Frs. Hermann Nekes and Ernest Worms's
"Australian Languages"

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Abstract. – This article describes the circumstances surrounding the recent publication in book form and on CD-ROM of an edited version of Frs. Hermann Nekes and Ernest Worms's "Australian Languages," which originally appeared in microfilm in 1953, as Micro-Bibliotheca Anthropos 10. The authors' magnum opus is described and appraised, and is situated in the context of the times; the editorial decisions are outlined, and the most significant differences between the original and edited version remarked on. It is suggested that the main value of the work lies in the documentation it provides of a number of moribund and extinct languages of the northwest of the continent. [*Australian Aboriginal linguistics, missionary linguistics, linguistic historiography, documentary linguistics*]

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Introduction

In mid-1952 the director of the Anthropos Institute, Fritz Bornemann, wrote to Fr. Ernest Worms offering to publish his and Fr. Hermann Nekes's "Australian Languages" on microfilm. It duly appeared the following year, as the tenth volume in the series Micro-Bibliotheca Anthropos (Nekes and Worms 1953; cf. Fig. 1). Thus ended the surviving author's long struggle to bring their *magnum opus* to the light of day.

Eight years previously, in 1945, the two Pallottine fathers had considered that their studies of Australian languages were nearing completion, and that their manuscript, "Australian Languages," was ready for publication. They began seeking a publisher in Australia, where they hoped their work would be published. By March 1947 interest of a Melbourne-based publisher had been secured. Thus began a saga of disappointment for the authors: failure to obtain a publication subsidy from the Australian government; failure to obtain the necessary phonetic fonts for the linotype machines; the disappearance without trace of a "well known Catholic gentleman of the city [of Melbourne]" whose assistance in negotiations with the publisher had been enlisted; and ultimately the withdrawal of the publisher from the project. Subsequent attempts to interest Australian publishers failed. Thus Fr. Worms was to sacrifice his ideal of publication within the country, and accept the offer of the Anthropos Institute.

In February 2006, some 61 years after Nekes and Worms had begun looking for a publisher, "Australian Languages" eventually appeared in book form, under the imprint of Mouton de Gruyter, vol. 24 in their series "Trends in Linguistics. Documentation" (Nekes and Worms 2006). The authors' dream was at least partly realized: the main descriptive portion of their work was published in book form, although the dictionaries, which constitute over half of the massive 1065-page work, appeared on an accompanying CD-ROM. And of course, the publisher is a German company.
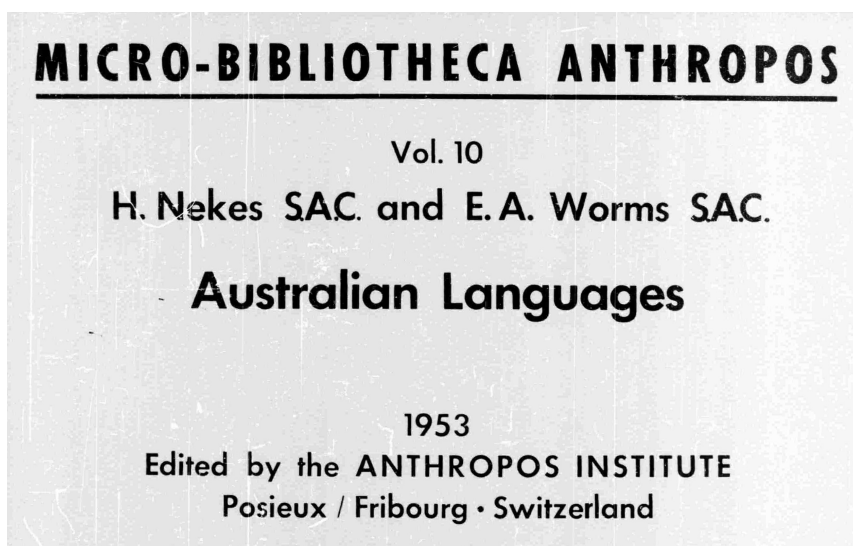
MICRO-BIBLIOTHECA ANTHROPOS

Vol. 10

H. Nekes S.A.C. and E. A. Worms S.A.C.

Australian Languages

1953

Edited by the ANTHROPOS INSTITUTE

Posieux / Fribourg · Switzerland

Fig. 1: Title page of Nekes and Worms 1953.

The Mouton volume was edited for publication by the present author, who began work on it in the early 1990s. In this article I wish to provide some background to "Australian Languages," to say something about the authors, to situate their work in its times, to say something about my interest in the project, and the editorial decisions I made. Fuller details on these topics can be found in the editor's introduction to the book (Nekes and Worms 2006: 1–40). What I present here is a shortened and revised version, in the expectation that readers of *Anthropos* may be interested in knowing about this unusual, indeed exceptional work, a landmark in missionary linguistics of the mid-twentieth century, a repository of information on a number of now moribund languages of northwestern Australia, and a source of primary information on Australian Aboriginal anthropology. Aside from this, the work deserves, in my opinion, to be better known by the community of linguists and anthropologists.

The authors

Born in Essen, Hermann Nekes (1875–1948) was ordained in 1899, and awarded his Doctor of Theology the following year. From 1901 to 1909 he served as a missionary in the Jaunde mission in the Cameroons; there he studied the Bantu language Ewondo (Jaunde), translated religious texts, and published some scholarly pieces mainly on tone. He was recalled to Germany in 1909, where he remained until 1935, teaching first in the Seminary for Oriental Languages in Berlin, then in the

Academy of the Pallottine Province of Limburg. It was there that, soon after the First World War, he taught Ernest Worms, and thus began their long friendship, and eventually their decade-long collaboration on Australian languages.

A native of Bochum, Ernest Worms (1891–1963) entered the Pallottine Society in 1912; having been called up for military service in the First World War, it was not until 1920 that he was ordained. After a decade of pastoral work and teaching in Europe, he was appointed to the Pallottine mission in the Kimberley (Australia) in 1930, and served as parish priest in Broome for the next eight years. Soon after his arrival, he began anthropological and linguistic studies of the local Yawuru. His studies intensified and expanded on the arrival of his mentor and former teacher Hermann Nekes in 1935, who had been appointed to the Beagle Bay Mission, situated some 180 kilometres north of Broome, on the Dampier Land Peninsula (Fig. 2 and 3).

Nekes and Worms remained in the Kimberley for the next three years, continuing their data-gathering on the local languages and cultures. Then in 1938 Fr. Worms was appointed as Rector of the newly opened Pallottine College in Kew, Melbourne. During his ten years there he and Fr. Nekes (who also spent much of this period in Melbourne) collaborated on the analysis of their language data, and the writing of "Australian Languages." In 1948 Worms returned to the Kimberley, continuing his researches, and extending his region of interest from Dampier Land to the Kimberley mainland, and ultimately to the eastern states. He again returned to the east in 1957, where

Fig. 2: Beagle Bay religious community, probably 1936 or 1937. Back row (left to right): George Vill, Richard Besenfelder, Anton Omasmeier. Front row (left to right): Paul Müller (?), Bruno Kupke, Otto Raible, Hermann Nekes, Dr. Betz-Kortez, Dr. Betz (Photograph courtesy of the Australian Pallottine Archives).


