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Two traditional stories in the Ganai language of Gippsland

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1. Introduction¹

This presents a detailed analysis of two Ganai² traditional stories about the owl and the eaglehawk (Section 3), recorded in the original language with glossing by Alfred W. Howitt (in Smyth 1878 II: 49) (see Section 2 for the text and original translation). Some grammatical observations gleaned from those texts are presented in Section 4.

Luise Hercus (1986:163) wrote that:

the five main Gippsland Tribes, the Bratauolung³, the Brabralung, the Braiakaulung, the Krauatungalung and the Tatungalung were known collectively as the Ganai.

She interviewed Mr Conolly, a speaker of Brabralung, and recorded 114 words (Hercus 1986: 240), including a small number of words identified as Bratauolung.

¹ The first version of this paper was presented at an Australian Linguistics Society (ALS) conference in 2001, and earlier drafts were discussed with Luise Hercus and benefitted much from her insight. I also thank Barry Blake, Heather Bowe, R.M.W. Dixon, Harold Koch and David Nash for comments on earlier versions, along with several anonymous referees. Ted Ryan, as usual, has been very helpful in pointing out a range of sources and connections. The current editors must also be thanked for their patience and determination to publish this important volume.

² There are a range of different spellings of the language name; the one used in this paper is that used by Luise Hercus (1986). The Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages uses two spellings, Gunnai and Kurnai, on its website, <http://www.vaclang.org.au/languages/yirruk-tinnor-gunnai-kurnai-language-program.html> [accessed 2015-07-23].

³ In the original 1986 text, the velar nasal is transcribed as ŋ, as *Bratuaolun*. In this paper we will use digraphs throughout, in keeping with modern practices in writing of Victorian languages.

From this wordlist a fairly complete phonological inventory was derived (Hercus 1986: 164), together with phonetic detail. This represents the most accurate source for the sounds of this language group we can ever have.

Other important sources for the language include John Bulmer (in Smyth 1878; Bulmer 1999), Alfred W. Howitt (in Smyth 1878, 1904, manuscripts), R. H. Mathews (1902a, 1902b, 1903, manuscripts), and John Mathew (1899, manuscripts). Most sources do not identify which variety was recorded, but John Mathew's source contains a wordlist for two varieties: Brabürgülung (i.e. Brabralung) and Krauatyingalung⁴ (Krauatungalung), the consultant for which was named as 'Mauity or McKay, a native of Lindenow'.⁵ The word lists were 'taken down from his lips at Lake Tyers Mission station 16 Jany 1890'.

Fesl (1985) collated all of the available Gippsland sources into a substantial combined word list, and made a preliminary examination of the grammatical material. The names of the languages are discussed in Howitt (1904: 73) as follows:

The dialects spoken were Nulit by the Brayakaulung, the Brataualung, and the Tatungalung, the Muk-thang or 'excellent' speech by the Brabralung, and Thangquai or 'broad' speech by the Krauatungalung.

While we do not know anything about the meaning of <Nulit>, **thang** means 'word, speech', as in example (2.7), and Howitt elsewhere says that <muk> means 'good', although this word is not found in other sources.⁶ John Bulmer (in Smyth 1878 II:32) uses the term <Bundah Wark> to refer to the language, a term not found in other sources. In his manuscript (NLA MS 8006), Mathews names the language as <Gunggaladhang>. The first morpheme in this word may be the term <gone.gal.ler> for 'wild Black' recorded for the Omeo language by Robinson (Clark 2000: 204). According to Fesl, this is the name for the language given by the neighbouring Birdhawal.

2. The texts

The two texts are presented in the tables below, with the Ganai text on the left, as it appears in the original, and the translation on the right. For the second text, in Table 2, the translation is that in Howitt (1878 II: 49), but for the first text, in Table 1, I have made a free translation based on the gloss given by Howitt. The full gloss for both texts is presented in Section 3 below.

⁴ The presence of <ty> in this word is also found in the spelling of the name of the large national park in the area, Croajingalong, named after the tribe.

