

THE GOONIYANDI SUFFIX *-wa*

William McGregor

Linguistics and Applied Linguistics, University of Melbourne

Abstract: Gooniyandi (non-Pama-Nyungan, Kimberley, Western Australia) shows what appear to be two homophonous suffixes *-wa*. One attaches to kinterms, and generally means 'his, her, their kin-relation'; the other attaches to spatial adverbials, and roughly glosses 'side', and to nouns and verbs, apparently deriving manner adverbials. This paper argues that there is a single morpheme *-wa*, the three main meanings being contextual senses of a single inherent meaning, which is of the linking or textural type (defined as per McGregor 1997a). A possible historical origin of the morpheme in a comitative suffix is proposed.

Keywords: Gooniyandi, non-Pama-Nyungan languages, morphology, semantics, kinship possession, Janus construction, linking, indirect reference, historical change.

1. INTRODUCTION¹

According to McGregor (1990:233-234, 245-246) there are two homophonous suffixes *-wa* in Gooniyandi, a non-Pama-Nyungan language spoken in the southern-central Kimberley region of Western Australia. One attaches to kinterms, and generally conveys the meaning 'his, her, their kin-relation', as in e.g. *ngaboo-wa* 'his/her/their father' (possibly also 'its father', for a

¹ This paper is based primarily on data collected in the course of two field trips to Fitzroy Crossing in 1980 and 1982, secondarily on data gathered since then. I would like to express my gratitude to my Gooniyandi teachers, particularly Jack Bohemia (deceased), Dave Lamey (deceased), Bigfoot Jagarra (deceased), Lanis Pluto (deceased), Mervin Street, and David Street for generously sharing their language with me. Acknowledgement is also made to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the Australian Research Council (Grants A58930745 and A59332055) for financing my field trips, and the latter organisation for funding my present position (ARC Research Fellowship A9324000).

higher order animate such as a dog or kangaroo), *ngarranyoo-wa* 'his/her/its/their mother', and *garingi-wa-yoorroo* 'his two wives'. The other attaches to spatial adverbials, expressing a meaning which might be reasonably glossed 'side', and to nouns and verbs, deriving manner adverbs. In this paper it is argued that there is in fact a single morpheme *-wa*, and that the three meanings just identified represent contextual senses of a single inherent meaning. This is of the linking type (McGregor, 1997a:70-73). Some of the fundamental properties of this linking relationship are examined, and a few brief remarks are made on the semantic contrasts with other means of expressing kinship 'possession' (specifically, by oblique free pronominals). The paper ends with a suggestion that *-wa* may have derived historically from a comitative marker.

2. USES OF *-WA*

As far as I am aware, the kinterm suffix *-wa* can be attached to any kinterm. There are just a couple of fairly minor complications. Occasionally a kinterm loses its final vowel, and is followed by the allomorph *-ga*; this happens only with words of four syllables (no kinterms have more than four syllables), including *ngaloowinyi* 'offspring of man' (thus *ngaloowiny-ga* 'his, her, its, their offspring'), and (it is presumed although this is not instanced in the corpus) *ngaliganyi* 'daughter of woman'² — but not *marriyali* 'wife's mother', for which the term is the regular *marriyaloo-wa* 'his, her, their wife's mother'. For just one known kinterm there is a complication: the term *ngaja* 'young or non-adult sibling' cannot take the suffix directly, and must take one of the augments *-ngoo-* or *-nyoo-*, depending on the sex of the referent sibling — thus *ngaja-ngoo-wa* 'his, her, their young brother', and *ngaja-nyoo-wa* 'his, her, their young sister'. (Neither of these augments occurs on any other kinterm, to the best of my knowledge.)

However, *-wa* is not restricted to kinterms narrowly defined; it may also occur on a few other lexemes, notably lexemes which relate to ceremonial activities and so forth, in which kinship is particularly important. For instance, *jali* 'peer, agemate', *garli* 'offspring of a different sex sibling' (otherwise 'boomerang'), and *narroogoo* 'namesake' can each take the suffix: *jali-joo-wa* 'his/her/their peer', *garloo-wa* 'his/her/their nephew/niece through different sex sibling', and *narroogoo-wa* 'his/her/their namesake'. However, not all lexemes apparently relating to this semantic domain can be suffixed with *-wa* — for instance, the subsection terms cannot be. It is beyond the scope of the present paper to specify precisely which terms may and may not take the suffix.

