

Pages 63 to 84 of

Steele, Jeremy. 2005.

The Aboriginal language of Sydney:

**a partial reconstruction of the indigenous language of
Sydney based on the notebooks of William Dawes of 1790-
91, informed by other records of the Sydney and
surrounding languages to c.1905. MA thesis.**

**This extract explains the methods and conventions used by
William Dawes in writing his notebooks on the language of Sydney**

3.2 Present reality

3.2.1 *The notebooks described*

The notebooks, as viewed in 2004, were in a small expanding-envelope-style white cardboard slipcase folder, with white tape around, bearing a white label, top right, with the pencil inscription:

| |
|--------------------------|
| 41645 |
| MS 41645 (a) (b) (c) (d) |
| DAWES NOTEBOOKS |

Inside the folder were two small volumes.

3.2.1.1 Marsden Collection, first volume

The lesser of the two volumes was stiffly bound with maroon covers. Printed on the square-backed spine was: DAWES—LANGUAGE OF NEW SOUTH WALES, together with, separately in a box in bold capitals about 7 point in size, ‘School of Oriental Studies London’:



Spine of the maroon-bound volume containing Dawes' Notebooks (a) and (b)

This volume had a circular sticker on the front cover bottom left-hand corner bearing the handwritten in ink library number 41645 a–b, as the volume contained the two Notebooks (a) and (b) by William Dawes, bound together.

Inside, after blank endpapers and flyleaf, were the original notebooks themselves, 157 x 9.5 mm in size, each in navy blue thin cardboard covers, each consisting of 22 internal sheets or 44 pages counting both sides.

Notebook (a) is so called because its navy blue cover, not greatly stiffer than its pages, bore a centrally placed white paper patch with the pencil library annotation at the top: ‘Marsden Collection’ and the reference number ‘41645a’. Below followed the text of the patch, handwritten possibly by a cataloguer after receipt of the notebooks into a collection: ‘Grammatical forms of the language of N.S. Wales, in the neighbourhood of Sydney, by — Dawes, in the year 1790.’



Anon Notebook (c), left, and the combined Dawes Notebooks (a) and (b), right.
A 50p coin gives an indication of the size.

On the inside front cover was a pencil-drawn and annotated set of lines, loops and an oval, with words as captions: apparently a map. The interior pages, of a slight blue pastel shade, appeared to have been folded down the middle. The still evident crease had probably been by made by Dawes to format the pages into two columns, the left-hand column to accommodate Biyal-Biyal language words, and to the right their translations aligned to the fold-mark—this arrangement occasionally being reversed.

The final two pages had been used upside down, by Dawes, and were less carefully written than the rest of the book. The last page, a:41 (“Naa To see”), which was wholly written upside down, might equally be considered as page 1 of the notebook if started from the other end. Similarly the second-last page a:40, with examples of the verb “Piyi To beat”, included several lines of upside-down writing at the foot of the page (of “Yen To go or to walk”); if started at the other end, this page would become page 2, a possibility to be considered again in §3.4.1.

Notebook (b), immediately following Notebook (a) in the SOAS smaller bound volume, was likewise navy-blue covered and bearing a paper patch, similarly headed, in pencil, ‘41645b’. Its pages, too, had been vertically creased to form two columns. All pages and the inside covers had been written upon, except for one double-spread, together with the immediately following page, that had been left blank. As will be explained shortly, Dawes evidently had a plan for the layout of each notebook. Had Dawes stayed longer in the colony, the blank sheets would almost certainly have been put to use, as had other occasional pages that had turned out not to be likely to receive data under his original scheme.

3.2.1.2 Marsden Collection, second volume

The larger of the two volumes in the SOAS slipcase, 180 x 125 mm in size, and unlike the other volume not re-bound, had a cover with an all-over design resembling waterworn stones. It lacked any printed inscription on its original and rounded spine. A patch of white paper, similar to those affixed to the covers of the Dawes Notebooks (a) and (b), bore the cataloguer’s handwritten legend ‘Vocabulary of the language of N.S. Wales, in the neighbourhood of

Sydney. (Native and English, but not alphabetical'. This volume too had a circular sticker on the front bottom left-hand corner, showing the handwritten-in-ink library identification number 41645 (c).(d).

Anon Notebook (c), in addition to its 44 written pages, includes ten blank double-spreads, and two other blank pages. The inside front cover is also blank. It is different from the Dawes notebooks, being written in another hand, or hands. Two hundred years ago it was common for people to have a 'fair hand' and a 'rough hand'—a carefully produced copperplate style, and a more casually executed rough hand. The bulk of Notebook (c) is in the fair hand, with occasional rough-hand entries. Whether the rough hand was of another writer, or two modes of the same writer, and whether the fair hand, with its varying degrees and styles of elaboration, was by one or more persons, would require an expert to determine. Because of its uncertainty of authorship, this notebook has commonly been referred to as 'Anon'. It may have been an official wordlist initiated under the direction of Governor Phillip, and contributed to by others. One scholar has styled it 'The Governors' Vocabulary' (Smith 2004:5).

Item (d): Tasmanian vocabularies. Item 41645 (d) referred to slips of paper in a back-cover pocket of Notebook (c). This pocket was marked by a paper patch with the pencil annotations 'Marsden Collection', '41645d' and the description: 'Short vocabularies of the language of natives of Van Diemen's land, collected by the officers of the French frigates la Recherche & l'Espérance, in 1793.' This item (d), featuring 199 Tasmanian words, did not relate to the Sydney language.

3.3 Physical characteristics

3.3.1 *Paper*

The paper in the Dawes notebooks, as mentioned above, had a pale blue tinge; there were occasional wood-pulp flecks, as well as stains and dots of age. These incidental marks sometimes occurred in critical places, such as where diacritics might have been used, or omitted, and affected the reader's judgement about the intended interpretation of pronunciation. For example, Dawes distinguished between a lower-case 'i' written with or without a dot over it: 'no-dot' [ɪ] meant pronunciation as in 'bit', 'with-dot' [i] as in 'bite'; so, was a speck above a particular 'i' a blemish or an intended dot? The determination in such cases affected the phonetic respelling of the word in question.

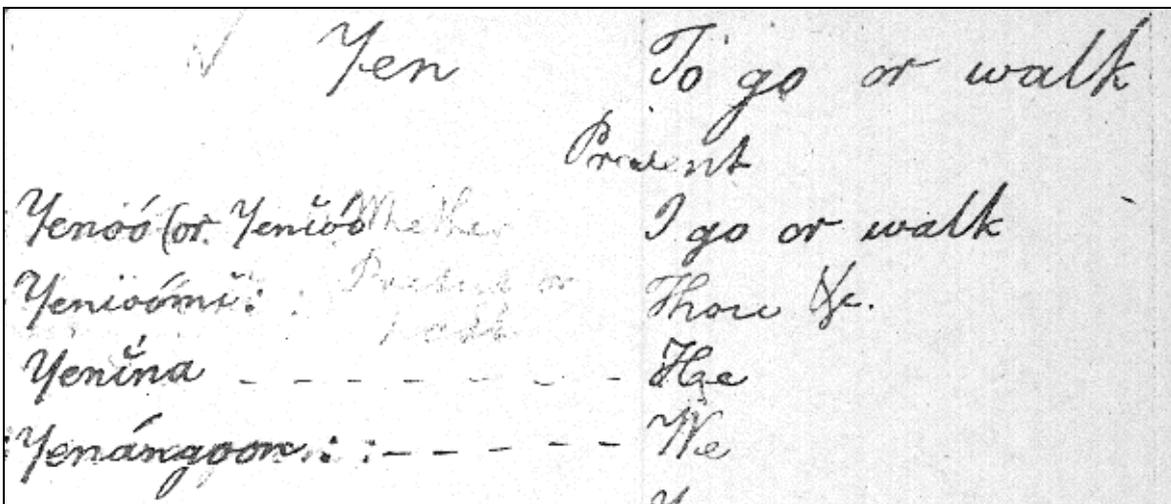
The paper in Notebook (c) had a yellowish or buff cast, but as diacritics rarely occurred in this notebook, and when used had been in the form of marks larger than incidental specks, the nature of the paper was not significant for interpretation purposes.

