

Luise Hercus' contribution to the historical linguistics of Australian languages

Harold Koch SHLP, Adelaide, 14 December 2018

Themes of this presentation

- Not focus on:
 - Research history: what languages, where, when
 - Products of documentation: grammars, dictionaries
 - Paralinguistic studies: mythology, placenames, etc.
- Themes discussed here
 - Philology: using and assessing early sources
 - Genetic classification: dialects, subgroup members
 - Areal features and diffusion
 - Posited changes
 - Etymology

Organised by 5 subgroups of Pama-Nyungan

KULIN subgroup

Main References

- Hercus, Luise A. 1969. *The languages of Victoria: A late survey*. 2 vols. Canberra: AIAS. [descriptions of **Wembawemba**, **Wergaia**, **Madhimadhi**]
- Hercus, Luise A. 1986. *Victorian languages: a late survey*. (PL B-77) Canberra: ANU. [= 2nd edn of 1969]
- Hercus, Luise A. 1992. *Wembawemba dictionary*. Canberra: Luise Hercus with the assistance of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.
- Blake, Barry. J., Luise Hercus, Stephen Morey & Edward Ryan. 2011. *The Mathi group of languages*. (PL 628) Canberra: ANU.
- Hercus, Luise A. 1974. Texts in Victorian languages. In Christine E. Furby, Luise Hercus & Christine Kilham, *Papers in Australian Linguistics No. 7*, 13-43. (PL A-37) Canberra: ANU. [**Wembawemba**, **Wergaia**, **Madhimadhi**]
- Hercus, Luise. 1978. A note on **Narinari**. In J.F. Kirton et al, *Papers in Australian Linguistics No. 11*. (PL A-51) Canberra: ANU. 118-132.
- Hercus, Luise A. 1989. Three linguistic studies from far southwestern New South Wales. *Aboriginal History* 13(1), 44-62. [The Kulin languages of the far south-west of NSW]

NW Kulin varieties

2 groups:

- Wergaia, Wembawemba, Perəpaperəpa, Narinari
- Mathi-Mathi, Wati-Wati, Letji-Letji

1978 “The position of Narinari”:

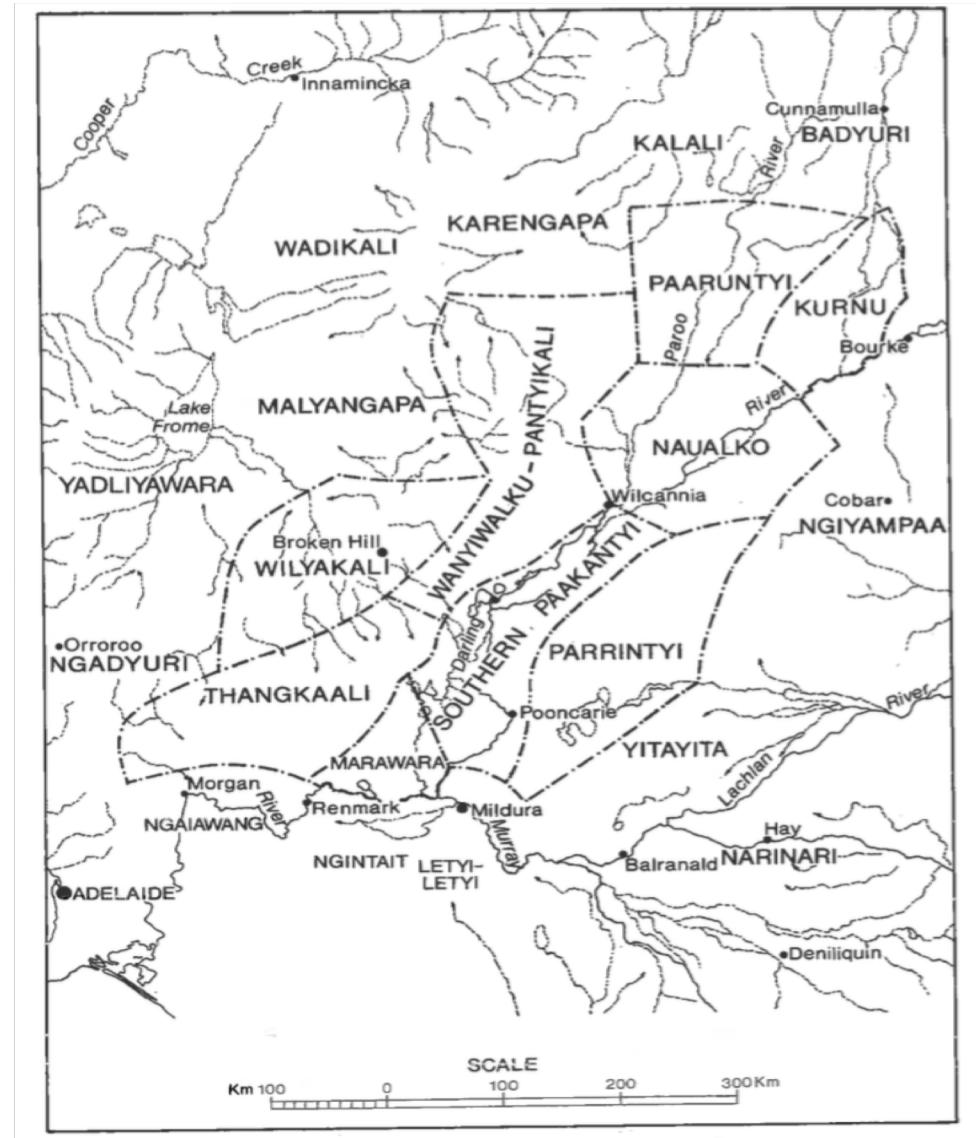
- 18 words from Jack Long show LH
- Narinari is clearly Kulin (not Lower Murray or Paakantyi)
- more similar to Wergaia-Wemba than Mathi group
- Phon. features shared with Wemba

