4

The unpublished manuscript

Anna Kenny

Carl Strehlow's comparative dictionary and language description work probably began taking shape in 1905, although he had already been collecting vocabularies for over 10 years mainly for teaching and theological purposes.¹ The impetus for the compilation of the dictionary came from his editor, Baron Moritz von Leonhardi, who played an important role in the formation of Strehlow's ethnolinguistic work. On 9 September 1905, von Leonhardi wrote to Strehlow:

Myths in the Aranda language with interlinear translations would be of great value; and a dictionary and a grammar would provide the key to them. A dictionary outlining the meaning of words as well as short explanations of the meaning of individual objects, characters in the myths etc., is highly valued in science.²

This request indicates that the 'key' he had in mind would go beyond being only an assistance to translating texts, but would also contribute to an understanding of Aranda culture and an analysis and description of their language. He made similar statements about the importance of documenting the Loritja language and provided continuous

1 Carl Strehlow wrote, for instance, a 'Deutsch–Aranda Wörterbuch' (German–Aranda dictionary), which was possibly compiled when he arrived in 1894 at Hermannsburg. The Strehlow Research Centre also holds a manuscript of a Dieri wordlist (circa 1893/94) as well as other wordlists that are likely to have been compiled for theological purposes between 1913 and 1919.

2 Von Leonhardi to Carl Strehlow, 9 September 1905. All German to English translations of letters by the author.

encouragement for collecting mythological texts in both languages. Together this data would make it possible to ascertain whether Loritja and Aranda were distinct languages.³ Alongside the comparative dictionary, Strehlow also compiled a comparative Aranda and Loritja grammar that he had completed by 18 April 1910.⁴ The interests behind this linguistic work were of practical, philological, theoretical and philosophical nature. Such interest was in this German anthropological context not unusual. It at once described the Aranda and Loritja languages, illustrated theoretical points made by the emerging *Kulturkreislehre* or culture circle theory (see Kenny 2013) and demonstrated that Aranda and Loritja were two different languages and as complex as any other languages in the world.

Grammatik		
Aranda.		Loritja.
Nom. s. atua 1	Kata = 2nd s.	patu
Nom. pl. atula 2	Katala, 1st s.	patunku, patunka.
Gen. atuka 3	Kataka 2nd s.	patuku
Dat. atuna 4		patuna
Acc. atuna 5		patuna.
Voc. atuai 6		patai
Adv. atunga 7		patunguru
Interj. atulela 9	atulaela, 1st s. atulela.	{ patu wananke patuwana patunku } patunku
Loc. I. atula. 10		{ patukutu patukuta }
Loc. II. atunga 11	atungana, 1st s. patungana	{ patu patu }
Causals. { atuibga atuibeta 8		patu.
Loc. III. atungibera 12	unb.	patu tanu.
Dual.		
Nom. s. atuantatara		patu kutara.
Nom. pl. atulantatara		{ patunku kutara. patunku kutara.
Gen. atukantatara		patuku kutara.
Dat. atunantatara		patuna kutara.
Acc. atunantatara		patuna kutara.
Voc. atuantatarai		patu kutarai!

Figure 17: First page of Carl Strehlow's unpublished comparative Aranda and Loritja grammar, 1910.

Source: SH-SP-48-47, Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.

3 Von Leonhardi to Carl Strehlow, 3 April 1909.

4 Held at the Strehlow Research Centre: Call number SP-46-47.

Prior to his collaboration with von Leonhardi, Strehlow's interests were predominantly theological, with the goal of producing translations of Christian texts. This focus took second place to the ethnographic and linguistic work during Strehlow's five-year period of close collaboration with von Leonhardi between 1904 and 1909. Once he had completed his ethnographic work, Strehlow's interests returned to translation for his missionary work. The focus on the comparative study of language was certainly reminiscent of von Humboldt's paradigm, as well as of Max Mueller's philology, that original texts along with a grammar and dictionary was the way forward in comprehensively documenting a people's language. Due to the nature of this emerging modern comparative and linguistic approach to the documentation of the complexity and richness of central Australian languages and cultures, Strehlow's work now provides an opportunity to chart change and continuity across a century.

Von Leonhardi repeatedly emphasised the importance of a publication of a comparative grammar and dictionary as an essential part of their ethnographic publications on the Aranda and Luritja cultures. Indeed, he thought that the language study would be the culmination of Strehlow's ethnolinguistic work and remarked to him:

To complete your work you must finally write a language study [Sprachlehre] of Aranda and Luritja—that will be its zenith.⁵

As things turned out, the death of Baron von Leonhardi⁶ in 1910 meant that neither the dictionary nor the comparative grammar were ever published.

Aranda and Luritja

Strehlow's study area (see his 1910 map, Figure 18) lies in a transitional zone where Aranda and Luritja speakers meet. Many people who belong to this border area are still fluent speakers of Aranda and Luritja and may switch seamlessly from one language into the other. A.H. Kempe, the first language worker (to borrow a modern term) in this region, had observed that the local language had incorporated words and phrases from the neighbouring language (i.e. Luritja) to the immediate west (Kempe 1891a: 1). This region is not only linguistically complex, but also

⁵ Von Leonhardi to Carl Strehlow, 23 December 1908.

⁶ For more details on Baron von Leonhardi see Völker (2001).

culturally, as different Arandic subgroups as well as Western Desert people meet here. In this area the section and subsection systems converged, for example, and two land tenure systems met (Strehlow 1965; Kenny 2010).

