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REVIEW

Felicity Meakins and Patrick McConvell. 2021. *A grammar of Gurindji as spoken by Violet Wadrill, Ronnie Wavehill, Dandy Danbayarri, Bidy Wavehill, Topsy Dodd Ngarnjal, Long Johnny Kijngayarri, Banjo Ryan, Pincher Nyurmiari and Blanche Bulngari* (Mouton Grammar Library 91). Berlin–Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, pp. xxxii + 746

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Let the advanced age allow this reviewer to begin the present text with recollections dating back to the earliest years of what is customarily dubbed “academic career” at the then newly created Adam Mickiewicz University Institute of Linguistics (1973) when he started working as probably (and definitely one of) its youngest staff member(s). His interests focused at that time on the abundance and variety of the world’s languages, hence on language classifications, language typologies, and language “universals” on the one hand, and on ethnolinguistic aspects within the framework of “anthropological linguistics” or “linguistic anthropology” (the latter two being names of courses alternately offered for several years to students of ethnology and of linguistics) on the other hand, and one of the intriguing subjects was ‘counting systems’ across peoples, their cultures and languages. Incidentally, one among the sources used during classes happened to be the translation of St. Luke’s Gospel (*Ewangelia* 1925) into Aranda (~Arrernte). The text and the language proved fascinating to the extent that the Aranda New Testament (*Testamenta* 1971) was imported from Australia via Japan to Poland as the only extensive text in the language known at that time to us to exist.

Among the first readings of this writer on Australian languages (including the undated Elkin, Holmer 1963, Cunningham 1969, Dixon 1972) of special interest here is Wurm 1972 because it turned out to be the very first book in his possession firmed by <Mouton> Publishers.

There were also but few such reference books as Meillet & Cohen 1952 with its 20-page (691-710) chapter on “Langues australiennes” by ethnologist Jean Guiart with about 25 glottonyms and quite impressive, for such a short text, linguistic data (seemingly mainly from Aranda and Worora) and a “bibliographie sommaire” (with 10 publications by 7 authors listed) provided, but we still had to wait for Voegelins (1977) or Meiers (1978) not to speak of now obvious and at hand Asher & Moseley’s 2007 *Atlas* and numerous “handbooks of [you fill in here whatever you wish] languages”, like e.g. Dixon 1980 or Koch & Nordlinger 2014,¹ and even the *Ethnologue* was far from what it is now. Thus Wurm 1972 turned out to become for us the first up-to-date source of reliable data on Australian languages and linguistics. Later, this reading list kept steadily expanding to include first Schmidt 1952 and Dixon 1980, recently Koch and Nordlinger 2014 as far as general overviews and syntheses are concerned, but – the most important in this context – works of considerable (at times really impressive) volume devoted to descriptions of individual languages.

To be sure, we had neither intention nor possibilities to conduct research on Australian languages, but finding rich, inspiring material for general, particularly comparative and typological studies so useful to make lecturing in linguistics much more attractive for students, we went on collecting, albeit highly selectively (with no ambition to have “everything” on the shelves), with the time passing acquiring a quite representative row of books like e.g. Capell & Hinch 1970, Evans 1975, Alpher 1991, Merlan 1994, Nekes & Worms & McGregor 2006, Tsunoda 2011, Meakins & Nordlinger 2014, Kapitonov 2021, McGregor 1993, Hosokawa 2003, Ponsonnet 2014,² to name only these within eyeshot. What kept our interest in this respect growing was the brutal awareness that the very existence of practically all of the aboriginal Australian languages was seriously endangered and that many of them perished unrecorded and undescribed.

Some three~four decades ago it became clear that most from among the world’s languages classified as seriously endangered (approximately half of the total number of languages existing) could not be saved, but, contrary to the past, there were incomparably more means at linguists’ disposal (money, voice and video recorders, qualified researchers, computers and specialized computer programs, transport mobility, etc., and, above all,

¹ From today’s perspective one cannot leave unmentioned the 12-volume enterprise *Handbooks of Japanese language and linguistics*, (also from De Gruyter Mouton) or, with this review in mind, the 5-volume *Handbook of Australian languages* [!] (HAL 1979-2000).