⁵ Ted Ryan (pers. comm.) told me that Mauity's wife died at Lake Tyers in 1894 at age 65, as reported on her death certificate. Since Mauity was probably older than his wife he was perhaps born in the 1820s.

⁶ See Section 3 for a description of the typographical conventions used in this paper.

Table 1: THE OWL AND THE EAGLEHAWK

(Brabrolong Tribe, Mitchell, Nicholson and Tambo Rivers)

<i>Ebing tówund-jat wattun magwánumurunga</i>	The little brown owl stole the eaglehawk's possum.
<i>Maengwarra gwánumurunga multówundjun wattun múlnoongal</i>	The eaglehawk watched him stealing his meat.
<i>yirrak neinda bulla kányuboolla mangoot bittal</i>	The two of them perhaps fought, as with a waddy or club.
<i>Palwadinna daya moóngabúllan marggiárt-bearn bulla</i>	A number saw those two fellows wrestling together.
<i>Koonkarra gwánumurunga maggiart-bearn bulla</i>	Perhaps the eaglehawk (and owl) were wrestling together.
<i>Kannyu bullan mabúndiana</i>	Perhaps the two bit at each other (with their beaks).
<i>Multówandjanny ngrúnga wattunda ma gwánumurunga nook prak a ngrúnga gwánumurunga</i>	(Because) he was stealing the possum from the eaglehawk's hole, the eaglehawk blocked him in the hole.
<i>Ebing turtygunny moonagrunga</i>	The owl died in the hole.

Table 2: THE EAGLEHAWK AND THE OWL

(By a Native of a Tribe near the Brabrolong)

<i>Bonay-chakka já-anju gwánumurunga wóonganto jirra</i>	The eaglehawk was seeking to seize a kangaroo with his talons.
<i>Gwánumurung ebing mum mutkwut wongia ngia ngrunga</i>	The eaglehawk saw the owl going into a hole belonging to him.
<i>Ebing woonganto blang</i>	The owl was seeking a ring-tail 'possum.
<i>Mútkwuttung (mookun) ebing toondor tanga wanga ngrunga</i>	The owl went down into the bottom of the hole.
<i>Wully ngat kekán ma nókepalla gunna?</i>	The eaglehawk said how shall I contrive to shut him up?
<i>Tappy quannal!</i>	All right, I have it!
<i>Ebing tunkana tang, wama ngat jellaquan tungoo?</i>	The owl said, how shall I make a hole to escape hence?
<i>Blabba tungana</i>	He made his escape.
<i>Blabba gwánumurung tungoo-wangoo ebinga</i>	The eaglehawk went away when the owl had escaped.

Howitt added a note that this second story was ‘told by one of the Tatoonlong tribe, which inhabited a strip of land between the Gippsland Lakes and the sea’. Unfortunately nothing can be said with confidence about linguistic differences between Brabralung and Tatungalung.

These two stories are part of the cycle⁷ of the Eagle and Mopoke, another portion of which is presented in Smyth (1878 I: 451-2), as follows (based on information from Bulmer):

The Gippsland people say that the Eagle left his son in [the] charge of the Mopoke while he with his wives went to hunt kangaroos. The Mopoke put the young one in a bag, and sewed up the bag and left him. The Eagle during his hunting excursion became uneasy about his son, and finally returned to ascertain how he had been treated. When he came to know what had been done, he grew very angry. He at once made a search for the Mopoke, and found him, after some trouble, sitting in a tree. The Eagle, when he saw his enemy, used guile. He exhibited no anger. He spoke gently. He determined to kill him by subtlety. He slyly requested the Mopoke to go into a hole in the tree to look for an opossum. The Mopoke obeyed, but returned without any. He was told to go again, and he obeyed; and as soon as he was in the hole, the Eagle closed the hole, and made the Mopoke a prisoner. The Mopoke cried aloud when he found himself fastened up, and he used these words:-

Wun-no nat jel-lowen gnong-ona wok-uk⁷
When I cut a hole Mopoke

which means, “When will the Mopoke cut a hole?” He was determined to get out, and, finding all means fail him, he at length, in great sorrow, broke his leg and took out one of the bones, and very patiently bored a hole sufficiently large to creep through. He got free. Again the Eagle met him, and they spoke together, and the Eagle and the Mopoke made a solemn agreement and a treaty of peace. The conditions were as follows:- The Eagle was to have the privilege of going up into the topmost boughs of the trees, so that he might from so great a height see better where kangaroos were feeding; and the Mopoke was to have the right to occupy the holes of trees. Thus ended the disputes between the Eagle and the Mopoke.

