AFGHANS AND ABORIGINES: DIYARI TEXTS

Ben Murray and Peter Austin

Ben Murray, the oldest and most fluent speaker of Diyari, now lives at Marree, South Australia, where he was born in 1891. His mother was Arabana and his father Afghan. Diyari was formerly spoken to the east of Lake Eyre in the far north of South Australia and currently has fewer than a dozen speakers. Ben Murray's two humorous stories about encounters with Afghans were told in Diyari to Peter Austin, who transcribes and analyses them here.

*Emily and the Afghans*¹

The first story dates from Ben Murray's childhood in the late 1890s. There were at that time a large group of Aboriginal people camped in the Frome Creek a few kilometres east of Marree and they were occasionally visited by some of the large number of Afghans who lived in Marree. The story concerns an encounter between Emily Russell (*jirimirrini*), a cousin of Ben Murray, and two itinerant Afghans in the Frome Creek. It demonstrates one shrewd Aboriginal girl's handling of the Afghans' requests for sexual favours.

1. ngayani pirrki-rna² karidi-nhi nhaka.
we plural excl-nom play -ptcple creek -loc there-loc
2. thana -li dika-yi nhinha Frome karidi.
they plural-erg call-pres him-acc creek-abs
3. ngarda-nih pula ngarrpingarrpi mandu
then -loc they dual-nom Afghan two-abs
wakara-ya.
come -past

- 1 The transcription employed here is a practical orthography and differs from that in Austin 1981. The digraphs *th*, *nh*, *lh* represent lamino-dental stop, nasal and lateral respectively, *j*, *ny*, *ly* are lamino-palatals, *rt*, *rd*, *rn*, *rl* are apico-domals (retroflex), *r* is a retroflex continuant, *rr* an apico-alveolar flap and *d* between vowels is an apico-alveolar trill. Each numbered line is a sentence and commas separate clauses of complex sentences. The following abbreviations are used: abs — absolutive case; acc — accusative case; add — additional information; all — allative case; antipass — antipassive; aux — auxiliary verb; dat — dative case; dist — distant; erg — ergative case; exclam — exclamation; fut — future tense; ident — identified information; imper — imperative mood; implDS — implicated (or purpose) clause whose subject is different from that of the main clause; implSS — implicated clause whose subject is the same as that of the main clause; inchoat — inchoative ('becoming'); loc — locative case; nom — nominative case; old info — old information; pass — passive; pre — present tense; prop — propietive ('having'); ptcple — participle; redup — reduplicated; reflex — reflexive; relDS — relative clause whose subject is different from that of the main clause; relSS — relative clause whose subject is the same as that of the main clause; trvb — transitive verbalizer; vicin — vicinity. For a description of the grammar of Diyari (phonology, morphology and syntax) see Austin 1981.
- 2 The distant past tense auxiliary *wanthiyi* is left out here since the context in which the story was told unambiguously located it in the distant past.

Peter Austin and Ben Murray, at Marree, S.A.

Photograph by L.A. Hercus

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4. pula wakara-yi nhanthu-yali, thana
they dual-nom come -pres horse -erg they plural-nom
 mankada pirrki-rnanhi pakarna karakara-lda-matha.
girl-abs play -relds also near -add-ident

5. pula kurikunga-rna ngari -yi, nhanthu
they dual-nom jump -ptcple go down-pres horse-abs
 kada-rna.
tie -relss

6. ngarda-nhi mankada parda-rna pada-yi
then -loc girl-abs catch-ptcple lie -pres

7. *Come on! Come on! Give me nikiniki*³!

