WAITING FOR BIRABAN: LANCELOT THRELKELD AND THE 'CHIBCHA PHENOMENON' IN AUSTRALIAN MISSIONARY LINGUISTICS

JIM WAFER

University of Newcastle

Callaghan

NSW 2308

Australia

HILARY M. CAREY

University of Newcastle

Callaghan

NSW 2308

Australia

Postal and email addresses of the authors

Dr Jim Wafer

PO Box 431

Mayfield

NSW 2304

Australia

James.Wafer@newcastle.edu.au

Professor Hilary M. Carey

History, School of Humanities and Social Science

University of Newcastle

Callaghan

NSW 2308

Australia

Hilary.Carey@newcastle.edu.au

Contact details of corresponding author

Professor Hilary M. Carey

Telephone: 61-2-4921 5209

Email: Hilary.Carey@newcastle.edu.au

Fax: 61-2-4921 6933

Abstract

This paper is an historical and linguistic introduction to some of the missionary translations made by the Reverend Lancelot Threlkeld (1788-1859) into the language (sometimes called 'Awabakal') of the Hunter River-Lake Macquarie region of Australia's east coast. It focuses in particular on Threlkeld's shorter texts, including his 'Selections from the Scriptures', which is the earliest published scripture translation into an Australian language. The paper places Threlkeld and his Indigenous collaborator Biraban in their local historical context, and also in the broader context of missionary linguistics. It considers some unique features of this genre, and focuses on cases where missionary compositions provide the only substantial records of an extinct language (the 'Chibcha phenomenon'). Such cases raise the question of reliability, which we propose can be tested. We use as our example a grammatical feature, the subordinator $=pa$, to determine the extent to which Threlkeld's construction of subordinate clauses was idiomatic. We conclude that, in spite of a small number of anomalies, which are probably errors, Threlkeld's usage appears to have been remarkably consistent with what we know about the functioning of such clauses in Australian languages in general.

Key words: Threlkeld, Biraban, missionary linguistics, Australia, Aborigines, Awabakal, subordination

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JIM WAFER

University of Newcastle, Australia

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University of Newcastle, Australia

Among the surviving sources of linguistic data for the coastal languages of south-eastern Australia, the work of the early nineteenth century English missionary Lancelot Threlkeld on the Hunter River-Lake Macquarie language ('HRLM'[1]) stands out as one of the richest. He wrote the first grammar of an Australian language, and there was no other for many years afterwards. But his work has been largely neglected by contemporary linguists, partly, no doubt, due to the difficulties inherent in interpreting a large corpus scattered in various nineteenth century publications and manuscripts, and partly also, perhaps, as a result of doubts about the purity of the language as recorded in Threlkeld's texts.

By 'purity', we mean here both grammaticality and idiomaticity. Threlkeld evidently spoke the language with a fair degree of fluency — he spent some fifteen years living with its speakers, was engaged as a court interpreter, and preached in it. But we could expect, nonetheless, that his treatment of it would have suffered from the influence of his first language (English), from the kinds of errors, or at least deficiencies, familiar in second language usage, and from his reliance on writing as his only recording medium.

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[1] This language has been known as 'Awabakal' since John Fraser invented the name for it in the late nineteenth century (Fraser 1892: v). But the term is generally taken to refer to the north-eastern dialect of the language, which, as a whole, is unnamed. It is for this reason that we use the geographically based name, abbreviated to 'HRLM'.

He received a good deal of help in his linguistic endeavours from the native speaker Biraban; but it is clear from Threlkeld's journal that Biraban was not always available when needed. We can thus assume that there are parts of Threlkeld's considerable output that have been checked and corrected by Biraban, and could therefore be taken to be idiomatic, and other parts that have not. Presumably, Biraban's priorities often lay elsewhere, so the final result has to be regarded as something of a compromise. The question this raises, in terms of language reconstitution, is how to distinguish between those elements of Threlkeld's corpus that are reliable and those that are less so.

This paper is an outgrowth of a project that aims, eventually, to produce a complete interlinear edition of Threlkeld's missionary translations. It is largely based on the shortest of these, the 'Selections from the Scriptures',[2] and the 'Prayers in the Awabakal Dialect',[3] but also draws to some extent on the first few chapters of Threlkeld's translation of the Gospel of Luke. These are the components of the interlinearization project that had been completed at the time this article underwent its final revision.

We begin by placing Threlkeld and Biraban in their local historical context, and also in the broader context of missionary linguistics. We then proceed to a discussion of one particular grammatical feature, the subordinator =*pa*, which we treat as a case study for the purpose of determining where Threlkeld's usage is reliable. Our conclusion is that, apart from a few apparent lapses, Threlkeld's handling of this cryptic feature of the language was surprisingly idiomatic, in spite of the fact that he was able to unravel only a small part of its complexity in his analytical writings.

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[2] To give it the title under which it appears in John Fraser's edition of 1892 (Threlkeld 1892e). The original edition (in Threlkeld 1836: 13-16) is untitled.

[3] Using, again, the title from the Fraser edition (Threlkeld 1892c). Threlkeld's manuscript version is called 'A Selection of Prayers For the Morning and Evening From The Service of the Church of England Intended For the introduction of publick worship Amongst The Aborigines of Australia', and is listed in our bibliography under the name of Archdeacon W. G. Broughton (Broughton & Threlkeld 1834) who commissioned the translation from Threlkeld and to whom the text is attributed in the Mitchell Library catalogue (State Library of New South Wales).

Missionary linguistics and settler colonialism

Over recent years there has been increasing interest in the life and work of the missionary Lancelot Threlkeld (1788-1859) and his major informant, known as John McGill or We-pohng, and later as Biraban (fl. 1819-1846), 'king' or chief of the Lake Macquarie people. Threlkeld's career was full of controversy, and even in his own lifetime his efforts on behalf of Aboriginal people in colonial New South Wales tended to attract both support and passionate denunciation. This mixed reception has continued into modern times, as part of the ongoing debate about missionary linguistics and settler colonialism.

In the period of more than thirty years since Niel Gunson published the foundational biographical studies of Threlkeld's life and work (1974), there has been disagreement over the latter's standing as a humanitarian advocate. For some, including Henry Reynolds (1998: 24), Threlkeld can be distinguished as one of the tiny handful of British missionaries and humanitarians who opposed the discourse of scientific racism with the scriptural language of human dignity and equality. Others have been less impressed, arguing, with Patrick Wolfe (1999: 178), that all forms of settler colonialism are inherently genocidal, and that there is little to distinguish the outcomes of the most belligerent settler regimes from those that resulted from the activities of missionaries and some anthropologists, who aimed to remake indigenous people in their own cultural likeness. Writing in this tradition, Anna Johnston (2003, 2011) has skilfully deconstructed the rhetorical tropes of Threlkeld's published journals and correspondence, laying bare the assumptions of white Christian superiority which underlie all missionary writing.

All the same, Threlkeld has been spared some of the most unsympathetic interpretations of his activities, such as have, for example, tended to be evoked by historians in relation to Threlkeld's younger contemporary, George Augustus Robinson (1791-1866). In reference to the latter, Lyndall Ryan (2008: 158) has marvelled that historians should currently view with such contempt the man who was regarded in his own day as a hero for risking his own life to save the Tasmanian Aborigines.

The distinguishing feature of Threlkeld's mission when compared with Robinson's is the central importance of the linguistic aspect. This is not to deny that Robinson made important contributions to the linguistic record for south eastern Australia (see Koch 2011), as evidenced in the word-lists published as volume 2 of his collected papers (Robinson 2001). In fairness, it is also worth pointing out that he was dealing with many languages, while Threlkeld was dealing with basically just one. Nonetheless, while the Tasmanian Aborigines and the Indigenous people who once spoke the Hunter River and Lake Macquarie (HRLM) language were both subjected to colonial practices that resulted in profound change, the historical legacy of speakers of HRLM is sufficient for a reasonably adequate reconstitution of the language. By contrast, little more of the language of the Tasmanian Aborigines has survived than a few word lists (see Crowley 1981).