² Only the last three items from this listings are not <Mouton> publications; the arrangement of the references here is premeditated as this author’s side intention has been to emphasize the role publishers with the *Mouton* trademark in its changing name, owners, and <places of publication> play in documenting “small”, “neglected”, “lesser-used”, “endangered” languages and securing their preservation for posterity, starting almost from null. The first, 1924, edition of Meillet & Cohen mentioned above included but a short (a little over one full page of print) note on Australian languages stating that “la linguistique australienne n’est qu’à ses débuts” and “il importe beaucoup de faire sur ces parlers une enquête approfondie avant qu’ils ne disparraissent”, and referring to only two sources, both by Schmidt (both 1919). In a very impressively edited Genzor 2015 (over 670 pp.), “Australian languages” cover only nine pages (illustrations take some 27% of that space) and, while quoting high numbers of these languages (200, 230 and 260), the chapter mentions and places on a map but 29 glottonyms (no Gurindji !), as if little had changed since Meillet & Cohen ¹1924. At least 15 books referred to in the present text are <Mouton> products.

institutions and individuals interested) to challenge the situation and implement all possible resources to go to often remote but, at times, also astonishingly close endangered speech communities and record as much as possible of these unique and otherwise unrecoverable assets of mankind's heritage. The rapidly increasing death rate was, and still remains to be, a serious problem. Nevertheless, no effort should be spared to record them for future generations destined to live in the world that will be much less diversified linguistically.

Two ways of saving these irreplaceable assets of mankind civilization seemed prospective: (1) to urgently start recording such ethnolects still remembered and record as much as possible from elderly informants of what they remember from the languages of their youth no longer passed to younger generations (having them recorded we can analyze the data and reconstruct and describe such languages later), and (2) to reconstruct unpublished data recorded when today's moribund or dead languages were still used naturally in all domains of everyday life. A wishful-thinking hope (rather than conviction) was that either of these measures could not prevent language death but both could be extremely instrumental in rescuing the languages in question, even if in some petrified form.

Examples of successful results of the former measure have fortunately been growing in number (and examples of results published and mentioned above are on the reference list but we shall extend the list mentioning the name of Michael Krauss who was the first to successfully alert the world about its linguistic crisis (1992) and who saved to posterity invaluable oral traditions recorded in the Eyak language from "one of the very last of a whole nation, the Eyaks" (1982) and the impressive breakthrough research project labeled Endangered Languages of the Pacific Rim (ELPR) initiated and run by Osahito Miyaoka resulting in at least 116 volumes of priceless material published in 1999-2003). Examples or results of the latter measure still seem not too abundant but undertakings like Nekes-Worms-McGregor 2006,³ CWBP (both from Mouton), Bogoraz 2004,⁴ or Ogawa 2003 and 2006, should encourage similar efforts: compiling dictionaries and grammars on the basis of manuscript records of materials (texts, word lists, etc.) from the times when respective languages now extinct, moribund, or acculturated were still used in all aspects of everyday life, is one of the most effective ways of saving languages now extinct, moribund, or acculturated. Library and museum archives all over the world preserve an abundance of such data on paper and phonographic (e.g. wax-cylinder) data carriers (cf. CWBP-3 (2004), 503-517, 575-645, 773-804, 817-820).

³ The *opus magnum* of two missionaries – Nekes and Worms – completed in 1945 and, except for a 1953 manuscript microfilm released by Anthropos Institute, never published (considered "unpublished and unpublishable") before McGregor's edition of 2006 (the printed book including Parts 1 – grammatical, and 2 – texts, the accompanying CD-ROM including "unpublishable" dictionary Parts 2-4 (English-Native, Native-English, Comparative Native)).

⁴ Chukchi texts collected by Vladimir Bogoraz and published in 1900 and 1910-1913, retransliterated into Chukchi contemporary Cyrillic orthography and *sound-recorded* on two accompanying CDs as read by three fluent Chukchi native speakers (famous Chukchi radio journalist late Margarita Ivanovna Belichenko (1945-2021), researcher of Chukchi musical~vocalistic culture Zoya Weinstein [~Vensten Венстен]-Tagrina, and Chukchi poet, novelist and journalist Ivan Vasilyevich Omruvye (1941-2021)).

Although appeals postulating the urgency and priority of intensive recording of endangered and undescribed (or insufficiently described) languages on a global scale kept being reiterated at every conference or seminar touching the subject and we were aware of a growing number of PhD dissertations on such tongues at various universities, the proliferation in two-three recent decades of published grammatical descriptions and dictionaries documenting them is astonishing – and it means that linguistics and linguists stand up to the challenge.

