INTRODUCTION
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The present volume aims to make a contribution to codifying the methods and practices historical linguists use to recover linguistic history. We highlight the theoretical basis of processes of change and linguistic reconstruction, focussing predominantly on historical morphology.

Although there is a considerable body of literature dealing with these issues, it is difficult to find a single source whose findings are broadly cross-linguistic. The focus within historical linguistics is usually on Indo-European languages and this is understandable since it reflects the history of the field and the fact that its development has largely taken place within this language family. Nevertheless, Indo-European provides a very specific set of circumstances, as does any single language family, and while the theoretical and methodological issues encountered within these languages are highly relevant to historical and comparative research carried out in other parts of the world, work outside of Indo-European has also revealed different kinds of issues that need to be addressed. It is for this reason that the present volume includes papers on a wide range of language families: not only Indo-European, but also Austronesian, Sinitic, Mon-Khmer, Basque, and one Papuan language family, as well as a number of Australian language families. The volume is divided into three parts – genetic relatedness, reconstruction and processes of change. In the sections that follow we provide a brief discussion of each of these themes and the relevant papers.

The subject matter of this volume has been the life work of Harold Koch (see section 4 of this introduction for an account of Harold’s career by Grace Koch). We would like to honour the invaluable contribution that he has made to the discipline, both as a scholar and as a teacher, by dedicating this collection of papers to him.

1. Genetic Relatedness

Most of the papers in this part of the book deal with Australian languages. This is not surprising since genetic relationships of languages in this region have often proven to be difficult to recover. Establishing regular sound correspondences has not always been possible due to paucity of data, inaccurate transcriptions, absence of adequately diagnostic sound changes, or conflicting correspondence sets due to borrowing. As will be seen in the papers that follow, Australianists often rely heavily on morphological similarities in making a genetic argument. The use of morphology as primary evidence in a genetic argument relies on the assumption that whenever the combination of similar morphemes with a shared paradigmatic organisation is observed, it is better explained in terms of historical connection than chance (see Evans 2003 amongst others), and that borrowing is also unlikely as morphological patterns.
— especially suppletive patterns — are supposedly resistant to borrowing (see Meillet 1925).

ALPER, O’GRADY and BOWERN discuss evidence for the genetic classification of the Western Torres Strait language. They show that despite radical innovations in phonology, there is considerable evidence for its inclusion in the Pama-Nyungan language family. However, not all aspects of a language’s morphological system will be indicative of genetic relationships and M. DONOHUE’s paper discusses this very point with regard to West Papuan languages, demonstrating that in his case study bound pronominal elements are the most reliable indicators of genetic relationships. SHARPE discusses the implications of different levels of cognacy between lexicon, verb morphology and other morphology. She points out the problems for establishing the relationship of Alawa, Mara and Warndarang, despite a considerable degree of shared vocabulary and nominal morphology. SIMPSON investigates the genetic position of Warumungu by providing an internal reconstruction of its pronominal system that is then compared to that of neighbouring languages. Her investigation proves to be inconclusive, though she is able to identify the elements in the system that are most likely to be archaic. AUSTIN uses evidence from verb morphology and philology to investigate the possible closest relatives for Pinikura, a sparsely attested language of the Pilbara region in Western Australia.

Still on the topic of morphological similarities, in Part II of the book, MICELI discusses the validity of genetic arguments based solely on this type of evidence.

2. Reconstruction

A major part of investigating linguistic prehistory is reconstruction, namely hypotheses regarding the non-attested antecedent states of a language or group of languages. There is considerable variation in the ways in which reconstruction is viewed by historical linguists, in terms of both its role within the investigation of linguistic prehistory and the methods with which it is achieved.