While Robinson cannot be blamed for this — his priorities lay elsewhere — it does highlight the extraordinary diligence and persistence demonstrated by Threlkeld in forwarding his linguistic project in the face of entrenched opposition. Threlkeld's scripture translations and grammatical work were not emphasized by earlier historians, including Gunson, but in recent years there has been renewed interest in Threlkeld's linguistic writing, which has risen in the context of a revisionist examination of missionary linguistics internationally (see Carey 2004, 2009, 2010; Roberts 2008; Keary 2009). While earlier critics were dismissive of missionary ventures into language acquisition and analysis, which were relegated to the status of artefacts of a pre-scientific age, there has been increasing fascination with the social and cultural evidence which missionary linguistics often provides about interaction with indigenous peoples across the contact zone.

Perhaps the most important development for revisionist interpretations of the Threlkeld legacy has been the publication, in 2006, of Amanda Lissarrague's salvage grammar of the HRLM language, a project completed at the invitation of the Wonnarua Nation Aboriginal Corporation. This study provides the first professional linguistic description of the language accessible to the general public; it establishes a modern orthography which can form the basis for future study, and incorporates an extensive description of historical materials, notably those prepared by Threlkeld, as the basis for a reconstitution of the language. Most interestingly, it allows us to hear Threlkeld's

interactions with his primary informant, Biraban, with fresh ears, and reconstruct to some extent their original conversations as reflected in Threlkeld's linguistic corpus.

This section of the essay aims to provide an historical analysis of the evidence for the working relationship between Threlkeld and Biraban in Threlkeld's earliest manuscript versions of his linguistic work and his personal journal. This journal (Threlkeld 1828-46) has only recently come to light, and represents the most immediate evidence for Threlkeld's contemporary notes in relation to his efforts to translate the scriptures into the HRLM language.

The pragmatic (if high-minded) motivation for missionary linguistics must always be emphasized. For Threlkeld and other missionaries, the acquisition of the language was just a pathway toward the civilization and uplift of the Aboriginal people, giving them the dignity of their own version of the gospel and simultaneously the power to testify on their own behalf in the British courts. Such underlying factors are not necessarily incompatible with a scrupulous attention to scientific accuracy in the collection of linguistic data; indeed, with so much at stake, it is clear that it had a tendency, in Threlkeld's case, to push him to extraordinary lengths to demonstrate the intellectual validity of his work.

It is with this in view that we need to consider Threlkeld's frequently repeated affirmation of the intelligence of his native informant in the language, principally Biraban, and the evidence of the depth and complexity of the language. In a report on his work among the Hunter River Aborigines, for example, *The Monitor* reported on 30 March 1827 that the missionary was making rapid strides in his efforts to 'disseminate some knowledge of the Scriptures among the Aboriginal Natives of Hunter's River and Shoal Haven'.[4] These people are described as 'possessing a good capacity, and by no means the degraded, unintellectual beings they have been represented.' As evidence of their readiness for the Christian Word, it was also reported that Threlkeld had already prepared a grammar which would be 'the first attempt to reduce it [HRLM] into a written language.'

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[4] At the present time, 'Shoalhaven' designates localities on the south coast of New South Wales ('N.S.W.'), such as the Shoalhaven River, Shoalhaven Heads, etc. This cannot be what is meant here.

The complexity of Aboriginal languages continued to be held out as evidence of the intelligence and capacity of the Australian Aborigines, perhaps no more so than by William Ridley (1875: 2), in his account of Kamilaroi. As Rachel Gilmour (2007: 1761) has shown in relation to attempts to record and translate the languages of the indigenous people of southern Africa, notably the Khoisan, similar arguments were made by other British missionaries elsewhere in the empire.

Linguistics was thus always, for Threlkeld and all missionaries, a means to an end. The series of steps which Threlkeld himself imagined as necessary to the completion of his description, analysis and use of the language as a fit means to translate the gospel were clearly established. First, it was necessary to live, as he had successfully done in Raiatea (Society Islands), in close proximity to the people and to seek persistently to record the sounds and meanings of the language. Next, a suitable orthography had to be established by which the language might be 'fixed', the necessary precursor to the next stage, namely, the preparation of what Threlkeld called 'representative sentences'. From sentences the missionary linguist would proceed to scripture passages, and from there to a complete translation of the individual gospels of the New Testament and, ultimately, the whole Bible.

The scriptures were, therefore, the culmination of an intellectual, moral and religious sequence. Like most Nonconformist Protestants, Threlkeld shared a devout belief that the scriptures alone (*scriptura sola*) were sufficient for salvation. Indeed, he says as much in a letter published in the *Sydney Gazette* (14 June 1828, p. 3), shortly after he had been abandoned by the London Missionary Society, largely because of the scale of his expenses. 'I will frankly avow my object, namely, to teach from the Scriptures alone Christianity, independent of any human system, or human form of Church Government, leaving those who may embrace the Gospel, to attach themselves to any Christian church.' In August 1827, Threlkeld demonstrated his devotion to the purpose of promoting the Bible by attending the Annual Meeting of the Auxiliary Bible Society of New South Wales and, on this occasion, serving with other leading evangelical laymen and clergy as one of the principal speakers (*The Sydney Gazette* 17 August 1827, p. 3).

When he entered the field, Threlkeld was well aware that earlier claims to advance missionary linguistics in the interior of New South Wales had been received

with disbelief and hostility. In 1825, the young Wesleyan missionary John Harper (c.
1800-62) had raised a major storm by claiming that he had rapidly acquired competence
in the language (Wiradjuri) spoken by the Aborigines around the remote penal station at
Wellington Valley, about 100 kilometres north-west of Bathurst. [5] These claims were
challenged by settlers as part of their campaign to prevent the establishment of a
mission on the edge of the expanding frontier. Threlkeld wrote that the 'flaming
advertisement' of the Wellington Valley Mission had undermined the mission cause,
and in particular its linguistic program (Gunson 1974, ii: 212). In this climate of
suspicion, Threlkeld knew that all his advances in the language must be fully
documented.

Threlkeld's mission to Lake Macquarie can be said to have commenced at the
beginning of 1825, when the London Missionary Society secured a conditional land
grant from the colonial government. [6] He nevertheless remained resident in Newcastle
(New South Wales) during much of that year, waiting for his house at Lake Macquarie
to be completed. [7] He wrote to the LMS in February 1825, to announce his marriage the
previous October, and again in July, to say that he was beginning his work. By October,
however, not only was the cottage not completed, Threlkeld was still living in
Newcastle. He wrote again to the Society to announce that his wife had been confined
with their first child in September (less than a year after their marriage), while the
children of his first marriage were still anticipated from the Society Islands. Despite his
reluctance to proceed to the mission station, Threlkeld was making progress in the
language, presumably by speaking with Aborigines resident in Newcastle, and possibly
through trips to the Lake.

Two early works in manuscript belong to this period. In September 1825,
Threlkeld presented his first attempts at devising an orthography for the language
(Threlkeld 1825) to Sir Thomas Brisbane (1773-1860), the governor who was principal

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[5] For this mission, see Roberts and Carey 2009, and in particular the appendix, for
extracts from Harper's Missionary Journal sent by W. Horton to the London-based
Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in February 1826.

[6] Orders for reserves of land, 29 January 1825, Fiche 3266, 4/1913, 4.

[7] See Threlkeld to the LMS, 22 Jan. 1825, 2 Feb. 1825, 5 July 1825, 10 Oct. 1825, in
London Missionary Society Records n.d..

patron of the mission cause in the colony. Threlkeld's title for this work was 'Orthography and Orthoepy of a Dialect of the Aborigines of New South Wales: Part I'; Threlkeld dated it at Newcastle, September 1825.

This early work shows that Threlkeld was a careful listener, observing the absence of fricatives and compiling sets of illustrative sentences to demonstrate the dual number and other points of grammar. These sentences also suggest the many questions that Threlkeld was obliged to ask his informants (who remain unnamed) and the difficulty he had in restraining them to speak with him about the language. They also hint at Threlkeld's struggles to slowly acquire some halting mastery of the language.

