

DRAFT REPORT ONLY

CONSIDERING TRADITIONAL
ABORIGINAL AFFILIATIONS
IN THE ACT REGION

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MAP ONE: THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY (ACT) AND SURROUNDING REGION

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INTRODUCTION

This report examines ethnographic, linguistic and historical sources relating to traditional Aboriginal associations to country for the broader ACT region. The research has been conducted with a view to identifying the Aboriginal cultural area(s) and group formations pertinent to this area at the time of the original intrusion of European explorers and first settlers. It should be borne in mind that this study was commissioned as a short desktop study. For that reason the conclusions drawn are necessarily precursory in nature. It has not been possible within the present time frame to locate and fully consider all of the historical and archival material of relevance nor to analyse genealogical data which could shed further light on local associations and interrelationships across the broader region. Present research has *not* been directed to a consideration of individual family connections to country. Pointed anthropological consultations with relevant family groups and close investigation of their particular family histories would likely enrich present understandings. As has been found elsewhere across the country (Sutton 2003), contemporary formations of landed identity, may be expected to reflect, albeit in transformed ways, underlying classical means of reckoning relationships between people and land. In all it should be borne in mind that early and traumatic disruption to traditional Aboriginal social structures and landed relationships - including the effects on the indigenous population of virulent diseases, violence and socio-economic marginalisation - combined with the poverty of the written record, undermine any confidence that a clear picture of the original territorial organisation could be attained.

While drawing at points on information gleaned from the reports of early explorers, newspaper articles, government records and the recollections of the first European settlers in the area, present research has, for the most part, been focused upon the writings of those who have applied a more professional approach to understanding traditional Aboriginal social and cultural institutions and relationships. Important in this regard are the recently published notes, journal entries and official report of the Victorian Chief Protector of Aborigines, G. A. Robinson who toured through the Monaro, the Limestone Plains and Yass in 1844; the writings of A. W. Howitt whose anthropological interests developed in the mid-late 1800s over the period in which he served as mines warden and Police Magistrate in Omeo; and the ethnographic and linguistic surveys of R. H. Mathews at the turn of the twentieth century.

N. Tindale's influential and - as subsequent analysis has shown (c.f. Sutton 1995) – highly problematic maps (1940 and 1974) depicting language-based tribal boundaries across the country have had an important bearing on conceptualisations of traditional landed affiliations in subsequent writings, in representations of identity amongst contemporary Aboriginal families, in governmental forums and in the formation of public perceptions around the issue. Ill-informed interpretations and misreadings of the material have further complicated an already troubled picture.

Coming after a long hiatus in academic interest in the issue, A. Jackson-Nakano's investigations into the Aboriginal history of Canberra and the ACT (2000) and Yass and surrounding settlements (2002), although substantially flawed in themselves, served to interrupt and challenge the unexamined general consensus. More recently Koch's 2011 re-examination of linguistic data has significantly shifted understandings of associations between language and place in the region. The aim of this report is to review the major sources of information pertinent to the question of Aboriginal

relationships to land in the broader ACT region, particularly in the light of present anthropological understandings of traditional social and local organisation.

Note: spelling conventions used in this report

This report in places reflects the language of the original sources and may contain terms which are offensive to some readers.

Because of their lack of familiarity with Aboriginal languages - and depending on their linguistic sensibility - Europeans had varying success in their efforts to listen to and record the words, names and sounds which they heard. For this reason a range of renditions of the same words and names can be found both between and within the texts of the various observers. In discussing the sources the original spellings have been maintained. The following table provides a guide to equivalent spellings. In addition, the reader should also be aware that in order to correctly convey sounds distinctive to Aboriginal languages modern linguistic conventions recommend some spellings which are counter-intuitive to English speakers.

| | | | |
|-------------|-------------|----------|----------|
| Gundungarra | Gandgangara | | |
| Monaro | Maneroo | Manero | |
| Namadgi | Nammoit | Nyamudy | Namwutch |
| Ngambri | Ngambra | Nganbra | |
| Kamberr | Kgamberry | Camberry | |
| Ngarigu | Ngarigo | Ngarrigu | |
| Ngunawal | Ngunnawal | Onerwal | Nunawal |
| Walgalu | Wolgal | | |

MAP TWO: TINDALE'S TRIBAL BOUNDARIES

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PART ONE: TINDALE'S MAP AND THE EARLY ETHNOGRAPHIC SOURCES

Tindale's project to map Aboriginal tribal boundaries across the country was an ambitious one and, given the true nature and complexity of Aboriginal social and territorial relationships, one anthropologists today would argue was seriously flawed in its conception. The work has nevertheless had a tremendous impact on understandings of Aboriginal interests in country ever since, no less in the ACT and surrounds than elsewhere.

In his 1974 volume¹, having described the territory of the tribe he called the Ngunawal, Tindale made the comment that 'this tribe has claims to have been the one actually on the site of the capital' (Tindale 1974:198). This statement appears to have been pivotal in the ascension of the Ngunawal identity amongst certain local Aboriginal people and to the subsequent prominence of place afforded to it by authorities not only over Canberra city itself but over the ACT in general.

In its fuller context, Tindale's explanation for the statement is that 'Canberra lies very near the *southern boundary* of Ngunawal country [emphasis added]'. The broader extent of the ACT was actually shown within his schema to fall within the domain of three different language-named groups, the Ngunawal, the Ngarigo and the Walgalu [see map 2]. Putting aside for the moment questions of fact, there is no basis within the description of country supplied by Tindale, or in the original sources upon which he depended, for the extension of Ngunawal country through the greater part of the ACT. This is not to say that those who - for some time at least - lay claim to the Ngunawal identity and championed the cause of recognition of Ngunawal claims over the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and surrounding region, do not have ancestral associations with the area to the south and south-west of the Territory. In fact, it is because their prime connections appear to have lain in this area that at least one family group has recently abandoned the Ngunawal identity in favour of that of Ngambri. This name, which has been promulgated by Jackson-Nakano as the original group name for the people of Canberra and surrounds, is for different reasons, no less problematic. This study will be concerned to interrogate the more complex nature of Aboriginal group formations and associations to country but will begin by examining the evidence for association of the three language-based groupings, Ngunawal, Ngarigo and Walgalu.

MATHEWS

R. H. Mathews was arguably Tindale's most important source in his mapping of tribal groupings in south-east Australia. Although Jackson-Nakano dismisses Mathews as an amateur, scorning his lack of anthropological or linguistic qualifications, Mathews was in fact, as Elkin has heralded him, one of the founders of social anthropology in Australia (Elkin 1975a:1). At the time of his writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, there was no anthropological academic institute in the country, the first department being established at University of Sydney in 1925.

Mathews' long career as a surveyor provided him with a strong orientation toward the land and skills in mapping and drafting which proved useful in his later research endeavours (Elkin 1975:131). Whereas many anthropologists of his day conducted their research remotely, relying on information

¹ 1974, Tindale, N. B. 'Aboriginal tribes of Australia, their terrain, environmental controls, distribution, limits, and proper names'. With four sheet map. University of California Press: Berkeley and Canberra.

provided to them by correspondents, Mathews prided himself on his field-based methods. In his published articles, he often made a point of the fact that the knowledge he had acquired had been personally attained; hence, in respect of his Ngunawal vocabulary he noted, 'every word has been noted down carefully by myself from the lips of old men and women in the native camps' (1901:302).

Elkin has noted that Mathews had an easy rapport with Aboriginal people and that he conducted himself with an appreciation for Aboriginal protocols founded on his close association with Aboriginal people in his early life,

Whenever he met groups of Aborigines he observed Aboriginal courtesies of approach and the patterns of behaviour he had observed from childhood onward. Thus W.J. Enright, a lawyer from Maitland who accompanied him occasionally on visits to Aborigines on the near north coast of NSW in the 1890s, told me that when RHM got near a camp, he usually lit a small fire and sat at it until invited to join the group (Elkin 1975:132).

As well as his practical and sympathetic capacities, Elkin notes, on the basis of his writings, that Mathews was also well-read in the discipline of anthropology. Mathews contributed to and considerably progressed understandings of Australian kinship systems, totemism and initiation rituals, amongst other topics, as well as recording valuable information on Aboriginal languages. He was a prolific writer, publishing some 170 articles in a range of academic journals nationally and internationally. His work has left a legacy of rich ethnographic detail and important observations regarding the commonalities and interrelationships between groups.

Not only then was Mathews a competent researcher, but in the area of present concern he also held a level of special interest. Mathews was born at Narellan near Camden, but in 1850, when he was only nine years old, his family took up a property at Mutbilly Creek in the Goulburn district near Breadalbane. He came to know the area very well and many years later returned in the capacity of government surveyor to draft an official map of the district (Thomas 2011).

According to his own account, Mathews grew up in the company of Aboriginal playmates, probably at Mutbilly, and apparently also at Bungonia where his father worked for some period (Mathews 1904:203; Thomas 2011). These experiences clearly formed the basis of his positive and non-prejudicial attitude toward Aboriginal people. He seems to have made no claim, however, that his knowledge of linguistic distribution in the area was based on his early personal experience.

Although Elkin comments that Mathews grew up in an era when Aborigines 'were still numerous and following their traditional pattern of life as far as possible' (Elkin 1975:128), reports by contemporary observers to the Select Committee on Aborigines for the area show that there had already been a dramatic decline in the local Aboriginal population by 1845. At Bungonia, Francis Murphy of the Bench of Magistrates reported they occasionally visited, writing,

There are no aborigines permanently in this district²; the tribe, a pretty numerous one, which in former times was located in the neighbourhood of Bungonia, has nearly disappeared, and has dwindled down to a very few individuals, who here joined themselves

² Mathews, himself, however, does document that in his time at Bungonia his father worked with Aboriginal labourers and that he played with their children. reference

to portions of tribes of other places, chiefly of Braidwood and Goulburn... (Votes and Proceedings 1845:34).

Meanwhile, Francis McArthur of Goulburn reported, 'there are not exceeding twenty or thirty, of all ages and sexes, belonging to the Mulwaree, or Goulburn Plains tribe' and in the last ten years he found they had 'diminished at least one third - and very considerably in the last five years' (Votes and Proceedings 1845:35).

Elkin was not wrong in suggesting that Aboriginal people were still striving to maintain a traditional existence, with Murphy making further comment on their itinerant lifestyle. He maintained that although quite competent to appreciate the value and comforts of civilized life, by choice Aboriginal people preferred 'the dirty, squalid, wild liberty of the bush' (Votes and Proceedings 1845:35). Mathews had at least some contact with the families of those employed on the farm and is likely to have had his curiosity aroused by others who came and went as visitors.

Although he never consolidated his findings, amongst a series of articles published in the late 1890s and early 1900s Mathews provides an inventory of the linguistic affiliations of Aboriginal peoples in south-eastern New South Wales. Mathews considered his work on languages in the south-east to have been conducted amongst the 'remnant' population (1908:335) and in an article on the Victorian tribes admitted, 'this work should have been done half a century ago, while the natives were still sufficiently numerous to supply the necessary information' (1898:325). Nevertheless his work provides valuable documentation of vocabulary for now extinct languages as well as important information on their distribution.

As well as his attention to the particular, Mathews' interest in identifying and documenting patterns of cultural commonality over wide areas, and his attention to intergroup relations, particularly in the ceremonial context, have left an important record of the more complex societal formations which characterised traditional Aboriginal life. This aspect of Mathews' work will inform later sections of this report concerned with the issue of regional societies.

NGUNAWAL

Mathews was clearly the main source for Tindale in his mapping of the extent of Ngunawal country. Before considering Mathews' account of Ngunawal country, it is important to note a difference in the way in which Mathews and Tindale conceived of the tribe. Although Mathews occasionally employed the term 'tribe' loosely to refer to the broader language group, his usual approach was to refer in the plural to the *tribes* speaking one language or another and to *the speakers* of a particular language [emphasis added]. Unlike Tindale he did not consider the speakers of any one language to constitute a single politico-territorial unit, recognising rather that relationships to land and authority in respect of it were highly localised.

To the north of the present area of interest, from Goulburn, Crookwell and Yass extending through Burragorang and Picton and as far north as Mt Victoria, Mathews locates the Gundungurra language (Mathews and Everitt 1900:263; Mathews 1901:140). Of those speaking that language he writes,

The Gundungurra *tribes* occupied the country to the west of the Thurrawal and Dharruk, as far as Goulburn, where they adjoined the Ngunawal tribes [emphasis added] (Mathews 1901:127).

Mathews reports that he and, in this case, fellow researcher Everitt depended particularly on information provided to them by a number of competent speakers based at Burrogorang,

We have given considerable attention to the study of the Gundungurra language, having visited and camped with the natives of the Burragorang, on the Wollondilly River, the most isolated and hence the best preserved and primitive remnant of the Gundungurra speaking people – two of our principal informants being “Billy Russell”, and “Bessie Sims”, who were able to satisfy us in every particular (Mathews and Everitt 1900:262-263).

Regarding the Ngunawal language Mathews wrote,

The native tribes speaking the Ngunawal tongue occupy the country from Goulburn to Yass and Burrowa, extending southerly to Lake George and Goodradigbee³ (1904:294).

This description accompanied his 1904 published Ngunawal vocabulary list. He had earlier made reference to the dialect Ngunawal, under the name Wonnawal, as one of those spoken amongst those groups of the south-east who practiced the *bunan* ceremony (Mathews 1898:67). There was no specific mention of Queanbeyan in the original description; however in a 1908 article on the Ngarrugu language he described Ngunawal as a sister tongue and located it as ‘adjoining the Ngarrugu on the north from Queanbeyan to Yass, Booroowa and Goulburn’ (Mathews 1908:335). The inclusion of Queanbeyan here is evidently the corollary of his description of Ngarrugu territory, which was presented as extending from Queanbeyan, via Cooma and Bombala to Delegate. In a sense, Mathews seems to make neither group the occupiers of Queanbeyan itself – or both. Canberra was yet to make its mark so that clarity regarding its particular linguistic affiliations did not hold the same imperative as it does today. Given Ngarrugu forms the main focus of the 1908 article and the apparent lack of mention of Queanbeyan amongst Mathews’ Ngunawal informants, more weight seems warranted on the side of his including Queanbeyan positively with the Ngarrugu. In any case the extension of Ngunawal territory between Lake George and Goodradigbee brings it easily within the immediate vicinity of the present day city of Canberra. Jackson-Nakano claims that Mathews’ fieldnotes show his major informants did not extend Ngunawal country to Goulburn and Lake George. I have not had the opportunity to view these notes but would suggest that his conclusions were probably not drawn on the basis of only their information. Tindale, it may be noted, largely follows Mathews but gives Ngunawal territory a slightly broader girth from ‘Queanbeyan to Yass, Tumut to Boorowa, and east to beyond Goulburn; on highlands west of the Shoalhaven River’ (Tindale 1974:198).

