

# Previously unexamined texts in Victorian languages: The manuscripts of Rev. William Thomas (1793-1867)<sup>1</sup>

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*Most of the records of the Aboriginal languages of Victoria were written down by untrained people in the 19th century. One of the most prolific was the Rev William Thomas (1793-1867), who was Assistant Protector of the Aborigines in the early days of colonisation of what is now Victoria. This article and the thesis upon which it was based closely examine for the first time the linguistic data collected by Thomas in two main sources - his manuscript notes now in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, and a manuscript entitled A lexicon of the Australian Aboriginal languages in the six dialects of Ballarat, Bacchus Marsh, Melbourne, Gippsland, Mount Gambier and Wonnin..., now in the State Library of Victoria. The valuable linguistics data about the various languages in these sources is exemplified, discussed and compared with modern linguistic studies of the languages concerned.*

## 1. Introduction

We now know that there were around ten mutually unintelligible languages spoken in Victoria before 1835. Blake and Reid (1998:57) have described this as follows:

"A linguist working with the criterion of mutual intelligibility would recognise six languages in central and western Victoria, some of them covering large areas. These widespread languages would not have been recognized as languages by the speakers themselves and they have no native name."

Blake and Reid list these as:

Language	Dialects
1. Bunganditj	
2. Warrnambool Language	Wannon, Kuurnkapanut, Pik Wurrung
3. Colac	

## Kulin Languages

4. Wathawurrung
5. Central Victorian  
Boonwurrung, Woiwurrung, Thagungwurrung
6. Western Victorian  
Djadjawurrung  
Grampians Language (mostly Tjapwurrung)  
Wimmera (Hercus 1986 Wergaia)  
Wemba-Baraba (Hercus 1986 Wemba Wemba)  
Yeti (Hercus 1986 Madhi Madhi, together with Ledji, Wadi)  
Nari-Nari

Extending Blake and Reid's definitions, we might regard Yorta Yorta (Bowe and Morey: forthcoming) and Gippsland (Fesl 1985) as two more such macrolanguages. Apart from some areas of North Eastern Victoria, where some quite small languages were spoken, these eight appear to have covered most of the state.

The various manuscripts of Rev. William Thomas represent one of the largest sources for the Central Victorian Language, and the six largest of the macrolanguages, Bunganditj, Warrnambool,

Wathawurrung, Central Victorian, Western Victorian and Gippsland are the six "dialects" recorded by Thomas (Latrobe MS 6290). See below 2.1.2.

## 2. Rev. William Thomas

Rev. William Thomas (1793-1867) arrived in Melbourne in 1838 to take up an appointment as Assistant Protector of the Aborigines. He recorded a large amount of linguistic information about the Aboriginal people of Victoria.

### 2.1. Writings on Language by Rev. William Thomas<sup>2</sup>

#### 2.1.1. *The Succinct Sketch of the Aboriginal Language*

Thomas was the author of an article entitled *Succinct Sketch of the Aboriginal Language*, which was published in Smyth (1878 Vol 2:118-133). Parts of the *Succinct Sketch* are published versions of portions of a manuscript in the State Library of Victoria, hereinafter referred to as Thomas (La Trobe MS 6290). These portions are

Table 1: Sources of *Succinct Sketch*

Thomas in Brough Smyth (1876) " <i>Succinct Sketch</i> "	La Trobe MS 6290 (Microfilm No 527)	Main draft source in Mitchell MS 214	Mitchell MS 214 (other draft sources)
Grammatical Sketch p118-120	p 14-22	The main draft of the list of verbs is 214/2 CY 2605 fr 9-11  A draft of the grammatical sketch is at 214/26/5 CY 3126, fr 226-227 and 214/21 CY 2984 fr 17-21	Another draft of the verb list is 214/23/1 CY 3130 fr 13-15  There is another draft of the grammatical sketch in 214/21 CY 2984 fr 59-61 & 65-66  A list of particles (affixed) is given in 214/23/1 CY 3130 fr 17  Pronouns are given in 214/23/1 CY 3130 fr 20  Adverbs etc. are in 214/23/1 CY 3130 fr 16-17, and in 214/23/1 CY 3130 fr 46
Word List - <i>Succinct Language - Mori Noular</i> p120-127		214/23/3 CY 3130 fr 162-170	The main draft word lists are 214/23/2 CY 3130 fr 93-116 (Aboriginal - English), fr 53-91 (English - Aboriginal), fr 117-120 (Birds, fishes, etc.)  An incomplete vocabulary list is at 214/22 CY 2984 fr 204, 206-216  Draft lists of adjectives are at 214/21 CY 2984 fr 66 and at 214/23/1 CY 3130 fr 18-19  Draft of List of Kindred, Clothing, Animals and Birds 214/21 CY 2984 fr 115-117
Short Sentences - <i>A few Leading Sentences</i> p127-8	p261 (short sentences only)	214/21 CY 2984 fr 66-68	A draft of the first few short sentences is at 214/21 CY 2984 fr 117
Dialogues p128-130	p262-265	214/23/2 CY 3130 fr 121-138	
Translations of Biblical Texts p130-133	Psalm cxxi p260 Creed p259 Lord's Prayer p258	The draft of the <i>Hymn to Old Hundred</i> is in 214/23/5 CY 3130 fr 208  The draft of the Catechism is in 214/23/5 CY 3130 fr 212  The drafts of the <i>Creed</i> and <i>The Lords Prayer</i> are in 214/22, CY 2984 fr 222-223	Some earlier drafts of <i>The Lord's Prayer</i> and <i>The Creed</i> are at 214/26/4 CY 3126, fr 144-145  There is another version of <i>The Lords Prayer</i> at 214/23/5 CY 3130 fr 225  There is a draft of Genesis 1, which differs from that in Brough Smyth (1876), in 214/22 CY 2984 fr 217-221

themselves compilations of drafts found in different parts of the Thomas papers at the Mitchell Library, hereinafter referred to as Thomas (MS 214). It appears that much of the data in Thomas (MS 214) was collected in the late 1830s and 1840s, although very few parts of the manuscripts relating to language are dated.

