

8.4.2.3 inyju- [feminine object iny- plus allomorph ju- of 3pl transitive subject bu-]

Feminine transitive subjects in *nga-* have been attested for Iwaidja since Pym and Larrimore (1979), as mentioned in the previous section. But until our joint work with Akerman there had been no attested occurrences of the corresponding feminine absolutive prefix *iny-*, known from Mawng and Ilgar. Once again, though, an example popped up in the specialized vocabulary of fire tools: the expression for rubbing or twirling a firestick takes the verb *wu-* ‘hit/impact upon’ and combines it with an object prefix of form *iny-* (reduced to *ny-* by vowel coalescence after the 1sg transitive subject marker *a-*), as illustrated in (8). Here the etymological motivation for the use of the feminine object marker appears to be the commonly employed sexual symbolism in which a firedrill (conceived as a masculine part) enters and creates heat in a receptacle (conceived as a feminine part), hence ‘hit/impact upon (a feminine object)’.

(8)

<i>Ngabi</i>	<i>a-ny-bu-n</i>	<i>kijbu</i>
1sg	1sgA-3femO-hit-NPst	firestick
‘I am rubbing the firestick.’		

Again, this is the only word we have recorded with this particular prefix combination.

8.4.2.4 Lexicalized gender agreement: summary

As these three examples illustrate, the atrophy of the inherited proto-Iwaidjan prefix paradigm, which productively combined five subject genders with five object genders,²⁴ into the reduced Iwaidja prefix paradigm did not wipe out as many cells as previously believed. It now looks as if some cells in the paradigm have managed to survive in combination with just a single verb—a finding of great interest to our understanding of how paradigms wax and wane. But each of the three new cells reported on above only came to light as a result of the sorts of multidisciplinary lexical probing outlined above.

p. 206 8.4.3 Segmentability of verb stems

In §8.3.3 I stressed the difficulty of making sense of the many long, apparently unsegmentable verb stems in Iwaidja. Then, in §8.4.2, I illustrated how subsequent collection of verb vocabulary has revealed that many verb stems have specific body-part locus meanings.

Assembling the verbs discussed in §8.4.2 and sorting them by the body part involved has enabled us to identify many ‘corporeal prepounds’—recurring first elements of verbs where a recurring form correlates with a recurring meaning. Here are some examples:

(9) *dangkardakbung* ‘wear on arm or wrist’

angkarakbun ‘tie armlet on arm’

angkadburang ‘tie (turtle) up by front fin’

(d)²⁵ *angkadbinybun* ‘wash arms’ (cf. *winybun/binybun* ‘wash’)

Recurring element: (d)*angkad* ~ (d)*angkard* ~ *angkarr* ‘arm, forefin’