Top left: Mrs Mona Merrick, Port Augusta, July 1981.

Top right: Mr Johnny Reece.

Above: The tank at Alberrie Creek, July 1981.

Photographs by L.A. Hercus

AFGHAN STORIES FROM THE NORTH-EAST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Luise A. Hercus

The speakers of Arabana held the country to the west of Lake Eyre; the closely-related Wanganuru language was spoken in the Simpson Desert and on the lower Diamantina. The few remaining speakers of these languages nowadays live mainly in Marree and Port Augusta, South Australia. They remember many stories about the 'Afghan' camel-drivers who first entered their country in the nineteenth century. The men popularly known as Afghans were Urdu and Balochi speakers who came from what is now Pakistan, and were brought to Australia largely as a result of the activities of Sir Thomas Elder and the Beltana Pastoral Company. Drivers and camels arrived in large numbers — 124 camels were unloaded at Port Augusta in January 1866 — and had an early and particularly important impact on the arid areas of north-eastern South Australia. The Afghans and their camels provided the only efficient means of transport from Beltana and Marree to Alice Springs in Central Australia before the completion of the railway line. They also continued to provide transport for the pastoral stations along the Birdsville and Strzelecki tracks until the 1920s.

The history of the Afghans and their camels has been recounted many times and need not be reiterated here.¹ But there are few published records of Aboriginal reaction to the presence of the Afghans. At first these strangers roused fear, but soon Aborigines were able to make shrewd judgments about the different customs of these outsiders. The Afghan predilection for plump, fair-skinned women, the role of bride-price in their marriage arrangements, their burial practices, their food and butchering rituals, their jealous pride and fear of losing face, and their preoccupation with money were acutely observed and remembered by Aboriginal people, as these stories illustrate.

The Afghans, just like Europeans, were outsiders as far as Aboriginal society was concerned: Arabana people called them 'Abigana' or *wadjbala madimadi* 'white fellows with hair-string' or *gaḍabu ḡara-ḡara* 'head tied up', references to the turban that was invariably worn. The population of Marree was divided by the railway line; to the west lived the European Australians; to the east was Afghantown, with the Aborigines living on the outskirts. Yet the three groups knew a good deal about each other, and prominent individuals won respect from other townsfolk regardless of their ethnic identity. The stories recounted here reveal something of the relations between Europeans, Aborigines, Afghan camel-drivers and Syrian traders in the Marree district between the 1890s and 1930s.

The Afghans had come without women of their own and in the early days there was good reason to teach young Aboriginal girls to beware of them. Anyone noticing a few of the marriage advertisements in Indian newspapers will be familiar with the attitude that 'fair' is 'beautiful'. As typical South Asians

1. See Barker 1964, McKnight 1969.

the Afghans also held this view and so they tried to marry Europeans or very light half caste girls, or the young daughters of other Afghans: for these they often had to pay large sums of money. Because European girls were scarce and part Afghan girls were even scarcer and expensive, the Afghans tended to pursue Aboriginal girls with strictly dishonorable intentions. Abigana-ru *danilira* 'the Afghans might eat you' parents warned, just to make the girls wary. This fear was increased because the Afghans were culturally conditioned to prefer girls with well-developed figures: in their northern Indian homeland thinness was regarded as a sign of poverty and low status. The first two stories, told by Mona Merrick, describe the sentiments of three Aboriginal girls in the mid-1890s who imagined that they were being eyed as tasty morsels. Both stories came from Mona's mother, a woman of Arabana descent who married Mr Warren, owner of Finnis Springs Station. Mona herself is still part-owner of the station.

The stories told by Mona Merrick and by her brother Arthur Warren are in Arabana, those told by Ben Murray and Johnny Reece are in Wanganjuru. Both languages are very closely related, although there are differences in both grammar and vocabulary. These differences account for apparent inconsistencies: for example camel is gamulu in Arabana, but usually gamuli in Wanganjuru; the suffix — *na* conveys the present tense in Wanganjuru, but in Arabana it fulfils the function of an imperfect aspect marker. The texts are accompanied by an interlinear gloss, and an English translation follows. The translation is as close to the original as possible; when words or phrases must be inserted for clarity these are shown in brackets. The phonemes of Arabana-Wanganjuru and the abbreviations used in the gloss are explained in appendices.

Loading Kidman's stores at Marree.

Photograph courtesy of Mrs Z. Khan.

AFGHAN STORIES

Places mentioned in 'Afghan' stories

Map drawn by Pam Millwood, Human Geography, A.N.U.

Getting a lift from Macumba

The girl in this story had come from the Simpson desert not long before and was staying on Macumba, only twenty miles from Oodnadatta. She was glad of a lift to save her walking in the hot weather. She had become familiar with the practice of laying a freshly killed bullock on a bed of leaves, ready for butchering, but she was not familiar with the European and Afghan use of beds for what was done 'in the bush' in traditional Aboriginal society.²

1. Abigana-bula uljuju badja -nda-yanu gamulu bargulu-na
Afghan -two woman travel-Sp -REL camel two -LOC
 Magamba-ru, uga-ru gad -ma-nda Magamba. uljuja bidla
Macumba-ABL, he -ERG leave-Vb-PRES Macumba. woman name
 Barada.
Barada.
2. gala -na guda maḥa, guda gira-nda, guda banda
creek-LOC water new, water flow-PRES, water big
 ganda-ga.
rain -PAST.
3. maga maba-nda, kerosene-tin banda gudni -nda
fire make-PRES, big put down-PRES
 maga-na.
fire-LOC.
4. "maga mani -nda, maga bunda-da, njinda-galba
"wood bring-PRES, wood break-PRES, tree -leaf
 mani -nda gula mani-nda, gudliya manda!"
bring-PRES cane-grass get -PRES, bed get Sp!"
5. budluga gari-ri biḍa-ra, magidi mani-ra njinda
bullock they-ERG kill-PUNC, gun take-PUNC wood
 mani-ligu mundaḥa, bungudu, gudliya. baḷu-na
take-HIST wattle, cassia bush, bed. open-LOC
 clean 'm njinda-na.
wood -LOC.
6. uljuja njinda bunda-da mundaḥa, Ilgiwara gala -nana
woman wood break-PRES wattle, Ilgiwara creek-EL
 uga naḥa -na: "kerosene-tin banda, didi nuga;
she worry-IMPERF: big, tea much;
 budluga badni -na, ibi badni -na minga bula-ru
bullock nothing-LOC, sheep nothing-LOC what two -ERG

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i laṇa ṇaṇu, aṇa-ṇaru ḡaṇi-li, aṇa ḡaṇi-liḡu
thus how, me -first eat -FUT, me eat -PURP

waya-ṇda!"
wish-PRES!"

7. njinda bunda-ḡa manda manda warida-gi warida
wood break-PRES get Sp, get Sp far -EMPH far
ḡiga -liḡu ḡaḷa -ṇa njinda-ṇa, maldja abira, njinda
return-HIST creek-LOC tree -LOC, not gum, tree
alga nuru.
form other.

8. uga-ru ṇawi-ra maḡabuḡa yabmi-yabmi-ṇda, uga
she-ERG hear-PUNC old man curse-curse-PRES, she
ḡarga-ṇda njinda-ṇa-du, liḡiwara ḡaḷa -ṇa ḡuḡa -ṇa,
stand-PRES tree -LOC-EMPH, Ilgiwara creek-LOC water-LOC,
yada njinda nuru -ṇa, ḡuru ḡarga-liḡu.
further tree other-LOC, inside stand-HIST.

9. maldja yadla ḡiga -liḡu, maldja yada yuga-ga,
not close return-HIST, not further go -PAST,
ḡad -ma-liḡu ḡiga -ṇda Maḡamba-rugu.
leave-Vb-HIST return-PRES Macumba-ALL.

10. wadjbala -bula, Abigana-bula yabmi-yabmi-ṇda "bundju
whitefellows-two, Afghan -two curse-curse-PRES "meat
badni wadla -ra" ṇaṇa -ṇaṇa -ṇda! baḡu miraga maṇi
nothing hunger-CAUS" think-think-PRES! body red fat
ṇuga uḷjuḷa, aṇḡuṇa' liḡu -ru ṇunda-ga.
much woman, my mother-ERG tell -PAST.