Table 1 details the different sections of the *Succinct Sketch* and their correspondences with the two Thomas manuscripts.

**2.1.2. A Lexicon of the Australian Aboriginal Languages in the Six Dialects of Ballarat, Bacchus Marsh, Melbourne, Gipps Land, Mount Gambier and Wonnin**

Curiously, the draft of the main vocabulary of the *Succinct Sketch* (p120-127) is not found in Thomas (La Trobe MS 6290). Rather, there is another much larger vocabulary in MS 6290 which compares "six dialects". The full title of this large manuscript is:

A  
Lexicon  
of  
the Australian Aboriginal  
Languages  
in the  
Six Dialects of  
Ballarat, Bacchus Marsh, Melbourne, Gipps  
Land, Mount Gambier and Wonnin  
with a  
Collection of Dialogues and Translations and  
an  
Introductory Essay on the Etymological  
Construction of the Language  
and  
A Grammatical Summary  
by  
W. Thomas Esq. I T  
Guardian of Aborigines

Scribende recti sapere, est et principium et fons  
Horace Ars Poet

These "six dialects" represent the six most widely spoken languages in Victoria before 1835, and correspond to five of the six languages of central and western Victoria identified by Blake and Reid (1998:57), together with the

Ganai language of Gippsland. In the manuscript, they are assigned numbers as follows (p13):

Ballarat	is marked by the figure	1
Bacchus Marsh	"	2
Melbourne	"	3
Gippsland	"	4
Mount Gambier	"	5
Wonnin	"	6

As mentioned above, these six correspond with six of the largest macrolanguages once spoken in Victoria, as follows:

Ballarat	=	Western Victorian
Bacchus Marsh	=	Wathawurrung
Melbourne	=	Central Victorian
Gippsland	=	Gippsland (Ganai)
Mount Gambier	=	Bunganditj
Wonnin	=	Warrnambool

The contents of Thomas (La Trobe MS 6290) are listed below in Table 2:

**Table 2: Inventory of Thomas (La Trobe MS 6290)**

p1-11	Introduction
p12	Phonetic Notes
p13	List of Languages
p14-22	Grammatical Summary
p23-97	Vocabulary Aboriginal Languages to English
p98-217	Vocabulary English - Aboriginal Languages
p218-228	Dialogues - 'Camping', 'Hunting', 'Corroboire'
p229-232	Songs
p233-253	Familiar Phrases
p255-259	Songs & Hymns
p260-265	Bible Translations
p268-307	Rough Vocabulary of the Bacchus Marsh, Melbourne and Ballarat dialects.

There are actually three vocabulary lists in Thomas (La Trobe MS 6290):

- Aboriginal Languages to English (Letters L - Y only) (p23-97)
- The main list, English to Aboriginal (p 98-217)
- Rough list of the Bacchus Marsh, Melbourne and Ballarat "dialects" (p268-307)

An example from the main word list, from English to the various Aboriginal languages, is provided in Table 3:

Table 3: Example of an entry in Thomas (La Trobe MS 6290)

Bawl, to	1	Kan-dri-allün	3
	2	Kahn-ah-kah	1
	3	Dōmbah-ganŋoōk	2
	4	Gnah-wahn-dyee	
	5	Ngōōr-drōōny	
	6	Ngōōrty-wahn	

English to Aboriginal Vocabulary

The problem of analysing this manuscript has been further compounded by the use of different numbers to refer to the languages in different parts of the manuscript. As distinct from the order of the languages in the main list (where 1=Ballarat, 2=Bacchus Marsh and 3=Melbourne), the order of languages in the Rough List is:

Bacchus Marsh	1	(= Wathawurrung)
Melbourne	2	(= Central Victorian)
Ballarat	3	(= Western Victorian) <sup>3</sup>

Even in the main list of six languages (p 98-217), there is sometimes a pencil entry after the Aboriginal word, which corresponds with the different order of languages in the rough list (p268-307). These pencil markings are shown in Italics in Table 3 above.

Table 4 gives an example from the rough list, with comparisons to modern linguistic publications relating to languages concerned:

Table 4: Example of rough list, Thomas (La Trobe MS 6290)

Camp 1 Garrong	Watha:	kurrung	(Blake, Clark and Krishna-Pillay 1999)
2 Willum	Cent. Vic:	wilam	(Blake 1991)
3 Lahr	Wemba:	lar	(Hercus 1986)

The Dialogues and Familiar Phrases in MS 6290 also appear in this order (1=Bacchus Marsh, 2=Melbourne, 3=Ballarat). In Table 5, some confusion (similar to that reported by Blake (1991) above), seems to exist, this time between the "Melbourne" and "Ballarat" entries

Table 5: Example from the Familiar Phrases, Thomas (La Trobe MS 6290:237)

To throw a long spear	1	Yōōng-gak-karrip
	2	Yōōng-gak-gōōyūn
	3	Yōōng-gak-gōōyūn

For this example at least, language no. 1 clearly corresponds to Wathawurrung, as is shown in (1):

- (1) yunga-k karrp  
 throw-IMP spear  
 'Throw the spear!'  
 (cf. Blake, Clark and Krishna-Pillay 1999)

As for language no. 3., in several of the languages/dialects making up the Western Victorian macrolanguage (but not Wembawemba as recorded by Hercus), the word for 'throw' is yunga (Djadjala, Hercus 1986), and in Djadjala the sentence (which corresponds Table 5, No. 3) would be expected to be:

- (2) yunga-g kuyun (cf. Hercus 1986)  
 throw-IMP spear  
 'Throw the spear!'

However in the other sources for the Central Victorian language, 'throw' has been recorded as yuma (Blake 1991:100), not yun(g)a which would be a regularisation of the word as it appears for language no. 2 in Table 5. This may be due to either a copying error, or to confusion between the Western Victorian and Central Victorian languages.

