Top left: Koonki (Nadu-dagali), from Horne and Aiston's *Savage life in central Australia*. London, 1924.

Top right: Ben Murray.

Bottom: Ben Murray and Jimmy Russell at the hot bore, Mirra Mitta.
Photographs by G. R. and L. A. Hercus.

TALES OF NADU-DAGALI (RIB-BONE BILLY)*

Luise Hercus

The early 1920s were a critical period in the history of the Lake Eyre region. The first world war had brought the closing of the Lutheran mission at Killalpaninna, which had been a home for most of the Diyari and also for many Wanganuru, Namani, Biladaba and Diŋari people, as well as some Arabana. The Aborigines were no longer set apart as much as they had been at Killalpaninna, but had regrouped around the one town in the area, Marree, and on various pastoral station camps, particularly Muloorina (where there was a considerable amount of fighting as a result of the influx of newcomers), as well as Mungeranie and Cowarie. Even Aborigines whose original territories were further north did not on the whole return to stations north of Mt Gason on the Birdsville Track, because — as is shown by the first story of Billy Rib-bone — the area held too many bad memories of the past. Marree society was literally split in half by the railway line: whites on the west side, Afghans on the east, and Aborigines on the outskirts of Afghantown. But this society was easy-going and there was considerable social intercourse between the various groups, and mutual respect (see story 3). A similar situation prevailed at Mungeranie, where the policeman George Aiston had an Aboriginal friend, Gottlieb Merrick, as a frequent house-guest.

Apart from the closing of the mission, the other major source of change was the post-war influenza epidemic, which took a heavy toll of Aboriginal lives and caused a further break-down in traditional culture. Only the old men kept up the traditional ways and knew the old myths (story 3), and despite discouragement from the young they also retained their old-style eating habits, with some adaptations (as in story 2).

George Aiston and Dr George A. Horne probably knew more than anybody else about the Aborigines in the Lake Eyre region at that time. Aiston, through his position as police officer at Mungeranie and personal interest, was constantly in touch with Aborigines. Horne, a Melbourne doctor and amateur ethnologist, became friendly with Aiston when visiting the area. He too had first-hand experience, and did most of the actual writing of their joint work, *Savage Life in Central Australia*, published in 1924. The title is misleading, as there is no emphasis on 'savagery' in its modern connotation. Moreover, unlike most writers of those days, Horne and Aiston appreciated and acknowledged the help given them by the Aborigines: 'old Koonki and Peter Pinnaru taught us what nowhere else could be learnt'.

Notes:

- * Fieldwork over the years has been financed by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and the Australian Research Grants Committee.

Distribution of language groups, Lake Eyre region.

'Koonki' is the Diyari¹ word for 'witch doctor'. Horne and Aiston used this term to refer to a distinguished old Simpson Desert Wanganuru man whose traditional name they rendered as 'Nutatacullie' (Nadu-dagali — 'side-spearing'), but he was generally known to people around Marree as 'Rib-bone Billy'.

This article will describe some of the background of his life, and his terrible death, which occurred a few years after the publication of Horne and Aiston's book, probably about 1928. This is Aboriginal history viewed from 'the other side' by the koonki's own distant relatives, speakers of Wanganuru.

The languages of the Lake Eyre Basin are: Arabana (on the west side); the closely related Wanganuru (in the Simpson Desert and on the lower Diamantina); Guyani (on the south side of Lake Eyre); Diyari, and the closely related Diñari (on the east side); Namani, Karaguru and Yaluyandi (to the north-east); and Yawarawarga (to the east-north-east). The traditional distribution of these language groups (sometimes described as 'tribal' territories) is shown on the map.

Apart from some scanty word-lists very little has been published on these languages. Only Diyari is relatively well-known, as it was used by the missionaries at Killalpaninna, but the great work of the missionary Reuther (thirteen volumes, mainly on Diyari language and traditions), compiled in 1901, is still unpublished. In recent years detailed studies of Diyari and Diñari have been carried out by Peter Austin; studies of Namani by J. G. Breen and Peter Austin; of Yawarawarga by J. G. Breen; and studies of Arabana-Wanganuru, Guyani and Yaluyandi by Luise Hercus. This work is still in progress.

Sources of information on the languages and traditions of the area are fast disappearing. There are still a few speakers of Arabana, mainly living at Marree. But only three people now know Diyari well, and only single speakers, all very frail and elderly, know Guyani, Yaluyandi and Namani. Diñari is extinct, although Ben Murray, aged eighty-four and of Afghan descent, a speaker of Diyari and Wanganuru, can still today remember some Diñari learned from his maternal grandmother.

These tales of Nadu-dagali are among numerous stories that were recorded by the few remaining Wanganuru, mainly by Mick McLean Irinjili² (c.1888-1976), the last man to be brought up in the Simpson Desert before white contact. He belonged to the same group of rain-makers as Nadu-dagali, whom he called 'father'. Much of the background information came from Mick McLean, but the tales of Nadu-dagali transcribed here are exactly as told by Ben Murray, who was the old man's

¹ Aiston was never fluent in any of the Aboriginal languages of the area, and thus some unwitting jokes have crept into his book. For example, the dignified old Diyari man Mawili is always referred to as 'Mowilliepedicha', even in the caption to a photograph. An obscene nickname has simply been added to the normal name, so that the term means 'Mawili the homosexual'.

² See Hercus 1977.

favourite 'nephew'.

The Wangganuru text is accompanied by an interlinear gloss. The English translation that follows is as close to the original as possible; some words and phrases have had to be added for clarity, and these have been put in brackets. The phonemes of Arabana-Wanganuru and the abbreviations used in the gloss are listed in appendices following the texts.

Story 1: The Massacre

The massacre described here by Ben Murray, who heard it from Nadu-dagali himself, is but one of several that took place in the Birdsville area in the 1880s and 1890s. A number of groups were involved, particularly the Wangganuru, who were gradually coming out of the desert. The massacres were often the end result of punitive expeditions undertaken to avenge cattle-stealing, as in this case and the tragic large-scale massacre at Koonchera Point, described by Mick McLean in 'The end of the Mindiri people'. According to his other epic account, 'The end of the Wardamba people', a major massacre at Nappamanna Station, near Pandie, was the result of the murder of a white man guilty of rape. The massacres of the Mindiri and the Wardamba involved a huge number of Aborigines who had come together for important corroborrees. Yet another major massacre took place in the vicinity of Cooninghera water-hole (half-way between Birdsville and Durrie on the Diamantina), again as the result of the murder of a white man who had committed rape — this time it was a station cook, whose head was found in a camp oven. The events described by Ben Murray are only one small part of a great tragedy.

