

LANGUAGE GROUPS IN THE *STEFANO* MANUSCRIPT

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The *Stefano* castaways were in contact with at least two Aboriginal groups during their six-month ordeal on the North West coast of Australia. We can now be reasonably certain that both groups were Yinikurtira–Talandji speakers. The evidence for this will in the end have to be found in the *Stefano* manuscript itself.¹ One way of doing this is by separating the two languages in the manuscript and examining the difference between them. Separating the languages is a reasonably straightforward task as it is possible to work out from the manuscript what Aboriginal group the *Stefano* castaways heard speak at all times even if these groups are not identified by name. Once this separation is in place, will there be anything we can say about these two languages? Are they different or are they the same language? Documenting and analysing the two languages in the *Stefano* manuscript is the primary aim of this writing.

THE SOUTHERN JOURNEY: The *Stefano* misadventure began on 27 October when ten surviving mariners were washed ashore somewhere near Point B on the manuscript map. This is also where the first linguistic contact with the local Aborigines took place four days later on 31 October. No indigenous words resulted from this exchange, most probably because the indigenous words were incomprehensible to the Dalmatian–Croatian speaking castaways. On 1 November the castaways began their journey southwards and the next three months were spent in the land of the southern Aboriginal group. During this time there was little interaction with the Aboriginal people. Only four days of interaction are described in the manuscript and these resulted in the following three recorded words:

<u>Page</u>	<u>Indigenous gloss</u>	<u>Translation</u>
[70]	<i>Bulawa</i>	Flour (corruptions)
[79]	<i>Be woteri</i>	Let us search for fish.

It is only when the two surviving castaways joined the southern tribe on 27 of January that the number of recorded indigenous words begins to increase. The manuscript also begins to describe elements of Aboriginal lifestyle which contextualize our understanding of these words. In addition we are given a few indigenous expression including a song which is not understood:

[125]	<i>To morning ba-jalgo</i>	You will eat tomorrow morning.
[125]	<i>Chinchi chinchi ba-jalgo</i>	Let us divide the food
[126]	<i>Paur paur gutari</i> <i>Puhur cerima</i> Mali jungura	The evening song or verses, which was not understood.
[128]	<i>Pinyari cominini</i>	Women are very quarrelsome.

At this point of the manuscript (Chapter VII) the narrative breaks off its chronological unfolding and instead we are given general details of Australian geography, its indigenous population and Australian exploration.² The manuscript also describes details of Aboriginal lifestyle in general terms using around 17 indigenous words, some of which we are told are external to the locality – some passages invoke East and South Australian continental tribes as well:

[136]	<i>Galle</i>	An Australian weapon, kylee
[136]	<i>Bellara</i>	An Australian spear
[136]	<i>Bellara-manno</i>	An Australian weapon – throwing board
[136]	<i>Be-manno</i>	An Australian fishing spear
[136]	<i>Bumerang</i>	Boomerang (common Australian)
[136]	<i>Kilie</i>	Kylee – boomerang (East Australian tribes)
[139]	<i>Womera</i>	Woomera, East Australian weapon
[140]	<i>Hileman</i>	Wooden shield – South Australian tribes
[141]	<i>Chumberi</i>	Steel instruments, knives, hatchets, axes
[144]	<i>Cun-jiri</i>	One
[144]	<i>Gudara</i>	Two
[144]	<i>Wrai</i>	Number between 2 and 10
[144]	<i>Brr</i>	Any number above 10
[144]	<i>To morning</i>	Corruption of tomorrow morning
[145]	<i>Junowanyabari</i>	Name of deity
[147]	<i>Waba</i>	Good
[147]	<i>Mirawaba</i>	Bad

The generality of the narrative makes it difficult to say categorically if these words belong to the language of the southern tribe or if they include words learnt subsequently from the (northern) Yinikurtira tribe. The sense of the narrative suggests that these words are meaningful to both tribes.

The interaction of the castaways with the southern Aboriginal group at Point F was quite short, lasting just over two weeks (27 January to 14 February). The seven words which are recorded for this period are as follows:

[152]	<i>Tataruga woteri</i>	Let us search for turtles.
[158]	<i>Tataruga chembo</i>	Turtle eggs
[159]	<i>Mayabulu</i>	Canoe
[161]	<i>Minara denki nagoru</i>	Shortly you will see the yawl.
[162]	<i>Minara, minara</i>	shortly, shortly

Most of these words listed above reappear when the castaways join the northern (Yinikurtira) tribe, which suggests that the words in question are common to both groups.

