Karte der Eingebornen-Sprachen

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 marginal or have been marginalised 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 1910-1960 represented the 'dark ages' of Aboriginal linguistics, characterised 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. Nekes and Worms 1953 *Australian languages*.

# Encountering Aboriginal languages

## Studies in the history of Australian linguistics

edited by
William B. McGregor

*Encountering Aboriginal languages:*
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## 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 1963 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.

# 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.

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# *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 Ernest 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 dobbed 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, sytlistic infleicities, and omissions before it was too late.

William B. McGregor
Århus, 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 AustLang, 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 Boström
Svenskt visarkiv/Uppsala university
mathias.bostrom@visarkiv.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
adamk@dca.net

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

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

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

Paul Monaghan
University of Adelaide
Paul.Monaghan@austmus.gov.au

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

Peter Mühlhäusler
University of Adelaide
pmuhlhau@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@mail.usyd.edu.au

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

David P. Wilkins
University of Sydney
wilkinsdavidp@aol.com

Map 1: Some Australian language families and genetic groups

**Non-Pama-Nyungan languages**
**Pama-Nyungan languages**
**Tasmanian languages**

# 1   *Introduction*

WILLIAM B. McGREGOR[1]

## 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 (Graffi 2001:2), or to understand the work of previous investigators within their social and intellectual milieus. As Hans Aarsleff has put it:

> The task of gaining the proper depth of historical perspective within a given period can only be satisfied by seeking to recapture 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 accorded the status of unquestioned doctrine. (Aarsleff 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.

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 on about, or the sudden appearance of a key example. Thus, after hours of poring over terse and inexplicit—if not incomprehensible—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 Tachon's 1895 grammar of Nyulnyul) I have been surprised by the unexpected appearance of examples of grammatical phenomena poorly represented in my own Nyulnyulan corpora.

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 careening his ship somewhere on the northern end of the Dampier Land peninsular 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 "Gurri, gurri" 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 Metcalfe has observed, this is most likely the Bardi word *ngaarri*, the term for a malevolent spirit (Metcalfe 1979:197). There is no evidence that Dampier or his crew made any serious attempts 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 subsections.

### 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–xv 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 Awabakal.[2] The remaining two pages single out a few of the main figures from the nineteenth century: George Grey, W.H.I. Bleek, L. Threlkeld, Horatio Hale, William Watson, 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 contribution 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 handful of works are singled out as good, including Horatio Hale's grammars of two New South Wales languages (1846). Works from this time is characterised as 'prephonemic': they were typically phonemically under-differentiated.[3] In particular, O'Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin (1966) remarks on the failure of many observers to distinguish retroflex from apical stops and nasals, and major inconsistencies in the usage of vowel symbols such as *u*, especially by speakers of English. A notable omission from this history is Threlkeld's Awabakal 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 Curr 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.[4] 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-

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2   Over a page of this short biography is wasted on a digression into the early history of the Threlkeld family in England.

3   Prephonemic is not a particularly apt label since it was not until another eighty or ninety years—during which time many changes occurred in the shape of Australianist linguistics—that the notion of phoneme took root in Australian linguistics (see McGregor 2006a; Moore, this volume).

4   This was not the first such general survey. Also mentioned by O'Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin (1966:5) is Brough Smyth's survey of Victorian languages (Smyth 1878), which they refer to as a 'quantitatively impressive but qualitatively appalling account of the languages of Victoria'. There were others as well.

lowing Curr's work saw the appearance of Wilhelm Schmidt's and Alfred Kroeber's classifications of Australian languages (Schmidt 1919; Kroeber 1923). And following the beginning of the second survey era, from about 1940 to the mid-1960s, a dozen or so individuals are singled out as having contributed to the continued work on Australian languages, mostly anthropologists but also linguists, including (among others): Ronald M. Trudinger, Ursula McConnel, Ronald and Catherine Berndt, William and Lynette Oates, Theodor G.H. Strehlow, Luise Hercus, Wilf Douglas, Stephen Wurm, and Ken Hale. (All of these individuals are mentioned at one point or another in the following pages and chapters.)

According to O'Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin (1966:8), the bulk of descriptive work on Australian languages was done by Australians, whilst the bulk of the genetic and typological work was done by non-Australians, who had no direct primary knowledge of the languages. O'Grady considers a 1962 conference held in Indiana University as the first attempt at combining the two groups of scholars and their research directions (O'Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin 1966:9). This conference seems to have focussed on the problem of low cognate densities; it was considered that something special was going on in Aboriginal Australia, with its 'family-like languages' and language families with extremely low cognate densities. Traditional multilingualism was mooted as a possible explanation. This 1962 conference also appears to have heralded the lexicostatistical period of the 1960s, initiated by O'Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin (1966). The treatment accorded to this conference amounts to almost a third of O'Grady's historical survey.

Half a dozen years later came what perhaps remains the most comprehensive work published to date, Arthur Capell's piece published in volume 8 of Sebeok's *Current trends in linguistics* (Capell 1970). Capell distinguishes two major periods, the **pre-scientific period** from 1770 to about 1930, and the subsequent **scientific period**.[5] Capell apparently saw little overlap between the periods in the sense that prior to 1930 no work was fully 'scientific', although a few missionary linguists (e.g. L.E. Threlkeld) stood out as exceptionally good, as did the occasional academic investigator (e.g. Horatio Hale, and Sidney Ray). Even Wilhelm Schmidt's work was not regard by Capell as entirely scientific—'at least semi-scientific', he avers—since it was based on unreliable materials, and because Schmidt brought along with him a number of presuppositions.[6]

Crucial to Capell's historical scheme is the notion of 'scientific', which he assumed means being 'complete freedom from presuppositions' (Capell 1970:676). This conception of science was at one time relatively standard, though it was already obsolete in the philosophy of science by the time of Capell's piece was published.

1930 or thereabouts was crucial in Capell's opinion for basically the same reasons that Elkin singled it out as a turning point in his history of Aboriginal anthropology (Elkin 1963).

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5  Capell's scheme (as pointed out to me by Russell McGregor, pers.comm.) seems somewhat reminiscent of the periods A.P. Elkin identified in the history of Aboriginal anthropology. Thus Elkin (1963:3) distinguished four overlapping phases: incidental anthropology (1788–1870s); compiling and collating (1870–1900); fortuitous individual projects (1870s–mid 1920s); and organised scientific research (post 1925). The first three of these correspond well to Capell's pre-scientific period, the last to his scientific period. Elkin mentions linguistic work here and there throughout his story, citing the contributions of a few individuals. Elkin (1963) cannot be regarded as a history of Aboriginal linguistics, however. (Other histories of Australian Aboriginal studies exist—e.g. Berndt and Berndt (1992:533–549)—but are also left out of the present account for the same reason.)

6  A slightly more positive evaluation was expressed in Capell (1956:1), where Schmidt's work is referred to as 'excellent, painstaking and thorough to a degree'—followed by the qualifications just mentioned. Capell goes on to say that Schmidt's work on pronouns in Australian language is 'the better of the two and of permanent value' (see also Schweiger, this volume).

