–2006.


Tauchon, Alphonse, 1895, Premiers éléments de la langue Niel/Niol. Unpublished manuscript.


Thefelid, Lanceot E., 1834, An Australian grammar, comprehending the principles and natural rules of the language, as spoken by the Aborigines in the vicinity of Hunter’s River, Lake Macquarie, &c. New South Wales. Sydney: Stephens and Stokes.

1892, An Australian language as spoken by the Awabakal, the people of Awaba or Lake Macquarie. Edited by John Fraser. Sydney: Government Printer.


---

**Part 1:**

**Investigations of particular languages and regions**


Meyer, Heinrich A.E., 1843, *Vocabulary of the language spoken by the aborigines of the southern and eastern portions of the settled districts of South Australia, ... by the tribes in the vicinity of Encounter Bay, and, with slight variations, by those residing on the coast to the eastward around Lake Alexandrina and for some distance up ... the River Murray, preceded by a grammar, showing the construction of the language as far as at present known*. Adelaide: James Allen.


---

18 The European ‘discovery’ of a multilingual Australia: the linguistic and ethnographic successes of a failed expedition

DAVID P. WILKINS AND DAVID NASH

1. Introduction

Like historians, linguists and anthropologists are often obliged to reevaluate—and sometimes retell—earlier accounts of people, cultures, languages, and events. This is especially so when the field concerned has developed new models or attitudes, or when accumulated knowledge allows a reinterpretation, or when a new document comes to light allowing added insight into known accounts. This is just such a retelling and reevaluation.

In April, 1791, under the leadership of Captain Arthur Phillip, the first Governor of New South Wales, an expedition was mounted 'to reach Hawkesbury River', opposite Richmond Hill, and, if possible, to cross the river and get to the mountains' (Phillip in Hunter 1793:340), and to 'ascertain whether or not the Hawkesbury and the Nepean, were the same river' (Tench 1791:223). This expedition did not achieve any of its stated aims, but in the course of the expedition its participants had encounters with Australian Aboriginal groups which profoundly affected their understanding of the linguistic situation of the area. This trip was the first time that the English colonisers had encountered an Aboriginal language that was significantly different from Iyura (i.e. Eora), the language which they had en-

---

1 Wilkins began the analysis of the language data considered here when a research assistant to R.M.W. Dixon at ANU in the 1980s, and drafted this paper in 1991 at the State University of New York at Buffalo. The authors' collaboration on this topic began during the inaugural Australian Linguistic Institute when they (and others) followed part of the route of the 1791 expedition on Saturday 4 July 1992. It continued at MPI Nijmegen in 1993, and remotely in 2005. Arnembow (2002:24) used extracts from the 1993 version. The authors thank for helpful comments two anonymous readers, William McGregor, Michael Walsh, Jake Troy, Jane Simpson, Bruce Bigley, Susan Locke, David Nathan, R.M.W. Dixon and particularly Ray Wood who also kindly shared his Wood (2000). Page 18.1 appears with the kind permission of Library Special Collections, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Spelling convention, primarily in table: bold for pre-modern spellings, italics for modern spellings. We follow our own transcription, mostly agreeing with Troy (1994) but in some cases differing such as our d (not ð) for ðl before e.

countered, and become somewhat familiar with, at Sydney and Parramatta, and which has been recognised as a dialect of the Sydney Language.

Dixon (1980:9–10) recognises this expedition as the first to reveal that Australia was a multilingual continent. Of course, this is a fact which would have been well known to the Aborigines themselves, and was probably known by the Macassans who frequented Arnhem Land, but it had previously been assumed by Europeans that only one language would be spoken throughout Australia. In 1770, along with Joseph Banks and certain other members sailing aboard the Endeavour, Captain Cook had collected a list of words from the people living on what the Englishmen christened the Endeavour River (in what is now north Queensland) and he described this as ‘a short vocabulary ... in the New Holland language’. This list, the earliest known wordlist recorded of an Aboriginal language, is now recognised as the Gungg Yakimidhiri language, but a copy of it was brought along with the First Fleet in order to aid communication with the Aboriginal people living at the site of the proposed convict colony that eventually took root at Sydney Cove in Port Jackson, just north of Botany Bay (the spot originally chosen as the landing place of the First Fleet). When the Iyura speakers living around Port Jackson were confronted with unknown words from an Australian language over two thousand kilometres away, they naturally thought the words belonged to the language of the Englishmen. For their part, the Englishmen were at a loss to explain why the inhabitants didn’t understand their own language. The 1791 expedition to the Hawkesbury under Phillip provided the information needed to resolve this mystery.

A detailed examination of this expedition also reveals that many other important linguistic and ethnographic observations were made. The purpose of this paper is to provide a recounting of this expedition which highlights those points of ethnographic and linguistic significance, as well as detailing the evidence that was collected to support the claim that Australia is a multilingual continent. Along the way we propose revision to some ideas on boundaries and basis of group identifications.

2 We follow Troy (1992, 1994) in using ‘Sydney Language’ as a cover term for the varieties making up the language of Sydney and environs, rather than a particular name from the records, notably Dhakun. We do however use Iyura (Eora) as a convenient label for the variety spoken at Port Jackson and the sea coast, mindful of Arnhem’s (2002:25–36) discussion of its origin.

3 Troy (1993:43–44) limited the geographical scope—‘For two years it was believed that there was only one Aboriginal language in the Sydney region. This fallacy was exposed when Phillips, in April 1791, explored (...)’—but it does seem that the colonists’ belief extended to all of New Holland, from their discussion of the Endeavour River vocabulary. Newton (1987) also discusses the topic.

In Euglethoff and Skelton (1958:41). See also Cook’s journal for 10 July 1770 http://southeast.nla.gov.au/journals/cook/17700710.html and the map http://southeast.nla.gov.au/journals/maps/4/endavour.html. The 10 July 1770 encounter, when Cook noted ‘neither us nor Tupi [the Tahitian] could understand one word they said’, presaged the later realisations that Australia was different linguistically from the South Seas.

5 Tench (1961 [1793]:51) records the Iyura application of the word ‘kangaroo’ (Gungg Yakimidhiri gangguru ‘large black kangaroo’), as follows:

Whatever animal is shown me, a dog excepted, they call Kangaroo: a strong presumption that the wild animals of the country are very few. Soon after our arrival at Port Jackson, I was walking out near a place where I observed a party of Indians, mostly employed in looking at some sheep in an inclosure, and repeatedly crying out, Kangaroo, Kangaroo.

As Dixon (1980:39) observes ‘[T]here were plenty of Kangaroos around Sydney Cove but the Dharruk people [sic. the Iyura] did not recognise this word; indeed they thought they were being taught an English generic term and quizzed whether cows were a type of kangaroo!’. Compare Tench’s comments here with those given after his experiences on the trip to the Hawkesbury (here are quoted in [2.6]).

The retelling is based on the published accounts of three members of the expedition Arthur Phillip (in Hunter 1969 [1788]:340–348), Watkin Tench (Tench 1961 [1793]:223–234), and David Collins (1788 [1798–1802]:506, 512–513). The linguistic notebooks of another member of the expedition, William Dawes, found their way into the Marsden Collection at the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and came to the attention of Australianists only in 1972. These unpublished notebooks contain linguistic information which adds significantly to our understanding of the observations made during the expedition. Wood’s (1926) retelling provides a helpful reassessment, and instigated Campbell’s (1926:37–59) plotting of the route, drawing also on Dawes’ (1973) map.

It is important to realise that none of the significant finds made during the excursion to the Hawkesbury would have been possible had it not been for the fact that two Iyura men, Gulbi of the Gadigal and Baludiri, accompanied the expedition and were the actual points of contact with the various people encountered on the trip. The actions of Gulbi and Baludiri during the trip, their relations with the English members of the expedition, and their interactions with members of other tribes are also highlighted and examined in this paper. In two hundred years a lot more information and understanding concerning the culture and beliefs of different Australian Aboriginal groups has emerged, and attitudes which characterise the first colonisers

6 McBryde (1989) collects the recorded details about Gulbi (Colebe) and Baludiri (Baluderrin), and reproduces portraits of them.
are no longer current. In this light, it is possible to give new interpretations to many of the events which occurred in April 1791.

