

Chapter 1

The language and its speakers

1.1 Location

Bunuba is an Australian Aboriginal language spoken in and around Fitzroy Crossing, a small town on the Fitzroy River approximately 400km east of Broome in the Kimberley region of north-west Western Australia. The traditional country for Bunuba speakers is very roughly bounded by the Erskine range (*Malaraba*) to the west, the King Leopold range (*Miluwindi*) to the north-east, the Fitzroy River (*Bandaralngadu*) to the south-east and the Napier Range to the north-west (see Map 1). The languages which were traditionally spoken adjacent to Bunuba territory are: Nyikina to the west; Unggumi to the north-west; Ungarinyin to the north; Kija to the east; and Gooniyandi to the south-east (see Map 2).

1.2 Classification

Capell (1940:244) identifies Bunuba and Gooniyandi as members of a single language grouping, recognising them as distinct from other languages of the Kimberley as “prefixing languages without noun classification”. The survey of Australian languages by O’Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin (1966) identified them as a separate family of two languages called Bunaban, more recently spelled Bunuban. This family grouping was further reinforced by Oates and Oates (1970) and Oates (1975).

Typologically, Bunuba is a prefixing language without noun class marking. It has been described by Capell (1940) and O’Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin (1966) as having two dialects, Eastern and Western (§1.3.1). These authors described the Western dialect as having an extremely complex tense system with up to eleven different tenses, compared with a much simpler system in the Eastern dialect. However, on the evidence from contemporary Bunuba this is not the case. Even allowing for a reduction of complex verb morphology due to language loss, there seems to be no evidence that any such differences of this scale ever existed. As described in §3.9, Bunuba does have a complex tense/mood system, but this is not

where the differences between the Eastern and Western dialects lie.

The closest genetic relative to Bunuba, Gooniyandi, is similar in structure and in lexicon. They have approximately a 45% cognacy rate, based on a 100 to 200 word list (Rumsey 2000:37). In my testing the cognacy rate was slightly lower—more like 40% on just over 300 lexical items. However, as McGregor notes in his description of Gooniyandi (1990:6), there is a higher cognacy rate of 66% between Bunuba and Gooniyandi for some of the frequent and more easily segmentable bound morphemes. Further, the cognacy rate (around 90%) between the auxiliaries of the two languages, which are highly grammaticised morphological elements, is extremely high (Chapter 3, §3.5).

Bunuba's other neighbours include Ungarinyin, Unggumi, Kija, Nyikina, and Warrwa (all non-Pama-Nyungan) and Walmajarri (Pama-Nyungan).¹ Ungarinyin and Unggumi are typical Northern Kimberley languages, and are members of the Worrorran language family. They have four noun classes, and cross-reference S, A and O by verbal pronominal prefixes (Rumsey 1982a; Saunders 1997).² They have no syntactic case marking, i.e. no ergative or accusative marking (Rumsey 2000:36). Warrwa and Nyikina are members of the Nyulnyulan language family. S and A are cross-referenced by prefixes to the verb, whereas O is cross-referenced by a pronominal suffix (Rumsey 2000:36-7). They have no noun class marking (McGregor 1988:49). Kija is a Jarrakan language family member which has pronominal prefix cross-referencing of S, A and O to the verb and marks two noun classes, either masculine or feminine (Kofod 1996). Walmajarri belongs to the Ngumpin family. It is a suffixing language with an ergative/absolutive case marking system (Hudson 1978; Richards and Hudson 1990; McGregor 1988:143). Gooniyandi, like Bunuba, cross-references S, A and O to the verb and has no noun class marking (McGregor 1990:2-3).

Table 1-1 outlines the cognacy rates of the neighbouring languages to Bunuba (from Rumsey 2000:37):

Table 1-1: Bunuba cognate % with neighbouring languages

Language	Cognate %
Gooniyandi	40-45
Ungarinyin	24
Walmajarri	24
Unggumi	20
Kija	20
Nyikina	15
Warrwa	11

1.3 The language

Bunuba is a predominately head-marking language (Nichols 1986). Bound pronominal prefixes in the auxiliary index the core grammatical roles of subject and object.³ These prefixes follow a nominative/accusative syntactic pattern, whereas case marking is more in line with an ergative/absolute patterning. Bunuba has no noun class markers (although see Rumsey (2000:69) for evidence of noun classes in an ancestral language). In this work verbal auxiliaries are classified as intransitive or transitive; the labels S, A and O are used in the Dixonian (1995[1994]) sense to differentiate between the subject of an intransitive verb (S) and the subject of a transitive verb (A). The O is the label used for the object of a transitive verb.⁴

There are two types of verb in Bunuba: simple and complex. Both consist minimally of an auxiliary formed around an obligatory auxiliary root inflected for person/number, tense, mood and aspect. Reflexive/reciprocal suffixes may also attach to the auxiliary. A simple verb in Bunuba consists of an auxiliary alone. Only two auxiliary roots—MA and NA—can occur in simple verb constructions. NA is found only in simple verb constructions, whereas MA may occur in both simple and complex verb constructions. As discussed in Chapter 3, the simple verb construction is more marginal in Bunuba than in other comparable Australian languages.

