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Rella nunaka inguia¹— our old people

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It is important to remember the old people (rella nunaka inguia, erilknabata), our ancestors, who taught Carl Strehlow our languages and provided the information to him for this dictionary. Among his main informants were people such as senior Aranda men Loatjira, Pmala (Tmala), Moses Tjalkabota, Hezekiel Malbunka, Nathanael Rauwiraka, Abel Renkeraka and Luritja man Talku. He had many more informants. He practised Aranda every day with our ancestors who helped him to learn it properly.

Loatjira (circa 1849–1924)

Loatjira was a very important Western Aranda man from Mbultjigata and the chief of Ntarea, the waterhole that gives the contemporary community of Hermannsburg its name. We call Hermannsburg Ntaria now. Loatjira was born about 1849, he belonged to the rameia (yellow goanna) dreaming. He was a great *inkata* (ceremonial chief) and *nankara* (healer, doctor). Most of the time he did not live at the mission.

1 I use here the spellings of Carl Strehlow, because this is the spelling system that our ancestors used.

2 With contributions by Anna Kenny and Adam Macfie.

Carl Strehlow's son T.G.H. Strehlow wrote that his father and Loatjira respected each other and were friends, but later their relationship cooled. In his book *Journey to Horseshoe Bend* T.G.H. Strehlow says:

Loatjira had always been greeted like a loved ruler returning from exile by everyone at Hermannsburg whenever he had come back on his infrequent visits. Strehlow and Loatjira had always met on such occasions. (Strehlow 1969)

Loatjira chose to live outside of Hermannsburg near the Ellery Creek and only came to live at the mission after Strehlow's death. Loatjira was nevertheless Carl Strehlow's main informant about Aranda culture, as he kept Aranda Law strong. He rarely came to Hermannsburg after Strehlow had finished his work on sacred stories and the dictionary. Loatjira was baptised when he was very old. On 4 November 1923, he was christened Abraham. He died not long after his conversion, on 4 October 1924 from the Spanish influenza. Loatjira was baptised because he wanted to be buried on his country—his father's and father's father's country.

On Sunday 10 April 1932, T.G.H. Strehlow wrote into his first field diary:³

After Aranda service today Moses, Jacobus, Able, Josef, and Martin came to the veranda and revived some reminiscences of olden times. ... This was interesting to me, ... The four natives in the picture ... are Loatjira, Silas, Lartjinaka, and Moses. Lo[atjira] was, perhaps, the last of the old *nankara* or witchdoctors of the Western Aranda, and a man of first importance in the tribe. He steadfastly used all his influence in the interests of the vanishing beliefs of the knaribata or old men til the death of my father. Furthermore, he was before then not a station native, but preferred to live the old ways of tradition. (Strehlow 1932: 1–2)

3 T.G.H. Strehlow, Field Diary I, 1932, Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.

Figure 11: Loatjira, Pmala (Tmala), Moses Tjalkabota and Luritja man Talku at Hermannsburg, 1906.

Source: SRC 06196, Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.

Silas Tmala Ulakararinja Mbitjana (circa 1860–1923)

Silas was a Western Aranda man from Ndata, not far north-west of Jabulpa (Glen Helen Gorge) and belonged to aranga (euro) dreaming. He was born in about 1860 (Strehlow 1971: xxi, 599, 760) and married Annie Toa in 1890 (see Carl Strehlow 1913: Stammbaum 4; T.G.H. Strehlow family tree FT I. 28, p. 8).

Silas was baptised on 16 April 1900 by Carl Strehlow (T.G.H. Strehlow 1969–70: 157) and was one of the main informants about Aranda stories and language. He appears on Carl Strehlow's genealogy as Ulakararinja (Carl Strehlow 1913). He was later known as Silas (Mbitjana). Although he been blind from youth (T.G.H. Strehlow 1969–70: 211), he often chopped firewood for the Strehlow home, and normally brought down on his head the large bread-setting dish with the fat and innards from the killing pen (T.G.H. Strehlow 1969–70: 125).