Translation

- Two Afghans and a woman had been travelling (that day) with two camels from Macumba, she was leaving Macumba. Her name was Baraḡa.
- There was fresh water in the creek (where they were going to camp), the water was flowing strongly, big rain had fallen.
- They (the Afghans) made a fire, and they put a big kerosene tin (full of water) on the fire.
- (They said to her): 'Bring some sticks and break the sticks into little pieces, bring some foliage from the trees, get some cane-grass, make a bed!'
- (She began to think): 'When they kill a bullock they get a gun and put down sticks, wattle and cassia shrub to make a bed. Out in the open, on the bed of sticks they clean out (the carcass)'.
- The woman went on breaking up sticks of wood, wattle and shrubs from the side of the Ilgiwara creek. She began to get worried: 'That's a big kerosene tin and a lot of tea: since they haven't got a bullock, and since they

haven't got a sheep, why are the two of them doing all this (getting a bed ready)? It's me they are going to eat; they want to eat me!"

- 7) She broke up sticks, picked them up and picked them up, further and further she went back (in the direction where Macumba was), right in the creek, amongst the trees — they weren't coolibah trees, but a completely different looking tree.³
- 8) She heard the two men swearing and cursing as she stood behind a tree, in the Ilgiwara creek, in the water. She (crept) further away to (stand behind) another tree, she stood (hidden) in the water.
- 9) She didn't go back near them, she didn't travel on — she got away and returned to Macumba.
- 10) She kept thinking: 'Those two whitefellows, those Afghans, are cursing and swearing because they haven't got any meat now, they are hungry!' She was a woman with brown skin (not jet black) and she had lots of fat on her. That's what my mother said.

The train was late at Alberrie Creek

Alberrie Creek is about 60 kilometres on the Oodnadatta side of Marree. There is a small building there, which used to house a railway gang, but there were no other habitations anywhere in the vicinity. In the daytime during the working week the place would have been deserted. Now of course, with the closure of the railway, the railway cottage is permanently uninhabited. Even before the Warrens took over Finnis Springs Station, to which this whole area belongs, Aborigines, mainly Guyani but also some Arabana, camped by some of the springs, some distance to the north and west, and the two girls has presumably been there visiting relatives.

1. *Alberrie Creek Railway Station* *na|a badni. ulju|a*
man nothing. woman
bargulu, Arabana ulju|a-Jimmy and Leslie's mother-bula
two Arabana woman both
miga-(g)a-ŋa traina-gu.
wait-TR -PRES DAT.
2. *traina manda-ŋa dangi waga baŋa-baŋa-ŋa bula*
delay-IMPERF tank black long -LOC two
danga-agura Mariri-rigu diga -lugu bula, bula
sit -ANC Marree-ALL return-PURP two, two
danga-ŋa.
sit -IMPERF.

3. The 'different' tree, unknown in Arabana country, is *Acacia cyperophylla*, the Red Mulga, which grows along creek-beds from the Oodnadatta area northwards. Wanganjuru people from the desert side of the Dalhousie area referred to the tree by its Aranda name *abmuna*. It is a slender tree with striking red bark and thin foliage.

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3. Abigana-bula yuga-nda-na damu-rugu gamulu-buFu
Afghan -Dl go -Sp -IMPERF dam -ALL camel -having
 guda mani-ligu. bula yamba-a -lugu-straightaway they
water get -PURP. two ask -TEMP-HIST
 asked! njiba naFi -ma-nda, nama dargi-dargi,
clothes fly up-Vb-PRES, breast display,
 nama nani-na!
breast see -NP!
4. bula nama dargi -nda bula!
two breast display-PRES two!
5. bula numa-nda, balgu miraga, maldja ala waga,
two like-PRES, flesh red, not true black,
 bula mani-nuga.
two fat -much.
6. bula dadla-ra wa -nda, "mara maldja gudni-nda,
two fear -CAUS want-PRES, "hand not put -PRES,
 dani-ligu waya-nda! traina ungulu yuga-nda,
eat -PURP want-PRES! train when go -PRES,
 wadjbala -bula nama dargi-la -dira!
whitefellow-two breast show -ALT-ACT PUNC!
7. "njiba naFi-ma-nda, dara nani-na! show'm leg!
"clothes fly -Vb-PRES, thigh see -NP!
8. nama dargi-na dara darg'-argi-na, bula
breast show -IMPERF, thigh show -show-IMPERF, both
 darg'-arg -argi-na numa-nda. bula-guna traina
show -show-show-IMPERF like-PRES. two -POS train
 galga-wa-l -da!
hurry-TR-ALT-PRES!
9. bula darg'-argi-na, bula dadla-ra wa -nda:
two show -show-IMPERF, two fear -CAUS want-PRES:
 "bula-ru mina-mina yamba-ya-lira?"
"two -ERG what-what ask -TR-POT?"
10. "maldja nama dimba -da nigi-bula, numa-nda,
"not breast tamper with-PRES this-two, like-PRES,
 maldja mara yadla gunda, bula nani-nda -gi!"
not hand close put Sp, two look-PRES-EMPH!"
11. mina-gu bula-ru nani-nda nama naFi -ma-na-na,
what-DAT two -ERG see -PRES breast fly up-Vb-NP-LOC,

maldja-di mara-ru manda nurga-nda
not -EMPH hand-INST grab Sp know -PRES

ḡani-ḡigu waya-nda.
eat -PURP want-PRES.

12. balgu nani-ḡigu naḡi-ma-naḡa njiba, bula-ru
flesh see -PURP fly -Vb-P IMPERF clothes, two -ERG

nurga-naḡa nḡi-ri ḡani-ḡi -baru arimba -ḡa,
know -P IMPERF this-ERG eat -PTC-FUT we INCL-ACC,

traina galga-nda yuga-nda!"
train hurry-PRES go -PRES!"

13. aḡali yuga-nda traina! bula traina-ḡa wanga -ḡa
at last go -PRES train! two train -LOC get up-PRES

ḡiga -ḡugu Maḡiri-rigu, Abigana-bula maldja waya-nda
return-PURP Marree-ALL, Afghan -two not like-PRES

traina, gamulu-ḡa yuga-nda Oodnadatta-rugu.
train, camel -LOC go -PRES Oodnadatta-ALL.

14. Abigana-bula maldja waya-nda train, they only wanted
Afghan -two not like-PRES
girl-friend.

Translation

- 1) It was at Alberrie Creek Railway station — nobody was there; only two women, Arabana women, — Jimmy's mother and Leslie's mother⁴ (they were just young girls then) — they were both waiting for the train.
- 2) The train was running late and so they sat down by that long black water-tank, they were sitting there waiting to return to Marree.
- 3) Two Afghans came past with their camels on their way to the dam (which is near the tank) to get water. They asked — they asked straight away! — 'Undo your clothes and show us your breasts — we want to see your breasts!'
- 4) The two of them showed their breasts.
- 5) The two Afghans liked what they saw: the girls had brownish-red bodies, not absolutely black, and they were both very plump.
- 6) The girls were frightened: 'they haven't touched us with their hands, they (just) want to eat us! When is this train coming — these whitefellows are making us show our breasts!'
- 7) 'Lift up your clothes so we can see your thighs — show'm leg!'

4. The reference is to two parallel cousins Jimmy and Leslie Russell, who have done much to help with work on both Arabana-Wanganjuru and Diyari (Austin 1981, Hercus 1971, Donaldson 1979). Jimmy Russell Waganjiri 'Many Mornings' was born near Marree about 1897 and is now permanently at the Hawker hospital suffering from the effects of a stroke; Leslie Russell Waganjula 'Two Mornings' was born near Marree about 1903 and died in 1975.

- 8) They went on showing their breasts, they showed and showed their thighs, oh how they went on showing and showing! If only their train hurried along!
- 9) They both went on showing, they were frightened: 'what will these two ask us next?'
10. 'They are not patting our breasts, these two, they are not even putting their hands anywhere near — they are just looking!'
- 11) 'Why do they keep looking at our breasts, while we've undone (our clothes) — they are not laying a hand on us: now we know they want to eat us'.
- 12) 'They made us undo our clothes so they could see our flesh'. They were quite sure now 'those two want to eat both of us, you and me! If only the train hurried and came!'
13. At last the train arrived. The two girls got on it to return to Marree. The two Afghans didn't want that train (to come). They went off with their camels to Oodnadatta.
14. The two Afghans didn't want that train (to come) — they only wanted a girlfriend.

Reflections on a television program

In late 1980 Mona Merrick saw a television program dealing with Afghan camel-drivers and the history of the Ghan railway line. It was one of the programs shown to mark the closure of the Ghan, and it caused her to reflect as follows:

Only praising old Afghan — no praise for Aborigine!

