

THE YARLI LANGUAGES

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1. Introduction

The Malyangapa language, traditionally spoken in far north-western New South Wales, has been classified into various subgroups of Australian Aboriginal languages, including the Karnic languages of the Lake Eyre Basin. Using all the available data on this language we consider previous classifications and regard Malyangapa as part of a small subgroup of languages, the Yarli subgroup, once spoken in the far north-west corner of New South Wales and adjacent areas in South Australia and Queensland.

The words quoted from Malyangapa, Yardliyawara, Diyari and Paakantyi are from our own transcriptions. Words from other languages are spelt according to the relevant standard works, Adnyamathanha according to Schebeck (2000a), Wangkumara and Yandruwantha according to Breen (forthcoming and n.d.). The only changes that have been made are in the notation of the rhotics.¹

1.1 Languages

The three languages in the proposed Yarli subgroup are:

Malyangapa — recorded by Stephen Wurm in 1957 with Hannah Quayle, born near Yancannia in about 1875, and with George Dutton and Alf Barlow. Peter Austin has made a detailed study of these data (Austin 1986). Luise Hercus did some recording with George Dutton in the mid-1960s on Malyangapa; Jeremy Beckett had previously worked with him on social and cultural traditions. Luise Hercus also recorded Laurie Quayle, son of Hannah

¹ Notation of rhotics: *r* = alveolar tap, *rr* = alveolar trill, *R* = retroflex glide. Abbreviations used are: ACC, accusative; ALL, allative; CAUS, causal; ERG, ergative; FUT, future tense; IMPER, imperative; INCH, inchoative; LOC, locative; NOM, nominative; PAST, past tense; PRES, present tense; PURP, purposive.

Quayle, checking some of the earlier materials. He passed away in 1976, and with his death the language became extinct.

Wadikali — known from a 72 word vocabulary in Tindale’s 1934 Diamantina notebook, taken down from Ned Palpilina ‘Blanche Ned’, who was said to be the last Wadikali. His country was Yandama Creek, but his mother had left there just before he was born and he had spent much of his life at Blanchwater in Pirlatapa country (Hercus 1987, Hercus and Koch 1996) There are descendants of Wadikali people, but the language has evidently not been spoken since the 1930s.

The name Wadikali might suggest that the language belongs to the Paakantyi subgroup as there are similarly formed names for Paakantyi people with a term *kali*, which is said to be an archaic word meaning “people”. Hence we have the names Wilyakali, Thangkakali, Bula-ali and Pantyikali “the Creek people” whose language was called Wanyiwalku. The use of the term *kali* is however by no means confined to Paakantyi: Malyangapa people called the Adnyamathanha, i.e. “the Stone People” of the Flinders Ranges, by the term *Yarnda-ali*, which is simply a translation and also means “the Stone People”. As the linguistic evidence in §4.1. below will show, Wadikali is not a Paakantyi language: it is clearly part of the closely-knit subgroup of Yarli languages.

Yardliyawara — based on limited material from two speakers, Barney Coffin, recorded by Bernhard Schebeck and Luise Hercus, and Fred Johnson, with whom Bernhard Schebeck did some recording of vocabulary and short sentences (Schebeck 1987). Bernhard Schebeck has very kindly made his data available to us. More work on the Coffin recordings is in progress.

Three vocabularies in Curr (1886-87) belong to the area:

1. No. 69 Evelyn Creek, by A. Dewhurst, Esq, Curr (1886-87 II:156):

Dewhurst and Crozier, as quoted (II:152), informed Curr that this area belonged to the ‘Pono’ people, but owing to the influx of other people there was “a great mixture of dialects”. Curr goes on to speculate that the “Pono Blacks belonged to the Cooper’s Creek (i.e. Wangkumara) rather than to the Darling Tribes”. This may well be so, as it seems likely that ‘Pono’ is a transcription of *purnu*, which in Wangkumara means “country”. The vocabulary written down by Dewhurst contains some admixture of Wangkumara but is mainly Malyangapa; e.g. “fire” is *wiyi* versus *'kal:'a'* in Wadikali, *kardla* in Yardliyawara; “beard” is *ngankuru* as opposed to *nganku* in Wadikali and Yardliyawara. There does, however, also seem to be some influence of Paakantyi; e.g. *yimba* for “you”, cf. Paakantyi (*ngimba*).

2. No. 69 Evelyn Creek, by H. Crozier, Esq, Curr (1886-87 II:154)

This is probably Wadikali with some admixture of Wangkumara and Pirlatapa.