2. The Expedition

2.1 11 April 1791—the meeting with Barriwan of the Burbrirangular

The expedition began from the Governor's house in Parramatta (Rose Hill) on Monday 11 April 1791, and the party comprised 21 people including Gulbi (Colbee, Colebe), Baludiri (Boladeere, Balledere), Governor Phillip, Captain Collins (judge-advocate) and his servants, Captain Tench, Lieutenant Dawes, Mr White (principal surgeon), two sergeants, eight privates, and three gamekeepers (i.e. 'three convicts who were good marksman' [Phillip in Hunter 1668 [1793]:340]). It was hoped that Gulbi and Baludiri would provide 'much information relating to the country; as no one doubted that they were acquainted with every part of it between the sea-coast and the river Hawkesbury.' However, it appears that Gulbi and Baludiri volunteered to go on the trip because they had believed that 'Governor Phillip and his party came from the settlement to kill ducks and patagorong [i.e. patagurogan = the grey kangaroo]; but finding that they did not stop at the places where those animals were seen in any numbers, they were at a loss to know why the journey was taken' (Phillip in Hunter 1668 [1793]:344).

Not understanding anything about Aboriginal attachment and rights to land, and believing that anyone that Gulbi and Baludiri met on the trip would be a 'countryman' and acquaintance of theirs, the Englishmen were surprised that, at a very short distance from Parramatta (Rose Hill), Gulbi and Baludiri claimed knowledge of the area which they were in (Tench 1661 [1793]:225), and throughout the trip demonstrated their reluctance to pass uninvited through the country of other groups. In the early part of the trip, at a point approximately four or five miles north of Parramatta, Gulbi (Colbee, Colebe) and Baludiri (Boladeere, Balledere) 'informed them that this part of the country was inhabited by the Bidjigals, but that most of the tribe were dead of the small-pox' (Phillip in Hunter 1668 [1793]:340). As they proceeded further inland, moving north 34° west towards the Hawkesbury, Gulbi informed the party that the people who lived inland were called the Bumbirangular, and that these people lived on birds and animals, having no fish (Tench 1661 [1793]:225).

The party stopped for the night of 11 April approximately ten miles to the north of Parramatta, and about an hour after sunset some voices were heard in the wood, and Gulbi and Baludiri, hearing 'caught the sound instantaneously, and bidding us to be silent, listened attentively to the quarter whence it had proceeded' (Tench 1661 [1793]:225).

Plate 18.1: Dawes' (1791:46a) comparative table, cf. Table 18.1. © SOAS Dawes online http://www.brij.org/dawes/

After listening for a while it was decided that Gulbi and Baludiri would make contact with the strangers, and they moved a little distance from the party and Gulbi 'gave them [i.e. the strangers] a loud hollow cry' (Tench 1661 [1793]:223), after which 'there was whooping and shouting on both sides' (Tench 1661 [1793]:225). Gulbi and Baludiri remained cautious at the meeting and as the voice of a stranger drew nearer 'they asked everyone else to lie down and be silent' (Phillip in Hunter 1668 [1793]:341) while they made contact. Phillip (in Hunter 1668 [1793]:341) records that '[a] light was now seen in the woods, and, our natives advancing towards it a pretty long conversation ensued between them and the stranger, who approached them with great precaution.' Tench (1661 [1793]:226) notes that '[t]he first words which we could distinctly understand were, "I am Colbee of the tribe of Cad-i-gal"', to which the stranger replied, 'I am Bér-ce-wan, of the tribe Koorooberongal'. Barriwan (recorded as Bu-ro-wan in Phillip in Hunter 1668 [1793]:342) was about 30 years old (according to Tench) and 'his hair was ornamented with the tails of several small animals' (Phillip in Hunter 1668 [1793]:342). Phillip observes that Barriwan 'had preserved all his teeth', suggesting that he belonged to a group which did not practice tooth avulsion as a form of initiation. He was very reluctant to come into such a large camp, especially one full of whitemen, but Gulbi managed to coax him in and Barriwan was introduced to everyone, with Gulbi and Baludiri calling out the name of everyone who was present. Apparently Barriwan had a stone hatchet, a spear, and a throwing-stick with him, but the sources disagree as to whether he came into the camp armed or not; Phillip (in Hunter 1668 [1793]:342) claims that Gulbi and Baludiri wanted Barriwan to leave his weapons, but he refused, while Tench (1661 [1793]:226) claims that 'he came to us unarmed, having left his spears at a little distance'.

Barriwan stayed for a long conversation with Gulbi and Baludiri. Gulbi related that Barriwan had no canoe and he lived as a hunter. It appears that he had been out hunting with his dogs and a small party of other people when they were summoned by Gulbi's calls. Phillip (in Hunter 1668 [1793]:341) notes that 'a little boy who was with him carried the fire, which was a piece of the bark of the tea-tree'.

7 The original spellings are Béb-oo-bee-on-gal in Tench (1661 [1793]:225); Béb-oo-bee-on-gal in Phillip's Journal in Hunter (1668 [1793]:542); and Burbrirangular in Dawes (1791:46a) where the ng is actually represented by an enigma symbol that Dawes used to represent a simple velar nasal. In our spelling Bumbirangular, the ng represents a velar nasal.

Burbrirangular has no analysis in the Sydney Language as buri (Eastern Grey kangaroo) - biring associative suffix, and the generic suffix -gal. In the coastal dialects, there is a metathesephrenological rule which changed the initial step consonant of a suffix to the homorganic nasal when that suffix was attached to a stressed ending in a nasal. So the name literally means 'people associated with characterised by the (grey) Kangaroo'. It may be an ecological typifier term (perhaps indicating that the group so designated had the grey Kangaroo as a primary form of game). However, Wood (2005:17) also suggests that Burbrirangular may have been a place name, pointing out that some of the other named community groups in the Sydney region carry -biring (i.e. Biddyigal, Gwyigyal, Dugugal, Badugal etc. are all plain). These terms are often found on the name of the place where the group lives (or the place with which the group has a primary affiliation), which supports Wood's hypothesis.
2.1.1 The linguistic significance of the meeting with Bariwan

It is important to note that, for all the important pieces of ethnographic information this first encounter contains, none of the published sources suggests that Barriwan spoke a noticeably different language from Gulbi and Balaidiri. Thus, although mode of living (hunting instead of fishing), aspects of material culture (lack of canoe), and ritual practices (lack of totem eversion), were different from the coastal dwellers, the language at this spot appears to be substantially the same. Interestingly, Davies (1791:46a) records a very brief comparative word list (Table 18.1, Plate 18.1), with the headings Burubirangal, Coasters, and E (for English), which strongly suggests that the language of Burubirangal and Lyura were sister dialects, and also indicates an interesting, and regular, dialectal distinction.

