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THE LANGUAGES OF KINSHIP

IN

ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA

edited by

Jeffrey Heath
Department of Linguistics
Harvard University

Francesca Marlan
Research Affiliate
Department of Anthropology
University of Sydney

Alan Rumsey
Department of Anthropology
University of Sydney
INTRODUCTION.

JEFFREY HEATH

1. General.

Many books have been written about Australian Aborigines, and the literature on their kinship systems is vast. Every graduate student in social anthropology, whether in Chicago or Paris, gets a dosage of it even if only from unreliable second-hand ethnological sources. The first-hand literature ranges from what we now refer to charitably as 'pre-scientific' reports (half ethography, half travelogue) to the painstaking regional surveys of Elkin and his students, major local ethnographies (Warner, Hatt, Meggitt, etc.) and a spate of recent work by a number of gifted younger anthropologists. The documentation has now reached the point where the major thrust of research seems to be in collating, organizing and interpreting materials already gathered and published. Indeed, the last few years have seen at least four new volumes, each attempting to account for continent-wide patterns of kinship and/or social organization (Fadden 1972, Shapiro 1979, Scheffler 1978, Turner 1980).

This volume is essentially designed to suggest that such synthesising is premature. Instead of offering slightly different interpretations of older material, we want to inject new data into the discussion and throw open some issues which may have seemed solved. In particular, we show that even under relatively strict definitions of 'kinship', Australian kinship systems are considerably more complex (and sometimes more fluid) than has previously been appreciated. Instead of proposing new explanations for those patterns of kin-type mergers recorded in conventional diagrams of kin terms (and typically based on elicitation methods which restrict and normalise the 'data'), we emphasise the need for much more sophisticated and painstaking grammatical and semantic description.

The distinctive characteristic of this collection, as opposed to other works on kinship in Australia (or, to our knowledge, elsewhere), is that the authors represented here all have a primary professional training as linguists, though the majority have additional professional qualifications as anthropologists. Most of us have spent around three years each in fieldwork with relatively traditional Aborigines, mainly in the northern half of the continent: where the linguistically and culturally intact groups are found. The principal authors (i.e., excluding Woolford, whose contribution is an appendix to Bala's paper) know at least one Aboriginal language well from direct experience, and some of us have substantial data on several languages. Our knowledge of the languages is based on varying combinations of actual speaking fluency and of transcriptions of large quantities of texts. For these reasons, the volume has a distinctively linguistic cast, and presents data in a manner rarely seen in social anthropological studies. Although the various papers all have their own orientations, all of them have one important thing in common. Each paper deals directly with the coexistence of two or more subsystems of kinship terminology within specific languages. Some papers are topically organised, identifying one kind of subsystem (say, dyadic terms) and discussing its various elaborations in a number of languages. Others provide a more wide-ranging overview of the various subsystems in a single language, and even the topical papers
are designed to assist future writers to describe the subsystem in question in the context of a broader study of subsystems within single languages. Clearly, no article-sized study can begin to do full justice to the data on any of the languages dealt with here, and all of us who had to cut our sections which we would like to have included. However, the present combination of analytical topical papers and capsule overall descriptions should at least indicate what the possibilities are and thus help to focus research.

In the remainder of this introduction, I provide background information on Australian kinship and social classifications; I comment on the relationship between this volume and earlier Australian works; I discuss some of the more general theoretical issues raised (but in many cases not resolved) here. Some of this introductory material will seem familiar (and perhaps egregiously oversimplified) to specialists, but should be observed that the volume is designed equally for linguists and anthropologists, and for non-Australianists as well as Australianists.

I would add that although Australian kinship is a complicated matter, and we want to insist that this complexity be recognized, the bulk of the papers here do not presuppose extensive technical qualifications on the part of the reader; certainly this point was stressed in early communications between the editors and contributors. For the mathematically inclined we have Laughren's paper on Warlpiri, presented in the terms of group theory, but most of the papers are written in layperson's language - or at least a reasonable approximation thereto. Furthermore, while the papers are reasonably rich in data, we have tried avoiding readers to assimilate huge masses of grammatical and lexical forms. Some readers may still find the papers formidable, but we have cut out a lot of material. We are not trying to dazzle readers with our analytical virtuosity (we are sparing use of formal expansion/reduction rules, for instance) nor trying to dazzle specialists with the sheer mass of data and to encourage other linguists and anthropologists to join us.

In addition, we have deliberately restricted the amount of material on historical linguistic matters (etymology and genealogy) to a minimum, because our experience is that many non-linguists find such disquisitions both pedantic and soporific. We have included a short paper by Nash which puts emphasis on etymological sources for a theoretically significant Warlpiri term, and there are a few briefer discussions in the other papers (notably in Alpher's paper in Dala-bon). However, etymological studies are not focused on in this volume.

2. Kinship and social classification.

In these societies, 'kin terms' are applied to all persons in the social environment, nowadays often even to white missionaries, teachers and schoolteachers. They are also applied to clans, totemic beings, localities, etc. Terms with relatives like 'Fa' are nearly always 'classificatory' terms which can be used to address and/or refer to numerous individuals according to their regular principles (e.g., Fa, Fak, FaFaSo). In addition, most Aboriginal societies have more inclusive social categories (subsections, moieties, etc.) which are known collectively as classes. We begin with these classes and then return to kinship proper.

