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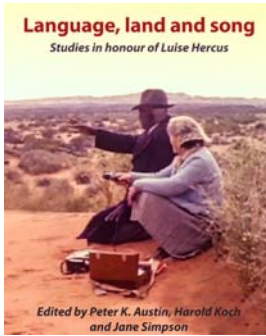
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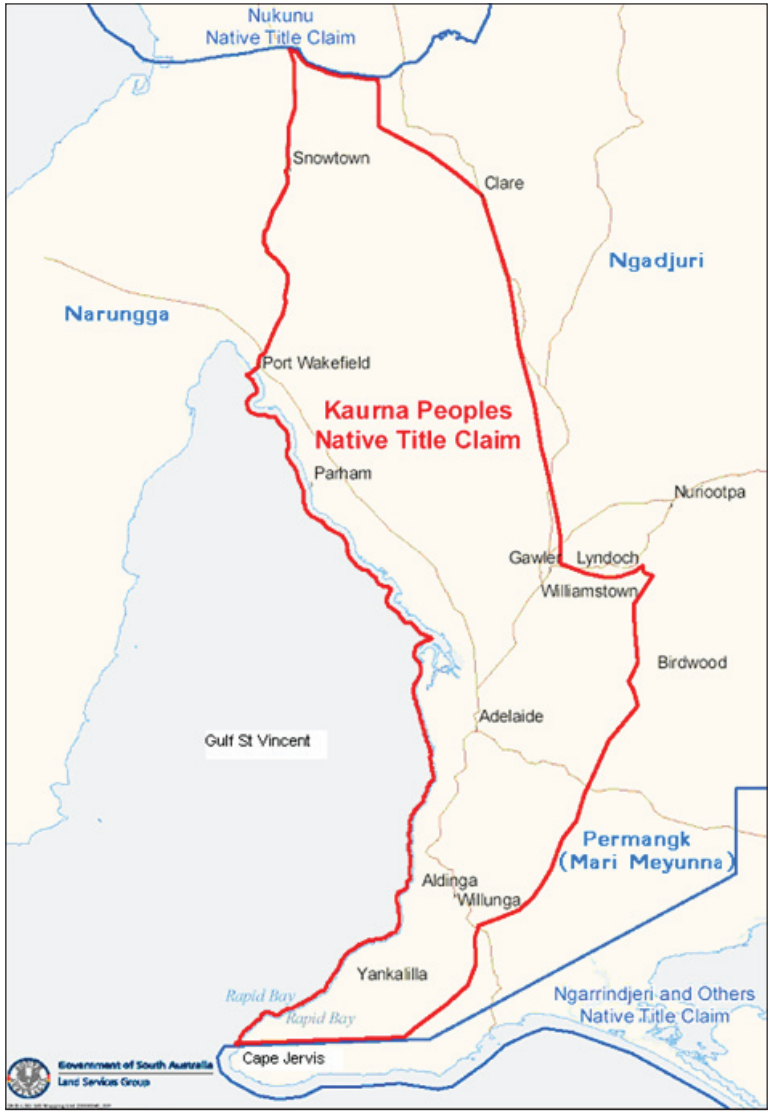
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The Kurna diaspora and its homecoming: Understanding the loss and re-emergence of the Kurna language of the Adelaide Plains, South Australia

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1. Introduction

In the case of Kurna, the original language of the Adelaide Plains, South Australia, the demographic profile and movements of people have great explanatory power for understanding the fortunes of a language. The Kurna people were never a large group. Their country extends from around Crystal Brook and Clare in the north to Cape Jervis in the south, bounded by the hills in the east and Gulf St Vincent in the west. The Kurna people were decimated by smallpox that had been introduced into New South Wales and Victoria by colonists. Smallpox spread down the river systems following trade routes and passed on at ceremonial gatherings. An epidemic struck the Kurna population about a decade prior to colonisation (Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840: 34) and there is some suggestion that there might have been an even earlier epidemic soon after the establishment of the penal colony in Sydney. Many in the remaining population of perhaps 500 to 700 Aboriginal people at the time of colonisation bore the signs of smallpox.



Map 1: Kaurna native title claim. Map courtesy Government of South Australia Land Services Group.

2. The Kaurna diaspora

The dispersal of the people of the Adelaide Plains, known today as the Kaurna, dates back to the sealing and whaling era more than a decade prior to the official colonisation of South Australia in 1836, when Kaurna, mostly women, were taken to Kangaroo Island, Western Australia (King George

Sound), Victoria (Portland and Warrnambool), Tasmania (Bass Strait), New Zealand and possibly even further afield (see Clarke 1996; 1998; Amery 1996, 1998, 2016: 57-59).