Fig. 3: Fr. E. Worms in Broome (Photograph courtesy of the Australian Pallottine Archives).
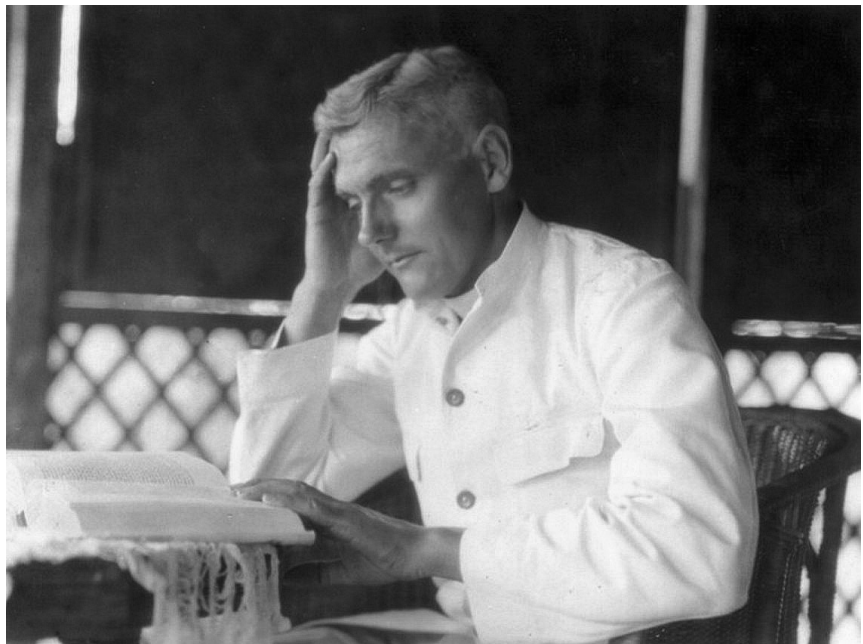
he remained until his death in 1963, spending his last years mainly on writing and involvement in Aboriginal affairs. Thus in 1961 he was appointed as member of the linguistic panel of the interim council that recommended the establishment of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (now Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies).

The Authors' Work on Australian Languages and Cultures

Of the two authors, it was Fr. Nekes who was the more academic linguist, although the extent to which he had been formally trained is uncertain – it is not known how much linguistics and anthropology was taught in the Pallottine seminaries when he was a student in the 1890s. Fr. Worms had rather broader interests, and his lin-
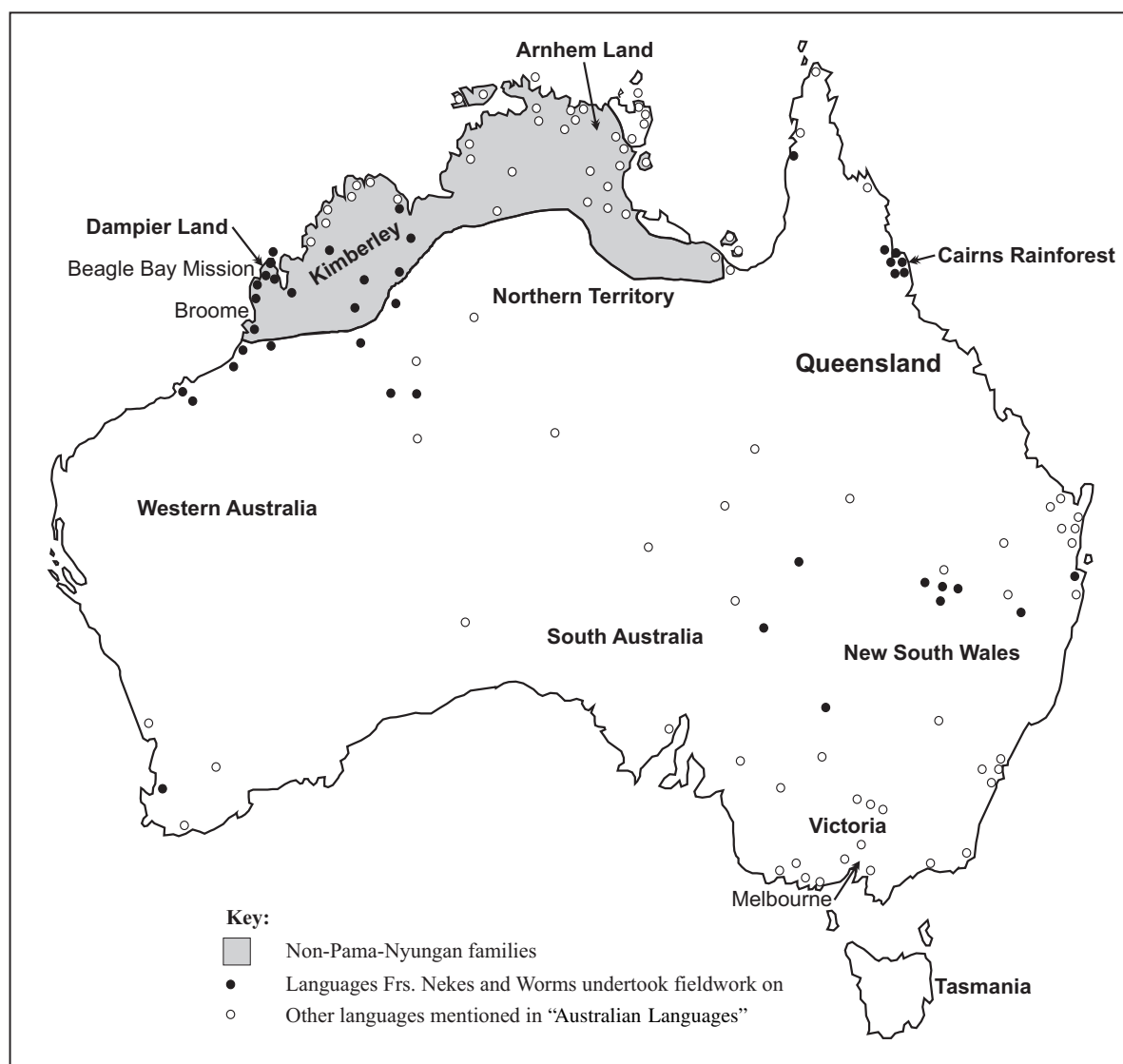
Map: Australian languages studied by Frs. Nekes and Worms.

guistic research was overall fairly cursory, rarely progressing far beyond recording of basic lexicon and a few texts, normally traditional mythology. He was primarily interested in Aboriginal religion, and his main publication as sole author is his "Australische Eingeborenen-Religionen" (Worms and Petri 1968), which appeared posthumously, edited by the anthropologist Helmut Petri. (This work has since been translated into English – Worms 1986, and a second revised version, Worms and Petri 1998.) Worms's interest in language might be fairly said to have been largely practically motivated, by considerations of missionizing (Worms 1970: 374 f.), and by the light he believed the lexicon threw onto Aboriginal religion and cul-

tural practices (e.g., Worms 1944: 284). He was also concerned about documenting the languages, believing them to be highly endangered. This concern did not, however, translate into the maintenance of the languages, which did not become an issue of wide concern in Australia until the 1970s (Amery and Gale forthcoming).

The focus of Nekes and Worms's research on Australian languages was the Nyulnyulan family, a small family of about ten languages located on Dampier Land Peninsular and adjacent regions of the Kimberley (Stokes and McGregor 2003). Their work covered all the languages except for Warrwa (spoken further afield, to the east of Derby) and Ngumbarl (possibly moribund by the 1930s).

Nearby Pama-Nyungan languages Karajarri, Mangala, and Walmajarri were also studied, though somewhat less intensively, and with somewhat less success. In a sense, one might say that the authors wore Nyulnyulan spectacles, just as some of their successors in the post-1960 era saw Australian languages from the vantage point of Pama-Nyungan languages. Fr. Worms, the more active fieldworker, undertook, after 1948, fieldtrips into the Kimberley hinterland, during which he recorded information on various other languages, Worrorran (mainly Ngarinyin) and Bunuban (Bunuba). He also undertook a number of trips to the eastern states, where he gathered wordlists and texts in the languages of the Cairns rainforest region, and western New South Wales. The map shows the locations of the authors' fieldwork languages, and other languages included in their investigation.