Table 18.1: Davies’ comparative list of Burubirangal and Lyura words, cf. Plate 18.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Burubirangal</th>
<th>Coasters</th>
<th>E.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ngindingi</td>
<td>Nginity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundung</td>
<td>Bunung</td>
<td>Knee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mundu</td>
<td>Munuru</td>
<td>Navel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>Mi</td>
<td>Eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandaouwi</td>
<td>Mandaowu</td>
<td>Foot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the first line of Davies’ comparative list does not have an English gloss, the forms are clearly those of the 2nd person singular pronoun ‘you’ (see Table 18.2 below). What Davies appears to have observed is that Burubirangal and Lyura are substantially similar bar a few differences in pronunciation. In particular, there is a regular correspondence such that words in Burubirangal with an nd correspond to cognate forms which show only n. In fact, this appears to be a regular difference between Lyura and all of its sister dialects, as is demonstrated by the following set of correspondences.8

Table 18.2: Comparative list demonstrating that words with nd in the ‘Dharruk’ and ‘Georges River’ dialects of the Sydney Language correspond to words with n in the Lyura dialect:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dharruk</th>
<th>‘Georges River’</th>
<th>Lyura</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matthews (1901)</td>
<td>Rowley (1878)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyindi ‘2nd singular’</td>
<td>nindi ‘you’</td>
<td>agyini ‘you’ [Dawes]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>gnee-ne ‘you’ [Collins]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kukundi ‘laughing’</td>
<td>kogunda ‘laughing’</td>
<td>go-gan-ne-gene ‘laughing jackass’ [Collins]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jackas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bindhi ‘belly’</td>
<td>bindi ‘stomach’</td>
<td>binny ‘with young’ [Hunter]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>bin-ni-ee ‘pregnant’ [Collins]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 It is possible that some words in Lyura varied between having only n and having nd. The only piece of evidence for this is that Dawes records against meaning ‘black’ while in the list attributed to Hunter nd is glossed as ‘black’. Note that in Dharawal, which adjoins Lyura to the south, the word for ‘black’ is nganda.

The meeting with Bariwan of the Burubirangal is not the event which captured the linguistic interests of the majority of the party, that was to come two days later on the Hawkesbury. Still, as noted above, it is significant precisely because of the keen linguistic observations that Dawes makes, and the lack of linguistic observations in the published works. A new group, the Burubirangal, are introduced, their position can be fixed with a fair degree of accuracy, and the evidence strongly supports the contention that they spoke the same language as the Lyura, albeit a different dialect.

2.2 12 April 1791—the expedition reaches the Hawkesbury

The party set off early on Tuesday 12 April 1791, and continued to move in a northwesterly direction towards the Hawkesbury River, which they reached in just over two hours. At this point it was reckoned that the party were now eighteen miles and an half from Rose-Hill, which bore from them north 28° west (Phillip in Hunter 1791:342). Tench recorded Gulbi and Balaidiri’s reaction:

Our natives had evidently never seen this river before; they stared at it in surprise, and talked to each other. Their total ignorance of the country and of the direction in which they had walked appeared when they were asked which way Rose Hill lay; for they pointed almost oppositely to it. (Tench 1961 [1791]:226)

McLaren and Cooper (1996:34) summarise this as ’when the expedition came upon a major stream, the Aborigines demonstrated their total disorientation’, and use it as evidence for their general thesis that ‘when in unfamiliar territory they [Aboriginal guides] were often of no greater competence than the white explorers whom they were meant to be guiding’. Indeed, the colonists did feel at this point that their idea of the party’s location was superior to that of their guides. However, we disagree that the guides ’demonstrated their total disorientation’ and venture an alternative interpretation: that the guides in their pointing gesture were anchoring themselves at Rose Hill and indicating, as if from there, the party’s location.9 This

9 Nash has seen this kind of remotely anchored gesture made by Aboriginal men in the central Northern Territory.
interpretation, if correct, would explain why the pointing was "almost oppositely" (rather than in some random direction, or not forthcoming at all), and is also consistent with the guides' joy four days later, when the party headed for home.

Believing themselves to be to the west of Richmond Hill, the party moved down river towards the east. Guibi and Baludiri, unlike their fellow travelers, walked unhampered and untroubled along the river side. Tender (1961 [1793]:227) writes that "[t]he hindrances ... which plagued and enmangled us so much, seemed not to be heeded by them, and they wound through them with ease; but to us they were intolerably tiresome." Tender goes on to note that Guibi and Baludiri derived great pleasure from the misfortunes of their English companions, and if any of the Englishmen were "to use any angry expression to them, they retorted in a moment, by calling them every opprobrious name which their language affords." An example of this is "Gon-in-Put-tai."(gamma-yn baba shit-ABL eat) "eat shit." 10

In the afternoon, the group came upon a hut which Guibi and Baludiri wished to destroy since it belonged to their enemies (Phillip in Hunter 1968 [1793]:343). The accounts differ at this point; the dispatch from Phillip (in Hunter 1968 [1793]:342-343) says that Governor Phillip prevented Guibi from destroying the hut, at which they were much displeased, while Tender (1961 [1793]:227) recounts that "Boilindree destroyed a native hut today very wantonly, before we could prevent him." The party came to a creek, now known as Cantai Creek, which they could not cross, and so they left the river to follow the course of the creek hoping to find a crossing place, or to go round its head. Phillip (in Hunter 1968 [1793]:343) observes that when the party came to the creek already mentioned a native fled on their approach, leaving his fire, and some decayed wood he had drawn out of the creek for the purpose of procuring a large worm which is found in it and which they eat." Phillip notes that the wood had a strong smell which "cannot be distinguished from the foulst privy." Collins (1975 [1798-1802]:462) rendering of what is apparently the same encounter is worth quoting at length:

In an excursion to the Hawkesbury, we fell in with a native and his family on the banks of one of the creeks of that noble river. We had Cole-be with us, who endeavoured, but in vain, to bring him to a conference; he launched his canoe, and got away as expeditiously as he could, leaving behind him a specimen of his food and the delicacy of his stomach; a piece of water-soaked wood (part of the branch of a tree) full of holes, the lodgement of a large worm, named by them Balu-Bo, and which they extract and eat; but nothing could be more offensive than the smell of both the worm and its habitation. There is a tribe of natives dwelling inland, who, from the circumstance of their eating these loathsome worms, are named Cal-bro-gal.

These "worms" are most likely a form of edible teredo (i.e. an edible shipworm) which, despite its worm-like appearance, is a mollusk. They bore into wood in estuarine, mangrove and ocean environments, and provided a food source for many Aboriginal communities, including communities living on the Georges River (the basic location of the 'Clouprool', and the source of the city name Cabramatta).

Tender (1961 [1793]:227) notes that small fish bones were found in the flue of the man who went away. This encounter appears to be the most instructive flue of the day. From it one can observe that, unlike Bariwam, the people living on the Hawkesbury had canoes and fish, and also procured from the water edible mollusks (i.e. edible "worms"). The expedition stopped to camp at the side of this creek at four o'clock in the afternoon.

10 Tender (1961 [1793]:227), in a footnote, observes that "[t]heir favourite term of reproach is Go-nin-Put-tai, which signifies, on ease of human encroachment — Our language would admit a very concise and familiar translation."

2.13 14 April 1791—the party discover they have been travelling in the wrong direction.

The following morning, on Wednesday 13 April 1791, the party continued to follow the creek until they crossed its head, and then attempted to return back to the river along a north-westly course. They were again foiled in their attempt, this time by a deep ravine. However, Mr. White, the surgeon, ascended a hill to look around, and to the west he saw what appeared to be Richmond Hill, the object of their pursuit. The rest of the party climbed the hill to take a look for themselves, and Phillip confirmed that they had been travelling in the opposite direction from their target; Richmond Hill 'bore west by south, and appeared to be from eleven to thirteen miles distant, as near as could be determined' (Phillip in Hunter 1968 [1793]:343).

Tender (1961 [1793]:228) estimated that Richmond Hill was 'distant about eight miles.' Phillip named the 'pile of desolation' (Tender 1961 [1793]:228) from which these observations were made "Tench's Prospect Mount" since this was the first time Captain Tench had seen Richmond Hill. On discovering their error, they decided to return to the head of the creek which they had rounded earlier in the day and camp there for the night.