8. nganha yingki-yamayi yani -ka.⁴
me-acc give -imper like this-token

9. wapa-mayi!⁵
go -imper

10. wapa-mayi yini!
go -imper you

11. wata ngathu yinha nganja-yi.
not I-erg you-acc want -pres

12. yini kini wanda nhanthu-yarri,
you-nom penis-abs thick horse -like
 dangki-danki -yarri.
redup -donkey-like

13. yaru -ka nhani yatha-yi.
like that-token she-nom say -pres

14. yundu wata nganha kudaka -rnanhi nganhi yulya -nhi
you-erg not me-acc release-relds I-nom police-loc
 yatha-lha nganayi.
speak-fut aux

15. nganhi marlarlu yulya -nhi warrapa-thadi -lha nganayi.
I-nom truly police-loc relate -antipass-fut aux

3 The origin of this word for sexual intercourse is unclear. The speech of the Afghans, as Ben Murray mimics it, shows a number of pidgin English features, e.g. [gɪb] for 'give'; see also lines 16 and 24 of story 2.

4 This word was accompanied by an obscene hand gesture.

5 Lines 9-16 were addressed to the Afghans in English and translated here into Diyari.

16. yini nhaka-lda wakara-rnanhi, ngathu marlarlu
you-nom there-loc-add come -relDS I-erg truly
 yinha kanyangadi-ya⁶ nganka-lha nganayi.
you-acc jail -all make -fut aux
17. ngarda-nhi nhani karrka-yi.
then -loc she-nom shout -pres
18. kanku-wara -yi! nhawu -ya parla -li
boy -plural-exclam he-nom-near sexual arousal-erg
 ngana-yi ngakangu.
be -pres me-loc
19. yarra wapa-ni -mayi, danga-danga -rna.
this way go -plural-imper redup-hunt away-relSS
20. ngayani parrjarna mindi-yi.
we plural excl-nom all-abs run -pres
21. ngarda-nhi pula -li thana -nha warrara-yi.
then -loc they dual-erg them plural-acc leave -pres
22. nhanthu-nhi kathi-yi ngarda-nhi wapa-rna
horse -loc climb-pres then -loc go -ptcple
 kuda -rna, thuka-thadi-rna kuda -rna.
go away-relSS carry-pass -ptcple go away-relSS
23. yaru -ka thana murda -ya.
like that-token they plural-nom finish-past
24. ngarda-nhi nhani yatha-yi.
then -loc she-nom say -pres
25. yini nhaka-lda ngingki -rda wakara-rnanhi,
you-nom there-loc-add here-vicin-loc come -relDS
 nganhi madi -ya mindi-lha nganayi, yulya
I-nom Marree-all run -fut aux police-abs
 mani-lha.
get -implSS
26. nganhi marlarlu ngunda-yi.
I-nom truly think -pres
27. kanji mindi-ya nhani, nhaka-lda nhawu
can run -past she-nom there-loc-add he-nom
 wakara-rnanhi.
come -relDS

6. The word *kanyangadi* is used for 'chain' and 'jail'; its pre-contact meaning is unknown.

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28. yaru -ka nhani murda -yi, yatha-rna
like that-token she-nom finish-pres speak-relSS
 nhungkangu.
him-loc
29. nhawu wata marla thika -yi.
he-nom not more return-pres

Translation

1. We were playing in the creek there.
2. They call it the Frome Creek.
3. Then two Afghans came up.
4. They came on horseback, right close to where the girls were playing.
5. They jumped down, tying the horses up.
6. They (one of them) grabbed (one of) the girls.
7. 'Come on! Come on! Give me *nikiniki*!'
8. Give it to me like this'.
9. 'Go away!' (Emily said).
10. 'You go away!'
11. I don't like you.
12. Your penis is big and thick like a horse, like a little donkey'.
13. That's what she said.
14. 'If you don't let me go I'll tell the police.
15. I'll truly tell the police all about it.
16. If you come again, I'll truly put you in jail'.
17. Then she called out.
18. 'Boys! He's sexually aroused over me.
19. Come over here and hunt (him) away'.
20. We all ran over.
21. Then they left them.
22. (They) climbed on their horses and went away, riding away.
23. That's how they finished.
24. Then she said.
25. 'If you come here again I'll run to Marree to get the police'.
26. I truly think.
27. She could have run (the distance) if he had come back again.
28. That's how she finished talking to him.
29. He never came back.