Fr. Worms describes their fieldwork procedures as follows, in the most complete account of their methods (1953: 967):

The most comprehensive work could be done at Beagle Bay and Lombadina. To these places members of other tribes were brought periodically for interviews of longer duration, sometimes lasting for several months. Periodically universal round-table conferences were held with representatives of different tribes. It is interesting to note that the appreciation of each of these for their mother tongue increased as they became more and more aware of their linguistic differences. They proudly realized that the special characteristic of their own language was their prerogative, e.g., the Bād [Bardi] took pride in the shortness of their language, the Yaoro [Yawuru] in the fitness and completeness of theirs.

Difficulties for the authors arose from varied sources, bodily fatigue from the enervating climate, and the high expenses caused by the upkeep and transport of the informants. Much patience was also required in dealing with the natives on account of the shyness of women, the secrecy of men, and the restlessness of both. The endless repetition of conjugations especially made them tired, listless and disinterested [sic]. The authors had to be very careful in order to receive correct information, as some women tried to "make it easy," as they confessed later when found out, by simplifying complicated grammatical forms so as to shorten the sessions and lessen inquiries. E. A. Worms' fieldwork was a more primitive one as he had to find the natives in the bush or desert and stay with them in improvised camps. Due to the paucity of provisions the number of natives had to be kept to a minimum.

During sittings shorthand notes were continually taken. When possible these were rearranged the following night and checked the next morning. Each word was written on a separate slip of paper in duplicate (English–Native; Native–English), and arranged in alphabetical order in several long boxes. Sentences used by the natives in spontaneous conversation in their own tongue were written down and analysed after each session. This gave ample scope for further investigation in grammatical and ethnological problems.

Nekes' and Worms's fieldwork was conducted before the advent of high quality portable audio-recording devices, and, as the above account indicates, they used paper and pencil as their primary means of recording information on the languages. They did have a phonograph with them, courtesy of the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv, and brought to Australia by Fr. Nekes. This, however, was used exclusively for recording songs, one sample of which is included on the CD-ROM accompanying the 2006 book.

Like most fieldworkers, the authors did the bulk of their linguistic analysis and writing up away from the field, in their cases, in Melbourne between 1939 and 1949 (Worms 1953: 967 f.). They transcribed the above-mentioned slips to exercise books, where the information was alphabetically arranged by headwords in the Aboriginal languages, with example sentences and inflectional paradigms included. These exercise books are, as far as I have been able to determine, the most primary of the surviving materials: the notes and slips appear to have been lost or destroyed. Thus we do not know anything about the system of shorthand they employed in their initial transcriptions.

Fr. Worms, as already mentioned, was interested in the modes of thought of Aboriginal people, which he believed could be revealed through investigation of the lexicons of the languages. Interestingly, he also undertook what might be described as the first psycholinguistic experiments on Australian languages (Worms 1942). With Fr. Nekes he investigated, in the early 1940s, the sense of smell amongst the residents of Beagle Bay Mission, who then (due to the war) represented a good sampling of Dampier Land and nearby languages. Worms made up a set of smell stimuli, which were tested with speakers of the languages represented in the mission. Fr. Nekes wrote down the responses of the speakers, which were given in their own languages. This experiment provided the authors with lexical and grammatical information relating to the expression of smells and the perception of smells, which material was later used in "Australian Languages." It also provided evidence against the then widely held view that Aboriginal people had a superior sense of smell to Europeans (which in popular belief put them lower on the evolutionary scale). While their experiment might not appear to us today to be particularly

psycholinguistic, in the authors' views it would certainly have been (as per the title, both linguistic and psychological), given their Whorfian views of the lexicon.

Some Remarks on the Authors' Thought on Language and Culture

Neither Hermann Nekes nor Ernest Worms was trained in modern linguistics; both employed the traditional Latinate model in their description of Australian languages. The impacts of this model are apparent throughout their writings in the word-centred bias of their descriptions, their part-of-speech classification, the absence of significant discussion of syntax, and their treatment of nominal case and verbal categories. Its hegemonic status is revealed in the relative absence of arguments for their analyses. Nevertheless, they did not use the model mechanically or unintelligently, and struggled with the descriptive problems that the Nyulnyulan languages raised for it.

Although they did not use modern terms like *phoneme* and *morpheme*, they had an intuitive operational grasp of the fundamentals of both concepts. However, they deployed them inconsistently, and in a piecemeal way, giving rise to potentially serious problems of interpretation for the modern reader. More surprisingly, they had a grasp of the notion of morphophonemic alternations, at least within the inflection paradigms of verbs; these they spoke of as "phonetical changes." For instance, they observed (Nekes and Worms 1953: 112) that if a stem begins with a labial or velar, the final consonant of the pronominal prefix becomes a homorganic labial or velar. Thus compare Jabirrjabirr ŋam-baṇdjen "I exchange," ŋaneŋ-gal "I wandered," and ŋan-dam "I hit it."[1]

The lexical bias of the authors is revealed clearly both in the space they allotted to the dictionaries in "Australian Languages" (see below), and the significance they accorded the lexicon and lexical items. Specifically, they presumed (as was not uncommon amongst anthropologists and linguistic

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1 In fact, there are two problems with Nekes and Worms's account of these alternations. First, the nasal at the end of the prefix is epenthetic, and not part of the underlying form of the pronominal prefix (e.g., Hosokawa 1991: 114; McGregor 1996: 42, 44; cf. Bowern 2004: 125, who suggests it is a tense marker in Nyulnyul and Bardi). Second, they missed the corresponding nasal assimilation in ŋanen-djalen "I saw it," which should be ŋanenj-djalen in their orthography, also with a homorganic nasal at the end of the surface prefix.

fieldworkers of the period) a fairly extreme Whorfian stance in respect of the lexicon. They believed – at least Fr. Worms did; Fr. Nekes says nothing explicitly in anything penned solely by himself, though one presumes he held similar beliefs – that examination of the meanings of words would reveal significant facts about the "native mind," the way Aboriginal people perceive and construe the world.

It is not surprising, then, that one component of Worms's approach to Aboriginal religion (his favourite topic) was via the lexicon. Thus he assembled sets of lexical items from many different languages showing similarities of form and meaning. From these he attempted to ascertain recurrent phonetic-semantic "syndromes" indicative of common underlying conceptualisations, and links between these conceptualisations. In doing this he has been misinterpreted by some modern scholars as setting up cognate sets and pursuing a misguided application of the historical-comparative method. While he does presume etymological relatedness amongst the items in his syndromes, close reading of his discussions reveals two important qualifications. First, he generally put the wide distribution of his syndromes down to borrowing rather than to retention from a protolanguage. Second, while he believed the syndromes showed relations amongst words, it is not clear that he saw them as implying corresponding relationships amongst languages. Criticisms that his cognate sets were spurious are thus beside the point: his lexical syndromes were never intended as cognate sets. (Admittedly, some wooly passages would lead one to this interpretation; I seriously doubt whether Worms was clear in his own mind on the distinction between borrowed and retained items.)

