LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY INVESTIGATIONS OF DAMPIER LAND LANGUAGES

William McGregor

Linguistics and Applied Linguistics, University of Melbourne

Abstract: The period 1890-1930 represents the first period of investigation of Dampier Land (Nyulnyulan) languages. (Two subsequent periods are roughly 1930-1953 and 1970-present, representing early and modern professional periods.) A number of amateur linguists made contributions, now of great significance because of the demise of most Dampier Land languages. In this paper I identify the main figures in the story, and briefly evaluate their contributions in terms of reliability and usefulness to modern Nyulnyulan studies. In the process I put straight the historical record on one count.

Keywords: Australian Aboriginal languages, Nyulnyulan languages, Dampier Land languages, history of linguistics, endangered languages, amateur linguists.

The first word of a Dampier Land or Nyulnyulan language (see Fig. 1) definitely recorded by a European dates back to 1688, when the English privateer William Dampier called in to a bay on what is now called the Dampier Land peninusula to career his ship.[1] He reported in his journal that the locals ran away from him calling out *Gurri! Gurri!* — i.e. *Ngaarri! Ngaarri!* 'Devils! Devils!' in Bardi. Significant contact with Europeans did not begin, however, until the 1850s, and from the beginning various European people put down on paper words they heard used by Aboriginal people. In the three decades of increasing white contact up until 1890, various explorers, pastoralists and pearlers recorded occasional words in languages of Dampier Land and nearby areas. Unfortunately, little of this information is of any value. In few

cases are cited words recognisably Nyulnyulan (or from any other language family), and there can be no certainty of their provenance. For instance, the journals of Hamish Cornish, one of the first sheep farmers on the lower Fitzroy River, contain the occasional word allegedly in an Aboriginal language. I have been unable, however, to identify a single one of these words. A notable exception is the wordlist provided by one James Martin in his 1865 report on expeditions to the west Kimberley coast in 1862 and 1863. He lists about seventy basic words in the language of the "sea-coast tribes", and about twenty in the language of the "natives of the interior". Most of the terms of both lists are undoubtedly Nyulnyulan, and are most likely Yawuru and Nyikina respectively (possibly with some Karajarri mixed in). Martin was surprisingly perceptive: "the language of both sea-coast and inland tribes ... is agglutinate, with Malay affinities few, obscure, and only partly recognised; the dialects prevail over exceedingly small areas, as is the case with eastern Kelœnonesian tribes" (Martin, 1865:287).
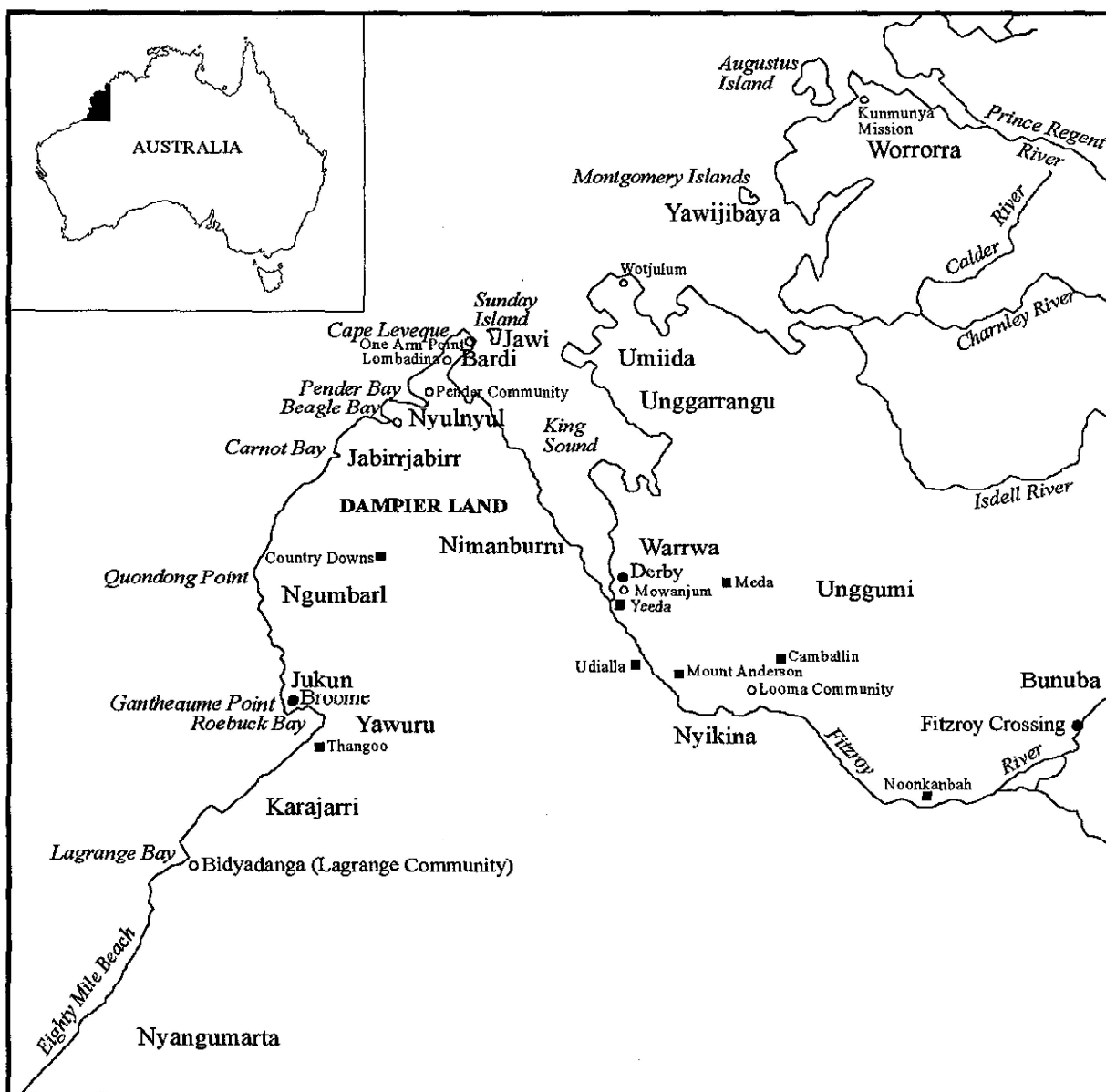