This confusion was discussed by Blake:

"The vocabulary entitled "Melbourne" seems to be a mixture of Woiwurrung and Wathawurrung. It is difficult to tell whether this vocabulary relates to a language intermediate between these two or whether Thomas mixed the two forms. It contains some uncorroborated forms. It has not been accepted in the present work as representative of the Woiwurrung language." (1991:57).

Thomas' introduction to MS 6290 gives an indication as to how this confusion might have arisen (p 9-10):

"In conclusion I would remark, that the ordinary difficulty of getting any certain data from which to compile an efficient Vocabulary of the language,

which consisting as this seems to do of an almost infinite number of dialects, presents obstacles of the most insurpassable kind, has been in the present instance very much enhanced by the slender resources at disposal, the information indeed having been entirely gleaned from three men, whose knowledge of English is rather circumscribed."

From this quote it appears that not only did Thomas believe he was recording a single language (when there are in fact six by the definition in Blake and Reid 1998:57), he also had only three informants. Almost

certainly one individual was the informant for the three Kulin languages 1, 2 and 3, another for 4 (Gippsland) and a third for 5 and 6 (Mt. Gambier and Wonnin). It would not be surprising for one informant to sometimes give responses which were confused between the three closely related but nevertheless different languages of Wathawurrung, Central Victorian and Western Victorian. This is even more likely when it is remembered that there would have been no "standard" form of either the Central Victorian or Western Victorian language. This, together with the fact that this manuscript is a copy<sup>4</sup>, would explain some of the difficulties. Nevertheless there is a

Table 6: Contents of Thomas (MS 214) Linguistic data (Central Victorian Language) not republished in the *Succinct Sketch*

Section of manuscript	Microfilm number	Microfilm frame number	Contents
214/23/3	CY 3130	fr 156-157	Comparative Word list in 10 languages
214/23/2	CY 3130	fr 145-151	Comparative Word List in 8 languages, mostly blank
214/26/5	CY 3126	fr 207	Comprehensive list of Verbal forms of the verb 'to work'
214/26/2	CY 3126	fr 93-94	Comprehensive list of Verbal forms of two verbs, <i>Tomboneit</i> 'to speak' and <i>Yannaneit</i> 'to go'
214/23/1	CY 3130	fr 46	Diagram showing the sun's trajectory through the sky
214/23/2	CY 3130	fr 121-138,	Dialogues, including those in Thomas in Brough Smyth (1876:128-130), and the following additional dialogues: "On Corroboree", "Attending School",
214/2	CY 2605	fr 20-25	Place Names
214/23/1	CY 3130	fr 20-23	Place Names
214/23/7	CY 3130	p1-10	Religious terms and sentences relating to religion
214/23/3	CY 3130	fr 172	Sermon in English with some notes in Aboriginal language
214/26/4	CY 3126	fr 113-150	Sermons and translations of the Bible, prayers and hymns. Some in Aboriginal Language only, some only in English
214/23/5	CY 3130	fr 209-228	Sermons and translations of the Bible, prayers and hymns. Some in Aboriginal Language only, some only in English
214/2	CY 2605	fr 10, 12-17, 19-20, 25-27	Short Sentences
214/2	CY 2605	fr 106-107	Short Sentences
214/26/2	CY 3126	fr 81-84, 91-92	Short Sentences
214/2	CY 2605	fr 120-122	Short Sentences - from Mr. Langhorn
214/21	CY 2984	fr 11-16	Short Sentences and words
214/22	CY 2984	fr 183	Song
214/21	CY 2984	fr 43	Song entitled Gaiggip - probably Corroboree song
214/23/6	Small booklet	2nd half	Trial documents translated into Aboriginal; the trial of Jetta Jetta and Trellier, 21/2/1848
214/2	CY 2605	fr 108-114	Verbs, including a table of different tenses (largely left blank)
214/23/2	CY 3130	fr 139	Weapons
214/22	CY 2984	fr 188	Weapons
214/23/3	CY 3130	fr 170	Weapons with drawings
214/21	CY 2984	fr 129, 131-132	Weapons, with drawings

great deal of valuable data in this manuscript, and this will be further demonstrated below in Section 5.

A further interesting observation of Thomas is his comment that there are "an almost infinite number of dialects". This may give us an indication of the real linguistic situation in Victoria before settlement - one of lects which varied slightly on a continuum across the state, with occasional boundaries (such as that between Central Victoria and Gippsland) where a much sharper division of mutual unintelligibility would have applied.

### 2.1.3. The Thomas Papers in the Mitchell Library

The *Succinct Sketch* was published in a widely available text (Smyth 1878) and has consequently received the most attention from scholars. However the language data in Thomas (MS 214) significantly adds to the information about the Central Victorian language. Table 6 lists the linguistic data relating to Central Victorian which were not republished in the *Succinct Sketch*:

The overwhelming majority of the data listed in Table 6 corresponds with the other sources for Central Victorian as listed by Blake (1991).

### 3. Conventions required for the presentation of data of this type

In presenting data of this kind, account must first be taken of the reliability of the transcription. To indicate this, the following conventions have been adopted:

#### Transcription conventions:

normal font clear interpretations possible  
bold italics dubious readings

In this article, the transcriptions of Thomas' data are presented together with a regularisation, using an orthography based on modern linguistic principles. In this process, all versions for a particular word are compared, with most weight given to the most reliable recorders (Hercus 1986 and Mathews 1902 & 1903). Blake (1991:81) also applied the principle that "if the original notation is difficult to interpret it is retained and given in italics."

For the regularisations of Yorta Yorta, Bowe and Morey (forthcoming) have extended this use of italics to make a regularisation which is in accord with the phonemic analysis of the language, but the reading of which is still

uncertain. For example the word for 'belly full' is given by three different sources as <powganōwmook>, <boc-on-an-wich> and <buginamutch>. These seem to be referring to the same word, but the reading is unclear. It has been regularised as *hoganamutj*, where the italics indicate some uncertainty in the reading.