At about the same time, Threlkeld probably also wrote the 'Specimens of the language of the Aborigines of New South Wales to the Northward of Sydney'. This is in Threlkeld's handwriting, but is neither signed nor dated.[8] This early work includes an extensive list of words describing the natural world of the 'Karr,eē', which is the word that comes after Threlkeld's title.[9] It continues with words for many different kinds of native animals and birds, followed by those of trees and plants, and only then a list of short representative sentences, which have been analyzed and glossed by Lissarrague (2006: 168-174). An edition of this work, without the vocabulary lists, was subsequently published in Sydney in 1827 under the title *Specimens of a dialect of the Aborigines of New South Wales; Being the first Attempt to form their speech into a written language*.

In 1828, Threlkeld's association with the London Missionary Society was terminated; however, with funding from the colonial government, he was able to establish a new mission on the other side of Lake Macquarie. At the same time 'We-pohng', also known as John McGill, makes his first appearance in Threlkeld's returns (Gunson 1974, ii: 360-370). It was Biraban therefore who collaborated with Threlkeld

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[8] We refer to this as 'Threlkeld n.d. (1824?)'. It is dated by Capell (1970: 23) to 1824, based on 'the absence of the phonetic system' Threlkeld later used in writing HRLM. At this early date, Threlkeld had not yet settled in Newcastle. But it is possible that he acquired the data in this manuscript from HRLM speakers visiting or resident in Sydney, or during an exploratory journey to Newcastle and Lake Macquarie.

[9] We take this to be some kind of gentilic, referring to the people and/or their language. See the discussion in Wafer & Lissarrague (2011: 161-2).

to produce his major grammatical publications. With a modified orthography, Threlkeld's early, more tentative, efforts were incorporated into *An Australian Grammar* (1834), which includes a dedication to Archdeacon W. G. Broughton (who in 1836 became Australia's first Anglican bishop), and *An Australian Spelling Book* (1836). Both these published works incorporate material from the earlier manuscript versions presented to Sir Thomas Brisbane.

At first Threlkeld's relationship with Biraban appears to have been particularly friendly, and rewarding to both men. Indeed, in 1830 Biraban was honoured with a breastplate which was inscribed with his name and new status and commemorated his linguistic achievement: 'Barabahn, or MacGil, Chief of the Tribe at Bartabah, on Lake Macquarie: a Reward for his assistance in reducing his Native Tongue to a written Language' (*Sydney Gazette*, 12 Jan. 1830, p. 2).

But if we look to the testimony of Threlkeld's Journal, there is intriguing evidence of the rise and fall of his confidence in Biraban. In a letter to Archdeacon Broughton, Threlkeld wrote: 'McGill is with me at present and I confess my patience has been almost exhausted waiting for him upwards of two months, however as far as the sixth chapter [of the Gospel of St Mark] is corrected' (Threlkeld 1828-46: 126). Perhaps in order to try and ensure Biraban could spend more time with him, in November the Colonial Secretary, Alexander Macleay, gave his approval for a sawyer to be sent to Threlkeld to erect accommodation for 'the natives who assist him in his translations' (Threlkeld 1828-46: 141).

By September 1828, when Threlkeld was examined by the committee accumulating information for the Select Committee on the Aborigines Question, he was frank about the difficulties of keeping more than a tiny number of natives around the mission, largely because they could earn good wages elsewhere. The most he could expect was that they would stay at the mission for eight or ten days at a time. Nevertheless, he reported that he had begun to try and teach two boys how to read in their own language (Gunson 1974, ii: 271). Biraban himself would never agree to commit himself to acquiring literacy in HRLM. In an excited postscript, Threlkeld wrote to Broughton in 1831, 'I have almost persuaded [stress in original] M'gill to learn to read his own language. He began today to learn the vowels' (Threlkeld 1828-46: 126). Unfortunately, they appear to have made no further progress in this direction.

At the same time as Threlkeld was undertaking his first ventures, with Biraban, in the translation of scripture and excerpts from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, he was simultaneously venturing with Biraban to work as a translator on behalf of Aboriginal people accused in the Supreme Court of New South Wales. As Russell Smandych (2004) has shown, the 1830s were a time when a series of critically important cases, a number of which engaged both Threlkeld and Biraban as interpreters, were testing whether Aborigines could testify on their own behalf.

Patronage was critical to the ongoing support of the mission, and for this Threlkeld was prepared to compromise with a number of his personal religious views. As a Congregationalist, he was clearly of the view that Christianity was a religion of the Word, not of priests, churches and ecclesiastical hierarchies. Nevertheless, having been made dependent on Broughton, Threlkeld undertook an important commission for him, which was to make a translation of a selection (made by Broughton) of Anglican Prayers for Morning and Evening service. In the manuscript in the Mitchell Library (Broughton & Threlkeld 1834), these are carefully dated, following Threlkeld's usual scrupulous habit, to August 4th, 1834.

While there is no evidence that Broughton himself made use of these prayers, in July 1834 Threlkeld wrote to him that the Evangelical layman, Sir W. Edward Parry, Commissioner of the Australian Agricultural Company at Port Stephens, may have found them useful. In response to a letter asking him to do something for 'the Blacks of P Stevens', he wrote: 'I propose sending him the Selection of Prayers by the Arch Deacon in the language. They are a good selection and I shall use them myself' (Threlkeld 1828-46: 162). At this stage, Threlkeld was clearly hopeful of the continuance of the mission in some form, despite the increasing dereliction of his principal informant.

Threlkeld triumphantly completed the draft of his Grammar in 1835 and ensured that, of the print run of 250, copies were distributed to all his patrons in the colony. Archdeacon Broughton took one to England as a present for the king. By this stage even Threlkeld's Christian friends were suggesting that the mission should be terminated. He demurred, stating that, although few native people were visiting the mission, he was engaged in the most interesting and important stage of his missionary work, namely that of scripture translation:

> I am employing my self in putting into the Blacks language the new testament
> Luke, Mark, and now Matthew. I am just attaining the point of usefulness to being
> the work amongst the Aborigines, and although they are, but, now and then, a few
> blacks who visit and stay a day or two with us, yet depending on him who has
> promised to pour out his spirit on all flesh, this little one may become a strong
> nation (Threlkeld to Heyward, July 1837, in Threlkeld 1828-46: 235).

With such hopes, the work of translation was to continue — with and without the financial support of the government — for the rest of Threlkeld's life.

Problematic aspects of missionary linguistics

In the last thirty years there has been a clear divide in scholarly approaches to the linguistic corpora typically generated as working tools by Christian missionaries. On the one hand, since the 1980s there has been a movement, spearheaded by anthropologists, to subject the linguistic efforts of missionaries to probing discourse analysis. These scholars have generally dismissed all attempts at cultural contact, including the generation of dictionaries, grammars, and scripture translations, as hopelessly compromised by their status as works which sought to entrench the cultural domination of European colonizing powers over subordinated peoples, languages and cultures (Errington 2001, 2008; Rafael 1988; Sanneh 1989). It has appeared to make little difference whether the languages under discussion derived from the Pacific (Tomlinson 2009), Africa (Fabian 1983, 1986; Landau 1995, 2005; Peterson 1999) or elsewhere in the world.

The other approach, in which linguists have been prominent, has shown rather more interest in the extent to which missionaries have successfully recorded features of languages which have now become extinct. This is the procedure pioneered by Victor Hanzelli (1969) and developed by Even Hovdhaugen and Otto Zwartjes for the Oslo Project on Missionary Linguistics, founded in 2002, which focussed on the non-Indo-European languages of the Spanish and Portuguese colonial world from the sixteenth to

the eighteenth centuries (Hovdhaugen 1996; Zwartjes & Hovdhaugen 2004; Zwartjes & Altman 2005; Zwartjes, James & Alonso 2007). Only recently have historians, notably Rachael Gilmour (2004, 2006, 2007), attempted a more nuanced historical reading of missionary linguistics that gives appropriate weight to the historical context in which missionaries attempted to turn oral languages into text.