By far the most common verbal construction in Bunuba is the complex verb, which involves an inflected auxiliary co-occurring with a coverb. Most of the lexical content of a complex verb is expressed by the coverb. Coverbs can be translated into English by verbs such as ‘go’, ‘sit’, ‘cook’ and ‘hit’. The primary grammatical features of any Bunuba verb, either simple or complex, are contained within the auxiliary. This two-part verb construction is not unusual in the non-Pama-Nyungan languages of Northern Australia and, where relevant, I will draw comparisons with other such languages such as Bardi (Nicolas 1998, 2000), Gooniyandi (McGregor 1990), Jaminjung (Schultze-Berndt 2000), Kija (Kofod 1996), Marrithiyel (Green 1989), Ngan’gityemerri (Reid 1990), Nunggubuyu (Heath 1984), Nyikina (Stokes 1982), Ungarinyin (Rumsey 1982a), Warrwa (McGregor 1994), Worrorra (Clendon 2000), and Wunambal (Carr 2000). An example of a simple and a complex verb construction in Bunuba follows:

Simple verb:

- 1-1 *Miybiyirranggu.*
 ø-ma-iy-biyirranggu
 pronominal.prefix-auxiliary.root-tense-oblique.pronominal.suffix
 3sgS-MA-PAST-3pl.OBL
 S/he said to all of them. (CR2.10)

Complex verb:

1-2 *Wad* *burraythangangi*.
 wad *wurr-ra-y-ngangi*
 coverb pronominal.prefix-auxiliary.root-tense-oblique.pronominal.suffix
 go 3nsgS-RA-PAST-2sg.OBL
 They came to you. (BO1.2)

Whether a complex verb is a single word or two separate words, is difficult to determine. There is phonological evidence suggesting that the coverb and auxiliary interact as a single word, whereas the occurrence of enclitics provides evidence that the two elements are separate words (§3.3).

The core pronominal prefix paradigm of Bunuba exhibits a system of *inverse alignment*, which adheres to a language-specific animacy/participant hierarchy. Violations of the hierarchy trigger an inverse pronominal prefix configuration. This can be analysed as involving a reversal of the normal A-O prefix order and the insertion of an inverse morpheme, yielding the sequence O-inv-A (§3.8.3).

Phonologically Bunuba is not aberrant from the phonological systems of other Australian languages. It has a series of six stops. Voicing is not phonemically distinctive, though the voiced series has been chosen by the Bunuba community for the practical orthography. There is a nasal corresponding to each place of articulation in the stop series. There are three laterals, two rhotics and three glides. There are three vowels, one of which shows a length distinction.

Bunuba is a morphologically rich language. That is, much of what is done through phrase order in other languages is done through morphology in Bunuba; for example, verbs in Bunuba have a complex structure encoding information that would correspond to a complete sentence in English. Bunuba sentences frequently lack overt NPs, although when they do occur they provide evidence of a basic SVO word order.

1.3.1 *Language/dialect sub-classification*

Linguistic analysis and speakers themselves identify two regional dialects. They differ chiefly in pronunciation rather than grammar. As mentioned, Capell (1940) and O’Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin (1966) claim that the dialects differ extensively in their tense systems, but there is no contemporary evidence for this.

One dialect seems to have been spoken predominately in the ranges in the western regions of Bunuba territory, while the other is associated with the eastern regions, including the territory in and around the township of Fitzroy Crossing. Speakers describe them as “heavy” and “light”, respectively, referring to variation in pronunciation.

It may indeed be the case in a particular language that one dialect is “heavier” than another, in the sense of favouring different consonants which may be acoustically “heavier”

than their counterparts. For example, the two dialects of Ngan'gityemerri are described by Reid (1990:1-2) as 'light/smooth' compared with 'heavy/rough'. In Bunuba, both dialects have exactly the same phonemic inventory but speakers of the light dialect tend to use the /yh/ phoneme less extensively than speakers of the heavy dialect, substituting the /y/ phoneme instead. Speakers of the light dialect are, however, well able to pronounce the /yh/ sound, which is found in one of the most common Bunuba words: /miyha/ 'meat'; it is pronounced with the /yh/ consonant by all speakers (Rumsey 2000:36, 42). One of the ten auxiliary roots in Bunuba, YHA, turns out to be a fairly consistent dialect variable: speakers of the light dialect tend to pronounce it as /ya/ (example 1-3), whereas speakers of the heavy dialect pronounce it as /yha/ (example 1-4).

YHA as /ya/, i.e., light:

1-3 *Wurrga* *yangarri*.
 wurrga \emptyset -yha-*ngarri*
 put 3sgO<3sgA-YHA-HAB
 She'd put it. (CR4.10)

YHA as /yha/, i.e., heavy:

1-4 *Wurrga* *yhangarri*.
 wurrga \emptyset -yha-*ngarri*
 put 3sgO<3sgA-YHA-HAB
 She'd put it. (NR1.3)

There are a few lexemes which have unrelated distinct light and heavy versions (Rumsey 2000):

	light:		heavy:
1-5	<i>dangayba</i>	assault	<i>bilthiba</i>
	<i>wadawiy</i>	spotted nightjar (bird)	<i>banangga</i>

The issue of dialects however, is not greatly significant. This thesis is a description of Bunuba. If there are any obvious differences between the two dialects they are drawn to the reader's attention as necessary.