Where possible, regularisations in this article are based on previous studies of the languages involved, such as Hercus (1986) for Western Victorian, Fesl (1985) for Gippsland, Blake (1991) for Central Victorian, Krishna-Pillay (1996) for Warrnambool and Blake, Clark and Krishna-Pillay (1999) for Wathawurrung. For Central Victorian data, which is the majority of this article, the conventions are as follows:

#### Regularisation conventions:

normal font forms regularised by Blake (1991)  
italics forms in italics in Blake (1991) ("original notation difficult to interpret")  
bold italics forms found in Thomas (MS 214) but not found in Blake (1991)

Because of this special use of italics, underlining is used in the body of the text to present language examples. For example a word which is attested in Blake would be presented as gunga 'take', but one which is found in Thomas but not in Blake as guda 'put down'.

Orthographic transcriptions are placed in angle brackets, as <wandanaro> 'look out'.

Sentence examples are presented as follows:

- (a) The original form and its source
- (b) The translation given in the source
- (c) A regularised spelling
- (d) An interlinear gloss
- (e) A translation, which may differ from (b)

In some cases, such as (3) below, the full text is given first and the analysis is only lines c) - e).

### 4. Text in Thomas (MS 214)

Apart from the vocabularies and grammatical information, the texts appear to fall into three main groups: 4.1 Translations from English, which appear to be

translations by Thomas into the Aboriginal Language, 4.2 short sentences, 4.3. longer sentences and or dialogues.

#### 4.1. Translations from English

Thomas (MS 214) has translated many texts, mostly religious, into the Central Victorian Language. One non-

religious text, published here for the first time, is a translation of a deposition against two young men of the Boonwurrung tribe. It appears that Thomas has translated the evidence for the information of the two defendants. Example (3) below is an extract from the deposition of William Robinson<sup>5</sup>.

#### 3) TEXT 1 from Mitchell Library MS 214/23 Part 6

Two Aborig youth of the Boonurong Tribe was charged before the Melbourne Police Office on the fourth day of January 1848 with assaulting and attempting to commit murder on a young man of colour named William Robinson at Mr Allens Station at Western Port on the 15th Day of December 1847 - Warrant issued by James Smith -- on the following Affidavit

Mr Robinson tattian bulganner Mr Allen tombit uung yellingout, yanbo mineam nangbo, murrumbeek yanneit worgonon, tattian bulganner Mr Allen, murrumbek yeameit bigout, nerdoit womeit bengero yan yan koolin Melboneit, euloneit murrumbeek, ganbony bangeit koondu, barmean kunganner murrumbeek, uung wetanang, bengero koolin nerreno bonnie laddie or Jette Jetta bar Tom or Trelhier, Mur <sup>k</sup> nier bunnun nangeit nangbo, - barrum mieleek murrum <sup>k</sup> , umarthun bolun, murrumbeek bullarto barboon, murrumbiik <i>tutundon</i> molocko tilbenner weakeit murrumbeek		William Robinson, in the Employ of Robert Allen of Western Port, maketh oath and sayeth - that on the 15th Day of Dec' last - I was but in the bush <i>jailing</i> my master's cattle, I was lying on the ground when 2 young blacks of the Melbourne tribe suddenly pounced on me, one held me by the throat & attempted to strangle me, whilst the other kept me down, with his body over me, their names are Bonnie Laddie or Jetta Jetta Tommy or Trilleer. I never saw these lads before, they attempted to take my life but by my own personal strength I succeeded in getting the better of them --- I am in	
tattian	taking charge of	wetanang	kept me down
euloneit	quick, suddenly	umarthun bolun	struggle, or wrestling about
bangeit	fell on, or catch at	eurodununner	hold em down legs
barmean	endeavored or tried		
<i>mieleek</i>	kill		

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W. Robinson	in danger of my life of these two blacks, one of them said on going away, he would keep a lookout for me, I pray warrant for their apprehension.  W. Robinson  sworn before me at the police office Melbourne this fourth day of Jan <sup>y</sup> 1848, James Smith JP
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In the following analysis, where words were translated by Thomas in the footnote to the page from 214/23/6 (reprinted above), the word footnote appears in brackets as the source the translation. Otherwise the regularisation of the word follows Blake (1991), in ordinary type, or by comparison with the various word lists in MS 214, in bold italic type.

- (3.1) Mr. Robinson *dadha-n̄*  
Mr. Robinson take care-NON.PAST(footnote)  
  
bulgana            Mr. Allen  
beef                Mr. Allen  
'William Robinson, taking care of Mr. Allen's cattle'

- (3.2) *dhumba-tj* *yung* *yaling-uth* Bonnie Laddie or Djita djita  
 speak-?PAST? other yesterday Bonnie Laddie or Jetta Jetta  
 'said the other day' 'The two Aborigines were called Bonnie Laddie or Jetta Jetta'
- (3.3) *ganbu mirnian nangbu*  
 one moon, month ?before? (Blake: bambu)  
 'one month ago'
- (3.4) *marram-bik yana-tj wurr gumang*  
 (body)-1Sg go-?PAST? bush  
 'I went bush'
- (3.5) *dadha-n bulgana* Mr. Allen  
 take care-NON.PAST cattle Mr. Allen  
 'looking after Mr. Allen's cattle.'
- (3.6) *marram-bik yimu-tj biik-uth*  
 (body)-1Sg sleep-?PAST? ground-LOC  
 'I was sleeping on the ground.'
- (3.7) *n(h)adutj wume-tj bindjirru*  
 then, when come-?PAST? two  
  
*yan-yan guliñ Melbourne*  
 young man Aboriginal man Melbourne  
 'then two young Aboriginal men of the Melbourne people came'
- (3.8) *yulonatj marram-bik*  
 suddenly (footnote) (body)-1Sg  
 'suddenly I,'
- (3.9) *ganbu-ny banga-tj gurn-du*  
 one-?? grab-?PAST? neck-LOC??  
 'one grabbed my throat'
- (3.10) *barma-n ?gunga-na*  
 tried (footnote)-NON PAST ?take-INT  
  
