LEXICAL CONTACT PHENOMENA IN AUSTRALIAN LINGUISTIC PREHISTORY: SUBSTRATES AND WANDERWÖRTER

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Methodology in Linguistic Prehistory

Berlin, 15th October 2011

RESEARCH SUPPORTED BY THE US NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION PROJECT HUNTER-GATHERER LANGUAGE DYNAMICS AND THE KIMBERLEY FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA PILOT PROJECT LINGUISTIC PREHISTORY OF THE KIMBERLEY REGION
Does Lateral Transmission Obscure Inheritance in Hunter-Gatherer Languages?

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Figure 3. Loan levels across the regions. Line plot of loan levels in Australia (AUS), North America (NAM) and South America (SAM) compared to the aggregate sample (ALL) and the languages from Haspelmath and Tadmor (2009) \cite{1}, showing an overall similarity in the distribution of loan levels by language across regions and sample type.
LOAN LEVELS AUSTRALIA AND AMAZONIA (HGS project)
CONCLUSIONS ON LOAN LEVELS

- basic loan levels in languages are usually low.

- certain social situations may lead to either abnormally low levels, as in SAM, or very high levels.

- high levels of loans can be the result of several different factors, which include language shift (in both directions).

- high and low rates of loans are associated with absence and presence of ideologies and practices of ‘linguistic purism’ respectively.

- mobile populations have higher average rates of borrowing.

- no evidence was found for a difference in loan rates between Hunter-gatherer and agricultural groups, suggesting that the social differences between HG and AG languages that resulted from the Neolithic revolution have not been as important for this area of language change as some have claimed.
PAMA-NYUNGAN AND NON-PAMA-NYUNGAN LANGUAGES

Cape York Peninsula

Yolngu

Karajarri

Kariyarra

Western Desert

Arrernte
PAMA-NYUNGAN LANGUAGE SPREAD

6000-3000 BP approx.

After 3000 BP approx.
LANGUAGE SPREAD: SUBSTRATE

ngarin ‘meat’

kuyu ‘meat’

LANGUAGE A –ORIGINAL DISTRIBUTION

LANGUAGE A –DISTRIBUTION AFTER SPREAD
GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF TERMS AND SPECIES: AGILE WALLABY

Gurindji *makiliwarn* < Nungali

*Macropus agilis*

VICTORIA RIVER AND GURINDJI
WANDERWÖRTER

EXAMPLE: SUBSECTIONS
Timber and artefacts

Artefacts such as speargunners can take their name from the tree they are generally made from, and later the artefact is referred to by the old tree name even outside the area where that tree grows, pointing to the origin of the particular style of the artefact.
Kim Akerman, Material Culture notes (various languages)
SPREAD OF REFLEXES OF *NGAPALE(NY) ‘SPEAR-THROWER’ stage I pre-Lenition loan

LENITION

ngapele-ny

JARRAGAN

NGUMPIN-YAPA (Pama-Nyungan)

ngapaliny

ngapaliny

ngapaliny

ngapaliny
SPREAD OF REFLEXES OF *NGAPALE(NY) ‘SPEAR-THROWER’ stage II post-Lenition

inheritance loan

LENITION

ngawalu
ngawali
ngawale-l
ngawale-ng
ngapale-ng

NGUMPIN-YAPA (Pama-Nyungan)

ngapaliny
ngapaliny
ngapaliny
In Miriwoong, *ngawaleng* (also) means *Erythrina vespertilio* (Bat’s wing coral tree)

Found in north-east Kimberley, not in south-west Kimberley
CAPELL (1939) COMMENTING ON LOVE ON WORRORRA
of his examples can be explained—e.g. yangaltja, the wommera is only to be reckoned a synonym with yamalba, wommera, because yamalba wood is used to make wommereras and so the name is transferred—yet others remain as complete synonyms. Such a case is

WORRORRA DICTIONARY
Yamalbanya nyina spear-thrower
Yarnkalja nyina spear-thrower

NGARINYININ DICTIONARY
\lx yamalba
\ge womera (the swayer)
\lx yamalba (nyindi)
\ge corkwood tree
\sc sesbania grandiflora, or erythrina).

AKERMAN’S MATERIAL CULTURE NOTES

Miriwung

Ngawalil – Kimberley type lath spearthrower of E. vespertilio.

Wunambal / Kwini. Kalumburu. Manila Kutwit, Dick Wutmorra, Wilson etc
12/6/1975

Spearthrowers cut form the wood of the kantiwal tree (Erythrina vespertilio).

[AKA YAMALBAL – AKERMAN]
IN-LAWS

Spread of *ramparr*/ *lamparr(a)*
Wife’s Mother ➔ Wife’s Father

SEED GRINDING AND THE MULLER

NGUMPIN-YAPA

3500 bp expansion of seed-grinding economy in Central Australia

McConvell and Smith 2003
Different roots in the different families; but also spread of coined words from peripheral areas in the west (probably with mythological associations) and regional diffusion into peripheral areas in the east (possibly associated with spread of the tree).
BOAB TREE PRISON, DERBY
DIFFUSION OF A NEOLOGISM FROM THE PERIPHERY ‘boab’ (Adansonia gregorii): larrkarti