1.3.2 *Number and distribution of speakers today*

Bunuba speakers are mostly over the age of forty. People under the age of forty who identify as Bunuba tend not to speak the language fluently. It is therefore a language which is severely under threat.

Most Bunuba people live in Fitzroy Crossing, which has a population of about 2000. Approximately 80% of the town population is Aboriginal and although Bunuba is the traditional

language of the area, speakers of at least four other traditional Aboriginal languages live in the township.

It is always difficult to estimate the number of speakers of a language for several reasons. First, proficiency levels are difficult to judge since people's attitudes to how well they speak the language may not match their actual proficiency. Second, the cultural identity of being a Bunuba person does not necessarily require that such a person speak Bunuba fluently. Previous estimates of the numbers of speakers of Bunuba come from McGregor (1988) who says that Rumsey believed there to be 50-100 speakers of Bunuba. More recently Rumsey (2000:37) has estimated there to be approximately 100 speakers. I believe this figure to be about right, although I have not undertaken an extensive survey. In Junjuwa, the largest Aboriginal community in Fitzroy Crossing there are approximately 250 people, the majority of whom are Bunuba; but many are young and have at best a passive understanding of the language. Yet, it is possible that in years to come various community-based language maintenance and revival strategies will cause the number of speakers of Bunuba to remain steady even as older speakers die (§1.6).

The lingua franca of Fitzroy Crossing is either Walmajarri or Kriol (§1.6). English is possibly a third lingua franca, although many Aboriginal people do not speak English fluently. Bunuba is certainly not a language you often hear spoken in non-English environments. The younger members of the Bunuba community learn Kriol as a first language, and so the older people will speak to them in Kriol rather than Bunuba. Amongst themselves, Bunuba speakers will talk Bunuba but they are often in mixed language-group company, and Kriol is the language which is most commonly used in these situations.

Over the last ten years or so several outstations have been developed on pastoral stations owned and operated by the Bunuba community, under the auspices of the incorporated organisation Bunuba Aboriginal Corporation (BAC)⁵: Leopold Downs Station (*Yarranggi*), acquired in 1992; Millie Windi Station (*Miluwindi*), acquired in 1994; and Fairfield Station (*Yuwa*), bought in 1995 (see Map 1). The purchase of each of these stations has allowed the setting up of residential blocks where Bunuba people can live during the dry season. For example, one of the speakers I worked with, Billy Oscar, has a block of land called *Wamali* on Leopold Downs Station. This outstation is situated very close to the Oscar Ranges, or *Mawanban* which is Billy Oscar's traditional country.

Bunuba speakers also live in other Kimberley towns such as Derby and Halls Creek, often as a result of marriage with speakers of different language groups.

1.3.3 *Speech styles*

Speakers of Bunuba have available to them different speech styles. This thesis is predominantly a description of everyday Bunuba. One other register, the respect register or Mother-in-law-

language *Gun.gunma*, is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. I also discuss briefly the song style *Junba* (§1.3.3.2).

1.3.3.1 *Gun.gunma* mother-in-law register

Like a number of other Australian languages Bunuba has a specific “avoidance” speech style or respect register. Such respect registers are often referred to as “mother-in-law languages”: in the literature (Haviland 1979; Dixon 1980; Rumsey 1982b, 2000; McGregor 1989).

Gun.gunma is governed by the kinship system of Bunuba society. It is a speech style which invokes distance between two speech participants through linguistic means. Strict social distance is required between particular members of the Bunuba community based on marriage practices and possibilities (§5.1.1). Most commonly, a man and his mother-in-law are in such a relationship which requires that they speak to each other in an extremely circumspect way.

Gun.gunma can be viewed as a separate language from everyday Bunuba. Theoretically, a speaker can use just *Gun.gunma* features, but in reality these features are dispersed throughout utterances which include everyday Bunuba features. *Gun.gunma* has some distinctive vocabulary, but there is also a major difference in the verb structure, namely that in *Gun.gunma* there is just one verb construction, a complex verb which allows only one single intransitive auxiliary. This raises a number of interesting questions about the representation and manipulation of valency and transitivity, and their relations to pragmatic and discourse functions. These are explored in Chapter 5.

1.3.3.2 *Junba* songs

My treatment of Bunuba songs is brief since I have not analysed this speech style in great detail, though I did observe the role and function of songs by Bunuba speakers on various occasions. *Junba* performances are carried out for traditional ceremonial purposes such as the celebration of boys becoming men and at funerals. There is some reference to Bunuba ceremonial songs in Kaberry (1939:243), but Kaberry worked only a little with the Bunuba community and focused more on the Desert groups of the Walmajarri or Wangkajunga. More recently, the older members of the Bunuba community perform songs and music at school or community gatherings to ensure the knowledge of the elders is passed on to the younger generations.