	Wemba group	Nari-nari	Mathi group
3SgPoss	<i>-uk</i>	-	<i>-u</i>
1SgPoss	<i>-ek</i>	-	<i>-ay</i>
<i>-ng</i> increment ‘foot’	<i>tyina</i>	<i>tyinang</i>	<i>tyinangi</i>
<i>-i</i> increment ‘fire’	<i>wanap</i>	<i>wanhap</i>	<i>wanhapi</i>
stress	<i>wanap</i>	<i>wanhap</i>	<i>wanhapi</i>
1Sg free pn	<i>yantin</i>	-	<i>yiti</i>

Paakantyi [Darling River language]

- Based on own and Wurm's fieldwork
- Relation to older sources: Interpret records of past
- Dialect names and locations
- Classification issues: which varieties belong, distinctiveness
- References
 - Hercus, Luise A. 1982. *The Bāgandji language*. (Pacific Linguistics B-67) Canberra: Australian National University.
 - Wurm, S.A. & L. Hercus. 1976. Tense-marking in Guṇu pronouns. In J.F. Kirton et al, *Papers in Australian linguistics No. 10*. (Pacific Linguistics No. A-47) Canberra: Australian National University. 33-55.
 - Hercus, Luise A. 1980. Dialect differentiation in Baagandji. In Bruce Rigsby & Peter Sutton. (eds.) *Papers in Australian linguistics no. 13: contributions to Australian linguistics*, 159-166. (Pacific Linguistics A-59) Canberra: Australian National University.
 - Hercus, Luise. 1984. The Marawara Language of Yelta: Interpreting Linguistic Records of the Past. *Aboriginal History* 8(1-2): 56-62.

Map of dialects and neighbours



Unity of language

- Lexical
 - “A Lexico-statistical comparison based on old vocabularies from the two **dialects** that represent the **geographical extremes** of Bāgandji territory, Guṇu from the Bourke area and Marawara from near Wentworth...shows agreement in over **85 per cent** of the items.” (Hercus 1980: 160)
- Mutual intelligibility
 - “In the sixties, **speakers of Bandjigali, S. Bāgandji and Guṇu** were still living on the reserve at Wilcannia...and **were able to communicate** with each other without any great difficulty, all speaking ‘Bāgandji.’” (1980: 164)
- Corrects Wurm’s classification of Marawara in Lower Murray group
 - “there can be **no doubt**, particularly from the evidence brought by Tindale [1939], that the now extinct **Maraura** (p. 134) **belongs** to the Darling River language group”. (Hercus 1974 [Review of Wurm 1972]: 392)
- “in 1963... **the difference from Victorian languages was obvious** even to a casual observer.” (Hercus 1982: ix)