The first distinction which must be made for any class system is whether it is egocentric or sociocentric. If the terms have glosses like 'my class' or 'the class of my Fa', the system is egocentric. If the terms have glosses like 'my class' or 'the class of my Fa', the system is egocentric. If the terms have glosses like 'my class' or 'the class of my Fa', the system is egocentric.
FIGURE 1

Subsections would work instead on a generational basis, combining Ego with MoNoMo
subsequent cycles of the type A-B-C-A-B-C-D-... with a return to A on
generations (four, eight, etc.), so that Ego has to go back to his MoNoMo
systems at least approximate more simple Fe-Ch two-generation cycles.

Australian languages vary considerably both in their specific inventory
of clan-based terms and also in the number of class systems coexisting
together, preference for egocentric vs. sociocentric labels, the functional
apparatus for patrilineal/matrilineal/neutral (male, female, and
system is (say, patrilineal semiotics). Thus, as Laughran and Nash show
semiotics are Patrilineal and matrilineal, and generation
ones in the other moiety), several of these subclans having both
different and social life, when and in what
will have to suffice here. In many of the northern Aboriginal groups we
concerned with here, patrilineal moieties and semiotics are of great
spiritual importance; they are, in many cases, representative as geographically
extended networks of patrilineal clans, and these networks (as well as
the clans themselves) are basic organisational units in their society.
Matrilineal moieties and clans are of ritual importance in some areas of
Australia, most of them not well represented in this collection, but more
often we find matrilineal categories (and concrete matrilineal practices) as
conceptualised in affinal terms (as spouse-yielding or -exchanging units).
Symbolically, patrilineal categories may be represented by the spiritual
ancestors (and/or bones) of persons, matrilineal ones by the spirits
of the dead within a single society. Readers familiar with Aboriginal societies
only through their secondary ethnological literature should be warned that
stereotypes of them as clusters of patrilineal lineages and matrilineal
lineages are misrepresentations, and that none of the classes or clans need
 correspond to residential or economic groups.

Similarly, the section and subsection systems have often been taken as
'structural categories' permitting the formulation of marriage 'rules' in
sociocentric terms. There is some truth to this, since the classes can be
thought of as being divided into their own sections, subsections and
subsections, each of which is associated with a particular moiety
and may have specific rules governing marriage within the section
and subsection. However, sections and subsections may be much more
complex and multifaceted than this; they permit a range of possibilities for
classification and combination, and the like. There is no obvious way to
equate these classes and subsections with sections and subsections from
African kinship systems. We have already indicated that most kin terms in Australia are
classificatory, and are thus extended in such a way that everyone in the social
the category of 'kin terms'.

Notes: Boxes indicate Ego's section-mates. Columns are
taglines, rows are generations.
a type of kinship system in which all categories shown (siblings being unrecognised) are terminologically distinguished. The Aranda type of Australian kinship system is of this type, except that the classification of distinctions within a 'patriline' (a vertical column in the figure) is permitted; for example, in one or more of the four patrilines there may be terminological neutralisations in the differentiation of the cross grandpaternal patriline (MoFaBi) and the cross grandmaternal patriline (MoBoBi), for example, or just between grandmaternal and grandpatriline, or between descending and ascending kin categories, or occasionally Omaha-type skewing of the type MoBo whose major diagnostic feature of Australian systems is differentiation of four patrilines. The major diagnostic feature of Aranda systems is differentiation of four patrilines. These patrilines tend to conform formally to patrilineal seminominals, but only a minority of societies with Aranda type kinship systems have named seminominals.

On the other hand, suppose that we also allow terminological mergers involving kinsman in different patrilines (not just among generations within a patriline). The Kariera system is of this type, with mergers in parallel patrokinship categories (Ego's own and MoBoBi's), and within the two cross grandpaternal patrilines (MoFaSi's and FaBoBi's). There is a suggestion of patrilineal moiety structure in this terminology collapsing, but again we must note that named patrilines do not necessarily co-occur in the language, and further analysis (especially of descending kin categories) reveals mergers which do not conform to moiety principles.

The typology of the Aranda/Kariera opposition, supplemented by a few additional types to take care of those Australian systems which do not fit easily into these two, has been extensively criticised (though usually not rejected entirely) by a number of anthropologists, but this is not the place for another critical survey of opinions on the matter.


In the turn-of-the-century 'prescientific' ethnography, represented in Australia chiefly by Sir Baldwin Spencer and his collaborator Gillen, both the semantics and the social functions of kinship were misunderstood and excessive interest was placed on the higher-order classes, so that the study of kinship terminology became of decisive importance for the field that A. R. Radcliffe-Brown considered this emphasis and argued forcefully that egocentric kinship relations were central in Australian societies and that higher-order classes were derived from them as crystallisations of groups of kin categories converted usually into a sociocentric idiom. Radcliffe-Brown's ethnographic writings on Australia were limited, and it was left to his student Warner to produce a comprehensive ethnography using these principles (Warner 1937). However, Radcliffe-Brown did contribute a series of papers presenting a comprehensive typology of Australian kinship systems (1930-31) in which he recognised a range of genealogical and sociocultural distances from Ego within each terminological category, and argued that the study of kinship terminology, to its importance in the social organisation' (1930-31:43). This was not only because the terminology is readily accessible to the anthropologist, but also and more importantly because '...the terminology is the basis on which the social understanding of Australian society is regulated' (p. 43). Radcliffe-Brown believed that each kin term identifies a set of kinsmen who are treated in basically the same way by Ego. He recognised a range of genealogical and sociocultural distance from Ego within each terminological category, and argued that the members of a set are treated by Ego in an attuned form of the social relationship. The more full-blown form of Ego's interactions with more immediate representatives of the same category.