3.3.2 *Interpreting the unspecified aspects of the notebooks*

In the presentation of original manuscripts there are subtleties that are lost upon transcription of the work into type. These include changes in line spacing, size of writing, interpolations (reflecting new information acquired by the compiler), different densities and flows of ink (suggesting the passage of time between one part of an entry, or of a page, and another), and overwriting in ink (suggesting confirmation of a provisional pencil entry). In addition, the infinite freedom of handwriting enables a writer to introduce additional marks. In this case, Dawes included: diacritics associated with particular

letters or parts of words to give clues to intended pronunciation (to be examined in Chapter 6); linking dashes to connect a left-hand column entry to its right-hand column counterpart—a device with perhaps no significance intended; and someone, whether Dawes or another, placed ticks alongside particular entries, suggesting an agreement with the inclusion of a word or entry, or with the interpretation given to it by Dawes. As well, in Notebooks (a) and (b), which are mostly written in ink, there are pencil entries.

Dawes on rare occasions made an entry in pencil and then overwrote it more carefully in ink, as on page a:4 (i.e. Notebook (a), page 4).



a:4: Showing a tick, and a pencil entry, later overwritten in ink.

The colons, or 'authorities', at the ends of some of the entries are discussed below (see §3.4.1).

From the illustration, it looks as if Dawes might have first drafted in pencil:

(a:4:1)⁷ : Yenoó :) Whether
 (a:4:2) : Yenioómi :) Present or past

and later overwritten a correct entry:

(a:4:1) : Yenoó (or Yenioó) I go or walk
 (a:4:2) : Yenioómi : Thou &c

leaving the pencil entry still standing.

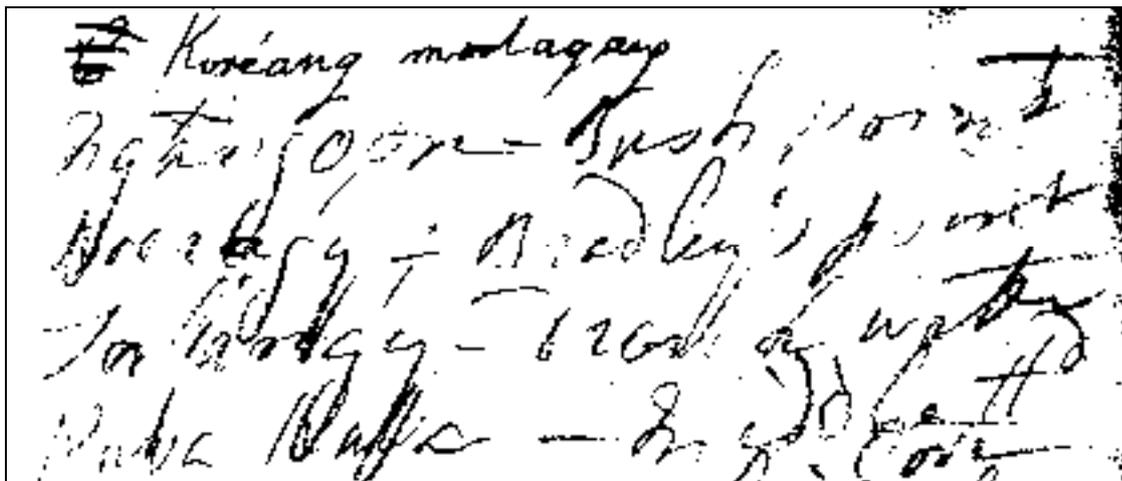
⁷ The reference '(a:4:1)' indicates Notebook (a), page 4, line 1.

On page b:19, the original entries underlying lines 2 and 3 (the first word of which is faint in the notebook, nearly invisible in the photocopy) appear to be:

(underneath b:19:2) (Tabon?)ga a To yawn
 (below b:19:3) Tirrinang To sneeze

The pencil entry has been written in a big hand; this may not have been Dawes, but perhaps '(W)', to whom Dawes later attributed the entry (possibly surgeon White or Worgan, midshipman Waterhouse, or passenger Lt Watts). The swirling capital T in "Tirrinang" is unlike the Ts used by Dawes; the tail of the g in the same word kicks oppositely to Dawes' usage; and the lower-case z in 'sneeze' also differs from Dawes' practice. It was Dawes who over-wrote the entries, in his smaller hand and on neat lines, filling the page. This might be an instance of an entry written in the field, and by someone other than Dawes.

The inside back cover, in pencil apart from the top line, was also probably by someone other than Dawes, written 'in the field' while on a boat enquiring about harbour placenames. The top portion follows, showing an untranslated Dawes top line:



b:42 After an entry in ink featuring Dawes' early system of transcription, follow pencil entries of harbour placenames in a hand unlike Dawes':

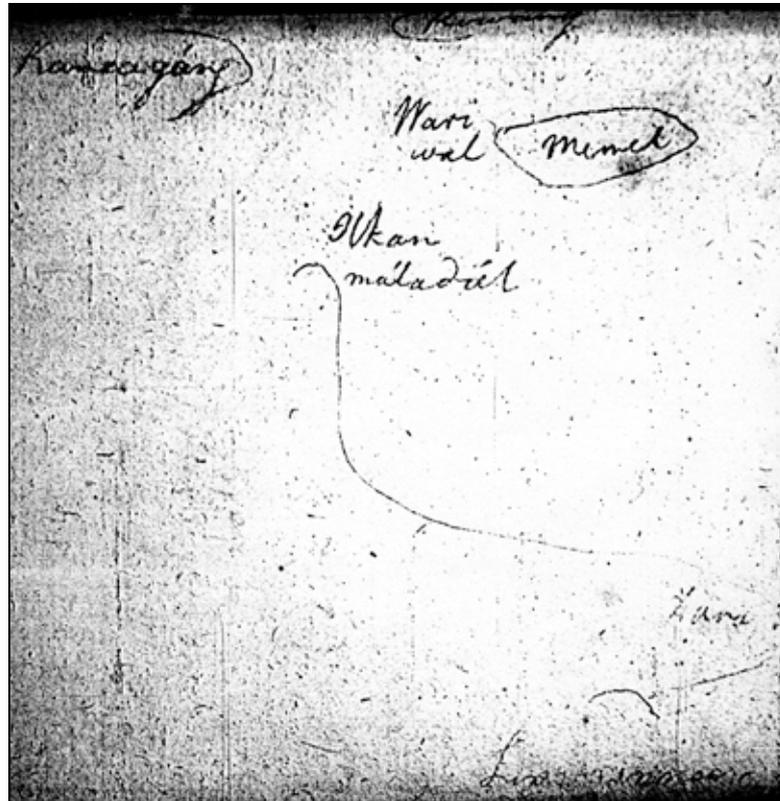
(b:42:2) Ngángoön Nga-ngun Bush point
 (b:42:3) Boorag'y Bura-gi Bradley's point

| | | | |
|----------|-----------|-------------|------------------|
| (b:42:4) | Taliang'y | Daliya-ngai | drank water [??] |
| (b:42:5) | Kuba Kuba | Gaba Gaba | Middle Hd |

“Koréang” (Guriyang) may be a person as the word or name occurs in the ‘List of Native Men’ on pages c:40 and c:41; mulagang probably means ‘ill’ (mula-li = “Sick” (b:17:15)). This page seems to confirm that the notebooks were taken into the field, and that others might have had access to them.