Dora and the Afghan

The second story is set at Etadunna on the Birdsville track when Ben Murray was a young man working on the station. It concerns Dora, a daughter of the European station manager, who used her knowledge of Diyari and of the Afghans' religious practices to make a public spectacle of an Afghan who stopped to talk to her.

1. *Dora* *nhani* *yatha-rna*⁷ *nhangkarni* *ngathata* *-nhi*.
she-nom *say* *-ptcple* *her-dat* *younger sibling-loc*
2. *yula* *thika -lu -mayi*.
you dual-nom *return-dual-imper*
3. *yurra*⁸ *wapa-ni -mayi,* *ngapiri* *ngandi-nhi*
you plural-nom *go -plural-imper* *father* *mother-loc*
yatha-lha, *nganha* *nhayi-rnanthu*.
say -implSS *me-acc* *see -implDS*
4. *ngathu* *nhinha -ya* *ngari-lka -yi* *nganthi-nganthi-ya*
I-erg *him-acc-near* *go -trvb-pres* *redup -animal -all*
nhingki-nhi-wa *thana -nha* *wanda-lha* *nhinha*
here -all-dist *them plural-acc* *show -implSS* *him-acc*
5. *marlarlu* *ngarda-nhi* *pula* *thika -yi*.
truly *then -loc* *they dual-nom* *return-pres*
6. *ayi!* *ngapiri!* *yarra* *wapa -lu,* *ngayana*
well *father* *this way* *go-dual-imper* *we plural incl-nom*
nhayi-lha *Dora-nha*.
see -implSS *Dora-acc*
7. *Dora-ndu* *ngari -lka -yi* *nganthi-nganthi-ya*
Dora-erg *go down-trvb-pres* *redup -animal -all*
nhingki-nhi-wa.
here -all-dist
8. *Dora-ndu* *ngari -lka -yi,* *mungka-mungka -rna* *nhinha*
Dora-erg *go down-trvb-pres* *redup -embrace-relSS* *him-acc*
yaru -ka, *yaru -ka* *nguna* *kuda-rna*
like that-token *like that-token* *arm-abs* *put -relSS*
nhungkangu *yarrkaria-nhi*.⁹
him-loc *neck* *-loc*
9. *ngalda* *wapa-yi* *nhingki-nhi-ya*.
we dual incl-nom *go -pres* *here -all-near*
10. *ngarda-nhi* *pula* *karakara* *ngana-yi* *marlarlu*.
then -loc *they dual-nom* *close* *be -pres* *truly*
11. [GRUNT! GRUNT!]

7. The distant past tense auxiliary *wanthayi* is here omitted. See note 2.

8. Line 4 is apparently an error as there were only two brothers involved (see line 5).

9. Dora put her arm around the Afghan's neck holding his head down so that he would not see where he was being led.

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12. yaru -ka piki -piki nhawu -pada.
like that-token redup-pig he-nom-there
13. *Oh he devil, this one!*
14. nhawu kathi nhungkarni-li mangathanda
he-nom clothing him-dat -erg head-abs
 warlpa-thadi -rna, ngarda-nhi mindi-rna kuda -yi.
cover -reflex-relSS then -loc run -ptcple go away-pres
15. mindi-rna kuda -yi, yatha-yatha-rna.
run -ptcple go away-pres redup-say -pres
16. *He devil! He devil!*
17. mayi, minha-rri -yi yini?
well what -inchoat-pres you-nom
18. nganha nhandu pardaka-rna warrayi, kuji
me-acc she-erg take -ptcple aux devil-abs
 wanda-lha.
show -implSS
19. wata marla nhangkangu wapa-lha nganayi.
not more her-loc go -fut aux
20. kuji nhandu -pada ngamalka-yi.
devil-abs she-erg-there have -pres
21. ngathu ngunda-rna.
I-erg think -ptcple
22. nhanhi mankada ngumu-yarri.
she-nom girl good -like
23. ayi! kuji -nthu nhani!
well devil-prop she-nom
24. ngayani kingka-rnanhi, *No laugh! No fun!*
we plural excl-nom laugh -relDS
25. wata kingka-ni -mayi.
not laugh -plural-imper
26. kuji nhawu -pada.
devil he-nom-there
27. yurra kuji nhinha -pada thayi-yi.
you plural-nom devil-abs him-acc-there eat -pres
28. yaru -ka nhawu yatha-yi.
like that-token he-nom say -pres