Radcliffe-Brown's typology emphasised Kariera and Aranda as the principal types in Australia, though he also described a number of others (Kumbingeri, Winkunun, Karadjari, northeast Arnhem Land, Yaralinga, Ungarinyin, Nyul-Nyul), each found in a small area in Australia. In addition, consistent with his view that kin terms were labels for sociologically (behaviourally) unitary sets, he insisted on a close correlation between his terminological variation from one tribe to another. Though assuming certain constant features of social organisation, such as the patrilineal land-holdings and land-owning group ('horde') to which the unity of sibling groups, he believed that some features were variable and that these were largely responsible for the variation in types of kinship system. Above all, marriage rules were crucial, and he felt that the Kariera system '...is based on and implies the existence of the form of marriage known as the "walking off" marriage' (p. 46), and that the Aranda system similarly requires marriage with second cousins such as MoBoMoBo. To the extent that he could, Radcliffe-Brown connected the other minor kinship types with local variations in the marriage rule; for example, Karadjari systems could be accounted for by noting that their marriage rule was asymmetrical, favouring the marriage of a man to his matrilateral cross cousin (MoBo) but not to his patrilateral cross cousin (FaSi).

With details modified, this framework was carried on by Elkin, who devoted a long lifetime to Australian ethnography and published many articles based on field surveys in several parts of the continent. His typology of kinship systems, found in the many editions of his popular book The Australian Aborigines: How to Understand Them (first published 1938), used somewhat different terminology and makes a few adjustments but is essentially similar to Radcliffe-Brown's. Like his predecessor, Elkin was greatly concerned with the connection between variation in kinship systems and local differences in marriage rules, but he had a somewhat more global approach, perhaps because of his research on ritual systems, political anthropology and the like. For example, in explaining the asymmetrical cross-cousin marriage of the Karadjari, he pointed out that FaSi marriage posed no problems of this kind (Elkin 1932:302-3). In addition, Elkin (1946:15) argued that the relationship or uniline connected terminologically (e.g., Elkin 1935:16) is in general, we can say that Elkin was able to obtain a great deal of useful data despite the relatively brief amount of time he was able to spend in most cases, and despite his limited knowledge of many of the languages in question. His understanding of the intricacies of marital and affinal relationships, and their articulation with clans and other social groupings, was often sophisticated. At the same time, from the late 1930s, Elkin was unable to make major advances over Radcliffe-Brown. His material on kinship systems consisted in large part of genealogical materials in which he had already worked out the sets of kin terms and mapped them onto individuals in a given Ego's genealogical network. These data were then presented in a conventional kinship diagram, and patterns of kin-type composition in the diagram were connected with marriage rules and other sociological phenomena. Although Elkin was interested in language and welcomed any assistance he could get from linguists, during most of his career there were only a tiny number of serious linguists working on Australian languages who had even a slender grasp of sociocultural anthropological concerns (for many years Arthur Capell was Elkin's only important linguistic collaborator, so far as I know).

Of the more recent synthetic attempts, Scheffler (1978) is by far the most notable for our purposes. Using methods of structural semiotics developed originally by Lloyd Lounsbury, Scheffler has presented a comprehensive and original restudy of the earlier typologies. Much of his monumental work is spent on the mapping of ethnographic reports by Elkin and others, and he has also investigated and in some cases published materials left behind by Donald Thomson and other earlier anthropologists. Scheffler
accepts several basic principles from Radcliffe-Brown, and goes even farther in insisting that kinship semantics cannot be derived in any obvious fashion from external sociological patterns such as borde structure or marriage rules. With regard to typological details, he argues that several of the aberrant local types are minor variations on Kartara. He is more concerned with revealing more with analytical decomposition than with gross typologies as such; each system is seen as a set of discrete, sometimes ordered extension/reduction rules which combine to generate the surface patterns in conventional diagrams. Typological analysis then takes the form of surveying the distribution of certain diagnostic extension/reduction rules, and as a subsidiary matter variations in details of the form of these rules and variations in rule ordering. Because of the semantic emphasis in Scheaffer's study, it is important to clearly relate the relationship between his work and the present volume. Although some papers here make use of extension/reduction rules, in general it is not the case that Scheaffer is not designed as a commentary or elaboration of his model. Some of the papers, notably those by Hale, Woolford and Laugham, have some affinities in their approach (emphasizing kinship logic in a relatively abstract mode), but on the whole our concerns are somewhat different and we do not make extensive use of the technical vocabulary and notion of structural semantics. One difficulty in defining our relationship to Scheaffer is that he has not been able to deal with the full range of kin-term subsystems which co-occur within individual languages. Although he has done some fieldwork in Australia, most of the material in his book is from publications and notebooks by other anthropologists. These are usually based on inadequate elicitation methods and produce static and one-dimensional presentations of 'the' kinship system of any language, which, typically based on lists of kin-terms subsumed under given kin terms (and represented in flat diagrams). In those instances where Scheaffer was able to find information about co-occurring linguistic systems, such as 'kinship pronouns', he has shown great interest in them and used them as primary evidence in his arguments about the usually covert superclass/subclass structures he believes underlie the kinship systems. However, we feel that it is perhaps wise to withhold judgements on the ability of formal structural semantics to handle the broader range of material fieldworkers have been able to collect and publish much more raw material on the subject. Probably the central empirical question here is whether the various linguistic feature bifurcations of the sort Scheaffer proposes, based usually on successive distinctive kin-terms, with only a subset of the possible values of the feature in question (so that there are several layers of superfamilies of kin-terms, as in the classification system of the Northern Territory), are all distinct patterns of typological features (or acoustically labeled) or whether distinct patterns of superfamilies can be reduced to one system and secondarily-type superfamilies (as in Kartara, see Laugham in this volume, would seem to constitute a challenge for Scheaffer's present model.)