Yet apart from these memoirs recorded by surviving Wangganuru the massacres are generally unknown. Only Farwell's *Land of mirage* mentions them and he notes that: 'No official enquiries were ever held into these massacres, which appeared to have been the common morality of the day'³

The location and date of the present story are not certain: it probably occurred in the Clifton Hills area in the 1890s. The text is in Wangganuru, with an admixture of a few Arabana words.

1. madabuḡa - na Nadu-daga - li - na
old man - EMPH Side-spear - HAB - PROP
'he spears you in your ribs' -
2. gananaḡa - nana yuwu - gari - ri buluga - na biḡa -
there - from men - they - ERG bullock - EMPH kill -
ḡa yuda gari - ri wadni - ḡa - ru madu - gi
PRES now they - ERG cook - SP - NAR cooked - EMPH

³ Farwell 1950: 132, 160-162.

TALES OF NADU-DAGALI

- igi - ligu, warida yuga - ligu warida danga - ligu.
take - PURP, *far go* - PURP *far stay* - PURP.
3. gari - ri walbala - ru - na wimba nani - ra
they - ERG *white men* - ERG - EMPH *track see* - PUNC
 maldja gari - ri nani - ligu indjara gari - ri wadni -
not they - ERG *see* - HIST *where they* - ERG *cook* -
 gana.
 PERF.
4. gari - ri wadni - nura duguja 'gana бага - nda - naru,
they - ERG *cook* - CONT *pit* POS A *dig* - SP - PURP,
 maga maba - ligu, buluga - na gudni - ligu dugulu - na
fire make - HIST, *bullock put* - HIST *pit* - LOC
 namba - ligu - na djirganda - li - yanda.
bury - HIST - EMPH *nice* - EMPH - EMPH.
5. wimba nayi idni - nda wimba - na uguna wadni -
track here lie - PRES *track* - EMPH *him follow* -
 nda-ru, mayi! wadlu - na aradja - li dadna - ligu
 SP -NAR, *hey!* *ground* - LOC *right* - EMPH *leave* - HIST
 buluga - gari diga - nda guda - rugu wimba darba -
cattle - mob *return* - PRES *water* - ALL *pad trample* -
 arba - nda 'gana.
 - PRES *him*.
6. dadna - ligu ilana nda - nanga - nura.
leave - HIST *thus burn* - CONT S - CONT.
7. mayi! wana - na gari diga - na gilda - lug
Hey! *early they return* - PRES *pull out* - PURP
 'ugana, djirganda - li - yanda namba - ligu : dadlu
him, nice - EMPH - EMPH *bury* - HIST : *empty*
 gari wimba nani - ga 'mina - gu gari njinda - na
they track see - PAST *'what* - *for they tree*
 gudi - ga?
drag - PAST?
8. *So they started the bullock, others dragging boughs behind.*
 wimba badni - ma - nda, biřimbara - ru daga -
track nothing - make - PRES, *war spear* - INST *spear* -
ligu buluga - na bilbiri - na biđa - nda - 'gana.
 HIST *bullock* *shoulder* - LOC *kill* - PRES *him*.
9. dirga - na gudni - nda, yuda namba - da - na. yuda
oven - LOC *put* - PRES *now bury* - SP *Now*
wadni - nda buluga - na bundju nuga - na.
cook - PRES *bullock meat much*.
10. aga|li danga - ligu 'ani diga - nda wadna -
off side stay - HIST *'we return* - PRES *take away* -

- lugu 'gana.
PURP him.
11. bundju gari - na gilda - na madu - gi. mayi
meat they pull out - PRES cooked - EMPH hey

'dirga-na namba - ru wadlu gadara yigi namba - da.
'pit bury - IMP earth fresh bring bury - PRES.
 12. yangu - will gudni - ligu, maga maba - nda bařara
break - like put - HIST, fire make - PRES in the middle
make out they've been camping there -

buluga - gari diga - nura nari wimba - na gari - guna -
cattle - mob return - CONT sure track - LOC they - POS -

na arada-gi diga - lugu dirga - na.
LOC above return - HIST oven - LOC.
 13. gari yuga - nda nani - wa - lugu
they go - PRES see - TR - PURP

'Ai.' They've been camping here, black-fellow' camp here.
They must have killed the bullock, but where did they
kill?' Couldn't see, couldn't even see blood ...
 14. malga gubmari njuđu nani - ligu, malga wimba nani - nda
not blood also see - HIST, not track see - PRES

'indjađa gari - ri biđa - ga?' malga gari - ligu - du
'where they - ERG kill - PAST?' not find - HIST - EMPH

gari - na wana - na ya walda - na yuga - nura
them - ACC morning - LOC and noon - LOC go - CONT

warida widji - nda - gi bundju wamba - da.
distant become - PRES - EMPH meat carry - PRES.
 15. wađununda gari warida yuga - gana.
other mob far go - PERF.
 16. nigi bula nuba - maga danga - nura, mayi! guya - na
here two spouse - with stay - CONT, oh! girl

malga - gi wanda - ga yadjaiga - na windawa - nda -
not - EMPH follow - PAST lignum - LOC hide - SP -

lugu, mudlu arada - gi danga - da.
PURP, sandhill above - EMPH sit - PRES.
 17. gari yuga - na - na yaguda 'guna dimba - lugu 'mayi!
they go - NP - LOC bag hers check - HIST 'hey!

bundju nigi!
meat here!'
 18. 'This is the one mate, she's got a bullock chunk of meat
here! That's one of them that killed it, give her a
bullet.'
 19. biđa - ru 'gana mayi aľali baldi - lugu gadna - ru.
kill - NAR her oh! finally split - HIST stone - INST.³⁶
 20. uga - da - li danga - nura yadjaiga - na madabuđa -
he - EMPH - EMPH stay - CONT lignum - LOC old man

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na, uga yadjaiga - na danga - nura, uga - ru nawi -
he lignum - LOC stay - CONT, he - ERG hear -
 ra magida ba|i - nda 'a|a - lida 'anduna bi|a - dara.
PUNC rifle crack - PRES true - ALT mine kill - IMM.