The Arandic language variety or dialect documented by Carl Strehlow belongs to the upper Finke River, mainly from the north-western and Hermannsburg areas of the Western Aranda people and the western portion of the MacDonnell Ranges (see T.G.H. Strehlow 1971: xx), though it also includes words that belong to surrounding Arandic varieties. Carl Strehlow often distinguished between the Western, North-Western, Eastern and Southern Aranda in his writings, but without defining exactly where their territories lie. On his map of 1910 he placed the Western Arandic dialect, Aranda Ulbma, on the upper Finke River, roughly between the MacDonnell and James Ranges (including Hermannsburg mission), the Aranda Roara as the dialect for the area between the eastern part of the MacDonnell Ranges and James Ranges including Alice Springs, the Aranda Lada from approximately Henbury along the Finke River and the Aranda Tanka between Charlotte Waters and Oodnadatta along the lower Finke River (see Figure 18). It is impossible to judge what these names and 'language' regions really indicate. Generally, language boundaries are diffuse and may even fluctuate with the movements of their speakers; it also may depend from whose point of view a language variety is described.

The Arandic group Carl Strehlow identified as Aranda Ulbma today identifies as Western Aranda, referring to their dialect as Western or Tjoritja (the name of the West MacDonnell Ranges) Aranda.⁷ Strehlow's Aranda informants lived in an area bounded roughly in the north by the West MacDonnell Ranges (Strehlow 1907: 32, 42; T.G.H. Strehlow 1971: 670, note 19) that separates them from the Anmatyerr and Northern Arrernte peoples. In the south, their country stretches along the Finke River past the James Range, to the countries of Southern Arrernte or Pertame and Matuntara (Luritja) peoples. To the west, it extends to The Derwent, the western Aranda–Luritja language border area, and to the east it abuts the territory of today's Central Arrernte people (see also T.G.H. Strehlow 1947: 59).

7 According to Kempe (1891a: 1–2), 'The vocabulary is that of the tribe inhabiting the River Finke, and is also, with only slight variations in the dialect, that of the tribes in the MacDonnell Ranges eastward to Alice Springs, but not far westward of the River Finke, and extending southward to the Peake.' Breen (2001: 64–65) speculates that the dialect now known as Western Arrernte (Western Aranda) arose from mixing of a West MacDonnell Ranges dialect he calls Tyurretye Arrernte ([Tjoritja Aranda) with Southern Arrernte (Pertame) at the Hermannsburg mission in the early contact period. My edits in brackets.

Figure 18: Map of schematic language distribution in the first decade of the twentieth century according to Carl Strehlow (1910b).

Source: Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.

The Western Aranda's first sustained contact with non-Aboriginal people occurred in the 1870s when the Lutheran missionaries arrived in central Australia. Among them were A.H. Kempe (1844–1928) and L.G. Schulze (1851–1924) who began the documentation of the language at a *ratapa* (twin) dreaming⁸ place on the upper Finke River where they set up a Lutheran mission, which they named Hermannsburg after the seminary that had trained them. Life on the frontier was incredibly harsh, the missionaries nevertheless pursued their language work, which included the development of a first Arandic orthography and teaching literacy, to spread the gospel in Aranda. By 1891 the mission was abandoned; the missionaries had succumbed to the hardship and challenges of the desert. Three years later, in 1894, Carl Strehlow (1871–1922) arrived to re-establish the mission, and immediately took up the study of Aranda, as would mission staff after his death in 1922. In the contact history of the Aranda, the Lutheran missionaries played an important role. Their colonial involvement included, among other changes, a Lutheran inscription on the Aranda language that they achieved by a) codifying this language in multiple orthographies, b) semantic changes to key terms (e.g. *altjira*, *kutungulu* and even *tjurunga*) and c) the reduction of vocabulary (which was also partly the result of the sedentarisation at the mission from a hunter-and-gatherer lifestyle) by discouraging and limiting many cultural practices.⁹

Luritja is a dialect of the Western Desert language and is not closely related to Aranda. It is not exactly clear when Luritja people encountered the first missionaries. However, by the turn of the century some of the people living to the immediate west of the Western Aranda, who called themselves Kukatja, had moved into the Hermannsburg mission. Carl Strehlow remarked that the people whom the Aranda called 'Loritja', referred to themselves as 'Kukatja' (Strehlow 1907: 57, Anmerkung 9). According to T.G.H. Strehlow, the word Luritja was the Aranda name applied to speech groups west of Aranda territory (1947: 177–78). Today the Western Desert group in the area call themselves Luritja or Kukatja-Luritja when referring to their ancestry and history. The country of the Kukatja-Luritja lies to the west of the Derwent River, which marks broadly the Aranda–Luritja language border. This language boundary

8 See Carl Strehlow (1907: 80–81; 1908: 72 f.3; 1911: 122–24) and T.G.H. Strehlow (1971: 758).

9 For more details on the mission history see Morton (1992), Austin-Broos (2009, 2010) and Kenny (2017a).

zone sometimes determines how people perceive their country. People in the area often describe the border area as ‘mix-up’ country, referring to the fact that a number of places have both Luritja and Aranda names and that there is no clear boundary between them.

Figure 19: Hermannsburg mission in central Australia, circa 1910s.

