



Map: Australian languages studied by Frs. Nekes and Worms.

guistic research was overall fairly cursory, rarely progressing far beyond recording of basic lexicon and a few texts, normally traditional mythology. He was primarily interested in Aboriginal religion, and his main publication as sole author is his "Australische Eingeborenen-Religionen" (Worms and Petri 1968), which appeared posthumously, edited by the anthropologist Helmut Petri. (This work has since been translated into English – Worms 1986, and a second revised version, Worms and Petri 1998.) Worms's interest in language might be fairly said to have been largely practically motivated, by considerations of missionizing (Worms 1970: 374 f.), and by the light he believed the lexicon threw onto Aboriginal religion and cul-

tural practices (e.g., Worms 1944: 284). He was also concerned about documenting the languages, believing them to be highly endangered. This concern did not, however, translate into the maintenance of the languages, which did not become an issue of wide concern in Australia until the 1970s (Amery and Gale forthcoming).

The focus of Nekes and Worms's research on Australian languages was the Nyulnyulan family, a small family of about ten languages located on Dampier Land Peninsular and adjacent regions of the Kimberley (Stokes and McGregor 2003). Their work covered all the languages except for Warrwa (spoken further afield, to the east of Derby) and Ngumbarl (possibly moribund by the 1930s).