It was about then that institutionally-based research began, firstly with the establishment of the chair of anthropology in 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) in the same department. The establishment of the journal *Oceania* (founded in 1930) which in its early years published a considerable amount of linguistics, and was one of the very few outlets 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.G.H. Strehlow'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 1960s, though it is of course now very dated. 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 amongst these is William Dawes' work on the Sydney language (1790), unearthed 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 Australian 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 lacunae and contestable 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 only comment on her work concerns her 1914 publication on the languages of the south-west (Bates 1914). Gerhardt Laves 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 under the auspices of the Board for Anthropological Research, and the South Australian Museum and the University of Adelaide that date to about the same time that insitutionalised research in Sydney began (see Monaghan, this volume); as well as this, there was the Adelaide school of linguistics (see Simpson, Amery and Gale, this volume; Monaghan, this volume; and Moore, this volume). This omission is presumably a relic of the rivalry between Adelaide and Sydney for Rockefeller Foundation funding the foundation chair in anthropology, ultimately won by Sydney, just as the cavalier treatment of Laves 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* (Wurm 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 wordlists 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 1972:13). Wurm mentions many of the most significant players in the field, including the wordlist collectors, the describers of particular languages, and the classifiers. Of the classifiers, Schmidt and Kroeber are singled out as most notable. Wurm evaluates the contribution of Kroeber more positively than the contribution of Schmidt, in that it was Kroeber 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 Sommerfelt's notorious attempt to link Arrernte language and culture, and his construal of both as 'primitive' (see especially Sommerfelt 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 SIL 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 interdisciplinary projects with prehistorians; 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, Yallop (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.[7] Then in about 1875, with the virtual cessation of expansion in most regions and rise of social Darwinism, came notions that Aborigines would inevitability 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 other than 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 Australianists, 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 2005, 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.; Rowse 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 in Australia 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

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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 Elkin's: Elkin characterised anthropological work up to about 1870 as primarily motivated by practical needs of interaction with Aborigines (Elkin 1963:5), while the subsequent thirty or forty years—his 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 (1979) 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 reverse until the late 1930s with the work of Arthur Capell. The subsequent two decades saw a gradual increase in linguist 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 foci. 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 lull in the first decades of the twentieth century, especially from 1912 to 1930. The 1930s saw the appearance of Arthur Capell and his surveys, and Theodor G.H. Strehlow'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 1770 to about 1910, and was characterised entirely by educated amateurs whose work was phonetically poor. From the mid 1840s to the late 1870s, aver 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 focusses 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).[11] 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' since his 1980 book (Dixon 2002:xxvi). *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

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11 This work might also be treated in the next section under the heading of *Local histories*. However, in terms of its organisation, and the fact that it deals with a rather large region that is home to a considerable number of languages, it fits more with national than local histories.

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, Fr Alphonse Tachon's grammar of Nyulnyul (1895) stands out, as do the recordings of Fr Bischofs in 1910 (see McGregor 1998, 2000), and Yngve Laurell's recordings on Sunday Island (see Boström, 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 the 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 Worrorra (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 a 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 (2006a). 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 period is not 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 1.1:** Comparison of the main accounts of the history of research on Australian languages

| Date | O'Grady et al. (1966) | Capell (1970) | Wurm (1972) | Dixon (1980) | Blake (1981) | Dixon & Blake (1991) | McGregor (2004) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1788 | 1788–1880s Prephonemic research, with difficulties in identification of some phonemic segments; a few grammars | | | 1788–1792 Keen interest in Aboriginal languages and cultures | | | Nothing significant on Kimberley languages |
| 1800 | | | | mid-1790s–mid-1840s Early years of each new colony characterised by keen interest in Aboriginal languages; this stopped in a few years | | | |
| 1840 | | 1788–1930 Pre-scientific period—a few notable grammars by missionary linguists, and a small contribution by academics; a few word-collectors | 1770–c.1930 First period—dominated by amateurs; primarily collection of wordlists; a few grammars usually on the Latin model | mid-1840s–mid-1870s Virtually no work on Aboriginal languages | 1770–1900 Primarily work by amateurs, mainly collection of wordlists; a very few sketch grammars | 1770–c.1910 amateur period—educated amateurs, phonetically poor; often sought links with languages outside of Australia | |
| 1870 | | | | | | | |
| 1880 | mid-1880s onwards First survey era—collections of c. 100 item wordlists on continental basis | | | 1880–1910 Golden age of amateur anthropologists and linguists; mainly collection of vocabularies; a few short sketch grammars | | | 1880s up to c.1929 Early phase—dominated by amateurs; primarily short wordlists; a few sketch grammars |

| Date | O'Grady et al. (1966) | Capell (1970) | Wurm (1972) | Dixon (1980) | Blake (1981) | Dixon & Blake (1991) | McGregor (2004) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1890 | | | | | | | |
| 1900 | 1890s–1930 Further descriptive work, and first major attempts at classification of the languages | | | | 1900–c.1930 Fall-off of work on Australian languages | | |
| 1910 | | | | | | Nothing | |
| 1920 | | | | | | | |
| 1930 | late-1930s to 1960s Second survey era inaugurated by Capell's surveys of northern Australia | | 1930s–early 1960s Second period—appearance of first professionals, primarily survey work with a focus on northern languages; beginning of description of marked registers, and appearance of a few detailed studies of particular languages | 1910–1960s Dark ages of Aboriginal policy, and virtually no linguistic work | 1930s–1960 Beginning of first professional investigations, and gradual increase in number of these investigators | post-1930s professional period—appearance of professional linguists on the scene, with new ideas; gathering of momentum in the 1960s and 1970s. Beginning of institutional backing | c.1930–1959 Intermediate phase—appearance of better trained investigators, primarily survey work |
| 1940 | mid-1940s to 1960s Further grammatical investigations | post-1930 Scientific period—institutional backing (universities, AIAS, SIL) | | | | | |
| 1960 | | | post-1961 Third period—under impetus of AIAS and SIL an explosion of number of investigators and diversity of topics | late 1950s onwards Serious and extensive work, and the beginning of institutional backing | post-1960s Explosion in number of linguists and of research on Australian languages, with the establishment of AIAS | | post-1959 Modern phase—greater professionalisation, first appearance of detailed grammars |
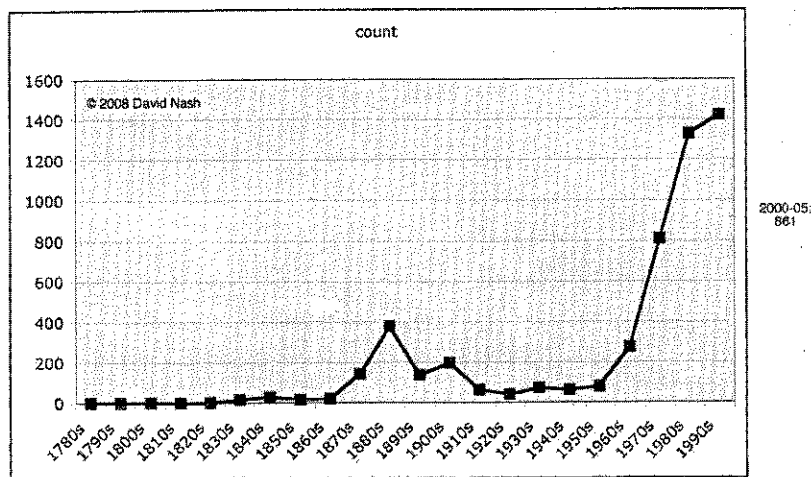
**Figure 1.1**: Decadal counts of publication year of items in Carrington and Triffitt (1999). Courtesy David Nash (http://www.anu.edu.au/linguistics/nash/aust/OzBib-stats.html Accessed 21 January 2008)

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 Curr (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 these 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 Gerhardt Laves.

### 2.2 Local histories

At least since the beginning of the 1970s grammars of Australian languages have generally included brief discussion of previous research on the language, usually in a section of the introductory chapter. Examples include Tsunoda's grammar of Jaru (Tsunoda 1981:18–21); Wilkins' grammar of Mparntwe Arrernte (Wilkins 1989:14–20); McGregor's grammar of Gooniyandi (McGregor 1990:28–30); Dench's grammars of Martuthunira and Yingkarta (Dench 1995:20–21, 1998:8–9); Harvey's grammar of Gaagudju (2002:5–6); Patz's grammar of Kuku Yalanji (2002:8–10); Sharp's grammar of Nyangumarta (2004:31–34); Evans' grammars of Kayardild and Bininj Gun-wok (Evans 1995:48–50, 2003b:69–71); and Kite and Wurm's grammar of Duuŋidjawu (2004:12–16). Less commonly, this section appears in an appendix to the grammar, as in Dixon's grammars of Dyirbal and Yidiny (Dixon 1972: 365–367, 1977:508–512).