For many scholars reconstruction is an integral part of the Comparative Method; the logical next step after establishing sound correspondences and cognate sets (Durie & Ross 1996, Nichols 1996, Rankin 2003). As such reconstruction is closely linked with demonstrating genetic relatedness, and can be used to strengthen the evidence supporting relationships already established. For example, MCGREGOR examines the Worrarran languages of northern Australia, showing how the reconstruction of both the forms and categories of noun classes further supports the family-status of this group of languages. McGregor’s reconstruction of the semantic restructuring of noun classes also highlights the need for methods of reconstruction that account for aspects of linguistic structure other than those which fall within the domain of the Comparative Method. The Comparative Method, strictly speaking, is limited to the lexico-phonological domain. It is a method that demonstrates cognacy amongst linguistic elements that are similar in terms of both form and meaning, where this pairing is arbitrary (Harrison 2003). Formal similarity is established through the recognition of regular sound correspondences, and reconstruction of the formal aspects of a proto-item is based on these correspondences and knowledge of sound change. The reconstruction of other aspects of linguistic prehistory requires techniques other than the Comparative Method (Harrison 2003). Methods of reconstruction used to complement the Comparative Method (or that sometimes stand in place of the Comparative Method) are rarely codified or made explicit, as highlighted by Miceli.
So what are the techniques and practices of historical linguists as they move reconstruction beyond the Comparative Method and towards “undoing” changes outside of the lexico-phonological domain? Primarily, as Koch (1996:222) describes for morphological reconstruction, reconstruction beyond the lexico-phonological domain is guided by knowledge of what constitutes plausible processes of change. In their papers, Jasanoff and Melchert demonstrate how traditional techniques of detailed etymological research can form the basis of reconstructions which also account for aspects of change other than phonological. Thus Jasanoff discusses the relationship between morphological explanations for change, morphological analysis as an input to reconstruction, and underlying phonological representations. The basis for discussion is the Ancient Greek root σβέννυμι ‘extinguish, go out’ and he provides a good example of the need to consider morphological change and paradigm uniformity in their own right, and not simply as the basket in which all the exceptions to Neogrammarian sound change are put. Melchert discusses problems with the etymology of Hittite duwān, which also touches on the role of paradigms (in this case, the reanalysis of a case-marked noun) and constructional semantic change.

In recent years, a major criticism of techniques of reconstruction is that their development within the Indo-European language family means they are not necessarily appropriate in other linguistic contexts where the basic processes of change may be different (Hale 2007:242-243). This is a challenge that has long been felt by those working with Australian languages because, as shown here by Miceli, these languages display a high degree of formal similarity between potential cognates, alongside an exceedingly low number of potentially cognate forms. Despite these problems, Harold Koch has always advocated the use of tried and tested methods of reconstruction aided by established models of language change. Thus Koch (2003), for example, demonstrates the value of an etymological basis for morphological reconstruction with case studies from the Arandic languages of central Australia. Hercus and Morey similarly use etymological techniques to investigate the history of negative forms within southeastern Australian languages, demonstrating how such methods can form the basis of hypotheses regarding the patterns of inheritance and borrowing. Black’s detailed etymological study of pronouns in Pama-Nyungan languages adds to the understanding of the origins and development of those forms considered to be one of the strongest indicators of the genetic unity of Pama-Nyungan.

Alongside such traditional methods, Harold Koch promotes the need to codify the discipline’s collective knowledge of the ways in which languages can and do change. Thus Koch (1996) not only sets out a method for reconstructing morphology, he presents it alongside a typology of morphological change which must necessarily inform any reconstruction. Such a typology forms an important basis for Sidwell’s reconstruction of Proto Mon-Khmer morphology, based on ‘bottom-up’ methods of reconstruction in order to be independent of the Austic Hypothesis, which has influenced many discussions of Mon-Khmer morphology and its history. Giacon also uses knowledge of plausible kinds of morphological change to inform his reconstruction of verb specification morphemes in Yuwaalaraay-Gamilaraay, an Australian language of New South Wales, which in this case is the basis of grammatical development in a language revival situation.

