For almost 40 years, Michael Walsh has been working alongside Indigenous people: documenting language, music and other traditional knowledge, acting on behalf of claimants to land in the Northern Territory, and making crucial contributions to the revitalisation of Aboriginal languages in NSW. This volume, with contributions from his colleagues and students, celebrates his abiding interest in and commitment to Indigenous society with papers in two broad themes. 'Language, identity and country' addresses the often complex relations between Aboriginal social groups and countries, and linguistic identity. In 'Language, identity and social action' authors discuss the role that language plays in maintaining social identities in the realms of conversation, story-telling, music, language games, and in education. 'Indigenous language and social identity' will be of interest to students of linguistics, Indigenous studies, anthropology, and sociology.

ISBN 9780858836181

edited by
Brett Baker, Ilana Mushin, Mark Harvey and Rod Gardner
Pacific Linguistics 615

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 School of Culture, History and Language in the College of Asia and the Pacific at The Australian National University. The authors and editors of Pacific Linguistics publications are drawn from a wide range of institutions around the world. Publications are refereed by scholars with relevant expertise, who are usually not members of the editorial board.

FOUNDING EDITOR: Stephen A. Wurm
EDITORIAL BOARD: Wayan Arka and John Bowden (Managing Editors), Mark Donohue, Nicholas Evans, Jeffrey Marc敞, David Nash, Andrew Pawley, Paul Sidwell, Jane Simpson

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD:
Karen Adano, Arizona State University
Alexandra Adelsar, University of Melbourne
Peter Austin, School of Oriental and African Studies
Byron Bender, University of Hawai‘i
Walter Bisang, Johannes Gutenberg—Universität Mainz
Robert Blust, University of Hawai‘i
David Bradley, La Trobe University
Lyke Campbell, University of Utah
James Collins, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
Bernard Comrie, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology
Sreekanta Dasgupta, University of Aarhus
Matthew Dryer, State University of New York at Buffalo
Terrell K. Edmondson, University of Texas at Arlington
Nicholas Evans, University of Melbourne
Margaret Florey, Monash University
William Foley, University of Sydney
Karl Franklin, SIL International
Charles Grimes, SIL International
Nikolaus Himmelmann, Bonn Universität
Lillian Huang, National Taiwan Normal University
Barabara Kaswanit Purwo, Universitas Aima Jaya
Marie Klammer, Universität Leiden
Harold Koch, The Australian National University
Frisoek Lichtenberk, University of Auckland
John Lynch, University of the South Pacific
Patrick McConwell, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
William McGregor, Aarhus University
Ulrike Meier, Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel
Chrie Moyse-Faurie, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
Bernd Nothoff, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main
Ger Reestraal, University of Leiden
Lawrence Reid, University of Hawai‘i
Jean-Claude Rivierre, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
Melenanti Taunoefahina, University of Auckland
Tetsu Tomoda, University of Tokyo
John Wolff, Cornell University
Elizabeth Zeitoun, Académica Sinica

Indigenous language and social identity: papers in honour of Michael Walsh

edited by
Brett Baker,
Ilana Mushin,
Mark Harvey
and Rod Gardner

Pacific Linguistics
College of Asia and the Pacific
The Australian National University
Ku Thithay Sugarbag Dreaming by Lawrence Kolumboort.

The people left the place Mount because two women drowned as they tried to recover their dirty bags of eydul nuts that they had been seeking. The eydul nuts are poisonous if they are not prepared and cooked properly.

The ancestors travelled throughout the country forming hills, creeks and waterholes. The ancestors settled in different places.

Ku Thithay (Native Bee) and Ku Ngubaygay (ichindha) continued to the hill known as Bahrak and they settled there.

Ngubaygay said, "I am going up to the top of the hill and I will stay there."

Thithay said, "I am too tired and my legs are too short for me to climb up there, I will stay here at the bottom."

Ku Thithay stays in the stone arrangement at the base of the hill.

Copyright in this edition is vested with Pacific Linguistics
First published 2010

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:
Title: Indigenous language and social identity : papers in honour of Michael Walsh / edited by Brett Baker... [et al.]
ISBN: 9780643836181 (pbk.)
Notes: Includes bibliographical references.
Other Authors: Walsh, Michael, 1948-
Contributors: Baker, Brett J. (Brett Joseph), 1967-
Australian National University. College of Asia and the Pacific.
Dewey Number: 306.440994

Published by Pacific Linguistics
School of Culture, History and Language
College of Asia and the Pacific
The Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200
Australia

Michael Walsh
Painting by Ros Fraser

Copyedited by the editors and formatted by Andrea Kittila
Printed and bound by Addicolour Digital Pty Ltd, Fyshwick, Canberra
# Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language maps</th>
<th>ix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of contributors</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Introduction  
   Rod Gardner, Mark Harvey, Ilana Mushin and Brett Baker  

2 Michael Walsh - A Personal Reflection  
   Ros Fraser  

## Language, identity and country  

3 Place and Property at Yintjingga / Port Stewart under Aboriginal Law and Queensland Law  
   Bruce Rigby and Diane Hafer  

4 Linguistic Identities in the Eastern Western Desert: The Tindale Evidence  
   Peter Sutton  

5 Juwalyi: Dialectal Variation and Ethnolinguistic Identity in the Great Sandy Desert  
   Sally Dixon  

6 Who were the 'Yukul'? And Who are They Now?  
   Brett Baker  

7 Colonisation and Aboriginal Concepts of Land Tenure in the Darwin Region  
   Mark Harvey  

8 Aboriginal Languages and Social Groups in the Canberra Region: Interpreting the Historical Documentation  
   Harold Koch  

9 The Kuringgai Puzzle: Languages and Dialects on the NSW Mid Coast  
   Jim Wafer and Amanda Lissarrague  

vii
Maps

Map 1: Top End Northern Territory languages

Map 2: Mid Northern Territory languages
List of contributors

Brett Baker
University of New England
brett.baker@une.edu.au

Paul Black
Charles Darwin University
paul.black@cdu.edu.au

Joe Blythe
Max Planck Institute for
Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen
blythe.joe@gmail.com

Toni Borowsky
University of Sydney
toniborowsky@unsw.edu.au

Jo Caffery
Australian Catholic University
Josephine.Caffery@acu.edu.au

Sally Dixon
University of Sydney
sdx4950@unsw.sydney.edu.au

Nick Evans
Australian National University
nicholas.evans@anu.edu.au

Ros Fraser
Austimper, NSW
walsh.fraser@yahoo.com.au

Rod Gardner
Griffith University
r.gardner@griffith.edu.au

Jenny Green
University of Melbourne
jenny.green@jimel.net.au

Diane Hafner
University of Queensland
d.hafner@uq.edu.au

Mark Harvey
University of Newcastle
Mark.HARVEY@newcastle.edu.au

Chir Hill
Max Planck Institute for
Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen
Chir.Hill@mpi.nl

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

Amanda Lissarague
Many Rivers Aboriginal Languages
Centre
abliss@habourrsat.com.au

Jim Martin
University of Sydney
jimartin@mail.usyd.edu.au

Patrick McConvell
Australian National University
patrick mcconvell@anu.edu.au

Ilana Mushin
University of Queensland
i.mushin@uq.edu.au
Acknowledgements

This volume (which came to be known as 'The Walshrift' or the 'UNOHUFest', the latter suggested by David Nash) originated in a conversation between the first three editors at the annual Australianists' Workshop, at Pearl Beach in Sydney in March 2006, as a way of marking the (then) recent retirement of Michael Walsh from his position in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Sydney in the previous year, a position he had held since 1982. David Nash suggested a theme for the volume at the same meeting.

The editors are grateful for the assistance of the following individuals and institutions:

Ros Fraser, who undertook missions of discovery for photos of Michael, and who lived with a terrible secret

Linda Barwick, Joe Blythe, Nick Reid and especially Mark Crocombe for organising the cover art (in record time); thanks also to Kamankiek-Yile Ngala Museum (Wadley) and to Cecil and Michael Bunduck for making this possible

Our numerous anonymous reviewers

Andrea Kittila for her dedication and professionalism in copy-editing the entire volume and preparing the camera-ready manuscript

Malcolm Ross and Julie Manley for their generosity, in getting this volume to print so quickly.
1 Introduction

ROD GARDNER, MARK HARVEY, ILANA MUSHIN AND BRETT BAKER

1.1 General introduction

In this chapter we aim to give a necessarily brief overview of Michael Walsh’s major contributions to the field, as well as a synopsis of the chapters to follow.

1.2 Michael’s work

Michael is inimitably unique. We won’t talk here of his seemingly unshakable good humour, his dedication to the welfare of students, and his compassion for the downtrodden more generally. We will instead focus on his contributions to scholarship and public life, which have been both extraordinarily broad and also far reaching.

Apart from his broad interests within linguistics itself, in historical linguistics, lexical semantics, discourse and pragmatics, and morphosyntax, his wide-ranging mind has led him into fields such as anthropology, education, history, native title and forensic linguistics, song, and digital technology and archiving. Language, though, has remained at the core, and his passion for language is evident throughout his work.

Michael’s PhD, awarded in 1976 (Walsh 1976), started him on what has become a lifelong association with Murriny-Patha (as it is now known) was the first detailed description of an Australian language with a multiple classifier system, and revealed much of the interesting behaviour of these systems (Walsh 1997). Based on his fieldwork, Michael published a number of other studies of Murriny-Patha which broke new ground in Australian linguistics: on impersonal constructions (1987b), on body part incorporation (1993), on the category squash’ of ‘vouns and norbs’ (Walsh 1996), and more recently on Murriny-Patha song (Walsh, Harwick, Marett, Ford, & Reid 2005).