The words spoken by the Mopoke here clearly related to line (2.7) below.

⁷ Bulmer collected information about versions of this cycle of stories from the Murray River as well as Gippsland. In the published versions in Smyth (1878: I), he is not always clear which piece of information comes from which source, though the portions in language are generally in Ganai. The content of the story was known in a wide area. A somewhat different version of the story, from the Wimmera, is contained in Bulmer (1999), and tells about a shortage of water and a robin, who knew where to find water in a tree. The mopoke shut the robin up in a hole in that tree, but later changed its mind and decided to let the robin out, but could not find the way, speaking the words <wunno nat gelowin ngoio wookook>, asking the robin where he should cut to let the robin out. These words are in Ganai language, as Bulmer concedes.

⁸ Most of the Gippsland sources listed in Fesl give the word for ‘mopoke’ as **wukuk**.

3. Detailed analysis of the texts

The method of presenting examples in this paper is to give the original spelling of the language examples in italics in the first line, with the original glossing and/or translation, also in italics, in the second (and sometimes also third) line. Following that are the regularised spellings in bold, using the phonemes identified in Hercus (1986: 163, 140). Following recent practice in Victorian languages, stops are written as voiceless, except in homorganic nasal stop clusters, and digraphs are used for palatals, dentals, retroflex and the velar nasal. No distinction is made between /r/ and /r̥/; the latter is written by Hercus as <r̥> and only found in three words.

These regularisations are based on comparison with other sources, and where a form is not found in any other sources, the suggested regularisation is shown in italics. Brackets are used to indicate where the consonant is not certain. Underneath the regularisation is the morpheme analysis and then a free translation. Detailed notes follow each line of the two stories. In the body of the text, original sources in language are presented in <> brackets and regularisations are presented in bold.

Blake (this volume) points out that many of the 19th century recorders give lists of ‘translational equivalents of English prepositions’. Bulmer (1878 II: 26) gives translations for 31 English prepositions, some of which are clearly verbs in Ganai, such as ‘to’ for which he gives <Keekala> which we gloss as **kika-la** ‘go-PURP’. A number of others, such as **wanga**, are probably relator nouns. The glossing of **wanga** by Howitt and Bulmer varies, in (2.2) below being glossed ‘into’, but in other cases as a comitative ‘with’, ‘at’ or ‘of’. This and similar words are glossed here simply as **LOCATIONAL**, because the full range and constraints of their meaning is not clear.⁹

3.1 Story 1:

The Owl and the Eaglehawk (Howitt in Smyth 1878:49)

- 1.1 *Ebing* *tówund-jat* *wattun* *magwánumurunga*
 Owl *stole* *‘possum* *of eaglehawk*
 (The little brown owl)

(ng)eping **t(h)awa-ny-tyat** **wathan-ma** **kwanamarung-a**
 owl steal-PST.3-? possum-POSS eaglehawk-OBL
 ‘An owl stole the eaglehawk’s possum.’

Notes: The word for ‘owl’ or ‘mopoke’ is recorded by Thomas (SLV MS 6290) as <ngyay-ping>. Hercus (1986) did not record vowel-initial words for Ganai,

⁹ Abbreviations used in the glosses are: 3DL = 3rd person dual, ACC = accusative, DEM = demonstrative, ERG = ergative, GEN = genitive, **LOCATIONAL** = locational word, NEG = negative, OBL = oblique, PART = participle, POSS = possessum, PROG = progressive, PST.3 = 3rd person singular past, PURP = purposive, RECIP = reciprocal, WH = wh- word, interrogative word.

so an initial velar nasal was probably present. An ergative marker /-o/ would be expected on this word (see below Section 4.3 for a discussion of the ergative).