For Harvey, too, typologies of change are invaluable. He examines the verbal ‘conjugation’ markers that are widely distributed across Australian languages with potentially cognate verb stems, and demonstrates that historically the system is best considered from the perspective of closed versus open paradigms and the different kinds of change associated with them. Nash is also concerned with closed paradigms, but in this case, with the reconstruction of small versus large closed verb systems in the Ngumpin-Yapa subgroup of Pama-Nyungan. Part of Nash’s argument concerns the
evidence that reconstruction itself brings to bear on paths of change. That is, how much weight should we give to the reconstruction of changes that appear to conform to known pathways of grammaticalisation? (A similar question is the topic of Hendery 2007.)

A different facet of the contribution of reconstruction to theory is Andrew’s work on how results from historical linguistics should help us decide between competing synchronic theories of morphology. Andrews uses evidence from analogical restorative changes in the history of Greek verbal morphology to support an argument that at least some language learners (and innovators) prefer an analysis based on ‘splitting’ the verb into the smallest possible analytic units, even at the loss of a generalisable structure. C. Donohue also discusses the relationships between synchronic and diachronic explanations.

A crucial aspect of morphological reconstruction is the hypothesising on the kinds of linguistic features likely to be archaic and thus reconstructable. As Koch (1996:219) has noted, it is the synchronically irregular or anomalous features of a language that are often archaic. Such a principle has led to the hypothesis that certain specialised speech styles, which are characterised by linguistic features that are irregular in comparison to everyday speech, may thus reflect features reconstructable for the proto-language. G. Koch and Turpin challenge this from the perspective of Central Australian Aboriginal song language. Through the comparison of song language, everyday speech and Harold Koch’s Proto-Arandic reconstructions, they demonstrate that while some archaic morphological features are retained in song language, processes such as phonological alteration due to metrical requirements and the multi-dialectal nature of song means that many aspects of song language are in fact innovative.

With different techniques of reconstruction, is it that all reconstructions represent the same kind of entity? All the papers within this volume take a realist approach to reconstruction. That is, the reconstructions presented have, as Harrison (2003:240) puts it, “the status of best approximations of antecedent historical states”, rather than abstract representations of correspondences between attested language states. This is an issue taken up directly by Rose. Tonal systems are traditionally reconstructed in terms of an abstract system of contrasts on the basis of contrasts in attested languages. Using a novel method, Rose reconstructs the acoustic values of proto-tones for the Oujiang subgroup of the Wu dialects of Chinese. It is important, however, that the techniques and models of change which underlie any reconstruction are made explicit, because realist or not, it is only on this basis that their appropriateness as hypotheses for earlier systems can be judged.

3. Processes of change

Underlying any linguistic reconstruction is the assumption that certain changes have taken place in the languages’ history, and as Koch (1996) notes, reconstruction needs to be based on knowledge of plausible and possible types of change. While morphological change has traditionally been viewed as isomorphic to analogical change (Hock 2003), Koch’s (1996) typology of morphological change demonstrates the breadth of types of change that need to be considered in the histories of morphological systems. Analogy is clearly not the only process at work.

There are many claims in the literature about the universality of morphological changes and about the cross-linguistic applicability of reconstruction methods (Dressler 2003, Heine 2003, Joseph 1998, 2003). However, as already mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, it is quite rare that we find a set of studies which are truly cross-linguistic, and the aim of this book is to move beyond familiar data and clear cases.
Many of the papers in this volume explore processes of morphological change. Some, like Liddicoat and Currow's and Evans', examine in detail cases of well-established types of change such as the process of levelling within paradigms or the creation of morphological zeroes providing a greater understanding of the mechanisms and motivations of change. Other authors, like Smith, C. Donohue and McConvell, examine less well-described types of morphological change, not only providing detailed descriptions of change within particular languages, but also adding new insights to knowledge of types of morphological change. Smith uses data from the refunctionalisation of clusivity marking in Tiwi (an isolate in Australia) to argue for refining our conception of exaptation. C. Donohue looks at remapping of case marking in Basque four place predicates. McConvell's focus is on reconstruction of kinship morphology in Pama-Nyungan, and he examines ways in which inflectional and derivational affixes have been absorbed into kin-term stems.