In most cases these pieces amount to just a few pages, and do not purport to be historiographical works; rather, their purpose is manifestly to provide a backdrop for the modern grammar. In these brief pieces we find reference to previous investigators of the language, and their works. Time is generally the primary organising principle, and for this reason these excursuses 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 recognised as descriptive 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—nor 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 (1998) distinguishes two periods of research on Biri. The first, from the 1860s 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.[12] 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 festschrifts and obituaries. Among the former one could mention the biographical sketch of Luise Hercus by Isobel White (1990), my biography of Howard Coate (1996a), and Wurm's (1997) and Tryon and Walsh's (1997) biographical notes on Geoffrey O'Grady. Worth singling out is Tamsin Donaldson's 'Patakirraparaaypuwan in western New South Wales' (Donaldson 1990), which presents recollections of Luise Hercus as fieldworker in western New South Wales by three Ngiyampaa people

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Hercus worked with, Mamie King, Eliza Kennedy, and Muriel 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 1975.

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 Arrernte (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.[13] Schurmann (1987) is a biography of Clamor 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 than reliable secondary source. T.G.H. Strehlow's autobiographical *Journey to Horseshoe 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 Arrernte 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 bushmen of today* (1936). In this book Love—a gifted amateur linguist, who wrote the first grammatical description of Worrorra (see §2.1.1; McGregor 1986)—presents a popular ethnography of the Worrorra woven into an account of his experiences as a missionary at Kunmunya mission. As the story unfolds one gets a clear picture of Love as a human being, and his relationships with the Worrorra people; language plays a fairly prominent role in the account, and one chapter deals with his experiences in learning Worrorra (Love 1936:41–50). 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 Kunmunya, 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

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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, 1930s–1940s* (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 ethnographic 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).[14] 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 missionising, 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 renown 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. Hoogenraad (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 Thieberger (2001) outline the history of Wangka Maya, the Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre, Port Hedland.

Edited versions and collections of the scholarly works of particular individuals are also relevant, though for Australianist linguistics 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.[15] Lacking an appraisal of Love's work, and with virtually no editorial intervention 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 Threlkeld

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14  It seems that J.R.B. Love had already prepared a 'rudimentary grammar and vocabulary' of the language (Trudinger 2004:269; see also Simpson, Amery and Gale, this volume:94), which may have served as a foundation or model for Trudinger's sketch.

15  In the early 1990s I began to prepare a critical edition of Love's MA thesis, intended initially for my festschrift for Howard Coate (McGregor 1996b). However, it was not completed in time to meet the deadline for the festschrift, and remains in manuscript form, in a half-finished state.

(Gunson 1974) is considerably better in providing contextualising information. However, it includes only Threlkeld's ethnographic writings, not his linguistic works. In press as of the time of making the final revisions to this introductory piece is Martin Thomas' edition of a selection of R.H. Mathews' voluminous ethnographic and linguistic publications and correspondence (Thomas 2007). This work provides an appraisal and interpretation of Mathews' work, as well as a biography.

The present author recently completed the major enterprise of revising and editing Frs. Hermann Nekes and Ernest Worms' monumental *Australian languages* (1953) for publication as a book. This work originally appeared in microfilm form, as the tenth volume in the series *Micro-Bibliotheca Anthropos*, and is not easily accessible. The main value of this major achievement of missionary linguistics of the second period (see §2.1) lies in the documentation it provides of a number of now moribund Nyulnyulan languages, as well as a scattering of languages from elsewhere on the continent. From today's perspective it is of considerably less value as a piece of language description. The revision of the book, Nekes and Worms (2006), can be regarded as documentation of their language documentation and description, and an appraisal of the contribution of the two priests (see further McGregor 2007). It contains an editorial introduction that outlines the lives and achievements of the authors and attempts to place their work in its historical context; it also attempts to understand the authors' guiding ideas about language and society. In these senses it is in part a work on the history of ideas. The remainder of the book consists of a revision of the authors' text of Parts I and V, their grammatical description and sample texts. The editor attempts to be level-handed in his treatment of the work, being neither dismissive nor eulogistic; he does not shy away from criticism where it is due, nor from giving credit where it is due. McGregor (2005) deals specifically with the dictionaries of Parts II to IV (see also next section).

Aside from hard-copy publication, mention may be made of web sites as repositories of information on Australianists. A notable example is the Gerhardt Laves site (http://www.anu.edu.au/linguistics/nash/aust/laves) managed by David Nash. This site presents biographical information on Laves, as well as indication of the range and depth of his corpora, excerpts from his written notes, the use made of his materials by modern scholars, and so forth. Also informative is the Norman B. Tindale site (http://www.samuseum.sa.gov.au/archives/hdms/aa338/338_tindale.htm), managed by the South Australian Museum; this provides detailed biographical information on Tindale, and detailed descriptions of the contents of the archive of Tindale's materials, which include short vocabularies of nearly 150 language varieties. Less informative is the homepage of the Strehlow Research Centre (http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/museums/strehlow/index.html), though it does provide some idea of the holdings in the extensive Strehlow archive.

## 2.4 Historical treatments of particular themes

Four themes in Australian Aboriginal languages and linguistics have received treatment in article-length or longer historical pieces: language documentation by Aboriginal people, missionary linguistics, lexicography, and language classification.[16] These, and other themes are of course dealt with in national, regional, local, and personal histories. Here I restrict attention to contributions focussing on the topics, occasionally mentioning shorter and non-specific treatments where they provide information useful for contextualising the more detailed studies, especially where they express historical notions widespread in the Australianist community.

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16  The history of the emergence and use of the notion of the phoneme in Australian Aboriginal linguistics is discussed in a conference presentation, as yet unpublished (McGregor 2006a).

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 organisation 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 Aborigines (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 Aborigines, that led to increasing interest in the compilation of dictionaries (understood as consisting of more that 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 1960s of institutions supporting linguistic work of 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 the same 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 1067 pages—almost three-quarters of the work) is lexicographical in nature; the grammatical description fills a paltry 160 pages.[17] 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, 8–13), 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 1970:700–715) 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 (mooted 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

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17  This is doubtless in part a reflection of the importance the authors ascribed to words, 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 amongst near synonyms and homophones would reveal important aspects of Aboriginal modes of thinking. They also considered that the study of words—as per O'Grady's above comment—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 Australianist 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 Hilary 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 Trudinger 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 missionary linguistics, and the creative descriptive approach he adopted, the extent to which he grappled with descriptive difficulties posed by Awabakal. 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* (2005) also stresses the significance of the contribution of missionaries. She treats in detail the documentation and description of Diyari 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 descendants of Diyari 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 (2000) 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 on 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 treats.

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 Austin treats research on the now moribund northern New South Wales language Gamilaraay. In the second paper Claire Bowern documents research on two closely related Nyulnyulan varieties, Bardi (highly endangered) and Jawi (effectively extinct). Research on these languages shows some unusual features. For Gamilaraay, as Austin observes, little research was done during the twentieth century by professional linguists, most investigations having been carried out by amateurs during the nineteenth century. By contrast, Bardi is notable for the number of professional linguists who worked on it from the late 1920s; yet no reference grammar has yet appeared (although Bowern is currently in the process of preparing one). Both Austin and Bowern describe the efforts in recent years by Gamilaraay and Bardi people to document and revive their languages.

The third paper in Part 1, by Jane Simpson, Rob Amery and Mary-Anne Gale, documents in detail the close to two centuries of research on South Australian languages. Their history agrees well with the three period model proposed in §2.1.3, and the period 1930 to 1950 emerges 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 article concludes with a discussion of current research, commenting on indigenous and community directed research, and directions for future research.