Source: SRC 07107, Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.

Carl Strehlow's linguistic and ethnographic investigations built on Kempe¹⁰ and Schulze's work that included an Aranda grammar and vocabulary of circa 1,750 words.¹¹ His work on language would last nearly three decades. During the intense period of recording Aranda and Luritja myth, song, social life, family trees and vocabulary between circa 1904 and 1909, Strehlow's principal collaborators were Loatjira (c.1846–1924),¹² Moses Tjalkabota (c.1873–1950), Pmala (c.1860–1923), Nathaneal Rauwiraka (c.1871–1950s) and the Luritja man Talku (c.1867–1941) (see Chapter 3).

10 The Strehlow Research Centre and Lutheran Archives in Adelaide (LAA) hold unpublished material by Kempe produced between 1877 and 1891.

11 Carl Strehlow's letters to Kaibel (1899–1909) held at the LAA.

12 According to T.G.H. Strehlow (1971: 753).

Carl Strehlow

Carl Friedrich Theodor Strehlow was born on 23 December 1871 in a little village in northern Germany, as the seventh child of the village schoolteacher. The village pastor Carl Seidel recognised the outstanding potential of the child and sparked his interest in myth and song. With great dedication, Seidel prepared his protégé for entry into a seminary and was able to place him in the Neuendettelsau mission seminary in southern Germany.

Carl graduated with a high distinction ('gut plus') and in April 1892 was sent to his first posting (Liebermeister 1998: 19), Bethesda mission at Lake Eyre in remote and arid Australia. There he joined J.G. Reuther (1861–1914), who had left the Neuendettelsau seminary four years earlier. From the moment he arrived, he studied the language of the local people, and within six months, it is said, he spoke the local language (Schild 2004: 55), and by 1894, in collaboration with Reuther, he had translated the New Testament called *Testamenta marra*, into Dieri, which was published in 1897.

Figure 20: Carl Strehlow, Reuther and Dieri people at Bethesda mission, 1893/94.¹³

Source: SRC 06171, Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.

¹³ Letter of 15 May 1894 from Carl Strehlow to his fiancée Frieda identifies all people on this photograph.

In late 1894, at the age of 22, he was transferred to the Hermannsburg mission, now called Ntaria after a sacred site in its vicinity, where he stayed for nearly three decades. He ran it as a mission and a cattle and sheep station, providing pastoral care for more than 100 Aboriginal people who became Christians, as well as a large number of their relatives who lived on the fringes of the mission. As soon as the Lutheran mission staff of the Hermannsburg mission managed to acquire a moderate proficiency in the vernacular, they used the Indigenous languages in church services and in school (Moore 2003: 24). Within months of Strehlow's arrival he became fluent in Aranda and preached in the vernacular (Eylmann 1908; Kenny 2013).

Figure 21: Aranda people at the Hermannsburg mission, circa 1906.

Source: SRC 05474, Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.

Despite the desolate condition at the mission, Carl started rebuilding it with great enthusiasm, not least motivated by the prospect that his young fiancée Friedericke [Frieda] Johanna Henriette Keysser would be arriving within the year. Travelling from Germany, Frieda, 19 years of age, joined Carl in 1895. Despite the inconveniences, Frieda embraced her role as a missionary's wife. She started to learn Aranda, to teach the women household skills intended to improve health and living standards. She had six children at the Hermannsburg mission. Her first child Friedrich was born in 1897, her only daughter Martha in 1899, Rudolf in 1900, Karl in 1902, Heinrich in 1905 and her youngest son Theodor in 1908.

Figure 22: The Strehlow children (Friedrich, Karl, Martha with baby Ted, Rudolf and Hermann) at Hermannsburg, 1908.

Source: SRC 05832, Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.

In 1901 Baron Moritz von Leonhardi, a wealthy German armchair anthropologist, wrote to Strehlow asking him for some information about the people of the Hermannsburg mission. A real friendship developed between these men that resulted in a fruitful intellectual exchange between 1901 and 1910 and produced a masterpiece. Von Leonhardi became Carl Strehlow's editor and organised the publication of Strehlow's magnum opus *Die Aranda- und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien* (1907–20) through the Ethnological Museum of Frankfurt.

In mid-1910, just after Strehlow had completed his ethnographic work, he departed with his family for Germany. The trip was intended as a break for Carl and Frieda, and to secure an education for his children. In his luggage Strehlow took many items with him that his editor had requested, including the dictionary manuscript. Without doubt the publication of the comparative grammar and dictionary of Aranda and Loritja would have followed had it not been for von Leonhardi's premature death. He died from a stroke late in October 1910, only days before he was to meet Carl Strehlow.

After an extended stay in Germany and placing his five eldest children with relatives and friends, he returned in 1912 to central Australia, with his wife Frieda and their youngest son Theodor (1908–1978), who

would later become one of the most controversial figures in Australian anthropology. In 1913, not long after his return to the Hermannsburg mission, Carl began the translation of the New Testament into Aranda with Moses Tjalkabota, Nathanael Rauwiraka and Jacobus. They completed it in 1919. Parts of it were published after his death as *Ewangelia Lukaka* (1925) and *Ewangelia Taramatara* (1928), without mentioning the role of the translators. In this period Carl Strehlow extracted data from his original dictionary manuscript and produced a second extensive wordlist, which is likely to have been for the translation of theological texts.¹⁴

When World War I broke out the Strehlows suffered greatly for leaving their children in Europe, and at the war's end they decided to leave for Germany to see them. However, 30 years of mission effort had taken their toll on Carl. In mid-1922, as he waited for his replacement, he fell sick. All attempts to treat him locally failed and he died on 20 October 1922 at Horseshoe Bend after an agonising journey south on his way to medical help.