*marram-bik*  
 (body)-1Sg  
 'tried to take me'
- (3.11) *yung wetanang*  
 other kept me down (footnote)  
 'the other kept me down.'
- (3.12) *bindjirru guliñ narrin-u*  
 two Aboriginal man name-3SgPOSS
- (3.13) *ba Tom or Trelhier*  
 and Tom or Trelhier  
 'and Tom or Trelhier'
- (3.14) *marram-bik ngabu-nhan nganga-tj nangbu*  
 (body)-1Sg NEG-1Sg see-?PAST? ?before?  
 'I never saw (them) before.'
- (3.15) *barma- milik*  
 tried (cf *barmean* 3.10) kill (footnote)  
  
*marram-bik*  
 (body)-1Sg  
 '(they) tried to kill me.'
- (3.16) *yuma-dhan buldu-n*  
 throw-1Sg.PAST fall-NON.PAST  
 'I threw and fell.'
- (3.17) *marrambik buladu bambuñ*  
 (body).1Sg big frightened  
 'I was very frightened'
- (3.18) *marrambik dudundon mulugu*  
 (body).1Sg ?? later  
  
*djilba-nharr wiaga-tj marrambik*  
 hit-2Sg.NON.PAST die-?PAST? (body).1Sg  
 '??'

There are some interesting features of this text, notably the frequent use of the suffix *-tj*, which may be a marker of past tense (Morey 1998). Other useful grammatical information is in (3.6), where the locative case ending is found, and in (3.14), where there is person marking of the negative.

The bulk of these texts are translations by Thomas of the Bible, hymns and other religious texts. It is expected that any analysis of them would show a similar level of grammar and vocabulary usage to (3) above.



## 4.2. Sentences and Dialogues

### 4.2.1. Short Sentences

It is greatly to be regretted that of the many long texts Thomas recorded, there are only translations done by him, and no text actually spoken by an Aboriginal person. There are however a large number of short phrases and sentences, of which (4) is an example.

- (4) Yanneang al Bagoot, Yannean al Bigoot  
 'Shall we take a walk' (MS 214/2)
- |               |            |
|---------------|------------|
| yana-ngal     | biik-uch   |
| walk-1Dl.Incl | ground-LOC |
- 'You and I walk on the ground.'

Thomas has split the morpheme *-ngal* '1st person dual inclusive' in his transcription, suggesting that he could not fully analyse the sentence, yet the translation is correct. From this, it can be assumed that both the sentence and its English translation were provided by an Aboriginal informant, rather than translated by Thomas.

One of the problems with the Thomas material is the apparent lack of ergative marking for the subject of a transitive sentence. An example of such a transitive sentence is (5):

- (5) Bagarook kimar purnuck (MS 214/21)  
 'Woman made basket'
- |         |      |        |
|---------|------|--------|
| bagurk  | gima | binak  |
| woman ? |      | basket |
- 'The woman made a basket'

The ergative suffix, given in Blake (1991:67) following Mathews, is *-dha*, *-dja*, *-a*. It is possible that an ergative suffix which was simply the vowel *-a* might not have been identified by a recorder who was not expecting it. There are however examples of the suffix in its instrumental meaning:

- (6) Tonabuk Weinna Wallert  
 'Dress the opossum with fire'  
 (MS 214/2 from Langhorne)
- |                     |          |        |
|---------------------|----------|--------|
| dunhu-bu-k          | wiñ-a    | walert |
| cook/burn-TRANS-IMP | fire-ERG | possum |
- 'Cook the possum with fire.'

### 4.2.1.1. Grammatical information gleaned from Thomas (MS 214), which is not in Blake (1991)

#### (a) Purposive:

Blake (1991:75), in discussing Thomas, mentions that he "lists verb forms with the ending *-eit*. It is not clear what the function is."

Example (7) appears to show that this is a purposive:

- (7) Murrumbinner Mur<sup>ht</sup> yannanan Willum  
 Monmonite (MS 214/21)  
 'You and I will go to make miam'
- |               |            |
|---------------|------------|
| marrambinharr | marrambik  |
| (body).2Sg    | (body).1Sg |
- |                   |       |                          |
|-------------------|-------|--------------------------|
| yana-na-ñ         | wilam | manma <sup>6</sup> -natj |
| go-?INT?-NON.PAST | hut   | make-PURP                |
- 'You and I (will) go to build a hut.'

Barry Blake (pers. comm.) has expressed the view that this suffix which Thomas writes as <nite>, <neight> or <neit> was probably a final laminal stop, /-tj/ with a low vowel preceding. Of the many examples in Thomas (MS 214) this is the clearest example showing purposive meaning. Thomas usually translates the form as if it were an infinitive.

#### (b) Frequentative:

Another grammatical feature evident in the manuscript is a suffix that appears to be a frequentative, similar to that found in Wemba Wemba, of which (8) is an example:

- (8) guđema 'to scold' Hercus (1986:48)  
 guđemila 'to keep on growling at somebody'

There are several words in which an <-il> appears as part of the suffix as recorded by Thomas. These may be frequentative.

- (9) Yergilburnin Kulpenkulpingerup (MS 214/2)  
 'Lost my knife'
- |                            |
|----------------------------|
| yiag(a)-il(a)-bu-nhan      |
| search/find-FREQ-TRANS-1Sg |
- galbun-galbun-djiap  
 knife  
 'I am continually looking for (my) knife.'

Thomas sometimes records the verb *yiaga* 'search' as having the meaning 'lost'. On each occasion there is an <-(i)l-> in the suffix. If this were a frequentative suffix, cognate to the Wemba Wemba *-ila*, the word would mean 'continually searching', and continual search implies loss. Thus the translation of 'Lost my knife' may have arisen.

Another possible frequentative example is (10):

- (10) *Kommargally* (MS 214/2 & 214/23 Book B)  
'Hold up your head'

*gama-dj(i)-il(a)-i*  
rise up-IMP-FREQ-IMP

The meaning appears to be to 'keep on rising up', implying: 'stay up.'