But Michael didn’t stop at Murriny-Patha. His first post-PhD professional job was as Linguistic Research Officer at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (now AIATSIS), from 1975-1981. Here, he started a one-man publishing tradition of overviews of Australian languages (e.g. 1979, 1981, 1984, 1987b, 1987c, and especially his book Walsh & Yallop 1993/2005). He also produced the first practical guides for building fieldworkers, on the lexicon and grammar (Walsh & Sutton 1979a, 1979b), and on recording and archiving materials (Walsh 1983), and thus influenced a generation of Australian linguists.
In addition to being an outstanding descriptive fieldworker, there has always been a strong applied aspect to his work. Most prominently, he has for a long time been dedicated to the fight for Aboriginal land rights. He was centrally involved throughout the difficult Kenbi land claim, which ran for nearly three decades, during which he wrote numerous reports and made numerous appearances as an expert witness. He also made important contributions to other land claims for the Northern Land Council, for example in the Wadeye region (Walsh 1991b). And he wrote a significant submission on Aboriginal identity for the Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991d). These efforts worked out early on as a person who was truly committed to the betterment of Aboriginal people.

Based partly on his experiences in land claims, he pioneered (with a handful of other Australian linguists such as Dianna Eades) the now burgeoning field of study of Indigenous interaction, and in particular the differences in conversational style between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (e.g. Walsh 1991a, 1994). His work has highlighted the extent to which misunderstandings can arise between Aboriginal witnesses and white lawyers and judges. His (1999) paper, for example, demonstrated how courtroom transcripts can seriously misrepresent what Aboriginal witnesses say in court, with potentially serious consequences for land claims.

Arguably Michael’s most important and long-lasting contribution came in the late nineties, when he turned his energies to another major project: language revitalization in New South Wales. Starting with an (in)famous roadtrip through regional NSW with colleagues Jaky Troy and Tony Lonsdale (described in the contribution by Michael’s partner Ros Fraser in Ch. 2), Michael began an intense and fruitful engagement with Aboriginal groups throughout the state. One of the many positive results that stemmed from this initial effort was the K-10 Aboriginal Languages Syllabus for NSW, so that for the first time Indigenous languages are now being taught seriously in many NSW schools. The K-10 Syllabus, and other initiatives, have led to a renaissance in the study of traditional languages by Indigenous people in NSW (described in Walsh 2001). This flowering of Indigenous scholarship is still unfolding. The impact has reached politicians, educationalists and language planners, as well as linguists interested in language endangerment. Michael is these days considered a world authority on language endangerment and language revival, as demonstrated by a major survey contribution to the *Annual Review of Anthropology* (Walsh 2005). “Will Indigenous languages survive?”

Most recently, Michael has been working with a team of linguists and ethnomusicologists on Aboriginal song, for a long time a seriously neglected field of Aboriginal studies. His article on Aboriginal song language (2007), subtitled “So many questions; so little to work with,” raises a host of crucial questions that will stimulate scholars in this emerging field of studies.

Michael’s research cannot be measured merely by his publications in journals and books, impressive as these are. He has been an inveterate speaker at conferences, disseminating his thoughtful and often unconventional ideas to diverse audiences; he has gained the trust of Indigenous Australians with his long-term commitment, and he has written numerous reports that have had a significant impact on land claims, courtroom procedures, and education, and ultimately on the day-to-day lives of Indigenous Australians.

1.3 Contributions to the volume

The range of contributions to this volume reflects many of Michael Walsh’s interests over the years, as set out in the previous section.

The first half of the volume focuses on the relationship between people, language and country. The complexity of this relationship, both historically and today, has been a central focus of Michael’s research and his professional activities in land claims. In particular, he has been concerned with the effects of colonisation, dispossession and anthropological population decline on the relationship between Aboriginal people and their land.

Rigby and Hager consider in their chapter the notion of place, land, country, and property, specifically for the Lamalama people around Yintjingga (Port Stewart) in Cape York. They summarise the history of contact with Europeans, with land appropriations and the exclusion of the Indigenous people, and the later transfer back to the Lamalama people under freehold tenure. This arose out of recognition and protection of traditional-customary Lamalama property rights and interests at Yintjingga through several forms of tenure under Queensland law in cooperation since about 1986 between the Lamalama people and the state and commonwealth governments. The authors argue that this result could not have been attained through litigation.

Sutton, who has known Michael since their undergraduate days, takes a journey back to Tindale’s work in the Western Desert region, spanning the middle part of the last century. He shows how linguistic identities in this region proved difficult to establish, probably because this region was settled only a few centuries ago. Thus, there was still flux in social organisation, due to the environmental extremes, including lack of rainfall. As Sutton puts it, “Desert people were still culturally in migratory expansion mode”, reflecting in less rigid linguistic identities.

Dixon’s chapter is based on her work with the Walmajarri people in Western Australia. She reports on a dictionary project of Juwaingi, a dialect of Walmajarri, in which she compares the lexis and morphology of the two varieties. She finds major differences in the form, but generally similar nominal and verbal morphology, and also some phonological differences. For Juwaingi speakers, these differences are sufficient for them to want their own language materials.

Baker’s chapter uses historical records, together with modern recollections in the community, to trace the trajectory of the name ‘Yukul’ from its probable origins as a language name to its current use as a collective term for Roper River people. The Yukul land-owning group were greatly affected by systematic massacres in the early colonial period, and by 1900 there appear to have been very few Yukul land owners and Yukul speakers. Understandings of Yukul identity were very attenuated during the 20th century. The associations of this identity became highly variable and it acquired generic uses which were not characteristic of pre-colonial society. However, certain kinds of more specific links between totemic, social groups, country, and semi-tribalities appear to have survived the devastating impacts of European colonisation.

Harvey’s chapter reflects on another aspect of Michael’s work. This is the interaction between Aboriginal and European conceptions of land tenure. Harvey focuses on the problems that arise from the fact that European conceptions offer a binary owner vs non-owner choice whereas Aboriginal conceptions normatively involve a range of degrees of ownership. He discusses an area in which Michael has been very active, and one where the effects of colonisation have been very significant: Darwin and its hinterland.

Koch also delves into how in his discussion of the languages of the Canberra region, using primarily word lists and a sketch grammar of Nganawal which are available for these
no longer spoken languages. He sifts through the linguistic evidence to argue for a reassessment of the relationships between the languages.

Wafer and Lissarague undertake a similar project, drawing on Walsh’s ‘Language map of south-eastern Australia and Tasmania’ (Walsh 1981), and his knowledge of NSW languages more generally, as a start point for their synthesis of currently available knowledge of the languages of the Central Coast of NSW. They focus on ‘Kuringgai’, a name given variously to a language or a group of closely related languages spoken around Sydney. They conclude that most likely there were at least five distinct languages, belonging to three distinct language groups. Therefore, Fraser’s (1892) proposal that the name ‘Kuringgai’ refers to a single ‘super-language’ lacks support.

Nash’s contribution investigates the evidence, from historical records of the Sydney Language, for the operation of an unusual phonological process whereby nasal-stop clusters in the inland variety correspond to nasals in the coastal variety. Nash names the pattern ‘Daues’ Law’ after Lt William Dawes, to whom we owe the relatively rich record we have of this language. Nash speculates that the pattern may have been a marker of linguistic identity.

Stirling addresses the cross-linguistic diversity of systems for referring to space, drawing on narrative data from the Torres Strait language Kala Lagaw Ya (KLY). She asks what the significance of the environment is in shaping the system of spatial reference in this language, which uses the parameters of wind direction (leeward/windward) and land and sea (up/down), as well as ego-centred deixis. KLY is one of the few languages that has a linguistic evidence pairing the future with a metaphorical ‘behind ego’ and the past with metaphorical ‘in front of ego’. Stirling suggests some reasons why wind direction, rather than topographical reference, might be better suited as a metaphorical basis for time reference, and for the particular pairing we observe between these two reference systems.

In the second half of the volume, we see a diversity of papers addressing the general theme of language as a basis for identity through social action of various kinds. One of Michael’s pioneering and enduring interests in this area has been the discourse level, which has in recent years attracted greater interest in studies of Australian languages. Two chapters consider conversational style, and in particular the differences between Aboriginal and Australian white middle class ways of talking.

Musil and Gardner use Conversation Analysis to explore a different aspect of conversational interaction, taking up Michael’s challenge to investigate aspects of conversational style, in this case turn-taking practices in Gardner as they relate to what Michael calls ‘non-dyadic’ and ‘continuous’ conversational style. Whilst they find a similar underlying architecture to turn-taking in Anglo-Australian norms, they also note some potentially widespread differences in how silences, overlapping talk and response tokens are used.

Blyth’s chapter concentrates on the language which has been a focus of Michael’s linguistic career: Murray-Patha. Using a Conversation Analysis method, Blyth analyses narrative storytelling, and specifically the use of parody and rhythm to achieve particular interactional objectives.

Hill’s also focuses on narratives, in this case on repetition across speakers in collaborative storytelling. This chapter focuses on two Cape York languages – Umpila and Kunuku Ya’u – to illustrate what is considered the canonical mode of multi-party storytelling in these communities. Hill distinguishes between primary and secondary narrator roles, and finds that repetition of turns spoken by the secondary narrator are most typically elements previously told, and have the function of emphasizing important themes in the story.