According to McGregor (1990:234), this *-wa* is a nominal stem-forming suffix — that is, it is a derivational suffix, rather than an inflectional suffix, enclitic, or whatever — which means that the N plus *-wa* represents a new nominal stem. For one thing, *-wa* always directly follows the kinterm root, and may be followed by an enclitic or postposition; the other order does not

² This is not the place to go into details of the complexities of Gooniyandi kinship terminology (see McGregor, 1996 for a list of the main kinterms, and brief indication of their primary referents). Suffice it to remark that (as in many Australian Aboriginal languages) there are different terms for the offspring of males and females. These terms, furthermore, are used in reference to children of brothers and sisters, respectively. Thus a man will refer to his brother's children by the same term as his own; however, his sister's children he will refer to by a different term — the same term, in fact, as the latter will employ.

occur. Thus, we have *ngaboo-wa-ngga* (father-*wa*-ERG)³ ‘by his father’, but not **ngaboo-ngga-wa* (father-ERG-*wa*), and *garingi-wa-yoorroo-ngga* (wife-*wa*-DU-ERG) ‘by his two wives’, but not **garingi-yoorroo-wa-ngga* (wife-DU-*wa*-ERG) (which might be expected, on the basis of semantic considerations) or **garingi-yoorroo-ngga-wa* (wife-DU-ERG-*wa*). In this position, moreover, *-wa* alternates with other stem-forming suffixes such as the kin dyadic suffix *-langi*, which are in complementary distribution with it.

This shows that *-wa* is tightly associated with the N, certainly more tightly than an enclitic would be. The reason why it is regarded as a stem-forming suffix is, more significantly, that it appears to represent a new nominal stem, which can serve in the two major environments of an N: as a referential item, and as a modifier, as illustrated by the following two examples, respectively:

- (1) *nganyi-ngga ngirnda marni -wa wardgila -nhi*
 I -ERG this Z+ -wa I:took:her -3sgOBL
 ‘I took his sister (i.e. as my wife).’

- (2) *Teddy ngoombarna -wa*
 Teddy H -wa
 ‘Teddy is her husband.’

In (1), it should be noted, *ngirnda* ‘this’ refers to the same person as does *marni-wa* ‘his sister’. It does not specify the person whose sister it is. This person may be designated by means of a datively marked NP, as shown by the following two examples — the second of which also, incidentally, shows a generic plural possessor: the speaker is saying he is uncle for everyone of the *jangala* subsection, not the uncle of one single man.

- (3) *janet -joo balmandoo -wa yilgala -nhi*
 Janet -DAT M -wa I:looked -3sgOBL
 ‘I looked at Janet’s mother (who I am in an avoidance relation with).’

- (4) *nganyi nyaanyoo -wa jangala -yoo*
 I MB -wa jangala -DAT
 ‘I am uncle to *jangala* (men).’

There are, however, some rather puzzling examples, where a kinterm plus *-wa* seems not to designate the meaning ‘his/her kin relation’, as illustrated by the following two examples:

- (5) *bili marna -wa bagiwirri*
 Bill B+ -wa they:lay
 ‘He and Bill were brothers.’

³ The following abbreviations are used: Adv — adverbial; ERG — ergative; B — brother; COMIT — comitative; D — daughter; DAT — dative; DEF — definite; DU — dual; F — father; H — husband; INDEF — indefinite; LOC — locative; M — mother; N — nominal; NP — nominal phrase; OBL — oblique; PAIR — pair marker; S — son; sg — singular; SoA — state-of-affairs; V — verb; W — wife; Z — sister. + and - following B and Z indicate older and younger siblings respectively. Note that the suffix *-wa* has been glossed throughout by itself, in order not to presuppose any particular analysis.

- (6) *minyawoo tharra jalijoo -wa*
 cat dog friend -wa
 'The cat and dog are mates.'

In (5) it makes no sense to analyse the two Ns as forming an NP meaning 'Bill and his brother', serving in the grammatical role of Actor in a clause describing a situation of lying down. Clearly *bagi-* 'lie' is being used here as a copula, and not to designate a state-of-affairs (SoA) (see McGregor, 1997a:29-31). Rather, the only viable analysis is that *marna-wa* is attributed of the elliptical NP *bili* 'he and Bill', in a verbal attributive relational clause.⁴ On the other hand, the two Ns in (6) must be conjoined in the NP *minyawoo tharra* 'cat and dog', of which the N *jaliji-wa* is attributed, this time in a verbless attributive relational clause. In neither case is it reasonable to interpret the kinterm plus *-wa* as meaning 'his or her kin relation', in the way that this makes sense in examples such as (2), which also involves attribution. Observe, however, that the interpretation of *-wa* as 'their kin relation' does make sense: here the anaphoric relationship is to the other NP in the clause, the one referring to the conjunction of the two entities — thus, 'He and Bill are their (own) brothers', and 'The cat and dog are their (own) mates'.