Aboriginal peoples from many different language groups were transported far and wide by sealers and it is linguistic evidence that is crucial in establishing the Kurna identity of several of these people. The earliest known Kurna wordlist was recorded at King George Sound, Western Australia in 1826 by the French zoologist Joseph Gaimard aboard the *Astrolabe* (Amery 1998). The Kurna source, known only as Harry, and his countrywoman Sally came from Cape Jervis in southern Kurna country (see Map 1).

Another Kurna wordlist was recorded on Flinders Island, Tasmania in June 1837 by George Augustus Robinson from a woman named *Kalloongoo* who had been kidnapped from the Yankalilla area years earlier (see Amery 1996).

Kalloongoo, Sally and Harry likely left their homelands in the early 1820s, but there could well have been earlier movements than this. Cumpston (1970: 3) refers to a tree on Kangaroo Island blazed with the date 1800 and attributes this to a voyage of the ship *Elligood*. The sealers left few records themselves and often Aboriginal people were not listed as crew in the ships' manifests.

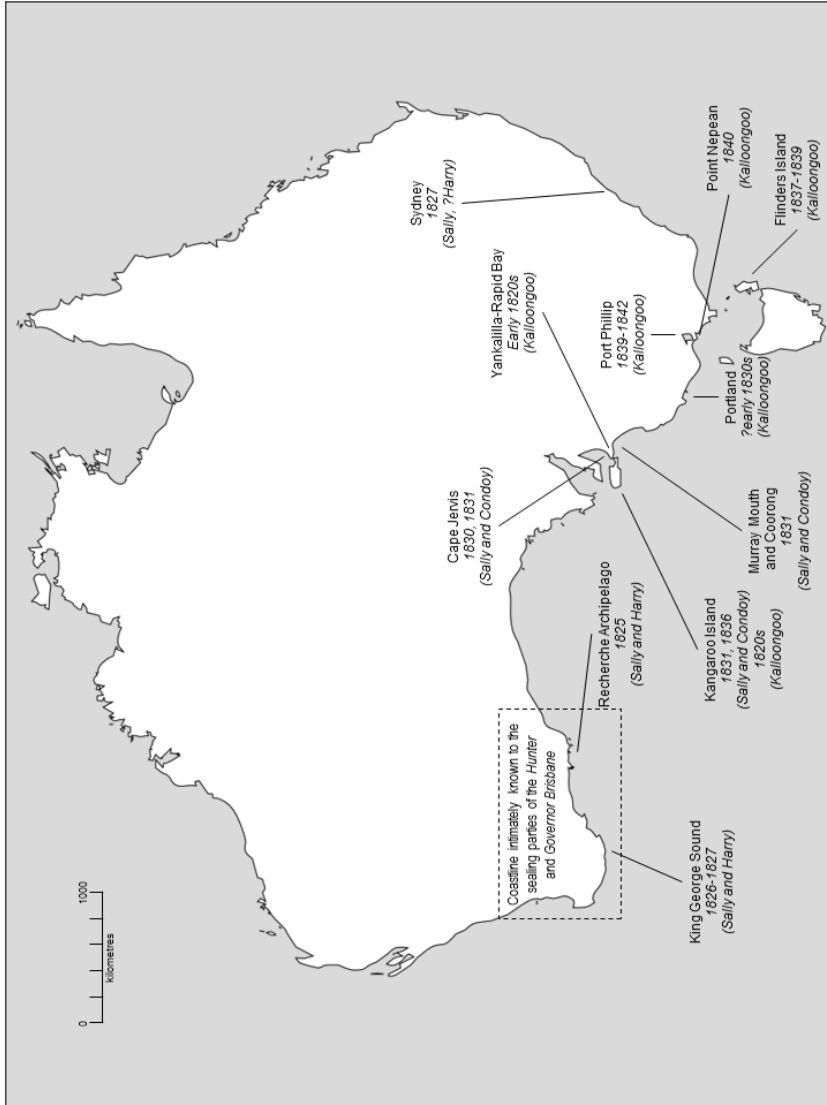
One indication of the extent of involvement of Kurna people in the sealing industry is the disparity of sexes in the population on the Adelaide Plains at the time of colonisation. Men outnumbered women and there were few children. Teichelmann & Moorhouse (1841: 46) reported:

In an area of 2,800 square miles, that is a distance of 80 miles to the north, and 60 to the south of Adelaide, running parallel with the coast 20 miles, there are 650 natives; or one in every 4 ½ square miles. The proportion of the sexes gives a peculiar predominance to the males: out of the number 650 there are 280 males, 182 females, and 188 children.