Fig. 1. Dampier Land and nearby languages

It was not until the 1890s that serious investigations of the languages began, with the arrival of missionaries. From then until about 1930 amateur linguists recorded information on the languages. With the demise of many Dampier Land languages, their work is now of great importance: for more than one language the early recorded information represents the most comprehensive information available; for a few, it represents useful information, which might indicate structural changes accompanying language obsolescence. I will refer to these years as the first period of investigation of Dampier Land languages. Subsequent periods are 1930-1953 and 1970-present, which represent early and modern professional periods.

The first language in the region to be studied was Nyulnyul, with work by the Trappist missionary Fr. Alphonse Tachon,[2] who apparently began work on the language immediately on his arrival in Nyulnyul territory — according to Bishop Gibney's diary entry for 20th July 1890, he had already begun to collect a vocabulary at Disaster Bay during their initial expedition to Beagle Bay, which led to the establishment of the mission there. Fr. Tachon wrote the first known grammatical description of Nyulnyul (Tachon, 1895), a sketch of approximately twenty pages, which covers most basic nominal and verbal morphology. He recognised pronominal prefixes to nouns, postpositions (which he interpreted as cases), and verbal tenses, moods and voice. He correctly identified -in (his "-en") as the ergative marker (in his terms, the marker of the subject of an active verb), and comments on its distribution. He also identified the pronominals, although he did not analyse the system optimally, treating it as distinguishing inclusive/exclusive in the first person non-singular. (In fact, the system is the so-called Ilokano type, which distinguishes four persons (1, 2, 1&2, 3) and two numbers (minimal and augmented) — see McGregor, 1996:21-23.) It appears that he had some speaking control of the language, and that he used it in teaching and religious services (Nailon and Huegel, 1990:10).

Fr. Tachon also compiled a dictionary of Nyulnyul, and translated various pieces of religious liturgy and prayers into the language (Zucker, 1994:31, 40; Walter, 1928/1982:82-83). Although most words are identifiable, Tachon did not fully understand the sound pattern of the language. He failed to distinguish initial /ng/ from /n/, and confused them in other environments as well; he also failed to distinguish between /ng/ and /ngk/. Nor did he distinguish between the two r-sounds, the tap and the trill, or between apico-alveolar and apico-post-alveolar articulation in stops, nasals and laterals. Fr. Tachon did, however, distinguish between the apical and laminal stops and nasals: for the latter he employed the digraphs ti ~ di (prevocalically) and tsch (word finally), and gn and sometimes ni (prevocalically), respectively; similarly, he used i to represent both the high front vowel, and the glide y. Thus, for instance, he wrote tiangor for jangkurr 'hat'.