On that final journey, he was accompanied by his wife Frieda and his son Theo, who 47 years later wrote a highly acclaimed, award-winning autobiographical novel based on this trip, called *Journey to Horseshoe Bend*. Mother and son travelled on to Adelaide and the dictionary manuscript as well as the original handwritten manuscripts of the publication *Die Aranda- und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien* journeyed with them.

The manuscripts

Carl Strehlow's published work *Die Aranda- und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien* was based on three handwritten manuscripts called *Sagen*, *Cultus* and *Leben*. *Sagen* (myths/legends) contains the Aranda and Luritja myth collections, *Cultus* (cults) songs that were sung during ceremonies and *Leben* (life) describes aspects of social life. They were published in seven instalments between 1907 and 1920 and are the richest and densest ethnographic text written on Western Aranda and Luritja cultures of central Australia at the beginning of the twentieth century. The original handwritten manuscripts survived in Australia; Strehlow had sent only copies to Germany in segments for comment and publication (Kenny 2013: 37). Those copies were destroyed in World War II during the bombing of the Ethnological Museum of Frankfurt.

14 Held at the Lutheran Archives in Adelaide.

[illegible]

Dieri	Narrinyeri
Kati (wof). puda inunif,	
Kalava-palku,	
vojira.	+ ankalla = <i>Wotba, Gpompas, Gofus</i> <i>Wankha, Wankha, Gofus.</i>
Kuta vojira	X Kaja ankalla <i>Wof. alt. Gpomp. Gofus.</i>
malanta vojira	X itia ankalla <i>Wof. alt. Gpomp. Gofus.</i>
Kankura vojira	X Kavaia ankalla <i>Wof. alt. Gpomp. Gofus.</i>
malanga vojira	X itia ankalla <i>Wof. alt. Gpomp. Gofus.</i>
vojirana.	X ankalla <i>Wof. alt. Gpomp. Gofus.</i>
	<i>Wof. alt. Gpomp. Gofus.</i>
ngampatarina	
	ankarutnarama <i>Wof. alt. Gpomp. Gofus.</i>
	ankarutnarana <i>Wof. alt. Gpomp. Gofus.</i>
shalingani	
kerieli.	
Kal. Kal. bakana (Gp.)	
mala-wala-kana,	
naripinti	

Figure 23: Page 10 of dictionary manuscript, 1906–09.

Source: Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.

The comparative dictionary is the fourth handwritten manuscript and has remained unpublished. It contains thousands of Aranda, Loritja and Dieri to German glosses. It probably represents the largest and most comprehensive collation of Indigenous words of Australian languages compiled around the turn of the twentieth century, closely matched only by Reuther's linguistic and ethnographic work on the Aboriginal cultures of the Lake Eyre Basin (Lucas and Fergie 2017).

Dates within the pages in the dictionary manuscript indicate that Carl Strehlow compiled it around the turn of the twentieth century. He noted on the last page 'Beendet am 23. Aug. 1906' (Completed on 23 August 1906) and 'Korrekturen beendet am 15. Dec. 1909' (Corrections completed on 15 December 1909). This original dictionary manuscript and the original volume manuscripts *Sagen*, *Cultus* and *Leben* are now held at the Strehlow Research Centre in Alice Springs. Notes deposited with these manuscripts and letters at the Strehlow Research Centre and the Special Collection of the Barr Smith library suggest that T.G.H. Strehlow had them in his possession from the 1930s until his death in 1978. Although the dictionary manuscript is a unique documentary record in Australia, and despite it being in his scholar son's possession, and then his widow's possession, it has remained nearly unknown for over 100 years. Efforts to publish the dictionary after completion were thwarted not only by the untimely death of von Leonhardi, but also by T.G.H. Strehlow's constant use of it.

The manuscripts travelled back from Germany with Carl Strehlow in 1912 and the dictionary manuscript was used to create a typed wordlist version for Aranda bible translation between 1913 and 1919.¹⁵ All manuscripts were taken in the luggage on his excruciating journey to Horseshoe Bend in 1922, packed by his 14-year-old son in the previous fortnight before leaving the Hermannsburg mission permanently (T.G.H. Strehlow 1969: 9).

After Carl Strehlow's traumatic death, and despite her ambivalence towards her husband's work on the Aranda and Loritja cultures, Frieda gave the manuscripts to her youngest son T.G.H. Strehlow when he started his language studies in the early 1930s. The dictionary manuscript seems to

15 It is a wordlist of simple glosses of Aranda, German and Loritja with an Appendix of additional words. This item is also in the FitzHerbert-Strehlow Papers: Item 2 called '21 typescript pages of Aranda words'. Page 1 is headed 'Anhang zum Woerterbuch von Missionar Strehlow, genannt Neue Woerter' with circa 1,536 words.

have been a lifelong companion of T.G.H. Strehlow. He annotated it in some places by hand and it becomes clear these manuscripts were not only professionally but also emotionally of unimaginable value to him. He took it with him when he returned in 1932 to central Australia (Kenny 2013: 153)¹⁶ and when he died in 1978 it was found on his desk at the University of Adelaide. The manuscripts disappeared for some time but surfaced again in the 1990s. They were among the items¹⁷ confiscated at the house of T.G.H. Strehlow's widow that were at the centre of a dispute over their ownership. They are now deposited at the Strehlow Research Centre in Alice Springs.