The ten papers of Part 2 focus on the contributions of particular individuals. The first paper, by Mathias Boström, documents the contribution of the Swedish ethnographer Yngve Laurell, 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. Boström situates Laurell's work in the context of Swedish and international ethnography and academic concerns, and explores Laurell's representation and construal of Aborigines as revealed by his writings and ethnographic collections.

Luise Hercus' contribution is an autobiographical account of her entry into the Australianist field 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. Hercus 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 east 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 Matti Miestamo discuss the work of Nils 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-
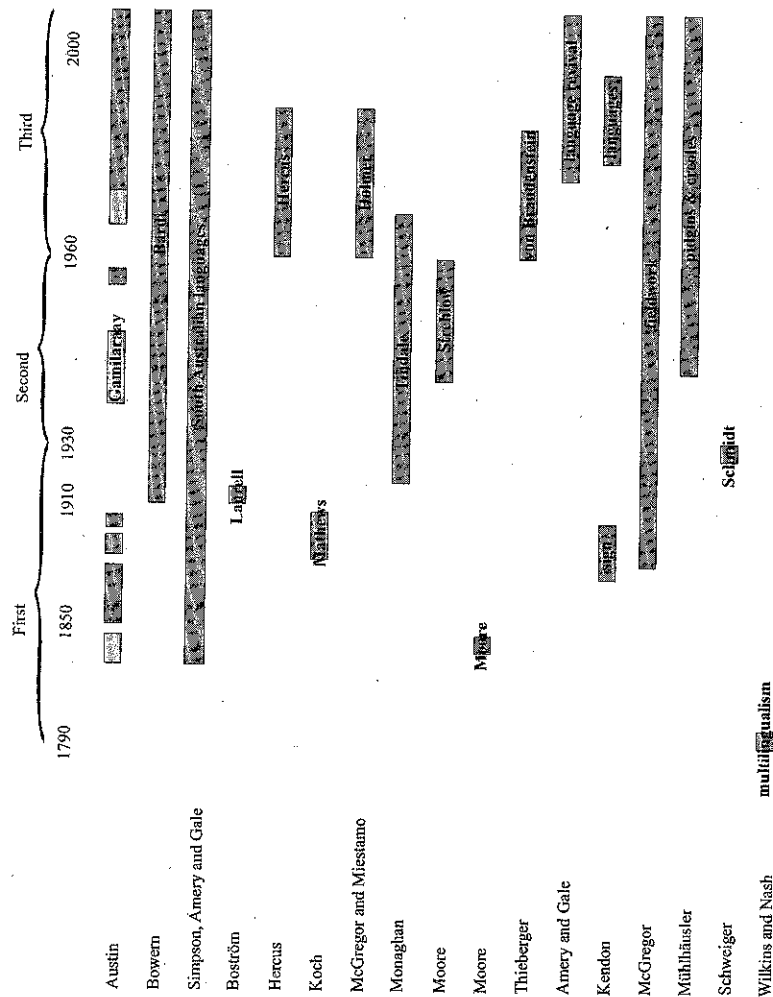
cuss Holmer's published works, and conclude that the main value lies in their documentation of some now highly endangered languages.

Paul Monaghan treats Norman Tindale's contribution to the documentation of Pitjantjatjara. From his first fieldtrip in the early 1920s, Tindale gathered vocabularies of the languages he came into contact with, primarily for the purpose of tribal identification and validation. His Pitjantjatjara vocabulary, based mainly on his own primary sources from the early 1930s, comprises almost three thousand headwords, representing ten different varieties of the Western Desert language. Monaghan links Tindale's research with the then dominant discourses of racial purity and corruption, the most relevant aspect of which was the equation of racial with linguistic purity.

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 Australianist 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 reclamation in Adelaide; and Ngarrindjeri revival in southern South Australia.

In the next paper Adam Kendon treats the history of investigation of sign languages in Australia, updating and expanding the history in his monograph (Kendon 1988). 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 Francis Gillen. From then until about 1970 only brief treat-



**Figure 1.2**: Time periods covered by the contributions to this book

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 Personalpronomina 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 Personalpronomina*, focussing on Schmidt's criteria for classification. Schmidt also remarked on regularities in the construction of pronominal forms, touched on regularities 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 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 eras that is dealt with, but the contribution 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 was 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 same goes for historians and biographers, who, with few exceptions, have rarely chosen linguists or linguistics as subjects of their investigations.[18] 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; Zwartjes 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 Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, the Summer Institute of Linguistics, the School

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18 The reasons are not clear to me. It cannot be simply because the subject matter of anthropology and archaeology is less abstruse (a perusal of recent journal articles would seem to suggest otherwise); and after all, there are innumerable histories—many popular—of the most abstruse 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.

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

DAVID P. WILKINS AND DAVID NASH[1]

## 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 1968 [1793]:340), and to 'ascertain whether or not the Hawkesbury and the Nepean, were the same river' (Tench 1961 [1793]: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-

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countered, and become somewhat familiar with, at Sydney and Parramatta, and which has been recognised as a dialect of the Sydney Language.[2]

Dixon (1980:9–10) recognises this expedition as the first to reveal that Australia was a multilingual continent.[3] 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'.[4] This list, the earliest known wordlist recorded of an Aboriginal language, is now recognised as the Guugu Yimidhirr 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.[5] 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 Dharuk. We do however use Iyura (Eora) as a convenient label for the variety spoken at Port Jackson and the sea coast, mindful of Attenbrow's (2002:35–36) 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 Phillip, 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.

4   In Beaglehole and Skelton (1955:411). See also Cook's journal for 10 July 1770 http://southseas. nla.gov.au/journals/cook/17700710.html and the map http://southseas.nla.gov.au/ journals/maps/44_endeavour.html. The 10 July 1770 encounter, when Cook noted 'neither us nor Tupia [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' (Guugu Yimidhirr *gangurru* 'large black kangaroo'), as follows:

> Whatever animal is shewn them, 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, busily employed in looking at some sheep in an inclosure, and repeatedly crying out, Kangaroo, kangaroo!

As Dixon (1980:9) observes '[t]here were plenty of Kangaroos around Sydney Cove but the Dharuk people [sc. the Iyura] did not recognise this word; indeed they thought they were being taught an English generic term and enquired whether cows were a type of kangaroo!'

Compare Tench's comments here with those given after his experiences on the trip to the Hawkesbury (these are quoted in §2.6).
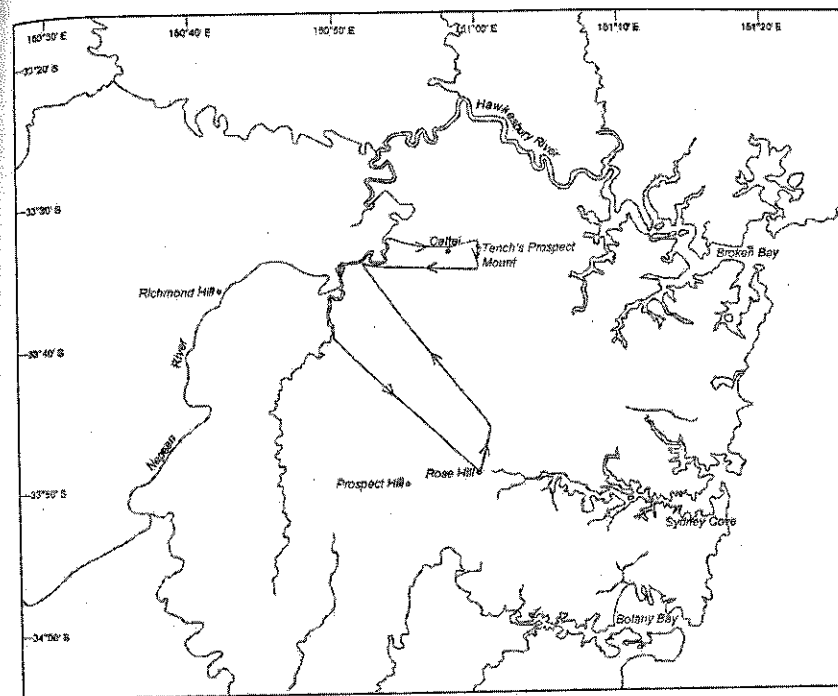
**Map 18.1**: Sketch of route traversed in April 1791, after Campbell (1926)