The grammar to be introduced here is a description of the structure and the existential context of the language which its authors decided to call Gurindji, at the same time informing that “it is not in accordance with the practical orthography generally used for the language, including in this grammar, which would spell the name ‘Kuurrinyji’ [...] probably an ethnonym which derives from [...] Wardaman” (p. 7).⁵ The glottonym and the ethnonym are the same. The explanation of the decision is also worth citing: “Because the Gurindji are famous, their name [with this spelling] is found in many books and in the press [...], and in official sources” (*ib.*).⁶

It would be also (cf. footnote 9) interesting to verify the fame of the Gurindji in Europe (especially Central, where this review is being written: learning about the reviewer’s intension to write it, so far not a single person seemed to have the slightest idea about identifying either the language or the people) but for insiders, both local as well as those involved in studying Australian (and perhaps Papuan and Austronesian) linguistics, reality~current events, history, and/or politics, it may naturally (and actually should) be so. Here, we shall come back to checking the *-nym* in literature for which professional linguists automatically reach in such cases.

Voegelin & Voegelin (1977: 262) list Gurindji among seven Ngumbin (Southwest Pama-Nyungan~Nyungic, p. 281) languages with indicating its localization (Wave Hill, Northern Territory). In Meier & Meier (1979: 383) it appears under <184.1.1.7.> as “Ngumbin mit Bunara, Djaru, Gurindji, Malngin, Mudbura, Ngariman (also Ariman),

⁵ for <Wardaman> see Merlan 1994.

⁶ It is interesting to observe the diachronic dynamics of the list of Australian glottonyms reflecting the history of our knowledge on Australian languages: still in the last two decades of the 19th century glottonyms simply and practically equaled (often English) toponyms – cf. e.g. the poetics of a selection of such cases from one source only: Bourke, Darling River; 50 miles below Bourke; Mouth of De Grey River; Mouth Leichhardt River; West of Leichhardt River; [between the] Leichhardt and Gregory Rivers; Cape River; Between Seymour and Cloncurry Rivers; Upper Cape River; Junction of Darling and Murray Rivers; Lachlan and Murrumbidgee to Darling and Murray Junction; Junction of Murray and Goulburn Rivers; Goulburn River; Hamilton River, near Boullia; Head of Hamilton River; [three different] Cooper Creek; Gunbower Creek; North-West of Lake Eyre; West of Lake Eyre; Eyre’s Sand Patch; Strangway Springs; Tower Hill, Mount Black; Mount Hope; Victoria Plains; Port Darwin; Sidney Harbour (Curr 1887, on the source see e.g. Wurm 1972: 13 or Dixon 1980: 13, Koch & Nordlinger, p. 6, check also some titles of the earliest publications like Threlkeld 1834, Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840, and Meyer 1843, *ibid.* pp. 20 and 18, or Kempe 1891 and Enright 1900 in Holmer 1962: 116.; cf. our earlier observation on Meillet & Cohen, fn. 2). Aboriginal glottonyms *en masse* appeared (perhaps first?) in Schmidt (used 1919 edition) but very many such topoglottonyms still could be found in it. Of interest to Australianists and Papuanists could probably be little known (despite being in part bilingual) Milewski 1948.

Tjiwarliñ (also called Wolmera)⁷ (no other information provided). *Ethnologue* ⁹1978, p. 400, provides data on “Gurinji ([alternate] Gurindji)” speakers (250 in 1971, “some are bilingual in English or another aboriginal language”), localization (Victoria River and Wave Hill, Northern Territory), and (the same) classification. *Ethnologue* ¹⁶2009 (p. 585 i 853 map Gurinji (Gurindji, Wurlayi)), the entry is also <Gurinji> with two alternate names Gurindji and Wurlayi and implies the growth of the number of speakers to 540 (1996 census), adding a confusing remark “400 semispeakers” (– plus or included...?); location provided is expanded with <Kalkaringi>, two dialects (Malngin and Wanyjirra ~Wandjirra), Kriol spoken by “all”, and a “Gurinji children’s language” being a mixture of “Gurinji and Kriol”.