Junba have been performed at special occasions, such as the handing over of a pastoral lease to the Bunuba community, or at the 100 year anniversary of a battle between Bunuba warriors and European settlers at Windjana Gorge (see Pederson and Woorunmurra 1995). There are *Junba* which are many years old and which have been passed down from generation to generation. They describe the creation of Bunuba country from the beginning of time. However, the *Junba* song style is still a productive phenomenon. While I was in Fitzroy Crossing, it was not unusual for Bunuba speakers working at the Kimberley Language Resource

Centre (§1.6.2) to decide to record *Junba*, and sometimes these were contemporary songs made up on the spot.

The linguistic style of the *Junba* reflected the traditional songs in voice quality, tempo and verse cycle. Some of the features of the *Junba* include slow rhythmic singing, almost like chanting. The verses tend to be short and may be repeated many times. *Junba* can be accompanied by musical percussion including the didgeridoo (*bambu*) and clapsticks (*gan.gan.gu*). Both men and women sing, though only men play the *bambu*. Included in the Appendices is a contemporary *Junba* recorded one of my informants, Jalakbiya, in 1998 (Appendix 1, Text 2).

1.4 Previous work on Bunuba

Linguistic work on Bunuba has been conducted in varying detail for over seventy years, most extensively by Alan Rumsey during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and by myself during the late 1990s. Rumsey's (2000) sketch grammar and this thesis are the only comprehensive descriptions of Bunuba available to date. After an overview of earlier research on Bunuba, I will present an overview of Rumsey's work with a view to identifying where it is strongest, and where there are gaps in detail and weaknesses in analysis which will be addressed in the present work.

1.4.1 Overview of research on Bunuba, prior to Rumsey

Researchers who have studied Bunuba, albeit not in great detail, include Capell (1940), Worms (1949), Nekes and Worms (1953). Coate and Peile also did some work on Bunuba in the 1950s and 1960s respectively. As mentioned above (§1.2), Bunuba was initially classified by O'Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin (1966) as one of a two-member family (Bunaban). Some wordlists were collected by Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) linguists, Joyce Hudson and Eirlys Richards, in the 1960s (1984[1976]).

The language name 'Bunuba' has been spelled in various ways over the years. Some of those spellings and their sources are listed in Table 1-2:

Table 1-2: Bunuba alternative language name spellings

Spelling	Source
Bonaba	Worms (1949)
Boonooba	Hudson and McConvell (1984)
Bunaba	Capell (1940)
	Rumsey (1982b)
	Oates (1975)
	Oates and Oates (1970)
	Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS)
	(now: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS))
	Worms (1949)
	Wrigley (1990)
Punaba	Kaberry (1939)
	Tindale (1974)
Punupa	Taylor (1960s in McGregor 1988:25)
Bunuba	Kimberley Language Resource Centre (KLRC) (1991, 1998, 1999, 2000)
	AIATSIS
	Rumsey (2000)
	Knight (this work)

Bunuba was first recorded by Capell in the 1930s (Rumsey 2000:38). The first published materials are in the Capell (1940) publication on Northern Kimberley languages. Further documentation was carried out by Worms (1949) and Nekes and Worms (1953), but according to Rumsey (2000:39) it is unreliable and short on detail. During the 1950s and 1960s Coate carried out research into Bunuba and made possibly the first sound recordings of the language (Rumsey 2000:39). Coate's materials are lodged with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) (Bunaba 1963:MS 2444). They include vocabulary, sentences, narratives and verbal paradigms with literal and free translations. There is also documentation by Capell from 1966 which includes a typescript manuscript of vocabulary running up to 42 pages and approximating 1250 words. This manuscript is also held at AIATSIS (PMS 303). Some Bunuba sentences were elicited by Father Anthony Peile in 1966 and 1967 (also see McGregor 1989:25); these materials are held at AIATSIS (PEILE_A10). Reference to Bunuba is made by Oates (1975) and by Oates and Oates (1970:40), but no detailed documentation was undertaken by these researchers. In the 1960s the SIL sent two linguists to Fitzroy Crossing for the purpose of translating the Bible into a widely spoken traditional language of this region. The choice of language was Walmajarri, but while working in Fitzroy Crossing the linguists recorded a basic Bunuba word list, published in Hudson and Richards (1984[1976]:66).

More recently, Nicolas (1998) has compared the verbal semantics of Bunuba and Bardi, based on data from texts in the publication *Thangani Bunuba* (KLRC, 1998). Nicolas followed her thesis with an article which makes reference to Bunuba verbal morphology (Nicolas

2000). This work on Bardi provides a prelude to the approach undertaken in this thesis for the equivalent morphemes in Bunuba (Chapter 4).

1.4.2 *Alan Rumsey's research on Bunuba and its relation to the present work*

The most extensive published work on Bunuba is by Rumsey (1982b, 1994, 1996, 2000) and Marr, Oscar and Wirrunmarra (1990). Over a period of twenty years, Rumsey travelled to Fitzroy Crossing to update and document Bunuba. His sketch grammar was published in 2000. Although an excellent work, this grammar is nonetheless a sketch grammar (117 pages in length) which leaves many areas of the language under-described or undescribed, particularly in reference to verbal semantics. A critique of Rumsey (2000) follows, highlighting the areas in which the present study diverges or extends from it.