Early in their day's travels, before they had crossed the head of the creek, Tender (1961 [1793]:227-228) notes that the party 'mounted a hill and surveyed the contiguous country and from it saw a tree on fire and several other vestiges of the natives.' There are no further observations recorded for the 13 April concerning Aboriginal occupation of the area. Guibi and Baludiri, although apparently cheerful, were no doubt at a loss to understand why they were now retracing their steps, and were very concerned to know when they would be returning home. As intruders in the country of another group, they were clearly feeling uncomfortable. Tender observes that Guibi and Baludiri would 'point to the spot they are upon, and all around it, crying Weere-ree, Weere-ree, (bad)' and immediately after mention the name of any other place to which they are attached, (Rose Hill or Sydney for instance) adding to it Bud-yere, Bud-yere (good)." It need not be assumed, as Tender appears to, that they were describing as bad the country that they were in, had only been well-meaning that it was dangerous for them to be where they were, and that it is bad to enter uninvited into an unfamiliar tribe's country. There is no doubt that they would have felt more comfortable in their own country where they had rights to fishing and hunting, and to which they had spiritual and kinship ties.

Still, they remained in good spirits and, after the party stopped for the night, they entertained the others by mimicking the misfortunes that befuddled the travellers during the day, imitating the leaping of the kangaroo, singing, dancing, and meeting each other with spear poised in a mock fight (Tender 1961 [1793]:228).

2.4 14 April 1791—the encounter with Gumbiri, Yalamudi, and Dylmba

Unlike the preceding couple of days, Thursday 14 April 1791 was to bring the party into direct contact with the inhabitants of the Hawkesbury. The expedition started early, crossed the creek, and headed back towards the river. After several hours they 'arrived on the borders of the river, and soon got to the place where they had first stopped in the morning of the 12th' (Phillip in Hunter 1968 [1793]:344). At, or near, this place, they saw several canoes being paddled up the river, and Guibi and Baludiri made the rest of the party lie down among the reeds while they attempted to contact the people in the canoes. However, at this stage, their calls were unheard by the other party which had stopped on the opposite shore.

11 Fishtardis, who annotated the 161 edition of Tench's journal, observes that this is the now the site of Campbell Trig. Station (Tender 1961 [1793]:228, 324 n.10; this is 17.6 miles (28km) from Richmond Hill.

12 Fishtardis suggests that this is probably the site of Cattai Trig. Station (Tender 1961 [1793]:228, 324 n.9).
The expedition continued westward along the river until they came to another creek which blocked their way. This time, however, they were able to bridge the creek with a tree and continue across. It was at this time that a man paddled along side them in a canoe and entered into a short conversation with Gulbi and Baludiri, after which he came ashore, showing no signs of fear or worry, and joined the group. Gulbi and Baludiri ascertained that the people in the canoes were going up river to get the stones with which they make their axes. It appears that the place where they procure such stones was near Richmond Hill, ‘which the old man said was a great way off, and the road to it was very bad’ (Phillip in Hunter 1968 [1793]:344).

Gulbi and Baludiri explained who everyone was, and in response the man returned to his canoe and collected two stone axes, two spears, and a spear thrower; all of which he presented to Governor Phillip. Phillip describes the spears and spear thrower as follows:

The spears were well made; one of them had a single hurb of wood fixed on with gum, the other had two large bars cut out of solid wood, and it was as finely finished at the top as if it had been made with the sharpest instrument. The throwing stick had a piece of hard stone fixed in gum instead of the shell which is commonly used by the natives who live on the sea coast; it is with these stones, which they bring to a very sharp edge, that the natives make their spears.

In return, the man gave two small metal hatchets, some fish-hooks, and some bread. Not knowing what bread was, Gulbi showed him that it was to be eaten, which he did without hesitation. (Phillip in Hunter 1968 [1793]:345)

The expedition set off, continuing along the river, and the man followed along in his canoe. Phillip (in Hunter 1968 [1793]:345) mentions that ‘another canoe, with a woman and child, joined him.’ When the man observed that the party was not taking the most sensible path, he got out of his canoe and led them to a path which had been made by the local inhabitants, and which followed along the river. At this point, Tench (1961 [1793]:229) observes that ‘a canoe, also with a man and a boy in it, kept gently paddling as far as us.’ Around four o’clock the party stopped and made camp for the night, and they were joined by the man who had led them, and the man and boy from the canoe. It was clear that these three people planned to join them for the night, ‘though their families were on the opposite bank, and they had two fires lighted’ (Phillip in Hunter 1968 [1793]:345).

The older man was named Gunbiri (Phillip records Go-me-bee-bee; Tench records, Goon-bee-bee, and Anon 1790–1791 records Gone-bee-bee). He is described by Tench (1961 [1793]:229) as a ‘man of middle age, with an open cheerful countenance, marked with the small pox, and distinguished by a nose of uncommon magnitude and dignity.’ The younger man, believed to be the son of Gumbiri, was named Yalumundi (Phillip records Yal-dhe-mien-dii; Tench records Yel-loo-mun-dee; Collins records Yel-loo-mum-dy; and Anon 1790–1791 records Yalo-mun-dee; Yal-lum-mun or Yeellah-munde). Phillip states (in Hunter 1968 [1793]:345) that Baludiri said that Yalumundi was bad, but this may be another misunderstanding of how the word ‘wet’ is interpreted by the words ‘bad’ and ‘dangerous’. This can be used. Given that Yalumundi is later found to be a garadi ‘doctor, sorcerer,’ note some of the same, it may be that Baludiri was indicating that Yalumundi was a powerful, indeed dangerous, man. Neither of the two men had lost their front teeth.

The youngest, a ‘lively little boy’ (Phillip in Hunter 1968 [1793]:345), was believed to be Yalumundi’s son, and, therefore, Gunbiri’s grandson. This boy’s name was Dyimba (perhaps Dyibima, cf. dyin ‘woman’ (Dixon 1980:9). Phillip records Jem-bah; Tench records Dhe-ema-ba; and Anon records Djimba or Jimbah).

Gumbiri, Yalumundi, and Dyimba were at ease in the camp, and, ‘all sides continued to chat and entertain each other’ (Tench 1961 [1793]:231). The party were able to learn that Gunbiri’s tribe lived chiefly on the small animals which they killed and the roots, particularly a species of wild yam, which they dug up. This diet was occasionally supplemented with the mussels that the women fished from the river. Collins (1975 [1798–1802]:464) recounts that ‘to be told, on the banks of the Hawkesbury, that all the men there, and inland, had two wives’, and Tench (1961 [1793]:230) also records this fact.

The Englishmen wanted Gulbi and Baludiri to ask why Gumbiri and Yalumundi had not lost their front tooth, and whether or not that custom was practiced within their group, but this made Gulbi and Baludiri uneasy and they steadfastly refused to talk about such matters. Tench (1961 [1793]:230) wrongly attributes this reluctance to talk about tooth evolution to a notion that it was a ‘mark of subjection imposed by the tribe of Cameragal, (who are certainly the most powerful community in the country) on the weaker tribes around them’. In fact, throughout Australia, initiation rite and other social rites are a secret and sacrosanct aspect of the personal life of both individuals and tribes which cannot be talked about publicly, especially with strangers. It may also have been that they wished to avoid overt reference to a difference between peoples. Thus, Gulbi’s and Baludiri’s refusal to discuss these matters is totally expected within the Australian context.

Gumbiri showed them all the scar left by a spear which had pierced him in the side and which apparently penetrated to quite a depth. Tench records (1961 [1793]:231–232) that Gumbiri related the details of how, where, and why he was speared to Gulbi, after which ensued a discussion of the wars ‘and, as effects lead to causes, probably of the gallantries of the district, for the word which signified a woman was often repeated.’ For, his past, appears to have passed on detailed information concerning the colonisation of Sydney and Parramatta, informing them ‘who we [i.e. the Englishmen] were; of the numbers at Sydney and Rose Hill of the stores we possessed; and above all, of the good things which were to be found among us’ (Tench 1961 [1793]:232).

