

Two Aboriginal Oral Texts from Arnhem Land, North Australia, and their Cultural Context

Margaret Clunies Ross

Introduction

This study examines two Aboriginal oral texts, recorded on tape and 16mm. film during the course of a mortuary ritual in Arnhem Land during August, 1978.¹ Their subject-matter is similar but their nature as utterance is different, as each belongs to a different oral register. Both texts concern two related sacred forces: the first is a spirit-being, or totem, as it would be called in the older anthropological literature, which takes the shape of a sea-bird named Mulanda and the second is a large black rock, Ngaliya, Mulanda's home. Text 1 is an oration, made by one of the senior men present at the ritual, to a gathering of male participants, shortly after he had supervised the execution of two icons, representing the two sacred forces, on the hollow log ossuary which had been prepared to house the bones of the man in whose honour the mortuary ceremony was held. The speaker has a double audience: he directs himself at times to the eye of the camera, but more often to his Aboriginal hearers. Text 2 is a single song-verse, which belongs to the standardised oral form² that Aborigines from North-East and North-Central Arnhem Land call *manikay*.³ The word is usually translated as "clan-song series". The song-verse in this instance, which also celebrates the same two sacred forces as the oration, formed part of the conventional musical and choreographic accompaniment to the mortuary ritual, whose nature will be described briefly below.

A comparison of the two texts is of interest for several reasons. In the first place, as the subject-matter is roughly constant, a comparison of two oral forms uttered in the one context and dependent on the same knowledge-frame⁴ allows one to isolate those characteristics of the utterance which, in each case, typify particular oral forms. It is possible to describe semantic, syntactic, morphological and lexical features of each text which characterise the type of speech act performed and indicate how the act itself relates to the context in which it is embedded.

Of particular interest is the fact that the song-text, by comparison with the

oration, seems impoverished in most areas of utterance analysis, except for the lexical level. As the textual elements of such oral forms as *manikay* songs are never uttered on their own but form part of a performance in which several closely-integrated elements occur together, it might be expected that the overall arrangement of these various elements to form a single song-verse compensates for the loss of some of the specifically linguistic capacities of the textual element. Indeed, it has been suggested that song-verse patterns characteristically override the syntactic patterns of spoken utterances⁵, so it may be that *manikay* exemplify this characteristic of song in an extreme form. There is evidence from widely removed parts of Aboriginal Australia for the linguistic simplification of song texts⁶, and it is therefore particularly important to analyse the "grammar" of Aboriginal performances that include song in their entirety, where that is technically possible. To this end I have included here a brief account of the non-textual elements which coincided during the performance of Text 2, though I concentrate on the song-texts⁷. In the case of Text 1, the oration, I have included an account of the speaker's paralinguistic activities, as he addresses both the camera and his Aboriginal audience.

A further reason for undertaking the close analysis of oral texts, produced in response to the demands of the indigenous society itself rather than as a result of the intervention of an enquirer from without, is the desire to discover what differences there may be between the standardised forms of societies without writing and the literature of societies that are able to compose in a written register. A comparison may establish whether such differences have cognitive foundations. The speaker of Text 1 and the singer of Text 2 are unable to read or write. In the North-Central region of Arnhem Land from which they come (see map, Figure 1), only adults under 35 and children are likely to be literate in either their own language or in English or both. Burarra, which is the first language of a fair proportion of those who were present at the 1978 mortuary rite, has been written down only since the late 1950s when the anthropologist L. R. Hiatt first began to work in and around the government settlement of Maningrida⁹. During the late '60s and the '70s David and Kathleen Glasgow have used Burarra in literacy materials and spiritual publications and have written several linguistic monographs on the language¹⁰. Although the two men whose texts I have recorded here are well aware of the existence of writing systems and of their use by others, and are interested in having their songs and ceremonies recorded and in recording them on tape themselves¹¹, it is unlikely that standardised oral forms from this part of Arnhem Land have yet been affected by writing systems.

The Context

1. Ethnographic background

The mortuary ceremony which provided the occasion for both of the texts analysed here is of a type that goes under the generic name of *larrgan*¹². It is the last of a series of rites during the course of which the deceased's bones are recovered from a shallow grave or—in days before European influence—a tree platform, cleaned, handed into the care of relatives to look after for some years and finally crushed into small fragments and placed in a hollow

log ossuary. The hollow log is decorated with paintings in various ochres which represent spirit-beings, known in North-Central Arnhem Land as *wangarr*, that either belong to the dead person's patrilineal clan or to linked patrilineal clans. A *larrgan* ceremony is an elaborate affair, as it involves the chopping down of a large hollow tree and its ritual preparation and painting, as well as the treatment of the dead person's bones with several coats of ochre before the final crushing. During all this time *manikay* belonging to the deceased's clan and to other linked clans are sung by mature male clansmen, both as a general accompaniment to the ceremony and as the liturgy for specific parts of the ritual. Other sung genres and invocations of clan names, of which more will be said later, also form part of the musical accompaniment to *larrgan* rites.

It is important that those who execute the ritual belong to the appropriate clan groups with respect to the deceased. Appropriateness is determined either by actual ties of kinship or by the knowledge that such ties had been traditional in the past and have the potential to be reactivated. Three major groups stand out, without the senior members of which the ceremony cannot proceed or be brought to a conclusion: they are those who belong to the dead person's patriclan, those whose mothers were of that clan (in Burarra, the *ngamonbeninga*) and those whose mothers' mothers belonged to it (the *aburramari*)¹³. The orator of Text 1 belongs to the last-named of the three groups and the singer of Text 2 is a member of the deceased's patriclan.

The 1978 *larrgan* was held in honour of a man named Angabarraparra, who had died in 1972. The rite took place on his patrilineal estate called Djunawunya, which is on the Arnhem Land coast a few miles to the west of where the Blyth River enters the Arafura Sea. (See Fig. 1) Angabarraparra had been a famous singer of the *manikay* named Djambidj, owned by his own clan and other clans of the same moiety¹⁴, a verse from which constitutes Text 2. The old man, whose knowledge of traditional lore was both wide-ranging and deep, had been one of L. R. Hiatt's main teachers and the latter, in conjunction with Angabarraparra's younger classificatory brother Frank Gurrmanamana (his mother's sister's son) had been contemplating the possibility of filming his *larrgan* for several years. Accordingly, in 1978, they invited Kim McKenzie, assistant film director at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in Canberra, and his sound-recordist, Peter Barker, to join us at the Blyth River. The resulting film, *Waiting for Harry*, was issued by the Institute in May 1980. Altogether McKenzie shot about 20 hours of film and I have drawn on two of his synchronised camera rolls for the two texts I publish here and the accompanying photographs. Text 1 is on Camera Roll 87 and Text 2 on Camera Roll 80.¹⁵

The orator of Text 1 is Leo Wudjal¹⁶. He is a member of the Gamalangga clan whose patrilineal estates comprise several of the Crocodile Islands. Gamalangga people do not speak Burarra, the language of Text 1, as their mother tongue, but the Yolngu (Eastern Arnhem Land) language Yanangu. Milingimbi Mission was established on one of the Crocodile Islands in 1922. (See Fig. 1) Wudjal is a man in his late fifties, a senior clansman in a position of authority to execute his clan emblems and expound their meanings. He and his several brothers customarily attend mortuary rites for Djunawunya

clans in the role of *aburramari*, a role which is expected to be an executive one. Hence, Wudjal's position of authority towards his audience in Text 1 is a function of his seniority within the Gamalangga clan and his and his brothers' executive role at the Djunawunya *larrgan* ceremony. On this occasion the eldest of the four brothers was unable to attend the ceremony through illness, and Wudjal took over his role as senior brother, referring to his elder brother Dainpuli (also known as Bitjagarala or Buthugurulu) by name in Text 1. Wudjal delivers his oration in a bough-shade at a ceremonial ground (*djanarra*) where the hollow log is being prepared and other, important rituals are carried out. This bough-shade, where men go in the heat of the day to work on the ossuary, smoke, talk, eat, sing and sleep, functions as a kind of male club-house which women do not approach. In terms of an industrial society, Wudjal is like the Chairman of a company addressing other businessmen (a term used by Aborigines about their role as ritual executives) at a board meeting¹⁷. They deal not in shares but in clan emblems of the spirit-beings, ownership of which may sometimes be considered exclusive to one clan, sometimes to be shared by several. The precise degree to which the *wangarr* Mulanda and the sacred place Ngaliya can be considered exclusive to the Gamalangga clan and yet shared with others is one of Wudjal's main themes.

The singer of Text 2 is Frank Gurmanamana, mentioned above as brother to Angabaraparra. Gurmanamana is the oldest living member of the dead man's patriclan and hence final responsibility for the successful carrying through of the *larrgan* ceremony fell on his shoulders. He and another leading singer of the *manikay* Djambidj¹⁸ were also responsible for providing much of the sung accompaniment to the rite, though they were assisted by singers of other *manikay*, including the related series Gamalangga (named after the owning clan), which was performed by two of Wudjal's brothers. Djambidj and Gamalangga share some song-subjects, though they give them different emphases. Each has a song celebrating Mulanda and Ngaliya, but as befits the main theme in each case, Djambidj-owners call their song Mulanda and Gamalangga-owners refer to theirs as Ngaliya.

Djambidj and Gamalangga are but two of many *manikay* from North-East and North-Central Arnhem Land, which are owned and sung by clans and clan-aggregates¹⁹. *Manikay* consist of a series of named song-subjects, like Porpoise, Turtle, Spirit-Man, King Brown Snake and Boomerang, each of which celebrates a particular spirit-being. Each subject is expressed on each performance occasion in a variable number of verses, whose text and melodic character is formed from a finite corpus of textual and melodic figures. Individual song-verses are of variable duration but are normally between 40 and 70 seconds long²⁰. Djambidj has 21 known subjects, divided between *wangarr* associated with the sea and coastline and those who inhabit the land and freshwater streams and billabongs. These *wangarr* are the forces that Aborigines consider created the topographic features of their clan estates and still reside there. *Manikay* celebrate the *wangarr*, the features they have created and the human clans who claim ownership of the estates where the *wangarr* live. Ownership of *wangarr* may establish individual clan identity and also affirm shared cultural relations with other

clans. At mortuary ceremonies, after a clansman or -woman has died, the singing of *manikay*, the invocation of clan and *wangarr* names, the execution of emblems in several visual media, all afford an opportunity to affirm exclusiveness of ownership and to share with others by making gifts of clan emblems to other clans, especially that of the deceased. It would seem that certain *wangarr* are particularly symbolic of the link between clans and are thus highly emotive; one such is the sea-bird Mulanda, subject of Text 2, which symbolises the enduring link between all the coastal clans from the Liverpool River in the West to the Crocodile Islands in the East, whose territories He visits in his habitual flight.