Figure 24: T.G.H. Strehlow at the Hermannsburg mission, circa 1920.

Source: SRC 06002 Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.

The dictionary manuscript's form

The dictionary manuscript is a complex document that not only contains four different languages, but also a number of different scripts as well as shorthand that say something about the time period in which it was produced and Carl Strehlow's education and scholarship.

16 T.G.H. Strehlow's Diary I (1932: 2), Strehlow Research Centre.

17 Schedule B of a draft of the *Strehlow Research Centre Act*, held at the Strehlow Research Centre.

The manuscript is organised into four columns with the following languages: Aranda (an Arandic language), German, Loritja (a Western Desert language) and Dieri (a Karnic language). The Aranda column contains circa 7,600 entries, the German column circa 7,600, the Loritja/Kukatja column circa 6,800, and Dieri column circa 1,200 entries. His Loritja was sometimes labelled Kukatja (see Figure 23). This seems to indicate that (i) one of his main informants might have been Kukatja or identified clearly as a Kukatja speaker, rather than being possibly a multilingual Arandic informant, (ii) he changed informant(s) part-way through the research project, or (iii) the language labels were both in use, but he changed his mind on which to use.

He was initially attempting to compare four Indigenous languages. An additional column was set up for Narrinyeri words, but there are no entries in it. He may have run out of time, not have had enough data on Narrinyeri, or the task to include it may have been simply too enormous and work-intensive.

A look at an excerpt of a page of his dictionary manuscript illustrates the difficult task of transcribing it. The Aranda, Loritja/Kukatja and Dieri words in the first, third and fourth columns are written in Latin script. Strehlow knew Latin script as it was used in all European countries outside of Germany and by educated Germans who engaged with people outside of their own country.

The words in the second column are German and written in a German script. Carl Strehlow and his son T.G.H. Strehlow used a German script that was called *Kurrentschrift* when writing in German (not *Sütterlin* which was developed much later and was only used in the 1930s). At the turn of the century there were many versions of these scripts used in different parts of Germany. At this time, there were endless public discussions in newspapers and academic publications about the pros and cons of the use of Latin script versus a German script.

In the middle column there is occasionally some shorthand. In the example in Figure 25 from page 40 of the manuscript, someone who knew shorthand added its transcription, that is 'die Abteilung der Gruppe, der ich nicht angehöre' (the group I do not belong to) and 'von einander' (of each other). It appears to be T.G.H. Strehlow's handwriting. However, the shorthand is not always annotated in this way. Carl Strehlow used a shorthand called *Stolze*, which was the preferred system in northern

Germany. There were many competing stenographic systems in Germany at that time. An extensive literature discusses the arguments about which system is best and how to improve it. In the 1930s the National Socialists implemented a common system and prohibited all others.¹⁸

Figure 25: Excerpt of page 40 showing Aranda and Loritja in Latin script (left and far right), German in *Kurrentschrift* (following Aranda) and *Stolze* shorthand (immediately following German *Kurrentschrift*).

Source: Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs. Image manipulation: Shane Mulcahy.

Most German scholars knew shorthand; it was one of the distinguishing features of education as well as an efficient technique used by scientists to record information. One could jot down in real time a speaker's narrative and it used very little paper, which was a valuable and scarce resource at the remote Hermannsburg mission in central Australia. It is possible that Carl Strehlow learnt shorthand at school. If he had not acquired this skill before he was trained as a missionary, he would have learnt it from his early mentor Otto Seidel or at the Neuendettelsau seminary.

¹⁸ I am thankful for the assistance provided at the stenographic collection in Dresden to help identify the version of shorthand used by Carl Strehlow.

The dictionary content

Carl Strehlow's dictionary contains vocabulary that relates to mythology (in which the flora and fauna play an important role), kinship and ceremonial activities, as well as social life in general and material culture, because these were the focus of Carl's ethnographic work. Although the transcriptions of Indigenous myths and songs in Aranda and Luritja are accompanied by German interlinear and free translations in Strehlow's published work, an Aranda–German–Luritja dictionary is required to understand the full richness of this early ethnography.

The type of mythological text material and its vocabulary that Carl Strehlow collected describes the core of an Arandic belief system that today is referred to in English as the Dreaming or The Law. The myths and songs about the earth-dwelling ancestral beings, called at the turn of the twentieth century in Aranda the *altjirangamitjina* and in Luritja *tukutita*, explain how the world was created and reflect many aspects of traditional Aboriginal life. Strehlow remarked that these narratives represented the Indigenous understanding of the world and their perception of how their laws and social systems came into being. The narratives of the exploits of the *altjirangamitjina*, both in prose and poetics, often transform into a description of the totemic or dreaming animals and plants (Strehlow 1910b: 5). The vocabulary includes names of ancestral beings and spirits, verb forms and adjectives that are used in these myths and descriptions of flora and fauna.