Zhu and Schulte's papers both concern actualisation of change. Zhu discusses the processes of change which have resulted in the vowel chain-raising in the history of Chinese, while Schulte's focus is on processes of paradigm restructuring, examining the dissolution of the Latin neuter plural category in Romance, particularly in relation to the isolated Romanian plural ouă 'eggs' and its genitive ouălelor.

4. Harold Koch: scholar and teacher

As mentioned, Harold Koch has long promoted the need for rigorous and codified methods of investigating language history. Beginning his own research on Indo-European languages, and in particular on Hittite, Harold has a deep knowledge and understanding of the theoretical and methodological issues which form the basis of the discipline. It is from this perspective that he began and has continued his historical and comparative research on Australian languages, and in particular the Arandic family. Harold’s skill as a teacher is largely responsible for the recent shift within Australian historical linguistics towards more traditional methods of comparative reconstruction (see Bowern & Koch 2004). Thus, just as studies of Indo-European languages have long dominated discussions of theories of language change and methods of comparative reconstruction, so studies of Australian languages are coming to be equally important within such discussions as Australianists rigorously apply traditional methods of historical linguistics, and present data which challenges some of the traditional notions within the discipline.

Working on Australian languages Harold has become not only an historical linguist, but also a fieldworker, and in the remainder of this introduction Grace Koch writes about this side of Harold’s career.

Having been inspired by Sally Hale’s article in Simpson et al (2001), I wanted to reflect upon some aspects of Harold’s career that some linguists may not know. Like Sally, I will begin by explaining how we first came to Australia, then move on to some fieldwork experiences. I met Harold in Boston in the late 1960s. After over 5 years of learning to accept one another’s triumphs and foibles, we married in 1972. So, the observations below come from first-hand experience.
Harold received a PhD in Linguistics from Harvard in 1973, and, like many other academics, was seeking a job in his field. Harold scanned the Harvard bulletin boards as often as he could, looking for openings. What we saw then as an exotic opportunity arose with the Canberra-based Australian National University Linguistics Department headed by R.M.W. Dixon for an Indo-Europeanist who would be willing to undertake fieldwork in either Australia or the Pacific in order to document an indigenous language, and Harold applied. Both of us had seen the film, Walkabout, and assumed that if he got the job, we would be going to live in Canberra in the desert.

Bob Dixon looked favourably on Harold’s application and arranged a rather unorthodox interview in Cambridge, Massachusetts at the Wursthaus, a German restaurant in Harvard Square, to which I was also invited. Because the decision would be a joint one, I needed to know what might be available for me, a music educator and musicologist, and I was not shy in asking. Bob mentioned that the ethnomusicologist Alice Moyle needed a research assistant at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (A.I.A.S.) in Canberra to document music recordings in their sound archive. This sounded ideal, especially as Harold had been working in a shoe factory and I at Carl Fischer music publishers and retail where conditions were minimal, with no sick days and a 45-minute lunch break. After a few fits and starts, we decided to take up the challenge to move to Australia for a two-year duration. Two years has stretched into thirty-two. Harold has remained at the Australian National University and I, am still at the (renamed) Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, albeit now in another position.

Harold’s choice of Aboriginal languages to study had narrowed to Nyulnyul, Bardi or Kaytetye. He opted for the latter. In 1974, it was our understanding that he would have had to fly across Australia to Perth, hire a car and drive 2275 kilometres to Broome in order to contact the most knowledgeable Nyulnyul or Bardi speakers. Our information may not have been correct, but it caused us to go to Central Australia. Interestingly, over 20 years later, Claire Bowern chose to study Bardi and was not faced with the same transportation difficulties.