The Threlkeld case presents a number of problems that may well be typical in the field of missionary linguistics but appear, as yet, to be under-theorized. In its broadest lineaments, we may define the situation as one in which the records of an extinct language exist wholly or mainly in written documents composed by non-native speakers. We call this the 'Chibcha phenomenon', since the data for the Chibcha language (also known as 'Muisca') furnish what is possibly the earliest example of it.[10] Inevitably, this circumstance raises questions such as how much these documents have suffered interference from the mother tongue of those who produced them, and whether it is possible to compensate for such interference in the reconstitution of the relevant language.

There are interesting parallels here with the efforts of missionaries to record the languages of other hunter gatherer peoples, for example in North America (Koerner 2004), notably the Pacific Northwest where, as McKevitt (1990) shows, Jesuit missionaries struggled with the challenge of small, mobile language populations

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[10] We acknowledge here our debt of gratitude to Nicholas Ostler for a personal communication which provided this information. Ostler, with scholarly caution, recognizes that Chibcha is only the earliest example he personally knows of. Further research could possibly discover even earlier cases. Of Chibcha he writes: 'First contacted by the Spanish in the altiplane of Cundinamarca (now in central Colombia) circa 1536-7, it is documented in a number of grammars, dictionaries and phrase books from the 17th century (in which period it was recognized as a "lengua general" for official use). It seems to have died out by the mid 18th century. But aside from two poems prefixed to the grammar of Fray Bernardo Lugo of 1619 (and the scattered sentences of the phrasebooks, as well as example sentences in the dictionaries), its extant literature consists exclusively [of] translations of Catholic liturgy (creeds, prayers, confessionals, catechisms), all attached to grammatical tracts' (p.c. 17 December 2010).

afflicted by the rapid destruction of their culture, languages and way of life. Similarly, the Threlkeld case has a number of precedents in the documentation of indigenous languages of Latin America left by Spanish missionaries. Many of these languages are 'now not known from any other source' (Ostler 2004: 45).

Nicholas Ostler notes the uniqueness of the linguistic endeavours of Christian missionaries from the early sixteenth century onwards. Most of the prior exercises in missionary linguistics had been carried out — as in the case of Ulfilas's fourth century translation of a Greek Bible into Gothic — by native speakers of the target language. But from the time of the Spanish conquests in the New World, Christian missionaries sent to regions speaking languages very different from their own routinely undertook the new evangelising strategy of formally analysing the language of prospective converts and translating the liturgy and scriptures into it. This procedure was one that rarely occurred to members of other faiths, or even to Christians themselves in the first 1500 years of their history. But it has become a small industry in the last five hundred years, and given rise to 'the disciplines of language-teaching, linguistic fieldwork and linguistic typology' (Ostler 2004: 41), engaging vast international teams of missionaries and specialist linguistic organizations, from the British and Foreign Bible Society in the nineteenth century (Batalden, Cann & Dean 2004) to the Summer Institute of Linguistics (Hartch 2006) in the twentieth.

Ostler analyses the sociological factors that made this strategy possible; but there is another aspect to its uniqueness. Up until roughly the second half of the last millenium, written languages were by and large the languages of prestige; in Western Europe this was principally Latin, and in the East, Greek. These slowly ceded ground to the vernaculars (Ostler 2006: chs 8 & 9). The written form of the vernaculars was generally based on the dialect used in the royal courts and often seen, as the grammarian Antonio de Nebrija called it in the introduction to his *Gramática castellana* (1492), as 'the companion of empire' (quoted in Ostler 2006: 331). The vernaculars gained additional impetus from the Reformation, when new prestige was attached to translations of the Bible into the languages of the Protestant confessional states, prominently the German Bible published by Martin Luther and his collaborators in 1534. Catholic adherence to Jerome's Latin Vulgate (itself a translation from Greek and Hebrew) was deplored as papist tyranny and ignorance. Those, such as William Tyndale

in England, who provided the gifts of vernacular Bible translations and literacy in the face of Catholic persecution, were lauded in Protestant martyrologies as both liberators and evangelists.

What is novel, then, about the work of the missionary linguists is that they were elevating the languages of their prospective converts — who were usually the conquered — to a level of prestige equal, in principle at least, to that of their own languages — which were usually the languages of the conquerors. The notion of 'people of the book' is less explicit in Christianity than in Islam, where it designates a tolerated non-pagan culture.[11] But Europe's sense of a superiority based on a long tradition of literacy is perhaps one of the reasons that it took till the late twentieth century for Meso-America to be recognized as one of the very small number of places in the world — probably less than a handful — where writing was independently invented (Evans 2010: 25, 136-8, 144-52; Coe 1999: 26 and passim). Whatever else one may think of the activities of the missionary linguists, one is obliged to concede that their work was motivated by the democratic impulse of giving a new language community direct access to the word of God, through a medium that had the same standing as Jerome's Latin, Luther's German, or Tyndale's English.

This is one of the main reasons why some of the technical terminology used to describe language contact fits so badly in the context of missionary linguistics. For example, a mother-tongue that influences a person's use of a second language (as English influenced Threlkeld's use of HRLM) is often called 'the substrate'. But, typically, this term is used when the second language 'is imposed on a community, as a result of political or economic superiority' (Crystal 2003: 444). Obviously, in the case of Threlkeld, and of most missionary linguists, this situation is reversed. The 'substrate' (if it can still be called such) in these cases is the language that has been imposed, often through conquest, and it is the second language, the missionaries' 'target language', that is the one suffering the imposition.[12]

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[11] 'People of the Book' (Arabic: أهل الكتاب – *'Ahl al-Kitāb*) is a term used to designate non-Muslim adherents to faiths which have a book of scripture — principally, the other Western (or 'Abrahamic') monotheisms, Judaism and Christianity.

[12] A similar argument could be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the use of the term 'superstrate'.

If missionary linguistics in general poses a novel set of problems, the type of case we are dealing with in the matter of HRLM belongs to a subset with a number of further distinguishing features. First, in contrast with, say, some of the languages recorded by the early Spanish missionaries in Latin America, there are no contemporary languages descended from HRLM. Second, there are no texts written by native speakers, either prior to contact or after contact. (The Mayan languages have both.) Third, there are no continuous texts, whether narratives or conversations, recorded verbatim from native speakers. (These are available, for example, for Nahuatl, in the work of Sahagún.)

What this means is that our options for determining the 'authenticity' of Threlkeld's treatment of HRLM are limited, since we have no definitive records of the language with which Threlkeld's usage could be compared. He died in 1859, about twenty years before Edison's invention of the phonograph (patented 1878), and, although the language was probably still alive at the time of the earliest sound recordings of Australian languages (1898, in the Torres Strait), [13] the new technology was, as far as we know, never applied to HRLM.

The closest thing we have to a record of native speaker usage is therefore Threlkeld's corpus of 'representative' or 'illustrative' sentences and phrases (n.d. [1824?], 1827: 4-25, 1834: 17-18, 21, 71-74, 105-30, 1850: 11-15, 30-42, 45-47, 58-60, 64), which appear to have been elicited. [14] But even here, there are doubts about whether

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[13] The last fluent speaker to be named in the historical record was probably 'Queen Margaret' (otherwise known as 'Old Margaret'), who died in 1894 (Powell *et al.* n.d.). But she had children and grandchildren (Turner & Blyton 1995: 50; 44-45, 47-49; Powell *et al.* n.d.), who probably had some knowledge of the language. It is also likely that speakers of one of the inland dialects of the language, such as Wanarruwa, survived even longer. The St Clair Mission, at Carrowbrook, operated from 1890 to 1923 (Miller 1985: 246, 255, 256-257, Turner & Blyton 2004: 57-60), and was probably home to a number of Wanarruwa speakers.

[14] There have been transcriptions of several songs in HRLM, though they add little to our understanding of the complex features of the language that we are concerned with here. One of them was transcribed by Eliza Hamilton Dunlop, and has been reproduced in Goddard (1934: 245) and Gunson (1974, i: 58). (Three of the other Dunlop transcriptions in Goddard are in Gamilaraay, or a closely related dialect. The language

they were transcribed at the time of the elicitation or from memory, and which ones were Threlkeld's own inventions (cf. Arposio 2009: 13).