21. mida - lugu gari a|ali yuga - na, warida widji -
wait - HIST they at last go - NP, distant become -
 nda; uga wanga - da yiwa - lugu, yuga - nda - yiwa -
PRES; he rise - SP - TR - HIST, go - SP - TR -
 na guya nani - ligu mudlu arada gumbira warbi -
NP girl see - PURP sandhill on top dead lie -
 nanga - nura.
 CONT S - CONT.
22. mayi, namba - da ganagada, namba - da - yiwa - na,
oh, bury - PRES there, bury - SP - TR - PRES,
 nadaru widji - ligu wandi - la - na gari - ginda,
behind become - HIST follow - ALT - NP mob - DAT,
 nala wandi - la - nda gari - na.
men follow - ALT - PRES they - ACC.
23. 'ayi, ilana bi|a - dara, anda namuru - gi, ilana gari -
alas, thus kill - IMM, I bereft - EMPH, thus they -
 ri bi|a - gana. mayi, yuda gari - ri bi|a - lugu
ERG kill - PERF. oh! now they - ERG kill - HIST
 nuru - lgi, wadlu nuru - na 'lgi' ilana yanda.
other - even, country other - LOC even thus speak.
24. gari yuga - nda ga|a nuru - rugu
they go - PRES creek other - ALL
but might have been the same owner
 ga|a nuru - rugu danga - iwa - lugu, 'mayi ani bi|a -
creek other - ALL stay - TR - PURP, 'oh! we kill -
 ra 'gana bundju ba|da - gi, malga wimba - na gudni -
PUNC that meat big - EMPH, not track put -
 ligu, warawa - nda - ga.'
HIST, cover up - SP - PAST.'
25. gari - ri nani - nda wadlu - ba|u - na - gi
they - ERG see - PRES country - plain - LOC - EMPH
 wadununda - na gari - ri bundju - bu|u nani - nda.
other - ACC they - ERG meat - having see - PRES.
 malga gari yuga - nura warida - rugu, yadla danga -
not they go - CONT far - ALL, close stay -
 da. bardja|da gari - na gumbira - ma - lugu
PRES. all they - ACC dead - make - HIST

maṛa bardjaṇḁa didna bardjaṇḁa.
finger all toe all.

26. walbala - ru yaga - nana gari - gari - ligu 'ayi!
whitefellow - ERG chase - IMM find - out - PURP 'hey!
bundju - buṛu nigi!' guldji - ri gari - na biḁa -
meat - having here!' bullet - INST they - ACC kill -
ga waḁuguba njuḁu namaḁa - buṛu - na.
PAST children also pity - having - ACC.
27. uga gurdji - ḁa - du gunda - guda - ru, ḁuba -
he debris - LOC - EMPH lie - drop - NAR, crouch -
nanga - lugu. guda - ru gurdji - ma - lugu.
CONT S - HIST. water - ERG debris - make - HIST.
28. uga - ru ḁawi - ru guldji - ri baldi - na ḁa,
he - ERG hear - NAR bullet - INST split - NP - LOC,
gari ḁandja - ḁa - na - ḁa aḁali wanga - yiwa -
they cry out - SP - NP - LOC finally rise - TR -
lugu, nani - ligu 'aḁa maḁili widji - nda - naru
HIST, see - HIST 'true other-side become - SP - PLUP
gumbira - lgi.'
dead - even.'
29. yuwu - du gari wadununda - alali gari bardjaṇḁa
people - EMPH they other - finally they all
yuga - lugu, uga njuḁu.
go - HIST, he also.
30. Then they left that country altogether.

Translation

Story 1. The Massacre

1. That old man Njadu-dagali — his name means that he spears you in the ribs —
2. A whole lot of people from up there killed a bullock and cooked it (they were planning) to take it away ready cooked, and to go a long way off (with the pieces of cooked meat) and to stay away.
3. The white-fellows wouldn't see the track and they wouldn't find out where they had cooked it.
4. They cooked it in a very deep pit that they had dug, they made a fire and they covered it up really well.
5. It was right on a cattle-pad, and the (other) cattle followed that pad, yes, they left that ground looking all right and those cattle went back on that pad to the water, and they trampled all over the pad (on top of the fire pit).
6. They left the bullock cooking.

7. Very early in the morning they came back and pulled it out and then covered it all up again nicely so that (the white-fellows) would just see the bare tracks and wonder 'Why did they pull fire-wood around'.
 8. (So this is how they did it): Some started the bullock and others dragged boughs behind it wiping out its track. They speared it with a big war-spear in the shoulder and killed it.
 9. They buried it in the fire-pit and cooked all that big lot of meat.
 10. They stayed well away on the lee-side saying 'we'll come back and pull him out'.
 11. They pulled out the cooked meat saying 'cover up this pit, get some fresh soil and cover it up quickly'.
 12. They made a rough wind-break and made a fire in the middle, to make out that they'd been camping there. The other cattle came back again on their usual track over the top of the (buried) fire-pit.
 13. The white-fellows came past looking around (and said in English) 'They've been camping here, — blackfellows' camp here. They must have killed the bullock, but where did they kill'm?' They couldn't see, couldn't even see blood. . . .
 14. They did not see any blood nor the track (of the particular bullock that was killed) 'where did they kill it?' They never found (one group of) these people who travelled morn and noon and went on and on walking till they had gone far, far away from that place still carrying some meat with them.
 15. Another group only went a certain distance (they reckoned that was far enough).
 16. But one young couple (Nadu-dagali and his wife) remained quite close, oh, the young woman did not follow her husband quickly into the lignum swamp to hide, she just stayed sitting on top of a sandhill.
 17. (The white-fellows) as they came looked into her bag, 'hey, there's meat in here!'
 18. (They said in English) 'This is the one, mate, she's got a bullock chunk of meat here! That's one of them that killed it, give her a bullet!'⁴
 19. They killed her, they ripped her open with a bullet.
 20. He stayed down in the lignum, old man Nadu-dagali he stayed there and heard the crack of the rifle 'It's true what's happened to me, they've just killed my wife'.
 21. He waited until they went away at last and until they had moved a long way off. Then he got up (out of the lignum), he quickly went up to see that young woman lying there dead on top of the sandhill.
- ⁴ Bullets are usually called by any name for pebble or stone, but the term guldji 'round stone' had become standardised with this meaning in Wanggaruru, and gadna 'stone' in Arabana.

