Shall We Play the Festschrift Game?

Essays on the Occasion of Lauri Carlson's 60th Birthday

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"It's Etymology Captain, but Not as We Know It": *Pump* in North Australia

David Nash

Abstract We consider the words originating from the English word 'bamboo' borrowed into the indigenous languages of northern Australian and denoting the didjeridu (drone pipe) or other aerophones. The word 'bamboo' must have been first acquired by speakers of Australian Aboriginal languages in the 19th century, and in north Australia where the large stem plant is endemic, namely in the region of Darwin. The available data is organised in support of an hypothesised spread whereby the word was applied to the aerophone made from bamboo, and then to similar aerophones made of other wood. In this sense, 'bamboo' (as *pampu*) spread inland southwards, and eastwards to western Cape York Peninsula. In western Cape York Peninsula the word lost the final vowel, and in this form was borrowed southwards and applied to the particular aerophone the 'emu caller', used to attract the emu (a large flightless game bird). A comparable distribution is collated for an indigenous word denoting aerophones: *kurlumpu(rr)* and corresponding forms in various north Australian languages. The study demonstrates how some etymological headway can be made on loanwords in languages with only a recent documentary record.

1 Introduction

The etymology of a particular word traces combinations of inheritance and borrowing, describing shifts in form and meaning along the way. When borrowing is involved, the path can be quite idiosyncratic, and uncovering it requires a deduction

It is a pleasure to associate this paperlet with Lauri Carlson. We knew each other as fellow graduate students in linguistics at MIT, and also shared a group apartment. Lauri would occasionally put to us his roommates (mostly native speakers of English of various kinds) that a (to us implausible) pair of English words would prove to be etymologically related, and invariably on us reaching for dictionaries he would turn out to be right. An earlier version appeared as blog posts (Nash 2011a, 2011b). I am grateful to the editors for providing this opportunity, and for their forebearance.

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beyond the Comparative Method. See for instance Trask (1996: 351–353) for an appraisal of the kind of study involved.

When the documentary record for the languages involved is only recent, as for Australian languages, the task is perforce more inferential. But if we confine ourselves to the historical period, that is, since written records began around two centuries ago, then etymologies in Australia can be pursued, using at least some shreds of evidence of a kind not available for the prehistoric period. In this note, I exemplify this first by studying a word of regional Aboriginal English, and then by looking at a cognate set in Australian languages with the same range of meanings. Along the way we see the hazards of translation on the colonial frontier, even with respect to 'concrete' artefacts.

2 'Pump' in North Queensland

The published grammar of the Kalkatungu language of western Queensland has this entry in the 'Weapons, tools, etc.' section of the glossary:

> 'pump' (decoy device for attracting birds) **ku⌊umpu**[1] (Blake 1979: 179)

This entry is fairly opaque to speakers of Australian English. What kind of decoy, the reader wonders, would be named with the English word for a fluid propulsion device (let alone a kind of footwear!).

The author (BB) elaborated[2] that he based the entry on a sound recording of an interview with Mrs Lardie Moonlight (LM) conducted by his colleague Gavan Breen (GB), who has kindly provided me with his careful transcript of the relevant excerpt, and later played me the sound recording.

> GB (<BB[3]): You plant so the emu won't see you.
> LM: Yes, dig a hole and put the little bough around it, sit in it with a pump, call him // *yu:ridja(y) yini* / *wùdingálkuwa* // *wudingalkuwa* /// he sitting down there in the hole for that emu to come; he blowing that pump, pumping his *kúrumbu* // *kúrlúmbuyan i.ni*
> GB: What was the pump like? How did they make it?
> LM: Out of the little oller [sc. hollow] tree, they knock the hollow tree down and they put a haxe [sc. axe] round it, you know, make it small, they blow it then.
> GB: Oh, yes, it makes a noise and the emu comes up to see what the noise is.
> LM: Oh yeah, they make a lovely noise too.
> (Breen Field Tape 283, AIATSIS AV tape A2459b, 24 May 1972, Boulia, Queensland)

The morphological analysis of the Kalkatungu is:[4]

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[1] ⌊ represents l-with-dot-under, the apico-domal lateral. Blake (1979: 4) noted that 'All the informants spoke English in most situations, some of them using a fair admixture of Pidgin features.'