The meaning of the suffix <-jat> is unknown. It might perhaps be some kind of emphatic.

The affix **-ma**, which marks the possessum, is written by Howitt as a prefix to the possessor. The possessive construction, where both possessum and possessor nouns are marked, is discussed in Section 4.1)

- 1.2 *Maengwarra gwánnmurunga multówundjun wattun mülnoongal*
Watched eaglehawk stealing meat of his

mangwa-ra kwanamarung-a mal thawa-ndjan(y)
 watch-? eaglehawk-OBL? ? steal-?

wathan-ma nungal
 possum-POSS 3SG.GEN

‘The eaglehawk watched (him) stealing his possum.’

Notes: The word **mangwa-** ‘watch’ is also found in a sentence from Bulmer in Smyth (1878 II:29):

Thununa ngi màng gwan ngung
going I to watch him

The first element of Bulmer’s example is also found in the sentence <Dhoonyoonang ngaty brabana wan’gin> recorded by R.H. Mathews with the meaning ‘I’m throwing a boomerang’, and this leads to the analysis of the Bulmer sentence as follows (reading <ngi> as **ngai**):

thunyuna(ng) ngai(ty) mangwa-n n(g)ung
 PROG I watch-? him

Assuming that the root of the word for ‘watch’ is indeed **mangwa**, then example (1.2) also contains a suffix <-ra> of unknown meaning.

The expected ergative marking **-o** is not found on the word for ‘eaglehawk’, but rather the oblique **-a**. The reason for this is not known.

The word for ‘stealing’, written <multówundjun> contains the expected root **thawa**. Since all the words recorded by Hercus (1986: 240) have initial stress, and since stress is probably indicated by the acute accent, then <mul> could be treated as separate lexeme. It is found also in the following sentence from Bulmer (1878 II: 30), where its meaning appears to convey motion and it has been tentatively glossed ‘GOING’:

Kootopanä kani mul wangä karika
one man will go to creek

kutapana kani mal wanga karik-a
 one person GOING? LOCATIONAL scrub-OBL

The word **wanga** is not a verb, but probably a locational relator noun. Thus it seems that <mul> carries the semantic meaning of motion.

- 1.3 *yirrak neinda bulla kányuboolla mangoot bittal*
quarrel fellows two perhaps fight
 (as fighting with a waddy or club)

yirak na(w)inda pula kanyu pula mang(g)-uth pithal
 quarrel fellow two perhaps two fight with club

‘Those two fellows were perhaps fighting.’

Notes: The word **yirak** is also found in the form <Yarrak> ‘fight’ (Bulmer 1878 II: 32)

The word <neinda>, glossed by Bulmer as ‘fellow’ is recorded by Mathews in the same meaning, but with the form <nawindoo> in a sentence he translated as ‘I throw a boome[rang] at that fellow’.

The word <mangoot bittal> is only found in this line. It cannot be analysed further.

- 1.4 *Palwadinna daya moóngabullan marggiart-bearn bulla*
A number see fellows two wrestling two (or together)

palwat(h)ina thaya munga pula-n marrgatj-piyan(g) pula
 some? see DEM 3DL-? wrestle 3DL

‘And some others saw the two of them wrestling.’

Notes: This line is the only record of the word <palwadinna>. Bulmer recorded <preporetha> (1878 II: 25) as ‘some’, and the phrase <preperwitha kani> ‘some more blacks’. The expected ergative marker is absent here.

The root of the word ‘see’ may be **thaka-**. Fesl (1985 Appendix IV, Section S: 1) gave the regularised form as <ḍaga>, but there are a number of records of ‘see’ with forms like <dein> and <tiarwark> that suggest a lenition of the second consonant in some circumstances, to a form **thaya**. This is similar to the lenition in irregular verbs in Wemba Wemba, where present **tyaka** ‘(he) eats’ corresponds to **tyaia** ‘he ate’ (Hercus 1986:46).