3. No. 69a Near the North-west Corner of New South Wales, by A.W. Morton, Esq, Curr (1886-87 II:160)

This seems to be mainly Wadikali, though the introduction speaks of ‘Mulya napa’ people living in the area. All the available evidence, and especially that of Tindale, points to the extreme northwest of New South Wales being Wadikali country.

1.2 *Areas and locations*

Like many other language-owning groups, the people of this region were divided up into a number of local clans. In view of the general disruption and depopulation during the course of the nineteenth century, information on this has been lost. The area was particularly vulnerable on account of the discovery of gold in the Milparinka-Tibooburra area. Police and pastoralists sometimes refer to groups of people by names that are otherwise unknown, such as ‘Pono’ quoted above (§1.1.). It is possible that these references are to small local groups, which were displaced in the wake of the first European settlement. There is however rough general agreement among all the sources as to the area originally occupied by speakers of Yarli languages. The most important of these sources is Beckett’s published and unpublished work with George Dutton in 1957-58:

1. George Dutton spoke of Malyangapa people being at Salisbury, Cobham, Yantara Lakes, Mt Pool and Mt Arrowsmith. The name was written as ‘Milya-uppa’ by Reid in Curr II:180. Reid’s ‘Milya-uppa’ vocabulary, from Torrowotto is however not Malyangapa at all, but straight Paakantyi. This may well be due to the displacement of people, which resulted in there being a mixed population at Torrowotto, some Paakantyi, some Malyangapa. Wurm’s main consultant, Hannah Quayle, placed Malyangapa country very much as George Dutton had, as “Tibooburra, Salisbury Downs and Milparinka.”
2. George Dutton spoke of “Wadikali, like Malyangapa (i.e. it is close to Malyangapa), go from Mt Pool, Mt Sturt, Yandama, Tilcha from there to Lake Frome.”
3. Yardliyawara was spoken on the eastern side of the Flinders Ranges, and Adnyamathanha people referred to it as ‘Wooltana talk’ (Wooltana being the name of a station on the north-eastern side of the Flinders).

There has been some confusion regarding the location of Wadikali people from Tilcha to Lake Frome. This was caused by a statement in the work of R.H. Mathews (1898:242): “At Lake Boolka and Tilcha are the Endawarra and Berluppa people respectively.” Mathews was basing himself on information from correspondents, including letters from the police sergeant B. Hynes from Tibooburra in 1897-98. Hynes wrote 28.5.1898: “the Tilcha Blacks are called Berluppa”. In a later communication 18.8.1898, too late to be used by Mathews in his article, he wrote: “Tilcha is now only a back station of Yandama and I believe there are no blacks there at present.” Hynes was passing on information he had been given by R.B. Daws, the manager of Tilcha: he was talking about the state of affairs at that particular time, not about the ancestral homeland of particular groups of people. The homeland of particular groups is precisely what George Dutton was speaking about.

‘Berluppa’ or ‘Biraliba’ are variant spellings for the Pirlatapa, who were not linguistically associated with the Yarli group but were closely akin to Diyari (Austin 1990b). There may well have been a group of them visiting Tilcha. The Pirlatapa were the immediate neighbours of the Wadikali and the Yardliyawara, as indicated by George Dutton and confirmed by all the other available evidence. They were strongly associated with the Blanchwater area, as is clear from oral evidence from South Australia (Hercus and Koch 1996); and according to George Dutton (Beckett 1958) they were at “Callabonna, Quinyambie Station and through to Lake Elder, Congie Bore and Cooney Bore.”

The ‘Endawarra’, who are mentioned by Mathews as being at Lake Boolka, about 30 km south of Tilcha, were even further from their country: Endawarra is a spelling for Yandruwantha. We know from Tindale’s evidence (1934) that the Yandruwantha had joint initiation ceremonies with Wadikali people; so this too probably refers to a temporary situation. See Tindale’s 1940 map for further details.

There is a major change in Tindale’s maps between 1940 and 1974 for this area. Into what was on his earlier map Yardliyawara and Wadikali country, Tindale has inserted another group, Ngurunta. This name is known also from Curr 1886-87 (II:180): “The tribes which bound the Milya-uppa are the Ngurunta on the west, the Momba on the south....”