1. *traina-na* *ṇawi-ga* *yani -maḡa -agura:* *Abigana-ru*
LOC hear-PAST speak-RECIP-ANC: *Afghan -ERG*
gari-ri *ṇunda-agura,* *Abigana* *ṇigi waduwa* *-ṇda-agura,*
they-ERG show -ANC, *Afghan* *here travel about-Sp -ANC,*
Birdsville way *gari, yuga-ga* *Abigana-di,* *Abigana*
they go -PAST *Afghan -EMPH,* *Afghan*
gamulu-na *yuga-ṇda!*
camel -LOC *go -PRES!*
2. *maldja* *ṇaḷa* *gari-ri* *ṇunda-da* *agu* *ṇaṇi-ga*
not *Aborigine* *they-ERG* *show -PRES* *I ERG* *see -PAST*
ṇaḷa *warga-diya* *ṇaḷa* *yuga-ṇda,* *wargayi-ṇda*
Aborigine *work -EMPH!* *Aborigine* *go -PRES,* *work -PRES*
ḡiga -ṇda *gari,* *money* *ṇuga* *gari.*
return-PRES *they,* *much* *they.*
3. *This Hector Bossicot, his grandfather* *dandi* *-'guṇa*
mother's father-his
gagaga *ṇuḡi* *-maḡa* *Willie* *gamulu-na*
uncle *elder brother-having* *camel -LOC*
wargayi-ṇda, *gari* *yuga-ṇda* *wara -rugu?* *Finniṣsi-rigu*
work -PRES, *they go -PRES* *where-ALL?* *ALL*

diga -lugu gamulu-na Birdsville-rigu yuga-lugu.
return-HIST camel -LOC -ALL go -HIST.

4. MaḤiri-na wargayi-nda gamulu-na naḷa nuga
Marree-LOC work -PRES camel -LOC Aborigine many
wargayi-nda Abigana maldja gari-na -du nunda-da,
work -PRES Afghan not they-ACC-EMPH show -PRES,
Abigana malaru nunda-da.
Afghan however show -PRES.
5. anda guya baḇa wargayi-nda MaḤiri-na naḷa
I girl big work -PRES Marree-LOC Aborigine
gumbira mabu, Oodnadatta-naḇa mabu njuḇu, gari
dead mob, -EL mob also, they
wargayi-nda diga -nda Oodnadatta-rugu Abigana-ru -di
work -PRES return-PRES -ALL -ERG-EMPH
money gari-na nuni-nda!
they-ACC give-PRES!

Translation

Only praising old Afghan, no praise for Aborigine.

- 1) I heard them talking to each other on that train (in the television program). They only showed (pictures of) Afghans: the Afghans used to travel here and there, the Afghans went on the Birdsville track, the Afghans went with their camels!
- 2) They didn't show any (pictures of) Aborigines. But I've seen Aborigines working (with camels), the Aborigines used to go off working and come back and get lots of money.
- 3) Hector Bossicot's maternal grandfather and his two uncles, (mother's brothers), they worked with camels, and they went all over the place, they came back to Finnis Springs and went off to Birdsville.
- 4) Many Aborigines from Marree worked with camels, as did the Afghans, but they never showed these Aborigines (in the film), only the Afghans.
- 5) When I was a big girl a lot of Aborigines from Marree were working (with camels), they are all dead now, just like those from Oodnadatta; they used to work (with camels) and then go back to Oodnadatta: the Afghans just paid them money (but stayed in town)!

Sher Khan

Ben Murray, himself of part-Afghan descent, has a vast store of knowledge regarding the history and oral traditions of the Lake Eyre basin.⁵ He related a number of stories connected with Afghans, some of which are given here. His main languages are Waḡaḡuru and Diyari. The texts which follow are in Waḡaḡuru.

5. Austin 1981, forthcoming; Hercus 1977, 1980.

AFGHAN STORIES

The Indian dowry system was never popular among Moslems: they tended to have a system of bride-price, but on a minor scale in the form of relatively small presents in money or kind given by the groom. The Afghans, however, were not lacking in business acumen and the great scarcity of eligible girls in the north of South Australia led to an escalation of price far beyond what would have been the norm in India.

1. *Mūsā, he bought that girl off Salim Khan for £200!*
 uga-ru wiḥi-ga maḡabuḡa-ru Sher-khanda-ru
 me -ERG buy -PAST old man -ERG -ERG
 first time £150 gaḡna-gaḡi uga-ru ḡuni-ḡa.
 stone-bit(money) he -ERG give-IMPERF.
2. *(Salim Khan said) "aḡu 'na ḡuni-ra."*
 I ERG you ACC give-PUNC.
3. *Mūsā yuḡa-ḡa, uga-ru ḡuni-ra £200, "all right!"*
 go -PRES, he -ERG give-PUNC,
4. *ḡayi Sher Khan uga ḡaḡa-ḡura ḡaḡaḡaḡa Broken Hill*
 this he stay -CONT there
 ḡaḡu -ḡa ḡiḡa -ḡuḡu.
 there-EMPH return-HIST.
5. *(Somebody told him) "That girl, old Khan's daughter, Mūsā
 been buy'm for £200!"*
(Sher Khan said): "Oh!"
6. uga yuḡa-ḡa traina-ḡa; ḡari -ḡi -ḡiḡu traina-ḡa
 he go -PRES -LOC; descend-INC-HIST -LOC
 Mūsā-ḡi -ḡi! buḡa yaḡla wiḡji -ḡiḡu. Sher Khan
 -EMPH-EMPH! two close become-HIST,
 maḡa baḡa-ḡa (and shot him).
 hand hold-PRES
7. ḡaḡu -ḡu uga ḡiḡa -ḡa iḡḡaḡi-gaḡi-ḡa
 there-EMPH he go back-PRES Iḡḡaḡi-gaḡi-ḡa
 towards Mundowḡna ḡaḡu ḡiḡna-ra waḡni -ḡa
 there foot -CAUS follow-PRES
 ḡaḡa -ḡa, ḡiḡna-waḡa-buḡu ḡiḡna-ra.
 creek-LOC, foot -shoe -having foot -CAUS.
8. *Mūsā they put'm in pub, no hospital those days,*
 ḡurḡu-ma-luḡu minbaru uga-ḡa ḡaḡi-luḡu yuḡa-ḡa:
 good -Vb-PURP doctor he -ACC see -PURP go -PRES:
 oh ḡara-ḡara ḡurḡu awaḡa ḡaḡa wiḡji -ḡa ḡaḡuru.
 ah heart good that one alive become-IMPERF slowly.

9. yulja tracker didna-gari-li Jacky Nalbili-na
policeman foot -see -HAB Nalbili-PROP
bula-ru wadni -nda gala -rugu yuga-nda, ilina
two -ERG follow-PRES creek-ALL go -PRES, thus
nani-ligu Mundowdna siding yulja yani -nda
see -HIST policeman speak-PRES
"I'll ring from here yulja Farina-nana, your bloke
policeman -EL
is still going that way."
10. "uga nudi -rigu-l' -gi." yulja diga -nda
"he dead end-ALL -EMPH-EMPH policeman return-PRES
MaFiri-rigu.
Maree -ALL.
11. Tracker carry on, uga didna-gari-li. First double dam,
he foot -see -HAB
yuwu badni, yuga-lugu damu nuru -rugu. yuwu ganaṇaḍa,
man nothing, go -HIST dam other-ALL. man there,
bambi-li guda railway
pump -HAB water
12. (The tracker said) "Ah good day, see bloke come here?"
"Yeah." "ah! diyarugu?" "awaḍa." Farina yulja and
"ah! where to?" "there." policeman
tracker bula garga-nura damu-na.
both stand-CONT dam -LOC.
13. "Ah, good day! Can you do something about my camels? I come
a long way, they get away!" "You come to my place, I give
you tea, boil some egg for you."
14. uga-ru gada-ru boy "Help you look for camel!" Tracker
he -ERG send-NAR
say "Ai boss you got the right one, that's him aḍu
I ERG
nurga-ra uga-na waraḍa!"
know -PUNC he -ACC there!"
15. digi -ligu. Give'm a feed first. "Take your boot off"
take back-HIST.
didna 'guna widi-li. "I know you!" "You know me, boss?"
foot POS sore-EMPH.
"You're Sher Khan!"