³ Goodradigbee does not provide a particularly clear point of reference since it is the name presently applied to a river extending north from present day Lake Burrinjuck to south of the Brindabella Ranges, however, in a 1911 article Lucy Carroll, perhaps Mathews’ main informant on Ngunawal, told a journalist that the proper name for the area of the new Burrinjuck Weir on the Murrumbidgee was Goodradigbee, ‘You tell your paper sonny, that Queen Lucy travelled along that river before any white people ever saw it, and tell them Queen Lucy says right name is Goodradigbee. You white people always changing names of places and say you know Aboriginal names when you know nothing about them’ (Barrier Miner 20/2/1911).

Mathews' main informants for Ngunawal appear to have been Ned Carroll and his wife Lucy (Jackson-Nakano 2001). Ned was born at Delegate and was apparently resident at Goulburn when interviewed by Mathews (Mathews 1900:262)⁴. Jackson-Nakano has dismissed Lucy Carroll (Queen Lucy) as an unreliable witness for Ngunawal claiming that she was a Wiradjuri woman possibly stolen by the Yass blacks from the Lachlan. While it is true that Lucy spoke Wiradjuri there is nothing to substantiate the theory about her capture⁵ and her affiliations to country and that of her parents cannot be clearly determined. Nevertheless, in 1910 when authorities attempted to remove Queen Lucy to Edgerton reserve she protested vehemently, maintaining that she was born in Yass and indicating that both her parents and grandparents had lived there. Reporting that she had been told she must go to Edgerton she remonstrated,

But I say 'No'. My grandfather and grandmother live here. My father and mother live here. My husband and I live here. My great grandsons and great grand-daughters live here. Here I was born; here I will die' (Barrier Miner 10/8/1910).

It seems, as well, that Mathews must have been satisfied with the competence of his Ngunawal informants because it is the only language amongst those of present interest for which he provided details of the grammar⁶.

Separate substantiation of the association between the Yass area and Ngunawal is provided by the recording of the name Onerwal there by Robinson in 1844 (Mackaness 1941:26). Howitt also makes mention of the Nunawal in the context of relating the account of Wiradjuri territory given to him by an informant named Cameron. The Nunawal had been cited as the eastern neighbours of the Wiradjuri, although he [Howitt] noted the group was unknown to him (Howitt 1996:56).

NGARIGO/NGARIGU

Mathews described the Ngarigu as that tribe 'which formerly occupied the country from Queanbeyan, via Cooma and Bombala to Delegate' (Mathews 1908:335). Following Mathews, Tindale depicts Ngarigu territory extending up to Queanbeyan, giving its bounds as 'Monaro tableland north to Queanbeyan; Bombala River from near Delegate to Nimmitabel; west to divide of the Australian Alps' (Tindale 1974:198). The inclusion of Queanbeyan within Ngarigu bounds by these two researchers differs from the account provided by Howitt. Howitt restricts the group more closely to the Manero [sic] tableland. His description includes a listing of the surrounding groups in which the Wolgal are identified as their northern neighbours,

The Ngarigo had the Wolgal on the north, the Ya-itma-thang on the north-west, the Kurnai on the west and the south-west, and the Yuin or Coast Murring to the south-east. The Ngarigo in fact occupied the Manero tableland (Howitt 1996:78).

⁴ Given more time it would be useful to examine Mathews' field notes, particularly to check some of the claims made about them by Jackson-Nakano.

⁵ The fact that she was named after her mother's sister with whom some association with the Lachlan was indicated is certainly insufficient proof. KM to find source in Philip Johnson's diaries

⁶ On this point the research of Besold should be consulted. According to Wafer and Lissarague she reports some difficulties with distinguishing Mathews' Ngunawal and Gundangara material (Wafer and Lissarague 2008:106).

Koch has examined Howitt's notes and papers and has discovered a number of pertinent references to Ngarigo as volunteered by his informants. For example, Mickey, an Aboriginal man from Mutong near Dalgety, described his language as Ngarego and told Howitt that 'Ngarego-mittang were as far as Cooma' (cited Koch 2011:135). He indicated good relations with the Queenbeyan (sic) blacks who he designated as *Ngye-mutch-mittung* [Nyamudy-midhang] and said that the latter used to go up to the mountains at the Murrumbidgee with them to eat bogong moths (Koch 2011:135). As will be discussed further in consideration of linguistic evidence, Koch has recently proposed that Nyamudy [Namadgi] should be recognised as a separate group for the broader Canberra area, albeit speaking a language very closely aligned with Ngarigu.

WOLGAL/WALGALU

The third group which Tindale has converging on Canberra is Wolgal. Koch expresses scepticism regarding the status of Wolgal as a separate language-based territorial entity suggesting that Wolgal 'seems...to be a fairly general term, applying to people living in mountainous areas' (Koch 2011:136). Nevertheless both Howitt and Mathews vouch for its distinction and the accumulated evidence points to a heartland, extending at least from Cowambat through Kiandra, Tumbarumba and the headwaters of the Tumut River. An account by Jauncey in 1889 gives the location at Kiandra snowfields and headwaters of the Murray, Tumut and Murrumbidgee rivers (Jauncey cited Wesson 2000:86). In Tindale's account the Wolgal were in occupation of the 'headwaters of the Murrumbidgee, and Tumut rivers; at Kiandra; south to Tintaldra; northeast to near Queanbeyan' (Tindale 1974:199), in this he largely follows Howitt.

There is scant reference in Mathews' published articles to what he identifies, contra Howitt, as the Walgalu, simply a note that the tribe adjoined the Narrugu 'on part of the west' and that the Dhudhuroa lay further westward again (Mathews 1908:336). In his unpublished field notes, however, Mathews has more further information. He notes that the mother of his Dyingning middhang (Dhudhuroa) informant 'belonged to the Walgalu tribe and language' which he locates 'about Walaragang junction of Tooma River or Tamberamba Creek up the Murray' (Mathews cited Clark 2009:203). In a separate entry he records that 'from Jingellic eastward was the country of the Walgulu tribe, whose speech resembled partly the Dhuduroa and partly the Dyrirringan, a tongue spoken from about Nimmatabel to Bega' (Mathews cited Clark 2009:213). Howitt is the main source of information on the Wolgal and it seems based his knowledge particularly on the information of a close Wolgal informant. Originally a geologist, Howitt came to the Victorian goldfields in 1852. He enjoyed a long and distinguished career as a mines warden and Police Magistrate at Omeo and occupied a number of other public offices in later life. In tandem with his other duties, Howitt developed a passionate interest in anthropology and worked in corroboration with Fison on a number of important studies. His most detailed research was conducted amongst the Aboriginal peoples of north-east Victoria and adjoining areas in south-eastern NSW. By his own account Howitt was initiated amongst the Kurnai, a status that allowed him to be privy to the more secret/sacred aspects of Aboriginal culture (Howitt 1996:511). Yibai-Malian, Howitt's main Wolgal informant, was a medicine man and one of the leading men in the organisation and conduct of the *Kuringal* [initiation ceremony] Howitt witnessed in the Bega area (Howitt 1996:516, 527-562). In his description of that ceremony, he mentions that he had known Yibai Malian for many years and so, it

may be assumed, had the opportunity to develop his knowledge about the Wolgal group over an extended period (Howitt 1996:516). Yibai-Malian aka Murray Jack, wore a breastplate describing him as King of the Wolgal and was born at Talbingo (near Tumut) (Koch 2011:136).

As noted, Howitt placed the Wolgal to the north of the Ngarigo. In his 1904 study he writes,

The Wolgal lived on the tablelands of the highest of the Australian Alps, and in the country falling from there to the north. The boundaries of their country commenced at Kauwambat (Cowambat) near to the Pilot Mountain following the Indi River to Walleregang, thence to the starting point Kauwambat, by Tumberumba, Tumut, Queenbean, Cooma and the Great Dividing Range (1996:78).

Both Howitt and Mathews mention Walleregang as a border for the Wolgal/Walgalu (Howitt 1996:101; Mathews cited Wesson 2000:86).

Janey Alexander, the daughter of Yibai-Malian (Murray Jack), appears to confine the group in a more southerly direction saying 'this tribe lived about the Murray River below Tom Groggin and were friends with the people down at Albury and up at Omeo' (cited Wesson 2000:86). Although elsewhere, Janey, along with her father and Mrangalla, provided an even more extensive description of country than Howitt's published list (cited Wesson 2000:86). This will be discussed further below in relation to ceremonial circuits. Also of possible relevance is the name of a township near Suggan Buggan, Wulgalmerang, possibly a rendition of Wulgal-Midhang, *midhang* being the commonly used suffix used to indicate belonging to place⁷. Jackson-Nakano has argued that the group occupying the larger Canberra region, extending from Lake George to Goodradigbee and from Gundaroo to Kiandra, which she calls the Kamberri or Ngambri, were Wolgal speakers (Jackson-Nakano 2001:97).

Koch has recently proposed 'Nyamudy' as the original and proper appellation for the local group in the Canberra area. He has further suggested that 'Nyamudy' would serve as an appropriate label for the local dialect of the area which he has identified as a variant of Ngarigo/Wolgal spoken on the Monaro and in the Tumut Valleys respectively (Koch 2011:141). While Koch has taken the name to have a broad regional reference including within its compass what is today Canberra as well as the wider ACT, as will be discussed in further detail below, I would argue that Nyamudy most likely had a more restricted geographical and social reference.

FURTHER LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE

Yuin language family

Commonalities between the languages of the south coast and hinterland region have long been recognised. In his major study of Australian languages linguist Schmidt (1919) grouped the languages of the area together under the banner 'Yuin'. This classificatory schema has recently been revised by Koch who has proposed that the southern grouping be expanded to encompass the

⁷ Koch has interpreted *midhang* as meaning 'group' in languages of the Alpine area. It is also noted that *midhung* is listed as meaning 'one' in Ngunawal which is fitting with the notion of belonging.

Gandangara language⁸ – originally, and in his view inappropriately, grouped with the Sydney and north coast languages – as well as the language of Omeo (Yaitmathang). He also proposes that separate recognition should be afforded to the language of the Canberra area [to be discussed below] (Wafer and Lissarrague 2008:101,105-106). Reflecting the degrees of relationship between the various languages of the group, Koch has described them as ‘a cycle of lects’ – a continuum of related dialects - progressing down through the inland languages of Gandangara, Ngunawal, Canberra⁹, Ngarigu, Omeo and up through the coastal languages, Thawa, Jiringayn, Dhurga, Dharumba and Dharwal (Wafer and Lissarrague 2008:105). Notably Wolgal has been omitted from this list. Here Wolgal was classified as Western Ngarigu¹⁰. In his more recent article, Wolgal is counted as a local variant of Ngarigo (Koch 2011:140-141).

The affinity of the languages in the region was vouched for by Stewart Mowle, one of the earliest contributors of a word list for the Canberra area. Mowle arrived at Yarralumla around 1837 as a young man and lived and worked, not only at Yarralumla itself but at various outstations in the mountain valleys to the west. For six years he was stationed at Mannus, close to Tumberumba (Mowle 1955; Jackson-Nakano 2001:79; Wilson 2001). Although acknowledging that there were different dialects ‘among the blacks’ he maintained, ‘That they sang the same songs and understood each other from the coast to the Murray, I know from my own knowledge’ (Mowle 1896:24).

In 1887 Curr, commenting on the word list supplied for the Moneroo or Manera district by Bulmer, stated that ‘The language this gentleman informs me is called Ngarago, and it will be seen that it has many words found but little altered in the dialects of Queanbeyan, Moruya, and Omeo’¹¹. He notes further, ‘whether this was always so, or is the result of the mixture of tribes, consequent on our occupation, it is now impossible to determine’ (Curr 1887:429).

Although underlyingly the languages of the entire region were technically closely related, the ability of Aboriginal people to understand each other, as Mowle suggests, from the coast to the Murray, is also likely to have been underlain in part by multi-lingual facility. Howitt corroborates that the songs sung in ceremonial contexts were shared from mountain to coast, reporting that the Wolgal used the same songs as on the coast (Howitt 1996:564). This cannot be taken as proof of shared language, however, for he also records that a Wolgal boy, who was initiated at the Kuringal he attended in the Bega area, was not able to understand the language of the local ritual leaders

⁸ This is the spelling used in Wafer and Lissarrague and apparently represents the phonetically correct rendition

⁹ As will be discussed below, the listing of Canberra as a separate dialect is a recent innovation based on the findings of Koch 2011.

¹⁰ A significant distinction is indicated by Howitt in respect of the totemic names applied to the moiety divisions within Wolgal as opposed to Ngarigo. In the Upper Murray region generally the totems eaglehawk and crow serve as the labels for the two great class divisions. According to Howitt’s account, the language names for these animals are, amongst the Ngarigo, Merung (eaglehawk) and Yukumbruk (crow), whilst for the Wolgal the equivalents are Malian and Umbe. Notably the Wolgal term Malian (eaglehawk) is, rather than being the same as that of the Ngarigo, the same as that employed by the Ngunawal and Wiradjuri. However Yibai-Malian whose name comprises the section name Ipai as well as Malian (eaglehawk) was the son of a Wiradjuri man so his account may have been framed in Wiradjuri terms (Howitt 1996:101-102; Wafer and Lissarrague 2008).

¹¹ Koch advises that the Queanbeyan and Omeo languages were likely to have stood in relation to each other as dialects, whereas Dhurga, spoken at Moruya, was a related language in the same Yuin family (Harold Koch pers.comm to NK, 4.9.2012).

(Howitt 1996:533). Because songs could be exchanged over long distances, or might in a ceremonial context preserve archaic or even secret linguistic forms, it was not uncommon for them not to be understood by the performers themselves¹². Mowle vouches that the 'blacks' did not seem to know the meaning of the songs he had heard,

It would be interesting to know what the songs mean. Who can tell? I cannot, and the blacks did not know, or they could not put them into English. They only know that they came from 'a good wee,' further intimated by a jerking up of the chin, the usual method of denoting distances and direction (Mowle 1896:24).