In short, Scheaffer's work deserves a comprehensive critique because of its originality, significance and erudition. While, however, several of us comment briefly on his work, this is not the place for that critique and I doubt that it should be attempted until a number of detailed, reliable studies on representative Aboriginal groups have been completed. Nevertheless, I do not think that our future labours should be directed primarily at this theoretical question. Scheaffer's model is, by design, a restricted one which does not attempt to confront all of the issues raised in linguistic studies of kinship. His superclass/subclass model is rather crystalline and abstract. It is possible for him to construct essentially the same model for a hypothetical range of languages differing sharply in surface patterns of lexical structure, the range of coexisting subsystems (regular kin terms, dyadic terms, triangular terms, bervement terms, kinship pronouns, etc.), and sociolinguistic norms for the usage of kin terms vary widely. Alternative kin expressions or alternative designations. In Scheaffer's framework the evidence for a particular underlying superfamily would be a neutralization observed in immediate speech contexts, an obligatory neutralization structure which is a special subclass system such as sign language or berevement kin terms, or a casual remark made by an informant in English (e.g. 'he is like a Br. or the evidence may be entirely indirect with no concrete surface manifestation as such. Once some piece of direct evidence or some persuasive indirect argument is found, the underlying structural fact a hypothesis is like a Br. or the evidence may be entirely indirect with no concrete surface manifestation as such. Once some piece of direct evidence or some persuasive indirect argument is found, the underlying structural fact a hypothesis is)

In question is recognised by the analyst and becomes part of the underlying system of which the surface forms are viewed as outcroppings. However, for linguists and sociolinguists the precise surface patterns of semantic distinctions and sociolinguistic norms cannot be disregarded. At most a part of our task is to identify a single system of underlying semantic relations; we are and must be heavily concerned with surface details. It is also at least possible that an analysis deriving surface patterns from abstract structures will encounter practical difficulties and that a more frankly surface-oriented (and sociolinguistically oriented) approach will be needed in some cases. Hopefully, then, this volume can function as a counterpart to Scheaffer's study, neither explicitly in favor of nor hostile to its orientation. There is, however, a common interest in hierarchical relations and coexisting terminological subsystems. Above all, there is a common rejection of the flat models of Australian kinship systems which have tended to prevail in the past.

4. Linguistic anthropology in Australia.

Although the volume is the first of its kind, it would be presumptuous to imply that we have no extended pronouns. Indeed, in this volume will be publicized the little-known work of several other authors who have tackled related questions before. Almost all serious ethnographic studies of Aboriginal contains at least some material on linguistic anthropology, but in this section I concentrate on publications in which concerns similar to ours have been central. W.B. Stanner is best known as a social anthropologist with major interests in Australian religious systems and the dynamics of social classification in post-contact Aboriginal communities. However, he also did an important piece of work on language (Stanner on 'Aboriginal Modes of Address and Reference in the 'North-West of the Northern Territory' (1936-57). In it, he describes distinct patterns of superfamilies in one system and secondarily-type superfamilies (as in Kartara, see Laugham in this volume, would seem to constitute a challenge for Scheaffer's present model.)

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cations are few and relatively short (he was also a biologist), he had an
admirable knack for Aboriginal languages and an exceptional ability to un-
derstand Aboriginal life. In his first article relevant to us (1935) he dealt
with organised swearers (joking), oppositions, and correlations, and
suggested that the issue of avoidance requires a more detailed
analysis.

Thomson subsequently (1946) published an account of the various
kinds of personal pronouns used in one of the Cape York group (Vik Bemau).

Scheffler -who has recently edited a volume of posthumous publication-
has written a more detailed monograph on Cape York kinship systems (Thomson 1972).

Scheffler (1937) and, in his unfortunately brief published articles, he
emphasised the significance of kinship relations (as opposed to higher-order
clases) and provided an outline of a complex terminological system involving
several formally distinct kinship subsystems. He identified two basic refer-
tential subsystems (one apparently just a modification of the other), a
vocative subsystem, a set of noun-bearing terms like 'wife' and a set of manual
terms involving body parts used to represent kin categories. The material is
not presented with what we would now consider adequate detail, but at least
Shane and other early anthropologists in Australia) noticed the kinds of
linguistic phenomena we are dealing with here and considered them
worthy of study.