He died on 24 June 1923 suddenly of heart failure.

Moses Tjalkabota (circa 1870–1954)

Moses Tjalkabota was the son of Tjita and Aranaljika. He was born around 1870 at Laburapuntja on the Ellery Creek and baptised on 26 December 1890 by A.H. Kempe, one of the first Lutheran missionaries on Aranda country. The children were taught Bible stories, reading and writing as well as some arithmetic. Moses also worked in the mission garden and as a shepherd. Not long after his baptism, his parents told him to leave the mission. He was told:

Boy, if you continue here, your head will implode, and you will dry up.
Then the wind will blow you away to the sand hills like a dried-up cicada,
and we will be unable to find you.

However, Moses did not return with his parents to Laburapuntja, he stayed at the mission, where he married Sofia Inkamala on 25 January 1903.

Between 1905 and 1910 Tjalkabota made major contributions to Carl Strehlow's work about traditional stories, family trees and the dictionary. He was blind. Moses also helped Carl Strehlow with the translation of the Bible into Western Aranda between 1913 and 1919, and in the 1950s he helped T.G.H. Strehlow retranslate the Bible.

Figure 12: T.G.H. Strehlow (Carl Strehlow's youngest son), Conrad Raberaba and Moses, Zacharia, Nathanael and Jakobus.

Source: SRC 06050, Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.

After Carl Strehlow's death, Moses Tjalkabota became a Lutheran Evangelist preaching at Deep Well, Horseshoe Bend, Idracowra, Jay Creek, Alice Springs, Undoolya, Arltunga and other places. He travelled by donkey, camel, buggy, on foot and on trucks. Moses died on 6 July 1954 at Hermannsburg.⁴

⁴ For more detail on Moses see T.G.H. Strehlow (1971: 357, 416, 627), P.G.E. Albrecht (2002: 237–300), P. Latz (2014).

Talku (circa 1867–1941)

Talku was Carl Strehlow's main Luritja informant, but Strehlow was not able to finish Talku's family tree and said (Strehlow 1913: 85, and note 2):

Unfortunately, I could not gather sufficient data to complete [the family tree], for my informant, Talku, who supplied most of the Luritja myths and songs. He has left our station again, and his tribal companions residing here have married local women and have been included in the family trees of the Aranda.

The man sitting at the end of the row on the right is Talku [see Figure 11]. It was his mission in life to spear the cattle belonging to the whites. During an attempt to escape arrest he was shot through the abdomen. He was subsequently brought to the Mission station and remained here until he left one day to enjoy his golden freedom.

Talku was also an important informant for T.G.H. Strehlow (1970: 137; 1971: xxi, 768). Strehlow wrote that Wapiti was Talku's name in old age. 'Wapiti' means yam in Kukatja-Luritja. He too made some biographical notes on Talku, aka Wapiti:

Talku, like Loatjira, was not a resident of Hermannsburg. He was the ceremonial chief of the Kukatja yam centre of Merini. Born about 1867, he organised raids upon cattle belonging to Tempe Downs Station at the beginning of the century. A police party surprised these raiders one day south of Ltalatuma, and fired upon them when they sought to evade capture. Talku was hit by a bullet from a police tracker's rifle which passed through his body and emerged again without apparently injuring any vital organs. His upper thigh bone was, however, shattered. He was carried on the backs of his friends across the ranges to Hermannsburg, a distance of some twenty-five miles. His tough constitution and unconquerable courage carried him through this ordeal. After being nursed back to health at Hermannsburg, he showed his gratitude to my father by providing him with detailed information on Luritja totemic rites, sacred songs, and social organization. And then he disappeared again one day into the free wild life of his own country. (Strehlow 1971: xxi)

Talku must have left the station at the very latest in 1909. By 1929 he was back at the mission. On his research trip to Hermannsburg, Norman Tindale made a data card of Wapiti. He died on 14 January 1941.

