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| 1. Record Nr. | UNINA9910810531503321 |
| Titolo | Australian languages : classification and the comparative method // edited by Claire Bower, Harold Koch |
| Pubbl/distr/stampa | Amsterdam ; ; Philadelphia, : John Benjamins Pub., c2004 |
| ISBN | 9786612255236 1-4237-6641-5 1-282-25523-1 90-272-9511-5 |
| Edizione | [1st ed.] |
| Descrizione fisica | 1 online resource (702 p.) |
| Collana | Amsterdam studies in the theory and history of linguistic science. Series IV, Current issues in linguistic theory, , 0304-0763 ; ; v. 249 |
| Altri autori (Persone) | BowerClaire <1977-> KochHarold James |
| Disciplina | 499/.15/012 |
| Soggetti | Australian languages - Classification Historical linguistics Language - Classification and evolution |
| Lingua di pubblicazione | Inglese |
| Formato | Materiale a stampa |
| Livello bibliografico | Monografia |
| Note generali | Bibliographic Level Mode of Issuance: Monograph |
| Nota di bibliografia | Includes bibliographical references (p. 341-364) and indexes. |
| Nota di contenuto | AUSTRALIAN LANGUAGES -- Editorial page -- Title page -- LCC page -- CONTENTS -- in memoriam, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS -- MAP -- CONTRIBUTORS' ADDRESSES -- FOREWORD -- 1. INTRODUCTION -- 2. A METHODOLOGICAL HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN LINGUISTIC CLASSIFICATION -- 3. PAMA-NYUNGAN AS A GENETIC ENTITY -- 4. THE COHERENCE AND DISTINCTIVENESS OF PAMA-NYUNGAN -- 5. PAMA-NYUNGAN: PHONOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION AND STATUS AS A PHYLOGENETIC GROUP -- 6. THE ARANDIC SUBGROUP OF AUSTRALIAN LANGUAGES -- 7. THE NGUMPIN-YAPA SUBGROUP -- 8. THURA-YURA AS A SUBGROUP -- 9. THE YARLI LANGUAGES -- 10. EVOLUTION OF THE VERB CONJUGATIONS IN THE NGARNA LANGUAGES -- 11. THE FAILURE OF THE EVIDENCE OF SHARED INNOVATIONS IN CAPE YORK PENINSULA -- 12. DIAGNOSTIC SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NYULNYULAN AND NEIGHBOURING LANGUAGES -- 13. REVISITING PROTO-MIRNDI -- 14. STEM FORMS AND PARADIGM RESHAPING IN GUNWINYGUAN -- REFERENCES -- LANGUAGE INDEX -- |

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Sommario/riassunto

This book addresses controversial issues in the application of the comparative method to the languages of Australia which have recently come to international prominence. Are these languages 'different' in ways that challenge the fundamental assumptions of historical linguistics? Can subgrouping be successfully undertaken using the Comparative Method? Is the genetic construct of a far-flung 'Pama-Nyungan' language family supportable by classic methods of reconstruction? Contrary to increasingly established views of the Australian scene, this book makes a major contribution to the demonstration that traditional methods can indeed be applied to these languages. These studies, introduced by chapters on subgrouping methodology and the history of Australian linguistic classification, rigorously apply the comparative method to establishing subgroups among Australian languages and justifying the phonology of Proto-Pama-Nyungan. Individual chapters can profitably be read either for their contribution to Australian linguistic prehistory or as case studies in the application of the comparative method.