Black also deals with Cape York narratives in his chapter. Drawing on Michael’s observation that in traditional Aboriginal narratives co-construction is the norm, he presents a story that is delivered by two narrators, from the Koko-Bera people.

Evans has a different take on narrative, picking up on foundational work by Michael and others on Aboriginal multilingual verbal arts. He takes up Sutton’s (1997) seven propositions, which note, amongst other observations, that languages are owned by speakers, and tied to specific places. Polyglot narrative texts reflect complex linguistic practices and relationships, harnessing multiple languages for aesthetic purposes, for example indexing country affiliations and characterisation, or the location of an event, or accommodating the audience’s languages. He ends by raising some questions for future attention, notably “What makes a ‘good story’ good?”

With Harpin and Green’s chapter, we come to another of Michael’s interests: song. The Australian languages form a closely related group of varieties spoken close to the geographic centre of Australia. Whilst language and country are strongly connected, Turpin and Green find that in Arawidi songs, there are often words, verses and even whole songs that use a language with respect registers. Turpin and Green suggest that the role of language in song and respect is different from its role in other domains. In everyday life, the choice of particular words is strongly influenced by considerations of land tenure, particular words and particular areas of country are directly linked, and the country of a particular word evokes its country. In song and respect registers, the choice of particular words is not so focused on evoking country. Rather, the choice of distinctive song or respect forms serves to distinguish the register from everyday registers.

Reid’s chapter is also on song, this time back to where Michael began his Australianist journey: Wadyee and Murray-Patha. Reid examines the Djanbog song repertory, and the ways in which it has served to reinforce social identities but also to create a co-dependency between social groups in Wadyee since colonisation. He proposes that the central function of the repertory is to overtly mark the links between the worlds of the living and the dead. The performance of Djanbog helps maintain links at significant points of change in the life cycle, such as funerals and circumcisions, when these two worlds come into contact.

Martin and Rose again address the discourse level, focusing on ‘cultural frontiers’ in the story genre. They argue that the maintenance and restoration of Indigenous language and culture not only needs a record of the phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon of language; it also requires community members to be involved in teaching cultural practices. As schools have become the main institution for cultural reproduction, it is necessary for members of the community to be involved in schools to tell their stories and talk about cultural activities, and for cultural traditions to be incorporated into school curricula.

In her paper, Borowsky examines a language game played by Pijjantjatjara teenagers, and used as a means of reinforcing in-group identity. Borowsky proposes an account of the language, which involves truncation of an initial syllable, within an Optimality Theory analysis. This is an important re-marking of constraints in the ordinary language, together with Correspondence relations between the varieties. This is a little-examined area of language, which is nevertheless important in understanding the extent to which humans can consciously manipulate linguistic structure in order to achieve social goals.

Riemer’s chapter picks up Michael’s abiding interest in lexical semantics, in a reconsideration of the basis for claims of polysemy. One prominent analysis is guided by the lexicalist-generativist position, which proposes that polysemy maps directly to syntax, and specifically to alternative verb subcategorisations. Riemer argues that this model is
unworkable if cases are found in which differences in syntax are not accompanied by differences in meaning. He presents examples (mainly from English, but also from Indigenous Australian languages) of just such cases.

Whilst a number of chapters in the volume allude to education, the one by Simpson, Caffery and McConnell is a strongly focused and argued contribution on the role of Michael’s efforts in promoting First Nations languages into the curriculum in many New South Wales schools to the educational, cognitive, social and health benefits of including children’s benefit at a time when, if anything, the trend is regressive. The chapter also provides a valuable contribution to the history of bilingual education, focusing on the Northern Territory.

In sum, this volume perhaps succeeds in something that many would consider next to impossible: covering close to the entire range of Michael’s interests in Indigenous languages. We therefore hope that it would constitute a book that he would enjoy reading, notwithstanding his characteristic hesitation in offering an opinion.

References
Fraser, John Foster. (Ed.).1892. *An Australian language as spoken by the Aborigines, the people of the Northern Territory*. Sydney: Charles Potter, Government Printer.


Michael Walsh Bibliography

**Books and Monographs**


Articles


1979b. An Australian bibliography - from Greenway to the late sixties. (With Lois Carrington.) In S.A. Wurm (Ed.), *Australian linguistic studies* (pp. 73-86). Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.


1997b. How many Australian languages were there? In Darrell Tryon & Michael Walsh (Eds.), Boundary rider: Essays in honour of Geoffrey O'Grady (pp. 393-412). Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.


2002c. Transparency versus opacity in Australian Aboriginal place names. In Luise Hercus, Flavia Hodges & Jane Simpson (Eds.), The land is a map. Place names of Indigenous origin in Australia (pp. 43-48). Canberra: Pandanus Books.


2007a. Australian Aboriginal song language - so many questions, so little to work with. Australian Aboriginal Studies, 2007(2), 129-144.


2007d. Indigenous languages: Transitions from the past to the present. In Gerhard Leitner & Ian Malcolm (Eds.), The habitat of Australia's Aboriginal languages: Past, present and future (pp. 73-99). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.


2007f. Arriving, digging, performing, returning: An exercise in rich interpretation of a djbarra song text in the sound archive of the Wadeye Knowledge Centre, Northern Territory of Australia (with Linda Barwick, Joe Blythe & Allan Maret). In R.M.


2008c. *What’s the use of linguistics?* In Anhar Mahboob & Naomi Knight (Eds.), *Questioning linguistics* (pp. 258-271). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press.


2009c. *Reinstating Aboriginal placenames around Port Jackson and Botany (with Jakelin Troy).* In Harold Koch & Luise Hercus (Eds.), *Aboriginal placenames: Naming and re-naming the Australian landscape* (Aboriginal History Monograph 19, pp. 55-69). Canberra: Aboriginal History Inc and ANU E Press.


in press a. *“The language was sleeping, it was not lost”: An overview of the state of Indigenous languages in Australia and ongoing strategies for revitalization.* In *Proceedings of the Aboriginal Policy Research Conference, Ottawa, 9-13 March 2009*.


in press d. *“Linguistic social work” and the ‘hopeless cause’: The role of linguists in ‘dealing with’ endangered languages.* In Peter Austin & Julia Sallabank (Eds.), *Proceedings of Endangered Languages Academic Programme Workshop: Beliefs and Ideology on Endangered Languages*. Oxford: British Academy in association with Oxford University Press.
8  Aboriginal Languages and Social Groups in the Canberra Region: Interpreting the Historical Documentation

HAROLD KOOI

8.1 Introduction: Traditional views and the need for new interpretation

8.1.1 The usual view of languages and groups in the Canberra area

The prevalent view of the end of the 20th century has been that the local Aboriginal group, and hence the local language name, in the Canberra area was Nganawal, and that the Ngarigu group and language associated with the Monaro extended to the vicinity of Queanbeyan. For example, a history of Canberra includes the following statement about Aboriginal groups, and further assumed that the local language was Nganawal.

At the time of first settlement the numbers of the Nganawal tribe, whose territory included the Limestone Plains and extended as far as Boorowa and Goulburn, and the Ngarigo tribe, who frequented a large area south of Queanbeyan, were each estimated as five hundred or more. (Gillespie 1991:44)

This view is assumed in Flood’s (1980) well-known book on ‘mood hunters’. For example: ‘The Nganawal are called the Queanbeyan tribe by Howitt and others, and their territory probably included the Tinderry and Namadgi ranges and the part of the Murrumbidgee lying between them’ (Flood 1980:112); ‘This “Canberra tribe” [of the early settlers] could have been the Nganawal, who occupied the Southern Tablelands area, and could have had their tribal base at Canberra’ (Flood 1980:37). The ‘magnificent view’ from the top of a high peak at the southern end of the ACT ranges, near Mt Kelly, was described as ‘a view in fact of what was probably the territory of the local Nganawal tribe’ (Flood 1980:151).

Until recently the Aboriginal language spoken closest to Canberra has been known in the linguistic literature primarily through the Queanbeyan wordlist published in Cur (Police Magistrate 1886-1887). Meanwhile it is often claimed that the city of Canberra is situated within the traditional territory of the Nganawal people (the name has also been

1 I use italics to highlight a word when the spelling is at issue, even if it is quoted from a source that doesn’t use italics.
spelled Ngamawal in recent years). Tindale's work on Aboriginal tribes (Tindale, 1974:198-199 and his 1976 map) has three of his named territories—those of the Ngamawal, Ngarigo, and Walgalu peoples—converge in the vicinity of the modern city. Recent work by Anna Jackson-Nakato (2001) reintroduced the term Kamberr as a label for the Aboriginal people of the area—following W. Davis Wright (1923), who in his History of Canberra claimed that Kamberr was both a placename meaning 'meeting place' and the name of the 'tribe' that had its headquarters in the area of the original Canberra—on the Flinders, a tributary of the Molonglo River, and the Arvon Peninsula. In a later publication Jackson-Nakato (2005) changed the designation Kamberr to Ngambri, apparently in recognition of the evidence of a nasal sound at the beginning of the placename as it was pronounced by local Aboriginal people in the early days. I have argued (Koch 2009) that the original form of the placename Canberra (which was also widely written as Cranberry and Cranbury in early days of European settlement) was in fact probably something like Ngambri— with some uncertainty about the nature of the third vowel and the r-sound preceding it. For discussion of whether the placename also served as a group label in pre-European times, see section 8.2.2.3. below.