Worms also employed lexical syndromes in his interpretation of Australian prehistory, though again in a way that does not gel with the historical-comparative method. Reading between the lines, he appears to construct the continent as a language region made up of languages, that are perhaps ultimately genetically related, in close contact. (This aspect is not explicitly discussed, and one remains uncertain as to the extent to which Worms believed in the relatedness of the languages forming the most archaic "layer.") From the frequency of shared lexical similarities in his syndromes he inferred earlier contact of peoples, rather than – or as well as – retention from a common protolanguage. Thus the (alleged) high frequency of shared lexical similarities between Kimberley and Cairns rainforest languages was indicative of earlier geographical proximity; they were subsequently

separated by the arrival of a powerful invader, the Aranda people, whose language Arrernte (again allegedly) shows fewer lexical similarities with either Kimberley or rainforest languages. What is striking about Worms's story is the greater weight he appears to accord to borrowing (though he does not use the term) over retention,[2] anticipating more recent approaches (such as Dixon 2001, 2002) in which borrowing takes precedence over retention in accounting for lexical (and grammatical) similarities.

The Editor's Involvement in the Project

I first saw "Australian Languages" in 1985 in the library of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, while doing library research for the preparation of a handbook of Kimberley languages (McGregor 1988). At this point, the work made little impression on me; it was not until a year or two later, after I had myself begun fieldwork on Nyulnyul, one of the Nyulnyulan languages, that Frs. Nekes and Worms had investigated, that I began to understand and appreciate the significance of their work.

On taking up a research fellowship in 1987 at La Trobe University, Melbourne, I made contact with the Australian chapter of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate, and was given permission of access to the archival holdings of Frs. Nekes and Worms held in the Pallottine community house in Kew. Now realising the importance of the two fathers' work to the documentation of a number of moribund languages and to the history of Australianist linguistics, I conceived of the idea of revising "Australian Languages" for publication as a book. It was clear, however, that the text was unpublishable in the form the authors had left it (see below), and that much editorial intervention would be necessary to produce a comprehensible text.

The then Regional Superior of the Pallottines in Australia, Fr. Michael McMahon, strongly supported this plan, as did Fr. Kevin McKelson, the leading Pallottine linguist in the country. A contract was signed with the Society in 1994 that I would edit "Australian Languages" for publication. The copyright holder, Anthropos Institute, was approached for permission to publish, which was immediately granted by the Director, Dr. Joachim Piepke. Regrettably, this project was, like many publication ventures, to take much longer than planned, due to other research commitments and academic responsibilities of the editor. In the meantime, by the end of 1998 a first revision of Part I of the book (see below) had been completed, and Mouton de Gruyter expressed interest in publishing an edited version of the work.

Significance and Structure of "Australian Languages"

"Australian Languages" is perhaps best described as a pandialectal description of Nyulnyulan languages, with a good measure of comparative data from other languages thrown in; it is not, as suggested by the title, a survey of Australian languages. As one of the authors says, "The title 'Australian Languages' does not imply that a presentation of all Australian languages is given. It merely stresses that in the course of the book languages from all parts of Australia are cited for comparison" (Worms 1953: 961). In saying this, I am not suggesting that the authors saw their work as a pandialectal description of Nyulnyulan: indeed, one of the problems with the manuscript lies precisely in the lack of a clear conceptualisation of purpose, and clear criteria for inclusion and exclusion of facts. Thus in places it comes perilously close to representing everything the authors know about Australian languages. Moreover, their desire for completeness led not only to the inclusion of significant sections on non-Nyulnyulan languages to the detriment of the overall coherence of the book, but also to lack of forcefulness in a number of observations, which are watered down by the inclusion of examples that illustrate a point at best tangential to the one they were attempting to demonstrate.

"Australian Languages" is indeed a unique document, unlike (as far as I am aware) anything else produced in Australia during the twentieth century.

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2 The following quote from Fr. Worms's description of the book bears out this claim with uncharacteristic clarity (1953: 964): "Each word is ear-marked by the abbreviation of that tribe or those tribes where it has been discovered. This identification occasionally reveals the existence of more than one signification for the same term, which is sometimes a good indication of external tribal connection. Such communication is often maintained through the practise of marrying women of other tribes whether near or distant. The present members of a tribe in many instances have forgotten the fact that these words were introduced into their own language from elsewhere."

It is interesting to note that although Fr. Worms does not allude to widespread multilingualism as the primary explanation for borrowing and diffusion amongst Australian languages, he does single out exogamy, which is often considered one of the factors underpinning multilingualism.

As O'Grady, Voegelin, and Voegelin (1966) say, it was one of the "23 fullest treatments of Australian languages" up to the mid-1960s, despite the fact that it does not focus on any particular language. In terms of its coverage and depth of description of Nyulnyulan grammar, "Australian Languages" belongs with the best grammars produced during the second period of research on Australian languages, 1930–1960 (McGregor forthcoming), namely J. R. B. Love's grammar of Worrorra (1934, 2000), T. G. H. Strehlow's grammar of Arrernte (1944), and W. E. Smythe's grammar of Gumbaynggir (1952). In contrast to the articles penned by Arthur Capell during the same period, most of which were genuine surveys, along with the occasional sketch grammar, Nekes and Worms (1953) provide more comprehensive grammatical descriptions. Capell's primary focus was on the classification of Australian languages, and his grammatical descriptions normally went little deeper than necessary for his classificatory purposes. Nekes and Worms effectively adopted Capell's typological classification, adding nothing to it, and even misconstruing it somewhat.

Despite Fr. Wilhelm Schmidt's enormous intellectual influence on both authors, "Australian Languages" and "Die Gliederung der australischen Sprachen" (Schmidt 1919) are different in almost every respect. Schmidt's book was a scholarly attempt to present a coherent picture of Australian languages and to suggest a classification based on the available evidence – he was successful in locating almost every extant reference on the languages of the continent. Nekes and Worms's work, by contrast, fails to present a coherent picture of the linguistic variety of the continent, and contributes virtually no novel insights into their grammatical structures, typology, or classification. Where its strength and lasting value lies is in the new data it presents on a number of previously undescribed and underdescribed languages, some which have since become moribund or extinct. Regrettably, this information is not presented in a very user-friendly way; it is hoped that the present edited version improves accessibility and presentation for future generations of linguists and descendants of speakers of the languages dealt with.

How reliable is the data provided in "Australian Languages"? Those knowledgeable in the Australianist tradition will be familiar with R. M. W. Dixon's derogatory evaluation of Fr. Worms's work on Dyirbal and Yidiɲ (1972: 365 f., 1977: 510), and could be forgiven for doubting the reliability of the data in "Australian Languages,"

and wondering at the wisdom of publishing it at all. Regardless of the validity of Dixon's evaluation – and it cannot be denied that it is not groundless – it must be remembered that it was Fr. Worms, the less accomplished linguist of the pair, who undertook the fieldwork of the Cairns rainforest languages.[3] But this fieldwork was admittedly brief and rather superficial. Moreover, as remarked above, Worms tended to wear Nyulnyulan spectacles, and this clearly led to some of the misinterpretations he is rightly criticized for. The authors' work on Nyulnyulan languages is a different story, and my own evaluation is that their transcriptions are reasonably good, although some phonemic distinctions are represented inconsistently (see Bowern forthcoming for a similar view).

Their grammatical analyses are also reasonable, indeed, good for the time. Despite working by and large within a traditional Latinate model, they did struggle intelligently (though not always successfully) with aspects of Nyulnyulan grammar that do not neatly fit into this model. In this department they were their own worst enemies, having little gift for putting their observations together into a coherent description, so that their text tends to become a list of instances, with scant linking or explanatory material. Thus my earlier comment that a good basis in Nyulnyulan is essential to an understanding of their text. For an appraisal of the dictionaries of "Australian Languages" see McGregor (2005).

