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The lonely lexicographer – J.G. Reuther's Diari dictionary

Peter K. Austin

Department of Linguistics
SOAS, University of London

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Overview

- The Diari/Dieri/Diyari language and people
 - Missionary J.G. Reuther
 - The Diari-German dictionary
 - Philipp Scherer's translation and our value adding
 - Reuther as lexicographer
 - Discussion and conclusions
-

Diyari language and Dieri people



Mission timeline

- 1866 German Lutheran mission established at Killalpaninna on Cooper Creek
 - 1888 J.G. Reuther joins mission (27 y.o.)
 - 1892-1894 Reuther and Strehlow translate Bible
 - Reuther & Strehlow 1897 *Testamenta Marra*
 - 1906 Reuther leaves mission
 - 1914 Reuther dies in freak accident
 - 1916 mission closed, people disperse (Austin 2014)
 - 1917 SA Museum buys Reuther MS and ethnographic collection
-

J.G. and Pauline Reuther



Scherer Diari-English translation (Reuther 1901)

1885

IV,80 9) kumari tapana = 'to drink blood; to suck at a wound'

When he is first being made a man, the wiljaru opens his mouth widely and drinks the blood [offered to him],

10) kumari tapana = 'to drink blood', i.e. to drink the blood that has been washed off a spear, wherewith a man has been killed. The young men have to do this, in order to become fearless,

11) danju tapana = 'to drink danju 'a variety of fruit'. In this instance one does not [use the term] 'eat',

12) paljangani tapana = 'to chew¹ a variety of [tree] gum'

IV,81 13) kirra tapana = 'to inspect a boomerang time and again' (during the making, to see if it is straight).

14) kana tapana = 'to devour the people.' The kutji does this.

15) tapana is used for 'eating' of the following fruits: kudnampirra, mpiampia, narimai, ngaliaru [and] nguratikiri.

16) mara tapana = 'to join in the eating of seed' which belongs to someone else.

17) wona marujeli tapana = 'for an old wona 'digging stick' to absorb' the water. This is placed in the water and enchanted, so that it may absorb the water,

Diari-English dictionary: some statistics

- 2,180 page typescript (published as microfiche)
 - Digitisation and XML markup (Austin 2023): 4,262 entries, 15,955 sub-entries, 27,472 Diyari expressions, 13,133 (classified) notes, 3,879 examples (Diyari, literal translation, free translation), 1,766 translator footnotes, 1,273 German expressions
 - Main dictionary XML file 162,870 lines (110,165 tags) 6.05 Mbytes
 - Supplement XML files: comparative lexicon, comparative sentences, placenames, ancestral beings, missing entries
-

XML sample

```
4945 </entry>
4946 <entry lbl="66" num="66" suf="">
4947   <lemma>
4948     <di>bununu pirna</di>
4949     <pos val=""/>
4950   </lemma>
4951   <note type="editor" subtype="morphology"><ortho>pununu pirna</ortho></note>
4952   <gloss>large itch</gloss>
4953   <note type="idiom">This is used in a figurative sense of a man who rejects his wife, in
4954     order to look around for another [woman], and after that for [still] another. The idea
4955     is thereby expressed: 'He is a man driven by sensual appetite for one girl or woman
4956     after another'. Cf. <di>baka pirna</di>.</note>
4957   <note type="mythology">the term <di>bununu parana</di> relates to the <di>Mura</di><mura
4958     value="female">Warilani</mura>
4959     <fn author="Scherer" num="fn1"><note>In all probability this name should read <mura value="female"
4960       >Wariliwulani</mura>.</note></fn> an old woman who once had many sores and rashes
4961     (<di>tapa</di>). While these were [in the process of] healing,
4962     they [still] caused her considerable itching. So she used her hands to soothe this
4963     irritation of the skin. That is how the word is said to have originated.</note>
.....
```