2.4.1 Description of ceremony performed by Yalumundi to cure Gulbi

Gulbi also showed one of his wounds to Gumbiri and Yalumundi, one which was causing him pain, and Yalumundi, who was a garadi ‘doctor, sorcerer’, performed a ceremony to alleviate the problem. The ceremony is recorded by Phillip (in Hunter 1968 [1793]:346), Tench (1961 [1793]:232), and Collins (1975 [1798–1802]:494) and the events appear to have unfolded as follows. While Gulbi, Baludiri, Gumbiri, and Yalumundi were sitting in conversation, Gulbi ‘with suddenly asked for some water, and Tench gave him a cupful. Gulbi presented the cup ‘with great seriousness’ (Tench) to Yalumundi, who took a mouthful of water which he squirted just below Gulbi’s left breast; the location of the wound. Yalumundi then proceeded to suck strongly at the affected area just below the nipple. He sucked ‘as long as he could without taking breath’ (Tench) and then, appearing to be sick, he rose up from the seated Gulbi, and walked about for a few minutes. These same steps were repeated three times, and on the final occasion of his sucking at Gulbi’s wound Yalumundi appeared, ‘by drawing in his stomachs, to feel the pain he had drawn from the breast of his patient’ (Phillip) and he appeared to ‘receive something into his mouth, which was drawn from the breast’ (Tench). Yalumundi arose for the final time, retreated a few paces, put his hand to his mouth and extracted something which he threw into the river. On his return to the fire-side, Gulbi assured the onlookers that the garudi ‘doctor’ had cernened bala dawal (two short-spear) ‘two short spears’ from his breast. Phillip describes the conclusion of the ceremony as follows:

Before this business was finished, the doctor felt his patient’s back below the shoulder, and seemed to apply his fingers as if he twitched something out; after which he sat down by the patient and put his right arm round his back. The old man, at the same time, sat down on the other side of the patient, with his face the contrary way, and clasped him
round the breast with his right arm. Each of them had hold of one of the patient’s hands, in which situation they remained few minutes.

Thus ended the ceremony, and Caleb said he was well. He gave his warning night cap and the best part of his supper to the doctor as a fee… (in Hunter 1668 [1793]:346).

The sources disagree as to what was actually sucked out of the breast: some believed it was two bars of a fishing spear (i.e. a ‘faggot’ or mending); Phillip contended that it was ‘two pains’; Collins that it was ‘the bars of two spears’; and Tench that it was ‘two splinters of a spear’. In a note to Phillip’s account (in Hunter 1668 [1793]:435), Elgin suggests ‘Caleb’s reference was probably to the extraction of two pointed bones, invisible spears’. Elgin’s opinion gains some support from the fact that Phillip and Tench both observe that there was no apparent scar at the supposed site of the wound, suggesting that it was probably believed by Gubi and the others to be of supernatural origin. Whatever the cause of Gubi’s pain, he was satisfied with the car-rahdy’s efforts to save him, and thought himself perfectly relieved (Collins 1975 [1798–1802]:494). Gubi assured the Englishmen that Yalumundi was a Car-ad-ye, or ‘Doctor of renown’, and ‘Baludiri added, that not only he, but all the rest of his tribe were Car-ad-ye of especial note and skill’ (Tench 1661 [1793]:222). Phillip (in Hunter 1668 [1793]:346) was given to believe that both men were garadigun ‘doctors’, as was the boy, and from this he ‘presumed the power of healing wounds descends from father to son’. Tench (1661 [1793]:232) records that ‘[t]he Doctors remained with us all night, sleeping before the fire in the fullness of good faith and security.’ Dyimba slept in his father’s arms, and whenever the man was inclined to shift his position, he put over the patient’s head, with great care, and then turned round him’ (Tench 1661 [1793]:233).

2.5 15 April 1791. Part I—a description of Gumbiri’s method of climbing trees

The next morning, Friday 15 April 1791, Gumbiri, Yalumundi and Dyimba stayed for breakfast, and before departing Gumbiri demonstrated how to climb trees in pursuit of small game. He asked for an ax, but declined the Englishmen’s hatchet, preferring a familiar stone ax. The tree he chose to climb, no doubt a species of gum tree, had smooth slippery bark, was perfectly straight, and was about four feet in diameter. He used the ax to cut notches in the tree, and the first notch, which was about two and a half feet above the ground, was a foot hold for the left foot (Tench 1661 [1793]:233). Phillip (in Hunter 1668 [1793]:345) records that ‘[t]he first notches are cut in the bark a little more than an inch deep, which receives the ball of the great toe; the first and second notches are cut from the ground; the rest they cut as they ascend, and at a distance from each other that when both their feet are in the notches the right foot is raised nearly as high as the middle of the left thigh.’ In order to raise himself up, Gumbiri held the ax in his mouth and used both of his hands to hold the tree as he thrust himself upwards. Apparently, ‘when cutting the notch the weight of the body rests on the ball of the great toe’ and ‘[t]he fingers of the left hand are also fixed in a notch cut on the side of the tree for that purpose, if it is too large to admit their clasping it sufficiently with the left arm to keep the body close to the tree’ (Phillip in Hunter 1668 [1793]:345).

Although the Englishmen had occasionally seen the inhabitants of Sydney and Parramatta climb trees in like manner, Gumbiri amazed them with his great agility, with no effort at all he had quickly raised himself to a height of about twenty feet, and was able to descend with equal ease. Tench (1661 [1793]:233) reports that ‘[i]t appears as if it was a matter of astonishment; but for him it was sport; for while employed thus, he kept talking to those below, and laughing immoderately.’ Given that the tribes living inland in the woldwari appear to have been dependent on climbing trees for their subsistence, it is not surprising that they were so adept at it, nor is it surprising that the Iyura called them ‘climbers of trees’ (Phillip in Hunter 1668:345). Collins (1975 [1798–1802]:462) observes that ‘[t]he natives who live in the woods, and on the margins of rivers are compelled to seek a different subsistence [i.e. from those on the coast], and are driven to a harder exercise of their abilities to procure it. This is evinced in the hazard and toil with which they ascend the tallest trees after the opossum and flying squirrel.’ Phillip (in Hunter 1668:345–346) adds that ‘these people climb trees whose circumference is ten or fifteen feet, or upwards, after an opossum or a squirrel, though they rise to the height of sixty or eighty feet before there is a single branch.’ After Gumbiri’s demonstration, each party went its own way. Tench (1661 [1793]:233) records that ‘Colbee and Baladeree parted from them with a slight nod of the head, the usual salutation of the country; and we shook them by the hand, which they returned lustily.

2.6 The linguistic significance of the encounter with the people on the Hawkesbury: details of the European ‘discovery’ of a multilingual Australia

The thing which most struck each person who recorded this encounter with Gumbiri, Yalumundi, and Dyimba, is the fact that the language that they spoke was noticeably different from Iyura. It is worth quoting each of the sources in detail on this point. Collins (1975 [1798–1802]:506) observes:

The dialect spoken by the natives at Sydney does not entirely differ from that spoken by Captain Cook of the people with whom he had intercourse to the northward (about Endeavour river) but also from that spoken by those natives who lived at Port Stephens, and to the northward of Botany Bay (about Adventure Bay), as well as on the banks of the Hawkesbury. We often heard, that people from the northward had been met with, who could not be exactly understood by our friends; but this is not so wonderful as that people living at the distance of only fifty or sixty miles should call the sun and moon by different names; such, however, was the fact. In an excursion to the banks of the Hawkesbury, we were surprised by two Sydney natives, we first discovered this difference, but our companions conversed with the river natives without any apparent difficulty, each understanding or comprehending the other. [emphasis ours]

After mentioning certain comparisons of mode of living and daily life, Tench (1661 [1793]:230–231) notes:

These are petty remarks. But one variety struck us more forcibly. Although our natives and the strangers conversed on a par, and understood each other perfectly, yet they spoke different dialects of the same language; many of the most common and necessary words, even some of the same sound, differing, and others being quite different. That these diversities arise from want of intercourse with the people on the coast, can hardly be imagined, as the distance inland is but thirty-eight miles; and from Rose Hill not more than twenty, where the dialect of the sea coast is spoken. It deserves notice, that all the different terms seemed to be familiar to both parties, though each in speaking preferred its own.*