[2] Blake and I exchanged a number of email messages on this in April–May 2011.

[3] Breen was working through a set of elicitation sentences that Blake had drawn up.

[4] Here I revert to the spellings of Blake (1979), cast in a practical orthography whereby e.g. *rl* is the apico-domal lateral; and ignoring the phonetic length marking of the first vowel in *i.ni*.

yurru	tjaa	ini	utingarr-ku-a,	kurlumpu-yan	ini
man	this	sit/remain	emu-dative-ligature	pump-having	sit/remain

'This man is sitting with the pump (waiting) for the emu.'

The 19th century ethnographer Roth (1897: 97) was familiar with that district, and described how men imitated the 'call' of an emu using 'a hollow log some 2½ feet to 3 feet long …', adding that 'These "call-tubes" are met with throughout North-West-Central Queensland'. Anell's (1960: 19) map shows reports of 'emu-callers' from seven locations from the south Gulf country in Queensland across to Charters Towers (and another two locations in northern NSW). The emu-caller has been likened to a cut-off didjeridu, and indeed there is a market nowadays for ones of recent manufacture, witness a Google search on the term.

So that explains what the thing is: the Kalkatungu were indeed describing a traditional device of theirs. But what of the glossing word 'pump'?

The English word *pump* is hard to relate here semantically. But as well as the emu-caller there is one other tubular aerophone long used and made by Aboriginal people in northern Australia: the didjeridu. And in western Cape York Peninsula (CYP) it is called *pamp*, phonetically matching the English word spelled *pump*. The key is this entry in Alpher's (1991) *Yir-Yoront lexicon*:

> **PAMP** *(N) Etymology: < English* ***bamboo****, probably via one or more other Aboriginal languages.*
> DIDGERIDOO. **Olo pamp palarrng**. He's blowing a didgeridoo. *Note: A recent cultural introduction to the area and not played at Kowanyama.*
> **YO-PAMP** *(N) SCI: plant.*
> CASTOR BEAN, PALMA CHRISTI, RICINUS COMMUNIS. *Note: Not a bamboo. L.E.*[5] '*kerosene bush*'.

A quite similar word is recorded in Kuuk Thaayorre, the neighbouring language to the north:

> yuk **pamp** –a nn **bamboo** flute pipe (Foote and Hall 1992–1995: 101; nn abbreviates noun)

The slight differences in meaning and form are instructive. First, the denotation is a smaller aerophone, one traditionally used in the Torres Strait islands, made from a slender species of bamboo native to the Cape York region. The bamboo flute or pan-pipe apparently spread south prehistorically along western Cape York Peninsula, as the Wik languages have their own terms for it (Peter Sutton, p.c.). Also the 'Bone or reed (blown like pan-pipe)' was reported further south, from the southeast Gulf of Carpentaria, by the 19th century ethnographer W. E. Roth (Roth 1902 per Moyle 1967 map), so it could well be that slender bamboo substituted for other materials in the pan-pipe. In any case, it seems that when the English word *bamboo* arrived in

[5]Local English. How and when the *pamp* word came to also denote the introduced castor bean plant calls for integration into my account. Edwards and Black (1998) list the same word *yok pamp* 'castor bean (*Ricinus communis*)' in Kokoberrin, a neighbouring language to the south; no word is listed denoting an aerophone or bamboo. The castor bean plant and bamboo have in common that they have hollow jointed stems (as drawn to my attention by David Wilkins, p.c.) and they are fast growing, suckering, colony forming plants.

the region, it was applied in some places at least also to the pan-pipe. This may well have been prior to and thus independent of the arrival of the didjeridu in western Cape York Peninsula (CYP).