Apart from this illustrative material, the Threlkeld corpus can be divided into two other broad parts: his analytical material; and his translations of religious texts, which constitute the greater portion of his legacy. The illustrative material is now available in an excellent modern edition (Lissarrague 2006: part 3), and the analytical material has provided the basis for three contemporary salvage grammars (Oppliger 1984; Lissarrague 2006; Arposio 2009).[15] Taken together, the illustrative material and the analytical material provide a sound basis for understanding the morphology of the language. But they give us only the most elementary view of syntax, discourse organisation, and semantics.

For a fuller comprehension of these features of the language, it is to Threlkeld's translations of religious texts that we must turn. There have been, until now, no modern editions of these documents — a deficiency which the present authors hope to remedy.[16] This paper is based largely on the shortest of them, which we call (following John Fraser's edition of 1892) 'Selections from the scriptures' and 'Prayers in the Awabakal dialect', but draws also on data from the early chapters of Threlkeld's translation of the Gospel of Luke.

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of the final song is obscure.) Two others have been reproduced in Murray (1986: 36-7), and one of these appears also in Gunson (1974, i: 59).

[15] Lissarrague's grammar is the one we have treated as authoritative for present purposes, since it provides a reasonably comprehensive overview of the morphology of the language, uses a phonemic orthography, and contains a word-list. Arposio's grammar also includes the illustrative material, interspersed through the text, but the author holds a 'somewhat sceptical view' of phonemes (2009: 17).

[16] Carey has commenced a transcription of the manuscript version of Threlkeld's translation of the Gospel of Luke, and supervised the transcription of the manuscript of the Gospel of Mark; Wafer has completed interlinear glosses of Threlkeld's 'Selections from and scriptures' and 'Prayers in the Awabakal dialect' and begun an interlinear gloss of Luke. Threlkeld's (probably incomplete) translation of the Gospel of Matthew appears, regrettably, to have been lost.

Reliance on Threlkeld's translations for an understanding of these complex features of the language is problematic, however, because it raises the question of how 'authentic' these documents are, in the sense of representing the language as it would have been used by native speakers. Are we dealing with HRLM in these texts, or with a 'Threlkeldese' that has suffered irremediable interference from English? The situation would be different if the texts Threlkeld had left us were direct transcriptions of stories told to him by his informants. But, as far as we are aware, he recorded no continuous narratives in the language. His role as a missionary dictated a different set of priorities.

Our method, then, for checking Threlkeld's usage in his own compositions in HRLM will be to compare it with three other bodies of data: first, with the elicited material, as represented by his 'illustrative sentences'; second, with the literature on related and/or neighbouring languages; and, third, with the broader Australianist literature, particularly as it pertains to languages of the Pama-Nyungan family, of which HRLM is a member.

HRLM's closest relative is the language immediately to the north, sometimes called 'the Lower North Coast language' (Wafer & Lissarrague 2008: 167ff.), which includes dialects Gathang, Warrimay, Birrpay and Guringay. This language is also extinct; but Nils Holmer made recordings in it, and also transcribed a number of traditional stories (Holmer & Holmer 1969).[17] Sadly, however, by the late date at which Holmer carried out his research into the language, it had already suffered a considerable degree of attrition, and interference from English, among those few who still spoke it (cf. Lissarrague 2010: 102). So, while individual words can be usefully compared between the two languages, for the sake of determining their phonological shape, there is not a great deal that can be learnt from the Lower North Coast language that will help us with the more complex features of HRLM.

HRLM has a slightly more distant relationship with the languages across the Great Dividing Range, in the central inland region of New South Wales. These belong to the 'Wiradjuric' group, as it was called by O'Grady, Voegelin & Voegelin (1966) and Oates (1975). A more recent classification by R. M. W. Dixon (2002: xxxiv) implies a reasonably close connection between these languages and HRLM. One of them, Ngiyambaa, survived for long enough to be the subject of an outstanding contemporary

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[17] These stories have also been included in Lissarrague 2010. See also Holmer 1966-7.

grammar (Donaldson 1980), which, as we shall see, has been useful for comparative purposes.

Fortunately, the comparative study of Australian languages is sufficiently far advanced at this point in time that it enables us to form a reasonably clear picture of the idiomaticity of at least some of Threlkeld's usages. In the present paper we will focus on just one of these, namely, his treatment of the subordinate clause marking clitic =*pa* (Lissarrague 2006: 93). One of our reasons for choosing this grammatical feature is that it appears a number of times in Threlkeld's missionary translations in syntactic contexts that don't occur at all in Threlkeld's illustrative material. In other words, it demonstrates that an analysis of the religious texts will add to our understanding of the complex features of the language.

Case study: the subordinator =*pa*

The missionary translations on which the present study is based appear to contain a number of errors, which could be errors of typography or slips of the pen, or, alternatively, may be 'original' mistakes made by Threlkeld in his composition of the texts. But these mistakes are generally analysable as such on the basis of Threlkeld's own observations on the morphology of the language, which are (at least in terms of the era in which he was writing) comparatively comprehensive.

Threlkeld was much less explicit about the syntax of the language. For example, a search of his analytical materials reveals very few references to =*pa*. The clearest of these is in his *Australian grammar* (1834: 76),[18] where he writes as follows, under the heading 'Of Adverbs… Of Time':

Ba,   When, at the time that.

Yet, paradoxically, his handling of the clitic =*pa* in his translations of the scriptural texts reveals a sophistication that is belied by such a bland, uninformative gloss.

It is true that in the vast majority of examples in the illustrative sentences, the clitic =*pa* is used to form temporal adverbial clauses or conditional clauses, often

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[18] In the Fraser edition (1892) this occurs on p. 44. Threlkeld also refers to *ba* in his *Key* of 1850 (p. 22).

introduced in their English translations by 'when' or 'if'. We list here the examples, as numbered by Lissarrague in her 'Database of sentences and phrases' (2006: 168-276):[19]

=*pa* used to translate 'when' ('while', 'as' *etc*.): Lissarrague database, examples 574, 580, 592, 664, 665, 667, 681, 682, 683, 733, 755, 822, 944, 946, 947.

=*pa* used to translate 'if' (and other conditional formulations): Lissarrague database, examples 357, 547, 548, 594, 598, 673.

At least since Kenneth Hale's seminal article on 'The adjoined relative clause in Australia' (1976), Australianists have been alerted to an ambiguity in the interpretation of temporal adverbial clauses in Australian languages (see Mackie 2011). In cases where the main clause and the subordinate clause make the same time reference and also share an argument, the temporal adverbial clause could also be interpreted as a relative clause (such as are introduced in English by 'who' or 'which').

And, indeed, that is exactly what we find in some of the examples just listed. Let us examine one of them:

[1] *Nauwa wirrobán bountoa tia ba.* (L 755, p. 242; T 1834: 130)[20]

nya-wa wirupa-n   puwantuwa=tja=pa

see-IMP follow-PRS 3F.SG.NOM=1SG.ACC=SUBR

Look as she follows me, or, while &c.

Although the relative clause interpretation sounds somewhat tortured in English ('Look at her, who follows me'), it is not ungrammatical, and obviously fits Hale's criteria. It can be contrasted with the case where the main clause and the subordinate clause make the same time reference but do not share an argument, such as this:

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[19] We refer to the Lissarrague database since it includes a reconstitution of the morphemes in a phonemic orthography, as well as Threlkeld's original text, and a reference to the source.

[20] For an account of our referencing conventions, see 'Referencing conventions for our examples' at the end of this article. For a definition of the abbreviations used in our glosses, including an explanation of the hyphen and the equals sign, see the table of 'Abbreviations used in the glosses', which follows the referencing conventions.

[2] *Tanán bi wolla yanti ta punnul ba polóng kallinnun.* (L 683, p. 235; T 1834: 124)

tanayn=pi　　　　　　**uwa-la**　　**yantay-tja**　**panyal-Ø=pa**

hither=2SG.NOM　　　　come-IMP　time-LOC　　sun-ABS=SUBR

pulungka-li-nan

sink-CONT-FUT

Come at sunset. [Literally, 'come here at the time when the sun will be setting'.]