In connection with Ngurunta Tindale (1974:216) also mentions the anonymous and very fragmentary vocabulary in Curr 1886-87 (II:173) with the vague title ‘Country north-west of the Barrier Range’. There is however no

indication that this brief vocabulary belongs to Ngurunta or any of the Yarli subgroup; every single word in it is Paakantyi and Curr himself mentions this: “The following words, contributed anonymously, some of which correspond with those of the Common (Paakantyi) vocabulary, show that the tribe which uses them is of Darling descent.”

None of the senior people in South Australia and on the NSW side in the 1960s ever mentioned the Ngurunta, and this includes Barney Coffin, who travelled frequently between the two states. Tindale’s information, however, does seem to be from a person interviewed by him in the 1960s, so memory of the group as an entity had survived in this limited way. The area in question, which is mainly inhospitable sandhill country, was generally regarded by these senior people in NSW as being part of Yardliyawara. See Tindale’s 1974 map for further details.

1.3 Culture

As regards social organisation the group is uniform in having a matrilineal moiety system. Yet, as elsewhere, belonging to the same linguistic subgroup does not necessarily imply social and cultural uniformity. All the three sets of people— Malyangapa, Wadikali and Yardliyawara— were circumcising and, along with their westerly neighbours, they had a form of the Wilyaru secondary initiation ritual (see Beckett 1967). Nevertheless it seems that the three groups did not perform joint ceremonies but joined in with their respective neighbours. Wadikali and Malyangapa joined in with what was called ‘Milia’, a circumcision ceremony and myth shared with Wangkumara/Kungardutyi people and centred on Cobham Lake in Malyangapa country. Wadikali people also shared in Yandruwantha initiation ceremonies, according to the entry mentioned above by Tindale in his Diamantina notebook (1934). Yardliyawara people joined in ceremonies with the Adnyamathanha.

There are numerous myths and song cycles traversing the whole area. Some were shared by all, along with Paakantyi people, such as the story of the Two Snakes from the Paroo who travelled all the way to the Paralana Hot Springs in Yardliyawara country (Beckett 1958). The *Kurlimuku* song cycle was also shared widely, as Barney Coffin pointed out to us, “Four nations sings the same song. Malyangapa, Wadikali and Kungardutyi and Wanyiwalku, that is four nations.”

The people speaking Yarli languages clearly remained associated with one another, but each had cultural associations, involving intermarriage, with

outside groups as well. In the case of the Malyangapa it was especially with the Paakantyi group Wanyiwalku/Pantiykali; in the case of the Wadikali it was with the Karnic speaking Kungardutyi /Wangkumara and Pirlatapa; in the case of the of the Yardliyawara it was with the Pirlatapa and the Thura-Yura speaking Adnyamathanha.

1.4 Genetic unity versus diffusion

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. The differences between the languages are largely due to outside factors. There is evidence for linguistic characteristics cutting across this whole area and apparently arising from borrowing and diffusion. For example, Malyangapa and Wadikali show phonetic lengthening of single consonants at the beginning of the second syllable following the initial stressed syllable. This feature is shared with Paakantyi to the east, and with Karnic. In Yardliyawara laterals and sporadically also the nasal *n* have become prestopped in this position (thus compare Malyangapa *yarli* ‘‘person’’ with *yardli* in Yardliyawara), a feature shared with neighbouring Karnic languages and Adnyamathanha.

Furthermore, the Yarli languages show bound pronouns for subject and object suffixed to the verb, a feature shared with both Paakantyi and Adnyamathanha. Bound pronouns are not found in Karnic.

Finally, there are lexical items which are distributed according to these regional diffusion patterns. Two examples from the vocabulary in Appendix 9 are quoted in Table 1 to show the intricacy of these diffusion patterns.

Table 1: *Lexical items showing regional diffusion patterns*

	kangaroo	kangaroo	bird	bird	bird
Adnyamathanha	<i>urdlu</i>		<i>yirta</i>		
other Thura-Yura	<i>kurdlu</i> PNK		<i>thirta</i> KUY		
Yardliyawara	<i>kurdlu</i>		<i>thirta</i>		
Wadikali	<i>'kol:o</i>	<i>talda</i> (Morton)		<i>ju:li</i>	
Malyangapa		<i>tharlta</i>		<i>yurli</i>	
Wangkumara		<i>thaldra</i>			<i>maranga</i>
Paakantyi		<i>tharlta</i>			
Paakantyi dialect	<i>kurlu</i>			<i>yurli</i> duck	
	Wilyakali			Pantiykali	

Adnyamathanha had the closest geographical and social ties with Yardliyawara: other Thura-Yura languages like Parnkalla and Kuyani were

further away. It therefore appears that these words had spread to Yardliyawara from Adnyamathanha before the occurrence of lenition of initials in Adnyamathanha.