The large number of words for different plants, animals, reptiles and insects—including those that appear in the mythology of the Aranda and Luritja—not only reflected their ontology but also, in Carl's view, their daily engagement with the environment and an Indigenous natural history, 'as the totems of the Aranda' usually belonged to the animal and plant world, reflecting their knowledge of the natural world¹⁹ (Strehlow 1910b: 5). Strehlow published a list of Aranda and Luritja totems containing 442 totems or dreamings, of which 411 were animals and plants (Strehlow 1908: 61–74). Of these, 312 were used as food or as stimulants. There are many other plants and animals listed in his dictionary.

19 Carl Strehlow to N.W. Thomas, mid to end of 1906 (SH-SP-6-1, Strehlow Research Centre).

The dictionary also abounds in useful and important data on social classification, in particular a large number of kinship terms that are mostly still in use in central Australia. The kinship system encompasses the whole population, with the ability to describe the closeness of different relationships. In his work about social life he showed how the two different section systems connected with each other (see Strehlow 1913: 62–89). For example, his account of the ‘marriage order’ starts with the basic division that organises Aranda people into two groups (exogamous moieties)²⁰ called *Nákarakia* (‘our people’) and *Etnákarakia* (‘those people’) or *Maljanuka* (‘the ones belonging to the other group’). These terms are not names for one or the other moiety but were reciprocally used by both groups (Strehlow 1913: 62). Today Arandic people still refer to such groupings and use the section and subsection systems called ‘skin’ by Aboriginal people in central Australia. The Aranda system is compatible with others in the broader region. The skin or section/subsection systems cross-cut linguistic and social boundaries and facilitate group interaction, ceremonial gatherings and marriage. Strehlow charted the Aranda system in the following way:

Gruppe: A.	B.	C.
Purula m. +	Pananka w.:	Kamara.
Kamara m. +	Paltara w.:	Purula.
Ngala m. +	Knuraia w.:	Mbitjana.
Mbitjana m. +	Bangata w.:	Ngala.
Gruppe B.	A.	C.
Pananka m. +	Purula w.:	Bangata.
Paltara m. +	Kamara w.:	Knuraia.
Knuraia m. +	Ngala w.:	Paltara.
Bangata m. +	Mbitjana w.:	Pananka.

Figure 26: Arandic subsection or skin chart (Strehlow 1913: 63).

Source: Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.

20 Moieties (halves) divide the social world of a people into two groups that are sociocentric. The same people are always grouped together regardless from whose perspective one is considering people. The division into moieties is evident in a number of social behaviours, ceremonial proceedings and in relationships to land.

Knowledge of the kin terminology and subsection system are indispensable for the understanding of all social institutions and ceremonial proceedings in central Australia, which includes a vast array of public as well as restricted rituals belonging to both men and women. These involve songs connected to myths and ceremonies. Strehlow (1910b, 1911) documented 59 Aranda ceremonies and their associated songs and 21 Loritja ceremonies. Many of these ceremonies were performed individually in public as well as in restricted ceremonial forums or as part of the initiation process that, according to Strehlow, had seven stages at the turn of the twentieth century (Strehlow 1913). The last ceremony²¹ was the largest and most prestigious ceremonial gathering, drawing men, women and children together from far places to witness the conclusion of the rites that brought young men into adulthood. According to Carl Strehlow's research, in his time all types of ceremonies and performances had either the purpose of *intitjiuma* meaning 'to initiate into something, to show how something is done' or *mbatjalkatiuma* meaning 'to bring about, make fertile, improve conditions of' (Strehlow 1910b: 1–2) and had public aspects that were witnessed by women, children and the uninitiated. At many stages of initiation, for example, women played a role, performing dances called *ntaperama*²² (Strehlow 1913: 19) or smoking ceremonies called *ulbuntakelama*²³ (Strehlow 1913: 36). The general public was usually never far off from the privileged procedures offering practical, ceremonial and emotional support.

Strehlow's myth and song texts are accompanied by drawings, descriptions of who performs what at which places in the central Australian landscape, how it is performed, what ceremonial artefacts are used and their purposes. Descriptions and interpretations of material culture are interspersed throughout Strehlow's work to illustrate and enhance the text. His collection included well over 1,000 objects and mundane artefacts that he had sent to Germany.²⁴ He sent carrying dishes, boomerangs,²⁵ spears, spear throwers, sacred objects,²⁶ clubs, shields, hair strings, stone knives and axes, digging sticks, chains made of native beans, and many other

21 Spencer and Gillen's *engwura* and Strehlow's *inkura*.

22 This is a verb meaning 'do the dance *ntapa*'; the dance is called *ntapa*.

23 This is a verb meaning 'put into smoke'; smoke is called *ulbunta*.

24 F.C.A. Sarg (1911) and Vatter (1925) used his collection for their publications.

25 F.C.A. Sarg described in *Die Australischen Bumerangs im Städtischen Völkermuseum* (1911) some of Strehlow's boomerangs.

26 Carl Strehlow to von Leonhardi, probably 10 December 1907 (SH-SP-15-1, Strehlow Research Centre).

items that he lists in this dictionary and the last volume of his work (Strehlow 1920: 8–14) to his editor in Germany. The items mentioned in the dictionary were for most part produced by Aranda and Luritja people, though there are terms for some pieces that were not manufactured in the region and were not recognised by the people I worked with.

