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# 1 Introduction. Legends and narratives in language and culture

Every society thrives on stories, legends, and myths. The intricate fabric of every culture is reflected in how people relate the lore to each other, what they talk about, how they make sure the audience is involved and how the art of storytelling is taught to their children. Narratives, legends, and stories of various kinds are a key to cultural knowledge and cultural heritage, across languages of the world. A legend may offer a cautionary tale. A myth might tell a story about how people came to be the way they are now, and where they come from. In Ellen Basso's (1987: 1) words,

narrative traditions are a vital, dynamic, and productive art form, an elaborate means of preserving, reworking, and sharing between generations knowledge, insight, and understanding of their world.

Across the world, traditional narratives vary in their genres, the ways they are told, and the linguistic means they are couched in. Narratives are hardly static. New genres and new ways of telling stories evolve, as people are exposed to new media and to the impending pressure from mainstream cultures and languages. What could be a better way of catching a glimpse of the unprecedented diversity of narratives and their structures than to turn to linguistic traditions in the very hotspots of linguistic diversity and to focus on the voices of minority First Nations languages – reflected in the many facets of the stories, told and documented?

The present volume is an attempt to do just that. Its aim is to address a selection of linguistic and cultural facets of the narratives in areas of linguistic diversity across the tropics and a few adjacent areas. These span New Guinea, Northern Australia, and the Tibeto-Burman domain, with an additional foray into traditional narratives in Siberia.

A narrative will have a structure and will evolve as the plot evolves. Traditional stories usually begin, and end, in a particular way. In many European languages, a folk tale will start with an introductory formula along the lines of *once upon a time*. Estonian folktales start with the expression *Elanud kord . . .*, 'literally, there is reported to have lived once . . .' An ancestral myth in Tariana, from north-western Amazonia, would open with the time word *walिकासु* 'at the beginning, back in the old days'. Stories in Manambu, a Papuan language, tend

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to start with a statement of the participants and their actions. Reference to a place is another typical way of starting a story (Dingemans, Rossi, and Floyd 2017). In each case, the scene will be set for the narrative to unravel. The formulaic beginnings offer the audience a sneak preview into the genre to be expected.

A formula will also conclude a story. In Tariana, any story (a folktale, a myth, or a narrative dealing with a historical event) would end in a verbless clause with the adverb *kida* or *kaida* ‘finished, ready’, or the possessed noun *kewhidana* ‘the end’ (literally ‘head’). A typical ending of a legend or a myth in Manambu is quite different: it translates as ‘the story goes back to its base’; for some, it is ‘the story enters an enclosure’ – as if, when told, the story was let out of where it is kept, and when it is finished, it goes back to its resting place. For a real-life narrative, a speaker would just say “it is finished”.

Different speech genres may have their distinct features – both grammatical and lexical. A grammaticalised marker of information source (that is, an evidential) is often chosen depending on the genre of a story – whether it is an ancestral tale, an account of what had actually happened to the narrator, or something they know because someone else told them that. Switching evidentials highlights multiple information sources and multiple layers of access to – and knowledge of – what one is talking about (Aikhenvald 2015: 280–281). In several Indigenous Australian languages, artful use of quotations reflects layers of representation of speech and thought through voices of different characters (Rumsey et al., this volume). In telling a story in English or in North Khanty (an Ob-Ugric language), a speaker may choose to switch to what is known as “historic present”. This is a way of describing “the past as if it is happening now”, and of conveying “something of the dramatic immediacy of an eye-witness account” (Quirk et al. 1985: 118; Skribnik, this volume). Speakers of every language will exploit whichever means are available to them, weaving a complex fabric of a narrative.

Which linguistic devices are the key to the narratives of varied genres in different languages? How to make a story flow, and keep the listeners on track? And how do cultural changes and new means of communication affect narrative genres and the way speakers structure them? What are the themes and the genres which come up time and time again? We now turn to these, and other, common threads in the analysis of narratives which permeate the twelve contributions within this volume. We start with the person of the narrator and the representation of multiple voices through quoted speech and thought in Australian languages – the topic of the first two chapters.