2. The Knowledge-frame: beliefs about Mulanda and Ngaliya

All *wangarr*, of which Mulanda is an example, are thought to exist both as spirits who, in times past, often called the Dreaming, created features of the landscape and the sea, and also as natural phenomena or natural beings, like rocks, waterholes, trees, animals, birds, fish, or even artefacts like boomerangs or fish-nets. Ngaliya is Mulanda's rocky home. Spirit-beings and their physical manifestations are imbued with numinous power. Plates 1 and 2 and Figure 2 represent Mulanda and Ngaliya respectively in a visual medium. Four men, directed by and including Wudjal, painted these icons on Angabaraparra's ossuary as a gift from Gamalangga clan members to the dead man and his clan. The ability to give these gifts is a privilege of ownership, but shared rights in them seem to have existed for some time, among the Djunawunya clans and the clans of the estate of Inanganduwa (or Nganduwa) at Cape Stewart. (See Fig. 1) These coastal clans appear to have been linked by ties of marriage and common culture; nowadays, however, the Inanganduwa clans are almost extinct, and Gamalangga men like Wudjal, whose patrilineal estates lie further east, have taken over many of the Inanganduwa men's ritual responsibilities. One of these, in respect of the Djunawunya rite in 1978, was to act as *aburramari*; Wudjal and his brothers now act in this capacity towards Djunawunya clan members, not because they themselves are Djunawunya *aburramari*, but because their own mother's mother came from Inanganduwa²¹. Wudjal refers several times in Text 1 to the close bond between Inanganduwa and Djunawunya; he calls these clans *Kaiko yerritja*, "Casuarina people" (line 54), alluding to the casuarina trees to be found on the beach-head in both estates, and he uses the collective term *Bolwarra* (line 57), which denotes all the coastal clans of Djowunga moiety from Inanganduwa right up to Djuta Point, just to the east of Maningrida.

Mulanda and Ngaliya may be represented in a variety of media. I have observed Mulanda expressed through song, dance, body decorations on dancers and in painting on a wooden surface; Ngaliya is celebrated in song, painting and as a sand sculpture. The connection between the two is close but they are considered separate entities. Ngaliya is Mulanda's home, upon which He perches and which He is able to enter by means of holes in the rock (designated R1-3 in Fig. 2), through which the sea also rushes. He shares this home with various *wangarr* fish and with Porpoise, which is also the subject of a Djambidj and Gamalangga song. According to Roger Sigston, Community Advisor at Milingimbi, who has seen Ngaliya, the reef is low

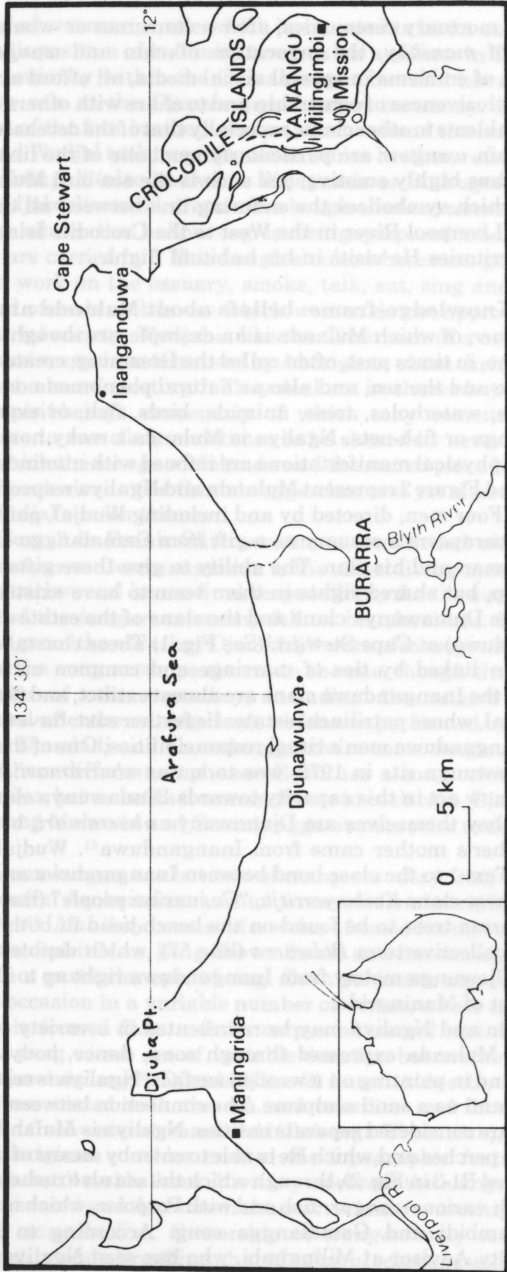


Figure 1. Map of the Liverpool - Blyth River - Cape Stewart area of North-Central Arnhem Land.

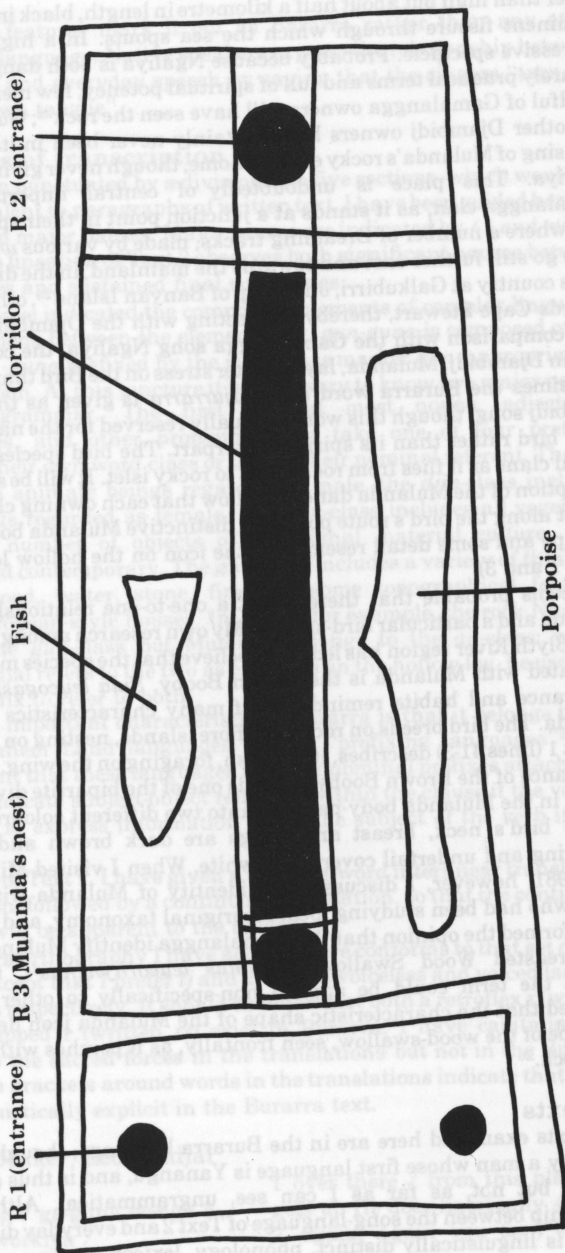


Figure 2. Mulanda's rocky home at Ngaliya. Explanations by Wudjal.

rather than high but about half a kilometre in length, black in colour, with a prominent fissure through which the sea spouts. In a high sea it is an impressive spectacle. Probably because Ngaliya is both dangerous to visit in purely practical terms and full of spiritual potency, few men other than a handful of Gamalangga owners will have seen the rock²²; Gurrmanamana and other Djambidj owners have certainly never been in its vicinity, yet they sing of Mulanda's rocky eastern home, though never giving it the name Ngaliya. This place is undoubtedly of central importance to the Gamalangga clan, as it stands at a junction point in their spiritual world-map where a number of Dreaming tracks, made by various *wangarr*, meet. Some go still further east and towards the mainland, in the direction of the clan's country at Galkubirri, on the tip of Banyan Island²³, others turn west towards Cape Stewart, thereby connecting with the Djambidj world-map.

By comparison with the Gamalangga song Ngaliya, the corresponding song in Djambidj, Mulanda, lays greater stress on the Bird than on the rock. Sometimes the Burarra word *malandjurrarra* is given as the title of the Djambidj song, though this word is usually reserved for the natural species of sea bird rather than its spirit counterpart. The bird species links many coastal clans as it flies from rocky islet to rocky islet. It will be seen from the description of the Mulanda dance to follow that each owning clan from east to west along the bird's route possess a distinctive Mulanda body-painting, in shape and some detail resembling the icon on the hollow log (compare Plates 1 and 3).

It seems probable that there is not a one-to-one relationship between Mulanda and a particular bird-species. My own research among the Burarra of the Blyth River region has led me to believe that the species most strongly associated with Mulanda is the Brown Booby, *Sula leucogaster*²⁴, whose appearance and habits remind one of many characteristics ascribed to Mulanda. The bird breeds on rocky offshore islands, nesting on the ground; as Text 1 (lines 41-3) describes, it eats fish, foraging on the wing. The frontal appearance of the Brown Booby reminds one of the bipartite division of the ground in the Mulanda body-painting into two different colours (See Plate 3). The bird's neck, breast and wings are dark brown and the belly, underwing and undertail coverts are white. When I visited Milingimbi in May, 1981, however, I discussed the identity of Mulanda with Stephen Davis, who had been studying local Aboriginal taxonomy, and heard that he had formed the opinion that the Gamalangga identify Mulanda with the White-breasted Wood Swallow, *Artamus leucorhynchus*²⁵, though he thought the term could be applied non-specifically to other birds. He suggested that the characteristic shape of the Mulanda icon derives from the shape of the wood-swallow, seen frontally, as it perches with hunched, short neck.²⁶

The Texts

Both Texts examined here are in the Burarra language, though Text 1 is spoken by a man whose first language is Yanangu, and is thus somewhat accented but not, as far as I can see, ungrammatical. Although the relationship between the song-language of Text 2 and everyday discourse in Burarra is linguistically distinct, phonology, lexicon to some extent and

morphological features mark it out as Burarra rather than any other Arnhem Land language. Native speakers express the relationship between song-language and everyday speech by saying that the singers "turn the song to their own tongue".

