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From *ni to ye:nka: Can we posit a preconjugational proto-Pama-Nyungan?

This paper is a cry for help and further leads which may point to a stage in the development of the Pama-Nyungan family.

About 80% of mainland Australia has been covered by the this family, and the remaining area is covered by a number of language families, the connections between which are being gradually unravelled. Consensus dating suggests protoPN existed some 5-6000BP, although one linguist suggests an earlier date before rising sea levels, and another suggested a much more recent date.

A large number of PN languages exhibit what have been called conjugation markers on verbs. Harvey and others have shown how these appear to be related to various verb forms in Gunwinyguan. Yugambah-Bundjalung, the most easterly placed PN language has no conjugations: it has some 14 irregular verbs, all of which, by cognate comparison, date back some considerable time and are connected with Proto-Gunwinyguan verbs.. Some of them, and some quite regular verbs also have cognates in nonPN languages, including Alawa.

These 'old' Yugambah-Bundjalung verbs seem to place Y-Bj closer to Proto-Gunwinyguan than many PN languages much closer geographically to the Gunwinyguan languages.