Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

MS 5105

Adam Kendon; Central Australian Sign Languages fieldwork, including Yuendumu Sign Language project

1978-1986

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COLLECTION SUMMARY

Creator: Adam Kendon
Title: Adam Kendon; Central Australian Sign Languages fieldwork, including Yuendumu Sign Language project
Collection no: MS 5105
Date range: 1978-2004
Extent: 1.4 metres (7 boxes)
Repository: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

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ACCESS TO COLLECTION

Access and use conditions

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Preferred citation

Items from this collection should be cited as [Title or description of manuscript item], Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, MS [insert number], Series [insert number], Subseries [insert number], Item [insert number and title].

For example: MS 5105/1/1 Sign language project, [1978-1982], Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, MS 5105 Adam Kendon; Central Australian sign languages fieldwork, including Yuendumu Sign Language project

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COLLECTION OVERVIEW

Scope and contents note

The Yuendumu Sign Language project began in 1978 with support from Australian National University. The fieldwork recorded in this collection was undertaken in 1981 and 1986, with support from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS), the Wenner-Gren Foundation and the National Science Foundation of Washington DC; analysis of the material was supported by the National Science Foundation.

Although the earliest reports to the scientific community of sign languages date from the mid-1870s, Adam Kendon's study was the first to seek to understand the structure of one of these sign languages and to analyse its relationship with the spoken language. At the time Adam Kendon was undertaking this study, the place of sign language in Australian Aboriginal culture was a neglected area of investigation.

Yuendumu was the primary site of this research because sign language was used extensively in daily life and because Warlpiri, the spoken language, had been documented, enabling comparison between the two languages. Also, Dr Mary Laughren, a linguist, was living at Yuendumu and Kendon was able to collaborate with her.

The study aimed to gather extensive visual recordings of the sign language used almost exclusively by older women at Yuendumu. Used mainly during periods of mourning, the sign language was also used whenever silent communication was warranted. Men had considerable knowledge of the women's sign language but used a somewhat different range of signs.

Further field work was undertaken to gather data about other Central Australian sign languages. The sites of this field work were Elliott, Neutral Junction, and Ti Tree.

A sign list, film and video recordings from the Yuendumu Sign Language project were produced. The material was glossed in both Warlpiri and English and an index in both languages compiled. These items and other analysis of the fieldwork were produced until 2004.

Sources:

PMS 3197 The sign language of the women of Yuendumu; a preliminary report on the structure of Warlpiri sign language

PMS 3626 A study of sign language among the Warlpiri at Yuendumu; summary of progress March, Sep 1982

Manuscript, typescript, photocopies, exercise books, loose pages
Provenance

The collection was given to the AIATSIS Collection on 9 July 2015 by David Nash, a colleague of Adam Kendon’s when Kendon was attached to Australian National University. Adam Kendon signed a Deed of Gift on 31 July 2017.

Material separated from the collection

No material has been separated from this collection.

Related material

MS 2901 Yuendumu sign language project
MS 1924 Knowledge of sign language in an Australian Aboriginal community; age and sign language proficiency among Warlpiri women at Yuendumu
MS 1866 A study of sign language in use among the Warlpiri of central Australia
MS 4849 Warlpiri sign language at Yuendumu; demonstrations for a Warlpiri sign language dictionary
MS 2569 [Comparative study of Aboriginal sign languages and guide to a notation system for Australian Aboriginal sign languages]
MS 2595 Warlpiri sign language dictionary project; interim documentation [Part 1]
MS 3794 Warlpiri sign language dictionary project: interim documentation [Part 2]
MS 4849 Warlpiri sign language at Yuendumu; demonstrations for a Warlpiri sign language dictionary
KENDON_A007 Warlpiri Sign Language Dictionary
KENDON.A02.BW Handsigns used by the Warlpiri
PMS 3197 The sign language of the women of Yuendumu; a preliminary report on the structure of Warlpiri sign language
PMS 3626 A study of sign language among the Warlpiri at Yuendumu; summary of progress March, Sep 1982
PMS 2944 Yuendumu sign language project

For a complete list of works by Adam Kendon, and of other works about Warlpiri sign language, held in the Collection and for other related material consult Mura®, the AIATSIS catalogue.