Strengths

- Huge number of entries, sub-entries, and examples gives rich information about possible semantics of Diyari lexicon, especially collocations and contexts
- 610 idioms represented, many not present in modern sources
- Rich encyclopedic information on culture and society (e.g. 915 ethnographic notes with 18 sub-types: 39 artefacts, 52 death, 30 kinship, 22 ceremony)
- Basic information on mythology for 461 entries (cf. other Reuther volumes)
- Comparative wordlist (157 entries), sentences (10)

Challenges

- We return to the challenges of Reuther's manuscript after outlining our work on adding value to the digitized version of Scherer's translation
-

Editorial interventions

- Typos corrected in Diyari, English, German
 - Where forms are known from modern sources they are added in the current orthography (for 2,486 entries)
 - Translator's English language errors corrected
 - Removed 'a' and 'the' in glosses, as per lexicographic practice
 - Scopal ambiguities resolved (e.g. multiple modifiers of head noun), e.g. 'clear, unobscured view' → 'clear view, unobscured view'
-

Editing

- Contextual information (e.g. selection) moved from “gloss” to “context note”, e.g. ‘to duck from the boomerangs, (when they come flying through the air)’ → `<gloss>to duck from boomerangs</gloss><note type="context">when they come flying through the air.</note>`
- All/any of the above, e.g. ‘to eat, chew (e.g. tobacco) for someone else’ → `<gloss>to eat for someone else, to chew for someone else</gloss><note type="context">e.g. tobacco.</note>`; e.g. ‘to look well after (e.g. widows, children)’ → `<gloss>to look after well</gloss> <note type="context">e.g. widows, children.</note>`

Editing

- glosses of idioms are clearly divided into literal gloss and idiomatic meaning, e.g. '[lit: to insult the water], i.e. not to take any fish out of forbidden waters' → 'to insult water'
Idiom: not to take fish out of forbidden waters;
- Footnotes appear at their relevant location in the text (not at bottom of page) and are popups triggered by mouse over;
- Other editorial notes, e.g. essential clarifications, corrections of translator's comments in footnotes. Additions by the editor appear preceded by an asterisk

Editing – sensitive expressions

Reuther's dictionary contains expressions and opinions that were common among missionaries and other non-Indigenous people in the 19th and early 20th century which Aboriginal people and others may now find offensive. Examples are “witchdoctor”, “heathen”, “pagan”, and “native”. There are 386 instances of such potentially offensive expressions. In the XML file these are tagged and a substitute provided,

e.g.1 like the cap on a <substitute val="">native</substitute>
man's head

e.g.2 in conformity to <substitute val="the Law">pagan [or
tribal] law</substitute>

User interfaces

1. **Specialist edition** for researchers and advanced learners -- presents all material in Scherer translation with editorial amendments. It is formatted by a CSS that converts XML tags to display as format (colours, bold, italics, indentation, alignment, pop ups) in a browser
 2. Limited search capabilities within the browser, minimal use of hypertext
-

Interface1

10

bakina vi

*Spelling: **paki-rna**

to break open; to open up of its own natural force or instinct; to burst open; to crack; to burst asunder

Context: Used in Diari of clouds, when they send forth rain in torrents, or when they disperse. Examples in Diari follow.

[1]

tapa bakina warai

the sore has opened up; the wound has burst

[page 11] [Vol. I, p. 9]

[2]

nguramarali bakila wapaia

the rosy-fingered morning has dawned

[3]

nauja marda bakina warai

the stone has cracked

Context: from the heat.