The just over one thousand pages of "Australian Languages" are divided into five parts plus a brief introductory section containing a map and list of the languages, basic typological information, and the like. Fig. 4 shows schematically the division of the book into parts, and well illustrates the word-based linguistics they practised.

Part I, "Grammar of the Prefixing and Suffixing Languages of the Southern Kimberley," as the title suggests, focuses on the languages of the far northwest of the continent, in particular, on the Nyulnyulan, and adjacent Pama-Nyungan languages. This part begins with a chapter on phonetics, which is mainly described via comparison with English and German, as was the norm in Australianist linguistics until the 1960s. The following seven chapters deal with the main word classes following

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3 Dixon castigates Worms for his lack of "knowledge of the basic principles of descriptive and comparative linguistics" (1972: 366). This cannot be denied. At the same time, Worms had had no training in modern linguistics, either in Germany or in Australia, where modern linguistics was only beginning to take root in the 1930s and 1940s.
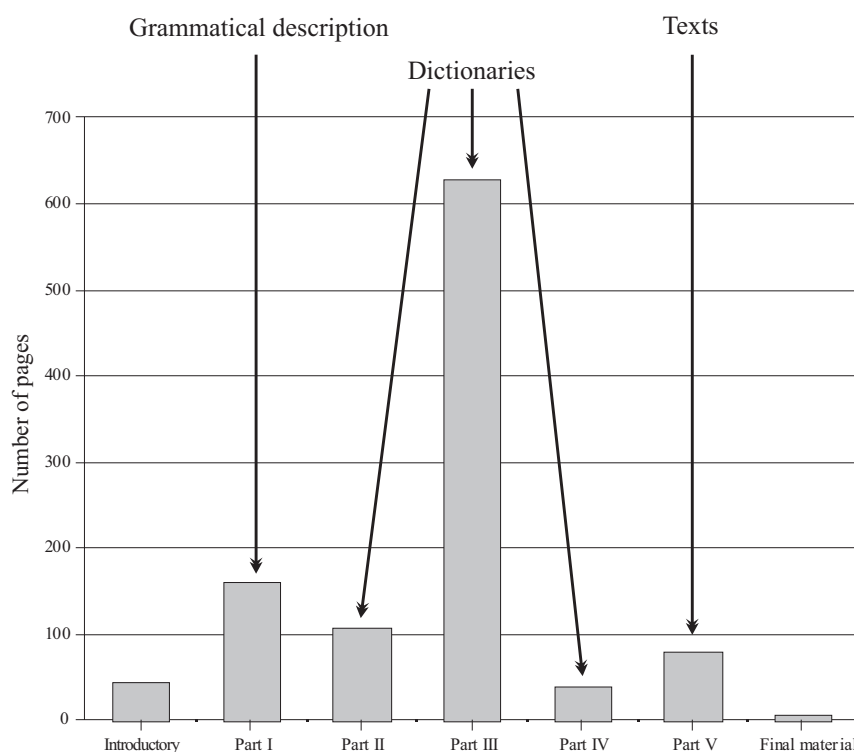
Grammatical description   Texts

Dictionaries

Fig. 4: Composition of Australian languages.

the traditional categorisation, nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, and adverbs. Two chapters are devoted to the verb, one on verbs in Nyulnyulan languages, the other on Pama-Nyungan verbs. The former is by far the better and more comprehensive of the descriptions, providing as it does paradigms of many verbs, listed according to the first segment of the verb root; there is also a fair amount of information on irregular verbs. One discerns from the description that the authors had a good intuitive appreciation of the relatively complex verbal construction of Nyulnyulan languages. The following chapter on verbs in Pama-Nyungan (suffixing) languages is concerned almost exclusively with a single language, Karajarri – rather a poor choice as a representative of the Pama-Nyungan family in that it exhibits evidence of considerable structural and lexical borrowing from the Nyulnyulan languages immediately to the north. Doubtless, Karajarri was chosen because the authors had most information on it; unfortunately, however, they do not really seem to have understood the verbal system of this language very well. The very brief final chapter of Part I, "Exclamations" stands out in that it provides information on language usage and the ethnography of speaking, in particular interjections and curses and good wishes.

Part II, "Dictionary English – Native Languages," is a 100-page finder list for the main dictionary presented in Part III. Little information is provided other than the names of the languages in which the words are found. The usefulness of the finder list is somewhat diminished by major inconsistencies with the main dictionary, as discussed in McGregor (2005).

Part III, "Dictionary Native Languages – English (a Paradigmatic Syntax)," accounts for over a half of the book. This part presents in a single ideally alphabetical (there are numerous inconsistencies and errors in the ordering) list of around nine thousand words from some thirty languages, mainly from the northwest of the continent. The size and scope of the dictionary can be appreciated from the breakdown given in the table (next page).

The provenance of each word – actually the headword entries include not just lexical words but also grammatical words and some bound morphemes (those which, like case suffixes and enclitics that are easily segmented) – is indicated (with a number of accidental omissions) by an abbreviation for the language name. In some cases morphological paradigms are given, and fairly extensive cross-references are made to phonetically similar words in other languages; unfortunately information on word class membership is provided

Table: Language constitution of the dictionary of Part III. (Rows blocked together represent families, respectively: Nyulnyulan, Bunuban, Jarrakan, Worrorran, and Pama-Nyungan.)

Language	Number of headwords or subentries
Bardi	2106
Jabirrjabirr	2092
Jawi	22
Jukun	7
Nimanburru	1508
Ngumbarl	1
Nyikina	1375
Nyulnyul	1762
Yawuru	1696
Bunuba	84
Kija	30
Miriwoong	199
Bemba	141
Ngarinyin	109
Worrorra	4
Badjiri	19
Gamilaraay	66
Gumbaynggir	42
Jaru	835
Karajarri	1447
Kukatja	335
Mangala	824
Malyangapa	41
Muruwari	53
Ngiyambaa	112
Paakantyi	44
Pitungu	5
Walmajarri	849
Widjela	63
Yuwaalaraay	77
Total	15948

inconsistently and for only a very small fraction of the entries. One of the best features of this dictionary is that it includes illustrative example sentences, a small sampling of which are given in (1)–(4) below (authors spelling and glosses retained). Although some of these are clearly elicited translations of English prompt sentences, many are clearly from conversation (these examples), and a number illustrate aspects of traditional culture and beliefs.

(1) *banban in-djaŋ bab-en, mai ibal-en in-au djer djen*
     excitement throbs child, food Father gave him
     "The child is excited (by joy) as the Father gave him an orange." = The child is blushing etc. (*in-djaŋ* fr. *ma-djaŋan*, to throb; *banban* "excited" Jabirrjabirr; 352)

(2) *anog min-nj-djer bēne baib? lēm ŋan-nj*
     where you took that pipe? ownerless I took
     "Where did you get that pipe from?" "I found it." (*lēm* "orphan, ownerless, derelict" Nimanburru, Nyulnyul; 650)

(3) *gaṛgo ŋa-ŋaran ŋanga-ni*
     tired I am language
     "I am tired of your questions about Aboriginal words." (*gaṛgo* "stiff, tired" Nyikina; 578)

(4) *barai ŋan-man robert ibal-og(iwal-ọn)*
     "I told the father about Robert." (*barai* "accusation, confession" Jabirrjabirr, Bardi; 365)