The other suffix *-wa* is, according to McGregor (1990:245), an adverbial stem forming suffix, which may be added to Ns, Advs, and most frequently, Vs, deriving an adverbial stem. Attached to spatial adverbials (although not all combinations are attested), *-wa* apparently derives another spatial adverbial stem, and means 'side', 'aspect' or 'mode' of some material body; for instance, *ngiwawoo-wa* (south-*wa*) 'southern side or aspect', as in e.g. *ngiwawoo-wa ngaarri-ya* (south-*wa* hill-LOC) 'southern end of a hill'. Occasionally it derives a spatial adverbial from a V or non-spatial adverbial — e.g. *wilaj-ga* (go:around-*wa*) 'around', and *miga-wa* (thusly-*wa*) 'that way, that direction'. Attached to Ns and Vs,⁵ it normally derives what appears to be a type of manner adverbial (McGregor, 1990:396).⁶

- (7) *garndiwangooroo thangarndi thirrgirli -wa milyilyi -ngga doowwilanyji*
 many word straight -wa brain -ERG I:want:to:get:it
 'I want to get the words straight in my brain.'
- (8) *barn -ga wajlarri -nhi*
 return -wa I:threw:it -3sgOBL
 'I threw it back to him.'
- (9) *ward -ga -ngga thirri roorrijbirrarni*
 go -wa -ERG fight they:argued:together
 'They argued going along.'

⁴ Another way of expressing the fact that the two men were brothers is by using the dyadic kinterm *marna-langi* 'two brothers', as in *bili marna-langi bagiwirri* 'He and Bill were two brothers'. The semantic difference between these two modes of expression is very subtle.

⁵ Note that in McGregor (1990:396) it is presumed that in examples such as (8) and (9) it is really a non-finite clause, rather than just the non-finite verb, that is in syntagm with *-wa*. Whether or not it is the V or clause need not concern us here, and does not affect the argument of this paper.

⁶ Note the allomorph *-ga*, which occurs following a stop or nasal consonant. The fact that the same form occurs as allomorph for both *-wa*'s adds to the case for regarding it as a single morpheme: compare *-wadi ~ -badi* 'your kin-relation', in which the initial *w* alternates with an initial *b* — which for this reason cannot be formed on *-wa*.

Careful examination, however, reveals that the V-*wa* word serves not to indicate the manner of performing the action, but rather functions as a secondary predicate (Nichols, 1978): it attributes a property or quality of one of the entities involved in the situation, but does so via the verb — more precisely, the SoA. In (8) and (9) the property attributed of the entity is an activity, rather than a quality *per se*, as in (7). Note also that the same resultative (examples (7) and (8)) and temporal (example (9)) subtypes are identifiable as elsewhere in secondary predication (McGregor, 1990:356-359). This analysis accounts, moreover, for why ergative marking occurs in (9) — since it marks secondary predicates on Agent NPs, but not manner adverbials in transitive clauses. It is thus preferable to treat *-wa* as a nominal, rather than an adverbial, stem forming suffix.

It is now possible to appreciate the thread of meaning running through all of the various uses of *-wa*. In each case, this morpheme is attached to a term that is being employed relationally; that is, a term that is being used in the first place to designate some relationship, rather than an entity *per se*. Attaching *-wa* to this relational term has the effect of indicating that a centre or standard of reference (McGregor, 1997a:322) — dubbed “propositus” in kinterm studies — of the relationship has been chosen, typically from the registry of things known at that point in the discourse. Putting this in another way, the term itself represents some binary relation $R(x,y)$, involving two entities x and y . One of these is adopted as the standard, in respect to which the other is determined or defined, not necessarily uniquely.

Kinterms are clearly relational in this sense, and the addition of *-wa* quite obviously serves the reference-type of function just described: it invokes, as it were, a standard of reference, in relation to which some other person is characterised. Similarly, spatial adverbials are prototypically relational: the topographical body of which a spatial aspect is being designated serves as standard of reference — i.e. roughly, ‘it’s spatial aspect’. Similarly, *wilaj-ga-* ‘circle around’ invokes some entity as a standard of reference, the centre for the circular motion; and *miga-wa* ‘this way’ invokes the speaker as standard of reference, according to which the direction to be taken is specified.