[4]

nauja turu bakina warai

the fire has burst into flame

Context: from wood laid on the coals

Supplements (e.g. missing entries)

Presented as per the Specialist edition but with lots of additional materials added by the editor, including references to additional sources, cognates in related languages, scientific identifications, hypertext links to Wikipedia entries, images, hypertext links back to the main dictionary

Sorted in proper alphabetical order – looks more like a “proper” dictionary

Balance between “faithfulness” and adding value

Interface1

35

bakubaku *n*

**Spelling: unknown*

type of animal

Editorial Note: this is probably **pakupaku 'crested bellbird'. See also Hercus (2014: 215) for the cognate term in Arabana-Wangkangurru.*

**Scientific name: Oreoica gutturalis*

**Scientific reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crested_bellbird*

[Wikipedia link \(opens new tab\)](#)



Editorial Note: this item only appears as a sub-entry of **thidna *foot**

**See: No. 3270-76*

User interfaces

2. **User-friendly edition** for learners, community members, interested others -- presents all material in Scherer translation with editorial amendments, but without footnotes, page numbers, and with substitutions of sensitive vocabulary.
 3. Three interaction methods:
 - ❑ by letter groups that show Diyari vocabulary and English gloss only. Users can click to open up full entry display for items that interest them
-

Letter group display

Reuther Dictionary Home Dictionary Notes More

Search

a b d g j k m n ng nj p t tj u w

baka n. *type, species; style, manner; nature, habit of a person or thing*



bakajerrujerru n. *hale and hearty nature*



bakakaritjina n. *transformed nature*



bakana conj. *too; also; and also; not only... but also*



bakanamata conj. *report; admission; confession; disclosure*



bakanata conj. *too; also; and also; not only... but also*



Expanded entry

a b d g j k m n ng nj p t tj u w

baka n. *type, species; style, manner; nature, habit of a person or thing*

bakajerrujerru n. *hale and hearty nature*

bakakaritjina n. *transformed nature*

Morphology: paka kartyi-rna

Mythology: This word owes its origin to the **muramura Matjamarpina**, who had fat arms and legs, and was therefore **bakapilki**. One and the same expression is used in all dialects.

jakaiai nauja karari bakakaritjina warai!

well, I never! he is now a transformed (almost disguised) type of man, (possibly because he has shaved off his beard)

bakana conj. *too; also; and also; not only... but also*

For users

2. other interaction methods:

- ❑ by search over Diyari or English expressions. The search box presents pop-up lists of available terms in forms or glosses and returns all entries with the search term – search begins with first typed letter and narrows as user types

 - ❑ by categorized Notes
-

Search “do”

Reuther Dictionary Home Dictionary Notes More

Welcome to the home page for the Reuther Diyari Dictionary.

This is the online edited version of Rev. Philipp Scherer's (1981) English translation of the *German Dictionary*. It was created by Peter K. Austin, Edward Garrett, and David

Diyari (also spelled Diari or Dieri) is an Australian Aboriginal language spoken in the north-west of South Australia (see <https://www.diyari.org>).

To view the dictionary click **Dictionary** in the navigation bar and you will see a list of words beginning with that letter. Click on a different letter to see words beginning with that letter. If you scroll over a word it will open up and display its full dictionary information.

To look for English or Diyari words in the dictionary use the **Search box**. Type the word you are interested in and you will see a drop-down list of words in the Dictionary that begin with that word. Click on the word you want and click Search. You will be presented by all occurrences of the search word. You can click on the highlighted links in each search result to go to the relevant dictionary entry.

A classified list of all the notes in the Dictionary can be found under the **Notes** tab.

dog
doubter
dokupirra
camp dog
doku belu
doku manka
doku maika
doku karia
lidna doku
marda doku
doku palara
doku parina
doku kekilja
doku palparu
worker, doer
doku tjinpiti

do



Search

Reuther's 1908 *Diari-*

ist of South Australia (see

beginning with the letter 'a'.
a particular word it will

s of the word you are
letters. Choose the one
; and examples. You can
he examples of their use.

Search “dok”

Reuther Dictionary Home Dictionary Notes More

Welcome to the home page for the Reuther Diyari Dictionary.

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Diyari (also spelled Diari or Dieri) is an Australian Aboriginal language spoken in the north-western part of South Australia (see <https://www.diyari.org>).