It should be noted that elsewhere in Australia, linguistic differences - sometimes of technically minor character - were employed as a means of marking distinction, or where useful for emphasising affinity between groups. Distinctions between language groups did not necessarily create a limited set of discrete and exclusively defined language groups, rather it has been found that particular features of commonality could create cross-cutting groups so that the same group - let's call them *a* - may in one context may align themselves as the group sharing feature *x* in common with group *b*, and call themselves together the *x* speakers. Yet the same group, in another context, could align themselves with group *c* and call themselves after a linguistic trait which defined them in common, and in opposition to group *b*, as let's say the *y* speakers. Linguists have suggested that the name Ngunawal is likely to derive from 'this' and hence means the people who use the form '*nguna*'. The same formation occurs in other parts of NSW (Wafer and Lissarague 2008:110).

'THE CANBERRA LANGUAGE'

The brevity of existing word lists, limited degrees of overlap and the dearth of grammatical material make linguistic comparison difficult; however, on the basis of recent analyses both McDonald (Flood 1984:20) and more recently Koch have come to the conclusion that word lists recorded in the Canberra region do not represent, as had earlier been assumed, samples of the Ngunawal language, but are identifiable as instances of Ngarigo or of a dialect closely related to the latter language (Flood 1984:20; Koch 2011:140-141).

Koch bases his findings largely on a comparison of personal pronouns which he has identified as a valuable indicator of historical linguistic differentiation. He reports that the common exhibition of the unique forms *kulangka* 'I' and *kulandyi* 'you' in both Ngunawal and Gandagara (of the Southern Highlands) 'convincingly shows' that the two languages are related. In fact he asserts, citing Besold and Dixon, that they are so closely related they may be considered dialects of the same language (Koch 2011:139). Meanwhile, and in contrast, Koch finds evidence amongst various word lists attributed to Limestone Plains, Queanbeyan, the Monaro, Ngarigo and Wolgal, of common sharing of the forms *ngayamba* 'I' and *yindiki* 'you'. Relying on this evidence, together with the identification of certain other items of shared vocabulary, Koch concludes that there is sufficient grounds to show that, despite possible dialectal variation, 'the Canberra language – and the Wolgal/Walgalu language – are essentially the same as the language of the Monaro, which was there called Ngarigo' (Koch 2011:140).

¹² The importance of ceremonial ties in creating regional societies will be discussed below.

Koch treats the Wolgal name with some scepticism, believing it may have been a flexible term applied more or less extensively across the mountains. Names aside, however, he points to three local variants: the Canberra language [or Nyamudy], which he associates with the 'Queanbeyan-Canberra-Namadgi' area; a language which might be known as Wolgal, centring on the Tumut Valley; and Ngarigo, the language of the Monaro, spoken between Delegate and Cooma (Koch 2011:141). The language of the Canberra area may be seen as transitional between Ngunawal and Ngarigu (Wafer and Lissarrague 2008:106), grammatically closer to Ngarigu but sharing much vocabulary in common with Ngunawal (Koch pers comm to NK, 4.9.12). While Koch's arguments are quite compelling, the examination of the finer detail raises some questions. The matter will be taken up again in a later section.

Howitt's treatment of Wolgal as a separate language also receives support from Mathews. Mathews' fieldnotes record that one of his Dhuduroa informants' mothers 'belonged to the Walgalu tribe and *language*' [emphasis added] (Mathews cited Clark 2009:203). Elsewhere he describes Walgulu speech as resembling 'partly the Dhuduroa and partly the Dyrirringan, a tongue spoken from about Nimmatabel to Bega' (Mathews cited Clark 2009:213)¹³.

¹³ Dhuduroa is in fact a distinct language and cannot be classified with the others under the Yuin family mast although it does share some vocabulary in common with the adjoining languages(Koch pers comm to NK, 4.9.12).

PART TWO: UNDERSTANDING ABORIGINAL ASSOCIATIONS TO COUNTRY

The model of language and territorial associations presented by Tindale depicting a series of neatly bounded tribes, much like separate nations, each speaking a distinctive language, closely guarding an exclusive territory and maintaining most of their social relationships within closed borders, has been found to be inadequate to the task of understanding Aboriginal group formations and associations to country.

Over time, anthropologists have come to appreciate that traditional Aboriginal relationships to land and socio-cultural formations are multilayered and highly complex. They range from the most intimate, local connections to place, through those that enable people to live together and gain their sustenance on a daily basis, to those bonds of recognition and mutual interest forged over wider distances by extended kinship and marriage networks, shared linguistic features, ceremonial cooperation and martial alliance. From an outside perspective it is possible to discern even wider socio-cultural blocs, areas distinguished by differences in language type, ceremonial kind and social organisation, although on the ground such divides tended not to be so sharply marked, with a melding of difference and overarching social ties.

Berndt provides a useful description of the diminished place the 'tribe' as a concept now occupies in understandings of Aboriginal socio-political organisation,

Especially as regards a larger tribe, the unity within it may be merely nominal, or held up as a kind of ideal: but except on certain ceremonial occasions, the tribe as such does not act as a whole in hunting or food-collecting, or in revenge expeditions, or other forms of fighting or warfare. It is the smaller groups within it which serve as a bridge between one large unit and another, so that really there is no clear cut demarcation between tribes, or languages, in ordinary everyday affairs. Distinguishing tribal units is a matter of convenience for us, in helping us to understand Aboriginal social organisation, and a matter of convenience for the Aborigines themselves in situations where they feel the need for some broader kind of identification apart from their local ones. It is also the leaders in the various smaller units who have the actual authority in tribal affairs, and at intertribal gatherings (Berndt and Berndt 1977:40).

LOCALISED ATTACHMENTS AND RIGHTS TO COUNTRY

Rights in country were not organised traditionally by way of membership in broad language-based tribes but through localised attachments, the principles for which varied in different parts of the country. In those parts of the country where land was inherited by descent, the local *land-holding group* may be described as the clan or local descent group. The clan were the owners of a particular *estate* – a tract or tracts of land and water over which they held primary rights and responsibilities.

Although the clan was the basic exclusive land-holding unit, occupation and use of land was not limited to clan members nor was the clan confined to its own estate. Other, albeit lesser, entitlements arose from maternal or other pathways of descent, affinal (marriage) ties and standing permissions between neighbouring groups, so that people might reside, hunt and gather over a broader territory. This they did in groups which anthropologists have labelled bands. As distinct

from the land-owning groups (clans), bands were the land-using groups, small, flexible groups, commonly of kin and affines (relations through marriage) drawn from more than one clan. The term range is used to refer to the area over which a particular band hunted and gathered in day-to-day living.

Commonly a number of related families with ties to adjoining estates in a common ecological niche clustered together to form a larger named occupational grouping. At times the members of such a grouping might live in separate family units, at others aggregate into a larger camp and cooperate for common purposes such as hunting, fighting and ceremonial participation. Although considerable flux affected membership on a day-to-day basis, in usual circumstances they were relatively stable entities with a well-defined territorial base. It is most likely that this level of local organisation which became visible to European observers and which made its way in piecemeal fashion into the historical records. Typically the group might be named after an environmental typifier, a geographic area or even after an influential leader.

It should be borne in mind that traditional Aboriginal practices allowed for a high degree of fluidity and contextual application of group names. Alternative means could be used to group people and their associated territorial interests together, a single name being amenable to variable application in different contexts. This is not meant to imply that all boundaries are amorphous and fluid, indeed there is consistent evidence that in this area local divisions maintained interests in well-defined and defended stretches of country

BROADER SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL RELATIONSHIPS

While for an extended period anthropology was heavily preoccupied with the local, there has been a swing back in recent times to consideration of the broader intergroup connections. Mathews and Howitt recognised quite early that Aboriginal society was cross-cut by groups coalescing around variable factors such as moiety, section, totems, gender distinctions, ecological orientations, linguistic affinity and ceremonial cooperation.

In one sense, Tindale was not wrong to point to a level of common identification around language, however, what he and other earlier observers failed to understand was the remarkable capacity in Aboriginal society for coalition around different and shifting commonalities. Keen has gone so far as to argue that the bounds of traditional Aboriginal social groups, both in terms of group membership and territory, were never unambiguous, but always contextually and politically defined. Groups had many alternative names and could coalesce strategically around different shared features, such as spiritual ancestry, ceremony-elements or common tongue (Keen 1994:73).

...a shared name indicated the existence of a relationship ... However, each country and group was connected to several such strings, which cut across each other. One of a group's alternative names would connect it to one string of groups, another name would join it to a different though possibly overlapping string (ibid:73-74).

Current anthropological understandings present a picture of Aboriginal social and local organisation characterised by multiple, fluid and cross-cutting conceptual categories linking people and groups in contextually and strategically contingent ways (Beckett cited Baumann 2006:324, Merlan 1996).

Such linkages, underpinned by the recognition of common or equivalent laws and customs, may extend to encompass groups across countries, language groups and geographical regions. For this reason drawing the bounds around a single society is highly fraught.

Howitt's testimony makes it clear that these issues of multiple and shifting frames of reference troubled his own conceptualisation of landed identity in the south-east. In his efforts to name the various tribes occupying the lower Murray River he indicated that the exercise was in no way straightforward,

This is an instance of the difficulties which beset these enquiries, since a group of blacks at a certain place may be called by their local name, or by the name of the dialect they speak, or by the name of the tribe to which they belong (Howitt 1996:52).

Within Howitt's writing on the south-east he reveals a multiplicity of levels of identification, including the broadest geographic and economic zonal labels separating the coastal, inland and mountain peoples, directional terms, group labels deriving from the use of common names for 'man' such as Yuin and Murring, which recognised a sense of common humanity and shared socio-cultural understandings and connections, through to 'tribal' groups sharing linguistic affinity to localised clans. He writes,

Not only are the Coast Murring divided into the 'southerners' and 'northerners,' but they are also divided into those who live on the coast and those who live inland. The former are the Katungal, from Katung, 'the sea,' called by the whites, 'fishermen.' Those who live inland from the sea are called Paiendra, from Paien, 'a tomahawk,' and are called by the whites 'Waddyman,' ... referring to their climbing trees in search of game for food. Those who live on the high mountains still further back are called Bemeringal or mountaineers, from Bemering, 'a mountain.' Perhaps strictly the Bemering include the people living on the Manero tableland, and even those on the high country as far as Kiandra, but not those on the fall thence to the north...

Beyond the most distant Bemeringal known to the Yuin, namely at Kiandra, there were tribes they called Woradjera and also Kunamildan, or 'come by night,' who had at times crossed the mountains, and killed the Murring. The former are clearly the Wiradjuri, some of whom lived on the lower Tumut River (Howitt 1996:82).

We have already examined Howitt's published account of the territorial affiliations of various language named groups. In his account of the inheritance of rights in country, and again in his description of the rituals surrounding the arrival of the various local contingents to the larger ceremonial gatherings, the importance of very specific localised connections to country emerges.

A NOTE ON NAMED LANGUAGE TRIBES

In the wake of colonisation, greater political import has been afforded to language named groupings than is understood to have traditionally been the case. Under the combined impacts of demographic stress and social reconfiguration, the usurpation of land and voluntary or enforced changes in residence and occupation, knowledge of finer levels of local organisation has often

become attenuated. Under such circumstances, although individual family associations with particular places might be retained, it has commonly been found that for the sake of social solidarity and political effectiveness – or as Marcia Langton has termed it ‘a survival strategy’ - a pattern of agglomeration of people sharing the same or related languages arose, such groups adopting a shared identity sometimes under the banner of a single language name. Such developments were clearly dependent upon the capacity for recognition within traditional frames of commonalities drawn at varying levels of inclusiveness. Whereas classically the language named group held its interests in land only by virtue of the component local groups, in the post-classical era such language named groups may come to claim undifferentiated interests and the right to speak over the broader extent of their combined country. Anthropologists have pointed to the rising importance of such language named tribes in the context of claims to country and land management in the current legal context. In the 1990s, Sutton coined the label ‘new tribes’ to refer to these self-identified language groups who act as corporate, and often legally constituted entities with claims and responsibilities over broad and bounded local areas (Sutton 1995:47).

More localised identities may be retained to varying degrees by different family groups within such umbrella groupings, sometimes leading over time to fission or reconfiguration. In the present Native Title context there has been an increasing move toward claims pitched at a societal level, encompassing a number of language named groups, who recognise their common basis in a more broadly acknowledged system of law and custom.

In the following sections we will examine the evidence for various levels of land related and sociocultural identity in what we may term the broader ACT region.

CEREMONIAL CIRCUITS, REGIONAL SOCIETIES AND CULTURAL BLOCS

Following Mathews, on the basis of linguistic affinity and cultural homogeneity as well as close ties of kinship, intermarriage and common ceremonial participation, Aboriginal groups traditionally occupying the country stretching between Bulli and Cape Howe on the New South Wales south coast extending inland to the Blue Mountains, southern tablelands and the alpine region in the far south of the state may be considered to have constituted a distinctive socio-cultural bloc. There were no hard and fast boundaries about such conglomerates, rather as across the country, the peripheries of one group and the next seem always to have been marked by transitional zones where linguistic and cultural features were melded or at the least where difference was easily negotiated through multilingualism and the capacity for cultural translation. In such zones there were also sometimes areas of territorial overlap where longstanding patterns of intermarriage effectively resulted in relatively free access on the part of neighbouring groups.

Mathews gave recognition to this linguistic and sociocultural bloc describing the grouping in one context as the ‘Thurawal nation’, this label merely applied for convenience after one of the constituent groups (Mathews 1898b:343) see map. Central to his definition of this conglomerate, as will be explored in detail below, was their link through a common ceremonial complex. As well as linguistic affinity, described above, the third defining feature was the maintenance of a distinctive system of social organisation.

The great nations of the Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi which adjoined the south-eastern group on the west and north-west, upheld a pervasive system of class and sectional divisions. In their world view the physical and the social world was fundamentally divided into two opposed halves or moieties which in the social sense formed intermarrying categories. Each moiety was in turn further subdivided to form two sections. Children gained their moiety and sectional affiliations by reference to the mother. People were identified with and commonly referred to by their section names, such as, in the example provided by Howitt for the Wiradjuri, 'Yibai', 'Wumbi', 'Murri' and 'Kubbi' (Howitt 1996:209). Such sections as well as a series of maternal totems played a role in the selection of ideal marriage partners.

The south-eastern conglomerate, on the other hand, was distinguished by the absence of class and section names and a totemic organisation based on affiliations organised by paternal descent. Writing of the Yuin, Howitt observed,

There are no class names, or even traces of them, but very numerous totems scattered over the country, as is the case in the tribes with descent in the female line. But in this case the totem names are inherited from the father, and not from the mother (Howitt 1996:133).