A similar explanation is available for (7). The real puzzle is not so much the occurrence of *-wa* on *thirrgirli* ‘straight’, but rather why its occurrence on such modifiers is so rare (this is one of the very few such examples available), and how its use contrasts with its non-use. Further fieldwork on the language will be necessary in order to permit such a fine semantic distinction to be made.⁷

As to the use of the suffix on Vs, as in (8) and (9) above, this also seems perfectly reasonable in as much as an action is necessarily associated with some entity or entities engaged in it in a participant (argument) role — and such an entity could reasonably be chosen as standard of reference for the event. If this is the case, it is possible that in fact what is in syntagm with the suffix *-wa* is just the V, and not a full (non-finite) clause (see above).

Not all uses of *-wa* are, however, entirely regular. There are at least two cases where the N-*wa* appears to be lexicalised: in the terms *girlinggoowa* ‘male of an animal species’ and *gamiriwa* ‘chest’. The first of these apparently involves the root *girlinggi* ‘penis’; the second, *gamiri*,

⁷ One reasonable hypothesis is that *-wa* occurs in this example because *thirrgirli* ‘straight’ in this example is not attributing a property of the individual words, but rather indicating a quality of their interrelatedness — they are ‘straight’ with respect to one another. According to this hypothesis *-wa* would not mark a nominal which simply indicated a quality inherent to an entity.

which form is not attested as a free N. Nor is it clear what motivates the presence of *-wa* on *giningi* 'breath, life force' in (10): it is possible — though not certain — that this is also a lexicalised combination.

- (10) *gamba -yoo giningi -wa nanggoowawoorrani*
 water -DAT breath -wa they:are:dying
 '(The cattle) are dying of thirst.'

There is at least one other example in the corpus in which *-wa* appears to be attached to a body part N. It does not, however, indicate 'his/her/their body part', but rather, involves an apparently metaphorical usage of the body part term to the kinship domain. The example is (11), where the N *jinyjili* specifies that the mother-child relationship is genealogical, rather than classificatory.⁸

- (11) *nyawandayi nhoowoo joogoo jinyjilaa*
 Nyawandayi her child navel:wa
 'Nyawandayi's child, which she gave birth to'

3. NATURE OF THE LINKING RELATIONSHIP INVOLVED

What I have suggested is that *-wa* represents a single morpheme, with a single inherent meaning, this being of the linking type (as per McGregor, 1997a). Specifically, this falls into the category of INDIRECT REFERENCE: a referential relation in which the referent is not pointed to directly, but instead is invoked indirectly, through some other thing — a standard of reference — that bears some relationship with the referent. The two main types of indirect reference are: associative, in which there is a relationship of association between the referent and the standard; and comparative, in which the referent is compared with the standard. It is the former type that *-wa* marks: it establishes the identity of an entity by virtue of an ASSOCIATIVE relationship between that entity and something else. This relationship is always a conceptually and semantically close one: a kin relationship, a spatial relationship, a participant-process relationship, or an attributive relationship (rare). Associative reference is also inherent to the oblique pronouns; however, this is much less constrained, and includes possession (alienable and inalienable), right of use, and so forth (McGregor, 1990, 1997a).

An interesting characteristic of the associative reference involved with *-wa* is that the standard of reference need not remain fixed, and may change even within a clause (see also footnote 7). Thus, in (12) and (13), each of the two participant groups referred to serves as the standard of reference for the other.

- (12) *marna -wa -ngga wardgoonayi ngajangoo -wa -yoorroo*
 B+ -wa -ERG he:brings:them:two B- -wa -DU
 'The older brother brings his two younger brothers along.'

⁸ There is a sandhi process whereby sequences such as /V-wa/ may in certain contexts be realised as /aa/, sometimes optionally, sometimes obligatorily. Why the process has applied in this particular instance, but not elsewhere when *-wa* is attached to Ns is not clear. Perhaps this is an indication that lexicalisation has occurred. (Another less likely possibility is that *jinyjilaa* is a representation of *jinyjili-ya*, involving the locative marker *-ya* — this combination is attested in other examples involving the same metaphorical use of *jinyjili*. However, reduction of /iya/ to /aa/ is not a common sandhi process.

- (13) *marna -wa boolooboowoorrayi ngajanyoo -wa -yoorroo -ngga*
 B+ -wa they:two:follow:him Z- -wa -DU -ERG
 'The two sisters follow that man.'