22. Oh yes, he buried her there, he buried her quickly and left, he got onto the track (of the others), he followed these people (the group that hadn't gone very far) and he said:
23. 'Alas, they killed her just like that, I'm bereaved! They killed her just like that! Those (white-fellows) are ready to kill anyone anywhere!' That's how he spoke to them.
24. So they went on to a different creek, but it might still have belonged to the same owner, they went to stay overnight by this other creek saying 'we did kill that big hunk of meat, but we left no track, we covered it all up'.
25. The white-fellows caught sight of those people out in the open plain (near the creek), they saw that there was meat there. Those people hadn't gone far enough, they were still quite close really. The white-fellows killed them all (twenty of them) as many as all my fingers and all my toes.
26. The white-fellows chased them around (on the plain) to find out 'yes, there's meat here'. They shot them all, even the pitiful little babies.
27. But he (Nadu-dagali) dropped out of sight, he crouched in the debris that floodwaters sweep (against the butts of trees in creek-beds).
28. He heard them being shot, he heard them crying out. Ultimately he was able to come out quickly to have a look: 'It's true, even after they had gone on to the far side (of the last creek) they are all dead now'.
29. The other people (those who had gone far away in the first place) finally all went right away, and so did he.
30. Then they left that country altogether.

Story 2. The Cat

Ben Murray here tells of one of his own adventures with his 'uncle' Nadu-dagali, showing how much the old man liked the traditional ways, and adapted them to new situations.

Some years after arriving from the north, Nadu-dagali, now usually called 'Rib-bone Billy', married again. His second wife was also a Wangaguru, named Rosie Midlandubuna 'Smoke-face'. She had no children. He never regarded his humpy on the outskirts of Maree completely as home, but spent much of his time travelling to ceremonies and living in the bush: 'poor Rosie was often all on her own, but others helped her get her rations'.

1. Wayi-galgu - ru ani yuga - Iugu Yuldjuru, Bidjiwaru;
 Clayton - EL we go - HIST Yulduru, Peachawarinna;
 malga yuga - Iugu waŋugadi yagida - rugu gari - ri
 not go - HIST emu yard - ALL they - ERG

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- bidla - lugu 'Emu Camp'
name - HIST
2. malga garu - guda yuga - na, ayi, muyu wangali yuga -
not there - ALL go - PRES, eh, sun rising go -
lugu Nangu - Milgi - rigu, mayi nananaḡa danga -
HIST 'Cooper Elbow' - ALL, yes right there stay -
libana - du, guda - ildjildji awaḡa.
ANC - EMPH, water - soakage there.
*Charlie Bosworth a son of old man Bosworth, a white fellow,
had that country then, along with Peachawarinna and Muloor-
ina.*
3. yuga - lugu gaḡa - na awaḡa.
go - HIST creek - LOC there.
4. 'gadi - gaḡi, gadi - du awaḡa!' 'indjalina?'
meat - piece, meat - EMPH there! 'whereabouts?'
5. gayi djaḡba - yi arada, baḡara - na! madia - nari
there tree - VOC on top, box tree - LOC! dog - EMPH
yigi!
get!'
6. uda garu madia - ru 'gana biḡa - na, uga - ru
now there dog - ERG him beat - PRES, he - ERG
njuḡu madia - na biḡa - ra, this wild pussycat.
also dog beat - PUNC,
7. uga - ru biḡa - lugu djaḡba - ru, biḡa - ḡa uga - ru
he - ERG kill - HIST stick - INST, kill - PRES he - ERG
yada - manji - manji gudna - namba - li namba - li..
cat dung - bury - HAB bury - HAB.
andiḡa yani - ḡa :
me say - PRES:
8. 'gadi nayi nurg' adu dani - na, nurgu adu dani - ra
meat this good I ERG eat - NP, good I ERG eat - PRES
waraḡa gadi gadjiwiri, ayi nurgu adu dani - na - na.
that meat huge, eh' good I ERG eat - NP - LOC.
bindi - daga - ra, uda gudna gilda - ḡa - ru.
peg - stick - PUNC, now guts pull out - SP - NAR.
9. 'mayi, maga maba - ru waḡu - guba - yi' yani - ligu
'Eh! fire make - IMP child - small - VOC' say - HIST
'maga gadjiwiri maba - ru, nayi gadi wadni - na - na,
'fire great make - IPV, this meat cook - NP - LOC,
anda iliyang - guda gadi wangidi - ra waya - ḡa.
I such - ALL meat desire - CAUS want - PRES.
I call 'm 'uncle', mother called him 'brother'.
10. 'uda yuga - lugu garu wara - lugu - lgi, adu 'gana
'now go - PURP there cover - PURP - EMPH, I ERG him

- mafa-mafa - nura - lgi.'
singe - CONT - EMPH.'
11. uga - ru nani - ligu 'mayi maga uda - gi, uda garu
he - ERG *see* - HIST 'eh, *fire ready*, *now there*
 biri - ma - nda 'gana'. biri - ma - lug 'alali.
open - *make* - PRES *it*'. *open* - *make* - HIST *finally*.
 dugulu - ma - nda maga - na uga - ru gudni wadlu
hole - *make* - PRES *fire* - LOC *he* - ERG *put soil*
 waru - na njuđu - na uga - ru gadi gudni - nda. uda
warm - LOC *also* *he* - ERG *meat put* - PRES. *now*
 garu wadni - ligu alali.
there cook - HIST *finally*.
12. njinda - na danga - lugu, warbi - na - nda - ga -
tree - LOC *stay* - HIST, *lie* - IMPF - SP - PERF -
 gi, mida - nda wadla - ra uga - ginda, yađu
 EMPH, *wait* - PRES *hunger* - CAUS *it* - DAT, *sated*
 widji - ligu. malga uga - ru djalba wadununda dani -
become - PURP. *not he* - ERG *food other eat* -
 nda, wadla - buđu danga - lugu, mida - nda uga -
 PRES, *hunger* - *having stay* - HIST, *wait* - PRES *it* -
 ginda bundju nda - na - na.
 DAT *meat burn* - NP - LOC.
13. nuga - mada mida - lugu, mida - nda, alali gilda -
much - *making wait* - HIST, *wait* - PRES, *finally pull out* -
 lugu dadna - ru 'gana madli - widji - ya - na - na.
 HIST *leave* - NAR *it ACC cold* - *become* - POT - NP - LOC.
14. bunda - da nuna banba - lugu, bara widji - na
break - PRES *arm taste* - PURP, *small become* - NP
 gadayabu - ru - nari guři - nda - nari - gi bargulu -
head - EL - EMPH *out* - PRES - EMPH *two* -
 ma - lugu, madli - widji - ya - nu.
make - PURP, *cold* - *become* - POT - REL.
15. uda uga - ru mani njuđu gadi dani - nda, malga i!an -
now he - ERG *fat also meat eat* - PRES, *not such* -
 guda gudni - nda, nařawa - na bandu - nana, bagu -
 ALL *put* - PRES, *salty salt lake* - *from, bare* -
 li dani - nda.
 EMPH *eat* - PRES.
16. dani, mayi, banda awada!' 'bunba awada' anda -
eat, go-on, big this one! 'stinking this' I -
 du yani - nura.
 EMPH *say* - CONY.
17. 'dani mayi, gadi nanga - widji - na!' 'malg' anda
'eat go on, meat alive - *become* - NP!' 'not I'
 waya - nda awada dani - ligu.'
want - PRES *this eat* - PURP.'