Howitt theorised that the Yuin and other groups may originally have upheld moiety divisions which were subsequently lost; the loss in his view not necessarily being seen as brought about by colonial disruption but possibly by cultural shifts in prehistoric times. Mathews and Everitt support Howitt's view that totems amongst the south-eastern peoples descend in the male line (Mathews and Everitt 1900:264).

There is on this point some difference suggested by Howitt between the coastal Yuin and related groups including the people of Braidwood, Queanbeyan etc, and the Ya-itma-thang, Ngarigo and Wolgal of the alpine country. In his inventory of different systems of social organisation, Howitt categorises the two groups separately (Howitt 1996). Whereas Mathews includes all the groups north of Cape Howe and Delegate (1898b:343) within a single bloc, Howitt's information suggests that the Ngarigo and Wolgal, while lacking sections, showed other organisational features aligning them with groups of the Murray, sharing with them the moiety divisions of eagle-hawk and crow, and a system of totemic affiliation in which totemic interests were inherited from the mother (Howitt 1996:102-103). It is pertinent to note here that one of Howitt's primary informants in this regard was the Wolgal man, Yibai-Malian, whose name may in fact be read as comprising the section name Yibai and the moiety name Malian [eaglehawk]. Yibai-Malian was the son of a Wiradjuri medicine man and it may be that his perspective was strongly influenced in this direction (Howitt 1996:511). In any case, the fact of his mixed heritage and of the congruencies with the Wiradjuri system postulated here may be regarded as reflecting a transitional status for groups on the periphery. The location of the Wolgal about the Tooma area in Mathews' fieldnotes may be tallied with his mapping of Aboriginal nations to place them right on the cusp of a major sociocultural divide.

Although such terminology had not entered into academic debate in his time, R. H. Mathews had begun working with concepts of both socio-cultural blocs and regional societies at the turn of the nineteenth century. Mathews' widespread and prolific studies of Aboriginal groups through NSW and Queensland stimulated his interest in the distribution of certain common traits across broad areas. In 1898 he published an article and accompanying map in which he divided Aboriginal tribes

of New South Wales into regional aggregates based on ceremonial types. He delineated eight different zones, the third of which was distinguished by their common commemoration of the *bunan* ceremony. The territory mapped extends along the NSW coast from Bulli to Cape Howe and includes the hinterland extending as far inland to Crookwell, practically to Yass, and appearing to follow the Great Dividing Range south so that Cooma is clearly within and Tumbarumba just beyond (see map). He writes,

MAP 3: MATHEWS MAP OF CEREMONIAL TYPES

DRAFT REPORT ONLY

In this tract of country the Bunan ceremony is in force. Some of the dialects are the Thurrawall, Wodi Wodi, Jeringin, Ngarroogoo [Ngarigo], Beddiwal [Bidhuwal]¹⁴, Mudthang, Dhooroomba, Gundungurra and Wannawal [Ngunawal](Mathews 1898:54).

Further consideration will be given to some of these language groups below.

In a separate article Mathews explains that in the west the tribes gradually merged into Wiradthuri [sic] country, where the initiation ceremony was known as the *burbung*. He suggests that the ceremonies celebrated at the interface of these two greater conglomerates 'would probably be found to have some modifications of detail to meet the views of both communities' (Mathews 1896:327). He also recorded that the Wiradthuri and groups as far as the Shoalhaven would sometimes attend each other's ceremonies (1896:327).

Importantly, as Mathews shows, the *bunan* ceremonies were not closed and local affairs but mandatorily intertribal in character. When an initiation ceremony was to be held the host tribe sent out its messenger or messengers to invite participants amongst a range of tribes covering considerable distances. Following commonly recognised protocols, the messenger travelled from one group to the other to bring news of the gathering. Mathews observed that the main messenger was sometimes accompanied by a second person, preferably someone from a far distant tribe, as this was considered to lend kudos to the invitation,

It not infrequently happens that a man is sent on his mission alone, but men are generally sent together, one of whom belongs to a different tribe to the headman who issues the message. The tribe to whom the two messengers are sent pay more attention to them if one is from a remote part of the territory (Mathews 1896:330-331).

Sometimes, instead of a single or pair of messengers travelling about the country, the headman of the first group receiving the message organised for one of his own men, of the same totem as the original messenger and of the host, to carry the message on to the next headman, who in turn was responsible for conveying the message onward and so on (Mathews 1896:331). The circuit about which such invitations travelled appears to have moved through a set sequence which linked the various participating groups and which was commemorated in the ritual context.

An important part of the ceremonials, particularly on arrival of the various contingents, was the calling out of a series of significant place names with which each group is associated. In his description of the Shoalhaven *bunan* Mathews described how, as the host tribe sets up the ceremonial ground and as each of the groups arrive, a ritual calling out of place names marking their respective countries is carried out. This is also repeated when all the tribes have assembled,

The headman then calls out the names of a few of the chief camping grounds, water holes or remarkable places in his country, and all the men present shout. The headmen of the other tribes follow in succession, each naming a few chief places in his country (Mathews 1896:333).

¹⁴ Bidhuwal is in fact linguistically related to Kurnai rather than the Yuin language family of NSW (Koch pers comm to NK, 4.9.12).

As Radcliffe-Brown observed amongst the Kamilaroi, in this way each group 'identified themselves with their own territory' (Radcliffe-Brown 1954:105-106). This ritual also seemed to serve as a means for honouring and ratifying, as well as remembering and teaching, the territorial associations of the various groups comprising the broader polity.

Howitt's account of the Bega *bunan* and the related *kuringal* closely accord with Mathews descriptions. Like Mathews, Howitt pointed to the intertribal nature of initiation ceremonies (Howitt 1996:511) but, as will be shown below, he recorded more detail on the specifics of which groups were in attendance at which ceremonies. Howitt describes how messengers were sent out to convey invitations to the *gommeras* (headman) of the various groups. According to Howitt, the messenger chosen was usually someone who through their kin connections had freedom of movement across the various territories. Hence he writes,

A leading man of the Snowy River Krauatungalung, who acted as my messenger to the Yuin, concerning the holding of a Kuringal, was born in their country, and therefore claimed it as his; his mother was a Ngarigo woman, and therefore he claimed her country. He was the accredited messenger between the Krautun Kurnai and the Ngarigo and Yuin (Howitt 1996:83).

The process of alerting all the participants to the impending ceremony could take considerable time as the message was conveyed - in a similar way to that described for the Kurnai - 'from clan to clan and from group to group, till the whole ... community, that is to say the initiated men, became aware of the intention to hold [the ceremony]' (Howitt 1996:516).

In his account of the ceremonies themselves, the ritual calling of place names, is once again noted, although according to Howitt's account, the visitors call the names from the country of their hosts and the hosts those of their visitors. When the visiting group have all entered the *bunan* circle,

One of them then shouts out the name of one of the local divisions of the makers of the *Bunan*, to which all his followers shout "Yau!" that is "Come here!" Then other names of the local divisions of the *Bunan*-makers are shouted, while the men of the contingent are dancing (Howitt 1996:521-522).

Subsequently,

The visitors now run out of the circle, and the *Bunan*-makers run into it, the former taking their places outside the circle. The latter now dance in their turn, and shout out the names of the local divisions of the visitors. These names are received with shouts of "Yau!" (Howitt 1996:522).

At another point he describes how the names of various local groups were shouted out 'the most distant one being first used' (Howitt 1996:528).

According to Howitt's informants, the *bunan* or the abbreviated *kuringal* rite extended as far north as Port Macquarie (Howitt 1996:513), but he shows there were divisions within these limits, with different groups congregating particularly around a more limited ceremonial complex. He gives quite specific description of the attendance that might be expected at a typical Bega ceremony, explaining also the exclusion of other groups who attended ceremonies elsewhere,

Assuming that the Bunan was to be attended by the clans from Moruya, Bega, and Twofold Bay, that is, by both the Kurial [northerners] and Guyangal [southerners], and that the meeting was to be near Bega, the following would be the procedure as the contingents arrived.

The people from Braidwood, Ulladulla and Shoalhaven would accompany those from Moruya. With them people from Broulee would occasionally come. Next would arrive those from Queanbeyan, then the Gurungatta¹⁵ from beyond Shoalhaven, with whom there might be even some from Jervis Bay; and all these people are true Kurial.

The Wollongong people did not attend this ceremony, because they go to one farther up the coast. The people from Twofold Bay would arrive about the same time, and bring with them some of the Bemeringal from the country along the coast range, being some of those living to the east of the Ngarigo.

The limits within which people would come may be roughly stated as Jimberoo, Kangaroo Valley, Nowra; but at this latter place were Bemeringal, that is, those who lived upon the high tableland, who went to the ceremonies at Goulburn. Nor did the Bemeringal come to these ceremonies from as great a distance as the country of the Ngarigo (Howitt 1996:519-520).

The participation in the *kuringal* that Howitt himself attended may have been influenced by his role in orchestrating it and hence included, or was to have included, representatives of the Krauatun Kurnai and Wolgal who might not otherwise have attended (Howitt 1996:516-517). Although in the latter respect he also makes it clear that Yibai-Malian, the headman of the Wolgal, maintained close ties with the Yuin.

In the first place, we may note that Howitt's description reveals something of the complexities of traditional territorial organisation, multi-layered and contextually dependent factors for defining commonality and difference and equally complicated group naming practices. The primary references in this account are to locales. Also evident are those names which identify broader environmental divisions, such as the Bemeringal, a term equally applicable to the people of the coastranges as to the Ngarigo of the high tablelands. *Kurial* and *guyangal* are directional markers and, although Howitt speaks of 'true Kurial', were likely shifting, context-dependent terms.

Single groups conjoined in various ways to form larger segments, so that in respect of present interests we see the Queanbeyan people joining with the Braidwood people and those from Ulludulla and the Shoalhaven. The Gurungatta [Coolangatta, north of the Shoalhaven] took part, whereas those from the tablelands behind Nowra and Kangaroo Valley, in this case probably Robertson and Moss Vale etc, joined ceremonies at Goulburn. Howitt's suggestion that the Ngarigo did not attend because it was too far is surprising given the proximity and apparent relative ease of passage between Bega and the Monaro and also in view of the strong presence of Manero blacks on the far south coast evidenced by Robinson in 1844. It raises the question whether it was actually because they were involved in a separate ceremonial circuit and therefore suggests a possible

¹⁵ Most likely a reference to the mythologically significant mountain and locale Coolangatta after which Berry's Shoalhaven estate was named.

distinction between Ngarigo and Queanbeyan. However, in this regard Howitt is also somewhat inconsistent, elsewhere including the Manero as part of the south coast ceremonial grouping (Howitt 1996:512).

The various groups participated in a series of lengthy rituals in which boys - who might be drawn from a number of groups - went through trials and teachings by which they were made into young men¹⁶. This rite of passage introduced the initiates into membership of the broader regional society and was an achievement of the whole rather than of any one group. After the close of the initiation ceremony a ritual involving the passing of each initiate's tooth from one group to another once again reinforced the distinct identity of local divisions and their linking together to form a regional society. Howitt writes,

The ceremonies being now completed, there remained nothing for the people to do but gradually to return to their own districts. The tooth would be carried by the Gommera of the place most distant from that of the youth it belonged to. He would then send or hand it to the Headman of the locality next to him, and thus it would pass from group to group of the inter-marrying community which had attended the Kuringal. It conveys its message, which is that so-and-so has been made a man. Finally it returns to its owner (Howitt 1996:561).

No single group monopolised the role of hosting the bunan, rather over time the various groups would take their turn to play host, inviting guests to join, contribute to and witness the ceremonies held on their own sacred grounds. The groups who participated in any one particular ceremony likely varied depending on the focal point of the host group hence it may be more fitting to think of overlapping regional societies, rather than mutually exclusive groups.

Early accounts provide clear evidence that local groups in what is now the ACT and its environs also played host to initiation ceremonies and other corroborees. The commonly cited figure of attendances of 500, whether more or less accurate, served not, as these commentators suggested, to indicate the size of a single tribe, but pointed to the fact that the bigger gatherings were intergroup affairs. Not all such gatherings were ceremonial in nature but even in the ordinary corroborees the arrangements of the performance area and of the dancers served to emphasise distinction between the various groups. In the mid 1830s, Eyre, who had taken up land in the Molonglo area, less than 20km from Queanbeyan, says that they [presumably he and his neighbours or employees],

Often had a good many blacks encamped in the neighbourhood and occasionally on the meeting of several tribes they indulged in their favourite 'corrobbery' [sic]. On such occasions the tribes not dancing would sit down in a semicircular form fronting the stage (any low green, smooth spot of ground), each tribe by itself and with a few bushes forming a sort of division between it and the adjoining ones ...When one party had exhibited another tribe would sometimes retire to paint and decorate, and thus they kept up their balls thro' the great part of the night (Eyre 1984:89).

In a separate report he stated,

¹⁶ Detailed accounts may be found in Mathews 1896, 1900 and Howitt 1996.

On one occasion I saw five tribes met together, and the evening was of course spent in dancing. Each tribe danced in turn, about forty being engaged at once, beside sixteen females, eight of whom were at each corner of the male performers (Eyre 1845:232).

Bluett recounts after Blundell that 400-500 of the Ngambri-Pialligo tribe would assemble by Canburry Creek for ceremonies at which 'neighbouring monarchs' were in attendance (Bluett 1954:1). In an earlier article he wrote,

At the foot of Black Mountain, north of the Molonglo River from the new Parliament House was the Kgamburry's favourite corroboree ground. John Blundell saw many of them. Here a clear open space under a big tree would be selected. Old King Hong Kong sat in state watching the enjoyment of his people, what time a couple of wives plied him with choice morsels of duck and goanna. A big active man he carried himself as born to the purple. A bodyguard of eight or ten warriors, stood behind him each with a spear handy in case of accident (Bluett 1927).

Queen Lucy of Yass says that boys were taken to Canberra for initiation, suggesting that boys from Yass may have been included (The Mail (Adelaide) 8.1.27). Wright, refuting Lucy's claims for the Canberra ceremonial ground, remembered women and children remaining behind at camps at his father's place (Lanyon) while the men took the boys up to Jedbenbilla (Tidbinbilla) Mountain (Wright 1923:61).

I well recollect when these ceremonies took place, as the blacks very often camped at my father's place, while the black men with the boys who were to go through the performance went away to the mountains, and that, too, into the most rough and out-of-the-way mountain top (The Mail 1927).