There are a few other articles from the thirties and forties which could be
considered in a context like this bibliographic review. My remarks are more
likely to mention those which have perhaps been most overlooked. Unfortunately, these publications do not form a sustained body of research, and it would be safe to say that this kind of
linguistic analysis of kinship terminology was poorly developed and of relatively low
visibility among Australianists. Those of us who have some familiarity with
American Indian studies cannot fail to be struck by the vastly greater
productivity of work in this field. This is largely due to the fact that native
American languages have been studied in greater detail than any of the
native languages of Australia. This is perhaps due in part to the
availability of larger bodies of published material, but it is also due to the
fact that American Indians have a rich oral culture. Their oral traditions are
richer than those of Australian Aboriginals, and this has resulted in a
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richer than those of Australian Aboriginals, and this has resulted in a
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In the first category we must begin with Ken Hale's important article
"Kinship cohesion in the form: Some Australian languages" (1966). The point
of the paper was that this (classificatory) agnatic i.e., co-membership of
the classificatory or real patrilineal in terms of kinship categories) and
in alternate-generating notables were features of pronoun usage in certain
languages, the examples being from Lardil and Lower Aranda. Since the
non-parallel pronouns can be used in a concord relationship to a noun
phrase (or a pronoun plus a kin term), Hale argued that the syntax of Lardil
did not incorporate kinship terminologies. Further information on "kinship pronouns" see the papers by Alpher (Dalabon
duals) and Koch, this volume.

Another important contribution in this area has been the work of B.
Schebeck (1971, 1974), much of which has been edited for publication
with commentaries by Hecox and White. Schebeck's studies of Adangbara
of South Australia (some distance south of the most southerly group dealt
with directly in this volume), found an exceptionally complex system of
third person pronouns in which the kinship relations of the speaker to
each other were encoded. Or rather, their kinship superclasses
(showing section-type neutralisations) were encoded, although the language
lacks what we call sociocentric sections. Schebeck's material is
of the kind that indicates the interest of Schebeck's findings and has commented on them extensively.

Unfortunately, Schebeck's materials are difficult to read, perhaps because he is the only one unable to complete the final nametapes for publication,
but these studies and the texts in them are essential reading for serious
students of kinship Terminology in Australia.

Additional studies on the semantics of kin terms have been undertaken by
Hale and Dixon by comparing lexical structures in special registers with
special terminologies. Hale (1971) studies the semantics of Warilpiri 'applied-down' language (as it is sometimes called), a special
register used in war initiation contexts in which the meanings of ordinary
words are inverted. Among other things, Hale briefly indicates how an
antonymic meaning is selected for kin terms. Similarly, Dixon (1971) discusses
the semantics of the Pyrrhian language by comparing the ordinary
lexicon with the much smaller lexicon of the 'mother-in-law' respect register.

Neither article focuses on kin terminology, so the material of interest
to us in them is modest. However, Hale's contribution to the present volume
contains an extensive study of kin terminology in a special register used
by the Lardil, and some of the other papers in this volume (e.g., Harlan)
provide information about kin terminology in similar registers.

O'Grady and Shone (1973) have provided a more detailed analysis of
kinship terminology in Nyungura, in the eastern part of Australia. Although they
concede gaps in their data, they describe a system of 'shared' kin terms
i.e., they identify the names commonly the addresses of the third, rather than just one
relationships are indexed by a single term (speaker-referent, addressee-referent,
speaker-addressee), though usually only two of these relationships make the
tter predictable. In Nyungura, a principal focus of the triangular forms
(to use the label I prefer) is specification of relatives in the
law relationships (on any side of the triangle). There are also some forms
involving alternate or adjacent generations within a classificatory patrilineal
or matrilineal, sometimes with the relationship of filiation. Serious
students of the shared kin terms will want to compare the Nyungura data
with those of Warilpiri and Gurrindji discussed in this volume, with data on
Fingap in Hermann and Hammers (1974), and eventually with data likely to be
published in the near future by Harlan on Jamway.

A recent M.A. thesis by Alan Dench (1981) contains some material on kinship
terms in Panayina (Zilbarra region, Western Australia). The most interesting
feature is the use of vocatives for addressee pairs. The rule is based on
geneocentric section relationships, both between the two adresseses
and between the speaker. Out of a possible maximum of ten distinct dual
tocatives, eight forms are in use. One or more of these vocatives for two addressee who are in the same section as each other
and in the same moiety (i.e., Fa-Ch section couple) as the speaker (whether they
are in the speaker's own section or the speaker is Fa-Ch) and the
merger is that one vocative form is used when the addressee differs from each other both in (patrilineal) moiety and in terms of alternate-generation moiety, regardless of the speaker's section relation to either addressee.
other words, speaker-addressee section relationships are encoded less
reliably than relationships between the two addressee. Dench’s preliminary
findings are to be published shortly in Anthropological Forum, and his
fieldwork on languages in the region is continuing.