An accusative suffix might be expected on <bullan>. However, none of the clearly accusative pronouns recorded by Bulmer have final **-n** and the form occurs again in (1.6) below where it does not have accusative function.

Luise Hercus (pers. comm.) points out that we might expect to find reciprocity marked in the verb for ‘wrestle’, with the form <bearn> possibly being a reciprocal morpheme. Mathews (NLA MS 8006) records two forms for ‘we d(ua)l talk to each other’, <Dhanggaiadyalliang> and <Dhanggaiagundhiang>. It is presumed that the first of these is inclusive and the second exclusive. Both words end in **-iyang** which may also be part of the form <bearn>.

- 1.5 *Koonkarra gwánumurunga maggiart-bearn bulla*
Perhaps eaglehawk wrestling two (together)

kunkara kwanamarung-a marrgatj-piyan(g) pula
 perhaps? eagle-OBL wrestle 3DL

‘(Maybe) the eagle (and owl) were wrestling each other.’

Notes: The editors have pointed out that it is odd to have two words meaning ‘perhaps’, **kanyu** in line (1.3), also recorded by Bulmer as <kanno> (1878 II:26) and by Mathews as <gunno> (NLA MS 8006), and <koonkarra> here, a form not found in any other sources.

- 1.6 *Kannyu* *bullan* *mabúndiana*
Perhaps *two* *bite (tear with the beak)*
- kanyu** **pula-n** **ma** **pandha-ny**
 perhaps 3DL-? ? bite-PST.3
 ‘Perhaps the two of them bit at each other (with their beaks).’

- 1.7 *Multówandjanny* *ngrúnga* *wattunda* *ma* *gwánumurunga*
stealing *hole* *‘possum* *of* *the eaglehawk*
- nook prak a* *ngrúnga* *gwánumurunga*
block up *hole* *the eaglehawk*

mal **thawa-ndjan(y)** **ngrang-a** **wathan-da-ma** **kwanamarung-a**
 GOING? steal-? hole-POSS possum-OBL-POSS eagle-OBL

nukaplaka **ng(r)ang-a** **kwanamarung-a**
 block up hole-POSS eagle-OBL
 ‘(Because) of his stealing the eaglehawk’s possum (from) his hole, the eaglehawk blocked up his hole.’

Note: The word <multówandjanny> is very similar to the second word in (1.2) above, and both are translated as ‘stealing’. It is likely that the same suffix is present in both cases.

Fesl (1985, Section G: 12) records the form for hole as <ngang>. There is a cognate in Bungaditj, **ngrang** ‘hole’ (Blake 2003: 81).

The analysis of the phrase <ngrúnga wattunda ma gwánumurunga> is discussed in detail in Section 4.1.

The word for ‘block up’, <nook prak a> is the same as <nókepalla> ‘shut up’ in (2.5) below. Here the meaning is past tense but in (2.5) it is irrealis.

- 1.8 *Ebing* *turtygunny* *moonagrunga*
owl *dead* *hole*
- (ng)eping** **tertika-ny** **muna** **ng(r)ang-a**
 owl die-PST.3 DEM hole-OBL
 ‘The owl died in (his) hole.’

Notes: The word <moona> is probably a demonstrative. A related form is found in Bulmer (1878 II: 27), where <munana> is glossed as ‘that’

kinowa *marook* *munana* *moola* *booloboolotha* *baanga*
put *rug* *that* *way* *over* *camp*
 ‘Put that rug over the camp.’

3.2 Story 2:

The Eaglehawk and the Owl (Howitt in Smyth 1878:49)

- 2.1 *Bonay-chakka já-anju gwánnumurunga wóonganto jirra*
claw-flesh foot-with eaglehawk seeking kangaroo
 ‘The eaglehawk was seeking to seize a kangaroo with his talons.’

punai-tyak-a tyany-u kwanamarung-a wunga-ndu tyira
 claw-meat-OBL foot-ERG? eaglehawk-OBL search-? kangaroo
 ‘An eaglehawk was seeking a kangaroo with his talons.’