The wordlist itself betrays Tachon's primary purpose, missionising: there are entries for a variety of concepts that would be useful in translating religious material (e.g. 'adulterer', 'adulteress', 'angel', 'beget', 'expiate', 'idleness', 'immortal', 'lewd', 'obscenity', etc.). In

---

[2] Fr. Duncan McNab, who established a mission base in Disaster Bay in 1884, may well have written down some Nyulnyul, and possibly began to learn the language. In a report to Fr. Tachon dated 22nd July 1895, Fr. McNab remarks that he wrote down as many as sixty or seventy words of "the native language" every day (Zucker, 1994:218). Nothing is known to remain of Fr. McNab's writings.

some cases the meanings of indigenous Nyulnyul words have been extended (often in rather unexpected ways, at least to the speaker of a Standard Average European language); in other cases the new concepts have been analysed into components which are translated (showing that he had a good working knowledge of translation practice) — for instance, Tachon gives the term for 'bigamist' as *wurombang maler inier*, which really means 'having many wives' (phonemically, *wurrumbang malirr-inyirr* many wife-with); and in other cases words are glossed in terms most appropriate to the Christian religious register (e.g. *kurwol* (i.e. *kurrwal*) is given under 'heaven' and 'paradise', but not under 'sky'). Various other domains — including flora, fauna, kinship and artefacts — are not so as well represented as would be expected for a word list of its size. (An investigation of this fascinating word list is planned for the near future.)

It is of interest to quote the following comments about the Nyulnyul language by Fr. Alphonse in a letter to his aunt, this being one of the earliest recorded observations about the language:

> There are more words in it [i.e. Nyulnyul] than in Caledonia. The language is harmonious although there are too many z's. They are down to earth and here is an example: to say 'I love you' they say literally, 'I give you my stomach', or 'I give you my breath.' They laughed at me when I told them it would be better to say, 'I give you my heart.' I will have to create words. (Letter from Fr. A. Tachon to his aunt, dated 20 May 1891, cited in Zucker, 1994:32; original held in Trappist Abbey of Sept Fons, Dom Pierre, France).

Fr. Nicolas Emo, a Spanish Trappist, who arrived in Beagle Bay in 1895, and spent the rest of his life in the Kimberley, may also have undertaken some investigations into the Nyulnyul language. Nekes and Worms (1953) refer to a manuscript by him on the language dated 1895 (which seems highly improbable given that he only arrived that same year). I have not seen this work, and there appears to be little else in the way of references to linguistic work by this priest. I am inclined to believe that the work they refer to was actually Tachon's 1895 sketch.

At the turn of the century, the Trappists relinquished the Beagle Bay mission to the Pallottine order. At the same time the Western Australian Minister for Lands requested a report on the improvements effected to the 10,000 acres that had been granted to the Beagle Bay mission, in order to ascertain whether the conditions of the lease had been met. Thus, in August 1900 Bishop Gibney and Dean Martelli, along with the amateur anthropologist Daisy Bates set off put things in order for the inspection. During her four months at the mission, Bates recorded information about the culture, and some words (Bates, 1938/1966) — as well as observations on day-to-day life in the mission.

Daisy Bates subsequently joined her husband at Roebuck Plains station, near Broome, where she lived for a year (Bates, 1985:5). During this time she obtained a considerable amount of information about the local Aborigines, and compiled "a Broome dictionary, of several dialects and 2,000 words and sentences, with notes of innumerable legends and myths" (Bates, 1938/1966:45).

The Bates archives in the Australian National Library contain four files of word and phrase lists in Dampier Land languages, three apparently compiled by Bates herself, the fourth by William Bird and Sydney Hadley (see below). Manuscript XII 2E, 1a is a fifty page typescript containing information provided by one Billingee, a "seacoast" man from Willie Creek (just

north of Broome), who presumably spoke Jukun.[3] There is a wordlist organised into semantic domains (humans, body parts, animals, birds, fish, reptiles, insects, the elements), followed by a "general vocabulary" (organised alphabetically by English gloss), which includes a number of verbs, adverbs, and short phrases, as well as nominals. Also included are six pages of short sentences, covering a variety of basic utterances relevant to everyday life on sheep stations of the times. Appended to the end of this manuscript is an additional six page list of words and short sentences (labelled XII 2E, 1d), also provided by Billingee. This includes various additional items, many of greater cultural and ritual significance than those in the main list.