3.3.3 Pencil sketch map

In addition, on the inside front cover of Notebook (a), is the pencil-drawn map mentioned above (see §3.2.1.1) of Port Jackson, showing “Dara”, now Dawes Point, and “Memel” or Goat Island. There are other sketches, possibly maps, under the writing on page b:2, and opposite page b:28.



The inside front cover map, Notebook (a). Unknown landmarks include “Wariwal”, “Ilkan máládúíl”, “Kowang” (possibly the same as “Cow-wan”, the name given to “Ross Farm” (c:38:16)), and “Kaneagáng”. The word at the bottom, written upside down, might be “Koowarinang”.

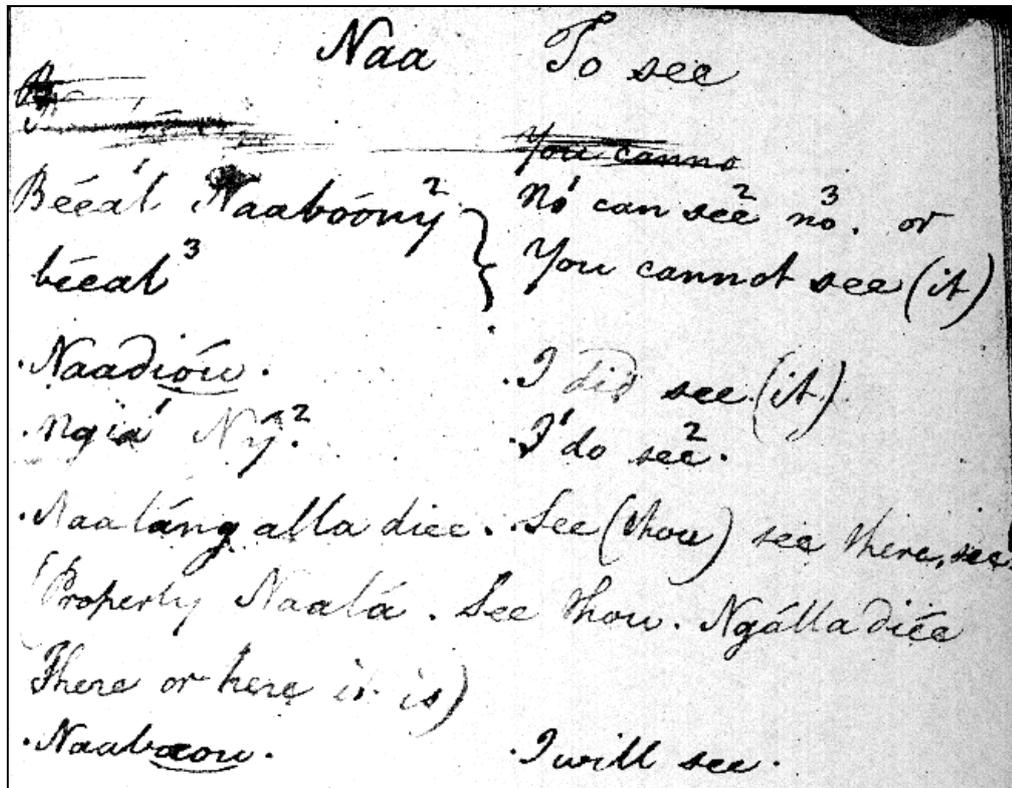
Notebook (c) also contains pencil entries (insertions on pages c:3 [1] and c:9 [2]) and isolated pencil annotations.

3.4 Setting up the notebooks

Dawes obtained two blank notebooks (if there were others, they have not come to light), and prepared himself for recording. Notebook (a) he would use for verbs and examples, and Notebook (b) for nouns and examples. There is no way of definitely knowing the sequence of steps he took in writing the notebooks. However, the following is an attempt to account plausibly for the evidence of upside-down pages in Notebook (a) and scattered initial letters in Notebook (b).

3.4.1 Verbs: Notebook (a)

In the verbs notebook, Notebook (a), to which there is no obvious front or back, Dawes made his first steps towards language analysis by jotting down words and usages, for “Naa To see”— not as carefully written as one would soon come to expect of him. On the next page he made further ‘casual’ entries for “Yen To go or to walk”.



He must soon have considered his initial approach inadequately systematic or indeed tidy, for the evidence suggests he abandoned this beginning and, by turning the notebook over, started afresh and more meticulously at the other end, at what is now regarded as page 1 of the verbs notebook, Notebook (a).

Beginning again, he laid out a table on the new first page (necessarily a right-hand page) for “Naa To see or look”, in the manner of his Latin and French studies.

Instead of the more or less random entries of his first attempt at the other end of the book, the table made provision for tenses and moods. He set out English entries in the *present* tense for “I see or look”, “Thou &c”, “He”, “We”, “Ye” and “They”, likewise for the *past* tense, for “I did see or have seen”, and again “Thou &c”, “He”, “We”, “Ye” and “They” for this tense, and so again for the *future*. He allowed for the “Imperative” mood at the foot of the page.

| | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| Naa | To see or look |
| Ngia Ni (as night) | I see or look |
| | Thou &c. |
| | He |
| | We |
| | Ye |
| | They |
| | Past |
| Nadiow. | I did see or have seen |
| N. diemi. | Thou &c. |
| Nadioga. | He |
| Nadiogun. | We |
| | Ye |
| | They |
| | Future |
| Nabawu | I shall or will see |
| Nabani | Thou |
| | He |
| Nabingoon | We |
| | Ye |
| | They |
| | Imperative |
| Goald | See thou |

a:1 Original “Naa—To see or look” page

Alongside these English entries he filled in such of the locally spoken words he knew already. Thus he placed “Ngia Ni (as nigh)” alongside “I see or look”, being the only entry he knew for this verb in the present, and went on to add then—or more likely later as he heard and understood them—the appropriate

He headed the blank right-hand page of the double spread for “Naa”: “Other inflexions of the same verb, the english of which is not yet certain” and later squeezed in: “with some authorities for what is marked certain &c”. On these ‘Other inflexions’ right-hand pages throughout the notebook he inserted phrases and usages for the verb being dealt with, although decreasingly so as the notebook progressed, perhaps because he found he was entering them in the other notebook, Notebook (b). Some of the initial entries for “Naa”, because he was still a beginner in learning the language, were soon crossed out and amended when he learnt more.

The ‘authorities’ Dawes mentions appear to be dots placed at each end of certain entries on these and later pages. Sometimes the dots occur singly, placed before and after a Biyal-Biyal entry (about 44 instances), sometimes as double dots, formed as a colon ‘:’, again before and after an entry (about 42 instances). There are examples on pages a:1 and a:2 illustrated above. Sometimes, though less often, the dots are attached to the English translation. While Dawes did not define the significance of these markings, they do seem to be his “authorities for what is marked certain”. *Double* dots, or ‘doubtful colons’, appear to have been used when he was less certain, while his use of *single* dots seems to be associated with examples whose validity today does not appear to call for questioning, and so might have been intended to indicate Dawes’ confidence in the accuracy of an item, i.e. “marked certain”, or at least that he entertained less doubt about it. No other device or explanation has been found for his ‘authorities’ statement. The question of the reliability of entries in the notebooks, raised here by Dawes, is taken up again at the end of this chapter (see §3.7).