Conventions of transcription

Text 1 has been punctuated by a division into five sections, which would be roughly equivalent to paragraphs of written text. I have been guided here by sense-units and major pauses. Major pauses are indicated by // and minor ones by /. The lineation of Text 2 observes both significant pauses between textual phrases and sustained final sung tones.

In Text 1 I have indicated the component elements of complex linguistic forms by hyphens between the elements, e.g. *gun-guna* is composed of the deictic lexeme *-guna* prefixed by the word-class marker *gun-* appropriate to the referent noun. At this juncture it is necessary to know two major points of Burarra grammar. The first is that most nouns, adjectives, demonstratives, and other pronouns must take one of four prefixes according to their own word class or that of their nominal referent. The *an-* class includes animate beings regarded as male, the *djin-* class includes animate beings regarded as female, the *man-* class includes all vegetable foods and a number of objects of Aboriginal material culture, both traditional and contemporary. The *gun-* class includes a variety of things of the earth: wood, water, stone, fire and some topographical features including European-style houses. In Text 1, for example, the rock Ngaliya belongs to the *gun-* class but Mulanda belongs to the *an-* class; when, however, Wudjal refers to the two as emblems on the hollow log, he uses the *gun-* class prefix to refer to both.

The second important characteristic of Burarra is that it belongs to the group of Arnhem Land languages termed "prefixing languages"²⁷, by which is meant that these languages have pronominal prefixes attached to the verb to indicate subject-object relations within the clause if the verb is transitive or to express information about the subject of the verb if it is intransitive.

In the case of Text 1, I have given a word-for-word interlinear translation of each section, followed by a continuous translation, so that the continuity of meaning will be apparent to the reader.

The Burarra orthography I have adopted here conforms to that set out by Glasgow²⁸ except that I prefer *tj* and *dj* for the voiceless and voiced lamino-palatal stops respectively. It should be noted that both a retroflex *r* (written *r*) and a flapped *r* (written *rr*) exist in Burarra. I have capitalised all references to the sacred forces in the translations but not in the Burarra texts. Square brackets around words in the translations indicate that these are not linguistically explicit in the Burarra text.

Text 1 Speaker: Leo Wudjal Section 1

1 . . . eigata / ga-guna wenga a-
garlmiy' a-workiya /
2 -mola, mola ny-adapa / ehe / -

1 over there / from this place He
gets up He does habitually /
2 -again, again you (sg.) turn /
that's it / -

3 <i>gun-guna nila / meinmak / gun-gunaga</i>	3 this one (<i>gun-class</i>) to Him / good / this one here (i.e. R1, see fig. 2)
4 <i>nip' wurunga gun-guna gayunyura ga-na-yutjinga</i>	4 He? (meaning unknown) this one (<i>gun-class</i>) He-It lies in He-It towards runs
5 <i>rralila nila / gu-guna rralila gu-guna rralila</i>	5 hole (R2) to Him / this hole (R3) this hole (R2)
6 <i>a-barrangamiya a-workiya a-nayutjinga a-workiya /</i>	6 He enters He does habitually He-towards-runs He does habitually /
7 <i>a-beiya / a-beiya a-barrangamiya a-yutja a-workiya</i>	7 He arrives / He arrives (at R3) He enters (R1) He runs He does habitually
8 <i>ga-rrandjing' a-ninyira / ga-rrandjing' a-ninyira a-workiya /</i>	8 He-It perches on He sits/He-it perches on He sits He does habitually/
9 <i>ga-rrandjing' an-dira a-workiya / gun-gunaga / gun-gunaga //</i>	9 He-It perches on He stands He does habitually / this one here / this one here //

Section 1, lines 1-9

. . . over there. This is where He starts from. Turn [the log] round more. That's it. This is His. Good. This one here (R1), He lies down in it, then He flies towards His hole (R2) [and] this hole (R3). He's in the habit of entering this hole (R2). He hastens towards it and arrives. He arrives and enters [R1]. He hurries back [to R1]. He sits, perching on it (i.e. Ngaliya), He sits perching on it, He stands perched on it—that's His custom. [He's] this [icon] here, this [icon] here!

Paralinguistic features of Section 1 (numbers refer to lines of text)

1 Wudjal gestures with his left hand behind to someone (not in view of camera), while pointing with his right hand to the Ngaliya icon (Pl. 2 and Fig. 2) which lies on the log immediately below that of Mulanda (Pl. 1). Wudjal stands behind the log, which rests horizontally on two low forked sticks at either end. He wants the other man to help him turn the log round a little (cf. line 2) so that both icons are in full view of the camera. At the first pause in line 1, two Djambidj singers begin to play the first part (clapsticks only) of a verse of Turtle.

From *gaguna wenga* Wudjal brushes his right index finger lightly several times over the top white band of the Mulanda icon, which represents His breast, and into the central band of footprints. After the end of line 1, the two singers begin part 2 (vocal and instrumental) of the Turtle verse.

2 Wudjal and another man turn the log round slightly on the former's instruction.

3 Wudjal bends over the log, points first to the Mulanda icon and then to the top left-hand circle (R1) of Fig. 2.

4-5 (first pause) He moves his index finger from R1 across to the right-hand circle (R2) at the end of the black medial corridor which represents Mulanda's track, placing his finger on R2 as he utters phrase 1 of line 5.

5-7 (first pause) Wudjal moves his finger down to R3 at the opposite end of

the corridor, then moves it along the black line to R2, touches R2 again and so back along the track to R3, pointing to R3 as he utters the first *abeiya*, "He arrives".

7-9 He again points to R3 on the second *abeiya*, then moves his index finger diagonally from R3 to R1, thence back to the Mulanda icon. On the first *garrandjinga*, "He perches on It", Wudjal touches the footprints on the Mulanda icon and begins to straighten his body, turning to face his audience who are to his side left. Like many Aboriginal audiences, Wudjal's hearers are not facing him directly; some have their backs to him, others half turn towards him. There is little eye contact between speaker and audience in this section, partly because Aboriginal people do not favour more than fleeting contact except as a sign of power, exemplified in later sections of Wudjal's speech²⁹, and partly because Section 1 is largely directed at the camera.

Section 2

- | | |
|---|---|
| 10 ga-guna wenga a-boiya rrapa rraawa ga-bitimunga | 10 from this place He goes and home He-it chases after |
| 11 gun-gunaga ina-gun-gaya / gun-gaba gun-gaba | 11 this one here which one (<i>gun-cl.</i>) / that (<i>gun-cl.</i>) one out of sight, that one out of sight |
| 12 gun-gaba gun-gaba ina-gun-gaya ga-bitimung' a-workiya / | *12 that one out of sight that one out of sight where does He-it chase after habitually |
| 13 Nutjiturro ginika / Manan-d jara ginika / Gunal ginika / | 13 Nutjiturro (<i>gun-cl.</i>) object belonging to / Manandjara's <i>gun-cl.</i> object/Gunal's object/ |
| 14 ga-bitimung' a-boiya / gun-gaba // | 14 He-it chases after He goes / that one out of sight // |
| 15 ga-bitimunga Wordeiya ginika / Bingurrama ginika / | 15 He-it chases after Wordeiya's object / Bingurrama's object |
| 16 Kalamagondiya ginika ga-bitimunga / | 16 Kalamagondiya's object He-it chases after |
| 17 a-garlni' a-workiya gun-gunaga / | 17 He gets up He does habitually this (<i>gun-cl.</i>) one here / |
| 18 gun-gunaga Nguto ga-yunyura aa gun-gunaga / gun-gunaga / | 18 this one here Nguto He-it lies in er this one here / this one here / |
| 19 gun-gunaga // | 19 this one here // |

Section 2, lines 10-19

He flies off from this place and seeks [other] homes. Where are they? [There's] that distant place and that one, that one and that one. Where does he constantly fly to? To the [rocky islands around the mouth of the Liverpool River] belonging to the Nutjiturro, Manandjara and Gunal [clans]. He flies off, seeking that far-off home, making His way to [the estates at the mouth of Anameiyerra Creek] belonging to the Wordeiya and Bingurrama clans; He seeks out [the estate of the] Kalamagondiya [clan].* [Then] He rises up [and

*Kalamagondiya is the clan of Angabarraparra for whom the mortuary

flies back] here to this place, Nguto, where He takes His rest. Er, it's this place here, this place here, this place here.

Paralinguistic features of Section 2

10 Wudjal straightens his body fully and looks directly at the men under the bough-shade with full, intent gaze. At the same time he gestures with a sweeping motion of his right hand, which describes a wide arc. The singers finish part 3 (unaccompanied vocal recitative) of the Turtle song-verse.

11 (first pause) Wudjal turns away from the audience and sweeps with his right hand through 180° left to right, in a westerly direction, thus imitating Mulanda's flight path.

11 (second phrase) -12 He turns back towards the audience, moving his right hand in an easterly direction and punctuating each *gungaba* with a stay of his hand.

13-14 (first pause) As he begins to list the names of the owning clans Wudjal turns directly to his audience again, gesturing with his open left hand at each name.

14 (second phrase) He gestures downwards and away from the hollow log.

15-16 Upon the first phrase of 15 Wudjal strikes both hands loosely together; on the second and in line 16 he gestures outwards and behind himself in the direction of the sea, to indicate presumably that he is speaking of the Djunawunya estate on which the mortuary rite is taking place.

17-19 Wudjal again bends over the log and on the word *ga-yunyura* places his hand flat between the two icons. Each time he says *gun-gunaga* he pats R3 on the Ngaliya painting.