Manuscript XII 2E, 1b includes words provided by three individuals, Billingee again, and in addition Wabbingan from Beagle Bay, who spoke the Yowera dialect of Nyulnyul,[4] and Beejee from Broome, who presumably spoke either Jukun or Yawuru. Unfortunately, this document does not specify the linguistic provenance of any word. A number are, however, readily identified as Nyulnyul — e.g. *wamb* 'man' and *eebaal ~ eebal* 'father' — while others are obviously not, and must be either Jukun or Yawuru. Contained in this manuscript is a reasonably extensive wordlist, of acceptable quality, and covering most of the expected semantic domains (body parts, human relationships, flora, fauna, the elements, general vocabulary (alphabetically organised according to English glosses), and a variety of verbs). Also included is a list of short sentences, many of which appear to be in Nyulnyul; examples are *ngai mallerjan* 'she is my wife', orthographically, *ngay malirr jan* (I wife my); and *anga nyilowel* 'name, what is your?', i.e. *angk nyi-lawal* (what your-name) 'What is your name?', both of which are perfect Nyulnyul. Manuscript XX 2E, 1c is a 24 page typescript wordlist of Jukun, again based on information provided by Billingee. It appears to contain the same information as manuscript XII 2E, 1a, but this time organised alphabetically on Jukun headwords.

The vast majority of entries in these manuscripts are recognisably Nyulnyulan, once the basic principles of Bates' English-based transcription are recognised. She frequently uses, for instance, *ee* for the high front vowel, except where the vowel is pronounced [ɪ], in which case she uses *i*; similarly, she generally uses *oo* for the high back vowel. Bates correctly distinguished many *ng* (/ŋ/) initial words (unlike many early recorders, who usually heard initial *ng* as *n*, sometimes as *g*); however, she did not generally distinguish between the velar nasal *ng* and the sequences *(r)n-k*, which she also wrote *ng* — thus she wrote *kurnka* 'raw' as *goonga*, and *nganka* 'speech, language' as *nganga*. Interestingly, she distinguishes the apical glide *r* from the apical tap *rr* (both of which she writes in the modern way). For instance, she writes *ngarree* for *ngaarri* 'devil', *boogarree* for *bukarri* 'dreamtime', and *booroo* for *buru* 'camp, place'. In a few places it appears that *r* is used to indicate retroflection of consonants *d*, *n* and *l* (though this may be a rich interpretation). As might be expected, she over-differentiates between voiced and voiceless stops, writing both *d* and *t*, *p* and *b*, etc.. In some cases she gives alternative pronunciations involving the two sounds, suggesting she may have had some appreciation of the lack of voicing contrast.

---

[3] An annotation on the title page of the manuscript specifies "Joogan or Ngoombal nganga (speech)". Ngumbarl was spoken just to the north of Jukun, and it is possible that the two languages are mixed in the manuscript. It is difficult to tell, however, due to paucity of information on Jukun.
[4] This word looks suspiciously like Yawuru. However, as mentioned immediately below, many of the words are clearly Nyulnyul, and not Yawuru. I have not heard any mention of this dialect name from the remaining speaker or part speakers.

As for her glosses, there are, of course, numerous inaccuracies. Most, however, are of the expected type, presuming that she elicited with English prompts (and made no attempt to identify the actual meaning of the words of the language): *maaboo* 'fresh (lately made), new' — *maabu* 'good'; *kalleea* 'full (filled up)' — *kaliya* 'OK, finished'; *yalgoo* 'erect' — *yalku* 'stand'; *warrinjarree* 'lonely' — *warrinyjarri* 'one, single, alone'; and many others. She attempted no analysis the verbs, of which she had but a very rudimentary understanding. Nevertheless, many inflecting verb forms are reconstructible: *meeboogundee* 'you take hold' is clearly *mibukandi* 'you will hold'; *yangarrama* is clearly 'we (1&2 augmented) put it'; and *yoongojimba* 'die, to' is presumably *yungkujimb(a)* 'he will die'. In many cases she gives just a preverb, rather than a compound preverb-inflecting verb construction (see McGregor, 1996:47-49), and there are often inaccuracies in the glosses — e.g. *meejala maaboo* 'living, alive' involves *mijala* 'sit', and *maabu* 'good', but the inflecting verb 'be' or 'sit' is missing.