The retelling is based on the published accounts of three members of the expedition Arthur Phillip (in Hunter 1968 [1793]:340–348), Watkin Tench (Tench 1961 [1793]:223–234), and David Collins (1975 [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 (1926:37–39) plotting of the route, drawing also on Dawes' (1793) 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.[6] 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 characterised the first colonisers

6   McBryde (1989) collects the recorded details about Gulbi (Colebe) and Baludiri (Baloderree), 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 Bariwan of the Burubirangal

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 (Boladeree, Ballederry), Governor Phillip, Captain Collins (judge-advocate) and his servant, Captain Tench, Lieutenant Dawes, Mr White (principal surgeon), two sergeants, eight privates, and three gamekeepers (i.e. 'three convicts who were good marksmen' [Phillip in Hunter 1968 [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 patagorongs [sc. *patagarang* '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 1968 [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 no knowledge of the area which they were in (Tench 1961 [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 (Boladeree, Ballederry) '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 1968 [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 Burubirangal,[7] and that these people lived on birds and animals, having no fish (Tench 1961 [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, having 'catched the sound instantaneously, and bidding us to be silent, listened attentively to the quarter whence it had proceeded' (Tench 1961 [1793]:225).

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7   The original spellings are Boò-roo-ber-on-gal in Tench (1961 [1793]:225); Bu-ru-be-ron-gal in Phillip's journal in Hunter (1968 [1793]:342); and Burubirangál in Dawes (1791:46a) where the '*ng*' is actually represented by an engma symbol that Dawes used to represent a simple velar nasal. In our spelling, Burubirangal, the *ng* represents a velar nasal.
   Burubirangal has an analysis in the Sydney Language: as *buru* '(Eastern Grey) kangaroo', *-birang* associative suffix, and the gentilic suffix *-gal*. In the coastal dialect, there is a morphophonological rule which changed the initial stop consonant of a suffix to the homorganic nasal when that suffix was attached to a stem 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 Burubirang may have been a place name, pointing out that none of the other named community groups in the Sydney region carry *-birang* (i.e. Bidyigal, Gwiyagal, Dugugal, Badugal etc. are all plain). These terms are often formed 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.
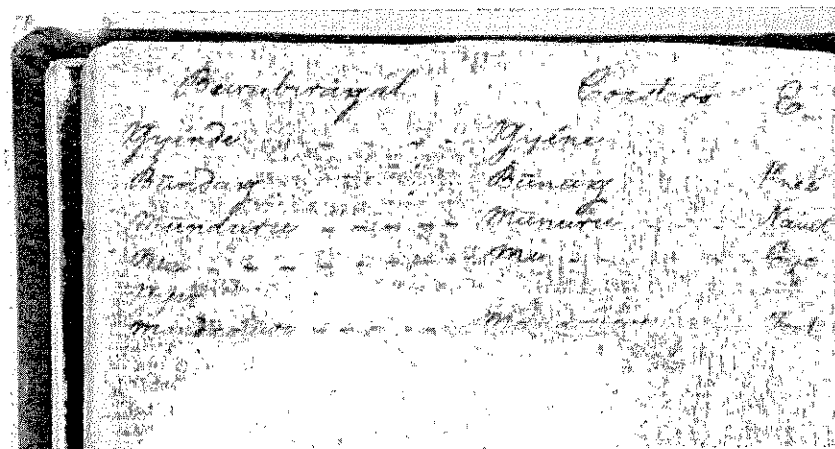
**Plate 18.1**: Dawes' (1791:46a) comparative table, cf. Table 18.1. © SOAS Dawes online http://www.hrelp.org/dawes/

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 1961 [1793]:225), after which 'there was whooping and shouting on both sides' (Tench 1961 [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 1968 [1793]:341) while they made contact. Phillip (in Hunter 1968 [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 (1961 [1793]:226) notes that '[t]he first words which we could distinctly understand were, "I am Colbee of the tribe of Càd-i-gal"', to which 'the stranger replied, "I am Bèr-ee-wan, of the tribe Boorooberongal"'. Bariwan (recorded as Bu-ro-wan in Phillip in Hunter 1968 [1793]:342) was about 30 years old (according to Tench) and '[h]is hair was ornamented with the tails of several small animals' (Phillip in Hunter 1968 [1793]:342). Phillip observes that Bariwan 'had preserved all his teeth', suggesting that he belonged to a group which did not practice tooth evulsion 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 Bariwan was introduced to everyone, with Gulbi and Baludiri calling out the name of everyone who was present. Apparently Bariwan had a stone hatchet, a spear and a throwing-stick with him, but the sources disagree as to whether he came into the camp unarmed or not; Phillip (in Hunter 1968 [1793]:342) claims that Gulbi and Baludiri wanted Bariwan to leave his weapons, but he refused, while Tench (1961 [1793]:226) claims that '[h]e came to us unarmed, having left his spears at a little distance'.

Bariwan stayed for a long conversation with Gulbi and Baludiri. Gulbi related that Bariwan 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 1968 [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'.

### 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 Bariwan spoke a noticeably different language from Gulbi and Baludiri. Thus, although mode of living (hunting instead of fishing), aspects of material culture (lack of canoe), and ritual practices (lack of tooth evulsion), were different from the coastal dwellers, the language at this spot appears to be substantially the same. Interestingly, Dawes (1791:46a) records a very brief comparative word list (Table 18.1, Plate 18.1), with the headings Burubirangál, Coasters, and E (for English), which strongly suggests that the language of Burubirangal and Iyura were sister dialects, and also indicates an interesting, and regular, dialectal distinction.

**Table 18.1**: Dawes' comparative list of Burubirangal and Iyura words, cf. Plate 18.1

| Burubirangál | Coasters | E. |
|---|---|---|
| Ngyindi | Ngyini | |
| Bundung | Bunung | Knee |
| Munduru | Munuru | Navel |
| Me | Mi | Eye |
| Mandaouwi | Manaouwi | Foot |

Although the first line of Dawes' 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 Dawes appears to have observed is that Burubirangal and Iyura 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 Iyura 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 Iyura dialect

| Dharruk Matthews (1901) | 'Georges River' Rowley (1878) | Iyura |
|---|---|---|
| nyindi '2nd singular' | nindi 'you' | ngyini 'you' [Dawes] gnee-ne 'you' [Collins] |
| kukundi 'laughing jackass' | kogunda 'laughing jackass' | go-gan-ne-gine 'laughing jackass' [Collins] |
| bindhi 'belly' | bindi 'stomach' | binny 'with young' [Hunter] bin-niee 'pregnant'[Collins][a] |

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

| Dharruk Matthews (1901) | 'Georges River' Rowley (1878) | Iyura |
|---|---|---|
| dundi 'scorpion' | | dtooney 'scorpion' [Dawes] |
| mundu 'mouth' | | moono 'the bill of a bird' [Hunter] |
| kunda 'smell' (verb) | | gu-na-murra 'a stink or bad smell' [Hunter] |
| jandiga 'laugh' (verb) | | janna 'laugh' [Dawes] jen-ni-be 'laughter' [Collins] |
| | mundowo 'leg' | ma-no-e 'foot' [Collins] manouwi 'foot' [Dawes] |

a   It is common in Australian languages for the word for 'pregnant' to be based on the word for 'belly; stomach'. For instance, in Arrernte the word for 'belly; stomach' is *atnerte* and one word which means 'pregnant' is the reduplication of this form *atnerte-atnerte*. Within the series of dialects under discussion it is important to note that in his grammar of Dharruk, Mathews gives **bindhiwurra** 'pregnant' as well as **bindhi** 'belly'.