The first example also shows the spread of pre-stopping. The second example shows a word, *yurli* ‘bird’, which appears to have been a joint innovation of the Yarli languages. This appears to have been subsequently lost from Yardliyawara. Some examples of morphological diffusion are discussed in §5.2. There is also a possible layer of recent borrowings from Adnyamathanha into Yardliyawara in our data, since both the speakers who survived to be recorded were also speakers of Adnyamathanha.

2. History of classification

Over the past 84 years, that is from the time of Schmidt (1919a) on, the Yarli languages have been classified into a number of linguistic subgroups:

1. with the neighbouring Karnic languages, that is with Wangkumara to the north and Pirlatapa the north-west
2. with the Thura-Yura languages to the south-west
3. with the Paakantyi or Darling River subgroup to the east.

As indicated above, in many ways this area of western New South Wales and north-eastern South Australia is marked by cultural and linguistic diffusion and shows evidence of phonological and morphological features shared across genetic subgroups. Despite this we are able to isolate characteristics of Malyangapa that it shares with those neighbouring languages with which we propose it forms a genetic subgroup, namely Wadikali and Yardliyawara. We call this the ‘Yarli subgroup’.

2.1 Schmidt

The first published classification of Yarli languages using lexical data was by Schmidt (1919a), who calls the language of the area ‘Evelyn Creek language’, basing himself on vocabularies by Dewhurst, Crozier and by Morton in Curr (1886-87 II). Unfortunately, Dewhurst’s vocabulary appears to be mixed, with some influence from Wangkumara and other Karnic languages. Schmidt had available to him only those Curr vocabularies and no morphological data; yet he was sufficiently impressed with the special features of ‘the Evelyn Creek

language’ to make it a special subgroup of a big group which included the Karnic and the Thura-Yura languages. (See further the map in Schmidt 1919a.)

2.2 *Tindale*

Tindale thought of Malyangapa and ‘Wanjiwalku’, a Paakantyi language, as being ‘the same’. In discussing ‘Wanjiwalku’ (1974:200) he states: “both this group and the Maljangapa speak one language (Wanjiwalku)”– an idea that may well have stemmed from the fact that his main informant, George Dutton, was a fluent speaker of both these languages. Tindale did a lot of very intensive language work with George Dutton: he transcribed two long myths and compiled a special separate notebook on Wanyiwalku grammar. There are no linguistic data on Malyangapa in Tindale’s work, and it would seem that he had no means of comparing the two languages.

There is not much similarity between any Paakantyi language and Malyangapa, as will be shown in §4.2. below.

2.3 *O’Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin*

To the north and north-west the Yarli languages are bordered by Karnic languages: for general discussion of the Karnic subgroup see Austin (1990a), Bower (1998, 2001c). In O’Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin (1966:123) the ‘Yalyi subgroup’ consists of Karenggapa, Malyangapa and Wadikali, while Yardliyawara is placed in the Yura subgroup of south-west Pama-Nyungan.

The name Karenggapa requires some explanation. The first mention of the name Karenggapa is by J.A. Reid in Curr 1886-87 II:180: “The tribes which bound the Milya-uppa are ... those of the Paroo to the east and the Karengappa on the north.” Karenggapa is mentioned by Tindale both in his 1940 work and in 1974:193 as the name of people around Mt Bygrave and the southernmost part of Bulloo Downs. It must have been a small local group, as none of the senior people recorded in the late 1950s and the 1960s had any recollection of the Karenggapa. This included elders who had memories reaching back to the last decades of the nineteenth century. The name Karenggapa has survived in the area only as the name of an old tank at the southern end of the Carryapundy Swamp. There is massive evidence from place names and statements in the mythology that the people originally living around Mt Bygrave and the southernmost part of Bulloo Downs, the area associated with the Karenggapa by Tindale, were speakers of a form of Wangkumara (Hercus 2001). The wordlist quoted by Tindale as belonging to the Karenggapa is by J.A. Reid

from Torowotto Swamp, much further to the south, and is, as stated above, entirely in Paakantyi. There is thus no evidence whatsoever to associate a ‘Karenggapa’ language with the Yarli subgroup.