In general there is no account given of the groups in attendance although an 1859 Goulburn Herald article reported on a 'theatrical performance of a corrobberre [sic] at Queanbeyan by a "tribe of Aborigines" from Braidwood and the South Coast' (cited Jackson-Nakano 2001:111). It seems that the annual blanket return provided an occasion for intergroup gatherings.

There are many descriptions of groups gathering for the bogong moth feasts in the Bogong mountains, these rich supplies of food likely supporting ceremonial undertakings (see Flood 1984 and Gillespie 1991 for fuller accounts). West describes the Monaro blacks passing through Coolamon in their hundreds on their way to the mountains (Queanbeyan Age 1913). Mickey, of Delegate, told Howitt that the Ngye-mutch of Queanbeyan joined the Ngarigo of Cooma on their way to the Bogong Mountains. Others passed by way of Canberra and Uriarra. Bluett writes,

In the annual spring trek to the Kiandra Mountains for the Bogong moth harvest, two or three families would club together and if they had joined forces about the Canberry district, they might be away for three months...(Bluett 1954:27).

Uriarra is said to have been named 'running to the feast' because it lay *en-route* to the mountains and was, as well, a place where the moths were roasted on the return (Gillespie 1991:43)¹⁷. There are many scattered references to ceremonial gatherings in the ACT and surrounding regions as well

¹⁷ See Koch 2009 for a sceptical approach to supposed meaning of place names.

as archaeological site documentation. Given more time it would be valuable to collate and properly analyse information available on sites, attendance, routes etc. with the aim of elucidating the regional society/ies within which Canberra and the broader ACT are implicated.

BEYOND CEREMONY

Both Mathews and Howitt pointed to the way in which ceremonial gatherings served to define a community, which not only participated in a common ceremony but which also upheld common laws and participated in mutual exchanges in regard to marriage, tribal justice and trade. Howitt writes,

But the rule is, that a certain ceremony brings together a number of tribes. Thus the Kuringal of the Yuin, is attended by people from Manero, Shoalhaven and Braidwood, and they therefore form what may be called a 'community,' which in this sense includes a number of tribes. In other words, all the tribes which attend the same ceremonies form an intermarrying community larger than any one tribe, and approaching what I have called a 'nation'. ...the community which thus meets periodically for the purpose of initiating its youths into the status of manhood, and membership in the tribe, is in principle also that of the united exogamous class divisions (Howitt 1996:512).

Such gatherings provided an opportunity for matters of broader concern to be discussed, Mathews giving account of the meeting of the various headmen,

At a retired spot in the bush, a short distance from the general camp, the headmen have a private meeting place called *warrawurrudthang*, where they congregate to consult on such tribal concerns as may be brought before them by the leading men of the several contingents present, and also to arrange the various details of the ceremonies (1896:328)

Mutual participation in ceremonies was only one strand in an array of important – and it might be added complex and sometimes fluid – interconnections by which groups were allied. Hence in describing the various mascots which a Ngarigo messenger might bear depending on his particular mission, Howitt gives light to a range of different ways in which groups might consolidate and draw upon their allegiances with others,

If the message related to a corroboree, the Ngarigo messenger carried a man's kilt (*Buran*), a head-band (*Ngunumila*), and nose peg (*Elangantu*). If it related to an expiatory¹⁸ fight, he carried a shield for spear-fighting (*Birkumba*); but if it was to call a war-party together, he carried a jag-spear (*Jerumbuddi*). In relation to the initiation ceremonies the token was a bull-roarer (*Mudji*) and also a spear, boomerang, and shield (Howitt 1996:687).

Individual 'tribal' groups did not operate as social isolates but were ensconced within a broader regional society, or perhaps more than one, involving the mutual cooperation of a range of linguistically distinct groups who shared and upheld a broad system of laws and customs, albeit perhaps with significant local distinctions, held joint responsibility for the conduct of ceremonies

¹⁸ A fight for the settlement of a wrong-doing.

involved in the inculcation and reproduction of laws and customs and in the bringing of men to adulthood, recognised and upheld the territorial interests of its constituent members, upheld normative rules for dealing with offences causing affront to the wider community and for resolving intertribal disputes, sometimes exchanged wives and traded in the natural and cultural products of their respective countries.

'THE LINE'

In May 1952 a series of correspondence passed between Norman Tindale and Mr W. Parkes, the former manager of the government settlement at Brungle (Parkes 1952; Tindale 1952). Mr Parkes recalled a description given to him in 1948 by 74 year old Frederick Freeman, an old 'halfcaste' Wiradjuri man, of what he called the Wiradjuri 'line'. The Wiradjuri line, as Freeman had related it, ran through Brungle, Gobarralong, Jugiong, Harden, Wellington, Orange, Condobolin, Hillston, Hay, Darlington Point, Wagga Wagga, Tarcutta, Adelong, 'this side' (north) of Tumut and back to Brungle. Parkes understood the line to describe the territory of the Wiradjuri but was surprised to find that the conception of territory underlying it seemed to relate to the line quite literally, he seemed to think of tribal territory as 'the line' itself rather than as the area it enclosed.

In his reply Tindale told Parkes that he had also come across the concept in relation to the Wiradjuri and believed that the 'lines' described the 'travelling routes along which natives used to proceed to the bora or initiation ceremonies which were held from time to time in different parts of their country'. Tindale's conception of the line as a travelling route misses its deeper significance. The recitation and the physical traversal of the 'line' constitutes, as we have seen from previous discussions, a test and a reinscription of physical, social and perhaps mythological geography and may be better understood as demarcating a string of related countries which together constituted a regional society.

As well as the Wiradjuri line, Parkes also relayed to Tindale the 'lines' described by Freeman for the Gurmäl and the Ngunawal.

Tumut was not on the Wiradjuri "line", but on "the line" of the Gurmäl, "a different lot altogether", "the lot who lived upon the Bugangs [Bogong Mountains]", who spoke "a lot like the Ngunawal" and were associated with the latter on the Tablelands (Parkes 7.5.1952).

The Gurmäl "line" according to Freeman 'ran this way', Bugang Mountains, Tumut, Cooma, Bombala, Twofold Bay, then probably "down Orbost way". This accords very well with the recollections of Wilkinson of Yallowin in the Tumut district who attested that 'blacks' used to come to his property from Yass, Wellaregang, Omeo and Mitta Mitta to attend corroborees (cited Jackson-Nakano 2001:58).

It also meshes with what Howitt recorded apparently in response to his questions about the limits of Wolgal country related to him by Mrangalla, Janey Alexander and Murray Jack,

From Kowumbut down the river ... To Tom Groggin thence to Wheelers and Cudgewa and as far down as the Murray to Walariganya River joining the Murray – above Albury thence to Tumberumba – Adelong – Kilmore Creek to Tumut, thence from the Tumut to Gundagai – to

Gloot – to Cullinbong and to Lambing Flat – thence to Yass – to Queanbeyan – to Micalago – Cooma – Kiandra – Lots [Lobs] Hole – Thelbungung [Talbingo?] Mountain – thence across to Kowombat (cited Wesson 2000:86).

It is an extensive listing and in his published account Howitt seemed to feel the need to cut it back (Howitt 1996:78).

The significance of Lambing Flat as the end of what we may call the Wolgal 'line' in the original account, seems to be supported in Howitt's description of the ceremonial circuit of the initiates' teeth after the Wolgal initiation ceremony,

The teeth knocked out are put in a bag with kangaroo teeth and red ochre, and sent away by the medicine-man who extracted them round to the places from which the contingents came – for instance, as far off as Lambing Flat (Howitt 1996:565).

The line described for the Ngunawal listed Roseby Park [on the coast near Nowra], Burragorang, Yass, Cooma, Nimmitabel, Bega, Bombala, Twofold Bay. Evidence of a range of connections between these relatively far flung places are indicated in linguistic affinity and marriage partnerships, which given greater time, might be more fully investigated.

It is possible to see how an Aboriginal tendency to respond to questions of territory with a recitation of 'the line' may account for some of the apparent overlaps and confusion which have perplexed understandings of group distributions over time. On this point, however, it is important to note that traditional notions of relationship to country may have extended in concertina fashion beyond the areas in which most authoritative ties were rooted. Myers has argued for the Pintupi that while a person maintained the strongest - and indeed indisputable - rights and interests, as well as a deep emotional attachment to the place which by birth or inheritance they considered their homeland, their notions of 'own country' were considerably more expansive. Through his or her network of kinship and affinal ties, through travel, visiting and sometimes extended periods of residence in other places, and also it may be added through ceremonial circuits, an individual established, over the course of his or her lifetime, a broader domain over which they were able to move (Myers 1982).

'TRIBAL' ENEMIES [use of the term 'tribal' to be qualified]

While the common employment of terms meaning *man*, such as Yuin and Murring, marked a recognition of affinity between close or loosely allied groups, outsiders - particularly those regarded as distant strangers - were labelled with terms signifying fear and contempt. Howitt records that the Kurnai - a term once again meaning man which the Gippslanders applied to themselves – used the name '*brajerak*' to refer to their neighbours, the Theddora of the Omeo tableland, the Ngarigo of the Manero tableland, and the Murring of the south coast of NSW. The term was derived from *bra* 'man' and *jerak* 'rage' or 'anger' (Howitt 1996:41). The Gippslanders were reciprocally held in dread and enmity. In recounting an attack upon the Monaro blacks at Cooleman by the Gippslanders, West describes how the latter were counted as the 'hereditary enemies' of the Monaro blacks (Barrier Miner 22/7/1908).

Howitt provides an insight into the way in which these perennial feuds were perpetuated. During the secondary initiation rites for young men amongst the Ya-itma-thang he describes how, after having their hair singed from their heads, the Wahu [second level initiates] were instructed in the attitudes proper to their various neighbours,

...the men would run some way, returning swinging the boughs, with a swishing sound, in a certain direction, mentioning at the same time the name of the district towards which they were pointing. This was repeated three times for each of the various directions they might point to. Each name mentioned was preceded by the emphasised exclamation of 'Wau! Wau!'; - for instance, 'Wau! Wau! Tumut!' If the *Wau* was followed by an exclamation or malediction, it meant that the Wahu might go to the one as a friend; or that in the other direction lived tribes with whom he would have to carry on the hereditary feud (Howitt 1996:566).

In the above-mentioned example it is likely that the Ya-itma-thang and Tumut peoples, who shared closely related dialects, maintained cooperative relations. Relationships between the Yuin/Murring and the Wiradjuri, on the other hand, were as Howitt conversely showed, marked by deep animosity. He writes,

Beyond the most distant Bemeringal known to the Yuin, namely at Kiandra, there were tribes they called Woradjera, and also Kunamildan, or "come by night," who had at times crossed the mountains and killed the Murring. The former are clearly the Wiradjuri, some of whom lived on the lower Tumut River (Howitt 1996:82).

From the opposite perspective, in his discussions with Parkes at Brungle, Wiradjuri man Freeman was quite emphatic in distinguishing the Tumut blacks or Gurmals from the Wiradjuri and in marking the two as enemies,

Far from being connected with the Tumut blacks, the Brungle Aborigines [Wiradjuri] regarded that lot as a hostile people (*gurai*), and some 'lads' (clever fellows) from the two tribes had killed each other off at Lacmalac, a place just outside Tumut town (Parkes 1952:3).

The aggressors in raids perpetrated by the so-called 'Yass blacks' upon groups to the south and east may well have been Wiradjuri rather than Yass locals. As Flood (1984:23) has suggested, places of white import were rough markers in referencing indigenous locales. Thomas Franklin, an early settler in the Yass district, is said to have witnessed 'a battle fought between about 1000 men, the Queanbeyan, Monaro and Upper Murray blacks¹⁹ being pitted against the Murrumbidgee and Lachlan blacks' (cited Gillespie 1991:52).

Yass seems to have constituted something of a border region²⁰ between the greater socio-cultural blocs and it may be assumed that relationships at the interface were complex with various degrees of connection maintained on both sides. Frederick Freeman explained something of the hierarchy

¹⁹ This reference may relate to the Wolgal.

²⁰ See for example Howitt's description of the Wiradjuri groups between Hay and Yass (Howitt 1996:56).

of relationships between the Wiradjuri and surrounding groups in his description of camping arrangements at intertribal gatherings,

At big meetings we Wiradjuri would camp nearest the Wongaibon because we could understand them; next would come the Ngunawal because we could understand them too; and after that the Gurmali, and last the Wadi Wadi (Parkes 1952).

This reference of mutual attendance at intertribal meetings is interesting, though I have no further evidence to explain whether such meetings were a common occurrence. There is an account of the Yass and Lake George tribes attacking the Piallago tribe (Queanbeyan Age 19.3.1919).

There is little information to shed light upon the relationships between the Goulburn peoples and their southern neighbours. Murray documented that a Goulburn man, Mangamore, had raided a camp in the mountains in an attempt to assassinate Onyong but his motive for this attack is unknown (Jackson-Nakano 2001:82).

Early records tell of a big battle between the Piallago blacks of Canberra and a fighting contingent from the Monaro (Queanbeyan Age 19.3.1919). The story suggests the fight was a hostile raid but it might also have been a formal expiatory fight. Notably, in relating the same tale, Shumack refers to the raiders only as having come from the south west possibly leaving room for the aggressors to have been a group from beyond the Monero. In general, other evidence, such as their mutual attendance at the Bogong feasts and their later congregation tends to suggest that the Monero blacks and their northern neighbours were generally allies rather than foes.

Finally, an early example giving strong evidence of the strong allegiance of the Yuin/Murring groups [as Howitt defines them] comes from Robinson who while at Tinoor [Genoa] in 1844 recorded,

The Twofold Bay, Cape Howe, Maneroo, Yass and other natives have several times begun an expedition to the westward to attack the blacks and steal women but in general returned after leaving, the old men conceiving some omen prejudicial (Robinson :144 ref incomplete).

In all, the evidence of relations of amity and enmity in the region give strong support to the proposition that the groups who traditionally occupied the area now encompassed within the ACT and its environs were members of a broader Yuin/Murring bloc clearly set apart from and at odds with the Gippsland and Wiradjuri Aboriginal people.