Storytellers in Yidiñ, an indigenous language from North Queensland (Australia), had a special way of recounting traditional tales. The speaker would often take on the identity of the main character and tell the tale as if they were the protagonist – ‘I’, the first person. This is the topic of Chapter 2, “First person ori-

entation in Yidiñ narratives and its implications”, by R. M. W. DIXON. The stories about several characters were told in first person.

The fusion of the character and the narrator resonates with Silverstein’s (1999: 107) remarks:

imagine a so-called “first-person” narration, that is, a narration – generally marked, where explicit, by the use of *I/we* personal deixis – in which the incumbent of the narrator role is also one of the characters inhabiting the narrated world. Imagine further that there happens to be no clear and distinct metapragmatic framing apparatus: at the level of text-sentences, for example, there is not the constant reminder of the dual roles the communicating narrator/communicated-about narrative subject is occupying in first-person narration. Finally, imagine that we are not encountering deliberate, aesthetically theorized verbal art, so much as that vast folk-art that is constituted intuitively every time a speaker of a language achieves a text-in-context.

This fusion of the narrator and the ancestral protagonist can be compared to other traditional extensions of ‘I’ or ‘us’ as a cover term for a ritually – or traditionally – defined unit, or segment (be it a clan, or a subclan; known as “segmentary” person: Merlan and Rumsey 1991: 96–98; Rumsey 2000; Henry 2013: 282). The narrator, the ancestral character, and oftentimes the whole clan or tribe are fused into one. In each case, the narrator speaks as a protagonist. And in other parts of the Pacific (including the Maori and the Fijians) people use first person to identify themselves not just with a particular group, but with a particular ancestral chief or an ancestor within it (but not a group: Rumsey 1999). The autobiographical component of public speeches and oratories cast in “segmentary person” is one of the topics of Chapter 11, by Rosita Henry – we return to this shortly.

For Yidiñ, in a legend where the initial main character passes away, the narrator takes on the first person reference of another character who now becomes the principal actor. This technique is absent from Dyrbal, Yidiñ’s southerly neighbour, where non-autobiographical narratives are all told in third person.

Yidiñ and Dyrbal are similar in both having split case marking – nouns are marked as absolutive (S and O functions) versus ergative (A function) whereas first and second person pronouns are shown as nominative (S and A) versus accusative (O). In Dyrbal all clausal coordination is on an S/O basis, whether the clauses are linked through shared noun or pronoun. Yidiñ differs in that coordination based on a pronoun is on an S/A basis, reflecting the morphology of pronouns. This correlates with the first person orientation of narratives in Yidiñ, giving it a higher frequency of first and second person pronouns than Dyrbal. Accordingly, Dixon argues that there is a strong interdependency between the infrastructure of a grammar and the ways narratives are organized (to which we return further on in this introduction).

The multiplicity of voices reflected in the use of quotations and re-enactment of various characters and the narrator is the topic of Chapter 3, “The sound of one quotation mark: Quoted speech in Indigenous Australian narrative”, by ALAN RUMSEY, JOHN MANSFIELD, and NICHOLAS EVANS.

In Silverstein’s (1999: 108) words, “complex indexicalities [. . .] bespeak complexity of crisscrossing and overlapping voicings” with which speakers and members of speech communities articulate themselves to each other within the context of relating stories, legends, and myths. A special feature of narrative traditions in many Australian languages is the predominance of quotations in representing much of the action, the talk, the thoughts, the feelings and the attitudes of the characters and the narrator through speech reports – and especially direct quotes.

Quotations often appear without an overt segmental introducer, or a “quote framer”, and set off from the rest of the text by intonation and other, suprasegmental, means (in contrast to a few languages from other parts of the world: see a typological overview in Aikhenvald 2011: 314–321). They offer more than the content of what is said. In Clark and Gerrig’s (1990: 772) words, quotations are “demonstrations”, so much so that “the internal structure of quotation is really the structure of what is being depicted”. Quotations represent actions, in a lively and dramatic way – as can be heard and enjoyed in the linked online audio recordings that accompany many of the narrative texts discussed in this chapter. The meanings of speech reports go beyond speech representation: they express internal thoughts, feelings, and perception – similar to numerous languages across the world, spanning New Guinea and the Andes (Adelaar 1990; de Vries 1990; Aikhenvald 2012a: 348–349). The speech verb, ‘say’, is polysemous with ‘do’ in most languages discussed. This relatively uncommon feature is shared with a few Austronesian languages and languages of the Horn of Africa (Cohen, Simeone-Senelle, and Vanhove 2002; Aikhenvald 2011: 318–319).