AFGHAN STORIES

16. "I come back kill'm Mūsā, kill'm woman too."
 i|ina uga yanda "You might get ten or twenty years!"
 thus he speak Sp.
17. d|aylla-ŋa gudni-nda gada-ru uga-ŋa
 goal -LOC put -PRES send-NAR he -ACC
 Western Australia, warida. uga-guna time up, malga
 afar. he -POS not
 nurga-nda. He travel up and put a hat on, not like rag
 know -PRES.
 they used to, ⁶ d|iga -lugu uga Broken Hill, bagu
 return-HIST he empty
 danga-da, gaduru.
 sit -PRES quiet.
18. Some say "why don't you go see that Mūsā?" "No, me finished!"

Translation

- 1) Mūsā, he bought that girl off Salim Khan for £200!⁶ But first Sher Khan bought her from the old man. He gave Salim Khan £150.
- 2) (Salim Khan said to him): 'I give her to you'.
- 3) Then Mūsā came, and he gave Salim Khan £200 (and so Salim Khan said to him) 'all right (it's a deal)'.
- 4) Now Sher Khan was living in Broken Hill and he had gone back there.
- 5) (Somebody told him): 'That girl, old Khan's daughter, Mūsā been buy'm for £200!
 Sher Khan said 'Oh!'
- 6) He went to by train (to Marree), but Mūsā too had gone down to the train (he had heard that Sher Khan was likely to come and wanted to get away). The two came close to one another and Sher Khan moved his hand forward (and shot him).
- 7) He got away going along the Irgaḍi-gaḍina Creek towards Mundowdna (siding) there he walked along the creek-bed, although he had boots (he took them off and) he went barefoot.
- 8) As for Mūsā they put him in the pub to fix him up (there was no hospital in those days): a doctor came to have a look at him and he said: 'his heart is good and so he will slowly recuperate'.
- 9) That Marree policeman and his tracker, the one who looks at footprints, Jackie Nalbili (a Simpson desert Wanganjuru) they both followed (Sher Khan) along the creek till they could see Mundowdna siding. Then the

6. This sum represented about 4 years wages for the average working man.

- policeman said 'I'll make a call from here to the Farina⁷ policeman, your bloke is still going that way'.
- 10) (The tracker said): 'Yes he'll finish up there (at Farina)'. The policeman returned to Marree.
 - 11) The tracker went on, he was watching the tracks. At the first double dam (north of Farina) there was nobody. He went to the other dam (right next to the railway line). A man was there who had the job of pumping water for the railway.
 - 12) (The tracker said): 'Ah, good day, see bloke come here?'
 'Yeah' (said the railway man).
 'Ah, where did he go to?'
 'Just over there'.
 The Farina policeman arrived and both he and the tracker stood by the dam (in front of Sher Khan).
 - 13) (Sher Khan said) 'Ah, good day! Can you do something about my camels? I've come a long way, they got away from me!' (The policeman said): 'You come to my place, I give you tea, boil some egg⁸ for you'.
 - 14) (He signalled the tracker, pretending) to send him out: 'He'll help you look for the camels'.
 The tracker said (secretly): 'Ai boss, you've got the right one, that's him all right, I know that's him just there'.
 - 15) The policeman took Sher Khan back with him (to Farina). He gave him a meal first. Then he said 'take your boots off!' His feet were all blistered. 'I know you' (said the policeman).
 'You know me boss?'
 'You're Sher Khan' (said the policeman).
 - 16) 'I come back kill'm Mūsā, kill'm woman too' — that's the sort of thing (Sher Khan) started saying.
 'You might get ten or twenty years (in gaol)' (said the policeman).
 - 17) He put Sher Khan in gaol and he was sent far away to Western Australia. When the time was up (for him to be released) he didn't want to think any more about it (about that matter of Mūsā and Salim Khan's daughter). He travelled up (from Western Australia) and he put a hat on, not a rag (turban) like the Afghans used to.⁹ He went back to Broken Hill, and he stayed there, without doing anything further about it, he stayed there quietly.
7. Farina 'the great granny of the north' was apparently named facetiously (Fuller 1975:82), but at the turn of the century it was still a thriving small township serving the railway, trade, and the pastoral industry. A high proportion of the population was Afghan. It is now a ghost town and even the main road has been diverted away from it. For many years Ben Murray was the only inhabitant: he was quite happy because he could always 'jump on the rattler' and visit friends and relations at the only other settlements in the area, Marree (60 km), Lyndhurst (30 km) and even Port Augusta. But now (since November 1980) the 'Ghan' no longer passes through and Ben has moved to Marree.
 8. The policeman was aware of the fact that Afghans would not eat meat offered to them because the beasts would not have been traditionally slaughtered.
 9. Ceasing to wear a turban was a highly symbolic act by which Sher Khan broke away from his past life as an Afghan.

- 18) Some people said to him: 'Why don't you go to see that Mūsā?'
(But he answered) 'No, me finished'.

'Azim Khan, 'Archie Kangaroo'

The events related in this story took place around 1910-1912 when Ben Murray as a young man was working a camel train for the Lutheran mission at Killalpannina. When picking up loads at Marree he often called on 'Azim Khan, as did many other camel drivers. 'Azim Khan was in the employ of Abdul Qadir, who was the wealthiest of the Marree Afghans. Qadir had leased land in the area, and had planted date palms; he also kept goats.

1. *Archie Kangaroo - he call himself that, he was really 'Azim*

Khan. nuba-buṛu danga-da. uga-ru magabuḍa-ru
wife-having sit -PRES. he -ERG old man -ERG

loadaga wanba-da-ru Froma-rugu, mayuga wandi-nda
carry-Ṣp-Nar ALL, master wait -REFL

warana-gu.

what -DAT.

2. *Abigana nuru from Broken Hill Wasīm Khan uga*
Afghan other he

yuga-ṇḍ'-inaru alaḍa gamulu-ra.
go -Ṣp -PLUP ready camel -CAUS.

3. *uga-guṇa nannygoata yagada-ṇa danga-ṇura gaṇaṇaḍa*
he -POS yard -LOC stay -CONT there

Maḥiri-ṇa Abdul Qadir down the bore-drain biḍa-lugu
Marree-LOC kill-PURP

ḍaṇi-ligu.

eat -PURP.

4. *magabuḍa yuga-ṇda loada-buṛu, ḍadna-ṇda loading*
old man go -PRES -having, leave-PRES

gaṇaṇaḍa, where the bore-drain is, ḍidna-ra -ḍu
there, foot -CAUS-EMPH

ḍiga -ga to store gaṇaṇaḍa ḍiga -lugu maḍi
return-PAST there return-HIST string

mani-ligu he was short of twine.

get -PURP

5. *wanda-ḍiga -lugu, uga ḍiga -ṇura nannygoata*
run -return-HIST, he return-CONT

gaṇaṇaḍa yuga-ṇa thirty-two uga ḍiga-ga
there go -IMPERF he return

wandi-ṇda-lugu-l -gi!

wait -Ṣp -PURP-EMPH-EMPH!

6. anda naridji -ya-nu anari gamulu-na, mission camel.
I come down-Tr-REL this way camel -LOC
"ah, mayi diyara uga?" nuba uga-guna yani-nda,
"oh, now then, where he?" wife he -POS say -PRES
"ungulu wabayi-nda?" "He must have left early, he left
"when finish-PRES?"
a load."
7. uga late diga -nda, djarḍa uga-guna gubmari-nuga.
he return-PRES, shirt he -POS blood -much.
"Oh, what's wrong with your shirt?" "I been killing goat
down there, boss's place, kill'm couple of goats,"
uga yani-nda.
he say -PRES.
- 8-9. (Told in English.)
10. "gudi-ḷigu gaṛu -gu bangi-na gudni-ḷigu gumbira.
"pull-HIST there-ALL side -LOC put -HIST, dead.
ah diga -ḷugu gaṛu." They might come with drag
oh return-HIST there."
digi -la -gudi-ḷigu.
take back-ALT-pull-PURP.
11. uga yanda: "ah yuga-nda nani-ḷigu! yambayi:
he say SP: "oh go -PRES see -PURP! ask:
- 12-13. (Told in English.)
14. iḷina yanda, waḷu widji -na diga -nda
thus speak SP, jealous become-PRES. I return-PRES
Mission load mani-ḷigu, diga -nda Killalpannina,
get -PURP, return-PRES
maḷga yada nawi-ḷigu.
not more hear-HIST.

Translation

- 1) Archie Kangaroo, that's what he called himself — his name was really 'Azim Khan. He was a married man. One day he took a (camel) load out to the Frome (crossing)¹⁰ and waited there for his master Abdul Qadir for some reason or other.