TALES OF NADU-DAGALI

18. 'gadi nurgu nayi, gula-gula - ya!' 'gawa - lira,
 'meat good this, nephew - VOC!' 'vomit - POT,
 maig'anda waya - nda dani - ligu njudu!
 not I wish - PRES eat - PURP also!'

Translation

Story 2. The Cat

1. We went from Clayton Station to Yuldjuruna waterhole (on the Clayton Creek) and then to Peachawarinna Bore, we didn't go on to the place they call 'Emu Yard' or 'Emu Camp'.⁵
2. We didn't go there, no, at sunrise we went to Nangu-Milgi 'Cooper Elbow', we used to stay right there, where there is a soakage: Charlie Bosworth,⁶ son of old man Bosworth, a white fellow, had that country then, along with Peachawarinna and Muloorina.
3. We walked about in the bed of the Cooper there.
4. 'There's game here!' (the old man said). 'Whereabouts?'
5. 'Up there in the box tree. Set the dog on it'.
6. The dog got the better of the cat, but then it was getting the better of the dog, this wild pussycat!
7. He killed it with a stick, he killed this cat, this animal that buries its dung, and then he said to me:
8. 'This is good meat that I'm going to eat, I'll eat this large⁷ lot of meat! Ah, it will be good for me to eat! I'll peg the belly together again⁸ after I've pulled the guts out!'
9. 'Go on child, make a fire!' he said 'Make a great big fire for cooking this meat. This is just the sort of meat I'm longing for'. — I called him 'uncle' because my mother called him 'brother'.
10. 'Go over there and cover up the fire while I burn the fur off!'
11. Then he had a look. 'Ah, the fire is ready, open it up!' He opened it up finally and made a hole (in the middle of the fire) and he put the

⁵ Emu Camp was to the east of the 'Cooper Elbow' on the old road to Old Kalamurina. Ben Murray stressed the fact here that he and his uncle Nadu-dagali turned off from that track to camp slightly further up the Cooper.

⁶ This means that the story related here by Ben Murray took place shortly before 1906. Ben Murray himself was born in 1893. 'Old Man' Harry Bosworth took up the holding on the Clayton, as well as Muloorina, in 1885 and his sons took over from him. By 1906 Clayton had passed to the two French brothers Guillaume and Baptiste de Pierres for whom both Ben Murray and his brother Ern worked (for two shillings a week) for some time before going to the mission school at Killalpaninna. See also Bonython 1971:173.

⁷ A cat really was a relatively large animal from the point of view of a Simpson Desert Waggaguru such as 'Rib-bone Billy'. There are no kangaroos in the desert, and the main sources of meat were the numerous small marsupials, particularly kangaroo-rats and rabbit-eared bandicoots. Feral cats generally grow to a much larger size than their domestic ancestors.

⁸ This was the standard cooking practice of the Waggaguru 'to keep the juices in'; see also Horne and Aiston 1924:75.

- meat in there and into the warm soil. And so at last he cooked it.
12. He was resting under a tree, he was lying there for the time being, waiting hungrily till he could fill himself up (with this meat), he would not eat any other food but stayed there full of hunger waiting while the meat was cooking.
 13. He waited there for a long time, he waited and waited, and then at last he pulled it out and left it to cool.
 14. He broke off an arm to try out what it tasted like, and then he reduced it to smaller by cutting it exactly in half from the head down, so that it would cool quicker.
 15. He ate the meat with all the fat too, he didn't put anything with it, none of that salty stuff from the salt-lake, he ate it just as it was.
 16. 'Go on, have a bit, it's big enough!' (he said). 'It smells horrible!' I kept saying.
 17. 'Go on and have some, this meat really makes you feel alive!' 'I don't want to eat this thing!'
 18. 'It's good meat, nephew!' 'I'd be sick, I don't want to join you in eating this!'

Story 3. Making Rain

There are numerous descriptions of rain-making in anthropological literature; there is even an account of a rain-making ceremony carried out by *Nadu-dagali* himself.⁹ Ben Murray's account is nevertheless of particular interest as it shows how he as a small boy was involved in the ceremony. It also shows that the interest displayed by white people in rain-making was in these circumstances appreciated and was not felt to be patronising. 'Rib-bone Billy' knew he had earned his reward.

1. uga gurawaŋa badni - li. naridji - naru gananaŋa yuga -
He rain make - HAB. come down - PLUP there go -
na guda badni - ligu. gudju gananaŋa yigi guni - wa -
PRES water make - PURP. feather there take lay - TR -
ligu, wirinja gunda.
PURP, nest put.
2. gudni - ligu wirinja - na uga - ru gadla-guldji - na.
put - HIST nest - LOC he - ERG rain stone.
3. mayi wanga - nanga - ɖa, gananaŋa - du diga - ligu
oh sing - CONT S - PRES, there - EMPH return - HIST
yuwu gari - na wadununda manda - diga - ligu.
men mob other fetch - return - HIST.
4. gari mina - ya - du gudni 'tent, tarpaulin' ilanguda
they what - VOC - EMPH put tent, tarpaulin thus

⁹ Horne and Aiston 1924:117.