As to the form of the Kuuk Thaayorre word, Barry Alpher (p.c.) noted that loss of an earlier final V2 (i.e. the vowel at the end of a disyllabic word) is common to all these western CYP languages, and points out that the oblique form in Kuuk Thaayorre is *pampa*, with echo-vowel *a* instead of *u*; this implies that Kuuk Thaayorre heard *pamp* (rather than *pampu*) when the word was borrowed into that language. I join Alpher (p.c.) in proposing that when *bamboo* from frontier English or creole was first borrowed into a western CYP language, *pampu* was truncated to *pamp* by loan adaptation (Alpher and Nash 1999: 14–15), and the truncated form was borrowed further into Kuuk Thaayorre.

But what of Yir-Yoront *pamp*, which we are told does not comprise bamboo. Well, a possible explanation is that it came as the name of the didjeridu, when this instrument arrived, ultimately from Arnhem Land. I haven't seen an account of how this happened, but a parallel arrival in the southern Gulf has been explained this way:

> The didgeridoo first entered Mornington Island in the 1930s as a result of visits to other Aboriginal settlements by the mission boat the *Morning Star*. This vessel was crewed by local tribesmen and paid occasional visits to Arnhem Land's Yirrkala mission. Items of material culture, including the didgeridoo, were brought back to Mornington Island from these visits. (iDIDJ Australia 2004)[6]

This same mission vessel's circuit also included Aurukun settlement, where lived speakers of many of the Wik languages north of Kuuk Thaayorre, but the Wik Mungkan dictionary (Kilham et al. 1986) does not record any *pamp* or didjeridu word.

In any case, in the Northern Territory the didjeridu has long been called *pampu* in Aboriginal English (with stress on the first syllable) and the word is fairly widespread especially in the northern half of the NT, and in the languages of people who adopted the didjeridu in historical times. Arthur's (1996) *Aboriginal English* has an entry for it, labelled '[northern Aust.]' and noting 'Also bamboo pipe'.[7]

The ethnomusicologist Moyle (1981: 322) remarked thirty years ago:

> The fact that bamboo didjeridus were quite common among northerly groups in the Northern Territory during the last century is confirmed by the word 'bamboo' which is still used in

[6]The "interactive map shows the major areas in the 'Top End' of Australia where the didgeridoo is traditionally found", in Exhibition of Didgeridoos. Memmott (1980: 271–272) recorded the word *pampu* 'didjeridu' in oral history recalling new artefacts that came to Mornington Island with the *Morning Star* in the 1920s–30s.

[7]Somewhat surprisingly Arthur's (1996) earliest citation is as late as 1969; along with a 1957 reference to *bamboo puller* 'a didgeridoo player'. These are antedated by Worms (1953: 278): "the Arnhem Land tribes also have a 'bamboo', a sort of crude trumpet made from a narrow branch of a tree". Balfour's (1901) title applied the expression "bambu trumpets" in 1901. It might be thought that as *bambu* is a Malay word it could have been borrowed through Makassarese (Mkr) contact rather than through English; however Walker and Zorc (1981: 118) list only *bamutuka* 'pipe' < Mkr *pammudúkaŋ* 'bamboo opium pipe' root word Mkr *udu?*, Malay *udut* 'to suck-at, smoke'.