The preponderance of quotations, with their prosodic features, stereotyped use of interjections, and person shifts, signal the inclusion of multiple voices in the traditional stories from six Indigenous languages from northern Australia – Kayardild, Bininj Kunwok, Dalabon, Ngarinyin, Wurla, and Bunuba. The expert manipulation of represented speech interspersed with quotations and speech reports of other sorts reflect “the heteroglossic mastery – including the harnessing of multilingualism to narrative – which is displayed in the oral cultures of Indigenous Australia” (§5 of Chapter 3).

The ways of describing events and organizing a narrative vary across the world’s languages. Many languages of Asia-Pacific, Amazonia and the Tibeto-Burman region have a special device, known as “clause chains” – a special type of complex sentence unavailable in many familiar Indo-European lan-

guages like English. A sequence of backgrounded subevents will be expressed by a chain of dependent – or “medial” – clauses leading up to a main, typically “final” clause. This technique contrasts with the ways a speaker of English – or of many Indo-European and Austronesian languages – will describe a sequence of related sub-events, with several independent sentences (linked by intonation or by conjunctions: an up-to-date synthesis is in Sarvasy and Aikhenvald forthcoming). Clause chaining is often a feature of various narrative genres. In many languages it goes together with “switch-reference” marking. Switch reference indicates whether or not the subject of a clause is identical with that of another clause, oftentimes signalling topical continuity within the stretch (more on this in Sarvasy and Aikhenvald forthcoming, and references there). Clause chains, and switch reference, are a well-attested feature of numerous languages of Papua New Guinea. Three languages from this hotspot of extreme linguistic diversity discussed in this volume are Manambu, a Ndu language from East Sepik Province (Chapter 4), Doromu-Koki, a Manubaran language from Central Province (Chapter 5), and Nungon, a Huon-Finisterre language from Morobe Province (Chapter 6).

Organizing clauses into chains is a means of packaging information and structuring the representation of an event. In a canonical situation the final clause – or a focal clause, following the terminology in Dixon (2009) – will carry the main event line. Non-main clauses – also known as medial clauses – carry backgrounded information, in line with their status as supporting clauses. The person of the narrator – and their interface with the addressee – underlie the interactive powers of a narrative and of a conversation. Both the narrator and the addressee are woven into the fabric of the narrative. This is done by artful manipulation of clause chains. Medial verb forms in Manambu can occur in non-canonical positions (along the lines mapped out by Sarvasy 2015). A free-standing medial clause occurs in addressee-oriented commands and questions. Or it can mark completed action, inviting the addressee to join in and start over again. A sentence-final medial clause may serve as a clarification; or it may mark a completed action with an invitation to the addressee to join in and take their turn. The non-canonical uses of medial clauses are a means of keeping up the interaction between the speaker and the interlocutors, making the stories and the conversations flow. This is the topic of Chapter 4 “The medial clause does it all: Coherence, continuity, and addressee involvement in Manambu”, by ALEXANDRA Y. AIKHENVALD.