Putting together the lists for particular languages one finds that they are much as expected. For the poorly represented languages, mainly just basic words are listed. For the best represented languages, such as Bardi and Jabirrjabirr, good coverage is provided of the major semantic domains, such as: human categories, kinship, body parts, animals, technology, environment, vegetation, qualities, quantities, motion, violence, human behaviour (including cognition and speech), and temporal and spatial adverbials. For these languages we also find grammatical items such as pronouns, determiners, particles, case-marking postpositions, and interjections, as well as borrowings from English.[4] A number of unusual (from the English-speaker's perspective) and sometimes culturally relevant entries are also included. Below is a small sample of such items from Jabirrjabirr (only the main parts of the definitions are given):

balal	"channel with rain-water" (341)
djagal	"steps, cuts in the tree for foothold; fig. ~~side of~~ <u>mother's hip as nest for baby</u>"[5] (442)
djibeṛ	"presentiment, foreboding of coming event on account of nervous jerks or palpitation of a vein" (473)
gombon	"white skinned-ghost haunting mangrove swamps" (612)
laŋgai	"slowly burning tree, used as fire reservoir" (644)
ma-magandjen	(reflexive verb) "to carry oneself, to surrender, to make peace" (670)
ma-moran	(transitive and intransitive verb) "to pour out, to upset, to throw away, to capsize" (734 f.). [Example sentences also illustrate the intransitive sense "flow (of water)"; this verb is also used in describing a bitch giving birth to puppies. The "capsize" sense is not

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4 Perhaps partly due to practical concerns of translation, Worms was interested in the ways in which new concepts are expressed in traditional languages – including by borrowing – and wrote the earliest paper I am aware of devoted to this topic in the Australian domain (Worms 1938).

5 The deleted and underlined words are written in by hand.

	well illustrated – the example apparently illustrates the intransitive sense "to flow."]
miror	"Orion's Belt"; a Jabirrjabirr person compared the Orion to a saucepan with the three stars of the Belt as the handle (722)
modaŋ	"bag, a whole bag (of flour) not yet opened" (724)
mōnd	"bury, bury spell; a magical spell of burying the name of an enemy." The bones of a lizard are broken with a pointing-stick (*wadaŋgar*), then the animal is singed and buried in a hollow log. The name of the person to be enchanted is called during these actions and the victim will soon die. (731)
nomolor	"stern of boat, back of cart, big end of axe-head" (760, 765)
waŋ	"cohabitation, fornication, adultery" (877)
wēn	"shy, bashful, avoidance between certain relationship-groups (as *djadji, djamenjar, babeli, raŋaŋ, wainman*, and *yaler*)" (895)
yelm	"'against the wind,' camping place for boys and unmarried men; sleeping-house (dormitory)" (931)

The short Part IV, "Comparative Dictionary of Australian Pygmoid Languages," presents short wordlists of Dyirbal and half a dozen neighbouring languages, organized under English headwords. It also includes a few pages of speculative discussion of origins of the rainforest people.

Part V, "Aboriginal Tests," contains transcriptions and English translations of some twenty texts in three genres (mythological, personal-experience narratives, and songs). The languages represented are mostly Nyulnyulan (Bardi, Jabirrjabirr, Nyikina, Nyulnyul, and Yawuru) and far northwest Pama-Nyungan languages (Karajarri and Jaru), but the north Queensland language Dyirbal (Pama-Nyungan) is also represented – although all bar one word is in Mamu, according to Dixon (1972: 365).

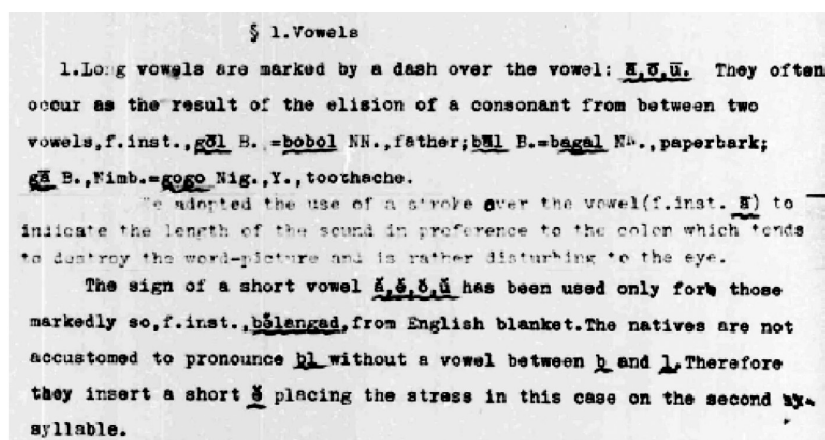## The Edited Version of "Australian Languages"

The edited version of "Australian Languages" consists of two components, a hard copy book of some 415 pages plus a CD-ROM. The hard copy book begins with an "Editor's Introduction" that outlines the history of authors and their work, comments on their linguistics, examines the significance of the work, and discusses the nature of editorial intervention. This is followed by an edited version of the "Authors' Introduction" and the entire text of Parts I (grammar) and V (texts).

Overall the organisation of the paper copy book follows the organisation of the original text. The chapter and section division of Part I has been largely adhered to, though Part V has been divided into three chapters, corresponding to the three divisions of the original according to text types: myths and legends, narratives, and songs. These chapters are numbered consecutively with those of Part I, and each text is accorded its own section. In Part I, the original Roman numbering has been replaced by Hindu numbering, and each subsection is given a full number including chapter, section, and subsection. A section numbered zero (so as not to interfere with the authors' numbering scheme) begins each chapter. This contains editorial remarks relevant to the chapter. The text is also liberally sprinkled with notes containing editorial remarks on specific points; these appear as endnotes. (The few footnotes of the original text are preserved as Roman numbered footnotes.) The editorial remarks in the introductory sections and notes are intended to offer further explanation and elaboration on the text, including in places corrections. The editor strongly believes that no good purpose is served by presenting an excessively laudatory appraisal of the work, and eschewing criticism and corrections where warranted. Such criticisms are offered in a scholarly spirit, and are intended to support and augment rather than undermine the work.

Revisions to the text are primarily in style and format, though a good deal of text has been added where necessary to convert the terse original to something more easily understandable. Where this interpolated material adds substantially to the text, it is enclosed in square brackets. The authors' transcription of Aboriginal language words was retained throughout; however, spelling of language names was modernized to current standards, where possible. (These standards are in a state of flux, and many changed – some more than once – during the life of the project.) Except in some large tables, full language names are consistently used throughout the book, instead of the system of single or two letter abbreviations used by the authors, which are the source of many errors in the text, and are so numerous as to impose a heavy burden on the reader's memory.

Changes to the layout of the material include presentation of paradigms in table form, instead

§ 1. Vowels

1. Long vowels are marked by a dash over the vowel: ā, ō, ū. They often occur as the result of the elision of a consonant from between two vowels, f. inst., gōl B. =bobol NN., father; bāl B.=bagal N., paperbark; gā B.,Nimb.=gogo Nig.,Y.,toothache.

We adopted the use of a stroke over the vowel (f. inst. ā) to indicate the length of the sound in preference to the colon which tends to destroy the word-picture and is rather disturbing to the eye.

The sign of a short vowel ă,ĕ,ŏ,ŭ has been used only for those markedly so, f. inst., bĕlangad, from English blanket. The natives are not accustomed to pronounce bl without a vowel between b and l. Therefore they insert a short ĕ placing the stress in this case on the second syllable.

1.2.1. Vowels

Long vowels are marked by a dash over the vowel: ā, ō, ū.[46] They often occur as the result of the elision of a consonant from between two vowels, as for instance in Bardi gōl 'father', corresponding to Nyulnyul *bobol* 'father'; Bardi *bāl* 'paperbark', corresponding to Nyulnyul *bagal* 'paperbark'; and Bardi and Nimanburru gā 'toothache', corresponding to Nyikina and Yawuru *gogo* 'toothache'.[47] We adopted the use of a macron over the vowel (for instance ā) to indicate the length of the sound in preference to the colon which tends to destroy the word-picture and is rather disturbing to the eye.

