

Flagging and diachrony in Pama-Nyungan languages, Australia

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Pama-Nyungan (PN) languages are spoken across the southern two-thirds of Australia and typically show case-marking on nominals that results from the interaction of four factors: grammatical functions (e.g. A – transitive subject, S – intransitive subject, P – transitive object), inherent lexical content ('animacy'), clause type (main vs. dependent of various types), and cross-clausal reference (e.g. main S/A = dependent S/A). For example, Thalanyji (Western Australia) *-garda* encodes P in purpose same-subject clauses (*-gu* and *-nha* encode P in other contexts). Most languages have some version of dependent-marked split-ergativity, at least for main clauses. There are no adpositions in PN languages.

In this paper I discuss three diachronic developments in these patterns:

1. In some Ngayarda languages (Western Australia) there has been a shift to nominative-accusative encoding via reinterpretation of earlier dependent clause patterns (Dench 1994, Westerlund 2019);
2. In Wangkumara (New South Wales, Robertson 1984) gender has been incorporated into cases through grammaticisation of post-head demonstratives (e.g. *-ndru* marks feminine ergative);
3. Some PN languages are 'double-marking' with pronominal suffixes or clitics on clausal heads alongside dependent nominal case – Blake (1977) shows that double-marking is areally distributed. Languages located near the isogloss show unusual patterns of flagging, with split-ergative head-marking (e.g. Malyangapa, New South Wales, Austin 2002) or sensitivity to clausal polarity (e.g. Gamilaraay, New South Wales, Austin 2023). We show that these patterns arise from transparent grammaticisation of pronominals. In Baagandji (New South Wales, Wurm and Hercus 1976, Alpher and Bower 2023), further changes have resulted in tense-marked pronouns (e.g. *ngaba* 1sg.nom.present, *gaba* 1sg.nom.future).

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