The Ngamawal language has been known primarily through a short wordlist (Bench of Magistrates 1856-1857) in Curr's compendium and a sketch grammar (The Ngamawal language, pp. 294-299) and 'Vocabulary of Ngamawal words' (pp. 302-305) included in Mathews (1904).

Jackson-Nakato (2001:33) in fact claims that the Kamberr/Ngambri probably spoke Walgalu. This seems to be a conclusion drawn from the fact that the territory associated with this group included the Narraiji area, which Tindale assigned to the Walgalu. Almost no information has been known about the language of the Walgalu (in Tindale's terminology) or Walgal (Howitt's rendition). Descriptions of their location suggest that as well as the Alpine ranges from Cawongs to Nangar and Kandras to Tumut, their range may have extended to Canberra and Queanbeyan (Howitt 1966:78). Tindale (1974:99) included 'headwaters of the Murrumbidgee and Tumut rivers... northeast to near Queanbeyan'. One might therefore expect some overlap with the language recorded at Queanbeyan.

The Ngariga people and language (spelled Ngarrigu in Mathews 1908) have long been associated with the Monaro tablelands—Delegate, Bombala, Nimmitabel, Cooma, etc. According to Tindale (1974:198) Canberra...is very close to the boundary line between this and the Ngamawal tribe. There is an early wordlist; difficult to interpret, in Lhotsy (1839). There are two short wordlists of the Monaro language—by du Veld and Bulmer—in Curr (1886-1887), Mathews (1908) provides a longer wordlist. In 1962 Luise Hercus recorded vocabulary from some families of Monaro background at Orbost, Victoria; this vocabulary was published as 'Southern Ngarrigu' (Hercus 1886).

1 As noted already by Curr, who calls him John Shotky (Curr 1886-87 vol. 3:420). Some of the words are Pidgin English (for example wordl 'tree'); others are probably Ngamawal (for example bulbul 'dog'), reflecting the Ngamawal-Gundungurra form 'bulbul' rather than the Monaro-Cooma-Walgalu (hereby). The Ngamawal terms may have been collected from the Pajung and Lhotsky met on his way to the Alps (see section 8.2.1).

2 Bulmer's list has to be used with caution, since a number of words in the list have 'slipped', with the result that a word is given the meaning of the previous word. Thus Bulmer's 'ame' should be glossed 'aan', the next word in the list; it stands for *mannum* (cf. Mathews' *mannum*, Quennell's *manum*). This affixation presents a problem for those who present comparative wordlists (for example Flood 1900:350-359) or do statistical calculations based on the wordlists.

### Table 8.1 Main sources for Canberra region languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source name</th>
<th>Date collected</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yass</td>
<td>-1887</td>
<td>Bench of Magistrates 1886-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngamawal</td>
<td>-1904</td>
<td>Mathews 1904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queanbeyan</td>
<td>-1887</td>
<td>Police Magistrate 1886-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monaro</td>
<td>1834</td>
<td>Lithoty 1839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monero</td>
<td>-1887</td>
<td>Bulmer 1886-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngarrigu</td>
<td>-1908</td>
<td>Mathews 1908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Ngarrigu</td>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>Hercus 1986</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 8.1.2 Further documents on the Aboriginal languages and groups in the Canberra region

The major source of new documentation is from George Augustus Robinson, made available through the transcription and publication by Ian Clark of the journals and Aboriginal vocabularies from the time of Robinson's work as Chief Protector of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, 1839-1849. The five volumes of his journals present information on geography (detailing his travels), ethnography, as well as vital contextual information for the interpretation of the vocabularies. The volume of vocabularies (Robinson 2000) provides linguistic data not otherwise available. Professor Barry Blake says, in his foreword to Clark's compilation:

Robinson's collection of Aboriginal vocabularies from south-eastern Australia is perhaps the largest source of information on the languages of the area that we have, certainly it is the most varied. It covers practically every area of Victoria as well as some adjacent areas of South Australia and New South Wales. (Robinson 2000:6)

Robinson undertook a number of journeys during his protectorate. During 1844 he made a fact-finding trip to investigate the Aboriginal situation in Gippsland and what is now the south-eastern portion of New South Wales (see Mackness 1941). His journal of this trip is published as volume 4 of Clark's edition of the journals (Robinson 1998). The expedition took place between 13 April and 20 October. The route went roughly: Melbourne, Wangaratta, Port Albert, Omeo, across the Manaro [Monaro] plains to...
Aboriginal Languages and Social Groups in the Canberra Region

8.2 Survey of group names

8.2.1 Yass to Lake George

8.2.1.1 Nganawal at Yass

Robinson (1998:211) recorded in his journal 16 Sept 1844 that he got a 'vocabulary of the Yass language from Jillimbo who had been brought up in Mr. A. [Andrew] Hume family'. The vocabularies volume includes a census of 'Yass Tribe, nearly all men' and a 154-item wordlist (Robinson 2000:207-210), which ends with the ethnonyms Oner:Wal 'Yass mob' and Ko:or:wal 'Limestone mob'. The first of these terms is obviously Robinson's hearing of the name Nganawal (he often misspelled an initial Ng, wrote an indistinct vowel as or and a short low central vowel as u). It is significant that the inhabitants of the Limestone Plains, that is the Canberra region, were not included under the Yass group's own group name, but were given another designation, which may not be the name by which they called themselves. R.H. Mathews (1904) provided the spelling Nganawal for the name of the language of his grammatical sketch and vocabulary, and used the same term for the people: 'The native tribes speaking Nganawal tongue occupy the country from Goulburn to Yass and Burrowa, extending southward to Lake George and Goodradigbee' (Mathews 1904:294).

Howitt's survey of Aboriginal tribes, included in his 1904 book, includes a group that he called Ngunawal — relying on information from A.L.P. Cameron — whose territory is said to be to the east of that of the Wiradjuri (Howitt 1996:56). This agrees with the known location of the Ngunawal and presumably represents a miscommunicated version of the name Nganawal.

Tindale locates the 'Ngunawal tribe' as follows:

Quambeyan to Yass, Tumut to Boorowa, and east to beyond Goulburn; on highlands west of the Shoalhaven River...Canberra, the federal capital is very near their southern boundary and thus this tribe has claims to have been the one actually on the site of the capital. The Ngarrak were the people immediately to the south also with a boundary passing close to Canberra. (Tindale 1974:198)

Jackson-Nakano (2001) documents how the descendants of the Canberra Aboriginals in the course of the 20th century came to identify as Nganawal.

8.2.1.2 More localised names

In 1834 the Polish scientist John Lhotsky, on his journey from Sydney to the Alps, met a group of some 60 Aboriginal people who called themselves 'the Rajong tribe', near Gunning (Lhotsky 1979:43). These people reported that in their peregrinations 'they go as far as Goulburn [sic], and Yass Plains, but not so far as Limestone' (Lhotsky 1979:41). The location of this group, which was also called the 'Fish River tribe' (since the Lachlan River at Gunning had this name in the early days), suggests that they may have been a local group of the Nganawal. Jackson-Nakano (2002:36), however, assumes that they either spoke the closely related Gunukhaara language of the Southern Highlands.

At least two further group names are attested within the presumed Ngunawal territory — Wallabulla in the Yass area and Burra or Burrowa in the vicinity of Boorowa (Jackson-Nakano 2002:227 and chapter 4 for references). Robinson (1998:164) further mentions a group name Took:lyang miiting with a gloss 'Yass Blacks' when he was at the South Coast; this presumably includes the place-name now known as Jugiong (between Yass and Gundagai) plus the form miiting that designated a group.
8.2.1.3 *Kurrwal* as ‘other’

Robinson’s wordlist recorded at Yass 16 Sept. 1844 gives *Kjo:ro.mal* as the Yass tribe’s designation of the ‘Limestone mob’ (Robinson 2000:210). In his official report he said: ‘The Yass Blacks are designated *Gurrumal* and the Limestone *Kurrwal*’ (Robinson 1845:26). *Tindale* reports, from his correspondent W.S. Paterns, that the Wiradjuri used the name *Gurrumal* or *Gurmal* (said to mean ‘hostile people’) to describe the Walgalu and the Ngaruwin, whom they considered one people (Tindale 1974:198-199). Paterns’ letter to Tindale, quoted in Jackson-Nakano (2001:309) applies the term *Gurrumal* especially to ‘the Tumut blacks’. Jackson-Nakano (2001:33) reports, from his notebooks, that R.H. Mathews in 1902 had discussions with Aboriginal people at the Brungle Aboriginal Reserve concerning the identity of the ‘Gurrumal’ people: language and people: they have associations with the area of the Tumut, Goodargidghee, upper Murraybridge, and upper Murray rivers and the towns of Kiandra and Adaminaby, and suggested that the term overlaps with the ‘Ngarrigarroo’ (Ngarunu) language and ‘Wolgai’ tribe. A handwritten note on one of his offprints in the National Library further specifies: ‘Gurrumal language at Queanbeyan (Jutta Besold, pers. comm.). The combined evidence thus suggests that *Kurrwal* was a term used by others, namely the Ngaruwin and Wiradjuri groups, to describe the groups south of Yass and Gundagai — that is the Namyudd, Walgalu, and Ngarunu.