Distinctiveness from other subgroups: lexical, phon'l

Direction	Language	Subgroup	%
W	Malyangapa	Yarli	41
SW	Ngayawung	Lower Murray	24
E	Wangaybuwan	CNSW	19
N	Wangkumara	Karnic	19
SE	Mathimathi	Kulin	16

	Karnic	Yarli	Paak	LMurray	Kulin	CNSW
Laminal PoA	2	2	2	1	1	2 restr
Apical PoA	2	2	2	2	2	1
Rhotics	3	3	2			
Final C	none	none	none	many	many	sonorants
Long V	none	/a/	/a/(+)	/a/(+)	/a/(+)	all
Vb conj	no	no	no			yes

Internal diversity and change

	Kurnu	(Intermediate dialects)	S. Paakantyi
Phonological Subj/obj pns	<i>-ty-</i> free		-y- bound
personal possession marking	free pronouns		by suffixes
Subj pn	marked for tense		not
Allative	≠ Dative		= Dative

YARLI Subgroup

- Lgs of far western NSW, between Darling River and Lake Eyre Basin
- Data from
 - own fieldwork, plus some by Wurm, Schebeck, Beckett,
 - Tindale1934 notebook
 - Curr 1886 wordlists evaluated (philology)
- Explores evidence for belonging to a separate subgroup vs. previous classifications:
 - either not all members of same SG, or subset of Kurnic (except Bowern 1998, 2001)
- References:
 - Hercus, L.A. [Review of] Wurm, S.A. : Languages of Australia and Tasmania (Mouton 1972). *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 83, no. 3 (1974): 391-92.
 - Hercus, Luise A. & Peter K. Austin. 2004. The Yarli languages. In Claire Bowern & Harold Koch (eds.) *Australian languages: classification and the comparative method*, 207-222. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Lgs, neighbours, and others' classification

Language	Yardliyawara	Malyangapa	Wadikali
External neighbours in contact	Adnyamathanha (Thura-Yura) Pirlatapa (CKarnic)	Pantyikali (Paakantyi)	Wangkumara (EKarnic) Pirlatapa (CKarnic)
Previous class'n			
Tindale		Paakantyi	
OHW 1966, Wurm 1972:128, 133	Yura	Yalyi SG of Dieric	Yalyi SG of Dieric
Dixon 2002: xxxvii	“WAd” part of Lake Eyre Basin Areal Group = Karnic+	=	=

Hercus evidence

- “Yadliaura...is almost identical with Malyangapa and therefore belongs to the Dieric languages in the subgroup called “Yalyi” in [Wurm’s] book.” (Hercus 1974:392)
 - [so Wurm’s classn not based on lexical %age if using correct sources]
- “Yardliyawara and Malyangapa are so close to one another, and what we know of Wadikali is also so close, that Proto-Yarli is more or less self-evident.” (Hercus & Austin 2004: 211)

Lexical distinctiveness

- Lexemes shared by all 3 Yarli lgs and no others = innovations
- Lexemes shared by 2 Yarli lgs and no others, in 3rd lg undocumented or replaced by loan
- Lexemes shared by 2 or 3 Yarli lgs plus a neighbouring lg, probably borrowed from Yarli
- Lexemes in Yarli lgs inherited from Proto-Pama-Nyungan, but not found in neighbouring lgs = shared retentions of some diagnostic value
- Lexemes in Yarli lgs only but regional cognates with significant formal or semantic differences
- (Basic vocabulary lexemes in Yarli lgs shared with neighbouring lgs through common inheritance from pPN: not diagnostic of membership in any other subgroup)

Further evidence for Yarli

- Morphological evidence for distinctiveness of Yarli subgroup
 - Form of personal pronouns
 - Form of verbal tense suffixes
 - Case suffixes
 - Demonstrative forms
 - Inchoative verbaliser *-ngunti*
- Diffusion: features shared through contact
 - Phonetic features: lengthening, prestopping of post-stressed consonants
 - Development of bound subject and object pronouns
 - Marking of Time of Day in verb
 - Regional spread of certain lexical items