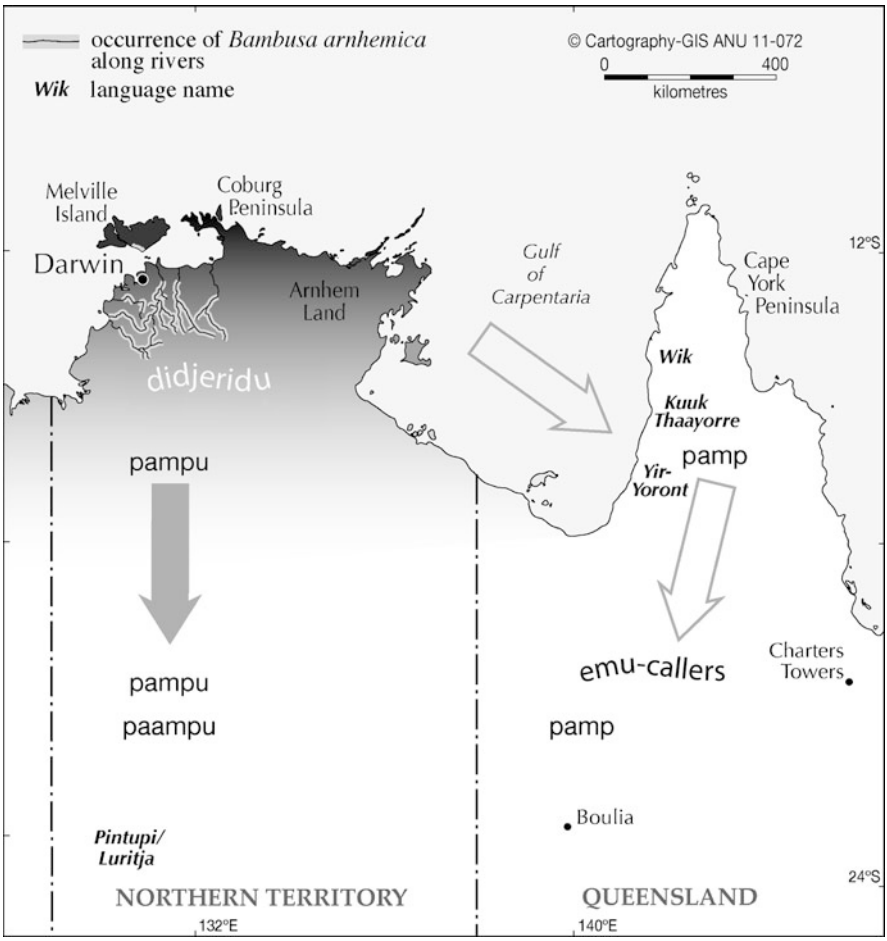

Fig. 1 Northern Australia, showing hypothesised spread of the *bamboo* word, open arrows indicate spread is inferred. Shading shows 19th century range of the didjeridu. Based on Anell (1960), Moyle (1981), and *Bambusa* range from Franklin (2008)

the lingua franca by some Aborigines when referring to the instrument, though 'didjeridu' may be gaining ground.
The suggestion here is that the first didjeridus were of bamboo; and that because of the availability of bamboo in the north-western region of the Northern Territory, the first didjeridu players may well have belonged to that region.

Bambusa arnhemica is the only one of the three endemic species of bamboo in Australia which is suitable for making a didjeridu. Botanists including Franklin (2008) have shown that the species is confined to Western Arnhem Land and the Daly River districts, as shown by the river lines on the map in Fig. 1.

The earliest records of the didjeridu are from this part of northern Australia, and these were made from bamboo, as noted by the earliest observers. Consider first

these quotations from the *Australian National Dictionary*'s (Ramson 1988) entry for *eboro*, a word no longer in use, nor remembered by Aboriginal people in north Australia:

> 1845 L. Leichhardt Jrnl. Overland Exped. Aust. 16 Dec. (1847) 534 They tried to cheer us up with their corrobori songs, which they accompanied on the Eboro, a long tube of bamboo, by means of which they variously modulated their voices.
> 1846 J.L. Stokes Discoveries in Aust. I. 394, I here saw the only musical instrument I ever remarked among the natives of Australia. It is a piece of bamboo thinned from the inside, through which they blow with their noses. It is from two to three feet long, is called ebroo [sic], and produces a kind of droning noise.

Prior to these writings, there are two recorded observations at the short-lived settlement 1828–29 at Fort Wellington in Raffles Bay on the Cobourg Peninsula at the far north of Australia.