Bates' short example sentences provide valuable resources, especially for Jukun (which is now moribund), and to a lesser extent for Nyulnyul. She attempted no grammatical analysis, and there are naturally many inaccuracies, both in terms of the glosses, and in terms of her division into words. For example, she gives *joonamun ban booliman* for 'Cattle, Did you see the?', which is presumably *juwa-na manban (minban?) buliman* (you-ERG you:see cattle) 'Do you see the cattle'; *jooa na moondee jinna* for 'Stolen, you have, that', which is probably *juwa-na mindi-jina* (you-ERG you:did-on:him) 'you did it in regard to him'; and *yangoo moogul ingara* 'What did he spear him for', which is most likely *yangki-yi mangul-ngany inara* (what-DAT spear-INST he:speared) 'What did he spear him for'.

The first Pallottine missionary to take much interest in the Nyulnyul language and culture was Fr. Henry Rensmann, who took over as superior of the Beagle Bay mission in 1903. He began learning Nyulnyul, and used it in religious instruction (Walter, 1928/1982:157). According to Durack (1969/1985:170), he also began compiling a dictionary of Nyulnyul. However, he drowned the following year, and nothing remains of his work.

In 1905, Fr. Joseph Bischofs arrived in Beagle Bay, and took charge of the mission, where he remained until he was removed in 1917 under suspicion of espionage (Zucker, 1994:75).[5] Like Frs. Tachon and Rensmann, he soon began giving religious instruction in Nyulnyul, and may have translated certain religious texts and liturgy into the language (Walter, 1928/1982:162). However, unlike his predecessors, Fr. Bischofs was not interested in Nyulnyul solely for missionising purposes; he also took a scholarly interest in the people and their language. He published a short, fairly general piece on the Dampier Land peoples in 1908 in *Anthropos* (Bischofs, 1908), as well as a comment on the absence of totems among the Nyulnyul (in the same journal). He had Fr. Tachon's sketch of Nyulnyul typed up and slightly edited, and also the wordlist, which he reworked with English glosses replacing the French of the original; he also made some adjustments to the spelling of the Nyulnyul words, without, however, improving the overall consistency or accuracy of representation. My guess is that he did this for his own use, to assist him learn the language — I am not suggesting that he deliberately plagiarised Fr. Alphonse Tachon's work in a bid to take the credit for it himself.[6]

---

[5] According to Durack (1969/1985:281), however, it was at the beginning of the First World War, 1914, that Fr. Bischofs was removed. I have been unable to resolve this discrepancy.

[6] Both works are mistakenly attributed to Fr. Bischofs in the catalogue of the library of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Studies, without any indication of the original source. It seems most likely that archivists attributed the works to Fr. Bischofs because they were found amongst papers held by the

Fr. Wilhelm Droste, who arrived in Beagle Bay in 1909, appears to have taken some interest in the language and culture of the Nyulnyul people, and he may have authored various manuscripts on aspects of the culture, and may perhaps have compiled a grammatical description of Nyulnyul (Walter, 1928/1982:13).[7] According to some sources, he also preached in the language (Torres and Williams, forthcoming).

William Bird, who served as a school teacher on Sunday Island for four or five years until about 1910, put together a short three page grammatical sketch of Jawi (Bird, 1910), and a brief word list of some 500 entries (Bird, 1915; Campbell and Bird, 1914-1915). Daisy Bates' archives include a "Native Vocabulary" compiled by William Bird and Sydney Hadley (Bird and Hadley, nd), which includes substantially the same wordlist, and handwritten answers to a questionnaire compiled by the Western Australia government, attached to which are three handwritten pages of grammatical notes, which apparently form the basis of Bird (1910).

On the whole Bird appears to have transcribed words reasonably accurately, and most are identifiable if one knows the word beforehand. However, the quality of his transcription is inferior to Bates'. Although he did distinguish initial *ng* from initial *n*, he did so inconsistently: e.g. he has *numana* for 'milk', which is almost certainly *ngama(r)na* (as it is in almost every nearby language). Some of his spellings are apt to appear somewhat unusual — e.g. *ngyrie* 'devil' for *ngaarri* 'devil' — but usually there is some phonetic motivation. There is no indication that Bird distinguished between retroflex and apical articulation in stops and nasals. He sometimes made the distinction between *r* and *rr*; the digraph *rr* he almost always used for the tap *rr*; the single letter sometimes represents *r*, sometimes *rr*, and sometimes a vowel quality, following English. Although in his word list he consistently cites the third person singular possessor forms of a number of prefixing nominals, it appears that at some stage he became aware of the prefixing variation: in an undated handwritten note "A peculiarity of the language", attached the typeset questions published by the Western Australia government printer, Bird cites 15 body part terms with first and second person singular possessor (the second person forms he gives are, however, actually third person — *ni-* '3sg', rather than *nyi-* '2sg').