This decision to introduce his new layout scheme must have been made some days after Dawes had acquired knowledge of words beyond “naa” and “yen”, for, using a pen, he appears to have put down all at once over several pages all he knew about verbs. The verbs were:

| | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| <i>Naa</i> | To see or look |
| <i>Yen</i> | To go or walk |
| <i>Bogee</i> | To bathe or swim |
| <i>Boobánga</i> | To cover |
| <i>Yeenee</i> | To fall |
| <i>Ngalawáú</i> | To sit |
| <i>Nanga</i> | To sleep |
| <i>Banga</i> | To paddle or row |

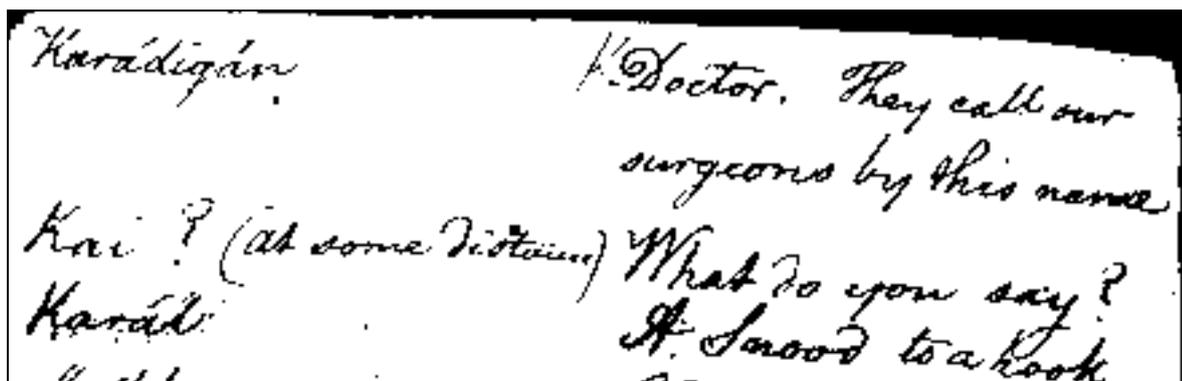
Later in the notebook, differences in the ink and presentation suggest that certain of the verbs might not have been put down at the outset but added when Dawes had identified them. The examples in Notebook (a) continue with:

| | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>Wida</i> | To drink | |
| <i>Pata</i> | To eat | |
| <i>Taabánga</i> | To yawn | |
| <i>Kótbara</i> | To cut | |
| <i>Wéllama</i> | To return or come back | |
| <i>Iri</i> | To throw | without pattern for tenses |
| <i>Búnga</i> | To make | |
| <i>Yárrsba</i> | To weary oneself | without pattern for future tense |
| <i>Wingara</i> | To think | |
| <i>Yánga</i> | | without pattern for tenses |
| <i>Ngara</i> | To hear | without pattern for future tense |
| <i>Maan</i> | To take | |
| <i>Píyi</i> | To beat | without pattern for tenses |

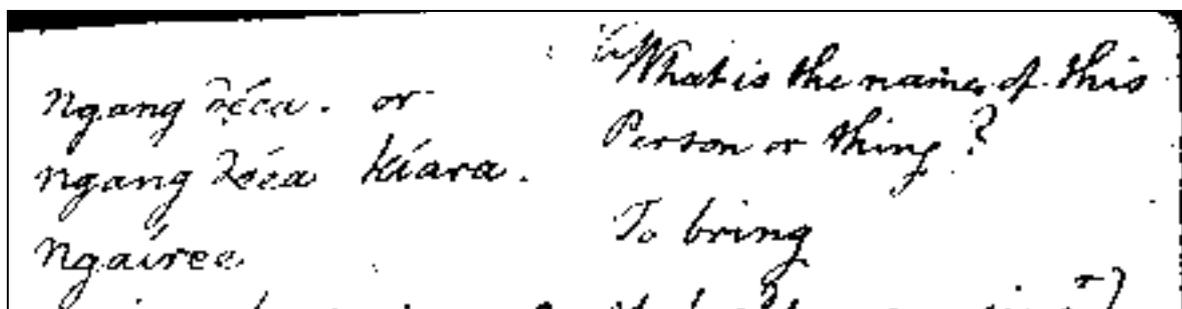
The ‘Píyi’ double spread concludes Notebook (a), apart from the upside-down entries, at the bottom (Yen) and occupying the page following (Naa), as described above.

3.4.2 Nouns: Notebook (b)

Having prepared one notebook for verbs, Dawes drew up a second notebook for nouns. He set up Notebook (b) using pencil, with a different letter of the alphabet to head each page. The 'K' and 'N' pages provide examples of this heading scheme.



b:11: Top of the 'K' page, on which are entered Biyal-Biyal words beginning with 'k'.



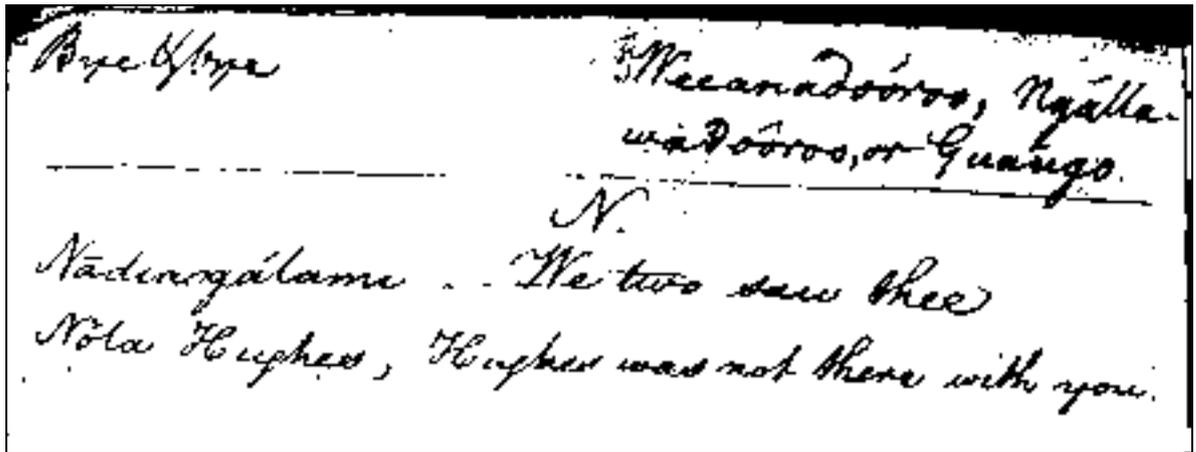
b:14: Top of the 'N' page, on which are entered Biyal-Biyal words beginning with 'n'.

The pencil 'N' at the top can just be made out.

Dawes marked out a page for each of the letters for which he expected he might find appropriate Biyal-Biyal words, alongside of which to place their English meanings. To letters expected to be less used ('J', 'Q', 'X' and 'Z'), he allocated half a page.