To view the dictionary click **Dictionary** in the navigation bar and you will see a list of letters. Click on a different letter to see words beginning with that letter. If you scroll down to a word, click on it to open up and display its full dictionary information.

To look for English or Diyari words in the dictionary use the **Search box**. Type in the word you are interested in and you will see a drop-down list of words in the Dictionary that begin with the letters you want and click Search. You will be presented by all occurrences of the word in the dictionary. You can click on the highlighted links in each search result to go to the relevant dictionary entry.

A classified list of all the notes in the Dictionary can be found under the **Notes** link in the navigation bar.

dokupirra
doku balu
doku manka
doku malka
doku karla
doku palara
doku parina
fidna doku
marda doku
doku palparu
doku kekijja
doku kalikali
doku tjinjiri
doku njinjaru
doku karitjina
dokupirapirra

dok



Search

Reuther's 1908 *Diari-*

Dictionary of South Australia (see

the introduction) beginning with the letter 'a'.
If you click on a particular word it will

display all occurrences of the word you are
interested in. You can click on the letters. Choose the one
you are interested in; and examples. You can
click on the examples of their use.

Search “dog”

dog



Search

dog
camp dog
wild dog; dingoo
name of dog of muramura

Welcome to the home page for the Reuther Diyari Dictionary.

This is the online edited version of Rev. Philipp Scherer's (1981) English translation of Rev. J.G. Reuther's 1900 *German Dictionary*. It was created by Peter K. Austin, Edward Garrett, and David Nathan.

Diyari (also spelled Diari or Dieri) is an Australian Aboriginal language spoken in the far northeast of South Australia (see <https://www.diyari.org>).

To view the dictionary click **Dictionary** in the navigation bar and you will see a list of entries beginning with the letter 'a'. Click on a different letter to see words beginning with that letter. If you scroll down and click on a particular word it will open up and display its full dictionary information.

To look for English or Diyari words in the dictionary use the **Search box**. Type the first few letters of the word you are interested in and you will see a drop-down list of words in the Dictionary that begin with those letters. Choose the one you want and click Search. You will be presented by all occurrences of the search word in entries and examples. You can click on the highlighted links in each search result to go to the relevant dictionary entries or to the examples of their use.

A classified list of all the notes in the Dictionary can be found under the **Notes** tab.

Notes list

All notes

Notes have been classified by type and sometimes also subtype. Use the links below to browse notes of a specific type. Counts are shown in parentheses.

Comparative (138)

Context (4120)

Editor (4940)

→ alternative (15)

→ grammar (3)

→ morphology (4260)

→ semclass (358)

→ xref (110)

Challenges of Reuther's dictionary

- Reuther was a poor linguist, a bad lexicographer, and obsessed with arcane knowledge (ancestral beings, mythology, placenames) while uninterested in many aspects of the mundane world (the 'lone scholar')
 - He received little training in languages, other than Greek and Latin, and for Diyari grammar borrowed heavily from previous missionaries, such as Flierl (Stockigt 2016)
 - Reuther's missionary orthography over-differentiates vowels and under-differentiates consonants, resulting in distinct words being spelled the same, or the same sound spelled differently
-

Phonology

Reuther

Austin

Gloss

ngatata

ngardarda

‘maternal grandfather’

ngatata

ngathata

‘younger brother’

terti

thati

‘middle’

terti

thardi

‘thirsty’

tala

darla

‘skin’

tala

tharla

‘name’

kalu

kalhu

‘liver’

kalu

karlu

‘testicles’

Phonology

kati	kathi	'clothing'
kadi	karti	'raw, uncooked'
kadi	kardi	'brother-in-law'

ngura	ngura	'camp'
ngura	ngurra	'continuous'

baru	paru	'yellow'
paru	parru	'fish'

waka	waka	'small'
wokara	wakarra	'neck'
woma	wama	'carpet snake'
wapana	waparna	'to walk'