Unlike Daisy Bates, William Bird did attempt a grammatical analysis. His brief sketch (Bird, 1910) indicates that he was aware of various grammatical features of the language, including ergative marking of nominals,[8] pronominal prefixing of verbs, and the irrealis form of verbs (which he correctly identified as involving *l*). He provides a few segments of a verbal paradigm. He incorrectly identifies the allative postposition *-ngun* as a "present participle" — in fact, it can be added to a nominal to indicate purpose, which is what his examples actually mean: for instance, *orlangun* (i.e. *wula-ngun*) means 'for water', rather than 'water getting' as Bird (1910:456) has it.

Bishop of Broome. In fact, the sketch grammar contains no indication of either date or author (though the fact that it was written in French should have made the archivists suspicious), while the word list contains the attribution "P. Bischop", amended by hand to "Bischofs" — hardly a mistake the man himself would have made. It thus seems unlikely that Fr. Bischofs was a party to the attribution of the works to him.

[7] Nekes and Worms (1953) make reference to a 1908 manuscript description of the language by Fr. Droste; this date must, however, be quite wrong, since he did not arrive in Australia until the following year. My suspicion is that the manuscript they are referring to is the typed-up version of Fr. Tachon's sketch grammar, which (as mentioned in the previous footnote) included no indication of author or date.

[8] Interestingly, in a later work, the ergative marker *-nim* is incorrectly analysed as a nominative marker (Campbell and Bird, 1914/1915:63), as it also is in the undated Bird and Hadley (nd). Campbell and Bird (1914/1915) go on to say "the "nim", however, is often left out, understood only."

The anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown (1930:339) makes reference, in relation to the Nyulnyul type kinship system, to his own 1912 fieldnotes. It seems most likely that he obtained his information from Nyulnyul (possibly also Jukun, Jabirrjabirr and Ngumbarl) men incarcerated on Bernier Island, a hospital for Aborigines suffering from venereal disease, which he visited during the course of the Cambridge University anthropological expedition which he led (Bates, 1985:7-8). Unfortunately, in the published article he gives only the section terms, although he states that he did gather kinterms.

Fr. Wilhelm Schmidt made the first scholarly attempt at classifying Australian languages, publishing his findings in monograph form in 1919. (Previously this work had appeared as a series of articles in the journal *Anthropos*.) Schmidt made a primary distinction between 'northern' and 'southern' languages, approximating the non-Pama-Nyungan vs. Pama-Nyungan division generally accepted today. Information available to Schmidt on the Kimberley languages was quite minimal — a few very short wordlists, as well as the rather longer ones for Nyulnyul (attributed to Bischofs — i.e. presumably Tachon's wordlist and Tachon, 1895) and Jawi (Bird, 1910 and 1915). Even so, he rightly distinguished within his Western subgroup of northern languages a King Sound group (i.e. Nyulnyulan), an Ord River group (i.e. Jarrakan), and the Ruby Creek language (Jaru — which is in fact Pama-Nyungan). He even proposed a possible division between coastal and inland "dialects" of Nyulnyulan — which is not far from the truth: there is a primary division between Eastern (inland) and Western (coastal) languages (Stokes and McGregor, 1989). Schmidt provides a wordlist for both dialects (Schmidt, 1919:176-185), as well as a list of free pronouns and possessive pronominal prefixes. Most of these words are readily identified, the main criticism being that the velar nasal is not generally recognised in initial position (no doubt due to inadequacies in the sources. (No doubt due to an oversight, the few Nyulnyulan words cited on p.163 are wrongly labelled as belonging to the Ord River group, and vice versa.)