The same principles apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to Threlkeld's examples of conditional clauses, often introduced by 'if'. The difference is that, in these cases, the verb in the subordinate clause is usually in the hypothetical mood, and followed by the suffix *-pa*.[21]

But what of Hale's alternative case, where the main clause and the subordinate clause share an argument but make distinct time references, so that only the 'relative clause' interpretation is possible? There are no examples of this in Threlkeld's illustrative sentences. In the one sentence where Threlkeld interprets the subordinate clause as a relative clause (L 899, p. 257; T 1850: 36), the latter is also susceptible to an interpretation as a temporal adverbial clause.

The text of the 'Selections from the scriptures' furnishes at least one case where the main clause and the subordinate clause make distinct time references but share an argument, so that the relative clause interpretation is the only one possible:

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[21] We say 'usually' because there are cases (e.g. Lissarrague example 357, p. 203) where Threlkeld uses the 'if' translation when the HRLM text employs the future tense suffix rather than the hypothetical suffix. Here the text could as well be translated using 'when' rather than 'if'.

[3] *nanun nura bobóng nungngamatoara kiri kin ta ba, kakillín ba takilli ngélla ba.* (*Winta* 7: 12, T 1836: 16; F 1892: 107, 132)

nya-nan nyura   pupung-nang ngama-tawarr-Ø

see-FUT   2PL.NOM   baby-ACC   wrap-P.NMLS-ABS

kirikin-tapa, kaki-li-n=pa   tjaki-li-ngayil-apa.

clothes-LOC   be-CONT-PRS=SUBR   eat-DVB-PLC-LOC

Luke 2: 12. Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

Here the main clause is in the future tense and the subordinate clause in the present tense, and the literal translation has to be 'you will see the baby wrapped in clothes, who is being in an eating-place'. The clitic *=pa* can also be used with the interrogative *ngan(tu)*, 'who', when the subject of the relative clause is indefinite, as in Threlkeld's translation of Luke 12: 10 (F 1892: 161), which also occurs as *winta* 7: 12 of the 'Selections' (T 1836: 15; F 1892: 107).[22]

Much work has been done on Australian subordinate clauses since Hale's article, and a recent overview of the literature by Nordlinger (2006) makes it clear that a common third function of clauses of the type we are dealing with (that is, in addition to their use as temporal adverbial clauses and relative clauses) is as clausal arguments (or 'complements') of speech or perception verbs[23] (Nordlinger 2006: 18). And, indeed, this is just what we find in HRLM. There are a small number of cases in Threlkeld's illustrative material (such as L 744, p. 241; T 1834: 129). However, we take our example from Threlkeld's 'Prayers':

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[22] This would indicate that the interrogative *minyaring* ('what/something' — see Lissarrague 2006: 49, 51) should be able to be used with *=pa* in the same fashion as *ngan* ('who/someone'). Although HRLM makes some distinctions between human and non-human nominals (Lissarrague 2006: 39), we have not yet come across any evidence that this affects the formation of subordinate clauses.

[23] Donaldson adds 'verbs of intellection' and 'stative verbs' (1980: 302-03).

[4] *Wi-yen-nun nge-en ba keawai yarakai korien ngearun[24] ba, nakoiyan ngaiya ngeen bo.* (B 1834: 1; F 1892, App. E: 120)

wiya-nan   ngayan=pa   kayaway   yarakay-kuriyan   ngayan=pa

speak-FUT   1PL.NOM=SUBR   NEG   evil-PRIV   1PL.NOM=SUBR

ngakuya-n   ngaya   ngayan=pu

lie-PRS   then   1PL.NOM=EXCL

John 1: 8. If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves (BCP p. 54. Morning Prayer).

What is especially interesting about this verse is that it employs the subordinate clause marking clitic =*pa* twice, in different ways. In the first instance (*wiya-nan ngayan=pa*) it is used to create a temporal adverbial clause ('if/when we say'), and in the second instance (*kayaway yarakay-kuriyan ngayan=pa*) to create a clausal argument or complement ('that we [are] without sin').

This is significant, because it is clear evidence for syntactic embedding in HRLM. As Nordlinger (2006: 18) puts it, 'functioning as an argument of the predicate of another clause is regularly taken to be one of the markers of clausal subordination and therefore syntactic embedding'.

This 'complementizer' function of =*pa* also occurs with interrogatives. For example, the following occurs in Threlkeld's illustrative sentences:

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[24] Threlkeld's original manuscript has *ngearun* (**ngayaran**), whereas the Fraser version (1892, App. E: 120) has *ġeen* (**ngayan**). Whether Fraser was working from a later, corrected, version of Threlkeld, or whether he corrected the word himself, is unclear. In any case, our argument depends on which version is correct. Threlkeld's original *ngayaran* is either the first plural accusative pronoun (followed by the clitic =*pa*), or the first element of the genitive pronoun, *ngayaranpa*. Either of these possibilities would require a revision of our analysis. In our phonemic transcription and gloss, we have preferred *ngayan*.

[5] *Wiyauwil bi tia yakoai bara ba wiyá bín.* (L 716, p. 238; T 1834: 127)

wiya-wil=pi=tja   **yakuway   para=pa**

speak-DES=2SG.NOM=1SG.ACC   how   3PL.NOM=SUBR

wiya-a=pin

speak-G.PST=2SG.ACC

I wish you to tell me how they spoke to you.

Apart from its use in forming temporal adverbial, relative, and complement clauses, *=pa* is also obligatorily used with some conjunctions. The conjunctions with which the use of *=pa* appears to be required include *wantu* ('but'), *tannga* ('before') and *kuytu* ('therefore').[25] Thelkeld's illustrative sentences furnish the following example:

[6] *Búm ba bo ta bón báng, wonto bang ba kinta kán kákulla.* (L 568, p. 223; T 1834: 116)

pum-pa=pu   ta=pun=pang

hit-HYP=EXCL   indeed=3SG.ACC=1SG.NOM

wantu=pang=pa   kintja-kan-Ø   ka-kala

but=1SG.NOM=SUBR afraid-NMLS-ABS   be-G.PST

I should certainly have struck him, but I was afraid.

For the use of a similar construction with *tannga* ('before'), see L 512, p. 218; T 1834: 112. The conjunction *kuytu* does not occur in the illustrative material, although Threlkeld does include it in his (incomplete) manuscript vocabulary for the Gospel of Luke, published by Fraser under the title 'Lexicon' (1892: 195-227). It occurs numerous times in Threlkeld's translation of Luke, as, for example, in Luke 1: 35 (F 1892: 130).

There are still a few aspects of the *=pa* phenomenon that require investigation, but there are insufficient data in the material we have analyzed so far to come to any definite conclusions. The first of these is where the argument shared between the main

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[25] There is so far one single example, in Luke 4:10 (F 1892: 137), of the use of the conjunction *kala* ('because' etc.) with *=pa*. But since the same word occurs many times without the subordinator, it is hard to determine whether this single case is an anomaly or a legitimate usage (at this point imperfectly understood).

clause and the relative clause is in an oblique case in the relative clause ('whom', 'whose', 'with whom', *etc*.). In most of the data we have to this point, the relative clause argument is the subject, in nominative, absolute or ergative case. There are a small number of exceptions, of which this example from the 'Prayers' is one:

[7] *Murrurōng ta kore wiyayemma korien bōn noa ba Pirriwullo yarakai umatoara*. (B 1834: 8; F 1892, App. E: 122)

marrarrang-Ø ta   kuri-Ø   wiyayama-kuriyan=pun=nyuwa=pa

good-ABS   indeed   man-ABS   accuse-PRIV=3M.SG.ACC=3M.SG.NOM=SUBR

piriwal-u   yarakay-Ø   uma-tawarr-Ø

king-ERG   evil-ABS   do-P.NMLS-ABS

Rom. 4: 8. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. [BCP p. 82. Epistle for the feast of the Circumcision]

Presumably *=nyuwa* is cataphoric in this case, referring forward to *piriwal-u*. Whether it could be omitted is unclear.