The ways of telling a story and the means of linking clauses and sentences are likely to be affected by language contact (see, for instance, Haig 2001; Aikhenvald 2002: 153–175, Sarvasy and Aikhenvald forthcoming). Doromu-Koki has been in intensive contact with Hiri Motu, an Oceanic language, for a long time. This has resulted in borrowing numerous lexical and grammatical items and techniques. Doromu-Koki preserves its original system of clause chains with a robust system of

switch-reference – which co-exist with numerous clausal and sentential conjunctions, many of which have a transparent Hiri Motu origin. Relatively recent contact with English, a major language of communication within the part of Papua New Guinea where Doromu-Koki is spoken, has resulted in an increase of code-switching. The advent of new genres of communication – writing, internet, and social media, all influenced by English – has seen an expansion of conjunctions and a reduction of clause chains as a means of linking sentences within these newly emergent discourse genres. On-going changes in media-based communication among the Manambu point in the same direction. New genres create new ways of saying things, oscillating towards convergence and levelling with English as the mainstream language. In a nutshell: social media and mobile phones are transforming the ways the Doromu-Koki, from Central Province, and also the Manambu from East Sepik, communicate: short and clipped sentences are becoming the way to go. These issues are the topic of Chapter 5, “Contact-induced changes in Doromu-Koki clause linking: New genres, new strategies”, by ROBERT L. BRADSHAW.

How do children acquire narrative techniques in a Papuan language with an elaborate system of clause chains, and switch-reference tracking the identity of who-did-what-to whom? Speakers of Nungon, from Morobe Province in Papua New Guinea, learn how to tell a story at a fairly early age. An in-depth longitudinal study of child language acquisition of Nungon in Chapter 6, “Verbatim narrative prompting to children in Nungon”, by HANNAH SARVASY, shows the pre-eminence of verbatim prompting by mothers and carers. Children are prompted to repeat lengthy clause chains, aimed at reporting their own personal experiences, word-by-word and clause-by-clause. Following the principles of organization of Nungon narratives, and their tense- iconicity, the verbatim prompting sequences involve clause chains for extended stretches. This is where medial clauses are the most prevalent. The process of prompting reflects a high degree of planning of a story which is to be fed to the child by the carers, alongside the “impressive maintenance of switch-reference relations that accord with grammatical rules”. The children readily comply with verbatim prompting of narratives – which may last for as long as five or six minutes. This indicates their familiarity with, and acceptance of, this kind of interaction, and accounts for their early mastery of clause-chaining, ready to be manipulated for discourse-organizing purposes at a later age. The constituency of prompts may point towards psychological salience of phrases and clauses, even for speakers with minimal literacy and little if any formal schooling (as is the case for care-givers among the Nungon). Sarvasy’s is the first-ever case study of verbatim narrative prompting as a way of teaching children to produce narratives in a clause-chaining language.

The next four chapters focus on grammatical devices which keep a narrative going, ensure its coherence, and signal its progress, its focal points and climaxes.

The fabric and the flow of a narrative are seen and expressed through the variety of clause-linking devices. Chapter 7, “Adjoining clauses in Brokpa narratives”, by PEMA WANGDI, focuses on the internal structure of sentences and their combinations in stories and conversations in this Tibeto-Burman (or Trans-Himalayan) language of Bhutan. In Genetti’s (2011: 5) words, “many languages . . . possess a feature, or a set of features, which is remarkable in systematic efficiency and central to its design, an axis around which other grammatical subsystems revolve”. For Brokpa, as for Dolakha Newar (Genetti 2011: 6), its “essential structural core is found in the combination of clauses, which produces sentences with remarkable levels of syntactic complexity”. Clause-chaining, nominalizations, and embedded clauses expresses the full gamut of semantic types of clause-linking to specify relations between clauses and between sentences, within a coherent narrative. A feature Brokpa shares with many Tibeto-Burman, Papuan and Australian languages is a pervasive heterosemy of case markers (within noun phrases) and clause-linking morphemes on verbs within dependent clauses. The organization of a narrative is mirrored by the status of dependent clauses as supporting clauses transmitting backgrounded information and of main clauses as focal clauses, which carry the principal story line. The discourse function of clause types is iconically reflected in their linear order: supporting clauses – which serve as a lead-up to the main line – typically precede the main, focal clauses.