10. The Frome crossing on the Birdsville track is only 6 kilometres from Marree — the bed of the Frome is the only area with small timber and bushes in an otherwise totally desolate landscape. There is always water about, on account of the bore.

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- 2) Another Afghan Wasīm Khan from Broken Hill — he had gone there because he was ready to set off back home with his camels.
- 3) Abdul Qadir — he lived in Marree — he had goats¹¹ there in a yard down by the bore-drain: they were kept there to be (ultimately) killed and eaten.
4. Wasīm Khan went there (to the yard) with his load, he left his load there where the bore-drain is and went back on foot to the Marree store; he wanted to go and get some string because he was short of twine.
- 5) He came hurrying back to where the goats were, he almost got there on his way back, just to find a thirty-two (calibre rifle) waiting for him.
- 6) I came down this way (to Marree) with camels, mission camels. (I went to 'Azim Khan's place) 'Where is he right now?' I asked. '(I don't know) when he will finish work', his wife said. 'He must have finished early', I said, 'because he left his load at the Frome'.
- 7) He arrived late, with his shirt covered in blood. (I asked), 'Oh, what's wrong with your shirt?' 'I been killing goat there, down there, boss's place, kill'm couple of goats', he said.
- 8) A young bloke who had come from Broken Hill that morning he went straight there where his mate Wasīm Khan had left his load. 'Afghan lying there on the other side of the road! It's him, my friend Wasim Khan'. He went back to Marree to tell the *yulja* (policeman). The *yulja* locked him up (in gaol as a suspect).
- 9) 'We'll get a tracker' (he said). 'We'll get Anaḍa Johnny'. The tracker said: 'I seen'm track. I know this fellow, he's shepherd's goat for Qadir. He been here, this bush, shoot'em from here, thirty-two'.
- 10) 'He pulled'm from here to over there and put'm down, dead, by the side (of the road)'. 'They might come with a drag (i.e. a horse-drawn vehicle) to pull up and take back (the body)', the policeman said.
- 11) He (the policeman) said as he was going 'I'm going to see him ('Azim Khan)'. He asked:
- 12) 'Where are his clothes?' 'That's where he left'm, he left and I never watched! I did know there was something wrong — look more like human blood'. That's what I said.
- 13) He ('Azim Khan) was jealous. (When caught he said): 'Wasīm Khan reckon he was going back to my place, but he never come near me, he went to the store, he had a set on me'.
- 14) That's what he said, he was jealous.¹² I went to take the mission load, I went back to Killalpannina, and I never heard anything further.

11. The word 'nannygoat' is used as a general term for 'goat' in Aboriginal English: this change of meaning was brought about by the fact that only relatively few billygoats were kept.

12. 'Azim Khan felt that his hospitality was being slighted: being of lowly social standing (as an employee of Abdul Qadir) he was very sensitive.

The aged Afghan

The events in this story took place around 1933-34 while Ben Murray was working on the vast and desolate Murnpeowie station which comprises the country immediately to the north and north-east of the Flinders Ranges: the ranges fall away suddenly to a treeless plain going down to Lake Blanche. Only small hills near the aptly named Mt Hopeless rise prominently out of the plain. Many Aborigines were employed on Murnpeowie including Mick McLean and Murtee Johnny.¹³ Ben Murray spent much of his time on the most remote parts of the station, checking the boundary fence. Mulligan Spring, where he came across the old Afghan, is not far from Mt Hopeless, and close to Lake Callabonna. The story is of particular interest as it shows the tenacity with which the older generation of Afghans adhered to their beliefs.

1. magabuḍa ḡanga-libaṇa Maṇbi -awi -ṇa; mayi ḡanda -ḡu
old man stay -ANC Pigeon-water-LOC; then things-EMPH
 gari-ṇa warba-ru gamuli-ri igi -ṇa Gudnaḡawa-ṇa
they-ACC carry-NAR camel -INST drive-PRES Kanowana -PROP,
 igi -ṇa ldniminga -rugu gamuli-ṇa Gudnari-ṇa
drive-PRES Innamincka-ALL camel -LOC Cooper -LOC
 baḡa -libaṇa aṇari Maḡiri-rigu ṇabamaḡi -rigu
travel-ANC this way Maree -ALL Nappa Merry-ALL
 station Yawarawarga Yandruwanda-ḡuṇa waḡḡu -ṇa.
Yawarawarga Yandruwanda-POS country-LOC.
2. You know them explorers Burke and them ḡaṇaḡaḡa wandja-ḡa
there die -PRES
 gari ḡiga -ga malju-mayi badni -ṇa -l' -gi
they return-PAST food nothing-LOC-EMPH-EMPH
 gari-ṇa igi -li yuwu -ru mani-libaṇa, awaḡa
they-ACC bring-HAB Aborigine-ERG get -ANC, there
 gari wandja-ṇa yadla. magabuḍa Abigana uriya.
they die close. old man Afghan ancient.
3. uga ḡada -libaṇa, malaru ḡiga -ṇa ḡanga-lugu
he travel-ANC, but return-PRES stay -PURP
 Maṇbi -awi -ṇa ḡanga-ḡa, gamuli uga-ḡuṇa yuga-lug'
Pigeon-water-LOC sit -PRES, camel he -POS go -HIST
 ayi! madla-ḡi -y -aṇu. Seven uga-ḡuṇa gamuli.
eh! bad -become-Gl-REL. he -POS camel.
4. mayi anda ḡaṇaḡaḡa ḡaḡa -ṇaḡa -ḡa anda-ḡu,
then I there travel-CONT S-PRES I -EMPH,
 ḡaṇa-ḡu malga-ḡu wargadi-ṇa, uga ḡanga-ḡa
man -EMPH not -EMPH work -PRES, he sit -PRES
 baḡu -l' -gi
empty-EMPH-EMPH.

13. See Hercus 1980.

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5. uga diga -ga, nulba widji -ga uga madabuḍa
he return-PAST, ill become-PAST he old man
Abigana, nuyu danga-da uga anda yuga-ga garu -guda
Afghan, one stay -PRES he. I go -PAST there-ALL
Mulligan Spring Maṇbi -awi -ṇa.
Pigeon-water-LOC.
6. uga yuga-ga Maṇbi -rigu malju mayi maṇi-ligu,
he go -PAST Pigeon-ALL, food get -PURP,
mayi ganaṇaḍa diga -ṇda danga-lugu; anda yuga-ga
then there return-PRES stay -PURP; I go -PAST
fence-ru uga-na ṇaṇi-ligu.
-ABL he -ACC see -PURP.
7. aḍu ṇaṇi-ga warbi-nanga -ṇura, ilina yanda: "Oh me,
I ERG see -PAST lie -CONT S-CONT, thus speak:
I thought I'd die, got nothing to eat! Me sit down here."
8. danga-da uga cocky wandi-nda, "cocky come, me get'm
sit -PRES he wait -REFL,
gun, we want'm two, brother," bargulu biḍa-lugu,
two hit -PURP,
waḍṇi-ligu.
cook -PURP.
9. anda yani -ṇda: "ah ibi gari diga -ṇda
I speak-PRES: "ah sheep they return-PRES
Gunawanda Springa-ṇa ibi-ibi!" "Which way you come?
-LOC sheep
Water in spring?" "I come from that way, guḍa bunda-garu!
water drink-PLUP!
10. "Ah, me go!" anda yuga-ṇda, uga-inda wandi-wandi-nda
I go -PRES, he -DAT wait -wait -REFL
ibi biḍa-lugu he'd be coming with a camel, camel been
sheep kill-PURP
watering there, wandi-nda alaḍa-na biḍa-lugu.
wait -REFL ready-EMPH kill-PURP.
- 11-12. (Told in English.)
13. anda diga -ṇda manager ṇaṇi-ligu awaḍa ṇaṇi-ga
I return-PRES see -PURP there see -PAST
"Old fellow's done, nulba widji -ṇda."
sick become-PRES."