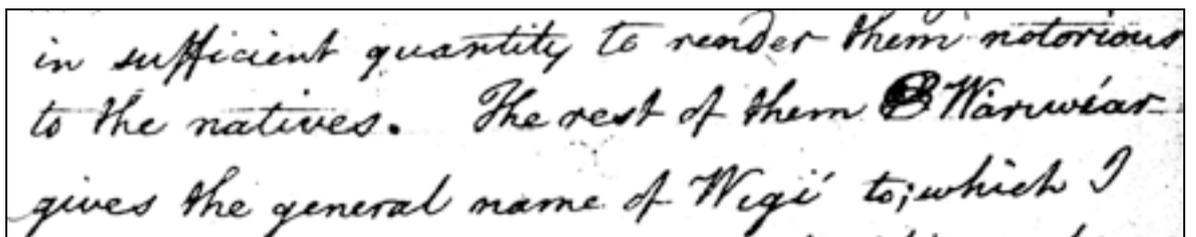
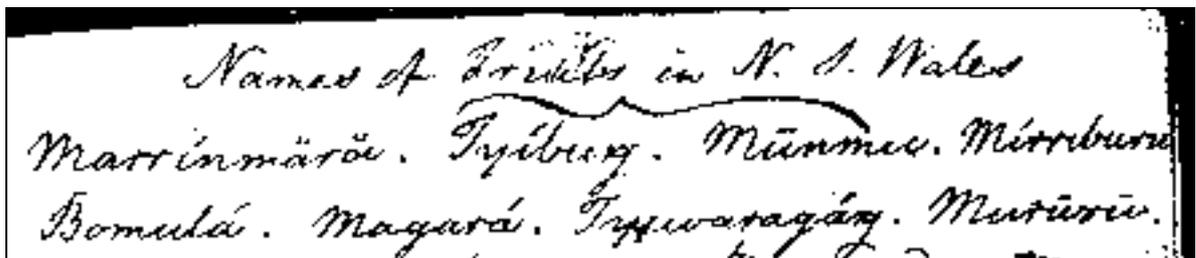
Having completed one 'A-Z' set, on the next page Dawes began a second alphabetical set. For, just as any foreign language dictionary requires sections for English – <language> and <language> – English, Dawes also made

provision for listing words alphabetically by their English initial letter. The 'B' page in this English–Biyal-Biyal sequence is illustrated.



b:25: the 'B' page, in the second alphabetical sequence, was intended to feature English words beginning with 'b'. The pencil 'B' at the top can be seen. Below, Dawes has initiated a Biyal-Biyal 'N' page, because the previous 'N' page had taken overflow from its preceding 'M' page.

Pages were headed with each potentially useful letter of the alphabet, with expected rarities again assigned half the space. Below are illustrated the top of the 'W' page, as well as its middle portion, where the letter 'X' can just be made out under the word 'rest'.



b:40: above, top of the 'W' page; below, the middle portion, where the 'X' can be discerned. No English words having been recorded for either 'w' or 'x', Dawes abandoned his original alphabetical-by-English-word plan, and used the page for general language purposes.

Dawes was soon to discover that his intended scheme did not work or was not helpful. The only entry he made for the English 'A' page was "Anger"; for 'B',

“Bye & bye”; and for ‘L’, “Lose (verb)”. For most of the pages he had provided for ‘English’ he made no ‘English’ entries at all, and re-allocated the pages to other uses. The table shows the final result.

T3.1 NOTEBOOK (b): NOUNS: BIYAL-BIYAL–ENGLISH ALPHA SEQUENCE, AND ACTUAL USAGE

| Page | Letter | ‘Letter’ usage | Re-allocated usage |
|----------------------|--------|-------------------------------|--|
| IFC ⁸ b:1 | | | pronunciation and transcription key |
| b:2 | A | nil | “The four winds”; Barangaroo etc. |
| b:3 | B | full page of ‘b’ words | |
| b:4 | C | nil | ‘b’ words continued |
| b:5 | D | full page of ‘d’ words | |
| b:6 | E | 3 ‘e’ words | ‘b’ words continued |
| b:7 | F | nil | “Question from me to Patyegaráng ...” |
| b:8 | G | 3/4 page of ‘g’ words | |
| b:9 | H | nil | relationships: Burung and others |
| b:10 top | I | nil | 2 verb entries: ‘Dturali’ and ‘Ilíri’ |
| b:10 bottom | J | nil | |
| b:11 | K | full page of ‘k’ words | |
| b:12 | L | nil | ‘k’ words continued |
| b:13 | M | full page of ‘m’ words | |
| b:14 | N | full page of ‘ng’ & ‘n’ words | |
| b:15 | O | nil | 1 ‘k’ expression; ‘ng’ & ‘n’ words continued |
| b:16 | P | full page of ‘p’ words | |
| b:17 top | Q | nil | ‘m’ words continued |
| b:17 bottom | R | nil | ‘m’ words continued |
| b:18 | S | nil | ‘m’ words continued |
| b:19 | T | full page of ‘t’ words | |
| b:20 | U | nil | “Degrees of Relationship”; ‘t’ words continued |
| b:21 | V | nil | “Nouns” [1]; ‘w’ words & expressions continued |
| b:22 | W & X | full page of ‘w’ words | |
| b:23 | Y & Z | full page of ‘y’ words | |

⁸ IFC: Inside front cover.

T3.2 NOTEBOOK (b): NOUNS: ENGLISH–BIYAL-BIYAL ALPHA SEQUENCE, AND ACTUAL USAGE

| Page | Letter | 'Letter' usage | Actual Biyal-Biyal usage |
|------------------|--------|--------------------------|---|
| b:24 | A | 1 English 'a' word | 'w' words continued; also 't' words |
| b:25 | B | 1 English 'b' word | 'n' words continued [2] |
| b:26 | C | nil | 'ng' words continued; then mixed expressions |
| b:27 | D | nil | 'ng' words continued [5] |
| — | E | nil | unidentified map |
| b:28 | F | nil | conversation (mostly with Badyigarang) |
| b:29 | G | nil | conversation (mostly with Gunangulyi) |
| b:30 | H | nil | "A Song of New South Wales"; 'y' expression [1] |
| b:31 | I & J | nil | conversation and mixed expressions |
| b:32 | K | nil | mixed expressions, and conversation (mostly with Badyigarang) |
| b:33 | L | 1 English 'l' word | conversation (mostly with Badyigarang) and mixed expressions |
| b:34 | M | nil | conversation (mostly with Badyigarang) |
| b:35 | N | nil | conversation (mostly with Badyigarang) and mixed expressions |
| | OPQR | nil | pages blank |
| b:36 | S | 1 English 's' expression | "Names &c. of persons dead of the dysentery" |
| b:37 | T | nil | mixed expressions [3 only] |
| b:38 | U | nil | "Parts of the human Body" |
| b:39 | V | nil | "Burubirângál, Coasters"; "Colours" |
| b:40 | W & X | nil | "Names of Fruits in N.S. Wales" |
| b:41 | Y & Z | nil | "Gwíagals", "Gwíagaliá'ngs" |
| IBC ⁹ | | | Harbour placenames |

⁹ IBC: Inside back cover.

3.5 Language acquisition

3.5.1 *Dawes' gradual learning and its significance*

Notebook (a) was begun when Dawes had begun to perceive the rudiments of structure, knowing just a few words of vocabulary. He continued to compile the notebooks up to the end of his period of duty in the colony, by which time it appears that he may have been able to conduct a basic conversation. Perhaps his level of fluency was not great, if the opinion of Judge-Advocate David Collins may be relied upon, writing in January 1791 about halfway through Dawes' language learning:

It was also unfortunately found, that our knowledge of their language consisted at this time of only a few terms for such things as, being visible, could not well be mistaken; but no one had yet attained words enough to convey an idea in connected terms (Collins 1975 [1798]:122).

That was, however, eleven months before Dawes left forever on the *Gorgon*, on 18 December 1791, and he might subsequently have acquired much language skill.

From sentences included in the notebooks reflecting conversational exchanges with his informants, it is reasonable to suppose that while Dawes might have attained basic fluency by the time he left, such competence did not apply when he began the compilation of the notebooks. On several occasions in the early pages he is seen to be grappling with basic concepts.

3.5.2 *Purpose in establishing the sequence in compilation*

The aim in attempting to throw light on the sequence in which the notebooks were compiled is to develop criteria for judging the level of authority to attach to Dawes' assessments and interpretations at the different stages of the notebooks' compiling. Another aim is to interpret Dawes' diacritical marking.