Anaphoric devices are a further means of making a story flow and maintaining its coherence. Demonstratives in their anaphoric function help keep track of referents throughout discourse. They help establish major discourse participants and distinguish between those referents which are backgrounded and less salient, and those which will be foregrounded and even unexpected. A substantial body of literature focuses on discourse use of demonstratives in languages with relatively simple systems, with a binary opposition between ‘this’ and ‘that’ (see, for instance, Dixon 2010: 223–254). What happens if a language has a complex system of demonstratives with a consistent distinction between visible and non-visible terms and more than two degrees of distance? This is the topic of Chapter 8, “Discourse functions of ‘visible’ and ‘nonvisible’ demonstratives in Tiang (New Ireland) and in a cross-linguistic perspective”, by CHRISTOPH HOLZ. Tiang has three degrees of distance – proximal, medial, and distal – and distinguishes visible and nonvisible forms. Visible forms tend to be a functionally unmarked choice; nonvisible forms tend to emphasise that the referent is not seen.

The use of visible forms correlates with speaker’s knowledge. The geography of the Tiang-speaking island of Djaul is known to everyone, and so place names are always referred to with visible demonstratives, even when out of sight. In this way, demonstratives in Tiang express non-propositional evidentiality – information source concerning a noun phrase or just a noun (along the lines of Aikhen-

vald 2018; Jacques 2018). A careful study of a large corpus of Tiang narratives shows that nonvisible forms are the preferred choice for anaphors, while cataphors tend to be expressed by visible demonstratives. This statement is corroborated by a careful study of twenty-two languages with visible versus nonvisible distinctions in their demonstrative systems, from various parts of the world. The sample covers all the languages for which information about anaphoric uses of visible and nonvisible forms is available at this point in time. The link between lack of visibility and participant anaphora correlates with conceptual distance. For instance, in Nivkh, a Paleo-Siberian isolate, the immediate anaphor is expressed with visible demonstratives, while nonvisible demonstratives appear to be reserved for anaphoric reference to those referents which are either not seen or were mentioned much earlier in the narrative. That visible demonstratives are preferred for marking cataphoric referents may have to do with the way cataphora works – deictically referring to something immediately following the demonstrative. Holz’s chapter, in its depth and breadth, opens a new avenue for typological research – to be taken up by linguists working on other languages with visibility distinctions in their demonstrative systems and their deployment in discourse.

Some grammatical devices are particularly prominent in framing a narrative, foregrounding its salient features, and leading up to an unexpected climactic peak. Mirativity – or grammaticalized expectation of knowledge, which covers unprepared mind and surprise – is a relatively recent arrival in the field of linguistics. It is not that individual scholars of numerous languages had not been aware of the existence of the phenomenon. But having a cross-linguistic overview of mirative, by DeLancey (1997), alerted grammarians across the world to its validity as something more than an exotic curiosity. New types of mirative systems (distinct from tense, aspect, modality and evidentiality) – as exponents of what Hyslop (2014) aptly called “expectation of knowledge” – and new mirative extensions of other categories keep being discovered (see also Aikhenvald 2012b and DeLancey 2012).

The use of mirative forms within narratives remains somewhat of a moot point in most grammars. Mirative forms and mirative extensions of other categories (be it evidentials or aspects) tend to be illustrated with isolated sentences produced as a spontaneous reaction to something. Two further chapters in this volume take a different approach – focusing on how miratives play out in actual narratives, and how a context leading up to a mirative is structured.

Mirativity, the grammatical marking of unexpected information, is a core feature of many a Himalayan language, and particularly so of Kurtöp, from Bhutan. This is the focus of Chapter 9, “Miratives and magic: On ‘newness’ as iconic grammar in Kurtöp narratives”, by GWENDOLYN HYSLOP. Mirativity is encoded in perfective and imperfective aspects, and in affirmative and negative existential and equa-



tional copulas. Mirativity is distinct from evidentiality (the marking of information source) and egophoricity (access to information). Mirative forms express the information the speaker did not have before the speech act. They are not uncommon in conversations and other speech genres – as the need arises. But a real hotspot of miratives are Kurtöp narratives all of which appear to involve something magical and whose key characters possess special, supernatural powers. The overall percentage of miratives in such stories is strikingly high. In two of the stories analysed by Hyslop, miratives were used within the first three clauses – “setting the tone for the introduction of the characters and place”. When asked about the choice of forms in the stories, the speakers remarked that the mirative forms made the stories “interesting”, and that using them was the way to tell a story.

