

Anthropologists or Linguists? Historians or Aboriginal Elders?

Summary written by Jo Martin, for Willie Brim, May 2020

<https://buluwai.org/archaeology-history/>



“Djabugay Speakers” and “Yidinji Speakers” are terms based on linguist Robert Dixon’s 1977 study and map of the Cairns area. This map was not intended to *denote*, *overwrite* or *supercede* traditional Tribal Estate boundaries as documented by previous anthropologists like Tindale and Roth; instead the map is a *linguist’s interpretation* based on Kenneth Hale’s 1970 brief Canadian linguistic study of Aboriginal language “dialects” in 1958-60 conducted with few speakers remaining at Yarrabah. Timothy Bottoms 1999 Map 2 with “Djabugay Speakers” and “Yidinji Speakers” sources Dixon’s earlier work purporting language “dialect” boundaries.

<https://buluwai.org/content/uploads/Kuranda-Region-Bama-Bulmba-Tribes.pdf> (Page 59, 65)

Bama languages are *use-base* multilingual, ie. *point-of-contact* languages for trading, women marrying into neighbouring tribes, ceremonial languages or stories that only a few Elders might understand. Aboriginal women were the original “gossips” - connecting with neighbouring tribes through multiple use-base languages, whereas men, like cassowaries the Bama totem species, stayed with their father’s land, knowledge and language.

Bama (stort-statured Rainforest Aboriginal People) neighbouring Sahul Estate’s Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu share similar use-base multilingual scenarios with distinct languages in tight resource-rich geographical boundaries. The vocabularies were/are narrow catalogues compared with modern English; these tribes the *meeek survivors* of at least 65,000 years of numerous global catastrophes and glaciations.

<https://buluwai.org/content/uploads/Kuranda-Region-Bama-Bulmba-Tribes.pdf> (Page 87-91)

A study of Tindale’s Parallel Vocabularies has been prepared and available for further clarification by linguists to correct this earlier language view:

<https://buluwai.org/content/uploads/Tindale-Parallel-Vocabularies-FNQ-Rainforest-People-Study.pdf>

Example Buluwai Parallel Vocabulary as collected by Tindale 2 September 1938 at Mona Mona mission:

https://buluwai.org/content/uploads/2019/08/ATTACHMENT-E-aa338-8-20_Buluwai.pdf

Timothy Bottoms 1989 map “Guluy” and “Nygali” were added to Tindale’s base map at the request of Michael Quinn (purpose: to enrich map data, but instead conflates primary source anthropologist maps with maps drawn much later by others). These names were not recorded by Tindale as Aboriginal Tribes or Languages. Nygali is known orally in Kuranda by Willie Brim [and older people] as a fishing place on the north banks of the Barron River, and may be the name recalled for a clan/family group at that location prior to the *killing times*. Guluy may be similarly added as additional detail and has been recorded in various different locations in later Cairns region maps by various mapmakers.

<https://buluwai.org/content/uploads/Kuranda-Region-Bama-Bulmba-Tribes.pdf> (Page 43, 55, 63, 72 ,100)

—

As the history of human development and migrations across the Earth continue to be constantly updated, only decades ago “10,000 years out of Africa” were the earliest recorded origins. Now Australia’s First Nations Peoples and other global archaeological sites are pushing this date much further back into deep history, putting human habitation on the Australian continent to at least 65,000 years ago.

The Aboriginal Heritage Project (SA Museum/University of Adelaide) underway since 2015 has secured funding to work on all 4,400 hair samples collected by Tindale and Birdsell during their early expeditions (with family consent). Professor Cooper explains in the video below the “picture” of Aboriginal Australia the DNA offers is a unique account of relatively fixed and stable tribal settlements for over 50,000 years.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQvOW8qCL-g>

Willie Brim says his ancestors were here in remnant Queensland Gondwana forests for a lot longer. At least one story remains of catastrophic sea level rise during the holocene, passed orally down the generations, the period when Australia's northern landbridge with Sahul Estate was inundated. Willie himself has *Homo erectus* skull features that cannot be ignored and shares short-stature with his Mona Mona Descendants grouping contemporaries. Remnant human pygmy populations are found all around the world in isolated pockets of rainforests, often 'Sky Islands' with higher altitudes, with wetter and warmer conditions. The last recorded *H erectus* is on the island of Java, Indonesia – close proximity to North Queensland.

Birdsell presented the Trihybrid Model for human migration into Australia and his early map depicts the 'Barrinean' type in Far North Queensland, Sunshine Coast hinterland, Snowy River mountains, Tasmania and Perth. In other work Birdsell coins 'Tasmanoid' for the similarly different physical characteristics he saw in Tasmania. Birdsell's work was dismissed in the 1980-90's as bunkum and scholars of the time determined the only acceptable narrative is a single human migration onto the Australian continent. The Aboriginal Heritage Project using Tindale's Aboriginal hair sample collection will settle some of the mystery around the patterns of migration once the DNA work is completed in the coming years.

<https://buluwai.org/content/uploads/Did-Homo-erectus-make-it-to-Australia.pdf>

The Barron Falls Walking Trail project locally between Kuranda and Barron Falls may offer the opportunity to date a Bama fireplace if found along the trail alignment disturbances using thermal luminescence dating technology. The oldest known fireplace found globally so far is 300,000 years old. Willie Brim says the fireplaces here in Bama country will be much older and is keen to find a site for further archaeological work to describe the culture of his ancestors and their tenure.

<https://buluwai.org/content/uploads/2019/09/BULUWAI-CULTURAL-HERITAGE-REPORT-Barron-Falls-Walking-Trail-September-2019-SECTION-2-Archaeology.pdf>

--

If Willie Brim is right about his ancestor's version of history, the unfolding story of the *oldest continuous culture on Earth* will continue in the coming decades. For at least 65,000 years of global civilisations rising and falling across the planet, as climate change and catastrophes wreaked havoc across antiquity, Aboriginal DNA held fast, confined to locales where the food sources were intimately understood. Today we might call these "micro-climates", each unique location its own set of *native* peoples and tribal lores, bound by the humans that understood how to manage, manicure and care for the land and water resources, to live in harmony with their neighbours, for future generations to pass on *stories of the dreamtime*.

This year marks the 250 year anniversary of the Endeavour Voyage sent by the British Empire to survey the east coast of Australia; a reconnaissance mission of sorts. Aboriginal people had remained undisturbed by major invasions for longer than any other known human culture to date. Tribes along every coastline of Australia defended their homelands as seafaring civilisations explored the island continent over millennia. Some visitors came to trade resources and left in peace, others may have come shipwrecked, or others with discontent and malevolence, but Australia's First Nations held their DNA in place.

Lieutenant James Cook surveyed the east coast of Australia then 18 years later Governor Arthur Phillip led the charge to enact the Empire's formulated plan to take the continent. Weapons were refined and mass manufactured for the conflict. Ships were built to carry soldiers on a one-way journey to fight for their lives. The rank and file warriors sent were the poorest and most desperate British souls, those already fallen foul of the Empire, destined to a life of poverty, slavery and incarceration, their own stolen generation of sorts. Surviving the long ship journey the troops arrived into the Frontier [Land] Wars, or *killing times*, that would take the next 150 years, generations of frontline trauma for all peoples, and generations of British "management" until today.

<https://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/endeavour-voyage>