In Yartseva (1982: 107-123) there is but an alphabetic list of glottonyms (two columns of dense print) under one caption ‘Languages of Australia and Tasmania’ with гурйинди and гуриндъи (among “Australian languages”, in this order, with the evident violation of the Russian alphabetic order, possibly an insertion in proofs, p. 113), the former probably standing for what is in Voegelin & Voegelin (1977: 242) listed as a dialect of the Murngic Jarnango~Yarnango~Yulngo, cf. also *ib.* 467,⁸ and in Wurm (1972: 147) as Guryindi (of course, Gurindji does appear in Wurm among seven languages of the Ngumbin Subgroup, p. 128). Similarly, in Tsunoda (1988: 1027) (right column under 1.31.2, it is listed among (14 languages, 15 glottonyms of) the Ngumbin subgroup, South-Western group, of Pama-Nyungan *gogun* パマ・ニュンガン語群 (reference to Wurm & Hattori (1981) *Language atlas of the Pacific Area*) as <Guurindji>, and indexed in Kamei et al. (1993) in Japanese-character index (和文索引 *wabun sakuin*) as <グーリンジ語> (*gūrinjigo* p. 578 right column) and in Roman-character index (欧文索引 *ラテン文字系 ōbun sakuin raten mojikei*) as <Guurindji> (p. 873 right column)).

In Asher and Moseley’s *Atlas*, **Gurindji** is listed (p. 100) among six Ngumpin languages (the other listed tongues being Juwarliny, Walmayarli, Jaru, Mudburra, and Ngayniman) of the Ngunpin-Yapa subdivision (altogether ten languages) of Pama-Nyungan language family (the four Yapa languages listed are Warlmanpa, Warlpiri, Kartangaruru, and Ngarti). Thus, listed in all of the selected renowned reference books, Gurindji can indeed be considered “famous” also among linguists.⁹

Logistically, it is considered convenient to confront just here this classification with the one offered by Meakins & McConvell’s *Grammar* as it possibly reflects the most

⁷ Higher levels in their classification (which “hat mehr sprachgeschichtlichen Wert”, *ib.*) being <184.1.1. Njunga-(~Süd-West-) Zweig> of <184.1. Pama-Njunga [die “größte Sprachfamilie” among 184.]>, and <184. Australisch-Tasmanische Sprachen>.

⁸ In Meier & Meier (1979: 384) Jarnango is listed in the text but cannot be found in the index due to misspelling <jaruange> (475); there are also other cases of the same error in the <Murngi-Gruppe> (384): Djimba in the index is listed as <djiuba> (460), and Wagilag in both the text and the index (538) as <Wagalig~wagalig>, and all this is detected only incidentally after 42 years of relatively frequent checking in the book! (*nempe humanum est errare*).

⁹ contrary to e.g. Paluai or Papapana, introduced in the present journal in vols. respectively 62/2 (2020), 121-133, and 63/1 (2021), 119-129, or Xong, the grammar of which was reviewed in *Rocznik Orientalistyczny // Yearbook of Oriental Studies* 75/1, (2022), 168-181. The Gurindji became in fact famous in Australia half a century ago for their successful pioneering involvement in the campaign for indigenous human and territorial minority rights and wage equality (see further in the present text).

recent “state of the art on the matter”. A very transparent tree (p. 3) splits <Ngumpin-Yapa> (16 languages) into <Yapa> (two languages only: Warlpiri and Warlmanpa) and <Ngumpin> which in turn bifurcates into <Western> (six languages grouped in the following way: Walmajarri & Juwaliny, Ngardi, Yaru & Nyininy & Kartangaruru) and <Eastern-Victoria River> prolonged to <Far Eastern> (two languages: Karrangpurru and Mudburra); <Victoria River> embraces six languages in two groups: Wanyjirra & **Gurindji** & Malngin, and Bilinarra & Ngarinyman & Wurlayi). Thus, the list of Ngumpin languages expanded and some new glottonyms appeared, among which of particular interest to this reviewer was Bilinarra, a 500-page grammar of which, co-authored by one of the co-authors of the grammar of Gurindji described here, was released in 2014 (Meakins & Nordlinger); one reads in it that it “is very closely related to Gurindji and Ngarinyman. From the perspective of linguists, these three would certainly be considered dialects of a single language. However, they are considered different languages by the respective communities” (*ib.*, p. 7).¹⁰ Using simultaneously the two grammars can be a real pleasure and adventure for linguists to whom this review is addressed.