Hezekiel Malbunka (1889–1965)

Hezekiel Malbunka Knuraia was the son of Petrus Paltara and Rebecka. He was born in the vicinity of Hermannsburg on 28 March 1889 at Ellery Creek (Cawthorn and Malbunka 2005: 71) and baptised nearly one year later on 23 March 1890. He married in 1908 (Strehlow 1969: 129, 153).

Although Hezekiel's family was early on connected to the mission, he and others of their father's and father's father's country that was centred on the tjilpa dreaming of Ltalatuma, Gilbert Springs, learnt the tjilpa's songs which have been transmitted to his descendants and are still known.

Hezekiel was a friend of Carl Strehlow. When Carl got sick in 1922, Hezekiel took a telegram to the Alice Springs telegraph station in a record time and returned even faster. The telegram contained a plea to the Finke River mission board in Adelaide to send help. It was a remarkable feat, according to Carl's son, T.G.H. Strehlow, who wrote that to walk the 130 kilometres distance to Alice Springs in one and a half days was faster than any of their horses would have been capable of. The return trip on foot was even faster once Hezekiel had the reply from the south. It took him one day. In 1960, he told Carl's son:

I got the paper and I went right through. I didn't sleep somewhere in the middle. I travelled right back to Ntaria [Hermannsburg]. ... I didn't camp on the way. ... I drank water at Untukuntuka. Then I had another drink of water at Ntjuikarra. ... From that soakage. Having drunk there, I headed back home. In the afternoon, around 5 o'clock, I arrived at the Mission. I didn't sleep on the way. (Cawthorn and Malbunka 2005: 73)

Abel (1888–1950)

Abel was also an informant of Carl Strehlow. He was documented on one of Carl's family trees (Strehlow 1913: Stammbaum 4) as well as on one of his son's, T.G.H. Strehlow (family tree I, 22, p. 6). Abel Mbitjana was born on 20 June 1888 at Hermannsburg, his conception site was Nguamina associated with ereakura dreaming. In 1906, he married Ruby Raggatt later called Rosa.

Nathanael Rauwiraka (circa 1871–1950s)

Nathanael Rauwiraka was often mentioned by Carl Strehlow in connection with the bible translation and he also mentions him in his letters. Rauwiraka was another important man like Loatjira, he was Kantjara's grandson, and the main man for Ellery Creek country that is in walking distance (about 20 to 30 km) from the Hermannsburg mission; it lies adjacent to Ntaria country.

Nathanael Rauwiraka documented with T.G.H. Strehlow in his own words (to be found in T.G.H.'s unpublished diaries) how he acquired his conception site and dreaming in Anmatyerr country, his initiation in Luritja country, his traditional marriage arrangements and how he became a *nankara*, a healer with powers. Although he was baptised and 'Christian', he was a traditional man. Like many Aranda 'Christians' he also kept his Aranda beliefs.

He was a true friend and mate of Carl Strehlow, they were the same age. He wrote letters in Aranda to Carl Strehlow when he was on holiday in South Australia and Germany (many have survived at the Strehlow Research Centre). These letters are generally about what is happening at the mission, that is, how he and his wife are going, men building their own shelters, births and deaths, and that they are missing him.

On another day, he sent Carl Strehlow a card written in Aranda that was stamped at Charlotte Waters on 28 August 1911:

Tjina nuka kankinjai Nona lata pipa kalainaka unkwangana pipa nanakata ngana dankilama wa nuna Nala narirama ltarkna mara etata tota jinga tota lata mara ltarkna nana Nuna etja endura knuerama unkw ngebera ta kuta etalerama ngana unta pipa nunaka lata lantamanga nuna lata argana narirama jinga tjina unkwanga Nathanael⁵

Nathanael spoke German, although it was not taught at the mission, apart from German hymns, otherwise Aranda and English was taught. Nathanael must have spent much time with the Strehlow family, which would have been the only place to learn German. He spoke Anmatyerr, Luritja and English beside his own language, Aranda.