For access to Audiovisual material contact Collections.
Archivist’s note

Abbreviations:

AIAS    Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies
NSF    National Science Foundation
YSL    Yuendumu Sign Language

The language names used by Adam Kendon during fieldwork are not always the same as the preferred terms in the AIATSIS thesaurus, Austlang, www.austlang.aiatsis.gov.au. Where there is a difference, Kendon’s usage is followed by the AIATSIS preferred term in square brackets, e.g. Kaittij [Kaytetye]

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BIOGRAPHICAL and ADMINISTRATIVE NOTES

Adam Kendon was born in 1934 in London and grew up in a small village near Cambridge. Between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, he became interested in birds and bird behavior; the parallels with human behavior intrigued him and stimulated the beginning of what would become the focus of his academic career. His tertiary education ranged over a variety of subjects and institutions, following and developing his interest in human interaction. He studied botany, physiology, zoology and experimental psychology at Cambridge and, after working in a number of American institutions pursuing the same interest, was awarded a D.Phil from Oxford in 1963. He worked in the United States, Australia and Italy on face-to-face interaction, sign languages, and gesture.

Kendon held research posts at Oxford University, University of Pittsburgh, Bronx State Hospital, New York, The Australian National University, the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Studies, Indiana University and the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen. He taught at the University of Oxford, Cornell University, Connecticut College, the University of Pennsylvania, Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples, the University of Salerno and the University of Calabria. He co-edited (with Cornelia Mueller) the journal GESTURE, until 2009 and was then sole editor until 2017. His research interests focused on the implications of gesture and sign for conceptions of ‘language’ and the place of gesture in theories of language origins.

His books include Sign Languages of Aboriginal Australia (Cambridge 1988); a collection of previously published papers, Conducting Interaction (Cambridge 1990), and Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance (Cambridge 2004). He has also published an English translation of a treatise from 1832 by Andrea de Jorio on Neapolitan gesture under the title Gesture in Naples and Gesture in Classical Antiquity (Indiana 2000).

Adam Kendon retired in 2015.

The Yuendumu sign language project began in 1978 while Kendon was Senior Research Fellow at Australian National University. In that year preliminary material was collected
during two short visits to Yuendumu. In 1981, with funding from AIAS, further data was
gathered during a ten week visit there. During 1982 one more visit was made and the
material gathered during all trips was analysed extensively. The last visit was supported by
AIAS, the American Council of Learned Societies and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for
Anthropological Research.

The data was further used in the initial preparation of a sign language dictionary. The
AIATSIS Collection includes progress reports on the dictionary and an audiovisual version of
it.

Sources:

Professor Adam Kendon, http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dcal/people/collaborators/kendon (viewed 18
April 2017)

2017)

PMS 3197 The sign language of the women of Yuendumu; a preliminary report on the
structure of Warlpiri sign language

PMS 3626 A study of sign language among the Warlpiri at Yuendumu; summary of progress
March, Sep 1982

MS 5101/1/6 Kendon Vitae current

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SERIES DESCRIPTION

Series 1 Funding applications and grants

MS 5105/1 Adam Kendon’s work on Central Australian sign languages was funded
through grants from the National Science Foundation, the Wenner-Gren
Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies and the then
Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies.

Item

MS 5105/1/1 Sign language project, [1978-1982]

• YSL seminar notes [n.d., pagination not consecutive]
• YSL II – 1981-1982 [AIAS Grant 1980]
• Wenner-Gren Foundation
  [includes list of birds observed in the vicinity of Yuendumu]
• Deposit of material arrangements with AIAS, 1978
  [includes copy of kinship chart ?by ?of George Jampinjinpa Robertson]
MS 5105/1/2  Equipment, 1975
Correspondence, file notes and lists relating to film analysis equipment

MS 5105/1/3  National Science Foundation [NSF] grant, 1981

MS 5105/1/4  YSL 1981 NSF file

MS 5105/1/5  Warlpiri Sign Language at Yuendumu, Australia: Short Report of Fieldwork from Jun 11 to Jul 23 1982

MS 5105/1/6  ‘Kendon – Vitae current’
Documents relating to Guggenheim fellowship, Cheryl Wright, biographical material, draft paper on gesture; includes letters to the Department of Education, Southern Region Northern Territory regarding YSL project 1981

MS 5105/1/7 Pt 1  AIAS grant materials, 1982 application

MS 5105/1/7 Pt 2  AIAS grant materials, YSL 83

MS 5105/1/8  Guggenheim application 1983-1985

MS 5105/1/9  AIAS 1986 grant; ‘Comparative Study of Australian Aboriginal Sign Language’

MS 5105/1/10  NSF application, 1987; ‘Studies in Australian Aboriginal Sign Languages’

MS 5105/1/11  AIAS application, 1990; ‘Aboriginal Sign Language: A Visual Exposition’

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Series 2 Fieldwork and analysis