THE MEETING OF THE TWO TRIBES: On 15 February the two tribes met at Point L, where they camped together until 19 February. The words recorded in the manuscript for this period are as follows:

[163]	<i>Kachuljamoro!</i>	Poor fellow! (Yinikurtira)
[163]	<i>Minara denki bolu</i>	Shortly you will row in the dinghy.
[165]	<i>Denki</i>	Dinghy (corruption)
[168]	<i>Bulura wagaj</i>	Go on ahead (Southern tribe).
[169]	<i>Wac-balla gudarago go!</i>	Hey, wait for the whites!

One can only assume that these words were meaningful to both groups. The castaways then departed with the northern Yinikurtira group for five days (19–24 February). No words are recorded in the manuscript for this period until both groups meet again at Point L. The following two words are recorded from this reunion:

- [171] *Bulac-balla pinyari* The blacks are quarrelling.
 [173] *Bulac-balla nagoru* The blacks are coming back.

THE NORTHERN JOURNEY: On 5 March the castaways departed with the Yinikurtira tribe again and remained with them until they were brought to Fremantle on 5 May 1876. The linguistic exchange for the remaining period is substantial and is set out below.

- [179] *Buluru wagaj* Let us go ahead.
 [179] *Bullura* Castaways thought Bullura meant NW Cape
 [179] *Wan-ji Bullura* Where is Bullura?
 [179] *Parue* Far (corruption)
 [181] *Niril* Needle (corruption)
 [187] *Yanina* Dugong
 [196] *Minara denki nagoru* In a little while you will see the boat.
 [200] *Nulla wi la tataruga dadalgo* We will have as many as I have fingers.
 [205] *Kai-biri gogay* Return to unfortunate me
 [206] *Wac-balla mira wan-ja ba-jaglo* Whites do not eat dog.
 [207] *Bunda-jo, Bunda-ja* Name of locality
 [207] *Nulla wac-balla, Karkara willa babba* Here, as at Karkara, the white men dug the wells.
 [208] *Minara Challi gogay, Pulimandur wagay chullu ba-jalgo chugga, turadji ba-jalgo thie, ba-jalgo cocona-ji* In a little while, Charlie will return and you will go to Fremantle and you will eat much sugar, rice, drink tea and eat coconuts (tea and coconuts are not present in the manuscript but are given in the translation).
 [210] *Yanie-balla yurogaya* The ship is approaching.
 [211] *Minara Challi dagi Pulimandur wagay* In a little while you will see Charlie Tuckey and you will leave for Fremantle.
 [211] *Minara Challi gogay, Chinchin wagay* You will soon see Charlie and you will soon go to Tsien Tsin.
 [213] *Pinyari cominini* Women are quarrelsome.
 [217] *Island* Island (corruption) Muiron Island
 [222] *Mirawaba tartaruga* The turtle was not good.
 [229] *Yanie-balla Challi komin* Here is the ship, Charlie is coming!
 [230] *Minara Challi gogay nulla* Shortly Charlie will come here.
 [230] *Minara gogay* It will return shortly.
 [230] *Mira gogay* It will not return.
 [231] *Wac-balla gudara bulac-balla gudara, Sandi Tobi, nulla kughi chinaman* (There are on board) two whites, two blacks, Sandi, Tobi and one Chinese cook.
 [232] *Minara, nulla Challi gogay niengo gudara Tigone, Tondogoro, gudara Chinchigo Pulimandur wagay* Shortly, Charlie will come here and you two Tigone (and Mir) and you two Tondogoro and Chinchigo will go to Fremantle and eat much sugar, rice, tea and coconuts.
 [232] *ba-jalgo chulla chugga, turadji, thie, kokona-ji*

[232] <i>Mir</i>	Miho (<i>Bačić</i>) [258]
[232] <i>Tigone</i>	Ivane (<i>Jurić</i>)
[251] <i>Nyo-gaya chullu wac-balla</i>	What a number of whites
[259] <i>Yungoro a-ju nulla</i> <i>pinyari cominini</i>	Give it to me so I can beat the women.