There are examples where the link between a main clause and a relative clause in which the shared argument is in accusative case is achieved simply by parataxis (juxtaposition of the two clauses), without any subordination marker. One such is *winta* 6: 12 of the 'Selections' (T 1836: 15; F 1892: 106). As Nordlinger observes, 'the lack of an overt subordinator means that there is little to overtly distinguish a finite subordinate clause from a coordinate clause' (2006: 17). She notes that, in Wambaya, 'such clauses are usually disambiguated by intonational contrast' (2006: 17). Of course, the relevant information about intonational contrast is not available to us for HRLM. But it's possible that further research, in particular in the matter of the ordering of clausal constituents, may throw some light on the distinction (if it exists) in HRLM.

In our second example of a relativized nominal in an oblique case, the genitive form of the demonstrative *ngala* ('that') appears to be used to translate 'whose':

[8] *Eloi, ngala koba yanti katai murrorōng umulli kān nei ngatun wari kulli kānnei, ngurrulla bi wiyelli kān nei kārā kān nei ngearun ba,* (B 1834: 9; F 1892, App. E: 123)

eloi-Ø   **ngala-kupa**   **yantikatay**   **marrarrang-Ø** **uma-li-kanay-Ø**

God-ABS   that-GEN   forever   good-ABS   do-DVB-ASS.NMLS-ABS

ngatan   **warika-li-kanay-Ø**   **ngarra-la=pi**

and   discard-DVB-ASS.NMLS-ABS   hear-IMP=2SG.NOM

wiya-li-kanay-Ø   **kara-kanay-Ø**   **ngayaran-pa**

speak-DVB-ASS.NMLS-ABS   slow-ASS.NMLS-ABS   1PL-GEN

O God, whose nature and property is ever to have mercy and to forgive, receive our humble petition [BCP p. 73. Prayers and Thanksgivings].

The fact that Threlkeld uses *ngala* fairly frequently to introduce relative clauses in his translation of Luke suggests that such a usage is probably idiomatic. In the other examples we have encountered so far, the relativised element is in the accusative case (Luke 2: 15, 2: 21, 2: 24; F 1892: 133), which suggests that using *ngala* may be the preferred method of forming clauses of this type. In two of these examples (Luke 2: 21 and 2: 24), Threlkeld uses both *ngala* and *=pa*. This reinforcement of the subordinate nature of the clause by adding *=pa* does not appear to be obligatory, however, since it doesn't occur in Luke 2: 15 (or in the example from the 'Prayers' given above).

We note also that there appears to be yet a third method of forming relative clauses in HRLM, and that is with the use of *wantu*, which otherwise translates as 'but'. We have noted above that *wantu* is one of the conjunctions with which the use of *=pa* is obligatory. But apparently it can also be used, without *=pa*, to introduce a relative clause. The only examples we have encountered so far occur in the long genealogy of Jesus that occurs in Luke 3: 23 to 3: 38 (F 1892: 136), where each name given is followed by the formula 'which was the son of N'. This is translated by Threlkeld as *wantu yinal N-ampa* ('which [was] son N-GEN). It's unclear at this stage of the research what circumstances govern such a usage.

There are a few usages of *=pa* that are still mysterious, such as the examples in the illustrative sentences 349, 350, 481 of Lissarrague's database. Take, for example, the last of these:

[9] *Ngán katoa bountoa? Tibbin katoa ba.* [L 481, p. 215; T 1834: 110]

ngan-katuwa   puwantuwa   /   tjipin-katuwa=pa

who-COM   3F.SG.NOM   /   tjipiN-COM=SUBR

With whom is she? With Tibbin.

This is interesting for the following reason. If our interpretation of the final morpheme as the subordinate clause marking clitic, rather than one of its homophones, is well founded, it would appear that *=pa* can be used for inter-sentential as well as inter-clausal anaphora. (In the present case, we assume that *=pa* refers back to *puwantuwa,* 'she', in the previous sentence.) The other two examples of this type (L 349 and L 350) would appear to support such an interpretation. This suggests that *=pa* may have a function in discourse organisation.

We have already mentioned one of the homophones of *=pa*, namely, the verbal suffix *-pa* that indicates hypothetical mood.[26] Another is the derivational suffix that derives an intransitive verb from a nominal root (Lissarrague 2006: 83). In addition, *-pa* is a nominal suffix that is usually translated as 'place of' (Threlkeld 1834: 82-84; Lissarrague 2006: 63), and is also a kind of emphatic extension of the locative case suffixes *-ka* (and its morphophonemic variants) and *-kin* (Lissarrague 2006: 26, 40-41).[27]

These various homophones can probably provide clues for tracing the etymological evolution of *=pa*. Such an exercise is, however, beyond the scope of this paper. Research with the prospect of a 'unified theory' is ongoing. But for the present,

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[26] This is possibly significant. As Blake (1987: 139) observes (in relation to Mangarayi), 'the use of irrealis as a subordinating device seems appropriate when one considers that subordinate clauses are backgrounded with reference to main clauses and normally do not contain assertions but present information as given'. But in Mangarayi the 'subordinators' are verbal affixes, identical to the ones that mark irrealis mood.

[27] The suffix *-ka(pa)* is used with (non-human) common nouns, and *-kin(pa)* with proper nouns, pronouns and human nouns. Lissarrague notes the variation between *-ka* and *-kapa* (2006: 41), but treats *-kinpa* as an unvarying form (pp. 40, 43). Threlkeld frequently uses *-kin* by itself — for instance, in example [12] above.

what is clear from the foregoing examples is that Threlkeld had assimilated all four of the functions of the subordinate clause marking clitic that we have described,[28] and used them appropriately, even though he was apparently unable to make these usages explicit in his analytical writing on the language.

There is one further important aspect of the subordinate clause-marking clitic *=pa*, and that is its position in the clause. The rule appears to vary with the particular use of *=pa*.[29] In temporal adverbial clauses (e.g. examples [1] and [2]) and complement clauses (e.g. examples [4] and [5]), *=pa* evidently follows as closely as possible the subject of the clause (preceded by any inflections and bound pronouns). In relative clauses, *=pa* follows as closely as possible the relativized element. (This is often the subject, but not necessarily so. In example [7], above, for example, it is the object.) Again, it is preceded by inflections and bound pronouns.

At this stage of the research we are short of examples where the subject is deleted in the relative clause. But our preliminary hypothesis is that in these cases *=pa* is affixed to the first word of the dependent clause. Here is an example:

[10] *Ngearung* [sic] *ba kuttan Wiyelli kan Jesu Krist Biyungbai toa ba kuttan.*
(*Winta* 5: 6, T 1836: 15; F. 1892: 106)

ngayaran-pa ka-tan   wiya-li-kan-Ø   *Jesu*-Ø   *Krist*-Ø
1PL-GEN   be-PRS   speak-DVB-NMLS-ABS   Jesus-ABS   Christ-ABS

piyang-pay-tjuwa=pa   ka-tan.
father-KIN-PER-SUBR   be-PRS

1 John 2: 1. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

The situation of *=pa* with conjunctions is less straightforward. Example [6] (and the other examples we cite in this regard) would suggest that it follows the conjunction

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[28] Or five, if we count the 'conditional' usage as a separate case from the temporal adverbial usage (see Hale 1976: 79-80).

[29] In this, and various other ways, it contrasts with the possibly cognate subordinator *-ba* in Ngiyampaa. See Donaldson (1980: 291). It is interesting to compare also Bowern's observations on the subordinator *=b(a)* in Bardi (2008: 4-6), though there is very little likelihood that it is related to HRLM's *=pa*.

immediately, except, again, that is preceded by any bound pronouns. But there appear to be a couple of exceptions in the 'Selections'. Although *winta* 6: 14 (T 1836: 15; F 1892: 106) of the 'Selections' follows this pattern, in *wintas* 1: 1 (T 1836: 13; F 1892: 104) and 8: 1 (T 1836: 16; F 1892: 107) the bound pronoun *=nyuwa* follows *=pa* (in the first case, immediately). If we compare these with the illustrative sentences, there is perhaps some indication that they are anomalies. In examples 568, 593, 763, 814, and 922 of Lissarrague's database (pp. 223, 226, 243, 248, 259), in each case *=pa* follows the conjunction immediately, except that it is preceded by any bound pronouns. Example 893 (p. 256) is the only exception, and in this case Threlkeld is attempting scripture translation (Luke 12: 9; cf. F 1892: 161).