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 Iyura, 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 1968 [1793]:342). Tench recorded Gulbi and Baludiri'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 [1793]: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. Gulbi and Baludiri, unlike their fellow travellers, walked unhindered and untroubled along the river side. Tench (1961 [1793]:227) writes that '[t]he hindrances ... which plagued and entangled us so much, seemed not to be heeded by them, and they wound through them with ease; but to us they were intolerably tiresome.' Tench goes on to note that Gulbi 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-Pat-ta'.(*guna-yin bada* shit-ABL eat) 'eat shit!'.[10]

In the afternoon, the group came upon a hut which Gulbi 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 Gulbi and Baludiri from destroying the hut, at which 'they were much displeased', while Tench (1961 [1793]:227) recounts that 'Boladerree destroyed a native hut today very wantonly, before we could prevent him.' The party came to a creek, now known as Cattai 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 our 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 foulest 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 child 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 **cah-bro**, 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 Cah-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 'Cabrogal', and the source of the city name Cabramatta).

Tench (1961 [1793]:227) notes that small fish bones were found in the fire of the man who went away. This encounter appears to be the most instructive find of the day. From it one can observe that, unlike Bariwan, the people living on the Hawkesbury had canoes and fished, 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.

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10 Tench (1961 [1793]:227), in a footnote, observes that '[t]heir favourite term of reproach is *Go-nin-Pat-ta,* which signifies, *an eater of human excrement.*—Our language would admit a very concise and familiar translation'.

## 2.3 13 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 northwesterly 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). Tench (1961 [1793]:228) estimated that Richmond Hill was 'distant about eight miles.' Phillip named the 'pile of desolation' (Tench 1961 [1793]:228) from which these observations were made 'Tench's Prospect Mount'[11] 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, Tench (1961 [1793]:227–228) notes that the party 'mounted a hill and surveyed the contiguous country'[12] 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. Gulbi 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. Tench observes that Gulbi and Baludiri would 'point to the spot they are upon, and all around it, crying *Weè-ree, Weè-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-ye-ree, Bud-ye-ree* (good).' It need not be assumed, as Tench appears to, that they were describing as bad the country that they were in. They could well have meant 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 beleaguered the travellers during the day, imitating the leaping of the kangaroo, singing, dancing, and meeting each other with spear poised in a mock fight (Tench 1961 [1793]:228).

## 2.4 14 April 1791—the encounter with Gumbiri, Yalamundi, and Dyimba

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 Gulbi 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 unheeded by the other party which had stopped on the opposite shore.

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

12 Fitzhardinge suggests that this is probably the site of Cattai Trig. Station (Tench 1961 [1793]:227, 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 barb of wood fixed on with gum, the other had two large barbs cut out of solid wood, and it was as finely brought to a point 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 was given 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 up abreast of 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 the 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 Gumbiri (Phillip records *Go-me-bee-re*; Tench records, *Gŏm-beè-ree*, and Anon 1790–1791 records *Gome-bee-re*). 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 Yalamundi (Phillip records *Yal-lah-mien-di*; Tench records *Yèl-lo-mun-dee*; Collins records Yel-lo-mun-dy; and Anon 1790–1791 records *Yello-mundy* or *Yellah-munde*). Phillip states (in Hunter 1968 [1793]:345) that Baludiri said that Yalamundi was bad, but this may be another misunderstanding of how the word *wiri* 'bad; dangerous; powerful' can be used. Given that Yalamundi is later found to be a *garadi* 'doctor; sorcerer' of some note, it may be that Baludiri was indicating that Yalamundi was a powerful, indeed dangerous, man. Neither of the two men had lost their front tooth. The youngest, 'a lively little boy' (Phillip in Hunter 1968 [1793]:345), was believed to be Yalamundi's son, and, therefore, Gumbiri's grandson. This boy's name was Dyimba (perhaps Diyimba, cf. *diyin* 'woman' (Dixon 1980:9); Phillip records *Jim-bah*; Tench records *Dèe-im-ba*; and Anon records *DJimba* or *Jimbah*).

Gumbiri, Yalamundi, 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 Gumbiri'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 mullets that the women fished from the river. Collins (1975 [1798–1802]:464) recounts that '[w]e were 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 Yalamundi had not lost their front tooth, and whether or not that custom was practised 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 evulsion 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 rites are a secret and sacred 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.' Gulbi, for his part, 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 found among us' (Tench 1961 [1793]:232).

### 2.4.1 Description of ceremony performed by Yalamundi to cure Gulbi

Gulbi also showed one of his wounds to Gumbiri and Yalamundi, one which was causing him pain, and Yalamundi, 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 Yalamundi were sitting in conversation, Gulbi suddenly asked for some water, and Tench gave him a cupful. Gulbi presented the cup 'with great seriousness' (Tench) to Yalamundi who took a mouthful of water which he squirted just below Gulbi's left breast, the location of the wound. Yalamundi then proceeded to suck strongly at the affected area just below the nipple. He sucked 'as long as he could without taking breath' (Phillip) 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 Yalamundi appeared, 'by drawing in his stomach, 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). Yalamundi 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 fireside, Gulbi assured the onlookers that the *garadi* 'doctor' had extracted *bula duwal* (two short-spear)[13] '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

13 Phillip (in Hunter 1968 [1793]:346) in fact records *Bul-ler-doo-ul*, and is the only one to note this term.

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 Colebe said he was well. He gave his worsted night cap and the best part of his supper to the doctor as a fee; ... (in Hunter 1968 [1793]:346)

The sources disagree as to what was actually sucked out of the breast: some beleved that it was two barbs of a fishing spear (i.e. a 'fizgig' or muting); Phillip contended that it was 'two pains'; Collins that it was 'the barbs of two spears'; and Tench that it was 'two splinters of a spear'. In a note to Phillip's account (in Hunter 1968 [1793]:435), Elkin suggests 'Colebe's reference was probably to the extraction of two pointing bones, invisible spears'. Elkin's position 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 Gulbi and the others to be of supernatural origin. Whatever the cause of Gulbi's pain, he 'was satisfied with the car-rah-dy's efforts to serve him, and thought himself perfectly relieved' (Collins 1975 [1798–1802]:494). Gulbi assured the Englishmen that Yalamundi was 'a Cár-ad-yee, or Doctor of renown', and 'Baludiri added, that not only he, but all the rest of his tribe were Cár-ad-yee of especial note and skill' (Tench 1961 [1793]:232). Phillip (in Hunter 1968 [1793]:346) was given to believe that both men were *garadigan* 'doctors', as was the boy, and from this he 'presumed the power of healing wounds descends from father to son'.

Tench (1961 [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 first put over the child, with great care, and then turned round him' (Tench 1961 [1793]:233).