Gara (2006: 23) attributes this disparity in the sexes primarily to the uneven effects of smallpox; I believe it is due primarily to the kidnapping of women by sealers, though the end result is of course a combination of both.

3. Colonisation, depopulation and forced relocation

With colonisation in 1836, Kurna lands were taken by British colonists and German immigrants who occupied the most fertile and well-watered districts and established a town (Adelaide) in the very heart of Kurna country. The colonial authorities established the Aborigines Location at *Piltawodli* opposite the Adelaide Gaol on the River Torrens, where Kurna people were settled in huts. German missionaries Christian Teichelmann and Clamor Schürmann commenced documenting the Kurna language upon their arrival in Adelaide in October 1838 and once they had grasped a working knowledge of the language, Schürmann opened a school on 23 December 1839.



Map 2: Movements of Kallioongo, Sally and Harry (from Amery 1998: 64).

It is difficult to know the exact size of the Kurna population at the time of colonisation. One of the earliest reports (Moorhouse 1840) says of the Adelaide tribe:

the Adelaide tribe varied from 150 to 300 at any one time, including children – that is to say, the tribe called the Adelaide tribe was a group of smaller tribes of which the Adelaide tribe was the centre.

This number is considerably smaller than the 650 given in Teichelmann & Moorhouse (1841), but in his 1840 report Moorhouse defines a much smaller territory extending for ‘ten miles north of Adelaide to Mount Terrible, near Myponga in the south’, which is only the central part of the Adelaide Plains, just a portion of Kurna country.

The European colonists introduced additional diseases and established a series of polluting tanneries. As a result of influenza, typhoid¹ and other diseases, the population on the Adelaide Plains of perhaps 700 at the time of colonisation plummeted. Teichelmann & Moorhouse (1841: 46) note that in the second half of 1839 there were just five births and seven deaths; in 1840 there were six births compared with fifteen deaths with nine said to be natural and six premature; whilst in the first half of 1841 there were just three births but fourteen deaths, nine natural and five premature. Already in these early years of colonisation we see a declining birth rate and a rising death rate.

Aboriginal peoples from outlying districts, especially the upper reaches of the River Murray in South Australia, were persuaded to come to Adelaide for the Queen’s Birthday celebrations to see how black and white could live together in harmony (Moorhouse Letter to George Hall 18 Dec. 1840). Moorhouse’s (1843) report shows the increasing numbers attending these annual feasts, rising from 283 in 1840 to 450 in 1843, and notes that, whilst there were some 300 in regular contact with Europeans, there were an additional 700 itinerants in Adelaide in that year (in Foster 1990: 59-60). So the remaining Kurna people were soon outnumbered within an exceedingly short period of time, not only by Europeans, but by other Aboriginal peoples in their own country. Men from the Murray River districts preyed on Kurna women. Skirmishes broke out between the Kurna and the interlopers in the Adelaide parklands. Adelaide soon became a dangerous place for Kurna people and before long they withdrew to surrounding country towns and localities such as Kangarilla and Clarendon.

An article on page 2 of the *Southern Australian* on 15th June 1847 reflecting on the early years reports:

it is commonly said that the whites have driven away the Cowandilla or Adelaide natives from the city. No such thing. This now small tribe have been driven away, their wives and daughters seized on, and their men killed almost before our eyes, by hordes of wild Murray and even Darling natives, who at this moment infest our streets, and who were never seen on this side of the mountains before the whites came.

¹ Pope (1989: 40) notes an influenza epidemic in 1838 and a typhoid epidemic in 1843 resulting from pollution from sewage and tanning works.

In July 1845, Kurna children were removed from *Piltawodli* and relocated to the Native School Establishment on Kintore Avenue (Klose Letter 29 Aug. 1845 in Graetz 2002: 44). Here they were housed in dormitories, deliberately separated from their families and the influence of their Elders. This school was closed in 1851.