Such constructions as this are not unique to Gooniyandi, and are found in various other languages, including Turkish (Lewis, 1967) and Hua (Haiman, 1980). Lewis (1967) refers to the construction as the "Janus construction". Example (14) shows a further complication: here the man referred to in the final NP serves as standard for the first two NPs, while his wife, designated by the second NP, serves as standard for the final NP. In other words, two of the three NPs serve as standards for one another and the third NP, which does not serve as a standard.

- (14) *lambadi -wa -ngga ward- ... mundurraanhi garingi -wa*
 WF -wa -ERG go he:takes:her:to:him wife -wa
ngoombarna -wa -ya
 H -wa -LOC
 'The father in law takes his wife to him. (i.e. gives her to him in marriage).'

In this respect the associative reference involved with *-wa* more closely resembles the type of reference indicated by the comparative determiners *yaanya* 'other, some' and *yaabja* 'others, some' than the associative reference of oblique pronouns.⁹ Thus, compare (12) and (13) with the following:

- (15) *yaanya birrinyiwoorloo thiwa yaanya birrinyiwoorloo gooroogooroo*
 other wasp red other wasp black
 'One wasp (type) is red, another is black.'
- (16) *yiyili -ya garndiwangoorloo yoowooloo yaabja ngarragi ngaaboo*
 Yiyili -LOC many man others my F
yaabja ngarragi marna
 others my B+
 'There are lots of people at Yiyili. Some are my fathers, others are my brothers.'

By contrast, as far as I can determine (although admittedly the evidence is not entirely convincing, since I did not check these matters out carefully in the field), if *-wa* in utterances such as (12) and (13) were replaced by an oblique pronoun, the latter would necessarily refer to a single individual as unique standard of reference within the clause. Thus, as I understand it, both instances of the determiner *nhoowoo* in (17) must be interpreted as referring to the same person, presumably someone other than the two participants in this clause, the older brother and the two younger brothers.¹⁰ Granted regular marriages, of course, the interpretation 'The older brother brings his two younger brothers along' — the normal interpretation for (12) — follows. But (17) requires that there be actually four persons related

⁹ McGregor (1997a:323) proposes that *yaanya* and *yaabja* are actually indefinite reference items, even though in these examples indirect reference appears to be involved. More recent work (McGregor, 1997b), however, suggests that comparative reference well may be inherent to the meaning of these words — certainly to the former.

¹⁰ If the second participant in (17), the Undergoer (object), had been taken as the standard of reference, the Agent (subject) would have to have been referred to as *marna-ngga birrangi* (B+ -ERG their) 'their older brother', and the *nhoowoo* 'his' in the final NP (as I understand it) could not refer to that older brother.

as brothers, whereas (12) does not: there need be no more than three brothers in the universe of the discourse.¹¹

- (17) *marna -ngga nhoowoo wardgoonayi ngaja -yoorroo nhoowoo*
 B+ -ERG his he:brings:them:two B- -DU his
 'His₁ older brother brings his₁ two younger brothers along.'

Furthermore, (12) can be used in various contexts in which (17) cannot. For instance, if there were four brothers, the standard of reference in (17) would have to be the second oldest brother; and the *marna* would necessarily be the oldest brother, the two *ngaja*, the two youngest brothers. This need not be the case for (12): there is no necessity for either the *marna* to be the actual oldest brother, or the *ngaja* to be the actual youngest ones. For all these reasons (12) and (17) are not synonymous.

4. CONTRAST WITH OTHER MEANS OF EXPRESSING KIN RELATIONSHIPS

There are a variety of means of expressing kinship relations. Most obviously, an oblique pronominal may be used to refer to the propositus, as in *ngarragi ngarranyi* (my mother) 'my mother'; alternatively, a dative marked NP may be used, as in *jiginya-yoo ngarranyi* (child-DAT mother) 'the child's mother', although this is comparatively rare. If the pronoun is third person, the kinterm sometimes has *-wa* attached to it, as in *nhoowoo garingi-wa* (his wife-*wa*) 'his wife'. Precisely how these possibilities contrast semantically with the kinterm plus *-wa* construction is not entirely clear. Nor is it clear how these constructions contrast with the use of plain kinterm stems (i.e. without any formal indication of the propositus). Clearly we cannot do justice to this difficult problem here. However, it is germane to briefly mention some of the more important considerations.