The signs for short vowels – ă, ĕ, ŏ, and ŭ – have been used only for those markedly so, as in for instance *bĕlangad*, from English *blanket*. The natives are not accustomed to pronounce *bl* without a vowel between *b* and *l*; therefore they insert a short ĕ between the two consonants and assign stress in this case to the second syllable.[48] [Stress in most Aboriginal languages falls regularly on the first syllable of a word – see p. 67.]

The following is a brief discussion of the main phonetic properties of the vowels.

Fig. 5: A sample section from the original microfilm and edited book.

of partly structured and incomplete lists, and extraction of most examples from the running text, and presentation in the more standard form of numbered examples made up of a language line, a line of interlinear glosses, followed by a free translation (see below for examples). As to wording, changes were made to adjust it to standard idiomatic English, though the original terms such as *native*, *primitive*, and *pygmoid* were retained to reflect the terminology of the times, despite their pejorative overtones in modern speech. In a few places more precise wording was adopted to forestall misunderstandings. Fig. 5 shows a small sample comparing the original text with the edited text.

Ultimately these editorial decisions are subjective, and at times I doubtless interfered more than necessary in the interests of producing a comprehensible piece of writing. It is also difficult to maintain editorial consistency in a task spanning

a decade or more. I have felt "some guilt at interfering with the work of an author who is dead" (as Isobel White says in her introduction to Bates 1985: 30). The only possible rejoinder to this is the hope that the end justifies the means.

The dictionaries, Parts II, III, and IV, are published only on CD-ROM. This was for both economic and practical reasons: to publish the entire work in hard copy would have been prohibitively expensive (the book already comes with the fairly hefty price tag of € 198). Aside from this, it was considered that the electronic format of the dictionaries would provide better possibilities of access to the contents than would the paper copy, e.g., via search functions. It also permits some flexibility in the display of data.

The three dictionary files are each presented in two formats, a text file that can be viewed with the widely used SIL International program Toolbox (freely available from their website, <http://www.
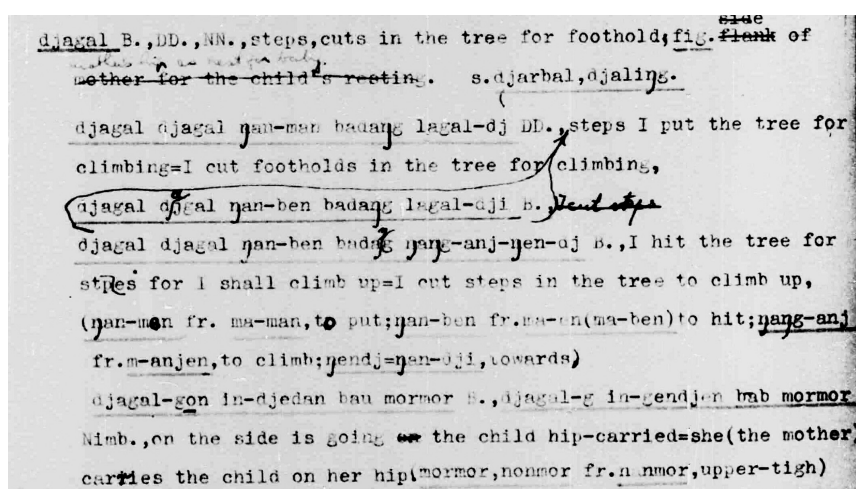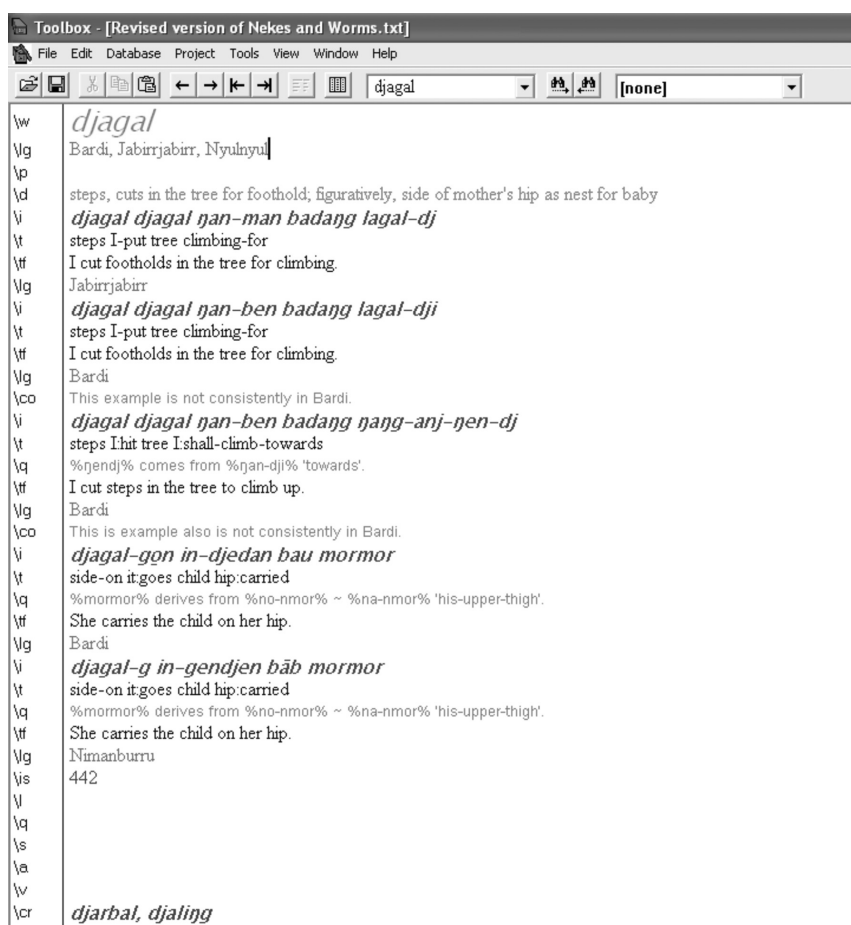
Fig. 6: Entry for *djagal* (442).

Fig. 7: Entry for *djagal* in Tool-box.

sil.org/computing/toolbox/downloads.htm>), and an XML file that can be viewed with a web browser such as Explorer or Firefox. Toolbox is a program developed for linguistic fieldworkers, and provides a convenient interface with the dictionaries, allowing among other things sophisticated searches of the data, output to various file formats, and filters permitting viewing or extraction

of, for instance, all the entries in a particular language.[6]

The web browser interface provided does not permit the same flexibility of access as the Toolbox files, and is quite basic, lacking bells and whistles. It should be useful for some purposes. For instance, this interface could be developed to present the information in a manner more suitable to certain users, such as descendants of speakers of moribund or extinct languages. The editor encourages computer-literate users to develop better interfaces, though for reasons of copyright, anyone wishing to do so should first contact the publisher, editor, language community, and/or regional language centre.

The three figures (6–8) provide illustrations of the entry for the word *djagal* from Part III (442) in the original microfilm, viewed from Toolbox, and from Microsoft Internet Explorer. As can be seen, the major advantages of the latter two representations lie in more accessible visual presentation and separation of data into fields. One problem I was unable to solve was how to present the example sentences with interlinear glosses vertically aligned with the morphemes or words in the language line. Thus one is forced to associate glosses and morphemes mentally by linking respective white spaces in the two representations.