## 2.5 15 April 1791, Part 1—a description of Gumbiri's method of climbing trees

The next morning, Friday 15 April 1791, Gumbiri, Yalamundi and Dyimba stayed for breakfast, and before departing Gumbiri demonstrated how to climb trees in pursuit of small game. He asked for an axe, but declined the Englishmen's hatchet, preferring a familiar stone axe. 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 axe 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 1961 [1793]:233). Phillip (in Hunter 1968 [1793]:345) records that '[t]hese 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 such 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 axe 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 1968 [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 (1961 [1793]:233) reports that '[t]o us it was a matter of astonishment; but to 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 wooded areas 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 1968:

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 1968:345–346) 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 (1961 [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, Yalamundi, 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 not only differs entirely from that left us 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 southward 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, accompanied 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 (1961 [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, used in life, bearing no similitude, and others being slightly 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. Cooke'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 Dieman's land,*[14] *differing from that spoken at Port Jackson.* And it remains to be proved, that the animal, called here Pat-a-ga-ram, is not there called Kanguroo. [emphasis ours]

14 Tench's reference here must be to the ten words recorded by Anderson, Cook's Surgeon, on 29 January 1777 at Adventure Bay in what is now Tasmania, which are quite different from the 1770 vocabulary of Endeavour River, as noted at the time (Cook and King 1784:Volume 1, Chapter VI). Given the great difference between the Endeavour River and Adventure Bay vocabularies, 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 landfall 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 1992:8), 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 was here, were not understood by the present inhab-itants, 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 have hitherto been acquainted with. They did not call the Moon, *Yan-ne-dah*, but *Con-do-in*, they called the Penis *Bud-da*, which our natives call *Ga-diay*. *Two of those 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 lan-guages 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 re-corded 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. *Ga-dia* (the penis), they called *Cud-da* [sic; a pub-lishing error, sc. *Bud-da*—DPW]; *Go-rey* (the ear), they called *Ben-ne*; in the word *mi* (the eye) they pronounced the letter I as an E. And in many other instances their pronun-ciation varied, so that *there is good reason to believe several different languages are spoken by the natives of this country, and this accounts for only one or two of those words given in 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 lan-guages spoken in Australia, that these languages might contain some similar vocabulary items, and that Australian Aborigines were frequently multilingual and/or multidialectal. As Dixon (1980:9–10) observed, this expedition resolved the enigma of 'the lack of correspon-dence between the local language and the Cook/Banks vocabulary'; '[t]here were A NUMBER OF distinct languages spoken on the continent' and it is '[s]mall wonder that if a different lan-guage 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 of Iyura with that of the people at the Hawkesbury. A list of items headed *Words used by the Natives in the Hawkesbury* also ap-pears in Anon (1790–1791), the third Sydney notebook.[16] This list is as follows:

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15 Governor Arthur Phillip to Banks, 3 December 1791. Number 20 of Series 37: letters with related papers and journal extract, received from Banks from Arthur Phillip 1787–1792, 1794–1796. Sir Joseph Banks' papers. State Library of NSW. http://www2.sl.nsw.gov.au/banks/series_37/37_20.cfm Frames 100, 101 and 102. Also cited by Dixon (1980:9) and Attenbrow (2002:34 n.160, 191).

16 This anonymous notebook is held with Dawes' two notebooks in the Library of SOAS in London. Troy (1992:155–156, 1993:45) justifies her attribution of its authorship to Collins, Phillip and Hunter.

---

**Words used by the Natives in the Hawkesbury**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bod-da | the Penis |
| Bo-roo-bal | hair |
| Bo-roo | Scrotum |
| Ma-ree-my | Testicles |
| Con-do-in | Moon |

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*', '*In-land*', and '*English*'. Tench heads the columns of his table 'English', 'Name on the sea coast', and 'Name at the Hawkesbury' (reprinted in Troy 1993:44). 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 impres-sion that these people were also Burubirangal like Buriwan (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 im-probable that Gumbiri, Yalamundi, and Dyimba belong to the Burubirangal group.

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

| English | Iyura (at the Coast) | On the Hawkesbury (Inland) |
|---|---|---|
| Head | Ca-ber-ra (C) | Co-co |
| Hair | De-war-ra (C); Deè-war-a (T) | Ke-war-ra (C); Keè-war-a (T); Bo-roo-bal (A) |
| Forehead | Gnul-lo (C); Nùl-lo (T) | Nar-ran (C); Nar-ràn (T) |
| Eye | Mi (C & P) | Me (C & P) |
| Ear | Go-ray (C); Goo-reè (T); Go-rey (P) | Ben-ne (C); Bèn-na; Ben-ne (P) |

---

17 Attenbrow (2002:34 n.160, 191) proposes that this 'may have been a misunderstanding on the part of Stock-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 conflation:

> The boundary between the Eora and the Daruk, who lived northwest of Sydney, was first estab-lished by observations during Governor Arthur Phillip's explorations in April 1791. Having ven-tured beyond the hordal territory of the Bidjigal, somewhat north of Castle Hill, his party was preparing to camp when his aboriginal companions came upon a young man and a boy who of an-other tribe and spoke a different language or dialect. Subsequently, on the Hawkesbury River a few miles farther north, the governor met the same man and others of his horde, the Buruberongal. They were in possession of several canoes. Their camp was on the northern bank of the river but there were indications of their presence farther south. Phillip's 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 be-longed 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 hordes is incomplete. ...'

| English | Iyura (at the Coast) | On the Hawkesbury (Inland) |
|---|---|---|
| Neck | Cad-lian (C); Càl-ang (T) | Gang-a (C); Gan-gà (T) |
| Belly | Ba-rong (C); Bar-an`g (T) | Ben-de (C); Bin`-dee (T) |
| Navel | Moo-nur-ro (C); Mùn-ee-ro (T) | Boom-boong (C); Boom-bon`g |
| Thigh | Tàr-a (T) | Dàr-a (T) |
| Buttocks | Boong (C and T) | Bay-ley (C); Bay-leè (T) |
| Penis | Ga-dia or Ga-diay(P) | Bud-da (P); Bod-da (A) |
| Scrotum | | Bo-roo (A) |
| Testicles | | Ma-ree-my (A) |
| Moon | Yen-na-dah (C); Yèn-ee-da (T); Yan-ne-dah (P) | Dil-luck (C); Con-dò-en (T); Con-do-in (P & A) |
| Sun | Co-ing (C) | Con-do-in (C)[a] |
| Hail | Gora (C) | Go-ri-ba (C) |
| Laughing Jackass | Go-gen-ne-gine (C) | Go-con-de (C) |

[a] This would appear to be a mistake on Collins' part; the form he gives as the word for 'moon' on the Hawkesbury is **dil-luk**, which is well attested for Iyura, but not the Hawkesbury, and the word he gives for 'sun' on the Hawkesbury is the word the others record for 'moon'.

### 2.6.1 What language did Gumbiri, Yalamundi and Dyimba speak?

Given the significant differences in basic vocabulary that exist between Iyura (and the other varieties of the Sydney Language) and the linguistic variety spoken on the Hawkesbury, the question remains: what was the language of those people encountered on the Hawkesbury? We can begin exploring this question by noting that the discussion of the encounter with Gumbiri and his family suggests that the group to which he belonged were associated with the northern shore of the Hawkesbury. While canoeing up the river it is reported that members of Gumbiri's party landed several times on the northern shore, the bulk of Gumbiri's group camped the night of the 14 April on the northern shore, and the purpose of their journey was to gather stones for axes around Mount Richmond on the northern shore.

