

# **SKIN, KIN AND CLAN**

**THE DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL CATEGORIES  
IN INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIA**



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THE DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL CATEGORIES  
IN INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIA

EDITED BY PATRICK MCCONVELL, PIERS KELLY  
AND SÉBASTIEN LACRAMPE



Australian  
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P R E S S



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## About the Cover



The image used on the front cover of this book is a reproduction of Shirley Purdie's *Gija Kinship*. Below is Shirley's explanation of the painting in *Gija*, it was recorded, transcribed and translated by editor Patrick McConvell.

In *Gija*:

Ngagenyel ganggal Nyaajarri-ngel. Ngagenyel gural Nyawurru-ngel. Ngayin Naangariny-ngage. Ngagenyel wigil Nangalangel ...

Translation:

My mother's mother is Nyaajarri skin. My mother is Nyawurru skin. I am Naangari skin. My daughter is Nangala skin ...

In English:

See that's the skin group that name. This my skin group and this is for my dad and auntie family, and this my mother side ...

The editors thank Shirley Purdie and the Warmun Art Centre for allowing them to use it on the cover of *Skin, Kin and Clan*.





## Contributors

**Joe Blythe** is an interactional linguist specialising in Australian Indigenous languages. He conducts field research on the Murrinhpatha language of the Northern Territory and on the Gija and Jaru languages from northern Western Australia. He is interested in the relationships between linguistic structure and social action, and what these relationships reveal about social cognition and culture. His research interests include gesture, spatial cognition and language evolution. He is particularly interested in social identities and kinship concepts, particularly as instantiated within everyday conversation, and as acquired by children.

**Laurent Dousset** is Professor of Anthropology at the Advanced School for Studies in the Social Sciences, Paris (EHESS), and is member of Centre for Research and Documentation on Oceania, Marseilles (CREDO). He has been undertaking research in Aboriginal Australia, in particular in the Western Desert area, for over 20 years, with a particular interest in kinship, social organisation, memories on first-contact situations, as well as social transformations. Since 2008, he has also been working in Vanuatu on political organisations and historical transformations. He has published numerous scientific papers and has written or edited several books.

**Mark Harvey** is an Associate Professor in Linguistics at the University of Newcastle. He has worked with Aboriginal people from Darwin and its hinterland to record linguistic and cultural materials since 1980. Kinship and land tenure are particular research interests. This includes reconstruction of terminological systems and their precolonial patterns of geographical association. The reconstruction and recording of postcolonial history is another significant research focus. This includes consideration of demographic changes and patterns of shift in residential ranges affecting the indigenous populations of Darwin and its hinterland.

**Luise Hercus** has been recording Aboriginal languages and writing grammars and dictionaries for over half a century, beginning in Victoria and then continuing into far western New South Wales, north-eastern South Australia, and far west Queensland. What has always mattered most to Luise is listening to and recording the old people when they were speaking in their languages about their own country, their stories and traditions, including kinship, and singing traditional songs.

**Tony Jefferies** is a linguistic anthropologist with a special interest in Australian prehistory. He has worked in native title, mainly in Queensland. His Masters in Philosophy thesis from the University of Queensland concerned the identity and history of the Guwar language of Moreton Island, south-east Queensland. At present, he is in the process of completing his PhD dissertation at The Australian National University, ‘The Australian Late Holocene: The case for demic migration, linguo-ethnicity and higher order social organisation’.

**Piers Kelly** is a linguistic anthropologist at the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History in Jena, Germany. His present research explores graphic codes in small-scale communities: their origins, evolution, pragmatic principles and relationships to social organisation. He has previously worked as an etymologist of Aboriginal words in Australian English for the Australian National Dictionary Centre, and as a linguist with the National Commission on Indigenous People, Philippines.

**Harold Koch** is a linguist (now retired) at The Australian National University. His linguistic research in Central Australia has included descriptive study of the Kaytetye language and analysis of historical developments in Kaytetye and the other Arandic languages. He has also been involved in the documentation of Aboriginal land claims in the region around Kaytetye traditional territory. Another area of research and supervision has been analysing historical records of languages of south-eastern New South Wales. His recent involvement with the AustKin project entails describing the distribution and prehistory of kinship and social category terms over the whole Australian continent.

**Mary Laughren** received her doctoral degree in 1973 from the University of Nice, France, for a dissertation on Tyebari, a Senufo language of Côte d’Ivoire. From 1975 to 1993, she was employed by the Northern Territory Department of Education to carry out linguistic research in support of school-based bilingual education programs principally in Warlpiri-

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**Maïa Ponsonnet** holds a PhD from The Australian National University and is currently a Senior Lecturer at the University of Western Australia. She has expertise in Dalabon and other languages of the Gunwinyguan family, as well as in Kriol. Her research deals in particular with the linguistic expression of internal aspects of the person, such as emotions and intellectual states.

**Peter Sutton** is an author, anthropologist and linguist who has lived and worked with Aboriginal people since 1969. He is a specialist on Cape York Peninsula and also generally in Aboriginal land tenure, and has acted in some 70 land claim legal cases. He has written or edited 16 books on Indigenous languages, visual arts, land tenure, history and policy. His latest books are *The Politics of Suffering: Indigenous Australia and the end of the Liberal Consensus* (2009) and *Iridescence: The Play of Colours* (2015, co-author Michael Snow). His main current project is a biography of Queensland anthropologist Ursula McConnel.