Notes: This is the only sentence in either story in which there is a possible ergative marker. The word for ‘foot’ is recorded at least 12 different sources and is clearly **tyany** (see Fesl 1985, Appendix A: 16). So the parsing of the word by Howitt should not have been <já-anju> but <jáanj-u>. The ‘eaglehawk’ is not marked for ergative.

- 2.2 *Gwánnumurung ebing mum mutkwut wongia ngia ngrunga*
eaglehawk owl there going into his hole
 ‘The eaglehawk saw the owl going into a hole belonging to him.’

kwanamarung (ng)eping mam matkwat wanga
 eagle owl DEM enter? LOCATIONAL

ngiya ng(r)ang-a
 ? hole-OBL

‘The eaglehawk (saw) the owl entering into his hole.’

Notes: Howitt’s free translation has ‘saw’ as the main verb, but there is no word ‘see’ in the text. The root for ‘see’ is **thaka**, as in (1.4) above.

The subject ‘eaglehawk’ is not marked for ergative.

- 2.3 *Ebing woonganto blang*
owl seeking ring-tail ‘possum
 ‘The owl was seeking a ring-tail ‘possum.’

(ng)eping wunga-ndu plang
 owl seek-? ringtail possum
 ‘The owl was seeking a ringtail possum.’

Note: The subject ‘owl’ is not marked for ergative.

- 2.4 *Mútkwuttung (mookun) ebing toondor tanga wanga ngrunga*
Went into (going into) owl down bottom into hole
 ‘The owl went down into the bottom of the hole.’

matkwata-ny muku-n (ng)eping thundu thanga
 enter-PST.3 LOCATIONAL?-? owl DEM? down

wanga ng(r)ang-a
 LOCATIONAL hole-OBL

‘Then owl went in, down into the hole.’

- 2.5 *Wully ngat kekán ma nókepalla gunna?*
How I can shut up him
'The eaglehawk said how shall I contrive to shut him up?'

wul-n(g)aty kika-n ma nukaplaka n(g)unga
 how-1SG go-? ? block up 3SG.ACC
 'How will I block him up?'

Notes: The form <kekán> is probably related to <keekala> recorded by Bulmer (1878 II: 26) in the meaning of 'to', 'until', and <keekaling> glossed as 'go' (1878 II: 30). These are presumed to be based on a root **kika-** 'go'.

It is assumed here that Howitt's <gunna> is the 3rd person singular object pronoun, recorded by Bulmer as <noonga> (1878 II: 15) and <ngunga> (1878 II: 29)

- 2.6 *Tappy quannal!*
All right
'All right, I have it!'

t(y)api kwan-al
 ? ?

Notes: No analysis can be offered for this line.

- 2.7 *Ebing tunkana tang, wama ngat jellaquan tungoo?*
Owl spoke words how I hole-make hence
'The owl said, how shall I make a hole to escape hence?'

(ng)eping thang(g)a-ny thang
 owl speak-PST.3 word

wuma-n(g)aty tyila-wan thung(g)u
 WH-1SG dig-? hence

'The owl said 'How do I dig (myself out) from here.'

Notes: Mathews (1902a: 105) gives <thunganadhang> as 'talk', written as a single word, which suggests the root of 'speak' is **thung(g)a**, but most of the forms in his manuscript paradigm have the first vowel in the root as /a/. Thomas wrote <doon-it-dang> for 'speak', again suggesting /u/ as the root vowel. The presence of a nasal-stop cluster in this word is implied by another form given by Mathews, <dhoonggandhoo>.

Howitt's original gloss separates the words for 'speak' and 'word', and the form **thang** is also found in the names of the languages (see Section 1). Thomas gives <gill-würt> 'to dig', which together with the sentence in Smyth's description of the Eaglehawk and Mopoke stories in Section 2, suggests that **tyila** means 'dig'

- 2.8 *Blabba tungana*
Away from here
'He made his escape.'

plapa thung(g)a-na
 go.away hence/from-?

'He got away from there.'