LOCAL CONNECTIONS

Primary connections to country - those of deep spiritual significance and productive of the strongest rights and responsibilities - are in Aboriginal Australia generally quite narrowly defined. A person acquires - usually by fact of descent or birth - an intimate bond to a specific named place or an estate often centred about an important site or collection of sites. Hence Howitt explains that in the south-east,

Claims to particular tracts of country arose in certain of these tribes by birth. When a child was born among the Yuin, its father pointed out some hills, lakes, or rivers to the men and

women there present as being the bounds of his child's country, being that where his father lived [ie. the father's father], or where he himself was born and had lived²¹ (Howitt 1996:83).

This description of country is reminiscent of those ritualised recitals of place occurring in the ceremonial context. It is not entirely clear whether the demarcations of country related here are equivalent in each of these cases and, in Howitt, at least, there is considerable sliding in levels from the local to the more expansive with noticeable slippage between the discussion of rights in particular tracts of country and broader tribal identities. Neither Howitt nor Mathews was much concerned with the fine levels of association to country which were better captured by Brough-Smyth writing for Victoria,

Each of these tribes had its own district of country – its extent at least, and in some instances its distinct boundaries, being well known to the neighbouring tribes. The subdivision of the territory even went further than that; each family had its own locality. And to this day the older men can clearly point out the land which their fathers left them, and which they once called their own (Brough-Smyth 1972: 40-41).

Mathews unfortunately tended to pay little attention to issues of land tenure and local residence patterns and his writings in respect of the present area of concern have little light to shed on local ownership and occupation of land. In a rare instance in respect of the Kamilaroi he did note that sons inherited their hunting and camping grounds from the father and that they tended to camp close to each other with their respective families. 'These little knots of people', he wrote, 'could be called collectively family groups or local divisions' (Mathews 1912:93).

Robinson, the Victorian Chief Protector of Aborigines who toured the Canberra region in 1844, was aware that individuals claimed connection to particular locales and in the censuses he took, including that at Yarralumla on the Limestone Plains, he enquired after people's country. Although he was not familiar with the place names he recorded himself, his lists provide a valuable source for mapping out the areas with which those then resident or visiting the Limestone Plains held association. These will be more closely examined below. We cannot verify what type of association was being recorded here, but it is noticeable that nearly every person claimed an association with a different place, suggesting that they were in fact volunteering places of their individual or close family affiliation rather than a current commonly shared residential base. The close personal identification of person and place is reflected in the fact that a number of individuals were named after their country.

As previously noted people did not reside or confine their hunting and gathering activities within the bounds of a single clan estate. By a complex system of secondary rights and interests, of standing permissions granted amongst neighbouring groups, and through hospitality afforded to kinsmen and other guests, people were able to circulate much more broadly.

While Howitt is quite clear that rights to country are in the first place inherited from the father, against the monopolistic model of patrilineal descent, which held long sway in anthropological circles, Howitt's study presented a more complex picture of the means by which rights in country

²¹ Howitt goes on to add here that a girl took the country of her mother, however, in the light of other information on land tenure, such a gender based distinction seems unlikely. As will elsewhere be discussed, however, rights in country descended to children from their mother in all cases.

were acquired. Rights in country are shown to descend to a child not only from the father, but also from their mother, from their place of birth if different, and from the place of birth of children as well. He was probably mistaken in suggesting that the girl, in opposite fashion to a boy, took her mother's country, rather it seems likely that every individual possesses rights in their mother's country as well as in their father's. So he explains in one example,

The son of one of the headmen of the Theddora was born in the Ngarigo country, to which his mother belonged. It was therefore his country... (Howitt 1996:83)

In addition, to the rights acquired by descent, Howitt was also told that a person had rights in the country in which he or she was born,

One of the old men of the Wolgal said that the place where a man is born is his country, and he always has a right to hunt over it, and all others born there had also the right to do so (Howitt 1996:83).

Furthermore, where a child was born away from its father's and mother's country, the parents also acquired rights in the country of their child's birth,

Besides this the father took the country where his child was born, if away from his own locality, and the mother took that where her daughter was born under similar circumstances (Howitt 1996:83).

The same reservations over this gender distinction apply as noted above.

Not only did an individual inherit rights at birth but it was also possible to acquire rights and interests over the course of a lifetime. A range of rights were available to the spouses of those with primary rights in country, on a temporary basis to visitors and by standing order to those who were neighbours. Such rights were contingent in nature and subject to withdrawal and did not give the person the rights of decision making over country. Yet it was also possible for consolidation of rights into more authoritative forms.

Powerful men extended their domain of influence through the activation of hereditary interests, through intermarriage of self and kindred, through hosting and participating in ceremonies over a wide range of distance, through the accrual of esoteric knowledge and the development of alliances with leaders of other groups. Howitt describes how the Wolgal leader Yibai-malian had come to have wide-ranging influence,

Yibai-malian, whose father was a renowned "blackfellow doctor" of the Wiradjuri tribe, who joined the Wolgal, with whom he was related by marriage, and then obtained a wife from the Theddora of Omeo. By this he became connected with the Ngarigo through her relations, and thus met the Yuin and became a man of influence in their tribe²² (Howitt 1996:511).

By fact of his various connections Yibai-malian had fairly free rights of passage over extensive parts of the country.

²² There seems some slippage in reference within this passage but it is assumed that beyond the mention of his father, it is Yibai-Malian who forms the main subject.

By the time Stewart Mowle came to live at Yarralumla, in about 1837, demographic strain, land alienation and new engagements with the European stations and settlements are already likely to have led to substantial group reconfigurations. Even so, had he taken the time to report in greater length on his experiences with and observations of Aboriginal people, there is no doubt that he could have told much about such configurations in the broader ACT region. Tantalisingly, he reports on the protocols attending the meeting of two groups,

Two tribes, or members of the same tribe, meeting at a camping ground would sit apart, light their fires, and feast upon their warmed through 'opposums. After a time the leading man of the last arrived would make a remark, then a speech, when they fraternised, and the talking would become general (Mowle 1896:24).

Whereas at the time, Stewart Mowle and others, such as Garrett Cotter, who maintained close contact with Aboriginal people, would have been able to speak about the countries, the group identities and some of the personnel involved in such exchanges, this level of detail must be counted largely lost to present knowledge.

DRAFT REPORT ONLY

PART THREE: CONSIDERING THE FINER DETAIL

JACKSON-NAKANO

In her reassessment of Aboriginal land associations in the area about Weereewaa, the name she gives for Lake George, Jackson-Nakano has made a gargantuan effort to glean from the historical record details of Aboriginal occupation and traditional local group configurations, unearthing much valuable information. Unfortunately, the existing information is too scant and fragmentary to hope to undertake the type of reconstruction attempted. Here a handful of randomly recorded and preserved Indigenous names - whose true referents are completely unknown - have been taken and turned into a patchwork of exclusive tribal territories, together covering every square inch of country. Cleaving to a simplistic tribal model, Jackson-Nakano struggles to make sense of the complexity of local organisation and is forced to resort to notions of territorial expansion and contraction, of conquest, mergers of country, of usurpation of power in the pre-historical period, none of which are commensurate with what is known about Aboriginal territorial relations, at least outside of very long frames of time, although clearly the post-contact period did represent a period of unprecedented change.

There is some inconsistency I would note in Jackson-Nakano's treatment of the historically recorded names for the various areas. Whereas she has seized upon group names appearing on blanket returns, name plates and other historical sources to demarcate quite finely differentiated local groups in the Goulburn and Yass area, she has passed over material of the same sort relating to the broader Canberra area in favour of the Kamberri or Ngambri identity which is credited as holding interests over a stretch of country extending from,

southwest of Weereewaa to Kiandra and the upper Murrumbidgee, down the Goodradigbee River to the south Yass Plains, south of the Yass River through Ginninderra and Gundaroo and across Canberra and Queanbeyan to the Gaurock Ranges (Jackson-Nakano 2001:xxiii).

The use of the Kamberri/Ngambri name as a group identifier with application to the entire ACT region seems unlikely. It clearly related to the area about what is now Sullivan's Creek and may have borne reference to the use of the area as a ceremonial ground. The name was probably used by white settlers, by extension, to refer to the Aboriginal people that came there, at times in impressive numbers.

Within given time limits it has not been possible to fully scrutinise Jackson-Nakano's arguments and interpretation of data, which she herself admitted were still in progress at the time of writing. In a number of cases, discrepancies have been found between the original source material and reported findings, and given greater time a more careful assessment of her interpretations from an anthropological perspective would help to tease fact from fiction.

KOCH

In the following section Koch's revisionist arguments about local and linguistic associations in the Canberra area will be examined. This engagement with Koch will allow for an exploration of some of the primary source material. A number of points of difference or questions regarding Koch's ideas

will be raised; however, at present, given the short time available for review of existing materials, I regard my own arguments more as points for further consideration than firm conclusions.

There are two major strands of argument in Koch's recent article regarding Aboriginal languages and social groups in the Canberra region: one is, as aforementioned, that the language spoken from Queanbeyan to Canberra to Namadgi, and possibly including Molonglo, was one dialect, related to, but distinguishable from, the dialects spoken at Tumut and Monaro; and secondly that the name Nyamudy [Namadgi] was the traditional self-appellation for the original inhabitants of the area.

Closer scrutiny of his sources for the Canberra languages is warranted, these are the word list recorded by Stewart Mowle, Chief Protector Robinson's 'Limestone' vocabulary, Eyre's 'Molonglo' word list (1845) and the Queanbeyan vocabulary published by Curr (1887).

Mowle came to Yarralumla in 1837 as a sixteen year old and spent some fourteen years in the region. In an 1896 article he volunteered some items of vocabulary and words of two songs as well as some corrections to the usual spellings of place names. He writes,

The aboriginal songs as under – and some of many words and names of places – I learnt in my early manhood days from the Queanbeyan (Cuumbean) blacks. That they are correct in spelling, as English can spell them, I can vouch for, from often having sung the songs with the blacks at their camps long ago, and the Government settlement in Brungle, in 1891 (Mowle 1896:24).

Queanbeyan is to be understood here as a general reference to the district.

A close examination of Mowle's memoirs, coupled with the census taken by Robinson at Yarralumla in 1844, gives finer insight into the territorial affiliations of those with whom he associated. One of Mowle's major informants was Tommy Murray, whom he befriended soon after his arrival at Yarralumla, and who he recounts used to sleep on a carpet on the floor of his hut (Jackson-Nakano 2001:70). Harry, 'tribal friend of Tommy' (Wilson 2001:105) was another companion. Wilson, Terence Aubrey Murray's biographer, describes Tommy as the son of a local chief and also as a Brindabella aristocrat (Wilson 2001:101). The source of these ascriptions is unknown, although Mowle does recount having encountered Tommy's tribe in the vicinity on the return from an expedition into the mountains to the west (Wilson 2001:109; Mowle 1899). Jackson-Nakano records that both Tommy and Harry were from the Tumut district, this appearing to have been inferred from Robinson (Jackson-Nakano 2001:79).

Although not all of the country affiliations can be recognised, details on Robinson's Limestone census suggests that the territorial associations of the 'Limestone blacks' assembled at Yarralumla in 1844 were concentrated west of the Brindabellas in the Tumut to Yaouk area, hence Billy Buckley²³ is associated with Ud.jin.bil.le near Tumut while Harry and probably Paddy (Ko.ber.er.munje) are associated with Goobarragandra, also close to Tumut; Money and Kangaroo Tommy are associated with Yarrangobilly; Bobby, Neddy and Hammilton are associated with Yi.yac (Yaouk), in the latter case the Aboriginal name of Jim mut possibly ties him to Tumut while Sharlotte (sic) is associated with Jin.jer.re, possibly in the vicinity of Mt. Gingera (Young 2005:433-434; Jackson-Nakano 2001:72). A number have associations with Bo.lare.rer (near Adaminaby) including Jemmy and

²³ Billy Buckley is listed as a visitor in the Janevale blanket return.

Johnny while Ong Gong himself is listed as King, Mr Broadrib, the latter also to be taken as a reference to Bo.lare.rer against which Robinson elsewhere records Mr Broadrib although it could also have been Buller-marang near Bredbo to which Robinson had recently been invited (Clark 2000:145)²⁴. There is a conspicuous absence of any persons with obvious connections north of the Molonglo.

Robinson's material shows a 19 year old named Harry (Koo.ro.mun)²⁵ whose country is recorded as Too mut, Koo.ber.rer.dan (possibly Gooberragandra). It is not entirely clear which Tommy was Mowle's friend - presuming he was present - because there are three Tommys on the list, at the top Tommy (Pun bun gurn ber ler) for whom no place association is listed, Bolero Tommy whose associations are presumably with Bolera near Adaminaby and Tommy (Murer dun min).

Flood has it that King Tommy or Mur-er-dun-min, aged 19 of Yarralumla is included in Robinson's material (Flood 1984:17) but this is not quite correct. In the census taken at Yarralumla²⁶, 19 year old Kangaroo Tommy, Murer dun min²⁷ appears, his country being listed as Yar ing guber le at Kennedy 50 mile, also a reference to the Tumut district. I see no reference to Tommy as King within Robinson's material although a Kangaroo Tommy, with a different Aboriginal name, is given as chief on a census taken from a Yam.moit.mittong [Nyamudy.midhang as per Koch] messenger at Gagedzerick. Tommy a.k.a. Moo.ro.rare.rer appears on the same list and may be the same person as Murer dun min. Koch has suggested a breastplate inscribed Moorarar of Namutch – NSW (Koch 2011:129) may have belonged to Tommy, although Wesson writes with respect to the same source 'Moorarar/Murrare alias Jacky' (Wesson 2000:112).

Robinson himself provided a word list for Limestone, his interpreter and informant for the word list was Wellington or Mo.rid.jer.gong. Jackson-Nakano makes comment on Wellington's connections to Tumut. Having observed that Hamilton 'was a frequent visitor to the Canberra-Queanbeyan district, but was not a local' she goes on to write, 'both Hamilton and his contemporary, Wellington, were more closely associated with the Tumut district according to Thomas Wilkinson, who knew them well' (Jackson-Nakano 2001:58). It has not been possible to locate the manuscript to check the details, but in light of the fact that Wilkinson lived at Gundaroo before taking up Yallowin it is interesting to note that Wellington told Robinson his country was Kundow.er.re²⁸. This name is closely reminiscent of *Candariro* which was recorded by Throsby in respect of Gundaroo in 1820 (Lea-Scarlett 1972:2).