5 Free translation: My dear friend. Today we received your letter and thank you. We are well, and I am well. We will not forget you and I always think of you. Your letter made us happy today. Your friend, Nathanael.

Gerolds giün
Bayern Germany
Per Mr: Carl Strehlow
Tjina kuka kankinjai
Nona lata pipa kalainaka
unkwangana pipa nanakata
ngana & dankilama wa nuna
kala narirama karkna mara
etata tota jinga tota lata
mara karkna naina kuna
etja endura knuerama unkuwa
ngebera ta kuta etalerama
ngana, unta pipa nunaka
lata lantamanga nuna
lata argana narirama
jinga tjina unkwanga
Nathanael

Figure 13: Letter written by Nathanael Rauwiraka to Carl Strehlow in Germany, 1911.

Source: ARA-1911-22-1, Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.

Nathanael taught Carl Strehlow alongside Moses the Aranda language when he arrived in 1894. He helped collating traditional stories, teaching children to write Aranda, worked on the cattle run and participated in the bible translation into Aranda.

Nathanael's father was Lutiaka Penangka whose country was the Ellery Creek region, where also Loatjira, the main chief of Ntarea, was living. His mother was Nungalka. Nathanael spent his time between the Ellery Creek and Hermannsburg, but after Carl Strehlow had left the mission, he stayed most of the time outside of the mission supervising the shepherds.

Nathanael Rauwiraka Pengarta was the ceremonial chief of Ellery Creek from his father's father's side. His conception site was in the Iloara (Lake Lewis) area on Anmatyerr country, north of his Ellery Creek country and the Western MacDonnell Ranges. He married his promised wife Maria in traditional ceremony that had been arranged many years earlier. They had one daughter Sara Penangka. She wrote, at the age of 10, to Carl Strehlow when he was on holiday in South Australia in 1903:

Mr: Strelow

Tjina nukai ennkatanukai jurgo knarra etnika jinga nal nama unta eamaga airama la junga Sara⁶

Mr: Strelow
Tjina nukai ennk ata nuka i
jurgo knarra etnika
jinga nal nama
unta eamaga airama la
jinga Sara

Figure 14: Note written in circa 1903/04 by Sara, Nathanael Rauwiraka's 10-year-old daughter.

Source: ARA-c1903-2-1, Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.

6 Free translation: Mr Strehlow, My friend, I cried very much when I saw you leaving, Sara.

Figure 15: Nathanael Rauwiraka, his wife Maria and daughter Sara at Hermannsburg, circa 1903.

Source: SRC 05810, Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.

In 1932 T.G.H. Strehlow (1932: 132) commented on Nathanael whom he had not seen for 10 years:

Nathanael is the chief overseer over the shepherds, and is also camped permanently at Long Water Hole [Thata] or on the No 4 Block. He is the only 'gentleman' amongst the natives at the Mission, a good-natured, jovial, open-hearted fellow, who, one feels, is superior by birth: one almost feels in him a sort of class-mate and school mate of my father's—indeed, his handshake and his hearty 'Guten Tag' ...

These are only a few short biographies of our ancestors, there are many more. I found some of the information at the Strehlow Research Centre, where all papers of father and son are held, but I also know many details about my people that were handed down to me from my ancestors. We do not want to forget them and I hope that we will be able to write in time all of their stories down.

Figure 16: Mark Inkamala working with T.G.H. Strehlow's materials out on his country, 2014.

Source: Trevor Frost.

This text is taken from *Carl Strehlow's 1909 Comparative Heritage Dictionary: An Aranda, German, Loritja and Dieri to English Dictionary with Introductory Essays*, edited by Anna Kenny, published 2018 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

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