29. yundu nganja-rna warrayi mankada.
you-erg want -ptcple aux girl-abs
30. yaru -ka nhandu yinha wanda-lha nganayi.
like that-token she-erg you-acc show -fut aux
31. wata marla ngathu nganja-yi, nhanha nhayi-lha.
not more I-erg want -pres her-acc see -implSS
32. karlka-ni -mayi!
wait -plural-imper
33. ngathu nhinha ngari -lka -lha nganayi, nganthi-nganthi
I-erg him-acc go down-trvb-fut aux redup -animal
wanda-lha nhinha.
show -implSS him-acc
34. wata nhandu piki dika-rna, windi yatha-rna
not she-erg pig-abs name-ptcple only say -relSS
nganthi-nganthi.¹⁰
redup -animal
35. marlarlu nhinha piki-ya nganka-rna nhandu
truly him-acc pig -all snake -ptcple she-erg
yakayita¹¹ pangki-nhi.
gate side -loc
36. ngarda-nhi wanda-yi nhinha.
then -loc show -pres him-acc
37. thana -pada yingkarni kamanali-tha.
they plural-nom-there you-dat friend -old info
38. ngarda-nhi nhulu nhayi-yi.
then -loc he-erg see -pres
39. ngarda nhawu yaru -ka kathi -yali
then he-nom like that-token clothing-erg
warlpa-rdaka -thadi -yi mulha mindi-rna
cover -pierce-reflex-pres face-abs run -ptcple
kuda -lha.
go away-implSS
40. kuji nhawu -pada! kuji!
devil he-nom-there devil

10 The Diyari word *piki* 'pig' is borrowed from English. Dora was careful not to say *piki* when speaking Diyari, lest the Afghan learn the purpose of her deception.

11 *yakayita* is borrowed from English 'gate', remolded to fit the pattern of Diyari words (words must be of at least two syllables and end in a vowel).

Translation

1. She said to her brothers.
2. 'You two go back!'
3. 'You all go back to tell mother and father to watch me.
4. I will take him down there to the little animals, to show them to him'.
5. Then they went back.
6. 'Hey! Father! Come here and we will all watch Dora!'
7. Dora took him down there to the animals.
8. She took him down embracing him like this with her arm around his neck.
9. 'Let's go just down there', (she said).
10. Then they got really close.
11. [GRUNT! GRUNT!]
12. That was a pig (grunting) like that.
13. 'Oh, he devil this one!'
14. He ran away, covering his head with his turban.
15. He ran away, yelling out:
16. 'He devil! He devil!'
17. 'Hey, what happened to you?' (we asked him).
18. 'She took me down to show me the devil.
19. I won't go near her again.
20. She has devils.
21. I thought
22. She looked like a good girl.
23. No! She has devils!'
24. When we laughed (he said) 'No laugh! No fun!'
25. 'Don't laugh!
26. That's the devil.
27. You all eat those devils'.
28. That's what he said.
29. 'You wanted the girl.
30. And so she showed you'.
31. 'I don't want to ever see her again'.
32. 'Wait (she had said)
33. I'll take him down to show him the animals'.
34. She didn't say 'pig', only saying 'animals'.
35. Truly she took him to the pigs by the side of the gate.
36. Then she showed him.
37. 'These are your friends'.
38. Then he saw.
39. Then he covered his face with his turban like that and ran away.
40. He's the devil! Devil!

MARREE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA
and
LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

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