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- 'bayilgu', 'baianketi' buḡa - lgi - di minā-yi - na
bag, blanket, humpy - EMPH - EMPH *what*-EMPH
- ganaḡaḡa 'damu' gudni - ligu yaḡida - na;
there dam put - HIST *yard* - LOC;
5. ganaḡaḡa - da gaṛi baḡni - ligu guḡa - yi - du,
there - EMPH *they make* - HIST *water* - VOC - EMPH,
 ganaḡaḡa gaṛi wanga - na
there they sing - PRES
6. yuwu bargulu bula biḡi - naḡa - nda wandaḡa - ra
men two both paint - NEW - REF *down-feather* - CAUS
 gaṛidji - ligu guḡa - ruḡu, bula yuḡa - lugu bandu -
 DESCEND - HIST *water* - ALL, *two go* - HIST *salt lake* -
 ruḡu, 'damu' - ruḡu. burḡa - lugu guḡa - na.
 ALL, *dam* - ALL. *wade* - HIST *water* - LOC.
7. wanga - da - naṛi gaṛi - du wanga - naḡa - nura
sing - PRES - EMPH *they* - EMPH *sing* - CONT S - CONT
 ganaḡaḡa.
there.
They've been singing away, then them two come up, they
have feathers in their hands.
 ḡunda - da gaṛi - guḡa - damuna.
show - PRES *they* - POS - *secret*.
8. ilina - na - na anda manabudu, andida gaṛi - ri
thus - LOC *I* ignorant, *me* DAT *they* - ERG
 yurunga - ma - na walba - ra - ma - na, mayi
knowing - make - PRES *skill* - CAUS - make - PRES, *ah*
 guṛawaṛa - du gaṛi - ri baḡni.
rain - EMPH *they* - ERG *make*.
9. wanga - lugu gaṛi, andida gaṛi yaṛi - ḡaḡa : 'mayi!
sing - HIST *they, me* DAT *they say* - PRES: 'Come on!
 aḡaṛi yuḡa - ḡa! njiba wadna, njiba -
This way go - PRES-EXCL! *clothes take off, clothes* -
 baḡu aḡa warbi - naḡa - lugu yaṛaba, gaṛi ganaḡaḡa
bare truly lie - CONT S - PURP *on top, they there*
 buḡda - ḡaḡa - da guḡdji - di.
break - CONT S - PRES *stone* - EMPH.
I lay on top of that nest and they smashed this stone
on my guts.
10. buḡba - ma - na aḡali 'guḡa, wanga - wanga - da
powder - make - PRES *finally* POS A, *sing* - sing - PRES
 gaṛi biḡa - lugu - gi - di. anda duḡa - na
they hit - HIST - EMPH - EMPH. *I* get up - PRES
 baḡu - na yuḡa - na njiba - baḡu - lgi ani baḡu -
plain - LOC *go* - PRES *clothes* - BARE - EMPH *we plain* -
 ruḡu wanga - lugu, duḡa - lugu baḡu - na.
 ALL *rise* - HIST, *stand* - HIST *plain* - LOC.

11. uga - ru - na wirinja - (na) mina - ya njudu yigi -
 he - ERG nest - LOC what - EXCL also bring -
 ra ganaṇaḍa gudni - ligu. guldji - djaḷa - gi idni -
 PUNC there put - HIST. stone - piece - EMPH lie -
 nura. adu maṛa - na bargulu baḍa - yira.
 CONT. I ERG hand - LOC two hold - PUNC.
They told me to throw them up, and showed me 'Look they've become two little clouds!'
12. I had to get up on his neck. djilgiri - na danga - da
 neck - LOC sit - PRES
 anda yaraba. mayi, yuwu gari yuga - na ṇadla, gari
 I on top. oh, men they go - PRES crowd, they
 yuga - nura guda - buṛu, bucket - buṛu, ana gari - ri
 go - CONT water - having bucket - having, me they - ERG
 duṛa - yira.
 sprinkle - PUNC.
13. mayaḷa, mayi anda madli - ra waya - ṇḍa!
 stop, oh I cold - CAUS want - PRES!
(but nobody took any notice)
 bilba - ru guda yaraba andida, dawī - nura andida.
 pour - NAR water on top me, throw - CONT me.
14. ude gari ṇanda - da, mayi wirinja - du ganaṇaḍa
 now they stop - PRES, oh nest - EMPH there
 mani - ga madabuḍa gari - ri ganaṇaḍa gudni - ligu
 take - PAST old men they - ERG there put - HIST
 bangi - ṇana - na guda yugari - na.
 side - from - LOC water fresh - LOC.
They only took that part where the pieces of rain-stone were.
 waḍuṇunda guṛaḷa balgu guda - na dawī - ṇaridji -
 rest cloud body water - LOC throw - go down -
 na, diga - lugu - lgi.
 PRES, return - HIST - EMPH.
15. Where Murteen Khan's store now is, out in the open.
They go to the store, Mr Arnold was storekeeper then, and Mr Duggan. They said:
16. 'Well, Bill, you been make'm rain?'
 'Yes, he jump along might be two day.'
 'Well when he comes you get a bag of flour, sugar and half a bag of tea.'
 'He come all right' - he was sure.'
17. aḷa - du ganda - na - na Mr Arnold uga yani - na -
 true - EMPH pour - NP - LOC Mr Arnold he say - NP -
 na naḷa waḍuṇunda - nda unba diga - ṇḍa, mayi
 LOC man other - DAT you return - PRES, oh,