Turning now to the question of the pragmatics of usage of kin terms
and functionally overlapping references and vocative expressions, the
approaches developed by Thomson and Stanner (see above) have been revived
by much linguists and linguistic anthropologists as John Haviland, Bruce
Tregear, Peter Sutton, Alan Rumsey, Peter McKeowen, Jason and Bruce Sommer.
Most of the research done by these people in the last
several years remains unpublished. The present volume, while leaning on the
whole toward semantic and grammatical analysis, also includes papers by Sutton
and Rumsey in particular which stress contextualization of kin-term analysis
in ongoing social life, and McKeowen and Merlan (among other contributors)
are clearly thinking along the same lines.

As for recent literature published elsewhere, we must of course mention
Haviland’s important article (1979) on avoidance/respect language in a Cape
York population. Though necessarily based on observation of vestigial rather
than fully productive registers, it is the most significant publication
on the subject since Thomson (1935), and makes similar points about the
structural polarity between joking/sneering and avoidance/respect registers.
In addition, he indicates how the kinship terminology itself appears in the
respect register; he shows that such terms as those in this register do not
correspond to particular cultural subcategories of the Australian class systems (they do also do
not correspond to sociopolitical groups), but rather correspond to ‘traditional social categories’
which, in turn, govern avoidance and behavioural restrictions on language’ (1979:385).

Alan Rumsey, whose contribution to the present volume advances the study
of the kinship system, shows that the structural polarity between joking/sneering
and avoidance/respect registers may be more complex than was previously
assumed. Rumsey (1980) reanalyses the Ngarinyin (= Gungiyin) kinship system,
which had previously appeared to be highly aberrant in comparison to other
Australian class systems, with a typology of kinship terms within patrilineages
(not just in alternate generations). Rumsey shows that the Ngarinyin
system is a contextually restricted device typical in discussions
involving membership in patrilineal clans and that in other contexts a
more precise terminology is used in which to do so is grammatically incorrect.
More importantly, he shows that the broader type of usage is not just
limited to the Ngarinyin system, and that other kinship systems with
a similar structure may be found elsewhere.

Rumsey’s paper was, incidentally, originally prepared for the
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5. Suggestions for single-society descriptions.

As noted earlier, the present volume consists of topical papers and capsule
commentaries on the various kinship subsystems in a given language. What we
now need are much more comprehensive studies which concentrate
in detail with the various kinship subsystems and their relationships to
to other systems of designation and address. It is recognised that some Australian
languages have only a small subset of the range of subsystems exemplified
in the volume, but we can set out here a kind of minimal inventory so that
fieldworkers will be at least aware of the possibilities.

For this purpose, with the aid of an ordinary kin term which normally
finds its way into the ethnographic literature, we are now coming to
realize, there is often some flexibility in the usage of these terms
according to speech contexts, and we need not belabour the point here.
However, we should emphasize the need to study modifying affixes and the
other elements used in conjunction with the basic terms (cf. Beattie on Umpila, this
volume). Even when there are morphological or other criteria for identifying
a class of kin terms distinct from other, semantically related forms, it is
important to find out how the supplementary forms are used to distinguish
major subclasses within a kin category, specify close (focal) or distant
kin within the category, etc. There are also, of course, cases where a non-kin
term is used in a semi-systematic fashion as a kin-term substitute (cf.
English old man and the like), and such elements have to be described to
clarify the structure of the overall kinship system.

Within the domain of simple referential kin terms, there are often
peculiarities in stem shape involving plurality, pronominal prepositions
(‘possessor’), and other categories, and it is improper to omit mention of
these fine points. For example, there may be kinship markers found in
one such morphological subsystem as against the others. Thus Bungubuyu
sibling terms distinguish only elder vs. younger in the 1st person and
the related sibling terms in the 2nd person: *forefather* or *grandfather* (the younger sibling’), with referent gender marked optionally by noun-class prefixes
(‘genderless’ but not vocative) in the 2nd and 3rd person; there is
the elder/junior opposition but gender is obligatorily marked in the stem
(as well as by optional noun-class prefixes). This is not typical
of the sibling terms, with a distinct stem *t’b* being used in 2nd/3rd forms.

Now a great deal of such information may seem to be of little
pragmatic interest, but it has nothing to do with kinship structure
and is entirely uninteresting? Suppose that we find a consistent pattern of stem suppletion
distinguishing 1st (and vocative) from 2nd/3rd forms, even though the language
has overt pronominal affixes which could perfectly easily be used to
differentiate these forms even if there was only one set per category. Such
a pattern calls out for interpretation, and it is not at all obvious what
form this explanation should take. Stem-suppletion might be a kind of
automatic consequence of the great frequency of usage of kin terms (just
as the most common verbs often have suppletive or other irregular forms),
but it might have something to do with elusiveness of speech pragmatics
or with emotive associations on words which are inappropriate to some forms.
We would suspect that the 1st and 2nd forms would be, in different ways,
more emotive and pragmatically loaded than 3rd person forms, and patterns in
which 2nd and 3rd forms are all suppletive to each other might appear
reasonably natural, but in Bungubuyu there is usually a break between 1st
form and 2nd form.
and 2nd/3rd. Because we are dealing with highly grammaticalised alternations, there is no simple test to determine what attitudes the various stems evoke in speakers, but we cannot assume that just because the stem alternations are categorical (automatically determined by pronominal affixes) there is nothing further to be said about them than just to list them. The same applies to any other stem-suppletions, say involving dyadic terms (cf. below).