(c) The grammatical predicate *gurri*

Thomas also records the use of a verb which may be *gurri*, which Blake (1991:76) describes as "a grammatical predicate rather like the verb 'to be' in English". In the Thomas data, it appears to have a meaning similar to 'have':

- (11) *Ngia Yellanebra Kodignan* (MS 214/2)  
'I have no blanket'

*nga(bu) yalani-burrang gurri-nhan*  
NEG blanket be-1Sg.NON.PAST  
'I have no blanket.'

(d) More complex sentences

Several examples from Thomas (MS 214) involve more complex combinations of more than one verb, such as (12), which appears to form a cohabitation proposal:

- (12) *Yemeanully yanne* (MS 214/2)  
'Come and live with me.'

*yimu-ngal-i yan(a)-i*  
sleep-1Dl.Incl.IMP go-IMP  
'Come and sleep with me.'

4.2.2. Longer Sentences and dialogues

In addition to the short sentences, there are groups of longer sentences, or "dialogues", some of which appear in the *Succinct Sketch* (Thomas in Smyth 1876: 127f).

Example 13 consists of several extracts from one of the dialogues not published in Smyth.

- (13) *Netbo murrumbiek bopup school womon*  
Now my children it is time to begin school

*Kurmburgee bopul warrawe*  
Call the children to come here

*Narlumby karbe, ganbony yen yen*  
Sit down there, first sing

- (13.1) *netbo marrambayik bubup*  
now my child

*school wumen*  
*school come-NON.PAST*  
'Now my children, come to school.'

- (13.2) *garrim-bu-dji bubup warrw(a)-i*  
*call-TRANS?-IMP child come-IMP*  
'Call to the children, "Come!"'

- (13.3) *ngalamb(a)-i karbe ganbu-ny ying-ying*  
*sit-IMP here one-?? sing.IMP*  
'Sit here, (and) first sing!'

Several of these sentences appear to show English grammatical features, such as *marrambayik bubup* 'my child', for which we might expect a suffixed possessive pronoun. This may suggest that they are translations by Thomas, rather than records of utterances by Aboriginal people.

The next example, (14), which was also published in Smyth (1878), gives a hint as to the grammatical complexity that some of these texts show. The suffix *-ng* appears to be similar to a suffix *-na* which Hercus records for Wemba Wemba as having a weak intensive meaning. (Hercus 1986:49). The suffix *-bu* which is perhaps a reflex of the widespread root *\*pu-/bu-*, appears to have a transitive meaning.

- (14) *Tombanna bagrook tinderbuk tanganan dado*  
*koondee kurruntuduk koolinner bullito tanganan.*  
(Thomas in Smyth 1878:129)  
'Tell them when they have eaten to go and look out gum for blackfellows to eat.'

dhumba-na-Ø bagurrk dindi-bu-k  
 speak-?INT?-IMP woman finish??-TRANS-IMP

dhanga-na-ñ dado gunga-dji  
 eat-?INT?-NON.PAST ?? rake-IMP

garrang-tuduk<sup>7</sup> guliñ-a buladu  
 gum-?for? man-ERG much

dhanga-na-ñ  
 eat-?INT?-NON.PAST  
 '(You) tell the women: Finish eating, and then get  
 gum for the men to eat.'

### 5. Text in Thomas (Latrobe MS 6290)

The problems of the word list in Thomas (Latrobe MS 6290), at least for the Central Victorian Language, was raised by Blake (see above 2.1.2). The texts in MS 6290 have not been analysed before. They consist of what Thomas describes as Dialogues (p218-228), Songs (p229-232) and Familiar Phrases (p233-253), for all of the "six dialects". In total there are about 120 sentences in each of the "dialects".

#### 5.1. Melbourne

One of the "Dialogues" is entitled "Camping". Example (15) is a transcription of the first part of the text for the Melbourne Language, and (15.1) to (15.13) a proposed analysis of the text:

#### Camping (Thomas Latrobe MS 6290:219f)

Stop! Will Camp here tonight	2	Ngahlamby-wat! Bahkar-rōōit
Name the place where we are to stop and meet	2	Dyōōm-ba-gut-bik
Tell the chief to collect his tribe	2	Dōōbah-gūt-wirrakūr-wōōrup-daydoo
Make a fire	2	Wirrak-(wēēng) wēēn
Fetch a log or two	2	Wandagga-kalk Strike
a light	2	Wōōlōng-ahk-wēē
Let us build a hut or mi-mi	2	Gōōngak-willam
Give me the forked stick here	2	Gōōng-aga-gahlk
Here it is, take it	2	Nyē - gōōngak
Put the spar on the forked stick	2	Gōōrdā-wak-gahlk-gabbawūtty
One of you run and strip some bark	2	Wūnda-ga-willam
Now then, look sharp!	2	Gōōrdo-ba-gōōrdo-wahk-willam
That's all right	2	Nōōhty-mēē

Analysis:

(15.1) Stop! Will Camp here tonight

Ngahlamby-wat! Bahkar-rōōit  
 ngalamb(a)-i wat bagarr-uth  
 sit-IMP 2Plu between-LOC  
 'Sit down all of you, between ...'

It appears that (15.1) is incomplete.

(15.2) Name the place where we are to stop and meet

Dyōōm-ba-gut-bik  
 dhumba-k biik  
 speak-IMP ground  
 'Say where the ground (for the camp) (will be)'

(15.3) Tell the chief to collect his tribe

Dōōbah-gūt-wirrakūr- wōōrup-daydoo  
 dhumba-k-a- wirrigiri wurrwi ??  
 speak-IMP messenger run- ??

It has not been possible to propose a full analysis of (15.3) at this time. The word <wirrakūr> may be related to wirra 'to climb', wirrigiri 'messenger', or wirrirrap 'doctor', and may be a word for 'chief'.

(15.4) Make a fire

Wirrak-(wēēng) wēēn  
 wirr(k)-ak wiif  
 make fire-IMP fire  
 'Light a fire!'

(15.5) Fetch a log or two

Wandagga-kalk  
 wañdha-k galk  
 fetch-IMP wood  
 'Fetch wood!'

Several times in this text there is <-ga> written as the suffix to the verb. These are clearly imperatives, but it is unclear whether it is the plural imperative suffix -gu or the singular imperative suffix -k, with vowel epenthesis to avoid a consonant cluster.