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- madabuḍa - nda yaṇi - ṭigu Nadu - daga - ṭi - nda
old man - DAT *say* - PURP *Side* - *spear* - HAB - DAT
- uga - na yuga - na djaḷba mani - ṇḍa - dīga - ṭugu
he *go* - NP *food* *take* - SP - *return* - PURP.
18. uḍa gari yuga - ṇana, uga - ru baṇḍa - gi - dī -
now they go - IMM, *he* - ERG *big* - EMPH - EMPH -
 ya mani - ṭigu
 ENCL *get* - HIST
150 pounds of flour in a bag
 gaḍayabu - ṇa gudni - ṭigu ṇuṛa - ruḡu dīga - ṇḍa
head - LOC *put* - HIST *camp* - ALL *return* - PRES
pleased as punch!
19. 'mayi, ṇayi - du, uga maḷju - mayi aḍu manda - na
'Hey, here - EMPH *it food* - I ERG *get* SP - PRES
 guṛawaṇa badni - naru - du, aṇa. yaḍa dīga - ṇḍa
rain make - PLUP - EMPH, *yes.* *again return* - PRES
 aru - na yaḍa yuga - bi.
we again go - HORT.
20. 'mina 'ndu manda - dīga - ṭugu?' 'didi - baḷga -
'what you get SP - *return* - PURP?' *'tea* - leaf -
 nari!
 EMPH
21. *And they went back and got this and tobacco and matches,
 mostly tobacco, those long old-fashioned sticks Eureka
 and IXL, give'm a couple of each. He was very happy.*
22. madabuḍa diyara yuga - ṇa? gari - ri bidla - ṭibana
old man where go - PRES? *they* - ERG name - ANC
 aradja - ṭi yuwu - ru - du Nadu - daga -
right - EMPH ADV *people* - ERG - EMPH *Side* - *spear* -
 yiwa - ṭi. yulda - buṛu awaḍa gilda - ṇḍa
 TR - HAB. *gear* - *having he* *come out* - PRES
 waḡuṇunda maṛṭiḷi dīga - ṇḍa ṇadu - daga - yiwa -
others other side return - PRES *side* - *spear* - TR -
 na.
 PROP.
23. *But he wasn't really like that, he was a good old fellow.*

Translation

Story 3. Making Rain

1. Nadu-dagali was a rain-maker. He came down (to near the Herrgott Spring) to make the rain come. (He said): 'Take a heap of feathers (matted together) like kurdaitcha shoes, and put them onto the

ground, make a nest'.

2. He put a rain-stone on the nest.
3. He chanted there for a long time; groups of men came and then went to bring back with them a host of others.
4. They put all that stuff, tents, tarpaulins, bags and blankets (to make a temporary) humpy, they put it there where the dam is, in the yard (near the Herrgott Spring).
5. They made rain there, they sang there.
6. Then two men freshly painted themselves (and decorated themselves) with down feathers they went down to the water, to the little lake, to that dam and they waded about in the water.
7. They sang, yes they sang there continually. (Ben says in English) They've been singing away (the main group) then them two come up, they have feathers in their hands. They showed the rain-makers' secret object.
8. I don't know anything (although) they told me about it and taught me. Well, they were making rain.
9. They sang, and they said to me: 'Come on, come over here! Take your clothes off and lie completely naked on top (of the nest)!' They broke up the rain-stone (Ben says in English) I lay on top of this nest and they smashed this stone on my guts.
10. They smashed it to a powder in the end, and they sang and sang as they struck it. I got up out into the open, I went with no clothes on, we all went up into the open and stood on the open plain.
11. He got something I don't know what else and put it into the nest, and a piece of rain-stone lay there. I held two little pieces in my hands. They told me to throw them up and showed me 'Look, they've become two little clouds!'
12. I had to get up on his neck, I sat on (Nadu-dagali's) neck. And then a whole crowd of men came walking along carrying water, carrying buckets. They showered me with water.
13. 'Stop, I'm cold' — but they took no notice. They poured water over the top of me, they went on throwing water over me.
14. Then it was all over, oh that nest — the old men took it and put it in some water that had been placed at the side, in some fresh water. They only took that part where the pieces of rain-stone were. They went down (to the dam) to throw the rest (of the nest) into the water, that was (to become) a cloud-mass. Then they went back home.
15. Where Murteen Khan's store now is, out in the open (is where they were camped). They went to the store (on the other side of the railway line) Mr Arnold was store-keeper then, and Mr Duggan. They (the store-people) said:
16. 'Well, Bill, you been make'm rain?'
'Yes, he jump along might be two day'.

'Well, when he comes you get a bag of flour, sugar and half a bag of tea'.

'He come all right' — he was sure.

17. When it was well and truly pouring Mr Arnold was saying to some other (Aboriginal) man: 'Go back and tell that old man, tell Nadu-dagali he should come and fetch his food'.
18. They went back, and he collected a huge quantity — there were 150 pounds of flour in a bag. He put it on his head and carried it back to his camp, pleased as punch.
19. 'Hey, here is the food I got from making rain! Oh yes! Let's go back (he said to the other man, his friend Manili) let's both of us go back'.
20. 'What are you going to get from there?'
'Tea-leaf'.
21. And they went back and got this and tobacco and matches, mostly tobacco, those old-fashioned sticks Eureka and IXL, give'm a couple of each. He was happy.
22. (But some people used to say) 'Whereabouts is this old man going? They were right when they named him the Rib-spearer long ago. He's come out carrying all his equipment (spears, boomerangs, etc).¹⁰ The other people went back on the other side 'he's the rib-spearer'.
23. (Final comment in English from Ben): But he wasn't really like that, he was a good old fellow.

Story 4. The death of Nadu-dagali

The Mt Gason bore (sunk in 1903) is one of the hottest, the water comes out boiling. It is just like the bore which is still running at Mirra Mitta, 'Rat Place', about 25 miles to the south; this is a desolate spot, where the air is permeated by steam and sulphur. One has to walk about 500 yards down along the bore-drain at Mirra Mitta before the water is cool enough to be touched and it is the same at Mt Gason. There was once a station at Mt Gason, with stone buildings, but these are now in ruins. Quite a few people were camped there in the late twenties, and Billy Hughes, a half-caste, was in charge at the station. Nadu-dagali decided to stay there for a while, and made his camp below the station on the other side of the bore drain.

'Koonki' Nadu-dagali was often given the alternative name 'Koonkoo' by Aiston. 'Koonkoo' is in fact a totally different word meaning 'blind' in Wanganuru. The word for blind very often implies 'old' in Aboriginal languages, and like the majority of elderly Aborigines, Nadu-dagali had

10 By this stage Marree Aboriginal people, particularly the younger generation, were no longer used to anyone carrying traditional equipment about with him. This lack of understanding was one of the reasons why 'Rib-bone Billy' did not stay on at Marree in his later years when his sight was failing, but went off to Mungeranie and Mt Gason.

Top: Ruins of Mt Gason Station.
Bottom: Simpson Desert near Lake Poolowanna, Nadu-dagali's home country.
Photographs by G. R. and L. A. Hercus.

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lost his sight almost completely. On this occasion he was going to see Billy Hughes and to get some tobacco from the station store.