In 1850 Poonindie Mission was established near Port Lincoln on Eyre Peninsula in Barngarla country. The students at the Native School Establishment became the nucleus of Poonindie Mission. In fact, *Pitpauwi*, one of the students at *Piltawodli* in the early 1840s, became Archbishop Horatio Hale’s right-hand man in his efforts to recruit students to the Poonindie Mission. When Poonindie closed in 1894, those remaining were sent to Point McLeay (*Raukkan*) in Ngarrindjeri country and Point Pearce in Narungga country.

As best we can tell, the Kurna population fell from at most 700 (and perhaps considerably less) at the time of colonisation in 1836 to a mere handful by the early 1860s. William Cawthorne, who knew the Kurna people well, writes in 1865 (quoted in Hemming 1990: 132):



Map 3: Forced or coerced relocation of the Kurna population onto missions in Barngarla, Narungga and Ngarrindjeri country. Map: Rob Amery.

Of this tribe at the present moment I believe not 5 individuals exist, 4 years ago, as well as I could ascertain, there was but one family living.

Teichelmann, who had spent years documenting the Kurna language and preaching the Christian gospel to Kurna people, corroborates this observation in the cover note to his 1857 manuscript dictionary:

I do not entirely approve of the orthography of the native language, as we have spelt it, but it is useless now to alter any thing [sic] in it after the Tribe has ceased to be.

Under the Aborigines Act 1911, Aboriginal people were not able to live where they pleased. Those who returned to Adelaide were quickly rounded up by the police and sent back to the missions (*Raukkan* and Point Pearce). During the twentieth century, as with other Aboriginal peoples, some were fostered out or adopted into non-Aboriginal families as a result of ‘stolen generations’ policies. This extended even as far as Germany and Sweden (Lewis O’Brien, pers. comm.).

4. The documentation of Kurna

All records of the Kurna language, with the exception of five documents written by Kurna children, were produced by European observers, principally German missionaries of the Dresden Mission Society. In fact there is something of a diaspora of Kurna documents which has been brought together over the years and is beginning to be returned to Kurna people. Significantly, the original letters written by *Pitpauwi* and *Wailtyi* and the page from *Kartanya*’s copybook were returned to Adelaide on permanent loan on 8th September 2014, held by the Barr Smith Library on behalf of Kurna people and the Leipziger Missionswerk (LMW).

This diaspora of Kurna documentation includes:

- Joseph Gaimard (1833) wordlist collected in King George Sound in 1826, published in Paris
- Stephen Hack (1837) Pidgin Kurna phrases and sentences in a letter sent to his mother in Gloucester, UK
- Earl (1839) short list of body parts attributed to Earl that were published in London (in Lhotsky 1839)
- Edward Stephens (1838) a list of bird names in a letter to E.G. Wheeler sent to London with accompanying bird specimens (see Tindale 1935)
- Charles Robinson (n.d.) wordlist collected on Flinders Is, Tasmania in 1837, Mitchell Library, Sydney
- a page torn from Matthew Moorhouse’s diary with Kurna songlines, Mitchell Library, Sydney
- William Wyatt (1840) wordlist, South African Public Library (SAPL), Cape Town

- Hermann Koeler (1842) wordlist collected in 1837-38, published in Berlin
- Teichelmann (1857) manuscript wordlist, SAPL, Cape Town
- Teichelmann (1858) three pages on verb morphology, SAPL, Cape Town
- a note written by *Ityamaii* attached to melons presented to Gov. Grey, SAPL, Cape Town
- six German hymns translated into Kurna, LMW, Leipzig, now in Frankische Stiftungs archives, Halle, Germany
- a page from *Kartanya's* copybook, 1840, LMW, Leipzig, now in Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide
- letters written by *Pitpauwi* and *Wailtyi*, 1843. LMW, Leipzig, now in Barr Smith Library
- miscellaneous words and songlines in missionaries' diaries and letters. LMW, Leipzig, now in Halle

Not surprisingly, a number of other sources (books, book chapters, journal articles, newspaper articles and manuscripts) are published or located in Adelaide. These include:

- William Williams (1840) wordlist (377 entries) plus some sentences
- Louis Piesse (1840) short wordlist (including placenames) as addendum to Williams (1840)
- Teichelmann & Schürmann² (1840) sketch grammar, vocabulary and 200 translated sentences
- a letter to Gawler written in Kurna and signed by nine children (Amery 2016: 112, Plate 9)
- Kurna translations of two speeches by Gov. Gawler (Amery 2016: 111, Plate 10)
- Kurna translation of the Ten Commandments (Amery 2016: 111, Plate 10)
- Mathew Moorhouse correspondence, 1840-1857
- William Cawthorne (1844) terminology for Kurna artefacts.
- William Wyatt (1879) wordlist of 650 entries recorded in his role as Protector 1837-1839
- Edward Stephens (1889) wordlist and sentences mostly plagiarised with altered spelling from Williams (1840) or remembered from childhood