(15.6) Strike a light

Wōōlōng-ahk-wēē  
*wulu-nga?*-k wiiñ  
 make fire-?-IMP fire  
 'Make a fire!'

The verb *wulu* is not reported by Blake (1991). However, in Thomas (MS 214/23), there is the following sentence:

Molocho Kulla Wolwon ner Wein  
 By & Bye then go off ( or leave) and make fire

This might be regularised as:

mulugu *gali(k)*<sup>8</sup> *wulu-nharr* wiiñ  
 later then make fire-2Sg fire

(15.7) Let us build a hut or mi-mi

Gōōngak-willam  
 gunga-k wilam  
 get-IMP bark/hut  
 'Get bark!'

This sentence perhaps was an instruction to fetch bark in order to make a hut. From (7) and (13.4) above it seems that the verb *manma* would have been used for 'to make (a hut)'.  
 (15.8) Give me the forked stick here

Gōōng-aga-gahik  
 gunga-k galk  
 get-IMP wood  
 'Get the wood!'

(15.9) Here it is, take it

Nyē - gōōngak  
 Ngai gunga-k  
 here take-IMP  
 'Here! Take (it).'

In MS 214, Thomas frequently records <nge> as meaning 'here'.

(15.10) Put the spar on the forked stick

Gōōrdā-wak-gahlk-gabbawütty  
*guda-wa-k* galk-*gabawa-uth*  
 put-INT-IMP wood-forked stick-LOC  
 'Put (it) on the forked stick.'

Although *guda* is not recorded by Blake, in MS 214, Thomas frequently records a verb with a stem <kood-> and the meaning 'to put down'.

(15.11) One of you run and strip some bark

Wūnda-ga-willam  
 wañdha-k wilam  
 get-IMP bark/hut  
 'Fetch bark!'

(15.12) Now then, look sharp!

Gōōrdo-ba-gōōrdo-wahk-willam  
*guda* ba *guda-wa-k* wilam  
 put down and put-INT-IMP hut/bark  
 'Put down the bark!'

(15.13) That's all right

Nōhty-mēē  
 nudji-mi  
 enough-??  
 'It is enough!'

Example (15) demonstrates the extent to which Thomas (Latrobe MS 6290) contains linguistic data which can be usefully analysed. There are five other languages represented in the manuscript, of which the following brief notes are presented:

5.2. Ballarat

As discussed above (in section 2.1.2), the "Ballarat" data of Thomas represents the Western Victorian Language, probably Tjapwurrung or Djadjawurrung. A small section of the dialogue is reproduced as (16), and analysed as (16.1) - (16.5)

(16)

Make a fire	3	Wirrkak-wēē
Fetch a log or two	3	Wāi-wahka-kalk
Strike a light	3	Dyilpahk-wēē
Let us build a hut or mi-mi	3	Barpak-lahr
Give me the forked stick here	3	Mōōtyahka-bahtyūn

(16.1) Make a fire

Wirrkak-wēē  
wirrka-k wi  
make-IMP fire

(16.2) Fetch a log or two

Wāi-wahka-kalk  
waiwa-k kalk  
lift up-IMP log

(16.3) Strike a light

Dyilpahk-wēē  
tjilpa-k wi  
strike-IMP fire

(16.4) Let us build a hut or mi-mi

Barpak-lahr  
papa-k lar  
build-IMP hut

(16.5) Give me the forked stick here

Mōōtyahka-bahtyün  
mutja-k patjan  
fetch-IMP forked stick

The main source for Tjapwurrung is Dawson (1881), and the main source for Djadjawurrung is Parker in Smyth (1878). The vocabularies of both are compared with the above texts. It appears to show that the informant for "Ballarat" was speaking a lect which was close to both Tjapwurrung and Djadjawurrung, although slightly closer to the former.

Thomas "Ballarat"	Dawson (1881)		Parker in Smyth (1878)	
Wēē	Wee	'Fire'	Wee	'Fire'
Wirrkak	Wirka gno wee	'Make fire'	-	-
Wāi-wah	Wiæwak	'Lift'	-	-
Kalk	Kaalk	'Log'	-	-
Dyilpah	-	-	Chilp-in	'To beat'
Barpa	Parpak	'Build'	Barrp-per	'To build'
Lahr	-	-	Larr	'House'
Mōōtyah	Muutchak	'Get'	Moo-cheen	'To fetch'
Bahtyün	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	Knäm-bool -kalk	'Forked stick'

5.3. Bacchus Marsh

Thomas' Bacchus Marsh is accepted as a source for Wathawurrung, by Blake, Clark and Krishna-Pillay (1999). Example (17) is an extract from the manuscript of the dialogues for "Bacchus Marsh", and (17.1) to (17.5) presents an analysis, including some lexical forms not found in Blake, Clark and Krishna-Pillay.

(17)

Make a fire	1 Wirrkah-wēēng
Fetch a log or two	1 Būr-bügga-galk-galk
Strike a light	1 Dilpahk-wēēng
Let us build a hut or mi-mi	1 Ngarwak-karrōōng
Give me the forked stick here	1 Gōōpmaka-bondim-bondim

(17.1) wirra-k wiyn  
light fire  
'Make a fire!'

Note: *wirra* 'make a fire' is reported by Blake for the Central Victorian Language (1991:101) and see above (15.4). No other word is reported for this meaning in Blake, Clark and Krishna-Pillay (1999), and it is quite likely that a similar word would be found in both languages.

(17.2) papa-k kalk-kalk  
fetch-IMP wood-PLU?

The reduplication in this case may either imply plural or possibly diminution, as in 'Fetch stick(s).'

(17.3) tjilpa-k wiyn  
hit-IMP fire

(17.4) ngawa-k karrung  
build-IMP hut

(17.5) gupma-k bundim-bundim  
bring,do-IMP forked stick

In Blake, Clark and Krishna-Pillay (1999), *gupma* is listed as meaning both 'to do' and 'to bring'.