Section 3

20 nguna-bitimung' andirra adjirra-wo /	20 He-me follows He is He-us gives
21 nyi-nga ny-elingga nyi-nga ny-elingga gun-yagara /	21 you (sg.) -who you (sg.) are called you (sg.) -who you (sg.) are called nothing /
22 ngatipa nguna-warla Dainpuli /	22 we two my elder brother Dainpuli /
23 warla-papa nguna-gurdagurdarridja / ngaipa //	23 elder brother of me He-me has taught / I //
24 gun-gunaga / nguna-bitimung' an-dirra / ngatipa //	24 yes this one here / He-me follows He is / we two //

Section 3, lines 20-24

He is now following *me*. He gives these icons to us. Who are you and what's your name? And what's *your* name? [He has given you] nothing. We two, me and my elder brother Dainpuli, my elder brother-He has taught *me* [the paintings]. I[']m the one.] Yes, this one here. He is seeking me. We two [are the owners.]

rite was held. The estate is Djunawunya, on whose land Wudjal stands as he speaks.

Paralinguistic features of Section 3

21 As he questions his audience's credentials in relation to the icons, Wudjal gazes directly at them and points to individuals in the group.

23 As he utters the first person pronoun *ngaipa*, Wudjal places his left hand on his chest.

24 On *gun-gunaga* he places his right hand flat on the icons.

Section 4

25 marnd' a-djirra marnd' a-djirra
marnd' a-djirra marnd' a-djirra

26 n-gurramunga ny-orkiya n-
djurawa /

27 a a-yutjing' a-workiya //

28 a-bitimunga guridjara a-banga
tjitjitj' a-banga /

29 a-bitimung' arrapa /

30 a-djerking' a-workiya a-yiniga /

31 a-barrangamiya a-yura a-
workiya

32 a-yura arrapa rrauwa a-yiniga
aa a-yura a-yiniga

33 gun-gunaga / gun-gunaga //

25 His wings His wings His wings
His wings

26 you(sg.) put you(sg.) do
habitually you(sg.) cross to the
other side

27 um He runs He does habitually
//

28 H-It (*an-cl.*) follows fish He-It
eats fish He-It eats /

29 He-It follows also /

30 He returns He does habitually
He does thus /

31 He enters He lies down He does
habitually

32 He lies down and at home He
does thus um He lies He does thus
(Member of the audience utters an
"mm" of approbation)

33 this one here / this one here //

Section 4, lines 25-33

His wings, His wings* [which] you put on (i.e. paint on yourselves) [when] you cross to the other side**, He uses to fly along, [as] He chases fish, [which] He eats. He eats and pursues fish. By using His wings He is able to return home, enter [His hole] and rest. Thus He lies down and rests at home, [which is] this place here, this one here.

Paralinguistic features of Section 4

25-6 Wudjal's right hand still rests on the ossuary and he continues to gaze at his audience.

27 He raises his right hand in a waving, flapping motion to chest level presumably imitating the bird's wing movements.

28 His right hand circles in front of his chest, then he brings the left hand up to form a complementary circle, punctuating this movement with a pointing

* The phrase "His wings" is actually uttered four times.

** Wudjal refers to a characteristic sequence of the Mulanda dance in which two rows of crouching dancers shuffle from one side of the dance ground to the other, wearing Mulanda body paintings, on their chests and leafy sprays on each arm (see Plate 5).

action of the left hand (? to indicate the catching of the fish).

31 Both hands gesture outwards.

32-3 Wudjal now turns back towards the log and places his right hand back on the icons while half-turning to look back at the men. After the first word of line 33, the singers clap their sticks again for another verse of Turtle.

Section 5

(The first few lines of this section are all but unintelligible. Wudjal speaks very rapidly in a high-pitched voice with a fair degree of stammering. I have not attempted to transcribe these lines, but they concern himself and his brother. A member of the audience pacifies him with:

gun-nyinyipa warrpam matjitja ga-djindjirra

gun-cl. yours everything dilly-bag it (*gun-cl.*) stands

"Everything that stands here, including the dilly-bag, is yours"

He refers to a ceremonial dilly-bag which Wudjal has hung from a pole in a sand-sculpture of yet another of his clan emblems.)

34 *gun-gunaga / gun-gunaga*
(member of audience: awa)

35 *gun-gunaga ya / gun-gunaga / gun-gunaga /*

36 *gun-gunaga gun-ngaipa ga-yunyura /*

37 *warla-papa warla-papa nguna-djerda nguna-djerda*

38 *nyuburra.* aburra-werramina Kaiko yerritja /*

39 *Goborbor yerritja / Nirramanuka yerritja /*

40 *Bitjirr Guwulaka yerritja gun-yagara aburra-ni /*

41 *Bolwarra yerritja / Kalamagon-diya / Kalamagon-diya*

42 *Wordeiya Bingurrama gun-yagara gu-ni /*

43** *an-nga an-ngardipa ana-bamburda*

44 *gun-gunaga ga-beiy' yirawa /*

45 *gun-gunaga ga-yunyura / gun-gareme / ga-balkidja //*

46 *gun-guna ga-balkidja ga-yura / ga-yunyu-barra /*

47 *ga-yunya Kalamagon-diya ginika / Wordeiya Bingurrama /*

48 *gun-gunaga / ga-yunyu-barra / gun-gunaga //*

34 this one here / this one here (yes, indeed)

35 this one here indeed / this one here / this one here /

36 this one here mine (ref. *gun-cl.* object) it lies /

37 elder brother of mine (twice) my mother's mother's brother (twice)

38 2nd. person pl. pronominal prefix for intransitive verbs—they have died Casuarina people /

39 Goborbor people / Nirramanuka people /

40 Bitjirr Guwulaka people nothing they are /

41 Bolwarra people / Kalamagon-diya / Kalamagon-diya

42 Wordeiya Bingurrama nothing there (*gun-cl.*) remains /

43 who (*an-cl.*) alone is approaching

44 this one here it arrived yesterday /

45 this one here it lies / rock / it-it stick to //

46 this one it-it sticks to it lies it will lie /

47 it remains Kalamagon-diya's / Wordeiya's Bingurrama's /

48 this one here / it will be / this one here //

* 38 *nyuburra*: In the heat of the moment Wudjal selects the wrong pronominal subject prefix for the intransitive verb *werrami*—"to waste away, die", but corrects himself immediately.

** Line 43 is an aside and refers to the cameraman as he comes in closer to



Plate 1. — The Mulanda icon painted on Augabaraparra's ossuary, Djunawunya, 1978. The first-transverse band represents Mulanda's chest, the central section His footprints, the lower transverse band His rump and the two pairs of tassels His wings. Explanations are by Wudjal.



Photo: Kim McKenzie



Plate 2
Wudjal, bent over log pointing to details on it.

Wudjal addresses his audience from beneath the bough-shade of the



Plate 3
Close up of male dancers with leafy sprays

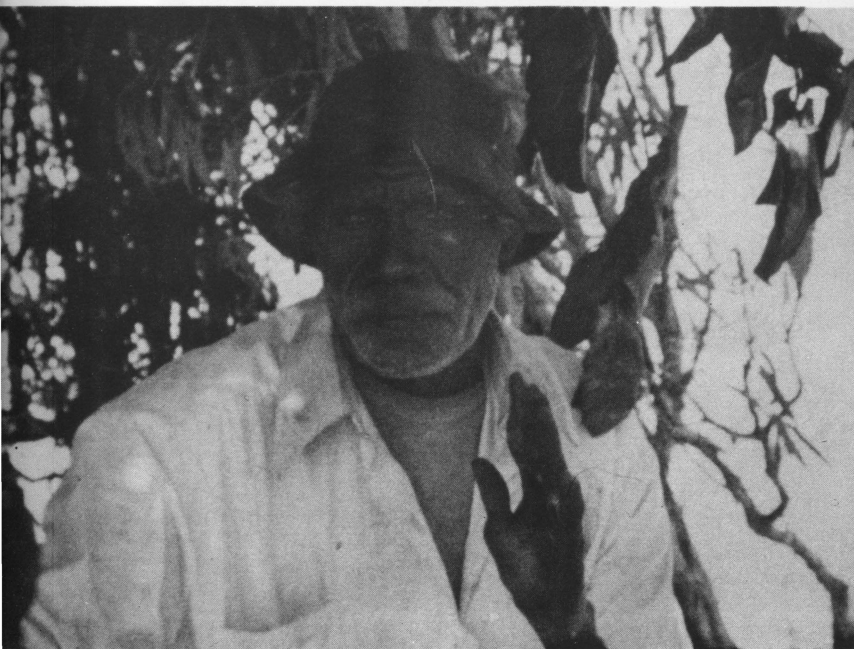


Plate 4. — Wudjal addresses his audience from beneath the bough-shade at the men's ground.