As early as on p. 3 of the *Grammar* under review here one learns that “Gurindji is the best documented of the Ngumpin languages” but the mentioned Bilinarra seems to be running close behind in this rivalry with its 2014 *Grammar*, both supported by published respective dictionaries¹¹ and there are grounds to expect further important research results related to Ngumpin (some, as Ennever’s Ngardi grammar, already available), a general overview included (Meakins et al. 2023).

Following the front matter (xxxii pp., including, among others a very detailed table of “Contents” (xi-xxi), “List’s of “figures” (xxiii-iv, 48 fig.) and “tables” (xxv-vi), and “Metadata for recordings” (xxxi-ii)), the introductory chapter entitled “The language and its speakers” expands over (1-)78 pages, providing in the first subchapter (1-4) data on the place of the language described in the genealogical classification of Pama-Nyungan and specifically Ngumpin tongues, areas where it still is and was in use (in this respect, it has been classified as “now a highly endangered language, with few elderly first language speakers and no child language learners” (1)) and how it is used (mainly as “Gurindji Kriol” in turn in use also by the progeny of former speakers of neighboring languages like e.g. Bilinarra), on the language records and corpus (or corpora), with the family tree mentioned and a fairly readable map provided as aids. Next comes the typological profile (“fairly typical Pama-Nyungan”, 4-7), followed by a short note on the

¹⁰ No Bilinarra in Asher & Moseley (!), Birinara ~ ビリナラ語 in Tsunoda (1988: 1027r) (Kamei et al. 1993: 711 and 823), Bunara in Voegelins (1977: 262) (here ~ Boonara), Meier & Meier (1979: 383) (cf. above in the text), Yartseva (1982: 109) (Бунара яз.), Nekes & Worms (2006: xx).

¹¹ *Gurindji to English dictionary, includes grammar, English word finder and information on Gurindji language* (pp. 595) compiled by Felicity Meakins, Patrick McConvell, Erika Charola, Norm McNair, Helen McNair, and Lauren Campbell, with eight (?) names of “Gurindji language custodians” listed on the cover, and *Bilinarra to English dictionary, includes grammar, English word finder and information on Bilinarra language* (p. 264) compiled by Felicity Meakins (with five names of other contributors (Patrick McConvell and Rachel Nordlinger included) and eleven (?) names of “Bilinarra language custodians” (eight of them marked deceased) listed on the cover; both 2013. Batchelor, NT: Batchelor Press. These data have been compiled from various sources as the reviewer has no access to such Australian publications on the other side of the globe.

glottonym (7-8) and a subchapter on the “Gurindji country” (8-15). The caption of the fifth subchapter (15-38) “Previous work, sources and methodology on the Gurindji language” speaks volumes for itself; it starts with recalling “the infamously brutal policeman [...] Constable [...] Willshire” who “did not produce a word list for Gurindji” but “did provide a mixed list containing Bilinearra and Ngaliwurru words [...], and impressively unsuccessful attempt at a description of the [...] «skin names»” (15-16, see further in the text), and goes on with 12 sections each devoted to individual persons taking notes and recording *i. a.* the language (the names: Michael Terry (his 1924 “Cooringi [...] vocabulary is a near perfect match for present-day Gurindji”, 18), anthropologist-linguist Gerhard Laves, genealogists William Stanner and Joseph Birdsell, ethnographers Catherine and Ronald Berndt, linguists Ken Hale, Velma Leeding, Patrick McConvell, Helen and Norm McNair, Erika Charola, Felicity Meakins, Lauren Campbell – most of these names from the latter part of this list, including the names of the authors of the *Grammar* appear in varying contexts in the present text). Subchapter <1.6> (39-45) takes the reader back to the signaled before relations between Gurindji and its linguistic neighbors to look at it more profoundly from a slightly different perspective, namely its “relation to other Ngumpin-Yapa languages”. Next, the authors propose a little interlude in the purely linguistic narration with an (indispensable, we would say) outline of “the socio-political and linguistic history of the Gurindji people” (45-66, italics *afm.*), among others explaining why the people deserve *fame* in Australia but, above all, why “in the last 100 years the Gurindji population has decreased dramatically” and the language has become endangered; the easy but functional historical periodization into “pre-contact linguistic situation”, “situation since European invasion”, and “life and language today” proves efficient and useful for a better understanding of actually the entire literature on the peoples and languages of Australia. The introductory chapter concludes (66-78) with the explanation of “the Gurindji kinship system” (i.e., by far not only terms, but also other phenomena related like “skin names”, kin signs, or speaker-listener-conditioned “specialized speech registers”). Numerous photos, tables, sketches, and maps with detailed explanations accompany the text (the reading is much more pleasant and understandable when one can see the people (including the authors), situations, objects, etc., mentioned or described).¹² For this part of the book the authors and the publisher deserve the highest possible praise: too often this kind of contextual information is insufficient, or drastically absent, in similar works, hence it is so much appreciated here.