From the analysis of (15), (16) and (17), it is clear that the single informant was able to separate the languages. Some interference is present, such as the word for 'fire' being expressed as <wēē> in (16.6) above for

'Melbourne' when <wēēn> or <wēēng> would be more correct. On the other hand, the data at times clearly distinguishes three different lects.

#### 5.4. Gippsland

Following a very preliminary examination, the following three sentences are presented for Gippsland, with regularisations based on Fesl (1985):

- (18)  
 Have you any sisters? 4 Wōōrnman-da-laindūk  
 Here is mine 4 Dindamañg-ñgay-dallōōng  
 Now lets approach and 4 Wirra-būn-wūrrōō  
 close in upon him

- (18.1) wunman-da landag  
 where sister  
 'Where is your sister.'

This example parallels the following sentence recorded by Mathews (MS):

- (18.1b) Woonmānda bān Where is the dog?

- (18.2) djinda-ma ngidhalung  
 here-POSS 1Sg.GEN  
 'Here is mine.'

Mathews records <dyinda> as 'here' in his Notebook. The possessive construction here is discussed by Fesl (1985:114). A parallel example, from Mathews, is:

- (18.2b) wangin-ma ganai-a  
 boomerang-POSS man-GEN  
 'A man's boomerang'

- (18.3) wirraba-n-waru  
 surround-PRES-1Pl.incl  
 'Let's surround (him).'

This sentence is recorded in the context of kangaroo hunting. The verb *wirraba* is only recorded by Thomas, here and in the word list where it is spelled <Warra-bwah> and translated as 'encircle'. The form of the first person plural is frequently recorded by Mathews, spelled <warroo>.

#### 5.5. Mount Gambier and Wonnin

At present very little analysis has yet been attempted for the data in these two languages. The following sentences are presented:

##### (a) Mount Gambier

- (19) Give me the forked 5 (Ngēē-ūrn) Wa-ang-  
 stick here eia-Ngēē-ōōra

Smith (1880) records <woang ine> or <wo-at ngine> with the meaning 'give me'. Mathews recorded <Wua> as 'to give', from which we may be able to reconstruct the following:

- (19.1) wua-ngin(a) ngiyura  
 give-me? forked stick?

##### (b) Wonnin

- (20) Make a fire 6 Pah-wēē-wēēn

Based on Krishna-Pillay (1996), the following analysis is presented:

- (18.2) paw(a)-i weeyn  
 burn-IMP fire  
 'Make a fire'

#### 6. Thomas' informants

Thomas gives very little information about his informants. In MS 214/21 p235, he gives the name of his informant about Aboriginal Deities and a sacred dance as Wonga. King Benbo is named as an informant for some stories given in MS 214/21 p155. Gibberook is named as an informant of the names of tribes and their chiefs in MS 214/23/1 p68.

In MS 214/23/3, Thomas makes the note: "Budgery Tom, Old Moragine, Derremut were the 3 who gave names to European things", and in the *Succinct Sketch*, there is a footnote to the part of the word list dealing with items introduced by Europeans.

"When White people had regularly made a footing at Port Phillip, one, Budgerry Tom, was noted for giving names to European things and animals. These names are mostly of his giving."  
 (Thomas in Brough Smyth 1876:124)

In MS 214/23 Book A p 68, Budgry Tom is listed as the chief of the Western Port country. This would suggest he spoke the Boonwurrung dialect. On the other hand, on p 66, Budgery Tom was listed as one of those whose country was "from Ruffeys (Cranbourne) to the ranges at N.N. Warren", which we would expect to be within the Woiwurrung dialect area (see map, Blake 1991:30). There are in addition a number of other Aboriginal people listed on p 66, together with the country they inhabited. How many of these might have been informants of Thomas, we cannot say.

It is likely that Budgery Tom was one of the principal informants of Thomas (MS 214), and that his dialect represents what was spoken in the Melbourne area, particularly to the South East.

The informant for Thomas (Latrobe MS 6290) is unknown, but given the differences between the two sources, they are unlikely to be those who informed him for MS 214.

## 7. Conclusion

It is clear that the various papers of William Thomas contain valuable linguistic information about languages across Victoria. Careful analysis of the data is likely to lead to a significant increase in our knowledge of all these languages, particularly when combined with a further analysis of texts, sentences, stories, bible translations, court documents and songs found in all the sources for these languages.

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#### Endnotes

1. I am very grateful to Dr. Heather Bowe for taking the time to read and comment upon this article, as well as for all her help in supervising the thesis on which this article is largely based. I would also like to thank Prof. Barry Blake for all his help, which included providing both hard copies and computer format transcriptions of many sources for various Victorian languages.
2. This article is largely based on the research done for my Honours Thesis (Morey 1998), but has been extended to include analysis of part of Thomas (LaTrobe MS 6290).
3. Prof. Barry Blake (pers. comm.) indicated that it is probably representative of the Tjapwurrung dialect of Western Victorian. However, owing to their being better records in Hercus (1986) for Western Victorian, I have given comparisons with Wembawemba or Djadjala.
4. In the catalogue entry for this manuscript, there is a note which was added by the cataloguer, probably in the 1960s. It reads: "Copied from the original Ms. by his son, William Jackson Thomas".
5. Although he is described as "a man of colour", elsewhere it is stated that he was born in London, and was thus perhaps of West Indian or African origin.
6. manma is also recorded as 'to make' in Yorta Yorta. (Bowe and Morey, forthcoming)
7. Recorded by Thomas (MS 214/21) as meaning 'for'.
8. This word is not recorded by Blake, but <kullik> is recorded by Thomas in MS 214/23 Book A as meaning 'then'.

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#### A Tribute to Michael Clyne

Since commencing my studies in linguistics in 1994, I have been very fortunate to study several subjects taught by Professor Michael Clyne. In 1997 he encouraged me to get involved in a very interesting student project about the use of Maltese language in Melbourne. In 1998 he frequently gave me advice during my honours year, and was one of the examiners for the thesis on which the present article is based. He is an inspiration to all the students in Monash Linguistics.