THURA-YURA Subgroup

includes most languages of South Australia

- Kaurna: Adelaide
- Narangga
- Ngadjuri
- Nukunu
- Adnyamathanha
- Kuyani
- Barngarla (Parnkalla)
- Nauo
- ?Wirangu

Philological study of Nauo

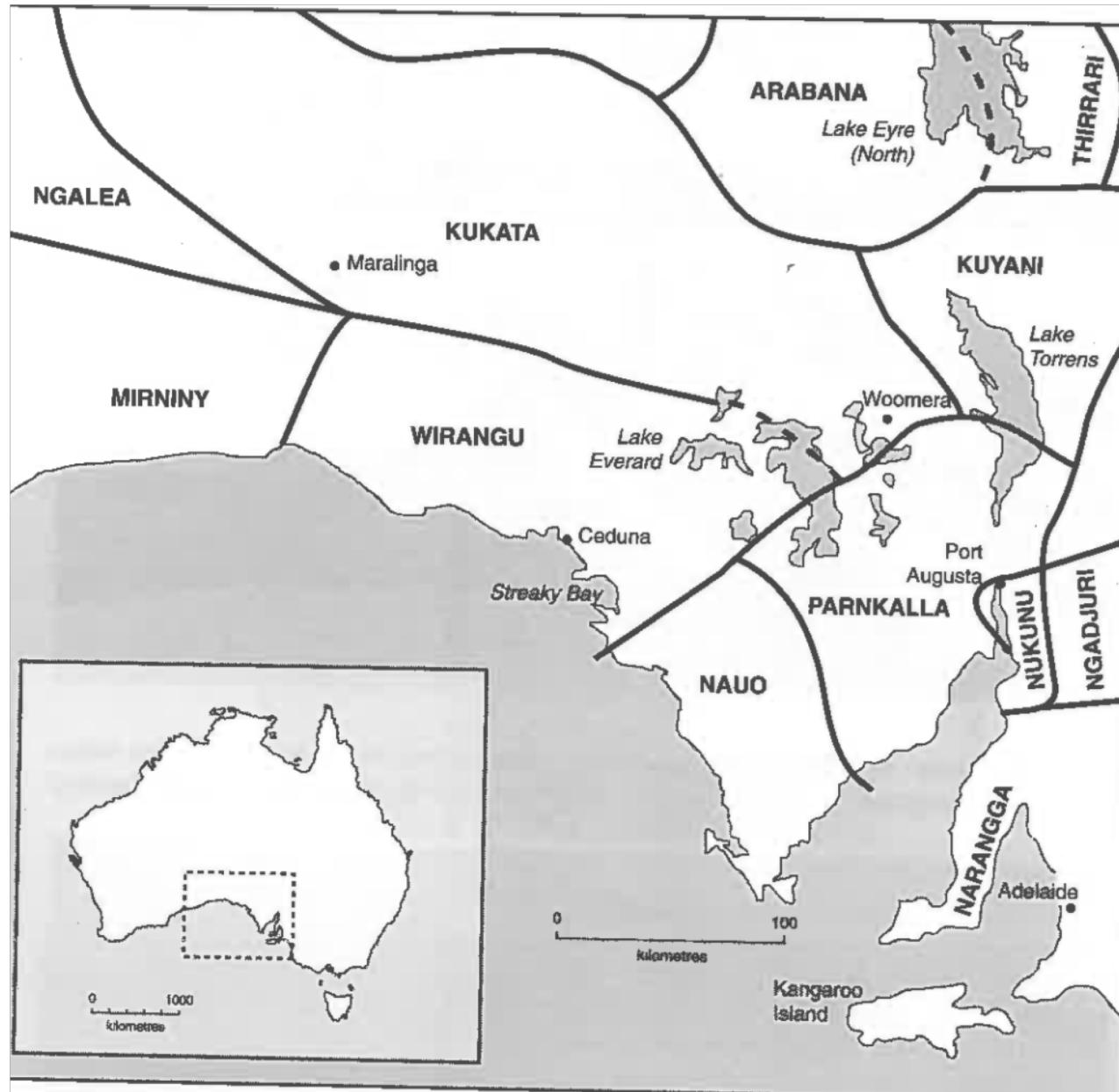
- What can be known of the Nauo language of Coffin Bay area, southern Eyre Peninsula?
- What sources provide some linguistic data?
- Conclusion: language intermediate between Barngarla and Wirangu.