² A copy of Teichelmann & Schürmann (1840) annotated by Mathew Moorhouse was recently located in Moscow by James McElvenny, having been taken there by the Russians at the end of the second World War from von der Gabelentz's library in Poschwitz near Altenburg, south of Leipzig. Prior to sending this copy to von der Gabelentz in the 1840s, Teichelmann had already incorporated Moorhouse's annotations into his 1857 manuscript. Another copy annotated by Teichelmann is located in Cape Town.

- Thomas Day (1902) memoirs includes eight words and seven placenames
- James Chittleborough (1906) wordlist recalled from childhood
- Daisy Bates (1919) short wordlist (26 entries) from *Ivaritji*, the ‘last speaker’ of Kurna.
- John McConnell Black (1920) wordlist (66 entries) plus several sentences from *Ivaritji*
- Norman Tindale (1920s) Kurna placename card files, journal entries. See Tindale (1935).

The source materials obtained from South Africa, Germany and Sydney are significant. Four out of five Kurna texts written by Kurna children were sent overseas. Teichelmann (1857) is the largest and richest Kurna source and was written as a compendium to Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840.

5. The return of the diaspora

A few Kurna people, including Gladys Elphick, returned to Adelaide during the second World War, having been sent by the Aborigines Protection authority to work in the munitions factories. From the 1960s onwards, many Aboriginal people drifted to Adelaide from the missions in order to make a better life for themselves and their children. They identified primarily as *Nunga*³ and many associated closely with the missions (Point Pearce or *Raukkan*) where they had been born and raised, long after moving to Adelaide.

5.1 The emergence of a Kurna identity

The vast majority of Kurna people are also of Narungga, Ngarrindjeri, Ngadjuri, Adnyamathanha or other Aboriginal ancestry, as well as of European descent. Having found themselves in Adelaide on Kurna land, people began to re-identify with the Kurna side of their families. Many came to know of their Kurna identity through historical research and word of mouth. Georgina Williams’ father would take Georgina to visit various places on the Adelaide Plains. He clearly had knowledge of the country and would mention ‘Big Daddy John’ (thought to refer to *Murlawirrapurka* ‘King John’). Genealogical research carried out by the late Dr Doreen Kartinyeri has been especially important in enabling families to trace their Kurna ancestry. Kurna genealogies were published for the opening of Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute (Kartinyeri 1989), where she identified five ‘full blood’ Kurna ancestors, all women, four of whom had married white men whilst the fifth had married a Ngarrindjeri man from the Coorong (see Amery 2016: 7). A great many Kurna people alive today are descendants of the Aboriginal woman known

³ The term *Nunga* [ˈnʌŋə] refers to an Aboriginal person from southern South Australia.

only as *Kudnarto*, who married a white man Tom Adams with the approval of the Protector of Aborigines in 1848 (O'Connor 1998: 140). This was the first officially-sanctioned marriage between an Aboriginal woman and a white man in South Australia. Lewis O'Brien, like many Kurna people, had grown up at Point Pearce thinking he was Narungga. But he also grew up with the knowledge of Block 346 which had been granted to *Kudnarto* but had been resumed by the government upon her premature death. *Kudnarto*'s descendants felt justifiably aggrieved at the loss of the land. In 1947, Lewis located this block at Skillogalee near Clare in the north of Kurna country. The name *Kudnarto*, a Kurna birth-order name, establishes a Kurna identity for their ancestor (see Amery 2016: 1).

Kurna people today identify eight apical ancestors. Participants of a Tertiary and Further Education (TAFE) workshop listed the following (see Gale 2012: 10):

- *Kudnarto* (ancestor of Adams, Williams and O'Brien families)
- Father of Charlotte
- Father of King Rodney
- Nancy Mitchell (ancestor of Goldsmith family)
- Mother of Alice Miller
- *Rathoola*
- Mother of Sarah Tarkarrabie
- Nellie Raminyememermin (also known as Mary Monato) (ancestor of Taylor, Power, Sumner, Sansbury, Kropinyeri, Newchurch, Wanganeen and Milera families)

Kurna identity began with genealogy, archaeology, site protection and the *Tjilbruke* dreaming narrative. Identification with Kurna language came later. When shown the records of Kurna language made by German missionaries, it seems that Kurna people Gladys Elphick and Tim Hughes rejected the spelling employed. They did not identify with *kari* 'emu' (where the *r* is actually a tap [ɾ]). They felt that the sound was a 'd' and that *kari* was wrong. This is now spelt *kardi* in revised Kurna spelling, which many feel is a much better representation of this known word.