The 1966 map *Aboriginal Languages of Australia: a preliminary classification* by O’Grady, Wurm and Hale follows this same classification and has Wadikali, Malyangapa and Karenggapa forming a subgroup.

2.4 Wurm

Wurm (1972:133) has a ‘Yalyi’ subgroup of the Dieric group. This subgroup consists of ‘Nadikali’ (presumably Wadikali) and Malyangapa. Karenggapa is no longer mentioned, but ‘Yadliyawara’ is still in the Yura subgroup of the southwest or Nyungic Group.

Walsh and Wurm (1982) have a Yarli subgroup (Wadikali and Malyangapa) of the Karnic languages. Yardliyawara has been reclassified into the Karna/Diyari group.

2.5 Dixon

Dixon (2001: maps on pages 72, 76, 94 and 96) also classifies ‘WAd’ as part of Karnic. ‘WAd’ is described as consisting of ‘Maljangapa, Yardliyawara and Wardikali’, but on those maps it appears as if Yardliyawara were not included.

Bowern (1998 and 2001c:255) has already given excellent reasons why there does not seem to be any close link between the Yarli languages and Karnic. These and other reasons will be discussed in §4.3. below.

3. Lexical evidence for the subgroup

3.1 *The lexical distinctiveness of Yarli*

Lexical comparisons of Wadikali, Yardliyawara and Malyangapa are difficult, given the limited amount of data we have, particularly on Wadikali. Nevertheless, even a cursory survey of the available materials shows that the three are lexically very close and not particularly closely related to the nearest Karnic language, Wangkumara. A comparative vocabulary illustrating this appears in Appendix 9, along with a commentary further substantiating the evidence.

Most of the similarities between the three languages represent innovations in the Yarli languages; some, however, are joint retentions. There are a number

of lexemes that are shared by all three Yarli languages and by no other languages in the area. These include such basic words as: “be hungry”, “dog”, “go”, “good”, “little”, “moon”, “speak”, “stick (n)”. These all appear to be lexical innovations of the Yarli subgroup.

Secondly, there are lexemes shared by two Yarli languages and no others in the area, where the third Yarli language is simply undocumented or has that word replaced by a loan from a neighbouring language. Examples are the words for “euro”, “leg”, “uncle”, “see”, “no”. These also appear to be lexical innovations of the Yarli subgroup.

Some lexemes are only found in all three Yarli or only two Yarli languages plus a neighbouring language, where there was probably borrowing out of Yarli; e.g.. “bite”, “ground”. These also appear to be lexical innovations of the Yarli subgroup.

There are also lexemes inherited from Proto-Pama-Nyungan (pPN) but not found in those particular forms in neighbouring languages. These include “eye” and “lie down”. Although these are by no means innovations, they differentiate the Yarli languages from their neighbours.

Some lexemes are found in the Yarli languages only, but they have regional cognates involving major differences in form and/or meaning; e.g. the words for “arm (upper)”, “bring”, “emu”. Thus *pardu* “bring” is cognate with a verb meaning “hold” in a number of Karnic languages, including Yandruwantha *pardra*. The Yarli word *kalarti* “emu” differs from but does have some resemblance to Paakantyi *kalthi* and Kurna *kari* “emu” and even Western Desert *karlaya* could be a distant cognate. These differences, however, are sufficiently significant to distinguish the Yarli words from those in neighbouring languages.

Finally, there are a number of basic items of vocabulary which are shared with neighbouring languages and which are inherited from proto or regional Pama-Nyungan; e.g. some body-parts, “to eat”, “give”, “food” and “possum”. Their presence in the Yarli languages shows resemblance to neighbouring subgroups, but not adherence to one or the other, because all those subgroups have them.

3.2 *Lexical differences from Karnic*

To the north and north-west the Yarli languages are bordered by Karnic languages: for general discussion of these see Austin (1990a), Bower (1998 and 2001c). In the vocabulary listed in Appendix 9 we have mainly considered

Wangkumara, as being geographically and socially the nearest Karnic language. Bowerman shows that the Yarli languages do not form part of Karnic. One of her arguments is based on the lexical comparison of all the Karnic languages. She gives (2001c:250) the following lexical cognate percentages, given here as Table 2, for Malyangapa in relation to a widespread number of members of the Karnic group. These numbers are sufficiently low to go towards proving her point.