Notes: Although not listed by Fesl (1985), perhaps because it does not occur in any word list, **plapa** is one of the most frequently recorded morphemes in the Gippsland texts, glossed as ‘go.away’ as it appears to relate to motion away from a location. It appears to be a verb and can co-occur with bound pronouns, as in the following line from a story recorded by Bulmer (1878 II: 33)

Went the two one day

Mal plapa bulla thungo kooto brun

mal	plapa-pula	thung(g)u	kutupan
GOING?	go.away-3DL	hence/from	one
‘They went away hence, one (day)’			

2.9 *Blabba gwánumurung tungoo-wangoo ebinga*
away eaglehawk hence-from him owl
‘The eaglehawk went away when the owl had escaped.’

plapa	kwanamarung	thung(g)u	wanga	(ng)ebing-a
go.away	eagle	hence	LOCATIONAL	OWL-OBL
‘The eagle went away hence from the owl.’				

Notes: Although the form <tungoo-wangoo> looks similar to <tanga wang> ‘bottom into’ in (2.4), the two lines are glossed differently. Bulmer writes the word for ‘down’, ‘under’ with <a> as <thanga> (1878 II: 26) but the forms meaning ‘from’ are always written with <u> as <thunga wanga wadthana> ‘from an opossum’ (1878 II: 97).

4. Linguistic notes

4.1 Possession

Fesl (1985: 114) pointed out that ‘the possessive in *Ganai* is represented by both the possessor and the possessed noun being suffixed’. She glossed the suffix of the possessor noun as ‘genitive’ (GEN) and that on the possessum as POSS. In this paper, I use the term oblique (OBL) (following Hercus 1986), rather than genitive, because the function of the suffix is wider than possession, but retain GEN for pronouns. The oblique is marked by **-a** (variant **-da** and **-wa**, see Table 4). Double marking of both possessum and possessor in Australian languages is not uncommon, also found in the neighbouring Yuin languages, for example (Besold 2013: 291), where the possessor is marked genitive and the possessum is marked for 3rd person singular possessor. As far as we can tell however, the marker of the possessum in *Ganai* is not the 3rd singular possessor, which is recorded by Mathews (NLA MS 8006) as <-noong>, in the form <wanging-noong> **wan.gin-nung** ‘his boomerang’.

The two most common constructions are Noun-Noun possessive constructions, as **wathan-ma kwanamarung-a** (possum-POSS eagle-OBL) ‘the eaglehawk’s

possum' in (1.1), and Noun-Pronoun as **wathan-ma nungal** (possum-poss 3SG. GEN) 'his possum' in (1.2). A related construction is that of Locational Word-Noun, as in **wanga ng(r)anga** (LOCATIONAL hole-OBL) 'into the hole' in (2.4).

Table 3 compares the marking of possessums from all the possessive constructions recorded in the language in regularised form, mostly from Bulmer in Smyth (1878 II). There are two forms of the suffix **-a** and **-ma**. Most body parts (except 'arm') are marked with **-a**, and most of those marked with **-ma** are alienable (except 'hole' which is marked with **-a**). While this is not conclusive evidence for marking of alienability, no phonological motivation for the different suffixes can be adduced, with, for example, all of final **-a**, **-ng** and **-k** found with both **-a** and **-ma** suffixes.

Table 3: Marking of the possessum in Gippsland languages

<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Root Form</i>	<i>Possessed Form</i>
hand	preth	pra-a
tooth	narndang	narnd-uwa
tail	(w)rak	(w)rak-a
heart	papak	papak-a
arm	pirndang	pirndang-ma
bone	pring	pring-a
meat, flesh	tyak	tyak-a
camp	pang	pang-ma
spear	wal	wal-ma
boomerang	wan.gin	wan.gin-ma
yamstick	kaniny	kaniny-ma
canoe	kri	kri-ma
camp	nguya	nguya-ma
father	mung(g)an	mung(g)an-ma
possum	wathan	wathan-ma
canoe pole	kenduk	kenduk-ma
person	kanai	kanai-ma
hole, cave	ng(r)ang	ng(r)ang-a

One word, **wathan** 'possum', is found as both possessor in **wreka wathan-da** 'the possum's tail' (Bulmer 1878 II: 96), and as possessum **wathan-ma kwanamarung-a** 'the eaglehawk's possum', in (1.1) above. When this word is a possessor marked

with the oblique case, or when marked for ergative (see (5) in Section 4.3), the suffix has an initial /d-/.¹⁰ Table 4 lists all nouns in regularised form marked as possessors and the variation in the form of the possessor suffix can be seen. Where the root form of the noun has final **-a**, the suffix is **-wa**, and for most of the final nasals, the form is **-da**.