The CD-ROM contains in addition to the dictionary files also a PDF file of the entire book, a digitized facsimile of the entire microfilm, a second PDF file with each (relevant) page of the book side-by-side with the corresponding page of the original microfilm, and other auxiliary materials, including photographs, maps, sample pages from the authors' notebooks, and one of the Nyulnyul songs recorded by Fr. Worms.

To sum up, editorial intervention was as far as possible restricted to what is essential. Pains were taken to make it fairly obvious where the editor intervened significantly in the text, while not giving the work an excessively disjointed aspect. My concern as editor was to both interpret the work of Frs. Nekes and Worms so that it could be appreciated by a wider audience, and to permit the reader access to the original to find what the authors really said, thus rendering my interpretations falsifiable. Comparison of the two versions

is facilitated by the PDF file linking the pages of the book to the pages of the microfilm, and the links from the HTML files of the dictionaries to the pages of the microfilm. (From the Toolbox files, one has to manually go to the relevant page, which is specified for each headword.) I also wanted to provide a historical perspective, and situate the work in the context of its times.

Conclusion

"Australian Languages" is, as I hope to have shown in this article, a remarkable piece of missionary linguistics from mid-twentieth-century Australia. Its primary virtue lies in the documentation it provides of a number of moribund languages of the far northwest of the continent. It is, that is, more noteworthy as a piece of documentary linguistics than a piece of descriptive linguistics (see Himmelmann 1998; Gippert, Himmelmann, and Mosel 2006 on the distinction between documentary and descriptive linguistics). It is here, in documentary linguistics, where the lasting value of Frs. Nekes and Worms's work lies, although this documentation is somewhat limited in scope by modern standards. The descriptive component of their work is less well-developed, and is of most interest to the historian of linguistics, rather than to the descriptive Australianist. Moreover, it is in its descriptive aspects that most stumbling blocks for the unwary reader are to be found.

The edited version of "Australian Languages" constitutes a documentation on two levels. First, like the original manuscript, it provides documentation of a number of moribund Australian languages. Second, it provides a documentation of the authors' research on Australian languages. Just as language documentation aims to provide "a lasting, multipurpose record of a language" (Himmelmann 2006: 1), the edited version of "Australian Languages" (Nekes and Worms 2006) attempts to provide a lasting and multipurpose record of Hermann Nekes and Ernest Worms's linguistic work on Australian languages. Indeed, the major goal of the editorial process was to produce such a documentation. This is done by providing on the one hand extensive commentary on the text – annotations in the terminology of documentary linguistics – to make it comprehensible to the modern linguist (a combination of description and documentation), and on the other hand by presenting the original data from the microfilm as the source against which the ultimate linguistic documentation can be evaluated.

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6 Unfortunately, Toolbox is not available for Macintosh systems, and users will need to purchase a copy of its precursor, Shoebox, from SIL International. Shoebox is not unicode compliant, and the phonetic fonts will probably not display properly.
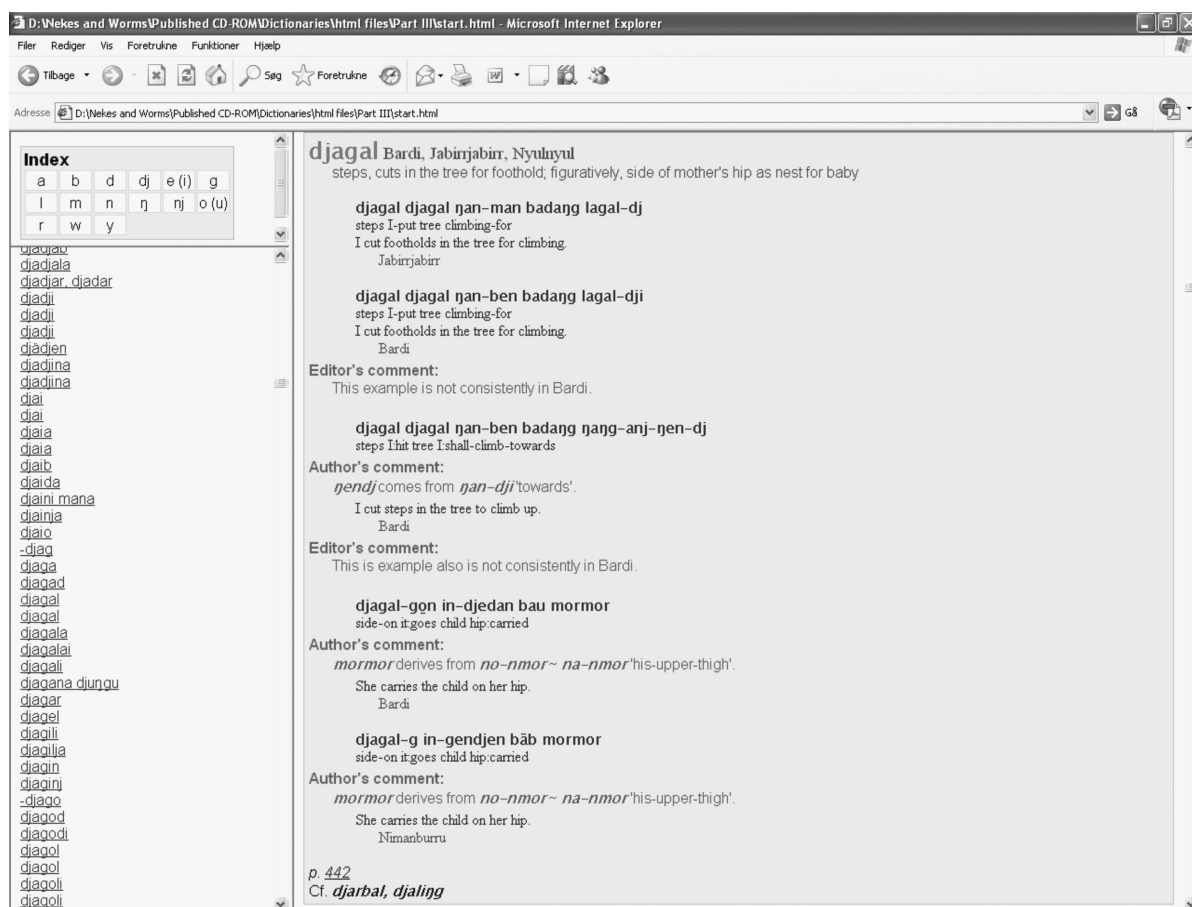
Fig. 8: Entry for *djagal* viewed from Internet Explorer.

This indicates the need for metadocumentary linguistics as a field of linguistics with a somewhat broader scope than documentary linguistics (as it is generally conceived), a domain that addresses the theoretical approach of a documentation or description of a language, incorporating this into the scheme of information representation. In such a discipline theoretical neutrality of documentations would not be held as an ideal to be attained (as it generally is in documentary linguistics).

Such a metadocumentary approach also holds some important advantages over the mere re-presentation of Nekes and Worms's documentation and description in either a book format or a more modern electronic format. To simply publish the work in book form as it is (as was done with J. R. B. Love's 1934 grammar of Worrorra [Love 2000]) would serve no useful purpose, and the majority of users would be seriously disadvantaged since the interpretation of the original documentation is not a straightforward enterprise. On the other hand, if it were transferred and translated into a modern linguistic format, users would remain uncertain as to where the division of labour fell between the re-documentation and the original: just how much flexibility has the editor allowed himself? The present edited work attempts to fulfil an intermediary role, and in doing so potentially serves more functions than would either of these alternative products. Thus it presents data relevant to the history of linguistics, Australian Aboriginal linguistics, and anthropology, and descendants of speakers. It also forms a basis on which informed and useful modern linguistic documentations could be complied of any of the languages dealt with, or existing documentations augmented.

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