Table 2: *Lexicostatistical percentages between Malyangapa and Karnic languages*

Language	Percentage
Pitta-Pitta	16
Arabana-Wangkangurru	29
Mithaka	30
Yaluyandi	21
Ngamini	21
Diyari	33
Yandruwantha	22
Wangkumara	35

4. Morphological evidence for the subgroup

4.1 Internal comparisons

4.1.1 Wadikali

Morphological comparisons within the Yarli subgroup are difficult because of the limited data from Wadikali. Tindale's materials do, however, include a couple of entries that show parallels to Yardliyawara and Malyangapa structures.

- (1) The entry "flat ground" has *wankanga 'pakaita* which is almost certainly:
wanka-nga paka-yitha
 meat-LOC go-PURP
 "to go for meat"
- (2) The entry "breast" has *'min:ami'teita* which could represent
minha mitya-yitha
 what suck-PURP
 "something for sucking"

- (3) The entry “salt lake” has the words *pak:uta pakanu* crossed out but this almost certainly represents:

paku-tha paka-nu
 lake-ALL go-PURP
 “to go to the lake”

All of the bound morphemes in these phrases, *-yitha* “purposive”, *-nu* “purposive”, *-nga* “locative” and *-tha* “dative, allative” have identical parallel forms in Yardliyawara and Malyangapa. There can be no doubt that we are dealing with a single group of languages here.

4.1.2 *Yardliyawara and Malyangapa*

The recordings of Yardliyawara so far studied show no appreciable morphological differences from Malyangapa. There are only minor divergences, and two examples of these are given here.

The first example is that of special time-marking. There is no sign in Yardliyawara of the special time-marking verbal suffixes for morning and evening: this seems to be confined to Malyangapa. Those morning and evening forms were not used by the Yardliyawara speaker, and even one Malyangapa speaker was heard to use a noun “in the morning” instead of expressing time as part of the verb *wanirithu miRinga* “I leave (you people) in the morning”. It seems highly likely that this specialised paradigm for time was used only in Malyangapa and probably in Wadikali, but we have no means of knowing for certain about Wadikali. One thing is clear: it was not a genetic but a regional diffusional feature. The actual forms used were not diffused, but the grammatical category was. We can deduce this from very important but as yet unpublished material by Breen from Yandruwantha (Breen forthcoming:§1.11). In this language there are verbal affixes referring to the time of day, including *-thalkana* meaning “early in the morning”, based on *thalka* “upward”, and *-yukara* meaning “at night”, based on a verb “lie down”. The Nhirrpi dialect of Yandruwantha, recorded by Wurm and studied by Bower (1999b:§4.4.2) shows those same features. It is from the Nappa Merrie area, very close geographically to Wangkumara. Similarly Wangkumara has a suffix *-pa* which refers to action in the morning or action upward, and a suffix *-waga*, which refers to action at night and is based on a verb meaning “sleep” (Breen n.d.).

The corresponding Malyangapa suffixes were formed from the actual word for “morning”, while the origin of the “night” suffix is not so clear.

Special suffixes for action in the morning and evening have not been recorded for Karnic languages other than Yandruwantha and Wangkumara; so it looks like a purely regional phenomenon. It probably originated in Yandruwantha because this language has the most developed system of this kind. It has special forms, apart from those already quoted, for “in the morning (not quite so early)”, “during the day”, “within the last hour or two” and so forth. The diffusion of this feature into Malyangapa and possibly Wadikali but not Yardliyawara clearly does not impinge on the Yarli languages being regarded as a unity.

The second example concerns a verbal form not shared between the three Yarli languages. There seems to be in Yardliyawara a past causal participle *-utu*, which does not appear in the Malyangapa data, as for instance in the Yardliyawara sentence in (4).

- (4) *Wanka iniki-nha wanyu-r-utu, pulkata!*
 meat that-NOM bad-INCH-CAUS throw away IMPER
 “Throw that meat away because it’s gone bad.” (Barney Coffin)

4.2 Grammatical differences from Paakantyi

There are very good reasons for recognising that, while there are some cognates and some lexical borrowings from Paakantyi, such as *kumpaka* “woman, wife”, *yartu* “wind” *wanka* “meat”, the grammatical systems of the two language groups are quite distinct. This is evident from the pronouns, both free and bound, as shown in Table 3. The Malyangapa singular forms are given here, with any divergences in Yardliyawara being noted.