The Dawes notebooks reflect gradual language learning and increasing knowledge, a process that may be illustrated by the following example. On page a:17, against the entry “Bangadarabában”, Dawes wrote: “3rd person singular or plural future tense” (of the verb ‘to row’), and went on to explain:

Speaking of Boorooong. We think it relates to bringing Boorooong to Dara. In which case it appears that they, put words sometimes between the root and the termination (a:17:10).

Other inflexions &c.

Bangabánye - - - { I think a future of
Bangadára or
Bangadára

Bangadarában } 3rd Person sing. or plur.
future tense

Bangadarábaie (1 s.) } Speaking of Boorooong. We
Bangadarábami (2 s.) } think it relates to bringing
Bangadarábangoon (1 p.) } Boorooong to Dara, in
Bangadarábanié (2 p.) } which case it appears that
Bangadarábaban (3 s.) } they, put words some-
Bangadarábaie (3 p.) } times between the root
and the termination

They were not speaking of Dara, for since, I have heard them repeat dara in the same word when I think they could not refer to that place. It seems to me to be peculiarly used when it is spoken as of rowing to a certain place to bring another back with you. But this is mere conjecture

a:17 Dawes identifies the derivational suffix dara, and its purposive function

Some time later in the light of new understanding, he added below this:

They were not speaking of Dara, for since, I have heard them repeat dara in the same word when I think they could not refer to that place. It seems to me to be peculiarly used when it is spoken as of rowing to a certain place to bring another back with you. But this is mere conjecture (a:17:11).

Dara was the placename for where he had established his observatory, now known as Dawes Point.

As the notebooks reflect a gradually increasing level of knowledge, so the degree of reliance placed on data contained in them should vary accordingly. Logically, given that Dawes was striving, without guidance, to understand a wholly unfamiliar language, some of his interpretations might have been, and indeed were, wrong, as shown below (§3.7). The same applies more strongly to interpretations given by other contemporary and later wordlist compilers, less accomplished and assiduous than Dawes.

In order to be in a position to make some assessment of the soundness of an interpretation of a word, expression or sentence provided by Dawes, it is useful to have an idea of at which stage of his language learning an entry was created. It is also helpful to see how much corroboration of meanings given by Dawes can be found in other wordlists.

3.6 Chronology

3.6.1 *Beginning the notebooks*

When did Dawes begin the notebooks? Here are some milestones:

30 Dec. 1788 Capture of the first native, Arabanoo, for language learning;

April 1789 Nanbarree and Booroong, smallpox orphans, taken into the settlement;

18 May 1789 Death of Arabanoo from smallpox;

25 Nov. 1789 Capture of the second and third natives, Bennelong and Kolbi;

12 Dec. 1789 Kolbi escapes: language learning proceeds with Bennelong:

One of these natives made his escape presently afterwards, but the other grew reconciled to his situation, and lives with the governor: he is a very intelligent man, and much information may, no doubt, be procured from him when he can be well understood. Mr Collins, the judge-advocate, is very assiduous in learning the language, in which he has made a great progress (King 1968 [1793]:269).

3 May 1790 Bennelong escapes.

3 June 1790 Arrival of Second Fleet (Fraser 1983:74).

17 June 1790 Natives seldom near settlement:

Setting fire to the corn I most feared, but which they never have attempted; and as these avoid those places we frequent, it is seldom that any of them are now seen near the settlement (Phillip 1790:216).

26 Jul. 1790 Natives still seldom near settlement:

The natives continue to shun us. I have not yet seen one, except a boy and girl we have in the colony, who begin to speak our language, and have no wish to leave us. It must be admitted there are now great obstacles to our establishing an intercourse with them; but were we uniform in our plans, and earnest in our wishes to accomplish it, 'tis very practicable (Captain William Hill letter quoted in Copley 1963:254-5).

12 Nov. 1790 Natives in settlement:

With the natives we are hand and glove. They throng the camp every day, and sometimes by their clamour and importunity for bread and meat (of which they now all eat greedily) are become very troublesome. God knows, we have little enough for ourselves! (Tench 1979 [1789, 1793]:192)

15 Nov. 1790 Earliest fully dated entry in Dawes' notebooks (a:9:3).

While Dawes might have begun to develop an interest in learning the local language on hearing the first cries of ‘Wara, wara!’ (Go away!) in early 1788, it is unlikely that he would have been able to do much about it for over a year and a half. He needed to make contact with the indigenous people, and to hear them talk, in order to collect his linguistic examples. That he did make sustained and repeated contact is evident throughout the notebooks. Dawes recorded his access to local informants as early as the first descriptive page (a:3) when he referred to Yirinibi, Booroong’s brother, a native other than a camp resident. The earliest dates cited by Dawes are in mid- to late-November 1790, and as Tench had said that the people had begun to visit the settlement frequently that month, it might conservatively be suggested that Dawes set up his notebooks and made his first entries sometime around 1 November 1790.

3.6.2 Determining the sequence of compilation of the notebooks

3.6.2.1 Dates cited

The most obvious indication of the sequencing of the Dawes notebooks is the date references incorporated in them by Dawes, of which there are several, as the following table shows:

T3.3 DATES CITED IN THE NOTEBOOKS

| Original record | Source |
|--|-------------------------|
| Yenma kaoui... Said by Booroong on ¹⁰ 1790 to Kooróda | a:5:11 |
| 19th November 1790 Booroong and Nanbarri talking together ... | a:7:02 |
| Nanbarri to Booroong 25 Nov. 1790 Bógiliebaou | a:7:4 |
| This Baludérri said to me on the 15th Nov. 1790 ... | a:9:3 |
| which Booroong and Nanbárree were playing with on the 19th Nov. 1790 ... | a:9:5 |
| This was said by Benelong on the 23rd Nov. 1790 ...: | a:19:2 |
| This was said by Benelong a little before dinner on 23rd Nov. 1790. | a:21:3 |
| N.B. This was said to me by Kolby 21st Dec. 1790. | a:21:11 |
| 23rd August [1791] | b:2:5.1 |
| This I got very particularly from Badyegarú ng 19th Sept 1791 ... | b:21:11.2 ¹¹ |
| * About the middle of September 1791 I was telling Patyegarú ng that Wú'rrgan was a great thief ... ¹² | b:21:11.3 |
| This was said to me by Patyegarú ng after the departure of some strangers, before whom I could scarce prevail on her to read. 25th Sept. 1791 | b:26:8.3 |
| This, to me by ... Tarabil ang when going towards B. Bay with him, Kolbi & Beriwa'ni, 13th Nov. 1791 | b:26:15.2 |
| The difference of speaking of we two and we three as above expressed was obtained 27 Nov. [1791] ... | b:34:8.2 |