* After this, it can not be thought extraordinary, that the little vocabulary, inserted in Mr. Cook’s account of this part of the world, should appear defective; even were we not to take in the great probability of the dialects at Endeavour river, and Van Diemen’s land differing from that spoken at Port Jackson. And it remains to be proved, that the animal, called here Pat-a-ga-rum, is not there called Kangaroo. [emphasis ours]

14 Tench’s reference here must be to the ten words recorded by Anderson, Cook’s Sargans, on 29 January 1777 at Adventure Bay in what is now Tasmania, which are quite different from the 1770 vocabulary of Endeavour River as recorded by Cook and King 1786 [V/1, Ch. 14]. Given the great diversity between the Endeavour River and Adventure Bay vocabularies, it is not surprising that the First Fleeters had little reason to expect a similar language at Port Jackson, unless they believed the Endeavour R. vocabulary was recorded at the headland near Sydney—see below.
Tench's secondary observation, that 'though each in speaking preferred its own' is the first note of what has been termed bilingual conversation (Nash 1992:3), which has been reported in a number of multilingual contexts around Australia. Finally, in a letter to Banks, Phillip wrote:¹⁵

It was a matter of great surprise to me when I first arrived in this Country, to find that the words used by the natives when you were here, were not understood by the present inhabitants, but in my last little journey, I found on the banks of the Hawkesbury, people who made use of several words we could not understand, and it soon appeared that they had a language different from that used by those natives we had hitherto been acquainted with. They did not call the Moon, Yan-ne-dah, but Cor-do-in, they called the Penis Bud-da, which our natives call Go-day. Two of these natives who have lived amongst us for some time were with us, and it was from them that we understood that our new friends had a language different from theirs... I now think it very probable that several languages may be common on different parts of the coast, or inland, and that some tribe may have driven away the people you found on this part of the coast. [emphasis ours]

This passage strongly suggests that Phillip was under the misapprehension that the Endeavour River vocabulary (the only one from New Holland from the 1770 voyage) was recorded at the landfall near Sydney (i.e. Botany Bay); cf footnote 15.

Phillip (in Hunter 1968 [1793:347]) also records that:

the names they gave to several parts of the body were such as the natives about Sydney had never been heard to make use of: Gud-da (the penis), they called Caw-da [sic]; a publishing error, so Bud-da—DPW; Go-ray (the ear), they called Ben-ne, in the word all (the eye) they pronounced the letter l as an E. And in many other instances their pronunciation varied, so that there is good reason to believe several different languages are spoken by the natives of this country, and this accounts for one or two of those words given to Captain Cook's vocabulary having ever been heard amongst the natives who visited the settlement. [emphasis ours]

Thus, this encounter brought the first definite realisation that there were a number of languages spoken in Australia, that these languages might contain some similar vocabulary items, and that Australian Aborigines were frequently multilingual and/or multidialectal. As Dixon (1986:9–10) observed, this expedition resolved the enigma of 'the lack of correspondence between the local language and the Cook/Banks vocabulary'; '[t]here were a NUMBER OF distinct languages spoken on the continent' and it is '[j]udgmental whether if a different language were spoken only 40 miles from Sydney there should be little in common between the Sydney language and the earlier vocabularies that had in fact been gathered at the Endeavour River, 2,000 miles to the north.'

Phillip was not the only one to substantiate his observations with comparative linguistic evidence. In fact, both Tench (1961 [1793:231]) and Collins (1975 [1798–1802:512–513]) published tables comparing items of basic vocabulary oflyra with that of the people at the Hawkesbury. A list of items headed Words used by the Natives in the Hawkesbury also appears in Anson (1790–1791), the third Sydney notebook.¹⁶ This list is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bod-da</td>
<td>Penis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bo-roo-bal</td>
<td>hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bo-roo</td>
<td>Scrotum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma-mee</td>
<td>Testicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cou-do-in</td>
<td>Moon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The items in the above list, along with Tench’s, Phillip’s, and Collins’ comparative data have been amalgamated to form Table 18.3. Note that Collins introduces his table by saying ‘The following difference of dialect was observed between the natives at the Hawkesbury and at Sydney,’ and then gives the three columns in the table the following headings: ‘Coast’, ‘Inland’, and ‘English’. Tench heads the columns of his table ‘English’, ‘Name on the sea coast’, and ‘Name at the Hawkesbury’ (reprinted in Trey 1992:44). Nowhere in Tench’s or Collins’ discussion of the meeting with the people on the Hawkesbury is a tribal or language name given, nor in Phillip’s letter to Banks. Phillip (in Hunter 1968 [1793:520]) gives the impression that these people were also Buurrungal or Buryuwan (cf. §2.1), and seems to treat the name as a cover term for inlanders.¹⁷ Given the silence of the other sources on this point, along with apparent linguistic, cultural, and geographic differences (see below), it seems improbable that Gumbirri, Yalanganji, and Dyiribing belong to the Buurrungal group.

Table 18.3: Vocabulary collected on the Hawkesbury during the April 1791 expedition, and the comparisons with lyra made by Phillip (P), Collins (C), and Tench (T); (A) is Anson (1790–1791)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Lyra (at the Coast)</th>
<th>On the Hawkesbury (Inland)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head</td>
<td>Ca-ber-ca (C)</td>
<td>Co-co</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair</td>
<td>De-war-ca (C); De-war-a (T)</td>
<td>Ke-war-ca (C); Ke-war-a (T); Bo-roobal (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forehead</td>
<td>Gmul-lo (C); Nul-lo (T)</td>
<td>Nar-kan (C); Nar-kan (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye</td>
<td>Mi (C &amp; P)</td>
<td>Me (C &amp; P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ear</td>
<td>Go-ray (C); Goo-reit (T)</td>
<td>Ben-ne (C); Ben-ne (P)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹⁷ Armstrong (2002:34a, 160, 191) proposes that this may have been a misunderstanding on the part of Sturt-dale who compiled this version of Phillip’s reports. Tindale (1974:127) in his ‘Discussion and comments on tribes, New South Wales tribes’ makes the same unwarranted confusion:

The boundary between the Eora and the Darrk who lived northwest of Sydney, was first established by observations during Governor Arthur Phillip’s explorations in April 1791. Having ventured beyond the hortid territory of the Budjigal, somewhat north of Castle Hill, his party was preparing to camp when his Aboriginal companions came upon a young man and a boy of another tribe and spoke a different language or dialect. Subsequently, on the Hawkesbury River a few miles further north, the governor met the same men and others of his borne, the Busbrunergal. They were in possession of several canoes. Their camp was on the northern bank of the river but there were indications of their presence further south. Phillips’ native helpers who had discovered a camp made by a hunter in the bush south of the river wished to destroy it on an excuse that it belonged to an enemy. Their own evident lack of security seemed to imply that they were very close to their own tribal boundary. Information on Eora hordeo is incomplete....
Gumbiri and Yalamundi, neither Didura nor Murunga "had lost his front tooth" (Tench 1961 [1793]:237).

Interestingly, it appears that Dawes and Tench were able to converse, at least to some degree, with these people: on the first encounter with Didura, Tench (1961 [1793]:235) notes "we had reached within two miles of Richmond Hill, we heard a native call; we directly answered him, and conversed across the river for some time. Given that Tench and Dawes would only have known lyura, this indicates that at least Didura knew lyura or spoke a closely related dialect or language. It is, however, to be doubted that this was the primary language of the group encountered on the Hawkesbury.