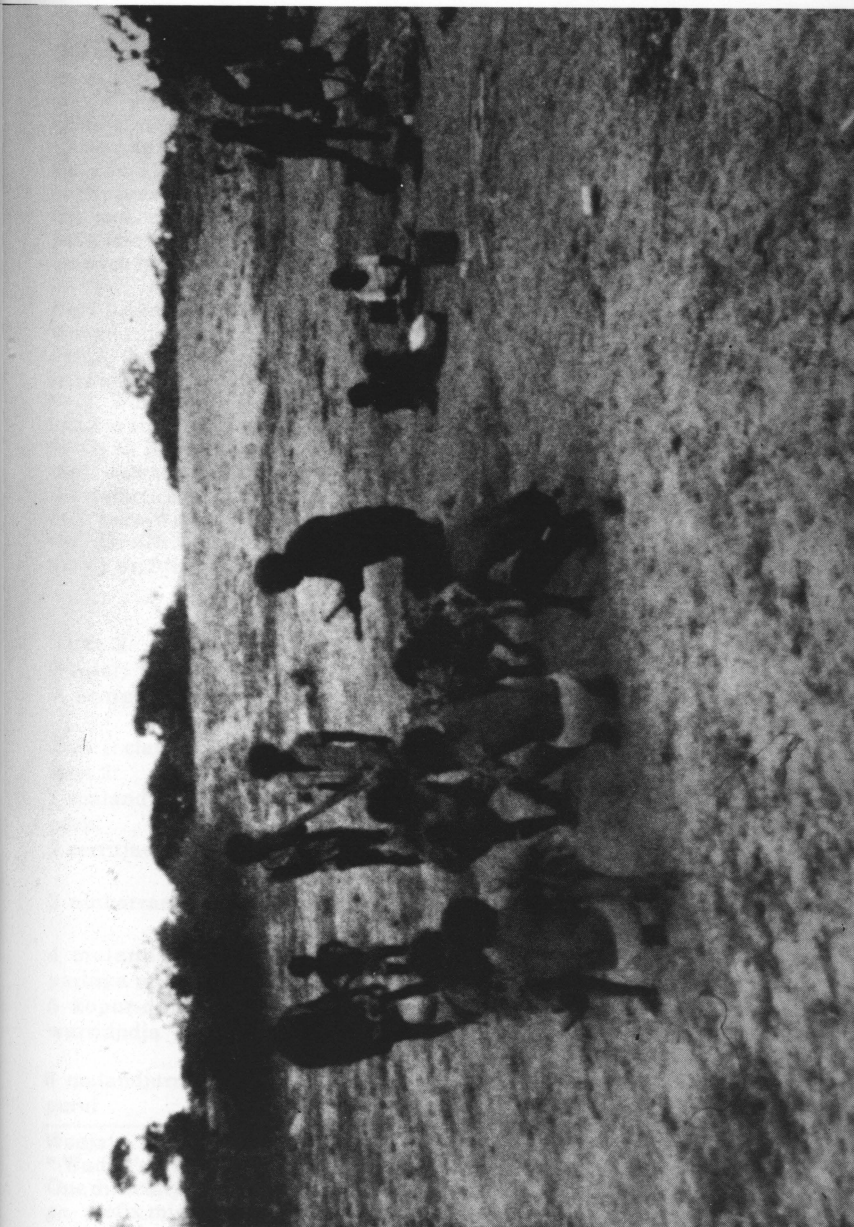


Plate 5. — The crossing-sequence of the *Mulanda bunggul*. Gurrmanamana (standing over the dancers to the right sings and plays clapsticks; his didgeridu accompanist (with an assistant to hold the trumpet up) stands behind the dancers.



Section 5, lines 34-48

This [icon] here, this one here indeed, the one [that] lies here [is] mine. [Some of] my elder brothers and mother's mother's brothers have passed away. Casuarina people, Goborbor people, Nirramanuka people, Bitjirr and Guwulaka people are no more, Bolwarra people and Kalamagondiya people have died and so have Wordeiya and Bingurrama men. Who's that coming towards me? This emblem here arrived (? was painted) yesterday*; this rock lies here and sticks to the log. It is painted on the log. It will remain there, the possession of the Kalamagondiya, Wordeiya and Bingurrama clans. This emblem here will remain.

Paralinguistic features of Section 5

Wudjal raises himself to his full height and looks directly at his audience during the first, untranscribed part of this section. The beginning of line 34 coincides with the beginning of part 2 of a second Turtle song-verse.

34-36 Wudjal stands beside the log. At each repetition of *gun-gunaga* he touches the Ngaliya icon.

37-42 As he utters these lines, Wudjal touches the Mulanda icon with his right hand, moving it slightly at points of emphasis and looking straight at the audience.

44-5 Here Wudjal lays his right hand flat on the icon.

46-8 He alternates an upright stance with hands hung loosely at his sides with a slightly bent posture in which he touches the log with his right hand.

Text 2

Singer: Frank Gurrmanamana **Manikay**: Djambidj

A song-verse of Mulanda: the textual element

Part 1: clapsticks only

Part 2:

1 malandjurrarra gomurru-burul-purul

2 rerritjaungora binbak-binbaktja

3 ninbarrarr kalikunga

4 mulanda yarlnga-yarlnga-yarlnga rerritjaungora

5 kopur-dumdumdja birnmala wurridjidja

6 malandjurrarra gomurru-burul-purul

1 Brown Booby Ngaliya

2 rocky island home name of Mulanda's clan

3 name of Mulanda's clan name of Mulanda's clan

4 Booby meaning unknown rocky island home

5 He rises up in a flock, wheels round and flies off name of Mulanda's clan name of Mulanda's clan

6 Brown Booby Ngaliya

Wudjal.

* Wudjal's train of thought in the latter part of Section 5 is a little obscure. One difficulty is that the subject and object of *ga-balkidja* are unclear, as the *ga-* prefix might mean "it-it" as translated, and so presumably refer to the painting on the log, or it might mean "he-it" and then possibly refer to the relationship of Mulanda and Ngaliya.

7 clapsticks only and ritual calls

Performance elements of Text 2

There are a number of elements which combine in the performance of *manikay*, some of which are always present, others of which are present according to the nature of the performance occasion. The essential elements of any *manikay* performance are text, melody, clapsticks and didjeridu. The singer accompanies himself with a pair of hardwood handsticks and has a didjeridu player, usually a younger man, to blow the wooden trumpet for him. Sometimes there is a single singer, sometimes two or more. Often prescribed dances accompany *manikay*, especially on ritual occasions; the whole performance is then called *bunggul*. The additional performance elements in *bunggul* are the dance-sequences themselves, which are tightly integrated with the musical structures,³⁰ and a series of ritual calls and invocations to the *wangarr*-subject of the song. My collaborator, Stephen Wild, and I have found that the addition of the element of dance profoundly affects the structure of the musical and verbal elements of a *manikay* song-verse. Our research so far has also shown that every element in a *bunggul* performance of a particular song-subject from the *manikay* Djambidj is integrated with every other element in a combination unique to that particular subject. Thus singers, instrumentalists and dancers have at their disposal a complex set of distinctive patterns in several media which they must perform in correct, co-ordinated sequence for a proper performance of any *bunggul*. As the textual element is only one of several, it is necessary to give some idea of the nature of the other performance elements and how they interact with one another.

Text 2 was part of a *bunggul* performance (see Plates 3 and 5). It occurred at a stage of the 1978 *larrgan* ritual shortly before its final phase; indeed, part of the function of the Mulanda *bunggul* is to announce to the women and children, who are not party to the preparations in the men's bough-shade, that the ceremony is approaching its climax. On this particular occasion, the Mulanda *bunggul* was precipitated by the ceremonial burning of a paperbark icon, also representing Mulanda, which had belonged to Angabarraparra. After the burning, a group of six men, whose chests had been painted with the Mulanda emblem appropriate to the clan estate of each one, and whose forearms had been fitted with leafy sprays representing the bird's wings, performed two Mulanda dances, to the accompaniment of two verses of the Djambidj Mulanda song, around the depression in which the paperbark icon had been burned. They moved off from the men's bough-shade, with the singer Frank Gurramanamana and his didjeridu accompanist, on a tour of the camp during which they stopped to perform the Mulanda *bunggul* four times in front of particular family shades. Text 2 is the third of those four verses. Perhaps in recognition of the work that has already been carried out on the ossuary and for the deceased, it is usual for those in camp to give presents of money or tobacco to the Mulanda dancers.

The Mulanda *bunggul* is a spatial link between the world of the men's bough-shade and ritual preparations and the world of the general camp, where the women keep the economic wheels turning. Apart from this one

bunggul, the only dance of the 1978 *larrgan* rite to bridge the space between the two discrete grounds is the final *bunggul*, that of Crow in the Djambidj repertoire, in which a group of male dancers, imitating Crow, carry the ossuary filled with the crushed bones of the deceased out of the men's ground to the camp *bunggul* ground. Structurally, therefore, the Mulanda and Crow dances are in parallel. Although no Aborigine has articulated what follows, it seems to me likely that Mulanda is associated in several ways with affirming the wholeness of the Aboriginal community; not only is this to be seen in the way in which the dance links groups within a community divided by gender, age, and domicile but it may also be detected in the way in which the Mulanda *wangarr* links many coastal clans whose estates He visits. Text 1 makes this latter theme explicit.³¹

Several distinct patterns of other performance elements besides the song-text combine in a Mulanda *bunggul*. Here I will do no more than indicate their most obvious characteristics. The performance of Text 2 begins with a long clapstick introduction and no sung part, though the singer issues spoken instructions to the dancers. In Part 1 he establishes the stick pattern which he is to maintain until the beginning of Part 2, line 7, which also has no vocal part. At that point he changes to two stick patterns of a different type, that coincide with a final didjeridu hoot pattern and a pair of prolonged aspirated trills by the dancers, all of which signal the end of the *bunggul*. I have said that ritual calls and invocations from the dancers are additional elements in a *bunggul* performance and, like all the others, they follow prescribed patterns for each subject. In the case of the Mulanda *bunggul* the dancers give out a series of irregularly spaced aspirated trills, "whrr", from shortly after the beginning of Part 1 until the third syllable of the last word of Part 2, line 4 (*rerritjaungora*). At this point they utter a single prolonged trill, coinciding with the central sequence of the Mulanda dance (see Text 1, line 26 and note) in which the two lines of crouching dancers, up to this point facing each other while performing an on-the-spot shuffle, cross from one side to the other. The prolonged trill coincides with the point when the two lines interlock momentarily en route to the other side of the dance-ground. It can be seen that textually and musically as well, line 4 is longer than the others; here the textual and melodic forms accommodate to the necessities of the crossing-sequence of the dance. Song-verses such as Text 2 use a restricted number of musical tones (usually two), the final tone of each line being sustained and usually followed by a vocal rest. The lines of Part 2 are divisible into several melodic phrases which are usually coterminous with the textual phrases.

Analysis and Comparison of Texts 1 and 2 as Utterance

The semantic level

One of the most striking points of difference between Texts 1 and 2 is that the latter does not use linguistic resources to denote relationships between objects that are contextually present nor does it indicate by linguistic means what sort of an illocutionary act this might be. A comparison of Text 2 with the linguistic resources of Burarra, exemplified by Text 1, will make the idiosyncracies of Text 2 as verbal utterance clearer.