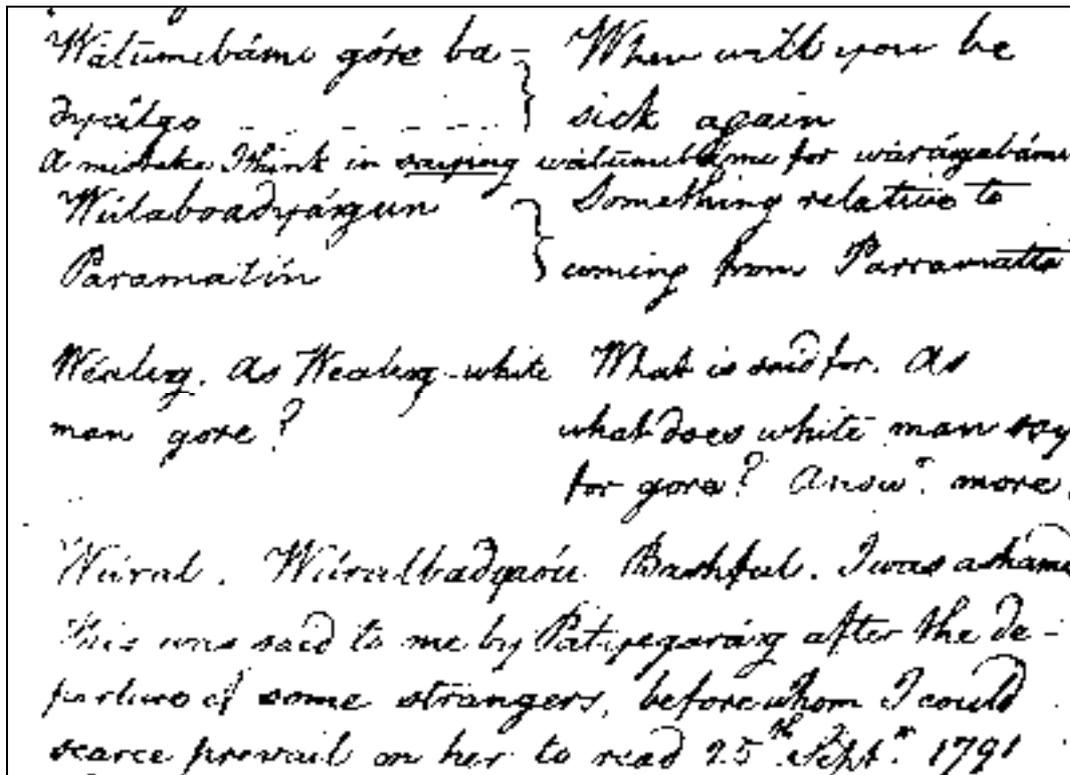
¹⁰ Date missing in notebook.

¹¹ The final element '.2' in the numbering system indicates that the 'line' entry consists of more than one element; in the present case "Putuwidyánga wiangáta putuwi" "My mother scorched my fingers (that I should not steal)" is numbered (b:21:11.1) and "This I got very particularly from Badyegarú**ng** 19th Sept 1791. See 3rd page forward.*" is numbered (b:21:11.2).

¹² Dawes' asterisk in this entry relates to his asterisk in (b:21:11.2). The entry on the "3rd page forward" has been brought to the relevant place in the database and numbered accordingly, as (b:21:11.3).

3.6.2.2 Dating by inference

When an entry appears on a page including a date specified by Dawes, it may be assumed that entries (other than interpolations, as in line 3 in the example below) higher up the page than the date cited were made at the same time or earlier, and those lower down, at the same time or later. It is possible at times to determine that an entry has been squeezed in later, above or between words or lines, or added at the top of a page.



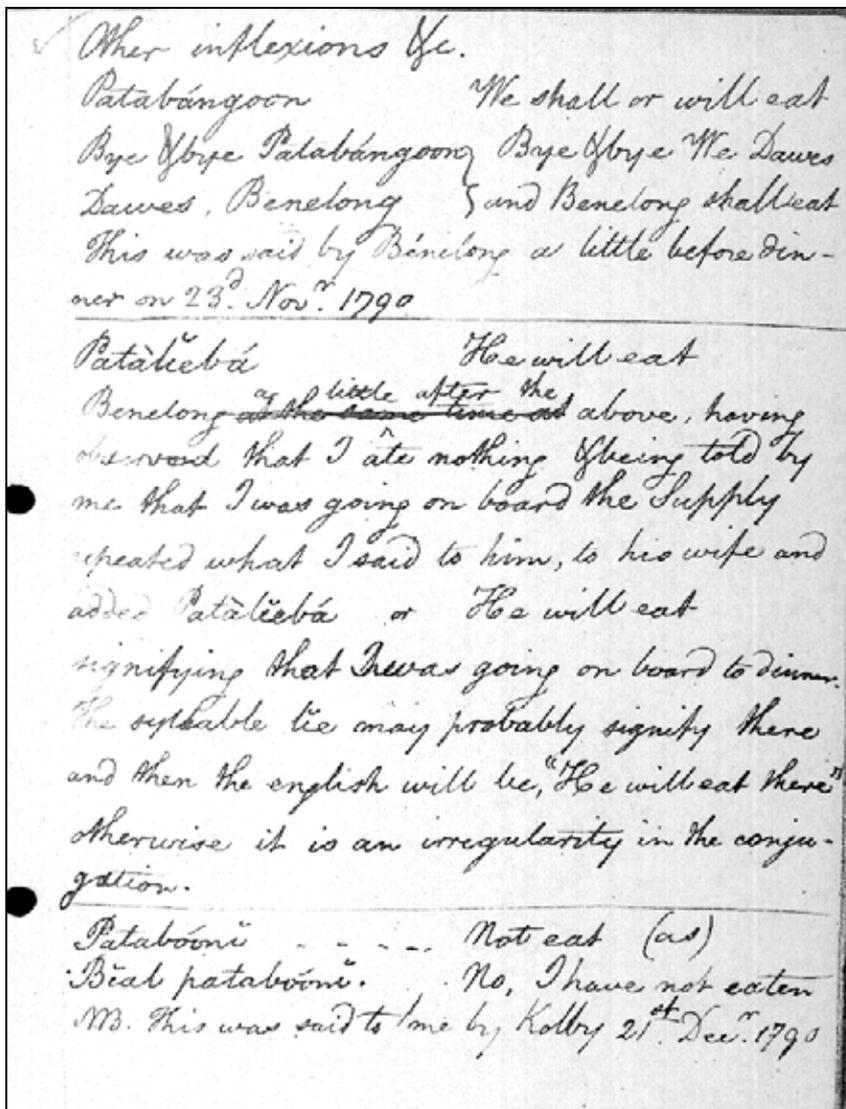
b:26 The date on the bottom line in this extract suggests everything above it was written on that date or before, except for the obviously interpolated third line, beginning "A mistake ...".

This example also shows the use of diacritics, whose significance is as follows. In the first word: a-dot (the sound of English 'or'); u-overline (probably English 'oo', with extended length); a-acute (á: the acute is a stress marker); i-no-dot (as in English 'it'). On the next line: u-dot (as in English 'but'). Line 5, Paramatín: i-dot (as in English 'white'). For more detail see §6.2 and §6.3.1.

For the most part the dating follows the same order as the page sequence; that is, dates for, say, November appear later in the book than dates for September. The clearest instance of non-sequential entry is the pronunciation key at page b:1, which incorporates styles that were not employed when the notebook was begun. Examination of the notebook itself revealed that this was entered not

on page 1 but on the inside front cover. Matter written on an inside front cover of anything is often an afterthought—otherwise why not write it on page 1?

Further evidence of non-sequential entry is apparent in table T3.3, where a:7:4 (quoting ‘25 Nov. 1790’), can be seen to have been written *after* the later page a:9:3 (quoting ‘15th Nov. 1790’). This confirms that Dawes added entries not wholly sequentially, instead sometimes placing them where appropriate in the layout scheme he had devised for the notebooks.



a.21 The first of two dates occurs on line 6, and the second on the last line.

The page illustrates:

—later addition of an entry, and separation from the previous matter using a line;

—‘certain’ dots before and after an entry (penultimate line);

—a tick by an unknown hand (top line);

—“The syllable *iebá*”, probably a continuative in this instance, is discussed below (see §8.3.2).

Thus, on hearing new forms or usages of, say, the verb 'to eat', Dawes entered them on the 'Other inflexions &c' page for that verb, page a:21, at the next available space, commonly drawing a line across the page to separate the new entry from the last. Dates show the passage of time over about a month.