The comparative vocabularies in Table 18.4 lend support to the view that the people encountered on the Hawkesbury in 1791 were speakers of Darkinyung. For the twelve possible comparisons that can be made between the 1791 Hawkesbury list and the other two lists (Mathews' Darkinyung list and the Tuckerman list collected in territory now attributed to the Darkinyung) there is a high rate of correspondence. The words 'head', 'hair', 'forehead', 'belly', 'thigh', 'penis', 'moon', 'hail' and 'laughing jackass' correspond very closely to forms in one, the other or both of the later lists. The words for 'eye' and 'ear' correspond if we allow extensions to be added to the Hawkesbury forms in order to realise Mathews' recorded forms (i.e. -ang adds to mi, to give the form for 'eye', and -agi adds to hubiha to give the form for 'ear'). The Hawkesbury word for 'scrotum', bo-roo, could possibly be related to the Darkinyung form for 'testicles', burlal. The only form collected in 1791 that is clearly not cognate with a semantically related form in one or other of the other two lists is marcemy 'testicles', and we have no recorded terms in Darkinyung to compare with the 1791 form for 'neck'. From these facts we conclude that Darkinyung and the linguistic variety encountered on the Hawkesbury in 1791 are the same language. Given the ease with which speakers of lyura were able to converse with these people we must conclude either that the two languages were very closely related, or that there was enough contact between the two groups for speakers to become bilingual in the two languages. Of course, these possibilities are not mutually incompatible.

### Table 18.4: Comparison between words collected on the Hawkesbury and two later (Darkinyung) vocabularies. Abbreviations as for Table 18.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>On the Hawkesbury 1791 (Inland)</th>
<th>Darkinyung (Mathews 1903: 280-281)</th>
<th>Hawkesbury River and Broken Bay (Tuckerman 1887)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head</td>
<td>Co-co</td>
<td>kamburung or koko</td>
<td>kunibeen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair</td>
<td>Ke-war-na (C); Ke-war-a (T);</td>
<td>kyuvar</td>
<td>kewurra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bo-roo-bal (A)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forehead</td>
<td>Nar-ran (C); Nar-roo (T)</td>
<td>ngurarra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18 The possibility that the variety on the Hawkesbury is a form of the Sydney Language cannot be dismissed out of hand. However, this is extremely unlikely given the substantial differences between this variety and lyura, as well as the fact that a genuine course only gives 7 out of a possible 14 correspondences between the Hawkesbury variety and Mathews' (1901) 'Darug'. Further, Mathews' (1901, 1903) later descriptions of the location of language groups partly south of the Hawkesbury the transition between Darkinyung (to the north) and the Sydney Language (to the south). (Remember, the range given by Mathews for 'Darug' would include lyura.) We have benefited here from Wood's (2005) careful territorial analysis of the published and unpublished writings of Mathews (and others).
On the Hawkesbury 1791

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Darkinyung</th>
<th>Hawkesbury River and Broken Bay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Mathews 1903: 280-281)</td>
<td>(Tuckerman 1887)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye</td>
<td>Me (C &amp; P)</td>
<td>mikkang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ear</td>
<td>Ben-ne (C); Ben-na; Ben-ne (P)</td>
<td>binungari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neck</td>
<td>Gang-a (C); Gun-ga (T)</td>
<td>bindhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thigh</td>
<td>Dar-a (T)</td>
<td>dhuuru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penis</td>
<td>Cud-da (P); Bod-da (A)</td>
<td>butun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrotum</td>
<td>Bo-roo (A)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testicles</td>
<td>Ma-re-ny (A)</td>
<td>burral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moon</td>
<td>Con-do-en (T); Con-do-in (A)</td>
<td>gundon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tail</td>
<td>Go-ri-ba (C)</td>
<td>walla1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laughing</td>
<td>Go-con-de (C)</td>
<td>kukundi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no Darkinyung form given for 'neck', but the forms given here are cognate with kunggga, the form Mathews (1903) gives for neck in 'Dharug'. As indicated in Table 17.1 these forms for 'neck' are not cognate with the Lyons forms. Given that the Sydney Language and Darkinyung border one another, we would expect borrowing to take place between the two, and this might be such an example.

Note that Mathews gives garpun 'flesh' and giliba 'dew' for Darkinyung, which could be suggested, with much hesitation, as possible correspondences with the Hawkesbury word for 'tail'. For Mathews' walla1 compare Tuckerman's walling 'rain'. Tuckerman's kooribai is a straightforward equivalent for the 1791 record.

2.7 15 April 1791, Part 2—Baludiri's protest

After taking leave of Gundibi, Yalamundi, and Dyimba, the expedition continued towards Richmond Hill along the path that had been shown them the day before. Yet again their path was blocked by a large creek which could not be forded or bridged by a tree. The Hawkesbury is tidal up to Windsor, and since the tide was coming in, the creek presented more problems than it would have at low tide. They followed this creek, said by Fitzhardinge to be South Creek, in the hopes of reaching and rounding its head. The party continued along the creek 'till they supposed themselves at the head of it, and then they endeavoured to regain the banks of the river. But they presently found they had only rounded a small arm of this creek, the principal branch of which they continued to trace, with infinite fatigue, for the remainder of the day' (Phillip in Hunter 1868 [1793]: 347). Because it was threatening to rain, they decided to make camp, even though they had just reached a possible crossing point a place where the creek split into two branches. For their fires they made use of timber from trees which had already been burnt down by the local Aboriginal inhabitants.

Both Gulbi and Baludiri were getting increasingly unhappy about the expedition. Amongst other things, they were growing angry about certain injustices which they encountered during the trip. Whenever a duck was shot, they were sent to swim out and recover it, but they were never given any duck to eat 'except the offals, and now and then a half-picked bone' (Tench 1961 [1793]: 234). During this day's journey, Baludiri finally protested the state of affairs by refusing a request to swim for some ducks which had been shot. Tench (1961 [1793]: 234) records that Baludiri 'told us, in a surly tone, that they swam for what was killed, and had the trouble of fetching it ashore, only for the white men to eat it'. They had been given all the crows and hawks which had been shot but they, like the Englishmen, much preferred duck. Their agitation and impatience also seemed to be exacerbated by homesickness; 'Colebe talked about his wife, and said his child would cry' (Phillip in Hunter 1868 [1793]: 347) and 'the exclamation of 'Where's Rose Hill? where was it?' was incessantly repeated with many inquiries about when we should return to it' (Tench 1961 [1793]: 234).

2.8 16 April 1791—the return home

On the morning of Saturday 16 April 1791, it was decided that the party would give up its quest and return to Parramatta, 'which bore from the sleeping place south-east, sixteen miles distant' (Phillip in Hunter 1868 [1793]: 347). No doubt Gulbi's and Baludiri's disposition were factored into the decision, along with the fact that it would have taken at least another two days to reach Richmond Hill. As one could imagine, Gulbi and Baludiri 'expressed great joy' on hearing that they were returning home. When they arrived at Parramatta in the late afternoon, a boat was about to leave for Sydney and 'Colebe and Baladeree would not wait for us until the following morning; but they insisted on going down immediately' (Tench 1961 [1793]: 234). They were both keen to meet with Bunawon (Benelong), and return to their families and friends.

3. Conclusions: taking stock of the successes of a failed expedition

This expedition is not cited, or brought forward, as one of even minor importance in the annals of the exploration and history of Australia. Indeed, even the Englishmen who had participated in it considered it a failure because it had not achieved any of its primary goals. They had not succeeded in reaching Richmond Hill, they had not ascended whether the Hawkesbury and the Nepean were the same river, they had not made any major geographic finds, and they had not discovered any major tracts of land that were obvious candidates for development and colonisation. In light of the values and priorities of the day, they had failed, in their minds, to make any progress. Thus, Collins (1775 [1798–1802]: 132), himself a member of the expedition, is able to write as part of his entry for April 1791, that:

During this month the governor made an excursion to the westward, but he reached no farther than the banks of the Hawkesbury, and returned to Rose Hill on the 6th [sic: ac. 16th], without making any discovery of the least importance. [emphasis ours]

Although all accounts give sound, and important, etnographic and linguistic information, little value is attached to this in the context of the expedition. However, with hindsight, it is possible to say that it is in these areas that the expedition was particularly successful. Wood (1937: 22) already briefly remarked that 'The one success of the journey had been its revelation of the more amiable aspects of native character', and, in that context, the ethnographic observations that were made with respect to the various people observed and contacted during this excursion inland are numerous and substantial. On the basis of these observations, fruitful comparisons between the coastal groups and the 'inlanders' can be made.