MS 5105/2  Adam Kendon researched Warlpiri, Warumungu, Warlmanpa, Anmatyerre, Mudburra and Djingili sign languages, at Yuendumu, Elliott, Ti Tree and Neutral Junction, 1974-1987
The primary research was conducted into Warlpiri (Subseries 1); Subseries 2 was conducted in two phases to gather data about other Central Australian sign languages.
Informants include Winnie Namgala, Ruby Nangala Robertson, Daisy [Akemarre], Dolly [Nampijinpa Granites], Judy [Nampijinpa Granites]

Subseries 1 Warlpiri

MS 5105/2/1  Field diaries, tape logs, transcriptions and glosses and analysis of recordings at Yuendumu.
### MS 5105 Adam Kendon; Central Australian Sign Languages fieldwork, including the Yuendumu Sign Language project

Items MS 5105/2/1/13, MS 5105/2/1/17-21, MS 5105/2/1/22, MS 5105/2/1/34-36, MS 5105/2/1/38, MS 5105/2/1/40-46 are kept in MS 5105 o/s box

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| MS 5105/2/1/1 | Human Ethology Laboratory Film Diary, 1974-[1978]  
[Includes Mowanjum project 1975, Enja project 1975, and YSL films] |
| MS 5105/2/1/2 | YSL IV, YSL XIII, YSL XXIII, YSL X, YSL SVIII, YSL I, YSL II |
| MS 5105/2/1/3 | YSL complete, gloss only, YSL XXII part, YSL XV gloss, YSL XVI.2 no transcription |
| MS 5105/2/1/4 | YSL XIV, XX, XXI, Sentences  
[This log appears to start at Tape I] |
| MS 5105/2/1/5 | YSL XXII, YSL XI (notes), YSL XV and parallel text, YSL IV |
| MS 5105/2/1/6 | Yuedumu Sign Language notebooks, Jul-Oct 1978; annotated copies  
- YSL XIV, XX, XXI, Sentences  
- YSL XXII, YSL (notes), YSL XV and parallel text, YSL IV  
- Dolly Nampijinpa YSL 15  
  [transcription and gloss; original] |
| MS 5105/2/1/7 | YSL 81 Wangarla story (2nd version), XIII 632-733; Wiinywiinypa story; XIII 763-863 |
| MS 5105/2/1/8 | Winnie Nangala  
- Purlkangku kiyalpa parraja-pinku muru-pungu  
- Yarnirnpa-kurlu  
- Wiinywiinypa-kurlu |
| MS 5105/2/1/9 | Yarnirnpa story original and photocopy  
Includes Winnie Nangala’s Yarnirnpa-kurlu, spoken and sign language versions; and Winnie Nangala’s Parraja Story sign version transcript [photocopy] |
| MS 5105/2/1/10 | Yarnirnpa I, YSL VI, Ruby XIII  
[Transcription and analysis. Includes loose pages] |
| MS 5105/2/1/11 | Transcript of Yarnirnpa-kurlu and sign version |
| MS 5105/2/1/12 | Correspondence with Mary Laughren; YSL transcription and lexicon queries, Nov 1979-Mar 1980  
[Includes copy of Yuendumu sign Language Project Memorandum 1, November 1978] |
| MS 5105/2/1/13 | Winnie Nangala; Yarnirnpa-kurlu sign language version [original]  
[In o/s box 7] |
| MS 5105/2/1/14 | YSL II, III Diary 1981, 1982  
[Diary for YSL II, notes on other scholars’ work, YSL 81 notes and queries] |
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MS 5105/2/1/15 YSL 82 Tape logs, I – VIII
MS 5105/2/1/16 Notation
- Parraja story
- Yarnirnпа-Kurlu
MS 5105/2/1/17 YSL IV, X, Yarnirnпа II
MS 5105/2/1/18 Transcript of Yarnirnпа story with accompanying signs
MS 5105/2/1/19 Analysis, Winnie Nangala’s Yirmirnпа signed/spoken story
MS 5105/2/1/20 Yarnirnпа analysis
MS 5105/2/1/21 Notes on observations of G-phrases in Yarnirnпа story
MS 5105/2/1/22 Gesture diary; Analysis notes in Parraja I
MS 5105/2/1/23 Winnie Nangala, Parraja story, sign version transcript
MS 5105/2/1/24 Parraja story: original and gloss
MS 5105/2/1/25 YSL transcript analyses
[Includes comment on John McDouall Stuart’s misinterpretation of Warumungu signs]
MS 5105/2/1/26 Warlpiri sign discourse – analyses [Parraja]
MS 5105/2/1/27 Greedy Girl
[Tck XI tape log]
MS 5105/2/1/28 Greedy Girl transcripts
MS 5105/2/1/29 YSL 86 Tape
[Also includes noted on other scholars’ work and drafts for sections of Kendon 1988 Sign Languages of Aboriginal Australia …]
MS 5105/2/1/30 YSL 1986 Book 1
[notes on verbs, compounds and re-duplication]
MS 5105/2/1/31 Tape Logs, YSL 1987, Tapes I – VIII
MS 5105/2/1/32 Tape Logs YSL 1987, IX – XVI
MS 5105/2/1/33 YSL 87 Tape XII, transcription of Story II (Rt W0, YSL 87 Tape XIII, Story III (Ruby)
MS 5105/2/1/34 Analysis of spoken and signed stretches of discourse, with notes on what parts are spoken and what are signed
MS 5105/2/1/35 Transcriptions YSL X.1-57, IV
MS 5105/2/1/36 YSL IV Sign Rate
MS 5105/2/1/37 Transcription of YSL 4
MS 5105/2/1/38 YSL X transcription and ?analogue video time codes
[the purpose of the annotation of the transcription is unclear; it may be analogue video time codes]
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Subseries 2 Other Central Australian Sign Languages