In Text 1, Wudjal's main concerns are with the nature of the Mulanda *wangarr* and His various homes, the way in which these are represented iconographically on the hollow log ossuary, and the question of the relationship between various clans, including his own, and the sacred forces. In particular, the speech exemplifies a tension between Wudjal's desire to present Mulanda as symbolically linking all the clans whose estates lie on His flight-path and therefore a *wangarr* to whom they have some claim and, contrariwise, as the exclusive possession of himself and his brothers. On the semantic level, Wudjal makes most use of complex bound pronominal prefixes on verbs and nouns of kinship, of free personal pronouns and of demonstratives to indicate subject-object relationships and contextually present objects. In Section 1, as he expounds the meaning of Mulanda's various homes and His habits, he uses the finely differentiated deictics *gun-guna*, "this one" and *gun-gunaga*, "this one here" to indicate individual features of the Ngaliya painting, contrasting these in Section 2 with the far-off homes to the west that Mulanda visits by means of the deictic *gun-gaba*, "that one out of sight" (lines 11-14). He uses bound pronominal prefixes on transitive verbs to denote the relationship between Mulanda and His environment (e.g. line 8, *ga-rrandjing' a-ninyira*, "He sits perching on It", line 28, *guridjara a-banga*, "He eats fish").

Section 3 of the oration is characterised by the use of pronominal bound forms which stress the closeness of the relationship between Mulanda and the Gamalangga brothers to the exclusion of other claimants (e.g. lines 20 and 24, *nguna-bitimung' an-dirra*, "He follows me" and line 20 *adjirra-wo*, "He gives us"); here also we find the first person dual (or unit augmented) pronoun *ngatipa*, "we two" (lines 22 and 24), used to express the exclusiveness of Wudjal's and his brother's claim to the *wangarr*, reinforced by the bound possessives on kin terms in lines 22-3, paralleled in line 37, as he alludes to kinsmen who have passed away. By contrast, the direct use of the second person singular bound forms in the repeated question *nyi-nga ny-elingga*, "who are you and what's your name?" of line 21 combine semantic and syntactic resources of Burarra as well as paralinguistic features to suggest that those of Wudjal's audience that he singles out have little claim to closeness with Mulanda, who has given *them* nothing. And yet, again using the second person singular bound forms in line 26 (*n-gurramunga ny-orikiya n-djurawa*), ("His wings, which you put on yourselves when you cross to the other side i.e. in the Mulanda dance"), Wudjal softens his exclusiveness by indicating that those who participate in the Mulanda *bunggul* may indeed come close to the *wangarr* through the mimesis of the dance. The same tendency to assert exclusive ownership, this time of Ngaliya, and then to extend it to others can be seen in Section 5, where he moves from the possessive *gun-ngaipa* "mine" of line 36 to a final statement that other clans from the west, including Kalamagondiya, clan of the dead man, will always be able to claim the icons as theirs.

On a number of levels, Text 1 is highly emotive; the speaker becomes very excited, especially during Sections 3 and 5, and the foregoing semantic analysis indicates the cause of Wudjal's emotion. It is the potential challenge to his and his brothers' exclusive ownership of Mulanda and Ngaliya caused by the presence of other interested parties at the *larrgan* and

by the very act of gift giving. It is not that Wudjal suffers any actual challenge; on the contrary, a member of the audience hastens to reassure him of the exclusiveness of his claims. But one may surmise that, every time a representation of a clan *wangarr* is executed publicly or semi-publicly, the executors run the risk that others both see it, memorise it and, having memorised it, are able to steal it and reproduce it as their own.

In addition, the threat of clan extinction as another means by which clan emblems may be lost is a theme Wudjal pursues in Section 5. The loss of clan members through death, with a decrease in robustness of the remaining group, renders the clan's remnants and their emblems vulnerable to takeover by another clan, as Wudjal would have been only too well aware was potentially the case with his small clan, Gamalangga, whose oldest male member was ill as he spoke and later died. The tension between the desire to retain for oneself and the desire to share, between primary and secondary rights in clan *wangarr* is one that permeates Arnhem Land society, and it is quite clear from Text 1 that the Burarra language is finely tuned to express such subtleties and to give them illocutionary force.

Before turning to Text 2, there is one aspect of the first text which must surely strike the reader used to the much higher degree of nominalisation in literary texts and even in everyday discourse in English and other European languages. The relative paucity of nouns in Text 1 is a matter of semantics, syntax and lexis. In part, we may explain it by recalling that Wudjal is expounding the meaning of a pair of icons which stand before him as he speaks. Hence he makes great use of deictic forms, and, as the paralinguistic analysis shows, reinforces linguistic signals with gestures. However, there are many places in his speech where the pronominal usage is exophoric, that is, the pronouns signal that reference must be made to the context of situation rather than text³². The only nominal reference to Mulanda in the whole oration comes at line 25 when Wudjal alludes to His wings; this, however, is a reference to a body part and in Burarra the word *marnda* may mean "hand", "wing", and so forth, depending on the identity of the *an*-class referent who possesses it. Thus the audience must supply the full value of this nominal reference from their world knowledge-frame. Most of the few nouns Text 1 contains depend likewise on contextual rather than textual reference as do most of the pronouns.

There is another aspect of the paucity of nominalisation in Text 1 which may be explained by reference to Aboriginal social custom, religious beliefs and etiquette. This is the relative absence of personal names to denote speech participants, with the sole exception of that of Wudjal's brother Dainpuli³³. It is widely known that Aboriginal people are extremely reluctant to name individuals either to their faces or in their absence, partly because of the necessity to avoid naming deceased persons for varying periods of time after death, partly because of various avoidance rules in respect of certain kinship relations. To name names directly is considered very bad form³⁴. It is interesting therefore that Wudjal makes trenchant use of the second person pronoun in a couple of rhetorical questions in line 21, pointing directly at individual members of his audience, who are well known to him. By being implicitly critical of individuals and by using direct questions, Wudjal is breaching Aboriginal etiquette, and yet he names no

names. The question he asks is ironically the unaskable "Who are you and what is your name?". In a small-scale society it does not require an informative answer, but it rests as a challenge to those singled out, suggesting that their claim to ownership of the sacred emblems is remote. Direct questions, especially those to which the answers are already known, are rarely used in Arnhem Land society except, as here, in public oratory and particularly when the speaker is angry or asserting his authority³⁵. To make his speech even "rougher" at this point, Wudjal both points at and gazes directly at his audience, breaching the rule of etiquette which allows only fleeting eye contact between speaker and audience³⁶.

On the semantic level, there are two outstanding differences between Texts 1 and 2. By contrast with the few nouns of Text 1, there are many nominal elements in Text 2, but there are no linguistic means of indicating the relationships between these elements nor can we deduce from the linguistic element alone the nature of the reference-frame of the utterance: is this an address, an invocation, a hymn or an utterance of the *wangarr* Himself? This question cannot be answered by studying the text, though the performance context of which it forms part suggests that the illocutionary effect is at least partly mimetic. The dancers' body-paintings, the ritual calls and the dance-sequences themselves contain a mimetic element though one that has been stylised. The song-text, unlike Text 1, does not use pronominal forms of any kind to indicate semantic relationships between contextually present objects, such as Mulanda and Ngaliya in this case, or to denote relationships between singer and audience. The favourite linguistic resource of Text 1 in this field, and, I believe, of Burarra generally, the use of bound pronominal prefixes on verbs, is absent. Indeed, the proportion of identifiably verbal elements in the song-language is low by comparison with spoken Burarra. One further consequence of the absence of pronouns, which, as we saw in Text 1, are the main vectors of affect in Wudjal's speech act, is that the textual element of *manikay* at least has no affective markers. The undoubtedly strong emotions evoked by the song subjects do not manifest themselves linguistically, perhaps because of the dramatic and at least partially mimetic quality of the accompanying *bunggul*. Again, as Wudjal intimates in lines 25-7, the very act of dance is itself an indication of closeness with the *wangarr*.

Unlike the first text, with its roll-call of clan names at two points, lines 13-16 and 38-42 and 47, the song-verse refers not to human clans but to clans attributed to the *wangarr* themselves. A number of the song-words in Text 2 denote clans which belong to the spirit-beings (e.g. *binbak-binbaktja*, line 2; *ninbarrarr* and *kalikunga*, line 3; *birnmala* and *wurridjidja*, line 5). By and large, reference to the human groups who have interests in the *wangarr* occurs, not in the song-texts, but in a series of strophic invocations of clan names which usually accompany the most holy parts of mortuary rituals. The complex liturgy for these ceremonies includes both *manikay* and invocations. On the textual level, at least, lists of owning clans and the emotions they evoke are removed from *manikay* verses to the contiguous strophic invocations. My guess is that the two lists of clan names in Text 1 are adaptations of strophic invocations to a non-sung medium.

Syntax, lexis and morphology

I have already discussed some syntactic, morphological and lexical characteristics of Texts 1 and 2 in the section on semantics. Bound pronominal prefixes on verbs, for example, indicate both syntactic functions, such as subject-object relations, and semantic relationships of speech participants and contextually present objects. The sequence structure of Wudjal's speech is divisible into five major sections. Section 1 (lines 1-9) consists of a series of clauses in appositional relationship. Apart from the parenthetical line 2 and line 3, which differs from the others in being an expression of the relationship between Mulanda and Ngaliya, the series of clauses develops the notion of activities that Mulanda undertakes as He moves from one to another of His various homes. The Burarra verb of habitual action—*worki*—occurs with most of the verbs in this section, suggesting the world of unchanging spiritual reality inhabited by the *wangarr*. Only at line 5 do we find any nominal realisation of the direct object of the many verbs expressing the *wangarr*'s actions in this section.

Section 2 (lines 10-19) introduces new information by means of a pair of paratactic clauses in coordinate relationship (line 10): from His eastern home at Ngaliya Mulanda flies off, seeking other camps. Lines 11a and 12b ask the rhetorical question "Where is that place (that he constantly seeks out)?" and the answer comes first with the repeated ellipsis of *gun-gaba*, "that [place] out of sight", which, as a new lexical element contrasting with the *gun-guna* of Section 1 is sufficient to establish the difference between Mulanda's eastern and western homes. The demonstrative is elaborated in the response to the second question, in line 12, in the list of clan names which, together with the possessive *ginika*, refer to the patrilineal estates of Western clans which are the direct objects of the response clause. There is variation of word-order in the response clauses of lines 13-16, in which line 15 begins with the verbal element, thus giving a judicious balance to the utterance and maximum effect to the lists of clan names. Lines 17-19 express a new idea, Mulanda's return to the east, first by the elliptical line 17 and then through the repeated *gun-gunaga* of lines 18-19 and the proper name Nguto, which is the first nominal realisation in the oration of the concept of Mulanda's home.