Table 3: *Malyangapa and Paakantyi pronouns*

	Malyangapa		Paakantyi	
1sg ERG	<i>ngathu</i>	<i>-thu</i>	<i>ngathu</i>	<i>-thu</i>
1sg NOM	<i>nganyi</i>	<i>-nyi</i>	<i>ngapa</i>	<i>-apa</i>
1sg ACC	<i>nganyinha</i>	<i>-nyi</i> (Yard. also <i>-ayi</i>)	<i>ngayi, nganha</i>	<i>-ayi, -anha</i>
2sg ERG	<i>yintu</i>	<i>-ntu</i>	<i>ngintu</i>	<i>-ntu</i>
2sg NOM	<i>yini</i>	<i>-ni</i>	<i>ngimpa</i>	<i>-mpa</i>
2sg ACC	<i>yininha</i>	<i>-ni</i>	<i>nguma</i>	<i>-uma</i>

Note that the only shared pronouns are 1sg ERG *ngathu* (and in the dual the first person *ngali*); but these are also well known outside these languages and descend from a more distant ancestor. The suffix *-ayi*, an optional form in Yardliyawara, heard from Barney Coffin, was probably due to Adnyamathanha

influence. In the Yarli languages the singular bound pronouns follow an ‘ergative-absolutive pattern’ (syncretising NOM and ACC) while in Paakantyi the pronouns have three distinct forms. In both languages in the dual and plural the systems are ‘nominative-accusative’ (syncretising the ERG and NOM).

Verb morphology shows a range of differences also. Both language subgroups have a single verb conjugation and a general verb structure of Root+Tense+NOM pronoun for intransitive sentences and Root+Tense+ERG pronoun+ACC pronoun for transitive sentences

The forms and meanings of their inflectional categories are rather different, however. This is shown particularly in tense marking as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4: *Malyangapa and Paakantyi tense marking*

	Malyangapa	Paakantyi
past	-nganta-	-ty-
yesterday past	-la-	
last night past	-ngantinta- (absent from Yard)	
this morning past	-miRinganta- (absent from Yard)	
present	-rnta-	-ø-
future	-yi-	-t-
evening future	-ngantiyi-	
morning future	-miRiyi-	
imperative	-ø-	-ø-

4.3 Grammatical differences from Karnic

4.3.1 General

Bowern (1998:30) has listed some of the main morphological features that distinguish the Yarli languages from Karnic. The Yarli languages do not share the change of the locative case to the dative, a change that occurs in all Karnic languages but Arabana-Wangkangurru. Furthermore, the ablative in the Yarli languages is not based on the ergative. The link between the ergative and ablative is a trait shared by all Karnic languages. Also, in the Yarli languages there are different demonstrative forms from Karnic and there are no deictic increments. Finally, unlike the more easterly of the Karnic languages, those of the Yarli subgroup show no sign of gender marking in nouns or pronouns. Table 5 lists some nominal/pronominal features.

Table 5: *Comparison of Yarli languages and Proto Karnic*

	Yarli	Proto-Karnic
Nominal Ergative	<i>-ngu</i>	* <i>-ngu/-lu</i>
Nominal Dative	<i>-tha</i>	* <i>-ku</i>
Pronominal Dative	<i>-tha</i>	
Locative	<i>-nga</i>	* <i>-la/ *-nga</i>
Ablative	<i>-tyali</i>	* <i>-ngu</i>
3sg pronoun	<i>nhu-</i>	* <i>nhan</i> (fem), * <i>nhu</i> (masc)

Those forms that are shared between the Yarli languages and Proto-Karnic, namely the locative *-nga*, the ergative *-ngu* and the 3rd singular pronoun base *nhu-* are by no means an indication of a close relationship between the Yarli languages and Karnic: they are much more widespread and go back to pPN.

Those forms in Table 5 that are very different from Proto-Karnic, however, are significant features for the recognition of the Yarli languages as a subgroup.

The ablative *-tyali* as such is an innovation of the Yarli languages and there seems to be nothing similar in any of the language subgroups in the vicinity, Karnic, Thura-Yura or Paakantyi. From a historic perspective the first syllable of the suffix *-tyali* goes back to pPN as an ablative and “having” marker.

4.3.2 *The suffix -tha*

The dative/allative *-tha* is bi-valent: it is also a verbal suffix in the extended form *-yitha* (*-yi* FUT + *tha*), as in the form *pakayitha* “in order to go” quoted above from Wadikali. Neither as a purposive nor as a dative-allative suffix can *-tha* be reconstructed for Proto-Karnic or for Proto-Thura-Yura.