8.2.2 Canberra area

8.2.2.1 Limestone Plains as an early European name

The district around Canberra was known as the Limestone Plains in the early decades of colonisation. When G.A. Robinson visited the area in September 1844 he was the guest of Terence Aubrey Murray at his Yarralunga property, where he ‘saw a number of Limestone Blacks’, as he called them, and took down their names (Robinson 1998:203). His main list of names includes 36 individuals, and a smaller group that he calls the ‘Mohongler tribe’ includes 11 more people (Robinson 1998:203-205). His vocabulary, which is labeled ‘Vocabulary Limestone Blacks, communicated by Wellington, Yaree & Mimbar On, Murray’ (Robinson 2000:270-271) is assumed to be from the former group, which includes the 16-year-old ‘Wellington, Mooridjer gang,’ or interpreter (Robinson 1998:204).

8.2.2.2 Namuvich, etc. as the Aboriginal group name

The earliest recorded name for the group inhabiting the area around the Limestone Plains is *Namitch* or *Namuvich*, which seems to be based on a region, presumably the one that gave rise to the geographic name *Namadji*. In May 1829 Assistant Surveyor R. Dixon met... several tribes from Merion and Namamagga’ (quoted in Flood 1980:9, 301). In January 1834 Lhoutly saw the ‘Namadji range’ from Duntroon: ‘From this place [the Duntroon dairy] the people pointed out to me the Namadji range, being 18 miles distant S.W.’

(Lhoutly 1979:56). The use of the group name can be traced back to an article dated 1831 written by William Edward Riley, which describes a ‘Corobborie at Tuggeranong Isabella plains’, which he witnessed a few years earlier. The article begins with the words: ‘The *Namitch* tribe of natives was assembled here’ (Lhoutly 2006:256 [italics added]). A list of Aboriginal people receiving blankets at Jemalong (near Tuggeranong on the Isabella Plains) in June 1834 gives Namuvich as the name of the tribe of 60-70 people, headed by the chief Hong Kong,whose district includes the mountains beyond the Murrumbidgee, Limestone Plains, sometimes reside about this part of the country’ (quoted from Jackson-Nakano 2001:55, who suggests an identification of Namuvich with the placename Namadji). A second group, totaling 43 people and headed by the chief Jemmy the Rover, whose native name was Newpol, was described as the Hagen Hope tribe from a district consisting of ‘Lime-stone Plains, Condorr Mts, Murrumbidgee’ (Jackson-Nakano 2001:55). These two groups appear together in a later blanket-distribution list, from Queenanby in May 1841. This lists 43 people of the ‘Murrumbidgee Tribe, Hagen-Hope District’, headed by ‘Hong-gong, Plate, chief of tribe & Newpol, Jemmy the Rover, Plate, Condorr Mountains’ (quoted from Jackson-Nakano 2001:53). The name Hagen Hope cannot be further identified. It is presumably ‘the English rendition of a contemporary Aboriginal name’ for a region (Jackson-Nakano 2001:54) — possibly with a form something like *Ngakinh* (names in this area could end in -b, as indicated by the name of the leader Newpol (Nabulan). G.A. Robinson passed through the Canberra region in September 1844, from Cooma to Yass. In his official report he says of this ‘fertile tract of Limestone Plains or rather Downs’ that ‘The *Yamnot Mitlong* are the original Inhabitants’ (Robinson 1845:25). Earlier, at Brooks’ station ‘Jejehetic’ [Gegedjeric, near Berridale] on July 7, he had met a ‘messagee from Limestone near Yas’ and taken a census of Limestone natives’ (Robinson 1998:131). This appears as ‘Census of the *Yamnot Mitlong*, or Limestone’ and includes names such as the chief Ong-gong, Nootup / Jemmy [the Rover], Kangaroo Tom, Hamilton / Lernmar and Mooridjer / Wol lent [Wellington], who reappear in the main ‘Limestone Blacks’ list recorded at Yarralunga 12 September. He once referred to the two groups met at Canberra as ‘the Yamnot and Molanglo Tribes’ (Robinson 1845:25). Since mitlong is a term occurring on many group names in the Alpine area, it seems that Yamnot is the key term in the group name (which does not exclude it from denoting a region as well). I conclude that Yamnot represents Robinson’s use of the same name that is behind Namitch, Namwivich, Namamagga, and Namadji, the original form being probably *Namuvich* (Koch 2009). Robinson also once referred to the Nam milt long tribe — with reference to Nootup / Jemmy the Rover (Robinson 1998:204). This spelling may hide a version of the same name, perceived this time as *Namitch*, with one of the two m syllables omitted by mistake from an intended *Namuvich miltong*.

The name is also attested on a king plate, which reads ‘Mooroar of Namitch — NSW’ (Troy 1993:133). Its wearer may have been the same person as the ‘Moo.roo.nare.cor Tommy’ mentioned on Robinson’s Yamnot census (Robinson 2000:206). Finally, the notes of information — dating from the 1880s or earlier — from Mickey, an Aboriginal man born at Mittagong near Buckleys Crossing Dalgety, ‘The Queenebayan blacks were called Ngwe-milch-mitindj, Cooma blacks

‘Lhoutly 1941:26] this name was mistyped as Korrin. This version was repeated in Wesson (1900:122).

[Jackson-Nakano 2001:123 noted] that W.S. Paterns suggests that the *Gourmal* (as she spells the name) was possibly pronounced with initial ng. This is possibly based on a variant spelling ‘Ngourmal’ given in Tindale (1974:198).

8. Wellington’s Aboriginal name is presumably the same as the word moorichgang (that is, *morobmanghung* or *morodjangan*) that Macquarie’s (1803) vocabulary gives as meaning ‘lying squatted’.}
Ngargor ngarlungu' (Howitt n.d. Box 1050/2/c).12 I interpret this as another representation of the name that in the spelling system I use would be Nyamal-nilmahng. This name, which presumably meant 'Namadgi mob', is attested from the first years of European settlement (Canberra was occupied by J.J. Moore in 1823 or 1824) until the 1880s, and seems to be the name that Aboriginal people of the Queanbeyan-Canberra-Namadgi area applied to themselves and by which they were known to people identifying as Ngargor.

8.2.2.3 Kambah, Ngambri, etc.: A group name?

William Davis Wright, who grew up at Lanyon in the 1840s, refers to the local Aboriginals as 'the Kambah tribe' and claims that:

The correct rendering of their tribal name was Kambah. Their corroboree ground was at Kambah, as far as I can gather the exact spot being near the Canberra Church,13 where the Administration Offices are now erected at Acton, Canberra, and by Canberra Church toward the old Dunrobin dairy.14 It served also as their general and best known meeting place. (Wright 1923:57-58)

He also claimed, of the land purchased by John Joshua Moore and named Canberra: This block of land, with adjoining blocks, is in reality [sic] the exact locality of the name of Canberra, pronounced 'Kambah' by the natives' (Wright 1923:22).

William Blissett - on the basis of information gained from early residents John Blandell, born 1838, and Mrs. John MacDonald, née Webb, born 1842 - called the local Aboriginals 'the Ngambri-Pialligo tribe', claimed that their 'headquarters...was right here within the City boundaries', and reported that one group camped at Pialligo and was known to the early settlers at the Pialligo blocks and that another, larger group who camped at the foot of 'Black's Mt close to Canberra Creek' was known as 'the Canbury or Ngambri blacks' (Blissett 1954:1). That they constituted a single group in some sense is suggested by his claim that: 'The domain of the Ngambri tribe extended from Lake George on the east to the Googong Reservoir on the west, and from near Yass, to the headwaters of the Murrumbidgee' (quoted in Jackson-Nakano 2001:85).

On the authority of Wright and Blissett, Jackson-Nakano first called the Aboriginal group that included Canberra in their range the Kambah (Jackson-Nakano 2001) and, in a later publication, the Nyambri, claiming that Ngambri is both a placename and the name of the local Aboriginal group (Jackson-Nakano 2005:6).

There is no doubt that the name Canberra - probably pronounced Ngambriy (P), with some doubt about the nature of the r-sound and the quality of the final vowel, if there was one (Koch 2009) - was attached to a locality focused around the Acton Peninsula, Sullivan's Creek, and Black Mountain. Furthermore, it was common in early days to refer to the Aborigines by the areas they typically frequented. Samuel Shumack, who lived in Canberra from 1856, refers a number of times to the local group (including some of the same men Robinson met as 'the Pialligo tribe') (Shumack 1967:149-149). Using similar terminological practice the later Canberra historian Lyall Gillespie refers to the Ginninderra and Queanbeyan Blacks' (Gillespie 1992:16). A term like 'the Canberra mob' may well have been a designation used by settlers and perhaps Aboriginal people as well - in the middle years of the 19th century. But whether it was used as a designation for an Aboriginal group in pre-European times remains in doubt, in my judgement. The case is much stronger that (at least one group of) the Aboriginal people in the Canberra area rather called themselves 'the Nyamal mob'.

8.2.2.4 Molonglo: Another group in the Canberra area

Robinson's journal (1998:204-205) 12 Sept 1844 includes, in his census of Limestone Blacks met at Terence Audley Murray's Yarralumla property, a separate list of about twelve people of the 'Molonglo tribe from Molonglo country'. Their leader was 'Bob, Bin.nim.migulgal, King, country Molonglo'. This country must have been the Molonglo Plains area, which was a term applied to an area around the upper Molonglo River between Queanbeyan, Captain's Flat, and Bungendore, and the same area from which Eyre obtained most of his vocabulary. The surveyor William Harper used the spelling Molunggoolah for the plains and the river (Jackson-Nakano 2001:23, note 82). Tindale (1974:198) associates the Eyre wordlist and the 'Molonglo tribe' with the Ngunnawal, without giving any reasons.