5.2 A Kurna linguistic identity

Georgina Yambo Williams was probably the first to call for the revival of Kurna in the mid-1980s as a spoken language. She had approached the School of Australian Linguistics at Batchelor, south of Darwin, to run a course in Kurna linguistics. Kurna language revival efforts began in 1990 with the compilation of a songbook and inclusion of a number of Kurna songs (Ngarrindjeri, Narrunga and Kurna Languages Project 1990), though prior to this Kurna people had named several organisations with Kurna terms obtained from historical records, beginning with *Warriappendi Alternative School* in 1980.

I interviewed a number of Kurna people in the 1990s in the course of my PhD research. The late Paul Dixon, who was instrumental in the recognition of *Warriparinga*⁴ and had been chair of the Kurna Aboriginal Community and Heritage Association (KACHA), saw the Kurna language as ‘the cream on the top’. For Paul, site protection, archaeology and Kurna material culture were pre-eminent, whilst the language was a bonus. For a number of other Kurna people since then, the Kurna language does play a central role in their identity.

Brief profiles and statements were prepared by a number of key Kurna language enthusiasts for the *Kurna Learner's Guide* (Amery & Simpson 2013) which tell of their identification with the Kurna language. The story of Jack Kanya Buckskin's engagement with Kurna is told poignantly in the film *Buckskin* made by Dylan McDonald, a young Central Australian Indigenous filmmaker in 2012-13.

Three Kurna dance troupes have emerged which all employ Kurna language in the form of introductions, expressions, salient words and names of these groups: *Paitya* ‘deadly’, *Taikurtinna* ‘family’ and *Kuma Kaaru* ‘one blood’. These dance troupes, each led by prominent Kurna language activists Karl Winda Telfer, Steve Gadlabarti Goldsmith and Jack Kanya Buckskin respectively, are in demand for festivals, conferences, Australian Football League games, and a range of other public events. They are a clear expression of Kurna cultural identity combining music, dance, song, story and language.

6. Revival of the Kurna language

Efforts to revive Kurna have been maintained for over 25 years, making considerable progress through a range of innovative projects and development of resources. There is now a much greater awareness of the existence of Kurna language, and some individuals now have considerable knowledge of and proficiency in speaking Kurna. It is certainly in a much stronger position now than it was a quarter century ago.

6.1 Speeches of welcome to Kurna country

The first speech of ‘welcome to country’ in Kurna was given by Kauwanu Lewis Yerloburka O'Brien in 1991 during the visit of scientist David Suzuki to Adelaide. The number of such speeches of welcome increased exponentially over subsequent years. Just seven years later, in 1998 there were 104 speeches given (Amery 2016: 211). These welcome speeches have become established protocol at large and small events, especially those concerned with Aboriginal affairs, but also major public events, such as the annual Festival of Adelaide and WOMADelaide. There are now far too many occasions on which Kurna speeches are given to easily keep track of them, probably numbering in excess of 1,000 annually. Kurna speakers are in high demand. In order to address this demand,

⁴ *Warriparinga*, located in the Marion area of Metropolitan Adelaide, is an important site in the *Tjilbruke* Dreaming narrative.

a three-day workshop, taught by Jack Kanya Buckskin, was offered to Kurna people in October 2014, during Kurna Language Week, at Tauondi College (an Aboriginal adult education provider in Port Adelaide).

Speeches of welcome are, for a number of Kurna people, the first attempt they might make at speaking Kurna. Initial attempts may be faltering, but it is remarkable how quickly people gain fluency in delivery of their speech. Some adhere rigidly to a set formula, whilst others adapt their speech to suit the occasion. A welcome speech in Kurna language is a public display that Kurna people still have a language and culture that is linked to the land, and as such, it is a strong expression of identity.