In addition, there are some patterns of markedness among the various pronominal forms to work out. In the Nunggubuyu example just given, the 2nd person forms with -tahi are clearly unmarked morphologically vs. 3rd person -tahi-mu, and the suffix -mu/-m occurs in this function without alternate forms. When later in the same stem, the markedness relation is usually 1st person least marked, then 2nd, then 3rd as in aggi 'my/or our FaMoRc', aggi-yi 'your /his/her FaMoRc', aggi-ki 'their FaMoRc'. his/her/their FaMoRc' (1st person least marked), or muti 'our FaMoRc', a-muti 'your FaMoRc' and g-muti-m 'his/her/their FaMoRc'. Moreover, the 1st person is occasionally used in place of the 2nd or 3rd person forms (e.g., when pronominal propositus is expressed by an independent personal pronon anyway).

Things are, however, not always this way and it cannot be assumed that universal markedness principles make descriptive detail unnecessary. In languages just north of Nunggubuyu, we find either a system in which 3rd person possessors is unmarked vs. overt affixation for 1st or 2nd person (Richanggu baiga-m 'my Fa', baiga-mu 'your Fa', baiga 'his Fa'), or else a system with a specially marked 2nd person object opposed to another marked form used for 1st or 3rd person and also used for 2nd person when there is an independent 2nd person marker in the phrase (Yhual baiga-m 'my Fa', baiga-mu 'your Fa', baiga-m 'his Fa', baiga-m 'your Fa', baiga-m 'his Fa', baiga-mu 'your Fa', baiga-m 'his Fa').

Here the data show that the 2nd person form is leas marked, while 1st person possessors are marked with a prefix -ga- and there is an 'absolute' suffix (g-bu 'my Fa', g-bu 'your Fa', g-bu 'his Fa'). Now these different systems are so highly contrasted within a given language, and so far from conscious manipulation, that they cannot be easily handled by extending the analytical apparatus usually applied to kinship systems. However, linguists have developed methods of analyzing other equally grammaticalised phenomena involving all of the grammatical categories marked adjectivally, nouns, pronouns and demonstratives, and there is no reason why we cannot develop similar theories about the morphology of kin terms. However, we need accurate data from these languages before we can attempt this.

Our interest in kinship systems dates from a long time ago, because we need to know something about the social organization of traditional hunter-gatherer societies if they are to be productive. We can easily distinguish triangle forms from ordinary linear forms (like 'your Fa'). McConell's Gurindji data show a situation in which the kinship system is partly deviant, but the system is partly deviant, and there is a formally distinct set of ordinary linear kin terms. McConell quite rightly raises the question of why some categories have triangle forms while others do not, and makes some suggestions emphasizing the role of avoidance/dispect categories. (Although this question does not arise in quite the same way for Warlpiri, we will eventually want to see whether certain kin categories have more elaborate triangular sets than do others, say with five distinct forms vs. just two.) Other Australian languages lack triangular subsets; in the Northern Territory they seem to be well established in the central western area and to run from the interior to the top End without intruding visibly into the Gulf coastal strip. We are just barely beginning to get reliable data on these interesting subsystems, which may be yet another uniquely Australian phenomenon.

Another problem which is ostensibly unrelated to this, but may in fact be closely linked, is the matter of choosing the propositus in languages which lack triangular terms or make only limited use of them. As Merlan in his paper in this volume shows, when referring to a third person one typically has the choice between saying 'my X' and 'your Y', using either oneself or addressess as propositus. Merlan identifies the most clearcut forms of usage favouring one mode or the other, but also points out that in some contexts the choice is not clearly prescribed by conventional rules, and delicate decisions have to be made. Because of tight restrictions on the referential use of personal names, there may be no escape routes, other than using some non-kin expression as a kin substitute. In this light, we might hypothesise that the origin of the triangular terms, which simultaneously index speaker's and addressee's kin relationship to the designated referent (and to each other), are historically a response to and a solution for pragmatic indeterminacies in the use of ordinary linear (propositus-referent) kin terms. But perhaps this is too simple an explanation; at any rate, it is premature to attempt explanations for phenomena which have, for the most part, not been adequately described for a representative set of aboriginal societies.
for various kinds of superclasses, including egocentric forms of sections, semioticities, moieties, clans and concrete agamic and uterine lines. Most obviously, terms which are used only as egocentric class labels must be identified and their semantics and usage clarified. However, many languages lack explicitly egocentric class terms, and instead have ordinary kin terms or perhaps non-kin expressions, with plural marking in most cases. Thus an expression of the form 'PaMo-Plural' might, in some contexts, designate one's own person or that of another person (with only one or two exceptions in the entire text lexicon). This model, however, is based on infrequent recollection of several actual Dyirbal speech behaviour even in the pre-contact period. Other respective registers which have subsequently been studied have turned out to show stylistic gradations of various sorts (just as non-linguistic behaviour towards someone shows grades of respect culminating in total avoidance of speech and physical proximity). Similarly, a range of familiarity culminating in elaborate vulgarity and joking characterises the other pole of the respect/familiarity spectrum in McGovern's account for the Gurindji (this volume). Romney's suggestion (this volume) of a relatively constant clause-by-clause quota of respect lexical items in running texts in the respect register for Rumbal deserves to be tested in other languages in which older speakers can still use the register. Haviland's (1979) analysis of the distribution of ordinary/respect lexical doubles across semantic domains (e.g., body parts) should also be considered in future fieldwork (cf. Merlan, this volume, p.124).