Jackson-Nakano (2001:23) says that 'Molunggoolah or Molonglo Plains' group 'probably spoke the Ngargor 'distinct'.'

8.2.3 Monaro and Ngargor

8.2.3.1 Monaro and the 'Monaro Tribe'

The term Monaro (with its many spelling variants) came into European usage with the discovery by explorers Currie and Ovens, around Bredbo (Mitchell 1826:19), of the extensive plains that they named 'Brisbane Downs', but of which they learned from the 'natives' they met there, that the clear country before it was called Monaro. (Currie 1825:375). The term Monaro has subsequently been used widely as the name of the large treeless district extending from Murrumbidgee to the Victorian border.16 It can be seriously doubted that the Aborigines intended the term as a placename rather than a label for a topographic feature - treeless plains - and that they restricted its application to the area south of Bredbo or Murrumbidgee. The same term seems to have been used in the Limestone Plains. The botanist Allan Cunningham visited the Canberra region in April 1824, crossing the Tuggeranong Plain, fording the Murrumbidgee River, discovering Mt Tuggeranong and naming it Mt Currie (its local Aboriginal name was Tharrawa), and on his way back inspected the Limestone Plains, or the Plains of Minbija as he called them (Moore 1990:3). According to Andrews (1994:200), Cunningham's journal refers to 'open Country called Mineeria by the Aborigines situate about 15 miles SW from Lake George'.

12 Young's (2003:353) transcription of the name as 'Ngä-rumnil-hyling' has been corrected after viewing a photocopy of the manuscript. Howitt's own summary (in the same manuscript) interprets the name as Ngä-nilmiling.

13 This is actually Acton House, formerly called Canberra Cottages, which was used for some time as the rectory of St John's Church.

14 St John the Baptist Church, consecrated 1845, on the west side of Anzac Parade, in the modern suburb of Reid.

15 This is now a heritage site in the suburb of Campbell, at the foot of Mount Pleasant.

16 This seems to be based on a (speculative) identification the makes between Robinson's names Binnen Mutung and Binnaingulgal for the people of the Monaro and Bin.nim.migulgal, the name of the leader of his Monaro group. See section 8.3.2 for further discussion of Eyre's wordlist.

17 See Hancock (1973) for the history of this name and of the district.
8.2.3.2 Bimmer-mittong, Bemunggal, and Bimmeringal

G. A. Robinson used Bimmer Mittong or Bimne Mttong as his general term for the inhabitants of Monaro plains. Mittong (middang) means 'group' in languages of the Alpine area, and the first part, bimmer or bimne (bimma in my orthography), is the word for 'plains', minus the final ng which occurs when the word is cited by itself. In the language spoken by the coastal group from Twofold Bay to Cape Howe, the term for 'all about blacks at Monaro' was recorded as Bonunggal (Robinson 1998:160); this is bimung-ngal, consisting of bimung 'plain' plus the suffix -ngal that indicates 'inhabitants of'. These terms designate the Monaro group as the 'plains people'.

Another term used by their coastal neighbours: 'The Bimmer-mittong are the original inhabitants of the Monaro', by the Coast Natives they are called Bimmeringal from Bimmering to the North' (Mackness 1941:15). Howitt (1996:530) confirms this label: 'Those who live on the mountains are called Bemunggal or mountainmen, from Bemung, "a mountain". It seems (from Howitt manuscripts I have seen) that coastal people used this term to refer to several groups of their inland, western neighbours, including the Bidawul of east Gippsland and the Braidwood group. But, according to Howitt (1996:563), the "true" Bemunggal, according to the Yuin, are the Ngarigo of the Monaro tableland'. In my opinion, the basis for this term, bimungal, may mean 'west' rather than 'north' or 'mountain'. At any rate, this is a term used by others and not a self-designation.

8.2.3.3 Local group names

Robinson obtained from Aboriginal people group names that convey more localised identities. The names typically are of the form X-mittong, where X is the name of a place and mittong (middang in my orthography) means 'group'. For example, from Aboriginal people at the coast he learned: 'The Tommy, Kyerorking, Ponedyang and Worrrar Mittong

14 I assume that [I] and [?] are variant pronunciations of the phoneme /I/. [I] and [?] of the phoneme /I/.

15 It is worth remembering that areas of the upper Murray-Bendigo and Euremburra rivers (Adaminaby, Kinchega, etc.) were included in 'Monaro' in the 19th century (Quamby 1972:9).

16 For example: 'Cenner of Bimme.mittong or Monaro tribe' (Robinson 2000:190).

17 Robinson records the word as bimung, bimung, and bimung in the meaning 'plain'. Howitt's manuscript notes a name from Mickey, a native of the Nannine, include a comment that 'the open plain country was called bimung' (cited in Young 2003:103).

18 It is worth noting however, the observation of Flood (1980:181) that 'treeless plains are, in fact, an unfavourable environment for Aborigines', and that she accordingly found little archaeological evidence in the Monaro area for campsites away from rivers or forested areas.

are Tribes inland [from Cape Howe]' (Mackness 1941:18). I discuss these group names in clockwise order, beginning in the east.

8.2.3.3.1 Bingiroa-Mittang

While he was at Twofold Bay (Eden), Robinson interviewed visiting Monaro people, as well as natives of the coast. His journal 19 August 1844, reports: 'Increased my vocabulary of Monero language from a Black called Nannine, alias Jenmy, alias Mr Robinson, age 22 years, country Bingiroo, near Nannine Mountains at Rocky Flat, a Bingiroo mittong' (Robinson 1998:172-173). Here is a group name derived from a locally called Bingiroo (Bingiroo) on the eastern side of the Monaro plain, in area between Cooma and Nimmablal.[19]

8.2.3.3.2 Bundyang-Mittang

A little farther to the south, near Cathcart and Bibbenluke, at the eastern edge of the Monaro plains, before he descended to the coast, on 13 July 1844, Robinson had met this group. He travelled... to Hibbert's Inn, Dollyko by natives, the tribe is called Pundang mittong, Bingangaraoy alias John Gow is a native of this place at Pundung' (Robinson 1998:134). Later, on 12 August at Twofold Bay, from a 'number of Monaro Blacks' visiting the coast, he 'got an increase vocabulary Monero language also names of Aborigines', including one described as 'country Pone.de.ong, a Pone.dal.ong.mittong' (Robinson 1998:164). Making allowance for the variable spellings (and variable perception of the un-English sounds), we can see here the name of a region Bundyang, from which was derived the group name Bundyang-Mittang and an individual name (of John Gow) Bundyang-kali. Wessön (2000:113) identifies this group with Lambie's Murra group (Murrara being the name of a European property).

8.2.3.3.3 Kyerorking-Mittang

Robinson's journal gives Kyer kong mittong as the name of the tribe at 'Delegat Hill' (Robinson 1998:168). Wessön (2000:108) identifies this group with the one associated with Currawong Station, which is in the vicinity of Delegate.

8.2.3.3.4 Worrorra-Mittang

Several times Robinson refers to a group called by this name. From the Omeo Aborigines he learned that the 'Monaro blacks are called Warrra mittong' (Robinson 1998:109). His vocabularies from Omeo give Worrra.re.mittong as the 'Snowy River tribe' (Robinson 2000:205). In a later journal entry written at Twofold Bay he gives Worrre r mittong as the name of the Inyeyberri (Ingebyra) tribe (Robinson 1998:168). Wessön (2000:77) further quotes from Billy Wood in the Howitt papers (1853:4a): 'The Gelamity men are called Wurrara mittong, Gelamity is Wurrara'. She also quotes (ibid.) John Bolton in Smyth (1878:193), who claims: 'Wurrara is the name for Black

[19] This same name may be indicated by the entry 'Bunger mittong: Limestone Blacks' (Robinson 1998:134), if we assume a mistake in reference from the perspective of Eden, the group was in the direction of the Limestone Plains. Wessön (2000:105, 113) had the same idea, but nevertheless treated the two groups as separate.

Mountain / Wulgularang area. All this information suggests that this group was associated with the south-western part of the Monaro, even extending into Victoria along the Snowy River.

8.2.3.3.5 Balaroo-Midyang

From information gained at Yass Robinson learned that the ‘Balaroo and Jumee Mitting From the group he met at Yarralumla, Robinson (1998:209) also recorded a group name Balaroo, another had the names Jumey and Bolorere, and a third had the English King of Balaroo, Manero’. Wessan (2000:105) identifies him with Robinson’s Jumey to the area around where Balaroo Station was (and still is) located, on the upper

8.2.3.3.6 Other possible groups

It is likely that Robinson’s list of groups is not complete, but that there were other named groups that remain unknown. Wessan (2000:110) discusses an unnamed group in 1843, on a trip from Tweedale Boy at the end of 1842, a small river, where we found a portion of the Moneroo tribe of blacks blankets and took an annual census throughout the 1840s.

Wessan (2000:111-112) notes a further group centred at Hummer Station near Dalgety on the Snowy River. She assumes this is the place where Llandy distributed blankets and assumes that this was the group that Robinson met at Richard Brooks’ Gogolucar station (near Berridale) in 1844. No native name is given.

In the annual ‘Census of the Maneroo Aboriginals’ by the Commissioner of Crown according to the names of places usually frequented’. These are (in addition to Omere with Cambalang from 1840), Snowy River, and Mahattara (combined regions of the Yarribo plain. The last mentioned in the Bombala area is identified by Llandy matches fairly well the divisions specified by Robinson’s group terminology, the European economy, and there were fewer groupings than Robinson’s examples suggest were current traditionally.