MS 5105/2/2 The fieldwork recorded in this subseries occurred in two phases: 15 July-20 September 1984; and 21 October 1984-4 April 1985. The purpose of this field work was to record sign languages in use among people from a number of spoken language groups.

Phase one was conducted primarily in Elliott, with journeys to Yuendumu, Tennant Creek and Kalumpurlpa. Warlmanpa, Djingili, Mudburra and Warumungu sign languages were recorded in this phase.

Phase two was conducted primarily in Ti-Tree with a trip to Neutral Junction. Anmatyerre and Kaititj [Kaytetye] sign languages were recorded during this phase

Item

MS 5105/2/2/1 Fieldwork diary [1984-1985]
[This diary includes the names of the people who shared the sign languages with Kendon; and the linguists with whom he worked on transcription and translation.

Also includes looseleaf of Ken Hale’s semantic domains]

MS 5105/2/2/2 Elliott Tapes I; Tape logs ELT I – III

MS 5105/2/2/3 Elliott Tapes; ELT IV – VI
MS 5105/2/2/4  Elliot Tapes Book III; ELT VII
MS 5105/2/2/5  Correspondence, Mary Laughren to Adam Kendon, 6 Jul 1984
MS 5105/2/2/6  Tape logs, Log book 1; Tck I, IV, III, part of IV, V
MS 5105/2/2/7  Tape Logbook II, Tcks IV, V, VI, X, XI.1, XI.2
MS 5105/2/2/8  Tck Logs, Book III, Tck IV, XI, XIII, X
MS 5105/2/2/9  Tck 15, ‘Bunny Narrula demonstrates Warumungu finger talk’ Volume 1
MS 5105/2/2/10  Anmatyerre Notes, Warumungu Notes
The first pages are in a hand other than Adam Kendon’s
MS 5105/2/2/11  Tck VII, Tck VIII, Warlmanpa, Tck XV notes
MS 5105/2/2/12  Tck XIV and Tck XV; Transcription materials (Warumungu)
• Notes for transcripts of TCK XIV, TCK XV
  [Bunny and Annie ‘N’ demonstration tapes]
• TCK XX Transcript Vol II
• Bunny
  [photocopied transcription, not in Adam Kendon’s hand]
• TCK 15 Bunny N[arrula]
  [photocopied transcription in a number of hands, not including Adam Kendon’d]
MS 5105/2/2/13  Warumungu vocals – alphabetical
 [Waramungu and Warlmanpa word lists and documents relating to Warumungu land claim]
MS 5105/2/2/14  Ti Tree I – IV.I
MS 5105/2/2/15  Ti Tree Tape Log Book II

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Series 3 Resources

MS 5105/3  This series comprises items collected by Kendon during his research in Central Australia. They include notes and lists compiled by himself, Central Australian language publications, pamphlets and newsletters, all of the latter having bearing on his work to differing and varying degrees.