Morphology – derived forms

buljubulju	pulyupulyu	‘annoyed, sullen’
buljubuljujeli	pulyupulyu-yali	‘angry (transitive)’
buljubuljurina	pulyupulyu-ri-rna	‘to become angry’
buljubuju ngankijirbamalina	pulyupulyu-nganka-iyirpa-mali-rna	‘to complain against one another’
buljubuljurilkijiribamalina	pulyupulyu-ri-lka-iyirpa-mali-rna	‘to annoy each other’
buljubuljurinietja	pulyupulyu-ri-rna-yitya	‘surly type’
buljubulju wapana	pulyupulyu wapa-rna	‘to walk along sullenly’
buljubulju kurana	pulyupulyu kurra-rna	‘to devise dissention’

Lexicographic issues

- Entries are sometimes partially duplicated, e.g.
 - **dapana** ‘to drink; to suck, to suck up; to kiss; to chew; to eat (of grounded seed); to belch or burp; to wet or moisten; to pour, to swallow’
 - **tapana** ‘to drink’, but its sub-entries contain glosses ‘to slurp, to suck, to absorb (water), chew, lick’
 - Sub-entries are often randomly listed in an apparent stream of consciousness (by Reuther or his teachers)
 - Some common terms have dozens of sub-entries, with tenuous semantics, e.g.
 - **tidna** ‘foot’ has 223 sub-entries, many of which are names for animals that have tracks
 - **tandra** ‘fruit’ has 127 sub-entries, most of which are names for unidentified plants
-

Lexicographic challenges

- some relatively common words are mistranslated, e.g.
 - **kaku** ‘sister (brother speaking)’ → ‘older sister’
 - **ngatata** ‘younger brother’ → ‘younger sibling’
 - **kami** ‘paternal grandmother’ → ‘father’s mother, father's mother’s brother’
- over 300 items do not have a headword entry but appear only as a sub-entry, often under a semantically loosely connected headword, or in examples, e.g. **tindritindri** ‘willy wagtail’ appears under **tidna** ‘foot’ only (as an animal that has tracks), **karku** ‘red ochre’ appears in 33 sub-entries and 10 examples but has no entry itself (c.f. **bukatu** ‘pink ochre’)
- Entries Supplement for these – many terms refer to flora and fauna, which Reuther apparently had no interest in but which we can identify from other sources, some contemporary to him, e.g. Gason (1886)
- Significant sense, reference, and cultural information can be scattered across entries in notes or examples

Proposal

- The main Reuther-Scherer dictionary needs a **stand-off XML index** that also incorporates material from all other legacy and modern sources (something like what we have done for the missing items Supplement)
 - It should be properly sorted and structured lexicographically to create a stronger Diyari-English bilingual encyclopaedic dictionary that builds on Reuther's strengths while filling the gaps and correcting his errors (especially in phonology and morphology)
 - We are working on this currently using Toolbox and Lexique Pro to generate both printable and web accessible versions
-

\x Lexeme

ngaRu

\a Alternate

\c Citation form

ngaRu

\var Variant

\xnum Lexical number

0527

\g Language

Di

\vcl Verb Class

\ps Part of Speech

ʔ

\ge Gloss in English

voice

\ge Gloss in English

echo

\de Definition

voice, distinctive sound, echo

\eth Ethnographic

\sci Scientific name

\scisrc Scientific source

\nt Note

Trefry (1984: 181) |

\sd Semantic domain

[Vocalisation_thought](#)

\syn Synonym

\ant Antonym

\cf Cross-reference

karta, kaldra, ngayarla, kunngaRa

\excf External cross-reference

ngaRu

\gcf Language cross-reference

YY

\reu_num

2049

\reu_lx

ngaru

\reu_ge

\bv Berndt and Vogelsang

\howitt Howitt form

\gas_lx Gason form entry

\rec Recorder

PKA, DT

\sp Speaker

\x_ref Example reference

[Di-g456](#)