The first was by naval surgeon Thomas Braidwood Wilson (Wilson 1967) who published in 1835 a book including his account of a visit to Fort Wellington. Wilson provided an illustration entitled 'Dance of the Aborigines of Raffles Bay' (Wilson 1835: 88) and described the dance 'to the music, produced by one of their part from a long hollow tube' (Wilson 1835: 87), which Kim Akerman (an expert on Australian material culture) believes is 'the earliest depiction of the didjeridu or eboro in use'.[8] Akerman (p.c.) continued:

> I think it is a bamboo one for two reasons:
>
> 1. The diameter—which is much more in proportion to the early bamboo didjeridus that I have seen, when compared with wooden ones; and
> 2. The lightness of the material is demonstrated by the fact that it is being held in one hand off the ground.
>
> These points do not prove it is bamboo but I think greatly raises the possibility.

Wilson's (1835: 319) vocabulary from Raffles Bay includes

> Ebero … *Their musical instrument*

which is the earliest known record of this term, predating the 1845 use by Leichhardt as quoted above from the *eboro* entry in the *Australian National Dictionary* (Ramson 1988). Note that the word has apparently dropped out of use on the Cobourg Peninsula (Bruce Birch, p.c.).

The second observation is by Captain Collet Barker (Bach 1966) who was Commandant of Fort Wellington. In his journal Barker described what we recognise as the didjeridu:

> Mago had brought a kind of musical instrument, a large hollow cane about 3 feet long bent at one end. From [this] he produced two or three low & tolerably clear & loud notes, answering to the tune of didoggerry whoan, & he accompanied Alobo with this while he sang his treble. (Mulvaney and Green 1992: 113)

[8]There is a rock art image of a human figure playing a didjeridu in Kakadu National Park (Chaloupka 1993) which may well predate Wilson's drawing.

Barker's word 'cane' here would not apply to a hollow limb from a tree. Note by the way his expression *didoggerry whoan*: this prefigures the word *didjeridu* for which the *Australian National Dictionary*'s (Ramson 1988) earliest citation is as late as 1919.

So, while the didjeridu has long been made from a variety of timbers, the association of the didjeridu and the bamboo plant is well established and derives from the northwestern part of the Northern Territory. The early settlements in that region (Raffles Bay, Port Essington,[9] and then Darwin) are the plausible site of adoption of the term *pampu* among Aboriginal people, and we can infer that they learnt the word *pampu* from the early contacts with English speakers, and applied it to the didjeridu. The *pampu* word spread both to people who already had the didjeridu (and their own term for it), such as to the east in Arnhem Land, and also with the didjeridu itself to other people to the south who had no previous term of their own. I have indicated the southerly spread with the solid arrow on the accompanying map; as far south as for instance *paampu* "didgeridoo; from English 'bamboo'; not used in Central Australia" in the *Pintupi/Luritja dictionary* (Hansen and Hansen 1992). The route along the Overland Telegraph Line south from Darwin has long been a conduit for the spread of innovations, and presumably was involved in particular in how Eylmann (1908: 376, Table XXIV Fig. 5) in 1897 happened to observe a bamboo 'trumpet' among the Warumungu of the central Northern Territory.

Another factor which might have had an influence is folk-etymology, with two aspects: (1) the English word *pump* could cover the repetitive exertion producing pulses of air, a kind of pumping; and, for the emu-caller, (2) onomatopoeia: the word *pamp* mimics the sound of the hand-struck emu-caller.

In sum, it seems that people familiar with the emu-caller adopted the 'bamboo' word for that somewhat similar aerophone. We can deduce that it reached the Kalkatungu via western Cape York Peninsula,[10] because they adopted the truncated form *pamp* (while their language usually preserves the final vowel of a loan word). I have indicated this hypothesis by the hollow arrows on the above map.