Rumsey (2000) is a short grammar describing phonology, nominal and verbal morphology, syntax, and the 'mother-in-law' language, as well as providing two glossed texts and a word list (listed twice: semantically and alphabetically). It is written in the Australianist "Dixonian" tradition, not following any particular theoretical framework. It is comprehensive in the sense that it covers the usual gamut of topics in an Australianist grammar, but this hardly makes it the be all and end all of work on Bunuba. Rumsey states himself that "after at least another six months' fieldwork, I hope to publish a fuller description of the language than the present one" (Rumsey 2000:39). There are some areas I choose to follow a different approach and these include the following:

Pronominal marking: Segmentation, documentation, inverse alignment

In this thesis, I present an alternative and improved formal analysis of the pronominal prefix system. On Rumsey's (2000) analysis, a number of the prefixes were assigned underlying forms which were non-syllabic. On my analysis they are syllabic—which, I argue, is preferable on both descriptive and theoretical grounds. Furthermore, from the point of view of sheer documentation, Rumsey's work does not contain full paradigms of the surface forms of all the auxiliaries. I provide this documentation.

I also describe a system of inverse alignment for Bunuba (§3.8.3). Rumsey (2000:106) alludes to such a system by commenting on the existence of a morpheme *-n* in the transitive pronominal prefix paradigm which may be a surviving trace of an old accusative marker. He does not, however, fit this into the wider typological environment of inverse marking in Australian languages, or in the languages of the world. I describe the language-specific animacy/participant hierarchy underlying the Bunuba system, and show how inverse alignment accounts for the reversal of prefix ordering in certain person/number categories.

Verbal semantics

Verbal semantics is an area of the grammar which Rumsey hardly discusses at all. It is only recently that descriptions of languages have focused on this area of grammar in relation to nearby languages (for example, Green 1989; McGregor 1990, 2002a; Nicolas 2000; Reid 1990; Schultze-Berndt 2000). Rumsey does not go into a detailed discussion of the semantics of the auxiliary roots in Bunuba, simply referring the reader to the similar cognate forms in neighbouring Gooniyandi.

This thesis aims to greatly deepen the description of Bunuba verbal semantics, moving beyond a purely synchronic analysis of forms and functions. Chapter 4 lays the foundations by seeking to identify the Bunuba exponents of NSM semantic primes as proposed by Wierzbicka (1996) and Goddard and Wierzbicka (2002). This leads to an extensive treatment of the “hyperpolysemy” of the MA auxiliary (noted by Rumsey (2000:122), but not pursued in any detail). Chapter 4 also discusses the classifying role of the auxiliary roots. For a number of auxiliaries, I identify semantically coherent sub-classes of coverb-auxiliary collocations and propose concrete paraphrases for the underlying semantic patterns in question.

Gun.gunma: role of MAL+NI auxiliary

Rumsey (1982b, 2000) describes the formal features of the Gun.gunma auxiliary. In this thesis (Chapter 5) I describe the valency/transitivity manipulation which occurs in Gun.gunma and set it amongst the pragmatic motivations for conveying respect through linguistic means. Although for the most part I agree with Rumsey’s analysis of the formal aspects in Gun.gunma, I discuss the function of the intransitive verbal auxiliary in much greater detail.

A very minor issue which can be mentioned at this point concerns whether there is a consonant cluster /dj/ as opposed to a single consonant /j/. Rumsey (2000:39, 41) has chosen to revise his earlier single phoneme /j/ analysis (Rumsey 1982b) in favour of the cluster or /dj/ analysis. After reviewing the data and checking with speakers, I find his arguments unconvincing and choose to spell the words with the single consonant /j/. The examples given by Rumsey (2000:41) in support of his analysis are the following:

/majali/	‘cicatricising stone’	vs	/madjali/	‘mother-in-law’
/lajalaja/	‘pocket country’	vs	/malwadja/	‘mud’

The matter has little significance for the present study. My purpose in raising it is merely to alert the reader that on occasion Rumsey and I differ in the representation of these words in Bunuba. I spell ‘mother-in-law’ as /majali/, making it homophonous with ‘cicatricising stone’, and I write ‘mud’ as /malwaja/.

1.4.3 *Other relevant research*

The Bunuba community has been studied a little by anthropologists from the time of Phyllis Kaberry in the 1930s. Kaberry particularly focused on women. In a footnote she comments that she was in Bunuba traditional lands for only a short time, so there is little detailed reference to Bunuba people (Kaberry 1939:126).

A.P. Elkin (1956[1938]) discussed some aspects of the Kimberley but again, there was little focus on the Bunuba community. Most attention was paid to desert peoples such as the Walmajarri and Wankgajunga who had shorter contact histories than the Bunuba. The people have had one of the longest contact histories of any of the Kimberley Aboriginal group, because their land was the most fertile and accessible (Pedersen and Woorunmarra 1995).

In the anthropological works by Kolig (1972 in Rumsey 2000:39, 1977) reference is made to the Bunuba group, but Kolig is mainly interested in the Walmajarri and Wangkajunga. Moizo (1991) discusses the political situation within an Aboriginal community and focuses on the local politics in the Junjuwa community of Fitzroy Crossing.