Sutton's paper in this volume is useful in providing an outline of how all of these phenomena may eventually be incorporated into a far broader theoretical framework. His personal interests lie in the study of the formal and semantic terms which are used to designate the various kin relationships. His method of analysis, which is based on the study of a single language, provides a general framework for the study of other languages, both within the same family and in other linguistic contexts. His work is especially valuable in that it provides a comprehensive and systematic approach to the study of kinship systems. The use of a single language as a model for the study of other languages is not uncommon in linguistic research, and Sutton's approach is particularly valuable in that it provides a general framework for the study of other languages, both within the same family and in other linguistic contexts.

There is a certain danger that our professions of interest in a wider semiotic theory can be taken as lip service, especially since this volume has been organised around kinship terminology (that is, essentially formal rather than functional category). At a minimum, we should surely try to ensure that our interests include personal names and other referential and addressing expressions. Many Aboriginals clearly learn norms which regulate the choice between kinship and other expressions. There is no valid defence for a delimitation of interest to kinship alone unless our concerns are strictly and narrowly semantic. However, I feel that studying kinship is a good way for fieldworkers to get a foothold in this area. Even within kinship, there are many choices which have to be made - among terms in different formal subsystems, or among competing terms (due to optimal neutralisations or duplications of lexical items) within one system. One cannot study Aboriginal kinship for very long, using participant-observation and/or substantial textual transcriptions, without facing issues of speech pragmatics. The kinds of analysis that are attempted in this volume, and the problems that arise, are extremely extendable to other domains, beginning with non-kinship referential and addressing expressions (including personal names), the analysis of which even on semantic grounds usually proceeds.
an extensive knowledge of kinship and classes), moving into the analysis of speech registers (which are distributed largely on the basis of kinship categories), and ending up with the more encompassing semantic approach advocated by Sustin analysing the whole range of social dynamics.

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DALABON DUAL-SUBJECT PREFIXES, KINSHIP CATEGORIES, AND GENERATION-SKewing

Barry Alpher

The Dalabon language (also called Ngalkbon), spoken in south-central Arnhem Land, obligatorily marks the person and number of the subject of the sentence by means of a prefix to the predicate word. Thus, for example, the prefixes ngal- 'I', ga- 'he/she/it', and balgal- 'they (plural)' combine with the verbal predicate jirmmu 'cough' (present tense) to form ngal-jirmmu 'I am coughing', ga-jirmmu 'he is coughing', and balgal-jirmmu 'they are coughing'. There are also pronominal object prefixes for appropriate verbs, but this paper is not directly concerned with these.

If the subject is dual (two in number), the choice of prefix further marks a feature of the kinship relationship of the two referents: garrhuk-go 'one two brothers go', but ben-ga-go 'a father-and-son pair go', both with -go 'go' (present), but with distinct 1Bu prefixes garrhuk- and anga-. Similarly, for first person dual exclusive (1BuDu) subject, there are two prefix forms, yarrh- and nga-; as in ngay yulun-ngam varra-BH- 'my brother and I go' and ngay bula-ngam nga-BH- 'my father and I go'. For the subject of a transitive verb, the distinction is maintained (although some of the prefixes differ slightly from their intransitive counterparts), hence 1BuDu acting on 3Bu object virralh- 'on' and -ngu- in ngay yulun-ngam virralh-angu- 'my brother and I speak' (yanung) 'a kangaroo' (gun) and ngay bula-ngam, ngag-angu- 'my father and I speak a kangaroo'.

The feature that is marked is, in general, 'same alternate-generation level' vs. 'different alternate-generation level' (i.e., the set of generations including ego's own and those of his/her grandparents and grandchildren vs. the set of generations of ego's parents and children). For convenience, we will use Hale's terms (this volume) 'harmonic' of the same-generation set and 'disharmonic' of the different-generation set. There are exceptions to this categorization among the dual-subject prefixes, and it is the exceptions that are of interest in this paper, but the regular cases are dealt with first. Table 1 presents the intransitive forms of sets of dual-subject prefixes ('set 1' and 'set 2'), while Table 2 lists the kinship terms which are attested with cross-referencing set 1 and set 2 prefixes.

When we say a term like ga-kakal 'HoHo' is of the set 1 class, we mean that set 1 dual-subject prefixes are used to refer to a pair of persons one of whom calls the other by this term. Indeed, as in many neighbouring languages (see Maran and Heath, this volume), there is in Dalabon a set of special dyadic formations, as for example garrhuk-g'o 'brother-and-brother pair' and ben-g'a-father-and-child pair' cited above. Such dyadic nouns, as subjects, occur with prefixes of set 1 or set 2. Those attested as subjects are listed, along with some ordinary dual forms of kin terms, in Table 3.

Of central interest are two kinship terms which do not fit the general rule, in that they denote relatives who are 'harmonic', although a dyad of ego and one of these relatives is cross-referenced by a prefix of set 2. These terms are gum and kiriwiny: they are both close cross-cousins.