6.2 Personal names

Personal names are one very clear indicator of personal identity. Many Kurna people have adopted Kurna names for themselves and/or have given Kurna names to their children. The first Kurna name given to an Aboriginal child in the modern era was that of Kudnarto Watson in the mid-1980s (*Koorie Mail*, 13th Dec. 1995, page 23). Since then, a number of children have been given Kurna names, sometimes in addition to English names, whilst at other times, their Kurna name is their only first name. Examples include *Kaiya* ‘spear’, *Ilya* ‘red-bellied black snake’, *Kudlyu* ‘black swan’, and *Tarniwarra* ‘voice of the breakers’. Adults who have adopted Kurna names or were bestowed names by others include *Yambo* ‘dolphin’, *Irabinna* ‘warrior’, *Kanya* ‘rock’, *Gadlabarti* ‘native bee’, *Karlapina* ‘inclined to fire’, *Tipu* ‘spark’, *Winda* ‘owl’, and *Warto* ‘wombat’. Jamie Goldsmith has adopted several Kurna names: *Ngungana* ‘kookaburra’, *Yidakipina* ‘inclined to the didgeridoo’ (being an enthusiastic player of that instrument), and *Ilyaitpina* ‘father of Ilya’ following traditional naming practices where Kurna men were referred to by the name of their latest child with the suffix *-itpina*.

6.3 Kurna placenames

A number of Kurna placenames, such as *Yankalilla*, *Kangarilla*, *Cowandilla*, *Myponga*, *Aldinga*, *Noarlunga*, *Uraidla* etc., had been placed on the map in the early years of the colony. In the 1980s, few people had any knowledge of the origins or meaning of these names. Even the literature on South Australian placenames (Cockburn 1990; Manning 1990; Praise & Tolley 1970) is demonstrably inaccurate, sometimes perpetuating false etymologies (see Amery 2002). As an integral aspect of the Kurna language movement, Kurna placenames are now intensively researched (Schultz 2011, 2012-) and displayed on the web (see www.kurnaplacenames.com, www.adelaide.edu/kwp).

Some Kurna placenames, such as *Warriparinga* and *Pirtawardli*, have been reinstated, others, such as *Onkaparinga* = *Ngangkiparingga* ‘woman river place’, rehabilitated (i.e. the rightful form and meaning made known), whilst some locations, including many parks, have been given new Kurna names in the absence of documented or known names for these places.

6.4 Kurna naming, signage, plaques and public art

Since the naming of *Warriappendi* in 1980 there has been an exponential increase in the use of Kurna to name organisations, businesses, programs, events, geographical features, parks, walking trails, streets, buildings, rooms, a bus, tram, patrol boat, frost chamber⁵, emergency beacon, a variety of wheat and even an allele. There are over 800 such instances of new Kurna naming in the KWP database with the actual number probably exceeding 1,000. Kurna words, phrases and short texts have also appeared in a number of prominent public art works, beginning with the *Yerrakartarta* installation outside the Hyatt Hotel in 1995. See Amery (2010) regarding the mapping of these names.⁶

6.5 Teaching the Kurna language

Efforts to teach the Kurna language began with a one-week or two-week workshop for adults each year from 1990. A Kurna language program was introduced into Kurna Plains School in 1992 and a senior secondary program into Elizabeth City High School and Elizabeth West Adult Campus in 1994. In 2003 the School of Languages approached me to develop a senior secondary program and this was introduced in 2004. I handed this course over to Jack Kanya Buckskin in 2007 (see Amery & Buckskin 2012). There is now a high level of demand for teachers of Kurna, with many schools across the Adelaide metropolitan area wishing to implement programs. Unfortunately, there are few teachers available. In order to address this critical shortage of teachers of Aboriginal languages, Mary-Anne Gale developed TAFE Certificate III & IV courses *Learning an Endangered Aboriginal Language* and *Teaching an Endangered Aboriginal Language* (Gale, this volume). Nine Kurna students completed the Certificate III in 2013, whilst Jack Kanya Buckskin and Taylor Tipu Power-Smith, completed their Certificate IV in 2015. Three more are currently completing theirs. Most students enrolled in Kurna language programs in schools, however, are not Kurna people. Significantly Kurna language offered at Kurna Plains School, Salisbury High School and elsewhere has involved some Kurna students. Anecdotal evidence suggests that these programs have played a significant role in shaping the Kurna identity of these students.

6.6 Kurna language resources

As mentioned previously, the Kurna language revival movement began in 1990 with the production of a songbook. Since then print-based resources have been

⁵ A chamber for testing frost resistance in wheat varieties at the Waite Institute, University of Adelaide was named *Bakkadla Pindi* (or *Pakadla Pinti* in revised spelling) ‘frost pit’.