Reference: Hercus, Luise & Jane Simpson. 2001. The tragedy of Nauo. In Jane Simpson, David Nash, Mary Laughren, Peter Austin, & Barry Alpher (eds.) *Forty years on: Ken Hale and Australian languages*, 263-290. (Pacific Linguistics 512) Canberra: Australian National University.

Classification main issue: place of Wirangu

- Main question: Is it a member of the Thura-Yura subgroup?
- Hercus, Luise A. 1999. *A grammar of Wirangu, a language of the west coast of South Australia.* (Pacific Linguistics C-150) Canberra: Australian National University. 8-10.
- Simpson, Jane & Luise A. Hercus. 2004. Thura-Yura as a subgroup. In Claire Bowern & Harold Koch. (eds.) *Australian languages: classification and the comparative method.* 179-206. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Map: Wirangu & neighbours (1999:xxii)



Others' claims

- 1917 JM Black: close reln to Parnkalla and more distant to Adelaide lg in a “Tindo family”
- 1966 O’Grady Voegelin & Voegelin, O’Grady, Wurm & Hale, Wurm 1972:128: sole member of “Nanga/Nyanga subgroup” within a large “Nyungic group”, alongside Thura-Yura, Wati (Western Desert), Mirning-Ngadjuma-Kalarko subgroups, etc. [all Pama-Nyungan lgs of W.A.]
- 1967 John Platt treats as related with Kukata in a subgroup of Wati lgs
- Other authorities follow this classification, treating Wirangu as part of Western Desert
- Dixon 2002: xxxvii Wirangu as sole member of his “WC” subgroup
- NOTE: All modern sources treat Wirangu as not member of TY subgroup

O'Grady & Klokeid 1969

- claim Platt error due to intense Wirangu-Kukata contact;
- justify placement of Wirangu in separate subgroup of Nyungic group
- publish 100-word lexicostatistical lists of Kukata, Wirangu, “Pankarla”,
 - plus 5 other lgs of area
- O'Grady “cognate” figures: WIR-KOK 47, WIR-PNK 39
- Criterial figures used in O'Grady Wurm Hale lex-stat classification:
 - 50%+ required to classify languages as members of same subgroup
 - 25-50% lgs belong to different subgroups of same “group”

Hercus view (1999: 8-10)

- More WIR-PNK cognates using older WIR words plus extra PNK words
- Applies to O'Grady & Klokeid's first 10 words
- HK extends LH approach to all 100
- Well within 50-70% subgroup criterion

[Implications for

- application of lex-stat methods
- constituency of Nyungic group
- processes by which one language can dominate another
 - deserves further study

	O'G	Hercus trial 1 st 10	Koch
WIR-PNK(T-Y)	39	(55)	65
WIR-KOK(WD)	47	(30)	33

Hercus view (cont)

- LH values shared grammatical features above lexical percentages
- grammatical features (e.g. verb morphology) shared with T-Y stronger evidence of genetic relation (11)
- Wirangu is **outlier** of Thura-Yura, with similarities to WD result of recent borrowing (10)
- “it might be considered an outlier, but it certainly belongs” (94)
- “By the term ‘outlier’ we imply that this language shows some differences from the rest of the subgroup; we suggest that these differences are not genetic, but due to profound changes that have taken place in relatively recent times owing to the influence of Western Desert languages.” (Simpson & Hercus 2004:180)
- Simpson & Hercus 2004 reconstructions to Proto-Thura-Yura only if evidence from Wirangu, otherwise to Proto-Central-Thura-Yura
- Should not be interpreted as indication that Wirangu is more distantly related within the subgroup [as the term “outlier” might imply]