There have been several historical accounts of the Bunuba community, particularly in reference to an individual known as Jandamarra, or Pigeon, a Bunuba warrior who led his countrymen/women in a fight against the colonisers who wanted to take over the fertile lands of the Fitzroy Valley. In 1952 Idriess published a fictional account of Pigeon but as is discernible from the title *Outlaws of the Leopolds*, he portrays the Bunuba resistance fighters not as victims but as criminals. Howard Pederson and Banjo Woorunmarra (1995) tell the story from the point of view of the Bunuba.⁶ All the actions and movements of the colonisers against the Bunuba are backed up by historical documents such as newspaper reports, personal letters and diaries from those involved. The account is one of sadness but of great heroism.

The organisation, Bunuba Productions, is in the process of developing a feature film script of the Jandamarra story. The aim is that there will be many local Bunuba people in the film and that the Bunuba language will be used as much as is possible. Bunuba Productions also wishes to film this story on location in traditional Bunuba country to make the filming of the story as authentic as possible.

1.5 **Data used for this study and field work methodology**

There are four main sources of data which have been drawn upon in the writing of this thesis. They are:

- Field notes, narrative texts and assorted materials recorded by myself during field work trips to Fitzroy Crossing in 1997, 1998, and 1999 (a total of 11 months)
- Narrative texts from the compilation *Thangani Bunuba* (KLRC 1998), which includes *Ngarranggani* (Dreamtime) stories as well as historical narratives of post-contact life

- Rumsey's published descriptions of Bunuba and Gun.gunma (Rumsey 1982b, 2000)
- Field notes from Alan Rumsey collected over 1979-1994.

I helped record, compile and edit the narrative texts which comprise the publication *Thangani Bunuba* as part of my duties while I worked for the KLRC during 1993-7. I subsequently began studies for this thesis and have since recorded, transcribed and translated many more texts on my field work visits to Fitzroy Crossing. The material collected by the KLRC, Rumsey and myself, has given me access to approximately 60 separate texts from 10 different Bunuba speakers. For this thesis I have drawn first and foremost on data compiled by myself, referring to work by Rumsey where information was lacking. Any examples occurring in this thesis or analyses made specifically by Rumsey are acknowledged.

Sources of textual examples are given at the end of the English glosses, either by reference to my own field data or to other sources. (My source references include the initials of the speaker and text number from which the data came, as well as the year, tape number and line numbers.) From time to time, I refer to comparisons with grammatical structures from other languages. These data are appropriately acknowledged both in the references and in the body of the work.

The main method of data collection and analysis used was the recording and transcribing of narratives. Elicitation methods were employed in checking narratives and possible grammatical alternations and also in the collection of the possible NSM semantic primes (see Chapter 4 and Appendix 2).

It will become obvious in Chapter 4 that I have been influenced by the semantic theory of Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) of Anna Wierzbicka and Cliff Goddard. Although this thesis is not written within any particular framework, the semantic aspects of the description has been strongly influenced by the NSM approach. Included in the data analysed for this thesis are some 200 so-called "canonical sentences" that were used in the identification of the proposed semantic primes in Bunuba. These sentences were devised by Wierzbicka *et al* to facilitate elicitation of the proposed semantic primes in natural languages. Through this work I not only identified possible exponents of these proposed semantic primes, I also came to understand the semantic content of the auxiliary roots more clearly. In this way, the description of their semantic content, although not couched in purely NSM terminology, is nonetheless described in a loosely NSM way. The NSM approach was also useful in coming to terms with the complex polysemy of the MA simple verb construction which is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

While working on Bunuba, both as a community linguist working for the KLRC and as a research student, I had contact with a core group of 10 informants. Their names and approximate ages are shown in Table 1-3, along with their dialect affiliation. Also included in this table are some younger Bunuba members who have helped me in my research.

Table 1-3: Bunuba informants and facilitators

Name ((d) if deceased) <i>Traditional name</i>	Approximate age	Reference	Dialect type
Adam Andrews (d) <i>Wigwuliny</i>	mid 70s	AA	light
Jimmy Green (d) <i>Mindawidji</i>	late 60s	JG	heavy
Molly Jalakbiya (d) <i>Jalagbiya</i>	early 70s	MJ	heavy
Jamie Marr <i>Madiyawu</i>	late 60s	JmM	light
Johnny Marr <i>Irmali</i>	late 60s	JnM	light
Rita Middleton (d) <i>Gamangu</i>	late 60s	RM	light
Mona Oscar <i>Nganyimiya</i>	late 60s	MO	light
Billy Oscar (d) <i>Wayani</i>	early 70s	BO	heavy
Nancy Rogers <i>Wibiy</i>	early 70s	NR	light
Casey Ross (d) <i>Nyawanday</i>	early 70s	CR	light
Facilitators:			
Patsy Bedford			
Dianne Chungal			
Selina Middleton			
June Oscar			