14. ani yuga-nda mani-na-diga -lugu, Manbi -rigu
 we EXCL go -PRES get -Sp-return-PURP, Pigeon-ALL
 digi -ligu uga-na.
 take back-PURP he -ACC.
15. "Which way you want to go" uga-na yambaga-na.
 he -ACC ask -PRES.
 "Adelaide." Adelaidi-rigu, danga-lugu gananaḍa.
 -ALL, sit -PURP there.
16. minbaru nani-na, gananaḍa wandja-ḍa.
 doctor see -PRES, there die -PRES.
17. ilina gari-ri gudni-nda, uga ilina warbi-nanga -ḍa
 thus they-ERG put -PRES, he thus lie -CONT S-PRES
 muyu-wanga-na undu nani-ligu muyu widni-nura,
 sun -rise -LOC you ERG see -PURP sun set -CONT,
 didna gudnangari, gaḍabu didnangara.
 foot south, head north.
18. unba yuga-ga Farina cemetery gari-na gananaḍa
 you go -PAST they-ACC there
 nani-ligu ilina anari anari nani-gura Mrs Mahomet,
 see -PURP thus this way this way see -ANC
 aluwa uga-guna, Musā, all north-south, at Marree too.
 child she-POS

Translation

- 1) The old man was staying on Murnpeowie; he used to cart things driving camels to Kanowana, driving them on to Innamincka, and travelling by camel along the Cooper down this way, to Marree, and then up again to Nappa Merry station (all over) Yawarawarga and Yandruwanda country.
- 2) You know the explorers Burke and them, they died there (near Nappa Merry). They went back there and they didn't have any food at all. The Aborigines were getting them some and used to bring some for them; they (Burke and the others) died very close to that place (Nappa Merry). That old man (who used to take camels up to Nappa Merry) he was really ancient.
- 3) He had been travelling about everywhere, but now he had come back to stay on Murnpeowie, he just sat there, and his camels just walked around, yes! He had become a sick man. He had seven camels.
- 4) Then I came there as I was travelling around (working on the netting fence). I was a grown man then. He wasn't working, he was just sitting there, doing nothing.
- 5) He had come back and he had been taken ill, the old Afghan. He was there all alone. I came there to Mulligan Spring, on Murnpeowie.

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- 6) He used to go to Murnpeowie Station to collect supplies of food and then come back to stay (near the Mulligan Spring). I went from the (dingo) fence to see him.
- 7) I saw him lying there, and he spoke like this: 'Oh me, I thought I'd die, got nothing to eat! Me sit down here'.
- 8) He sat there, waiting for cockatoos to come 'cocky come, me get'm gun, we want'm two, brother', (he was waiting there) to kill and cook two cockatoos.
- 9) I spoke like this 'There are sheep around Gunuwanda Spring, they are coming back there all the time'. 'Which way you come? Water in spring?' 'I came that way, and I had a drink of water (from the spring)'.
- 10) 'Ah, me go!' I went and waited and waited for him so that we could kill a sheep, he was going to come with a camel — his camels had been drinking there (at the spring), I was waiting ready to kill a sheep.
- 11) 'Me shoot'm cut'm throat and you carry the meat, I'll have plenty now', he said, 'but no, Sayyid (a Syrian hawker) didn't come, cut'm throat' — they pray when they cut'm throat, Afghan way.
- 12) (So he started saying): 'Me eat'm if you cut'm throat you say same as me Bisamala wala akuba
[i.e. Bismallāh wallahu Akbar 'in the name of Allāh who is great'].
'All right, but you'd better kill for yourself after this when I'm not here', I said.
- 13) I went to see the manager (at Murnpeowie station); I saw him there and said: 'That old fellow is done for, he's become very sick'.
- 14) We went to get him, to bring him back to Murnpeowie station.
- 15) 'Which way do you want to go?', the manager asked him. 'Adelaide', he said. He went to Adelaide to stay there.
- 16) He saw the doctors there, and he died there.
- 17) They put them into the grave like this, they lie like this, that from the sunrise side they look towards the sunset; their feet are to the south, their head to the north.¹⁴
- 18) You've been to Farina cemetery, you've seen them there lying this way, you've seen them, Mrs Mahomet and her children, and Mūsā, all north-south, and at Marree too.

Comments on the customs of the Afghans

a) *Mona Merrick and Arthur Warren*

The following remarks were made at various stages in conversations with Mona Merrick and her brother Arthur Warren. These remarks reflect what were considered the most interesting features of the behaviour of Afghans. Frequent topics of conversation were food, money and the cruel practice of over-loading camels.

14. 'The graves of the Muhammadans are so dug as to allow the body to lie with its face towards Mecca, consequently in India they were dug from north to south' (Hughes 1935, s.v. 'graves'). It is interesting to note that the Afghans simply carried on this Indian tradition in Australia and did not adapt it in the southern hemisphere so that the body should face Mecca.

1. *They used to eat chapatty. Then we start eat chapatty.*
maga banda maba-nda, maga-bila nuga, waya nigi
fire big make- , fire-coal much, wire there
gudni-nda walgarara ala damper wadni-nda. Abigana-ru
put -PRES light very cook -PRES. Afghan -ERG
nunda-ga
show -PAST.
2. *gari curry wadni-nda, curry waru -nana madlangi,*
they cook -PRES, long ago-EL bad,
maga-buru mana-daga -li, dali burda-burda-li.
fire-having mouth-pierce-HAB, tongue bite -bite -HAB.
3. *Abigana maldja danda bagu -ru nuni-li, Salaam*
Afghan not things empty-ABL give-HAB
mani -gu mani mani-ligu, mani -gu wadlara.
money-DAT money get -PURP, money-DAT hungry.
4. *mani namba-ga gari-ri, walgi-nda-ya-nu*
money bury -PAST they-ERG, sick -Sp -Tr-PLUP
gambabina banda-na, gambabina shuta-ma-nda, dugulu
camp-oven big -LOC, camp-oven shut -Vb-PRES, hole
baga-nda-lugu namba-da-lugu. anandara
dig -Sp -HIST bury -Sp-HIST. we mother and us children
badni nani-ga waba-nda-na.
nothing see -PAST hunt-Sp -NP.
5. *gari-guna nuba maldja nigi danga-nura, gari mani-nura*
they-POS wife not here stay -CONT, they take-CONT
niginda wadlu -nana uljula uljula wafu uljula
here country-EL woman, woman white woman
waga mani-nda.
black take-PRES.
6. *bundju gari-ri wadili bida-nda, ungu djindja-da*
meat they-ERG own kill-PRES, throat cut -PRES
Abigana-ru undu bida-nda gari-ri maldja dani-ra,
Afghan -ERG you ERG kill-PRES they-ERG not eat -PUNC,
gari-ri ungu djindja-da nannygoata, budluga,
they-ERG throat cut -PRES bullock
rabbiti, mulabara gudna-djildi gari-ri ungu
rock pigeon, waterhen they-ERG throat
djindja-da: *they didn't worry about fish, they got their*
cut -PRES:
throats cut anyhow! Ha!

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7. yaguda bargulu bargulu gudni-nda gamulu mudlu-wa!bu-na,
bag two two put -PRES camel back -bone -LOC,
gamulu badni wani -nda luda-ru banda-ru
camel nothing stand-PRES load-INST great-INST
garba-agura.
crush-ANC.

b) Comments by Ben Murray.

Because of their itinerant lifestyle many of the Afghans took their personal responsibilities lightly and some completely ignored their part-Aboriginal children. This is brought home by Ben Murray.

1. anguna anja Bejah, ilina gari: never look after us
my father thus they:
when we were young, bagu ani danga-ga.
empty we EXCL sit -PAST.
2. uga malga MaFiri-na, roada-na gada -libana,
he not Marree -LOC, -LOC travel-ANC,
undu nurga-ra uga-guna story, Northern Territory,
you ERG know -PUNC he -POS
Mt Isa gari yuga-nda.
they go -PRES.
3. dadlu gari yuga-nda : Jack Bejah, I call'm brother,
empty they go -PRES
uga yuga-nda diga -lugu, wandja-diga -lugu,
he go -PRES return-HIST, die -return-HIST,
dropped dead on the Marree racecourse. I was already
working camel when he, my father, got married ... (to a
part Afghan woman).
4. gari-ri namba-na Farina-na dugulu бага-na dini,
they-ERG bury -PAST Farina-LOC hole dig -PRES tin,
milk-tin, coffee tin gudni-nda wana -gi -di!
put -PRES night-EMPH-EMPH!
magabuda MaFiri-na that old Khan magabuda-ru
old man Marree-LOC old man -ERG
namba-ga ilina nayi toilet, washing clothes line,
bury -PAST thus here
fence-post gananađa namba-ga : "Can't keep'm in my
there bury -PAST:
house, everybody looking" guldji banda
pebble(i.e. money) big
gold too, can't find'm now.