26 Wessan (2000:102) confuses this group, probably pronounced (bolaro) or (balaroo), with two Bolaroo (bolaroo) groups located in the coastal area and near Blackwood respectively.

27 In his earlier publications Howitt uses the spelling Ngarigo, but later wrote it as Ngarrigo.
Kyrrong-mittang at Delegate Mountain\(^{28}\). Has Howitt used the name in a wider sense than any of the Monaro Aboriginal people themselves did?

R.H. Mathews (1898:335), a few decades after Howitt’s research, ascribed a more northerly extent to the ‘tribe’, which he spelled as Ngarrigu (with a different vowel in the middle syllable): ‘the Ngarrigu tribe, which formerly occupied the country from Queanbeyan, via Cooma and Bombala, to Delegate’. He includes the ‘Queanbeyan blacks’ among the Ngarrigu. Tindale (1974:198) largely follows Mathews\(^{29}\), but adds a western border which is beyond the plains: ‘Monaro tableland north to Queanbeyan; Bombala; River from near Delegate to Minimilabel; west to divide of the Australian Alps’. Wesson (2000:119) reports that according to a map in Fraser (1892:19) ‘Garrego includes the County of Wellingbura, Bombala, Minimilabel, Cooma, Kiandra through into Victoria’.

8.2.4 Wolgal, Walgal

This is another term that is not found in Robinson’s journals. The name originates in Howitt’s ethnographic materials. Howitt obtained his information from Yibal-malai (Murray Jack), his daughter Jane Alexander, and the songmaker Mragula (Singing Johnny). Murray Jack, whose photo with his bristlyacht declaring him ‘King of the Wolgal’ is shown in Young (2005:224), was born at Talbingo Mountain (near Tumut), of a Wiradjuri father and a mother from the Theedorda [Dhuddhura] of Omeo, and functioned as an influential leader of both the Wolgal and Ngarigu peoples. Howitt describes their territory as extending over the western slopes of the Alps, from Cowowbh (or Tom Groggin) northward to include Tumbaramba, Adelong, Tumut, but also the Upper Murrumbidgee River, including Kiandra, Queanbeyan, Mickelago, and Cooma. Howitt (1887:32) refers to them as ‘the Wolgal of the Tumut and Upper Murrumbidgee Rivers’. Howitt (1896:102) says the ‘Wolgal … extended over the great alpine ranges in which the Murray and Murrumbidgee gap’. Another 19th century observer, J. Junceley, writing around 1898, located the Walgal tribe at ‘Kiandra snowfields and headwaters of Murray, Tumut and Murrumbidgee’ (quoted in Wesson 2000:69). R.H. Mathews, who spells the name Walgu, gives their location in fairly unspecific terms: ‘adjoining the Ngarrigu on part of the west’ (Mathews 1906:336). ‘From Jingello [at the eastern end of Dhuddhura territory] eastward was the country of the Walgu’\(^{30}\) tribe (Mathews 1909:278). Tindale (1974:195) locates the Walgu at ‘headwaters of the Murrumbidgee, and Tumut rivers; at

28 It is conceivable even that Kyrrong represents a synthesis of Ngarkung, a coastal version (with final ng added), of the name Ngarrigu (= Ngarrigu).

29 According to Flood, ‘the tribal boundaries in the Southura Tablelands area are less certain that they appear on the [Tindale’s] map being based, primarily, on late evidence by R.H. Mathews (Tindale 1974:198)’ (Flood 1990:112); and ‘in the Southura Tablelands, our information is less reliable, being based mainly on the very late and slight linguistic evidence of R.H. Mathews’ (Flood 1980:107). I suspect that Mathews interpreted the Queanbeyan wordlist as being of the same language as the Monaro wordlist, and on this basis concluded that Queanbeyan must be included in the territory of the people who called themselves Ngarrigu.

30 Garrego is actually Ngarrigu: there is a dot inside the G, which is used to indicate nasal sound. The territorial limits for all of Fraser’s groups are too loose that no reliance should be placed on them.

31 A local history of Belco Station (near Delatag) indicates that he lived there in the last years before his death in 1891, and that he was a brother-in-law of the Ngarrigo elder Mickey (Young 2005:387).

32 It seems he received his information, and the form of the group name (with a final w and an accent on the second syllable), from Dhuddhura informants. Hence I prefer to use the spelling Wolgal, which Howitt obtained from people who identified as members of the group.

8.2.5 Conclusions concerning group names

It is clear, especially from G.A. Robinson, that the Aboriginal people of this region used names for fairly local groups of people that were based on the names of their ancestors. Attested local group names in the Monaro area are: Bungiro-Midhang, Bandyang-Midhang, ‘Kyrrong mittang’, Warrora-Midhang. In the Queanbeyan-Canberra-Namadgi region there was the Nyumudy-Midhang, and to the east of them the Molongo tribe. Further to the southwest were the Boloro-Midhang, who were included among the ‘Yamnolit Mittong’ group that Robinson met at Yarrangbul, and in 1844. It is likely that there were further local groups whose names have been lost – none have been recorded across the northwestern (Walgal) part of this territory, for example – in addition to names like Hagen Hope that remain uninterpretable.

Terms that were much more general in their application are Robinson’s ‘Bliemertang’ (‘plains people’) of the Monaro plains. The term Wolgal seems also to be a fairly general term, applying to people living in mountainous areas. ‘Kyrrong mittang’ seems to be an even more general term, applied to all of the Boloro-Midhang, Nyumudy-midhang, and Wolgal by outsiders, the Wiradjuri and Nganawal people. The name Ngarrigu seems to have been used both for the group of Aborigines inhabiting the area from Cooma south to Carcoar, and for their language. This name seems to be intermediate in its scope between a local group name such as Bandyang-Midhang and a broad areal term like Bima-Midhang.

It is obvious that group names, being of different scope, may overlap. Thus the Limestone Plains – Upper Murrumbidgee group, which called itself Nyumudy-Midhang, may have been included for certain purposes in the denomination Wolgal / Walgal (especially if this referred to ‘mountain people’ as opposed to ‘plains people’ in the Monaro) and in other circumstances as Karrnul (together with other Walgal people and Monaro people in opposition to the Ngunawal and Wiradjuri neighbours to their north and west).

8.3 Language relations

8.3.1 Previous classifications of the languages

All of the languages with which we are concerned here are related and belong to a group that has come to be called the ‘Yuin’ group of languages.\(^{32}\) Howitt (1904) introduced

32 Cf. the caution that Peterson and Carr (1998) advocate with respect to the incompleteness of our knowledge about local groups in the area.

33 “Subsidiary names in general language to indicate inhabitants of a region, for example Kynong-Kul ‘sea people’, Kinyang ‘southern people’; but if RED-ku is to be analyzed in this way, we cannot be assured that there was a word similar to this in the languages of European settlers.

34 See Wafer and Lissewagne (2006:chapter 4) for the languages that are considered to belong to this group, called the South-east NSW (‘Yuin’) languages.
the term Yini (yini) as a social group name, noting that both yini and mirriny (mirriny) are widespread terms for 'person' among the Indigenous people of south-eastern New South Wales. He uses the term 'Yini tribes' especially for groups on the NSW south coast. The Australian scholar W. Schmidt's (1919) classification of Australian languages typically uses a widespread term for 'man' or 'people' to represent groups of languages. On the basis of the documentation available to him (which did not include Robinson's data), he classified the languages of south-eastern New South Wales into a 'Yini' group. This group was further subdivided into a coastal and an inland Yini subgroup, and each of these in the northern and Ngurrari in the southern divisions of his 'Inland Yini'. The classification in Warm (1972:137) includes Ngurrari and Ngarigo-Walgal (treated as dialects of the same language) as two languages of the Yini subgroup. Dymond (2002:xxxv) treats Ngarigo (or Nqrgrgi) as a separate language from Ngurrari (which he treats as a dialect of Gundagarry), and includes both in a 'Southern tablelands group', which is classified with a 'NSW south coast group' of four languages into a 'Southern NSW Group'. Wesson (2000:81, 114-116) analyses Ngarigo, Wolgal, and Ngurrari as three dialects or variants of the same language, which she does not name. But it is clear that her 'Ngarroo' includes data from both the Queanbeyan and Yass wordlists - which should be kept separate.

Scholars have differed on what language the Queanbeyan wordlist, widely attributed to Nellie Hamilton, should be ascribed to. Wesson, as just mentioned, groups it with Ngurrari and Yass sources. Murphy (1957:16) quotes from a paper read by Josephine Flood to the Canberra and District Historical Society, August 1983, which claimed that the language of Nellie Hamilton was not Ngurrari but Ngarroo. Flood based this conclusion on an unpublished paper by Maryalynne McDonald of the (then) Linguistics Department of the Australian National University.

### 8.3.2 My conclusions regarding language relations

In deciding which language samples belong together, linguists typically measure the proportion of vocabulary that they have in common, using a technique called lexicostatistics. Beginning from a set of meanings represented by English words, they first make lists of what the equivalent terms are in the languages to be compared. Since different wordlists do not indicate exactly the same set of meanings, not all items from each vocabulary set will be represented. But of those meanings that do have a translation equivalent in each of a pair of languages, the number of compared terms can be counted, and of these it can be determined which forms are the same in form as well as meaning; these are called cognates. The proportion of cognate terms relates to the total number of forms compared is given as a percentage. The lexical similarity of different languages can then be presented.