1.6 Language maintenance, renewal, literacy and recording

The maintenance of Kimberley Aboriginal languages has been a priority for the speakers for some years. That many Kimberley languages are either threatened or already extinct, is of major concern to the people who see these languages as an integral part of their culture and identity. A number of maintenance/revival projects have been carried out throughout the Kimberley, supported by and directed by local community groups. Aboriginal-run organisations such as the Kimberley Language Resource Centre (KLRC), Mangkaja Arts, the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (KALACC), Karrayili Adult Education Centre and the Kimberley Land Council (KLC) have all been involved in the maintenance of Bunuba in and around Fitzroy Crossing. It is the nature of life in regions such as the Kimberley that these organisations work co-operatively. They tend to have overlapping membership and often overlapping goals. This section outlines some of the more tangible contributions made to the maintenance of Bunuba by these organisations. It must also be noted that some additional organisations have been involved at the community level; in particular the Education Department

of Western Australia (EDWA) through its Languages Other Than English (LOTE) programs, has been a strong supporter, both financially and politically, of the need for traditional language maintenance in the Kimberley. The role of this support on the maintenance of Bunuba is discussed in §1.6.1. Some contemporary uses of Bunuba in the community and region of Fitzroy Crossing are discussed in §1.6.2. A short note on Bunuba practical orthography follows in §1.6.3.

1.6.1 *Kimberley Language Resource Centre*

The KLRC was set up in the 1980s after extensive community consultation. Aboriginal people in the Kimberley felt that their traditional languages were under threat and were seeking an organised way of attacking this problem. A pilot study for the setting up of a language centre was undertaken in 1984 resulting in the report *Keeping Language Strong* (Hudson and McConvell 1984). In 1984 the KLRC set up its office in Halls Creek as this was considered a central location for all the members the organisation wished to serve.

In 1989 a linguist began working for the KLRC in Fitzroy Crossing. The people there were quite accustomed to the presence of linguists, as SIL linguists Joyce Hudson and Eirlys Richards had lived there since the late 1960s, translating the Bible into Walmajarri; and Rumsey had also been in Fitzroy Crossing from time to time since the 1970s. However, the Bunuba language had not had much local, community-based maintenance work done on it and the Bunuba community felt a need for this to begin. An orthography workshop was conducted by the KLRC in 1989 by the then Halls Creek linguist Matthew Wrigley (1990). Through this workshop the level of interest in Bunuba language work was ascertained and a working community orthography was developed. As a result of this workshop and the work by the KLRC and Rumsey, the *Bunuba Wordbook* (1991) was published and this is still in active use.

Through the strong support of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Regional Council, funding was obtained for a permanent annexe in Fitzroy Crossing for the KLRC. This has allowed Bunuba to be worked on more consistently than had ever been done previously. *Thangani Bunuba* (KLRC 1998) was the first major publication of Bunuba language material and is being used to promote Bunuba language use and language pride.

The time-consuming process of developing language materials in print has been simplified by changes and improvements in the media available. A Bunuba CD-ROM language learning tool has recently been produced (KLRC 2000), aimed at the young Bunuba language learner. Resources such as this can be developed much more quickly than large, print publications. A Bunuba-to-English dictionary is also in preparation. I have been adding to this database during my studies, and the KLRC hopes to publish it in the near future.

With support from both the KLRC and EDWA, a program akin to the New Zealand Maori

“language nest” concept was implemented in 1996. This involved Bunuba elders, who tend to be grandparents of the target group, taking the young children out of the school environment for a few hours, two or three days a week. Younger children not yet at school are also included. The Bunuba elders play with the children and instruct them in Bunuba as much as possible, with the aim that the children will develop language skills which their parents have not acquired and are therefore unable to pass on to their children. The first children who started in this program are now all of school age and are being taught in the school under EDWA’s LOTE program. The reinforcement of Bunuba (and other local traditional languages) for these children is invaluable. Bunuba is being revived to some extent, as the children are becoming more and more proficient in the language of their grandparents. The KLRC has documented this and the other language nests (which are run for Gooniyandi and Kija in Halls Creek) through a video *So They Can Know* (1997).

1.6.2 Contemporary use of Bunuba

In various ways Bunuba is given high status in the general community in Fitzroy Crossing, in particular by being used for the naming of organisations or businesses in the area. Some of these names are coined terms such as *Ngindilangarri* (*ngindila-ngarri*: ‘backbone’-COM1) which is the name given to the Cultural Health Centre; or *Ngiyali* (*ngiyali* ‘bohemia tree’) which is the name given to the Community-governed roadhouse (which has a bohemia tree in front of it). These and some other businesses and organisations whose names are derived from Bunuba are listed in Table 1-4.

Table 1-4: Bunuba-named businesses/organisations

Business name:	Type of business/local organisation	Translation/explanation
Dangku tours	local organisation (in conjunction with CALM (Conservation and Land Management)	Place name: Giekie Gorge (<i>Danggu</i>)
Guwardi Ngadu	Old people’s home	
Gurangaja	Private business	Place name: <i>Gurangaja</i>
Ngiyali	Business	<i>ngiyali</i> ‘bohemia tree’
Ngindilangarri	Local organisation: Cultural Health ‘backbone’-COM1	<i>ngindila-ngarri</i>
Marra Worra Worra	Local organisation: Resource Agency	Place name: <i>Marrawarra</i>
Burawa store	Private business	Place name: <i>Burawa</i>

A number of residential communities on Bunuba land have also been given Bunuba names, which are the traditional names for the locations on which these communities are set up. Some examples are shown in Table 1-5. Some locations in Bunuba traditional country have their Bunuba names maintained by the wider population; see Table 1-6.