Section 3 (lines 20-24) has already been discussed in some detail. Syntactically, it is characterised by a high degree of ellipsis, as in line 20 (*adjirra-wo*) where no direct object is expressed and in line 21 (*gun-yagara*), where both verb and pronominal object prefix are unexpressed, viz. "[He gives you] nothing". We also find here what I suspect is a stylistic characteristic of Burarra speech-making, the interspersal of free-standing but grammatically incohesive first person pronouns (*ngaipa*, line 23; *ngatipa*, lines 22 and 24) within grammatically cohesive clauses in order to emphasise the orator's personal importance. On the lexical level this section contains a nucleus of kin terms with possessive affixes, which we find paralleled in Section 5.

The beginning of Section 4 (lines 25-33) expresses a softening of Wudjal's stance in Section 3. Syntactically, the notion that many can share Mulanda through *bunggul* is expressed by a series of clauses (lines 25-27) which

appear to be in hypotactic relationship, though this is indicated by factors such as intonation, pause and stress rather than by grammatical markers. The first part of line 26 seems naturally construed as a relative clause, the second part (*n-djurawa*) indicates further subordination. At no other point in Wudjal's oration do we find hypotactic relationships between clauses. Lines 28-9 introduce new lexical elements (Mulanda pursues and eats fish), triggered by the symbolically important notion of His wings, but the final lines of this section return us once more to Mulanda's true home, Ngaliya, in preparation for the final section. Section 5 (lines 34-48) begins with a positive statement of personal ownership of Ngaliya, conveyed by the repeated *gun-gunaga* and the use of effective pauses as well as by the possessive *gun-ngaipa*, "mine" (referring to a *gun*-class object) Yet Wudjal moves immediately from this stance, mirroring his thematic progression in Sections 3 and 4, to contemplate the threat death poses for the Gamalangga clan's ownership of this *wangarr*. But death also strikes the Western clans, with whom Gamalangga share Mulanda, no more clearly than at mortuary ceremonies like that one for the Kalamagondiya man, Angabarraparra, at which Wudjal is officiating. The last lines of his oration, though aspects of them are obscure to me, stress the endurance of the *wangarr* and therefore the clans though individual members may die. The newly introduced lexeme *-werrami* "to pass away" stands in contrast to the newly introduced future suffix *-barra* on the existential verb *-yu-* in lines 46 and 48. Wudjal seems to be saying that the recent painting of the two icons on the ossuary will ensure their continued existence as possessions of the Kalamagondiya clan.

Text 2 displays none of the syntactic characteristics of Burarra so the way in which this song-verse, as a speech act, is delimited and ordered is at best inferential³⁷. We cannot meaningfully talk about sentences or clauses of *manikay* verses, merely about word combinations or, as I have called them, textual phrases³⁸. A vestigial clause-structure may exist, in that the order of elements in many textual phrases is fixed, though some elements that appear first in a phrase may take several possible second elements, and vice versa. At the clause-level, syntactic functions such as subject-object relations cannot be indicated linguistically in Text 2, though one may infer the existence of verb ellipsis in lines such as 1 and 6 and thence the relationship of *malandjurrarra* and *gomurru-burul-purul* as a subject-object one in a clause like "Brown Booby [perches on] Ngaliya". Elsewhere³⁹ I have drawn attention to the virtual absence of all characteristic affixes on verbs in the song-language, so that there is no indication of tense, aspect, mood or the syntactic functions such as subject-object relations that the bound pronominal prefixes of Burarra normally indicate. The one verbal element in Text 2, *kopur-dumdumdja* (line 5), is characteristic of song-words that my informants have identified to me as verbs: it shows zero pronominal prefix, a complex stem with reduplication of one element, a final suffix which is a recognisable attribute of some Burarra verb classes (cf. Glasgow, *Burarra Word Classes*, 13.3.2) and a meaning which is highly specific to the subject of the action in question, here the *wangarr* Mulanda. According to Gurrmanamana this song-verb and its Burarra spoken equivalent may only be used of birds, like Mulanda and geese, which congregate in flocks.

The *Manikay* lexicon is set off from that of spoken Burarra by several

important features. I have already noted the high proportion of nouns in the song-language, especially by contrast with their sparing use in Text 1 and, I believe, in Burarra generally. It should also be said that the *manikay* lexicon has been reduced to predominantly nominal and verbal elements, with the former more frequent, to the exclusion of free pronominal elements, adjectives and adverbs. This reduction is certainly characteristic of Djambidj and other song series from the Blyth River region which I have studied, though it seems not so extreme among the Eastern Arnhem Land clans; in the Gamalangga *Ngaliya* song, for example, we find the demonstrative *nangu* or *nangunei*, "that one". Perhaps the sharpest distinction between Burarra and *manikay* language lies in the fact that a majority of the *manikay* lexemes are not found in the spoken language and, where cognate forms occur, the *manikay* words are distinguishable from the spoken register by means of various linguistic devices such as the addition of syllables, especially by reduplication, and by intra-verbal transpositions like metathesis. The semantic field of *manikay* words is also quite restricted, being confined to the following categories, most of which are exemplified in Text 2: nouns which are alternate names for the *wangarr* song-subjects (e.g. *malandjurrarra*; *mulanda*) nouns which denote the *wangarr*'s home or homes (e.g. *gomurru-burul-purul*; *rerritjaungora*); names of the *wangarr*'s clans (e.g. *binbak-binbaktja*; *ninbarrarr*); names of other *wangarr* with which the principal song-subject is associated. Verbal forms almost invariably denote the *wangarr*'s mode of being and acting, often as we have seen, referring to species-specific behaviour.

Conclusion

The speeches of Australian Aboriginal orators have not received the attention that their polished performances merit nor have they been subjected to the same degree of socio-linguistic analysis as their counterparts in other traditional societies⁴⁰. Wudjal's oration does not exhibit the same degree of formalisation as the majority of political speeches examined in the volume on *Political Language and Oratory in Traditional Society* edited by Maurice Bloch. It may be that other kinds of Aboriginal oration show greater formalisation, though, as Bloch hypothesises (p. 13), extreme formalisation of discourse is likely to be closely correlated with the relative importance of traditional authority in the political system. Authority in Aboriginal society is dependent in the first instance on age and sex and then, to greater or lesser degrees, depending on circumstances, on clan affiliations and personal charisma.

Nevertheless, my analysis of Wudjal's speech has revealed a number of formal structures and stylistic features which doubtless underpin the balance and fluency which are marked characteristics of this oration and others I have heard. Here we find very few of the unfinished clauses, changed tacks, ums and ers which characterise unstructured oral discourse, at least in societies with writing. Further research will be necessary to establish whether the formal structures of Wudjal's oration are paralleled in other Aboriginal texts of this kind but, to begin with, I draw attention to the following stylistic features: the thematic balance of the various sections, Sections 3 and 5 complementing one another, Sections 2 and 4 expanding

the speech act's focus; the use of lists of clan names; the very high frequency of repetition as an emphatic and emotive device, sometimes incorporating the feature of varied word-order, as in lines 13-16, sometimes minimal lexical variation, as in line 28 (*guridjara a-banga tjitjitj' a-banga*) and lines 40 and 42 (*gun-yagara aburra-ni* and *gun-yagara gu-ni*);⁴¹ the use of rhetorical questions which are in breach of the norms of Aboriginal etiquette in order to assert the speaker's authority over his audience and to affirm his own clan's exclusive right to the *wangarr* in question; the use of the free first person pronoun outside the syntactic structures of clauses for emphasis and self-assertion.

Some features of Text 1 may display characteristics of discourse in societies without writing; repetition is probably one, as are the mostly **appositional, rarely paratactic and only once hypotactic relationships** between clauses. In the last-named case, as we have seen, hypotaxis is not grammatically marked. Again, the clause-length, which is usually short, **may characterise standardised oral forms, as may the frequency of ellipsis** in clauses. There is a very high degree of verbalisation as against nominalisation in Wudjal's oration, which is a characteristic that has been predicted will appear more frequently in spoken than in written registers⁴² The increase in "nouniness" of speech acts has been associated by Brown and Levison⁴³ with remoteness and formality factors and by Goody with abstraction. However, in the case of Text 1 and most Aboriginal discourse, we must also consider that the low nominalisation rate is attributable to a cultural reluctance to name names and also to the fact that the texts are embedded so deeply in the cultural knowledge-frame that reference is normally made exophorically to the context of situation rather than endophorically to the context of text. The latter process almost certainly involves greater abstraction, however.

Text 2 shows concentrated denotation of contextually present objects by means of a set of nominal and verbal elements whose syntactic relationships can only be inferred by juxtaposition within discrete textual figures and by repetition and variation of roughly synonymous lexemes. *Manikay* texts thus stand deliberately independent of the normal performance functions of language⁴⁴ and do not concern themselves with the intentions and consequences of the speech act. Hence, as we have seen, they do not denote speech participants, time or modalities and so cannot convey affect by linguistic means. In part, the fact that song-words are only one component of a complex set of performance patterns in several media has probably modified the specifically linguistic qualities of the act of communication. In part also, it may be that the undoubted formality of *manikay* as a standardised oral mode has led to the greatly increased frequency of nouns in the song texts and also to the reduction of the most characteristic functions of verbs in everyday discourse registers. The grammatical impoverishment of the song-texts combined with their increased nominalisation, which is marked further by comparison with everyday discourse by being lexically distinct from it, results in a particular kind of linguistic remoteness of utterance from both speaker and audience which I believe is a product of Aboriginal cultural constraints upon the free dissemination of knowledge. It has been customary to distinguish between

“secret-sacred” and “secular” areas of knowledge in Aboriginal society, but it seems probable that all knowledge has its place somewhere upon a continuum of restrictedness and that most institutionalised expressions of knowledge, of which *manikay* are one, are designed to reduce the informational output of the linguistic channels as such and to make as much as possible depend on the perceiver’s input of culturally sanctioned interpretative knowledge, the extent of which depends upon his sex, age, personal acuity and interest in religion. So a text like Text 2 allows a degree of intellectual free-wheeling in its interpretation by individuals which is inconceivable in a society where both the meaning of linguistic units is standardised and their formal expression is semantically explicit.