In the Gagedzerick census of Limestone Aborigines taken by Robinson both Wol.lur.dan (presumably Wellington) and a second man Kangaroo Tommy are listed with the Aboriginal name Mor.rid.jer.gong. The elder man is probably the same person who in 1841 was listed on the Queanbeyan blanket return as 30 year old Kangaroo Tommy whose Aboriginal name was given as

²⁴ Bo.larerer appears in Robinson's notes with the midhang suffix, along with a number of others including Til.le.midhang and Jinne.ne midhang. These require more careful consideration. Robinson did not record Yam.moit.mittong at Yarralumla but from a Limestone messenger at Gagedzerick.

²⁵ Jackson-Nakano (2001:72) suggests Coolamon.

²⁶ Presumably the source of Flood's claim for Tommy's territorial affiliation.

²⁷ As transcribed by Young 2001:434.

²⁸ Throsby Smith had recorded Gundaroo as Candariro in 1820

Monijary? (cited Jackson-Nakano 2001:63). He was wearing a plate with a reference to Boogolong, in the vicinity of Wee Jasper. I am unable to pursue questions of links toward Yass further at this point but note a number of facts pointing to close enmeshment of groups from Tumut to Yass and Canberra with common references to Goodradigbee featuring in both Mathews' description of Ngunawal country and in Bluett's account of the domain of the Kgamberry (Bluett 1927), Queen Lucy of Yass's claim to familiarity with Goodradigbee and Freeman, as per Parkes, mention that the Gurmals of Tumut spoke a lot like the Ngunuwal and were associated with the latter on the Tablelands (Parkes 1952).

The close ties of Mowle and Robinson's informants to the Tumut area, as well as the fact that Mowle spent six years living at Mannus, near Tumberumba, cast some doubt over the argument that the word lists they supplied were representative of the Canberra area *as distinct* from the Tumut Valley and therefore from the Wolgal (although it may be argued that the Wolgal proper were located further south). This leads as well to consideration of whether the original Nyamudy name had broad applicability in the region or whether its reference was more constricted.

NYAMUDY²⁹

Drawing linguistic equivalence between what have been previously regarded as disconnected names (see for example Flood 1984) including Nammage, Nammitch, Yam.moit and Ngye-mutch, Koch (2011) provides a rich inventory of instances of the name Nyamudy employed in reference to both Aboriginal people and place by early explorers and settlers within what is now the ACT. In Koch's view early references to Nyamudy as an Aboriginal group name may be read, not only with reference to the Namadgi Ranges, to which there are indisputable connections, but as a regional reference for the Queanbeyan-Canberra-Namadgi area and its people more broadly. This is a point on which I am not entirely in agreement. I am not certain a more constricted association with the mountainous area now referred to as the Namadgi Ranges, stretching and perhaps the immediately adjoining Isabella Plains area was indicated.

In January 1834 the explorer Lhotsky viewed the Namadgi range from Campbell's estate (now Duntroon). He wrote, 'from this place the people pointed out to me Namadji range, being 18 miles distant S.W. which is covered with snow during a great part of the year' (Lhotsky 1979:120). At the same time other locales including the Molonglo Plains to the south east and the Kemberly Plains to the NNW were identified. Within the white perspective at least, even in the early days, the name Namadgi, had a quite specific reference to a particular range of mountains.

An account by Riley of a corroboree witnessed at 'Tuggranon Isabella Plains' apparently at the end of the 1820s begins with mention of the Namitch tribe. The fact that the performance was instigated at his request, that the numbers involved were not large – a group of eight old men and women who led the singing and a total tally of 23 performers – as well as the reference to a single chief suggest that this was not a major congregation. The basis of this gathering seems to have been what Riley presents as an annual winter bunkering down; he writes,

²⁹ This spelling represents the linguistically correct rendering of the name whose pronunciation might more easily be Nyam

The Namitch tribe of natives was assembled here, forming rude huts of boughs of trees and bark open on the north-east side and arranged in the form of a crescent; they had made these 'gunyahs', as they term them, more substantially than any I had yet seen – only erecting them when in expectation of a continuance of cold and rainy weather, and generally close to some cattle or sheep station where they remain nearly all the winter assisting the stockman in grinding and eating his wheat or maize, and living principally on the skim milk and bran which they beg' (cited Lamb 2006:256).

Similar relationships are likely to have formed with other stations and may have been the basis for the issuing of a considerable number³⁰ of breastplates in the area for which that issued for Moorarar of 'Namutch'(Koch 2011:129) is only one.

A tendency for such a group to disperse into the mountains in the warmer months and reassemble in the Tuggerong area for winter fits well with the reports made on the same tribe (Namwitch) on the 1834 Janevale [later Wanniasa] blanket return³¹. On this form, the district or usual resort of the Namwitch is described as 'Mountains beyond the Murrumbidgee, opp'e [apparently opposite] Limestone Plains sometimes resides about this part of the country' [presumably meaning Janevale]' (in Gillespie 1991:36). Importantly, it should be noted that Jackson-Nakano has omitted mention of the word 'opposite' in transcribing the description of the locale and Koch has relied upon this incorrect reference in his analysis to underline the group's association with the Limestone Plains. It is further noted on the census form that,

The probable number of this tribe [Namwitch] about 60 or 70 men, women, children most part of them wild Blacks, and seldom go near the haunts of white men (in Gillespie 1991:36).

A second tribe listed on the 1834 Janevale blanket return is labelled as the Hagen Hope tribe. Seventeen individuals³², led by Chief Jemmy the Rover³³, are listed with the district being described as 'Limestone Plains, Condore Mountains [in the Brindabellas] and the Murrumbidgee.' This seems to indicate that a separate group was identified with the area including and to the immediate west of the Limestone Plains and north of the Nyamudy. It is interesting that it is the Hagen Hope identity which seems to persist through to the 1841 blanket return at which time personnel from both groups are consolidated under that label, possibly relating to changing or circumstantial residential patterns (in Jackson-Nakano 2001:63). The Molonglo tribe is also separately enumerated on the Janevale blanket return.

In February 1834 a few months before the June 1834 blanket return Lhotsky visited Bradley at Kuma. He was told that the Monero blacks sometimes visited Bradley's hut in numbers of 60-70, were

³⁰ The Janevale blanket return lists a B which I have taken to mean breastplate against a number of the men. Others known for the area include Neddy of Neis [Naas], Mickey of Gin and Gin and Derry [Gininderra] (Gillespie 1991:21), Kangaroo Tommy of Boogoolong (1841 Queanbeyan blanket return).

³¹ Lists of recipients were recorded during the annual handout of government-issued blankets to Aboriginal people.

³² Two under this head were listed slightly apart and known to be visitors from elsewhere, Captain Brooks of the Illawarra and Old Cry

³³ The origins of Jemmy the Rover are somewhat uncertain. Jackson-Nakano reports that Shumack said that he was not a local (source unlocated). Robinson recorded Jemmy the Rover as Nam.mittong which Koch has interpreted as a reference to Nyamudy. It is interesting to note a Jemmy the Rover, although with different native name, appeared on Robinson's Yate mittong or Omeo census as well (Young 2005:428).

civilised or rather corrupted, and that they travelled to Limestone Plains and Yass³⁴ (Lhotsky 1979). It is not unfeasible that this was the same group listed as Namwitch at Janevale. According to Jackson-Nakano Mr Davy who was listed at Janevale appeared more frequently on the Cooma blanket returns (Jackson-Nakano 2001:59).

I think some caution is also warranted where equivalences between Nyamudy and the Limestone Plains or with Queanbeyan are indicated. Queanbeyan was at the time a large administrative division. A reference to a place name or district may serve to locate the group relative to other places or districts within European frames but the reverse cannot be assumed. In 1844 Robinson recorded a vocabulary at Gedjezerick from a visiting messenger who was described as coming from 'Limestone near Yass'. This man was also the apparent source of a list or 'census' of the Limestone natives which Robinson recorded under the name 'Yam.moit-mittong or Limestone'. This list bears close similarity to the 'Limestone' census of Aboriginal people recorded by Robinson at Yarralumla. Notably Robinson's journal entries in relation to Aboriginal people at Yarralumla including that census and his recounting of Murray's tales of the murder of half-caste children by local Aboriginal people, Limestone and Molonglo make no mention of the name Yammoit.mittong. I surmise that its employment in his official report was an extension of information taken at Gedjezerick rather than a reflection of advice from Murray.

Onyong

The history of Onyong³⁵, who in the Janevale blanket return, is listed as Chief of the Namwitch tribe is interesting. According to oral traditions maintained by his family, Garrett Cotter, a convict stockman from the Kenny property near Lake George, crossed the Murrumbidgee looking for pastures in 1827-1828. He is said to have been led in his search by Onyong. At this time Cotter erected a hut in the Naas Forest presumably as a pastoral outstation. In 1832, after being convicted of horse stealing and sentenced to live 'beyond the limits of location', he returned to live in the mountains and apparently, over the six year period he spent in exile, enjoyed close relations with Aboriginal people. The Cotter family say that Onyong later came to occupy the Naas hut and they have erected a plaque at the site to commemorate the friendship between the two men.

Onyong may well have been instrumental in Terence Aubrey Murray's selection of land at Yarralumla and his subsequent explorations in the mountain valleys to the west of there. Jackson-Nakano says that Murray knew Onyong from his Lake George properties and has hypothesised that his name may have derived from the place of the same name located near Murray's Adjamatong Station. She reports that he appeared on censuses in the Lake George and Goulburn areas as well as those at Janevale in the Tuggerong area, at Yarralumla and in Queanbeyan (Jackson-Nakano 2001). Onyong may well have had kinship connections and rights of interest across this extent of country and it is clear he developed a wide range of influence. , Nevertheless, in his adult life he demonstrated firm associations with the mountain country, and it might even be argued, in guiding people into the area he exercised a traditional right to do so³⁶. Onyong's affiliations in the south-west are further

³⁴ Jackson-Nakano has incorrectly attributed this to Slater at Yaouk and creates two groups out of one.

³⁵ Various renditions of his name have been recorded eg. Hong Kong, Hong Yong, Hong-gong, Onyong. For consistency sake, I will use Jackson-Nakano's version.

³⁶ Although it must also be borne in mind that a retreat to the mountains may have been necessitated by the increasing usurpation of land by white settlers.

affirmed by his listing in Robinson's 1844 census as King, Mr Broadrib's, a reference to either Bolero or Bullamanang in the Adaminaby/Yaouk/Bredbo district (in Gillespie 1991:36; Clark 2000).

The account of a battle between the Canberra blacks, 'then known as the Piallago tribe' and the Monero tribe as told by one of the 'old identities of the district' locates the battle on the Piallago Plains being east of the Molonglo River between Duntroon and Queanbeyan. The writer, relating the tale, describes the retreat of the Monero with their Piallago enemies in pursuit,

The king of Monaro hurriedly withdrew his men from the field and began a long and disastrous retreat... On and on, for full 15 miles, past Cuppacumbalong, the territory of King Bongong [presumably Onyong], eight more miles to Naas, another 18 miles up to Booth's Creek (as it is now called, but by the blacks named Durrandimmey) and so retreated to their own territory defeated and disgraced (Queanbeyan Age 1919).

Although alternative readings are possible, this account appears to differentiate the territory of King Bongong [sic] from that of the Piallago tribe.

Onyong certainly later came to hold the status of King of the Piallago tribe in the eyes of the settlers, yet there are suggestions this was not necessarily validated by other Aboriginal people. There were reportedly strong tensions between Jemmy the Rover and Hong Kong over issues of leadership and it seems that Queen Nelly of Queanbeyan opposed Hong Kong's appointment to the place of King or Chief by authorities. Bluett, basing his account on the reminiscences of Blundell, recounts, that

Round the '60s³⁷ King Hong Kong, a tall burly middle-aged son of the Piallago branch, ruled the remnants of the tribe. His authority was recognised, as well as being found useful, at the Police Station in Queanbeyan. The officers presented him with a moon-shaped name-plate, as an insignia of his office, which he wore on his sable chest hung by a leathern strap round his neck. Hong Kong's right was disputed by a peripatetic gin, who called herself Queen Nellie, claiming that she was the daughter of the Canberra branch, and therefore should have her throne like Queen Victoria (Bluett 1954:20).

Although the reasons for Queen Nellie's protests are uncertain it is plausible that she was objecting on traditional grounds to Hong Kong's right to assert rights of authority over the area. It is also noted that early settlers reports have it that Nellie refused to 'go with the wild tribes of blacks' (cited Jackson-Nakano 2001:129).

MOLONGLO

Jackson-Nakano gives some cause for thinking that Queen Nelly may have had an affiliation with the Molonglo group, suggesting that Nelly may have been listed as an orphan on an 1838 Queanbeyan blanket return and could have been the same girl listed under that name who was counted amongst Robinson's 'Molongler' group in 1844 (Jackson-Nakano 2001:125).

There seems to be good reason to separate Molonglo from the Nyamady at least on social grounds. The Molonglo tribe is repeatedly identified in official records including the Janevale blanket return of

³⁷ Jackson-Nakano suggests Onyong passed away circa 1850

1834, the Queanbeyan blanket return of 1844 and in Robinson's 1844 Limestone census and commentary (Robinson 1941), as distinct. The presence of a 'sea coast' woman on a Molonglo census suggests that, as indicated in the case of Braidwood by Howitt (Howitt 1996:528), this group shared an orientation toward and close marriage exchange relationships with coastal groups. This is also commensurate with Nelly's later marriage relationships. If, as Koch maintains, *bimme* was a reference to plains, Bob, Bim.mim.mi.gal, King of Molongler might be seen as presiding over the plains perhaps in conradistinction to the mountainous affiliations of the Nyamudy³⁸.

Eyre's word list for 'Molonglo or its vicinity' dates from the mid-1830s and was taken at his Woodlands property less than 20km south east of Queanbeyan on the Molonglo River (Eyre 1984). Although he seems to hold some reservations, Koch grouped this wordlist with those of Mowle and Robinson as 'probably' representative of the same language (Koch 2011:141; Wafer and Lissarrague 2008). Although, in any case, Koch acknowledges that the Canberra language is transitional between Ngarigu and Ngunawal and most of the words in Eyre's list seem to be common to both languages, there a few notable items seeming to lean it toward Ngunawal. Koch includes the word *kundhul* 'eye' as amongst those vocabulary items unique to the Ngarigo/Canberra/Wolgal language, yet 'eye' on the Molonglo list is '*magalite*' comparable to Ngunawal '*mikalady*'. The word for father too is, in the Ngarigo related languages, *babang* yet in the Molonglo list *ko-rai*, commensurate with Ngunawal '*kurang-i*' (Eyre:1845; Gillespie 1991; Wafer and Lissarrague 2008). There are no personal pronouns amongst Eyre's material but I note that the possessive suffixes recorded on the Molonglo list ie. *-da* 'my' as in *naj-jan-da* (my mother) and *-go* 'its' as in *ko.bong-go* (its egg) are the same as those documented by Mathews for the Ngunawal (Eyre 1845; Mathews 1904). Koch advises that the suffix *-dha* or *-dya* is used for my in several Yuin languages and does not serve to distinguish Ngunwal and Ngarigo. He further notes that *-kung* is the possessive suffix characteristic of Ngunawal, the *-go* However, in this regard, I have no data with which to compare this information with Ngarigo and I defer to the linguists.