First, the use of a free oblique pronoun is typically associated with focus on the identification of a referent, whereas the use of a kinterm plus *-wa* is more strongly associated with attribution, with the kin status of some person in a particular socially defined circumstance. This is possibly a consequence of the observation made in the previous section that unlike the oblique pronominal *nhoowoo* 'his, her, its', *-wa* does not invoke a single enduring standard of reference; in other words, it does not actually refer to the standard of reference, but merely invokes it.

One reflection of this observation is that the construction involving the free oblique pronominal is quite frequently found in identifying relational clauses — clauses which establish the identity of some entity in terms of an alternative designation (McGregor, 1990:294-298) — whereas that with the kinterm plus *-wa* are rarely found in this context, and are more likely to be found in attributive relational clauses — i.e. clauses which ascribe some quality or

¹¹ It might be objected that in a society in which everyone is related to everyone else by classificatory kin relationships, it would always be possible to find some person who is a brother to a set of three brothers, who could serve as the standard of reference. But the point is that in other occurrences of *-wa* there is always some contender for the role of standard of reference, some individual in the universe of discourse, rather than an arbitrary, unspecified individual who might serve as a possible contender for the standard of reference. The objection thus loses its force. And (granted present understanding of the morphemes) even in an end of the world scenario where the three men were the only people alive, (12) would still be pragmatically acceptable, indeed true — although (17) would be pragmatically impossible.

property of an entity, as in examples such as (2), (5) and (6) above (see McGregor, 1990:298ff, where they are referred to as “characterising”).

Related to this, the construction with free oblique pronoun is likely to be used to establish a discourse referent, using another person (whose identity is patent) as the standard of reference, and the fact that they are related in this or that way is not of great importance. What is most significant is that the identity of the person be established, and they enter into the universe of referents for the discourse. The construction involving kinterm plus *-wa* is not normally used in this way. Rather, it strongly tends to be used when it is the kin relationship itself that the referent person enters into, rather than their identity *per se*, that is of most significance in the discourse. (14) provides a good illustration of this point: here it is the fact that the persons are related to one another by certain genealogical or affinal ties, and the respective duties and roles that follow from this, that is critical to the text (which concerned kinship ties, rights and obligations), rather than the specific identity of the persons. There are a number of such examples in the corpus. In (18), for instance, the actual identity of the mother is not at issue; rather, the question is where she is — and why she isn’t looking after the child.

- (18) *jiginya joogoo nardaari ngarranyoo -wa ngoonyi -ya -wirri*
 little child he:cries M -wa where -LOC -INDEF
 ‘The little child is crying; I don’t know where its mother is.’

When used referentially, it is frequently (though not always, as example (18) shows) the case that a kinterm plus *-wa* is used selectively, to choose one member of a given group of persons. This may be either a group that has already been established in the discourse, or one that can be inferred from knowledge of the world and/or text. In the following extended example, the kinterm plus *-wa* designates one of a pair which has just been explicitly established.¹²

- (19) *ngirndaji garrayili boolga nhoowoo jaminyi gardbini*
 this old old:man his DS he:killed:him
moowoorroo -ngarri -ngga jaminyi -wa -ngga gardbini gijali
 club -COMIT -ERG MF -wa -ERG he:killed:him dead
yilba nangbani jaminyi -wa -ngga boolga wayandi jardjingi
 for:good he:died MF -wa -ERG old:man fire he:lit:it
 ‘This old man killed his own grandson with a club. The grandfather killed him dead.
 The grandfather lit a fire.’

Observe that the analytic construction involving a free oblique pronoun is used in this example to establish the new referent, by explicitly relating it to a previously established one, the old man. Now that the two protagonists are established, the former is singled out with the designation *jaminyi-wa* ‘his grandfather’ — which, by the way, does not really serve to single him out specifically, since *jaminyi* is a self-reciprocal; however, granted the preceding context, which of the two is obvious. (And this is made precisely explicit in the next clause.)

What I am getting at is that when a kinterm plus *-wa* is used referentially, it does not normally present a new, unpredictable referent into the discourse. This holds even for (18), in which it

¹² Quite obviously the two participants are not discharging socially relevant roles pertinent to their kin relationship in this example. To the contrary, the old man is behaving in a way which is quite at odds with the expected behaviour between two *jaminyi*. But the peculiar behaviour is highlighted by the frequent reference to the kin relationship, which it contrasts sharply with.

may be taken for granted that a child will have a mother, and thus both referents can be regarded as given. A kinterm plus oblique pronoun, by contrast, is often used introductively, to bring a new actant into the discourse. This difference is consistent with the association of the former with attribution, the latter with identification. *-wa* can present new information, but only of the attributing type, not the identifying type. The only possible exception is when the two constructions are combined. But why the two should be able to co-occur — and what the combination means — remains a mystery to me, a matter for further investigation in the field.