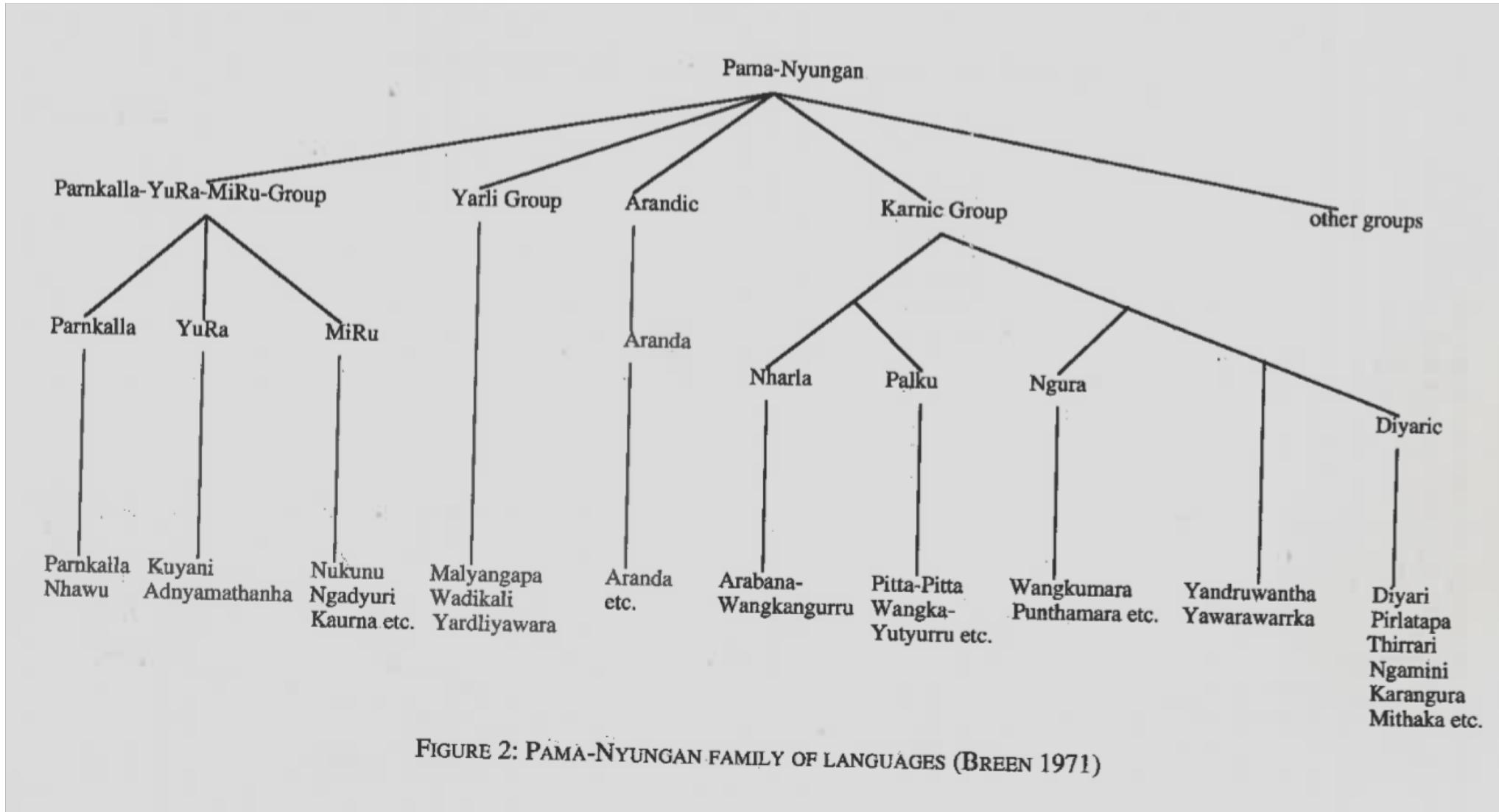
Karnic subgroup: Arabana-Wangkangurru

- Hercus, Luise A. 1972. The pre-stopped nasal and lateral consonants of Arabana-Waŋganjuru. *Anthropological Linguistics* 14, 293-305.
- Hercus, Luise A. 1979. In the margins of an Arabana-Wanganguru dictionary: the loss of initial consonants. In S.A. Wurm (ed.) *Australian Linguistic Studies*, 621-651. (PL C-54) Canberra: ANU.
- Hercus, Luise. 1987. Linguistic diffusion in the Birdsville area. In Donald Laycock & Werner Winter (eds.) *A world of language: papers presented to Professor S A. Wurm on his 65th birthday*, 245-255. (Pacific Linguistics C-100) Canberra: ANU.
- Hercus, Luise A. 1994. *A grammar of the Arabana-Wangkangurru language of the Lake Eyre Basin, South Australia*. (PL C-128) Canberra: ANU.
- Hercus, Luise A. 2013. Archaisms in placenames in Arabana-Wangkangurru country. In Robert Mailhammer (ed.), *Lexical and structural etymology: beyond word histories*, 313-322. Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton.
- Koch, Harold & Luise Hercus. 2013. Obscure vs. transparent cognates in linguistic reconstruction. In Robert Mailhammer (ed.) *Lexical and structural etymology: beyond word histories*, 33-52. Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton.

Classification issues

- Hercus accepted Breen's 1971 inclusion of A-W as a 4th branch of a Karnic subgroup
- BUT Austin's 1990 "Classification of Lake Eyre languages" (LTWPL 3:171-201) omitted AW from Karnic: too few cognates
- LH insisted that AW belonged: more cognates can be found if consider semantic changes and other processes that render them obscure—hence etymological study (2013 papers)
- At same time studied and mapped areal features:
 - "phonetic changes could sweep over a large area even if the languages were not very closely related" (1972: 302)

Family tree of Karnic and adjacent lgs (Hercus 1994:10 < Breen 1971)



Etymology: identifying archaisms

- obsolete words survive in placenames
 - Wangkangurru *kupa* 'little' replaced by *nyara*
 - but survives in placename *Karla kupa* Kallakoopa 'little creek'
 - A-W *ngapa* 'water' has been replaced by *kutha*,
 - But survives in placenames e.g. *Napa-marra* 'fresh water, Ngapamura'
- & compounds
 - Karnic *ngandi* 'mother' replaced by *lhuka*