Kaytetye had several advantages. Kaytetye speakers lived within a two or three hours’ drive of either Tennant Creek or Alice Springs, both of which had a fairly direct air service from Canberra. Also, Ken Hale had encouraged Harold to consider working on Kaytetye because of its distinctive grammatical and phonological features. Finally, Harold realised that in choosing Kaytetye, the northernmost dialect of Arrernte, he might avoid the watchful and critical eye of Professor T.G.H. Strehlow, who had written extensively on Arrernte and had frightened away most linguists with an interest in that language. Strehlow had not included Kaytetye in the grammar he had written on Arrernte, so Harold felt on safe ground. Several years later Strehlow actually asked Harold to join the Strehlow Foundation.

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1 I would like to extend most heartfelt thanks to David Nash, Jane Simpson, Jacquie Lambert, and Luise Hercus for editorial comments.
2 Founded in 1978, the Strehlow Foundation was established to ensure the maintenance of Strehlow’s large collection of artefacts and documentation of Arrernte life and culture. In 2005, the Northern Territory Government passed an Act to create the Strehlow Research Centre, which contained a provision to work with Aboriginal communities to repatriate some of the objects according to their wishes.
Our first field trip was in December 1974. I was still awaiting news on the position with Alice Moyle at the A.I.A.S. so was free to go. Not wishing to spend Christmas alone in Canberra, I decided to join Harold on this great adventure. We were to fly to Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory to pick up a vehicle stationed at the North Australia Research Unit from David Daffen, their field officer, then drive to Warrabri Aboriginal Settlement about two hours’ south. The flight stopped initially at Alice Springs, where we were met with a blast of sun and heat beyond anything I had ever experienced. After a brief wait, we reboarded and had a rollercoaster ride due to the savage thermals. I managed to keep lunch down unlike others on the flight, although I remember the stewardess trying to distract us by polite conversation as we struggled with our digestion, responding zombie-like if at all.

The heat in Alice Springs barely prepared us for Tennant Creek, where the temperature soared above the century. Dave Daffen met two people with red faces and queasy stomachs, and promptly informed us that academics were not really very much appreciated around there, speculating that we might be on a flight home soon. He had to do something with us, though, so he took us home and gave us a beer. The calming effect of the beer was offset by the fact that his wife had just bought a bullock from the butcher and was curing the raw meat on the dining room table. Shortly afterwards he took us to the Eldorado Hotel where our room had the air conditioning on full blast. I wanted to stay there indefinitely. After a nap, we headed out for dinner to the Boomerang Restaurant, watching the stick insects crawl up the walls. This entertainment foreshadowed one type of excitement I would experience later at Warrabri, as I lay on a vinyl couch, watching the life and death drama unfolding on the ceiling amongst the spiders, flies, stick insects and other creatures.

We spent a few days in Tennant Creek awaiting fit out of the vehicle. Some of the locals invited us to a picnic on the bone-dry Gosse River where they expected Harold to bog his four-wheel drive in the sand so that they could show him how to get out. They did not realise that they had a good old Waterloo County farm boy on their hands. Our friends got bogged doing wheelies, and Harold helped each get out even though the metal of the cars burned any hand that happened to touch it. He never did get stuck in the sand. The day was around 45 degrees C so, after that adventure, we all sought shelter in the air-conditioning of the local seismic station.