There is a nominal suffix *-tha* in one distant Karnic language, namely Wangka-yutyuru, once spoken in parts of the eastern Simpson Desert and along the Mulligan Channel. It is used there as a genitive-possessive, and may well go back to the same pPN ablative and “having” marker *-tya* that was noted above for *-tyali*.

There is however a suffix *-tya* ~ *-itya*, which cannot be reconstructed for Proto-Thura-Yura, but is well attested in just one Thura-Yura language, Kaurna from the Adelaide plains (Jane Simpson pers. comm. on evidence from Teichelmann and Schürmann 1840). *-itya* has the following main functions in Kaurna:

- (5) a. On nouns it is a purposive:
parngutta wild potato
parnguttitya for wild potatoes
- b. On verbs it is a purposive:
punggondi to heap up (present form)
punggetitya for heaping up
- c. Tt is added to the ergative form of pronouns to form an allative:
nindo you (ergative form)
nindaitya to you

It is possible that the Kurna suffix *-itya* had a pronominal origin within Thura-Yura (J. Simpson pers. comm.). There is also a good possibility that *-itya* (a palatalised version of the extended form that is only found with verbs in the Yarli languages) was borrowed from the Yarli languages into Kurna. Kurna is not adjacent to Malyangapa: the Thura-Yura language Ngadjuri is in between. Unfortunately the presently available data on Ngadjuri have practically no morphological content, and it is impossible to say whether there were *-itya* forms in Ngadjuri. The proposition that *-itya* was borrowed from the Yarli languages into Kurna via Ngadjuri therefore remains just that, a proposition. There is also a possibility that in a more distant way Yarli *-tha* is related to the directional *-tharV* of Thura-Yura. One thing remains certain: *-tha*, *-itha* as such is an innovation shared by all three Yarli languages.

4.3.3 *The inchoative*

The inchoative forms within the subgroup illustrate how by innovation as well as by the retention of different Pama-Nyungan features the Yarli languages cannot be classed with their neighbours. This is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: *Forms of the inchoative*

	YAR, MAL	YAN	WAN	DIY	ADN
to become	<i>-ngunti</i>	<i>-na</i>	<i>-minda</i>	<i>-ri</i>	<i>-ri</i>
to become (good or bad)	<i>-r-</i>	<i>-na</i>	<i>-minda</i>	<i>-ri</i>	<i>-ri</i>

The inchoative suffix *-r-* is used in both Malyangapa and Yardliyawara as a verbaliser, but only, as far as our recordings go, with the adjectives “good” and

“bad”, as in the sentence quoted above (4) from Yardliyawara (repeated below) and as in (6), which is from Malyangapa.

- (4) *Wanka iniki-nha wanyu-r-utu, pulkata!*
 meat that -NOM bad-INCH-CAUS throw away IMPER
 “Throw that meat away because it’s gone bad.” (Barney Coffin)

- (6) *Wanyu-r-arnta-nyi ngurna-yi -nyi*
 bad- INCH-PRES-1sg intr lie down-FUT-1sg intr

palyu mingku-ra-yi-nyi.

soon good-INCH-FUT-1sg intr

“I’m beginning to feel no good, I’ll lie down and I’ll come good by and by.” (George Dutton)

With other adjectives a verbalising inchoative suffix *-ngunti* is used, as in *mantha-ngunti* “cool down”, lit. “get cold”.

The suffix *-ngunti* appears to be an innovation in the Yarli languages. The *-r-* verbaliser, however, is widely known in several forms (both with a retroflex *R* and with an alveolar tapped *r*), and the relationship between the various forms is not clear. It can be reconstructed for Thura-Yura (Simpson and Hercus this volume, chapter 8) and it is found in parts of Karnic (e.g. Diyari). It is certainly not a feature that would imply any close association of the Yarli languages with either Karnic or Thura-Yura.

5. Summary and conclusion

There is phonological evidence such as pre-stopping (applying to Yardliyawara only), lexical evidence such as a number of ‘regional’ words, and grammatical evidence such as the use of specialised ‘time of day’ markers in Malyangapa which all point towards a measure of linguistic diffusion cutting across genetic relationships. But the overwhelming testimony of much unique joint lexical and grammatical innovation in the Yarli languages provides a solid and deeper link between them. There can be little doubt that they form a small separate subgroup of Pama-Nyungan. Whether Schmidt was right and whether there was once a higher grouping of Karnic, Yarli and Thura-Yura remains as yet uncertain.