The intellectual context of the dictionary

The comparative dictionary and grammar that von Leonhardi had hoped would be an integral part of Carl Strehlow's publications was to provide the key for the interpretation of the extensive collections of the Aranda and Luritja text materials. It was to contribute to the understanding of Aranda and Luritja people's worldviews and show that their languages as well as cultures were distinct. The richness of the linguistic data was also to show that Aboriginal languages were no different to any others in the world and could express the full range of human cognition. Thus, the broader purpose of such a language study or ethnolinguistic project around 1900 had not only empirical dimensions, but was as much theoretical and philosophical in orientation.

The German language tradition that was a hallmark of nineteenth-century German anthropology was in some ways related to Lutheran language theory and practice that reached back to Martin Luther's reformation. It had been a crucial part of Luther's treatises to spread the gospel in German rather than in Latin or even a German rendition of the Vulgate. Luther preached that the word of God was to be taught in vernacular and translated into a people's mother tongue (Wendt 2001: 8; Moore 2015: 39). As a consequence, in the nineteenth century it was characteristic of German Protestant mission theology and practice to pay special attention to a people's language and its implications for idiom and other dimensions of culture (Schild 2004: 54). These studies of Indigenous languages often resulted in the production of grammars and dictionaries as well as collections of myth texts and other aspects of cultures.

German missionaries in Australia brought this linguistic tradition with them. Among the missionaries, it went without saying that they had to learn the language of the people they were sent to serve. This tradition dovetailed with linguistic views of the emerging German discipline of anthropology about the importance of language. One of the main principles of German anthropological thought emanating from Herderian

and Humboldtian philosophy, which were expressed by Bastian, Virchow and their anthropological circle in Germany, and by Boas in North America, was the focus on language as the main tool of its empiricism. The meticulous and diligent study and collection of linguistic material (grammar, vocabulary and original text) became central, and was the most important feature of nineteenth-century German anthropology and ethnology.

Probably the main reason for the emphasis on language was that it was seen as the embodiment of a people's culture or spirit, its *Geist*. Literally *Geist* means 'spirit' or 'ghost', however, in this context it means 'the essence of a people' or 'the spirit (mind/intellect/genius) of a people'. This view has its roots in German eighteenth-century philosophy that emphasised the ideas of particularism opposing progressivism and deduction. It became part of mainstream German intellectual life and absorbed into anthropological thought (Marchand 1982: 20).

Thinkers who influenced the development of this sort of anthropological thinking were Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), Georg Foster (1754–1794), the von Humboldt brothers, Wilhelm (1767–1835) and Alexander (1769–1859) as well as Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) to some degree, although Herder was critical of race theory (Mühlmann 1968: 62) and in particular of Kant's. Herder, the founder of German historical particularism, was influential on anthropological thinking, because he was interested in the differences in cultures over time, and from one people to another (Adams 1998: 271).

Herder rejected the concept of race as well as the French dogma of the uniform development of civilisation. He believed that there were many unique sets of values transmitted through history and that civilisations had to be viewed from within—that is, in terms of their own development and purpose (Berlin 1976: 174). Humanity was made up of a great diversity, language being a crucial manifestation that expressed a people's particularity. The *Geist* of a people, he believed, was embodied in their language, which included oral literature and song texts of Indigenous peoples. Therefore language became critical in German anthropological research and a precondition of authoritative ethnography. To achieve their Herderian goal, (i.e. to document the various manifestations of cultures as completely as possible), German anthropologists were committed to

inductive science and an empirical methodology. They stressed the need to gather as much information as possible before attempting to generate theories about human difference (Penny and Bunzl 2003: 15).

True to the paradigms of nineteenth-century German anthropology, Strehlow's editor believed that thorough empirical research had to be conducted before universal laws pertaining to humankind and ideas of their origin could be developed. Language was the main tool for such an empirical study of cultures. His editor stated that it 'is simply impossible to penetrate the heart of the beliefs of the Australian Aborigines without thorough knowledge of their language'.²⁷ He perceived language as the embodiment of a people's mind and spirit that was both Herderian and Humboldtian in character. Wilhelm von Humboldt maintained that there were two steps in language research, which needed to be undertaken to be able to make statements about a people's culture and language. The first step was to describe the structure of the language (grammar and dictionary) and the next its use (*Gebrauch*) (Humboldt [1820] 1994: 16), by which he meant oral literary text (Foertsch 2001: 113).

Thus, in Strehlow and von Leonhardi's central Australian project language was method and phenomenon and could not be separated from culture. Through language, phenomena like myths and social institutions as well as material culture that seemed similar, related or identical, could be established as specific within their own cultural and linguistic context. Language was not only a research tool, it also had a philosophical dimension, showing how other people thought. Von Leonhardi in particular understood the particularity of a culture and saw language and its literature as a reflection of this specificity. The exact description and recording of language and transcription of original Australian Indigenous text, he believed would give insight into people's 'Anschauungen' (views) and their 'Geist' (spirit).²⁸

Kulturkreislehre

Another reason for the emphasis on language in Carl Strehlow's research was that in the period in which the material for *Die Aranda- und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien* was collected—1904 to 1909—a

27 Von Leonhardi to Carl Strehlow, 17 March 1906.

28 Von Leonhardi to Carl Strehlow, 2 June 1906.

new method and theory in German anthropology was emerging. It was called the *kulturhistorische Methode* (culture-historical method) and *Kulturkreislehre* (culture circle theory). The aim of this diffusionist theory was to chart historical movements of peoples as well as to identify traits of 'culture circles'. One of the obvious traits of a culture circle was language or a language group, which presumably helped to distinguish one circle from the other or suggested overlay and mixing of cultures. Through language comparison, which looked at dialect variations and the possible travel of words, myth and song, along with comparative studies of material culture and social systems, it was believed possible to discover migration patterns and how the distribution of peoples over long periods of time across the globe had occurred. Von Leonhardi may have hoped to clarify with Strehlow's linguistic data what happened at the edges or in transitional zones of culture circles, as Carl Strehlow's mission was located in such a linguistic and cultural transitional region.