Miratives appear to act like attention-getting devices – as if telling the audience to expect the unexpected, and to keep listening: something new is coming. The strength of novelty and lack of expectation expressed in Kurtöp mirative forms correlates with another feature – their relatively recent origin. It is as if the novel forms encode very novel information – an example of historical iconicity of sorts. And quite likely, older and more archaic miratives in a language will tend to wear out, giving way to new mirative forms, which would express stronger newsworthiness, and novelty. The necessity for constant renewal of mirative forms and the iconic correlation between the age of a form and its force is reminiscent of Jespersen’s cycle of renewal for negative expressions across languages (see, for instance, Miestamo 2017: 431). A similar point is taken up in Chapter 10.

As a narrative evolves, the audience is gradually being prepared for a new and surprising turn of events, and a focal point of a stretch of discourse. The ways in which the narration is structured shows an iconic correlation with the presentation of events leading to a focal point, or a climax in a story – be it a folktale, a legend, a myth, or an account of any event worth talking about. In many languages of Western and Central Siberia, such a focal point requires mirative marking. This is the topic of Chapter 10, by ELENA SKRIBNIK, “Reading Siberian folklore: Miratives, premirative contexts, and Proppean ‘Hero’s Journey’”.

The sequence of actions leading to the climax of a story paves the way for an unexpected outcome. In other words, a discourse context for a mirative meaning is created by a conventionalised series of actions reflecting what Propp (1929) called “A Hero’s Journey”. The set typically involves

- (i) a verb of motion towards the speaker or point of reference, ‘come’,
- (ii) a verb of visual perception ‘see’, potentially also followed by a verb of comprehension and then a verb of speech.

The sequence of verbs and of actions goes along the formula *veni vidi* ‘I came I saw’, which can be expanded by *comprehendi* ‘I understood’ and then *dixi* ‘I

said (it)'. This is the essence of what Elena Skribnik calls “premirative contexts”: a set of background events leading to a climax in a narrative. The formulaic organization of the story line in its lead-up to an unexpected outcome creates the context for the use of dedicated “mirative” forms. Examples come from Mansi and Khanty, two Ob-Ugric languages (from the Uralic family). Or an essentially non-mirative form will acquire a mirative extension – as is the case in Selkup, from the Samoyedic branch of Uralic, which has no conventionalised special forms with just a mirative meaning. The organization of a tale with its build-up towards a surprising outcome creates the appropriate context and the motivation for the emergence, and concomitant renewal, of mirative forms and meanings across the discourse genres captured by the corpora of narratives of indigenous languages of Siberia (analysed by Skribnik).

The renewal and salience of mirative meanings in specific discourse genres resonates with Hyslop’s conclusions in Chapter 9. In Du Bois’ (1985: 363) adage, “grammars code best what speakers do most”. New, surprising, and unexpected facets of magic, the supranatural, and folk tales across the board are conducive to continuous renewal of mirative forms, pivotal for telling a story the way it is to be told.

The three final chapters focus on a selection of topics, and types, of narratives in Northern Australia and in Papua New Guinea.

Across many languages and many story-telling traditions, from Amazonia to North America and Australia, a Trickster is a well-attested character, and “an intriguing puzzle to anthropologists and folklorists” (Basso 1987: 4). In Ellen Basso’s (1987: 4–5) words, what appears to be impressive are “the contradictions in Trickster’s moral character”, in “what Boas called ‘the troublesome psychological discrepancy’ between the apparently incongruous attributes of the ‘culture hero’ (who makes the world safe and secure for human life) and the ‘selfish buffoon’ (who ludicrously attempts the inappropriate)” – that is, the Trickster. Tricksters come in different guises. It is human-like for the Kalapalo, a Carib-speaking group from the Xingu area of Brazil (Basso 1987: 225–226) and for the Wakuénai, an Arawak-speaking variety of Kurripako from Venezuela (Hill 2009). Trickster comes in the shape of Wanali (a large bird of the genus of Anhingidae) for the Tariana, who speak a closely related Arawak language. In a magic tale by the Kurtöp a trickster is a frog (Hyslop, Chapter 9 of this volume). Across North American traditions, Trickster takes the shape of a variety of birds and animals (Raven, Mink, Coyote, Hare, and so on). The Trickster is ambiguous: he can be a deceiver and a trick-player, a shape-shifter, a lewd improviser and a bricoleur, and also a messenger-imitator of the god, transcending “the ordinary in a way that is both destructive and creative” (evoking the figure of Trickster-creator among some northern Amazonian groups who never does, or bestows anything on anyone, in a straightforward way).