\xv Example vernacular

ngathu nhinhayari ngaRu ngaRarna warayi

\xe Example English

I heard a voice like his

\date Date

04/Aug/2023

(a) 'to drink'

ngapa thaparna 'to drink water' [R229-ex1, R3148-ex1]

kumarrri thaparna 'to drink blood', *Ethn.* When he is first being made a man, the *wiyarru* opens his mouth widely and drinks the blood offered to him by his initiators. This also used to refer to drinking the blood that has been washed off a spear that a man has been killed with; young men are required to do this, in order to become fearless. Reuther also has the meaning 'to suck a wound' [R3148-ex 9]

kipaya thaparna 'to drink urine', *Ethn.* men drink their own urine in order to end a friendship when planning to kill a friend [R3148-ex22]

piarrurna thaparna 'to kneel down to drink' [R3148-ex18]

thapatha thikarna 'to come back to drink' [R3148-ex21]

(b) 'to suck'

ngama thaparna 'to suck the breast' [R3148-ex6]

paya kapi thaparna 'to suck out bird's eggs' [R3148-ex7]

thurintyi thaparna 'to suck marrow out of a bone' [R3148-ex8]

muanya thaparna 'to suck a wound', *Ethn.* the *kunkri* sucks puss and matter from a wound [R3148-ex3]

mularru thaparna 'to suck on caterpillars', *Ethn.* this is done so they become big and fat [R3148-ex19]

(c) 'to eat, slurp up, or chew on soft or semi-liquid food or fruit'

pawa thaparna 'to slurp up ground seed' [R229-ex6, R3148-ex2]

kilthi thaparna 'to eat fat or stew' [R229-ex4, R3124-ex 5]

danyu thaparna 'to eat *danyu* fruit'. *Note.* for soft fruit *thaparna* 'drink' rather than *thayirna* 'eat' is used. Other fruits are *kudnampira*, *mpiampia*, *nharimayi*, *ngalyaru*, and *ngurathikiri* [R3124-ex11]

palyangari thaparna 'to chew on the gum of the *palyangari* tree' [R229-ex9, R3148-ex 12]

karna thaparna 'to eat people', *Ethn.* the members of a *pinya* revenge expedition eat the raw liver of their victim. [R229-ex2, R3148-ex14]

(d) 'to lick'

miralu thaparna 'to lick a coolamon', *Ethn.* when a man has no tobacco, he licks the dish that he last prepared tobacco in to ensure that some may soon become available. [R-ex 23]

(e) 'to kiss, touch with the mouth'

marna thaparna 'to kiss on the mouth'

parru thaparna 'to kiss a fish', *Ethn.* If no fish land in the net, a man goes down into the water, whistles into a hollow bone, and sings his *mura* song. The first fish to be caught is then kissed while the man has bread (made of seed) in his mouth, and allowed to swim again. This is expected to entice other fish to enter the net. [R3148-ex20]

kira thaparna 'to kiss a boomerang', *Ethn.* this is done before throwing to ensure that the boomerang hits its target. It is also done repeatedly when a boomerang is being made to see if it is straight. [R229-ex25, R3148-ex13]

Conclusions

- The Diyari-English dictionary created by Reuther in 1886-1905 is a rich source of linguistic and cultural information about a highly endangered language which could potentially serve as a resource for revival and (re-)learning
- By digitising and adding value to the materials using XML we have created an explicit representation accessible in Specialist and User-friendly editions (and other derived documents can be created by XSLT and CSS, e.g. finderlist)
- There are a number of challenges with the manuscript that can be met by editorial intervention – it would be further enhanced, ideally, by creation of a well-structured richly articulated index into the original manuscript
- The project is a demonstration of the importance of making sense of and coming to grips with the “social life” of a legacy document (Dobrin & Schwartz 2022)
- Could be a case-study for others doing complex legacy-based research to respond to contemporary community needs

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