 - But survives in *mara-ngandi* 'thumb' < 'hand-mother'
 - *pari* 'creek' (cf. Thura-Yura, Yarli lgs) replaced by *karla*
 - survives in AW *warru-pari* 'Milky Way, *'creek white'
- Derivatives
 - *kupa* 'little' survives in derivative *kuparli* 'younger sibling'
- Deparadigmatised
 - Old 1Sg pn form preserved in adverb *anhari* 'this way, towards me'

Areal diffusion

- “work by several researchers , especially Hercus, has demonstrated that there are a number of linguistic features which cross-cut the apparent genetic groups east of Lake Eyre and which appear to have been distributed by linguistic diffusion”:
 - Prestopping and C length (laterals and nasals)
 - Initial C loss
 - 3 r-sounds intervocally
 - Stop voicing
 - Kinship-based pronouns (Hercus & White)
 - Associated Motion meanings
- Earlier AP Elkin had established shared cultural features for the same area
- (Peter Austin 1989 Verb compounding in Central Australian languages, La Trobe Working Papers in Linguistics 2: 67-68)

Explaining diffusion process

- Careful synchronic study of conditions of nasal and lateral prestopping and of partial initial C loss in A-W
- Comparison with surrounding languages
- LH's proposed chronology deserves closer evaluation; e.g.
- 1972: 301 conclusion that “prestopping probably later than loss of *ng-*” [& *k-*]
- Since words beginning with *a-* do not reflect presence or absence of prestopping acc to whether initial C was non-nasal or nasal [= synchronic conditioning in C-initial words]
- But—this overlooks the possibility of restructuring the phonological rules after a sound change takes place
- [deserves further study]

Conclusions

- Historical linguistic issues were not LH's main concern. But—
- Relating her field-based knowledge to old sources was a major concern
- She cared about the genealogical classification of the languages
- Generally she considered this to be fairly evident from a knowledge of the grammars especially.
- She was not too interested in lexicostatistical comparison
- She was very aware that cognates were not always obvious
- She was very much interested in (areal) linguistic features shared across genetic boundaries
- And in the shared cultural relations that were responsible for them
- Her results need to be taken seriously in any historical comparison.