Further evidence of the association of this group with the northern shore of the Hawkesbury is to be found in Tench's account (1961 [1793]:234–237) of another expedition to Mount Richmond which took place the following month. During this expedition—which was mounted on 24 May 1791, and involved Tench, Dawes, a sergeant, and a private—there was an encounter on the Hawkesbury with a man named Didura (Tench records Dee-do-rà) who 'appeared to know our friend Gombeeree, of whom he often spoke' (Tench 1961 [1793]: 235). This encounter was first initiated by Didura who called over to the party of explorers from the northern bank of the river. Later, after this group arrived at the spot across the river from Mount Richmond, a party of local inhabitants known to Didura were on the northern bank, and helped ferry the party of Englishmen from the southern to the northern shore so that they could reach Mount Richmond. In particular, a man named Murunga (perhaps Muranga; Tench records Mo-rù-nga), lent his canoe and his skill to the task. As was the case with

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 Iyura, this indicates that at least Didura knew Iyura 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. -*kang* adds to *mi*, to give the form for 'eye', and -*ngari* adds to *binu/bina* to give the form for 'ear'). The Hawkesbury word for 'scrotum', **bo-roo**, could possibly be related to the Darkinyung form for 'testicles', *burral*. 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 **mareemy** '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.[18] Given the ease with which speakers of Iyura 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.

| English | On the Hawkesbury 1791 (Inland) | Darkinyung (Mathews 1903: 280–281) | Hawkesbury River and Broken Bay (Tuckerman 1887) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Head | Co-co | **kamburung or koko** | **kunibeen** |
| Hair | Ke-war-ra (C); Keè-war-a (T); Bo-roo-bal (A)) | **kyuar** | **kewurra** |
| Forehead | Nar-ran (C); Nar-ràn (T) | **ngurran** | |

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 Iyura, as well as the fact that a generous count only gives 7 out of a possible 14 correspondences between the Hawkesbury variety and Mathews' (1901) 'Dharruk'. Further, Mathews' (1901, 1903) later descriptions of the location of language groups puts 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 'Dharruk' would include Iyura.) We have benefited here from Wood's (2005) careful territorial analysis of the published and unpublished writings of Mathews (and others).

| English | On the Hawkesbury 1791 (Inland) | Darkinyung (Mathews 1903: 280–281) | Hawkesbury River and Broken Bay (Tuckerman 1887) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Eye | Me (C & P) | **mikkang** | **mekung** |
| Ear | Ben-ne (C); Bèn-na; Ben-ne (P) | **binungari** | **binna** |
| Neck | Gang-a (C); Gan-gà (T)[a] | | |
| Belly | Ben-de (C); Bin`-dee (T) | **bindhi** | **ukul** |
| Thigh | Dàr-a (T) | **dhurra** | **durra** |
| Penis | Cud-da (P); Bod-da (A) | **buthun** | |
| Scrotum | Bo-roo (A) | | |
| Testicles | Ma-ree-my (A) | **burral** | |
| Moon | Con-dò-en (T); Con-do-in (A) | **gundon** | **koodang** |
| Hail | Go-ri-ba (C) | **wallaji**[b] | **kooribai** |
| Laughing Jackass | Go-con-de (C) | **kukundi** | **kookundi** |

[a]   There is no Darkinyung form given for 'neck', but the forms given here are cognate with **kungga**, the form Mathews (1901) gives for neck in 'Dharruk'. As is indicated in Table 17.3 these forms for 'neck' are not cognate with the Iyura 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.

[b]   Note that Mathews gives **gurpang** 'frost' and **gillibin** 'dew' for Darkinyung, which could be suggested, with much hesitation, as possible correspondences with the Hawkesbury word for 'hail'. For Mathews' **wallaji** compare Tuckerman's **wollong** '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 Gumbiri, 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 1968 [1793]:347). Because it was threatening to rain, they decided to make camp, even though they had just reached a possible crossing point at 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 1968 [1793]:347) and 'the exclamation of "Where's Rose Hill; where?" 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 1968 [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 'Colbee 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 Banalang (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 ascertained 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 (1975 [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, sc. 16th], *without making any discovery of the least importance*. [emphasis ours]

Although all accounts give sound, and important, ethnographic 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 (1926:22) 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 tooth evulsion, 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 Gulbi allowed himself to be cured by Yalamundi, and felt the curing ceremony had brought him great relief, indicates that the people on the Hawkesbury and the Iyura shared similar beliefs and practices concerning *garadi* '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 Iyura. 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 woomeras 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 1975 [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 mollusks. However, while fish, and other ocean fauna, were the main source of food for the Iyura, the people on 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 'inlanders' 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. As their method of procuring these animals was to climb large trees, in the manner described above, it was recognised that the 'inlanders' 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 differentiating 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 Iyura (the 'coasters') and the different groups of 'inlanders'. If the colonisers had been more interested in seeking a peaceful coexistence with 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 colonisers assumed that they were superior and took for granted that they 'were the new lords of the soil' (Tench 1961 [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 1975 [1798–1802]:513) and that 'they certainly rank low, even in the scale of savages' (Tench 1961 [1793]:281), it is welcome to find in the accounts of this expedition that the Englishmen were often forced to acknowledge the superiority of their Aboriginal companions, and also that Gulbi and Baludiri took several opportunities to ridicule and make fun of their frequently pompous fellow travellers. No doubt they felt the Englishmen were lacking a certain sophistication, charging through other people's territories, hunting their game, and attempting to pry into their personal sacred-secret affairs. The Englishmen followed or-

ders when Gulbi and Baludiri told them to hide themselves so that they alone could make first contact with other groups, and when Gumbiri found that the Englishmen did not know the best ways to walk along the river, they were forced to fall in behind him and follow his lead. Indeed, as has been noted, the inability of the Englishmen to trek with any sort of ease or grace through the country was a constant source of merriment to Gulbi and Baludiri; they were overloaded, overdressed, and ignorant of the best paths to take.

Baludiri's protest over the unfair sharing of food, mentioned previously, underscores the tense relations that existed even between 'friendly' Aborigines and the Englishmen. The ever-possessive Englishmen thought that 'their natives' could be used as tools, as servants, and ordered to swim for shot ducks, or used to gain further knowledge of the land. Gulbi and Baludiri recognised and protested the inequities, as other Aboriginal people had and would continue to do. In a different social, intellectual, and historical context, the events of such an expedition might have been taken to signal the parity of races, but blinded by the prejudices of the day, the recorders of this expedition were unable to divine the significance of their own accounts and see the incongruities and inconsistencies in the position they took on relations between race, intelligence, and 'civilisation'.

Finally, the numerous linguistic merits of the expedition cannot be neglected. The comparative word lists which have been mentioned or reproduced in this study are the first such comparative lists recorded for Australian languages. From them it has been possible to discover (1) that the language of the Burubirangal appears to have been a sister dialect of that spoken by the Iyura, and that one dialect marker is the correspondence of *nd* in Burubirangal words with simple *n* in Iyura words, and (2) that the language spoken by the people encountered on the Hawkesbury is distinct from that on the coast (and that spoken by the Burubirangal) and appears to be the same language, or a dialect of the same language, as Darkinyung. That Gulbi and Baludiri could converse with the different people encountered is also the first clear indication of the multilingual and multidialectal capabilities that was typical of the Aboriginal inhabitants. Moreover, we have here the first recording of what appears to be a bilingual conversation with each participant using their own language.

Indeed, the most significant linguistic find was the realisation that there are a number of languages spoken on the continent. The 1791 discovery of the multilingual nature of Australia is as important as any geographic or scientific discovery, but it was conveniently and quickly forgotten. It is only in the last thirty years or so that the wider Australian public has begun to appreciate that there were several hundred Australian Aboriginal languages, not just one, spoken throughout the country. Even today, a web search on 'the Aborigine language' or 'the Aboriginal language' will reveal documents around the world which maintain the myth of a single Australian Aboriginal language. Counterfactually, we can imagine 19th century Australia acknowledging that Aboriginal people spoke real languages which resembled Latin and Greek in structure and which eluded most of the first colonists' attempts to learn them, and that the continent was covered by a great variety of languages and cultural systems, in the same way that a great variety of languages and cultural systems cover Europe. Would this have moderated the colonial expansion which led to the displacement and decimation of so many Aboriginal communities? Probably not, but had the first colonists heeded and explored the evidence before them of Australia's indigenous multilingualism and multiculturalism, then they might have come sooner to the recognition that Aborigines had civil societies with customary law and land ownership, and so would have much earlier rejected the doctrine of *terra nullius*.

The real failure of this expedition is that its participants, and other observers, were blind to its successes. A rich spectrum of ethnographic and linguistic discoveries was relegated to the

realm of insignificance when Collins pronounced that the expedition returned 'without making 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.

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