Adolphus P. Elkin, subsequently professor of anthropology at the University of Sydney, undertook an extensive field trip through the Kimberley during 1927-1928. He sailed first to Broome, where he stayed for a short time, recording some information on Karajarri, a Pama-Nyungan language spoken to the south of the Nyulnyulan languages (see Fig. 1). In late 1927, Elkin travelled up the Dampier Land peninsula, staying in Beagle Bay for six weeks. During this time he gathered a considerable amount of information about Nyulnyul culture and social organisation — especially kinship, land tenure, and religion — from knowledgeable old Nyulnyul men, including the renowned Felix Ngurdinbur, then over 75 years of age. His unpublished description of Nyulnyul social organisation (Elkin, nd1), is the most detailed and perceptive account of traditional Nyulnyul society available. He recorded a number of Nyulnyul toponyms, kinterms, artefact names, animal and plant names, etc.; in addition, he transcribed a few song texts, two of which appear in Elkin (nd2). Elkin's linguistic notebook of approximately 20 small pages contains a number of Nyulnyul verb paradigms, as well as various nominals with attached postpositions.

In early 1928 Elkin went farther up the peninsula to Lombardina, Cape Leveque, and Sunday Island, at which locations he stayed briefly, working with Bardi people. Aside from recording genealogies and information on kinship, he put together a reasonably extensive notebook of around 100 small pages, mainly of verb paradigms, but also a few simple sentences. At some time during his sojourn in Dampier Land (possibly during his stay in Beagle Bay), he also gathered some information on Jabirrjabirr kinship and culture. However, he recorded no linguistic information other than a few words.

Elkin employed a broad phonetic notation. Overall, the quality of his transcriptions is good, and the bulk of the transcribed words are readily identified. He distinguished between the two *r*-sounds, writing the retroflex frictionless continuant as *r*, the trill as *r̃* (he sometimes missed word-final *rr*, however, as in his representation of *yalarr* 'wife's mother' as *yala*). He also distinguished the velar nasal, word initially as well as medially (although he missed a number of them in the former position). Elkin does not appear, however, to have been aware of the distinction between apico-alveolar and apico-postalveolar articulation in stops, nasals and laterals. He also used five vowel symbols, augmented by a variety of diacritics, all of which are left unexplained. (Some of the diacritics may well represent *r*-colouring of the vowel, and thus signify retroflection of the nearby consonant.)

Table 1 Time line for research into Dampier Land languages during first period

Decade	Language	Investigator	Nature of contribution
1680s	Bardi	W. Dampier	Recorded one word, *gurri* most likely the Bardi word *ngaarri* 'devil'.
1860s	Yawuru? Nyikina?	J. Martin	A list of some seventy basic words — clearly Nyulnyulan — in the language of the "sea-coast tribes" and the "natives of the interior" (possibly Yawuru and Nyikina respectively).
1880s	Various	Pearlers and pastoralists	A few words recorded in memoirs, diaries, and other writings; none yet identified as Nyulnyulan words.
1890s	Nyulnyul	Fr. A. Tachon	Sketch grammar, wordlist, and translations of various religious materials. Good in terms of quality of grammatical description, somewhat weak in phonology.
1900s	Nyulnyul Jukun Ngumbarl Yawuru	D. Bates	Primarily wordlists, with a number of sentences in some languages; these are preserved in her archived manuscripts held in the Australian National Library. Most information was gathered by herself, though some was compiled from information supplied by others (e.g. Jawi by W. Bird). Reasonable in terms of phonetic representation; weak on semantics and grammar.
	Nyulnyul	Fr. Bischofs	Little evidence of original linguistic investigations, but had various of Fr. Tachon's manuscripts typed up and slightly revised. Presumably used these works to assist his learning Nyulnyul, and for translation. Published some works of anthropological relevance.
1910s	Jawi	W. Bird	Very short sketch grammar and wordlist. Poor representation of sound-shape of words, though most are identifiable with knowledge of the languages.
	Nyulnyul	A. Radcliffe-Brown	Recorded information on kinship, including the section terms.
	Nyulnyulan	W. Schmidt	First attempt at classifying Australian languages, distinguishing King Sound group (i.e. Nyulnyulan); some words of Nyulnyul and possibly Nyikina are cited (wrongly classified in one place).
1920s	Nyulnyul	S. Porteus	A few words for artefacts and culturally significant concepts. Mainly anthropological information.
	Nyulnyul	A.P. Elkin	Various toponyms, kinterms, names for artefacts, animals, and seasons. Also some verb paradigms in a small notebook, and transcriptions of a few brief song texts. Much excellent information on Nyulnyul culture, kinship and land tenure.
	Bardi	A.P. Elkin	Extensive paradigms for verbs, as well as a few simple sentences.
	Jabirrjabirr	A.P. Elkin	Cites a few words, including possibly some kinterms.