Translation

a) *Mona Merrick and Arthur Warren:*

- 1) They used to eat chapatties. Then we started eating chapatties. We used to make a big fire, with a lot of hot coals, and we put some wire netting on top, and cooked some really light dough. The Afghans showed us how to do it.
- 2) They used to cook curry. In the olden days that curry was horrible, it burnt like fire, it cut into your mouth and it bit your tongue!
- 3) An Afghan will never give anything away for nothing. 'Salaam' they say for money, they want to get hold of money, they're hungry for that money.
- 4) They used to bury their money: if they got sick they'd put the money in a camp-oven, they shut the camp-oven, dug a hole and buried it. My mother and my brothers and sisters, we were always looking for it, but we never found any.
- 5) Because they didn't have their own wives with them, they took women belonging to this country, white women and black women they took.
- 6) They always killed their own meat; they cut the animal's throat. If you killed meat for them they wouldn't eat it. They cut the throats of goats, bullocks, rabbits, rock pigeons and even waterhens: they didn't worry about cutting the throat of fish, because they've had their throats cut anyhow, ha!
- 7) They usually put four bales on a camel, on its back so that the camel couldn't even stand up (unaided), it was pressed down by that enormous load.

b) *Comments by Ben Murray:*

- 1) My father was Bejah;¹⁵ that's how they were: they never looked after us when we¹⁶ were young, we had nothing.
 - 2) He was never in Marree, he was always on the road, he travelled about, you know the story, they went to the Northern Territory, they went to Mt Isa.
 - 3) But it didn't do them any good: Jack Bejah, I called him 'brother'¹⁷ he went off (with father) he came back, he came back to die; he dropped dead on the Marree racecourse, I was already working with camels when my father got married . . . (to a part-Afghan woman).
 - 4) The buried (their money) at Farina, they dug a hole and put (the money) in a tin, a (powdered) milk tin, or a coffee tin, and they put it in the hole at dead of night. An old man at Marree, that old Khan, he also buried (his money). They buried it there under toilets, clothes lines and under fence-posts: 'Can't keep it in my house, everybody looking' (the old man said). It was big money and gold too, but nobody can find it now.
15. Bejah Dervish was a most highly esteemed and deeply religious man. When he retired from camel driving he lived at Marree. He had been a member of the Calver-Wells expedition of 1896 in Western Australia and distinguished himself by saving Wells when he got lost. A photo of Bejah and a lively description of this fine old man were published by Farwell (1950).
16. Ben Murray is referring not to himself and his brothers, but also to other children of Afghan camel drivers.
17. He was a half-brother, of part European descent, who had been acknowledged by Bejah.

Travelling with an Afghan camel string

This account was given by Johnny Reece of Marree, the oldest Wangganuru man now living. He was born in about 1901 at *Gudnugu*, Koonakoo waterhole, on Alton Downs, in Nulubulu country: his parents had just left the Simpson Desert. He fled from the cruel conditions at Alton Downs and in about 1915 went to Andrewilla, where there was a large Aboriginal camp. They were mainly Wangganuru people who lived there, but also remnants of the Yaluyandi, Yawarawarga, Garaṅuru and Namani. In 1917-1918 he came down the track to Marree. He was at first frightened of the Afghans, then worked for them. He clearly remembers how hard the Afghans — and he — had to work. He describes a journey in which they averaged 35 miles a day up the Birdsville track and beyond; this was quite normal for a camel-string.

1. magidi-bu^{fu} Abigana gari, gadji-nda wadlu-na
gun -having Afghan they, turn -PRES land -LOC
bigi-bigi bardjana magidi-ri wadni-nda, anda
pig all gun -INST hunt -PRES, I
dadlara ana nju^{du} wadni-lira bigi-bigi wili.
frightened me too hunt -POT pig like.
2. "Azim Amira anduna mayuda; didna-ra yuga-ga,
my master; foot -CAUS go -PAST,
yuga-nda luda yigi -ligu Kidmani-gu, didna-ra
go -PRES load shift-PURP -DAT, foot -CAUS
yuga-nda gamulu gudi-nda, nandarada-na-nda gamulu.
go -PRES camel pull-PRES, tired -Sp-PRES camel.
3. ani -guna nura Clayton, Claytona-ru yuga-ga Etadunna,
we EXCL-POS camp -ABL go -PAST
muyu nyu-^u-na yuga-naru Manurani Manurani -ri
day one -LOC go -PLUP Mungeranie, Mungeranie-ABL
Garawa^{da} gudnala-nda awanda-gi, Garawa^{da} -ru
Kirrawadinna sleep -PRES there -EMPH, Kirrawadinna-ABL
yuga-ga Waluru -rugu
go -PAST Mt Gason-ALL.
4. gamulu gudi-nda didna-ra Gandirida-rugu yuga-ga
pull-PRES foot -CAUS Gandirida-ALL go -PAST
Gandirida-ru Nalarawili-rigu muyu nyu-^u-na gudnala-nda
Gandirida-ABL Andrewilla-ALL day one -LOC sleep -PRES
yuga-nda -gi wana-wana Digiri -rigu, yuga-lugu
go -PRES-EMPH early Dickeree-ALL, go -HIST
Digiri -ri WiFari -rigu
Dickeree-ABL Birdsville-ALL.

5. muyu gudnala-nda, anda malga narabila-nda
day sleep -PRES, I not rest -PRES
 Dandabidi-rigu Dandabidi-ri Duri -rigu, awanda-ru
Bluff -ALL Bluff -ABL Durie-ALL, there -ABL
Mt Leonard.
6. gaļa wandila-nda wadlu warida -rugu Monkira-rugu.
creek follow -PRES country distant-ALL -ALL.
 gamulu-na diga -nda nigi MaFiri-rigu danga-da
camel -LOC return-PRES here Marree-ALL stay -PRES
niginda.
hereabouts.
7. anda nuyu, bargulu Abigana, mayuda, dirga-guna, bula
I one, two Afghan, master, oven -POS, two
 yuga-nda, bula wanba-da
go -PRES, two ride -PRES.
8. adu wad -ma-nda gari-na madli-ma-nda
I take off-Vb-PRES they-ACC cool -Vb-PRES
 mudlu-walbu, gari madli-na nuba-na-nda gari
back -bone, they cool -LOC lie -Sp-PRES, they
 marga-nda njinda dani-ra, gabulu gudni -nda
crawl-PRES grass eat -PUNC, hobble put on-PRES
 ildingildinga gudni -nda nawi-na irdja-irdja-ra
bell put on-PRES hear-NP noise-noise-CAUS
 yuga-nura.
go -CONT.
9. gulbari-li dani-nda curry, gudnala muyu widni-nura
three -ADV eat -PRES sleep sun set -CONT
 wana -li wanga-na, yuga-nda nura-li, malga
early-ADV rise -NP, go -PRES hard-ADV, not
 naFabili-na niginda naFabili-na, fifty camel, loading
rest -NP hereabouts rest -NP
Kidman stores.
10. Camel get away from us too, gamulu gari dada-na
camel they send-PRES
 Waluru -ru yuga-nda ani yuga-nda all day,
Mt Gason-ABL go -PRES we EXCL go -PRES
 narga -na digi -na, uga yani-nda: gamulu
evening-LOC take back-NP, he say -PRES:
 uga yuga-nda warida-rugu malg' anda prayer
he go -PRES far -ALL not I
 wigi -rinaru.
become-PLUP.

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Translation

- 1) The Afghans always carried guns, they travelled around the country shooting down all the pigs, I was scared in case they shot me down too like a pig.
- 2) 'Azim Amīr was my first boss. I went on foot, taking a load up for Kidman.¹⁸ I walked and walked leading the camels, but when I got tired I rode on a camel for a while.
- 3) Our (first) overnight camp (out from Marree) was Clayton. From Clayton we went to Etadunna in one day and then went to Mungeranie. From Mungeranie we went to Kirrawadinna waterhole. We slept there overnight and went on to Mt Gason.
- 4) I led the camels, travelling on foot, and we went to Gandirīḡa waterhole (just 4 miles on from Clifton Hills), and from Gandirīḡa waterhole we went to Andrewilla. We slept there for one night and setting off early we went to Dickeree waterhole (near Pandie Pandie). We went on from Dickeree waterhole to Birdsville.
- 5) We slept there for one night, I never had a chance to have a bit of a rest there. We went to the Bluff (now Rosebeth Station), from the Bluff to Mt Leonard.
- 6) We followed the creek, the Diamantina to that distant land, to Monkira. We then came back by camel to Marree and stayed around here.
- 7) I was on my own, and there were two Afghans, the boss and the 'oven-man' (the cook). They both walked and rode (at intervals).
- 8) I was the one who took off the loads and let those camels cool down their backs. They lay around in the cool of the evening, they moved about slowly eating grass. I put hobbles on them and I put bells on them so that we could hear the noise of them moving about.
- 9) The three of us then ate curry and went to sleep as the sun set, so as to rise at first dawn. We went all in one go, we were not to have a chance to rest anywhere on the way, we only had a rest when we got back here to Marree. We had fifty camels, laden with Kidman's stores.
- 10) A camel got away from us too. They had let the camel go at Mt Gason. We went all day looking for it and got it back at night time. He ('Azim Amīr) said: 'That camel went a long way off because (that night) I hadn't said my prayers'.