In Chapter 11, “Jawoyn Trickster stories, Southern Arnhem land”, FRANCESCA MERLAN offers a brief discussion of what the image of a Trickster is like in a variety of traditions. She then defines “trickerism” as “a narrative complex of character and events in which the trickster figure does things which become understood by the audience as beyond the knowledge of another or others within the story, in a way that advances the story line”. Trickster stories are part of the personal repertoires of male speakers of Jawoyn, of the Northern Territory (originally from the Arnhem land), and are shared with their former neighbours, the Bininj Kunwok.

In one story, the Trickster figure is Najik ‘owlet nightjar’, a rather menacing looking bird. Najik is a shape-shifter, a deceiver, a disrupter, and also an establisher of norms. A Jawoyn story tells how women used to hunt but, due to Najik’s action, only men now hunt. The other story involves Balukgayin, ‘the guardian’: this is a man charged with taking care of boys during their initiation and making them into adults. But instead of acting in a responsible manner, he does the opposite, transgressing every norm of acceptable and ethical behaviour, and is killed as a result. Depicting the Tricksters as norm-breakers and norm-inverters is a matter of mirth for the narrators – the stories are interspersed with laughter at Tricksters’ tricks and mischief. The readers can accompany the flow of the stories themselves: the stories are provided in the Appendix, and the running commentary is within the chapter itself. Trickster stories are perhaps among the oldest and the most traditional ones for the Jawoyn, and appear to be the exclusive domain of male narrators.

In contrast, Chapter 12, “Narratives of self and other: Auto/Biography in PNG”, by ROSITA HENRY, addresses a genre believed to be a relatively new arrival – that of autobiography. People tend to construct selfhood through narratives about themselves and about others. The novelty of autobiography as a genre in the context of the Papua New Guinea has its roots in the traditional conceptualization of self and of person. Traditionally, people “did not acknowledge themselves as the autonomous, ego-oriented entities, imbued with temporal continuity, which we might call ‘individuals’. Consequently, they could not have an autobiographical consciousness” (Goddard 2008: 40). Such consciousness must have started to appear only within the postcolonial context which saw the rise of the autobiographical genre, written predominantly in English.

However, it would be too simplistic to assume that autobiographical motives are solely a post-colonial innovation. Numerous traditional oral narrative genres across Papua New Guinea can be autobiographical in some way and be employed as a means of self-representation. One such example is segmentary person, whereby an orator will use the first person singular in reference to their entire tribe (as mentioned above). This use of first person can be considered autobiographical, no matter whether the orator is speaking of his own personal lived experi-

ences as one man or of the shared experiences of his whole tribe, or “segment”. Another oral genre which appears to be autobiographical in nature is confession – a traditional practice which involves getting together to give members of a lineage opportunity to confess and “straighten” any wrong done to others. This practice is now merging with Christian practices. Songs and myths can also be a vehicle for autobiographical stories: through the rendition of a myth, a skilled narrator will construct their own identity and put their own, autobiographical, imprint on it.

The concept of self and the construction of personhood is viewed, by Rosita Henry, with reference to the memoir of the late Maggie Wilson (2019 with additions by Henry). The narrative within the book is in part an unfinished memoir by Maggie herself, and in part a collective biography, with an interplay of many life stories and memoirs of Maggie, herself a prominent member of the Highlands community.

Maggie’s memoir is considered to be a true PNG autobiography, that is, a retrospective telling of her own life in written form. But it goes well beyond just that. Even the use of the first person singular ‘I’ within the memoir does not necessarily imply an ‘I’ “that is an egocentric, self-reflective, introspective individual self” (Henry, this volume).