Diagrammatic iconicity should now be apparent. On the one hand, the single-word construction basically designates a single entity, the individual who bears the specified kin relation to some standard of reference, the *propositus*, which is presumed (or invoked), rather than referred to. On the other hand, in the analytical construction, two entities are clearly being referred to, the *propositus* and the referent. (See also Chappell and McGregor (1989).) Additionally, the single-word construction is associated with less information content than the analytical construction.

Second, it seems that plain kinterms — without either oblique pronouns or *-wa* — tend to be used when there is little chance of misunderstanding. Thus, they are frequently used in reference to the speaker's kin, less frequently to the hearers kin, these two possibilities being partly conditioned by the linguistic context: the former in statements, the latter in directives and address (vocatives). Furthermore, if there is a single (third person) referent established in a text or discourse, and hence no other contender for the *propositus* role, an unmodified kinterm is more likely to be used. In a text concerning a man who had been hunting, for instance, the father and mother of this man were referred to simply by *ngaaboo* 'father' and *ngarranyi* 'mother', respectively, there being no possibility that they were any other person's father or mother. An oblique pronominal is used when there is more than one likely contender for *propositus*; it permits, in addition, contrastive focus to be assigned to the *propositus*.

5. CONCLUSION

It seems to me that the evidence adduced in this paper justifies my claim that there is a single morpheme *-wa* in Gooniyandi. The only thing that does not have a ready explanation is the fact that in its use as a V suffix, *-wa* does not necessarily invoke a standard of reference which is "other", neither speaker nor hearer, which is always the case for kinship-possessive uses of *-wa*. It is possible, that is, for the erstwhile agent ("subject") or undergoer ("object") of the *-wa*-marked V to be first or second person. (9) above, for instance, could have had the verb form *roorrijirrarni* 'we argued together', and it would mean 'We argued going along'.

The present analysis is further supported by diachronic and comparative evidence. The northern Kimberley languages Wunambal and Gunin/Kwini show a somewhat restricted comitative suffix *-we* (Capell and Coate, 1984:149, McGregor, 1993:39). I suggest that Gooniyandi *-wa* is cognate with this morpheme,¹³ and that it was a type of comitative in an earlier stage of Gooniyandi.¹⁴ As is well known, comitative markers in many Australian

¹³ Whether it was areally diffused at some time in the past, or is a retention from a proto-language for Bunuban and Worrorran is not clear; I am inclined to the former scenario.

¹⁴ Miriwung has suffixes *-gang* and *-gany* which can be attached to kinterms and body part terms, indicating third person possessor, and masculine or feminine possessed, respectively (Kofod, 1978:144); quite probably these are also historically related to Gooniyandi *-wa* (which shows, it will be recalled, a *g*-initial allomorph)

languages are stem-forming suffixes, which derive Ns of the attributive or qualifying type (comparable with adjectives in languages which distinguish these as a separate word class). If **-wa* was such a suffix, the uses of *-wa* in modern Gooniyandi are in no way unusual — and this goes for the exceptional as well as the regular uses of the morpheme. Attached to kinterms, **-wa* might reasonably be presumed to have meant something like '(the quality of) having the kin relation'. It is not far from this to '(someone) bearing the kin relation to someone'. And of course this would make it clear why the standard of reference is not actually referred to, or indexed (as pointed out in sections 3 and 4 above), but merely invoked or presumed. Nor are the other uses of *-wa* in any way exceptional. It is not unusual in Kimberley languages for a comitative marker to occur on adverbials to indicate some relational aspect such as side or direction. And although I am not aware of any language in which a comitative marker attaches to a V root giving rise to an attributing N used as a secondary predicate, there is nothing especially surprising about this.

Supporting evidence comes from Gooniyandi's only close genetic relative, Bunuba, which shows the indubitably cognate suffix *-way*,¹⁵ which, attached to kinterms, serves to indicate third person propositus, as in e.g. *madjali-way* (WM-*way*) 'his mother in law (etc.)' (Rumsey, forthcoming). Although Bunuba *-way* does not show the other uses associated with the Gooniyandi suffix *-wa*, there is another environment in which it is found, as illustrated in example (20).

- (20) *jimarri bindayminy -way yatha'yiirrayntha yilngarri -wiya*
 mate Bindayminy -PAIR we:sat altogether -DEF
 'My mate Bindayminy and I have been sitting down (together) for a long time.'