Prominent German representatives of diffusionist theory were P.W. Schmidt, Fritz Graebner, Bernhard Ankermann and later also Leo Frobenius. In the first decade of the twentieth century most theorising on the *Kulturkreise* and *-schichten* was undertaken in letters between these men and other scholars (Penny 2002) and most of the anthropologists who would publish on this subject were still developing their methods and theories or out in the field collecting ethnographic and linguistic data as well as material culture to bolster their hypothesis. Only occasionally were short pieces published in German anthropological journals such as *Globus*, *Petermann's Mitteilungen* or *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*. The first major work on the *Kulturkreislehre* was Graebner's *Methode der Ethnologie* published in 1911 followed by Pater Schmidt's *Die Gliederung der Australischen Sprachen*²⁹ published between 1912 and 1918 in his journal *Anthropos*.

Strehlow's editor, Moritz von Leonhardi, participated in the early phase of the development of the *Kulturkreislehre* and explored the use of comprehensive descriptions of languages to explain hypotheses of the emerging theory. His understanding of language in the context of the

29 P.W. Schmidt, *Die Gliederung der Australischen Sprachen und ihre Beziehungen zu der Gliederung der soziologischen Verhältnisse der australischen Stämme*. In: *Anthropos* 7 (1912): 230–51, 463–97, 1014–48; 8 (1913): 526–54; 9 (1914): 980–1018; 12/13 (1917/1918): 437–93, 747–817.

Kulturkreislehre was informed by close reading of the limited amount of existing material in the century's first decade and his correspondence with P.W. Schmidt.

Work on the culture circles and their distribution concentrated initially on material culture and social organisation. The first, very brief linguistic contribution on Australian language in the context of the *Kulturkreislehre* was written by Pater W. Schmidt in 1908. The comparison and classification of language was believed to give insight into ethnic origins, migrations and prehistory. Based on some linguistic evidence extracted from the very limited literature, Schmidt (1908) declared that his findings suggested with certainty that the Aranda were not 'primitive', not an earliest form of inferior culture, as social Darwinism wanted to see them.

Schmidt, as well as Graebner, Foy and Thomas in England, saw the population of Australia not as homogeneous, but consisting of a number of layers of peoples and cultures that at different times in prehistory migrated and partially amalgamated. The oldest layer was believed to have spread from Tasmania and thought to have occupied all of Australia at some stage, surviving in the south-east of the continent. On the Tasmanian layer it was believed that at least two further layers had introduced new cultural elements like totemism, the boomerang and the spear thrower.³⁰ Schmidt (1908: 869) suggested that a fourth layer originating in New Guinea had swamped the Australian continent from the north and reached its southern extent with the Aranda which, he believed, was evident in his linguistic investigations.

For von Leonhardi it was important to try to establish the links or their absence between the languages and cultures of central and south coast Australia. He speculated that very ancient elements of culture may have been preserved on the southern coasts of Australia where apparently no boomerangs, shields, marriage classes or totemism existed and it:

would be the very oldest population of Australia, probably the Tasmanian one, which may have been pushed by migration waves with a slightly higher culture and differing language to the south and south east and possibly to the south west coast where they seem to have survived.

'However', he concluded in 1909, 'that is all still very problematic.'³¹

30 Von Leonhardi to Carl Strehlow, 2 March 1909.

31 Von Leonhardi to Carl Strehlow, 12 February 1909.

The theory of culture circles and layers was still very hypothetical and most details unclear at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. Where the two layers and waves of migrations overlaying the original Tasmanian stratum, for instance, had come from, was still a mystery.³² It was not even clear what traits needed to be present in a culture circle, to define it as such (Kluckhohn 1936: 138–9), and this problem would never be solved—and thus by mid-century the *Kulturkreislehre* had substantially faded into insignificance. Despite its limitations, the ethnolinguistic data that was amassed in its heyday remain an immensely valuable body of work.

Concluding remark

Carl Strehlow's comparative dictionary and his ethnography *Die Aranda- und Luritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien* were products of a German nineteenth-century style that was language-based and strictly descriptive. A century after their production, they remain invaluable resources for Aranda and Luritja people. Language was not only method for Strehlow, but proof that the Aranda were part of the universal plurality of humanity. His last public remark on language in *The Register* on 7 December 1921, after 27 years of studies in central Australia, makes this clear. Rejecting evolutionary theory explicitly he wrote that 'the wonderfully structured language of the aborigines, and their religious beliefs'³³ show that their languages and cultures are as sophisticated as any others in the world.

32 Von Leonhardi to Carl Strehlow, 2 March 1909.

33 *The Register*, Adelaide, 7 December 1921.

Figure 27: Carl and Frieda Strehlow in central Australia, 1898.

Source: SRC 07767, Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.

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.

doi.org/10.22459/CSCHD.08.2018.04