There is another link between the two aerophones:

> A suggestion that the 'emu decoy', reported in several parts of Australia, may have been a precursor of the didjeridu in some areas is to be found in an extract from Roth (1902).[11] (Moyle 1981: 327)

So, curiously, by spreading from the didjeridu to the emu-caller, the word may have reversed the course of an earlier adaptation deriving the didjeridu from the emu-caller.

[9]Balfour (1901: 33) includes a photograph of 'three bambu trumpets … from the Alligator tribe, Port Essington' in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. See items 1900.55.273 and 274 and 1900.71.12 in the databases at http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk.

[10]There is evidence for a parallel trade link: Sharp (1952) noted that stingray barbs from the Yir-Yoront area were exchanged for ground stone axe heads sourced a long way south, subsequently matched with quarries in Kalkatungu country (Davidson et al. 2005: 108).

[11]Roth's (1902: 23–24) report was from further east, from north-east Queensland.

3 *Kurlumpu*

The Kalkatungu word *ku⌊umpu*, where I began, also looks to have an intriguing etymology. Being a word indigenous to Australia however its story can only be prehistoric inference. Table 1 contains the apparently cognate words I have found, cast in the source spelling or the current orthography. (Note that in the relevant Australian languages there is a single series of stop consonants, variously but not distinctively spelled with the voiced or voiceless symbols.) The words are presented in a geographic order northwest to southeast, which is also from the longer more complex form to the shorter forms.

The apparent cognates in Table 1 span a major linguistic divide in Australia, that between the Pama-Nyungan (PNy) family across most of the continent, and the disparate languages of other families across northern Australia. Given the time depth of the separation of these families and the scarcity of inherited shared vocabulary, we can presume that the cognate set in Table 1 involves borrowing, fitting with the relatively recent diffusion of the denoted artefacts, especially the didjeridu. The linguistic evidence tugs in two ways as to the direction of the diffusion: the non-Pama-Nyungan languages show more variation (initial *k* possibly lenited to *w* in Alawa; final *ng* separable in Miriwoong), whereas the *rr* segment is attested only in a Pama-Nyungan language (Warlpiri, and likely cognate with the final *t* in Mudburra). Drawing on extra-linguistic evidence, it might be thought that the word spread south (from non Pama-Nyungan languages) along with the didjeridu; but it is also possible that the word denoted a pre-existing aerophone in Pama-Nyungan languages, and was later applied to the didjeridu.

There is another apparent cognate set spanning some non-Pama-Nyungan languages of north Australia, which can be matched to the above in the first two syllables, shown in Table 2.

The words in Table 2 matching in just the first two syllables are yet to be demonstrated to be related. Similarly, for guidance of future research I mention as intriguing potential cognates some other words in Pama-Nyungan languages which are quite similar in form, but with a rather different meaning:

1. Wulguru *kulumpuru* ‘tree with honey in it’ (Donohue 2007: 41) (per Claire Bowern, p.c.; Price 1885: 30: *Cooloomboro* ‘Tree “Sugar Bag” In which the natives find the Honey’); the meaning connection would be through ‘hollow tree’. The Wulguru language was spoken about 1,000 km to the east on the Queensland coast around Townsville; the *r* is Donohue’s reconstitution which matches an apical flap or retroflex glide.
2. Warumungu *kulumpurr* ∼ *kulumpul* ‘hard, loud’, an eastern neighbour of Warlpiri
3. Warlmanpa *kurlumpurrnga* ‘(upper) arm’, another eastern neighbour of Warlpiri; compare also Warlmanpa’s non-Pama-Nyungan neighbour Jingulu *gurlumbu* ‘thigh bone’ (Chadwick 1975: 123). The speculative meaning connection could be through the match in size and shape between an arm and the Warlpiri trumpet.