As Rosita Henry puts it, “Maggie’s narrative is event-dominated rather than characterised by introspective self-reflection”: she presents herself through her “practical deeds, exchanges, temporarily emplaced social actions, and her relational engagement with others”. Maggie’s memoir is an “auto/biography in which the distinction between both self and other, and self and person collapse” and fuse together – perhaps implicitly following the traditional embeddedness of autobiographical motives into genres which go beyond just one person’s life and experience. In a nutshell, Maggie’s narrative about herself can be viewed as a continuation of autobiographical traditions which constitute part and parcel of traditional narrative genres of the Highlands with which Maggie was intimately familiar. We are faced with a continuity of ways of talking about oneself – not just with a postcolonial expansion of “autobiography” as an imported genre.

Chapter 13. by MICHAEL WOOD, “The origin of death in Kamula futures”, focuses on the analyses of a Kamula narrative recorded and transcribed in 2019 – after decades of close interaction between the traditional Kamula of Western Province of PNG, White Australian colonial powers, and Christianity. Powerful ancestral beings continue to play a creative role in the constitution of social life among the Kamula. The narratives about the origins of death position the dead as a salient political concern, and reflect Kamula on-going engagement with the Europeans in terms of their differences and similarities. A narrative overflows into interaction with the audience and the addressees (including the researcher), and has to be supplemented by the context of other events beyond the limits of

the narration, and include the history of speakers. The current events to do with logging in the area – the collapse of social order into violence and the long-awaited renewal of logging, so as to provide the community with financial resources – are reflected in the stories about the origin of death. Even the figure of Christ is understood, by some, as already “prefigured” in ancestral myths about the Hero and his son – similarly to the ways in which the White Invader was integrated into the evolving ancestral mythologies across Amazonia (see Aikhenvald 2013 on the evolution and change in structure of Origin myths among the Tariana and other groups in north-west Amazonia within several decades, as a response to the pressures of market economy).

The polyphony of voices is underscored by the ways in which the narrator alternates between his own voice, the voice of the ancestral being (the protagonist), and the sound of the birds as additional participants in the events. The use of quotations – often marked only by changes in voice and in prosody – is reminiscent of the manipulation of different voices and quotations in Chapter 3 of this volume. The ancestral stories of the Kamula are far from set and static: they include future projections, expectations, and evolving attitudes towards what is happening around. In Michael Wood’s words (this volume), “the various retellings of the narratives depended on, and were held together, by an emergent community of narrators and characters . . . who all interacted in different ways to create various partial and contingent instantiations of the story”. The presence of the speakers’ selves in the narration echoes the autobiographical motives and experiences as part and parcel of ancestral myths and legends, outlined in Chapter 11.

As Rosita Henry puts it (Chapter 11, this volume), “narratives of various kinds are an important part of the way people communicate with both humans and non-humans in their worlds. Both the nature of the narrative form and the interpretation of the messages encoded in narratives” are what the chapters within this volume focus on.

The volume is held together by multiple threads which form a multi-coloured tapestry of polyphonous narratives – from grammatical forms and categories deployed in organizing the narrative and interweaving the protagonists and the narrator, to the kinds of narratives told, their organization and evolution in time and space, incorporating the impact of post-colonial languages and post-colonial experience. Each author has undertaken intensive fieldwork and has firsthand in-depth knowledge of the languages under discussion. This is what makes the conclusions – and the generalizations within this volume – particularly reliable.

Last but not least – as many minority languages become obsolescent and gradually slide into disuse, so do the intricate fabrics of their stories and their lore. Documenting them and making them available to younger generations is

vital for the survival of millennia-old traditions, ways of life and worldviews. And for maintaining dignity and identity, by preserving First Nations' voices and making them heard, documented, and remembered. Our focus on narrative traditions of indigenous minorities is a further way to serve this purpose. It is fortuitous and appropriate that the preparation and publication of this volume coincide with a decade-long international event – UNESCO's Decade of indigenous languages (2022–2032).

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