Table 1-5: Some Bunuba community names

Community name	Location
<i>Biridu</i>	on Leopold Downs Station
<i>Galamanda</i>	on Leopold Downs Station
<i>Junjuwa</i>	in Fitzroy Crossing
<i>Miliwindi</i>	Millie Windi Station also King Leopold Ranges
<i>Wamali</i>	on Leopold Downs Station
<i>Yarranggi</i>	Old Leopold Downs Station
<i>Yuwa</i>	Fairfield Station

Table 1-6: Some Bunuba traditional country names/standard location names

Bunuba name	European name
<i>Lilimalurru</i>	Lillimooloora police station
<i>Janjuwa</i>	Junjuwa community
<i>Burawa</i>	Burawa (old mission site)

1.6.3 *A note on the practical orthography of Bunuba*

Like other Australian languages Bunuba has an extremely short written history. Because of its state of decline, those who speak the language most fluently are older people who are not literate in any language. The younger people who identify as Bunuba, and who are literate in English, tend not to speak the traditional language fluently. The development of an orthography has therefore been left to non-speakers and to partial speakers of Bunuba.

As mentioned, the KLRC conducted an orthography development workshop with the Bunuba community in 1989.⁷ Prior to that time, Alan Rumsey had been visiting Fitzroy Crossing since 1979 in connection with his research on Bunuba. The orthography decided upon at the KLRC workshop differs slightly from the one used by Rumsey. The main differences between the community orthography and the linguists' orthography are between the use of /ng/ ~ /ng/: [ŋ] and between the use of /lh/ ~ /yh/: [ɣ].

In the Bunuba community orthography the velar nasal is underlined to distinguish it from the sequence /n/ followed by /g/. As Rumsey (2000) points out, this is an over-distinction since the retroflex sounds are also indicated by underlining, and so for the words which have a /n/ followed by /g/ (which are fairly rare), he uses a full stop to distinguish the sequence from the velar nasal /ŋ/; that is, the two phoneme sequence is represented as /n.g/ while the velar nasal is simply represented as /ng/. This is a logical solution and one which I also adopt, not only for /n.g/ sequences but also to for /n.g/ sequences, that is, for /ŋ/ followed by /g/. In addition, however, I will also use the Bunuba practical orthography convention and underline

/ŋ/ for the verlar nasal /ŋ/.

The difference between the symbols /yh/ and /lh/ is orthographic. Initially Rumsey analysed the phoneme as an interdental glide [ɹ], and so represented it orthographically as /lh/ (Rumsey 1982b). Phonological evidence suggests that the phonetic representation is actually [ɹ] and so /yh/ is a more appropriate phonemic representation of this sound (Rumsey 2000:42). The dialectal alternation between /y/ and /yh/ suggests strongly that /yh/ is in fact a glide and not a lateral (§1.3.1). The /yh/ symbol is used throughout this thesis.

1.6.4 *Use of Kriol*

Kriol is the name given to the English-lexifier creole language spoken throughout the Kimberley region. It is quite similar to Northern Territory Kriol but differs a little due to regional variations (McGregor 1988:217; Hudson 1983). All speakers of Bunuba speak Kriol, and younger Bunuba people tend to speak it as a first language. A number of Kriolisms appear in the speech of Bunuba speakers, either as nonce borrowings or through the filling of gaps in the language for items or concepts not previously accounted for in the Bunuba language. When Kriol words occur in Bunuba examples in this thesis they are given appear in plain text rather than in italics.

1 Walmajarri is directly to the south of Gooniyandi traditional country, rather than bordering Bunuba traditional country. However, with more recent movement, Walmajarri and Bunuba speakers have more recently come into contact (Map 2).

2 Throughout this thesis I employ the terms S, A and O for the syntactic roles of intransitive subject, transitive subject, and transitive object, respectively. These terms as they apply to Bunuba are discussed more fully in §3.8.

3 Bunuba makes some use of dependent-marking strategies for the marking of grammatical relations, where case markers attach to overt NPs indicating semantic roles such as agent (*-ingga* §2.11.1.1) or dative (*-u* §2.11.1.3). To argue that Bunuba is both head- and dependent-marking is in line with the approach taken by McGregor (2002b) in his description of Warrwa where the line between an ergative/accusative language vs a nominative/accusative language is not as clear cut as one might expect.

4 Rumsey (2000:105-111) justifies his reasons for using the terms monovalent and bivalent rather than intransitive and transitive. In this thesis, the terms 'transitive' and 'intransitive' are reserved for the number of participants referred to through pronominal prefixing within the verbal auxiliary. Valency is reserved for the number of implied participants referred to by the use of a particular coverb (Chapter 3).

5 Bunuba Aboriginal Corporation has recently undergone corporate changes and is now known as Bunuba Incorporated.

6 Note that the alternate spellings of Banjo's surname in this chapter refer to the same person: Wirrunmarra ~ Woorunmarra.

7 More recently, the Bunuba community orthography is promoted by the KLRC (1999). The publication recommends practical orthographies of many Kimberley languages including Bunuba.