⁶ See http://www.kurnaplacenames.com/kurna_public_arena/ where Kurna names are mapped on Google Earth.

produced: a Kurna songbook (Schultz et al. 1999), vocabulary (Amery 2003), alphabet book (KPS 2001; KWP 2013), funeral protocols (Amery & Rigney 2006), learner's guide (Amery & Simpson 2013) and draft dictionary (Morley & Amery 2014). Many of these have been accompanied with sound recordings. The Kurna media team have also produced radio shows and short radio clips for Radio Adelaide and short video clips posted on YouTube. Some of these clips are language lessons based on the learner's guide. Others feature placenames, a Kurna welcome at Womadelaide and a Cycling for Culture fundraiser with Kurna voiceover. We have also produced YouTube clips for children featuring Kurna animals, colours and counting starfish. The Pirltawardli Puppet Shows featuring *Kurraka* 'magpie', *Pirlta* 'brushtail possum' and *Kuula* 'koala' have been a real hit.⁷ Because our audience consists of native speakers of English, we introduce the Kurna language by exploiting misunderstandings between English-speaking (*Kuula*) and Kurna-speaking characters (*Kurraka*), mediated by a bilingual character (*Pirlta*).

6.7 Kurna as a spoken language

Three young Kurna men, Jack Kanya Buckskin, Kaiya Agius and Jamie Ngungana Goldsmith, are now able to conduct a conversation of some substance in Kurna without resorting to English (pers. comm. Jack Kanya Buckskin, April, 2014), though because they live at opposite corners of the Adelaide metropolitan area and each have young families, they don't often have a chance to meet up.

A number of Kurna families have greatly increased their use of Kurna at home. Buckskin has spoken Kurna regularly with his children since they were born. Whilst English is the dominant language of his eldest daughter, aged 4 years, she understands Kurna well, and often uses Kurna words and expressions. In April 2014 when she visited the University of Adelaide with her father, I asked her *Waa ninkai?* 'where's your mother?' She replied 'home' and clearly understood what I was asking her, in the absence of any contextual cues. In March 2015 at the annual Spirit Festival I asked her *Waa ninku panyapi?* 'Where is your younger sibling?' expecting to see him in the pram in front of me (the pram had the hood up obscuring my vision). She quickly responded pointing behind me 'there'. Her brother was in his mother's arms in the opposite direction to where I was looking. If I say to her *Mapa mapakurungka ngatpanthu!* 'Put the rubbish in the rubbish bin!' she will race off and do just that.

In the 2011 Census, 58 people claimed to speak Kurna at home, an increase from 34 in 2006 and 29 in 2001.⁸ Most likely, all these people reside in Adelaide.

Of course, not all Kurna people have returned to Adelaide and others have since moved to live and work in rural South Australia, interstate or even overseas. Over the past 20 years, I have received a number of enquiries

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2BG0kH33iNQ&index=4&list=PLFkCRgxSjVGjt1Zwra9cxp-tC4SODjQGP> [accessed 2016-04-13].

⁸ Prior to 2001 figures were not compiled, though it is known that there were some.

from Kurna people living interstate who want to learn Kurna or obtain Kurna language learning materials. Fortunately, it is now possible to gain access to the Kurna language via the internet. The Kurna YouTube channel <http://bit.ly/kurna>, Kurna Placenames website www.kurnaplacenames.com and Kurna Warra Pintyanthi (KWP) website www.adelaide.edu.au/kwp are especially useful.

7. Conclusion

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Kurna population plummeted to an exceedingly small number as a result of disease and activities of sealers. The Kurna language has been reclaimed from materials recorded between 1826 and 1920. Many of these have only recently been sourced from locations near and far. Following efforts over the last 25 years to re-introduce it, there is now a much greater awareness of Kurna language within the Kurna community and within the public at large. Several Kurna people are now reasonably proficient speakers of Kurna. Others have considerable knowledge and the Kurna community at large draws pride in the fact that their language is once again in use. Local governments include Kurna language objectives within their Reconciliation Action Plans. There is considerable emblematic use of Kurna language. As an auxiliary language, Kurna serves as a badge of identity and a rallying point for those who have returned to Adelaide and seek to re-establish their connections with the land and their linguistic and cultural heritage. Much of the use of Kurna in the 21st century, such as welcomes and acknowledgements, celebrates this connection. The content of teaching programs, radio shows, YouTube clips etc. often focuses on country. Connection with country provides the *raison d'être* for Kurna to re-emerge as an auxiliary language.

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