Table 1 (above) summarises the major attempts to record information about Dampier Land languages up to 1930. Many other Europeans recorded occasional words, without, as a rule, having the slightest idea of their provenance.

Whereas professional anthropologists began visiting the area in the early years of this century — Hermann Klaatsch (1906, 1907), Adolphus Elkin (1927-1928), Stanley Porteus (c. 1928) — it was not until the 1930s that investigators with some linguistic training began work on the languages,[9] and not until the 1970s that the first truly professional linguists began to come on the scene.

In conclusion, the amateur linguists who worked on Dampier Land languages late last century and in the first three decades of this century, left behind them an important legacy for the modern student of Nyulnyulan languages, as well as for descendants of speakers of a number of now dead languages. Overall, the quality and quantity of information these largely untrained amateurs recorded is good, and does them credit. Judicious use of their materials, along with modern data from the surviving languages, will provide the historical linguist with a great deal of relevant information, and will permit the compilation of sketch grammars of at least two Nyulnyulan languages now no longer spoken, Jukun and Jawi. I plan to begin this work in the near future.

REFERENCES

Bates, D. (1938/1966). *The passing of Aborigines: a lifetime spent among the natives of Australia*. Panther, London.

Bates, D. (1985). *The native tribes of Western Australia*. Edited by White, I. National Library of Australia, Canberra.

Bird, W. (1910). Some remarks on the grammatical construction of the Chowie language, as spoken by the Buccaneer Islanders, North-Western Australia. *Anthropos* 5, 454-456.

Bird, W. (1915). A short vocabulary of the Chowie-language of the Buccaneer Islanders (Sunday Islanders) north western Australia. *Anthropos* 10, 180-186.

Bird, W. and S. Hadley (nd). Native vocabulary: Sunday Island. Manuscript. In Bates, D.M. Native vocabularies, northwestern district. Section XII, 2e, 6. ANL-MS365-53/41-81.

Bischofs, P. J. (1908). Die Niol-Niol, ein Eingeborenenstamm in Nordwest-Australien. *Anthropos* 3, 32-40.

Campbell, W. D. and W. Bird (1914/1915). An account of the Aboriginals of Sunday Island, King Sound, Kimberley, Western Australia. *Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia* 1, 55-82.

Durack, M. (1969/1985). *The rock and the sand*. Corgi, London.

Elkin, A.P. (nd1). The social organisation of the Nūl-Nūl (Ňl-ñl), Beagle Bay, W.A. Unpublished typescript. Box 6, Item 1/1/59, Elkin Archives, University of Sydney.

---

[9] A.P. Elkin appears to be the first investigator with some linguistic training to have worked on the languages; the other anthropologists show no evidence of any linguistic training, and at best record no more than the odd word. In the mid 1930, Fr. Nekes, a specialist in Bantu languages, and Pallottine missionary, began work in the region, and might not unreasonably be regarded as the first professional to work on one of the languages.

Elkin, A.P. (nd2). Jabera-Jaber social organisation. Box 7, Item 1/1/75, Elkin Archives, University of Sydney.

McGregor, W. (1996). *Nyulnyul*. Munich: Lincom Europa.

Nailon, B. and F. Huegel (Eds). (1990). *This is your place: Beagle Bay Mission 1890-1990*. Beagle Bay Community and Magabala Books, Beagle Bay and Broome.

Nekes, H. and E. A. Worms (1953). *Australian languages*. (Micro-Bibliotheca Anthropos, 10.) Anthropos Institut, Fribourg.

Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. (1930). The social organisation of Australian tribes. *Oceania* 1, 34-63, 206-246, 323-341, 426-456.

Schmidt, W. (1919). *Die Gliederung der Australischen Sprachen*. Mechitharisten-Buchdruckerei, Vienna.

Stokes, B. and W. B. McGregor. (forthcoming). Classifying the Nyulnyulan languages. To appear in: *Comparative studies in non-Pama-Nyungan* (N. Evans (Ed.)). Pacific Linguistics, Canberra.

Tachon, A. (1895). Premiers elements de la langue Niol/Niol. Unpublished manuscript.

Torres, P. and M. Williams. (forthcoming). *Ngai janijirr ngank*. Magabala, Broome.

Walter, G. (1928/1982). *Australia: land, people, mission*. Bishop of Broome, Broome.

Zucker, M. (1994). *From patrons to partners: a history of the Catholic Church in the Kimberley 1884-1984*. University of Notre Dame Australia Press, Fremantle.