Rumsey (forthcoming) considers this to be a different morpheme (which he glosses PAIR), accidentally homophonous with the third person propositus suffix. Clearly, however, this use is entirely consistent with a former comitative marker, and the association is not fortuitous.¹⁶ This suffix has developed historically in rather different ways in Gooniyandi and Bunuba, although one use (as a third person propositus suffix to kinterms) is shared.

It has been observed at various points in the exposition that a root plus *-wa* is typically used attributively. Indeed, one might take this to be fundamental to the meaning of the morpheme, and consider the referential uses as secondary, perhaps more apparent than real. For instance, it might be suggested that a kinterm plus *-wa* may only serve in an attributing role, either in a clause, or in an NP. It might be suggested that in those cases where it appears to serve as the "head" or Entity N of an NP, in fact it is not, and in reality this role has been ellipsed. Thus, the last clause of (19) might be taken as illustrating the situation as it really is; a head N such as *boolga* 'old man', *yoowooloo* 'man', *goornboo* 'woman', or whatever, can always be added to the NP. Related to this, we could see kinterm plus *-wa* as representing something like 'kin relation-ly'. Thus, *marna-wa* might be seen as meaning 'older brother-ly', designating

and the northern Kimberley comitative *-we* — the final *ng* and *ny* represent masculine and feminine suffixes, respectively. A more speculative association is with the Mangarayi suffix *-wa* which has a specific determiner function when suffixed to nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, as in e.g. *balayi-wa* (big-*wa*) 'big one', and *yunggun-wa* (ahead-*wa*) 'leader' (Merlan, 1982:171).

¹⁵ Neither Bunuba nor Gooniyandi shows the mid front vowel /e/ found in Northern Kimberley languages; the phonetic realisation of the Bunuba suffix *-way* would be very similar to that of the Kunin/Gwini *-we*. What has happened in Gooniyandi may then be that the final segment has been lost.

¹⁶ Whether there is one or two suffixes *-way* is another question, which needs to be addressed separately for Bunuba.

someone who behaves in the manner of an older brother to some person. It is difficult to argue convincingly against this analysis, and it certainly contains many valid elements (including the fact that it is in accord with the historical scenario outlined above). However, it seems to me that in addition to this, the relational nature of *-wa* is inherent to its meaning.

Finally, there is a lesson for descriptive practice: it is not necessarily the case that morphemes which appear to form paradigms actually do. Although *-wa* 'his, her, its their kin relation' and *-wadi* 'your kin relation' appear to form a paradigm of pronominal suffixes to kin terms (together with \emptyset 'my/our kin relation', it might be suggested), such as exist in many Australian Aboriginal languages, this turns out not to be the case. The two morphemes do not belong together in any significant way; they share no patterned behaviour in common. Paradigms are not given, always available to the analyst on inspection. They need to be established on language-internal grounds.

REFERENCES

- Capell, A. and H.H.J. Coate (1984). *Comparative studies in northern Kimberley languages*. Pacific Linguistics, Canberra.
- Chappell, H. and W. McGregor (1989). Alienability, inalienability and nominal classification. *BLS* 15, 24-36.
- Haiman, J. (1980). *Hua: a Papuan language of the Eastern Highlands of New Guinea*. John Benjamins, Amsterdam.
- Kofod, F.M. (1978). *The Miriwung language (East Kimberley): a phonological and morphological study*. MA thesis, University of New England.
- Lewis, G. L. (1967). *Turkish grammar*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- McGregor, W.B. (1990). *A functional grammar of Gooniyandi*. John Benjamins, Amsterdam.
- McGregor, W.B. (1993). *Kunin/Gwini*. Lincom Europa, Munich.
- McGregor, W. B. (1996). Dyadic and polyadic kin terms in Gooniyandi. *Anthropological Linguistics* 38, 216-247.
- McGregor, W.B. (1997a). *Semiotic grammar*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- McGregor, W.B. (1997b). Indefinite and comparative determiners in Australian languages. Paper presented to Second International Workshop on Australian Linguistics, University of Melbourne, December 1997.
- Merlan, F. (1982). *Mangarayi*. (Lingua Descriptive Series, 4.) North Holland, Amsterdam.
- Rumsey, A. (forthcoming). Bunuba. In: *The handbook of Australian languages, Volume 5*. (Dixon R.M.W. and B. Blake, (Eds.)). Oxford University Press Australia, Melbourne.
- Nichols, J. (1978). Secondary predicates. *BLS* 4, 114-127.