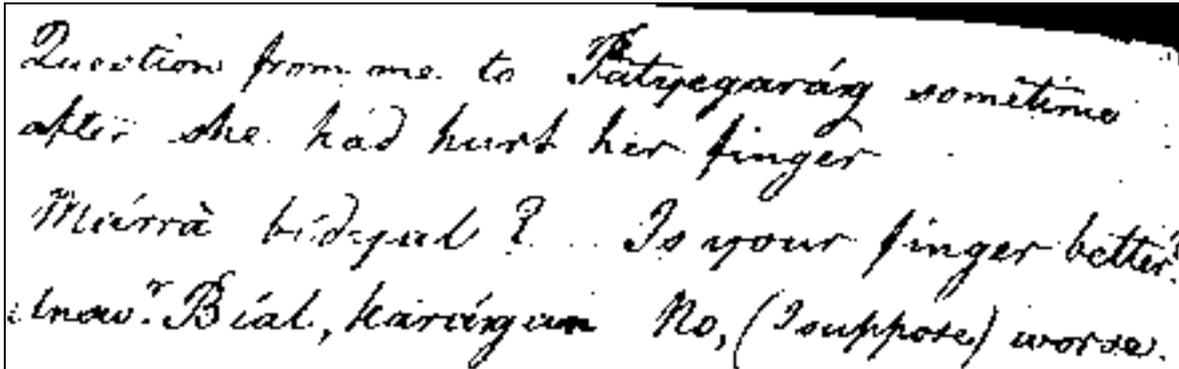
3.6.2.3 Other dating indicators

Other ways to identify sequencing include:

- Dawes' application of his own pronunciation key on the inside front cover of Notebook (b). (This key will be dealt with in §6.3.)
- Blackburn duplicates: the master of the *Supply*, David Blackburn, copied Dawes material in a letter dated 17 March 1791, from which it can be deduced that all Dawes' entries on a page occurring after a 'Blackburn' copied item were made after that date. There are over 130 exact or close 'Blackburn' matches (see §6.1.3).
- cross correspondence: Dawes occasionally entered the same basic information in more than one place. There are three 'breakfast' sentences: if they did not relate to the same event, it is possible they related to a period. The same applies to people, the following featuring in the notebooks, with the number of occasions shown: Ngalgiya [7], Dagiya [2], Biriwan [3], Punda and/or Pundul [8]. It is likely their appearances and mentions occurred over brief periods, unlike Badyigarang with many appearances and to a lesser extent Gunangulyi and Wariwiya. This process is akin a geologist's dating of rocks by fossil content, where fossils of organisms that flourished briefly were more useful for pinpointing a period in time than those that persisted over extended eras.

3.7 Reliability of the notebooks

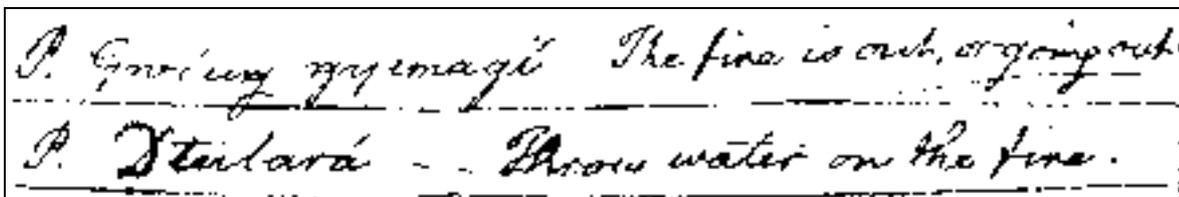
While Dawes is the primary authority for knowledge of Biyal-Biyal, not everything he wrote should be taken as correct. Some examples follow.



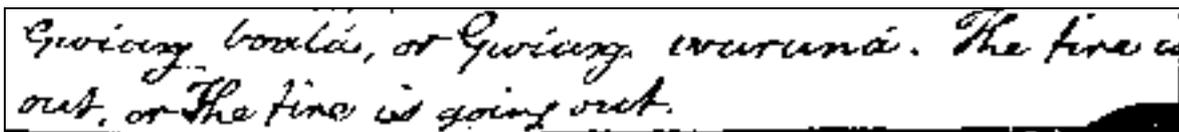
Question from me. to Patyegarang sometime
after she had hurt her finger
"Miarra bidyal? ... Is your finger better?
I know." Bial, kariguan No, (I suppose) worse.

b:7:1

In the above exchange at b:7:1, Dawes' question mara bidyal, for which he has written "Is your finger better?", actually means 'hand hurt?' Badyigarang's reply biyal, garangan does not mean "No, (I suppose) worse" but rather 'no, [it is my] fingernail [that is hurting]'



P. Gwiyang nyimagai The fire is out, or going out.
P. Dhulara - - Throws water on the fire.



Gwiyang buwa-la, or Gwiyang wuruna. The fire is out, or The fire is going out.

b:31:7-8 and b:31:13

Similarly, in these two extracts, the correct translations are:

b:31:7: gwiyang nyimagayi: 'fire pinched [i.e. put out]'—'fire (put) out';

b:31:8: dhulara: 'ash' (the same 'powdery white' word is used for 'frost', 'flour', and the suburb 'Chullora');

b:31:13: gwiyang buwa-la: 'fire, blow it!'

b:31:13: gwiyang wara nha: ‘fire, away, that [?]’ Dawes’ translation might have been correct, yet the statement has the appearance, from his stress indicator on *wuruná*, of an imperative, matching the imperative of *boalá*, ‘blow it!’ (see §8.7).

Again, “Káma” in the next example may not be ‘to dig’:



b:11:11

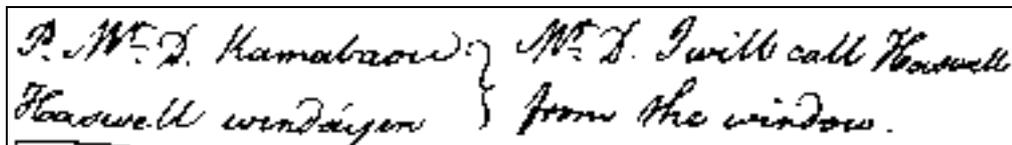
The following sources have *gama* as ‘To call’:

gama = “To call” (King in Hunter 1793:408.1:5);

gama-wu = “Shall I, or must I call” (c:14:2)

as does Dawes himself in b:32:9:

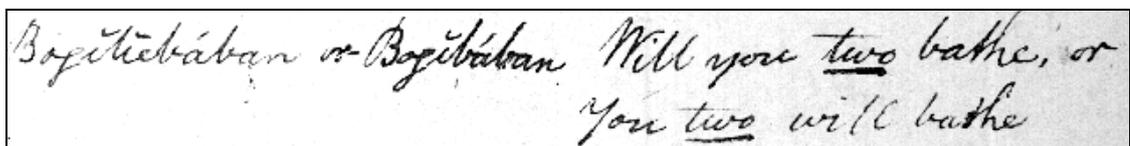
gama-ba-wu HASWELL WINDA-yin:
“I will call Haswell from the window.”



b:32:9

Nevertheless, Dawes’ use of the overline ‘macron’ in the first example suggests *gaama*, and hence a word possibly distinct from *gama* = ‘to call’.

There is doubt, too, over Dawes’ explanations of the suffix *-ban*, the status of which remains unresolved. He translated it variously as ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘you-two’ and ‘they’, two of the examples being illustrated:



a:7:7: bugi-(lyi)-ba-ban: bathe-CONT-FUT-... [?]

and:



a:15:1: nanga-dya-ban: sleep—PAST—... [?]

The suffix -ban is considered more fully in §7.1.4.

The question of the degree of reliance to be placed on Dawes' entries according to when they were made is dealt with again in Chapter 6 in discussing his systems of transcription (see §6.1–§6.3).