Nyulnyulan: Bardi larrgidi, Yawuru larrgardi, Nyikina larrkardiy, Warrwa larrkardiy
Worrorran: Unggumi larrgari
Bunuban: Bunuba larrgariy, Gooniyandi larrgardi
Jarragan: Kija larrgardi (boab nut)
Marrngu (Pama-Nyungan): Karajarri larrgardi, Mangala larrgardi, N. Nyangumarta larrgardi
Ngumpin-Yapa (Pama-Nyungan) Walmajarri larrkarti,

PROBABLE ORIGIN
Karajarri/Mangala: larr ‘split (lengthways)’
larrka ‘open’
Karajarri: x –ti (-rti) ‘thing/person which typically does/is x’
(cf. Mangala -yiti)
> larrkarti ‘thing which splits open’
STORY OF THE WANDJINA SPLIT BOAB TREE

The Barking Owl, *Tumni* was caught by some children. They tortured him, plucking his feathers and putting a sharp grass stem through his nose. They threw him up into the air so they could watch him fall down unable to fly. They threw him up again and again — but then he didn’t fall down but disappeared into the sky. He went to see the Wanjina Wojin. He was really the son of Wojin/Wanalirri. He told him how he had been mistreated and abused and demanded justice. He wanted the humans killed...

Wojin/Wanalirri gave the signal and the Wanjinas killed the humans with a big storm with lightning and floods.....At Yomon a Wanjina Kangaroo with a long black and white tail called *Mangara* (Nail-Tailed Wallaby) saved two children from the flood.....

The two children who had been saved then killed the little wallaby. The mother of the wallaby was the Wanjina Yomon (*Yom = drown*). Angry, she transformed herself into a big boab tree, with a cleft in one side that led to a hollow interior. This was her vagina. Then, creating a big dust storm she caused the two children to seek refuge from the flying sand in the cavity, which then closed on them.

*Extracts from Akerman (1976, 1985); variants published by others also – thanks to Kim Akerman. Location of the events is in the North Kimberley*
Gooniyandi/Bunuba country; boab anthropomorph rock paintings also in Miriwoong country and elsewhere. Thank you to Kim Akerman.
WORRORRAN *junguri/*jungura* - no obvious etymology or stratigraphy at this stage.

**JARRAGAN *jamula-*/*jumulu-**. The suffixes are gender markers, -ny masculine in Kija *jumulu-ny*, and –ng general. Today *jamula-ng* is not found in the northern Jarragan languages but has been borrowed into the eastern neighbouring Ngumpin languages where the final –ng attests to its Jarragan origin. The form *jumulu-* in Kija looks like a later development, but it is found in Kwini, probably borrowed from Kija. The change a＞u before second vowel u is also found in subsection terms; the stratigraphy needs investigation.

*kertewun* in Gajirrabeng/Miriwung has replaced *jamulang* relatively recently; lack of lenition *rt>r* in Miriwung may indicate recency but the lenited form *kuruwuny* diffused into Western Mirndi to the east. The form is similar to the Jarragan root for ‘egg’ *kertewul* (cf. the egg shaped boab nut). *Muruwun* in Nungali has an added vegetable class prefix mV- with regular lenition of k.
SPREAD OF REFLEXES OF *LEPARRE ‘ARCHER-FISH’*

inference → loan/substratal

LENITION

NGUMPIN-YAPA
(Pama-Nyungan)
BRADSHAW PAINTING
Around 20,000 y.a. OR 7000-4000 y.a

WANDJINA PAINTING
From 4000 y.a.
LENÉ HARA CAVE, EAST TIMOR, CARVED FACE RESEMBLING WANDJINA
Dated 10-12kya  (Sue O’Connor, Ken Aplin)
Figure 1: The Kimberley, northwest Australia showing spatial distribution of major rock art styles.
CHANGING STYLES OF SPEAR THROWER IN KIMBERLEY ROCK ART

Figure 5: Depiction of a late Bradshaw figure holding boomerangs, a pair of multi-barbed spears and a spearthrower. This is the first clear evidence currently known from the Kimberley rock art sequence for the spearthrower. Note the prominent “knobs” at the proximal ends of the spears. (Photo: G.L. Walsh).

Figure 12: Spade handle spearthrowers and boomerangs depicted in the Clawed Hand Period.

Walsh and Morwood 1999
Welch Ngarinyin
‘kanmangu’/'ganmanggu’
cf. dictionary:
\lx kanmanku
\ge yam.

‘YAM PEOPLE’

Possibly including Dioscorea transversa ‘Long yam’ and Dioscorea bulbifera ‘gunu’ round/hairy/cheeky yam

Associated with Bradshaw figures and similar Dynamic figures in Arnhem land: possible age 6-4000 years ago
CONCLUSIONS

• Loanwords in Australia are generally distinguishable from inheritances and often can be chronologically stratified.
• Levels of loanwords varies from low to high, but high levels are relatively rare.
• There is a need to understand patterns of loan diffusion. These patterns result from different mechanisms, such as substratal transfers and regional or long-distance diffusions (Wanderwörter). Methods for distinguishing these are currently being refined.
• The reasons for Wanderwörter diffusion are sometimes clearly related to diffusion of technological, social or ritual innovation. This provides an important source of evidence on prehistory which can be even more valuable when combined with archaeology, rock art studies, palaeobotany etc.
• Other Wanderwörter are less immediately interpretable as important cultural elements in terms of recent history but repay further study eg in relation to mythology, song and ritual.