Syrian Traders

Muslim and Christian traders¹⁹ from 'Syria', i.e. Syria and Lebanon, came to the north of South Australia much later than the Afghan camel drivers. Most of them came in the first decades of the present century, particularly before World War I, in order to escape from Turkish oppression. They were classified as 'Abigana' by Arabana people who were nevertheless well aware of

18. Sir Sydney Kidman (1857-1935) was a major owner of pastoral properties, particularly in central Australia (see Idriess 1935).

19. From various comments made it appears that the cruel Syrian and Sayyid Ali were both Muhammadans, while Mansoor was a Christian.

the difference between these new 'Abigana' and the camel drivers; it was the commercial-mindedness of these traders — greater even than the commercial-mindedness of the old-style Afghans — that above all caught the attention of Arabana people. Mona Merrick and her brother Arthur Warren recalled the days in the twenties when these traders visited Finniiss Springs. The traders fulfilled a valuable function: they brought 'luxury' goods that did not form part of the usual provisions.

a) *The Cruel Syrian*

1. Abigana wadlu nuru -nana mugadi guba-guba, uga yuga-ga
 Afghan country other-El hat little, he go -PAST
 Finniissi -na soap, handkerchief comb sella-ma-nda:
 Finniiss Springs-LOC -Vb-PRES:
 "I got nice little comb for hair-style."
2. gamulu nuyu-na uga yuga-ga. ani wiFi-ga
 camel one -LOC he go -PAST. we EXCL buy -PAST
 handkerchief, soap, comb, one shilling.
3. gamulu-na ganjari banda gudni-ga, railway chain.
 camel -LOC chain big put -PAST
 gamulu widi nuga ganjari banda gudi-nda didna-na.
 camel sore many chain large drag-PRES foot -LOC.
4. wagaJa gamulu-gugu-na danga-agura mudlu-waibu-na,
 crow camel -back-LOC sit -ANC back -bone -LOC,
 budluga njuri gugu-waFi, wagaJa-ru widi dani-na-na
 bullock skin back-cover, crow -ERG sore eat -NF-LOC
 gamulu saddla-na widi-buFu mudlu-waibu.
 camel saddle-LOC sore-having back -bone.
5. diga -na MaFiri-nana yulja -ru "gana
 return-IMPFERF Maree -EL policeman-ERG him
 mani-ga -du galba-ra -gi "gana gamulu naru -na :
 take-PAST-EMPH shut -PUNC-EMPH him camel manner-LOC:
 "Cruelty to animals!"
6. gamulu maldja buFa-ga yulja -ru mani-ga.
 camel not die -PAST policeman-ERG take-PAST.

b) *Mansur.*

1. Mansur nurgu aJa, danga mugadi, photo mani-ga;
 good very, clothes, hat, take-PAST;
 anda guya galgawalda nani-ga. waru Mansur
 I girl sometimes see -PAST. long ago
 mugadi, njiba wiFa-nda.
 hat, dress sell-PRES.

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2. *working-man* danga-ga Beltana-na Mansūr.
 sit -PAST -LOC
shearing time yuga-ga uga mani nuga mani-li,
 go -PAST *he* *money* *much* *get* -HAB,
anandara njiba, mugaḍi, danda
we(our mother and us children) *dress,* *hat,* *clothes,*
comb wiḥi-nda, anduna abidji-ri djaḍa wiḥi-ga.
 buy -PRES, *my* *father-ERG* *shirt* *buy* -PAST.
3. *working man* nuba mani badni anduna abidji-ri
 wife *money* *nothing* *my* *father-ERG*
 njiba wiḥi-la -lugu.
 dress *buy* -ALT-HIST.
4. *Mansūr motorcar* baḍa, njiba nurgu.
 big, *dress* *nice.*

c) Sayyid Ali.

1. *Sayyid Ali had a van, two camels dragging it.*
2. *Sayyid Ali* mani baḍa, ḡidna-walga njiba, mugaḍi,
 money *big,* *shoe* *dress,* *hat;*
 danda.
 clothes.
3. abidji-ri wiḥi-nda prints njiba mani-ri garba-na-na.
 father-ERG *buy* -PRES *dress* *self-ERG* *make* -NP-LOC
 anandara wiḥi-nda almond, peanut.
 we(our mother and us children) *buy* -PRES
4. Abigana waḍlu nuru -ḡana, mugaḍi guba-guba. guya
 Afghan *country* *other-EL,* *hat* *little.* *girl*
 bargulu, guya nurgu.
 two, *girl* *pretty.*
5. (Told in English.)

Translation

a) The Cruel Syrian

- 1) An Afghan from a different country (not India), wearing a small hat (a fez), he came to Finnis Springs selling soap, handkerchiefs and combs: 'I got nice little comb for hair-style' he said.
- 2) He came with just one camel, and we bought handkerchiefs, soap and combs, for one shilling (everything he had cost one shilling).
- 3) He had put an enormous heavy chain on this camel, a railway chain. The camel was covered in sores and it dragged this big chain on its foot.

- 4) Crows were sitting on this camel, on its back, it had a rough bullock hide (in lieu of a saddle) and the crows were devouring the camel where its back was full of great sores from this saddle.
- 5) He went back to Marree and the Marree policeman took him and put him in gaol because of the camel: 'Cruelty to animals!'
- 6) The camel didn't die, the policeman took it (and looked after it).

b) *Mansūr*

- 1) Mansūr was a really good man, he had clothes and hats for sale and he took photos for people. I used to see him (at Finnis) occasionally when I was a little girl. It was a long time ago; Mansūr sold hats and dresses.
- 2) Mansūr was a working man at Beltana, but he came at shearing time (when there was plenty of money about) and he used to get a lot of money; all of us, my mother and us children bought dresses, hats, clothes and combs, and my father bought shirts.
- 3) If the wife of one of our working men didn't have any money, my father would buy a dress for her.
- 4) Mansūr had a big motor-car, and he sold pretty dresses.

c) *Sayyid Ali*

- 1) Sayyid Ali had a van, two camels dragging it.
- 2) Sayyid Ali had lots of money, he had shoes, dresses, hats and other clothes for sale.
- 3) Father used to buy prints from him so that we could make our own dresses. Mother and all of us used to buy almonds and peanuts.
- 4) He was an Afghan from a different country (not India), wearing a small hat (a fez). He had two daughters, pretty girls they were.
- 5) He'd had a wife, but she ran off, and in the end those two girls ran off too, they went and got married in Queensland.

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APPENDIX 1

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			ɾ, r	ɽ		
glides	w				y	

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Note

Certain nasals and laterals in Arabana-Wanggaru have pre-stopped allophones: -bm- corresponds to -m- at the beginning of the second syllable, -ḍn- to -n-, -ḍn- to -n-, -ḍl- to -l-, and -ḍl- 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 -ndj-.

APPENDIX 2

List of Abbreviations

ABL	ablative
ACC	accusative case
ACT	active voice suffix
ADV	adverb
ALL	allative case
ANC	ancient, distant past
CAUS	causative case
CONT	continuative participle, -ṇura
CONT S	continuative stem-forming suffix
DAT	dative case
EL	elative case
EMPH	emphatic enclitic participle
ERG	ergative case
EXCL	exclusive
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
IMM	immediate past tense
IMP	imperative
IMPERF	imperfective
INCL	inclusive
INST	instrumental
I PRES	intransitive present
LOC	locative case
NP	non-past
PAST	past tense
PERF	perfective aspect
PLUP	pluperfect-explicative past
POS	possessive suffix
POT	potential
PRES	present tense
PROP	proper noun marking suffix -ṇa
PUNC	punctiliar present (in transitive verbs only)
PURP	purposive
Sp	speed form, implying action performed hastily or before departing
TR	transitory aspect
Vb	verbalizing suffix

In the translation brackets are used to enclose phrases that are not in the original, but have been added by way of explanation.

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