The grammatical core of the volume has been organized into nine chapters (2-10, pp. 79-622) followed by lists of 164 “suffixes” (623-624) and 83 “enclitics” (625), nine “Appendices” (627-707) presenting texts analyzed and translated, bibliographical “References” (709-723), “Index of names” (725-732) with example sources identified, and “Index of subjects” (733-746).

The phonological inventory is characterized as “typical Australian [...] containing” five “stops” [...], five “nasals” (both “with five places of articulation”), three “laterals”, one (or two?) “tap/trill” (~ flap~vibrant liquid(s?)), three “glides”, and three (or six – it seems

¹² This reviewer once wrote elsewhere that “photos of informants and their habitat definitely help in making the relations between them and users of such a book more intimate and involving”.

not clear whether length is or is not phonologically relevant; *irrelevant* in this case are number and frequency of occurrence of minimal pairs) “vowels” (79-80, cf. Meakins & Nordlinger 2014: 43). The chapter “Phonology” (79-127) discusses *i. a.* also such issues of interest as consonant clusters and their simplifications, babytalk, accent (as a rule initial stress, deviations mentioned, 123-124), phonotactics, phonological rules. Some irritating repetitions can be observed (like “no voicing distinction ~ no voiced stops” on pp. *i. a.* 4, 79, 80, 98).

Chapters 3-7 deal with matters usually in grammars labeled “morphology”: (3) lexical categories (“Parts of speech”, 128-152; “nine word classes or parts of speech which can be distinguished using inflectional and distributional criteria”¹³: nominals, bound pronouns, inflecting verbs, coverbs, adverbs, clitics, complementisers, particles, interjections); (4) “Nominals”, 153-267, “one of the largest word classes [...] not always present in the clause [as] grammatically optional” (153); discussed are “the structure of the nominal word”, “NP structure” (no <NP> in the “List of abbreviations” on p. xxvii, but cf. p. 163), “Case morphology” (171-212), “Number” (213-223, “not obligatory”, with subsections on “Numerals”, “Time spans”, “Reduplication” (222-223, cf. also 121-123)), “Kinship morphology” (224-227), “Adnominal case” (228-236), “Derivational morphology” (~ word formation ~ Wortbildung, 236-263), “Clitics” (263-267, “most of the clitics [...] can occur with most parts of speech. Three are specific to nominals, hence [...] described here”, 263); (5) “Closed class nominals (268-324; “Demonstratives”, “Spatial relations” (here “cardinal terms” like ‘north, LOC’, ‘north ALL’, ‘in the north (long way)’, ‘far north’, ‘further along the north’, ‘from the north’, ‘originating from a place to the north’, etc., etc., “river drainage terms”, “verticality terms”), and “Ignoratives” (“interrogatives” and “indefinites”)); (6) “Pronouns”, 325-394, with separate subchapters “Free pronouns” 325-334, and “Bound pronouns” 335-394; (7) “Inflecting verbs and coverbs”, 395-483, divided into “Inflecting verbs” (396-439) and “Coverbs” (440-481) – “Gurindji [...] augments its small verbal inventory with a range of complex predicates consisting of two elements: one of a limited set of inflecting *verbs* combined with one of an open class of *coverbs*, [...] an areal feature of north Australian languages” (p. 395, italics *afm.*); a two-page subchapter “Adverbs” (“a difficult part of speech to categorise and difficult to distinguish from coverbs and nominals”, 482) ends the “morphology part”.