The Englishmen, fascinated by the ritual of toot evocation, but at this time not really aware of its significance, were able to determine that it is not practised inland, but seems to be con-
tained to the coast. The fact that Guibli allowed himself to be cured by Yalamundi, and felt that the curative ceremony had brought him great relief, indicates that the people on the Hawkesbury and the Illawarra shared similar beliefs and practises concerning *garndi* 'Aboriginal doctors' and healing. Another shared custom that was recorded during the expedition was the fact that a man could, and in fact tended to, have more than one wife.

As far as artefacts were concerned, the party was able to determine that the sharp stone affixed to the spearthrower of the people on the Hawkesbury corresponded to the sharp edged clam shell affixed to the spearthrowers of the Illawarrans. These sharp attachments to the spearthrower were used as knives and, amongst other things, were employed to sharpen the spears. Later written records and archaeological finds confirm that one of the obvious material distinctions between the groups living on the south-eastern coast of Australia and those living inland from the coast was that the latter used stones on their spears and weapons where the former used shells. Thus a death spear from the coast would have been 'armed with pieces of broken oyster-shell for four or five inches from the point, and secured with gum' (Collins 1795 [1798–1802]:487) while the corresponding spear from inland was 'made by embedding a series of small jagged stone chips in a gum layer that has been smeared over the head of the spear' (Davidson 1934:147). Not surprisingly, people living inland away from both the river and the coast, like the Burubirangal, lacked canoes, whereas the inland river dwellers, like the people on the coast, had canoes.

As is the case on the coast, it was observed that, amongst the people living on the Hawkesbury, it is the women who had primary responsibility for fishing from canoes. Moreover, the diet appears to have been supplemented by edible worm-like molluscs. However, while fish, and other ocean fauna, were the main source of food for the Illawarrans, the people of the Hawkesbury apparently relied very little on fish, and, if the accounts are correct, the Burubirangal did not rely on fish at all. For the 'indigenous' small animals and birds appear to be the primary source of meat, and it seems that possums and flying squirrels were the mainstay of the diet. At their method of procuring these animals was to climb large trees, in the manner described above, it was recognised that the 'indigenous' were significantly more adept at this activity than the people who lived by fishing on the coast. Clearly, despite proximity, changes in environment provided a great force for differentiation in basic practices of daily life including diet, methods of food collection, and artefacts.

Although other comparisons could be made, these stand out as the most significant points of similarity and difference between the Illawarra (the 'coasters') and the different groups of 'inlanders'. If the colonists had been more interested in seeking a peaceful coexistence with and understanding of the original inhabitants of these areas, then an understanding of the similarities and differences in customs and mode of living of different Aboriginal groups would have been crucial, and the findings of this expedition more highly regarded. However, the colonists assumed that they were superior and took for granted that they 'were the new lords of the soil' (Tench 1611 [1793]:46) with the rights to colonise any place they chose and thereby displace the 'old lords of the soil'.

Given the bold and unfounded pronouncements that the Aborigines 'are ignorant savages' (Collins 1795 [1798–1802]:531) and that 'they certainly rank low, even in the scale of savages' (Tench 1611 [1793]:284), it is welcome to find in the accounts of this expedition that the Englishmen were often forced to admire the superiority of their Aboriginal companions, and also that Guibli and Baludiri took several opportunities to ridicule and make fun of their frequently pompous fellow travellers. No doubt they felt the Englishmen were lacking in certain sophistication, charging through other people's territories, hunting their game, and attempting to pry into their personal sacred-secret affairs. The Englishmen followed other
realm of insignificance when Collins pronounced that the expedition returned “without mak- 
ing any discovery of the least importance.” One can only speculate as to whether history 
would have been any different if such discoveries had been vested with real significance and 
value.

References

Anon, 1790–1791, Vocabulay of the language of N.S. Wales, in the neighbourhood of Syd- 
ney. (Native and English, but not alphabetical). Manuscript, Marsden Collection 
41645, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Attenbrow, V.J., 2002, Sydney’s Aborigines past. Investigating the archaeological and hi- 
storical records. Sydney: UNSW Press.

Bagguley, J.C., and R. A. Skelton, eds, 1955, The journals of Captain James Cook on his 

Campbell, J.F., 1926, Notes on ‘Explorations Under Governor Phillip.’ Journal and Pro- 

Collins, David, 1975 [1798–1802], An account of the English colony in New South Wales. 
London: Cadell and Davies. Also Christchurch: Whitley & Toms 1910, etc. [Ap- 
pendix XII, pp.608–616, Language: difference between natives at Hawkesbury and 
Sydney; notes on languages, also name taboa, pp 607–608], http://www. 

Cook, James and J. King, 1784, A voyage to the Pacific Ocean: undertaken by the command 
of His Majesty for making discoveries in the northern hemisphere: performed under 
the direction of Captain Cook, Clerke, and Gore, in His Majesty’s ships the Resolution 
and Discovery in the years 1776...1780. 2nd ed. London: H. Hughes, 1785, 3 v. in. 4. Vol.1, 2 
by J. Cook.

Davidson, Daniel S., 1934, Australian spear traits and their derivations. Journal of the Poly- 

Dawes, William, 1791, Vocabulary of the language of N.S. Wales, in the neighbourhood of 
Sydney, (Native and English). Manuscript, Marsden Collection MS 41645b, School of 
Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), Library, University of London. Interactive digital 

1793. A map of all those parts of the territory of New South Wales which have been seen by 
any person belonging to the settlement established at Port Jackson. March 1791. In 
2007.

Dixon, Robert M.W., 1960, Languages of Australia. Cambridge: Cambridge University 
Press.

Hunter, J., 1968 [1793], An historical journal of the transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk 

McBryde, Isabel, 1989, Guests of the Governor – Aboriginal residents of the First Govern-
ment House. Sydney: Friends of the First Government House Site.

McLaren, Glen and William Cooper, 1996, Aboriginal involvement in Australian explora-

Mathews, Robert H., 1901, ‘The Dharruk language and vocabulary’. [a section in] The 

1903, Languages of the Kamilaroi and other Aboriginal tribes of New South Wales. Journal of the 
Anthropological Institute 33:259–283.


Newton, Peter J.F., 1987, More than one language, more than one culture: scholarly and pop-
ular ideas about Australian Aboriginal languages from early times until 1860. MA 
(Hon.) thesis, Macquarie University, North Ryde.

Rowley, J., 1878, Language of the Aborigines of George’s River, Cowpasture and Appin 
that is from Botany Bay 50 miles to the south and west. Journal of the Anthropological 
Institute 7:238–262; reprinted in Ridley 1878 Australian languages and traditions, 7.

Tench, Watkin, 1961 [1793], Sydney’s first four years: being a reprint of A narrative of 
the expedition to Botany Bay and A complete account of the settlement at Port Jackson. 
With an introduction and annotations by L,F. Fitzhardinge. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 
in association with the Royal Australian Historical Society. Electronic book, 


Troy, Jakelin, 1992, The Sydney language notebooks and responses to language contact in 

1993, Language contact in early colonial New South Wales 1788 to 1791, in Michael Walsh 
and Colin Yallop, eds, Language and culture in Aboriginal Australia, 33–50. Canberra: 
Aboriginal Studies Press.


Tuckerman, J., 1887, No. 189—Hawkesbury River and Broken Bay. In E.M. Cusz, ed., The 


Wood, Ray, 2005, Improved draft of Wood (Sections 1 and 2) in Nancy Williams and Ray 
Wood, 2001, Anthropological assessment of experts’ evidence filed on behalf of the ap-
plicants in Federal Court proceedings NG6004/98 [unpublished report to the Federal 
Court]. Unpublished.