The duration of these linguistic exchanges for the entire period can be summarised as follows:

PERIOD	LINGUISTIC EXCHANGE	
31 October 1875	Yinikurtira	1 day
8–9 November	Southern tribe	2 days
17–18 January 1876	Southern tribe	2 days
27 January – 14 February	Southern tribe	18 days
15–18 February	Both tribes	3 days
19–24 February	Yinikurtira	6 days
25 February – 4 March	Both tribes	8 days
5 March – 17 April	Yinikurtira	44 days
18 April – 5 May	Yinikurtira	16 days
4 July	Yinikurtira	1 day

Conflating this summary we have the following linguistic exchange:

Communicating with the Southern tribe only:	22 days
Communicating with both the Southern tribe and the Yinikurtira tribe:	11 days
Communicating with the Yinikurtira tribe only:	<u>67 days</u>
	Total 100 days

In conclusion we note again that the linguistic exchanges between the shipwrecked *Stefano* mariners and the southern Aboriginal group took place when the castaways knew no Aboriginal words and when the exchange was short in duration. Furthermore, almost all words that arose from encounters with the southern Aboriginal group are repeated in the vocabulary of the northern Yinikurtira group. Only a handful of words are not repeated and the context suggests that most are meaningful to both groups (such as *Chinchi-chinchi* (divide), *Chembo* (eggs)). The castaways would have been more attuned to Aboriginal sounds when they joined the Yinikurtira group on 5 March 1876. For the next two months they were almost entirely in company of Yinikurtira speakers, until their arrival at Fremantle on 5 May 1876. The bulk of the Aboriginal expressions in the manuscript come from this period. Thus, as a broad generality the *Stefano* vocabulary can be considered as arising from and being consistent with the Yinikurtira language group.

The words listed above account for about 100 of a total of 150 words in the *Stefano* manuscript. The remaining 50 words are to be found at the end of the manuscript in the collection of indigenous words and expression. Because these do not appear in the body of the manuscript we cannot say much about their origin except to note that eleven are post-contact words or adoptions of English words and the rest are presumably pre-contact words. The details of these words that appear outside of the manuscript are given in Appendix 1. The uncertain origin of these words does not change the substance of the argument presented above.

Notes and References

1. All references to the *Stefano* manuscript refer to the publication Baccich, M. & S. Skurla, *The Wreck Of The Austro-Hungarian Barque Stefano On The North West Coast Of Australia*, translated into English by Angelina Baccich (1920), edited with analysis by Josko Petkovic (2007). *IM: Interactive Media* e-journal, No 3:2007.
2. Baccich, M. & S. Skurla, *ibid.* manuscript page [130]

APPENDIX 1

THE STEFANO INDIGENOUS WORDS NOT MENTIONED IN THE TEXT

POST-CONTACT WORDS

<i>Changuru</i>	Hat
<i>Char</i>	Shirt
<i>Chuchigo</i>	Shoes
<i>Cocon-jai</i>	Goat
<i>Culgo-manda</i>	Iron Log of wood
<i>Milli Milli</i>	Paper
<i>Paura (corruption)</i>	Gunpowder
<i>Pikinini</i>	A boy, <i>Piccaninny</i>
<i>Tanta</i>	Trousers
<i>Ulma</i>	Old

PRE-CONTACT WORDS

<i>Arima</i>	To die
<i>Bagay</i>	To shipwreck
<i>Bambay</i>	To sleep
<i>Bildura</i>	Intestines of fish
<i>Birida</i>	Thirsty
<i>Birra</i>	Shell
<i>Bunday</i>	Bathe at sea
<i>Buria</i>	Sea
<i>China</i>	Sole of foot
<i>Curi</i>	A youth between 16 and 20
<i>Galbai</i>	To arise
<i>Gallyadaga</i>	To kiss
<i>Gamogo</i>	Starving
<i>Gundum-balla</i>	Male organs
<i>Kalla</i>	Wood
<i>Manda wan-ji</i>	Crabs and crayfish
<i>Muriandi</i>	Quick
<i>Najengolo</i>	Nose
<i>Nulla</i>	Birds
<i>Nurgan</i>	Fat
<i>Pinoro</i>	Fire
<i>Polco</i>	Calf of leg
<i>Ta</i>	Mouth
<i>Tantargoria</i>	To sit down
<i>Tulla</i>	Eyes
<i>Wandi</i>	Male organs
<i>Wario</i>	A vine
<i>Willara</i>	Stars or moon
<i>Wirago</i>	Sick
<i>Yanda</i>	Sun
<i>Yengo</i>	Rain
<i>Yi-jala</i>	Immediately
<i>Yirala</i>	A sail

PRE-CONTACT EXPRESSIONS

<i>Chir iriri</i>	To satisfy nature's demands, to void
<i>Eun-jeri</i>	Oh the devil!
<i>Inagoyo</i>	So much
<i>Neru-wolu</i>	What do you want?
<i>Niengo babba dirido</i>	You are thirsty
<i>Tendi balan-jeri</i>	An ugly word or a curse
<i>Tendi duga</i>	An ugly word or a curse
<i>Tendi wan-ju-jeri</i>	An ugly word or a curse

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