Footnotes

- 1 I use the word text throughout this article in the sense of an acceptable discourse in a language which forms a unified whole; cf. Teun A. van Dijk, *Text and Context, Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse* (London and New York, 1977), p. 3. The transcription and translation of Text 1 was undertaken by L. R. Hiatt and myself in early 1979 with the indispensable assistance of two native speakers of Burarra, Johnny Mundrug-mundrug and Albert Nganmara. Later that year we worked on the finer points with Frank Gurmanamana and Frank Malkorda. I owe a debt of gratitude to all my co-translators. I have worked on Text 2 with the singer Frank Gurmanamana and checked my transcription with Johnny Mundrug-mundrug. My analysis of the musical and choreographic elements of Text 2 is part of research in progress undertaken in collaboration with the ethnomusicologist Stephen Wild. Kim McKenzie, without whose film none of the text analysis would have been possible, supplied me with frame enlargements from the 1978 camera rolls for *Waiting for Harry*. The edited film *Waiting for Harry* (Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1980) was directed and photographed by K. I. McKenzie. Sound recordings were by Peter Barker. I take this opportunity to thank the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies for sponsoring this research, and Professor H. L. Rogers (Department of English, University of Sydney) for encouraging it.
- 2 I adopt the term standardised oral form for orally transmitted artistic forms that achieve variable but consistent structures in variable performance contexts rather than “oral literature” as the latter seems inappropriate to a society without writing and suggests that some forms are literary, some not; cf. Jack Goody and S. W. D. K. Gandah eds., *Une récitation du Bagré*, *Classiques africains* 20 (Paris, 1980) Introduction. p. 31.
- 3 See Alice M. Moyle, *North Australian Music: a taxonomic approach to the study of Aboriginal song performances*, Vol. 1, Introduction. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Monash University (1974).
- 4 Cf. Teun A. van Dijk, “Context and Cognition: Knowledge Frames and Speech Act Comprehension”, *Journal of Pragmatics* (1977) I, pp. 211-32.
- 5 It has been suggested that this may have to do with the fact that musical perception is predominantly a right-hemisphere brain activity, while language perception in most people is controlled by the left hemisphere;

- see Mark W. Booth, *The Experience of Song* (Yale University Press, 1981) and M. Critchley and R. A. Henson eds., *Music and the Brain; Studies in the Neurology of Music* (Heinemann Medical, 1977).
- 6 I have previously gathered some of this evidence in my article, "The Structure of Arnhem Land Song-Poetry", *Oceania* 49 (1978), 134-6; in works published since that date, notably R. M. Moyle, *Songs of the Pintupi* (Canberra, 1979), there is insufficient linguistic evidence.
- 7 A much fuller analysis of the interaction of the musical and verbal elements of *manikay* performance is to be found in a paper, as yet unpublished, presented by Stephen Wild and myself to a conference on Transmission in Oral and Literate Traditions at the Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University, in August 1981, entitled "Formal performance: the relations of music, text and dance in Arnhem Land clan songs".
- 8 See Jack Goody, "Thought and writing", in *Soviet and Western Anthropology*, ed. Ernest Gellner (London, 1980), p. 124.
- 9 For the general ethnographic background, see L. R. Hiatt, *Kinship and Conflict. A Study of an Aboriginal Community in Northern Arnhem Land* (Canberra, 1965).
- 10 Their publications are listed in K. Glasgow, *Burarra Word Classes*, Summer Institute of Linguistics (1981).
- 11 See *Djambidj. An Aboriginal song series from northern Australia*, (Canberra, 1981), performed by Frank Gurrmanamana and Frank Malkorda (singers) and Sam Gumugun (didjeridu), ed. B. Butler and S. Wild (cassette and disc AIAS/16) with companion book of the same title by M. Clunies Ross and S. Wild (Canberra, 1982).
- 12 See L. R. Hiatt, *Kinship and Conflict*, pp. 53-60; M. Clunies Ross and L. R. Hiatt, "Sand sculptures at a Gidjingali burial rite", in *Form in indigenous art. Schematisation in the art of Aboriginal Australia and prehistoric Europe*, ed. P. J. Ucko (Canberra, 1977), pp. 131-2; N. Peterson, "Mortuary customs of northeast Arnhem Land: an account compiled from Donald Thomson's fieldnotes", *Memoirs of the National Museum of Victoria* 37 (1976), pp. 97-108.
- 13 See Hiatt, *Kinship and Conflict*, p. 54 and, for a more general view of ritual polity, Graham Barker, "The Ritual Estate and Aboriginal Polity", *Mankind* 10 (1975-6), pp. 225-239.
- 14 Arnhem Land Aborigines divide the world and everything in it into moieties; they are called Djowunga and Yirritjinga among the Burarra and Djambidj belongs to the Djowunga moiety.
- 15 The camera rolls are held in the archive of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.
- 16 Wudjal is the Burarra form of his name which, in Yanangu, is probably better represented as Wudhal.
- 17 Les Hiatt draws a similar analogy in his commentary during *Waiting for Harry*; see also the observations of John von Sturmer, "Talking with Aborigines", *Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies Newsletter*, New Series 15 (March, 1981), p. 18.
- 18 See M. Clunies Ross and S. Wild, *Djambidj*, Section 3, The Performers, pp. 9-11.

- 19 On the nature of clans and clan aggregates in the Milingimbi area, see Ian Keen, *One Ceremony, One Song: An Economy of Religious Knowledge among the Yolngu of North-East Arnhem Land*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University (1978), pp. 21-31.
- 20 See Companion Book to Djambidj disc, pp. 12-13.
- 21 Les Hiatt ascertained these details on a visit to Milingimbi in May, 1981; his information came from Michael Maragulbiana and Roy Riwa.
- 22 The recent death of a senior Gamalangga clansman was attributed to his having set foot on Ngaliya.
- 23 For details of the Gamalangga clan's estates, see Keen, *One Ceremony, One Song*, p. 22.
- 24 *Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds*, first revised edn. (Sydney, 1979), p. 64.
- 25 op. cit., p. 570
- 26 I cannot comment authoritatively on this hypothesis except to observe that, although the White-breasted Wood Swallow lives near water, it rarely lands on the ground, which seems to be an action imitated in the Mulanda dance. The wood swallow catches invertebrates in the open bill; I do not know whether it is also a fish-eater, as Wudjal's speech supposes. Doubtless the owners of Djambidj and of Gamalangga have slightly different realisations of the Mulanda *wangarr*, though Wudjal's presentation shows no inconsistencies with information I have been given by Gurrmanamana.
- 27 A. Capell, *A New Approach to Australian Linguistics*, Oceania Linguistic Monographs No. 1 (Sydney, 1966) and J. Heath, *Linguistic Diffusion in Arnhem Land* (Canberra, 1978) p. 3.
- 28 K. Glasgow, *Burarra Orthography*, Summer Institute of Linguistics (Darwin, 1980).
- 29 See the suggestive remarks of Stephen Harris, *Culture and Learning: Tradition and Education in Northeast Arnhem Land*, abridged by Joy Kinslow Harris from the doctoral dissertation *Milingimbi Learning Contexts* (University of New Mexico, 1977) (Department of Education, Darwin, 1980) p. 114.
- 30 Stephen Wild and I have investigated these in our work-in-progress paper "Formal Performance: the relations of music, text and dance in Arnhem Land clan songs".
- 31 A dance, similar in almost every respect but ascribed to the bird named Gegangie (which I consider to be the Silver-crowned Friar Bird, *Philemon argenticeps*) by the Wurgigandjar clan of Djinang-speaking Aborigines whose estates lie eastward and inland from those mentioned here, is described in some detail by Ad Borsboom in his study of a Maradjirri (exchange) ceremony, *Maradjirri, a modern ritual complex in Arnhem Land, north Australia* (Nijmegen, 1978), pp. 103-6.
- 32 For these distinctions see M. A. K. Halliday and R. Hasan, *Cohesion in English* (London, 1976), pp. 31-3.
- 33 I suspect, but do not know for sure, that Dainpuli may be a nickname; Wudjal's elder brother's name was given to me as Bitjagarala or, in the Yanagu language, Buthugurulu.

- 34 The rules of etiquette in this matter are perceptively laid out by John von Sturmer, "Talking with Aborigines", pp. 13-18.
- 35 Stephen Harris, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-6 confirms this; reasons why what she calls "informational questions" cannot be separated from "command questions" in small-scale societies are indicated by Esther N. Goody, "Towards a theory of questions", in Esther N. Goody, ed., *Questions and Politeness, Strategies in social interaction*, Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology 8 (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 17-43.
- 36 Harris, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-5.
- 37 See my "The Structure of Arnhem Land Song-Poetry", pp. 134-5.
- 38 See Clunies Ross and Wild, "Formal Performance: the relations of music, text and dance in Arnhem Land clan songs".
- 39 "The Structure of Arnhem Land Song-Poetry", pp. 135-6.
- 40 Cf., among others *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking*, R. Bauman and J. Sherzer eds. (Cambridge, 1974) and, ed. M. Bloch *Political Language and Oratory in Traditional Society* (London, 1975).
- 41 I surmise that a very high frequency of repetition is characteristic of most Australian Aboriginal texts; it is well evidenced in most of the texts recorded by J. Heath, *Nunggubuyu Myths and Ethnographic Texts* (Canberra, 1980). It is also a feature of the New Guinea Highland oratory studied by Andrew Strathern, "Veiled Speech in Mount Hagen", in ed. M. Bloch, *Political Language and Oratory*, pp. 199-201.
- 42 See J. Goody, "Thought and Language", p. 124 and footnote 17.
- 43 P. Brown and S. Levinson, "Universals in language usage: Politeness phenomena", in ed. Esther N. Goody, *Questions and Politeness*, pp. 212-4.
- 44 The notion that communication encompasses both referential and performative functions of language was suggested first by J. L. Austin, *How to do things with words* (Oxford, 1962) and developed by J. R. Searle, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge, 1969).