Queen Nellie was almost certainly the person responsible for the word list contributed by the Police Magistrate to Curr's 1887 volume which linguists Koch (2011) and MacDonald (see Flood 1984) have both determined is Ngarigo or a variant thereof. It is purely conjectural to suggest so, but given Nellie's uncertain heritage, her age, long association with Ngarigo speakers and the possible early demise of the people who originally inhabited the Queanbeyan area, the fact that in the late 1880s she volunteered a word list which was little differentiated from Ngarigo does not constitute definite proof that this was the language originally spoken there.

During his 1834 expedition, Lhotsky observed that Kembery was the name originally applied to the Limestone River by the natives adding the comment 'they are no more!' Lhotsky's comments have been dismissed by various authors as ignorant assumption (Bluett 1927, Jackson-Nakano 2001). However, given that he elsewhere showed interest in and enquired about Aboriginal occupation of country, it is not certain that there was not some pointed knowledge - perhaps of some violent dispersal at least - underlying the assertion. A story related by Elizabeth McKeahnie, whose family arrived at the Canberry/Acton property in 1838, tells the story of an incident taking place in earlier days. Supposedly a plan on the part of Aboriginal people to murder all the men on Acton Station

³⁸ Although Howitt has used the term *Bemeringal* as one which distinguished people of the uplands from those of the coast.

was said to have been thwarted when the whites settlers were forewarned of the attack by a 'kind-hearted gin'. The blacks were said to have met with 'a warm reception' (Queanbeyan Age cited Gillespie 1991:34). That these same people retreated to the mountains is, of course, a definite possibility.

References to camps at Piallago and to the Piallago tribe, as to the Nganbra, can be found scattered in the recollections of early settlers. Various tales relating to Ainslie's original discovery of the Piallago plains have it that he was guided to 'her people's' camp at Piallago by a woman he met at either Yass or Ginninderra (eg. Bluett 1954:3; Wright 1923:6). Jackson-Nakano's theory that this woman may have been a captive wife of the Wallaballoo of Yass forced to guide the whites into their enemy terrain (Jackson-Nakano 2001:41) seems most unlikely, but that she may have had cross-cutting kin or affinal ties is feasible. According to F. Campbell, the grandson of the original owner of the station, Piallago meant 'good camping place' and he says, 'that it is on that account that Ainslee, my grandfather's overseer, pitched his camp there'. He reports that 'the last of the tribe of blacks continued to camp close to the house, under the hill known as Mt. Pleasant until they became extinct' (Campbell 1913).

This is likely the same group reported on by Bluett who writes, as apparently reported to him by McDonald, of a group of Aboriginal people camped at Piallago in the early days 'who were known to the early settlers as the Piallago blacks' (Bluett 1954:1). Shumack also refers to the Canberra blacks as the Piallago tribe.

A second group, Bluett says

of a larger number of families set up their mia-mias at the foot of Black's Mountain close to Canburry Creek. These were called the Canburry or Nganbra blacks (Bluett 1954:1).

Bluett maintains that Canberra served as the 'headquarters' of the larger tribe who did not live there permanently but visited on occasion. He paints a vivid picture of the congregation of large numbers of people, from what he refers to as the Nganbra-Piallago tribe and their neighbours, for a ceremonial gathering,

Canberra was the most convenient locality, rich in food, for the King to assemble his warriors and their families 400-500 strong, from his Empire of over two million acres, when he wished to honor and impress his neighbouring monarchs...The night would be lit up with the cooking fires at a hundred and more mia-mias spread along the Creek; the four or six blazing bonfires light up up the big cleared dancing ground; the painted and decorated athletic performers, their greased bodies glistening in the firelight; the dancing and miming and singing and shouting; the piccaninnies goggle-eyed with excitement; the old men chanting and tapping their feet, the lubras clapping hands and slapping buttocks to the rhythm of the dance (Bluett 1954:1).

Terence Aubrey Murray sketched a picture of a man who he identified as 'Bindermarren of Canbrey' in 1836 (Jackson-Nakano 2001:78), apparently at the time when he first took up Yarralumla, but there is no other evidence that either he or Mowle used Canbrey as a group name. A number of references second Bluett's claims that Canberra - or *Nganbirra* (per Koch) - served as a ceremonial ground. Campbell remembers the name being pronounced as Canberrie and says that 'it signifies

“head of the plains”, or chief meeting place for the holding of their corroborees’ (Campbell 1913). Queen Nelly was recorded as giving ‘big-plain, no trees’ [Source?]. One of the contributors to the debate about the meaning of the name which raged at the time of the establishment of the new capital said that it was derived from Wiradjuri ‘*Ngan irrabirra*’ meaning they meet or assemble, while a newspaper report records a ‘statement by old “Queen Lucy,” [of Yass] a dusky royalty, that Canberra’s original name was Go Yanberra, the place where they took the boys for the bora ceremony’ (The Mail (Adelaide) 8.1.27).

If correct, Queen Lucy’s statement adds some support for the claim by Don Bell (dec) that his father was initiated on Black Mountain. I am under the impression that much scepticism surrounds the various claims made by Don Bell to establish his claims of interest over Canberra and the ACT.

In a 2002 report, Hutchins presented a map produced by Bell showing the places the latter’s father had earlier mapped for him delineating Ngunawal country. The map shows a circuit extending from Murrumbateman through Goulburn, Braidwood, Kiandra and Gundagai. I do not find it far-fetched that his father described what we might read as a version of the Ngunawal ‘line’ by drawing a map in the sand for him. In his autobiography Jimmy Barker, a Muruwari man from western NSW recounts how he was taught as a boy about the various local divisions of the Muruwari

(Hippi and Maria) told me how the tribe was divided into groups, and spent many hours drawing in the dust with a stick and explaining their position (Barker 1977:27).

We have seen the importance of the recitation of place names identified with participating groups at initiation ceremonies. Children were always included in those parts of the rituals and it seems that the memorisation of such routes was an important part of a child’s education.

Bell has also asserted that his father used to bring the family to visit Canberra for camping and hunting and gathering expeditions. Not only may there have been some favoured seasonal resource but it should be understood that there is a strong compunction within Aboriginal society for the maintenance of relationships both to people and to place by visiting.

Reminiscent of ‘the lines’ previously discussed, in his 1950s study of Western New South Wales Jeremy Beckett found that people referred to ‘beats’, those circuits which were regularly travelled to visit kin,

All Aboriginal people have ‘beats’, areas which are defined by the situation of kin who will give them hospitality, within which they can travel as much or as little as they please, and where they are most likely to find spouses. Proximity is only a minor factor... (Beckett 1988:131).

Travelling such circuits, it may be argued, not only represented an exercise of rights but was also the means by which one maintained such rights. Although a range of rights might be theoretically available the activation of such rights depended upon the maintenance of relationships to kin through visiting, reciprocal exchanges of kin relationships and the visiting of country itself.

One is known wherever one has lived and wherever one has kin; where one has kin one can also visit and meet the other local people face-to-face. There are no other means whereby one can become known, even by repute. If we are to speak of an Aboriginal belonging to a

community wider than the local residential group, it is his or her beat – the localities where there are kin who will provide a pied-a-terre. In this sense, each individual [has] a personal community, but inasmuch as people are closely inter-related and tend to marry into the same local groups, communities tend to coincide (Beckett 1988:133-134).

There is an integral relationship between Aboriginal conceptions of kin and country. One's location within a social skein defines one's association to place; one's connections to country creates a bond with those who share common affiliation. To know – both in terms of country and in terms of a network of kin and countrymen – where one belongs and that one does belong, continues to be of critical importance in Aboriginal culture and is vital to the sense of self and wellbeing.

DRAFT REPORT ONLY

CONCLUSION

- This report has demonstrated, after Mathews, that the broader ACT region traditionally fell within a broad Aboriginal sociocultural bloc extending from at least Bulli to Cape Howe encompassing the coastal Yuin groups and the groups occupying the adjacent hinterland region including the southern highlands, southern tablelands and the alpine country of south-eastern NSW.
- The groups within this bloc were united by commonalities in language, social organisation and ceremonial type, were bound by close ties of kinship, intermarriage, trade relationships and ceremonial cooperation and may be regarded as having upheld a common system of Law and custom underlain by their adherence to the *bunan*.
- Within this broader sociocultural bloc particular alliance networks formed around regularly observed ceremonial circuits.
- There is slight evidence for distinction between Yuin and Ngarigo/Wolgal in Howitt's assertion that the two groups traced totemic relationships differently, the Yuin through the father, the latter through the mother (Howitt 1996:133).
- Again although slight there is also a suggestion that while Queanbeyan blacks gathered with those from Braidwood in attending the south coast ceremonies, the Ngarigo did not attend (Howitt 1996:519-520).
- In contrast to their Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi neighbours, the south-eastern groups did not uphold a four class section system, although marriage was regulated with respect to totemic affiliations.
- At the peripheries transitional zones of interaction and cultural cross-over blurred the divide and there is some evidence of mutual ceremonial participation, nevertheless relationships between the south-eastern bloc and the neighbouring Wiradjuri appear to have been marked by strong degrees of animosity and suspicion.
- Where detailed ethnographic research has been conducted in other parts of the country less affected by colonial disruption and European cultural influence, fine-grained and highly complex systems of land tenure have found to be operational. There is no reason to expect that socio-territorial configurations in the broader ACT region would have been different. It is clear that the combined effects of massive demographic stress, alienation from country, forced adjustments and necessary engagements with the European settlers led to an early breakdown of original relationships to land and landed identity.

- For the purposes of ethnohistoric analysis the written record must be counted thin. With few exceptions the early observers failed to take any interest in or to record their observations of Aboriginal landed associations. The fragmentary information contained within official records and local reminiscences is insufficient to recapture the original configurations of landed identity maintained in the area.
- Evidence from Mathews' and Howitt's works demonstrate without doubt that there were strongly particularised associations between local groups and specific tracts of country. It is clear that high value was placed on knowledge of social and physical geography and that respect for the territorial interests of one's close and distant neighbours was obligatory. Strict protocols guiding the passage of messengers and etiquettes surrounding entry into other camps are indicative of high regard for territorial interests.
- The census material collected about Aboriginal people met with by Robinson at Yarralumla in 1844 provides some evidence for highly localised attachments to country. Of those place names recognisable in his listing of individual country affiliations most are in the Yaouk to Tumut area.
- Tindale's map of tribal territories for the region shows three groups converging on Canberra. Following Mathews he places the southern boundary of the Ngunawal at or just south of Canberra itself. To the south, again based on Mathews testimony, the Ngarigo are depicted as laying claim to the corridor of lowland extending up from the Monaro. To the west, the Wolgal are depicted after Howitt as occupying the high country extending west to Tumut.
- Mathews efforts to salvage linguistic material and to locate the extent of country in which each of the languages was spoken was undertaken late in the historical piece and on the basis of limited interviews. Canberra itself did not form a focal point of his study. His placement of Ngunawal in the Yass area and of Ngarigo on the Monaro tablelands is corroborated by other sources. There are no other known sources which place either of these groups at Canberra or Queanbeyan.
- Wolgal connections to the Queanbeyan area were posited by Howitt. In comparison to Mathews, Howitt's information was acquired over a longer period of time, involving practical interaction in the field with informants with whom he had developed close relationships; however, his knowledge only peripherally extended into the ACT region. Howitt's major Wolgal informant was a senior and knowledgeable man born at Talbingo.
- Koch has made careful and productive use of personal pronouns as a tool for linguistic distinction and has effectively drawn lines of distinction between the Ngunawal/Gundungarra language(s) or dialects and the word lists for the closely related dialects which he posits as Ngarigo, Wolgal and Canberra.
- Koch has produced several instances of the use of Nyamudy which strongly suggest its use as a group name, nevertheless, I hold some reservations as to whether it was one with broad applicability over the entire Queanbeyan-Canberra-Nyamudy area. It seems more

likely to me that it was the name of a local group with attachments to the mountainous country in the area now known as the Namadgi Ranges and stretching west and south west from there.

- I note that Koch considers both Wolgal and Gurmäl likely general appellations possibly both applied to outsiders Wolgal, it is suggested, refers to the occupants of mountainous country while Gurmäl is understood as a name applied in undifferentiated fashion by their Wiradjuri neighbours to the Wolgal/Canberra/Ngarigo groups. I note that it is Tindale rather than Parkes himself who suggest the Ngarigo belong in this grouping. I have some difficulty in separating the people implicated in Mowle and Robinson's word lists from the Tumut Blacks identified by Freeman.
- I suggest the Molonglo tribe was a group of similar standing whose homelands were located about the Molonglo River south-east of Queanbeyan and would be interested on comment with regard to my suggestions of some indications of linguistic distinction.
- I suggest that there was possibly a separate local division coinciding with the Hagen Hope tribal identity/district listed in the Janevale blanket return of 1834 and a subsequent Queanbeyan blanket list in the country to the west of Canberra. These groups are likely to be local occupational groups.
- I tentatively suggest that there may have been another local group whose affiliations lay about Pialligo or more generally on the northern side of the Molonglo. Given this and my amateur impression regarding the similarity of certain words in the Molonglo list to Ngunawal, I cannot conclusively preclude the possibility that as suggested by Mathews and Tindale Canberra lay on a linguistic divide.
- All conclusions here must be regarded as tentative. Within the given time frames it has not been possible to locate and thoroughly investigate and analyse all materials with relevance to the brief. Furthermore it must be noted that only a detailed ethnographic study conducted at the time when classical structures were still in place could adequately give account of the social and territorial organisation originally existing in the ACT region. Given the traumatic impacts of colonisation on the population and social structures, possibly even before, and certainly after first settlement and the paucity of the written record it may be assumed that the issue of which groups held traditional association over which areas will remain uncertain.
- I have suggested that an anthropological investigation of the contemporary principles upon which those claiming interests in the broader Canberra area, as well as detailed genealogical analysis, may add light to understandings of traditional configurations.

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