In other words, the sentences that appear to have been elicited give the impression that bound pronouns must precede *=pa* when it follows *wantu* (and, presumably, other conjunctions), and the exceptions we have drawn attention to all appear to be Threlkeld's own compositions. Whether these are mistakes on Threlkeld's part, or on the other hand result from factors we have not yet understood (such as, perhaps, a subtle change of meaning), is a matter for further research. But if we assume these anomalies are indeed mistakes, we have at least shown two things: first, that it is possible to correct for (at least some of) Threlkeld's errors in the reconstitution of the language; and, second, that, for the most part, Threlkeld's command of the language was surprisingly good. He understood all the varying usages of *=pa* and used them in the appropriate contexts, even if, on occasions, he made errors in the order of clausal constituents. This is the kind of error one would expect of any second language learner, and is relatively minor.

These are only preliminary hypotheses, since the data are not yet all in. But if the rules we have just formulated, or a more elegant version of them, prove to hold true, then it appears that Threlkeld's usage of this complex feature of HRLM was remarkably accurate.

Conclusion

Threlkeld and Biraban were very different individuals with very different agendas, but the historical evidence indicates a working linguistic partnership that was surprisingly productive. The question of its success, however, depends on the criteria one might wish to use. From the perspective of evangelization, it was a signal failure. In the preface, dated 15 August 1857, to the manuscript of the Gospel of St Luke which Threlkeld presented to Sir George Grey, he stated that the document could only be regarded as 'a work of curiosity', since the language was by that date all but extinct. Indeed, he states that it was possible to observe 'the last man of the Tribe', 'a paralytic', who could be seen in the suburbs of Sydney begging from passers by (Threlkeld 1857, fol. vi).

From the perspective of language heritage, on the other hand, the answer is less clear-cut. Up until now, it has been assumed that the cultural and linguistic limitations of the relationship between Biraban and Threlkeld would be evident in the scripture and other religious translations which the team completed, notably those made during the most productive years of their partnership, from about 1825 to 1840. But our linguistic analysis of one feature of some of the translations in the Threlkeld/ Biraban corpus indicates that Threlkeld's own skills in the language were probably deeper than has hitherto been recognized.

Even so, the question of the partnership's success in recording the language for future generations is still an open one, since it depends on a more complete description of the language, which, in turn, depends on an analysis of all of the remaining texts. If such an exercise confirms what we seem to have found in the present study, namely, that the surviving corpus of scripture translations contains more information about the original language of the people of this region of coastal New South Wales than has otherwise been suspected, we would attribute this to the dynamic nature of the linguistic partnership. Threlkeld was a patient and persistent man, and Biraban an excellent, if frequently elusive, teacher. The collaborative work was achieved largely by waiting for Biraban, 'the intelligent Aborigine' (Threlkeld 1857 fol. vii) who was Threlkeld's 'almost daily companion for many years' (Threlkeld 1892d: 88).

Acknowledgements

Referencing conventions for our examples. Our examples come from four different ensembles of translations, each of which exists in a number of versions: 1. Threlkeld's illustrative sentences and phrases; 2. his 'Selections from the scriptures'; 3. his 'Prayers in the Awabakal dialect'; and 4. his translation of the gospel of Luke. In all cases we have based our transcriptions of the original (in italics in the text) on the manuscript version, where one exists, or the earliest published version. Nonetheless, in our referencing of this material we have provided details of the other versions as well, for the sake of comparison. The transcription in phonemic orthography (in bold in the text) is our own work except in the case of the illustrative sentences and phrases, where we have used the transcriptions in Lissarrague 2006 (part 3). We have modified Lissarrague's phonemic reconstitutions by using only lower case letters, except for proper names. (Lissarrague uses capitals to indicate ambiguous phonemes.)

1. The illustrative sentences and phrases
Following the transcription of Threlkeld's original, we provide, in brackets, Lissarrague's example number preceded by L, followed by the number of the page in Lissarrague 2006 where the example occurs. This is followed by a reference to the original sentence in Threlkeld's corpus, indicated by T, a date, and a page number.

2. The 'Selections from the scriptures'
We give the number of the *winta* ('section') and verse in Threlkeld's edition of 1836, followed by 'T 1836' and a page number. This is followed by 'F 1892' and a page

number, which refers to Fraser's 1892 edition of the same text. In cases where there are two page numbers, this means that the particular verse occurs also in Fraser's 1892 edition of Threlkeld's translation of the gospel of Luke, to which the second number refers.

3. The 'Prayers in the Awabakal dialect'

We reference the manuscript version using the abbreviation 'B 1834' (for the Broughton and Threlkeld manuscript) and a page number. Because the page numbers of the original are not in sequence, we have used our own pagination, which treats the title page as zero, and the numbering of the subsequent seventeen pages as sequential. This abbreviation is followed by 'F 1892, App. E:' and a page number. This refers to Fraser's 1892 edition of the Prayers, which occur in Appendix E. (The appendices are separately paginated from the main body of the text.)

4. The gospel of Luke

We have not taken any of our transcribed examples from Threlkeld's translation of Luke, except where they also occur in the 'Selections'. When we reference examples from Luke in our discussion, we give the chapter and verse, followed by 'F 1892' and a page number. This refers to Fraser's edition of the text.

The English sources

The English translations of the illustrative sentences and phrases are those given by Threlkeld. In some cases we have provided our own versions as well, in square brackets. Where Threlkeld is translating a passage from the Bible, our English rendering is taken from the Authorized ('King James') Version of 1611 ('KJV'), which Threlkeld would have used as his original, and is preceded by a reference to the relevant book of the Bible, followed by chapter and verse numbers. Where the example comes from Threlkeld's translation of Broughton's selection of prayers from the Book of Common Prayer of 1662, our English translation is taken from Broughton's version of the relevant prayer, as transcribed in the 1834 manuscript; but we reference the example with the abbreviation 'BCP', followed by a page number. This refers to the online version of the Book of Common Prayer available at

http://www.vulcanhammer.org/anglican/bcp-1662.pdf . This is followed by an
indication of the section of BCP from which the example is taken (Morning Prayer,
Evening Prayer, etc.). In cases where our English translation diverges slightly from the
version in BCP, this means that Broughton's version of the relevant prayer, as it occurs
in the 1834 manuscript, is inaccurately transcribed. Fraser's version of these prayers
includes more material than the manuscript, and in cases where it does not duplicate the
Broughton selection, the translations are taken directly from BCP. (In cases where the
BCP version is quoting scripture but diverges from the KJV version, it is the BCP
version we have used.)

Abbreviations used in the glosses

In the glosses, we have followed the conventions of the Leipzig glossing rules (see
http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/pdf/LGR09_02_23.pdf). These are as follows: ABS—
absolutive; ACC — accusative; ASS.NMLS — associative nominalizer; COM —
comitative; CONT — continuous; DES — desiderative; DVB — deverbalizer; ERG —
ergative; EXCL — exclusive; F — feminine; FUT — future; GEN — genitive; G.PST
— general past; HYP — hypothetical; IMP — imperative; KIN — kin term (suffix);
LOC — locative; M — masculine; NEG — negative; NMLS — nominalizer; NOM —
nominative; PER — perlative; PL — plural; PLC — place (derivational suffix);
P.NMLS — patient nominalizer; PRS — present; PRIV — privative; SG — singular;
SUBR — subordinator; 1 — first person; 2 — second person; 3 — third person; -
precedes a suffix; = precedes a clitic or cliticized (bound) pronoun; and Ø null
morpheme (morpheme realized by a phonologically null affix).

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Abbreviation: SLNSW = State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

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Biographical notes

Jim Wafer is a visiting senior lecturer, University of Newcastle, NSW, where he is a member of the Endangered Languages Documentation, Theory and Application research group. His most recent book (with Amanda Lissarrague) is *A Handbook of Aboriginal Languages of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory* (Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative, 2008).

Hilary M. Carey is a professor of history at the University of Newcastle, NSW. She has published extensively on medieval and nineteenth-century religious and cultural history. Her most recent book is *God's Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World, c. 1800-1908* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).