Table 1 Apparently cognate words for *kuḻumpu*

Language	Dictionary entry	Source
Miriwoong	*gooloomboong* 'didjeridu'; final *-ng* marks a nominal, and masculine on an adjective; added to introduced nouns e.g. *babaloong* 'buffalo', *wadameleng* 'water melon'; also coverb as in *gooloomboob ganiya* 'he played the didjeridu'	Kofod (1978: 76n; p.c.)
Gajirrabeng (Gajirrawoong)	*gooloomboong* 'didjeridoo' 'frequently used by Miriwung speakers and yet occasionally they reflect that [these] are really Gadjerong'	Kofod (1978: 76n)
Gija	*gooloomboo-ny* 'didjeridu'	Frances Kofod (p.c.)
Alawa	*wurlumbu n. bambu, dijaridu;* didjeridu, bamboo. Once wulumbu. Prob. also applies to any instrument played similarly (e.g. brass instrument); • *Wurlumbu didung-jilanna*. Deibin pulum bambu, they were playing didjeridu	Sharpe (2001)
Jingulu	kūlum-būpi 'trumpet'	Gillen (1901) (Chingilli)
Ngarnka	urlūng-būngma 'trumpet'	Gillen (1901) (Gnanji)
Wambaya	kulūmbū 'trumpet'	Gillen (1901) (Umbaia)
Gurindji (PNy)	*kulumpung* 'didjeridu'	Patrick McConvell (p.c.)
Mudburra (PNy)	*kulumput* 'pampu'	Peter Sutton (p.c., recorded in ceremonial context in 1983)
Warlpiri (PNy)	*kurlumpurrngu* 'trumpet, didjeridu, guitar'	Swartz (1997), Patrick (2011)
Unknown Queensland Gulf language (PNy)	*colombo*, associated with 'a hardwood drone pipe collected from the Gulf of Carpentaria'[a]	item A2928 in the SA Museum; documented at AA298 to have arrived in 1897 from Philip Sydney Watson who had Gregory Downs station (in the southern Gulf) (Philip Jones, p.c.)
Kalkatungu (PNy)	*kuḻumpu* 'emu-caller'	Blake (1979: 179)

[a]Edge-Partington (1898: 136, Fig. 3) (referred to by Balfour 1901: 33) drew this with caption 'Musical instrument of hard wood hollowed by termites. "Blown like a bullock horn." Native name *oolomba*. Gulf of Carpentaria. Adelaide Museum.' The item has an inscription, applied in the SA Museum, probably in 1911–12, which clearly reads *colombo* (Philip Jones, p.c.)

Table 2 Other apparently cognate words for *ku|umpu*, matching in the first two syllables

Language	Dictionary entry	Source
Alawa[a]	*gulurrun* ~ *gulurun* 'didjeridu', L gulurrung, golorrong	Sharpe (2001)
Yanyuwa	*ma-kulurru (noun)* **1**. musical instrument **2**. didgeridoo. Made from a hollow length of wood, not traditional to the Yanyuwa	Bradley and Kirton (1992: 195) = p. 202 of PDF
	ma- is the Class 5 prefix, with manufactured items	Bradley and Kirton (1992: 58–59) = pp. 66–67 of PDF
Gun-nartpa	*ngorla* 'didjeridu', *-ngorla* 'hollow' (*gun-ngorla* 'hollow tree', *an-ngorla* 'hollow metal pipe')	Margaret Carew (p.c.), Glasgow (1994)
Jingulu	*gulugugbi* 'didjeridu' *gurlumbi* 'thigh bone'	Chadwick (1975: 123)
Yir-Yoront	*ko+rlonhl* ~ *ko+rronyl* ~ *ko+ronyl* '1. syrinx shell; 2. shell trumpet'	Alpher (1991: 188)

[a]A similar term has somehow found its way into Kunwinjku but in a ceremonial context which is not in the public domain

4 Conclusion

Discovering the etymology of particular words (as form-meaning pairs) is difficult enough in language families with a documented history, but some headway can be made also with languages with only a recent documentary record, as I have shown for a couple of terms for various aerophones in northern Australian languages: *pampu* from English *bamboo*, and *kulumpu(rr)* of uncertain origin.

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