Item

MS 5105/3/1  Annotated bibliography, Australian Sign Languages
 [These index cards are organised into the following regions: Southern Coast; Northeast Coast; Rainforest; Riverina; Lake Eyre; Gulf; East Cape York; West Cape York; Torres Strait; South Aust Gulf; Western
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Desert; Kimberley; North Central Desert; Fitzmaurice; Wagait [Patjtjamalh], North East Arnhem Land, Indian Ocean; Southwest Coast, Tasmania
Approx 180 cards]

MS 5105/3/2 Kendon, A., Field list of Warlpiri Signs Compiled at Yuendumu, NT in July and October 1978 [photocopies of index cards, some annotated, each card corresponding to a Warlpiri sign with English Warlpiri and Stokoe notation]


MS 5105/3/4 AIAS Institute News, no 7, Dec 1987

MS 5105/3/5 Junga-Yimi, vol 1, no 1, Jul 1978

MS 5105/3/6 Institute for Aboriginal Development, (1979) Aranda-English, English-Aranda Vocabulary


MS 5105/3/12 Koch, H., [n.d.] A Simple Sketch of the Kaititj [Kaytetye] Language

MS 5105/3/13 Articles by Hale and Miller
• Hale, K. (1983), Warlpiri and the grammar of non-configurational languages, Natural Language and Linguistic Theory 1: 5-47 [photocopy]
• Hale, K. (n.d.) Linguistic research and Aboriginal land claims in Central Australia [typescript]
• Hale, K. (1979) A note on Damin kinship terminology
• Miller, W. R. (1970) Sign language used at the Warburton Ranges in Western Australia [typescript]

MS 5105/3/14 Articles and papers, avoidance and focus strategies in Warlpiri [includes 2 x David Nash and 1 x Mary Laughren]

MS 5105/3/15 Purle, C., Green, J., Heffernan, M. (n.d.) Draft Anmatyerre word list; Anmatyerre-English English-Anmatyerre
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MS 5105/3/16  Enga material – gesture, speech, analysis notes
MS 5105/3/17  Notes on West Jr, L. The Sign Language: An Analysis
MS 5105/3/18  Kaytej [Kaytetye] word list compiled by H Koch [includes duplicates]
MS 5105/3/19  Warlmanpa vocabulary; semantic domain and alphabetic
MS 5105/3/20  Mudbura [Mudburra] vocabulary resources; and Yurrunak kuya translation to English
MS 5105/3/21  Lists of AIAS sign language resources

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Series 4 Preparatory notes, papers and publications

MS 5105/4  The series comprises drafts, notes, typescripts of excerpts and early versions of some of the papers and publications Kendon was able to produce from Central Australian sign language research
The item titles are taken from the folders in which the items arrived at AIATSIS.

Item

MS 5105/4/1  Parallels and Divergences between Warlpiri Sign language and Spoken Warlpiri: Analysis of Signed and Spoken Discourses [MS 5105/2/1/34 relates to this item]
Item includes:
- Copy of this paper, prepared for the Discourse Symposium, AIAS Biennial Conference 1986
- ‘On the construction of utterances in Warlpiri Sign Language: an exploration in the relationship between two modes of realization of a language’ [typescript]
- ‘Orientation and IRI in Yarnimpa-Kurlu [manuscript]
- Orientation in parraja-kurlu in association with R-junctures [manuscript]
- Typescript beginning ‘Warlpiri sometimes tell stories in sign alone. …’
- ‘Aspects of Warlpiri sign language’ – talk given by Kendon at undisclosed date and place [typescript]
- Organisation of sign utterance [manuscript]
- Exercise book containing notes on various sign language topics and projects

Page 14 of 16
Simultaneous original
[The contents of this item relate to Kendon’s 1983 paper, ‘Speaking and signing simultaneously in Walpiri sign language users’.]

Documents include:
- Correspondence from M Laughren to Kendon 6 Jan 1984 and 25 Apr 1984 [holograph]
- Correspondence from David Nash to Kendon 31 Dec 1983 [typescript and holograph]
- Comments concerning “Speaking and Signing Simultaneously in Warlpiri Sign Language Users”; Referee B [annotated typescript]
- Correspondence from W Bright, Editor Language, to Kendon 5 Jul 1984
- Correspondence from Kendon to Mary Laughren 21 Jan 1984 [typescript, carbon copy]
- Outcome of discussing ‘simultaneous’ paper with David [Nash] [manuscript]

Kendon, A (n.d.) A list of signs from the sign language in use among the Warlpiri at Yuendumu

“Notes for Chapter 13”
[These notes possibly relate to Chapter 13 of Kendon 1988, Sign languages of Aboriginal Australia: Cultural, semiotic and communicative perspectives]

Yarnirnpa-Kurlu; sign-speech complementarity

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Finding aid compiled by F Blackburn, with assistance from L Reed and comment from Adam Kendon, August 2017

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