The remaining three chapters (8-10, 484-622) thus naturally constitute a description of the syntactic component of Gurindji in the *Grammar*: (8) “Syntax of main clauses” (484-533, with subchapters discussing and exemplifying “Non-configurationality”, an important property found in numerous Australian languages, “Verbless clauses” (here section on “Predicative possession”), “Attributive possession”, and “Verbal clauses”; (9) “Complex sentences” (534-576, subchapters “Conjoined clauses”, “Finite subordinate clauses”, and “Non-finite or reduced subordinate clauses”), and (10) “Unrestricted clitics and particles” (577-622, with “Unrestricted clitics” attachable “to different parts of speech and sometimes to the whole clause”, 577, and “Particles”, “[ten] uninflected function words,

¹³ The postulate that “each word only belongs to one word class” is correct; preceding it “in most cases” is logically risky: it questions the logical postulate of classification that all items undergoing classification must be taken into account and each single item belongs to one and only one class.

which can occur anywhere in the clause, but attract pronominal clitics when they are found in first position”, 605).

With the compilation and publication of the *Grammar* described above, one more endangered~on-the-verge-of-extinction language has been richly and solidly documented and saved for posterity (printed on paper ensuring permanence and durability, in addition FSC-certified). The volume of the book, the richness of the genuine language data provided, and the amount of the work invested by the authors and cooperating informants and consultants are, doubtlessly, all spectacular, impressive and imposing – and this would be optimal to conclude the present review. But the reviewer is *expected* to assume also the role of a nitpicker: to look hard for, and pick, “holes in the whole”. *Et voilà*: the book is not a detective novel to be read from desk to desk with no break in reading but a work of reference to be consulted (in this case, probably rarely, unless one intends to become a specialist in, or learn the language), to check or find something of interest – and the book has to be organized in such a way that within no more than 5-10 minutes one finds what is needed or excludes the existence in the book of information searched after. The infrastructure and tools to enable it consist of precisely inter-correlated elements of the “front matter” (especially a “technical introduction/preface” briefly explaining the said “infrastructure”, the table of contents, lists of conventions, symbols, abbreviations, tables, figures, illustrations, etc.), references and cross-references in the text, footnotes~endnotes, bibliography, and indices necessarily ending the volume. Here to be praised is in the first place the table of contents, and the lists mentioned in this text (though omissions seem possible), and to be critically evaluated are the indices at the end of the book – they *do not* make the entire work “user-friendly” (probably a merger of the indices “of names”¹⁴ and “of subjects” as well as the lists “of suffixes” and “of enclitics” (these two, of course, with page references obligatorily added)¹⁵ would dramatically increase the so badly needed *friendliness* toward the potential *user* of the *Grammar*.

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¹⁴ Every thing has “a name” and everything can be “a subject”. The reviewer was in vain looking for glottonym <Bilinarra> in the “Index of subjects” to find out that it had been packed together with anthroponyms and toponyms (probably as a rule the latter two used to be listed in academic books in separate indices, respectively “of personal” and “of geographical~place” names, all other items were “subjects” (German *Sachregister ~ Sachverzeichnis*)).

¹⁵ These two lists turn out in practice to be completely functionless.

¹⁶ The *Sketch* in the title stands for what is titled “Part I The outlines of the Yir-Yoront language” which, together with following it “Notes” can easily serve as a 123-page grammar of the language.

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¹⁷ This, out of necessity a little clumsy, bibliographical description to some extent reflects the disorderly vicissitudes of the publication of the entire edition and is provided here to instrumentalize and facilitate access to the material for confused non-Australianists. The reality in this case is much more complicated.

¹⁸ The Japanese title provided on the back cover of the book is much simpler: ヨルグ語民族文化語彙集 (*Yorugugo minzoku bunka goishū*).

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¹⁹ The recentmost at the reviewer's hand preparing the present text.

²⁰ Possibly the first global linguistic atlas on such a large scale (Milewski mentions but two predecessors – the set of maps appended to Meillet and Cohen 1924, and Father Schmidt's “Atlas von 14 Karten” appended to his *Die Sprachfamilien und Sprachenkreise der Erde* of 1926 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung).

²¹ The “first edition” was in fact a series of articles published in 1912-1918 in *Anthropos* (7 (1912), 230-251, 463-497, 1014-1048; 8 (1913), 526-554; 9 (1914), 980-1018; 12/13 (1917-1918), 437-493, 747-817).

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