If we apply these techniques to the languages in the Canberra-Queanbeyan area we get the results shown in Table 8.2. For this comparison I have used the relatively basic vocabulary terms given in Wafer and Listergare (2008), supplemented by the 'Wolal' terms found in Howitt's manuscripts. Each language's wordlist is based on an amalgamation from several sources, with the result that there are sometimes two or more synonyms available for a given language. It can be seen that the proportion of vocabulary that the Canberra language shares with Ngurrari is a little higher than that it shares with Ngarroo. Walgal scores higher in relation to the Canberra language than to Ngurrari. The Canberra language, Walgal, and Ngarroo share about 60% or more vocabulary, which is usually taken to indicate a relationship close enough to be considered dialects of the same language. But Ngurrari is not far behind.

**Table 8.2 Lexical comparison of the Canberra-Queanbeyan language and its neighbours**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ngurrari</th>
<th>Canberra</th>
<th>Canberra and Walgal</th>
<th>Walgal and Ngurrari</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. compared</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. cognate</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage cognate</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>89.5</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is more to language relationships that vocabulary, however. The grammar of the languages should also be considered. In cases of a conflict between the evidence of vocabulary and that of grammar, it is grammar that is usually considered decisive in deciding linguistic relations. The evidence from grammar, especially personal pronouns, convincingly shows that Ngurrari is closely related to Gundagarry (Gundagarry) from the Southern Highlands. 'I' is *mullangga* and 'you' is *mullangyi* in both Ngurrari and Gundagarry; in fact, all pronouns except those of the third person are built on a stem *baler*-, to which suffixes are added to indicate the specific person and number. Only one of the two lects, of all the Yini languages, have pronouns of this type. It is clear from the data presented that Gundagarry and Ngurrari are closely related. The data also show that the first-person pronoun is simply attested as *ingayemba*, it is found in Robinson's Limestone Plains, Curr's Queanbeyan wordlist, Maori languages being borrowed or derived from one language into the other are not "cognates" in this sense. But since it is often impossible to distinguish real "cognates" from each "loanwords", in practice any shared forms are often called cognates in lexicostatistical operations.
Bulmer, and Howitt, as well as from Howitt’s Wolgal informant Yhil-Matim (Tony Jack). In addition, the possessive form *ngyanyabi-dyuwrul ‘my’ appears to lie behind glosses are given in Table 8.3. Forms for ‘I’ based on a stem *ngya- are found elsewhere in this set of lects do we find an extension in *mha.

Table 8.3 Attestation of 1Sg pronoun (‘I’) in southern inland Yuin lects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lect</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limestone</td>
<td>tma.bar</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>Robinson 2000:271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queanbeyan</td>
<td>ime.ba</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>Police Magistrate 1886-1887:425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monaro</td>
<td>ime.bar</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>Robinson 2000:193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monaro</td>
<td>ngmba</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>da Vé 1866-1887:431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monaro</td>
<td>nglaamba</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Bulmer 1886-1887:433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngarigo</td>
<td>nimba</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Howitt n.d.: Box 1054/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolgal</td>
<td>ngimba</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Howitt n.d.: Box 1054/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manero</td>
<td>lam.bar.jer.no</td>
<td>mine</td>
<td>Robinson 2000:197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manero</td>
<td>lam.bar.jer.no</td>
<td>wife</td>
<td>Robinson 2000:195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolgal</td>
<td>ngimba</td>
<td>his</td>
<td>Howitt n.d.: Box 1054/5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the second person singular, the same sources (plus Mowle for Canberra) provide evidence for a form *yindaka.6 The closest equivalent in the Yuin languages is yinda in yinda (where V is any vowel) are widespread in other Australian languages. But no other language consistently shows the increment -si after the vowel i, with y instead of ny or ng at the beginning of the word. These forms are shown in Table 8.4.

Table 8.4 Attestation of 2Sg pronoun in southern inland Yuin lects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lect</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>yindagee</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>Mowle 1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limestone</td>
<td>in.gage</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>Robinson 2000:271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queanbeyan</td>
<td>indagee</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Police Magistrate 1886-1887:425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manero</td>
<td>in.gage</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>Robinson 2000:193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monaro</td>
<td>yindagee</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>da Vé 1866-1887:431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngarigo</td>
<td>indagee</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>Howitt n.d.: Box 1054/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolgal</td>
<td>indigi</td>
<td>my</td>
<td>Howitt n.d.: Box 1054/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While it is usual in Australia for neighbouring languages to share some vocabulary items, it is significant that certain words are unique to Ngarigo, the Canberra language, and Wolgal, and the Omeo language (not discussed here). These include: dhrung ‘stomach’, yindaga ‘ego’, miyar ‘cacklehawk’, narni ‘sun’, dhiyula ‘snake’, wakka ‘fire’ and evi ‘noise’ (vs. nataur in the coastal Yuin languages and other terms in Ngunawal and many cree). Such unique items of vocabulary combine with the distinctive pronouns (yndi and yinda) to support the claim that the former were dialects of the same language, whereas Ngunawal was in a dialect relation with Gunungurra from the southern highlands.

It must be admitted that there is no evidence from present to establish that the Eyre’s Molonglo wordlist belongs with the Canberra-Quamboyan dialect. Most of the 25 words that are identifiable agree with either the Canberra or the Monaro wordlists, but at least two agree with Ngunawal and two with the Bradwood (and coastal) language. It is normal for dialects to share some vocabulary with each of their neighbouring dialects.

The evidence of grammar and vocabulary thus show that the Canberra language – and the Wolgal / Walgal language – belong with the language of the Monaro, called Ngarigo, as dialects of the same language.6 (The Omeo language – not discussed here – was also probably closely enough related to be considered another dialect.) Ngunawal is very closely related to Gunungurra – they are dialects of the same language. But Ngunawal is a separate language from the one spoken by the inhabitants of the Canberra region, the Monaro, and the Alpine region of the ACT and New South Wales. The Canberra dialect of this language, however, shares a relatively large amount of vocabulary with the Ngunawal dialect of the Ngunawal-Gunungurra because of the geographical proximity.

There is no indication of what the Nyanmuy people called their language. It seems that the practice in this part of the country was for the language name to be the same as the group name. Thus the terms Ngunawal, Ngarigo, and Wolgal(n) are each used (by early scholars) to refer to both a social group and their language. By this logic the Canberra area language may well have been called Nyanmuy by its speakers and by those who knew them as the Nyanmuy-Mindang. Meanwhile outsiders, the Wiradjuri and Ngarigo in particular, who applied the term Kurnai to all the people of the Tumut, Canberra-Queanbeyan, and Monaro region, apparently used the term Kurnai for the language of all of them as well (see section 8.2.1.3 above).

8.4 Summary and conclusions

A reassessment of the historical documentation leads to these conclusions about the social groups in the immediate Canberra area. The earliest attested name that the local group used for themselves was Nyanmuy-Mindang, which probably means the mob associated with the Nyanmuy (Namwilk, Namnool, Namadgi) region. They may sometimes have been included in a wider term Wolgal or Walgalu, which was used for people inhabiting the mountainous areas around the Australian Alps, but whose best

6 Here I am using the term ‘language’ in two different senses. In the non-sociological sense, any group’s speech is called their language; in linguist’s technical talk, however, all local varieties that can be described by the same set of grammatical generalisations are called ‘dialects’ of a ‘language’ in a more abstract sense. Speakers of traditional languages typically had a name only for their ‘language’ in the non-technical sense, but no name for the language in the linguist’s more general sense. The term ‘lect’ is sometimes used to refer to a language in the non-technical sense.

6 Jakobs-Nikora (2001:33) concluded that the Kumbiri (her term for the Canberra group) probably ‘used the Walgalu dialect’, but she gives no basis for her conclusion.
known representatives were from the Tumut area. They were included — with the Wagga and Ngarrig - in the designation Kooramul used by Windjarni and Ngunawal people. The called themselves, the 'Canberra mob', based on the placename Ngarania (or similar).

What was their language? The combined evidence of wordlists from Robinson, Moses, the Queensland Police Magistrate, and probably Eyre in the Molonglo Plains, indicates a documentation is all from around Yass. Rather it should be seen as one regional variant of a common language that was spoken in the Monaro, where it was known as Ngarrig or Ngarrgo, and in the Tumut area, where it was called Wagga or Waglui. No distinctive name is recorded for the Canberra area dialect; there is no evidence that it was included in the name Ngarrig or Waglui, but it is possible that it was called Nyanwali, as the local group was called Nyanwali-Midjung.

References

Andrews, Alan E.J. 1998. Earliest Monaro and Burragorang 1790 to 1840. Palmerston,
ACT: Tabletop Press.


Eyre, Edward John. 1845. Journal of expeditions of discovery into Central Australia and overland from Adelaide to King George's Sound in the years 1840-1...including an account of the manners and customs of the Aborigines... London: T. and W. Boone.


Jackson, Anthony. 2001. The Kamabe: A history of Aboriginal families in the ACT and surrounds (Aboriginal History Monograph No. 8). Canberra: Aboriginal History Inc.


Koch, Harold. 2009. The reconstruction of Aboriginal placenames: Methodology and application to the Canberra region. In Harold Koch & Louisa Heron (Eds.), Aboriginal placenames: Naming and re-naming the Australian landscape (Aboriginal History Monograph No. 19, pp. 115-171). Canberra: ANU E Press and Aboriginal History Inc.