When the vehicle was ready we headed south to Warrabri. Speakers of four language groups lived there, the Kaytetye (who were the traditional owners of the land) and Alyawarr and the Warumungu and the Warlpiri, who came from places farther north and had been transferred there in the 1950s from the old Phillip Creek Settlement near Tennant Creek. Each group camped in areas located in the general direction of their traditional territories, with Warumungu camping north, Warlpiri west, Kaytetye south and Alyawarr east. Interestingly enough, the name, Warrabri, was a combination of Warumungu and Warlpiri language names. Some people found the whole name too hard and just called it Warlpiri, which was especially upsetting for the traditional owners. The actual name of the place is Alekerenge, which is Kaytetye for “belonging to dog”, for this is Dog Dreaming territory. Lots of fierce and often scruffy camp dogs patrolled the area. Our house came with two large golden Labrador retrievers (appropriate to Dog Dreaming country) who lived beneath the house and often knocked against the floor as they rumbled around at odd hours.
The Superintendent at Warrabri either suggested or insisted that Harold work with Tracker Mick, who had done linguistic elicitation with Ken Hale. Mick worked as a yardsman, so his time needed to be negotiated with his supervisors. During their first elicitation session, after getting acquainted, Mick began to give vocabulary for body parts without even being prompted. After all, he had had practice working with the best! Harold found him a patient teacher, but the time limitation became a worry. A concentration of Kaytetye speakers lived at Neutral Junction Station to the south, so Harold began to forge connections with Tommy Thompson Kngwarreye, Peter Horsetailer Jabiyard and Alec Kapetye, who was featured in Chatwin (1986). They camped near the store on Neutral Junction, sometimes working as stockmen for the Petrick family, who lived on the station and were its leaseholders.

Harold made several other trips in the next two years working on grammar and vocabularies. Some of the Kaytetye women remembered that Harold had a spouse who was interested in music. In 1976, they planned their part of a Rain Dreaming ceremony, and the AIAS funded me to go to Barrow Creek and record and document the performance. This didn’t quite happen as planned, but to my joy I recorded significant parts of three women’s song series—Rain, Fire and Red Bank. At AIAS I had listened to and documented many field recordings of music and was thrilled to have the chance to record my own, putting into practice some of the documentation techniques taught to me by Alice Moyle.

Most of the Kaytetye women who chose to work with me were connected in some way to Harold’s teachers. Alec Kapetye’s wife, Daisy Akemarre, became my main teacher along with Katie Ampetyane (who had been married to Peter Horsetailer), and Mary Kngwarreye (Tommy Thompson’s sister). They gave me a Kaytetye “skin name” that categorised me as a “daughter” to Daisy, thus providing a point of reference for them to situate me within the complex social structures of their community. Harold was disappointed that his Kaytetye “skin name” (Thangale) was fairly easy to pronounce. Mine, Kngwarreye, was the one he really wanted because that would have allowed him to wax eloquent on pre-stopped nasals. Lots of people, though, began calling Harold “Kaytetye” and referring to me as “Kaytetyarenge”, meaning “belonging to Kaytetye.” I have been trying to establish a separate identity ever since!

Harold met many of the pastoralists who ran stations where Kaytetye people were living because he needed to obtain their permission to talk to the residents; also, he had met them at the famous Barrow Creek Pub, where he stayed on several subsequent field trips. Obviously they, too, had their own names for Harold. David Nash tells me that when he first went to the Northern Territory in 1977, Harold told him to introduce himself to Slippery Harris, who managed McLaren Creek Station, and to tell him that ‘the Barrow Creek linguist’ had sent him. Perhaps the most interesting appellation came from a radio telephone operator at Warrabri. We needed to contact someone in Alice Springs, and requested help. The operator asked us our names, to which Harold replied “Harold and Grace Koch.” Harold’s Canadian accent may have put him off, so he identified us to the bemused recipient of the call as “Aroldan.”

Harold’s work in comparative linguistics has extended his formidable analytical skills to other Aboriginal languages. He takes great pride in his students and gets much pleasure introducing them to the Comparative Method and to the intricacies of Australian Aboriginal languages. For so much of his life he has put others first. I am very pleased that his students and colleagues have put this volume together in his honour.

3 The Kaytetye people have a complex series of eight “skin names” corresponding loosely to eight surnames. Everyone is related in some way to everyone else. I had the name, Kngwarreye, which meant that all other women or men with that name were my classificatory sisters or brothers.

4 Personal communication, David Nash. 28/09/2006.
References