1. uga gungu widji - ga; madabuda ganaṇaḍa danga - ga,
he blind become - PAST; old man there stay - PAST,
 Mt Gason, ganaṇaḍa danga - libana gungu widji - ga.
Mt Gason, there stay - ANC blind become - PAST.
2. yuga - nari, malga gadi - ṇa gayi 'bore' gaḍayabu,
go - EMPH, not turn - PRES, there bore head,
 ṇayi gaḷa baṇa-baṇa - ṇa guda gira - ṇura, guda
here creek long - LOC water flow - CONT, water
 maga - buṛu - gi - di - ya!
fire - full - EMPH - EMPH - EMPH!
3. narida - ru wanga - ḍa 'bore' - ru ṇayi - du guru
there - EL rise - PRES bore - EL here - EMPH other
 gari - guna ganaṇaḍa - ṇana wadi. malga uga wali - ri
they - POS there - from path. not he house - EL
 ilina - yi yuga - na ayi gaṛu - nari uga, yadninga -
thus - EMPH go - PRES oh there - EMPH he, youth -
 willi waya - ṇa gaḷa - bunda - lugu malga aṇari yuga -
like wish - PRES jump - across - PURP not hither go -
 ṇa, maṛiliḷi diga - ṇa.
PRES, other side return - PRES.
4. nalida - ru uga diga - ṇa ṇayi wali - di, ilina -
this - EL he return - PRES here house - EMPH, thus -
 ru diga - ṇa.
EL return - PRES.
5. malga gaḷa - bunda - ḍa, guda maga - buṛu - ṇa. ṇaḍa -
not jump - over - PRES, water fire - full - LOC. burn -
 ṇa.
PRES.
6. uda uga iridji - ṇa banba - ḍa - gi - di gaḷa -
now he move - PRES try - PRES - EMPH - EMPH jump -
 bunda - lugu - gi - di. guda - ! - di - ṇa
over - PURP - EMPH - EMPH. fall - ALT - SP - PRES
 yaḍa gudnaḍi njuḍu maga - ra bardjana ṇaḍa - lugu.
again stomach too heat - CAUS all burn - HIST.
7. ṇandja - la - ṇa - du, yuwu gari wadna - ṇa
cry out - ALT - PRES - EMPH, men they run - PRES
 gilda - lug' uga - ṇa
pull out - PURP he - ACC
8. dadlu gari diga - ṇa, awaḍa danga - lugu, wandja -
empty they come - PRES, there stay - HIST, die -

lugu - gi. madu widji - naru. gaḍayabu nguru.
 HIST - EMPH. *cooked become* - PLUP. *head good.*
Poor old Rib-bone.

Translation

Story 4. The death of Nadu-dagali

1. He became blind, the old man; he used to stay here, at Mt Gason, when he had become blind.
2. He went but he didn't turn — there was the bore-head and here was the long bore-drain, full of fiercely boiling water.
3. It goes up from the bore here, that's the track that the other people were using, the people who belonged to that place. He didn't go from the house this way, oh no, he went over there (on that far side) he wanted to jump across like a young fellow.
4. He didn't come in this direction (past the bore-head), he went back on the other side.
5. He didn't manage to jump across,¹¹ he fell backwards into the boiling water. He was scalded.
6. He moved, he tried to jump out indeed! but he fell again, this time forward, and he was burnt all over.
7. He cried out and people rushed to pull him out.
8. They came in vain (it was too late). He died on the spot having been completely scalded. Only his head was unhurt. Poor old Rib-bone!

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11. The last Guyani speaker, Mrs Alice Oldfield, is about one hundred years of age and remembers Rib-bone Billy well. During a recent conversation (September 1977) she added a further detail to the story of his death: apparently he had dropped his tobacco tin and tried to retrieve it. It is by no means an easy feat to jump over a bore-drain, and the one at Mt Gason was particularly slippery. According to Mick McLean, even an unfortunate dingo pursued by dogs failed to jump across, fell, and died there.

APPENDIX I

The Phonemes of Arabana-Wanganyuru

	labial	interdental	alveolar	retroflex	palatal	velar
stops	b	<u>d</u>	d	ɖ	dʲ	g
nasals	m	<u>n</u>	n	ɳ	nʲ	ŋ
laterals		<u>l</u>	l	ɭ	lʲ	
vibrants			r̥, r	ɽ		
glides	w				y	

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NOTE

Certain nasals and laterals in Arabana-Wagwanuru have pre-stopped allophones: -bm- corresponds to -m- at the beginning of the second syllable, -dn- to -n-, -dn- to -n-, -dl- to -l-, and -dl- to -l-. In order to make the spelling approximate as closely as possible to the pronunciation these pre-stopped consonants have been included in the orthography.

For simplicity the cluster -njdj- has been written as -ndj-.

APPENDIX 2

List of Abbreviations

ACC	accusative case
ALL	allative case
ALT	altruistic-emotive aspect
ANC	ancient, distant past
CAUS	causative case
CONT	continuative participle, — gura
CONST S	continuative stem-forming suffix
DAT	dative case
EL	elative case
EMPH	emphatic enclitic particles
	The emphatic particle. —na, much favoured by Ben Murray, has not been glossed after the first few occurrences.
EMPH ADV	The instrumental case is used in Diyari and in Arabana-Wagwanuru with adjectives to indicate that they are used in an adverbial function. The instrumental case marker in Arabana-Wagwanuru is —ru ri, in Diyari it is —li. Ben Murray, who is also a fluent Diyari speaker, has introduced this Diyari usage of —li: —li in Arabana-Wagwanuru is simply an emphatic particle. There are one or two other minor slips caused by the influence of Diyari, such as the use of ya 'and'. For Diyari, see Peter Austin, A grammar of the Diyari language, MS.
ERG	ergative case
EXCL	exclamatory form
HAB	habitual participle
HIST	historic past, used generally in an account of a series of events. In form this tense is identical with the purposive
HORT	hortative suffix — bi
IMM	immediate past tense
IMP	imperative
INST	instrumental case
LOC	locative case
Nar	narrative past tense
NEW	'newly completed' aspectual marker
NP	non-past
PAST	past tense
PERF	perfective aspect
PLUP	pluperfect-explicative past
POS	possessive suffix
POS A	possessive form used in lieu of accusative
POT	potential mood
PRES	present tense
PROP	proper noun marking suffix —na
PUNC	punctiliar present (in transitive verbs only)
PURP	purposive
REF	reflexive
REL	relative past
Sp	speed form, implying action performed hastily or before departing
Tr	transitory aspect
VOC	vocative

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