Table 4: *Marking of the possessor in Gippsland languages*

<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Root Form</i>	<i>Possessor Form</i>
woman	rukurt	rukurt-a / rukur-a
man	kanai	kanai-a
boy	lity	li-a
eagle	kwanamarung	kwanamarung-a
name of mythical creature (Nargun)	narkun	narkun-a
possum	wathan	wathan-da
water	yarn	yarn-da
name of a bad spirit (Barn)	parn	parn-da
moon	weny	weny-da
kangaroo	tyira	tyira-wa
koala	kula	kula-wa
stick	kalak	kala-wa

In example (1.7) above, we find a construction that may be an example of recursive possession. The ‘possum’s hole’ would be **ngrang-a wathan-da** (hole-POSS possum-OBL) and ‘the eaglehawk’s possum’ would be **wathan-ma kwanamarung-a** (possum-POSS eagle-OBL) which we find in (1.1). The word **wathan** is marked with both the **-da** and **-ma** suffixes, with the suggested analysis as in:

- 3) **[ng(r)ang-a wathan-da]-ma kwanamarung-a**
 [hole-POSS possum-OBL]-POSS eagle-OBL

The interpretation suggested here is ‘(stealing) the eaglehawk’s possum (from) his hole’. The use of a possessive construction to mean ‘from’ is seen in (2.9) above.

¹⁰ There is one sentence recorded by Bulmer (1878 II: 97) where possum is combined with a locational <thunga wanga wadhana>, but the oblique marker does not have /d/.

4.2 Verbs

Very little is known about the verbal morphology of the Gippsland languages. Mathews gave several verb paradigms in his different publications, but as Fesl (1985) found, these do not always accord well with the sentences recorded by Mathews and others. For a past tense verb marked by 3rd singular, Mathews (NLA MS 8006/8/7) recorded <Dhanggañ> suggesting a 3rd singular past marker **-ny**, which is found in (1.8).

Two exemplars of the verb ‘steal’ with a suffix **-ndjan(y)** are translated as ‘stealing’, in (1.2) and (1.7).

In the second story, there is a suffix **-ndu** in (2.1) and (2.3), in both cases translated with the past progressive in English. On the other hand, Mathews (NLA MS 8006) records a suffix **-ndu** on a present tense verb as <Dhangandu> **thang(g)andu** ‘thou speakest’, but the text examples from Howitt are clearly not 2nd person.

4.3 A note on the ergative marking of nouns

Both Bulmer (1878) and Mathews (NLA MS 8006) record sentences with the ergative, in both instances marked with <-o>. The two sentences recorded by Mathews are:

- 4) *kunnaio* *wadhan* *dhanda*
 a man *an opossum* *is eating*

kanai-o **wathan** **tha-nda**
 man-ERG possum eat-?
 ‘A man is eating a possum.’

- 5) *waddhando* *dyerring* *dhânda*
 a possum *leaves* *is eating*

wathan-do **tyering** **tha-nda**
 possum-ERG leaf eat-?
 ‘A possum is eating leaves.’

The ergative is also written with <-o> by Bulmer. The list of words recorded by Hercus (1986: 240) includes /o/, phonetically realised as [ɔ], and found in final position in a number of words.

Given that both Mathews and Bulmer wrote the ergative with <o>, and both distinguished it from the oblique, it is unlikely that Howitt, whose transcriptions are in general at least as good as Bulmer’s, would have missed this. The lack of ergative marking in these stories, apart from the possible marker in (2.1), remains unexplained, like so much about the Ganai language.

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